EUROPEAN JOURNAL OF MUSICOLOGY

ISSN 2504-1916 VOL. 20/1 (2021), 23–38

DOI : 10.5450/EJM.20.1.2021.23

# Choir Transhumance in the Filipino Catholic Community in Rome

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## Premise

In the summer of 2017 in Villa Latina, a small town in central Italy, I (Serena Facci) met and interviewed an 86-year-old Italian lady, who in the 1950s had been a singer and dancer in a local folk group.[2] Maria still has a beautiful voice and regularly sings in the town church choir. She has always lived in Villa Latina, except for when as a young girl she emigrated to Scotland where she was offered a career as a singer. But she preferred to return home: "That was not my destiny," she sighs. She speaks at length of her love for singing which encourages her to participate in the Mass each Sunday and rehearse every Wednesday. "If I didn't have to sing at Mass, perhaps I wouldn't go any more," she tells me with a smile.[3]

From her accounts I realise that in the church of this town of 1,200 inhabitants, choral activity is particularly well nurtured. "We are a sizable group and each of us sings his/her part. There is the conductor, who plays the organ quite well and sometimes a tenor is invited to join us who performs solo." The priest asks a lot of the choir singers. "He hears every detail. He cares a lot and doesn't want us to make mistakes. He has a beautiful voice and during Mass he answers us singing. He is so talented!"

Not always in Italian Catholic churches does one come across such careful attention to the preparation of music for the service. In doing the research described in this article, we often heard immigrant church-goers say that the service in Italian Catholic churches is boring, because it is spoken, with singing being little used, while Italian priests who sing during the Mass are few and far between.

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[2] In 1949 the Villa Latina folk group took part in the International Folk Musical Festival and Congress, coinciding with the second congress of the International Folk Music Council held in Venice from 7–11 September.

[3] Maria, personal interview, Villa Latina, province of Frosinone, 8 August 2017.

The problem was also raised by Pope Francis.[4] On the other hand, because of the vocational crisis, foreign priests are by now particularly common in Italy as in the rest of Europe. I thus ask Maria: "Is the priest Italian?" "No," she replies, "he's Filipino."

In this article we mainly focus on Filipino Catholics in Italy in the context of the overall situation of the Christian community of Rome and as regards the importance of singing during the ceremony for migrants who, wherever they are, emphasise and cultivate their passion for and their abilities in music. We analyse and illustrate how the dynamics of mobility are lived as circular processes of going and returning, similar to the procedures of transhumance, keeping in mind the idea of a central place of return.

## 'National' churches in the sacred Rome of the 21st century

Since 2013 a research group that originated at the University of Rome-Tor Vergata has been working to document the musical aspects of the religious services of Catholic, eastern Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant churches which in Rome also include the ceremonies of foreign communities. These communities comprise immigrants who started to arrive in Italy in the 1990s.[5] Some of these communities have been offered the use of Italian churches. The Parish Councils reserve them a space and a schedule to conduct ceremonies in their language and according to their customary rituals. Those churches which are used by more than one community, we would call 'multinational.' In other cases, the Vicariate of Rome chooses to entrust the faithful of a particular nationality and Rite with a church for their exclusive use. These churches are called 'national.'[6]

The presence of the Holy See within the city of Rome means that it has always had an international character in its places of worship. This is due to the centuries-old custom of pilgrims, today also known as religious tourists, making the rounds of the Basilicas, Saint Peter's in particular, and the

[4] Address of his Holiness Pope Francis to participants at the International Conference on Sacred Music, Rome, 4 March 2017, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/speeches/2017/march/documents/papa-francesco_20170304_convegno-musica-sacra.html, last access 8 January 2018.

[5] The group is coordinated by Serena Facci and composed of Alessandro Cosentino, Vanna Crupi, Grazia Tuzi and, periodically Postgraduate and PhD students. We wish to thank the Chaplain of Santa Pudenziana, Father Ricky Gante, the Filipino choirs and their directors, and all the other communities for their availability and collaboration. A special thank you to the San Raffaele Community and their choir, to the director Jerry Arquesola and to the Karilagan Choir. We also thank the Vicariate of Rome and in particular the director of the association *Migrantes*, Don Pierpaolo Felicolo, for his help and interest in our work.

