

RESEARCH DIRECTIONS IN THE DEPARTMENT OF ART STUDIES 1959-2009

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IN JUNE OF 1959, the English Department of the University of the Philippines (U.P.), Diliman, was split into three smaller departments. One of these was the Department of Humanities and Philippine Institutions. A year later, the departments were abolished but the, “disciplines were retained as administrative units” (Lava n.d., 4). The Discipline of Humanities, as the unit was then called, was to change names and redefine its directions several times, and has come to be known today as the Department of Art Studies (DAS). This brief essay charts the research directions it has taken in its fifty years as a vital and growing academic unit.

The first decade of the unit’s existence was devoted to the development of a general education course entitled Humanities I: Introduction to the Arts. The model for this course was a similar general education course in art appreciation developed at the University of Chicago. It was, “designed to make the students consciously aware of what constituted a work of art and why it affected them the way it did...(in order to)...draw the values and meanings from particular works” (Lava n.d., 2). The course included the analyses of works from the visual arts (painting, sculpture and architecture), music, and literature.

The 1960s

The first publication emanating from the department was the fourth issue of the *University College Journal*, edited by Prof. Virginia Moreno in 1964 (Moreno 1964). A perusal of the contents of this striking volume reveals departmental interests in the 1960s and 1970s. Some of the entries are creative works by practicing artists serving on the faculty—poetry by Virginia Moreno and Ricaredo Demetillo and woodblock prints by Rodolfo Paras-Perez, as well as short stories and poems by other authors Adrian Cristobal, Jorge Arago, and Epifanio San Juan, Jr. San Juan's poems contain commentary by the author himself. There are reproductions of works by the nineteenth century painter Antonio Malantic, and contemporary paintings by Lee Aguinaldo, Mauro Malang, Joya, Manansala, and Luz. There are general essays on the teaching of humanities by Josefa Lava and the nature of sculpture as a medium by Alice Co Seteng. Demetillo and Paras-Perez contribute essays on Philippine contemporary art and literature. Aurora Roxas-Lim has an essay describing the state of the San Agustin Church and the Manila Cathedral after Second World War's devastation. Esther Samonte Madrid contributes a formal analysis of Eliseo Pajaro's "Prelude and Testament," a composition based on remarks delivered by University President Carlos P. Romulo at his oath-taking on June 1, 1962. The essays reflect the strong formalist orientation of the department at the time.

The first recorded extended research effort of a department faculty member was an ethnographic study of the music of the Tinggian of Abra by Prof. Esther Samonte Madrid, began in 1962. During this time, the discipline of ethnomusicology was being introduced at the U.P. Conservatory of Music by the newly returning member of the faculty, Jose Maceda.¹ This effort thus reflects a new anthropology-based methodological approach to the study of the arts. Although the final research report of this project cannot be located, some of the research findings from this project have been published in the essay, "Tinggian Music is a Total Experience" (Madrid 1978).

Most of the early teachers of the course were conscripted from the English Department and retrained to deal with the non-word based forms such as painting, sculpture, architecture, and music, alongside literature. Many of them took courses abroad to deal with diverse forms of art. For example, Pacita Guevarra Fernandez studied at Stanford University, then a center for the teaching of the Humanities; Aurora Roxas-Lim obtained an M.A. in Art History from the University of Chicago in 1959; Leticia Ramos Shahani finished her Bachelor of Arts in English Literature at Wellesley College in Massachusetts and her Master in Comparative Literature at Columbia University in New York; and Josefa Lava studied in Harvard from 1967-68. All had English literature undergraduate degrees. For the first two decades of the department's life, efforts were thus focused on redirecting instructors initially trained in literature to deal with other forms of art. These members of the faculty brought with them a broad, interdisciplinary outlook which is characteristic of the department to this day and this helped the department develop a cadre of scholars capable of using an array of disciplinary methods and techniques to study the arts.²

By 1965, a full-fledged undergraduate degree in humanities was created with twenty new courses in art history. This would ensure that new recruits to the teaching pool would be primarily trained to handle art history and art criticism courses rather than literature, as had been the case in the past. By the end of the first decade of its existence, the first graduates to the program had earned their degrees and were hired as lecturers and instructors. Felipe De Leon, Jr. was hired immediately after his graduation in 1969. His classmate, Santiago Pilar served as lecturer and instructor from 1978-84. Still another batchmate, Corazon Alejo-Hila, taught with the department from 1971-83, where she specialized in Asian art. This gave the department the added advantage of having a sector of faculty that was well grounded in the discipline to begin with and committed to expand and deepen its expertise in the future.

