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QUADRICULA (HOCUS II)

THE HOFIENA-CUSTODIO PAINTINGS

Sylvia L. Mayuga and Xiao Chua



QUADRICULA

(HOCUS II)



Curated by Gemma Cruz Araneta

HOCUS: HISTORY REFOCUSED

By Sylvia L. Mayuga

The exhibit HOCUS at the Philippine National Museum of Fine Arts in 2017 was a dreamlike return to Spanish Philippines, with archangels, demons and souls of the dead whispering their continued presence in our people's journey through time.

With progenitor Saul Hofileña, Jr. pouring out decades of his archival research and the “nightmares” they gave him, and painter Guy Custodio rendering them all in Filipino *naif* with touches of Velasquez, and Goya, learned from his 20 years of painting in Spain, was nothing short of haunting.

This dialogue between our past and present continues in 41 new Hocus paintings soon to be exhibited, unique history-telling with much to teach new generations of Filipinos.

Friars Over Conquistadors

It's long been said that Spain's conquest of the Philippines was led not by conquistadors but missionaries. The painting “Swords of the Cross” that overwhelmed our ancestors with the Spanish sword crossed by Roman theology justifying conquest in the name of “the one true God”.

“Colonization of the Mind” is in turn one giant Filipino I.D.—the *indio* crucified in his own land, linked by giant rosary beads to where “the Son of God lived, suffered and died for our sins.” Four centuries since animist *indio* spirit was drastically refocused from its island home, Filipinos are perpetual pilgrims to the “home of the Son of God” half a world away.

Then “The Spanish *Quadricula*” paints the mythic and historical face of Spanish rule in the walled city of Intramuros. Here’s the conquistador laying its grill of squares with a friar as angels descend with symbols of Spain’s power—its ultimate symbol in the orb, the *erfe*, sword and crown, the emblems of Franciscans, Jesuits, Recollects, and Dominicans the King ordered to rule the land in God’s and his name.

Here, too, is the sardonic touch of a Chinese-looking angel waving the *baraja española* for the Chinese merchants whose taxes on the playing cards they sold helped finance the building of Intramuros. All that was how this eight-gated walled city was “built to protect the conquerors from the conquered,” Hofileña sums up.

This *quadricula*’s four principal streets emanating from a central plaza in four directions was King Philip II’s order for all Spanish colonies. It would give all of Catholic Philippines its lasting face. The *reduccion* that compelled *indios* in remote villages to move closer to this *quadricula*, like milking cows in a stall, completed the job.

We then see the chronological order of the arrival of the five religious orders who Christianized the Philippines. In “*Los Recien Llegados*” (The Recent Arrivals), the Augustinian friar signals 1, as the first to arrive in 1565. The Franciscan gesturing 2 arrived in 1578. The Jesuit gesturing 3 arrived in Sorsogon with Bishop Domingo de Salazar in 1581. The Dominican gesturing 4 came in 1587. The last, 5, the Recollects, came in 1606.

Pause now for an eye-opener from the historian Fr. John Schumacher, SJ. Early on, a moral theological issue faced the Spanish colonialists. “On what ground did the Spaniards have the right to come to this archipelago, rule over the natives and collect tribute?” the missionaries asked. “And what is Spain’s source of sovereignty; how far does it extend?”

Augustinian Fr. Martin de Rada, who accompanied Miguel Lopez de Legazpi, even wrote that “no part of all these islands has come under the power of the Spaniards by a just title.” The conquistadores without salaries were impatient to collect tribute, but the early missionaries insisted that Christianizing the natives was the main goal. So, as soon as the first bishop, Domingo de Salazar, arrived in 1582, he had to convene a synod in Manila to settle this question, Hofileña writes.

That was when King Philip II divided *Filipinas* into ecclesiastical districts—Northern and South Luzon for the Augustinians; Laguna de Bae and Camarines for the Franciscans; Visayas, Mindanao and Cavite for the Jesuits; Bataan, Zambales, Pangasinan and parts of Northern Luzon

for the Dominicans. Large parts of Zambales, Palawan and Pampanga for the Recollects who arrived last. They also got Bohol when it was vacated by the Jesuits expelled in the 18th century.

That was the beginning of what would become the thorny problem of “friar lands” in a secular republic.

Anatomy of Conquest

The painting “Staking Territory and Taking Possession” captures a moment of conquest with a heavily guarded Dominican priest saying Mass for Igorots beside an idyllic river with their sacred mountain looming in the distance.

Hofileña, also a professor of international law, makes a radical statement that the Mass was really a “manifestation of conquest.” Buttressing his contention is a document in the archives of Nueva Vizcaya, confirmed by an extant photograph in the Ayer Collection in Chicago, Illinois. *Los Dominicos toman possession de la provincial de los igolotea para administrarta* dated 1620, says:

“Two Dominicans, Fray Juan de San Jacinto and Fray Francisco de Ugaba, on March 13, 1620, petition the alcalde mayor Garcia de Aldana, of the province of Pangasinan, that he order the notary to certify their rights to evangelize the Igorrotes and confirm their exclusive rights to the ecclesiastical administration of the province... as a sign of the formal taking of possession. All other religious are to be barred from this jurisdiction.”

The lawyer argues, “In law we have the ancient document rule that if a document is more than 30 years old, unblemished by signs that (it) has been tampered with, in the possession of the person or entity that should have possession of it, there is no need to submit other evidence to prove the truthfulness of what the document says or what it portended. Thus, by saying a Mass a territorial claim was made and sealed.”

Quoting Leon Ma. Guerrero who wrote that “the history of Spanish Philippines began and ended with the friar”, the friar, Hofileña observes, linked government with all its *indio* subjects. The friar’s endless list of functions says it all about his overweening, hugely tempting power.

