

## Sanctuary: Genius Loci and Empowerment in Community-based Tourism

An Investigation of Community-Based Theater, Tourism, and the Creative Industries in Thailand, Japan, and Indonesia, as Emerging Models of Social Entrepreneurships

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### Introduction: The Problematique

This artist-researcher has been involved with the establishment of community theater groups in Bohol and in the Visayan region, loosely organized as the Lihok Bisaya Network, jumpstarted under the auspices of the National Commission for Culture and the Arts of the Philippines or the NCCA, the local governments, and community-based NGOs and people's organizations. Selected on the basis of the presence of vulnerable but rich heritage assets in the area, of economic dislocation, and of potentials of community cultural tourism as an engine of growth, these newly formed groups were comprehensively trained in a specially designed and multi-faceted curriculum for community theater, addressing the major Millennium Development Goals. However, in reality, these amateur groups performing by the riverbanks, by the sea coast, or in hillsides and forest areas, are still striving to assert their presence in the tourism loop of their respective provinces. Still far from being sustainable, they find themselves fighting for recognition, resources, and participation in the burgeoning tourism value chain.

Various local development players have bewailed the economic imbalance which mainstream popular tourism packages had engendered. Sales and profits went mostly to city-based travel agencies and tourism establishments, with little trickling down to the basal communities. The participation of local artists and cultural groups, an essential factor in a tourism agenda boasting of "people at the heart of development", was found wanting. To address such imbalance, new tourism circuits were launched in the last four years to engender more community participation. One of these was the birthing of the Abatan River Community Life Tour in the province of Bohol, organized by five municipalities thriving by the banks of the winding and nipa-swamped Abatan River. However, in the past two years, the effort

has yielded far from impressive results. Was there something wrong with our package? Was community-based tourism then a mere pipedream? Is there any other country in Asia from which I can learn?

### Beginning Constructs as Paradigm Guides

Before leaving for my research, I had already been enamored by the following constructs which I considered to be the key themes along the way: Genius Loci, Imagining Communities, Social Entrepreneurships, Community-Based Tourism, Creative Industries, and the Creative Economy.<sup>1</sup> These six constructs form a cluster of satellite themes, a prism of ideas, through which a major phenomenon is to reflect on or to refract back to: *Community Theater. Where and who are these community arts and theater groups consciously engaged with the use of the theater arts within the context of tourism? How do the five constructs or themes interplay in the world of contemporary community theater in Asia?*

### ACT I: THAILAND—SURVIVAL AMIDST TOURISM FLOODWATERS

#### The Landscape

Thailand abounds in a spectacular range of tourism varieties, of almost every shape, dimension, or configuration. This magnitude has been considered both a boon and a bane.

One witnesses different tourism perspectives in the droves of tourists trooping to the Siam Niramit Theater in Bangkok, a Las Vegas-inspired performing arts space where one is feted with almost two hours of theater pyrotechnics of Thai history and culture, after being doused with a 10-course Thai dinner at the cost of \$75.00. Or one could buy packaged tours all around the country, shuttling through temples and heritage sites, through beach resorts and elephant tours, eco-adventures of

almost any kind. Anything which can be fabricated, manufactured, designed, is sold to tourists.

I had the unique experience of witnessing how a piece of genuine Thai culture was being transformed through the conveyor belt of mass cultural tourism. Joining a community-based tourism exposure for students from Silpakorn University led by Professor Jittasak Putjorn, I participated in a home-stay tourism program in the heartland of Mae Hongson province, in the village of Baan Mae La Na. In the evening, the indigenous Shan community shared some of its cultural traditions in music and dance, enthraling the student audience with their simplicity and gentleness. Young dancers accompanied by elder musicians on traditional instruments shared a Buddhist-inspired folk dance which involved the imitative but unaffected movements of a donkey/deer, played in glee by two boys chasing after a group of winged creatures symbolizing peacocks, danced by girls costumed in simple folkloric attire. The performance exuded an air of simplicity and reverence. On another occasion, I saw this same dance as a major production number at the Old Chiangmai Cultural Center and as part of the highly popular “Kantoke”, a dinner-theater presentation. However, the same dance was altered a bit to fit the perceived tastes of foreign tourists. These extra effects were more tremendously transmogrified in yet a bigger Kantoke Complex in Bangkok, where dancers, with more garish wings as though popping out from a Brazilian Mardi Gras Carnival, broke their dance routine to directly approach the seated audience to solicit tips. The original performance tradition had lost its true context as it got transformed through the tourism mill as a cultural commodity.

