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## Folklore without a folk: questions in the preservation of the Marinduque Moriones heritage

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### ABSTRACT

Since the 1870s, the Moriones festival has been part of the Lenten celebrations in Marinduque, located at the heart of the Philippines. Inventoried by the Philippine government, the National Commission for Culture and Arts (NCCA) and the Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Asia-Pacific Region (ICHCAP) as one of the Philippines' intangible cultural heritage, the Moriones festival has exhibited various problems regarding a decreasing historical value, political intervention and increasing detachment from the Marinduque community. This study raises questions on regional inventorying of ICH, especially in light of what needs to be tackled before, during and after the incorporation of traditions and practices as ICH.

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### Introduction

The Moriones festival of the Philippines is celebrated during the Lenten season in the province of Marinduque as a re-enactment of the events leading to Christ's passion and death. In this celebration, men, and more recently women, in masks march the streets rhythmically with their cylindrical sticks (*kalutang*) from Holy Monday to Easter Sunday, playing pranks, scaring children and drawing the attention of passersby. Under the joint efforts of a local government body (National Commission for Culture and the Arts, NCCA) and the government of Korea (the ICH Courier of the Asia Pacific, ICHCAP), the Moriones festival, together with the art of mask-making, were selected as two of the nation's Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) recorded in an official inventory entitled *Pinagmulan: Enumeration from the Philippine Inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage* (2012). In essence, such efforts of regional cooperation by the NCCA and ICHCAP work to echo and put into practice UNESCO's Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICHC), a twenty-first century call to safeguard intangible heritage from deterioration, destruction and extinction. However, a closer look at today's Moriones festival reveals that despite its recognition as a regional ICH, little has in fact been done to first, ensure the continuity of the mask-making craft and the involvement of Marinduqueños (in both participation and safeguarding) and second, to bring attention to the increasing detachment of Marinduqueños from the festival due to the loss of shared common values. Through highlighting the problems that have not been tackled after the inventorying of the Moriones festival, this study argues that historicity must not be lost in the process of ICH safeguard in serving as a basis collectively acknowledged by concerned communities and practitioners. In adhering to UNESCO's (2003) definition of ICH (point 1, Article 2) as 'constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity,' this study also proposes that together with the dynamic transformations of

ICH as a cultural space, collective identification within concerned communities, creators and bearers must be secured in affirming the worth of ICH as a means to maintain solidarity and identity. The Moriones festival emerged as a political tool in the 1970s for state leaders and provincial politicians in Marinduque in scrambling for public support, and today continues to be utilised as such by local politicians. This has resulted in divided interpretations and sometimes contesting performances that have invited criticism from Marinduqueños regarding the festival's deterioration. Should an item that is not recognised and openly criticised by its community be inventoried as ICH? Must efforts then be made to tackle existing contradictions to ensure the dynamic involvement of communities during the process of safeguarding ICH? Notably, the Moriones festival and the art of mask-making are alive in the Marinduque province, yet locals do not approve of its contemporary changes and not much has been invested to sustain the craft of making masks in the long run. This study therefore examines the historical background and reinvention of the Moriones festival during the 1970s in first, questioning whether the declaration of ICH must incorporate the restoration of (so-called) tradition in light of local opposition against unpopular state intervention and second, in reaffirming the importance of self-identification amongst community members, creators and bearers in connection to the celebrated ICH, supported by the basic opportunity to produce and re-create.

Since the establishment of the ICHC, there have been concerns over the 'freezing' of cultural practices in the process of documentation and safeguard (Kurin 2004, 74). There have also been doubts as to how cultural coherence can be maintained under a global perspective in allowing people to safeguard their (ascribed or adopted) roots (Arizpe 2004, 133). In view of these, problems in balancing state intervention and community participation, as well as of communal acknowledgment of old traditions in the contemporary world have emerged. The Gujo Dori festival in Japan, for instance, exemplifies the problematic designation of traditions as ICH through contemporary revivals by states and organisations which has resulted in the promotion of non-traditional events, the exclusion of local communities and the transfer of power to preservation groups (Cang 2007). Following this interpretation, I argue, through this study of the Moriones festival, that historicity and the promotion of a communal sense of identity are important in the safeguarding of ICH: without a collectively recognised past, traditional rituals become more open to contestation and participation can only be restricted to people with authority who lead and manage the constant recreation of ICH. On the other hand, without collective identification, the meaning of ICH as a marker of communal belonging and identity is not just questionable, there may occur reservations in safeguarding within the concerned cultural community Early and Seitel pointed out 'there is no folklore without the folk' (2002, 19); placed in the context of ICH, there seems little point in protecting items that have been purposefully revived for political or economic reasons and that are not acknowledged by representing communities. Traditions, reinvented or not, must progress and develop in line with the values and beliefs of their concerned communities, creators and bearers.

