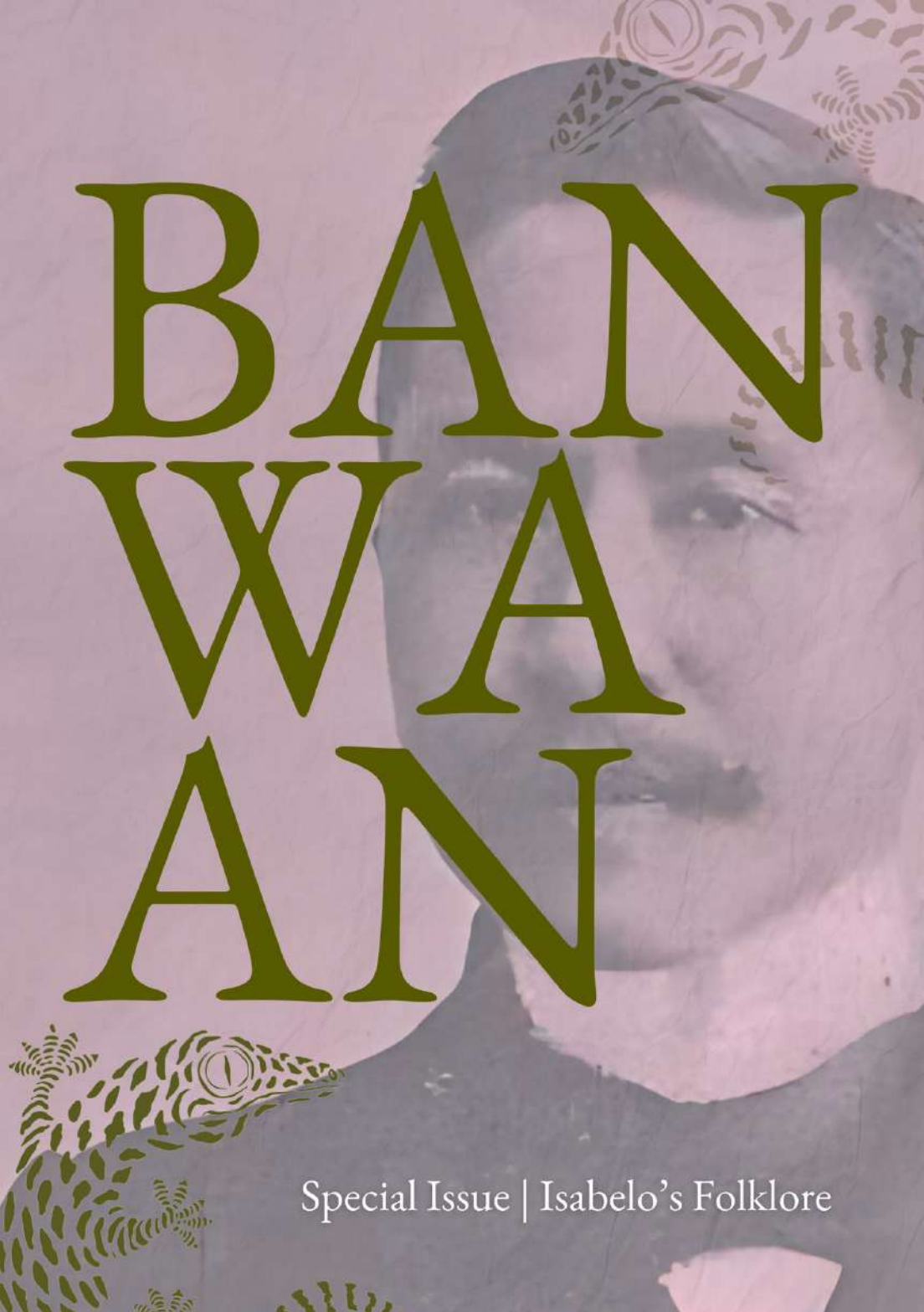

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Special Issue | Isabelo's Folklore

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The Philippine Journal of Folklore

Special Issue, "Isabelo's Folklore" (2025)

COLLEGE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES & PHILOSOPHY
FOLKLORE STUDIES PROGRAM
UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES DILIMAN

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The Philippine Journal of Folklore
Special Issue, "Isabelo's Folklore" (2025)

EMMANUEL JAYSON V. BOLATA
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Issue Editors

FOLKLORE STUDIES PROGRAM
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Banwaan: The Philippine Journal of Folklore is the peer-reviewed online journal of the Folklore Studies Program of the UP College of Social Sciences and Philosophy. The journal aims to provide a space for scholars working on folklore to exchange ideas, methodologies, and research findings. Recognizing the multidisciplinary nature to folkloristics, the journal welcomes articles from various disciplines.

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editors' note

One hundred forty years have passed since a young Ilocano journalist wrote an open letter through a Manila newspaper that "called on people to send to him and newspapers in Manila manuscripts, documents, and all kinds of verbal or non-verbal materials relating to local folklore." Isabelo de los Reyes (1864 – 1938) was barely twenty-years old when his call, which "went largely unnoticed," appeared in *El Comercio* on 15 March 1885. Matching the youthful potential of this "young science," his interest in folklore occurred as early as 1884, through the help of José Felipe del Pan, and was further encouraged by Spanish folklorists, Antonio Machado y Álvarez and Alejandro Guichot y Sierra. In 1889, his labors led to the birth of what can be considered as the earliest Filipino work on folklore, *El Folk-Lore Filipino*.[1]

This special issue celebrates—and conversely responds to— Isabelo's long forgotten call. We see the issue as a humble contribution to the appreciative and critical scholarship on Isabelo de los Reyes and Philippine folklore. It presents papers that engage, explore, and expand his ideas and approaches, therefore invoking a range of subject matters: from the conventional historical, literary, and cultural analyses to the emergent interdisciplinary studies on medical science, disasters, law and customs, and play.

But this issue, we believe, is by no means definitive. Rather, it finds parallels with *El Folk-Lore Filipino*: "a raw, inchoate archive."[2] Like the European readers of *El Folk-Lore Filipino*, the life and works of the Ilocano folklorist have caught the attention of foreign scholars. The earliest would be William Henry Scott, whose essay, "Isabelo de los Reyes, Father of Philippine Folklore," appeared as a chapter in the monumental *Cracks in the Parchment Curtain and Other Essays in Philippine History* (1982). It later served as the basis for other scholarly essays on Isabelo's folklore. In *Orientalists, Propagandists, and Ilustrados: Filipino Scholarship and the End of Spanish Colonialism* (2016), Megan C. Thomas devoted a chapter on Isabelo's *El Folk-Lore Filipino* and a section on his ethnological arguments,

[1] Quotations are from Resil B. Mojares, *Isabelo's Archive*, p. 1.

[2] Mojares, *Isabelo's Archive*, p. 20.

thus situating him within the Filipino knowledge production and activism in the late nineteenth century. Benedict Anderson weaved Isabelo into the larger loom of emergent transnational thought and ideologies in his *Under Three Flags: Anarchism and the Anti-Colonial Imagination* (2006), specifically in its prologue which first appeared as an article in the New Left Review in 2000. A more focused eye on Isabelo appears in his translation and annotation of *Ang Diablo sa Filipinas ayon sa nasasabi sa mga casulatan luma sa Kastila*, along with Ramon Guillermo and Carlos Sardiña Galache (2014).

Quite notably, just like the *provinciano* Isabelo, Filipino attention to his life and works also tended to come from the non-center. The books of Resil B. Mojares, *Brains of the Nation: Pedro Paterno, T.H. Pardo de Tavera, Isabelo de los Reyes and the Production of Modern Knowledge* (2006) and *Isabelo's Archive* (2013), followed Isabelo patiently, as he went through the country's—and his own—turns of time. A National Artist for Literature, Mojares is a well-admired journalist, writer, and historian from Cebu and just like Isabelo, he enriched Filipino scholarship beyond the confines of Manila and the Tagalog-speaking regions. Other Filipino scholars have shown the same interest and similar positionalities, to mention a few: Lars Raymund C. Ubaldo, an Ilocano-Tagalog historian, wrote on Isabelo's *Historia de Ilocos* as well as Ifugao blade-making; the Kapampangan-speaking Tarlakenyo historian Lino L. Dizon wrote on Isabelo's contributions to early Philippine studies, more so on Felipe del Pan and the publishing firm, Imprenta de Ramírez y Giraudier; and historian Raymundo D. Rovillos, born in Itogon, Benguet and raised in Baguio City, wrote on Isabelo's ideas of nation and ethnic identity, which jives meaningfully with his works on the history of Cordilleras and Philippine indigenous culture. Moreover, the works of Ubaldo and Rovillos, written in Filipino, can be coupled with the writings of Leslie Anne L. Liwanag—whose dissertation examined Isabelo's discourses on Philippine studies— and her co-authors.

We are grateful to National Artist Resil B. Mojares and to Anvil Publishing, Inc. and its managing editor, Mr. R. Jordan Santos, for allowing us to republish the important essay, *Isabelo's Archive*. It first appeared in the book with the same title, *Isabelo's Archive,* published in 2013 by Anvil, and can be bought at its online stores and select National Book Store branches. The essay brings us to the origins and journey of Isabelo's Philippine folklore project, which he carried out "almost singlehandedly." What is striking here is Mojares' emphasis of the term "archive"—associating Isabelo's project with the French *bibliothèque*, almost akin to the philosophes' *Encyclopédie,* yet not completely devoid of the colonial politics of collecting, interpreting, and presenting local knowledges.

Anna Melinda Testa - de Ocampo's *Humor and Satire in Isabelo de los Reyes's El Diablo en Filipinas* seems to run against Father John N. Schumacher's remark that Isabelo reveals data in a "somewhat more dispassionate fashion."[3] Testa - de Ocampo convincingly deconstructs the seemingly objective and neutral citations of Isabelo in his fictional dialogue, *El Diablo en Filipinas*. These citations, it appears, "elicits awareness and laughter," and at the same time, indicates a shared community– a community identified, or even formed, through laughter. Appended to Isabelo's folklore project, it reveals not only Isabelo's reading of the historical works produced by the Spanish clergy, especially for the purpose of finding folklore, but also his witty strategies of poking fun at friars in the guise of being scientific.

Emmanuel Jayson V. Bolata's *Authoring the Folk* looks into the relationship between authorship, a concept commonly associated with Western individualism and positivism, and folk literature, which most of the time disregards the authority of the author. This relationship is examined through the poems of Isabelo's mother, Leona Florentino, in *El Folk-Lore Filipino*. The paper is threefold: it shows how Leona was partly acquainted with the Western idea of authorship; it delves into how Isabelo conceptualized the ideas of "folk" and "folk literature" through his presentation of samples of Philippine and Ilocano poetics; and it compares Leona's poems with the Ilocano epic *Lam-ang* through a Python-based corpus analysis which leads to insights on Ilocano/Philippine poetic form.

The following three papers are re-readings and reinterpretations of *El Folk-Lore Filipino*. While scholars must also exercise restraint in the various directions in which they "stretch" this text, i.e., extracting readings and interpretations from the original words and intentions of Don Belong, these re-readings and reinterpretations are valuable in that they weave connections among writings and sources contemporaneous with *El Folk-Lore Filipino* and the experiences of the communities who now are experiencing and confronting modernity from *El Folk-Lore Filipino*'s nineteenth-century context.