In such a picture of commercialized tourism, where lies the creative spirit, the *Genius Loci*? Small but increasingly significant miracles do happen.

#### **In Focus One: Makhampom**

The Makhampom Theater Organization in Chiang-dao, with headquarters in Bangkok, was founded in the early 1980s by Thai activists out from whom renowned theater artist and API Fellow Tua Pradit

Prassarthong became artistic director. It focused on theater as a form of people’s media, and included the revitalization of Thai traditional theater as one program element. After 25 years with Bangkok as its base, it moved its base of operations for community and international programs to the rural northern countryside of Chiang-dao where it built a community-based Living Theater Center, providing integrated programs of workshops, training, and performances for local, regional and international artists and cultural development workers. Its facilities include dormitories, a theater space, meeting rooms, open workshop areas, and a resource center built with simple construction materials on a five-hectare area surrounded by idyllic rice paddies.

Makhampom, through the current leadership of Pongjit Saphakhun, Paluhad Paholkulbutr, Yada Kriangkraiwuttikul, and Richard Barber, has slowly developed a community-based cultural tourism project borne out of its direct participation in a unique struggle of a group of indigenous peoples from Burma, who had decided to migrate to Thailand. The Dara-ang community created a theater piece based on their indigenous folklore, using their own artistic methods, enhanced with other Thai traditional cultural expressions. The community gradually became an exposure site for alternative tourists wishing to have an idea of the life and culture of ethnic communities, prompting Makhampom to establish a new program: educational travel for Australian students and development workers providing lodging in the center, outreach visits in the Chiangdao areas, interactions with the Dara-ang community, and workshops in people’s theater and cultural development work. Earnings from this alternative educational tourism are spent on running Makhampom’s operations and underwriting development projects for their Dara-ang neighbors. A similar program is also being developed at the Mirror Foundation in Chiangrai.

#### **In Focus Two: A Community-based Tourism Institute**

Another edifying inroad in local tourism is the emerging impact of an NGO, the Thai Community-

Based Tourism Institute, popularly known as CBT-I. Ably steered by Potjana Suansri or Noi, this organization has a track record of training almost a hundred communities in various ecological settings and ethnic backgrounds. CBT-I has synthesized and curricularized its formidable experience in providing tools for disadvantaged communities through manuals, handbooks, and booklets that are handsomely laid-out and cogently written.

This reader had the distinct experience of joining exposure tours organized by CBT-I in two villages of Mae Hong Son Province: Baan Mae Lana and Baan Ja Boo. In both communities where we spent a day and a half each, we were guided on an environment tour (mountain treks and cave exploration in Ja Boo; forests and rice and cornfields in Mae Lana) by proficient and engaging tour guides, on visiting households where we interacted with families as they did their home cooking and daytime chores, learned to weave or play traditional instruments, and saw homegrown industries like organic sesame oil and sugar-cane juice processing with the aid of indigenously constructed machinery. Dinner served in an open hall or a temple was prepared by the local women's organization. The experience was capped each night with cultural sharing without the artifice of theatrical technology. The breakfast and lodging home-stay tourism package featured the local mountain cuisine of herbs and wild vegetables, and sleeping in clean and comfortable rooms with simple amenities of blankets and mosquito nets. Family hospitality

was the warmest I had ever felt. Tour guides were distributed amongst 30 students, and overnight lodging amongst 15 households. The gross income from this activity was distributed among all participating local suppliers, guides, and hosts, with a percentage set aside for the upkeep of the local tourism organization.

Training for both village communities ensued almost at the same time three years ago and yielded members drilled in visitor relations, story telling, the organized and synchronized implementation of tasks, and open audit of expense and revenue. Trained villagers were visibly beaming with self-esteem and pride in their natural and cultural resources.

### Analysis

In a scholarly examination of community-based tourism, Chiang Mai University, in cooperation with the Rockefeller Foundation, launched a series of research projects to investigate the impact or results of a number of community-based tourism projects in 2008-2009. In the book *Mekong Tourism*, it laid out six areas relating to the implementation of community-based tourism projects, and against which achievements would be assessed.<sup>2</sup> Achieving good practice for each criterion requires an average score of 3 out of 4, or 75 percent. In the last two columns, I attempted to do my own assessment of the two villages which I visited together with the Silapakorn students:

