

# Critical Filipinx American Histories and their Artifacts



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*RICK BONUS AND UW AAS 360 2019  
STUDENTS*

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# Preface: Critical Filipinx American Histories and their Artifacts

The essays you will read here, including the images you will see, collectively constitute the work that 42 students produced through a college course that I taught in the Autumn Quarter of 2019 at the University of Washington (UW). Entitled, “Critical Filipinx American Histories,” this course was designed to primarily engage students with questions regarding the production, circulation, and transformation of knowledges that touch on the lives of Filipinx Americans. From the long histories of colonization that Filipinxs have experienced all the way to the contemporary diaspora of Filipinx labor around the world, we critically examined the ways in which Filipinx American identities were and continue to be co-constructed, how Filipinx American cultures and social practices are dynamically and endlessly evolving, and why ideas and questions regarding the past, present, and future of Filipinx Americans matter in relation to other groups and to practices of power and resistance.



Towards the last three weeks of our class, we paid close attention to fulfilling an “artifacts project” in which students were challenged to ruminate on significant connections they can make across our class topics, our institutional locations, our personal and community lives, and selected historical objects that were housed at The Burke Museum at UW.

The Philippines-sourced artifacts that we encountered at the Burke Museum presented to us a variety of ways to think and act upon not only the meanings we can infer from regarding and researching on the artifacts; we also considered the artifacts and what they represent as opportunities for us to speculate on our personal and social identities, the communities we belong to within and outside of our university, our recently-learned and freshly-discussed studies of Filipinx American histories and contemporary cultures, and relevant institutional practices related to knowledge production and critique that we were a part of.

Of course, in the fulfillment of these observations, reflections, and

speculations, students attempted to produce works that arose from diverse perspectives and lenses, distinct voices and positionalities, and multiple levels of engagement and discourse. We present parts of them here as key elements of an open textbook resource for you. These essays and images cumulatively express our intellectual labors, our personal and social investments in knowledge production, as well as our hopes and questions regarding the relationships among artifacts, people, and the locations where such artifacts are sourced and kept. We are optimistic that our project engages you in provocative ways, in the same manners by which we were inspired and stimulated in putting it together.

This “artifacts project” was made possible by funding from the UW Libraries Open Textbook Grant that I obtained in May of 2018. This grant became the incentive behind a pursuit to integrate students’ works into an open textbook resource for the first time, to teach, read, and learn about “Critical Filipinx American Histories,” a course that I have taught for many years already. This experience thus made it a simultaneous learning process for both me and the students. All of the student projects were eventually completed and uploaded in February of 2019 and will thus be made available for viewing and online discussion from thereon.

Humbly, we want to honor and recognize the indigenous people upon whose land our studies and our work on this project were made possible. The process and completion of this open textbook project also included the supportive work of an amazing team of resource persons from the UW Libraries, the Center for Teaching and Learning, the UW-IT Learning Technologies office, and The Burke Museum. I thank Lauren Ray profusely for guiding me and my students so ably and patiently through the complex processes of open textbook publishing; Maryam Fakouri for helping us navigate through the mazes of licensing and copyrighting; as well as Harry Murphy and John Danneker, also from the U.W. Libraries, for guiding us through. Robyn Foshee from the Center for Teaching and Learning and Beth Lytle from UW-IT Learning Technologies offered

us their valuable assistance in accomplishing different parts of this project.

At The Burke Museum specifically, our immense gratitude goes to Dr. Holly Barker (Curator for Oceanic and Asian Culture and Principal Lecturer with the Department of Anthropology), Kathy Dougherty (Collections Manager, Oceanic and Asian Culture), and Rose Mathison (Collections Assistant). Holly and Kathy were the first to open my eyes to the Philippines collection at The Burke and the potentials of pedagogically acting upon practices of access and learning that this collection presented, while Rose provided my students with the freshest voice in museum collection. In addition, I want to make special mention of Lauren Banquer, former Collections Assistant at The Burke, for her helpful work on this project before it became part of an open textbook resource. The chair, faculty, staff, and students at my home department, the Department of American Ethnic Studies, also deserve my appreciation for their support of a project that, to me, was so meaningful in new, innovative, and challenging ways. And lastly, on behalf of all the students who participated so willingly and excitedly in this project, we thank our families and friends for their support, love, and trust. We recognize you all with deep appreciation!

Rick Bonus  
University of Washington

# I. Put On Your Thinking Cap – a Connective Insight on an Ifugao Headdress

## IFUGAO HEADDRESS

### *A CONNECTIVE INSIGHT*

Jaya Rivera  
Lia Villaruz

---

The artifact we've chosen is a headdress donated by the James S. and Ann E. Boynton family in 1988. It originates from the Ifugao people who reside in a mountain province of Luzon, which is located in the northern part of the Philippines. This particular headdress is adorned with feathers and attached to it is the beak of the Kalaw (hornbill) bird. It is usually worn by a religious Shaman. However, in our research of this artifact, we learned that it can be used in a variety of ways, such as being worn during wedding ceremonies by the bride or by the village chief as a crown during planting and harvesting rituals. Women tend to be in charge of weaving the band of the headdress while men collect the beak or carve a wooden figure of Bul-ul (the God of rice) that sits atop the headdress. This artifact is significant because it existed during the pre-colonial time of the Philippines and has lived through Spanish and other colonizations.

Put On Your Thinking Cap – a  
Connective Insight on an Ifugao



The overall intricacy of the artifact and its beauty are what intrigued us. From the colors, to the inclusion of feathers, to the beak of the Kalaw situated at the top, the artifact is beautiful and we were astounded by the fact that something that seems so delicate has managed to last through the centuries. This artifact is a remnant of the past; it survived Spanish colonization, conveying the idea that this part of Filipino shamanism is not subject to erasure even through the spread of Spanish Catholicism.

We can see that this artifact obtains its significance through its representation as a status symbol of respect and authority; a deeper analysis of this artifact leads us to realize that there is a much more complex rendition of civilization in the Philippines in pre-colonial times, which contradicts the typical assumption that Filipinos only became civilized during and after colonization. This indigenous



artifact is also significant because it is a symbol of resilience as it escaped eradication and happens to be physically here with us today.

To look at this artifact through a critical lens, however, it seems that although this artifact provides information about the customs and traditional clothing of indigenous Filipino people, it partakes in creating the façade that “cultural gatekeepers” render to not draw attention to the historical context of colonization and suffering associated with the people of the Philippines. This artifact is not obviously linked to the idea of empire in the eyes of most audiences, which contributes to the lack of understanding of “friendship and forgetting” and institutional invisibility. Without understanding this historical context, we cannot fully understand the artifact.

That being said, this artifact can also be examined methodically in the context of the argument Lustre illustrates in their poem that this item belongs to all observers who are of Filipino descent, regardless of their overlapping, conflicting identities or how strong their connection is to their origins. As a result of diaspora and a long history of conquest, many Filipinos have not seen the mainland and have grown disconnected from the Philippines. This artifact should serve as a source of strength and pride for all Filipinos. It is a physical representation that certain identities have outlasted about 400 years of colonization and suffering.

—

As part of the Filipinx-American community, we find it difficult to truly define our identities as we are a result of centuries of colonization. This artifact serves its part in starting a conversation of who we are and where we truly come from. It relates to our personal lives because, as an artifact with a Filipino background, it gives us a peek into our own histories being of Filipino descent. It serves as an object that represents distance in both time and space, so being able to learn more about its history and the region it comes from is something that should not be taken for granted. Though none of the members of our group are from the mountain provinces

of Luzon, it is rewarding to learn more about the varying cultures and traditions even within the Philippines.

In relation to our school, the institutional practice of keeping museums can be utilized as a tool to acquire knowledge, especially if done ethically. We notice that there is an influx of Filipino students here at the University of Washington, so, by having the Burke museum provide and care for an abundance of artifacts with rich Filipino histories, Filipinx/Filipinx-Americans at this school are able to learn more about the different aspects of their culture for free, with trust in the transparency of the Burke. This artifact is of importance to Filipinos especially because it shows us how other Filipino people display their pride and honor their culture through traditional clothing. By observing and having this artifact on display, it encourages other Filipinos to find ways to educate others about their cultures.

Doing this Open Textbook Artifact Project has brought an opportunity to apply *bayanihan*—which is achieving a goal through a collective effort—to learn to connect Filipinx-American history with tangible objects from the past. As we collaborated together throughout this project, we learned more about the varying cultures of the Philippines and how to connect them to current times, thus improving our knowledge of Philippine history.

\*\*\*\*\*

We ask you to take this time to reflect with us in engaging with this artifact. How can the acquisition of this headdress be viewed in a positive light? This artifact has served us to think deeper on what it represents, and we hope it has the same effect on you.



## ***“BAYANIHAN”***

### ***List of Acknowledgments:***

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\*\*\*

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Lustre, Napoleon. "Conditions." *Amerasia* 24, no. 2 (1998): 111-114.

## 2. A Parol: What Pa-Role Does it Have?

### **The Parol**

*Thomas Macale Abalahin*

*Leslie Paulino*

A special thanks to the Burke Museum for allowing us to visit.

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Supposedly acquired in 2013, this parol was originally on display as a Philippine artifact at the old Burke Museum. Shown next to Santo Niño figurines, these artifacts and other Catholic iconography were considered representative of a single thread of Filipino history: Spanish colonization and its influence. When the new Burke was built, the museum curators received feedback from Filipino community members, and decided to put the parol and other Catholic-centered artifacts back into the collections. Thus, the opportunity arose to show a different strand of Filipino history. Instead of a single monolithic story of conquest, the Burke can now present the Philippines as having a rich cultural nexus with a history that began before the arrival of Magellan.

The role of the parol is complicated. But its genealogy is quite simple; its name is a derivative of the Spanish farol, for lantern. It was an ornament lent from Spanish traditions that were celebrated and expanded under Spanish law on Philippine soil. The ornamental lantern symbolizes the star of Bethlehem, and is hung outside or from windows. Pragmatically, the parol lit the way to church during the Christmas season for the early dawn masses, *Simbang Gabi*, leading up to the midnight mass on Christmas Eve, also called *Misa de Gallo*. The parol is not only an embodiment of the glowing guide for the three wise men, but also, perhaps more notably, a singular expression of the Filipino Christmas spirit. While Catholicism dominates the Philippines, and while its symbols are thoroughly loved by the populace, it is imperative to be critical of the systems that laid the ground for its pervasiveness.

