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## The bells of Balangiga: from massacre to memoryscape

*Les cloches de Belangiga: d'un massacre à un paysage de mémoire*

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### Abstract:

In Balangiga, Eastern Samar, on September 28, 1901, the residents attacked, and destroyed, a United States Army garrison during the Philippine-American War. Every year, since 1989, the residents celebrate Balangiga Encounter Day, which commemorates the attack, and a large monument has been built to this effect. Memoryscapes are celebrations, and monuments, anchoring memories in space. This article addresses the conjoined questions of how Balangiga constitutes a memoryscape and how the 2018 return of the church bells, taken from Balangiga by the Americans as war booty in 1901, has affected this memoryscape.

### Résumé:

Lors de la guerre entre les Philippines et les États-Unis, le 28 septembre 1901, les résidents de Balangiga, à l'est de Samar ont attaqué et détruit une garnison de l'Armée des États-Unis. Chaque année, depuis 1989, les résidents célèbrent la Journée de la Confrontation de Balangiga, qui commémore l'attaque. Un grand monument a été également construit et dédié à l'attaque. Les « paysages de mémoire » sont les célébrations, localisées aux monuments, qui ensemble permettent l'ancrage des mémoires dans l'espace. Cet article adresse les questions conjointes de savoir comment Balangiga constitue un tel paysage de mémoire, et comment le retour en 2018 des cloches de l'église, enlevées de Balangiga en 1901 par les Américains parmi leur butin de guerre, a affecté ce paysage de mémoire.

### Keywords / Mots clés

*Philippines; Philippine-American War; war tourism; memoryscapes; monuments  
Philippines; Guerre Philippine-Américaine; tourisme de guerre; paysage de mémoire; monuments*

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## INTRODUCTION

On September 28, 2019, the residents of Balangiga, Eastern Samar participated in the 118th anniversary of Balangiga Encounter Day. The events began with a mass in St. Lawrence the Martyr Parish, followed by a parade, a wreath-laying ceremony, a commemorative program, and a reenactment of the Balangiga Encounter. The term "Balangiga Encounter" is a deceptive term as the actual "encounter" was an attack on the United States Army garrison occupying Balangiga during the Philippine-American War, destroying the garrison, sending it fleeing, and precipitating a violent reprisal. This article addresses the conjoined questions of how Balangiga constitutes a memoryscape and how the 2018 return of the church bells, taken from Balangiga by the Americans as war booty in 1901, has affected this memoryscape. The methodology consists of a review of secondary sources, participant observations, and key informant interviews. In accordance with the ethics requirements of the author's home institution, prior written informed consent was obtained from all interview partners.

## CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND: THE CONCEPT OF A MEMORYSCAPE

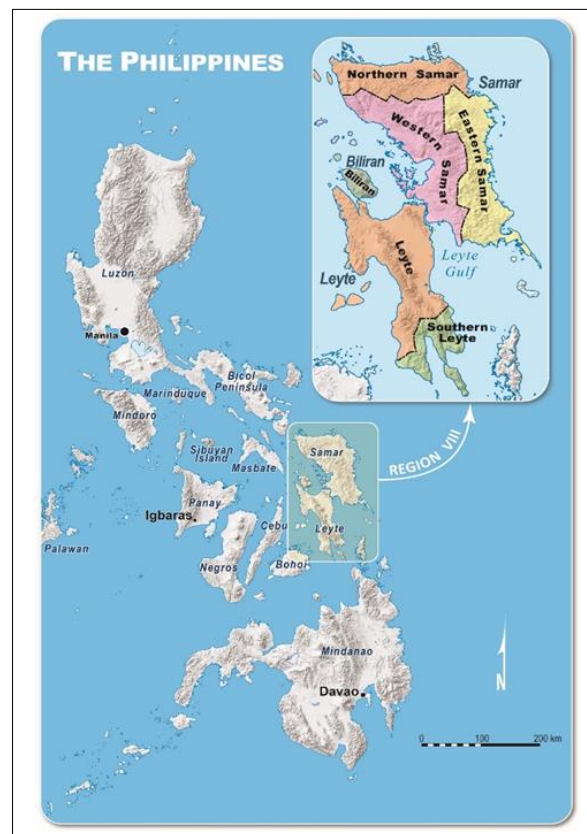
Memoryscapes are celebrations, and monuments, causing memories to anchor in space. One cannot travel in time to when a famous event occurred, but one can travel in space to where the event occurred and, in doing so, can have a geographical connection with the event. Muzaini (2014: 383) defines memoryscapes "as sites and practices where the past is remembered today." Tyner et al. (2012: 855) wrote that "memory is spatially constituted" and is "attached to 'sites' that are concrete and physical." To Muzaini (2006: 211), memoryscapes consist of "preserved historic battlegrounds, plaque markers, war monuments and museums, as well as commemorative war ceremonies." When memories are translated into physical spaces this makes them clear in people's minds, serving as prompts for visitors to recall them (Muzaini, 2006). Monuments are memorials, usually in the form of public statues, or other symbolic architecture, commemorating a sense of national, or local identity and symbolizing a collective memory of events or persons (Johnston et al., 2000). Perhaps the seminal article on memoryscapes was Pierre Nora's 1989 article, "Between Memory