	AREA	FACTORS	Baan Mae Lana	Baan Ja Boo
A	Organizational Structure and Community Participation	grouping of stakeholders, proportion of villagers involved in community tourism, ability to make contact with the village, and benefit sharing.	3.5	3.5
B	Marketing	brochure, website, publicity in newspapers/ magazines/ television, marketing team, and fees	3	3
C	Product Development	product development assessed using six indicators: tourist activities, hospitality, home-stay service, tour guide skill, community and souvenir shop, and application of local wisdom and knowledge.	3.75	3.75

	AREA	FACTORS	Baan Mae Lana	Baan Ja Boo
D	Safety and Sanitation	security, travel safety and convenience, public restrooms, and parking.	3	3
E	Environmental Management	attractive environment for tourist attractions, land use planning, solid waste management, water quality management, noise disturbance management, local practices of environmental conservation, and preservation of the natural environment.	3.5	3.5
F	Home-stay Management	house selection for home-stay service delivery, house structure, housing area, bedding, bathroom and toilet, food, water supply, and food containers.	3.75	3
		AVERAGE SCORE	3.416	3.291

On the other hand, in an interview with one of the major writers of the research, some negative tendencies that went counter to the avowed ideals of CBT were identified.

In general, community-based tourism is not well managed by the local people. It still depends on the assistance of external agencies, in particular NGOs. Most communities imitate the management systems of successful communities without developing their own management capacity. This also leads to duplicate activities and products. Few villagers are involved in tourism activities. Income is concentrated among a limited number of villagers. To ensure steady income, villagers concentrate on their primary careers as income from tourism activities is secondary and unstable. This discourages the community from improving tourist attractions.<sup>3</sup>

These observations, however valid, have not allowed the fire of enthusiasm burning in the other leaders of the Thai CBT to die, but rather, stoke it all the more. Ms. Wasanee in Huay Reng Village leads a homestay program which was recently awarded by TAT or the Tourism Authority

of Thailand, as a Regional Model of Excellence. The local organization continues to develop local soap, liniments, jams, juices, and beauty and medicinal products out of their local mangosteen orchards, alongside its well-organized homestay tourism.

In Salakphet village in Koh Chang Island, which was once a pristine environment of white beaches and green forest, ardent CBTI-trained youth leaders Fluck Tungchai and Ju Panichsukohto doggedly organized youth cultural organizations by holding annual centennial trees festivals, kayaking competitions, band concerts, and eco-treks with youth guides, to advocate continued sale and overdevelopment of the fragile island.

### **In Focus Three: Other Emerging Models of Empowerment through Genius Loci**

The Family Tree is an arts and crafts fair trade shop in the high-end tourism city of Hua Hin. Proprietress Premruethai Tosermkit grew up in Northeast Thailand, where she learned the ancient art of creating silk with indigenous natural dyes and weaving fibers using these dyes. Her shop is a venue for selling excellently crafted handmade arts and crafts focused on the use of local dyes.

Earnings go back to the local weavers who are also deeply committed to planting more trees in their community.

The Hua-Hin Artist's Village is a two-hectare community of twelve prominent Thai visual artists and sculptors, each having his or her own personally designed studio for exhibition, also serving as a workshop area for teaching art, as well as a shop for selling their art.

The Vic huahin Patravadi Arts School and Theater, owned and led by legendary cultural visionary theater director Mejhudon Patravadi, is a haven for talented and gifted youth where they are able to train under the best of drama, music, and art teachers. The students stay in modern dormitories fully equipped with facilities and amenities.

The Thailand Dramatic Institute in the different regions of Thailand takes pride in producing artists who find jobs teaching traditional dance drama technologies in other local drama colleges or performing in many tourism establishments.

The PETA Mekong Partnership Program under the auspices of the Rockefeller Foundation conducts workshops for theater and performing arts practitioners from the Mekong River countries, providing skills and resources to harness the potentials of theater for development work, especially in the areas of gender, sexuality, and HIV/AIDS.

The Bangkok Theater Network is a 10-year theater alliance of contemporary theater groups. Problematized by dwindling resources and the lack of theater venues, many of these groups rent or occupy small experimental "black box" theater spaces, just to be able to assert and develop their bursting creativities.

These Thai artists, together with other excellent community-based tourism leaders, are indeed cultural champions and artistic warriors in their own right, as they fight in a world run by profit in order to assert their countrymen's *Genius Loci*.

## ACT II: JAPAN—ASSERTION OF THE SIGNIFICANT MINORITY IN MEANING CREATION

### The Landscape

The landscape of cultural tourism in Japan left me stunned by its level of systemic organization and organic sense of aesthetic order or hierarchy.