One other focus of departmental efforts in the 1960s and early 1970s was the collection of readings, art books, slides, musical recordings, and tapes for classroom use. This resulted in

the acquisition of a major collection of audio-recordings in Long Playing (LP) form as the result of a generous grant from UNESCO.³ Teaching was buttressed by a massive library of these instructional materials painstakingly collected by faculty members from all over the globe.

The 1970s

By 1976, Pilar and Alice Guillermo, who was to become a member of the faculty in 1985, participated in the writing of a textbook, *Art: Perception and Appreciation* (Ortiz 1976), for the University of the East along the lines of one of the Department of Humanities' standard reading materials—*The Humanities* by Dudley and Faricy (1978). It used the then current art appreciation approach, which aimed at instilling in the layman an understanding of a universal vocabulary for analyzing and enjoying individual works of art. The book also discussed styles and historical style periods in European and Philippine art.²

As far as U.P. was concerned, a more influential printed work was the set of readings edited by Felipe M. De Leon, Jr, *On Art, Man and Nature* (1978), widely used in the department in the 1970s. The slim eight and a half by eleven inch volume challenged the formalist and art appreciation models and suggested a more holistic method for art analysis that involved a comparative study of art in its social and cultural contexts. It also featured theoretical essays underpinning such an approach, including a number by Philippine authors such as anthropologist, F. Landa Jocano; poet and literary critic, Ricaredo Demetillo; art historian, Alice Guillermo; art critic, Eric Torres; and ethnomusicologist, Jose Maceda on art history, art criticism, and aesthetics.

In 1974, the department instituted an M.A. Art History degree. It was instituted, "in answer to a crying need for developing serious scholarship and research in Philippine art history" (Lava n.d., 15). The degree would bear first fruit in the 1980s when five graduates of the program were able to undertake extended research on such art forms as architecture (Valdez 1982) and pottery (Celdran

1987) of the Northern Cordilleras, embroidery and textile traditions of the Tagalog regions (De Vera 1989) and Abra (Respicio 1989). This interest in traditional art and the use of ethnographic methods and techniques in studying art was spurred on by the presence in the department of the Philippine Traditional Arts Research Center (TARC), established in 1977 during the chairmanship of Felipe de Leon, Jr. The Center aimed to document and study all forms of Philippine art. Under De Leon's mentorship, many students began what was to be a life long commitment to research in Philippine art.

The advocacy for the serious study of Philippine art in its sociocultural context was carried on in broadsheets and journals by De Leon, who provided regular editorial commentary for various publications. Another critic, Alice Guillermo, who joined the Art Studies faculty a decade later, was also involved in writing on culture and the arts for both the popular and scholarly press. In 1982, she was to publish two compilations of such essays and reviews in *Images of Change: Essays and Reviews* (Guillermo 1988) and *The Covert Presence and other Essays on Politics and Culture* (Guillermo 1989).

The 1980s

De Leon and Guillermo also served in the publication of general works on Philippine art. De Leon served as volume editor of and contributor to the Philippine Art and Literature volume of *The Filipino Nation Encyclopedia* published by Grolier Press (see De Leon 1982). Guillermo was a major contributor to *A Portfolio of 60 Philippine Art Masterpieces* commissioned by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports in 1986 (Guillermo et. al. 1986).

In the 1980s, perhaps spurred by the university's call to increase research productivity, other members of the faculty indulged in basic research and disseminated results which were later published in journals, playbills and other publications and used these materials to do community work. These included Brenda Fajardo,

whose, “The Aesthetics of Poverty: a Rationale in designing for Philippine Theater” (Fajardo [1984?]) and “Decolonization through People’s Art” (Fajardo 1985), served as theoretical frameworks for arts and theater practitioners as well as cultural workers in the field and on the ground. Elena Mirano’s studies on the pabasa (Mirano 1984-1986) and the awit (Mirano 1985) traditions, led to a traveling stage production and an audiocassette entitled “Kumintang: Awitin ng mga Tagalog sa Batangas” (Mirano 1987), which later resulted in training programs for research in the Southern Tagalog region.