[6] In both cases the term 'church' indicates the building devoted to worship, just as the term 'rite' indicates the specific liturgical functions performed there. On the other hand, the terms in capital letters (Church, Rite) will be used to mean the theological and liturgical differences within Christianity: Roman Catholic Rite, Orthodox Church, etc.

other sacred places of Christianity such as the Catacombs. The use of churches by non-Italian communities also dates back to past centuries.[7]

The city has Colleges of early date for the formation of monks and priests.[8] Some Catholic universities receive students, often priest and nuns, from across the world. We can cite, for example, the Urbaniana and Gregorian universities. The Pontifical Institute of Sacred Music is important for musical development. Many of the students from African, Asian or South American countries take their Holy orders in Rome and begin their sacerdotal activity in Italian churches which benefits the use of music in the religious service as in the case of the Filipino parish of Villa Latina, whom we spoke about in the *Premise*.

Since the 1990s Italy, like other countries, has become one of the possible destinations for various migrant and refugee flows, be they motivated by economic, political, environmental reasons or by outbreaks of war. Italy in particular, whose location in the Mediterranean makes it a bridge between African countries and northern Europe, is considered by many migrants also a place of transit.

The Church of Rome and other Christian Churches play a decisive role in policies on migration. The Pope and other important representatives have clearly made official declarations in favour of the unavoidable need to offer first aid to those fleeing war, persecution and extreme poverty.

Our research work on national and multinational churches in Rome is placed in a varied perspective. The non-Italian Christian faithful have a varied status (economic migrants, refugees, priests, theology students, music students, musicians) and have been driven to Italy for a variety of reasons. Despite the supranational nature of Christianity, all of them see national and multinational churches as places to affirm a belief, but also to assert a belonging to a political or national group (despite their unhappiness with the situation in their country of origin), or simply somewhere to enjoy the situation, a feeling of being at 'home.'[9] Churches can be places of welcome for new arrivals. They can also be a starting point for help and can give a sense of security in relations with the city at large. They can offer work or simply volunteering opportunities useful to the community and they can be places for brief stays and temporary support for those passing through the city.

[7] The church of S. Maria in Cosmedin, today serving the Melkite Greeks, was reserved for Greek communities who had fled iconoclastic movements as far back as the 8th century. Saint Louis des Français in Piazza Navona has been the French national church in Rome since 1589. Santa Maria dell'Anima, the German national church, was designed by Johannes Burckard in the 15th century in Gothic style to resemble a church in northern Europe.

[8] The Ethiopian College was founded in Rome in 1481 and today stands within the Vatican walls. Various other Colleges followed: Greek (1577), Maronite (1584), Melkite Basilian (1783), Ukrainian (1897), Russicum (1929), Romanian (1937).

[9] Since their origin anthropological studies have considered the relation between religion and the socio-economic dimension from a holistic point of view (Riccio 2014, 12). Some recent ethnomusicological studies underline the importance of national churches for immigrant communities (Phelan 2017; Rizzuto 2017; Cosentino and Crupi 2017).

Sounds, song and music used in the religious services play a leading role (see Bohlman 2011). They characterise the different Rites (Roman, Greek, Coptic, etc.). At the same time, they are influenced by geo-cultural factors and characterise each national church following the same Rite (see also Facci 2017). In the Roman Catholic Church liturgy, which in this article regards the Filipino community, the reform of the liturgical practice carried out by the *Sacrosantum Concilium* has allowed the spread of chants and hymns differentiated by language. The liturgy is also distinguished by musical form (melodies, scale, rhythms, arrangements), which refers to the music in vogue in the various countries of origin, even if it is used in a way that is conditioned by its use in church.[10]

For example, Filipino liturgical music is completely different to what we can listen to in Rome's Church of the Nativity, the national church of the community of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Here the singing is in the four national languages of that country and in French (the widely used colonial language) and sometimes in Italian in homage to the host country. The four-part chorus, in which the sopranos introduce the melody and the tenors dialogue in call and response, reflects a style which is typical of many countries in central southern Africa. Electric guitars, electric bass, drums, congas, rattles and, where possible, keyboard provide the accompaniment. The guitar has the role of leader. This type of music is derived from the Congolese rumba and was widespread throughout central Africa during the period of the Second Vatican Council. In the last few years, a priest, Cola Lubamba, guitarist and student at the Pontifical Institute of Sacred Music, has typified the choral activity of the Church of the Nativity of Rome. Cola even sings in the Sistine Chapel and conducts the Nativity chorus, a mixed group of Congolese and Italians, which provides liturgical entertainment. Its musical activity has had an articulated effect on the practice of religious music in Rome (Cosentino 2017).

Another case we can cite is that of Johnny, a Catholic Lebanese musician in the Maronite tradition, who in 2014 was a university student in biology in Rome. For a certain period of time, Johnny, an expert *kanun* player, significantly enriched the choral activity of the Church of San Marone, the seat of the Maronite Episcopate, participating at the Mass in Saint John Lateran on the occasion of the Festival of peoples.[11]

Johnny felt that it was very important to underline the Middle Eastern features in the liturgical service, introducing his instrument. He helped the choir director in training the singers in the *maquamat* system. He then returned to Lebanon because he could not find work in Italy.