The astounding cultural programming of Japan's various World Heritage Sites like Kyoto, Osaka, Hiroshima, Hiraizumi, and even as far south as Okinawa, evinced a most assiduous and scientific process of restoration, research, conservation management, information delivery, promotions and marketing. Japan's national cultural treasures in the theatrical art, like the Noh and the Kabuki, have enjoyed years of infrastructural support and progressive development. Cultural heritage districts exhibit Japanese ingenuity in product development and, most especially, product packaging. One cannot miss out the role of the Japanese government in these arduous tasks of cultural preservation, development and promotions, as a basic component of tourism.

Despite these efforts at specialized cultural tourism development, however, profit-driven mass tourism is as highly organized and thought through. Trips to Japanese public baths, gambling casinos, sleazy nightspots, nature spots, and pop entertainment centers are as rampantly patronized as the latest cultural inventions of the Japanese mind and imagination.

### In Focus One: Revalidating Community Creativity - The Japanese Public Theater Space

Theater director and producer Sato Makoto led a core of kindred artists-leaders in the years 1997-2002, in building the first model of a community-styled public theater, the Setagaya Public Theater. In 2003, he designed and built a second public theater space, the Koenji Public Theater for the Koenji district community in Tokyo. The Koenji

Public Theater has multiple theater spaces and workshop facilities within its modernist little complex, complete with modern theater facilities, all of which aim to enhance dynamic interaction with the Koenji community, a district known for small stores and marketplaces. Activities inviting public dialogues, children's theater workshops, an actor's training academy, and the production of new plays by budding playwrights make the Koenji an animated place for public discussion and engagement. Its most consistent claim to public accountability is its adopting an annual Koenji community cultural festival, the Awadori Festival, for which it opened its doors for rehearsals and meetings to about 30 groups from the entire community, even months before the event. The Awadori Festival harnesses the creativity and imaginative prowess of smaller sections in the Koenji district and is a major example of a seasonal community creative industry. In 2010, about 150,000 people visited this new haven of communal creativity.

#### **In Focus Two: Reclaiming Sense of Community: The Kominkan**

Theater actress and director Natsuko Kiritani, or Nacco, a founding theater artist of the Black Tent Theater or BTT, led me to a suburban district in Gumma prefecture where still exists a community arts center, or what Japanese society refers to as Kominkan, or the Community Learning Center. Middle-aged volunteers take turns offering workshops and cultural skills in various fields, from traditional to modern dances and music, and from children's art activities to senior citizens cultural activities, at a very low price. Here clients enjoy the company of community members, otherwise walled from each other by the stresses of industrialized life. The Kominkan in Morioka City in Iwate Prefecture is a bigger physical structure with more iconic cultural offerings, like workshops on the tea ceremony, Zen, Yoga, furniture making, and local traditional cuisine, also at a minimal fee. These *kominkans* provide the essential safety nets or cultural sanctuaries for communities otherwise beholden to the latest of impersonal cultural technologies, prevalent in commercial mass tourism.

#### **In Focus Three: Reclaiming Cultural Sovereignty amidst Mainstream Tourism - The Okinawan Experience**

None resonated more strongly with my Philippine socio-political experience than my experience with the people of Okinawa. Visits to the prefectural museum, the peace memorial, the underground Navy headquarters during the war, the traditional arts and crafts center, navigating through layers of cultural memories from the original Okinawan nation of the Ryukyus who continue to struggle for identity and historical pride, reminded me so viscerally of the Philippine colonial experience with Spain and the United States.

The new National Theater of Okinawa, a toast to Okinawan cultural pride, was built by the Japanese government for this once archipelagic nation to showcase whatever was left of their vanishing cultural traditions. Many Okinawan cultural scholars and artists lament the predominance of mainland Japanese cultural goods in the tourism and culture markets. This phenomenon has become an impetus for Okinawan artists to revitalize their performing traditions like the well-loved *kumi udui* and the *shibai*, reinforcing the Okinawan or Ryukyuan cultural identity.

Concerned woman playwright and theater critic Shoko Yonaha opines that despite the cynicism brought about by the continued effects of the Japanese and the American presence, Okinawans have realized that their unique cultural norms and practice could exist side-by-side with other shared national values, goals, and institutions. In an essay written for a book entitled *Ethnicity and Identity*, she claims that "cultural pluralism is occurring in Okinawa, and cultural differences are seen to be an asset rather than as a defect".<sup>4</sup>

Okinawa's "The Islands Festival" demonstrates an outburst of local ingenuity in products such as seafood, teas, cereals, toys, clothing, fabrics, sweet delicacies, sauces, herbs, and island-hopping tourism packages for the many islands of the small archipelago, including Taketomi Island, which has been in the list for World Heritage Inscription.