## Problematizing ICH

In the Philippines, the process of ICH inventorying is problematic, especially due to its lack of transparency. The Philippines became a signatory to the ICHC in 2003, the Philippine government passed the National Cultural Heritage Act in 2009 and the NCCA was put in charge of inventorying the nation's ICH matters. Under the collaboration of the NCCA and the ICHCAP, the Moriones festival and 334 other items were officiated as the Philippines' national ICH through a publication entitled *Pinagmulan: Enumerations from the Philippine Inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage* (2012). The process of inventorying in the Philippines, unlike those practiced in neighbouring cities like Hong Kong and Macao, is not an open selection that invites nominations from local communities. Instead, the state and government organisations have monopolised the entire system from inventory to protection, local communities and practitioners are not invited for engagement and public awareness of ICH remains low. More often than not, questions that arise in the process of ICH safeguard can be

traced back to legal shortcomings and further, the lack of regional and local experience in heritage management. The UNESCO Convention, as a pioneering global framework, has therefore been open to conceptual and philosophical debate (for instance, Kono 2009; Smith and Akagawa 2009; Labadi 2013, 127–146). For instance, critics have found fault in the lack of clear guidelines that have resulted in the ‘intangible’ encompassing overtly broad spaces and contexts (Murphy 2001). They have also noted the problem of temporal and practical balance resulting from the lack of specific guidelines over the problem of ownership (Kearney 2009; De Miguel Asensio 2012). In 2004, regional experts in Asia met at a workshop organised by the Asia-Pacific Cultural Centre for UNESCO (ACCU) to exchange views on inventory-making, suggesting that custodian communities and individual practitioners must be entrusted with the decision to list their cultural expressions in ICH inventories (Moreno-Triana 2004, 84).

Nevertheless, in the Philippines’ latest report on the ICHC submitted to UNESCO (2014), remarked that matters related to ICH have been overtaken by a number of organs. The NCCA, as the highest body that works with UNESCO, has established the Intangible Cultural Heritage Unit and the NCAA-Intangible Heritage Committee to plan and formulate policies in inventorying, research, documentation and promotion of ICH items. There are so far two inventories (compiled by the NCAA) that are valid, the first is a pending open registry submitted by local government units and national cultural agencies (Philippine Registry of Cultural Property; PRECUP) and the other is the Philippine Intangible Cultural Heritage Inventory which records ICH ‘... regardless of whether they are endangered, still being practiced, no longer practiced but still remembered in the community’ as decided by so-called experts and government representatives (UNESCO 2014). Restricted to the access and control of governments and authorised peoples, and without a clear system of heritage selection, regulation and management, the ICH inventory of the Philippines fails to reflect the lived connotation of safeguarding ICH. For one, the selection of extinct practices contradicts the essence of ICH protection and the Intangible Cultural Heritage Unit has yet to fully operate and realise their objective of increasing the engagement of communities. Hafstein’s (2009, 105) warning of creating ‘a shopping list for treasure hunters’ and ‘a free catalogue for multinationals who want to appropriate intangible cultural heritage,’ though exaggerated, applies in that the Philippines’ attempt in safeguarding ICH has so far involved the compilation of a list, but no action has been taken to safeguard many of the traditions/local cultural practices.

