



The Boholano *Hugos* And Its Challenges in the Second Millenium

***Lutgardo L. Labad, Ramon A. Boloron, Bonifacio A. Quirog,
Rosalina R. Sarabosing, and Socorro Anne R. Zaluaga***

Tagbilaran City, Bohol, Philippines

Abstract

The research study is a selective descriptive survey of *Hugos* traditions in Bohol, specifically celebrated in the towns of Loboc, Dimiao, Panglao, and the capital city Tagbilaran. Five researchers documented the staging of this intangible cultural heritage. The main aim of this research is to delve deeper into this well-loved tradition and be able to fill in the gap of urgent community-based participatory cultural research needed to describe the quality, character, spirit of Boholano arts and aesthetics as found in community traditional practice. Specifically, the objectives are: (1) to determine the following aspects that characterize the *Hugos* tradition-history, artistic aspects, creative processes, significance, and challenges for preservation; and (2) to ascertain possible venues and strategies for future revitalization and preservation for sustaining the culture of communal spirituality; thereby be able to navigate into the issues behind the gradual loss of cultural heritage vis-à-vis concepts of holistic socio-cultural development. Based on the focus group discussions, the participants acknowledged that the celebration of Holy Week is incomplete without *Hugos*. This research recommends that *Hugos*, like all other cultural traditions, must be safeguarded with concrete measures to make it more significant and relevant to the Boholano community.

Keywords: Boholano Hugos, paraliturgical practice, Easter celebration, Philippines

Introduction

The growth of arts and culture in Bohol, alongside the celebrated progress of mass and cultural tourism in select towns seems to affect many traditional intangible heritage forms. One of the most precious, living, and still engaging paraliturgical practices in Bohol is the mounting of the Boholano version of the *Salubong*, called *Hugos*.

Cordero-Fernando, Zialcita and Yamsuan (2000) in *Cuaresma* state, “The *Salubong* on Easter Dawn commemorates the encounter between Christ and His Mother. The Tagalog word *Salubong* refers to the act of meeting, receiving, or welcoming someone arriving. The Visayan word *Sugat* refers to the act of fetching someone who has just arrived, while *Hugos* refers to the action of hoisting down someone from above a higher plane, or the act of christening as in the Catholic rite of Baptism. In all these meanings, the words *Salubong*, *Sugat*, and *Hugos* all pertain to the same folk ritual and annual celebration at the dawn of Easter Sunday. Towards the end of the Holy Week celebration, these all refer to that popular religious celebration reenacting the meeting between Jesus and Mary, His Mother. It is part of the Filipino Christian tradition that goes back to the Spanish colonial period, and is still alive today. It takes the form of a short drama belonging to the “constellation of religious dramas and dramatizations which mark the liturgical year in the Philippines.

According to Fr. Dela Cruz (2014), the *Salubong* falls under the category of the “liturgically derived but not called for” popular religious celebrations. It has acquired a life of its own outside the official liturgy. It is also called a form of a para-liturgical practice observed by the community. Being liturgically derived, it may be integrated into the official liturgy in order to make the official liturgy more alive and relevant through the popular. He proffers various possibilities as to the origins of the *Salubong/ Sugat/ Hugos*: (1) from Spanish popular belief derived from St. Ignatius’ Spiritual Exercises of the 16th century through Jesuit missionaries of the Spanish colonial period; (2) from Filipino popular understanding that the Risen Christ would have appeared first to his grieving mother, something which is really

something acceptable, natural, and human to any Filipino; and (3) thirdly, the commitment of Spanish missionaries to teach the Catholic faith to the neophytes by employing dramatic and semi-dramatic forms as effective pedagogical means to teach religion.

Fr. Rene Javellana, S.J., a staunch historian, anthropologist, and heritage specialist, in his *Wood and Stone For God's Greater Glory*, comments on the outstanding manuscript of the Jesuit Francisco Alzina, a historiographer of excellent quality, who documented in three volumes the life and culture of the Visayans in the middle of the 17th century, and quotes his very words:

“All these external celebrations, music, dances, gatherings, fiestas, etc., is another form of disseminating the faith, because among these people the faith enters more through sight than through hearing, as Saint Paul says.” (Alzina, *Historia Sobrehatural de las Bisayas, Segunda Parte...1668-1670.*)

Fr. Javellana further opines that the early practice in the 17th century Philippines must have started with just the meeting of two processions, one led by the icon of the Blessed Mother clad in black, and the other led by that of the Risen Christ. This practice evolved through the three centuries thereafter with the main difference which is practiced till today, where the climax is staged outside the church with an Angel hoisted down to remove the black veil of Mary singing *Regina Coeli*, accompanied by a throng of angels with their Alleluias.

This cultural legacy shows the cluster of artistic, folkloric, and popular cultural traditions that have evolved since Christianization in the province but are now, sadly, a victim of periodic fads of popular culture that seep into the artistic creation processes. This traditional intangible heritage form supposed to demonstrate the genius of Boholano artists and cultural communities are in danger of gradual loss, dilution, or transformation as they slowly lose their intrinsic artistic character, spirit, and values due to modernization, technological progress, and in general the impact of globalization.

In this research, each town parish has its own version of this spiritual-cultural production, where the events of the original Easter Sunday are played out with music, singing, and processions that have organically grown through the province's cultural history of origination and acculturation. The main characters are angels, played by the children community of the towns,

preluded by the meeting of the Risen Lord Jesus Christ and the Blessed Mother Mary, symbolized by statues hoisted on *caros*. The angels are organized into various groups of hierarchies, but the “lead” angel singer is hoisted from a built tower and pulled down to the climactic reunion of the two images, singing *Salve Regina*. The visual climax and most moving is when this main angel removes the dark veil of grief from the head of Mary to the grand singing of the Alleluias. The varieties of choral music, design practice, community engagements, and production staging culture, are the most intriguing components of the *Hugos*. Each town in Bohol has its way of doing the *Hugos*, let alone its implied values and communal perspectives and worldviews.