The re-reading that Athena Charanne R. Presto and Emmanuel Reed Horton B. Viceral offer harnesses their positionalities as insiders/from-within observers of Ilocandia. They approach the seminal text as a codification of narratives deemed exotic yet familiar to them as Ilokanos. They argue that their folktales, deftly

[3] John N. Schumacher, *The Propaganda Movement 1880-1895: The Creation of a Filipino Consciousness, The Making of the Revolution*, p. 226.

retold by De los Reyes, have the potential to serve as antidotes to misguided, essentialist, and still-colonial views of Ilokano identity, more particularly, and Filipino identity, more generally.

Joseph Adrian D. Afundar's article goes beyond Don Belong's usual (yet warranted) framing as a pioneer in anthropology and folklore studies in the Philippine context. The paper examined *El Folk-Lore Filipino* as a document of health practices and medical knowledge; casting De los Reyes also as a proficient documenter and scholar of health and health-seeking behaviors. The paper argues for a more nuanced reading of the often dismissed "traditional" healing practices and theories of illness causation and how they interacted with the Western scientific medical paradigm.

The paper by Kerby C. Alvarez, meanwhile, is an analysis of the portions of *El Folk-Lore Filipino* tackling nature and various environmental phenomena such as meteorological patterns and the movement of celestial bodies. While traditional European perspectives would readily cast some of this wisdom as mere "superstition," Alvarez demonstrates how the belief systems and narratives documented by Don Belong are grounded in centuries of community wisdom and that the reason these have persisted is because they help these people live in harmony with their environments.

The final two papers of this volume gesture toward further connections of Don Belong's oeuvre and the adventurous spirit of his multifaceted life.

Lorenz Timothy Barco Ranera's article contributes to the corpus of writings on legal history in the Philippines by examining how two famous proverbs (*salawikain*), with equivalents attested in several Philippine languages, have been transformed as provisions in the 1949 Civil Code of the Philippines. The paper highlights Jorge C. Bocobo's deep fascination with Philippine folklore and how this interest makes him Don Belong's "kindred spirit" despite their chronological separation.

Finally, we have Micah Jeiel R. Perez's article which poses the intriguing question "Is *sungka* a wargame?". The paper traced the various iterations and versions of the shell game, connected to the *mancala* of Africa, played across the Philippines, Southeast Asia and the Pacific. Perez concludes that while *sungka* cannot be considered a wargame in the strictest sense–it does not directly serve as training for an elite warrior class in strategy and tactics–it is fruitful to view *sungka* as a cultural artifact deeply embedded in the communities and societies that have

captured the imagination of Don Belong. These are communities and societies which developed distinct forms of warfare shaped by the archipelagic and maritime setting of the Philippines.

Given these papers, we hope to provide a well-rounded view of the Ilocano/Filipino folklorist's early career. We also hope that readers would be encouraged to revisit his writings—and speaking of this, we have to recognize the value of the English translation of *El Folk-Lore Filipino* by Salud C. Dizon and Maria Elinora Peralta-Imson, published by the University of the Philippines Press in 1994. Despite its limitations, it bridged (and has been bridging) Don Belong to generations of scholars, especially those who do not have access to the Spanish original or cannot read Spanish.

Isabelo is a man of many faces and phases, and as we have remarked that this is a humble celebration of Isabelo's legacy to Philippine scholarship, this could further be followed by future iterations– which is, for us, very Isabelo-like. Isabelo's folklore may give birth to Isabelo's diablos, Isabelo's epics, and so on and so forth…

Emmanuel Jayson V. Bolata
Vincent Christopher A. Santiago
Editors

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We want to express our gratitude to our issue contributors and the reviewers of their manuscripts; to the CSSP FSP coordinator, Prof. Jesus Federico C. Hernandez; and to Asst. Prof. Aaron F. Viernes, who did the layout and cover design. Again, to National Artist, Prof. Resil B. Mojares, and Mr. R. Jordan Santos, managing editor of Anvil Publishing, Inc., for allowing the inclusion of "Isabelo's Archive."

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Isabelo's Archive

Resil B. Mojares
National Artist for Literature

IT WENT LARGELY unnoticed. On 15 March 1885, an open letter appeared in the Manila press written by a young Ilocano journalist named Isabelo de los Reyes.[1] In this letter, Isabelo called on people to send to him and newspapers in Manila manuscripts, documents, and all kinds of verbal or non-verbal materials relating to local folklore. The appeal seemed innocuous enough except for the ambition that was behind it. Proudly announcing that the "young science" of *folk-lore* was the "New School" (*Nueva Escuela*) in Europe, he urged the formation of a movement he called *folk-lore regional Filipino*. He wrote:

> 'Folk-Lore de Filipinas' has for its aim to collect, compile, and publish all of the knowledge of our people in the diverse branches of science (Medicine, Hygiene, Botany, Politics, Morals, Agriculture, Industry, Arts, Mathematics, Sociology, Philosophy, History, Anthropology, Archaeology, Languages, etc.)

Such knowledge, he said, is found in local customs and traditions preserved in writings, artifacts, and oral traditions, encompassing verbal and art forms, vocabularies and speech practices, ceremonies, games, and other expressions of

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In a career spanning more than five decades, National Artist for Literature Resil B. Mojares has produced a good number of scholarly works—already considered classics—on subjects as diverse as literature, biography, politics, social history, local history, and history of ideas. His most notable works include *The Origins and Rise of the Filipino Novel* (1983), *House of Memory* (1997), *Waiting for Mariang Makiling: Essays in Philippine Cultural History* (2002), and *Brains of the Nation: Pedro Paterno, T.H. Pardo de Tavera, Isabelo de los Reyes and the Production of Modern Knowledge* (2006). His awards include several National Book Awards from the Manila Critics Circle, a national fellowship in the Essay from the UP Creative Writing Center, and teaching and research fellowships from the Ford, Toyota, and Rockefeller foundations, Fulbright Program, and Social Science Research Council of New York. He has also served as visiting professor in universities in Japan, Singapore, and the United States. At present, Dr. Mojares resides in Cebu City, where he is Professor Emeritus at the University of San Carlos. [Lifted from "About the Author," *Isabelo's Archive* (2013)].

popular behavior and thought: "in sum, all the elements constitutive of the genius, the knowledge and languages of Filipinos... [the] indispensable materials for the understanding and scientific reconstruction of Filipino history and culture [Isabelo's emphasis]." The appeal did not quite generate the response Isabelo hoped for, and the folklore society he envisioned did not materialize.

Four years later and almost singlehandedly, he would publish *El Folk-Lore Filipino* (1889), a two-volume compilation of local knowledge to demonstrate what he had in mind. But, a man of many projects, Isabelo could not sustain what he had begun. The significance of what he was up to was not fully appreciated in his time. I think it is not fully appreciated even in our own time, in part because the idea of *folklore* has contracted into something less ambitious and encompassing than what Isabelo proposed.

Many thought the enterprise quixotic. The Spaniard Jose Lacalle (*Astoll*), a professor at Universidad de Santo Tomas, praised Isabelo for his daring but expressed pessimism about the project, chiding Isabelo for his high "scientific" ambitions. "The science of anthropology is as familiar to the Filipino as the inhabitants of the moon," Lacalle remarked.

Yet, Isabelo's project was a radical move. It was a call for the creation of an archive of local knowledge in the Philippines. One may call it the founding moment (if one likes such moments) of "Philippine studies" by Filipinos. In a larger sense, it was nothing less than an attempt to carve out a space of knowledge out of which a "nation" could emerge.

I WOULD LIKE to trace the genealogy of Isabelo's act, to see it in relation to its connection to outside scholarship, specifically the rise of folklore studies in Spain, and, more important, its radical value in terms of the formation-in Isabelo's time and ours-of a national scholarship.

The immediate inspiration for Isabelo's appeal came from the Spaniard Jose Felipe del Pan (1821-1891), long-time Manila resident and journalist who, a year earlier, had written an editorial calling for folklore contributions to his newspaper *La Oceania Española* ("*Folk-Lore de Filipinas*," 25 March 1884).[2] Encouraged by del Pan, Isabelo, one of his protégés in the press, started to publish folklore articles in *La Oceania Española* and *El Comercio* (beginning "May 24, 1884," Isabelo provides a curiously exact date). Del Pan subsequently sent these articles as "exhibits" in the 1887 *Exposicion General de las Islas Filipinas* in Madrid.[3] More

important, del Pan put Isabelo in contact with folklorists in Spain.

It was only some three years earlier that the folklore movement in Spain began when the ethnologist Antonio Machado y Alvarez (1848-1893) convened a nucleus of folklorists in Seville on 3 November 1881. Inspired by the founding of the world's first folklore society in London in 1878, Machado had just issued *Bases de la organizacion de El Folk-Lore Español*, a prospectus for a Spanish folklore society called *El Folk-Lore Español*. Days after the Seville meeting, *Sociedad El Folk-Lore Andaluz* was established. This was shortly followed-in a conscious strategy of building the local or regional bases of the national folklore-by societies in Catalonia, Castile, Galicia, and other regions. The movement was launched in a flurry of organizing, publishing, and networking with scholars and enthusiasts in Europe and various parts of Spain and her empire.[4]

This was the group to which Isabelo was connected. Isabelo said that Machado ("founder of *Folk-Lore Español*") and Alejandro Guichot ("secretary general of *Folk-Lore Español*" and "editor of *Boletin Folk-Lorico* de Sevilla") supplied him with "all the writings on folklore published in Spain" and encouraged him to initiate the creation of folklore societies (sociedades folk-loricas) in the Philippines. At their instance, he issued his public appeal of March 1885 and contributed an article to *Boletin de la Institucion de Ensenanza* (31 August 1885), of the famous Institucion Libre de Ensenanza in Madrid.[5]

Isabelo adopted the Spanish folklorists' vision of *folk-lore* as a science of "popular knowledge" (*saber popular*). His statement on the scope and purpose of Folk-Lore de Filipinas is almost a direct transcript from Machado's Bases de la organizacion de *El Folk-Lore Español*.[6] Like Machado and Guichot, Isabelo saw folk-lore as an all-embracive "anthropological" science, coextensive with all branches of human knowledge in the wealth of materials it describes and the range of disciplines it implicates. Like Machado and Guichot, he underscored folklore's status as an empirical science by highlighting methods of collection, recommending the use of "musical sheets, drawings, stenography, photography" and other means of scrupulous documentation. He likewise stressed the importance of a learned and systematic comparativism in the analysis of materials. To write folklore, he said, one needs to be a "disciple of Zola" and aim for *naturalismo y realidad*, and possess in addition the virtues of "honesty, exactitude, fidelity, and absolute truth."

Equally significant, there were affinities between Isabelo and the Spanish folklorists in terms of their socially-minded, progressive approach to the subject.

Machado, Guichot, and their colleagues were not musty antiquarians but liberals influenced by evolutionism, Krausism, and Spencerian philosophy. They were enthusiastic about folklore's prospects as medium for social reform, of "returning to the people, improved and purified, their own heritage."[7] Their advocacies went beyond folklore to projects of popular education, local autonomy, and cultural regeneration. These were advocacies Isabelo shared.