Indeed, the extent, experience and method of communal engagement in heritage preservation have been widely criticised (Waterton and Watson 2011) in hopes of reducing friction between traditional custodians, host communities and legal custodians. Damm (2005), for instance, argued that participation must include the rights and power to research and management. Waterton and Smith (2010) have questioned whether ‘community’ inclusion can be achieved when heritage management practices are dominated by the assumptions and values of heritage experts, particularly under what Smith highlights as the ‘authorised heritage discourse’ (AHD) in legitimising heritage narratives (2006, 44). In his 2011 publication, Lixinski also illustrated the complications in achieving community engagement by highlighting the conflict between the role of communities and the role of states in the listing process. Adding to existing observations that speak of the various difficulties in ensuring community engagement in the safeguarding of ICH, the case of the Moriones festival further demonstrates the challenges of community participation and the problems that derive from excessive governmental involvement, dominating the act of ICH safeguard with a group of peoples and politicians who cannot represent, and most likely have not experienced the Moriones festival as practitioners. Should a strong historical awareness have been present, political reinvention could have been made more difficult and a more representative idea of the ICH better recognised by concerned communities. Furthermore, as Marinduque locals increasingly become disconnected from the contemporary Moriones festival, this allows us to question whether the tradition should even be considered an ICH and to rethink the importance of collective identification and communal participation in the safeguarding of heritage.

## Genesis of a 'contemporary tradition'

The story of the Moriones festival's origin does not point to one universally agreed interpretation. Generally, it is believed that the tradition first emerged in the town of Mogpog during the nineteenth century. Roces (1961, 256), for instance, documented Mayor Rafael Lasic's (term in office: 1960–1963) narrative that the Moriones festival originated in 1807 when parish priest Dionisio Santiago organised a group of people to re-enact the crucifixion of Christ. Another recollection refers to the initiation of a stage play by Dionisio who was then inspired by Mariano Pilapil's 1884 publication *Ang Mahal na Pasyon ni Hesukristo* (The Sacred Passion of Jesus Christ); *Pasyon* carries a seventeen-page description of Roman Centurion Longinus' conversion to Christianity, explaining why the story became the heart of the festival (Obligacion 2002, 50). However, Loyola (2015) did not mention Pilapil, but instead raised Hon. Senen Livello Jr.'s illustration of the Moriones tradition as starting with acolytes walking around the city with a mask before going to ring the church bell. This is better elucidated by Peterson (2006, 108, 109) who pointed to the Moriones as an attempt by Father Santiago to attract more converts in the 1880s. The next documentation commonly refers to the contemporary revival of the Moriones festival to a large-scale tourist production, particularly in line with new initiations of placing Marinduque in local and international travel books. During the 1970s with new and more aggressive cultural policies under the Marcos regime, the provincial government of Boac thoroughly renewed the Moriones into a large-scale festival and since then, the practice has been implemented by different factions across Marinduque. As a forerunner in the modification of the Moriones festival, Boac has made critical changes: the *pugutan* (beheading) of Longinus, initially invented in Mogpog and supposedly climaxing the festival on Easter Sunday through a display of street theatre, was single-handedly reorganised by the government into a more sophisticated stage play. Taking place instead on Saturday evening and now commonly known as *sinakulo* or *cenaculo* (also cenacle, the site of the Last Supper), the execution of Longinus in Boac involves professional actors hired by the provincial government; the performance itself takes place at the Moriones Arena in Boac Riverside and is richly ornamented by stage lights, expensive costumes and sound effects. Certainly, such contemporary modifications are a vivid demonstration of the dynamic nature of ICH supported and encouraged by the CSICH; however, Boac's monopolisation of the Moriones festival's revival and reinvention has resulted in two problems that need particular attention.

First, this revival project of the Moriones festival and sophistication of the *sinakulo* are rooted in attempts of power reassertion by Boac politicians. During the 1960s, the theatrical reinvention of the *sinakulo* was overseen by a newly established organisation *Samahan ng mga Moryon* (The Society of the Morions), later *The Order of the Moriones* and finally renamed *Kapatiran* (Brotherhood), which was initiated by the Boac Mayor's son (Peterson 2006, 105). Initially, the Governor and his cabinet officials would take the stage and perform the theatrical interpretation of Longinus' *pugutan*; the stage play would later continue as a government project where actors are screened and handpicked by provincial officials. As William Peterson's (2006) thorough study of the Moriones Festival in Boac sufficiently revealed, it was more than a revival in countering the decline of the Moriones festival: the project was in reality a political construction that would become more and more obvious under the direction of Carmencita O. Reyes for the sake of rallying public support. With a husband working as the nation's Commissioner of Immigration, Reyes herself served as Governor of Marinduque until 2007. Her large-scale alteration of the Moriones festival was carried out using the influential authority of her family and support from her friendship with First Lady Imelda Marcos. In line with Marcos' new cultural policies of promoting the Filipino identity, Reyes was asked by the First Lady to bring the Moriones for the opening of the cultural village Nayong Pilipino in 1972. It was during this time that the *pugutan* became a scripted theatrical performance backed by sound dubbing, professional actors and visual effects, all of which Reyes thought more appropriate as an interesting performance worth showcasing. In 1978, Carmencita O. Reyes became the Representative of Marinduque under the new Constitution of the Marcos dictatorship and, thereafter, attempted to standardise the new cinematic performance across the province through a failed ordinance that met with opposition from

other municipalities (Peterson 2006, 109). Peterson (2006) also pointed out in his study how Reyes' politicisation of the festival led to the emergence of divided factions as municipal governments fought to reinforce their own Moriones festival:

Boac today is best known for its *Sinakulo*; Mogpog for its insistence upon traditional *moriones* attire and its resistance to dictation from the outside; Santa Cruz for its older women performing in grass skirts; Gasan ... for the fact that its inhabitants tend to be more progressive because they entertain ideas. (2006, 109, 110)

The choice of moving the climax of the *sinakulo* to a Saturday evening was explained by Reyes as a request by performers who felt it more suitable to bring out the cinematic vision of the stage play during nighttime. However, some believe this transformation was in fact Reyes' intention of welcoming a number of spectators from England, Spain, beauty pageant winners, diplomatic ambassadors and the mother of President Marcos herself. In order to avoid the scorching heat usually experienced during daytime, the beheading of Longinus then became a nighttime showcase (Mandia 2002, 253–256). These various transitions evidence Reyes' theatrical modification of the Moriones festival as a political agenda that simultaneously helped boost her public image and strengthened her connection to the Marcos family. Furthermore, the changes made during the 1960s and 1970s in Boac have served to limit the participation of locals and marginalise Marinduqueños who have previously taken part. According to Roces, registration traditions in the 1960s date back to the Philippine Revolution where *insurrectos* infiltrated a town disguised as morions. After that, morions would be recruited through open registration at the town hall where fifty centavos was paid during registration for charity or fiesta fund (Roces 1961, 259). As times have changed, many of these old morions, unable to afford the new, elaborate and costly costume found themselves excluded from the traditional festival; the careful selection of actors for the stage play also created a group of 'elite morions' in the *Kapatiran*, closing the gates of open participation that in the past facilitated communal belonging. Such a division was condemned not only by critics of Reyes, but also by those calling for the preservation of Marinduque's old traditions: the church has continuously shown disapproval over Boac's Saturday evening attraction for discouraging church-goers from attending Saturday mass, moreover criticising the Boac government's main intention of promoting tourism (Mandia 2002). In the twenty-first century, more attractions have indeed been added to the festival that increase its entertainment value but still cannot escape the fate of politicisation; the Battle of the Moriones, a competition where dance groups compete in choreographing the story of Longinus (*The Standard*, 27 March 2016), is commonly seized by political rivals as an opportunity for contestation where various dance shows are sponsored by different political campaigns.

Facing increasing criticism and developing a rift within the Marinduque communities, the contemporary revival of the Moriones festival is unable to achieve engagement of the locals. As participation is commonly suggested by UNESCO to include aspects of research, design and actual interpretation, management and conservation (Phillips 2008), the case of the Moriones illustrates the monopolisation of these processes by Reyes' political team. Reyes' failed attempt to standardise the Marinduque province's Moriones performances under her plot and the subsequent resistance of local communities towards these changes allow us to reflect on the importance of historicity in the process of inventoring. Without an interpretation and enacting of inventoried items that take into account grassroots understandings which are historically and socially grounded, such items may continue to be disputed by communities and be considered as artificial ICH which are 'no longer connected to the cultural idiosyncrasy of the communities, groups and/or individuals to which it culturally belongs' (Lenzerini 2011, 113). Remarkably, the inventoring of the Moriones festival as ICH under such contested conditions must be regarded in examining a few questions about the ICH. Under the manipulation and monopoly of state authorities and used to satisfy political and economic aims, must a reinvented tradition despised by the communities in which it originated be inventoried as ICH? As any other folk tradition in postcolonial Philippines that have experienced sudden rejuvenation and reconstruction (Tiongson 1994; Flores 2010; Cabalfin 2010, 4–9), the Moriones revival falls into the category of a national project that reconfigured old practices into more contemporary productions favoured by



the government and social elites. The sophistication of the *pugutan* scene into a cinematic fantasy by Reyes fits with what Lockard (1998, 158) observes of the Marcos regime's preference for western high-end culture. From another perspective, must an account of historical traditions closer to people's perceptions and lived experience be revisited and affirmed before local and regional inventoring in order to prevent the disengagement of communities? I argue that the difficulties shown in the case of the Moriones festival may be suggestive of the need for more public or communal dialogue before, during and after the inventoring of an ICH.