Documenting this paraliturgical practice through selective descriptive survey in Loboc, Dimiao, Panglao, and Tagbilaran, this research fills in the gap of urgent community-based participatory cultural research needed to describe the quality, character, and spirit of Boholano arts and aesthetics as found in community traditional practice. Specifically, the objectives are: (1) to determine the aspects that characterize the *Hugos* tradition- creative processes and challenges for preservation; and (2) to ascertain possible venues and strategies for future revitalization and preservation.

To effectively implement the research project, the researchers utilized as a conceptual grid the cultural mapping format for intangible heritage developed by the NCCA Technical Working Group for Cultural Mapping (2019). This format is an evolved research design drawn from the UNESCO template on cultural mapping and templates developed by pioneering mapping and development specialists of the Philippines, especially Dr. Eric Zerrudo and Jamie Antonio. The template for mapping Social Practices, Rituals, and Festive Events was utilized.

The research team employed Focused Group Discussions (FGDs) with a group of select heritage bearers of the respective town; one-on-one interview with select personalities or individuals who have been instrumental in the continuity of the local tradition in the locality; process documentation of the *Hugos* practice in 2017, covering pre- actual, and post-production activities; regular consultative, theoretical, and analytical meetings and discussions amongst the members of the research team; study of related literature and research studies pertinent to the study of the Philippine *Salubong* tradition, presented both nationally and internationally. This paper focuses on the features of the actual *Hugos* and the challenges each town faces concerning this tradition.

What follows are the four site-based research essays written by the four Boholanos researchers. The entire team under the guidance of the Project Director and main researcher met several times to finalize the research design and methodologies, and with the research administrative staff set up all the necessary meetings and consultations with the communities and leaders from the four sites. During the Holy Week preceding Easter Sunday of the *Hugos*, four teams spread out with each team consisting of the Site Researcher, Videographer, a Research Assistant, and a Team driver. The main Research Director tried to spread his time over the four municipalities. During the actual *Hugos* on Easter Sunday Dawn, all four teams were simultaneously witnessing and recording the *Hugos*. In the next months, follow-up focused group discussions and meetings were conducted.

Loboc *Hugos* and Its Sense of Community

Loboc is a 4th –class municipality in Bohol in the Central Visayas of Region VII in the Philippines. As a parish, Loboc was established in 1602 by the Jesuit missionaries. Being Christianized early, Loboc is said to be the bastion of Catholicism in the inland portion of Bohol.

While there is Hermana/Hermano mayor each year in the parish, the Parish Pastoral Council (PPC) even as early as Christmas of the previous year, has already accumulated a substantial amount of money to fund the staging of *Hugos* and related events during the summer Holy Week. Often, the parents and clan of the chosen Main Angel volunteer to shoulder and take care of the food for Black Saturday’s dinner and even snacks for practices or *sana-sana* and procession with the other angels, the musikers of the Loboc Brass Band and even of the Loboc Children’s Choir. Likewise, other key players like the keeper of the cloth scaffolding (said to be the same cloth scaffolding used 50 years back and safely kept by a certain Lilia) and the hair/wig and make-up of the Main Angel and two other angels (all young boys) are offered for free by a hairstylist and make-up artist, said to have been blessed/cured by his contribution to the para-liturgical practice of *Hugos*.

The *Hugos* script is composed and primarily based on the biblical story of the Passion, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. The incumbent parish priest, however, is entitled to insert his contribution or novelty to the script (as an added line) though the main content of the biblical story remains intact.

The Loboc Children's Choir (LCC), since its founding and establishment, as well as its musical virtuosity, has lent color and beauty to the staging of *Hugos*. The assignment of roles for the *Hugos* is usually done by Mrs. Alma Taldo, head conductor of the Loboc Children's Choir. The performers are the main angel, the two assistant angels, and the choir of angels with a maximum of twenty cherubs and seraphim of young girls and boys, whose parents take care of supporting their need for angels' wings and attire and corresponding wigs or hairstyles and make-up.

The main angel (soloist) is chosen early in the previous Lenten season through an audition set by Mrs. Alma Taldo or her assistants, like Noel Kerr Cañeda or Mrs. Neria Varquez. The main organist and pianist of LCC and even during the *Hugos* is Mr. Clemencio "Boy" Varquez. For the *Regina Coeli* and other songs, Noel Kerr also assists Mr. Varquez and Mrs. Taldo. Though the Loboc Children's Choir has its regular weekly practices for the musical engagements, locally and abroad, still the choir members take time to practice and assist in the rehearsal or *sana-sana* for the *Hugos* production. The said rehearsals for the LCC, with the choir of angels, the two alternate angels, and the main angel, are usually done on two Saturdays and Sundays before Lent.

The physical preparations for the *hugusan* begins on Maundy Thursday when church workers start to spruce up the cemented structure or *hugusan*, by repainting though the actual decorations start early Black Saturday. This repainting and beautification include the metal ladder or platform where the seraphim and cherubim (little young boys and girls dressed as angels) stand to sing as a choir of angelic voices led by the Main Angel, the two angels and the Loboc Children's Choir.

The refurbishing of the *hugusan*, the construction of an optional stage (for the Easter tableau depicting the conversations of the women of Jerusalem and Apostles, with Archangel Gabriel announcing the Resurrection of Jesus Christ), and even the Church decorations during the whole Lenten season- all involved the cooperative and collaborative labor of love of church workers, such as the CWL, the appointed 12 Apostles, the Sharers of the *Siete Palabras* (Seven Last Words of Jesus) and the able leadership of the parish priest, assistant priest, and the Parish Pastoral Council (PPC).