The first book length researches emanating from the writers based in the department also saw publication in the late 1980s. Guillermo’s *Social Realism in the Philippines*, in which she formally names and defines this important contemporary movement in Philippine painting, tracing it back to its historic and cultural roots in the nineteenth century, saw print in 1987 and has since become a classic. Pilar’s *Juan Luna: the Filipino as Painter*, a major “life and works” volume, was published in 1980. Elena Rivera Mirano’s *Subli: Isang Sayaw sa Apat na Tinig/Subli: One Dance in Four Voices* (1989), an interdisciplinal study of a traditional form that merged song, dance, poetry, ritual, and prayer won the Manila Critic’s Circle’s “Best Art Book” award in 1989.

By 1988, the department, supported by the generous financial assistance of the University’s General Education Council felt it had enough material to attempt a textbook that would reflect its new holistic, sociocultural approach and include a substantial amount of Philippine material for discussion in the classroom. The result was *Art, Man and Society: Instructional Materials for Humanities II* (Guillermo et. al. 1988), which summed up the multi-disciplinal approach to the arts then being used in U.P. Diliman. In the years to follow, two other textbooks and readings, this time in Filipino, *Ang Sining sa Kasaysayang Filipino* (Guillermo et. al. 1991), and *Sining at Lipunan* (Flores and de la Paz 1997), were released by the department. All these materials were supported by the U.P. General Education Council.

The 1990s

In 1998, recognizing the Department's expertise in the teaching of art in general education, the Philippine Commission on Higher Education (CHED) commissioned the department to write a handbook for teachers of humanities entitled *Humanities: Art and Society Handbook* (Morillo ed., 1998). This was accompanied by a kit of instructional materials including slides, audio-cassettes of musical examples, and video-cassettes featuring excerpts of movies. Most were Philippine examples. Under the sponsorship of CHED, the department also sponsored a week long workshop and teacher training that has since then been repeated.

The 1990s was a fertile period for research in Philippine art. Buoyed up by the liberating aspects of the EDSA uprising, progressive groups and pioneering researchers were enlisted in ambitious government projects celebrating the art of the nation. As the centennial of the Philippine revolution of 1898 approached, members of the faculty were commissioned to take part in omnibus publications celebrating a century of Philippine art such as the *Tuklas Sining* (Tiongson ed. 1991) series of monographs and documentaries on Philippine art released by the Cultural Center of the Philippines (CCP). Alice Guillermo was the over-all editor of the series and wrote the monograph on the American colonial and contemporary traditions in Philippine visual art as well as the script for the accompanying documentary (Sining Biswal 1989). Elena Mirano, likewise wrote the monograph and accompanying script for the volume on the Spanish influence on Philippine music (Mirano 1992). Both authors also provided major essays for the *CCP Encyclopedia of Philippine Art*. Mirano was also to participate in the *Compendium of the Humanities of the Philippines*, commissioned by the National Research Council of the Philippines, providing the essay on, "Ritual and non-Ritual Music in the Philippines" (Mirano 1998).

The University also provided a nurturing culture for scholarly writing during this period, providing the funding for three

issues of a journal based in the department from 1992-1994. The *Art Studies Journal*, edited by Pearl Tan included essays by members of the department faculty including Patrick Flores, Ma. Victoria Herrera, Cecilia Sta. Maria, Rosa Maria Magno-Icagasi, Cherubim Quizon, Belen Ponferrada, and Ana Labrador among others.

The Vargas Museum, under the directorship of Brenda Fajardo, in close collaboration with the DAS from 1998-2001 provided a second venue for scholarly writing on the arts. *Perspectives on the Vargas Museum Collection* allowed scholars from the department to analyze rare materials from this valuable collection and discuss their findings in print. Faculty members who wrote for these volumes included Guillermo, Flores, Herrera, Reuben Cañete, Canta, Alden Lauzon, Cecille Tuble and Flaudette May Datuin.