[10] *The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy Sacrosantum Concilium*, containing the rules for the execution of the liturgical reform desired by the Second Vatican Council, was promulgated in 1963 by Pope Paul VI.

[11] The Festival of Peoples is organised every year with the aim of letting 'old' and 'new' Italians get to know each other. During the Mass in Saint John Lateran the choirs of the various communities take turns in singing a part of the Liturgy (Cosentino and Crupi 2017).

The activity of the foreign Christian communities and that of their musicians and choir singers takes place in open and common spaces in the city, such as squares in front of churches and main roads used for processions. In these cases, the presence of the communities is evident, also audibly. These public gatherings, characterised by the cultural practices of the 'foreign' churches, are at the same time comprehensible and shared by other citizens, because they are part of 'Christian' events in the city of 'Christians.'[12]

To sum up, the panorama of the city, in terms of religious practice, turns out to be multifaceted, due, as we said, to the simultaneous presence of expressions and repertories differentiated by Rite and geographic origin. At the same time the religious practice is very dynamic because of the mobility of the musicians and singers: temporary arrivals, departures, permanent re-departures, new arrivals, people passing through.

The case of the Filipinos, a particularly important community because of its size, is to be considered in this context. As we will see, the Filipinos are known all over the world for the quality of their choruses and even those who live in Rome are particularly proud of the care their educational system reserves for music and singing. For this community choral activity is one of the most important factors in the division and organisation of the urban space.

## Transhumant mobility: linearity, circularity, pluricentrism

"Music makes place by moving through it, sounding it in ways that realize place with temporality" (Bohlman 2011, 151). Bohlman's thesis in his article *When Migration Ends, When Music Ceases* also reconstructs the history of the musicological and ethnomusicological approaches to the intersection of music and mobility and music as mobility. His deliberation leads to the theoretical assumption that migratory processes are political acts, in which music assumes a role of 'aesthetic agency':

> Migration is always political, and the forms of aesthetic expression that arise from it are necessarily politicized. […]. Recognizing the politics of aesthetics also makes it possible to pose new questions about music and agency, questions that for me have become part of my own attempts to theorize what I call "aesthetic agency." (Bohlman 2011, 151–52).

Politics – it may be banal to remember – was born as a science for the governance of common spaces, in particular for the citizens of the *polis* where relations were closer and roles more complex. On the other hand, man has often made use of sound markers. Hunters and shepherds, nomadic and semi-nomadic,

[12] We may add that these displays are absolutely legal and hence indisputable, even in cases we have sometimes seen ourselves when the local inhabitants have shown an intolerance for the noise or the occupation of the streets and squares.

are masters of this type of marking. Studies on the practical and symbolic role of animal bells and cow bells in pastoral contexts have focused on this topic,[13] as well as on the importance of musical and literary productions for the general knowledge of the culture essential to the memory of transhumant pastoralists (see among others Tissières 2007).

In modern times and in an urban context such as that of Rome, these processes assume a particularly symbolic and metaphorical role, but the case that we shall describe seems in essence to connote a profound motivation that animates the men and women of a migrant community to try and preside over spaces of the new city even through the use of sonorous marking. This is 'governance' as a primary political act, which coincides with the affective perception of managing the city and making it their own, overcoming fear and diffidence.

This role is fulfilled by all the national churches which take particular care in ensuring the success of the services through music, but also by means of figurative art, poetry and incense, thereby setting in motion the processes of 'aesthetic agency' spoken about by Bohlman (2011). The Filipino community is unique in the fact that it has conceived an extremely organised system which seems to interpret the movement in the urban framework as a metaphor of migrant mobility on a global scale.

The migratory journey is materially characterised as moving linearly from a place of origin to a final place of destination. The track of this journey can be seen as primarily unidirectional for those who, by leaving, 'burn bridges' with a past and a motherland, which is difficult for them even to think of. But most of the time, as in instances of transhumance, the routes are circular, that is, people go and then return, maybe transiting along other paths and transitorily relocating themselves to other places (Riccio 2014).[14] But the two extremities of these routes are not easily perceived as the nameless ends of a segment. Especially for first generations the motherland remains an essential reference point for the whole of one's life. Generally, as the generations pass, these feelings flip over to the very point of cancelling out the memory of one's geographic origin. It is a gradual process also well known to Italians, who have lived through such difficult migratory processes over and over again and now find themselves observers of other people's migrations (Boccagni 2009).