Besides parish priest, he was also health officer, civil registrar, educator, tax collector, adviser on charitable works, electoral commissioner, provincial board member, Prison Board president, municipal budget censor, censor of all plays and dramas, certifier of the *indio*’s only proof of tax payment, the *cedula*.

On top of all that, the friar, as president of the Board of Statistics, selected members of the police force. It was he who declared a young man physically fit for conscription or not.

The four-paneled allegorical painting “La Quinta” (fifth in a lot drawn for military service) closes up on military training for young *indios* in the telling presence of both a military officer and a friar. Later, they became the *guardia civil* and the auxiliary soldiers of the army of the

Spanish Empire in the Philippines tasked to kill their fellow Filipinos. The *guardia civil* is a constabulary of natives officered exclusively by Spaniards, the great grandfather of today's national police, Hofileña notes.

Christian doctrine sealed the veneer of legality over trampled ancient native rights to their own land and worship. Hofileña offers a detail of instruction in the Faith—the palimpsest, an expensive leather sheet of animal parchment monastery scribes often scraped to use again. “The Philippine Palimpsest” shows the Tagalog Hail Mary superimposed on the Spanish version—“an overlay written in blood red script, signifying the bloody conquest of these islands in the name of religion. The original Castilian script of the prayer (is) accidentally exposed, unmasked for all to see” is how the Hocus progenitor sees it.

The painting “*Ang Pasyon*” on the Passion and Death of Jesus Christ next subtly portrays Catholic Spain waylaying the natural development of the Faith in a conquered people by force, rote and ritual.

Originally a Castilian poem translated into Tagalog in the 18th century by master printer Gaspar Aquino de Belen, this dirge—like *Pasyon* still lives in its *pabasa* (reading) in all Philippine Christian towns and villages on Holy Week. Devotees “take turns reading aloud, not allowed to cease until they’re hoarse,” Cavite native Hofileña points out.

Truth be told, despite all commercial establishments closed on Holy Week, few urbanized English-speaking Filipino Catholics attend the *pabasa* anymore. They find its archaic Tagalog disconnected from their modern lives, preferring TV sermons, binge-watching movies in air-cooled homes or the beach at the height of Philippine summer. The most such Christians might concede about *Ang Pasyon*’s traditional Filipino Calvary is its “charming art *naif*.”

And yet, a closer look at that black rainbow arching over the cross in *tinieblas*—biblical darkness as Christ was dying—evokes childhood memories. In this elder’s youth, hometown elders urged kids to jump and shout on Black Saturday, not saying why. Only now, from Hofileña’s research, does this former child realize how the Philippine Spanish centuries were dimming to oblivion as she grew up.

Back then, at exactly 3 PM on Good Friday, the hour of Christ’s death, the faithful “would mimic the lightning storm as Christ was dying—hammering their wooden clogs on the church floors, crying, shouting, weeping”—a key into dark depths of colonized racial memory.

Childlike Wonder

“Childlike” is how many foreigners describe Filipinos. In the painting *Escuelas y Rosarios* is a happier face of Catholic Philippines with its abundant native gifts in music and dance so easily bent to the purposes of religion.

Watching the day unfold in a typical village in the Spanish centuries, the 18th century Jesuit cartographer Pedro Murillo Velarde was struck by children singing all the way to school in “the stillness of the country air rent by singing...indoctrinat(ing) the rest of the village with Christian doctrine...” Wonder no more about the spell of the jukebox, the musical, the singers on MTVs on Filipino culture.

“*Canta Boholana*” is another celebration of native musical gift unleashed by Augustinian Recollects. This painting was patterned after a musical score etched in ancient carabao leather which Hofileña saw in one of Bohol’s church museums.

From the days when the Faith bloomed in Bohol’s art and music comes the *kyriale*—a massive songbook etched and painted on animal hide, with the text and plainsong notations for the congregation at Mass. Strikingly, scenes intimate to Boholanos replace musical notes – like 19th century female churchgoers, the pulpit of the Sto. Niño parish church, a bench in Baclayon church, the pipe organ of Dimiao’s San Nicolas de Tolentino church, a bas relief atop

the doorway of Loboc Church, a *sakayanon* (boatman) on Loboc River, the entrance to the Panglao cemetery and so on. “It was a time when people found happiness in singing praises to the *Ginoo*. With this unusual guide, one could actually sit before a pipe organ and play ancient music!” Hofileña tells us.

Needless to say, Spain’s traditional Catholic rituals captivated our light-hearted ancestors. *El Arsenal de la Fe* (Arsenal of the Faith) is a tongue-in-cheek comment on how the Filipino religious procession all began—in a “celestial stockholders’ meeting” of archangels approving a Franciscan proposal “to lure pagan natives from their hillside rice fields to the newly erected towns where they could forget their pagan practices as they were converted into the new Faith.”

Indeed, our childlike ancestors so quickly magnetized to heavenly beings with the new names of Christian patron saints were easily led to trance with “prayers in a strange language recited and sung in unison, the aroma of incense, lighted candles, torches and fireworks” in religious processions for their patron saint.

Equally in trance, Hofileña slyly suggests, were “Artisans of the Faith and Washers of Souls” making plaster saints, directing the building of churches, painting murals, even “washing *indio* souls before their release to the afterlife.”

But things take a more serious turn in “*Polos y Servicios*”—forced labor in “40 days of service a year by every able-bodied man on the tax rolls.” The exemption of *Peninsulare* and *Insulare* Spaniards, mestizos and the *indio* ruling class, the *principalia*, only served to divide colonial society so deeply it continues to this day. Forced labor was, in fact, a “principal grievance that eventually led the *indio* to demand freedom from Spain through force of arms,” Hofileña underlines.

