

## THE HISPANIC MOROS Y CRISTIANOS AND THE PHILIPPINE KOMEDYA

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### Al-Andalus and the Muslim-Christian relations in the Iberian peninsula.

Al-Andalus / الأندلس was the Islamic political State established in the Iberian Peninsula since 711 A.D., which represented the westernmost classic edge of the Islamic World (in Jayyusi 1992). Its political evolution changed through the centuries: *Fath* / فتح (Conquest, 711-756); *Imāra* / إمارة (Emirate, 756-912); *Khilāfa* / خلافة (Caliphate, 912-1009); *Mulūk al-Tawā'if* / ملوك طوائف (Small kingdoms, 1009-1091); *Al-Murābi ūn* / المرابطون (The Eremites, 1090-1145); *Al-Muwāhhidūn* / الموحّدون (The Unitarians, 1145-1223); and the Sultanate of the *Banū Nasrids* / بنو نصر (1231-1492). The history of Al-Andalus changed dramatically from being the second Caliphate in Islam—influencing Europe, Byzantium, and Africa—to the small Nasrid Sultanate of Granada. Al-Andalus represented an azimuth in Western civilization, the transition period between the Roman-Greek Classicism and the Renaissance.<sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless, Iberian Muslims suffered traumatic socio-cultural changes, especially since the eleventh century, when the fall of Toledo triggered a process in which their lands began to be incorporated into the Christian Kingdoms: Castilla, Aragón, and

Portugal. The Sultanate of Granada—the last Islamic State in the Iberian Peninsula—collapsed in 1492. Since this moment, the people of Al-Andalus underwent a process of cultural alteration until the Decree of 1609 (Chejne 1974), when Philip the Third signed the Act of Expulsion. Finally, around 300 thousand persons were expelled from the Iberian Peninsula. The consequences were huge not only for nations surrounding the Mediterranean Sea but for the Islamic World as well. Islam disappeared from the Iberian Peninsula, but at the same time people expelled from Al-Andalus Islamized sub-Saharan Africa, nurtured the North-African kingdoms, joined the Ottoman army, and raided European coasts. Due to the collapse of Al-Andalus, Andalusians became displaced (Epalza 1992).

Indeed, the development of Muslim society in the Iberian Peninsula is a complex process ranging from the assimilation of the Arab conquest by Iberians to the expulsion of the *Moriscos*—Muslims compelled to become Christians—from Spain. It is thus convenient to use the appropriated terminology. Firstly, at the moment of the Muslim advent, the Iberian Peninsula was called Hispania and was mostly ruled by a Germanic dynasty—the Visigoths (Chalmeta 1992). An army composed by Arabs and Berbers crossed the sea and performed the conquest in 711 A.D. through the south taking control of the lands either by force or by forming pacts. After the incorporation of Iberian lands into the Islamic Empire, indigenous people was converted to Islam in a short time as *Muwālladūn* / (موالِدُون) , Arab Andalusian term for “client” (Corriente 2003, 399). Foreign newcomers were not numerous but the links established between the indigenous aristocracy and the new Arab State transformed the Iberian society (Marín 1992, 24). In the end, if not from its onset, a large number of the Iberian population accepted rules imposed during the Arab conquest. This was how people from the Iberian Peninsula joined the Arab-Islamic civilization.

In fact, both the Arab aristocracy and the indigenous population composed the Andalusian ethnicity. Indeed, the sm all number of Arabs eventually became indistinguishable as the former *Muwālladūn*

absorbed the foreign civilization to such a degree that a new Arab nation had effectively emerged: the Andalusians. This is precisely the main trend in Andalusian civilization, as in the use of Arab language and culture. Beyond religion, *Andalusi* / أندلسي referred to that group of people (whether Muslim, Christian, or Jew) which possessed an Arab culture related to that which belonged to the Iberian Peninsula. However, a process of political “Africanization” was implemented afterwards by North African empires since the eleventh century, but the Andalusian civilization was strong enough to shape as its own the North African culture up to as far as the Middle East.

In this moment it is important to note what had happened in the north of Al-Andalus when its borders were reduced due to Christian expansion. Toledo fell in 1085 and a large number of Muslim population had fallen under foreign Christian rule. As a matter of fact, the Andalusians were eventually categorized as Mudéjar (Chalmeta 1986, 286-289) or *Al-Mudājjanūn* / المَدَجَّجُونَ (“submitted”), referring to the Andalusian Muslim under Christian rule, as a consequence of the geographical expansion by the Northern Iberian Christian Kingdoms against Al-Andalus’s borders (Burns and Chevedden 1999). The Mudéjar kept their religion but they were taxed heavily by the King or by the feudal lords. A colonial distribution of the land distinguished between lands of the King and lands of feudal lords was made (in Ferrando i Frances 1979 and Josep Torro 2006).

Despite the power of the feudal lords who patronized the Mudéjar workers, the Monarchy obtained authority by conquering the last Islamic Kingdom—the Sultanate of Granada in 1492. The Catholic Monarchy undertook an aggressive policy of conversion consequentially changing the religious status of the Iberian Muslims from Mudéjar to *Morisco* which means “New Christian from Muslim” (Chejne 1983).

Finally, the situation ended when the aristocracy was not able to support the pressures of the Catholic State (represented by the patriarch Juan de Ribera) and some lords moved from the periphery to the center to obtain superior benefits (as the Duque de Lerma, lord of thousands

of Moriscos in Valencia). Besides, Moriscos supported the Ottoman Empire, which represented a great threat to the security of the Hispanic Monarchy. In sum, Philip the Third signed the Expulsion's Decree in 1609, and the Moriscos were deported out of Spain. The consequence on human geography was dramatic in some Spanish regions, where ghost towns and deserted lands emerged (Donoso 2006). Consequences on the Mediterranean Sea area were considerable too, with the displacement of a large number of people. Iberian Muslims became expatriates and deportees (Braudel 1972).