A crowd begins to gather at the churchyard at around 6:00 PM, to watch the rehearsals or *sana-sana*. The crowd consisted mainly of those who joined the two processions coming from two directions. The all-women group which

the main and two angels with their parents joined, was led by the image of *Mater Dolorosa* while the male group, consisting of the 12 Apostles and sharers of the *Siete Palabras* was led by the *carro* of the Risen Christ.

The *sana-sana* begins right upon the arrival of the two groups and lasts an hour or until 7:00 in the evening, with the final set-up of lights and sound, decorating details of the *carros*, which are wheeled devices, complete with lights and decorations of flowers, carrying the assigned statue of the Risen Christ for the male group and the statue of *Mater Dolorosa* for the female group.

The other *carros* carrying the statues of Sts. Peter and Paul, Lady Magdalene, and Santa Salome were situated and decorated near the foot of the *hugusan* where the Loboc Children's Choir, with the Loboc Brass Band on their left side, was situated. By starting the Easter Vigil Mass at 10 in the evening, the *Hugos* may start at 1:00 on Easter morning. The chorus of angels, highlighted by the LCC, sings Halleluiah.

It is widely believed that *Hugos* is a source of cultural and spiritual strength for the Catholics in Loboc. The Easter *Hugos* celebrates the deep religious faith and strong familial devotion of the townspeople. This deep faith expressed the religiosity and spirituality of the Lobocanons through the performing arts of dance and music- two inseparable elements in their worship, a form of prayer for gratitude, supplication, and adoration to the Holy Triune God; the Almighty Father, Divine Son, and Holy Spirit. Such expressions are not individual undertakings, but rather, communal displays of faith and reliance.

The 7.2 magnitude earthquake in 2013 destroyed 85% of the stone-church of San Pedro Apostol and rendered the remaining 15% and the whole wooden convent perilous to the lives and limbs of the people. However, the *hugusan* of the 1990's was not impaired by the Big Quake and thus serves the *Hugos* to this day.

Presently, the open-air 20-feet *hugusan*, ably supported by steel platform in a backdrop of white and sky-blue paint, constructed for the choir angels (seraphim and cherubim) is the main area for *Hugos*. This *hugusan* is located between the center of the destroyed old stone church and newly-constructed "tent" church with a white and blue backdrop. As agreed by the *Hugos* production team, a makeshift stage can be constructed to serve as a

performance area for the Easter tableau (as was presented during the *Hugos* 2017). To culminate the whole biblical story, the production staff, this year has also staged the remorse of Judas Iscariot on the left front side of the new church building, where his effigy and the colored globe (made of bamboo) were burned. The burning was closed off with a 10-minute fireworks display.

As *Hugos* aims to deepen the spirituality of Catholic Lobocanons, it also aims to pass on knowledge, cultural and social values, and collective memory of the townspeople from one generation of performers to the next. Undeniably, *Hugos* plays a crucial part in keeping the peoples' cultures alive.

It has been observed that the active functions in the traditional *Hugos* are generally performed by the members of the Parish Pastoral Council, the Centro Catolico, members of religious organizations, like CWL and *Adoration Nocturna*, the Youth Pastoral Team, and the like. All their commitment and participation display strong social cohesion. This is readily evidenced by their almost spontaneous collective response to church activities such as volunteerism and open-hearted contributions and donations during the run of the whole Lenten activities.

The Lobocanons remain to observe all these religious and cultural practices with reverence and adoration. The songs have been reproduced in photocopied versions. The music notation (melody and chords) of the *Hugos* is already available. These songs are regularly practiced by the members of the Loboc Children's choir and Angels Choir, in early March or April.

Being chosen to be the main angel or one of the two side angels is considered by the community people as a special gift and privilege. Stories have it that the hairstylist and make-up of the main angel and two angels are provided with free services because he has observed that since volunteering his expertise, service, and make-up sets, his business and health have been blessed.

Moreover, the lady who keeps and maintains the cloth scaffolding for the Main Angel, relates that this prop for *Hugos*, is considered already an heirloom. It is the same prop, which has been used by her grandmother, her mother, and now to her- which she readily used and served for the Blessed Mother Mary and God, through the service she does every *Hugos* to the main and two angels.

Lobocanons, as religious and musically-gifted people, express their arts and faith through *Hugos* and church-related activities. These also satisfy

the townspeople's need for entertainment, their love for the spectacle, or more precisely, their sense of aesthetics.

Para-liturgical traditions, such as *Hugos* and other cultural Christian practices, are challenged with gradual disappearance due to urban growth and development projects. Loboc, though far from the capital city, is still affected by the influx of modernization, such as digital technology and related mitigating innovations and their subsequent mindsets and attitudes.

Because of the popularity of Loboc as Bohol's Music Capital, it has sustained itself as one of Bohol's famous tourist destinations, though with its popularity also comes some negative implications or challenges, like vices and drug addiction. Moreover, *Hugos* often suffers in the same way as traditional performing arts as the performances can be reduced to show adopted highlights in order to meet tourist demands.

Migration, especially of young people may draw the local artists, performers, musicians, and designers of *Hugos* away from Loboc and may endanger these cultural and religious practices.

The viability of *Hugos* may also depend quite heavily on general socio-economic conditions. The rehearsals, musical instruments, costumes, stage design, technical production are often very expensive and may not be sustainable, though, Lobocanons are quick to claim that their communal involvement, even financially, and in safekeeping their musical instruments and musical scores, in their private homes, are a plus.