and History: *Les Lieux de Mémoire*," where Nora (1989: 7) stated that when memory is embodied in certain sites "a sense of historical continuity persists" and there are "*lieux de mémoire*, sites of memory." To Nora (1989: 9), "memory takes root in the concrete, in spaces, gestures, images, and objects." Memoriscapes frequently involve visits from those wishing to see where battles occurred- what could be referred to as war tourism. "Battlefield tourism," wrote Lookingbill and Smallwood (2020: 23), comprises a significant sub-discipline of war tourism." War tourism is, to Lookingbill and Smallwood (2020: 23), "a branch of dark tourism or thanotourism," which is "tourism associated with death or suffering." As veterans pass away, visitors extend beyond just veterans and family members of the dead to include war tourists performing, what Muzaini and Yeoh (2007: 290) call, "commemoration in situ." Nations commemorating a conflict against another nation will experience tensions, and contradictions, and must walk a fine line; making, on one hand, the commemoration appealing to their own citizens while, on the other hand, refraining from offending citizens of the other nation involved in the conflict. As Muzaini and Yeoh (2005: 3) wrote, "nation-states have resorted to manufacturing memoriscapes in a way that makes them 'locally' appealing to their citizens as national sites but without drawing any negative impressions from other nations." Memoriscapes are malleable, changing through the prism of contemporary political events or, what may be referred to as mnemonic regime change. According to Arguelles (2017: 268), "a mnemonic regime refers to the dominant pattern of memory politics in a particular society at a particular time." Governments use commemorative activities "to socialize the members of a nation to remember, or forget, a historical event to serve their political ends" (Arguelles, 2017: 268). "Mnemonic actors," stated Arguelles (2017: 278), "reconstruct memories and deploy them for various political reasons" creating "narratives that they think will result in the most potent legitimation for their rule." "Spaces of memory," stated Muzaini (2014: 393), "are also a conduit for ongoing debate and are susceptible to rewriting and appropriation." "The past," wrote Tyner et al. (2012: 855), "never remains the same but instead is constantly selected, filtered, and restructured in terms set by the questions and necessities of the present." Commemoration activities are often used to justify present political activities and "ongoing attempts to commemorate past violence will reverberate with- and perhaps obfuscate- violence in the present" (Tyner et al. 2012: 856).