Iberian Muslims evolved through the centuries into different socio-political stages, nurturing a specific Arab culture (the Andalusian civilization) and suffering processes of cultural alienation until the final expulsion in the beginning of the seventeenth century. A table of this ethno-historical process could be summarized by the following:

711-1492 A.D	أهل الأندلس	ANDALUSIAN	<i>Iberian Muslims within Islamic State</i>
11th-16th	المُدَجَّنُون	MUDÉJAR	<i>Iberian Muslims within Christian State</i>
16th-1609	المُورِسْكِيُون	MORISCO	<i>Spanish Christians from Muslims</i>

### The Concept of *Moro*

In order to establish an ideological advocacy which approved of the sovereignty of a Christian State in the Iberian Peninsula and the conquest of Al-Andalus, the Northern Christian Kingdoms designed specific myths and folklore. The fundamental idea was the affirmation that the apostle Santiago traveled to the Iberian Peninsula and his body was buried in the end of the world—*Finis Terrae* (Galicia). Because of this and the establishment of the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela,

the preceding Islamic advent came to be considered as nothing more than an “invasion.” Therefore, Islam came to be equated as an “invasion” that segregated “Spaniards” into small kingdoms in the northern regions. The supposed epic quest was the re-conquest of the old Hispania for the Christendom against the invaders (Wheatcroft 2005). With this point of view, Andalusians came to be considered not as Iberians but as foreigners and even as invaders. This is where the concept of the Moro started (González Alcantud 2002).

Medieval Iberian Peninsula was divided between a Christian north and a Muslim south, a mutable division that had dramatic consequences to the Iberian inhabitants. Since the eleventh century, Andalusians were under the rule of North African dynasties. Therefore, from this period on, local authorities submitted to African rulers. Accordingly, after the classical denomination of North Africa as *Mauritania*, the Andalusians were called *Maurus* by the Northern Iberians, in order to make them “strangers.” In doing so, the Iberian Muslim—indigenous to the Iberian Peninsula—came to be denigrated as a “foreigner” by Iberian Christians. Iberian Christians advocated being the rightful inhabitants of the Iberian Peninsula by using two main arguments: firstly, that Christianity was established throughout the Peninsula before Islam; secondly, that Islam was the “foreign invader” that subjugated the national Christians. This was the foundation with which the concept of *Reconquista* (“Re-conquest”) was built. Likewise, in order to make this ideology workable, there was a need to transform the Andalusian into a foreigner, as an African Moro (*Maurus Africanus*) and not as an Iberian Muslim. Lévy-Provençal (1986, 236) adds that “in Spain, Mauri became Moros, and it was under this name that the inhabitants of the Peninsula designated the Muslim conquerors.”

The word Moro comes from the Latin *Maurus-a-um*, “native of Mauritania”; in connection, *Mauretania-ae* is the geographic region that the Romans located in North-West Africa. Therefore, *Maurus* was considered as the indigenous people of North Africa and in extension, an African. When Iberian Christians tried to establish a nationalist program based on Roman and Catholic heritage, they conceptualized the term Moro to mean African, and in consequence, alien to Europe. The purpose

was to refuse Andalusians their Iberian-ness. Andalusians became Mauros/Moros to the Iberian Christians; the Moro became the Muslim Other in opposition to the Christian; the African invader of Europe (John V. Tolan 2002):

With the term mythography we try just to point out the imaginary and mythical nature of those real or imagined events—the opposite representation of the Muslim and the Christian in the Iberian Peninsula as antagonists. This irreconcilable Islamo-Christian enmity in the Iberian Peninsula is part of the Spanish historiographical thought from the first moment. Florencio Janer wrote in his speech to enter in the Spanish Academy of History, in 1857, a thoughtful discussion dealing with the origin of this enmity, which he considered an inevitable historical drama: «The tragedy of the Morisco population, the storms that Moriscos fought till the last exile from their nation, was nothing more than the cancer they had suffered long before. And between the Islamicity of the Moriscos, and the religious intolerance of the Spaniards of those times, nothing could mediate». (González Alcantud 2002, 150-151)

In consequence Andalusians—having a religion that came from Africa and having been ruled by an African Dynasty—were not Iberians but Africans, the result of Iberian Christians' Othering of the Andalusians. Hence, Andalusians became Moros, Mudéjares, Moriscos, and finally, expatriates—a people without a nation.

### Moros y Cristianos and Dramas of the Hispanic Conquest

Having in mind this background, we can now begin to understand how Iberian Muslims and Iberian Christians came to be known as adversaries in battle. The Iberian Peninsula was a crossroad of various civilizations, cultural traditions, and political expansions in the Mediterranean Sea. Its borders can thus be conceived not only as a

physical construction but as ideological device. By understanding the Other as one who is different, man builds borders against comprehension. From this stage, it was very easy for the expansionists to transcend to the next level of designating the Other not only as different but as rival. In consequence, instead framing difference as an asset, it was considered as a factor of opposition. As a matter of fact, borders were established firmly in the mind, so much so that the idea of the Other as rival became difficult to overcome. The mental process created became dependent to constructed biases, given the fact that men no longer were capable to go beyond the ideological border established. By limiting our minds to borders, we tend to act and think in a specific way, something that is expected of us and somehow obligated us. This mental dependence is the origin of many ideological processes, from nationalism to colonial mentality.

Concerning our topic, this dependence is the origin of the good-bad, hero-villain, *bida-contrabida*, nationalist-invader and Christian-Muslim dichotomy. By establishing the Iberian Muslim as a Moro, an African, an infidel and an invader, Iberian Christians consequentially became the European, the faithful and the indigenus. Thus, popular rituals and dramas had to represent this division between Moros and *Cristianos*, theatrical performances and established propaganda wherein the *Cristiano* is the hero. This is one of the main reservations posted by several authors towards Hispanic dramatic representations of Moros y *Cristianos*. For instance, Doudoroff (1981, v) remarks that:

The popular and semi-popular plays on the moros y cristianos theme are certainly among the least attractive verbal artifacts of Hispanic folk culture. They are generally humourless, crudely written, verbose and bombastic, historically inaccurate, culturally anachronistic, stereotype-laden, and they reinforce execrable prejudices.

Although in this statement we can find actually existing elements regarding the Moros y *Cristianos*, the judgment lies beyond anthropological analysis. Moros y *Cristianos* is a folk representation that enforces the links between and within communities by displaying

a theatrical performance in which after a battle, the victor symbolizes a community into which the defeated is consequentially incorporated (Brisset Martín 1998). In addition, it is considered that “[t]he existence of a real or imaginary foe compels the conquerors, under their will or not, to establish united rituals, exalting the *Communitas* against the alien” (González Alcántud 2002, 157).