The linearity of the actual route, when it transfigures the complexity of the movement as experienced on the emotional level, reveals an instability in which one of the termini assumes a veritable 'centrality.' Moreover, this is particularly true today for those who arrive in Italy, a new homeland, considered 'weak' and transitory by many migrants because of the uncertainties of current economic trends. Moreover, the ease in communicating both with the mother country and with other countries,

[13] Cfr. the project of Steven Feld, *The Time of Bells*, in particular Feld (2004); Scaldaferri (2006); Ricci (2012).
[14] The ability to create a network with a 'transnational' aptitude is often recognised among migrant people in particular in music practises (Krüger and Trandafoiu 2014; Sardinha and Campos 2016).

thanks to new technologies and low-cost airlines is an additional factor in overcoming the idea of the bipolar route. Instead, the bipolar concept is replaced by an image, which sees a transnational network with many possible relocation points.

The mother country thus becomes a central symbol, the umbilicus from which they have departed, solid or fragile depending on the situation, ideally connected to a rather elastic 'cord.' The concept of *centre* clearly has an extremely wide application both in the sciences that study the organisation of space, and also in the social-anthropological ones. In this case, we will consider the theory expressed by the Italian anthropologist Francesco Remotti (2014). In analysing a series of ethnographic data, Remotti compares the monolithic idea of the centre proposed by other scholars, in particular Eliade,[15] to his own idea of a humble and territorial centre, not necessarily a single one, but one that is widespread, a landmark for the practical management of the territory.

The concept of a 'humble' and 'vast' centre, sometimes mobile and hence plural seems to us to define particularly well the different types of 'centrality' which can be recognised in the relationship between Christian communities, in particular between the Filipino one, and the city of Rome. The knowledge of being a Christian and a 'Roman Catholic' which, sometimes faintly, sometimes markedly (as in the case of priests or nuns), overlays one's national identity, further creates in migrants the sense of having reached a 'centre.' In Rome, Catholicism has its own centre, also well defined in terms of territory: the Vatican City which is simultaneously and contradictorily both a forbidden and inaccessible city, with the squares enclosed by walls within the Vatican, but also the open and welcoming *piazza* in front of St. Peter's Basilica. For many Roman immigrants the square really represents a sacred centre: just like pilgrims, immigrant communities and especially the Eastern European worshippers (Rumanians, Ukrainians, Polishes) sometimes attend Mass and the Angelus on Sundays and then they stop to pray and sing in the square.[16]

Moreover, national or multinational churches represent symbolic centres for immigrants. Many multinational churches are 'minor local centres' for Filipinos from which they periodically depart to converge towards the chaplaincy of Santa Pudenziana. This chaplaincy is the true symbolic 'main centre' which refocuses on the communities themselves.

[15] The symbolic concept of 'center' entered the debate of social and anthropological sciences with Mircea Eliade's renowned considerations on the universality of the 'sacral center' in archaic societies (Eliade 1965). Many other scholars' theories have followed those of Eliade (Geertz 1977; Burrows 1990).

[16] Various other 'centres' are located in the city of Rome and represent the destination of communities on certain special occasions: these are mainly the two basilicas of San Giovanni in Laterano (St. John Lateran) and Santa Maria Maggiore (St. Mary Major) where the Filipino community often gather on special occasions or for ecumenical meetings (such as the Philippine feast of Santa Cruz or the People's Feast).

## The Filipino Diaspora in Rome

The city of Rome, as the cradle of Catholicism and the crossroads of multiple migratory flows, represents a privileged place of observation of the processes of conservation and transformation of ritual and musical practices in a diaspora setting. The complex organisational system of the large Filipino community in Rome appears to be a good example of the articulation of the urban space.[17]

The churches lying therein[18] become places that are at once real and metaphorical, capable of encouraging both the sharing of a feeling of belonging toward the 'distant homeland' (see Turino 1993) and the placing of migrants in a welcoming environment. To fully comprehend the case of the Filipino diaspora in Rome, one must first of all make a few observations on the migratory movement which since the 1970s has seen a major inflow of Filipinos toward Europe and not only.

The first interesting element to note is that since the 1970s, as reported in an Italian Government and European Community dossier, the Philippines became an 'exporter of labour,' a sort of prototype for the world of the 'nation of emigrants' which through appropriate placement agencies, has promoted and organised the diaspora of millions of its citizens toward other countries.[19] These causes of this phenomenon, as is clear from the dossier,[20] are varied, including the country's poor economic development, its political instability, a series of natural disasters and a strong demographic increase.

It is precisely at the beginning of the 1970s that the Filipino community begins to settle in Italy as well. The community remains a predominantly female one for quite some time,[21] and is also one of the first migrant communities to establish itself in our country. However, it is in the 1990s that the major influx begins thanks to a policy for family reunification promoted by the Italian government.[22] This influx stabilised around 2,000 Filipinos with the birth of second and third generations.