There were crucial differences, of course, in the context in which the Spaniards and the Filipino worked. The folklore movement in Spain was stimulated by anxieties over Spanish nationalism. In the wake of the crisis created by the loss of Spanish American colonies in the early 1800s, the French invasion (1808-14), and regional conflicts in the Iberian peninsula, Spanish Intellectuals struggled with the question of the "Spanish nation." There were contested views about what constituted the nation, divergent tendencies expressed in the ways in which folk-lore was imagined and used. On one hand, folk-lore was viewed as a vehicle for the creation of a unitary Spanish identity. Machado and his colleagues expressed this view when they spoke of folklore as a resource for uniting "the regions that constitute Spanish nationality." On the other hand, folk-lore fostered centrifugal tendencies in conceptions of national identity and helped nourish regional, cantonal, and federalist movements vis-à-vis the central state. Machado and Guichot, it may be noted, played a role in inspiring Federal Republicanism in 1868-1874 and the regional movement called Andalucismo well into the twentieth century.[8]

At another remove, liberal intellectuals imagined the Spanish nation as one that did not only encompass the Iberian provinces but Spain's remaining colonies (Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines), now conceived no longer as a distant las Indias but the provincias de ultramar. As Christopher Schmidt-Nowara writes: "Spaniards sought to construct a national identity that folded the colonies into the metropolitan historical narrative."[9] It was in this sense that Isabelo's Spanish patrons spoke of a folk-lore regional Filipino, i.e., "regional" in relation to Spain. In Machado's Bases de la organizacion, the regions that constituted "Spanish nationality" (nacionalidad Española) — in which folklore centers were to be established-included Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines.[10] Isabelo echoed this concept. This was, after all, the discourse of "assimilation" shared by liberals in metropolitan Spain and the Philippines, one expressed not only in the pan-Spanish folklore movement but in such political causes as the campaign for Filípino representation in the Spanish Cortes.

This intellectual positioning, however, was neither static nor homogeneous.

There were cultural and political faultlines not only within Spain but between Spain and her colonies. In the Philippines (as in Latin America), where patriots were less interested in the unity of Spain than in the differences between their homeland and the metropolis, folklore served other purposes.

THIS IS WHERE Isabelo's project takes its own particular trajectory. Writing with the enthusiasm of an initiate, Isabelo bannered his European connections to lend authority to his appeal. It was more than Spanish patronage, however, that excited Isabelo. What he did with folk-lore was not quite what his Spanish patrons intended. This can be appreciated if we turn away from Spain and look at the local context of Isabelo's "movement."

The first attempts to publish Philippine folklore were made by European missionaries interested in cataloguing the "customs and beliefs" of the natives they sought to know and convert. Early missionary investigations were driven by the double impulse of marking resemblance (the natives were fellow-humans, God's lost children) and difference (not-quite-human, the Devil's captives, the European's Other). In recording local customs, the missionaries built an archive at once corrupt and indispensable. They compiled and created knowledge that provided elaboration and proof for Biblical and universal histories and, on a more pragmatic level, aided and justified conquest and conversion. Yet, they also preserved (if in densely mediated ways) knowledge that would otherwise have been lost and one that the natives, in their turn, had to confront, reinterpret, and use.

In the nineteenth century, as publishing widened beyond the control of the Church, Spaniards and Creoles pursued more secular, "modern" interests in matters pertaining to the country. Like their liberal counterparts in Spain, Manila Spaniards like Jose Felipe del Pan worked not only to disseminate in the colony "the best" in Western culture but to study local history and customs as part of Spain's imperial archive.[11] In this context, they cultivated local lore in articles, poems, sketches, and novels in the mode of what was called *costumbrismo*. While this indexed growing Creole identification with the land, it was one that mixed science and romance, biased in favor of what was quaint, bizarre, and exotic. Their interest was not only literary or touristic however. Stimulated by Enlightenment ideas of modernity, the colony's intellectuals also looked on local manners as ground and object of social and moral reform. It was in this vein that, in a note appended to Isabelo's letter of 1885, the *El Comercio* editor endorsed Isabelo's project for its value in providing a base for correcting the natives'

"ridiculous" and "absurd" beliefs and practices.

Isabelo was aware that folklore had been used as proof of his people's "backwardness." He cited the reluctance of his fellow-Ilocanos to have their beliefs and customs written about because they feared these would only be used to malign them. In response, Isabelo distanced himself from foreign observers by claiming the privileged position of an insider who embraced the culture as his own and was committed to its development. In his article in Madrid's *Boletin de la Institucion de Enseñanza* in 1885, he proudly announced to his Spanish readers he was "brother of the forest dwellers, the Aetas, Igorots, and Tinguians." He was no Igorot or Tinguian, of course. He placed his faith in the transcendent value of "scientific" study, asserting that science and patriotism (*patriotismo*) were not only compatible but that one was necessary for the other.

European folklorists saw in folklore the method and materials for reconstructing the "early history of mankind" and had a special interest in "savage" and "primitive" races. Isabelo was less interested in world-theorizing than reconstructing his people's history *prior to* and *apart from* coloniality as well as demonstrating the persistence of this history into the present. Isabelo appreciated folklore's value in making available data useful for new and emergent sciences. Yet, he saw its value for *patriotismo* as well in reconstructing the country's past and enabling a fuller, critical self-understanding on the part of his people.

Machado and his colleagues imagined Filipino folklore as a "regional" constituent of Spanish folklore in the same way as the Andalucian or Extremaduran were. For his part, Isabelo quickly demonstrated that he was less interested in the idea that his people's folklore was, like the Galician, Basque, or Catalan, a component of Spain's "national" folklore than in the prospect of local knowledge as a resource for a separate nationality. It is interesting to note that while Machado and his colleagues began their movement by forming local and regional societies (such as *Folklore Regional Gaditano* in Cadiz and Sociedad de *Fregenal de la Sierra* in Badajoz) as a way towards forming a national society, Isabelo immediately proceeded to stake out Folk-Lore Filipino (instead of, say, Folk-lore Ilocano) as his field.

For Isabelo, folklore was a resource for nation formation and not something merely ethnological. In calling for the recovery and study of the people's knowledge, he envisioned a "national" project, one that was not executed by one person but involved everyone. He saw the native not only as a privileged informant but as his own country's scientist and scholar. He approvingly quoted

Guichot saying that "to know and study the feelings, thoughts, and desires of the native (indio), as well as matters of his land, one has to become a native." Through folk-lore, a *psychic* (and political) need for a national identity will be filled, a privileged site claimed for a discourse on the "soul" of a people. For these reasons, Isabelo advertised the project, called for contributions, and urged the promotion of a national folklore movement.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF Isabelo's project can be appreciated if we compare it to the work of two other Filipinos, Jose Rizal and Pedro Paterno, who were in Europe and were about to embark on their own projects to write Philippine history at the time Isabelo issued his appeal in 1885.

Rizal recognized the need to promote "Philippine studies" by Filipinos themselves and had suggested in 1884 that Filipinos in Spain collaborate on producing a book of essays on the Philippines. Nothing came out of the proposal. But in 1888 Rizal was in the British Museum in London to work on his own history of the Philippines. In 1890, he published in Paris his annotated edition of Antonio de Morga's *Sucesos de las Islas Filipinas* (the work of a Spanish colonial official published in Mexico in 1609).[12] While working on Morga, Rizal also conceived the idea of organizing *Association Internationale des Philippinestes*, an international group of scholars that would "study the Philippines from the historic and scientific point of view" and undertake conferences, competitions, and the establishment of a Philippine library and museum. He began preparations for holding the association's first "international congress" in Paris to coincide with the Universal Exposition in that city in August 1889. These were audacious moves that had few parallels in world colonial history: a "native" initiating (if aborted) an international association and congress of scholars on his country, a "native" publishing his critical annotation of an "official" European account of his country's history.

Lacking the sources and the time, Rizal chose the annotation as his form in writing the history of the Philippines. The annotation offered him a direct and exemplary form of counterhistory. Through footnotes (literally, a "speaking from below"), Rizal interrogated the Spanish textualization of his country from within the text. He did not only show this text to be biased, imperfect, and contingent, he sketched the outline of an alternative history by showing what had been misinterpreted or excluded, and claiming in the process a privileged position outside the colonialist text and the authority of an "insider" to speak about and for the country.

Rizal adopted a more transparent anti-colonial stance than did Isabelo (who operated under more restricted circumstances than did Rizal). In writing his version of Morga, however, Rizal was limited by matters of sources and form. He lacked source materials outside what the European themselves had written and was constrained by the mode and structure of Morga's book. A civic chronicle that devotes seven of its eight chapters to narrating accomplishments under successive Spanish administrations and only one chapter to native society itself, Morga's text delimited the space for Rizal to discourse on native society in its own terms.

For all its advantages, the annotation is an auxiliary rather than autonomous form. Footnotes dictate a discontinuous commentary that lacks the fullness and coherence of a narrative and does not quite displace the main text as the "master narrative." Moreover, Rizal does not question the validity of Europe's historiographic mode and its rules of evidence and persuasion. Thus his annotations-many of which are clarificatory and explanatory in nature-serve to "complete" as much as subvert the European account. For all its daring, Rizal's Morga is a tentative performance, a shadow history, a prospectus for a national history rather than that history itself.

At this time, Pedro Paterno, a flamboyant Tagalog scholar based in Spain, had also embarked on his own project, publishing *La Antigua Civilizacion Tagalog* (1887), the first in a series of ethnological treatises on what he called "ancient Tagalog civilization."[13] Paterno announced his work as "a humble effort to form the foundation on which to build the History of [a] forgotten people.' Despite the rhetoric, Paterno was not a victim of modesty. He positioned himself as a metropolitan scholar conversant with world-knowledge.

Mining the European cultural sciences and their styles of proof and presentation (comparative taxonomies, evolutionary schemas, copious citations), he constructed an overblown theory of "Tagalog civilization" comparable to the world's "high" civilizations.

There are many similarities in Isabelo's and Paterno's arguments about the "high" state of precolonial Philippine "civilization," arguments that undercut colonialist assertions that the natives are a people without a culture and a history. For Isabelo, this provided charter for a distinct nationality (and the possibility this raises for claims to independence and sovereignty). The political implications of this argument, however, are not clearly articulated in Isabelo since it was not until 1897, when he was deported to Spain (where he stayed until 1901), that he could write and publish freely.

In Paterno's case, there is no doubt that his motives were politically conservative. What Paterno desired was that Mother Spain recognize the glories of one of her possessions. He did not claim for his *civilizacion* a sovereign existence but a favored place in the stream of *historia universal* and the realm of magna *hispaniae*. Following European evolutionary theories, he located his *civilizacion tagala* in a linear, evolutionary sequence in which it was succeeded by Hindu, Muslim, and Euro-Christian civilizations. While he pointed to the persistence of elements of this ancient civilization, he effectively relegated it to the status of the exotic and forgotten, representing it in the static form of an ethnological treatise instead of the dynamic form of a historical narrative. What Paterno wrote was, as politics, a call for the closer integration of the Philippines to Spain, and, as scholarship, a speculative, non-critical addendum to European imperial history.

Rizal attempted a counterhistory, Paterno engaged in mimicry.