It is obvious that, in the representation of the conqueror and the conquered, anachronistic stories that are told through battles rather than dialogues is a questionable ritual. However, once the ritual is accommodated a specific place, displayed within a specific community, and performed in the form of a festivity, the mental dependence that we pointed out earlier paradoxically vanishes, and in the end the ritual becomes a fiesta of the town and the community. More so, the people within the community tend to connect more with the exotic rather than with the known; indeed, they would eventually want to perform as Moros rather than as *Cristianos*.

Moros y Cristianos is a festivity formalized through the centuries within what Demetrio E. Brisset Martín (1988) called the “Dramas of the Hispanic Conquest” (*Representaciones rituales hispánicas de conquista*). Based on the ideological division between Iberian Muslims and Iberian Christians and on the designation of the Andalusian as Moro and therefore as alien, Hispanic conquest was ritualized in theatrical way using the following dramatic representations as recurring standard forms:

- 1) Advent of the enemy with the intention of acquiring something
- 2) Praying of the heroes to obtain supernatural help
- 3) Battle for a disputed object
- 4) Neutralization of the enemy; the enemy embraces the hero and joins the other side.
- 5) Winners enjoy the disputed object

This is the standard structure of the Hispanic conquest’s dramas according to Brisset Martín (1993). Before arriving to this model,



a long process had to transpire in order for a theatrical performance that is capable of transmitting ideological message to develop. Accordingly, after the political expansion of the Christendom in the Iberian Peninsula, the message in which Christians win Muslims and Muslims join Christianity was ritualized little by little. The idea that Al-Andalus was an illegitimate State and the Andalusian an invader eventually emerged. In militarized societies, cultural creations reflect the factuality of war. This is how the Iberian medieval theatre gave space to folk representations of battles.

In the fifteenth century, these folk representations were formalized in comedies and plays, for example, the *Comedias de capa y espada* displayed in *Corrales de comedias*. In consequence, the Hispanic conquest's dramas became a decisive element in the creation of the Spanish classical theatre in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Carrasco Urgoiti 1989; 1996).

It was not expected for those representations of Muslims and Christians in the Iberian Peninsula to have any relevance overseas, but in the end, it proved otherwise:

The most explicit message that these rituals transmitted is the strengthening of the official religion. Its model can be found in the Crusades in the 11th century, started with the conquest of Aragon's Barbastro and ended with Jerusalem. This message was transformed in theatrical text by the papal court that celebrated the conquest of Granada by the Catholic Kings, and then was used by the missionaries in the Americas. Proved its efficiency, was accommodated into the evangelical local strategies, in place of the profane comedies...During the Golden Century, these representations emerged from Ceuta to Manila. (Brisset Martín 1998)

The expansion of the Moros y Cristianos overseas is a peculiar phenomenon of cultural adjustment. How was it possible, for example, to make those representations understandable in America where there were no Muslims. Certainly, the final goal was to Christianize, and in

consequence the battles between the faithful and the pagan were a main component to show indigenous Americans the way to conversion (Ricard 1932; Warman 1972; and, Beutler 1983). Even more, in the evangelization of indigenous Americans, the argument conveyed by *Moros y Cristianos* seemed more successful than in the evangelization of Moriscos in Spain (Garrido Aranda 1980; Gómez García 1992). This is how the expansion of the *Moros y Cristianos*' drama became surprisingly more successful overseas than in the Iberian Peninsula.

Hence, we can find dramatic representations based on the argument within *Moros y Cristianos* in the area ranging from Latin America, southern regions of the United States, Cabo Verde in Africa and even regions as far as the Philippines, astonishing the Asian *Moros* and *Cristianos*. These representations were always part of the most significant festivities and celebrations, especially in the capitals which were the seat of administration. However, after the independence of Latin American nations, the practice of these huge activities displaying the model of *Moros y Cristianos* decreased having been relegated to folk traditions in remote towns (López Cantos 1992, 187-188). However at present, neutralized the ideological and medieval component through traditional and customary representations the *fiesta* has achieved the status of cultural heritage, from Zacatecas in Mexico (with twelve thousand participants) to Alcoy in Spain (with eight thousand). As town *fiesta*, as the pride of a community, as an anthropological phenomenon, and even as tourist attraction, *Moros y Cristianos* is one of the ever growing festivities in the world.

### **Current Representations Of *Moros Y Cristianos*: *Fiestas De Moros Y Cristianos En Honor De San Jorge* In Alcoy (Spain)**

During the Medieval Age, various conquest's dramas emerged to strengthen the authority of the official power in the Iberian Christian Kingdoms. In the sixteenth century these folk representations influenced the creation of the Spanish classical theatre, and were imported overseas

as a cultural device in evangelization. Nowadays, these dramas do not have anything to do with power, even less with evangelization, whether in Spain or elsewhere. After a long anthropological process, *Moros y Cristianos* nowadays is a fiesta fitted into a specific community and town, with particular features and traditions. The purpose of its representations no longer has any relation with the ideological objective that brought out the dramas during the Medieval Age, and instead expresses the entrepreneurship of a community, usually a small town that preserves the fiesta as testimony to its dynamism. This is as in the case of the city of Alcoy, in the Valencian Region of Spain.

We have pointed out that these kind of representations were more successful overseas than in Spain. Thus, as far as Spain is concerned, we can find celebrations of *Moros y Cristianos* concentrated only in two main areas: the Alpujarra in Granada (Demetrio E. Brisset Martín: 1988b) and the Mountain of Alicante, precisely because these were places where Islamic presence in the Iberian Peninsula was longest. From these two areas we can find celebrations between La Mancha and Murcia as well as on their edges, Andalucía and Aragón.

*Moros y Cristianos* was not and certainly is not practiced in the whole of Spain, but in specific areas where Islamic presence and Muslim-Christian relations were more persistent. Moreover, not only the geographical implantation of *Moros y Cristianos* is limited to certain areas, but also it is possible to find significant componential differences in various areas:

- a) Valencia: Urban celebration with exotic costumes and spectacular battles with guns
- b) Alpujarras: Rural comedy displayed as a battle for the castle's town
- c) Aragón: Dances with swords and sticks and simple final battle

Therefore, even within Spain, the differences between *Moros y Cristianos* are enormous, and in order to distinguish the specific celebration of a town, there is no other way but to observe it directly. Yet

Moros y Cristianos has a standard frame—the encounter between two groups. But beyond this frame a lot of elements of anthropological adaptation can take place. Given the fact that it is a folk representation, indigenous, popular, and traditional elements have a decisive role in designing a unique celebration in every town. Even more, the way Moros y Cristianos is understood differs: celebration, fiesta, drama, comedy, dance, battle, procession, and others (Guastavino Gallent 1969).