[17] As Father Ricky Gante, chaplain of the Filipino Chaplaincy of Santa Pudenziana, explained to me, despite the presence of a larger number of Filipinos in Milan, the type of organisation that is described in these pages is present only in Rome.

[18] It is vital to underline the complex relationship which is formed between the various national Churches and the Vatican, represented mainly by the *Ufficio diocesano per la pastorale delle migrazioni*: (*Migrantes*) directed by Monsignor Pierpaolo Felicolo. *Migrantes* plays a decisive role in the coordination and in the organisation of the spiritual and material activities of the various communities present in Italy.

[19] Ferdinand E. Marcos's government implemented this policy through the enactment of the *Labor Code* of 1974 (*Presidential Decree*, No. 442) which was then continued with equal force until 1992 under the government of Corazon Aquino. On this subject see also the work of Josefina Socorro Flores Tondo, *Transnational Migration, Diaspora and Religion: Inscribing Identity Through the Sacred (the Filipino diaspora in New Zealand and Singapore*), 2012, in which Filipino migration results as being "one of the largest labour diasporas in the world, […] more than 10% of its 90 million population dispersed in 193 countries" (Tondo 2012, 6).

[20] *La Collettività Filipino in Italia*, https://www.dossierimmigrazione.it/scheda-dossier-statistico-immigrazione, last access 3 February 2018.

[21] Nearly all the women were in fact employed as domestic helpers.

[22] Martelli Law (No. 39 of 1990).

A second element to bear in mind is that despite the large presence of Filipino citizens in Italy (ISTAT, National Institute of Statistics, calculates 166,459 on 1 January 2017, with more than 40,000 resident in Rome), there is no corresponding number of persons requesting Italian citizenship.[23] This is probably due to the rather common notion that in the future they will return to the Philippines where they have frequently left their children and a large part of their family.[24] However, as I have often been told, it must be pointed that when the family nucleus also includes second and third generations, returning is not so easy.[25]

Italy is not only a place to come to work. On the contrary, for most of the Filipinos who have been here for over twenty years and for the young people who were born here, our country represents a 'second home:' "At any of our celebrations we sing our national anthem, but we also sing the Italian anthem, because we are here, out of respect but also because we also feel Italian. We have something in common, we are all Catholics."[26]

In fact, Catholicism represents the third and fundamental element which characterises the Filipino diaspora. First of all, one must remember that the migratory movement toward Italy came about mainly because of the significant role played by Catholic missionaries in the Philippines or by Filipino priests in contact with Italian parishes.[27] It is a question then of a migration supported mainly by the Catholic Church, a factor which can explain the presence of and the type of organisation of the Filipino communities in the Roman diocese, spreading perhaps like a large oil slick.

It becomes even more evident that in this community the religious aspect represents a potent factor of identity and connection between the world of origin and that of arrival.[28] In actual fact this is not just a characteristic of the Filipino diaspora in Italy. Indeed, as emerges from a study by Tondo: "Religion remains as much a part of migrant's transnational life in diaspora communities, as it is in the homeland […] religious practices are translocated and expressed in diaspora rituals, and constitute a vital part of the diaspora community's identity in host societies" (Tondo 2012, 41).

[23] In 2016 only 1,131 had Italian citizenship.

[24] On the other hand, it is true that migration produces a sense of double belonging, which transforms itself into a circular process where people who belong to two communities continue to be oriented mainly toward their countries of origin.

[25] The historic presence of Filipinos in Rome is also symbolically represented through a simple game developed for the last Family Day, a celebration where a prize is given to the family who manages to create the longest chain of people of all ages holding hands.

[26] Lina, personal interview, Rome, 11 June 2017, on Independence Day. Quite often they identify as citizens of two countries as do members of other migrant communities. Indeed, as Gupta and Ferguson report, "In this culture-play of diaspora, familiar lines between 'here' and 'there,' centre and periphery, colony and metropole become blurred" (Gupta and Ferguson 1992, 10).

[27] It is to be noted that 83% of the Filipino population is Catholic.

[28] As Father Felicolo recalls on this subject, the Filipino pastoral centre represents an important reality in the Church and in the context of the diocese and "it is important that one feels part of the Diocese of Rome and to walk with it in the faith with one's own peculiarities" (Father Felicolo, personal interview, 19 January 2018).

Religion is present then as a principal factor of union and cooperation among Filipinos in Rome, becoming at the same time an "inclusive instrument reinforced by ethnic identity" (Russo 2013, 216) thanks to the fact (as once again outlined by Tondo): "Filipino folk Christianity and devotional rituals provide the cultural and the domain for the Filipino construction of community and identity overseas" (Tondo 2012, 41).