UNLIKE RIZAL AND Paterno, who were both educated and based in Europe, Isabelo de los Reyes was a homegrown intellectual who worked within the narrow and dangerous confines of the colony. A printer, publisher, and writer, he produced articles, issued them as chapbooks, or compiled them as anthologies. In a time when the relations between journalism and scholarship were incestuous, Isabelo, tireless and uninhibited, wrote under many pseudonyms, "pasted up" newspaper articles into books or parts of books, and produced copy for entire newspaper issues. While he mainly wrote in Spanish, he also wrote or recycled his works in Iloko and Tagalog translations. He was conscious—more than Rizal and Paterno were—of his differential location within the colony and his relation to specific local publics.

He was a denizen of the colonial world of print—where books were cheap, hybrid and perishable because facilities were primitive, paper scarce and expensive, and quickness and portability were prized because of surveillance and censorship; where the author, whether political agitator or petty entrepreneur, produced his work almost singlehandedly, without grants or commissions, outside of universities and learned societies, with limited access to archives and libraries, oblivious to protocols of scholarship and respectable publishing.

Like Rizal and Paterno, Isabelo aspired to write the country's history. He wrote local history, *Las Islas Visayas* (1887) and *Historia de Ilocos* (1890), and attempted the first full history of the Philippines by a Filipino, *Historia de*

Filipinas (1889), conceived as a two-volume work.[14] Only the first volume, *Prehistoria de Filipinas*, was finished. Conscious of Rankean rules of history writing, he was stymied—as Rizal was—by the fact that, lacking indigenous sources, he had to work out of European texts and documents. While a critical, interrogatory temper informed his writing, he must have chafed against the limitations of source and method in writing his people's history.

It is in relation to these limitations that Isabelo's *El Folk-Lore Filipino* (1889) assumes significance as an effort in content building that goes beyond what Paterno and Rizal attempted Envisioned as an open-ended, multi-volume project (although only two volumes were produced), it compiles and makes available native and local documents, and articles collected and mostly written by Isabelo himself.

Its value can be appreciated if we bear in mind that, from its beginnings, Filipino scholarship has been a wrestling with content and form. In Isabelo's time, it was hounded by the problem of an inchoate, ill-defined subject (*Filipino, nacion*) that was not so much "out there" as something that had to be constituted in the act of writing itself. (Hence, Paterno's invention of a *civilizacion tagala* and a country called *Luzonica*.) Filipino intellectuals struggled with the lack of self-definition, the sense that colonialism had divided Filipinos from their past by means benign and violent. (Rizal lamented the Spaniards' destruction of native documents, depicted the past as a "shadow," *sombra*, and was compelled to speak through somebody else's text.) Europe dominated the technologies, language, and forms of writing. (Rizal wrote on the margins of a Spanish *cronica*, Paterno mimed the Orientalist encyclopedia.)

Filipinos needed to build an archive of local knowledge, a storehouse of distinctive materials and repertoire of forms. *Folk-Lore Filipino* responded to this need for building local sources and providing an epistemic base, as it were, for an "autonomous" history of the Philippines, one that is worked out from within the culture instead of appended (as in the case of Rizal and Paterno) to an already-written imperial or "universal" history.

Isabelo calls *Folk-Lore Filipino* an "archive" (*archivo*) of all aspects of popular knowledge needed "in understanding and reconstructing scientifically the history and culture of a people." He does not quite elaborate on the notion of an "archive" he also uses the words "museum," *museo*, and "arsenal of data," *arsenal de datos*) but its use is felicitous in the light of contemporary scholarship on the nature, power, and limits of the archive, imperial, national, or postcolonial.

Isabelo surely imagined an archive as the sum total of a community's memory of itself, a resource without which a group or nation cannot know its distinctness and coherence. Preserving such an archive was his aim although, writing as a colonial subject, he may have felt obliged to soften its political implications by stressing instead its merits as a "contribution" to world science. Yet, he was not unaware of its subversive value in building the knowledge base for a national consciousness and deepening the site from which narratives of domination could be interrogated.

Considered as an attempt in the creation of a "national archive," Isabelo's *Folk-Lore Filipino* is hurriedly and carelessly designed and executed. It is a hodge-podge of miscellaneous items: reprints of Isabelo's historical and cultural articles, original manuscripts (including a fictional narrative by Isabelo on the irrational workings of the colonial bureaucracy, entitled *Folk-Lore Administrativo*), the poetry of Isabelo's mother Leona Florentino, the text of the Iloko epic *Lam-ang*, and a most diverse range of popular lore. There are contributions from Mariano Ponce, Miguel Zaragoza, Pedro Serrano, and Pio Mondragon on the folklore of Bulacan, Pampanga, Tayabas, and Iloilo, in addition to articles on the folklore of Zambales, Malabon, and Pandacan. While aspiring to be national in scope, the work remains understandably heavy on Ilocano folklore.

It is very much a work-in-progress. While there is an attempt at following a classificatory system, the arrangement of contents is ultimately desultory and adventitious. Some items were added when the book was already in press and many more items were planned but could not be written for lack of time. Each of the two volumes is continuously paged (345 and 300 pages), but to each volume is appended a three-page article written by Isabelo: on "women and flowers" in the first, and, in the second, Isabelo's cursory reflections on his career as a writer, entitled "*Mi pobre pluma: articulo de relleno que nadie interesa*" (My poor pen: a filler article of interest to no one). They were written, Isabelo notes, because the typesetters (*cajistas*) told him they lacked three pages to complete the printer's sheet (*pliego*). In my copy of the 1889 edition, the two volumes are bound as one together with Gabriel Beato Francisco's verse chronicle, *Casaysayan nang Bayan nang Sampaloc*, a 136-page pamphlet (*folletin*) issued by Isabelo's newspaper La Lectura Popular in 1890, the year the second volume of *Folk-Lore Filipino* appeared.

Folk-Lore Filipino is a makeshift performance, determined by the exigencies of colonial book publishing, the circumstances of the compiler (Isabelo was a writer-in-a-hurry, ambitious and uninhibited), and the fact that the project was,

in the main, a solo performance. While Isabelo spoke of folklore as a systematic science with its divisions of subject matter, he said that "since I cannot count on a collaborator in writing this book, I will adopt a simple division organized according to my opinion and the material at my disposal." Moreover, *Folk-Lore* was not meant to be a closed and finished book but an open-ended series that could well have run to more volumes than the two that were produced.

It was printed on cheap paper, with the economical page size of 110 x 150 centimeters. This was not the French *Encyclopedie*—that grand Enlightenment project to classify and sum up the entire breadth of the arts and sciences of the "world," that ran to a total of twenty-eight massive volumes between 1751 and 1772, and to which the leading European *philosophes* contributed. (Even then, despite its majestic ambitions, Encyclopedie was also a jumble of information that contained "thousands of words about grinding grain, manufacturing pins, and declining verbs." It was ideologically driven as well, meant to be both reference work and *machine de guerre*.[15])

Isabelo's opus was a rickety *machine*. That it is so does not, however, take anything away from the significance of what the project intends. Though Isabelo may not have been fully aware of all the implications of what he was doing, this was what he was about: building a place in which his people could locate themselves, look out, and speak to *others*, the keepers and purveyors of dominant knowledge, European or, for that matter, the local ruling elite itself.

I think it is not facetious to say (though they seem worlds apart) that Isabelo would have agreed with what Jacques Derrida wrote: "There is no political power without control of the archive, if not of memory. Effective democratization can always be measured by this essential criterion: the participation in and the access to the archive, its constitution, and its interpretation."[16]

TWO ASPECTS OF the content and form of *Folk-Lore Filipino* are of particular interest in the light of contemporary scholarship.

The first has to do with Folk-Lore Filipino's mixed, hybrid content. While Isabelo attempted to record the earliest known beliefs and practices, his stress was on *saber popular* rather than *saber tradicional*, on the dynamic cultural reinventions of the present rather than a fixed heritage from the past. He was less interested in the "authentic" and the "original" than in what the living culture was. He worked out of what the local realities were, marking out what beliefs were not in fact *of the people* but had been introduced from the outside, what

practices had been misrepresented or transformed, what had become anachronistic, and what could be developed or "refined" for the present and the future. While he spoke of the need to recover and preserve what was threatened by "progress," Isabelo was not a sentimental indigenist. He was interested not just in the pure and autochthonous but the hybrid and borrowed, not just what was past and archaic but knowledge present and contemporary.

Together with descriptions of "precolonial" beliefs and practices, Isabelo includes contemporary local histories, Spanish borrowings and accretions, as well as his own literary inventions. Thus his archive has the character of a palimpsest, with its layers of thought that represent not so much one "originary place" as an active, syncretic process of cultural persistence, combination, and recreation. Archaic beliefs survive in fragments; the Iloko epic *Lam-ang* appears in a Spanish version of what was transcribed and probably edited by a nineteenth-century Spanish priest and then reedited by Isabelo himself; the early history of Manila is pieced together from nineteenth-century wills and testaments in the Spanish colonial records; the already Hispanified verses of Leona Florentino are offered as specimens of "native poetics." Mediations and contaminations make of Isabelo's archive one that is highly complex and unstable.

By refusing to essentialize the culture, Isabelo exposes its dynamism and creativity, that deep instability Derrida calls "archive fever," the archive's permanent incompleteness, nostalgia for origins never satisfied, and openness to the future. Isabelo was no purist. He gloried in his people's gifts of invention and reinvention, their capacity to absorb diverse influences and remake their culture. (On the natives' gift for linguistic play, for instance, he says: "The indigenes are natural corruptors of languages and inventors of thousand upon thousand new terms.")

The archive's instability is further conveyed in the form and style of *Folk-Lore Filipino*: a pastiche of inventories, "curious" documents, newspaper articles, folktales, poems and fictional sketches. It recalls what the French called *bibliotheque*, a loosely-ordered, luxuriant, and open-ended compilation of miscellaneous pieces, a library-in-a-book, meant not so much as a finished "book" as a ready, accessible repository of useful information. Isabelo elsewhere referred to his writings as *centon* ("crazy quilt"). And if Isabelo's book is to be imagined as a kind of museum (since this is also how he calls it), it is closer to the medieval cabinet of curiosities than the modern museum.

The form of the book may largely be the product of the practices and habits of an early print culture, in which independent, amateur printer-publisher-

authors (Isabelo was one produced ephemeral forms of literature, such as small newspapers, chapbooks (*folletin*), broadsides (*papeles volantes*), and posters (*pasquines*).

Yet, despite the book's circumstances and what may have been Isabelo's intentions, the form of *Folk-Lore Filipino* is distinctly oppositional in its effects, and highly contemporary (blurring as it does, for today's readers, the boundaries of the premodern, modern, and postmodern). It reminds me of an image raised by the Spanish novelist Juan Goytisolo, in his *El sitio de los sitios/ State of Siege* (1995), of a literary underground of polyglot "copyists, clerks, interpreters, monks of scant virtue, wayward young scholar-poets" producing "theories, commentaries, sophistic arguments, interpolations, and apocrypha" that undermine the certainties and dogmas of the medieval Church (and modern state power, since the novel deals with the siege of Sarajevo in the 1990s). Goytisolo writes: "Victims of the cruelty of history, we took vengeance on it with our histories, woven out of ambiguities, interpolated texts, fabricated events: such is the marvelous power of literature."[17]

This is not wholly what Isabelo would have said. He was not writing out of what seemed like history's end but its beginning. His work could not have been otherwise but imperfect and unfinished. As it stands, however, it does convey something of the contingent dissonant, unincorporated, and unsaid that contemporary scholars deploy to undermine or trouble history's *grands recit*.[18]

Though it is a product of the time and circumstances of its production, there is much that *Folk-Lore Filipino* can tell today's scholars not only about the need for archive building but its limits and dangers.