Ironically, *polos y servicios* also turned out to be investments in the future, a legacy of graceful European-inspired bridges, cemeteries, and ancient Catholic churches treasured to this day. Most were made of stone and adobe, but here’s a unique old church built of corals from the Visayan sea in “Siquijor.” A humorous eye renders a portrait of life at end of another day in forced labor with work-weary *indios* and intoxicated priests in front of the convent.

Next, we see an imposing result of *polos y servicios* in the painting “Miag-ao,” a Baroque church on a promontory named after the abundant *miagos* plant. There are the Atis (the earliest inhabitants of Panay Island), hewers of wood and stone, carpenters, masons, bricklayers, women breaking eggs (their whites used as binders for church stones), sculptors, painters and *capiz*-shell artisans, all at work on what would become a magnificent church.

Completed in 1797 after ten years, with coconut and papaya trees distinctive on its façade, the town patron saint on a shell-like keystone below its pediment, twin belfries and seven anti-earthquake buttresses on each side, UNESCO would declare Miag-ao a World Heritage Site three centuries later.

The giant Hocus diorama then closes in on Catholic Spain’s severe medieval zeitgeist. In “Lashes for the Faith” a woman is being beaten inside a church for skipping Mass with a cat-o’-nine-tails, that multi-tailed leather whip also used to draw blood from mutineers on Spanish galleons. A Frenchman wrote that this was prevalent in the provinces, where friars sometimes employed other people to lash females, “their husbands and fathers not daring to say a word,” Hofileña informs us.

Violation of *indio* dignity was both physical and spiritual. This brings us to the tale of a high-born native Visayan in “At the Crossroads.” What a striking contrast between his dark, tattooed skin and his embroidered tunic with the European fool’s cap he was made to wear for “offending Holy Mother Church.”

What was his offense? The Inquisition was tightening its screws on an animist who kept his native gods in his heart when he submitted to baptism, evidenced by tattooed symbols of his original faith. Exuberant Visayans are some of the most fervent Christians today. Who can fail to be moved by this native of the “islands of the happy man” resisting captivity of his very soul?

Indio resistance could only grow down the centuries. After earlier pocket revolts, the most serious threat to the rule of Spain's Church and State finally came in the 19th century. Ironically, it bubbled up from the very Faith forced a naturally mystical folk.

The painting, *Cofradia de San Jose* (Brotherhood of St. Joseph), is a tender portrait in folk colors of a fraternity of peasants and farmers at prayer, surrounded by novenas and protective amulets of folk faith, the *anting-anting*. The angel behind them is no longer. That white angel peeking in might well be whispering to the Franciscan friar of the Cofradia's approaching fate in their return to their ancestral faith.

Their leader, Apolinario la Cruz-Manong Pule—was a Dominican lay brother with a clear mystical vision alarming the church to refuse official approval for his *Cofradia*. Hofileña recounts from a Spanish document how this religious fraternity unwittingly turned into tinder for national revolution. That the *Cofradia*'s fate would become the founding legend of the revolutionary Katipunan half a century later calls for a step-by-step recall of how it happened.

Soon after two Franciscan priests refused permission for the *cofrades* to hold novenas in their parishes, Tayabas province's Capitan General ordered the *guardia civil* to suppress them, threatening to arrest Pule.

Next, the provincial Governor Joaquin Ortega himself arrived with troops and attacked the Cofradia in March, 1841. Outnumbered by the fast-swelling ranks of *cofrades*, the governor was killed in the foothills of Mt. Banahaw.

That was the turning point. The Cofradia retreated higher on the mountain with a captured cannon and started building fortifications. They declared Banahaw their church and their ancestors' Bathala their true God. Pule said Mass in caves with a boulder as altar. The Cofradia's breach with the colonizer's Church and State was complete.

Then the "national Captain General sent land and sea forces, offering pardon to surrenderees, except Pule and his leaders," Hofileña quotes. Met by silence, "the Spaniards and their native auxiliaries attacked on November 1, 1841, pitting their 600 to 700 men with three cannons against 300 to 400 *cofrades*, not counting the aged, women and children. Pule was defeated, 300 women were taken prisoner."

The following day, Nov. 2, 1841, Pule was captured and within two days shot in the Tayabas town plaza. He was decapitated, his body quartered and displayed on the pilgrim road in different parts of the Tayabas. "He was 27-years old," Hofileña tersely notes.

It didn't end there. When news of the massacre reached the Tayabas Regiment in Malate, Manila, it mutinied and took over Fort Santiago on January 20, 1843.

Governor-General Marcelino de Oraá, a seasoned war veteran, quelled the mutiny, recaptured Fort Santiago, and ordered all 82 members of the Tayabas Regiment executed the next day.

“A reign of terror followed, sparing not even prominent members of colonial society like Don Domingo de Roxas, ancestor of today’s Ayala-Soriano and Zobel clans,” Hofileña recounts. Pule’s revolt was a warning of the coming revolution.

How Revolution Began

The Philippines has its fair share of historical scandals whose facts were deemed too dangerous to reveal in their time. “The Uses of Occam’s Razor” reexamines one such scandal.

This painting returns to 1896, when the Spanish government discovered the Katipunan. The church of Tondo towers above its parish priest, Mariano Gil listening to Teodoro Patiño about *indios* plotting revolution. To the priest’s right are the infantry soldier and the former *Guardia Civil Veterana* officer he first told. On the sand below is “the Katipunan organizational chart and the sea of blood about to wash it away.” Above them all the fireball of revolution is hurling down.