## THE BALANGIGA ENCOUNTER OF SEPTEMBER 29, 1901

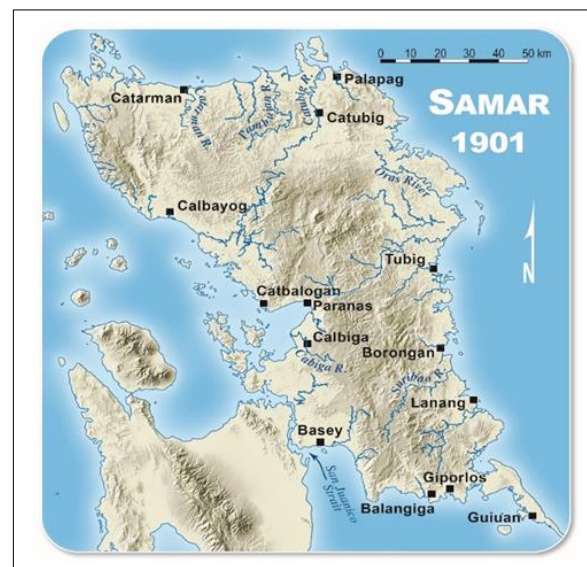
The Philippines is an archipelago of 7,100 islands located in Southeast Asia, and Samar, along with the islands of Leyte and Biliran, constitute the Eastern Visayas Region or Region VIII (Figure 1). In 1965, Samar was divided into three provinces: Eastern Samar, Northern Samar, and Western Samar. Samar's residents are referred to as "Samareños," or as "Samarnons," they speak a language called Waray-Waray, and Samar derived its name from the Waray-Waray word *samad* meaning "wound" (Santos and Lagos, 2004). The municipality of Balangiga is located on the southern side of Samar (Figure 2) and its residents are referred to as either "Balangigueños," or as "Balangigan-ons."

From 1565 to 1898, the Philippines was a Spanish colony but, by the late nineteenth century, conditions deteriorated as the Spanish Empire declined. In 1896, the Philippine Revolution broke



Source: the author

Figure 1: The Philippines



Source: the author

Figure 2: Samar in 1901

out. It concluded in December 1897 when its leader, Emilio Aguinaldo, and his followers, reached an agreement with the Spanish to go into exile in Hong Kong in exchange for the payment of \$800,000 (approximately 25 million dollars in 2020 currency)- half to be paid in advance and half to be paid in Hong Kong (Silbey, 2007). On 25 April 1898, the United States and Spain went to war, ostensibly to end Spanish colonial control over Cuba. On May 1st 1898, Commodore Dewey's Asiatic Squadron

destroyed the Spanish fleet at the battle of Manila Bay. With Spanish control ending, Aguinaldo returned on May 19, 1898 and on June 12, 1898 declared the independence of the Republic of the Philippines. However, two weeks later, US soldiers arrived making it apparent the Americans intended to retain the archipelago and concerns were raised when the United States purchased the Philippines from Spain for 20 million dollars (approximately 623 million dollars in 2020 currency) on December 10, 1898 (Silbey, 2007). Tension built as Filipino nationalists surrounded Manila while it was occupied by US soldiers, and on February 4, 1899, conflict broke out. This conflict went through three phases: first, from February 1899 until November 1899, the Filipinos under Aguinaldo attempted to engage in conventional warfare; second, from November 1899 to March 1901, the Filipinos engaged in guerrilla warfare under Aguinaldo's leadership until his capture by American forces in March 1901; finally, from March 1901 until July 1902, a fragmented insurgency under localized leadership was waged (Linn, 2000). One of the places where the Filipinos waged an insurgency under localized leadership was Samar where Vicente Lukban commanded the nationalist insurgents (Chaput, 1994).