### Detachment of Marinduque locals

Owing to the rich historical background of many postcolonial states, heritage has become convenient prey in boosting tourism where colonial history and modern artistic elements are combined to produce spectacular performances. Carmencita O. Reyes' theatrical design of the *sinakulo* is no exception- audiences have since opening night flocked to Boac to watch the beheading of Christ. As Falser points out, heritage is by the end of the day 'a contested construction, full of constantly reloaded ideological conflicts and shifting cultural interests in changing political regimes' and ICH, a dangerous cultural branding used in reinventing national identities and overwriting collective trauma (2014, 718). It is undeniable how sustaining heritage entails accepting new elements and endeavours of states and communities, particularly as old values fade out and no longer apply in contemporary contexts. One example is the Moriones festival's old purpose of propagating 'values of passivity and submissiveness' in colonial Spanish and American contexts by presenting Jesus Christ as a willing victim of torture and death (Tiongson 1999, 23, 24). Moreover, Tiongson (1975, 194, 195) suggested the *sinakulo* as exhibiting behaviour which encourages the shaping of weak Filipinos who are *kimi* (timid), *mabini* (modest) and lowly. As these carry negative memories of the colonial era, the Moriones festival recorded before the Marcos regime came to emphasise more on cultivating religious values and a sense of community in Marinduque. Reyes' intervention, however, has since gradually erased these values and barred local communities from fulfilling their religious vows through participating as masked morions in the event. Subsequently, Marinduqueños have expressed frustration over the loss of a shared spirit and an increasing breach within the community, making it questionable whether the Moriones festival in fact is representative enough of the Marinduque community.

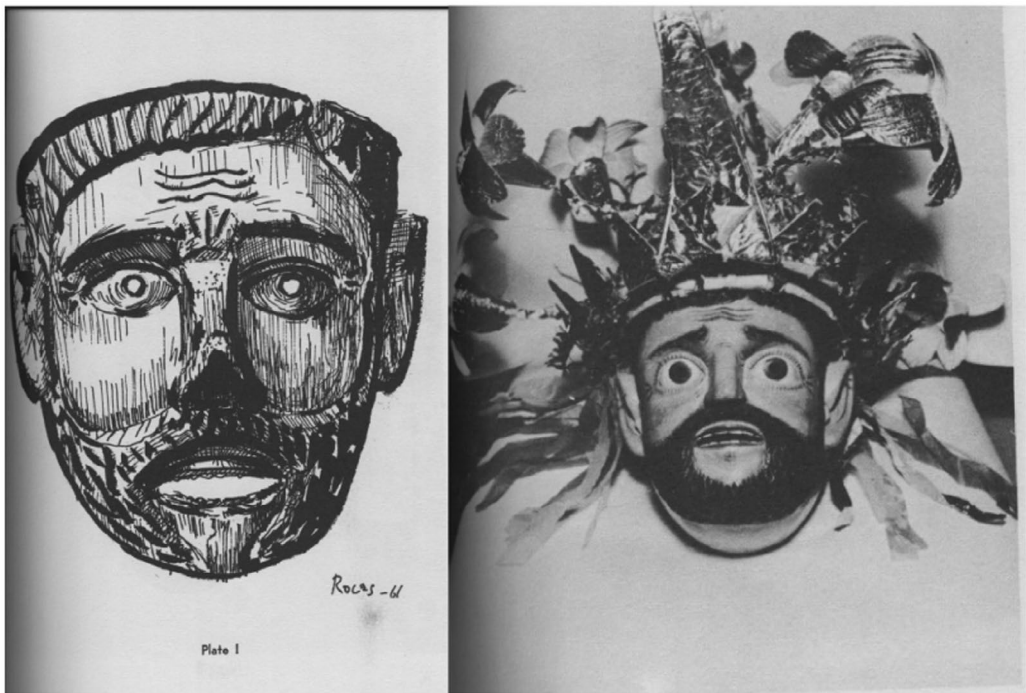
One vivid example of local detachment from the Moriones festival is a result of the declination of religious value within the Moriones, which does not align with the consistent perception of the festival by Marinduque locals as an act of religious service. In the past, morions used to come from poor barrios and the purpose of becoming a morion was for the purpose of fulfilling a *panata* (a vow), which is expected to purge sins or reward participants with blessings for good health or strength in overcoming adversities. Withstanding seven days of physical discomfort under the scorching sun, morions were not to take off their costumes and heavy wooden or papier-mâché masks in public, keeping their identities a secret even from their closest family members. Recalling her participation in Mogpog's Moriones festival nearly two decades ago, Trish Nicholson (personal communication, 28 January 2016) remembers a spiritual heritage that was experienced and collectively shared 'as a whole' by Mogpog residents. Nicholson further points to Mogpog's insistence of using the old spelling Moryones to differentiate themselves from non-conventional reinventions in Boac. As a tradition and as a way of communal life, Mogpog's Moriones from Nicholson's 1997 account entails a good extent of spiritual engagement, between a morion and his *panata* in the municipal of Mogpog. However, this is hardly observable today as morions today wander freely through the streets with their masks in their arms when not performing (Peterson 2007, 311, 312). Criticism is also not uncommon regarding the increasing absence of the *panata*: a 2001 interview conducted by Bonde with a Filipino morion substantiates the decline of spiritual attachment in the morions, quoting: '... the first time I participated, the first time I played a role in *sinakulo*, that was back in 1990, I don't have anything to think about, say penance, *panata* not at all- I just [wanted to] join!' (2006, 114). Another Boac performer, 48 year-old Guy Singson, who claims his parents were originally from Marinduque, but emphasises