Transmission activities such as training future generations of musicians or organizing classes which allow students to work closely with master performers are not strengthened to encourage the next generation to continue to practice and carry their heritage forward.

The materialistic values of our society today challenge this precious and engaging religious tradition. The use of a digital sound system, in place of the traditional brass band, has diminished the quality and artistry of the performing arts and cultural practice.

Dimiao *Hugos* and the Legacy of the Maguyons

Dimiao is one of the (24 out of 47) fourth income class municipalities

in the province of Bohol, Philippines. When the parish was founded is uncertain, although baptism records date back to the year 1750. In Dimiao, *Hugos* has been a regular annual liturgy-derived practice in the town ever since the elders can remember. It is a musical, scenic, dramatic religious portrayal of the Angel announcing to the Blessed Virgin Mary that her Divine Son has risen from the dead and that she should rejoice. The main musical dialogue between the Main Angel and the Angel Chorus is an expanded version of the Latin sequence, *Regina Coeli*. The entire scene is accompanied by the town band.

Eufracia “Tingting” Maguyon was born in 1910 and was the first angel in memory to have sung the *Regina Coeli* composition of his father, Mariano “Maestro Anoy” Maguyon. If Ma’am Tingting, as she was fondly remembered by Dimiaonons, sang it first at age ten, the first *Hugos* in Dimiao must have been in the 1920s. It was told that in that very first *Hugos*, Tingting (the angel) walked. There was no *hugusan*. In her mature years, Ma’am Tingting was assisted in the solo parts of the chorus by a church soloist named Soling Apalisok. At that time, there were two known photographers in town, Kikoy Napuli and Gulle Studio. But surviving photographs of those olden days are rare.

For 1 to 2 weeks before Easter Sunday, different simultaneous preparatory activities are done in the town of Dimiao, namely; organizational meetings chaired by the Parish Priest with the Parish Pastoral Council and the traditional *Hugos* leaders; selections and auditions for the choir, especially the selection of the boy or girl performing the role of the main angel assigned to sing the main aria, the *Regina Coeli*. The pastoral council members and cultural leaders begin scouting for children who could play the role of angels one month before the actual *Hugos*, usually starting on Ash Wednesday. Parents volunteer their children for different roles and show up for daily rehearsals until Holy Thursday.

Since band members are usually college students in Tagbilaran City or working elsewhere, the band and choir rehearse on weekends. The band was led by the late Odilon “Dilon” Maguyon, Jose “Kiking” Maguyon, and Ramon Maguyon Magadan who were known pillars of the musically-renowned Maguyon Clan. Ramon himself won the National Accordion Competition (*Hamon sa Kampeon*) in 1966, while two of the male choir singers, siblings Joselito and Amando Gallur, won national singing competitions. Parishioners design the stage with the scaffoldings, buildings, painting, decorating the scenery, preparing the harness and pulley system;

cleaning and decorating the *carosas*.

In its early years, only *lukay* (coconut leaves) and *bani* (banana trunks) were used to decorate the bamboo scaffoldings. When the *hugusan* was made concrete and permanent in 1960, the use of paint, crepe paper, and curtains improved the scenery, usually led by the local Catholic Women's League (CWL). On the morning of Black Saturday, they tried and tested hands of local experts, originally headed by the late Genie Madjus, Ramon Maguyon Magadan, Ile Malaran, Rogelio Rallos, Felix Alcantara, and now by Joel Dahiroc, with the help of workers from Lila, install the *montura* (the vehicle of the main angel) with all the scruples of making sure that it is safe and secure. It was only around 2012 when they installed an additional safety belt to the *montura*.

Between 2011 and 2012, under the direction of Fr. Claverlito Migriño, there were colorful designs of clouds and stars and they experimented on such a new design without using the *hugusan* because there were local engineers who advised that it was no longer structurally viable. On three occasions, the angels just walked into the church. It has a different choreography.

When a 7.2 magnitude earthquake struck Bohol in 2013, the use of the *hugusan* was entirely suspended. In 2015, the *hugusan* was used again after it was retrofitted. Assigned leaders mobilize financial and material resources for food, costumes, lights and sound, and other requirements.

Performed right after the Easter Vigil Mass, around 1:00 am, the congregation leaves the church and proceeds to the *hugusan*, while the *carosas* each bearing the Risen Christ and the *Mater Dolorosa* are led in two separate processions around the site. As soon as the *carosas* meet by the *hugusan*, the seven-minute *Hugos* is performed by the chorus of child actors as angels, by the main *Regina Coeli* child actor/actress, and the accompanying town band. The main dramatic highlight is focused on the *Regina Coeli* Angel tied to an improvised harness hoisted down from the top of a tower to the level where he/ she lifts from the Blessed Virgin sculpture the black veil, signifying the end of her mourning since the Christ has risen as He has promised.

Hugos used to be performed first at 4 am on Sunday, and the holy mass was celebrated thereafter. However, recently throughout the Diocese of Tagbilaran, Mass is held first around midnight on Saturday, then *Hugos* follows at dawn on Sunday. The change was due to observations that people

tended to compete with the seats at the church after the *Hugos*, or worse, they would go home to sleep and skip the Mass after watching the *Hugos*. *Sana-sana* used to be at 6 p.m. on Saturday; now, it is at 5 p.m.; then *Hugos* at around 1 a.m. Sunday after the Saturday midnight mass that starts at ten in the evening.

It is widely believed in Dimiao that the *Hugos* is part and parcel of the people's faith. It is ardently prepared and mounted as a communal ritual celebrating what is deep in their hearts. It is inconceivable that Easter passes without this yearly custom. The choice of the Main Angel is also believed to be a special gift to the chosen child, a source of honor and pride to the family and the community.