A lithographic stone, a dagger and incriminating documents on the existence of the Katipunan found in the

Diario Manila printing press, Patiño’s work place, led to 500 *katipuneros* or suspected *katipuneros* arrested.

Historians later fell on different sides of the scandal, arguing over details large and small. “Was it Patiño’s sister or wife Juana who betrayed the Katipunan?” someone asked. Historian Gregorio Zaide replied in the ‘50s that Patiño did not have a wife named Juana, and that he went to Fray Gil not to confess his sins but to betray the Katipunan.

Teodoro Agoncillo in his leftist “Revolt of the Masses” added in the ‘60s that it was one Jose Cortes of the *Guardia Civil Veterana* whom Fray Gil told, adding that “Bonifacio, Jacinto and Valenzuela met and agreed to implicate wealthy Filipinos who showed their hostility or indifference to the society.”

O.D. Corpuz’s *magnum opus* “The Roots of the Filipino Nation” in the ‘70s noted how Fray Gil “was praised in friar history for having ‘discovered’ the Katipunan through secrets told him in the confessional” while “postur(ing) as the savior of his compatriots by trumpeting his sensational discovery.”

Controversy deepened three months after Patiño’s revelation. On December 1, 1896, when Fray Gil declared to a notary public that he discovered the “cowardly and treasonous scheme of Filipinos against the Catholic religion, the integrity of Spain and the lives of the Spanish residents from Patiño in his convent’s receiving room, upon advice by his sister living at the Mandaluyong Orphanage run by the Augustinian Order.”

Quelling alarm, Governor General Blanco banned the issue of the Manila paper *El Español* with the friar's picture "to put a stop to the exhibitionism." Meanwhile, a huge question faced the Church: Did Patiño betray the Katipunan at the *convento's* receiving room or the confessional bound by secrecy in the sacrament of confession? Was the confessional being used to obtain information from the natives, information that is necessary to protect the interest of the colonizers?

Establishing uncertain truth a century and 20 years later, Hofileña applies the problem-solving Occam's Razor. It says that when "confronted with competing hypotheses, one should select the solution with the fewest assumptions. More often than not, the simplest solution will be the right one. What is the simplest hypothesis?" he asks.

"That people go to church to hear Mass and commune with a priest to ask for God's forgiveness in the confessional. Fray Gil's declaration made several months *after the fact* would admit that he violated the seal of confession, even if it was to save the Catholic Faith or rescue an empire from its inevitable descent." Therefore, Fray Gil of Holy Mother Church lied. The thunderbolt was hurtling down.

Captive Genius of His Race

The gravest consequence of Patiño's revelation came 29 days since Fray Gil tried to save his skin. On December 30, 1896, *indio* fingers pressed the triggers of their muskets at the Spanish command, "*Fuego!*"—and Jose Rizal,

charged with leading the revolution, fell dead at 7:03 in the morning.

Witnesses said he twisted when he was shot, falling face up to the sky, followed by a Spanish officer delivering the *coup de grace* with a shot to his head. Some ladies at the execution dipped their handkerchiefs in the hero's blood. Spanish loyalists shouted "*Viva España!*" with the troops as the band played the triumphal "*Marcha de Cadiz*". Little did they know: Rizal's death would galvanize their *indio* slaves to fight a deadly war of independence after 333 years of Spanish rule.

The moment of execution is captured in the painting, "Reading List 2" with a Filipina angel weeping at the window of a library. With her now is the spirit of the captive genius of his race amid the books that led to his death—his *Noli me tangere* and *El Filibusterismo* keeping company with friars' books like *Santa Teresa de Jesus*, *Arte de la Lengua Tagala*, *Antiguos Alfabetos Filipinos*, *El Indio*, *Pláticas y Conferencias*, *Libro de Almas*, *Vocabulario de la Lengua Pampanga* etc. Spain's will to power had prevailed over its scholars and mystics.

An hour after the execution "*A Las Ocho de la Manana*" (Eight in the Morning) records its aftermath in his mother's face. In sorrow and dignity, Teodora Alonso holds out *Mi Ultimo Adios*, the poem her son wrote at the eve of his execution.

This regal lady of the third generation Tagalog *principalia* in Calamba, Laguna had already lived through

a lifetime of humiliation and mental torture—"accused of poisoning a relative, she was unjustly imprisoned for two years; apprehended for using her maiden name; made to walk from Santa Cruz, Manila to Santa Cruz, Laguna in her 60s; lost her home to friar landlords, her eldest son and sons-in-law exiled; her youngest son arrested for subversion, jailed in Barcelona, exiled to Dapitan and finally executed in Bagumbayan," Hofileña writes.

Did she ever lose heart in lifelong suffering? Did her son? All signs point to mother and son one in courage and hope unto death.

What Spain Displaced

Hocus now widens our perspective on what made our islands so desirable to invaders. There's a broad hint in "The Laguna Copperplate" with its treasures of our pre-Hispanic past: "a Javanese lamp, golden death masks excavated in Butuan, dated 10th-13th century A.D., a golden deity, a golden half-man half-bird *kinnari* unearthed in an area ruled by an ancient kingdom in Surigao; bejeweled natives ambling through the cryptic script bequeathed by our ancestors."

Gold in our islands also drew neighboring Imperial China. Spain was already occupying Luzon when a Chinese delegation in the painting "Three Mandarins" arrived in Manila with 14 ships sent by Chinese Emperor Wanli in 1603.

A letter they wrote Captain-General Pedro de Acuña before they arrived is all about gold. It tells the tale of the Chinaman Tio Heng, who claimed to the Emperor that there was "a mountain of gold in the midst of a lonely sea" in the port of Cavite "in Lucien (Luzon)," Hofileña recounts from documents.

