



Figures 13-14: The fusion of *burik* motifs on the Cordillera *hinaboe barong Tagalog* of En Barong. The barong was designed by artist Roberto Feleo in 1987, incorporating traditional tattoo motifs into the barong Tagalog. Right: Details of the designs embroidered on piña cloth inspired by the 1885 drawing of the *burik* of Banao by Hans Meyer. The tattoo motifs are similar to the tattoos found in Kabayan, Benguet. (Reproduced with permission from En Barong Inc.)

En Barong created a new line called *hinaboe* (“coarse weave” or raw side of the piña fibre). The first in this line is the *pintado hinaboe*, which is based on the 16th century Boxer Codex of the early inhabitants of the Visayas Islands of Central Philippines. The second is the *Cordillera hinaboe*, the patterns of which are derived from the tattoos of Banao of Mountain Province. The designs resemble the tattoo patterns (*burik*) from the 1885 drawing by Hans Meyer (Figure 16). There are two versions of the *Cordillera hinaboe*. In the first, the tattoos are embroidered directly on the surface on the *piña* fabric (Figures 13-14) with motifs that “represent aspects of [the] environment and folk beliefs. Among them are mountains, clouds, rice paddies, flat land, snakes, hunting stripes and lightning” (Alejo-Hila et al. 258). In the second version, the embroidery is done on the surface of an undershirt made of off-white cotton cloth—the plain translucent *piña* is worn over this undershirt. (Figure 16). The designs for the undershirt are similar to the tattoo patterns found on the surface of the *piña* fibre to give the effect of “bundling”. Bundling transforms the status of an “extinct” tattoo to a “vibrant” one.



Figures 15-16: (Left) Cordillera hinaboe with embroidered patterns on a cotton cloth and with a piña cloth over it. The tattoos are derived from the burik (tattoos) of the Banao people in the old mountain province. (Photograph provided by Neal Oshima and En Barong Inc. Reproduced with permission). (Right) Tattoo illustrations by Hans Meyer in "Die Igorroten" in 1885.

Roberto Feleo, artist and Fine Arts professor at the University of the Philippines Diliman, conceptualized the designs exclusively for En Barong as early as 1988, but the designs were first executed in 2007. According to Feleo, colonization forced the natives to cover their bodies, which meant covering their tattoos, their original clothing. By putting the tattoo designs on the *barong*, Feleo and the other designers have made tattoos visible once again. This act reminds us of Billig and Edensor's emphasis on the role of crafting personalized identity by incorporating the mundane culture of everyday life such as "tattoos." This is a subtle and informal way in which nationalism is reproduced. The use of tattoos and their meanings in fashioning identities through the *barong* reflects the nation state's respect for and recognition of ethnic groups in the Philippines. The refashioning of tattoos on the *barong* becomes the connection of the people to the nation; the *barong* has achieved status as national attire.

According to Silverio, the *barong Tagalog* with *burik* and *pintado* designs have become popular souvenirs (*pasalubong*) for diasporic Filipinos. As

such, these are dispersed to other places, local and abroad, and their value is doubly grounded: it is clothing that is recognized as distinctly Filipino and which, in addition, bears tattoo markings that also come from the Philippines. Indeed, individual and national identities are grounded in the everyday such as wearing tattoo-inspired T-shirts and *barong Tagalog*. These items have become alternative strategies of expressing “selfhood” and “nationhood,” as well as a self-conscious cultural assertion of wearing identities through clothing.

Social Life Trajectories: Burik as Contemporary Tattoos and Aesthetic Practice

Kopytoff (88) posits that the biographic profiling of things is relative to the economic, cultural, and private valuations of the object that lead to its trajectories. In the case of *burik*, this is dependent on individual and collective valuations, specifically on how to relate with the tattoos at present. For instance, tattoos have taken on a new form, with a very high potential for creative endeavour. Tattooing is practiced in the Philippines in different social and cultural contexts. Further, tattooing is now linked to the mainstream popularity of “tribal” or “ethnic” tattooing elsewhere in the world. Tattooing is also considered a practice related to deviant groups such as gangs, criminals, and ex-convicts. The contexts of tattoos and tattooing do not exist independently. Rather, they intersect with one another and form the complexity of the contemporary tattoo scene in the Philippines.