So, what does a parol mean to an American-born Filipino? Divorced from the lantern's ubiquitous presence in the motherland, where does its light lead? Our co-author, Thomas Macale Abalahin, states, "I understand the criticism of singular narratives, but parols... feel so... Filipino." Abalahin extrapolates that the parol remains Filipino in character because it has been elevated as a tradition in Filipino culture; the materials, skills, and love put into each parol feel uniquely Filipino, even if they originate from practices elsewhere. From his personal experiences, the parol makes itself apparent as a long-lasting connection to his family's Filipino identity. When speaking to what the parol means, Abalahin says "even if my mom says we are American now... we still have the parol, and I thought it was just a regular Christmas thing growing up until I saw no one else had one." Specifically, the parol was ordered by the co-author's late grandmother from the Philippines; and the province his

family hails from, Pampanga, has even taken the title of “Parol Capital of the Philippines.” He connects the parol with faith, his grandmother’s and mother’s faith, and an admiration for its craftsmanship recognizable even from across the Pacific Ocean.

In practice, Abalahin marks this connection as a form of transnationalism – that his grandmother could not let go of a cherished tradition, and so ensured the parol’s arrival and preservation on American soil in spite of their apparent loyalty to their new nation. Just as she sent *balikbayan* boxes (boxes of dry goods) back to the Philippines, his grandmother also received gifts and trinkets from her family in the provinces and enjoyed these small parcels sent from home. This exchange also represents a site of contradiction: pride in the Philippines and its goods, and the claim to the United States as their home. If the U.S. is home now for the Abalahins, why take bits and pieces from the old home and declare them as better made, as unlike anything in America, or as more auspicious? For the Abalahin family, American citizenship meant partaking in the belly of the empire; a higher quality of life afforded by the accumulation of wealth in the imperial nation that drew them in. They coveted the light of empire, while renouncing their previous allegiances as an effort to draw themselves closer to that light.

...

From the perspective of a non-Filipinx, the parol seems to symbolize light over darkness. Although this history of the Philippines is wistful, the parol unites a community through hope and resilience. Much like the three wise men, the parol guides them to something greater than their own. The simplicity and uniqueness of this specific parol bring a sense of life, as it feels very homemade and personal. One may



even question why this parol is in the Burke Museum. Why is this delicate little artifact here? After speaking with the museum's collections manager, Kathy Dougherty, she said most artifacts were previously donated. Knowing who or why someone donated this parol might remain a mystery. However, one may wonder about its marvelous journey to the Burke and begin to imagine a story of their own creation. The heart-shaped patterns on the parol evoke a sense of warmth and love put into its making. And by being at the Burke Museum, hopefully (if the museum plans on showing the parol in an exhibit) it would showcase the journey of love and light expressed by the Filipino community.

The parol has many roles and meanings, shifting and overlapping across different times and places, simultaneously dependent on context as well as the person one asks. It seems not dissimilar from the histories and identities of people who identify as Filipinx, as we moved from the role of the parol within the influence of Spanish colonization, to the meanings of the parol from outside of the Philippines. The parol looked small and unremarkable, sitting within Burke's massive natural history collection, but it turned out to be an artifact that sparked a lot of earnest discussion among us.

...

Out of all the answers for the role of the parol, we have a favorite. Ernesto David Quiwa, a parol-maker dubbed the "Golden Man of Parol – San Fernando," believes that:

*"the meaning of  
lanterns is to give love."*

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Ernesto David Quiwa article:

<https://www.rappler.com/move-ph/191400-golden-man-parol-san-fernando-ernesto-quiwa>

## Further Acknowledgments To:

Kathy Dougherty  
Rose Mathison  
Prof. Holly Barker  
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Harry Murphy  
Maryam Fakouri

### 3. Like an Object in a Museum

#### *The Violence of the Archive, Labels, and Filipina/o Weaponry*

JOSHUA BENDER

The artifact I elected to meditate on was an iron shortsword, likely from the south of the Philippines. The sword has an octagonal wooden grip and pommel, as well as a curved iron guard. The blade itself is slightly curved and rusted, chipped in quite a few places. The sword is housed in a sheath made of two pieces of wood held together by a leather band at the tip, and stitched along the sides. It bears a lot of similarities to other traditional Filipina/o swords from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but it bears no exact resemblance to any of the others I could find at the Burke or from looking through archives online. Unlike most ceremonial or decorative weapons found in the Philippines in the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries, this sword does not have a curved handle, but it is rather fairly stout and short. Its blade also differs significantly from most of the weaponry we observed at the museum: rather than being cut into a sort of wave, the blade is relatively straight, except for the curve to the tip at the end. Most of the items typically looted from sites of violence and relocated to museums tend to be ornamental or ceremonial pieces, used in rituals that were feudal or religious. But the fact that this shortsword looks different and plain makes me think this weapon was a more commonplace artifact, one used not by nobility, but by the masses.



Figure 1: Nineteenth-century Filipina/o Shortsword in Sheath



Figure 2: Nineteenth-century Filipina/o Shortsword outside of sheath

You can see the shortsword I selected here, in Figures 1 and 2. The first shows the shortsword with its sheath on, while the second depicts the unsheathed blade. As you can see, it bears little resemblance to the Filipina/o kris, a sword often used for stabbing at one's enemies, as noted in Figure 3. Figures 4, 5, and 6 are a few examples of items I found through my research that bear some resemblance to the shortsword I was originally interested in. Figures 4 and 5 are nineteenth-century Indonesian shortswords, and Figure 6 is an eighteenth-century Spanish rapier. We can see

that the swords all share some similarities: the guard on Figure 4 is the closest I could find to the guard on the original, and that seems to be the most ornate part of the sword. But it also serves an important function, obviously: the guard is meant to protect the user's hand from incoming blows by the opponent, which makes me think that the original shortsword was designed for combat rather than something more mundane like hunting or butchering meat, though it may very well have served that purpose as well. Figure 5 has a similar curve to the original artifact, though I think that is more a common trait of many shortswords both in antiquity and contemporarily.



*Figure 3: Filipina/o kris*

What is interesting about these shortswords, Figures 1/2, 4, and 5, is that despite the clear European influences from a cultural and political perspective, the weapons themselves are mostly unique

from the colonizing bodies: particularly, I think the design is most un-European in its blade. All of these shortswords have a *flat* and a *sharp* side, meaning that they were designed for *slashing* rather than *stabbing*, as we see in many European weapons. Consider the rapier, Figure 6, which has a thin blade and a pointed tip, with sharp edges on both sides. The rapier was designed for quickly parrying and stabbing, which also explains why its guard covers much more of the hand. However, it would be incorrect, I think, to say that the shortswords exist completely without the influence of their colonizing bodies, and as we can see there may have been some Spanish influence on the design of the Filipina/o shortsword here. Both Figures 1 and 6 have straight grips and rounded pommels. While European weapons, especially those we see in museums, were almost always more elaborate or decorative—for example, note the intricate designs and decorative guard on the Figure 6—we can see that the basic design of the grip and pommel are the same.



Figure 3: Eighteenth-century Indonesian Shortsword



*Figure 4: Eighteenth-century Indonesian Shortsword, 2*



*Figure 6: Eighteenth-century Spanish rapier*



Figure 7 highlights the similarities I've noted previously between the shortsword I found at the museum and the ones I found through online research. As one can observe, we have the curved guard, the curved tip at the end of the blade, the flat and sharp edges, the round pommel and straight grip. Noting all of these similarities highlights for me the difficulty of classifying something when all we have to build on is its appearance, which also speaks to the disconnect many Filipina/o American youths may feel in having no concrete, physical connection to the Philippines. But what does it mean that we are able to hold these artifacts, to observe them like objects in a museum—which they are—where we are literally holding these items? And how can we think about this as an avenue for the ways we understand racialization, especially of Filipina/os? How do the observation and categorization of stolen artifacts in the possession of a museum—itself a site of violence—correlate to the ways in which Filipina/os are observed and categorized by colonizers?





*Figure 7: Similarities between the swords*

I think what attracted me the most to this item was that it was initially labeled as an “Indonesian style” shortsword, and sometime later, this label was crossed out and the word “Philippines” was written in its place (see Figure 1). For me, this presented an interesting avenue into interrogating the ways in which items are classified by the museum, and what that means for the peoples from whom these items are taken. Historically miscategorized and recategorized, much like the Filipina/os during the colonial periods of Spain and the United States (as well as during the nominally postcolonial period, for instance during the court case of *Roldan vs. LA County*), these artifacts can be seen as emblematic of the ways Filipina/os navigate their colonial surroundings. At the very least, how are we read by non-Filipina/os, for instance, by archivists and by the museum? We exist as an object of study and there is violence in the ways we are portrayed and erased. Of course, this very well could have been an honest mistake in mislabeling, but overlooking entire categories of people is itself a violent act. We see this articulated in Oscar V. Campomanes’ writings on the institutional invisibility of Filipina/os, where he observes the ways Filipina/os are erased from historical narratives and recategorized in order to fit a particular American colonial history. This logic of forgetting still persists in the contemporary United States, and

we can see it even in the labeling of a museum artifact. That the colonizing body of the Philippines—the United States—was able to mislabel this artifact and this label itself was not changed until, I am sure, its incorrectness was pointed out by a member of the Filipina/o community here in Seattle, says something powerful about the logic of forgetting, of *willful erasure* of the Philippines as part of an imperial nation-building project in the United States.

# 4. The Bulul Statue: Power of Rice Healing

## The Bulul Statue



## The Power of Rice Healing

By:

Tiaralyn Valdez Torres  
Khriselle Chelsea Daugard

A special thanks to Burke Museum and Rick Bonus for  
this incredible opportunity!



*Male (left), female (right). H: 15.25 inches, W: 4.25 inches, D: 4 inches*

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## What is a “Bulul”?

The bulul is a carved wooden statue that the Ifugao people of Northern Luzon used to guard their rice crop. They are carved from a single piece of wood and depict humans with very unrealistic features. These bulul are supposed to represent the ancestors of the Ifugaos, and the people supposedly gain power from the presence of ancestral spirits within them. The statues have the figures either standing or sitting down, and the male and female statues are usually found next to each other. They each have sex-related symbols: the mortar for the female and

the pestle for the male. Among the different types of Ifugao figurative sculptures, the bulul are the most known and are the most abundant.



## Who uses the Bulul statues? Where did they come from?

The Ifugao were originally referred to as “Igorots.” They are the mountain people of Northern Luzon. During the Spanish conquest, the colonizers experienced much difficulty when it came to taking over the Ifugao; this was due to the Ifugaos’ firm beliefs in their rights since ancient times. Even after the Ifugao communities were colonized and transformed into new provinces of the Spanish-administered Philippines, the Ifugao people still battled the colonizers. This went on for hundreds of years. Of course, once the Philippine Revolution broke out, the occupation of the Spanish in the province was ended. Prior to this colonization, the Ifugaos were one of the most sophisticated and prosperous highland plutocracies in the entire Philippine archipelago. The state existed for over 2,000 years, and there was a council of elders that ruled and led with peace. This plutocracy that they led brought about the best agricultural technology in Asia at that time. Massive rice terraces were built, which became enduring symbols of this province. Rice for the Ifugao is considered a prestige crop, so their cultures revolve around it. There are many feasts that the Ifugao hold that are related to rice and the different aspects of rice farming. Not only are there different ceremonies held with respect to rice, but in Central Cordillera, are is linked to community and spiritual well-being. Art is all around them in their everyday lives.