Tio Heng told the Emperor that "the mountain is not owned by any State and people of that mountain spend gold 'like garbanzos.' In every poor man's house are at least three *gantas* of gold; in the houses of the rich, 100 *gantas* of gold used to trade with the Chinese. The emperor sent them to find out if the narrative is true," the letter said.

This did not sit well with the Spaniards of Intramuros, which just suffered a fire that burned down 150 houses. People were blaming the Governor-General for prohibiting *indios* and Chinese from Intramuros and so lacked manpower to fight the fire.

This was unknown to the Mandarins when they willy-nilly started to administer justice to the Chinese in Intramuros. With their seal of office, bailiffs, soldiers and retainers, they had one Chinaman flogged, another tortured in what the Spaniards considered their territory.

But when they seized a third, a Christian Sangley, royal auditor Antonio de Morga stopped them. The governor general then issued a decree "forbidding any Chinese from insulting or molesting the Mandarins while

forbidding the Mandarins from administering their own justice,” reminding everyone who was boss in Intramuros.

Soon after the mandarins left without the gold they desired, the Spaniards clamped down on Chinese merchants in Intramuros, provoking the first and largest Parian Revolt. The Spaniards responded by slaughtering 20,000 of them with their indigenous troops and Japanese from nearby Dilao, “drastically reducing Luzon’s Chinese population to near extinction.”

Pause from bloodshed now in the lone Hocus painting wearing the other-worldly face of pre-conquest Mindanao. A different kind of gold glimmers in “Dreamweavers,” the T’boli tribe of Lake Sebu in South Cotabato whose beauty must be experienced to be believed. With the world now entranced by their T’nalak cloth, rest awhile in their dream culture.

With the fibers of the abaca they plant, strip and dye, they weave designs the gods grant them in dreams. At the center is Fu Dalu, the serene Goddess of the Weave over their enchanting lake, protecting their threads from snapping in the loom.

Around her are women weaving dreams. One weaves the M’Baga Klagan to appease Loos Klagan, a spirit inflicting disease. Another weaves the pattern of the goddess of waters; from another’s loom a T’boli mermaid’s long hair flows out with the seas, rivers and lakes. Another intertwines threads to persuade the spirit M’Baga F’low to protect them all from spirits who bring illness and death.

But a Christian Cross draped with symbols of heaven in the patterns, colors and images of all T’boli dream weaves since time immemorial is already emerging from the lake behind Goddess Fu Dalu, slowly replacing T’boli spirit dreams in magical cloth.

Meet the Muslims

Mindanao’s natural wealth and spiritual beauty wear another face—war. Who of us who know and love this island does not mourn the fracture between Muslims and Christians centuries old?

Its roots are embedded in “*Un encampamiento en Zamboanga*” with symbols of Spain’s will to power as the source of deadly conflict continuing to this day. Its most recent disaster—ISIS’s fake jihad that razed the lovely lake city of Marawi in 2017—is still fresh in national memory.

Hofileña’s mythic view presents the beginning of Muslim-Christian war with hosts of archangels arriving in *Las islas filipinas* after the destruction of the Aztec empire in Mexico. This conqueror wearing the power of empire in black armor embellished with Aztec gold surveys Spain’s armies in Zamboanga, looking for new conquest.

Zamboanga was the base of their troops and auxiliaries to battle Moro strongholds like Jolo and Patikul. There were many punitive Spanish expeditions, like the one in 1854 led by Fernandez de Cordova along the Rio

Grande de Mindanao that breached and penetrated the land of the Moros.

The Spaniards were however reduced to punitive expeditions, never able to conduct a full-blown invasion of Moro land. Writer Jose Montero y Vidal explains why they never succeeded in capturing Mindanao like Luzon and the Visayas—the Moros already had a nascent nation with local rulers, a bureaucracy and a justice system. What strife there was, was among chieftains competing for the highest throne.

Then as now, more than gold was at stake, Hofileña points out. In primal will for conquest, a Mexican viper devours a Mindanao Scops owl, with a Burgos Pointer, a canine native only to Spain in the conqueror's possession along with his intellectual tools of conquest—military maps and books like *El Vocabulario Iloco-Español*, *Leyes de Toro*, etc...

But there, too, was an older, more complex reason passed on to new generations of Moros and Christians. The wars Spain waged in Mindanao were a revival of the *Reconquista* by King Ferdinand and Queen Isabela to free southern Spain from the Moors that ended only when Islamic Granada fell in 1492.

This was a battle of pride, long and deep. What Hofileña sees in Mindanao is a nightmare best told in his own words on *La Guerra Eterna*, with “armies of the Crescent and the Cross about to collide head on. On the left, *Buraq*, the steed of the prophet Muhammad, pulls

a wagonload of warriors with a Moro angel holding the reins while Death steadies the horse that once flew the Prophet to Jerusalem.

“A wagonload of Tagalog and Visayan troops escorted by Death rush towards their sworn Moro enemies. Death holds the reins of both wagons. Christian and Moro angels dive towards their respective wards to take their souls to the Paradise of their chosen Faith.”

“Even the sun and moon of their emblems battle for supremacy. The sun covers the moon in a reverse eclipse; the moon becomes the Crescent of Islam, as the sun transforms into Lumen Christi—the light of Christ.”

On the lower part of the painting, again the animal kingdom echoes human battle with the now extinct Saurus crane once found in Northern and Central Luzon tangling with a native pelican, *Pelecanus Philippensis* once endemic in Luzon and Mindanao, a lost species like the Saurus crane. Paleozoic marine arthropods, Trilobites are breathing their last as a crawling crab symbolizes the “crab mentality” that keeps Muslim and Christian Filipinos at war to this day.