Because tattooing has become popular elsewhere in the world, the number of willing recipients, as well as tattoo artists (most of them practicing full time), has steadily increased. In the early 1980s through to the 1990s, the use of tattoo machines became a status symbol for tattoo artists, indicating their professionalism. This differentiated them from those who tattooed with remodeled razors or needles (*preso style* or “prison style”) – as these were considered “old school,” “amateur” or “non-professional.” In the Philippines today, many tattoo artists have shifted to tattoo machines primarily for reasons of hygiene, i.e., to forestall the possibility of transmission of disease through unhygienic practices (Philippine Senate Bill RA Nos. 1876, 1126 and 1873).

Despite the popularity of tattoo machines, however, there is a resurgence in the use of traditional tools very similar to those discussed earlier. Some of the conventional tattoo artists who use tattoo machines incorporate the “traditional” hand-tapping method to recreate *burik*-inspired designs. The method, according to the tattooists, offers a kind of “exotic flavor,”

“traditionality,” and “authenticity.” Although the traditional methods remain, the designs are revised and transformed to fit into the rationale of “being modern,” “mainstreaming” a previously ritualistic practice. Tradition is used for a modern purpose.

Tattooing Burik

At tattoo conventions, many people get tattooed for various reasons. Between 2008 and 2011, I attended the annual tattoo convention called *Dutdutan*²¹ in Metro Manila. *Dutdutan* is a tattoo exposition sponsored by the Philippine Tattoo Artists Guild (PHILTAG),²² an association of 130 licensed professional tattoo artists recognized by the Department of Health as having met the required standards of safety and hygiene.²³ A lot of people queued for this event with one of three goals in mind: to get tattooed or to “shop” for a design or meet a potential tattoo artist. Friendship is also important for the tattoo artists and their clients, as it is usually a network of friends or relatives who get tattooed. Tattoo artists converged in Manila to showcase their skill in tattooing, to earn money, and to advertise their products and designs.

In one of these tattoo conventions, there were about 40 stalls with tattoo flashes posted on the makeshift walls, as well as albums and catalogues of photographs of tattoo designs. The buzzing of electric tattoo machines filled the air as some clients were tattooed in public. Others made appointments to be tattooed privately in the artists’ respective shops. There were daily competitions for tattoos in different categories: tribal/ethnic, Oriental/Japanese, modern, and futuristic. The *burik* and Kalinga-inspired tattoos fall under the tribal category along with the solid black lines of Polynesian- or Hawaiian-inspired designs.

In these tattoo conventions, one can find people who have *burik*-inspired tattoos appropriating motifs and patterns from old illustrations and photographs found in books and on the Internet. There are tattoo artists who have employed “modernized” *burik* styles, consisting of “traditional” motifs but in modern arrangements. Modern *burik* styles feature many graphic figures, such as stylized snakes, dogs, birds, lizards, and others. In the contemporary development of tattooing, traditional motifs remain and the creativity of tattoo artists emerges through the development of their own style, technique, and interpretation. According to Kopytoff (65), these are the kind of valuations that transform the status or the trajectories in the social biography of the objects (in this case, the tattoos).

For instance, Junjun Tabuyog, a tattoo artist who specializes in “tribal” tattooing with the use of modern tattoo machines, has an album of Cordillera

motifs in his catalogue of designs (Figure 18). One of these is the *burik*-inspired tattoo. According to Junjun, he found the illustration from an Internet source and he incorporated the designs into his own renditions of his tattoo art. He also said that a lot of tattoo enthusiasts have taken an interest in the *burik* designs in various local and foreign tattoo conventions: "A lot of my clients asked me to design a combination of individual designs or even the whole of the *burik* designs tattooed on their chest or on specific parts of their body done with the electric tattugraph." At a tattoo convention, a foreign tattoo enthusiast came up to him and asked if he could be tattooed with similar patterns to those tattoos found in the catalogue (Figure 18).