The archive, Derrida reminds us, involves the operation of an authority or law that organizes the past and governs public memory. The word archive (Greek *arkheion*; Latin *archivum*) originally referred to a ruling office, town hall, or the residence of the superior magistrates, the archons, "those who commanded" by their power as keepers and interpreters of official documents. (In Derrida's words, it is "*there* where men and gods *command*, *there* where authority, social order are exercised, *in this place* from *which* order is given.") It involves a process of institutionalization in which a group, nation, or state accumulates, stores and inscribes its memory of itself in a body of symbols, documents, and texts.

The archive lays claim on order, completeness, and objectivity. Yet, the process of formalization by which it is created also excludes or represses what the archive's makers, its archons, choose to forget as hostile, irrelevant, or inconvenient.

It can be said that, in Isabelo's case, the form of *Folk-Lore Filipino* is not completely open and centerless. This is not Jorge Luis Borges' "Book of Sand," in which the pages shift and multiply as you leaf through them. "No page is the first, no page is the last."[19] A monstrous book that "defiled and corrupted" reality, this was not what Isabelo intended.

Isabelo, after all, does not only believe in the reality and necessity of nations, he maintains a strong editorial presence, as shown in his glosses and commentaries and his vain attempt to establish logical divisions for his materials. Clearly, Isabelo saw himself as more than just a collector or compiler. He aspired to be an archon, the editor and interpreter of the archive. This is shown in his later attempts to construct out of popular knowledge an ideology of the Katipunan revolution (when he wrote *Religion del "Katipunan"* in 1899) and a theology of a national church (when he produced doctrinal texts for the Philippine Independent Church).[20]

A further illustration was his proposal for a national educational system at the time that the Malolos Congress had began to create such a system by establishing *Universidad Literaria de Filipinas* in 1898. In contrast, Isabelo proposed in 1900 a decentralized "academy of the country," constituted out of a network of semi-autonomous schools, sociopolitical clubs, and discussion groups (*academias, centros, circulos, clubs, ateneos, casinos, katipunans*), many of which had mushroomed in the wake of the revolution. Naming his proposed academy *Aurora Nueva* ("New Dawn"), Isabelo proceeded to draw up its organizational structure, statutes, and a plan of studies that, he said, would perfect the Filipino through an education that stressed individual and social rights, patriotism and civic spirit, free inquiry, and the spread of useful, modern knowledge.[21]

His attempts at "institutionalizing" knowledge did not quite succeed. His interpretation of the revolution was ignored during his lifetime; his doctrinal texts were later revised, "cleaned up," or discarded by the church he helped establish; and his plan for a Philippine educational system went largely unread. Isabelo was better at initiating projects rather than building institutions. But his failure is not to be lamented. He was most stimulating when he gave free play to his populist and contrarian instincts. It was when he was most imperfect that he was most interesting.

Isabelo created a raw, inchoate archive. By placing at its center, folk-lore, "the people's knowledge" (instead of the elite's or the official), and by rendering it in a wonderfully imperfect form, he raised the specter of its subsequent institutionalization, when-taken over by organizations, learned institutions, and

government—the nation's memory is organized in terms of which kinds of knowledge are prioritized, what genres, modes, or styles of representation are privileged, how access to this knowledge is regulated, and who exercise authority as archons of this knowledge.

BY MAPPING THE domain of Filipino knowledge, Isabelo initiated the creation of a "national archive" apart from and in opposition to the imperial archive. By locating it in popular knowledge, he poses it against other forms of authority, other kinds of dominant knowledge, including the official, elite versions of what the "national" is. By representing this archive in a half-organized, open-ended form, he reveals (even if this may not have been his intention) the archive's basic instability, the necessary imperfection of a project caught in time between a past that is never fully accessible and complete, and a future that is yet to come.

These are lessons that are highly relevant to the formation of a national scholarship today.

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Notes

This is a revised version of a paper first published in the *Cordillera Review,* I:1 (2009, 105-120.

1. *El Comercio* (21 March 1885), n.p., datelined "Malabon, March 19, 1885." I have not found a copy of the March 15 letter cited by Isabelo (*El Comercio* does not have an issue on this day, a Sunday; it may have appeared in another paper). The March 21 letter in *El Comercio* is reprinted in Jaime C. de Veyra & Mariano Ponce, *Efemerides Filipinas* (Manila: Imprenta y Libreria de I.R. Morales, 1914), 278-83.

De los Reyes wrote about this appeal in *El Folk-Lore Filipino* (Manila: Tipografia de Chofre y Cia., 1889), I:12-18. The first volume of this work was translated

into English by Salud C. Dizon & Maria Elinora P. Imson and published by the University of the Philippines Press in 1994.

Two important essays have been written on this subject: William Henry Scott, "Isabelo de los Reyes, Father of Philippine Folklore," *Cracks in the Parchment Curtain and Other Essays in Philippine History* (Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1982), 245-65; Benedict Anderson, "The Rooster's Egg: Pioneering World Folklore in the Philippines," *Debating World Literature*, ed. C. Prendergast (London: Verso, 2004), 197-213; first published in *New Left Review*, 2 (March/April 2000). Also see Resil B. Mojares, *Brains of the Nation: Pedro Paterno, T.H. Pardo de Tavera, Isabelo de los Reyes, and the Production of Modern Knowledge* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2006).

2. On del Pan: *Enciclopedia Universal Ilustrada Europeo-Americana* (Bilbao: Espasa-Calpe, 1920), XLI:635-36. On Isabelo's journalism: Megan C. Thomas, "Isabelo de los Reyes and the Philippine Contemporaries of La Solidaridad," *Philippine Studies*, 54:3 (2006), 381-411.

3. *Catalogo de la Exposicion General de las Islas Filipinas* (Madrid: Est. Tipografico de Ricardo Fe, 1887), 584, 589. For examples of these articles, signed by Isabelo de los Reyes or "R," see *La Oceania Española* (13 January 1885), 3; (15 January 1885), 3; (17 February 1885), 2; (12 March 1885), 3; (19 March 1885), 3; (22 March 1885), 3.

4. Alejandro Guichot y Sierra, *Noticia Historica del Folklore. Origenes en todos los paises hasta 1890; desarrollo en España hasta 1921* (Sevilla: Hijos de Guillermo Alvarez, 1922), which has a brief account of Isabelo de los Reyes and folklore studies in the Philippines. I thank Michael Cullinane for a copy of the book.

Also see Sabas de Hoces Bonavilla, "Demofilo, ese desconocido," *Revista de Folklore*, I:7 (1981), 23-30; Salvador Rodriguez Becerra, "El Folklore, Ciencia del Saber Popular, Historia y Estado Actual en Andalucia," *Revista de Folklore*, 19:225 (1999), 75-80.

Antonio Machado y Alvarez was the father of the great Spanish poet Antonio Machado y Ruiz (1875-1939), whose views on literature and culture trace ideas similar to Isabelo's. See James Whiston, *Antonio Machado's Writings and the Spanish Civil War* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1996).

5. In this article, "Terminologia del Folk-Lore," Isabelo comments on whether folk-lore is a science or not, citing such British folklorists as George Laurence Gomme, Edwin Sidney Hartland, and Alfred Nutt. Clearly, he did not see

himself as a mere informant but a contributor to the "theory" of the field. The article is reprinted in de los Reyes, *Folk-Lore Filipino*, 1:20-27.

6. See Guichot, *Noticia Historica*, 165-166.

7. *Enciclopedia Universal*, XXI:450-51.

8. On the domestic situation in Spain: C.A.M. Hennesy, *The Federal Republic in Spain* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962), 53-56, 210-11; Enric Ucelay da Cal, "The Nationalisms of the Periphery: Culture and Politics in the Construction of National Identity," *Spanish Cultural Studies*, ed. H. Graham & J. Labanyi (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 32-39.

9. Christopher Schmidt-Nowara, *The Conquest of History: Spanish Colonialism and National Histories in the Nineteenth Century* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2006), 55; Antonio Feros, "'Spain and America: All is One': Historiography of the Conquest and Colonization of the Americas and National Mythology in Spain, c.1892-c.1992," *Interpreting Spanish Colonialism: Empires, Nations, and Legends*, ed. C. Schmidt-Nowara & J.M. Nieto-Phillips (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2005), 109-34.

10. Guichot, *Noticia Historica*, 166.

11. In historiography, this impulse is illustrated in Manila Spaniard Ricardo de Puga's lament on the lack of a modern *historia general* of Spain and her territories. Criticizing the fragmented, localistic character of existing *cronicas* and *historias*, he calls for integrating the histories of "different kingdoms" in the creation of "Spanish nationality" (*nacionalidad Española*). See R. de Puga, "Reflecsiones acerca de las publicaciones historicas relativas a Filipinas," *Ilustracion Filipina*, II:13 (1 July 1860), 150; II:6 (15 June 1859) - II:13 (1 July 1860).

12. Antonio de Morga, *Sucesos de las Islas Filipinas... anotada por Jose Rizal* (Paris: Libreria de Garnier Hermanos, 1890). Facs. ed. published in Manila in 1961; English ed., 1962.

13. Pedro A. Paterno, *La Antigua Civilizacion Tagalog* (Madrid: Tipografia de Manuel G. Hernandez, 1887), *Los Itas* (Madrid: Imprenta de los Sucesores de Cuesta, 1890), *El Barangay* (Madrid: Imprenta de los Sucesores de Cuesta, 1892), *La Familia Tagalog en la Historia Universal* (Madrid: Imprenta de los Sucesores de Cuesta, 1892), and *El Individuo Tagalog* (Madrid: Sucs. de Cuesta, 1893). The last three-mentioned works appeared as a single volume entitled *Los Tagalog* (Madrid: Sucesores de Cuesta, 1894).

14. Isabelo de los Reyes, *Las Islas Visayas en la epoca de la conquista* (Iloilo: Imprenta de "El Eco de Panay," 1887), *Historia de Filipinas: Prehistoria de Filipinas* (Manila: Imprenta de D. Esteban Balbas, 1889), *Historia de Ilocos* (Manila: Establecimiento Tipografica de "La Opinion," 1890), 2 vols.

15. Robert Darnton, "Philosophers Trim the Tree of Knowledge: The Epistemological Strategy of the Encyclopedie," *The Great Cat Massacre and Other Episodes in French Cultural History* (New York: Basic Books, 1999), 191-213.

16. See Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, trans. E. Prenowitz (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 4n. Also Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*, trans. A.M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon, 1972), 126-31; Sandhya Shetty & Elizabeth Jane Bellamy, "Postcolonialism's Archive Fever," *Diacritics*, 30:1 (2000), 25-48.

17. Juan Goytisolo, *State of Siege*, trans. H. Lane (London: Serpent's Tail, 2003), 94, 97, 116.

18. See, for instance, Catherine Gallagher, "Counterhistory and the Anecdote," *Practicing New Historicism*, ed. C. Gallagher & S. Greenblatt (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 49-74.