## The Filipino Chaplaincy of Santa Pudenziana and the 'System of Transhumance' of the Community and its Choirs

The Filipino community of Rome has as a religious, social, organisational and affective reference point the Chaplaincy of Santa Pudenziana,[29] in Via Urbana, in the historic centre. It represents the true heart of the Filipino people, a home away from home, offering religious services and concrete support for overcoming the difficulties caused by being migrants. In addition, numerous social, educational and cultural activities take place here, which strengthen the common feeling of belonging, of maintaining ties with the land of origin and of reconstructing a proper national space in the new context of fitting-in.

The Chaplaincy integrates 55 sub-communities,[30] which organise their own management of the city in further autonomous sections down to a micro-spatial level according to an organisation that is both hierarchical and reticular. The micro-communities are organised according to a *matrioska* system which foresees that each of them belongs to a territorial cluster (centre, north, south, east and west),[31] which in turn contributes to 'building' the great 'family' of the Catholic Filipino Chaplaincy. This complex system is based on an itinerant movement in which the micro-communities move according to a predetermined schedule from their parishes to the Chaplaincy and back again to provide for the celebration of religious services.

[29] It was recognised as the Filipino Chaplaincy in 1991.

[30] The Roman Director of the Fondazione *Migrantes*, Father Pierpaolo Felicolo, together with the Chaplain, Father Ricky Gante, are currently trying to undertake a process of reorganisation of the micro-communities which foresees that the less numerous groups (made up of fewer than 40 people) should be combined with larger communities located in the same cluster. This has all been made necessary by the shortage of Filipino priests in Rome who can follow the same micro-community on a steady basis.

[31] System of division for the parishes of Rome adopted by the Diocese.