Figures 17-18: (Left) Junjun shows his own rendition of the *burik*-inspired tattoo, which according to him was taken from the Internet. His catalogue also has different combinations of *burik* patterns and designs, which he has already tattooed on to some of his clients. (Right) Junjun entertains a query from a client interested in getting the *burik* traditional tattoos. The Dutdutan Festival (2010) is the venue for tattoo artists to advertise their work and get potential clients (Photograph by AV Salvador-Amores).

There are also a handful of tattoo artists who have adopted the hand-tapped technique of tattooing. For instance, Nick Arriesgado, another tattoo artist from Manila, started to use the hand-tapping method in 2008 (but has been using a tattoo machine since 1995). He first experimented with a thorn attached to a stick. However, with constant use, the thorn became blunt and

Nick had difficulty piercing the skin. He said the ink may not be embedded deeply into the skin. He then tried a sewing needle attached to a stick and did hand-tapping for some of his clients.

Adding the hand-tap technique to the repertoire of tattoo artists can also translate into monetary value in light of the added skill. Hand-tapping costs more than the electric machine-made tattoos because of the time invested, the skill required, and the kind of tattoos that require additional research, unlike the ready-made tattoo flashes from tattoo catalogues. Many people are attracted to the “texture” (e.g., embossed, raw) of the designs done with the traditional method, in contrast to the finer details of tattoos done with the modern technique (Figure 19). Moreover, the sensation of pain seems to be the driving force behind the desire of being tattooed in the “traditional” way. This movement of tattooing from protection to decoration relates to the changes in the social context of how tattooing is practiced. The collective ritual performance of the tool is removed and replaced by an artistic activity or expression of individuality in the contemporary context. While there is a transmission of technique, there is an innovation of design.



Figure 19: Hand-tapping traditional tattoo-inspired designs with a lemon thorn gives the tattoos a “raw texture.” (Photograph provided by Nick Arriesgado, reproduced with permission).

Nick Arriesgado tattooed the *burik*-inspired tattoos on the chest of Dada Macusi (see Figure 20, third from left) whom I met in the tattoo festival and with whom I did follow-up interviews. Other tattoo artists who used the hand-tapping technique were Daniel Purissima and Agit Sustento (Figure 20). Both are self-taught artists who have fused traditional *burik* designs on their clients and who have collaborated with other tattoo artists to tattoo *burik*, *pintado*, and other tribal-inspired motifs on their skin.

Dada collaborated with Nick in the conceptualization of a “Benguet-inspired” tattoo design on his chest that took several months to finish and that required three to four hours per session, with a combination of hand-tapping and the modern technique using the electric tattugraph. Dada is an environmentalist and forester. He has on his chest a “coat armour” of Appo Anno, the tattooed mummy of Benguet (see Figure 3). On the right side, he has a tattooed mummy to show the provenance of the other tattoo (Figure 20). In the middle of the chest are two pairs of men and women in their Benguet native attire in the position of a traditional dance (Figure 22). The Benguet dance is called *tal-lak*. It is a dance performed in Bakun, Kibungan and Kapangan and in other areas in the northern part of Benguet. “The *tal-lak* is a musical instrument made of wood. It was played during the dry season when food was plentiful. Dancing went hand-in-hand with *tal-lak* playing. The two dancers, a man and a woman, went around in circles following those who played the *tal-lak*. An old man, the *mambasabas*, or one who blesses, blessed the two dancers, invoking for them long life after which the audience joined in a forceful refrain of approval” (Bagamaspad and Hamada-Pawid 94).