Figure 1. Actors in costume in the Moros y Cristianos in Alcoy.  
Photo by Francisco Tomás

Nowadays, the most important Spanish celebration of Moros y Cristianos takes place every year between April 22 to 24 in the Valencian city of Alcoy: the *Fiestas de Moros y Cristianos en honor de San Jorge*. This celebration has its origin in the foundation of the city. Catalans founded Alcoy in the thirteenth century as a Christian city surrounded by Muslim towns. The then Catalan King Jaume the First expelled in 1258 the Muslim ruler Al-Azraq / الأزرق (“the blue,” because he had blue eyes)—Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muhammad Ibn Hudhayl of Alcalà de la Jovada. Al-Azraq organized soon after an army in North Africa which would return with him to his hometown in 1275 (R. I. Burns 1967, 1973). It was based on this epic battle between the small town of Alcoy and the Muslim army where the Christian legend about San Jorge (Saint George) originated. Legend has it that a mountain opened up from

which appeared the Catalan saint. Owing much to this miraculous manifestation, the Christians won the battle taking the life of Al-Azraq on April 23 of 1276 (Momblanch González 1977).



Figure 2. Parade of Moros in the mode of the so-called filà.  
Photo by Francisco Tomás

The first document of Moros y Cristianos in Alcoy is dated at 1668, when Vicente Carbonell, in his book *Celebre Centuria* mentioned that: “a solemn procession with a company of Christian Moros and Catholics Cristianos performed different military activities” (Berenguer Barceló 1974, 71). However, the element that made the Moros y Cristianos relevant in Alcoy was the bourgeois taste and the romantic fascination for the exotic in the nineteenth century. Alcoy became an industrial city and wealth was invested in the local celebration and procession. Big amounts of money were devoted to costumes and festivities. Recently in 1980, Moros y Cristianos of Alcoy was declared International Tourist Event. The model of Alcoy is nowadays being exported successfully in other traditional representations in Spain, given its spectacular display and the capacity to attract the tourism.

The main features of this Moros y Cristianos are the impressive and magnificent costumes, the creation of a specific music (*Marcha Mora and Marcha Cristiana*), the martial display and parade (*Filaes*), the remarkable use of gunpowder to represent the battle, and the commitment of the citizens in preparing the fiesta every year. Thus, Moros y Cristianos is a current celebration that does not have anything to do with medieval ideology. Flags with Muslim Crescents as well as Christian Crosses are displayed in the balconies of the buildings, and there are more people joining Muslim companies and sororities than Christian ones. The concept of Moro certainly does not refer to the foreign anymore. Nowadays, Moros y Cristianos is considered simply as fiesta and a venue to express the identity and achievements of a town.

### Islam In The Philippines And The Establishment Of Moros Y Cristianos In An Asian Context

Islam entered the Philippine Archipelago around the thirteenth century and by the end of the fifteenth had developed political structures (Majul 1999; Jocano 1983; Abubakar 2005). When the Spaniards arrived on Philippine shores, they were shocked by the existence of a Muslim population, and tried to formalize a theory about the Islamization in South-East Asia following their own experience in the Iberian Peninsula (Donoso 2007). However, although the relation between Spaniards and Muslims in the Archipelago is complex and rich along an extensive historical process, it has been interpreted as a long-lasting “crusade” that began in 711 with the Islamic “invasion” of the Iberian Peninsula and ending in 1898. As pointed out before, the so-called invasion of the Peninsula was an argument of the Christian ideological propaganda. To simply apply the same idea to the Philippines during the long administration of three centuries is certainly tantamount to reducing the topic in the Archipelago.

The Other in the Philippine archipelago was designated to refer to the Muslims, in identifying them as competitor in commercial activities and as an opposition to authority. Because of this, Muslims

in the Archipelago also came to be known as the Moro, in this case the *Maurus Asiae* or Asian Moro. Muslims in the Archipelago were not Iberian and the *Reconquista* argument was out of place in the Philippine islands. The reality was that there was no other strategy considered in order to obtain the loyalty of the *principalia* and achieve legitimacy over the indigenous population.

This was when the medieval ideology of *Moros y Cristianos* became pertinent in the Philippines (Cushner 1961), more than in America, given the simple fact that there were Muslims in the Archipelago. But oddly enough, this did not materialize. In other words, rather than simply referring to local encounters between Muslims and Christians, the *Moros y Cristianos* that persisted in the Philippines pointed to exotic lands and characters:

Los romances viejos históricos encontraron terreno propicio en el moro-moro ilocano. El tema está basado en la verdadera lucha entre los moros y árabes y los cristianos españoles de España. Pero se adoptó en el ambiente local. Los moros en el moro-moro ilocano vienen de África, Arabia, Turquía y a veces representan los musulimes filipinos. Los cristianos, en cambio, vienen de Europa y no sólo de España [...] Las representaciones moro-moristas ilocanas [...] muestran la influencia de la literatura teatral medieval.<sup>4</sup> (Cargullo Gawaran 1979, i-iv)

The reason is that *Moros y Cristianos* was an exported cultural device from Mexico, the place where its representations gained more significance (López Cantos 1992, 187). In consequence, while the Spaniards considered Muslims in the Philippine Archipelago as the Moro, Filipinos considered in the theatrical form the Moro as the exotic Muslim from places like Granada, Turkey, or Persia, and as foreigner to the Archipelago. It is a wonder that while most Philippine metrical romances (*awit* and *corrido*) do not have Mindanao and Sulu as settings to the stories, the Moro almost always appear as characters; stories reveal that these *Moros* originated from Turkey, Persia, Arabia, or, as in the case of most *awit* and *corrido*, from Spain, i.e. from the

Islamic Spain. The presence of the Moro can be considered therefore as anachronistic and exotic. It also goes for the absence of Mindanao and Sulu from the plot while faraway kingdoms from Arabia, Persia, Turkey, and Granada are represented.

