

As I got older, I began to realize that many of the Philippine stories and cultural facts I was taught were nothing more than myths and legends. I'll only mention a few because I want to get on to the latest one that I have finally decided is nothing but a cultural myth. I was made to believe that the *tinikling* was our national dance and yet there is no place in the Philippines where people traditionally celebrate events with this dance. Filipinos only learn this dance in school. Then, I noticed that there were many rural areas in Southeast Asia where indigenous people have dances very similar to the *tinikling*. A few remote mountain areas in Papua New Guinea have such a dance and no one can accuse them of copying the Philippine *tinikling* – they are much too primitive to have learned the dance from a foreign source. I suspect the *tinikling* came about from a paper written by a graduate student during the American era.

I now see Philippine *angklung* orchestras. This probably was recently copied from Indonesia because the term "angklung" is Indonesian and the instrument is common in Indonesia but hardly seen in the Philippines. Sadly, I don't see *musikong bumbong* bands today even though they really existed in the Philippines during the early 1900s – pictures of such bands abound in books and postcards. Where are they now? Are they not worthy enough to claim as our very own?

{xtypo_quote} Ka Hector Santos is the venerable Los Angeles, California-based historian and writer. He is a cofounder and cochairman of the Philippine History Group of Los Angeles

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, which was founded in 1995. He maintains also the website,

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. But does the observation of Mr. Santos apply also to the members of the Filipino-American Symphony Orchestra (FASO)? The FASO is the only Filipino symphony orchestra in the United States and it has become the pride and joy of Filipino Americans.– Editor {/xtypo_quote}

In the 1936 Olympics I was told the Philippines won a silver (or was it bronze) medal in basketball. I later found out that the Philippines took 5th place. Be that as it may, it was quite an accomplishment. That and the fact the Philippines dominated Asian basketball in the mid-20th century led to the myth that Filipinos are natural and graceful basketball players while the Chinese and Japanese players were too mechanical to play that game well. This short basketball reign helped me develop a theory on why Filipinos believed they were were "superior" to other Asians not only in basketball but also in music, as well.

We have always been proud that we were superior to other Asians in the field of music. Until the 1970s, and even into the 1980s, Filipino bands dominated the Asian music scene. We began to believe that it was something innate in the Filipino soul that made us musically superior to other Asians. But I saw no Filipino musician make it in the biggest music market in the world. In the field of jazz, Japanese pianists made it in the U.S. (Toshiko Akiyoshi and Keiko Matsui), one Filipino (Bobby Enriquez) almost made it but not quite. Why?

Nauna lang tayo. (We were just ahead.)

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That was the sad conclusion I came to after watching jazz and pop TV programs from Asian stations that have sprouted among the new digital channels we now have. Other Asian countries have made great strides and are now musically equal to Filipinos. No, the Filipinos have not been left behind but are simply holding their own.

The Americans introduced basketball to the Philippines decades before other Asian countries took up the sport. The Americans also introduced American music when other Asian countries were only playing their own kind of music. Olongapo and Angeles were profitable training venues for Filipino bands until they got big enough to tour abroad.

This half a century of headstart made us smug. And so when I recently heard a jazz band called "Unit Asia" with Japanese, Thai, and Malaysian musicians recently play on TV I was bowled over. This couldn't be! Only Filipinos are supposed to play like that.

Nauna nga, pero nahabol na. (Yes, we were ahead but others caught up with us.) # # #

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