According to Nick, his mummy tattoo is based on photographs of the mummy found in the Internet and in magazines, while the “dancing people” tattoo is from a book he read a long time ago. Dada says that he is aware of the current plight of the mummies in Benguet: “Some are stolen, some are sold, some are displayed as a curio. I decided to have the mummy tattooed on me to remind the people about the mummies.” Although Dada has not seen the mummies of Benguet in person, he recalls that he did research on his tattoos from the photographs and information that he saw from an internet source. He admits that he became interested in the intricate tattoos of Appo Anno: “I have not seen anyone yet with the *burik* tattoo in the Philippines.”²⁴



Figure 20: Daniel Purisima, Agit Sustento, and Dada Macusi tattooed on the chest and back with burik and pintado-inspired tattoo designs (and other combinations of Cordillera, Visayan, and tribal-inspired motifs) using the traditional and modern method of tattooing. Photograph taken at a Markado, a tattoo festival held in Manila, 2010. (Third from Left): Dada Macusi with a similar breastplate tattoos as an “iconic representation” of his Ibaloy roots. (Photograph courtesy of Dada Macusi, reproduced with permission).

It is different and reconnects with the place and culture where I grew up as a child in Benguet.” Dada, who is now living in urban Manila, said that the use of the internet and the presence of modern tools can further enhance the rendition of the “real” designs: “one can be tattooed with ... original tattoo patterns, but one can explore the possibility of modifying these original patterns to be attuned to the features of modern tattoos.”

In this section, I have shown how the embodied nature of the tattoos by permanently marking the skin becomes significant. This means that the experiential nature of tattoos again becomes central in contemporary tattoo practice. There is now an interplay of the permanence and impermanence of tattoos in the construction of identity. This indicates that different actors are extracting different values from tattoos. However, it is no longer about



Figures 21-22: Detail of Dada Macusi's tattooed mummy with Appo Anno's "coat of armour" (breastplate). On his shoulders are Cordillera-inspired motifs done in modern technique. Right: Detail of the *tal-lak* with a pair of men and women in a dancing position, blackened breastplate. Found at the center are *aso* or dog motifs, also found in some tattooed mummies in Kabayan (Photograph by AV Salvador-Amores).

the expression of cultural identity; it is more about tattooing as a marker of individual identity. This means that special interest groups (professional tattoo artists, their clients, and tattoo networks) share tattooing as a pure practice that is much less about what the designs signify in relation to ethnic identity. On the other hand, practitioners and enthusiasts are re-appropriating an indigeneity (by referencing Polynesian-, Kalinga- or Maori-style tattoos) that is not necessarily regionally or locally rooted, but is an identity built around a specialist activity (i.e., tattooing). This is in contrast to the earlier examples of the use of *burik* in Banao or traditional tattoos in any other ethnolinguistic groups in the Cordillera, which use tattoos as an expression of their ethnic identity.

In these examples, we can see the *burik*'s inherent status in the past (tattooed underneath the skin as a collective identity of the Ibaloy and Kankanaey groups in Benguet) to its movement (on T-shirts, barong Tagalog, and drawings for individual and social identities) and its current

career (again tattooed skin-deep), acquiring new meanings in different contexts because of the social, cultural, and historical significance that it is accorded by its producers and users (tattoo artists and their recipients). This assures the continuity of *burik*. As the examples have shown, the analysis and examination of the stages and processes of the *burik*'s career and social biography reveal that it is multi-dimensional and innovative.

Conclusion

The tattoos found on the mummies of Kabayan, Benguet have followed an interesting path "in-and-out" of the "regimes of value." There is a transformation of these tattoos from a kin-based cultural practice of the past, to an emerging tattoo design incorporated in clothing and in actual design on the skin in the contemporary period. Indeed, the traditional tattoos have been appropriated in different contexts. The features of traditional tattoos have been re-invoked such that the experiential aspect of tattooing (pain and permanence) and the graphic element of the tattoos (pure designs, motifs) are used to construct individual and social identities. The process of disaggregating the traditional tattoo by way of the modern method of tattooing or hand-tapping technique on the skin, embroidering and printing on clothing have, in fact, recreated and reinvented new tattoo designs. *Burik*, once extinct, now moves into different mediums to ensure the vibrancy of the art, significantly as an "emerging tattoo," and not as a "lost practice."