When asked as to what aspects of the *Hugos* in their town they consider sacred or unchangeable, the Pastoral Council and cultural leaders said, "Sa hugusan jud. Di gyud mosugot ang mga tawo nga usbon kay maoy among gimat-an og buot" (The *Hugos* must be done at the *hugusan*. The people will not allow it elsewhere because that is what we grew up with).

The Parish Pastoral Council (PPC), or what used to be known as the *Centro Catolico*, always had the main say or responsibility in the mounting of the *Hugos*. They even noted that when it started in the 1920s, *Hugos* in Dimiao had no choreography. The angel merely walked around the scene. In the 1950s, temporary bamboo scaffoldings called *hugusan* were constructed to mount the *Hugos*, decorated with *lukay* and *bani*. This was during the time of Fr. Teofilo Mahinay as parish priest in the 1950s.

In the olden days there was no such thing as a microphone. The main angel and the choir had to rely on the loudness of their voices. There was of course a minimum of noise only at that time since there was yet no electricity and very few cars and trucks. The musical instruments used were primarily the harmonion and accordion, a family of box-shaped musical instruments of the bellows-driven free-reed aerophone type. Today, the electric organ is the centerpiece of the band consisting of wind and string instruments and a set of drums.

The type of lighting in vogue in the 1950s and 60s was the use of the Petromax, a brand name for a type of pressurized kerosene lamp that uses a mantle. This was also popular among local fishermen. Then in 1972, during the time of Mayor Asterio Akiatan, he installed a generator-powered electric system in the town. Fluorescent lamps now illuminate the entire scene.

At its inception, *Hugos* in Dimiao only had one angel to sing and the choir. Now there are already more angels. This started during the time of Fr. Juan Castil sometime in 1988 in which he suggested that other than the main angel, there should also be added four angels. In the 1990s, there were already ten angels; and twenty (20) angels, including males, in 2010. Today, the angels' movements are already choreographed. Choreography started sometime in 2010 led by Caridad Magadan and Liza Maguyon-Abarquez.

As to costumes and props, angels used to wear multi-colored costumes based on whatever was available; now, it is white with wings. Members of the CWL also assist in preparing these costumes.

The movement of the sculptures of Mary and Jesus was such that in the past, on Good Friday, there was usually the procession of the *Santo Entierro* (the body of the Lord Jesus); but in 2008, the *Mater Dolorosa* (the Blessed Virgin Mary as Mother of Sorrows) was added to the scene. These various changes were prompted by the advent of modern technology and the varying policies of the *rigodon* of parish priests.

Ever since the years after the Second World War, it is widely believed that the practice has been traditionally organized by a few families in the town, led by the Maguyon clan and their descendants, and other musical leaders in Dimiao. The main music *Regina Coeli* was composed in the 1900s by the musical scion of the clan, Mariano Maguyon (1880s-1942), popularly known as Maestro Anoy in Dimiao. He died in 1942, leaving behind 14 children, and bequeathed the musical legacy to these descendants who turned out to be musicians and musical performers regarded in high esteem in Dimiao, some of whom even garnered national acclaim.

The choir and band notation had been reproduced in different (photocopied) versions through the years, complete with separate orchestral and choir parts. There is no consolidated orchestral or conductor's score surviving. The pieces are regularly practiced as part of the regimen of the town band, while the choir parts are rehearsed weeks before the *Hugos* by the choir conductor who is the granddaughter of the original composer.

The parish priest would factor in the overall staging of *Hugos*. Former parish priest, Fr. Efren Dolauta, suggested that there should be a contest on the singing of *Regina Coeli* and the winner will be the main angel. The current parish priest, Fr. Joemari Polo, on the other hand, suggested that there should be three songs, like in Loboc where he was once assigned, because

Dimiao has only one song which he found too short.

The choice of angels is done by audition based on musicality tested by the musicians of the Maguyon clan. Local school teachers usually make suggestions about the children who should be considered. There is also a practice of weighing the main angel because the child's weight is also crucial in the up-and-down movement of the pulley harness system.

Parish Pastoral Council President Joel Dahirac said they spent Php15,000 in the recent mounting of the *Hugos* including the cost of materials. Ma'am Elvira, the oldest surviving heir of Maestro Anoy, said that she is touched by the kind of community participation that this activity can muster. Some people would donate food for the band. The children's parents volunteer to spend for their costumes, accessories, and make up, and other various charitable gestures.

A major threat might be if the present musical leaders fail to train a new generation of musical and scenic artists ready and empowered to continue the legacy. When asked for comment, the current Parish Priest, Fr. Joemari Polo, said there is still a lot of room for improvement. For one, he said, we still use fluorescent lamps hung on wires and ropes. He also suggested that there should be three songs, and not just one song as is the current practice. Fr. Polo has been described by the main informants as artistic and creative and gives importance to design. They pointed to his use of decorative jars even in a church activity he initiated which was held at the time of our first Focused Group Discussion, "Lugaw for a Cause".

Our key informants were one in saying that they would really appreciate it if there is going to be a Musical Clinic for *Hugos* in the near future, as they acknowledge that the way the band plays still needs a lot of polishing. They also see the importance of the digitization of the musical scores. Both are highly important for continuity. Also, the parish needs to have a good sound system for the purpose. As it is today, the sound system has to be rented each time.

What they consider to be among the most difficult challenges in staging the *Hugos*, include the following: a) the attitude of the parish priest vis-à-vis his appreciation or misappreciation of the *Hugos*; b) safety concerns with respect to the installation of the main angel's pulley and harness; and c) the quality of the sound system.