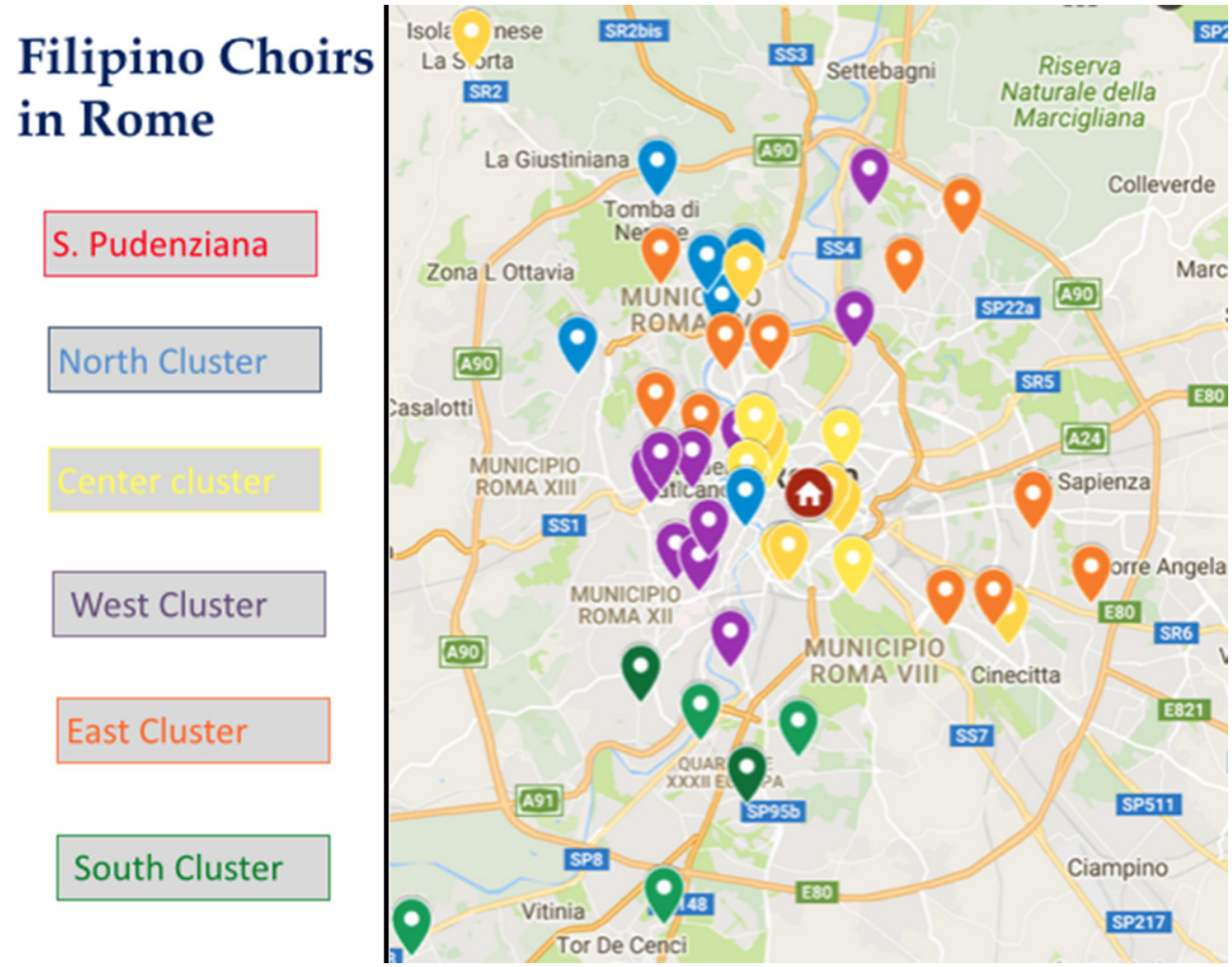


**Figure 1:** The map indicates the distribution of community choirs. The colours correspond to the different clusters. The Chaplaincy of Santa Pudenziana is indicated at the centre by the symbol of a house.

According to the Chaplain, Father Ricky Gante, this system for distributing responsibilities[32] is necessary not only because it supports the activities of the Chaplaincy and the organisation of the main festivities,[33] but also because it makes a material contribution to keeping the entire Roman Filipino community united, avoiding the creation of ghettos or divisions of a regional nature.

In this context of diaspora, musical practices are recognised as an expression of the cultural and religious life of the community, which is mindful of its past with a view to maintaining commonly held traditions and reinforcing the sense of homeland, as well as renewing a symbolic tie with its place of origin.

In the field of worship and devotional activity, some migrant communities living in Rome, promote a series of familiarisation strategies and the re-organisation of the 'alien' space into a home-like environment, reaffirming their Nation through music. Musical performances nourish the centre, the

[32] A meeting with the heads of the various communities, the Chaplain and other Filipino priests is held in the Chaplaincy each month. This is when common activities are organised and various matters are discussed.
[33] The Cluster that has to organise the whole year's festivities is chosen every year.

heart of the community and promote and sustain the solidarity of Filipinos in the diaspora. I have been told on numerous occasions that the singing serves to contribute to the life of the Chaplaincy as well as being a way of expressing their gratitude for their membership in the national community.

The choruses are organised according to the same *matrioska* system,[34] and take it in turns to perform the religious services; they also have to guarantee the performance of the music during the liturgies celebrated on Santa Pudenziana day and on the most important Filipino festivals: *Simbang Gabi* (the beginning of the Christmas novena), *Santcruzan* (in the month of May), *Barrio Fiesta* and on *Independence Day*.


**Figure 2:** Images of the Choirs. Photographs: Grazia Tuzi.

Singing, which, as is often said, "flows directly from the heart," is considered to be one of the most potent instruments for the expression of one's own religious experience thanks to the fact that involves emotion and renders prayer more effective. It represents moreover an effective symbol of their being Filipinos to the point of moving them to say, "singing is in our blood," the music which is part of their culture. "The love for singing is always in the Filipinos' heart. In the Philippines they are always singing, and they are good at singing."[35]

[34] The various territorial cluster choruses of the micro-communities come together for some of the most important occasions, while, for some special events, members of the various cluster choruses form a 'grand choir,' renamed the *Filipino choir* by Father Ricky Gante.

[35] Father Ricky Gante, personal interview, 6 January 2018.

In fact, an important part of their school education is music and especially choral singing. The extensive diffusion of this practice has fostered the presence of a large number of singers in Rome, who are willing to participate in choral activity with both passion and competence. On the one hand then, singing is prayer, on the other, it *is* what the community is.

Singing then not only reinforces prayer but is looked on as a way of serving God and the Chaplaincy. The fundamental role that Filipinos assign to singing during religious services permits them to depend on the presence of a chorus at every Mass celebrated at Santa Pudeziana. This gave rise to the idea of an itinerant group of Filipino choruses moving from the periphery to the centre and back again, according to a preset calendar. This network of relations and activities, guaranteeing the fulfilment of the spiritual life of the Chaplaincy, effectively strengthens the feeling of mutual belonging: "The Chaplaincy unites everyone, it is like being in the Philippines, the singing unites us, it makes us closer. Singing is a way of exhibiting our talent, our culture, our traditions. Singing is the life of Filipinos."[36]

Although most musical performances are carried out by 4-voice choirs or by 4 voices accompanied by piano or guitar, in some cases there are other combinations, for example, a unison choir accompanied by an instrument or a soloist accompanied by piano. The repertory performed by the choir is mainly influenced by American culture and for the most part by so-called *Contemporary Worship Music* which developed in the 1960s and is stylistically close to pop music. In fact, one must recall, as Kim Rockwell notes, the arrival of North American missionaries in the Philippines at the beginning of the 1900s. Not only did they introduce Protestant religious practices, but they even contributed to the spread of popular songs and hymns from that country: "Although Filipinos had long been acculturated to Western music and as a result cognitively and affectively aligned for the ready acceptance of American popular music" (Rockell 2009, 72).