himself as coming from Antipolo practically explained his love for cosplay as his reason for joining the Moriones festival (*Interaksyon*, 27 March 2016). Fulfilling a *panata* was also perceived as more than an individual matter; it was, in the old days when only men were allowed participation, for moriones to form a sense of brotherhood, but the emergence of different factions has worried locals like sixty year-old Robert Julio for interrupting the communal bond amongst moriones:

*Mga 20 years na akong nagmo-Morion. Marami nang nagbago. Dati, magkakasama lahat ng Moriones dito. Ngayon, meron nang tatlong grupo. 'Yun 'yung Kapatiran, Legion, saka 'yung Mistah. (I have been a morion for 20 years. So many things have changed. In the past, moriones would come together but now, there are three groups: Kapatiran, Legion and Mistah; *Interaksyon*, 27 March 2016).*

Adding to Julio's concern, these differing morion factions have started competing with each other in claiming authority and authenticity, dividing thus the Marinduque participants and eroding the ICHC's aim of fostering a sense of identity. Mistah, for instance, was formed during 2003 in opposition to the reinvented moriones in Boac, stressing the promotion of real tradition. Mistah is at present affiliated with a local Catholic organisation and sponsored by mobile phone service provider Globe Corporation; the group castigates the *Kapatiran* as a form of entertainment and insists on adopting old costumes and performing the traditional Sunday *pugutan*, ironically after Longinus had already been beheaded the previous night in the *Kapatiran*'s stage performance of the *sinakulo* (Peterson 2006, 120–123).

In recent years, the essence of the Moriones festival has been channelled in the way of commercialism and tourism. As according to a Boac local, his participation as a morion is not just for his religious faith but he believes to be doing a favour for the province in stimulating tourism (Peterson 2006; 117). This is not inappropriate, particularly in considering that the Operational Directives for the Implementation of the ICH Convention, acknowledges commercial activities as a ground for sustainability. In paragraph 116, the Directives refers to commercial activities in raising awareness regarding heritage and in generating income for its practitioners; in the long run, this may work in securing the



**Figure 1.** Two typical 'traditional' headgears with *bulaklakan* (covered in flowers) on the right. These masks carry an ambiguous expression, usually with wide eyes and an open mouth, described sometimes as benign and other times as oafish (Roces 1961, plate 1 and plate 2).