The villages here were often built around a stone platform that was situated in its middle spaces. It was on this platform that social and spiritual rites were performed, such as the worship of deities and ancestors, as well as the consecration of the figures they sculpted. Communities all around the Central Cordillera mountain range took part in the practice of carving ancestral



and religious figures. But today, carving is mostly practiced by the men. The first child of the family usually inherited the bulul, which were very highly respected and admired.

## **How does the Bulul statue artifact relate to Filipinx-American studies?**

What made us interested in the bulul artifact is how much power it can contain through its healing presence. The significance of the bulul statues within the community of the Ifugao is heavily important due to their massive rice terraces that eventually became a symbol of the Luzon province later on. Since Northern Luzon is the site of one-third of the country's total rice production — the main reason why it is called the “Rice Granary of the Philippines” — the Ifugao culture massively revolves around rice. Originally referred to as “Igorots,” these members of the mountain tribes provide us with an understanding of how they lived by their customs as practiced in their daily lives. In the acclaimed and distinguished autobiography/novel and historical/social text of *America is in the Heart* by Carlos Bulosan, a Filipino novelist and poet who immigrated to America, he briefly mentioned his personal experience with the Igorots. While Carlos was trading at San Manuel's public market, he witnesses groups of the Igorot who came down from the mountains to the lowland villages in order to trade their own products with others. He added that they were walking in “G-strings with their poisoned arrows.” This specific reference was the fact that in the early 20th century, the Igorot tribe held on to their traditional cultural dress and way of life. In today's 21st century, the Igorot people still observe and practice their customs. In addition to Carlos witnessing the Igorot people, an American tourist pays him to undress for a picture, making him look “ugly” to attract the attention of

other tourists in exchange for some income. However, the tourists seemed to have more of an interest in the actual Igorot people who are already nearly naked. We can relate this to how the bulul statues are now mass produced in markets. The indigenous ideologies are lost due to assimilation to Western culture. Since the bulul statues are now produced in mass quantities, this can easily translate as losing their ritual significance due to mass production, in which cultures are reduced to tacky souvenirs and interior decoration. The bulul statues' main and only purpose is to help protect and multiply rice harvests. In addition, the statues are treated by priests with care and respect to avoid any bad spirits that can possibly ruin a successful rice harvest. So, in a contextual manner of assimilation, the bulul statues can stand for what Filipinos experienced through resistance, resilience, and in a sense, colonial mentality. Western culture that produces mass quantities of bulul statues is another form of cultural degradation. In other words, we see here the loss of meaning and value of one's culture through assimilation.

## **A personal connection to self and Filipinx-American communities:**

Rice is a main staple when it comes to Filipino cuisine. As to any other Asian cultures, rice is a prominent food when it comes to eating main dishes, desserts, and so on. So, when we think of the bulul statues and its main purpose of protecting and healing rice harvests, it ties in with our cultural value through growing up with our parents cooking and figuring out our favorite dishes with rice. From a community aspect, rice can also signify poverty. Poverty in the Philippines is very high and rice can be a sign of poverty due to it being the only meal some people can consume when they lack enough resources. In

addition, rice provides carbohydrates, which are essential for those who engage in hard labor. Rice is a kind of food that helps us live and survive, regardless of where you come from. Overall, the significance of the bulul statue and its healing properties that help protect and heal rice harvests bring positive impacts on one of the most staple foods of our Filipino culture!

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Further Acknowledgments To:

Kathy Dougherty

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Prof. Holly Barker

Lauren Ray

Harry Murphy

Maryam Fakouri

Richard Rivera



## 5. winKNOW history, winKNOW self

### Winnowing Tray

by: Isabella Sundry, Sarah Jane Agbyani, Alexa Tonel



#### **Background on Artifact**

Our artifact is a winnowing tray, *bilao* in Tagalog, from the Abra Province in the northern region of Luzon, in the Philippines. It is a woven fan-shaped basket used for drying grains of rice and sifting them, particularly performed by women.



had several aspects of their lives destroyed and changed to assimilate into Spain's rule for three centuries. When Spain sold the Philippines to the United States through the Treaty of Paris in 1898, the Filipinos went under U.S. colonization. After the Philippine-American War, Filipinos again were forced into assimilation by the United States through their education system and extraction of labor. Knowing the long-lasting effects of colonization and the trauma associated with it help people better understand the identity and history of Filipinos. Despite their history of colonization and assimilation, the winnowing tray or *bilao* did not leave or change its purpose in the lives of Filipinos. The winnowing tray, used to dry and sift through grains of rice, was a powerful weapon of survival during the years of colonization. Rice, a basic form of sustenance especially for poor people, kept Filipinos alive. The winnowing tray can be seen as a powerful tool that is essential to the identity of Filipinos because it has been passed down through generations of Filipinos who survived their colonization. Although Filipinos suffered through colonization, this tool is significant because it is still used today. It is a living sign of resilience.



A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: <https://www.pressbooks.pub/criticalfilipinxamericanhistories/?p=44>



### **Reflection**

Initially, my reaction to seeing this piece in the museum was that I was really surprised. Seeing the winnowing tray opened my eyes, from being something used daily to becoming an artifact at a museum. I would have never thought that an item like this would be something I have to analyze. But, I was also very pleased to see my culture being a topic of interest at the University of Washington's Burke Museum community. Almost everyone's experience with museums is walking into and not knowing a thing nor understanding the story behind each artifact. However, this time was very different from my other visits to the museum. It was almost a reflection and reminder of where my roots came from.

The story behind the winnowing tray is also a story of Filipinxs across the world. Generally, the purpose of this object entails a long process of cleaning and separating of hand-picked rice. Not everyone grew up with a rice cooker, and a winnowing tray was the start of it all. The people who usually use this are those who live in poverty. A typical main dish for those who are poor is a meal that required rice and a simple entree of meat. Filipino culture views food as being a symbol of love, and the process and hardship behind each dish made by hand is very important to its people.

Which is why praying for the food and the hands that made it before you eat has become almost everyone's traditional practice. The winnowing tray then becomes a reminder of how beautiful rice plantations are and how grateful we are to even have them still around. So, seeing the artifact there in the museum provided a sense of comfort and familiarity that drew us to it.

One of my fondest memories of visiting the motherland is driving up to the province, to the house where my dad grew up, and seeing my Lolas (grandmothers) squatting down and using the winnowing tray to sort the rice. I remember gazing out into the rice field and witnessing my people working hard under the hot sun. This gem in my memory has a lot of cultural significance. I've seen many Americans today use this tray as modern-day decor far different from its original use. This artifact is special to communities and schools because it is a piece of memory for present-day people, a reminder of the hardships that our ancestors had to face. This contributes and influences us to find our cultural identity. Without it, few would get to ever learn about the difficult times many had to face to survive the rough experiences of colonization.





*“If you give me rice, I’ll eat today; if you teach me how to  
grow rice, I’ll eat every day”*

*-Mahatma Gandhi*

## 6. The Boar Bowl



### **Institutional “In-boar-sibility”**

by Maychelle Manzano and Graciela Flores

Carved out of dark wood and smooth to the touch, this bowl looked just like any other. What made it distinct, however, were the four legs supporting its body, a head shown at the front, and a tail protruding out the back. It was an animal, though fairly indistinguishable at first. A *cow*, we had thought, taking into consideration its pointy ears and snout. We skimmed the brief description neatly placed next to the artifact and agreed that the bowl most resembled a boar. The thought of calling it the *boar bowl* undoubtedly crossed our minds. A satisfying alliteration.

Upon first sight, we immediately had many questions regarding this artifact: Who created this and why did they do it? What is the purpose or historical context behind it? What compelled Eugene H. Kolb, the donor, to buy and own it? Was it a form of art? Or a functional dish? Our professor even challenged us to think of it as a toy, considering its small size and child-like nature. Driven by curiosity, we were determined to find meaning in what we had found to be such a peculiar artifact.

Kolb himself had left only one note regarding the boar bowl. An “expression of humor,” it had said. We found this fitting at first, but after a minute or two of contemplation, we realized the flaws in our perceptions. Kolb might have deemed the bowl to be humorous, but that begged the question—Was humor the original intention of the creator? Could Kolb have been correct in saying the artifact was an “expression of humor?” What if he was wrong, and the object was one that held sentiment to the creator? In analyzing how labels affected the first impressions of others, we realized that we were also guilty of allowing our judgment to be clouded by a description that is likely only indicative of one individual’s opinion on the artifact. With that in mind, we decided to purge all of our previous assumptions and critically examine what we were able to gather as fact.

The boar bowl is an artifact sorted under the *dish* category. It was made out of dark wood and tentatively determined to resemble a boar. It was donated to the Burke Museum in 1947 by a man named Eugene H. Kolb who, after the Philippine-American War, had bought the bowl in Luzon as a lieutenant for the U.S. Constabulary.

While this was all great information, almost every lead we had lamely reached a dead end. We believed, at first, that this would be a straight-forward research project. Only after searching online, visiting the library, and returning to the Burke Museum, did we learn that our efforts were to no avail. We resorted to hypothesizing the ideas as previously mentioned and, after many unsuccessful attempts, we had yet to assign a concrete meaning to the boar bowl. There was simply not enough information to accurately and effectively identify why this small and simple artifact was significant. We sat slumped against the stools, caught between the shelves of the Suzzallo Library’s “Filipino History” section. We were stumped and on the verge of giving up completely. There are plenty of words to describe how we felt. Confused. Helpless. And frustrated, more than anything.

It seemed like we had run out of options. Time passed, however, and during this period, a thought arose. These feelings of confusion,

helplessness, and frustration—are they not what Filipino Americans today feel in terms of reclaiming their own identity? Steven De Castro, author of “Identity in Action: A Filipino American’s Perspective,” argues that Filipinxs, in pursuit of their true collective story, must do three things: search, discover, and reclaim. But there is a perceived barrier in the “discover” aspect of his argument when, institutionally, our knowledge and resources of Filipino history and culture have been limited to only that which has been cloaked to fit American ideals. This is where the boar bowl gains its meaning.

As mentioned before, we could only describe the boar bowl as a physical embodiment of all our unanswered theories and assumptions. Furthermore, we surmised that the lack of context and knowledge surrounding our artifact was likely due to the concealment and inadequacy of Filipino studies in American institutions. *Institutional invisibility*, a term coined by the Philippine historian and author, Reynaldo Ileto, recognizes that Filipino studies has been hidden for decades, ultimately contributing, in large part, to the insufficiency of information obtained about the artifact. Perhaps the research portion of our project proved more difficult than necessary because of the amount of information lost and suppressed throughout the century. The frustration we had felt in researching the artifact is likely a shared feeling between many others who are seeking the answer to what it really means to be Filipino and consequently, know its history and culture.