It is in the early 1960s in the light of the renewal promoted by the Second Vatican Council in the celebration of the Mass in vernacular languages and accompanied by local traditional music that the Jesuit Father Eduardo Hontiveros organises a performance of Filipino liturgical music. This is why Hontiveroa is considered the precursor of the worship musical group *Bukas Palad* of the *Jesuit Music Ministry* of the Academy and Manila University.[37] A group which

> has produced well over a hundred original liturgical and inspirational songs composed by Fr. Manolig Francisco, S. J. Norman A. Agatep, Jandi I. Arboleda and other Bukas Palad members. Bukas Palad continues to create new religious songs because the heart of Bukas Palad's ministry is to give a voice to

[36] Noel Parin, Director of the Chorus Karilagen, personal interview, 26 February 2017.
[37] Eduardo Hontiveros, Francisco Manoling Arnel D'Aquino, Fruto Ramirez, Nemy Que, Chalie Cenzon, Jboy Gonzales, and Isodoro Danny are members.

people's most fervent prayers.[38]

The ample corpus of songs produced by Bukas Palad constitutes the principal 'archive' into which the majority of the choirs dip. A repertory that has now become transnational[39] and which, beyond the creation of a sort of 'Filipino religious-musical identity,' has allowed the tie to one's country of origin to be continually nourished.

## Conclusions

The acoustic environment of the Chaplaincy seems rich, dynamic and continually renewed.[40] If we look at the complex system of itinerant movement of the choirs from the parishes spread over the various quarters to Santa Pudenziana, we realise that music is one of the most effective means of fostering solidarity and cohesion of the diaspora communities in Rome: "We represent various communities, but we are all here together to sing and to contribute to the activity of the Chaplaincy. We are bound to one another as if we were a braid."[41]

We could almost say that the Filipino community of Rome manifests its own religious experience also and above all through its liturgical music. Choral singing seems then to offer us a key to effectively understanding how, in Philip Bohlman's words, "through sharing religious and musical practices, the Philippine community forms and solidifies itself" (Bohlman 2006, 238).

The complex organisation of these choirs is a paradigmatic example of a model of re-appropriation of urban space by a community in diaspora. The migratory journey finds its symbolic accomplishment in the composite grid of paths that the various groups undertake in their going and coming from the chaplaincy of Santa Pudenziana.

In the research conducted among the migrant communities of Christians residing in the city of Rome, the Filipino case appeared particularly significant from this point of view. Other national communities have a different relationship with the territory. Some less numerous ones show an affective attachment to their church and the churchgoers embark on long city journeys to participate in Sunday Mass, while larger communities are split into churches located in different areas of the city and choose one or the other for individual or community reasons (parties, weddings, etc.).

[38] Bukas Palad Music Ministry, www.bukaspalad.com/ptofile, last access 3 February 2018. Bukas Palad continue to compose, publish and perform numerous songs which represent a significant part of the liturgical music of the Philippines and of the diaspora communities.
[39] This repertory is followed in both the Philippines and countries of the diaspora.
[40] In the Roman diaspora, indeed, songs are continuously renewed thanks to the internet, which becomes an important reference archive to dip into for songs and styles of performance. The technological developments, in fact, as Jonathan M. Dueck and Suzel Ana Reily sustain, "linked to the popular music industry have also become a vehicle for the circulation of Christian repertories" (Dueck and Reily 2016b, 10).
[41] Flordeliza Rocadio, member of *Filipino Choir* (ex. Grand Choir), personal interview 1 March 2015.

A more widespread and also personal knowledge of the mini city-tours of the new Romans helped us better understand how complex and differentiated the groups of migrants are and how significant their relations are with the city of Rome. Music is never a secondary element in this scenario. If, from this point of view, the case of the Filipinos is paradigmatic, since it is above all the journeys the choirs make that represent the round-trip movements from the periphery to the centre, it is undoubtable that also in other communities the churchgoers attending the liturgies of national churches often move following the sounds that come from their mother-country and which are cultivated by compatriot musicians in the new homelands.

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