Panglao *Hugos* and the Innovations It Welcomed

Panglao is both an island, off the east coast of Bohol fronting Tagbilaran City on the mainland, and a town on the west coast of the island. The town is believed to have been founded in 1782 (Redondo, 1886 cited by Bernales, 2014). It is of historical significance in that it was the town to which the Spaniards went after their unfortunate experience in Cebu. However, *La Iglesia de San Agustin de Panglawod* was established much later in 1803 by the Jesuits. The term “Panglawod” literally means “to the open sea” was the original name Panglao. The town abounds in religious customs which have survived several generations of parishioners. One such traditional practice is the Easter *Hugos* dawn celebration.

Direct historical evidence on the Panglao *Hugos*’ beginnings is lacking. An oral source cites 1940 as the year when the first *Hugos* in Panglao was staged. Fr. Lucero Tabotabo, composer from Cebu City started the religious practice to provide a major attraction for the Easter Sunday dawn celebration. In Panglao, it is possible that the practice was introduced by the Spaniards during the province’s evangelization and hispanization period. The long years of Spanish presence in Bohol rooted Christianity deeply in the lives of the people.

The Panglao *Hugos* takes place right after the Easter Vigil Mass (*Bihilya sa Pagkabanhaw*). By starting the Easter Vigil Mass at 10:30 PM, the *Hugos* can commence at 1:00 in the morning, to simulate the actual time of Christ’s resurrection from the grave.

The *Hugos* production requires months of rehearsals. The rehearsals (ensayo) for the choir of angels are usually done on Saturdays and Sundays. Part of the preparation is that the PPC Artist Club maintains a fund which is built up through solicitations/contributions from generous residents of the town. The general practice to defray the expenses for the actual staging of the Easter *Hugos* is sponsorship (*angkon-angkon*). Families with means or the town politicians provide for the stage decoration and costumes and supply the food. Costumes, however, can be recycled from year to year.

The *Hugos* script is composed purposely for the musical and dramatic presentation. The sequence of the songs is as follows: *Sayo sa Kabuntagon*, *Mga Dampog*, *Regina Coeli*, *Et Mari Valde*, and *Et Resurrexit Christus*. The assignment of roles for the *Hugos* is usually done by Mrs. Mylene Oracion, in-charge of the Panglao Children’s Choir. The performers can be roughly

divided into: the main angel and the choir of angels with a maximum of fifty (50) singers. The main angel (soloist) is chosen through audition during the *sana-sana*. The images of Saint John the Apostle, Saint Peter, Mary Magdalene, and Maria Salome are part of the traditional processions.

The physical preparations for the *hugusan* begin on Holy Wednesday when workers start to construct the stage. As the Holy Week progresses finishing touches are put on the platforms. There is the use of more technologically-advanced heavy equipment, the boom truck as the *hugusan*. The building of the stage involves cooperative labor and the directions of the PPC Artist Club, *Camareros*, and the LGU of Panglao. The open-air stage is constructed at the plaza with an approximate height of 40 feet and width of 50 feet. The materials for the stage are either donated or purchased out of the PPC Artist Club funds.

A crowd begins to gather at the church yard at around 6:00 PM to watch the rehearsal or *sana-sana* and witness the audition to select the main angel. The *sana-sana* begins at around 7:00 PM and lasts until 9:00 in the evening. The final set-up of lights and sound decoration of the *carros*. The young boys and girls audition for the role of the main angel (soloist). Mr. Emmanuel Alboleras is the organist in the *Regina Coeli*. Mr. Rancy Jun Micabani is the organist for the preparatory songs.

It is widely believed that *Hugos* is a source of cultural and spiritual strength for Catholics in Panglao. The Easter *Hugos* celebrates the deep religious faith and strong familial devotion of the townspeople.

Oral tradition has it that in the forties, the church *corro* served as the *hugusan* for the Easter *Hugos*. In the seventies, when Fr. Gabriel Oppus was the Parish Priest, the *castillon* at the church plaza became a permanent *hugusan* for the annual Easter *Sugat*. The harness and the pulley system were used for the main angel.

The 7.2 magnitude earthquake in 2013 destroyed the *castillon*. Today, an open-air temporary *entablado* (stage) is constructed at the church plaza with white and blue backdrop, with platforms for the choir angels, and with the use of more technologically-advanced heavy equipment, the boom truck, as the *hugusan*. It can be said that at present the *Hugos* of Panglao is a production extravagant with scenery and machinery.

It has been observed that the active functions in the traditional *Hugos* are generally performed by the members of the Parish Pastoral Council, the *Camareros*, and the *Centro Catolico*. They exhibit strong social cohesion. This is readily evidenced by their almost spontaneous collective response to church activities such as *bayanihan* in celebrating Holy Week activities. Religion remains a strong influence in the lives of people in Panglao. Such influence is reflected in the strong participation of the people in activities of worship and religious rites.

Stories are told by the lay faithful in Panglao that through their participation in the work of staging the *Hugos*, the Lord protects them from afflictions and epidemics. The selection of the main angel is even considered by the community people as a special gift to the chosen main angel. Like other forms of intangible cultural heritage, the traditional *Hugos* is threatened with gradual disappearance due to urban growth and development projects. With the Panglao Bohol International Airport (PBIA), jobs are generated giving more livelihood and wider economic opportunities for the parishioners. *Hugos* is affected by the changes the town of Panglao undergoes because it depends so much on the participation of its practitioners.

Tourists are also increasingly participating in its religious practices, rituals, and festive events. While there may be positive aspects to tourist involvement, *Hugos* often suffers in the same way as traditional performing arts as the performances can be reduced to show adopted highlights to meet tourist demands.