Four full length books by members of the department were published in the 1990s. Again, Guillermo's books *Cebu: a Heritage of Art* (1991a) and *Blanco: the Family of Artists* (1991b), celebrate her prodigious writing prowess and underscore her mastery of Philippine visual arts history. Mirano's music history cum ethnography of a Tagalog community, *Ang mga Tradisyonal na Musikang Pantinig ng Lumang Bauan, Batangas* (1997) won her the U.P. Diliman Gawad Chancellor as Best Book in the Humanities category for 1998. Patrick Flores joined these writers with his first book, *Painting History: revisions in Philippine Colonial Art*, a study of colonial painting and its institutions, their, "covert intentions, functions, and agenda, within a synchronic history of competing social forces" (Flores 1998).

Meanwhile, the M.A. program in Art History, later reconfigured into M.A. Art Studies: Art History was flourishing. From the first five theses written in the 1980s, the 1990s produced seventeen new theses on a wide range of topics—from traditional art (the visual arts of Sulu,⁴ drinking songs from Leyte,⁵ the Orasyon Tattoo of Leyte,⁶ the patadyong of Miag-ao, Iloilo,⁷ Philippine pre-historic pottery,⁸ the Ati-atihan of Aklan,⁹ concepts in Philippine vernacular architecture¹⁰), to Spanish colonial art (colonial church architecture in Bicol,¹¹ the Manila Cathedral,¹² the church bells of

Bulacan,¹³ art in cemeteries,¹⁴ secular architecture in Vigan¹⁵ and Binondo,¹⁶ religious paintings,¹⁷ eighteenth century engravings,¹⁸ colonial painting¹⁹), to American Colonial art (architecture and the Philippine system of public education²⁰), Contemporary Philippine art and institutions (Napoleon Abueva,²¹ regional artists,²² Viscom at U.P.,²³ CCP and the Museum of Philippine Art,²⁴ modernism²⁵ and Mabini art²⁶). Many of these young scholars, notably Abraham Sakili, Marilyn Canta, Pearl Tan, Cecilia de la Paz, Patrick Flores, Victoria Herrera, and Gerardo Lucena joined the faculty of the department.

Also in the early 1990s the department faculty earned its first set of Ph.D. graduates, mostly from U.P.'s interdisciplinary program in Philippine Studies beginning with Mirano (1991) and Guillermo (1995). They were to be followed in quick succession by Fajardo (1997), Ana Labrador (1998) and Sakili (1999). Armed with new strategies and concepts such as *pantayong pananaw*, *kulturang bayan* and *sikolohiyang Pilipino*, generated from within the U.P. Philippine Studies program these faculty also gained confidence in the use of semiotic, critical theory, postcolonial, postmodern, and neo-Marxist models in the course of their advanced studies.

The presence of a growing number of Ph.D. graduates among the faculty well versed in theory building also encouraged younger members of the department to sharpen their skills in art theory along the same lines. In the next two decades, DAS was to witness an explosion in the publication of essays by young members of the faculty in scholarly journals such as the *Diliman Review*, the *Philippine Humanities Review* and *Humanities Diliman* and national publications such as *Pananaw* and *Bulawan*. Gerard Lico, Rina Corpus, Reuben Cañete, Roberto Paulino, Tessa Maria Guazon, Helen Yu-Rivera, Robin Rivera, Clod Marlan Yambao, and Patricia Lopez joined the ranks of faculty publishing in scholarly journals. Faculty also continued to contribute short pieces to popular magazines including *Blu-Print* and *Mabuhay*.

Although a number of faculty from the department had served as curators of art exhibits from the very beginning of the department's history, two important developments served to give focus to the practice of Philippine curatorship. The first was the institution of the Diploma in Museum Studies in 1996 and the M.A. Museum Studies program in 1998. These DAS based programs sought to provide advanced training for museum workers, particularly those who wished to serve as curators. The second was the collaboration of the DAS with the Vargas Museum, which served as the laboratory for this groundbreaking new program. It has earlier been mentioned that department faculty, led by Brenda Fajardo, had earlier published the *Perspectives on the Vargas Museum Collection* series. Since the rise of this subdiscipline, many members of the department faculty, notably Fajardo, Labrador, Herrera, Flores, Lico, Legaspi-Ramirez, Paulino, and Yu-Rivera have been commissioned to curate and direct the research for local, national, and international exhibitions. Museums and other institutions were assured of rigorously conceptualized, well-researched catalogues for these art exhibitions and the work of U.P. trained practitioners has set a standard in the discipline.