### In Focus Five: Creating a Niche in Tourism: Spirit of Japan Travel

Amidst the din of mainstream mass cultural tourism, one sole warrior in the advocacy for authentic community-based tourism is Masaru Takayama, through his Spirit of Japan Travel. He has designed and managed several tour experiences-packages that put the community up-front as managers, beneficiaries, and co-creators of the experience. He believes that “the basic communities distant from the mega-cities have little chance to gain from main mass tourism. Operators tend to undersell; there is no capital for smaller communities; Japanese mass tourism has always been luxury travel tourism; popular bus tours which are cheaper ferry tourists to low-quality forms of entertainment”.

#### Touchstone Reflection:

I gaped at the beauty of a Noh, a Kabuki, a Butoh performance or at a Sato Makoto multi-Asian experiment. I marveled at the wondrous Hiraizumi medieval temples and the Osaka Castle. I was held breathless by the multi-media installations at the Hiroshima and Okinawa Peace memorials and the beautiful Mt. Fuji. Indeed, mainstream and majestic cultural tourism is here to stay in once imperial Japan.

However, two ineradicable experiences uncontrollably brought tears to my eyes. If tourism meant opening one’s home, one’s heart and mind to another person, then my visit to artist teacher Hitoshi Hoshino, founding director of an alternative Junior High School, the Sangosya School in Naha, Okinawa, and the performance tribute for deceased friend and playwright Gen Yamamoto in Morioka in Iwate prefecture, were matchless in profundity in meaning. Hitoshi showed me the area where he and his high school students were literally digging the ground and heaping stone upon stone to build the foundation of an integrated arts school with the Okinawan culture and environment as a core subject of interactive learning. In a moving production tribute to playwright Gen Yamamoto mounted by the BTT, various different leaders from different cultural sectors in Morioka came and paid their last respects to him, who had continually come to Morioka to share his talents

with the community. An atmosphere of love and solidarity suffused the entire production even until the cast party, where all took turns delivering their moving eulogies with utmost warmth, friendship, and love.<sup>5</sup>

For one brief moment, I stepped into the interiors of their culture and was allowed to experience the depths of their humanity. This was indeed an example of a heartfelt travel to a humanizing and selfless “imagining community”.

### ACT III INDONESIA: UNBROKEN HERITAGE AS A SANCTUARY BEQUEATHED

#### Culture Capitals in the Island of the Gods

The artistic genius of this enviable nation is as vast as its geographic magnitude. “Ubiquitous” is but a lame word to describe the cultural phosphorescence of the Indonesian Genius Loci. In Jakarta, whether in the Wayang Kulit Museum in Jakarta, or at the TIM, where there is a monthly round of artistic activities organized by the Jakarta Arts Council, including special performances of the 100-year old folk comedy *Ms. Tjib Tjib*, of theater gurus like master theater directors Sardono, Riantiarno, and Putu Wijaya, of new and traditional dances and music from the other parts of the country, of *tari topeng* (masked dances) recitals from Javanese, Sundanese, Balinese, Sarawak regions—the list seems insanely endless.

The twin royal cities of Jogjakarta and Surakarta or Solo are two cultural planets of the creative industries. One can only gasp at the cultural eloquence of the Royal Museums of both the Jogja and Solo Kratons, and how royalty and aristocracy had played an enormous role in cultural patronage and creation. Along the span of the immensely popular Marlioboro street and environs, are museums, galleries, shops, eateries, literally awash with Indonesian cultural icons, transformed into merchandise, from kitchenware to clothing, from décor to food, toys to accessories, from paintings to miniatures. Here, the innards of creativity, so to speak, are laid out on the streets for all to see, buy, and enjoy.

Bandung City boasts of its Angklung Orchestra at the Saung Angklung Udjo Village. Surakarta is one haven of batik art, another cultural icon inscribed by UNESCO as a Masterpiece of World Intangible Heritage. Batik production processes displayed at the elegantly restored aristocratic palace, the Museum Batik Danar Hadi, climaxes in a sweatshop of nearly a hundred workers bustling in a human conveyor belt of batik production: pattern designing, stenciling, waxing, and dyeing.