*Awit, corrido*, and the metrical poetry based in the Hispanic *Romancero* are the roots of the Philippine *komedya* (Donoso and Zabala 2010). Aside from the *Romancero*, the *komedya* finds its roots from Sacred History following the patterns of the religious theater—*Auto sacramental* (Tiongson 1982). These roots explain why specific topics, stories, and scenarios involving Muslims in the Archipelago are not explicitly depicted. Consequently, although the audience could construe a division between the Christian *bida* and Muslim *contrabida*—a theatrical dichotomy *per se*—it is not the purpose of these metrical romances to explicitly deride Muslims in the Archipelago. As mentioned above, Philippine *komedya* was originally an exported cultural performance from Spain via Mexico, wherein the presence of Muslims in society and theater was considered an exotic anachronistic. Hence, together with “Carlomagno” we could find the “Gran Turco de Argel,” like in the case of Zacatecas mentioned by Sempere (2008, 100-101). Thus, for a Mexican point of view *Moros y Cristianos* represents the baroque aesthetics of a hybrid identity between Europe and America, between the ancestral and the cosmopolitan:

Un teatro con ocho mil actores, tres mil acompañantes y un solo espectador. El pasado remoto y ajeno de las guerras entre musulmanes y cristianos se convierte en gozo de hoy, en palabra viva. La poética arcaica de los cantares medievales y de la representación barroca adoptadas con vibrante pasión por un pueblo joven. Las culturas del México mestizo descubren tesoros que han permanecido ocultos como muchas flores del desierto.<sup>6</sup> (Vértiz and Alfaro 2008)

That exoticism suggests a standardization of plots, stories, and settings based on the Hispanic *Romancero*. By the time the *Moros y Cristianos* was already being performed in the Philippine archipelago,



anachronism and exoticism were the standards imported from Mexico (Tiongson 2008). In other words, Philippine Moros y Cristianos, or its contextualized name as *moro-moro*, was not concerned with Islam in the Philippines, but with the exotic Islam from far places; it had as its standard a theatrical plot where a *bida* faces a *contrabida*, in an operative medieval strategy that had *docere et delectare*—to teach and to please—as goal. Eventually in time, the theory of the plot was performed in accordance with local cultural elements, costumes, practices and contexts. This is how emerged a hybrid theater born in Europe, developed in America and established in Asia—the Philippine komedya.

We could mention as instance the most famous Ilocano komedya: *Gonzalo de Córdoba o la Conquista de Granada por los Reyes Católicos: Comedia en Ylocano* (ca. 1882) (cf. Donoso 2007b). It illustrates the standard mentioned above. *Gonzalo de Córdoba* narrates the conquest of the Islamic city of Granada by Catholic Kings in 1492. However, together with historical characters such as King Fernando of Aragón and Queen Isabel of Castilla, numerous *Zegríes* and *Abencerrajes*—royal families of the Sultanate of Granada—also appear, completing the list kings coming from Ethiopia, Numidia, Fez, and four “graciosos” (clowns). Plots are based on the Hispanic Romancero, incorporated with invented and exotic elements that may have originated from Mexico if not invented in the Philippines. This was the device commonly used in the propagation of tales, plots and dramas in the oral tradition.

Another example is the komedya of Marinduque: *Buhay ni Principe Proteslao sa Alimania at si Princesa Eucaris sa Turquiang Bayan*. An existing manuscript reveals that its author was Pío Lagustan who originally wrote it in Spanish around 1856. It was translated to Tagalog by Hermenegildo L. Lagustan in May 9, 1953.<sup>7</sup> Komedya Marinduqueña such as the *Buhay ni Prinsipe Proteslao* is staged for the renowned Moriones which makes it an important cultural heritage in the island.<sup>8</sup> Its plot reveals the masterful accomplishment of Filipinization of the Moros y Cristianos in the Asian context. Here,

the existing Hispanic Romancero may no longer be considered as the source; the main source will be the new and formalized Philippine Metrical Romances and the chivalrous tales between princes and princesses from exotic lands (cf., Donoso and Zabala 2009). As the title suggests, the story revolves around a prince from Germany and a princess from Turkey who get involved in an unsparing love between a Christian and a Muslim. Exotic lands are depicted through rhetorical speeches, fictional characters, and all the elements that make the komedya a reflection of what is commonly perceived as a Philippine kind of entertainment. In addition, the komedya tends to end with an encouraging message which the *Buhay ni Prinsipe Proteslao* fulfills through its ending scene:

Magkakamayang dalawa ni Adrasto ar Florinda at pagkatapos ay magpupugay sa lahat.

REY—Yayamang tapos na yaong pagkakasal tayo namang lahat ngayon ay magdiwang mabuhay si Adrasto na ubod ng tapang

TODOS—Mabuhay Princesa Florinda esposa niyang Mahal

SULTAN—Mabuhay Mabuhay ang haring Proteslao

TODOS—Mabuhay

SULTAN—at gayon din naman ang esposa niyang mahal

TODOS—Mabuhay

SULTAN—ang dalwang kinasal habaan ng buhay

TODOS—Mabuhay

SULTAN—malagi sa lugod tuwa't kaligayahan

TODOS—Mabuhay

REY—Tayo'y pumasok na namagpatuloyan

TODOS—Kami'y sumusunod o monarkang mahal.

WAKAS

It is within these parameters where we have to place the Philippine Moros y Cristianos as an artistic production of the “moro-morista” tradition, a specific Asian theatrical production that makes the komedya a unique cultural phenomenon:

Las comedias de los indios se componen de tres ó cuatro tragedias españolas, cuyos pasajes están entrelazados unos con otros, y forman al parecer una sola pieza. Siempre entran en ellas moros y cristianos, y todo el enredo consiste en que los moros quieren casarse con las princesas cristianas y los cristianos con las princesas moras. <sup>9</sup> (Martínez de Zúñiga 1893, 73)

The Philippine komedya or moro-moro has a standard argument: Christian princes of exotic kingdoms fight for the impossible love of Muslims who likewise come from exotic regions. After several battles (in which the Filipino *Arnis* is a relevant element) the drama ends with a wedding and final conversion to Christianity (Villarica 1969; Mendoza 1976; Tiongson 1999).

