

INTRODUCTION

INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE The Genius of a People

From the sixteenth century to the founding of the postwar Philippine Republic, successive waves of foreign invaders had systematically undermined the very foundations of Philippine indigenous traditions, in the process depriving us of the most potent symbols of our identity as a people. The colonizers are now gone. Yet, sadly, Filipinos themselves continue to degrade what the Spaniards and the Americans have not succeeded in wiping out completely. Mainstream Filipinos, especially the moneyed elite have almost completely succumbed to the lure of Hollywood, Broadway, MTV, video games, cyberspace, and other cheap thrills to the detriment of serious thought and reflection, spiritual concerns and more creative forms of expression still found in abundance among our cultural communities who have managed to preserve their ancient ways of life against all odds.

A nation can only be erected on the basis of self-respect, on a sense of self-worth and dignity. Without pride in our own cultural heritage and achievements, there will be no unifying force in our society for social cohesion and unity that is indispensable for nationhood. For being Filipino means pride in being Filipino.

And pride in being Filipino is synonymous with confidence in our positive achievements, the basis of which is our precious intangible cultural heritage. The collective expressions of our indigenous traditions' multifaceted creativity, breadth of skills, and depth of knowledge constitute a bedrock of strength that is indispensable to nation-building. Highlighting the indigenous, what is truly ours, or what is innate in us is to declare to the world what is uniquely Filipino – that which makes us distinct as a people.

The Filipinos will be presented as creators, innovators and bearers of collective wisdom rather than as imitators and passive consumers. In this way, we call attention to our intrinsic dignity and worth and enhance our self-respect. It is a way of dignifying our people, a significant direction in healing and unifying a nation.

Therefore, I wholeheartedly commend this collection of ICH encompassing all the five domains as defined by UNESCO. This guidebook is a celebration of our indigenous, ancient yet contemporary heritage of creative genius and a testament to the profound sources of our cultural identity.

Paeans to the living bearers of our indigenous wisdom documented in this collection. They are the heroic guardians of our treasure troves of knowledge systems, skills and practices!

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