Ubud District, one major cultural nexus in Bali Island, with adjoining Peliatan, Gianyar, and Bona districts, spills out high-end and popular art museums exhibiting generations of Balinese aesthetics in sculpture, murals, and oils; temples with nightly cultural shows from the Hindu epics and Balinese folklore, including the newly devised *kecak* dance dramas; resorts, hotels, inns, and home-stays designed in the characteristic Balinese style; bookshops and markets selling folk, native, ethnic crafts and merchandise. At every bend and corner runs a lane of sculpture garden stores, with religious and mythical figures cast in stone in every conceivable size and weight. And if one chances to bump into a cremation ceremony in the streets, or get invited to a wedding or a temple ritual in one remote village, the experience is sheer phantasmagoria.

Performances and festivals abound in these cultural megalopolis. And the artistic menu is legion. Each major city offers its own series of festivals each year. Jogjakarta, among others, has its International Carnival, Solo its SIPA Festival, and Bali its Ubud Writer's Festival.

At the Prembanan Theater Complex, the well-loved Ramayana epic is enthralling with the elegantly lighted temple spires glimmering in the panoramic and natural sky cyclorama. Different troupes from Jogjakarta and other theater academies in Java take turns in interpreting this tale. At the theater shows in Ubud Raya in Bali, different community groups of Balinese dancers and musicians rotate in about twenty heritage venues around the Ubud Raya area, providing short, but engaging, theatrical medleys of Balinese dances and music resulting from generations of theatrical curating by masters of the craft.

### Government in Cultural Education

What provides a modicum of stability and a promise of sustainability is how the Indonesian government supports the training and promotion of artists in almost all facets of the cultural profession. Each major region or province has its own Institute of the Arts or *Institut Seni Indonesia* (ISI), providing college degree courses in various disciplines, the most outstanding of which are the ISIs in Jakarta, Jogjakarta, Bandung, Solo, and of course, Bali. A visit to all these institutes reveals an accomplished faculty of artists, a wide, eco-friendly space for learning with impressive facilities, and a programme of study that drinks from the wells of actual masters until students find their own original creative voice.

### Government as Cultural Harbinger

This writer had the unique privilege of having interviewed top officials of Indonesia's cultural governance: Dewi Noviami the Drama Head of the Jakarta Arts Council, Tazbir of the Jogjakarta Provincial Tourism Authority, and Suastika of the Bali Tourism Office, to name a few. The most eloquent and comprehensive articulation of the new emerging agenda in Indonesia's cultural tourism comes from Henky Hermantoro, who laid out the ideas on the new Creative Economy program of Indonesia in his pioneering book entitled *Creative-based Tourism*.<sup>6</sup>

But contrary voices are also heard.

### In Focus One: A Community Tragedy in the Making: The Wayang Orang Theater

The Wayang Orang Theater in Solo, a seventy-year institution in this royal city, features a theatrical depiction of ageless stories from Indonesian Indian-inspired epics. All the performers and production staff are government employees, whose main job is to provide *wayang orang* entertainment six days a week. They also come from the same community areas and families or clans of the *wayang orang* lineage.

The experience is a baffling encounter with the shackles of tradition. Actors are given their



roles two hours before the show; perform their assigned characters using stock and codified movements, dialogues, chants, and gestures; portray different plays each evening for two and a half hours out of a selection of about seventy storylines or scripts whose scenarios are well-sequenced in the mind of the director; are aided with a defined set of costumes, make up, and music cues from a live gamelan orchestra.

“And this is where heritage ceases to be creative”, say concerned theater artists like Hinundayan and Yosephat. Everything is repeated routine, unchanging in its repetitiveness, cruelly stuck in its fossilizing mold of codes. Audiences in the Wayang Orang Theater have dwindled in the past decade, leaving the venue a curiosity to tourists and a source of nostalgia to old and aging loyal fans.

### **In Focus Two: The Courage to Rebuke Cultural Elitism—Sutanto and the *Communitas Lima Gunung***

A jazz musician on the piano by training, an arts connoisseur by avocation, a visual and literary artist by vocation, a committed cultural organizer by choice, a biting critic of government, and an iconoclast by temperament—these are how I would describe the enigmatically imposing Sutanto, owner of the famous Mendut Studio in Magelang. One is deeply touched by his care of and solidarity with the peripheral communities of the mountains of Java.

Sutanto leads the now iconic Lima Gunung Festival or Five Mountains Festival, a festival of people’s art and culture participated in by communities from a network of mountains in Central Java: Mount Merapi, Mount Merbabu, Mount Andong, Mount Sumbing, and the Menoreh mountain range. Sutanto states that

“the mountains serve more as a symbol of rural groups that have long been sidelined by government institutions rather than a mere indication of origin. It aims at affirming that outside the government and political elite with their frequent mismanagement of the population, there is an ongoing process

of artistic creation in villages, or in mountain slopes, to maintain traditions and instinctive abilities. The festival provides opportunity and trust to art communities to manage their own affairs, which have been previously been in the hands of other circles.