Return to Luzon

Now we return to Luzon with a tongue-in-cheek reflection on what happened to the animist soul force-fed with Christianity.

“The Virgin Has Nothing to Sell” is about *Nuestra Señora de Buen Viaje y la Paz*—Our Lady of Good Voyage and Peace—whose shrine in Antipolo was the most popular in the Spanish years.

Many miracles have been attributed to her since her icon arrived by galleon from Acapulco, Mexico in 1626. All we have are legends near impossible to confirm or debunk. We retell them nonetheless to underline her significance to Filipino Catholics for better or worse.

The legends began while the church to enshrine her was being built. They said the Virgin disappeared from her pedestal and later found on the branches of an *antipolo* tree in the mountain. A miracle, they said. Then, during a Chinese uprising in 1639, the Virgin was seized from her sanctuary and cast to the fire, where flames failed to consume her. A miracle, they said, but that didn’t prevent a Chinese from stabbing her face next.

And so, when the Spanish troops and their auxiliaries arrived and slaughtered the “rebels,” she was taken to Cavite for safekeeping upon orders of Governor General Sebastian Hurtado. There, they said, she helped a galleon dock safely in Cavite during the term of Governor General Diego Fajardo.

When twelve Dutch ships next appeared off the coast of Mariveles, Bataan, the Virgin helped the Spaniards defeat the Dutch at sea, they said. So, the Spaniards took

her back and forth on galleons several times to protect them from pirates, calm furious seas and quiet violent storms. She succeeded each time, they said.

But something less than mystical was happening. Like Assisi in Italy, Lourdes in France and Fatima in Portugal, religious items were being dumped by the thousands for pilgrims to buy. Their sheer numbers made a profitable business. This, too, is what happened to 19th century Antipolo. In the years passed, jobless men peddled display cases with a small image of the Virgin covered by glass panes, presented to devotees on the way to the pilgrimage site to be held and kissed—for a fee.

The painting shows the sorry state of Antipolo today, with makeshift stores selling religious objects to pilgrims, Hofileña comments. “Alas!” “The Virgin herself has nothing to sell.”

Next he imagines murky *indio* inner reality exploding in “*El Fin del Mundo* (The End of the World),” when the invisible world makes its presence felt. Suddenly, some mysterious force hurls patron saints from their floats in a fluvial procession down Manila’s Pasig River.

What happened, he says, is that the Fallen Angel Lucifer has just decided “to return to the heavenly fold, driving his minions to rush to confessionals to beg forgiveness.” *Indios* rush to the *Mater Dolorosa*, Christ’s mother, to confess their sins. Flagellants whip themselves

to frenzy, still believing what they learned centuries ago, that self-punishment can stave off the end of the world. Are they right? Are they wrong? The question remains unsettled as the *indio* continues navigating the waters of his consciousness.

And so, we end this Hocus tour with a multi-layered enigma in the painting *Arbol de España* centered on the *Anghel de Cuyacuy*. Literally Angel Swinging His Legs, this leisurely creature is “destined to battle ignorance and superstition armed with books.”

He’s just been hanged from a tree by the priests around him, who’ve excommunicated him with bell, book, and candle. Another priest carries the sword of the Inquisition alongside the Dominican St. Peter of Verona, a 13th century Inquisitor assassinated by heretics, the sword they hit him with still on his right shoulder.

Above them the Visayan Cathedral of Oton is destroyed by an earthquake and the gates of hell open, swallowing a thief of one of *Anghel de Cuyacuy*’s wisdom books. From the church rubble emerges “a new *anghel de cuyacuy*, who cannot die despite his indifference to man-made dogma and doctrines.”

Anghel de Cuyacuy is Hofileña’s idiosyncratic personal icon in an era of reckoning with old ideas still trying to kill the human spirit kept captive for over three centuries.

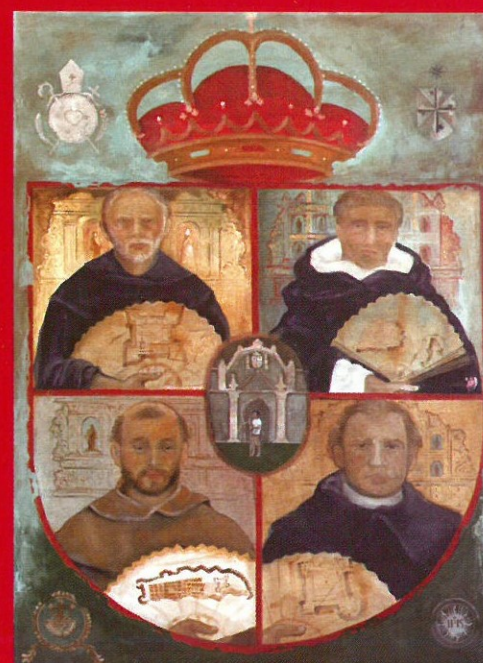
Sylvia L. Mayuga is an essayist, columnist, poet, documentary filmmaker and environmentalist. She has three National Book Awards to her name.