On August 11, 1901, Company C of the ninth United States Infantry Regiment arrived in Balangiga to establish a garrison (Borrinaga, 2003). At that time, Balangiga had a population of approximately 2,000 people and Captain Thomas W. Connell, Company C's commander, began treating them capriciously (Borrinaga, 2003, 2008). One of the first things Connell did was to order the Balangigueños to cut down all trees so the soldiers could have a better view of the area surrounding the town. This infuriated Lukban's insurgents who regarded this as a denial of food to them because some of the trees were fruit bearing. The insurgents also regarded the Balangigan-ons as becoming too friendly with the Americans and, on September 18, 1901, a group of men armed with long knives called bolos came to attack Balangiga but, at the last moment, aborted their attack. Then, on September 22, 1901, two drunken soldiers harassed a young woman; she called for assistance and her brothers beat the soldiers. In response to this, Connell assembled the Balangigueños, detaining 143 men in two tents in the town plaza. Two days later, Connell's troops confiscated all bolos belonging to the Balangigan-ons, and, on September 25, Connell's troops confiscated, and destroyed the entire rice reserve under the pretext of stopping supplies to the insurgents (Borrinaga, 2003). Threatened by Lukban's insurgents for cooperating with the Americans, and humiliated by Connell, the Balangigueños decided to, as Borrinaga (2003: 79) wrote, "fight for their honor and right to peaceful living by plotting against the Americans in their midst." Signaled by the ringing of the bells in St. Lawrence the Martyr Church, the garrison was attacked during breakfast on the morning of Sunday, September 28, 1901, while most of the soldiers were unarmed. Out of 74 officers and men, 38 were killed instantly. (Borrinaga, 2003). The 36 who survived escaped by boat to Basey (Borrinaga, 2003, 2008). Seven more died on the trip, and three more died later from their wounds. It has been estimated that out of these 74 men, 26 survived and only four of them were uninjured.

When the Americans heard of the attack, in the words of Linn (2000: 312), it profoundly shocked them, touching off "an immediate outcry for vengeance." Fe Campanero, the Municipal Tourism, Culture, and Arts Officer in Balangiga, and one of the narrators for the Balangiga Encounter Day re-enactment, indicated that the Americans "thought they were a superpower

and their ego was hurt because they were overpowered so badly" (Campanero, 2019: interview). Constanca Elaba, a retired Bureau of Internal Revenue Officer in Balangiga, and the other narrator for the Balangiga Encounter Day re-enactment. Stated that the Americans were disturbed by what happened, and "what was in their hearts and on their minds was revenge" (Elaba, 2019: interview). Couttie (2004: 185) described the American retaliation to the attack as a "typhoon of steel". After the remnants of Company C made it to Basey, American forces returned to Balangiga, and burnt everything to the ground, and the three bells in St. Lawrence the Martyr Church were taken as war booty (Quigley, 2015). Two were kept at Warren Air Force Base, in Cheyenne, Wyoming, and one was kept at Camp Red Cloud in South Korea, until their return to Balangiga on December 15, 2018. In response to the attack, the United States deployed the Sixth Separate Brigade, a force of 4,000 soldiers and 300 Marines, to pacify Samar in October 1901 (Linn, 2000). The commander of the Sixth Separate Brigade, Brigadier General Jacob H. Smith, ordered the commander of the Marine Battalion, Major Littleton Waller, to "kill and burn," take no prisoners, make the interior of Samar a "howling wilderness," and to kill every male Samareño over the age of ten (Linn, 2000: 315). It is estimated that, between October 10 and December 31, 1901, the Sixth Separate Brigade killed or captured 759 insurgents, killed 587 carabaos, destroyed tons of rice, 1,662 houses, and 226 boats (Linn, 2000). Harassed by American soldiers, denied supplies, separated from the population, and with their movements detected by Army intelligence, the insurgents on Samar could no longer continue and, on February 18, 1902, Lukban was captured and by April 1902 the last of his followers surrendered (Linn, 2000).

Samar lay in ruins. The Sixth Separate Brigade's punitive campaign led to the death of 15,000 people, the destruction of the island's economic base: houses burned down, and food stocks destroyed (Borrinaga, 2008). Bob Couttie, a British historian and author resident in Balangiga, stated that the American response "really did devastate Samar" (Couttie, 2019: interview). Between 1898 and 2015, Samar's population, as a percentage of the Philippine population, fell from 13 percent to two percent (Borrinaga, 2003: Philippine Statistics Authority, 2019). Rolando Borrinaga, the Secretary of the National Committee on Historical Research, of the National Commission on Culture and the Arts, stated that the war really did ruin the island, especially along its southern shore where the Americans were very harsh, and their response was a "wounding of the wounded land" (Borrinaga, 2019: interview). For decades, the attack was a forbidden topic in Balangiga because of its violence, the outcry among the Americans afterwards, and their harsh retaliation. Fe Campanero recalls that while growing up in Balangiga, "few of their grandfathers would even talk about the attack" (Campanero, 2019: interview). Long after the Philippine-American War ended, they were worried about the Americans seeking revenge. In Campanero's words, "At the back of our mind, the retaliation never stopped" (Campanero, 2019: interview). The trauma of the American retaliation persisted for so long among the people of Balangiga for two reasons. First, the shock of its severity as a "typhoon of steel." Second, feelings of guilt over what had been done to the garrison. The war eventually ended but those in charge of the Philippines after the war (the Americans) were the same people who were savagely attacked. This left a lingering feeling among the Balangigan-ons that some form of additional retaliation could reoccur. What eventually allowed the Balangigueños to overcome the trauma of the attack, and the American retaliation, was the creation of the Balangiga Encounter