Migration, especially of young people may draw those local artists, performers, musicians, and designers of *Hugos* away from the town of Panglao and may endanger these cultural and religious practices. The viability of *Hugos* may also depend quite heavily on general socio-economic conditions. The rehearsals, musical instruments, costumes, stage design, technical production are often very expensive and may not be sustainable in times of economic downtime.

Transmission activities such as training future generations of musicians or organizing classes which allow students to work closely with master performers are not strengthened to encourage the next generation to continue to practice and carry their heritage forward.

The materialistic values of our society today challenge this precious and engaging religious tradition. The use of technological advanced boom

truck as *hugusan* replaces the magical effect of the harness and pulley system.

Tagbilaran *Hugos* and Its Significance to the Urban Community

Tagbilaran City, the provincial capital, is the leading commercial and trading center which serves as the gateway of Bohol. It is the seat of the diocese that bears its name. Records from 1742 preserved in the parish archives tell that it was once a barrio and a *visita* (mission station) of Baclayon, although the place was described as a “new village” by Murillo Velarde who wrote between 1751 and 1754. Since the late 1890’s or early 1900’s, the parish has observed the activities during the Holy Week. One of which is *Hugos*.

The Tagbilaran *Hugos* is carried out with the Main Angel singing the songs *Mga Dampog*, *Mga Tawo Singgit Kamo*, Jesus Christ is Risen Today, *Salve Regina*, *Laetare Mater Nostre*, *Alleluia*. Prior to 1990’s, *Hugos* was performed at 4 o’clock in the morning. However, the priests assigned in the Cathedral then changed it to 1 o’clock in the morning which is immediately after the Easter Vigil Mass. The change of time is seen as beneficial because the angels (children), the churchgoers, and the onlookers need not go home after the Easter Vigil Mass and then come back at four o’clock in the morning for this spectacle.

A month before the staging of *Hugos*, the Cathedral invites parents to allow their children to serve as angels. The Parish Office takes care of listing the names. The invitation is also printed in *Lantawan*, the official newsletter of St. Joseph Cathedral. The children who are listed are then trained by Mrs. Enriqueta Butalid, fondly called as Ma’am Equit. They familiarize the tune and memorize the lyrics. Some of them though have already been angels in the past two or three years (like the Lead Angel in 2017). The children who have known the songs help in teaching the new ones. The total number of angels trained reached 80.

When the children have already familiarized the songs, Ma’am Equit chose three angels who would be hoisted or *hugusan* while the rest of the angels would serve as the chorus. Part of the preparation is the recording of the voices of children. Unlike in the past when the angels were accompanied by the band, the organizers this year decided to have the voices recorded.

The costumes of angels were distributed on Holy Wednesday. These

consist of the crown, the wings and the dress. These costumes have been pooled together by Ma'am Equit and Ma'am Fely from their friends and other benefactors. Now, the costumes can already clothe almost 80 children.

The *hugusan* is also prepared two to three weeks before the actual staging. The artist Joey Labrador designed the pelican-inspired structure in 2017. The *hugusan* is constructed with iron bars and is manipulated using pulleys. On both sides of the main structure are two platforms where the rest of the angels will position themselves.

The rehearsals on Holy Saturday happen when the group gathers at ten o'clock in the morning for the rehearsals. Ma'am Equit makes sure that the songs are sung correctly and are not out of tune. Fely Lim, one of the members of the Holy Hour group, assists Ma'am Equit in the practices and gives important reminders for the children, especially on what goes well with their costumes. Some of the reminders include: wearing light makeup, tying the hair, and not wearing heels. The last practice or *sana-sana* was done at around three in the afternoon. They tried whether the *hugusan* functioned properly as the three angels were already on it. The angels who serve as a chorus at the side are designated their places. Fr. Monton, then Episcopal Vicar of St. Joseph Cathedral, and Fr. Lito Geangan, one of the priests assigned in the Cathedral, were there to check last-minute fixes in the *hugusan*.

Hugos is performed immediately after the Easter Vigil Mass. The apostles and lay ministers would carry the image of the Risen Christ and the male churchgoers were invited to join the procession which proceeded at the left side of the cathedral. The image of *Mater Dolorosa* proceeded through the right side or near Garden Café. The females joined the procession.

When, the Risen Christ and *Mater Dolorosa* met in front of the Cathedral, the angels at both sides of the *hugusan* sang in chorus *Salve Regina*. While the chorus sings, the pelican's breast opens and the platform (where the lead angel is) slowly moves down. The lead male angel along with two other angels descend and sing *Regina Coeli* and *Laetare Mater Nostre*. He then removes the black veil on the Blessed Mother and replaces this with a crown. After this, the image of the Risen Christ is brought in front of the lead Angel. The chorus sings *Mga Tawo Singgit Kamo* and *Mga Dampog*. The platform with the lead Angel, this time with the image of the Risen Christ, moves slowly upward. This movement simulates the resurrection commemorated on that day. The rite is concluded with a grand Alleluiah

performed by the HNU Chorale with Fr. Irvin Garsuta conducting while fireworks lit the dark skies.

Hugos is an avenue for children's catechesis. Throughout the practices, the children were taught prayers. Ma'am Equit believes that the children who join as angels are closer to the church, have a sense of belongingness to a community, and thus, will grow up serving the church. Once, one of the angels during her childhood, she wants to pass on her experience and her gift of music to the children whom she trains. This occasion is also the Tagbilaranons' manifestation of their devotion to Mary as the whole community joins her in this moment of rejoicing for her son's resurrection. Fr. Martin Lupiba cited that this religious tradition is a manifestation of our being *pueblo amare de Maria* or lovers of Mary. For the the parents, participation of their children in *Hugos* is a privilege in itself. They also take pride when they see their children join this performance.