The 2000s

The first decade of the twenty-first century saw more and more full length books published by members of the department. Aside from Guillermo, who continued her prolific writing career, coming out with *Image to Meaning: essays on Philippine Art* (2001a), *Protest/Revolutionary Art in the Philippines* (2001b), and commissioned works such as *Brushstrokes from the Heart: the first five years* (for Petron Corporation, 2005), *Onib Olmedo: Dimensions of Depth* (for CCP, 2007), and *Diosdado Magno Lorenzo: Art rebel to legend* (for the Philippine-Italian Association/Tantoco-Rustan Foundation, 2009); Mirano also published Volume I of a monumental study entitled *The Life and Works of Marcelo Adonay* (2009), the first critical edition of a Philippine composer's works.

They were joined by Brenda Fajardo (*Ang Inukit na Kaalamang Bayan ng Paete*, 2005), Flaudette May Datuin (*Home body memory: Filipina artists in the visual arts, 19th century to the present*, 2002), Abraham Sakili (*Space and identity: Expressions in the culture, arts and society of the Muslims in the Philippines*, 2003), Eloisa May Hernandez (*Homebound: Women visual artists in nineteenth century Philippines*, 2004), Helen Yu-Rivera (*Patterns of continuity and change: Imaging the Japanese in Philippine editorial cartoons, 1930-1941 and 1946-1956*, 2005 and *A Satire of Two Nations: Exploring Images of the Japanese in Philippine Political Cartoons*, 2009), Rina Corpus (*Defiant Daughters Dancing: Three independent women Dance*, 2007) and Gerard Lico (*Arkitekturang Filipino: A History of Architecture and Urbanism in the Philippines*, 2008a).

Members of DAS also experimented with new formats. Notable among these efforts are the CD-ROM works by Gerard Lico—*Arkitekturang Filipino: Spaces and places in history* (2002) which includes essays by Marilyn Canta and Tessa Maria Guazon; *The Philippines Through the Lens of an American Scholar* (1898-1907): the *Harry Whitfield Harnish Photographic Collection* (2004) including essays by the author, Marilyn Canta, Reuben Cañete, Flaudette May Datuin, Patrick Flores, Alice Guillermo and Ricardo Jose; and *Building Modernity: a Century of Philippine Architecture and Allied Arts* (2008b).

Still another project using innovative materials worth noting in the 2000s is the effort of Roberto Paulino (“A Do-It-Yourself Kit for the Teaching of Art Studies 1 and 2”) which won for him the Washington Sycip Award for excellence in the production of innovative general education instructional materials.

The choice of Patrick Flores to curate and design the permanent exhibition of the Philippine National Gallery of Art, which opened in 2008, served to affirm the leading role DAS has taken in the development of the discipline of curatorship. Flores was also curator for the inaugural exhibit of the U.P. Bulwagan ng

Dangal in 2009 which featured the U.P. Diliman Art Collection and presently serves as curator of the Vargas Museum.

In the last decade, the M.A. Art Studies program has continued to grow. Twenty eight new theses have been added to the department arsenal. Twenty five of these were written by students of the DAS M.A. programs. Three were contributions of alumni and faculty who earned their degrees in other universities. Eight Ph.D. dissertations from faculty, former students, and advisees of DAS faculty contributed even more mature research work to the field. A number of these employed the traditional art historical (Fernando 2000; Galang 2008; Quevedo 2003; Saguinsin 2006) and ethnographic approaches (Bien 2009; Respicio 2000; Quizon 1991; Quevedo 2003; Achanzar 2005; Cruz 2008; Muyco 2008; Tan 2010; Josefina Pineda 2008) to their work. A growing number explored new theoretical approaches and methods from museum studies (Yraola 2004; Montemayor 2009; Castulo 2008; Santos 2004), gender studies (Hernandez 2001; Roselle Pineda 2003; Corpus 2004; Datuin 2001; Cañete 2008; Guazon 2008) discourse analysis (Lico 2000; Patacsil 2004; Baraero 2003; Cruz 2008), dance studies (Corpus 2004; Jacinto 2007; Muyco 2008), post-colonial and diaspora studies (Patacsil 2004; Ramirez 2007), performance studies (Bonilla 2001), the critique of art and its institutions (Cañete 2002), art and tourism (Baraero 2003), urban studies (Guazon 2008; Mapa-Arriola 2002), and popular art (Flores 2000; Lubang 2004; Yu-Rivera 2000).