Day in 1989. According to Borrinaga (2008: 120), “the people of Balangiga themselves could not officially celebrate their forbearer’s testament to freedom until 1989, when the first Balangiga Encounter Day was officially celebrated.”

## BALANGIGA AS A MEMORYSCAPE

Starting in 1989, the residents of Balangiga began referring to the events of September 28, 1901 as the “Balangiga Encounter.” This began when Republic Act No. 6692, An Act Declaring September 28 as Balangiga Encounter Day and a Special Non-Working Holiday in the Province of Eastern Samar was passed. According to Borrinaga, the local government officials were the initiators of the commemoration, with some support from the Provincial Government of Eastern Samar (Borrinaga, 2019: interview). The first commemoration included the first re-enactment of the 1901 events. Recall that Muzaini (2014: 383) defines memoryscapes “as sites and practices where the past is remembered today.” The re-enactment, which commenced in 1989 is such a practice and, accordingly, constitutes a memoryscape. The re-enactment which lasts approximately two hours, begins with the arrival of Company C, depicts the establishment of a garrison, shows the depredations inflicted upon the Balangigueños, depicts the planning of the attack, vividly re-enacts the attack, depicts the retaliation (Figure 3), and, every year from 1989 to 2018, concluded with a call for the return of the bells.



Figure 3: Scene in the 2019 Re-enactment depicting the seizure of the Bells of Balangiga

Mayor Randy Graza, the mayor of Balangiga, indicated that Encounter Day means a lot to the Balangigan-ons because it reminds them of how their forefathers fought for their freedom; he is proud of what happened on that day, stating, “it is our pride and honor, it symbolizes the heroism of our ancestors” (Graza, 2019: interview). Fe Campanero attended her first re-enactment in 1992 and she began narrating in 1999; the narration is done in English so foreigners (namely Americans) can understand it, and so the Balangigan-ons can “send a message to the whole world” (Campanero, 2019: interview).

There are tensions and contradictions in local memories of the Americans. The Philippines is a country where people have a high opinion of the United States- in a 2015 survey, 92 percent of Filipinos expressed approval of the United States (McCoy, 2017). However, events during the Philippine-American War has caused this admiration to coexist with, what McCoy (2017, 40), refers to as “layers of antagonism, even resentment.” This coexistence of

admiration with resentment has generated a “post-memory, that is a trans-generational transmission of traumatic knowledge marked by strong nationalism inflected with resentments ready to surface at any slight.” (McCoy, 2017: 40). According to Barrios (2004: 273), it is common to see “photographs showing Balangiga residents at Encounter Day waving US flags and emphasizing that both veterans and young people have ‘forgiven the United States.’” “Pro-American sentiments articulated by Balangiga residents,” wrote Barrios (2004: 260), demonstrate “the complexity of colonial rule and the contradictory feelings of resentment and desire of the colonized people for the colonizer.”

In Balangiga there is also a monument depicting the attack on the American garrison (Figure 4).