19. Jorge Luis Borges, "The Book of Sand," *The Book of Sand and Shakespeare's Memory*, trans. A. Hurley (London: Penguin Books, 1998), 89-93.

20. There was in the Spanish folklore movement a basic contradiction not quite resolved in the stress on "the people" and the bourgeois intellectualist bias for systematization and modernization, a contradiction to be found in Isabelo as well. See Mojares, *Brains of the Nation*, 313-31; Ignacio R. Mena-Cabezas, "Recepcion y Apropriacion del Folklore en un Contexto Local: Cipriana Alvarez Duran en Llerena (Badajoz)," *Revista de Folklore*, 23:271 (2003), 6-15.

21. Isabelo de los Reyes, *Filipinas. Independencia y Revolucion* (Madrid: Imp. y Lit. de Jose Corrales, 1900), 118-36.

Humor and Satire in Isabelo de los Reyes's El Diablo en Filipinas

Anna Melinda Testa – De Ocampo

This paper is a preliminary study on humor and satire in Isabelo de los Reyes's text, *Ang Diablo sa Filipinas ayon sa nasasabi sa mga casulatan luma sa Kastila* (The Devil in the Philippines according to Ancient Spanish Documents), published in 1886 as a serialized text in La Oceania Española (De los Reyes, 1886/2014). In Isabelo De los Reyes's efforts to critique the excesses of Spanish rule, he used satire to elicit awareness and laughter, and at the same time, contribute to the creation of an imagined community. The search for the magical librito in a dead man's library is the beginning of a journey of the book as a material object and the exploration of other Spanish historical texts in the library. Unlike Marcelo H. del Pilar's satirical technique of rewriting the Spanish original material in his critique of the excesses of the friars, De los Reyes quotes verbatim (at times in an edited form) from Spanish historical writings. Sharing jokes and laughter towards the Spaniards creates a shared community, increases one's awareness of abuse, and elicits revolutionary action.

Keywords: *satire, humor, el diablo, librito, De los Reyes, Gaspar de San Augustin*

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1. Introduction

Laughter, a facet of our daily lives, keeps us sane as Filipinos, especially while living in the Philippines. It seems that even in a time of natural disaster or personal stress, the Filipino is unique because we still find time to make jokes, just to make ourselves laugh. Laughter saves us, in the worst and best of times. Strangely, it is not a topic that has been extensively studied in Philippine literature or history.

In her study of humor in Filipino popular forms like the *komiks*, popular theatre, and cinema, Maria Rhodora Ancheta (2017, p. xxiii) contends that Filipino humor is "largely incongruity-based, functioning as an apprehension of abnormality, in the subjects as well as the milieu in which we find them, as departure from normalcy, and as valorization of flaw in order to foreground or highlight humor as a subversive response to an oppressive dominant culture." Shared laughter is elicited from the viewer or reader of a comic strip, political joke, or play on words. An inappropriate act in a particular situation, or an unexpected comment can elicit shared laughter. As one of the earliest studies on humor, Mikhail Bakhtin's (1984) work, *Rabelais and His World* argues that during the time of a carnival, laughter can be subversive, as it overturns hierarchy, rules, and overhauls proper decorum.

Ancheta (2017, p. xxvi) argues that humor in popular texts can be "a potent conduit of the deeper tensions within Philippine society, whose comic treatment of national virtues, beliefs, symbols, and sufferings, both homogenize, by virtue of the popular and fracture, by way of humor's liberative impulses, Filipino identities." A shared laughter in a group creates a community of shared codes, as a joke that needs to be explained loses its humor. Laughter can release political tension, and at the same time, subvert the existing power situation.

This paper is a preliminary study of humor and satire in Isabelo De los Reyes's text, *Ang Diablo sa Filipinas ayon sa nasasabi sa mga casulatan luma sa Kastila* (The Devil in the Philippines according to Ancient Spanish Documents), published in 1886 as a serialized text in *La Oceania Española* (De los Reyes, 1886/2014, p. 9). I argue that in Isabelo De los Reyes's efforts to critique the excesses of Spanish rule, he used satire to elicit awareness and laughter, and at the same time, contribute to the creation of an imagined community. Sharing jokes and laughter towards the Spaniards creates a shared community, increases one's awareness of abuse, and elicits revolutionary action. This paper examines three questions:

1. How does the librito as an object exemplify the colonial uncanny?

2. How does Isabelo De los Reyes use counter-reading as a satirical device?

3. How can humor and satire facilitate the creation of an imagined community to move Filipino natives to act against the excesses of the Spanish colonizer?

The paper will cover the following sections: Satire and its Elements; Isabelo de los Reyes and *El Diablo*; The Librito as Text; Counter-reading as Satire, and Laughter in an Imagined Community. As the readers of *El Diablo* laugh together, satire does not end there, since there is always the hope that the reader will act to change the present order that is being critiqued by the writer.

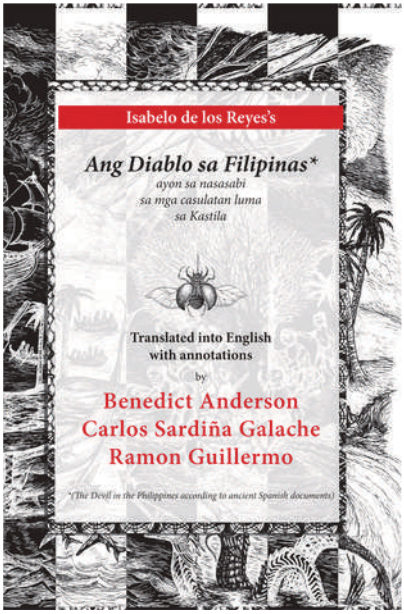

FIG 1. *Book cover, Ang Diablo sa Filipinas ayon sa nasasabi sa mga casulatan luma sa Kastila, translated into English with annotations by Benedict Anderson, Carlos Sardiña Galache and Ramon Guillermo, Manila, Anvil Publishing, Inc., 2014. Photo from https://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/ang-diablo-sa-filipinas-benedict-anderson/1127100324*

2. Satire and its Elements

Satire is "the literary art of diminishing or derogating a subject by making it ridiculous and evoking toward it attitudes of amusement, contempt, scorn, or indignation" (Abrams, 1999, p. 275). Parody is "one of the most calculated and analytic literary techniques: It searches out by means of subversive mimicry any weakness, pretensions, or lack of self-awareness in the original" (Routledge Dictionary, 2006, pp.166-167). There is the intent to call attention to another work, possibly to distort, or exaggerate a section, and to elicit laughter.

Ruben Quintero (2007, p. 1) argues that Juvenal, a Roman writer, and other satirists, write "in winters of discontent," as he describes the "decadence and corruption he sees all around him." The intent of the satirist is not merely to call attention to the situation, but in drawing awareness… he "wishes to arouse [the reader's] energy to action, not purge it in vicarious experience" (Paulson, cited in Quintero, 2007, p. 3). While some satirists would write against an ethical standard, an awareness of a wrongful situation is intended to provoke/move the reader to action.

Satirical writing in the Philippines during the Spanish colonial period would include Jose Rizal's novels and Marcelo H. Del Pilar's satirical works. As educated professionals, it is possible that Isabelo de los Reyes and other writers like Jose Rizal and Marcelo del Pilar were influenced by the Spanish novels, *Lazarillo de Tormes* (1554) and *Don Quijote de la Mancha* (1605/1615). As famous Spanish literary texts, the Lazarillo text presents the adventures of a poor boy trying to survive but who is not bound by societal norms. A significant shift from portraying/casting the aristocracy as lead characters in the text, the Lazarillo text critiques the situation of the poor and the hypocrisy of those more privileged who are outraged at Lazarillo's behavior. This was a significant shift from the traditional choice of lead characters in a novel and a critique of existing power relations in society. Cervantes parodies the ideal knight and virtues of chivalry and heroism prevalent in European literature. The narrative style in both texts critique power and hypocrisy in society.

Satiric literary elements could include "parody, humor, irony, and dialogue." Alberta Gatti argues that in Cervantes's critique of the ideals of chivalry in *Don Quijote*, he used the "ironic voice" of the narrator and "dialogue is made a constitutive part of the action and used… as an exploration of the truth, a process not requiring a definite conclusion" (Gatti, 2007, p. 90). In the case of Jose Rizal using satire to raise political awareness of the abuses of the Spanish friars and

government, C.W. Watson (1998) contends that Rizal used the practice of *costumbrismo*, which entailed detailed descriptions of people, customs, and events. This was coupled with two other practices, one of which was "of writing about characters or types of people to whom one ascribes in exaggerated caricature humorous and ridiculous patterns of behavior (p.10, seen in the representation of Doña Victorina and others). Another technique was "the depiction of typical scenes or situations which take on a representative status as standing for the general unhealthy condition of existing social relations" (Watson, 1998, p.10). Historian Vicente Rafael (1988, pp. 1-3) uses the scene of Fr. Damaso's sermon and disjuncture of native understanding of Fr. Damaso's vitriolic insults in his opening chapter of *Contracting Colonialism*. The classroom scene in the *El Filibusterismo* depicts the reality of a student being humiliated in a class, and at the same time, critiques this situation (Watson, 1998, pp. 10 – 11). Jocelyn Pinzon (2015, p. 426) describes that in Philippine literature, satire uses other "rhetorical devices such as "parody, burlesque, and irony."

Michele Hannoosh (1989, p. 113) writes that "a major aspect of parody to emerge from recent theoretical consideration of the genre is its essential reflexivity, its capacity to reflect critically back upon itself, not merely upon its target." The reference to an earlier text, and the writing and reading of the second text against it, draws the reader to critique the first text via the second. There would be two elements at play here: (1) "reflexivity is inherent in the definition of parody as a comical retelling and transformation of another text," and (2) "it has more radical implications than mere self-reference: the parody actually rebounds upon itself, calling itself into question as it does the parodied work, and suggesting its own potential as a model or target, a work to be rewritten, transformed, even parodied in its turn" (Hannoosh, 1989, pp. 113-114). As De los Reyes cites the writings of the Spanish chroniclers and historians verbatim or in an edited format, the original text is re-presented in a hilarious and critical manner. At the same time, even the text *El Diablo* opens itself to being parodied or retold.

Laughter is elicited from the contemporary reader as the context of the original text changes. De los Reyes uses this technique as he quotes sections from the works of several Spanish chroniclers, but in a different context, the dialogue between Gatmaitan and the "I," to critique and elicit laughter. The continuing discussion of supposed truths about Gatmaitan's beliefs based on his own personal experience, his grandmother's stories, and the written records, indirectly critique the Spanish texts. This is similar to the approach of Spanish critic Luis Galván (2021, p. 33), who describes that "parody and satire are not separate

classes of texts… The notion of parody points, above all, to a high degree of similarity of a text and its model, whatever the function of that similarity may be. Satire, for its part, is best defined in rhetorical terms, as a poetical or in general literary configuration...which censures wicked or shameful actions or characters."

The humor in Isabelo de los Reyes's *Ang Diablo sa Filipinas ayon sa nasasabi sa mga casulatan luma sa Kastila* (The Devil in the Philippines according to Ancient Spanish Documents, 1886) critiques historical writing that presented a biased view of the Filipino natives in the Spanish colonial period. De los Reyes unpacks the superstitions supposedly collected and written by the Spanish chroniclers, and shows that the biases come from the perspective of the chroniclers themselves, who reinterpreted and rewrote local beliefs in accordance with their own Spanish beliefs. Calling the local anitos, diwatas, and places or objects of worship as demons or demon inhabited, Anderson jests that "Satan arrived with the colonial conquest" (in De los Reyes, 1886/2014, p. 9).