economic stability and improve the living standards of bearers and practitioners of heritage. UNESCO's guidelines further encourage a balance between the safeguarding of ICH and the promotion of cultural tourism and artisanship. A typical proof of the Moriones festival's commercialisation is seen in how Marinduqueños have gradually begun to reinvent the old tradition according to emerging trends in pop culture. Trish Nicholson's (2011, 13, 14) extensive study of the Morions in Mogpog showed the authentic mask as the *bulaklakan*, literally 'covered in flowers'; this includes a headdress of paper flowers that comes with a 'benign, almost saint-like' facial expression. This was described by Roces (1961, 260) as 'oafish' with an occasional touch of humour, particularly due to their resemblance to Spanish soldiers which may have been deliberate in light of Spanish colonisation of the Philippines (Figure 1). Under Reyes' revival of the Moriones, the Roman mask was standardised, increasing in number and elaboration where the festival is celebrated in different areas of Marinduque including conventional Mogpog. Different from the *bulaklakan*, the Roman mask has a crested helmet with a stern, aggressive western face where morions compete to look most threatening (Figure 2). In recent years, Morion masks have expanded to incorporate iconic faces of western popular culture as imagined by creative Filipinos including one-eyed or triple-faced sci-fi masks, Star Wars and ET (Roces and Roces 2013), as well as political figures like former impeached Philippine president Joseph Estrada. However, despite the consistent commercialisation of the Moriones festival, little has changed in sustaining the future of mask making in the provinces of Marinduque. An interview with a local newspaper revealed the threats that the artisanship faces as ageing artisans call for heirs (*Inquirer Southern Luzon*, 13 April 2014). Although the NCCA and the ICHCAP have taken a step forward in inventorying both the Moriones festival and the morion mask into the Philippines' list of ICH, the crisis of losing the artisanship in the near future have not been tackled, let alone mentioned.



**Figure 2.** The portrayal of Roman centurions became more and more common particularly after Carmencita Reyes' 1970s theatrical reinvention; a more aggressive expression is achieved and morions compete to look most threatening (*Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 27 March 2013).

In safeguarding Te Papa's ICH, a Maori curatorial member remarked: '... intangible heritage is a culture's spirituality, values, philosophy, cosmology ... helping people discover who they are by showing to them things that they can connect to and their history ... it is all about creating and reclaiming knowledge' (quoted in Aliviadou 2012, 17, 18). That is, even when negotiations take place to rework and renew the ICH in the contemporary world, it is this re-appropriation of inherited cultures by practicing communities that ensure heritage are not forgotten or abandoned. So far, the developments of the Moriones festival have received criticism, particularly directed at its detachment from the Marinduque community. Mandia (2002) recorded a strong resentment made by Marinduqueños regarding the *pugutan* in Boac and Mogpog as being inauthentic, adding further that the tradition had been killed by its contemporary transformations.

Without doubt, the incorporation of the Moriones by Philippine authorities and by the ICHCAP has so far done little in safeguarding the Moriones tradition, let alone in promoting knowledge and reconnecting Filipinos with their history. Seemingly, Arantes (2009, 59, 68, 69) warning of the possibilities of 'butterfly collecting' in the process of inventorying ICH has emerged. After the recognition of the Moriones festival and mask making artisanship as ICH, no response has been made regarding the increasing loss of spiritual value and the decreasing number of young practitioners. Consequently, the original story and meaning of the Moriones festival, as well as the artisanship of morion mask making will be lost despite their positions as recognised ICH in the Asia Pacific region.

## Rethinking the message behind ICH

According to the ICHCAP's website introduction of the Philippines' ICH, the purpose of inventory and safeguarding is to hold onto 'indigenous traditions' that have survived the different eras of colonialism. Looking forward to the future, the ICH inventory is also hoped to create a binding force for nationhood, quoting its official website:

Filipinos are presented as creators, innovators, and bearers of their collective wisdom and heritage rather than as imitators and passive consumers. In this way, they can call attention to their intrinsic dignity and worth and enhance their self-respect. It is a way of dignifying Filipinos, a significant direction in healing and unifying a nation.

