


Tibaldo: Foreign relations from a citizen's standpoint (1st of 2 parts)

ART TIBALDO

 Consumers atbp.

July 23, 2018







WE DO not necessarily have to be a diplomat or a politician to be able to link up, establish networks or attend functions of foreign countries here and abroad. It's not that I am a well-travelled person to say so but I believe that our foreign relations cuts across the government, the people and the land. Embassies of foreign countries here have varied programs and activities that are meant to strengthen bilateral and cultural relationships. I remember submitting my artwork for a painting contest at the Spanish Embassy when I was still a fine arts student back in the late 70s. I did a research on the historic arrival of Spaniards in the country and I rendered on canvas an oil painting depicting the blood-compact between Miguel Lopez de Legaspi and Datu Sikatuna. Blood compact was a ritual in ancient Philippines intended to seal a friendship or treaty called "Sandugo" between foreign explorers like Legaspi and Sikatuna, the chieftain of Bohol.

According an earlier account, a blood compact was contracted between Portuguese explorer Ferdinand Magellan and Rajah Humabon of Cebu. It was through historical accounts such as this I suppose that even Malacañan today confers or awards an Order of Sikatuna to foreign leaders who have rendered exceptional and meritorious services to the Republic of the Philippines.

Said Order was signed by President Elpidio Quirino through Executive Order No. 571 dated February 27, 1953 when it commemorated the first treaty (Pacto de Sangre) between the Philippines and a foreign country. In that art competition, I did not get any award but I can say to myself that I have at least drank red wine from the embassy's crystal glass during the ensuing art exhibit.

After my BFA, I took an offered short course on Cinema as Art at UP Diliman and I was lucky to have been given a film grant from the Goethe Institut which is the Federal Republic of Germany's cultural institute which promotes the study of German abroad and encourage international cultural exchange. The "Goethe-Haus" as it was initially called, opened its doors in the Philippines on April 7, 1961 in Pasay City and is now at its current home at the Adamson Center along L.P. Leviste Street in Makati City providing a comprehensive picture of Germany here in the Philippines.

I pursued my film studies at MOWELFUND when it was still at the old residence of then Mayor Joseph Estrada in San Juan, Metro Manila and we again received support by the German Embassy and French government through a program that was I think called Film Varaan where we had film directors Haro Senft and Ingo Petzke as our lecturers who taught us methods on how to produce films. I was then working with the Philippine Information Agency in the late 80s when I learned that we can borrow educational films from the British Embassy so I actually dropped by their office in Makati and had a chance to borrow 16mm films and given a Library Borrower's Card that I still have today.

My first foreign travel as a scholar was in Japan when I was sent to the Okinawa International Center for a six-month course of Television Production under the Colombo Plan. The Colombo Plan is a regional organization that embodies the concept of collective intergovernmental effort to strengthen economic and social development of member countries in the Asia-Pacific region focuses primarily on human resources development. Even today, I still get connected with the Embassy of Japan, Manila Office through its local counterpart and network of artists. When we initiated a cosplay or anime costume show at the Baguio Post Office grounds as part of our art encounter, the cosplay models came with a Oguni San, a retiree who adopted Baguio as his home. In fact there are quite a number of Japanese nationals who joins us when we have the Tanabata Festival which has become an annual event in Baguio.

I attended the First Igorot International Consultations held in West Covina, California on the summer of 1995 as a covering media practitioner and documenter hence I was accommodated by the organizers as part of the secretariat. Because I promptly returned before my official

travel ended, I was granted a VISA with a much longer effectivity during my succeeding trips to the US. In 2003, the Cabini Mission in the Philippines sent me to their New York General Assembly to present the programs of the Save Our Street Children Inc. of which I was the President at that time. For years, the Cabrini Sisters has been supporting Baguio's street children and they left a legacy of a shelter at Camdas Subdivision and a stained glass window of Saint Frances Xavier Cabrini at the right side of the Baguio Cathedral.

The city of Baguio has sister cities around the globe and I only happened to attend two functions and it happened at Vallejo City of California and Honolulu in Hawaii. My travel to the island state was when I was invited by the East-West Center as artist-in-residence at the EWC Art Gallery where I helped mount an exhibit depicting the upland cultures of North Philippines. It happened in February 2006 when the islanders celebrated the Centennial Anniversary of Filipino Migration in Hawaii where I also gave lectures of Cordillera Culture at the University of Hawaii and two other state colleges.

Not many are aware but Baguio has been the Philippine base and seedbed of the International Delphic Council (IDC) with pianist Divina Bautista as among its top officials. The IDC is a charitable, non-governmental organization based in Berlin, Germany and claims to be the highest authority for all matters regarding the Delphic Games of the modern era. Our RP Delphic team competed at the III Jeju Delphic games in Jeju, Korea in 2009 and we brought home medals composed of one gold, one silver and one crystal with Ifugao carver Ernie Dulang bagging the top award for sculpture.

While Luzon is mired and caught up with the monsoon last Saturday, about forty seven guests from our sister city of Vallejo, California arrived late evening to celebrate with us in our 25 years of twinning. They were formally received by the city officials and formally introduced during the Monday flag ceremony at the Baguio City Hall. To be continued.

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I used to wonder how slim girls eat everything they like and still look amazing.



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