La Pesadilla
(The Nightmare)
2017, oil on canvas, 4 feet x 11 feet
PERMANENT EXHIBIT
National Museum of Fine Arts,
Manila



El Capitan Chino
2017, oil on canvas, 4 feet x 3 feet
PERMANENT EXHIBIT
National Museum of Fine Arts,
Manila



La Brisa de los fuertes
(The Breeze of the Forts)
2017, oil on canvas, 4 feet x 3 feet
PERMANENT EXHIBIT
National Museum of Fine Arts,
Manila



Marcha del patronato
(March of the Patronato)
2017, oil on wood, 5 feet x 3 feet
PERMANENT EXHIBIT
National Museum of Fine Arts,
Manila

How We Lost Our Names
2017, oil on wood, 5 feet x 3 feet
PERMANENT EXHIBIT
National Museum of Fine Arts,
Manila



The Lost Island of San Juan
2017, oil on wood, 5 feet x 3 feet
PERMANENT EXHIBIT
National Museum of Fine Arts,
Manila

A PEOPLE SMITTEN BY MAGIC

History and Meaning in the HOCUS Exhibitions

By Xiao Chua

Once, there was a people who had their own culture, religion and commerce. They had their own identity. They were their own people.

And then the foreigners came in the 16th century. They brought along their shiny weapons: rapier swords and guns. But they knew that they can only use fear as a weapon for a time. They needed more than fear to get hold of this people who love their freedom and culture freely.

They needed magic. *Hocus pocus domi nocus* and thus colonialism began in the Philippines.

But who concocted the magic spell? The Patronato Real, apparently.

The Patronato Real was the theme of the unique series of exhibitions by a “historian who cannot paint and a painter wary of history” entitled HOCUS. The first exhibition successfully ran from 16 April to 29 October 2017 at the prestigious National Museum of Fine Arts.

HOCUS draws its name from the first syllables of the surnames of the creators of this art: Lawyer and historian Atty. Saul Hofileña, Jr. who imagined and made thorough

historical researches of the figures and symbols painted in allegory while church painter Guy Custodio put them on canvas upon the direction of Hofileña. HOCUS is synergy in both the literal and figurative sense.

The “Angel de Cuyacuy,” is the definitive signature of every HOCUS painting. Cuyacuy literally means jiggling of the legs as the angel is depicted reading a book and battling the evils of ignorance.

Indeed, HOCUS is an art exhibition. But many times it is in the art that we find the bigger truths of our history. The paintings are unique because if one will be mindful of the meanings of the symbols and the significance of the places and people depicted in its pieces, one actually realizes that the past is as interesting, even as controversial, as the present.

PATRONATO REAL

a. The History of HOCUS

It all started when Hofileña saw Custodio restoring the old paintings at the Alburquerque Church in Bohol. Their meeting sparked a partnership wherein Hofileña will ask Guy to paint different symbols from the history of Spanish colonialism in the Philippines to show the effects of the Patronato Real.

The Patronato Real arose from a series of agreements between the Church and the Kingdom of Spain. The King of Spain became the royal patron that would fund and direct the various groups of missionaries who would spread Catholicism in the Philippines in exchange for the Pope's recognition of the sovereignty and authority of Spain over its colonies. The conquest of the Philippines was thus known as having been done *con la cruz y espada*, by the cross and the sword.

The magic of course was mind-control, by introducing to us their own brand of faith. The way these paintings tell our history is surrealistic magic in the sense that the paintings are not what they seem. The devil are in the details and they can actually make us think about our past and spark debates, just as history books do.

b. History in HOCUS

The history of our country is told symbolically in each HOCUS painting. One panel shows Pope Alexander VI between the Catholic Monarchs of Spain and the King of Portugal as he divided the world for the two kingdoms like an orange, so they can conquer these lands and spread the faith. This is the symbolic rendering that depicted the papal bull called "*Inter Caetera*" which eventually led to the Treaty of Tordesillas of 1494.

Another painting shows angels dressed like Roman soldiers coming down from heaven to these islands, holding banners with their names for the various islands

in the Philippines—Cebu, Pan-ay, Cavite, Leyte, Paragua (Palawan), Bo-ol, Nueva Caceres, Ylo-ylo, Nueva Castilla, Samar. The lives of these people will never be the same as the Patronato marched through these islands. This painting is now on permanent exhibit at the National Museum.

One of the paintings that can be considered controversial in HOCUS was a retablo of a few saints—San Isidro Labrador, San Antonio de Padua, San Vicente de Ferrer, Santa Magdalena, Santa Monica, San Francisco de Asis, San Miguel and San Roque—saints of important aspects that the colonial regime wanted to emphasize. One hardly notices that at the top of the retablo is a small human figure, King Philip II, the royal patron of the religious missionaries, because he was the one who financed and streamlined the conquest of the Philippines.

One of the saints in the retablo is a particular favorite of the Spaniards, Santiago de Matamoros. He is St. James the Apostle of Christ, believed to have been martyred in Spain. He was seen in a vision fighting with the Spaniards and killing Muslims during one of their battles in the 700-year Moro occupation of Spain. But in another HOCUS painting, St. James is shown killing not the Moros but a different kind of victim, those who resemble our ancestors as depicted in the 1593 Boxer Codex. By trying to change our culture and because of the policies that enslaved us, they might as well have killed us, thus Santiago de Matamalayu—the killer of Malays.

In the painting *Readers of the Lost Words--Lectores del Palabras Perdidas*, we see representatives of the five orders of friars that were sent to the Philippines—Franciscans, Recollects, Dominicans, Augustinians and Jesuits. They are seen reading prayer books of various Philippine languages but their eyes are covered with blindfolds. They taught us how to pray without making us understand the meaning of our memorized chants.

Not only did the friar had spiritual authority over us, he had political power. In the *Breeze of the Forts—Briza de los Fuertes*, the friars, some were called *Padres Capitan*, who acted as military leaders in places where there were no soldiers. In the painting, they are seen displaying in their fans the various plans of the different forts built in the places where they held sway—Fuerte de Francisco, Fuerte de la Virgen del Pilar (Zamboanga) and Fuerte de San Felipe Nery (Cavite)—showing the hidden sources of their power. This painting also forms parts of the permanent exhibit at the National Museum.