Despite the fact that the boar bowl is likely to be a product of institutional invisibility, Professor Bonus was able to alleviate some of our struggles in a one-on-one discussion with him where he provided us with a perspective that added a little hope to the artifact’s meaning.

According to the information given by the Burke Museum, the boar bowl’s origin lies in the mountainous regions of Luzon, the northern province of the Philippines. The North, as Bonus had stated, is known to have escaped most of the forces of colonization due to its difficult terrain. This brought up some interesting implications. Although the boar bowl is so seemingly insignificant

and miniscule in size, it is astonishing that this simple dish managed to evade the destructive tendencies of colonization. This is what labels the boar bowl as a survivor. This bowl acts as an enabler in understanding how Filipinx and those like them can find hope and resilience after enduring the perils of colonization and imperialism. There is something truly amazing about the lengths this artifact has traveled to reach the point it has and the culture that refuses to be forgotten through both time and space. It is thanks to this artifact's existence that we are allowed, along with future others, the opportunity to pursue greater awareness and spark conversations about indigenous cultures that had previously been neglected and suppressed. Let the boar bowl be a symbol in continuing to strive for a more expansive education, one that gives back to the people whose voices have been stolen and one that remembers what has systematically been erased.

# 7. Indigenous Innovation: Poison Bow and Arrow Set

DANICA VILLEZ





**by Danica Villez, Isabella Dalmacio, and Matt Berhe**

Society has always been fixated on making things better. We want bolder, newer, more complex and efficient things, and while the desire for these upgrades isn't necessarily bad, it often renders their predecessors as primitive or irrelevant. However, it's so important for us to understand the artifacts of the past, because only in doing so can we understand the developments of the present.

Our group chose to research a poison bow and arrow set, complete with a quiver and lid. They were dated from before 1915 and sourced from the Philippine Islands, sealed away in a bag for



safety purposes, as the poison was potentially still potent. Upon our initial research, we discovered that these arrows were likely used for hunting, fighting and warfare. While arrows were often used in battle throughout history, the use of poisoned arrows was practiced widely in pre-colonial times. Using poison made of plant, animal and/or insect extracts, hunters and warriors would lace their arrows with these toxins so that they may have a second line of defense against their prey or enemies. If the arrow would not be enough to kill them, the poison would work its way through their bodies and they would die by touch or smell. The process of creating these poisons was very meticulous, from pressing and heating the sources of these toxins, to extracting and applying them to their weapons.

Poisoned weaponry is not an unfamiliar concept to us. From Greek warrior Achilles being shot in the ankle with a poison arrow to the shocking death of The Mountain in the HBO show *Game of Thrones*, there have been many stories of poisoned weaponry as an effective and strategic tool. However, these are merely stories; we're conditioned to see them as otherworldly, mythological, and anachronistic. It isn't widely known that these weapons are integral to the history of many cultures, including Filipinx culture. Not only were poisoned bows and arrows used for hunting food, they were also used in *amigo* warfare, a term coined by historian Reynaldo Ileto to describe the ways in which Filipinos used stealth tactics and feigned friendship to discreetly fight against oppression and colonization. If a Filipinx warrior shot someone with a poisoned arrow but removed it before their enemy's body was discovered, the cause of death could not be traced back to them. This is an example of Filipinx resilience and resistance that have connected our ancestors together long before our artifact's dated year. In fact, a poisoned arrow is said to be the weapon that our first Filipino hero Lapu-Lapu used to kill Magellan and his Spanish colonizers in the Battle of Mactan. This bow and arrow exemplify our culture's strength and skill, but it is not often honored as such. When we are taught about native warriors in history today, our weapons are

depicted as savage and barbaric. Our ingenuity is invisible to our historical gatekeepers. Our ancestors are called uncivilized.

To our group, this artifact represents how resourceful and knowledgeable Filipinx people were and are of their land. It represents indigenous innovation, a narrative that has been changed and concealed by U.S. imperialism and the colonization of our education. To Danica, this weapon represents Filipino resiliency, the action of fighting back against the oppressor that is rarely seen in media. For Matt, this artifact represents indigenous people's resourcefulness and knowledge about their environment. It defeats the narrative of incompetent savages. To Isabella, this weapon represents the *Katipunán*, Filipinx revolutionaries who used bows and arrows, amongst other weapons, against Spanish colonization. These warriors are her namesake, and her source of inspiration and power.

Society has always been fixated on making things better. However, development doesn't beget progress; knowledge does. It isn't enough to innovate and expand if we cannot honor and educate ourselves on the things of the past. This Open Textbook Artifact Project allowed our group to do that. We found ourselves drawing parallels from our past to our present: eco-friendly "innovations" used by indigenous folks but claimed by white society upon their discovery, and indigenous culture and tradition exploited on social media videos that receive comments denouncing them as third worldly, sad, and savage. We learned so much about the inherent power of our ancestors, a strength that we carry within ourselves and our communities. We also learned that asking to open a bag of poisoned arrows to get a closer look is maybe a bad idea.

In closing, we'd like to first and foremost recognize the stewards of Coast Salish lands, original and current caretakers from the Duwamish, Suquamish, Tulalip and Muckleshoot peoples, on whose lands we reside and study today. Our hands go up and recognition spreads. Secondly, we'd like to acknowledge the indigenous people of the Philippines whose artifacts and histories we have discovered through this project and this class. We'd like to additionally thank

Dr. Holly Barker (Curator for Oceanic and Asian Culture and Principal Lecturer with the Department of Anthropology), Kathy Dougherty (Collections Manager, Oceanic and Asian Culture), and Rose Mathison (Collections Assistant) for helping facilitate this project and expanding our learning through the Burke Museum and its artifacts. We'd like to thank Professor Bonus for being our engaging and enthusiastic professor, and always encouraging us to "search, discover, reclaim." We'd like to thank our classmates for being open-minded and kind throughout the quarter. Finally, to our families and friends, thank you for the love and support. *Mahal na mahal namin kayo.*

## 8.



### Combing through the Wreckage

Wandering around a table at the Burke Museum, we looked at the assorted artifacts scattered around, each with its own unique story to tell. We were searching for something available and extraordinarily special; the sword, possibly? No. Perhaps the flag from the Philippine American War? No either. How about the toy boat or the poison arrows? Unfortunately not. After some time, it appeared to us, this special, spectacular artifact that would tell an inspiring tale: the comb. While the comb drew little interest initially, there was a feeling that the comb could tell a valuable lesson and narrative, so we decided to take a chance on it. The narratives that

the comb voices should be given a platform, which is what this University of Washington Pressbook entry hopefully accomplishes.

It was small and unassuming, about five inches long and three inches wide. Made of wood, wrapped tightly on the top with a wire-like material, the comb, or possibly a headpiece, is surprisingly in good condition. Decorated with black, white, red, and blue beads, as well as metallic studs in the front, the craftsmanship stood out upon closer inspection. According to the information that the museum had, the comb appears to be from the T'boli tribe, who live in Mindanao, in the Southern part of the Philippines. It was gifted to the museum in 2013, and it is assumed to be obtained from the Philippines anywhere from 1972 to 1974, but could be much older than that.

The more implicit speculations that we gleaned are that the comb appears indigenous due to its colors, craftsmanship, and overall aesthetic. Upon further research, there is little doubt that the comb belongs to the T'boli people. Images of similarly crafted combs from the T'boli people can be found at present: the combs are wooden, with the same tight wire wrappings and colorful beads. The T'boli people also have a traditionally distinct way of styling their hair, sticking these wooden combs horizontally to keep their hair up with the beads flowing down. Thus, there is good indication that the comb is wholly unique to the T'boli people from Mindanao.

Despite the brutal and long history of colonization and external influence from Spain, the United States of America and Japan, the comb appears to be wholly indigenous, without any influence from outside forces. While under colonization, objects, languages, religions and the ethnic composition of the indigenous population were drastically changed because of these outside forces. It was extremely hard for anything to remain original from the pre-colonization period. But the comb has. The prevalence of Spanish surnames and blood, Spanish Catholicism, and the popularity of speaking and writing in English due to American influence serve as evidence.

However, an equally important but less documented history is

that of resistance in the Philippines and in Mindanao, specifically. Mindanao's history diverged early on from the rest of the Philippines solely because of its location. It was in close proximity to Arab influences, which is why there is an influence of Islamic religions within the islands of Mindanao to this day. It was brought down to the South Cotabato and Lanao areas of the Philippines. When the Spaniards first arrived in the Philippines, their dominance was much more difficult to assert due to there being an already established semi-government in Mindanao. It was not until the middle of the 19th century that the Spaniards were able to break ground and establish sovereignty within Mindanao, thanks to their weapons. To this day, there is still resistance going on between Mindanao and the current official government based in Manila. President Rodrigo Duterte even declared martial law in Mindanao back in 2017 due to on-going security battles.

Because the comb is unique, it connects not only to the history of colonization in Mindanao and the Philippines as a whole, but also to the long history of resistance due to the fact that Mindanao itself desires autonomy to this day. The idea and design behind the comb are wholly unique to Mindanao and the Philippines, and despite the comb appearing dainty and unassuming, it has somehow survived such damages from a long history of colonization. A comb is something that should be easily lost, discarded, or altered artistically because of a long, painful history of colonization. Yet, it is here, preserved at the Burke Museum on campus.

This comb symbolizes the obscured history of resistance in the Philippines: physical resistance to the destructive forces of conquest and resistance to artistic and cultural revision from outside forces. A comb here in the United States or in the West, for example, is distinct compared to the comb of the T'boli people. A comb here in the United States tends to be plastic or metal, plain, and mass produced, whereas this comb is wooden, decorated, and hand crafted. The fact that the indigenous comb has stayed true to itself in the face of an overbearing history of imperialism represents the idea of holding onto one's tradition and culture.

The comb is a testament to resisting physical and artistic conquest: staying untainted and true to one's self. Looking at the comb as something that travelled to America, surviving the history of colonization and remaining true to itself almost resembles a beacon for all people who feel pressured externally to change. The invaluable lesson that the comb has taught us and can teach everybody is that if the comb can make it, we all can make it.

### **Acknowledgments**

Written by Aviel Legaspi, Mandy Vu.

Special thanks to Professor Rick Bonus for his insight and knowledge,

Rose Mathison for information on the artifact and the rest of the curators at the Burke Museum,

Lauren Ray, and the rest of the staff at the University of Washington, for their guidance.

# 9. An Exploration of the Mouth Harp, Kubing

*A PRESENTATION BY*

**THE ADOBROS**

Kyle Bender  
Dane Siegelman  
Caitlin Miranda

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*A special thanks to the Burke Museum  
& the amazing staff for the experience.*



Picture credit to Kyle Bender.