While the idea of permanence is a significant feature of tattoos, permanence cannot stand alone when the "graphic-ness" of tattoo designs is appropriated in the contemporary context. This means that when designs are revised and transformed to fit into the rationale of "being modern" by "mainstreaming" a previously ritualistic practice (transforming the permanence of tattoos into a disembodied practice as in the embroidered tattoo designs on national attire to express identities) they assume a new form. Here, the interplay of permanence and impermanence and the idea of visibility and invisibility of the tattoos are demonstrated. Furthermore, the "extinct tradition" such as the *burik* and its interplay with contemporary practice is "understood as a sign of vitality rather than decadence or extinction" (Sahlins 409). This shows that rather than becoming "museum items," tattoos on mummies are reinvented as part of an ongoing innovation and recontextualization of tradition. The recontextualization of the tattoos articulates individual, social, ethnic, and national identities in the contemporary period.

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NOTES

¹This is the approximate age of the Kabayan mummies until further carbon dating is conducted for scientific study to ascertain exact age. H. Otley Beyer writes in his *Outline Review of Philippine Archaeology* that the mummies found in Kabayan are believed to be centuries old (150-200 years old). These mummies are the ancestors of the present day Ibaloi. Furthermore, Merino states that: "Mr. Moss, an American who established the elementary school in Kabayan in 1908, recorded that the Kabayan (tattoo tradition) was about thirty generations ago. And Mr. Indo Masao, a Japanese who made a carbon dating of some mummies in Japan said it is 700 to 800 years old" (99).

²Beyer (219) also mentions the discovery of mummies not only in Kabayan but also in Mount Santo Tomas near Chuyo and Tunglo. More than twenty mummies were found in a cave, of which at least half were in a fair state of preservation. The practice and presence of mummies were also found in Sagada, Besao, Bontoc and Alab, Mountain Province (Keith and Keith 19). The map found at the Kabayan Museum in Benguet shows the different rockshelters and burial grounds where the other mummies are found.

³Craig and Benitez (1916) wrote that the term *burik* "applies to any Igorot who is tattooed in a certain manner" (110) in correspondence with Eduardo P. Casal who saw the tattooed Igorots in the Philippine Exposition in Madrid in 1887 and confirmed the statement of Dr. Hans Meyer.

⁴The legend of the "Crow and the Lizard" as retold by the elders in Alab, Bontoc and Tinglayan, Kalinga was an explanation about the origin of tattooing. The pattern found on the lizard's skin is similar to that of the iguanas.

⁵Crawfurd (76-77) used these terms to refer to the "wild and independent tribes inhabiting the Northern portion of Luzon ... who tattoo the upper portion of the body and made the Spanish writers to jump into a conclusion that they were descendants of the Pacific driven by storms on the coast of Luzon."

⁶*Burik* is also an Ilocano term that means "engraving or decoration." The Spanish word *buril* means "engraving tool." The term *burik-burikan* in Ilocano means "to carve, engrave, sculpture; emboss, design or sketch" (Rubino 136).

⁷The Madrid Exposition, however, was objected to by the *ilustrados* in Europe, who believed that it was an assault on human dignity and a misrepresentation of the Philippines (Salman 154; Scott 276-278). Rizal said to Blumentritt that "from what I understand, it is not an exposition of the Philippines at all but only of the Igorots" (Salman 154). Byrne (29) argued that the great nineteenth century exposition is an occasion for the metropolitan population to savor the sense of being at the pinnacle to which history has climbed. "It put them, quite simply, in a different class from the rest of the world."

⁸I am currently conducting a study on the ethno-archaeology of tattooed mummies in Benguet. A recent visit to Kabayan in July 2012 showed that the mummies also had "unfinished tattoos." Some of the mummies had tattoos on the forearm, some on the wrists until the elbows, while others had full-body tattoos. This certainly warrants further investigation.

⁹The tattoos of the women are extant and found among the elderly folks in some areas in Benguet. Separate research on the tattoos of the Ibaloy women is currently being undertaken.

¹⁰A pastor allegedly stole the mummy around 1918 to get rid of a pagan symbol (<http://nmuseum.tripod.com/anno1.htm> accessed 08 June 2008). It wound up as part of a sideshow in a Manila circus and changed hands a number of times in 1984 before an antiques collector donated it to the National Museum. In 1999, the mummy was retrieved by the National Museum and was returned to its burial site in Nabalicong, Benguet. The Kankanaey celebrated Appo Anno's return with a re-burial ceremony, completed with local rituals. The burial cave where the mummy is found has iron grills and local people now maintain the site.