On its fiftieth anniversary, DAS looks forward to the launching of two landmark publications—the first, *Suri Sining*, is described by its editor, Reuben Cañete, as:

an anthology of literature that catalogues the emergence of the disciplinary field of Philippine Art Studies written from the perspectives of mentors and practitioners mostly associated with the Department of Art Studies (formerly the Department of Humanities) of the University of the Philippines Diliman. Composed of twenty-one essays, the anthology documents the various schools of thought

and theoretical movements in Art Studies from its origins in the Humanities to contemporary trends and insights into popular culture and transdisciplinary and interdisciplinary studies. The anthology serves as an important milestone in the reflection of the nature of the disciplinary field of Philippine Art Studies, its history, current manifestations, and possible directions in the future. (Cañete 2010)

As such, the volume is a history of the intellectual development of the Department of Art Studies, from its beginnings as the Department of Humanities and Philippine Institutions, to the present.

The second, *New Directions in Art Studies and the Humanities*, to be edited by Patrick Flores, is a record of the proceedings of the second Philippine Art Studies Conference held on February 18 and 19, 2010 at the National Museum of the Philippines. Tessa Maria Guazon, conference convenor, notes that:

The conference made apparent three major directions for the art studies discipline in the local context. First, the heightened interest in reflexive approaches to the discipline itself and in rethinking categories. Themes engaged were art history, performance, new media, curatorship and changing local traditions. This was evident in the conference audience's interest in presentations that examined art historical categories and new models of criticism and pedagogy. Another direction that can be discerned was greater engagement with inter-disciplinary approaches to research. Papers and projects that dealt with local conditions were regarded as relevant, as the discussions situated them within broader contexts, both global and national. Finally, conference participants agreed there is a need for corollary events like workshops of wider reach, not only in Manila but in

the regions as well. There was a shared awareness that a national organization (as suggested, the Philippine Art Studies Association) will encourage stronger networks and resource sharing among colleagues. (Guazon 2010)

This volume, therefore, will chart directions for the future of the Department of Art Studies and set its research agenda for its next fifty years with a renewed vigor and energy.

After fifty years, the DAS has made significant contributions to the national effort to discover, reconstruct and represent the image of the Filipino in the arts. It looks forward to nurturing and training the succeeding generations of writers, researchers and intellectuals in service to the nation.

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- 1 Maceda had close and cordial relationships with members of the Humanities Department faculty. His first research assistant, Felipe de Leon, Jr., was one of the early students to graduate from the A.B. Humanities program. The Department was to co-sponsor Maceda's avant-garde composition "Cassette's 100" at the newly constructed Faculty Center in 1971.
 - 2 This trend was to continue until the 1970s, with such faculty members as Frances Morillo, whose M.A. thesis in English Literature was, "Ignacio Manlapaz, his life and works," a study of a Philippine literary and art critic who was active in the 1920s and 1930s; Deanna Ongpin-Recto, whose M.A. thesis was "A Critical Survey of Literary Criticism in English in the Philippines" in 1969; and Elena Rivera Mirano, whose M.A. thesis in Comparative Literature, entitled "Christ in the Tagalog Pasyon," was a study of traditional Tagalog poetry. Mirano also continued with the practice of taking an advanced degree in an American university, finishing another Master of Arts (A.M.) degree in Humanities at Stanford University in 1978.

- 3 This collection is now under the stewardship of the U.P. Diliman Main Library.
- 4 Sakili 1990
- 5 Modina 1990
- 6 Anacion 1991
- 7 Aguilar-Reyes 1994
- 8 Quiz 1995
- 9 Ilagan 1995
- 10 Batacan 1999
- 11 Canta 1990
- 12 Vergara 1994
- 13 Achanzar 1992
- 14 Rosal 1995
- 15 Baltazar-Florendo 1990
- 16 Del Castillo 1999
- 17 Lucena 1999
- 18 De la Paz 1993
- 19 Flores 1994
- 20 Dado 1996
- 21 Abaya 1991
- 22 Defensor 1992
- 23 Lee 1991
- 24 Herrera 1994
- 25 Bautista 1992
- 26 Punongbayan 1992

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