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*A short clip of the Kubing being played*

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## Artifact Information

This artifact is the *kubing*, or mouth harp, and can be found in the Maguindanao province of the Philippines. It is played by both Muslim and non-Muslim tribes in the southern islands and in Indonesia. This particular artifact dates back to 1903. The definitive origins of the *kubing* are relatively unknown, but it can be traced to around the 18th century. The purpose of this instrument is for communicating between loved ones and family members. It is also used for courtship. Historically, it was men who used this intimate instrument for those traditions.

## Course Connection

*Music as a reclamation of culture*

Music is one of the most significant parts of culture. It defines an expression of self, outside of spoken language. Everyone can identify and relate to the emotions that a piece of music is trying to convey. A huge part of the study of music itself is ethnomusicology, or the anthropology of music. Ethnomusicology is dedicated to documenting the significantly close relationship between music and

the larger culture from where it comes. Our group took interest in the *kubing* because we saw that it wasn't just a single instrument, but a representation of the importance of music for Filipinx people. We wanted to explore this artifact as a form of De Castro's suggestion of studying Filipinx and Filipinx American history: search, discover, reclaim. We want to take a look at the *kubing* and share our truth with you. The searching and discovering have arguably been done, but we must still consider how to reclaim this artifact. How do we make it ours again? How do we interpret it in light of our current culture? How can we take our findings and relate them to how we interact with others today?

### *Music as a reclamation of masculinity/femininity*

Music, dance, and performance are extremely large parts of Filipino culture. So many shows on TFC (The Filipino Channel) are focused on or include someone singing or performing. Filipinos have been representing their culture through their singing voices. Lea Salonga was the singing voice of Princess Jasmine in Disney's production of *Aladdin*, and the singing voice of *Mulan*. She was also in the Broadway production of *Les Miserables*. AJ Rafael dominated most of our playlists growing up with songs like "We Could Happen" and "Red Roses." The significance of music in Filipinx American culture runs extremely deep and can be traced back to Taxi Dance Halls and Dancers in the 1920s and 1930s. In class, we learned about how Overseas Filipino Workers (OFW) would reclaim their lost masculinity through military service, writing, boxing, and most especially, dancing. The particular focus on dancing as an expression of masculinity spoke to us in a strange way. We thought that this idea was powerful, but not whole. We believe that dance, music, and performance don't have to belong to a particular gender. We believe that the importance of music in Filipinx culture can be claimed by everyone. When we collectively look at this *kubing*, we want to look at it as a representation of music which, as discussed

through ethnomusicology, is a major representation of culture. We know that Filipinx people value music to an extremely high degree through our look at Taxi Dance Halls as important sounds in places of community gathering, and we believe that the *kubing* is a larger representation of that value of music.

## Connection to self and community

*How do we use music when interacting with each other?*

This artifact has a very strange connection to how we believe people interact and “court,” or flirt with each other. We noticed how the *kubing* is used as a form of courtship and thought that it related to how we see people share music and playlists as a form of flirting. It might not share the same idea of displaying skill, but more likely follows the line of finding common interests with another person.

*How does this relate to Filipino American Studies?*

A strange thing we noticed about our particular *kubing* is the general lack of information that was provided to us by the Burke Museum. We didn’t think this was necessarily a limitation because it gave us a lot of room to extrapolate on the meaning of the *kubing* in relation to the larger idea of music that was surrounding it. We thought that the lack of a specific history surrounding our artifact spoke to the idea that Filipinx American studies is a shifting field. Our interpretation of the meaning behind our *kubing* isn’t an absolute truth, but one of many truths that could exist around it. We also noticed that the Burke didn’t claim to know anything about the artifact itself. We thought this helped to exemplify the Burke’s mission to have their displays centered on the community

finding itself in the museum. Seeing so many artifacts available to, and provided by, the community speaks to how powerful finding a collective truth is – not one that is absolute, but one that everyone can understand and follow clearly. In relation to the *kubing*, as an artifact, the overall lack of specific information adds to the idea of a collective truth. As an instrument, it acts as a tool for the creation, development, and collective definition of culture.

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***We Would Like To Acknowledge The Following:***



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***Richard Rivera***

## 10. Betel Container



## Betel Box

Amelia Zvaleuskas

## Artifact Information

### *Description*

Our artifact is the betel box. This a storage container for betel nuts and other ingredients that were used in betel nut chewing, like slaked lime and betel leaves. As mentioned, betel nut is chewed and wrapped in leaves so that its taste gets to be more pleasant. The box itself is made out of brass and is of dark chestnut color. It has an intricate lacing design, which is typical of Islamic architecture. Since this box was created during the pre-colonial or colonial Philippines, it was hand-made! Inside the box, there are little compartments for storing other products used in betel nut consumption. The box itself is still in good condition, even though the Burke museum guides theorize that this box is well over a 100 years old.

### *Where is it today?*

The object itself is stored in the Burke museum warehouse near the University of Washington. It is not on public display because of limited space, but it is available to be viewed under a special request. Upon inquiry, we learned that it was purchased in 1910 from a Mrs. J.M.T Partello in the Philippines.

## What is Betel Nut?

Betel nut is the nut of an Areca palm tree that is a mind-altering substance. It has similar effects on the brain as tobacco and weed, but if taken in high doses, it can act like cocaine. It is an addictive narcotic that is used mostly by women and children. It is estimated that as much as 10% of the world's population chews betel nut, but this number is on the decline. Betel nut causes health risks like oral cancer and permanent tooth discoloration, so it has been on the road for illegalization in many Asian countries.

## The Bigger Picture

### *Historical Amnesia*

This box has survived the colonization of the Spanish, Japanese, and American people, meaning that much of the information surrounding the box has been lost. We do not know where in Mindanao this box was found, nor do we know the relationship that a community had with it and its contents. However, the mere fact that the box has survived this long without having been destroyed is a testament to the notion of resilience against the longstanding history of colonization.

### *Colonization*

During Spanish colonization, betel nut, among other goods like tobacco, were taken and sold through the galleon trade. This demonstrates how the colonizers used the resources from



territories under their control for financial gain. Betel nut is local to Southeast Asia, so it was likely not seen by the Spanish before they colonized the Philippine islands. This illustrates the willingness to exploit indigenous cultures and traditions for ones' own benefit. Also, Steven De Castro, a Filipino American author, states that we must "search, discover, and reclaim" our identity. Though this box shows a long and brutal history of colonization for the Filipino nation, we can use this history to teach others about the resistance needed to combat the forces of colonialism.

## Connections with Us

Much like the recreational use of weed, betel nut can be seen as a similar substance in terms of affect and stigma. However, unlike weed, betel nut is not as intensely regulated and is still legal in many countries. This may be because the use of betel nut has been mostly replaced with tobacco and is not a substance commonly seen today.

### *De-stressing*

Much like people use tobacco, betel nut is used as a way to de-stress. The effects of nicotine and betel nut are very similar in the fact that they both can calm the body. They give a "high" that causes euphoric feelings in the body, which takes the mind off the aches from work and other anxieties. We can see that no matter where you are, the desire to find a substance to use for de-stressing is universal.

## *Storage of Valuables*

Due to the fact that there is very little information about this artifact, we would like to speculate a bit about it. Looking at the box, we notice a simple design on the top of the box and an imprinted pattern in the interior lids. From this, we can see that it was made from rich materials and done with quality craftsmanship. We can thus assume that it was used to store something of value. Much like a jewelry box carries valuable items, we can conclude that betel nut was of importance and value due to the box it was stored in.



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## II. T'Nalak: The Land of the Dreamweavers

### The History of T'NALAK



Amanda David

Shiela Everett

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T'nalak is a traditional hand-woven cloth indigenous to the T'boli people from the Cotabato region. It is woven in order to celebrate

and pay tribute to major life events such as birth, life, marriage, or death within the community. The cloth is woven from abaca fibers and is naturally dyed from bark, roots, and certain plants. The fabric undergoes a unique tie-dye process where it is tied in specific knots measured by finger or knuckle length, and dipped in dyes in order to create ornate patterns that indicate precision in craftsmanship. This is denoted by a distinctive tri-color scheme; the background is painted black while the pattern is white, which is then tinted predominantly with shades of red. However, it is not unusual to see creative variations in such a traditional pattern.



Image Source: International Care Ministries

In addition to marking major life events, the cloth also conveys class and individual status, often signifying the warriors within a community. T'nalak weaving was a practice observed by women who were referred to as “dream weavers,” as it is believed that the designs and patterns were sourced from images in their dreams, as handed by the spirit of the abaca, *Fu Dalu*. The T'nalak woven by the

dream weavers were coveted and inevitably valuable, as the women were famed embroiders and brass casters. The details required to create the fabric were taught and passed down through maternal relatives. T'nalak also was bartered in order to secure food and supplies for a family.

Our T'nalak was gifted by Nancy Davidson Short, a former Northwest editor for *Sunset Magazine*. It is assumed that this T'nalak was procured in the mid 1900's. However, not much evidence is provided by the Burke Museum to establish the precise date when it was acquired, created, or how Short obtained the item. In her obituary, it was noted that her position at *Sunset Magazine* allowed her to travel to many places across the globe, including China and presumably Southeast Asia where this T'nalak may have crossed her path.



T'nalak Festival. Image Source: International Care Ministries

The T'nalak reflects core themes that can be used to understand

Filipino American studies, including *bayanihan* and *damay*, which are examples of strong community partnership as participant or recipient. The whole process of T'nalak weaving, from dyeing to weaving, is descended from generation to generation of maternal relatives that necessitated a community of woven fabrics and traditional plant based-dyeing in order to sustain the tradition of T'nalak weaving. By creating specific coloration and subsets of T'nalak, it also provides signs of Filipino cultural identity, rank, and status.

Outside of Southern Philippines, T'nalak and other traditional Filipino fabric and garments production have been, by and large, ignored by American audiences which, in some way, extends to the institutional invisibility experienced by Filipinos and their cultural practices. Additionally, T'nalak weaving often became a substitute for income, as bartering with it increased over the years. Local and overseas work made those who stayed at home rely on cultural ingenuity in order to sustain their family. We saw examples of bartering in Carlos Bulosan's *America is in the Heart*, in which he writes about the time he and his impoverished mother obtained a beautiful vase that she traded for in the market, in light of a shortage of physical currency.





*Image Source: The Textile Atlas*

The T'nalak's cultural symbolism and connection to indigenous practice are highly relatable to the members of this group in the ways our family traditions are similarly connected to our cultural identities and heritage. It symbolizes our links to our ancestors. Because the T'nalak is traditionally woven by women of the community who apprentice their daughters to maintain such a tradition, we see this practice as something that empowers women in the community. The impact of female empowerment, doubled with the cultural significance of T'nalak, is of paramount importance to us not only because it is passed down from generation to generation, and from mother to daughter, but also because it has survived colonial rule. Though T'nalak and other forms of fabric weaving are specific to the T'boli, their cultural significance translates to how other societies and groups value their own rituals and strengthen ties to their heritage which, in turn, provide



opportunities for later generations to seek a deeper understanding of themselves and their cultures.