Photo credit: the author

Figure 4: The Balangiga Encounter Monument

Just as practices constitute a memoryscape, so can sites (Muzaini, 2014). Recall also that monuments are memorials, usually in the form of public statues, or other symbolic architecture, commemorating a sense of national, or local, identity and symbolizing a collective memory of events or persons (Johnston et al., 2000). Rolando Borrinaga pointed out how the monument is not 100 percent accurate (the Balangigueños did not burst out of the church and enter the garrison’s mess tent because the two locations were not adjacent to each other), but its message is to represent the sheer chaos of the attack (Borrinaga, 2019). Borrinaga also emphasized that, just as the re-enactment is the only known celebration of an event from the Philippine-American War, the monument is the only known memorial from that war (Borrinaga, 2019).

Just as there are tensions and contradictions in local memories of the Americans, the monument also demonstrates tensions and contradictions. At the back of the monument is a list of both the American and Balangigueño casualties of the attack. In addition, in preparation for the 2019 Encounter Day celebrations, both an American flag and Philippine flags were placed on the monument. On one hand, the monument celebrates the Balangigan-ons attack on the garrison and, on the other hand, it acknowledges there were two sides to the story. The permanent acknowledgement of the Americans on the monument, with the list of their casualties, and the temporary acknowledgement of them with the flag at the 2019 Encounter Day, exemplifies how, as Muzaini and Yeoh (2005: 3) wrote, “nation-states have resorted to

manufacturing memoryscapes in a way that makes them ‘locally’ appealing to their citizens as national sites but without drawing any negative impressions from other nations.” According to Mayor Graza, Americans, including descendants of the garrison, attend Encounter Day; they come to know the real story of what happened (Graza, 2019). Jean Wall, the daughter of Adolph Gamlin (1887 to 1969), the last American survivor of the attack to pass away, attended Encounter Day in 1999. Constanica Elaba said Americans attend because it is a place where they have family history and Wall told Elaba her father never got over the attack and had nightmares for the rest of his life where he would wake up screaming “they’re coming, they’re coming” (Elaba, 2019).

## THE BALANGIGA MEMORYSCAPE AFTER THE RETURN OF THE BELLS

On December 15, 2018, after 117 years in American custody, the three bells from St. Lawrence the Martyr Parish were returned and a chronology of events in the campaign for their return is set out in Table 1.

Date	Events
1957	Father Horacio de la Costa wrote Chip Wards, Command Historian of the 13 <sup>th</sup> Air Force at Warren Air Force Base in Wyoming, requesting the return of the bells.
1958	Franciscan priests on the island of Negros wrote to Chip Wards requesting the return of the bells.
1989	The (then) Secretary of Defence of the Philippines, Fidel V. Ramos, received a visit from the (then) US Secretary of Defence Dick Cheney. Upon learning that Cheney was from Wyoming, Ramos asked for his help in having the bells returned. The Balangiga Historical Society petitioned the US government for the return of the bells.
1994	Senator Heherson Alvarez wrote President Bill Clinton asking him for the bells to be returned. On the 50 <sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1944 Leyte Gulf landing, letters to the editors of Philippine newspapers called for a return of the bells.
1998	President Fidel V. Ramos began asking for the bells to be returned for the Philippine Centenary on 12 June 1998.
1999	The United States Bishops Conference called for the bells to be returned to Balangiga.
2001	Jean Wall, the last living descendant of a Balangiga Survivor, joined Bob Couttie and Rolando Borrinaga in calling for the return of the bells.
2002	Senator Aquilino Pimentel drafted Senate Resolution 48 calling for the return of the bells. Jean Wall wrote to President George W. Bush asking the bells to be returned to the Philippines.
2003	Bishop Leonardo Medroso, of the Diocese of Borongan, wrote to President George W. Bush calling for the return of the bells, as did Archbishop Orlando Quevedo of Cotabato.
2005	The Wyoming Veterans Commission voted to return the bells to the Philippines, but the governor of Wyoming denied having jurisdiction to have them returned as the two in Wyoming were located on an Air Force base and, thus, were under federal jurisdiction.
2007	Senator Manny Villar filed a resolution calling for the return of the bells. It indicated that Filipinos, specifically the Diocese of Borongan, have the rightful claim to the bells.
2013	While thanking the United States for its assistance in the aftermath of Super Typhoon Haiyan, Marciano Deladia, an aide to Mayor Randy Garza, called for the return of the bells.
2017	In his State of the Nation Address, President Rodrigo Duterte called for a return of the bells to the Philippines.
2018	On August 11, the US Secretary of Defence James Mattis announced the return of the bells to the Philippines and the 2018 National Defence Authorization Act included a provision for their return to the Philippines. The bells were returned to the Philippines on December 11, and then returned to Balangiga on December 15.
Sources	Chua (2018), Interaksyon (2017), Quigley (2015), Reyes (2018)