Hugos is performed in the open space of the cathedral, specifically on the left side where a *hugusan* is built. In the account of Bernard Alturas, a lead angel during his childhood (1960s), he slid on an inclined plane to simulate the descent, and then after singing the songs, he was also pulled upward. Joey Labrador, the artist commissioned to design the *hugusan*, explained that in keeping up with the times, the simple bamboo was changed to angle bars. The latter are also durable and lasting.

The staging of *Hugos* is a collaborative effort of the priests in St. Joseph Cathedral and the lay faithful. Mrs. Enriqueta Butalid, 80 years old, recalls from memory *Regina Coeli and Salve Regina* as she sang them when she was once an angel. Now, she keeps the music sheets she has been using since she took over as the main trainer. She has observed that in the past, the children were taught using the tunes handed down through hearing. Since she wanted to be accurate in her production, she wanted to get the notes of these songs. In its absence, for example, the song *Mga Dampog* was taught to her by a priest's sibling in Sevilla. While the source sang, Ma'am Equit jotted the music notes.

Ma'am Equit enthusiastically recalled that time when she was one of the angels. There were only 12 of them plus the lead angel. Their trainer required them to memorize *Mitoo Ako* and other prayers in Bisaya. She eventually learned the prayers. Now that she is training the angels, she also makes sure that they begin and close their practices with prayers that the children can learn and bring to their homes. In this way, children will learn

the importance of a prayerful life.

Bernard Alturas recounted that his being the lead angel for four years made him popular. He was thankful to his father, Paulo Alturas, for forcing him to be one. He considers that experience truly special and memorable as he was able to share his gift of singing with many Tagbilaranons. He further shared that when he sang before, he was accompanied by the band. His father would prepare *lechon* so that after *Hugos*, it would be a sumptuous fare for the band players and those who took part in the performance.

According to the accounts of the FGD participants, much has been changed in the staging of *Hugos* in Tagbilaran. The music used is one. Through the efforts of Ma'am Equit who carefully notated the songs, the recent group of angels sang seven songs. During the performance, the children sang along with their recorded voices. In the previous staging, a band accompanied the lead angel in singing the songs.

The number of angels also changed. Ma'am Equit narrated that there were only 13 angels during her time but now, she has trained 80 children. She also projected that the number of angels would reach a hundred.

The *hugusan* is another change, that is, from a simple bamboo to a zipline-like structure to the pelican-inspired *hugusan* that the performers used in the latest *Hugos*. The symbolism of the mother pelican is rooted in her natural behavior of wounding herself, striking her breast with her beak to feed her young with her blood so they would not starve (Saunders, 2003).

Despite all these differences in terms of the staging of *Hugos*, the organizers have maintained the basic elements like the presence of the angel, the image of the Blessed Mother crowned and the image of Jesus Christ hoisted are still kept.

Hugos still draws a big crowd every time it is staged. This implies that Tagbilaranons value this religious drama as this reminds them of the significance of Jesus Christ's resurrection in the life of a Roman Catholic; thus, together with the entire community, they gather around the front of the Cathedral to witness *Hugos*.

However, the documentation of *Hugos* is faced with several difficulties. First, it is difficult to obtain pictures of previous *Hugos* which were supposed to assist the researcher in the descriptions of the past *Hugos*.

The lack of available documentation of past performances of *Hugos* is considered a constraint. Second, since most of the trainers are already in their old age, it is time to expose potential young leaders to challenging tasks such as organizing and catechizing children during the rehearsals of *Hugos*. Third, with the advancement of science and technology, the Cathedral continues to keep up with the times. However, modernization of the stage, the songs, and other elements of *Hugos* might veer away from the traditional, simple but meaningful dramatization.

Conclusion

Based on the documents and interviews, the staging of *Hugos* enhances and reinforces Boholanos' faith. *Hugos* satisfies the townspeople's basic need for entertainment, their love for the spectacle, or more precisely, their sense of *aesthetic* pleasure. It also demonstrates the value the Filipinos place on the family. *Hugos* features a family reunion of Christ and his Mother and for this reason, all those who participate feel the joy of the vicarious meeting. It also provides an extremely rich experience for the people of these towns who are accustomed to family solidarity. The *Hugos* is rooted in the dynamics of Boholano family relations. Undeniably, *Hugos* plays a crucial part in keeping the peoples' cultures alive.

Dominant among the challenges is the constant modernization of the music and design, using canned orchestral accompaniment and modern arrangement devoid of any trace of Boholano musical heritage. There is also an emerging temptation to a "Broadway-zation" of the tradition, coming up with extravagant sceneries, and abandoning the magical effect of the harness and pulley system, with the unimaginative walking down a ramp for the Lead Angel to descend and walk for his or her aria.

Safeguarding measures like direct transmission of the musical parts through an unbroken chain of musical leaders from the time of inception; reservation of scores through copied notations and modern photocopying procedures; protection of the musical scores by keeping these in the care of the musical leaders and preserve them from climactic and human disaster risks; and constant promotion, enhancement, and revitalization are recommended.

Documentary recordings in the form of CD for the music of *Hugos* and as digitally streaming and downloadable files for the global website can

help preservation. To ensure the continuity of this tradition, *Hugos* requires the engagement of the provincial and municipal governments in the safeguarding efforts, in the form of annual budget appropriation. Copies of the song must be kept in the archives of each church. The paraliturgical practices like *Hugos* have to be chronicled to allow the younger generation to appreciate this tradition and eventually to let them continue this in the years to come.

Not only did they exhibit the fervor of their faith and spirit of voluntarism but also the high respect and reverence for a religious and community practice, *Hugos*, which to most of them meant a tradition that should forever be kept. They said that without *Hugos*, which follows the long Black Saturday Vigil and holy mass- Lent or Holy Week observance is incomplete.

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