The Artifact project has been valuable to our group. Aside from allowing us to have a deeper understanding of Filipino culture, it has also made us comprehend better the institutional invisibilities experienced by Filipinos. Additionally, we also obtained an appreciation of the work of ethnography, museum collection and management, and the scholarship produced within Asian American studies.



*Image Source: International Care Ministries*

## Acknowledgments



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## 12. The Vinta

### The Model *Vinta*

Marc Joshua Antonio

Within the Burke Museum is a model outrigger artifact. This artifact takes after the appearance of a *vinta*, a boat whose culture of origins is that of the Philippines. Parts of the model boat have carvings that take the form of wave motifs. These carvings match the *vintas* mentioned by Harry Arlo Nimmo, an anthropologist who wrote about indigenous boats from the Philippines. He notes that the *vinta* is a houseboat, as indicated by the carvings in it (Nimmo 71). The boat is called by different names and by different groups. According to Nimmo, the “Bajau call this boat *pilang*, while the Tausug call it *dapang*” (Nimmo 87). These groups are located in the southern Sulu islands of the Philippines (Nimmo 52). He notes that the “Art (*okil*), as carving or painting, is reserved for houseboats”, though he additionally specifies that some fishing boats do have carvings (Nimmo 71). From these descriptions, one can infer that this model *vinta* is based on a houseboat. The carvings of the model are not as intricate as the object it represents, as *vintas* contained carved motifs of curved lines, leaves, flowers, and waves that were sometimes painted (Nimmo 73). This model is most likely a toy boat, as the design of the model seems too simple to mirror a houseboat. Toy boats were actually carved by the Bajau people and were often given to sons or made by young boys who held races using their toy boats (Nimmo 82). The way this object made its way to the museum most likely started with the item falling into the hands of a person of the American military and made its way across several individuals until it reached the Burke Museum. In Reynaldo Iletto’s

article, “The Philippine-American War”, he notes that “Looting was rampant, as well, when nearly no one was around to protect their homes,” referring to the American military looting Filipino houses during the war (15). This looting is a likely explanation for how the boat fell into American hands.

This artifact was chosen by Gabrielle Mangaser, a student who worked on studying the artifact in a group that also included Nathanael Ramos and me. The artifact was partially chosen due to its cute appearance as a toy. I was initially indifferent towards the artifact. However, as I learned about what the boat represented, I gained more interest in it. The rich culture of the Filipino groups that made vintas and their carvings represented a strong sense of culture that was only partially represented by this toy boat. However, if that was all I saw in the vinta, Steven De Castro would most likely call me a “junior coconut”, a type of Filipino that “thinks they can pick and choose which parts of the story they want to read” (De Castro 298). By not acknowledging everything the boat represents besides Filipino culture, a Filipino American observer may get stuck in a colonial mentality that De Castro warns about. This mentality forces the reader to ignore the trauma associated with this artifact by only acknowledging it as a splendid little boat. This idea spreads to a lot of items within the Burke Museum in that by only viewing them as memories of Filipino culture, the viewer forgets the pain it took for the artifacts to make it to the museum. The artifact represents more than just the culture of the Bajau people. It also expresses the traumatic violence and war waged against the people in the Philippines by the American army. The idea that this boat was most likely looted is something that is hidden when studying just the vintas that the toy is modeled after. The image of someone taking this boat from a child’s collection of toys is a symbol of trauma that potentially resides within this artifact.

When it comes to what resided in the artifact, I was less concerned with the trauma and more interested in the artistic culture that went into making the boats that the toy represented. This was not due to me not acknowledging the history of violence

associated with the artifact. There was simply more information on the culture associated with vintas than there was on the exact history of the toy boat. This is most likely due to the nature of looting being an undocumented act that contributes to a history of forgetting that Ileto says is part of the ultimate surrendering that the Filipinos had to partake during the Philippine-American War (Ileto 19). As such, I found there was more to be fascinated with when it came to the artistic culture of the boat rather than its history of violence purely based on how much or how little information I could find. Of course, this fascination was only developed after doing heavy research into the object and vintas in general. The accessibility of reliable and authoritative information on Filipino cultures can often be difficult to navigate. Many young Filipino Americans I know will likely know very little about this artifact without doing similar research. Additionally, even if they were to research on this artifact, they would most likely find little about its tragic history and relation to the Philippine-American War. And this will continue on for the rest of their lives as they have very little incentive to learn about Filipino culture while here in America. However, perhaps, if they ever read this, they will change and seek to learn more about their Filipino heritage.

## Nathanael Ramos

This artifact is a model vinta, a sailboat commonly used in the Mindanao region of the Philippines. It is a small narrow outrigger known for its decorative rectangular sails and creative hull design. While it is not built for rough water or long journeys, the vinta is a multi-use boat, and is used for short-distance transportation, fishing, tourist activities, and even housing. The Mindanao region of the Philippines covers a large area, so there are local variations in the vinta's use and name. It is also referred to as a *pelang*, *depang*, *lepa-lepa*, *sakayan*, or *bangka* (Nimmo). Filipinos have often been

categorized as Asian or Pacific Islanders, but even generalizing the use and names of the vinta in the Philippines does not give credit to local specificities within the Philippines. The artifact is currently stored at the Burke Museum in Seattle, Washington and, to our knowledge, its true origin and journey to America are unknown.

All the artifacts reflected upon in this book illustrate meaningful aspects of Philippine history and culture that are still relevant today. The identities of both the maker and the “owner” of the model vinta are expressed through creativity in the sail and hull design. The artifact itself has multiple identities. It is simultaneously a model, an artwork, a floating boat, a toy, an expression of identity, and a symbol of strength and resilience. Its interpretations are endless and demonstrates the thoughtfulness required for its presentation in a museum. The delicate model’s humble color and design are a symbol of resilience for a culture that has endured conquest and trauma. While a museum should provide historical context, it should in no way bias the viewer into limiting the artifact to just one identity.

The next step in this reflection is to investigate the artifact in the context of our class: Critical Filipino American Histories. As an engineering major, this class was very diversifying and a rewarding break from technical classes. Furthermore, I have not been able to connect with and engage in my own family’s history and culture quite like this since attending the UW. In this class, we read Filipino American essays, read an autobiographical novel, *America is in the Heart* by Carlos Bulosan, and watched a Filipino movie, *Milan* (2004), to learn about Filipino American history and to understand the diverse experiences and collective relationships of Filipinos.

One class reading, “Identity” by Carla Kaplan, provided a foundation for the class. The author states that “Identity is neither something we possess nor something that defines us but is an unending linguistic process of becoming.” She makes the distinction between personal identities and social identities (i.e. who we are versus who we are supposed to be). The model vinta itself demonstrates the changing nature of identities which depend on

the history and the people. The artifact's maker and the "owner" express aspects of their identity through the sail design, color schemes, and hull engravings. For these people and their families, the vinta may have sentimental value or fond memories associated with it. For Mindanao communities, the vinta symbolizes a common cultural artifact, but has the flexibility of different local designs, uses, and names, allowing many expressions of local identities.

Identity is important when studying the history of a group of people, but for Filipino Americans, their history and, therefore, identity have been affected by trauma due to colonization, conquest, and racism. Marie-Therese Sulit, in an essay titled "Through our Pinay Writings: Narrating Trauma, Embodying Recovery," defines trauma, the paradoxes of trauma, and the routes to recovery by turning to what can be learned from Filipino American literature. She suggests writing and reading to help deal with trauma. For Filipinos, the vinta is a symbol of resilience and strength. A group called the Katatagan (meaning "stability" in Tagalog) is helping with Filipinos cope with surviving typhoon disasters (Hechanova). The participants were given a drawing of a vinta and were instructed to write their sources of external and internal strength on different stripes of the sail. As a group, they reflected on the ways these strengths could be used to assist in their (physical and emotional) recovery from the disaster. Community, personal strengths, and cultural symbols are all things Filipinos have leaned on to recover from a history of trauma and resistance.

The model vinta appealed to me because I have always been fascinated with model cars, boats, trains, and planes. My Filipino grandparents keep items of similar cultural significance in their house, including dolls, chairs, and tapestries. These keep them connected to their identity back home in the Philippines, while for me, Filipino artifacts remind me of fond memories and encourage me to appreciate and celebrate my family's background. I enjoy fishing with my grandpa, so this model vinta reminds me of



something that I trust with my life on the water, and symbolizes, for me, strength and security.

While I have published on Wikipedia, this is the first time I have published something with greater creative liberty and without anonymity. Initially, I felt pressure from myself to publish something extraordinary and powerful. But this reflection has taught me that what is most important is speaking honestly from the heart. What I want people to take away from my reflection is the idea that there is more meaning beyond the physicality of an object. These artifacts are creative expressions of identities and sources of preservation of history and culture that must not be forgotten.

## Gabbie Mangaser

### Artifact Analysis and Reflection

The vinta artifact from the Burke Museum is a model of a much larger outrigger boat used mainly in the city of Zamboanga, Mindanao in the Sulu Archipelago. Known to locals as *lepa-lepa*, or *sakayans*, it is used by the Moros, and the Sama-Bajau peoples. When we think of the Philippines, we often do not put forth much thought into its Muslim history when, in fact, much of pre-colonial history begins here. The Philippines, before it was named *Las Islas Filipinas* by the Spanish, was a conglomerate of sultanates. The vinta during this time was used for traveling and fishing, and now its use mostly caters towards tourism. Its distinction from other *bancas* in the Philippines lays in its supposedly colorful sails.

Though the artifact itself is a Philippine artifact rather than a Filipino artifact, there are very important points to be made. I believe it is important to note that although it is mainly used for the purpose of commercialization through tourism, its use surpasses that of colonialism. This is a boat from pre-colonial times used by indigenous peoples of Mindanao, and despite both Spanish colonization and United States imperialism, it is both a product of

history as well as a tool of the present. It represents the resilience of the Filipino, through adaptability.

The model vinta is also a symbol of multiplicity in the Filipino identity. In the poem “Conditions” by Napoleon Lustre, he illustrates that there is no single definition that makes one Filipino, because there are all kinds of stories that connect Filipino to Filipino:

You are Pilipino  
if your mother is Pilipina  
if your father is Pilipino  
if you are from ‘pinas  
if you have one drop of Pilipino blood...

You are Pilipino  
if you are descended from the children  
of the Spanish friars, priests, and other unholy men...

You are Pilipino  
it doesn't matter if you've been whitewashed by blood or culture...

You are Pilipino  
if you are 1/2 Mexican, 1/2 Flip...

Because it is one type of Philippine boat, it can be a symbol of just one of the many identities that the Filipino can have. For example, take the Philippine *paraw* used in the Visayan region. Its original use was for the Palawans to fish and for transportation. The original boats were not always made out of the same materials like the vinta and the paraw, further contributing to the idea that identity is of multiple origins and complex histories.