In spite of the mentioned exoticism, the first mention about the performance of Moros y Cristianos in the Philippines deals specifically on local Islam. We have a notice narrated in 1637 about a fact that took place in Cavite after the celebrations for the Hurtado de Corcuera's campaign in Mindanao. After the school time, the children tried to represent the celebrated battles that everybody in the region was speaking about. The children formed two groups and started the action:

Y porque á comedia tan grave no faltase un gracioso entremés, contaré lo que pasó en este puerto de Cavite el mismo día 7 de junio; el sábado en la tarde 6 de junio, habiendo salido temprano de las dos escuelas los muchachos se fueron á jugar al fuerte que está comenzado al fin de este pueblo. Allí comenzaron á entretenerse haciéndose unos moros y otros cristianos, defendiendo unos el fuerte y otros acometiendo á tomarlo, quedaron picados y concertados para el día siguiente para hacerlo más á propósito; previnieron banderas, espadas de palo y de cañas; el que se hizo Cachil Corralat enarboló la suya en el fuerte, animó á sus soldados á la defensa y áun afrentó á los cristianos llamándolos vinagres españoles y

gallinas. Estos se animaron al asalto y arremetieron con denuedo, pero fueron rebatidos con coraje de los moros, y tanto que quedaron heridos y maltratados algunos, con que entrando en cólera arremetieron al fuerte á manera de furiosos sin desistir hasta entrarlo y echando mano de Cachil Corralat lo precipitaron de la muralla abajo, de que quedó mal herido en la cabeza, y tanto que le dieron para curarle cinco puntos, pero ya anda por las calles y yo lo he visto pero entrapajada la cabeza.<sup>10</sup> (Barrantes 1878, 309)

Based on the festivities in honor of the Hurtado de Corcuera's campaign, a comedy was staged in the city of Manila on July 5, 1637. What made this event unique is that it was probably the first time that a comedy had incorporated a topic dealing with the Muslims of the Archipelago: *Gran comedia de la toma del pueblo de Corralat y conquista del Cerro*, by Jerónimo Pérez (Retana 1909, 34-36). Both indigenous and imported culture can therefore be rooted in the formalization of the comedy based on Moros y Cristianos in the Philippines, until it became komedya with a particular moro-morista tradition.

### Classic Historiography On The Moro-Moro Tradition

The komedya would be the favored dramatic representation in Christianized areas of the Philippine archipelago. As have already been stated, models and sources used to create the drama originate from exotic lands rather than the actual encounters between Muslim and Christians in the islands. Nevertheless, it is important to note that although representations of Muslim characters in the komedya rarely referred to those within the archipelago or Muslims from Islamized areas, it was actually them who were being targeted by the plays' messages, good or bad. As mentioned earlier however, komedya is not simply a homogenous representation as every town has its respective particularities, original features provided by the particular context. Such characteristic has made the moro-moro a

very particular tradition depicting trends of Philippine aesthetics and culture (Mojares 1985, 60). This character can be gleaned from original features such as the use of distinct stage design (bamboo arcs and others), music, battle and martial arts (*Arnis*), and the incorporation of a *Lacayo* or *Pusong* for amusement.

This is precisely one of the reasons why, despite its enormous popularity and Hispanic origins, the Spanish population in the Philippines did not fully appreciate these representations during the Spanish administration. The moro-moro appeared bizarre to the Spaniard new-comer at the turn of the nineteenth century. The comedy has thus become totally Filipinized; something which to the Filipino is his own while being strange to the new Spaniard in the country. We can find, for example, statements made in the nineteenth century dismissing the komedya as folk and fancy literature when Realism started to be in fashion in Europe against Romanticism:

Semejante pintura del público y de la comedia tagala [...], autoriza las gacetillas de los periódicos de Manila cuando se dignan ocuparse de tan estupendos espectáculos, que no es muy á menudo, y algunas sangrientas cuchufletas, como la de aquel escritor que en 1871 disfrazó su nombre con el pseudónimo de E. Rikr, en la portada de un donoso librito titulado *Diccionario humorístico filipino*, en el cual escribe:

COMEDIA  
Gutiérrez, Bretón y Ayala,  
ved en resumen cabales  
los resortes principales  
de una comedia tagala

Título de la función,  
cualquiera, que poco cuesta;  
cuando se cansa la orquesta  
se alza ó se rompe el telón.  
Se presenta un jastialón  
dando coces en la escena,  
sale al punto una morena  
vestida de nonelete,  
la dice acó el mozalbeta,

vienen cuatro ó cinco luego,  
y al son del himno de Riego  
se dan de palos los siete.

Pero también disculpa al mismo tiempo á los modestos autores tagalos, que á tan pedestre público han de complacer... se ha dejado correr casi impunemente aquella falsa moneda de Lope: “El vulgo es necio, y pues lo paga, es justo hablarle en necio para darle gusto.”<sup>11</sup> (Barrantes 1889, 136-137)

Indeed, the Spanish population in the Philippines did not fully understand the moro-moro not only because they were not able to fully appreciate its aesthetics but also because they had no command of the language. All Philippine komedya were staged primarily in vernacular languages; yet theatrical devises in the libretto were in Spanish, the title, name of characters and places, and some common sentences and expressions. As we have pointed out earlier, anachronism and bombastic elements are idiosyncratic to the *Moros y Cristianos*. Thus the main reason why the Spaniards could not sufficiently understand Philippine komedya was precisely because it was a product of the Philippines. Furthermore, the tradition of moro-moro was facing a new situation imposed by the time. In the last part of the nineteenth century, when Realism became predominant, when José Rizal abandoned Romanticism and criticized Philippine literature for being escapist—inaugurating modernity in Asian literature with the *Noli me tangere*—the komedya had to take its curse. Within a Philippines that seeks for modernity and independence, it was the only remedy to show the sickness—*social cancer*—of the country in a realistic way. In other words, José Rizal exposed the ludicrous character in rationalizing the absurd:

A los indios, sobre todo al gobernadorcillo, gustó mucho la comedia tagala: este último se frotaba las manos y nos decía que era una lástima que no hubiesen hecho pelear á la princesa con el gigante que la habia robado, lo cual en su opinión habría sido más maravilloso, y más, si el gigante llegaba á ser invulnerable menos en el ombligo como un tal Ferragús de

que habla la Historia de los Doce Pares. El M. R. P. Fr. Dámaso, con esa bondad de corazón que le distingue, participaba de la opinión del gobernadorcillo y añadía que en tal caso la princesa ya se arreglaría para descubrirle al gigante su ombligo y darle el golpe de gracia.<sup>12</sup> (Rizal 1887, 157)