¹¹Attempts to explain the meanings and symbols of the tattoos found on the mummies are mere speculation. In-depth research and investigation are needed in order for one to be able to understand their distribution and association. The mummies should be photographed and their tattoos scientifically studied.

¹²The research on association and distribution of tattoos is currently ongoing.

¹³Personal communication with Florentino Merino last 20 March 2003 at Kabayan, Benguet. *Peshit* is a ceremony for honor and social position. It is celebrated to show that one is rich and can afford to celebrate (Leano 299). This is the capability to hold a series of festivity rituals that demand the butchering of animals and sharing them with kin and neighbors. Sacrifices range from three to twenty-five pigs, depending

on the status of the person. According to tradition, it is obligatory for near kin to contribute blankets, food, wine, and animals like pigs and cows, during this occasion (Bagamaspad and Hamada-Pawid; Sacla 38; De Silva and Salamat 19). *Peshit* is practiced by members of all Benguet communities (Lewis 256). *Peshit* is also called *pachits*, *pedit* or *peshets* to refer to these prestige feasts in other Benguet communities (Bagamaspad and Hamada-Pawid 39, 114, 128).

¹⁴The cover of the rectangular wooden coffins found in Bangao cave in Kabayan has two snake figures carved on the lid. Similar snake figures are found on the funerary blankets in Benguet and Mountain Province.

¹⁵Apart from the photographs that he took, he also collected the tattoo instruments used in Bontoc and Abra as part of an ethnographic collection of artifacts for illustration purposes in his lectures at the Amsterdam Colonial Exposition in 1883. Other specimens that were collected include instruments for wood-carving, weaving, and blacksmith work. The Schadenberg collections are in the *Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde*, Leiden, which I visited in 2004. Photographs of these tattoo instruments are published in *Tatu-Tattoo!* by the Musees Royaux d'Art et d'Histoire (49–51).

¹⁶An ethnography of Butbut tattooing will be in *Tapping Ink, Tattooing Identities: Tradition and Modernity in Contemporary Kalinga Society* (forthcoming, University of the Philippines Press), which includes a discussion of Whang-ud's tattooing instruments, designs, and techniques.

¹⁷All these preliminary reports are filed at Archaeology Division of the National Museum.

¹⁸This includes a 30-minute documentary of the National Geographic entitled *The Mummy Road Show* that premiered in July 2003. Another documentary is the Discovery Channel's *The Fire Mummies of the Philippines* in May 2006.

¹⁹Circus Science X also produced other tattooed T-shirts with Kalinga (Northern Luzon) and *Pintado* (Visayas) inspired tattoo designs in 2011.

²⁰For a detailed history and evolution of the *barong Tagalog*, see *The Barong Tagalog: The Philippine National Wear* (De la Torre), *Barong Tagalog: Then and Now* (De la Torre) and *Garments of Honor, Garments of Identity* (Alejo-Hila et al.).

²¹*Dutdutan* is a Tagalog word derived from *dutdut*, which means "to insert ink with the use of needles."

²²Another tattoo organization in the Philippines is the National Tattoo Artists Association (NTAAS). If a tattoo artist is not a member of either of these two organizations, he/she is considered "underground" and may not have a good reputation because of the lack of a legal permit to operate and an official health registration required by the Department of Health.

²³The DOH prohibits the use of shared needles in tattooing for fear of HIV-AIDS transmission. Tattoo artists are required to wear surgical gloves for the entire process of tattooing. Tattoo shops should always observe hygiene.

²⁴The traditional tattoos also caught the imagination of Filipino-Americans in the United States (Salvador-Amores "Batok in Diaspora" 312-313) and have incorporated the *burik* designs into the tattoos on their chests and on some parts of the body (Krutak). This is done in combination with both the modern technique and the hand-tapping method.

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