Table 1: Chronology of Events in the Return of the Bells of Balangiga

During all the Encounter Day re-enactments from 1989 to 2018, a consistent theme was having the bells returned. However, on the 30th Encounter Day in 2019 the bells were back. How did the return of the bells transform the memoryscape? In many ways, their return has helped to heal the trauma of the attack and its subsequent retaliation. To Fe Campanero, when the bells were rung in 1901 it was to signal the attack on the Americans; today, when they are rung it is to signal that we can move forward. Today, the bells represent resiliency and the ability to move on from a sad experience, using pain to inspire people. Their return also shows that hope does pay off; yes, it took 117 years to get them returned but “we were able to get it done” (Campanero,

2019: interview). Constanica Elaba regards their return as changing the significance of Encounter Day because all previous re-enactments would end with a call for their return; however, in 2019, for the first time, they ended the re-enactment giving thanks for their return (Elaba, 2019). To Father Serafin B. Tybaco Jr., the parish priest of St. Lawrence the Martyr Parish, the return of the bells has made him feel special because for 117 years (and 39 parish priests before him) the bells were in American hands but he was the priest who received them back (Tybaco, 2019). On September 28, 1901, the bells rang at 06:45 to signal the beginning of the attack. However, on September 28, 2019, they rang at 06:45 for the first time, in 118 years on a 28th of September and this was the reliving of history. For Father Serafin, their return has changed the significance of Encounter Day from being a celebration of vengeance into a celebration of reconciliation (Tybaco, 2019).

## HOW MEMORYSCAPES CHANGE WITH CONTEMPORARY POLITICAL EVENTS

In 2016, Rodrigo Duterte was elected President of the Philippines. After being elected, Duterte implemented a brutal war on illegal drugs, estimated to have taken between 8,600 to 25,900 lives (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2020). Duterte has been keen to manipulate history for contemporary political purposes. “Duterte,” wrote Arguillas (2017: 269), is “a mnemonic political actor who is keen on a specific interpretation of the past.” This willingness to manipulate history for contemporary political purposes became apparent at the 118th Balangiga Encounter Day of September 28, 1901 when the guest of honor was Philippine Senator Christopher “Bong” Go. Go was the Special Executive Assistant to President Duterte from Duterte’s election in May 2016 until Go’s election to the Philippine Senate in May 2019. While acting as Duterte’s assistant, Go became known as “Duterte’s personal gatekeeper at Malacañang Palace” (Miller, 2018: 47). Go began his speech discussing how the Balangigueños resisted the Americans, stating “our forefathers showed their bravery to fight for freedom” (Quirante, 2019: 1). Go urged the crowd to be ready to fight to the death, to be independent from foreign invaders and brought up a proposal in the United States Senate to prohibit entry to any Philippine government official involved in the detention of Philippine Senator Leila De Lima (ABS-CBN News, 2019). De Lima first ran afoul of Duterte by investigating his war on drugs when he was mayor of Davao City and while she was Chair of the Commission on Human Rights. Then after Duterte became president, De Lima further annoyed Duterte by investigating his war on drugs while she was a Senator. On February 24, 2017, De Lima was arrested on charges of drug trafficking and has been detained ever since (Miller, 2018). According to Go, “These senators should also be banned here in the Philippines. These senators think they know better than us in governing ourselves.” To Go, this proposal is an “affront to our sovereignty and our ability to govern ourselves” as it “unduly pressures our independent courts and disrespects the entire judicial process of the Philippines by questioning its competence.” According to Go, this detention was done by a “lawful order from an independent court, which was upheld by the Supreme Court, in a thorough and comprehensive process.” Go then concluded by discussing Duterte’s campaign against crime, corruption, and illegal drugs, which he implored the crowd to continue supporting. To discuss Balangigueño resistance to the American occupation, and then segue into a discussion of contemporary American interference in Philippine affairs, exemplifies what

Mishra (2017: 168) refers to as “a fierce politics of identity built on historical injuries and fear of internal and external enemies.”