By decontextualizing the chronicles and *historias* and reading the texts horizontally - on a level plain with Spanish and Filipino native beliefs - De los Reyes critiques the ridiculousness of Spanish writing on supposedly Indio superstitions and beliefs. It is a brilliant rewriting and critique of the Spanish chronicles and historias, some of which are cited verbatim but carefully edited (because of the length of the text and slant De los Reyes intends to create). Aside from the *Noli me Tangere* and *El Filibusterismo*, other literary texts using satire to critique Spanish excesses and representations include *Fray Botod* (1874) by Graciano Lopez Jaena and Marcelo H. Del Pilar's *Dasalan at Tocsohan* (1888). Jaena's text is a brutal and honest depiction of the excesses of the Spanish friars, while Del Pilar appropriates the *Doctrina Cristiana* (1593), the earliest published book here in the Philippines, and rewrites the prayers and religious teachings to show the abuses of the clergy. He uses the form of the prayers like the Our Father, Hail Mary, and the Ten Commandments, but rewrites and changes the words to critique the religious orders and their hypocrisy. It could also be considered a "sacred parody," as studied by Bakhtin (1984, p. 14). Mojares believes that Del Pilar "has the makings of a fine satirist: purposive irreverence, a feel for the public nerve, a vigorous language, a sense of tradition in his bones. Incomplete though his achievement is, Del Pilar remains a light in Philippine literary tradition" (Mojares, 1983/2020, p. 144). The irony is that Del Pilar uses Catholic prayers and teachings to critique the hypocritical nature of the Spaniards and missionaries. Mojares argues that "in the nineteenth century Del Pilar turned the missionary tactics against the friars – to use old forms to propagate new attitudes.

The use of duplo verse as a mold for subversive subject matter allowed Del Pilar to create political poetry … the poet did not need to start from scratch – he simply took over and renovated what was already available" (Lumbera, cited in Mojares, 1983/2020, p. 143). The historian Teodoro Agoncillo argues that Del Pilar works such as *Dasalan at Tocsohan, Dupluhan, Kadakilaan ng Dios, Caiingat Cayo, Pasiong Dapat Ipag-alab nang Puso ng Taong Babasa*, and *Sagot nang España sa Hibik nang Filipinas* merit further study (1944, p. 15). Del Pilar's parody of the Catholic prayers and teachings in the *Doctrina Christiana* (1593) like the *Ama Namin* (Our Father; entitled Amain Namin) was a "satirical parody the like of which has never been seen before and since" (Agoncillo, 1944, pp. 15-16). Del Pilar's creativity and imagination in these texts need further study.

The source of laughter in the satirical text is another area to consider. For M. P. Mulder (2002), conventional humour theories include: Superiority theory, Relief theory, and Incongruity theory. The "Superiority theory" assumes that as "we laugh about the misfortune of others, it reflects our own superiority" (Mulder & Nijholt, 2002, p. 3). "Relief theory" would seem to be more of a theory of laughter, as laughter "releases tension and psychic energy." It assumes that "energy continuously builds up within the human body" and laughter releases it. The last, "incongruity theory" is "the sudden perception of the incongruity between a concept and the real objects, which have been thought through it in some relation, and the laugh itself is just an expression of this incongruity" (Mulder & Nijholt, 2002, p. 4). The laughter that is elicited in *El Diablo* would seem to be more of incongruity theory since the "concept" of the veracity of the chronicles become incongruous when cited out of context. The idea of superstitious beliefs refers not to that of the Filipino native (as the chronicle supposedly records), but rather to the Spanish writer's own superstitions. Combined with the elements of dialogue, appropriation of Spanish writing verbatim (but in a different context), and the incongruity of the cited texts, all these factors contribute to the laughter elicited by *El Diablo*.

3. Isabelo de los Reyes and *El Diablo*

Resil Mojares (2006, p. 255) describes Isabelo de los Reyes as "the country's most unorthodox intellectual." He was a lawyer and a journalist, wrote articles on folklore, critiques of the Spanish rule in the Philippines, and on the Katipunan. He wrote in Ilocano and Spanish, and was imprisoned in Montjuich castle, where he met Ramon Sempau (who later translated the *Noli*

me Tangere into French) and other anarchists. He established the "fortnightly Spanish-Iloko newspaper *El Ilocano* (1889 – 1896)" and "was the only indio ever licensed to own and operate a paper in the colony" (Mojares, 2006, p. 259). With Gregorio Aglipay, they established the Iglesia Filipina Independiente and the Partido Republicano (Mojares, 2006, p. 277). In 1922, he became a member of the Senate, representing the district "Ilocos Sur, Ilocos Norte, Cagayan, Isabela, Abra, and Batanes" (Mojares, 2006, p. 286). He married three times, and had twenty-seven children (Mojares, 2006, pp. 255-258).

He was educated in Manila, and was not an *ilustrado* like Rizal, but *"an indio and provinciano* working in the race conscious, socially conservative, and politically repressive Manila" (Mojares, 2007, p. 260). Among his many publications, he wrote *El Folk-Lore Filipino* (1889 – 1890), *Historia de Ilocos* (1890), *La Religion del Katipunan* (1899), and *Memoria sobre la revolución filipina* (1899). His book *El Diablo en Filipinas* was first published in 1886, as a series in *La Oceania Española* (De los Reyes, 1886/2014, pp. 9, 11).

William Henry Scott sees the *El Diablo* as a "hilarious piece in which a pious *provinciano* defends his belief in ghosts and evil spirits by quoting examples of Spanish friars who saw and heard apparitions of the Devil, citing volume, chapter, and page numbers from their Orders' (sic) official chronicles as evidence – from which Isabelo wickedly concludes that it must have been the friars who introduced the Devil into the archipelago" (Scott, 1982, pp. 255-256). *El Diablo*, written and published in Spanish and Tagalog, is an interesting sample of Philippine literature, since it made the text more accessible to the Filipino native reader at the time. It was published in a bilingual version (1889) in the newspaper, *La España Oriental* (De los Reyes, 1886/2014, p. 11). The text is a dialogue between "I" and Gatmaitan, as they visit the library of the deceased *directorcillo* (the secretary of the *gobernadorcillo*). Set as a conversation between friends whispering in a library, Gatmaitan justifies his beliefs in spirits, anitos, and demons by citing Spanish sources. Similar to Don Quixote, De los Reyes uses the dialogue format as the narrative style, and in the course of the conversation between the narrator and Gatmaitan, different perspectives are offered on the texts cited, or the beliefs discussed, debated, and debunked.

As Filipino natives reading Spanish sources, the Spanish writers are questioned and ridiculed indirectly. Filipino superstitions and beliefs are supposedly recorded objectively, but Spanish bias comes in. The Catholic faith

has the power ostensibly to heal the sick, protect a person against all evil elements, or expel demons from the natural environment. It justifies the belief in the (one true) Catholic faith. As the sources are re-read in an incongruous context, it elicits laughter in the reader, and at the same critiques the writings and reasons for Spanish rule. The implied hierarchy of Spanish belief and the Catholic faith is called into question as Gatmaitan cites Spanish sources again and again to justify his beliefs and the narrator, "I" ridicules and challenges Gatmaitan's beliefs with use of reason or alternative readings of the situation as a dream, nightmare, or illusion. Mojares (2006, p. 354) argues that De los Reyes "subverts the pretensions to intellectual and moral superiority of the Friars by citing not only analogues between local and European superstitions here, but in his style of radical mischief, posing that some of the local 'barbaric' beliefs (even the Devil himself) may have been invented by the Spaniards themselves." Megan C. Thomas (2012, pp. 115 – 116) agrees with this reading, that for De los Reyes, "the most absurd beliefs were in fashion in the Iberian peninsula, during the first days of Spanish domination," adding that his "long literary sketch, titled, *The Devil*… showed through its readings of early friar accounts that the friars were superstitious and that they were likely the source of many superstitions in the Philippines."

4. The Librito as Text

The book opens with the scene where the narrator "I" and Gatmaitan are interested to see the dead man's library, as Gatmaitan hopes to acquire "a miraculous little book titled *De La Compañía* [of the Company] which conferred on him all the wisdom of Solomon" (*libritong mababalaghin na ang tauag ay sa Compañia, siyang nagbibigay dunong sa caniya huad cay Salomon*) (De los Reyes, 2014, pp. 21-23). Scott believes that this "belief was undoubtedly added to purely Ilocano beliefs by the Spaniards: it is a common belief that the Jesuits possess little miraculous books" (Scott, 1982, pp. 254 – 255; see also in the footnote no. 4 in De los Reyes, 1889/1994, p. 37). But Anderson and Guillermo believe that the "little book" was a "magic tool of local sprites (*sangcabui*)" and not just a Jesuit magical book (see footnote no. 4, De los Reyes, 1886/2014, p. 23). The curious element here is the view of the book as a "talisman" or having the power of mobility that is granted to the owner of the book. The meaning of the book as an object or thing becomes complex as Bill Brown argues that "the thing seems to name the object just as it is even as

it names some thing else" (sic) (Brown, 2001, p. 5). The book may acquire a different meaning aside from its contents, but more so as an object with power. While book and newspaper publishing were already prevalent here in the 19th century, the slippage of meaning as a talisman is a promising area of study as it involves language and the physical character of the book.

It should be interesting to see if any other books with other magical qualities are included in Philippine folklore and the reception of the book as a material object in Philippine history and culture. Perhaps the native perception of the Catholic religious practices that included the act of prayer, administration of sacraments (both while reading from the Holy Book or missal), the procession of the Book/Gospels (carrying the physical object) in the Catholic mass, or raising it above the head of the celebrant during a ceremony imbued the book as a material object with special qualities. The librito as an object or thing is a curious element in the text, because it does not cover the expected areas of the study of the writing, publication, distribution, and reception of a book. Patricia May B. Jurilla (2003, p. 534) examines the history of the book as a "physical object, in the materials and processes used in the manufacture of texts." In a more recent study, Jurilla argues that "the survival of the incunabula of the Philippines can offer much information not only on the publication, manufacture, distribution, and reception of early Philippine imprints… but also on Spanish colonial rule…; Christian missions in Asia during the Counter-Reformation; global trade and travel since the early modern period; and Philippine historiography in general" (Jurilla, 2023, p. 422).

The act of reading and writing in the native context merits further study. Fenella Cannell describes the transactional or reward aspect of reading the Pasyon: "Many, if not all, however, read the *Pasion* in the expectation of healing from sickness for themselves and others, which would be granted by a contract not with a universal Christ, but with a very particular one, the local cult figure of the Amang Hinulid, or "dead Christ" (Cannell, 2006, p. 146). Reading a religious text like the Pasyon could "provide them with shamanistic gifts of healing power" (Cannell, 2006, p. 146). Cannell describes the act of natives taking notes of prayers, novenas, and incantations for protection. "The more prayer spells one has, the more likely one is also to have mastery of a range of other broadly shamanic powers. The greatest adepts collected their many prayer spells together into a volume known as a 'little book' or *librito*" (Cannell, 2006, p. 148). Cannell's study of a Bicolano librito shows the "shamanic repertoire" that covers protection against "snakes, witchcraft, lightning … to become invisible, … to protect against malign and predatory spirits." It also included an "oracion to

travel swiftly by land and water" (Cannell, 2006, pp. 150-151). While the librito in *El Diablo* is a book of spells given by the sangkabagi to their friends, the magical properties in possessing or uttering the prayer spells contained within empowered whoever possessed it.