The festival rotates every year from one mountain to the other. Sutanto takes pride in the fact that the festival has not sought a single rupiah from the government since its existence. Sutanto continues the Indonesian breed of progressive cultural visionaries like Rendra, eschewing authority over cultural integrity and artistic freedom”.

### **In Focus Three: Communal Heritage Anchored in Spirituality whilst Embracing the Industry**

KELOLA, an Indonesian NGO devoted to enhancing cultural development and excellence among Indonesian artists, brought me into contact with many community-oriented theater groups like Celah Celah Langit of Iman Soleh in Bandung, the theater networks in Jogjakarta, and the cultural forces in Bali. One important encounter was with the artistic progeny of the Sidia clan.

I Made Sidia is one of seven siblings of the 80-year old master guru I Made Sijo. This cultural patriarch has taught all his children a multi-art tradition of the Balinese performative act: carving for the masks, *wayang kulit* and *golek* puppets; dancing for the *topeng* and other *tari*; and playing the gamelan instruments. I Made Sijo deemed it their destiny to bequeath a heritage of cultural expressiveness as everyone’s birthright. Trained with the best of contemporary Indonesian artists and in the United States for advanced theater studies, I Made Sidia experimented on fusing modern media technology with the Balinese traditions at the Bali Safari and Marine Park Theater Complex with his production of the Bali Agung.

This is a theatrical production of the legends around Balinese Goddesses, involves close to 150 performers, and runs for five to six times a week. It utilizes all forms of Balinese cultural expressions,

synthesizes these in a narrative format that is totally absorbing, fusing modern theater technologies including acrobatics, gymnastics, and forms of physical theater associated with Cirque du Soleil.

This event has deeply changed the lives of many of the Balinese performers. Chosen from I Made's community of neighbors, friends, and relatives, the group has virtually developed into a closely-knit community theater engaged in cultural tourism. The performers, who are paid professional fees, set aside a percentage for maintaining a dance and music school for children in the home of I Made Sidia. After a matinee performance, the entire troupe would travel to the nearby beach for a two-hour training session in voice, movement, improvisation, and acting drawn from both Balinese and Western theater pedagogies. What a whirlwind of income-generating cultural activities for a 150-member community theater force!

But what struck me as a blast was how this community of artists regards art and religion in much the same way as all Balinese do. In a special thanksgiving and propitiation ceremony in the home of I Made Sidia, the entire Bali Agung ensemble transformed his abode into a multi-sensorial environment of music and dance offerings. When asked why he did not mind the absence of an audience ogling at his masked performance in the ceremony, I Made Sidia quickly quipped, "It was not a show. It is my own prayer offering to the gods, thanking them for blessings received".<sup>7</sup>

### Conclusions

These performances in tourism in Thailand, Japan, and Indonesia exemplify "the art of presence" and the "quiet encroachment of the ordinary" which Dr. Mary Racelis pointed out from the work of anthropologist Asef Bayat, and which she underscored as "an engagement in new paradigms, done in interaction with the people whose lives are most affected". This research into the interiors of cultural tourism in three countries brought me to such a higher plane of realization and insights.

For community-based cultural tourism to prosper, the communities must be able to fathom and

celebrate the wisdom and ingenuity of their history and culture. Lessons from Thailand underscore the threats of a merely profit-driven orientation. In Japan, I saw the dangers of the homogenization of creativity's taking a toll on smaller but engaged communities envisioning their own parameters of creativity. Indonesia unmasked the other face of tradition and governance stultifying creativeness and artistic freedom.

One major instrument to offset these trends is the presence of passionately committed cultural visionaries who are able to see their historic role in cultural and social transformation. Another would be the level of awareness of the communities as to their own significance in this changing world, of their *Genius Loci* and its power to transform a tourism landscape insensitive to the real stirrings of a people's culture.