Much like how there are many origin stories, there are also many destinations for Filipinos. The model vinta represents the journeys that millions of Filipinos have taken from their homeland to find a better life, such as the ones experienced by overseas Filipino workers (OFWs). It can represent the stories of Filipinos petitioning

for their families to come to the United States. It can exemplify the stories of the Filipinos who have traveled away from their homeland and the hope they have to return one day. Though we may not have the tools to accurately pinpoint where this artifact came from in the Philippines, it is clear that it has made a long way to journey into the Burke Museum in Seattle.

### **The Role of the Museum and Self-Reflection**

As a Filipina, it is encouraging to see more Philippine history in the light through these artifacts. When we think of Asian and Asian American histories, many fail to look past the hegemonic contexts from China and Japan and less into histories of Southeast Asia and their people. Courses that study Filipino histories are the beginning of a new turn in academics that can shed light on more holistic Asian perspectives. However, we could do well to recognize the role of the museum in knowledge production as well as the ownership of artifacts. Academics should remain critical of how artifacts are portrayed and organized within a system, and keep in mind that one artifact does not completely and perfectly summarize an entire culture. The *vinta* has the ability to personify Filipino identities and their journeys, but knowledge surrounding artifacts do not end at a certain point. Like identities being ongoing processes, so is the production of knowledge.

Growing up in a family of Philippine immigrants, I never took pride in what it meant to be Filipino until half-way through my undergraduate studies. Even then, it was the lack of Asian Americans in general in the subjects I wanted to study—both as topics of discussion and as faculty—that inspired me to become more interested and start asking questions as to why this was a regular occurrence. This project has made me hopeful for the future of Filipino and Filipino American Studies to have adequate representation within academia.



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## 13. Head and Heart

### *An Exploration of Ifugau Oklop*



This artifact is a warrior's helmet worn by the Ifugao people of the Philippines. The Ifugao are settled mostly in the mountain region of Northern Luzon. Archaeologist David P. Barrows writes this about the tribes of Northern Luzon in his book, *History of the Philippines*:

These people are preeminently mountaineers. They prefer the high, cold, and semi-arid crests and valleys of the loftiest ranges...these people live in compact, well-built villages, frequently of several hundred houses. (Barrows, pg. 9, 10)

The helmet, or oklop, is carved out of wood. Although many groups in Northern Luzon wear oklops, the Ifugao are the only ones who carve faces on them. The typical features are a large triangular nose, close-set eyes, and protruding ears. A string is passed between each ear to secure the oklop to the head. During hunting or traveling, warriors would also use their oklops as a bowl for eating and drinking.

The oklop was crafted sometime in the 19th and early 20th century. This was a pivotal time in Philippines' history. During that time, the Philippines was in a constant state of war – either revolting against the Spanish Empire, or fighting off American colonization. The Ifugao people likely used their oklops to protect themselves in combat.

When the U.S. helped the Philippines defeat Spain, rather than liberate the country, they purchased it from Spain for \$20 million. After the Philippine-American war, the Philippines experienced a decade of American government (1903 – 1913). Soon after, the Jones Law was enacted in 1916, creating the first fully elected Philippine legislature. This led to the modernization of the Philippines, as well as the antiquation of the oklop.

As a piece dated from the early 1910s, it is necessary to put the oklop in the context of the times, or more specifically, in the context of the Philippine-American war. This war, itself the product of multiple layers of colonization of the Philippines (first by the Spanish, then by the Americans), is a direct reminder of the long-lasting legacies of resistance and resiliency found within the Philippines and within the Filipino diaspora. This helmet ties directly into these ideas as a piece that subverts many of the traditional tropes and images mapped onto the indigenous communities of the Philippines during this conflict, such as strife, helplessness, or disobedience. Take, for example, the many faces carved into the many different helmets found within the Burke Museum's Filipino collections. These faces serve as a direct contradiction against the idea of helmets being used to camouflage, conceal, and protect the people underneath them. On the contrary, these faces are a breath of life and light-hearted humor even in times of war and conflict. Additionally, these helmets that double as bowls yet again contradict the images of war and struggle that are often connected to indigenous communities within the Philippines. Instead, we can replace these images with ideas of nourishment and camaraderie. Together, these two aspects create the image of a strategic, but still humorous, product of the conflicts, from a group

of colonial resisters with their own power, ideas, and autonomy, things that are often forgotten when discussing conflicts. All in all, this helmet, one of many found within the Burke's collections – all with their own faces, characteristics, and histories – is a great reminder of the strength and resiliency borne out of the diversity of the Philippines and the Filipino diasporic communities, as explored in Napoleon Lustre's poem, "Conditions (an unrestricted list)."

The opportunity to engage with the oklop, as well as the rest of the artifacts gathered for research within this project as a whole, has been an interesting activity for us scholars within Filipinx Studies. In a sense, this artifact project has been an exercise in countering the invisibility of Filipinx histories both within the classroom, and for the sake of this project, within a large body of public knowledge, represented in the Burke Museum. In our research, questions regarding not only the history of the artifact in a traditional sense but questions of the history of travel and inheritance the artifact experienced to come into the possession of the Burke arose, a topic not entirely unraveled within the information provided by the museum. In exploring this matter, the complex and intertwined history of colonialism and museum inheritance came to the forefront, providing an interesting take on the ethics of artifacts and museums, adding to conversations regarding Filipinx American histories. Unearthing the histories of these artifacts through research directed by an awareness of the erasure that has afflicted Filipinx Studies in the past has allowed us to subvert the work of past gatekeepers of knowledge and contribute a holistic history of the artifacts. Rather than breathe new life into the artifacts, we have allowed the artifacts to breathe again, making *them* speak rather than speaking for them.



# 14. Stabbing the Narrative: Mindanao Kris and Scabbard

*Mindanao Kris and Scabbard*

## **Stabbing the Narrative: The Mindanao Kris and Scabbard**

Allison Nguyen, Jorn Peterson, and Carson West





### **The Artifact** [Allison Nguyen]

Donated by Vic Hurley as part of the Betty and Vic Hurley Asia Collection, the Mindanao Kris and Scabbard were first accessioned in 1978 at the Burke. The collector, Vic Hurley, had extensive knowledge of the Philippine islands as he resided in Mindanao for several years before moving to Zamboanga, where he served in the Philippine Constabulary. Both a ceremonial and combat heirloom, the kris is a 19th century sword that typically originates from Southeast Asia, and was first forged in Indonesia before traveling to the Philippine

islands. The curved blade is something that distinguishes the kris from any other weapon. Forged to be a stabbing sword, the waves maximize the width of the wound when used to impale the enemy, but it is also significant as a symbol of status, depending on the higher number of waves per side. Doubling as a spiritual heirloom passed down through successive generations, the kris is also believed to possess a good or bad spiritual presence, determined by an



*detail on guard & hilt*

odd number of waves on one side of the sword. It is also evident that the curves are symbolic of a flame or serpent (depending on residency) and can signify to a traveler what land or region the wielder came from, as well as their position within their community. This specific kris and scabbard were dated around 1926-1936 from Mindanao, and it is evident that the guard of the kris blade was forged separately from the hilt – also called an antique kris (made prior to 1930). The specific detail lining the guard and the slight curve to the hilt can indicate its multipurpose use as both a combat sword and an heirloom. The curve on the handle ensures a more secure grip for battle. Its fine detail emphasizes the intricacy and time put into the artifact. A scabbard is a sheath meant to hold the blade of a sword, and this specific sheath is made of hardwood.



A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: <https://www.pressbooks.pub/criticalfilipinxamericanhistories/?p=73>

(an example of the damage that can be done)



### **First Encounters** [Carson West]

The interesting part about this artifact is not just that it is a sword, but rather because it is different from any sword or blade we have ever seen. The kris is not a classic straight-cut sword. It has intricate designs which we sought to know the origin and meaning of, not only to understand more about the sword, but to connect our newfound knowledge back to our class. This sword, given the time period it was dated, could have been used in the Filipino-American War, because compared to the U.S. military, the weapons the Filipinos used then were not nearly of the same caliber, nor did they have a unified army to wage a big fight. So, *insurrectos* would use swords like this as their weapons in *amigo*

and guerilla warfare. The purpose of the sword's wavy design was to inflict more pain, as the waves have the capability to lengthen the size of the wound while still being a lightweight weapon that warriors could run with. Additionally, the waves are also meant to provide a more smooth stab, as straight-cut blades do not damage the bones as much as curved blades can. The act of using what you have to create the best weapon to inflict the greatest possible damage portrays a strong sense of resistance. Moreover, this artifact is a symbol of the Filipinos' having to scramble to defend themselves against unprovoked attackers. They did not start a war with weapons at the ready. They were repeatedly attacked by groups of people whom they had not harmed. They had to create weapons like the kris out of necessity, the desire to survive, and to resist the colonizer.



“...any further resistance was termed **ladronism**, or banditry. Perhaps the myth of a ‘splendid little war’ persists because it helps to conceal a profound contradiction”

-Reynaldo Ileto, *The Philippine-American War: Friendship and Forgetting*



## Connection and Relevance [Jorn Peterson]

This artifact relates to our personal lives because many of us have ancestors that were in the Philippines during the time of the Philippine-American war, fighting for one side or the other. It relates to communities I belong to because my family has been active in the United States military since at least the 1880's, so it's very possible they were present in the Philippines at the time a kris like this was being used in battle. It also relates to the Filipino-American community because they also can likely trace an ancestor who fought for the Filipino side way back during the Philippine-American war. This relates to the study of Filipinxs because it keeps the history relevant and accessible. The purpose of an artifact is to spark a question, thought or debate; that is exactly what has been made possible with this Open Textbook Artifact Project. This project helped us learn to shift the narrative by using context. Just as the textbooks alone can't teach you everything, neither can the artifacts. Artifacts should be used as supplemental tools for learning to help expand on ideas learned through textbooks. In being able to engage with the artifacts, we have learned to not take everything written in the textbook at face value, and how to apply what we can learn from one culture's history to another. This project has been helpful in helping shift the analytical lens from a top-down perspective to a bottom-up perspective. In other words, we tried to use the artifact to help create a narrative, rather than trying to fit the artifact into a pre-existing narrative composed of previous assumptions and knowledges. Hopefully, viewers will learn something about the kris. But more importantly, we hope that they learn why artifacts are important and how to engage with them in context in order to create a meaningful narrative.



We would like to acknowledge **Kathy Dougherty**, **Rose Mathison**, and **Professor Holly Barker** for supplying us information about our artifacts and allowing us to have access to this opportunity, **Professor Bonus** for all he has taught us, and finally, **our class** :).