Indeed, the tendency towards exoticism, an element in the representation of Moros y Cristianos worldwide and overly used in the country, was remarkable in the Philippines. However, among the places where Moros y Cristianos have emerged, it was only in the Philippines and in Spain where Islam had actually existed. More so, it was only in the Philippine komedya where the representation of the Muslim as exotic—rather than the representation of its real history—persisted. Thus, even though the Filipinos had no prior knowledge of the Iberian Muslim, the Andalusian, the Sultanate of Granada and the Spanish Moro had a constant presence in the komedya:

Parecía, pues, natural, que en la literatura filipina (teatro, áuits y corridos, ó sean relaciones en verso) vino el asunto «moros y cristianos» á ser el predominante (el exclusivo, puede decirse), los moros fuesen los que los filipinos conocían y padecían, los malayos mahometanos de Mindanao y Joló; pero, no: se da el extraño caso de que el moro de la literatura filipina sea siempre, invariablemente, el moro arrogante, seductor y de largas y espesas barbas de la literatura importada, el moro de la literatura española; es decir, el moro desconocido, jamás el moro que durante siglos enteros asoló cuanto pudo las costas de Bisayas y Luzón. ¿Por qué este fenómeno? Tal pregunta nos llevaría muy lejos, para venir á parar á que en la literatura filipina de algún vuelo (se alude á la de ficción) no se percibe ni por casualidad la más leve afición al realismo, que se diría que es incompatible con la fantasía de los escritores, tan enamorados por lo común de lo exótico, ó por mejor decir de lo desconocido, que aún hoy, en pleno siglo XX, que tan notables progresos ha hecho en Filipinas el arte literario, todavía los cuentistas suelen poner la acción en países para

ellos ignorados, y, desde luego, sus personajes, sobre ser “principescos”, han de ser de raza extraña necesariamente. Hasta mediados del siglo XIX, el moro de Mindanao y Joló (no menos malayo que el filipino cristiano), fué el azote, siempre que le fué posible, de los filipinos civilizados, á los que robaba, cautivaba y seducía las dalagas secuestradas; y este moro, sin embargo, jamás pasó á la literatura propia, pasando en cambio el moro de Marruecos, el moro de Turquía... el moro desconocido de visu, conocido únicamente por las producciones literarias de los españoles.<sup>13</sup> (Retana 1909, 34-35)

It is possible to deduce three conclusions from the statements above. First, the *Moros y Cristianos* was an imported cultural drama to the Philippine Archipelago (as it was to Latin America). Second, Philippine komedya may involve local Islam, yet it stages mainly exotic stories and paraphernalia (as in Latin American, and even in Alcoy, the very core of Spanish *Moros y Cristianos*). Third, the Filipinization of *Moros y Cristianos* into moro-moro was completely achieved by standardizing a plot based on fictional princes, princesses, and their impossible love affairs; staged with local martial arts (*Arnis*) and music; and spoken in Philippine languages.

The *Moros y Cristianos* was part of the various Conquest’s dramas that advocated an ideological aim, staged exotic elements, and performed a ritual battle mainly to attract the attention of a particular audience. Consequently, these folk representations provided the foundation on which classical theatre as well as the official Spanish establishment would dwell. With the expansion of the Hispanic culture, the model of the encounter between the two religions was brought to America and was tailor-fitted to specific realities and necessities, given the fact that Muslims were not known. The *Moros y Cristianos* reached Asia and was established in the Philippine Archipelago, where Muslims have been present and known. However, it mainly represented the exotic elements carried by the Hispanic culture rather than the local realities of the Philippine Islam (as in all the representations of



Moros y Cristianos wherein exoticism and anachronism were dominant features). At present, the Philippine komedya is a formalized Asian drama that focuses on the celebration and the fiesta of a community, similar to current representations of Moros y Cristianos worldwide. Given the uniqueness of the phenomenon in Asia, Philippine komedya is without a doubt an intangible heritage that belongs to the Philippines as well as to the universal culture.

## NOTES

- 1 For further readings about the dramatic History and Culture of Al-Andalus for Europe and Western Civilization, see: Imamuddin 1969; Chejne 1974; Glick 1979; Jayyusi 1992; Marín 1992; Kennedy 1996; Cruz Hernández 1996.
- 2 It is needed to clarify that *Reconquista's* concept is mainly a Castilian creation to justify its expansion. In the case of Aragón, the policy was consciously colonial in form and the Muslim inhabitants were to be subjected to colonial rule (consequently, there was no necessity to identify the ruled with the ruler). Cf., Torró 2006.
- 3 That statement is believed even by Anglo-American scholars, maybe because they are not aware of Spanish history and Philippine Historiography: "The Spanish arrived in time to halt the Islam expansion; therefore, Spain was responsible for stopping the Muslims in Asia. In dealing with the Muslims, Spain did not follow the peaceful policy that it applied in the other parts of the Philippines. The Spanish policy for the Moros was to conquer first and convert afterwards...This was looked upon by the Spanish as a continuation of the 'holy war' they had fought against the Muslims in their homeland for over seven centuries." In McAmis 2002, 33. However, William Henry Scott (1984, 111-115) clearly stated the issue in the dichotomy of "crusade or commerce." César Adib Majul provided such significant contribution to Philippine Islamic Studies that even after forty years, no work can

surpass his statements. But forty years ago the historiographic paradigm was subjected to a context of national integration and ideology under Marcos. In order to validate Muslims in the nation called the Philippines, they had to join the struggle for national construction. Hence, even a detailed stage of several “Moro Wars” was led by Muslims in the Philippines against the alien. The argument seems to be the same as that of the *Reconquista*, but in the Philippine case the Muslims were considered as the freedom fighters, while in Spain were the Christians. (Wherever in Spain we find *El Cid*, a long list of heroes emerged in the Philippines. These are tools articulated by nationalistic historiography all over the world). Yet, the Iberian Peninsula was the westernmost edge of the Islamic world, while the Philippine Archipelago was at its easternmost. Both ends would meet in the sixteenth century, but this was during a cultural expansion that integrated Andalusian Civilization with that of the Christian Iberians. Thus, Arabic words became integrated into Philippine languages through Spanish (e.g., *alahas* (*alhaja*, al- hāja), *alkalde* (*alcalde*, al-qādī), *alkampor* (*alcanfor*, al-kafūr), *alkansiya* (*alcancia*, al-kanziyya), *aldaba* (*aldaba*, al-dabba), *almires* (*almirez*, al-mihrās), *baryo* (*barrio*, al-barrī), *kapre* (*cafre*, kāfir), *kisame* (*zaquizamí*, sāqf fāsamī), etc.); churches and buildings in the Philippines were built in Mudéjar style; Andalusian food can be traced in the islands (*turrón*, *polvorón*, or *arroz valenciana*); and even the Sulu-Spanish diplomatic relation generated a sophisticated chancellery, within which *Jawi* documents were produced at the same time as when Chabacano emerged. Like the *Moriscos* in Spain, *Moros* in the Philippine Archipelago wrote Spanish words using Arabic script, an astonishing phenomenon which connects distant regions of the Islamic world. Moreover, Ibn ‘Arabī, an Andalusian mystic, seems to have had deep influence in Southeast Asian Islam. All of these are valid anthropological and cultural topics for research.