The experience also stressed the need to be scientific in the process of developing social entrepreneurs. The pedagogy reaped by the experience and expertise of groups like the Community-based Tourism Institute and the Makhampom of Thailand; the models of the *Kominkan* and Taketomi Island Communities in Japan; and aesthetic education profiled by the Indonesian ISIs or academies of arts and culture—all these reinforce my belief in the solid values of human resource development, capability building, and social preparation in community organizing. The process of ownership and internalization of the values of social entrepreneurship can only be sustained through a long-term and strategic look at cultural and social change. Nothing changes overnight.<sup>8</sup>

Select community cultural and theater groups in Asia hold a key to enhancing Philippine knowledge of and skills in community-based cultural tourism. It is highly recommended that a network of kindred spirits be launched for a cross-cultural and inter-regional exchange and resource-sharing in the area of community theaters as social entrepreneurs in the domain of tourism. Such a program which I entitle "Likha Asya", a convergence of minds and hearts passionately engaged with the Creative Industries, Community Theater, and Community-

based Tourism, a fellowship of Asian cultural creatives, will further broaden and deepen the ongoing discourse on Community-based Tourism for the Creative Economy.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> *Genius Loci* is essentially the “character of place”, or the “spirit or genius of place” bringing about the authentic integrity of a community’s creativity. *Imagining Communities* are proactive and reflexive communities, directly engaged in social transformation of their *habitus*, having come out from dehumanizing conditions, and now fabricating meaning from new possibilities and resources “grasped within new social configurations”. *Social Entrepreneurships* are business enterprises that consider the following bottom-lines for authentic implementation: (a) ecological preservation and cultural integrity; (b) leadership and management by an organized community; and (c) equitability in the sharing of revenues among the enterprise stakeholders. Planet. People. Profit. *Community-based Tourism*, as a specific example of social entrepreneurship, is that mode of sustainable tourism led, managed, and owned by a defined community, usually disenfranchised from the sources of power and capital, but devoted to the preservation of their natural and cultural heritage as it promotes and markets its local tourism destination or experience. The term *creative industries* refers to those contemporary modes of production utilizing the individual’s creative resources, or a community’s assets as sources of cultural capital for product development such as publications, fashion, media, furniture, and cultural tourism. Lastly, the most recent over-arching construct that intends to describe the impact which creativity and culture have impinged on local or national development is the term *Creative Economy*. See section on References below for books which deal with these themes.

<sup>2</sup> See Chapter 7, “Benchmarking Community-Based Tourism Management in Thailand”, by Korawan Sangkakorn, researcher, Social Research Institute, Chiang Mai University, from Kaosa-ard Mingsam (ed.). 2007. *Mekong Tourism: Blessings for All? CMU: Mekong Series Na.2*. Chiang Mai, Thailand. Social Research Institute, Chiang Mai University. (Please make this a parenthetical reference instead)

<sup>3</sup> Interview with Korawan Sangkakorn, researcher, Social Research Institute, Chiang Mai University – (convert to a parenthetical reference)

<sup>4</sup> Interview with Ms. Yonaha elaborating on issues discussed in her essay “Okinawan Drama: Its Ethnicity and Identity Under Assimilation to Japan”; written for same book, referenced in Section on References. (convert to a parenthetical reference)

<sup>5</sup> The Black Tent Theater of Japan or Kuro Tendo has been a major model in bringing theater to the communities outside Tokyo, even to the farthest isles of the Japan archipelago, especially from the 1970s to the 1980s.

<sup>6</sup> All these tourism officials took pains in facilitating field visits to their respective heritage tourism sites. A major offshoot of this networking activity was the invitation from

the Surakarta City Office to this writer and his group (Bohol and NCCA artists) to perform at the Solo International Performing Arts Festival in September 2012. The contingent was accompanied by officers from the Philippine NCCA, who saw for themselves the wealth of Indonesian culture in Java and Bali in a side cultural exposure trip.

<sup>7</sup> Aside from permitting the writer to see his production of Bali Agung, I Made Sidia brought me to temple rituals and local activities, where nary a tourist was present except for me, who saw first hand the union of art and spirituality in the lives of the Balinese, distinctly apart from the presentational aesthetics of his and his friend’s performances for tourists. The community-oriented Kechak group of I Ketut Rina of Gianyar was an example of authentic solidarity and fellowship among the Balinese.

<sup>8</sup> Cultural leaders from the Makhampom Foundation and the CBTI in Thailand, PETA in the Mekong, Koenji and the BTT Theaters, the Japan IIT Center, KELOLA in Indonesia, API colleagues in Jogjakarta, the members of the once PETA Asian Theater Forum in the 80s, aside from the Philippine embassies in Thailand, Japan, and Indonesia, and the API Partner Institutions in those countries, made the writer’s research and connection with local respondents so much easier, livelier, touching, and more humane. This writer’s weight loss of almost 20 kilos during the six-month duration of this whirlwind of a journey is outbalanced by the weightier, invaluable, and matchless gains of love, solidarity, knowledge, and friendship with kindred spirits in the search for our Asian identities.

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