Ironically, the case of the Moriones exhibits grave difficulties in achieving this objective, especially in light of the lack of historicity, ongoing politicisation and loss of communal identification amongst Marinduqueños. Furthermore, the fact that the mask making industry continues to face extinction draws light on whether continuity and inheritance is being achieved in the acknowledgment of ICH. These trace back to basic questions UNESCO and communities can rethink regarding the historicity of heritage: in rationale, the safeguarding of the Moriones festival is meant for the future generations of Marinduque, yet in the context of an unclear, complex interpretation of its past, the Moriones has been successively antagonised by competing parties for their political and economic considerations. In some cases of ICH protection, fossilisation of heritage is condemned as folklore becomes a lucrative investment (Falser 2014, 716, 717). This study suggests that folklore cannot be omitted in the process of safeguarding ICH as the absence of a collective account of history makes traditions more vulnerable to contestation and political misuse, leading usually to the disengagement of communities. Certainly, heritage is constantly reconceptualized by varying stakeholders according to their experience, religion, culture and motive. However, in face of the fast-changing world, collective history is a static possession of the past, present and future generations; even if history cannot avoid being gradually dismantled by progress (Benjamin 1969, 257, 258), it affirms the ownership of heritage by local communities and may serve as a reminder that ICH protection must not see community exclusion. The sustainability of the Moriones festival and the mask making artisanship requires the collective participation of local practitioners and bearers, a right that must not be monopolised by provincial governments. Although today's Moriones festival engages an increasing number of participants from outside Marinduque, the formation of an elite group of performers in Boac, for instance, has shut the door to free communal engagement from Marinduqueños. All of this suggests that there is a need for greater efforts in ensuring that the guidelines in safeguarding ICH are not being neglected, and, furthermore, the screening of

heritage before and during inventorying requires a stronger procedure in order to identify potential problems that may call for attention.

Second, the collective identification of locals towards the Moriones festival and the art of morion mask making need to be sustained. Without a *panata* but with a consistent need to fulfil one, participants can only join the Moriones festival based on personal interest and unless a new collective identity emerges, the Moriones festival will fail to deliver its purpose as a representative tradition. As a Lenten celebration, the festival in the past was held in the streets to encourage the engagement of performers and spectators. People were expected to follow the search for Longinus and mark the martyrdom of Longinus after his beheading through a generous feast that was usually hosted by whoever played the character of Longinus (Roces 1961, 258, 259). As of 2015, the Moriones festival holds the *sinakulo* on Saturday evenings, followed by a day parade that re-enacts the chase of Longinus meant for tourists and non-local spectators. This has not been popular amongst the locals expecting the old ritual of celebratory feasts to take place. Despite the many unwelcomed changes that have, since the 1970s, plagued the Moriones festival, the NCCA and ICHCAP incorporated these two items into the inventory without subsequent efforts to strengthen the heritage, leading to the question of whether an artificial ICH had been created and is being sustained. Put simply, if the Marinduque locals do not approve of the present-day Moriones festival, there should be doubts concerning what exactly is being safeguarded. The increasing division within Marinduque communities and local resentment against today's Moriones festival serve to challenge the self-recognition of concerned communities, further demonstrating a loss of connection between the tradition and its practitioners and an emerging belief that the Moriones festival is not anymore representative in nature and practice.

## Conclusion

All in all, this study of the Moriones festival raises questions about what is at stake between past, present and future. Hartog (2015, 191) condemned the idea of heritage for 'le[ading] us unexpectedly from the past to the future, but to a future which is no longer to be conquered or brought into being, if need be by brutalising the present.' With this regard, the inventorying of the Moriones festival perceives the future of the tradition and of the artisanship of mask making as facing threats, but the pressing issues that require attention in the present-day condition of these two items remain unseen in the picture. This poses a number of problems in the safeguarding of ICH: for one, the past is being abandoned due to an obsession to secure the future and further, questions in the present about the tradition's representation, as well as the limits to participation by communal practitioners need more urgent attention. However, none of these have been tackled; instead, inventorying appears to be taken as the first and final step in safeguarding ICH. Therefore, a closer monitoring by UNESCO of regional and local efforts in inventorying ICH may be necessary in the near future. Finally, the past, present and future must be aligned for a fruitful process of ICH preservation. Successful safeguarding of heritage should be more than keeping a tradition alive, especially if sustainability may be interrupted by disagreement, contestation and debate within concerned communities, groups and individuals. Therefore, without history and assurance of local participation, the worth and purpose of ICH cannot stand for what is left are tangible elements and materialistic interpretations. As Wim van Zanten wrote: 'Culture is now looked at as a site of contestation and no longer of homogenous agreement between all people in a community... However, culture can only have continuity if people enjoy the conditions to produce and re-create it' (2004, 37); if the self-identity of Marinduque locals to the Moriones festival and the artisanship of making morion masks cannot be realised and transmitted, the soul of the Moriones and the heart of Marinduque can only be unconsciously lost and forgotten in time.

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