- 4 My paraphrase: The topic of ancient historical Romances found in the Ilocano moro-moro was certainly based on actual battles between Muslims and Christians in Spain but

was adapted to have a local ambience. The Muslims in the Ilocano moro-moro come from Africa, Arabia, Turkey, and sometimes they represent Filipino Muslims. The Christians however, come from all over Europe and not only from Spain. Thus, the Ilocano moro-morista performances show the influence of the medieval theatrical literature.

- 5 However, other matter is the costumes and how a specific libretto is dramatized; it is possible that actual costumes of Muslims in the Archipelago may be used for the representation.
- 6 My translation: "A theater with 8,000 actors, 3,000 bystanders and a single spectator. A distant and exotic past converted into modern entertainment, into living words. The archaic poetics of medieval epics and baroque spectacle are vibrantly and passionately represented by a young nation. The cultures of mestizo Mexico hold startling treasures that have remained hidden like so many desert flowers."
- 7 We are deeply grateful to Cecilia J. Mandalihan and her husband, Vice Mayor of Mogpog, Sebastian T. Mandalihan, in providing us a copy of the document, which is in their possession as part of Mogpog's heritage. I would also like to recognize the assistance of Mogpog Mayor Senen Nivelto Jr. Field work for this paper would not have been possible if not for Mayor Nivelto and the Marinduqueño expert, Conrado Lancion.
- 8 "Ang kwentong ito ng komedya ay isa sa mga ipinagamalaking kultura ng Mogpog katulad ng mga Moriones na siyang nagsimula din dito sa ating vayan," in the introduction to the manuscript done by Mandalihan, May 11, 2005.
- 9 My translation: "Indigenous comedies are composed of three or four Spanish tragedies, which are combined to form a single piece. Muslims and Christians are always present and the whole plot deals about Muslims who want to marry Christian princesses and Christians who want to marry Muslims."
- 10 My paraphrase: "In order to complete a serious comedy with a funny interlude, I narrate what had happened in the port of

Cavite in June 7; On Saturday afternoon of June 6, a group of boys that earlier ended their classes from two schools went to the fort located at the end of the town to play. They had fun acting like Muslims and Christians, one group defending the fort while the other fighting for it. They became passionate and settled to do the same the next day this time with flags, wooden swords, and sticks. One boy played the role of Cachil Corralat, raising his flag, exhorting his soldiers, and taunting the Spaniards as cowards. This triggered a fight, and although those who played the role of Muslims retreated immediately, some of the boys ended up injured. Angered, one group retaliated furiously against the fort until they reached the one who was playing as Corralat. The boy fell from a wall which caused a head injury. However, I eventually saw him walking on a street, heavily bandaged but obviously recovering.”

- 11 My paraphrase: “Such picture of Tagalog comedy, allows commentators of Manila’s journals to speak about something which they do not use to talk about. Thus, they spoke mercilessly as in the case of a writer in 1871 with the pseudonym of E. Rikr, with an interesting book entitled *Humorous Philippine Dictionary: COMEDY* / Gutiérrez, Bretón and Ayala / see the all the talents / the main characters / in a Tagalog Comedy/ The title of the performance / nothing is expensive / when the orchestra gets tired / the curtain are raised / then a braggart emerges / wielding everywhere / suddenly a morena emerges / dressed provocatively / a teenager says ako / four or five others emerge / and under Riego’s Anthem / seven fight scenes mark the end. Nevertheless, Tagalog authors are forgiven due to the audience they had to please, following irresponsibly Lope de Vega’s statement: ‘Naïve is the mass, we have to please them using a naïve language.’”
- 12 “The indios, especially the mayor, enjoyed the Tagalog comedy. He rubbed his hands together and told us it was a shame they hadn’t has the princess battling the giant who had robbed her, which, in his opinion, would have been

marvelous, and even better if it turned out that the giant had been invulnerable except in his navel, like one Ferragús recounted in the History of the Twelve Peers. The very reverend father Friar Dámaso, with the heartfelt goodwill that distinguishes him, agreed with the mayor's opinion and added that in such a case the princess would take care of everything, uncover the giant's navel, and give him the coup de grace." Translation from Augenbraum 2006, 187.

- 13 My translation: "It seemed normal that in Philippine literature (theater, awit, corrido, relations in verse) where the 'Moros y Cristianos' topic became predominant (and exclusive, one might say), the Muslims, the Malay Muslims from Mindanao and Jolo, should be those that Filipinos knew and experienced. But this was not the case. It is strange that the Muslim in Philippine literature is always the irremediably arrogant but charming Muslim with a long beard originating from imported literature, that is, the Muslim in Spanish Literature; in other words, the yet known Muslims rather those that raided the Visayas and Luzon for centuries. Why this phenomenon? Such a question will bring us very far, ending only in the conclusion that the best Philippine literature (fictional ones) do not provide even by chance any aspect of realism. Unfortunately, writers who are enamored with exotic features, or better yet with the unknown, still write about distant and colorful lands even in the present twentieth century. Their characters, being princes, have to be foreigners. Until the middle of the nineteenth century, the Muslim from Mindanao and Jolo (in no way a lesser Malay than the Filipino Christian) was a whip to Filipinos during Hispanic influence, who raided, captured, and raped them. And yet, this Muslim never became part of the Filipino literature. Instead, the Muslim from Morocco, the Muslim from Turkey... the Muslim they have never seen, would become known to them through Spanish literary productions."

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