The attendance of Go at Balangiga Encounter Day demonstrates the malleability of mnemonic regimes. According to Aruggellas (2017: 278), “instrumentalist mnemonic actors reconstruct memories and deploy them for various political reasons.” Go discussed the courage of the Balangigan-ons in fighting against “foreign invaders,” and then brought up the United States Senate’s actions in support of De Lima framing it as an act of foreign interference in Philippine affairs. This is a sensitive topic in the Philippines because, although popular domestically, Duterte’s government has, as Pardo et al. (2019: 38) wrote, “garnered international attention and opprobrium from civil-society groups, NGOs, most Western governments, and international bodies for its recent and continued hardline efforts to suppress crime and drugs.” Duterte, wrote Rothhoff (2019: 99), “refuses to tolerate such expressions of concern, which he regards as interference in domestic affairs.” The audience was reminded of historic depredations committed by the Americans and Go concluded by imploring the crowd to support Duterte’s campaign against illegal drugs, which Aruggellas (2017: 277) described as “the pillar of Duterte’s government.” Go’s attendance and speech at Balangiga Encounter Day exemplify how, according to Tyner et al. (2012: 856), “ongoing attempts to commemorate past violence will reverberate with- and perhaps obfuscate- violence in the present.” In this context, Go commemorated the violence of the Balangigan-ons against the garrison 118 years ago, juxtaposing this beside the contemporary “interference” by the United States Senate in Philippine affairs. What is, however, obfuscated is the war on drugs, which has claimed thousands of lives. The mnemonic regime becomes transformed from one merely commemorating an event, which took place 118 years ago into one facilitating a future governed by a harsh authoritarian regime. As Aruggellas (2017: 281) wrote, “mnemonic regimes reflect the struggle for power over a society’s future. What, and how, nations choose to remember and forget narrows the future path of a society.”

## CONCLUSION: THE BALANGIGA MEMORYSCAPE

Balangiga is a place where the memories of the events of September 28, 1901 are anchored in space. One cannot travel back in time to September 28, 1901 and see that day’s events, but one can travel to the place where they occurred and have a geographical continuity with them. If one goes to Balangiga and watches an Encounter Day re-enactment, sees the monument, or views the bells, one will be, as Nora (1989, 7) wrote, in a place “where a sense of historical continuity persists”- one will be in a place where “there are lieux de mémoire, sites of memory.” Nations hosting memoryscapes must make them appealing to their own citizens without drawing negative reactions from other nations. This is demonstrated by the tensions and contradictions in local memories of the Americans in Balangiga. On one hand, the attack on the garrison is celebrated as a great victory in Philippine history, and this makes Balangiga an appealing destination to Filipinos. On the other hand, the Americans are acknowledged with the re-enactment being narrated in English, with their flag being on the monument, and with the names of their soldiers being on the monument. Memoryscapes are fluid and change over time. In Balangiga, the memoryscape may be undergoing a transition because of the bells having been returned. Memoryscapes are also susceptible to manipulation by

contemporary political pressures. The Duterte regime is facing international condemnation for its war on drugs. This generates a temptation to hold up the Balangigueño resistance to foreign interference as an analogy to contemporary Philippine resistance to foreign disdain for its war on drugs. In any event, visiting Balangiga gives one a profound appreciation of what happened there on September 28, 1901. In this regard, Minerva Capagalan, the curator of the museum at St. Lawrence the Martyr Parish, quoted the Roman philosopher Cicero, “To be ignorant of what happened before you were born is to be ever a child. For what is a person’s lifetime unless the memory of past events is woven with those of earlier times” (Capagalan, 2019: interview).

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