There is also a painting of a Chinese Captain, the acknowledged leader of the Chinese community during his time showing his seeming acceptance of Catholicism so that he can be accepted in the colonial system. He displays a portrait of the “Birhen ng Biglang Awa” the patroness of Binondo, and yet, a page from the Shih-Lu, which is the Doctrina Cristiana in the Chinese language and one of the first books printed in the Philippines, is seen on the floor. An indication that his acceptance of Spanish rule is not complete and is only for compliance.

There is also a series of paintings presented as tarot cards called *Cartas Philipinensis* featuring some symbolic events in our history occurring in important heritage sites that the Spaniards built in the country. The *Cartas Philipinensis* is the first playable tarot cards with Philippine themes.

c. Mystery in HOCUS

Similar to the urban legend of supernatural city of Biringan, a painting depicted an island near Samar which was documented in some travelogues and was also depicted in some old European maps, the originals of these documents were also displayed as part of the exhibit. But the lost Island of San Juan is nowhere to be found today, not in any Philippine map.

The Isla San Juan mural is now also on permanent exhibit at the National Museum of the Philippines.

d. Meaning in HOCUS

Two HOCUS paintings give us a summary of the message of the exhibition for all of us.

The painting *Puente de Capricho* refers to the unfinished bridge built by the Spaniards in Majayjay, Laguna where it still stands unfinished. It was depicted by our National Hero José Rizal in his novel *El Filibusterismo*. In allegory, the painting speaks of the rivalry of the Franciscans and Dominicans over jurisdiction in Laguna.

Under the bridge is an old lady who has to decide which path to follow: Will she climb to the Puente de Capricho and continue to be under the yoke of colonialism? Or will she follow the boat boarded by a man dressed in a black suit and hat? The man is riddled with bullets and is holding a book resembling the *Noli Me Tangere* and *El Filibusterismo*. He will be leading us to an alternative destination: The path to nationhood. Scattered around the painting are symbols created by Rizal who was shot at the Luneta—the Sybilla Cumana, the monkey and the turtle, the *draco Rizali*, *A Mother's Revenge*. Slavery or liberty?

There is also a triptych entitled *La Pesadilla—The Nightmare*—symbolizing the battle of good versus evil. Aswangs are depicted ready to battle angels. In between the two forces is a cross with the crucified Christ absent, referencing the belief that Christ is dead. Demons are depicted killing indios, executed, divided and placed in cages. Amidst all these chaos, an affluent woman sits in front of the mirror apathetic to the evil that surrounds her.

There is a figure of a man wearing a cone sitting beside a clock which revolves counterclockwise—symbolizing the past being distorted—he trivializes the past and watches the word HISTORIA disappear in a whirlpool, as the truth shall be hidden forever. Saul Hofileña, Jr. explains, “[*He is a man*] mindlessly obscuring the past, a hindrance to preparing for the future.” Indeed, what lessons are we to learn from the past if the past is being distorted?

The painting shows the dead and the dying during the period of Spanish colonization. It is also a reminder

of the continuing violence and brutality in the most recent history of our country. Is the painting really depicting the apocalypse, or is it an allegory of our various past and present experiences as a nation? The *La Pesadilla* may be categorized as one of the best paintings on permanent display at the National Museum of the Philippines.

2. QUADRICULA

It was not only in teaching us a new faith did the Spaniards rearranged our minds in thinking that Spain and their religion should be the center of our lives. They also did it by some novel means: town planning.

Our ancient kingdoms near the riverbanks and seashores were independent and numerous. In a colonial perspective, controlling these separate settlements was a problem. A Franciscan friar, Fray Juan de Plasencia found a solution, which was codified for implementation in the whole Spanish Empire including the Americas in the “*Leyes de las Indias*” or Laws of the Indies. The solution was called “*Reduccion*”, to put all these separate settlements under what would be established as “*pueblos*,” or townships. The roads were arranged in the Roman grid pattern, which, if one sees from above, will be like a town divided into squares, thus, *cuadricula* or quadricula in Portuguese.

The center of the “*pueblo*” was the plaza complex—where the *church* and the *casa real* or the royal house were built. Being the center, it reinforces that Christ and the King of Spain should be in the center of people’s lives, and

the constant reminder of this, would be the daily tolling of the bells to signal the praying of the oracion or the Angelus. Thus, the pueblos were called “abajo de las campanas.” Anyone reached by the sound of the church bells within the Spanish square were under the powers of the Spanish colonizer.

With brand new paintings, HOCUS will tackle the Quadricula and its effects for its second exhibition. One thing HOCUS art also seeks to answer is the question of agency. Were our ancestors merely recipient of the magic, or did they willingly accept and appropriated the faith because it similarly resembled their own pre-colonial beliefs? Was the Black Nazarene, which is my favorite Catholic devotion, only a tool to make us meek in the face of oppression and poverty, or was the narrative of the suffering Christ who looked like us and will eventually be resurrected after dying from the cross empowered the revolutionaries of various times to believe that the story of the Nation was that of light—darkness—light. As Reynaldo Ileto asserted in his book *Pasyon and Revolution*: A once free and independent people, chained in the darkness of colonialism, will soon regain its freedom and will have a better nation.

HOCUS is the story of our enslavement but it can also be a narrative about eventually singing our own song. The new HOCUS exhibition will surely spark new debates and will continue our conversations about the forgotten past, and remind us perhaps of our tendency as a people to be smitten by magic, and also the power of knowing about our own culture and past, and with that knowledge,

appropriate the magic to reinterpret the way we look at our world, and hopefully, to shape a better nation.

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