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# 15. A Waving Symbol of Resilience and Hope

## The Philippine Flag

Written by: Olivia Chong, Francinne Alarcon, and Junior Van Patten



☆☆☆

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It's on college campuses, in Instagram bio's of proud Filipinos, hanging on the walls of hole-in-the-wall restaurants that smell like Lola's cooking, and worn by people walking the city streets. The Philippine flag isn't shy to make its appearance, and you don't have



to look too far to spot one. We see it in many different places. And for each individual, it can symbolize many different things. It's a physical representation of pride and identity for many Filipinos. It holds a long and complex past of war, violence, and trauma, but also resilience and hope. The flag has stood witness to many events throughout the country's history. From the proclamation of the Philippines' "independence" to the years of bloody combat, the flag has been there through it all.

## History of the Philippine Flag

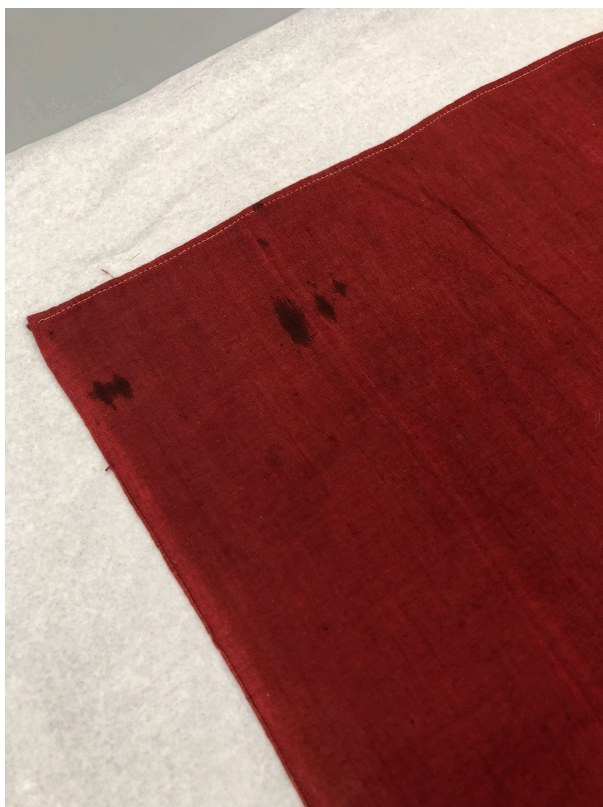
At the end of the Philippine Revolution, Emilio Aguinaldo went into exile in Hong Kong and designed the Philippine flag to be what it looks like today. Every detail of the flag was carefully designed to hold meaning. The white triangle stands for equality; the blue stripe stands for peace, truth, and justice; and the red stripe represents patriotism and valor. The eight sun rays symbolize the first eight provinces in the Philippines that revolted against Spanish colonization. The three stars represent Luzon, Visayas, and Panay, the main islands of the Philippines during that time. Marcela de Agoncillo, her daughter Lorenza, and Josefina Herbosa de Natividad sewed the first flag out of silk. During the Spanish-American War, Aguinaldo returned to the Philippines with it. It was first flown in 1898 and has since been declared the national flag of the Philippines.



The specific flag we picked out at the Burke Museum is from the Laguna Province of Luzon in 1899. The flag is covered in blood stains and the red stripe is on top, which means that the country was at war during this time. This flag is significant because it is a symbol of the resilience of the Philippines and its people. Despite the blood, aging, and wear it has endured, it is still relatively intact. Like the flag, Filipinos have been through hundreds of years of colonization, imperialism, violence, and trauma, but we're still here.

We were interested in this artifact because although we see thousands of different flags in the world every day, it is incredible to think that we've never seen this specific flag before. The number of

stories it could tell if it could talk would be endless. Even though we have no clue how the flag made it to the U.S., nor do we know how the blood-stained battle scars came to be on the faint blue fabric, we chose this artifact because we wanted to tell a meaningful story of its past.



## Connection to Class

“Resistance in Paradise” outlined how the conquest of the Philippines was not a small event. The Philippines faced years of

colonization, starting from when Ferdinand Magellan sailed to the islands in 1521. The Philippines remained under Spanish rule until when the Treaty of Paris was signed in 1898, which kick-started U.S. colonization. As colonization brought imperialism, trauma, and violence to the nation and its people, this flag stood as a symbol of the resilience of the Filipino people and the hope for their liberation across the nation.

This flag knows that imperialism and colonization don't go away after independence. This flag has seen resilient and proud Filipinos come together in solidarity to listen to songs like *Bayan Ko* to remind themselves that they are and have always been resilient, and to keep fighting against systems that are against them no matter if these people reside in the homeland or abroad.

## Connection to Community and Self

In Filipino history, this flag represents hardships, growth, and a country's pride as a physical embodiment. As we grow, we look to the flag in remembrance of all those events and as a symbol of hope for a better future. When healing in the communities and the search, discover, reclaim tactic started, the flag was a warm symbol of a homely feeling and a sense of comfort. It encouraged people of the community to come together as one and to move forward as a single unit. Throughout history, the flag was always present, even if not physically embodied yet, like during the Spanish colonization. The flag has always lived in Filipinos themselves, giving it life even before it was created. This shows the power residing within Filipinos as they continued to fight on and push through all the adversities, concentrating on that flag of freedom.

The project provides a space for students to learn about their cultures through items their ancestors used. We can research any object to learn the histories and where it came from, but when it comes from your own culture, it adds another special dimension.

Knowing that the item was used by your ancestors in the past during times of colonization gives people a personal connection to the item. The artifacts are connections to the past, so the future may know what life was like back then, and having the chance to do so was enlightening. We learned about the creation of the national flag and how meaningful it was to the Filipino people, especially in times of colonization and growth. We hope people can learn the ways that Filipinos used to live and the tools they used in order to get through all of their difficult histories and become the proud people they are today.



## Acknowledgments

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“Ang bayan kong Pilipinas

Makita kang sakdal laya.”

– Bayan Ko (1928)



# 16. The Barekbek: To Catch a River Shrimp

*The Barekbek*

## The Barekbek: To Catch a River Shrimp



Earl Jocson, Joncarlo Abarcar, Jeremiah Juson

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### *The Artifact Itself*

As a gift to the museum from H. B. Hard, the *barekbek* is a model Filipino bamboo fish trap from the province of Cagayan. Its name is as self-explanatory as its function—it was a trap used for fishing. It has a nearly cylindrical shape of bamboo strips held together by strings, with two open ends, and a hollow, funneling interior. Through further research, we learned that the *barekbek* is “a trap that is set in rivers and streams in groups of three or five traps, and all the trap openings are positioned opposite to the currents” (ICH Courier of Asia and the Pacific). Inside the funnel of the fish trap, fisherfolk would place baits, which are often sour fermented rice

balls or, in the case of our trap, bird bones. The *barekbek* and the bait together are used to catch river fish, shrimp, crabs, and eels. In terms of its function, the fish would enter the wider end of the fish trap, and the funnel would restrict them from escaping, so fisherfolk can just stick their arm inside to pull the animal out.

### *Connections to the Course*

If one were to take a look at the history of the Philippines, and how the archipelago was treated throughout the nearly 400 years of colonization, one could draw some parallels to trapping and fishing. Imagine the seafood to be caught as symbolizing the diverse Filipino people facing a trap has been set, with bait to lure them in. Our class reading, “*Resistance in Paradise*,” detailed a promise of freedom from the Spanish regime and support of the Philippine revolt after starting it in 1896 with the Cry of *Pugadlawin*, here symbolized as the sour rice balls leading the Filipino people to fall right back into the trap of colonization under the new American regime.

One could also shift their view and see the bait: the hypothetical bird bones as the benefits of cooperation with Spain or the United States. We know, as detailed by John D. Blanco in his piece, “*Oriental Enlightenment and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse?*,” that some of the educated Filipinos had chosen to pass on the bait, deciding against cooperation. However, regardless of the choices of both ideologies of the educated elite – the anti-colonial *ilustrados* or the collaborators who were willing to work with the colonizing powers for benefits – the Philippines as a whole had fallen into a trap, and was once more under the heels of a new and different colonizing power.

Consider thinking about the *barekbek* in a different way, in which the fish trap itself represents the evolutions and derivations of history stretched upon multiple cultures and ethnicities. In this



way, the *barekbek* is symbolic of the overlaps and connections with other nations. In our research on fish traps, there were fish traps of differing sizes, materials, and processes, but they all had the same goal: to catch fish. The process on how the fish are caught in the *barekbek* is very similar to a bottle trap, extensively used in many towns in China. This fact can be connected to a poem discussed during the course by Napoloen Lustre titled “*Conditions (an unrestricted list)*.” Analyzing this piece, we conclude that the fact of being Filipino is varied with many shifting and overlapping identities. If the *barekbek* is a representation of Philippine cultures and ethnicities, then it shows how the Philippines has had so many connections and interactions with other nations that caused so much change within it, for better or for worse.

The *barekbek* had first caught our interest because currently, the way to catch fish is to use modern implements like fishing rods or large fish nets to catch many at once. But looking at the *barekbek*, this trap has its own unique way of catching fish other than using hooks and nets. It is a woven basket that is used to trap aquatic life. It was intriguing to see both how the Filipino people fished for food, compared to modernized fishing devices, but also how people in the Philippines back then were able to obtain one of their primary food sources. The *barekbek* connects to our own personal lives because our ancestors and family members native to the Philippines would have used such a fish trap to catch fish to eat, or sell in order to support their lives.



Image Source: <https://nordis.net/2013/04/28/article/feature/making-bamboo-traps-a-source-of-income>

This fish trap merely tells us how people caught aquatic life. But also more importantly it lets us infer how they would have used the *barekbek* to sustain their livelihoods while resisting against colonization. It is a glimpse into how they were staying true to their methods, their own intrinsic Filipinoness in the face of the newer and supposedly better American way of fishing. Even today, as many other people switch to doing things the way Americans or Westerners do, there are still traditional villages who are still utilizing the *barekbek*, still utilizing the ways Filipinos have done so in the past.

### *Reflections on the Artifact Project and the Burke Museum*

At the Burke Museum, we learned that they do not organize artifacts on the basis of ethnic origins, but rather by artifact type and function. Also, there is not a lot of representation of Filipino artifacts on display. These are significant because even though there is only so much space to display a huge number of artifacts, there is still

a lack of Filipino representation even in the Burke Museum. There is still much to be told inside of the Burke and all around campus. While our class gave presentations about their own artifacts, one thing that stood out was that many of the objects sourced from the Philippines and held at the Burke Museum were given by white people – not coming from Filipino communities, but white individuals who obtained them somehow.

This experience of doing the Open Textbook Artifact Project is meaningful because it gave us an opportunity to look into a large selection of Filipino artifacts in the storage room of the museum. In addition, it allowed us to do our own research, perform an in-depth analysis of an artifact that most of us were unaware of, and learn more about our backgrounds and histories. These aspects helped us make connections to ourselves and the topics that we learned in our course. It helped us with depth how artifacts like the *barekbek* have resisted throughout history, through colonization, and through many changes. These artifacts are direct connections to the Philippines and the history of its people.



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