Language is also a crucial element, since the book is entitled in Spanish, "de la Compañía". Vicente Rafael analyzes the use of Castilian, or the "Colonial Uncanny" in translation and evangelization. Rafael argues that "Filipino nationalism thus did not originate with the discovery of an indigenous identity and his/her subsequent assertion of an essential difference from the colonizer. Rather, its genesis lies in the transmission of messages across social and linguistic borders among all sorts of people whose identities and identifications were far from settled" (Rafael, 2005, p. 5). The colonial uncanny meant that the local language was assimilated into Spanish religious teachings. Rafael describes the "codification of native languages" with the introduction of the Roman alphabet, "using Latin categories to reconstruct native grammars; and the Castilian definitions in constructing dictionaries of the vernaculars." The untranslatability of certain Spanish and Latin words such as "Dios, Espiritu Santo, Virgen" were to keep the "purity of sacred concepts" (Rafael, 2005, p. 2). Since the native language was used by missionaries for Catholic teaching, its appropriation and linkage to Castilian endowed it with "magical" powers:

> Through the translation of God's Work, natives came to see in Spanish missionaries a foreign presence speaking their 'own', that is, the natives,' language. This appearance – as sudden as it was unmotivated from the native's point of view – of the foreign in the familiar and its reverse, the familiar in the foreign, roused native interests and anxieties … Conversion ...was thus a matter of responding to this startling because novel emergence of alien messages from alien speakers from within one's own speech. It was to identify with this uncanny – we might say magical – occurrence and to submit to its attractions which included scenes to an unseen yet omnipresent source of all power (Rafael, 2005, pp. 2-3).

While it would have been interesting if De los Reyes had included more details of the librito in the text, Fennell's study on the Bicol libritos shows that the languages and signs used included Bikol, Pangasinan, Latin, and Castilian. Letters, acronyms, and drawings were used in the oracion or spells in the text, together with instructions like in Catholic prayer books, "Say 3 Pasternosters: Say a credo" (Fennell, 2006, pp. 153-157).

In *El Diablo*, the librito is described as an anting-anting, and the library of the directorcillo is locked in order to secure it, but the book still disappears behind locked doors. "But the first thing my friend Gatmaitan hunted for was the Little Book, because the poor fellow, believing in ancient legends, was trying to inherit, illegally, this anting-anting (amulet)" (*Ngunit, ang unang hinanap ng caibigan cong si Gatmaitan ay ang librito, yayamang and caniyang nais, ay mapasacaniya di man carampatan, ang librito na anting-anting*) (De los Reyes, 1886/2014, p. 22-23). The source of the librito is indefinite, although Guillermo and Anderson believe it is a gift from a native spirit to a human being (see footnote no. 4, De los Reyes, 1886/2014, p. 23).

De los Reyes describes the *katatao-an* or *sangkabagí* in *El Folk-Lore Filipino*:

> […] appear to their chosen in the middle of the night in the window or through holes. They wake their victims with a hardly audible voice, and have them ride on a flying barañgay or airship like those of the katatao-an, flying in space at one o'clock in the morning and going all around the world in half an hour. According to the Ilocano common folk, the sangkabagi approach many people; but some refuse their friendship because these anitos forbid their friends to say the rosary, hear mass, make the sign of the cross, or fulfill their religious obligations as Christians, because the sangkabagi, by their own admission, cannot go near people who practice acts of piety.
>
> The sangkabagi inflicts evil on those who scorn and reject them. They are dragged to the floor when they are asleep and taken to other places. Their livers are snatched and the space filled with grass to make them sick. The sangkabagi have very sharp eyes and they can read the thoughts of men through their faces … *On the other hand, they give those whom they like a book, called libro de la compañia*, and this book can take them in no time to wherever they want to go no matter how far. All they have to do is indicate the place. It is said that an old native of Sarrat, Ilocos Norte was going from his town to Laoag, not very far away, to do some shopping and returned after four minutes with the things he had bought. He did this everyday, morning, noon, and night. According to the people, the sangkabagi teach their friends to make watches and give them roots to cure any sickness by rubbing the roots to the affected body (De los Reyes, 1889/1994, pp. 35-37, emphasis mine).

While the book's title is in Spanish, the librito in De los Reyes's *El Folk-Lore Filipino* is a gift from a native spirit to a human native, giving the new owner the power of mobility. The behavior of the sangkabagi also indicates the irreconcilability of the old beliefs and the new faith. Since the new faith does not allow worship of older gods or spirits, when someone is converted and baptized, the relationship with the older spirits is cut off. *El Diablo* illustrates the dynamics of the relationship between the old spirits and the new Catholic God. Powers and gifts from the old spirits cannot be accepted or used under the new faith. The old *anitos* can punish the Filipino native who does not believe in the power of the spirits. Baptism was also presented as "the best medicine against a demon" (De los Reyes, 1886/2014, p. 69) and inscribing a cross on a tree possibly "inhabited by Divatas; deities of the forests and mountains, whom they venerated in ancient times," made the spirits leave (De los Reyes, 1886/2014, p. 59). The friendship between the native spirit and the Filipino native requires that the native does not practice the new beliefs, Catholic teachings or participate in its rituals.

The curious element of oracles foretelling the arrival of the Spaniards and resulting displacement of the old beliefs was also included in the conversation with Gatmaitan. Gatmaitan gives the example of Apolaqui (the Pangasinan god of war) who tells the Filipino natives that he is leaving because, "I weep to see the completion of what I expected for so many years; namely that you would welcome some foreigners with white teeth and hooded heads, who would implant amidst your houses crossed poles (crosses) to torment me all the more. I am leaving you to seek people who will follow me, for you have abandoned me, your ancient lord, for foreigners (De los Reyes, 1886/2014, p. 29). The character "I' cites the *Conquistas de las Islas Filipinas* by Friar Gaspar de San Augustin, in a *maganito* ceremony three years before the arrival of Legazpi, where the *demon* says "our ancient friendship has come to an end because of the arrival of the fair-headed men with white skins, with great force and valour" (De los Reyes, 1886/2014, p, 31). The effect of reading the so-called oracles would be twofold: read from the perspective of the Spanish chroniclers, their future arrival and the conversion of the natives to the new faith was inevitable because even the old gods had foreseen it and accepted it; while read from the Filipino native perspective, the acceptance of the new faith and displacement of the old beliefs should be questioned, and the reevaluation of the new religion brought by Spanish colonization. Perhaps a revival of the old beliefs was necessary. Could the relationship with the older spirits still prevail or exist alongside the new faith that demanded exclusivity? Can the old beliefs be revived?

De Los Reyes raises this issue in *The Religion of the Katipunan, or the old beliefs*

of the Filipinos, published in 1899:

> the philosopher of the Katipunan should study this thoroughly in order to bring back this religious system back to its pristine purity, by expurgating its historical inaccuracies and superstitious because we should not forget that all kinds of religious superstitions have been introduced at some time or another, mostly by some abusive and deceitful ministers, who have or tried to cheat the believers, like for instance, the friars; they were forced to invent thousands of miracles in order to confirm their idolatrous doctrines (De los Reyes, 1899/2009, p. 26).

With the librito element in the text, we see a hybrid element, as the book is titled in Spanish, but possibly its content is in the vernacular, or a combination of signs and different languages, as Fenell has studied in the Bicolano libritos. We see Rafael's "colonial uncanny," imbuing the librito with its power and elusiveness. But even if the library was locked up to secure the directorcillo's library, the librito manages to escape Gatmaitan and the narrator.

5. Counter-reading as Satire

The humor in Isabelo de los Reyes's *Ang Diablo* critiques historical writing that presented a biased view of the Filipino natives in the Spanish colonial period. De los Reyes unpacks the superstitions supposedly collected and written up by the Spanish chroniclers and shows that their bias and misread meanings come from the perspectives of the chroniclers themselves. Presumably, demons abound in the Philippines and only the one true faith and Catholic God can save the Filipino natives.

Since the librito cannot be found, Gatmaitan and the narrator start to read sections from other books in the dead man's library. These Spanish chroniclers would include: Diego Aduarte, a Dominican; Francisco Colin, a Jesuit; Gaspar de San Augustin, an Augustinian, and Juan Francisco de San Antonio, a Franciscan. Starting with Fr. San Antonio's *Cronicas de la Apostolica Provincia de S, Gregorio de Religioso descalzos de N.S.P. San Francisco en las Islas Philipinas, China, Japon, etc.* (1738), Gatmaitan reads the section describing "two ferocious black demons" with an indio who was damned for imposing a tax on "civet (animal perfume)". After the damned indio gives his shroud (that protected him), he is taken by the two black demons and disappears (De los Reyes, 2014, pp. 25-27). While the charges are ridiculous, it shows that small acts can damn one

immediately with no recourse. In the Aduarte text, *Historia* (1640), the "witches" made another native woman sick, avenging her refusal to give one of the witches a piece of strawberry fruit that the witch supposedly wanted. The old women "with the help of the Devil (*El Diablo*), made themselves owners of the haciendas, food, and personages among all the Indios" (De los Reyes, 2014, pp. 27-29). There are also contradictions cited from the Fr. Aduarte text, wherein a native man was held by five demons who left when he was baptized. But in the same account, "a sick Chinese man" confined in a hospital, must face demons who "threatened to carry him off because he refused to be baptized" (De los Reyes, 2014, p. 35).

For De los Reyes, while quoting verbatim or in an edited form from the Spanish texts, the change of context and incongruity of the situation elicits laughter from the readers of *El Diablo*. The beliefs of the Filipino natives as written by the Spanish writers seem ridiculous in the conversational exchange between the narrator "I" and Gatmaitan. In presenting the humor and unbelievable superstitions, De los Reyes questions the veracity of the writing of the Spanish chronicles and shows that their own biases and superstitions intrude into the writing. De los Reyes's satirical approach to the Spanish shows the ridiculousness of the superstitions and interpretations of events as supernatural, like the souls knocking on the floor, or demons throwing rocks on the roof. Natural phenomena are read as the handiwork of the demons such as the incident of a large number of birds on a tree, as the natives supposedly believed that "the tree was inhabited by Divatas, deities of the forests and mountains, whom they venerated from ancient times." When the sign of the cross was affixed on the tree trunk, the birds "departed forever" (De los Reyes, 2014, pp. 57-59).

Perhaps even a minor eruption of Taal volcano is interpreted as demons leaving the area where Fr. Augustin celebrated mass. Gaspar de San Agustin's original text (cited in *El Diablo*) reads (boldfaced text indicates the words used in *El Diablo*):

> There is a church or hermitage two leagues from Taal containing a miraculous image of Our Lady called Caysasay to which all the natives of the area are greatly devoted. God worked many and wondrous miracles through this image, with which we will deal at the proper time. However, I will narrate one prodigious event that Divine Majesty displayed in the town of Taal through Fray Agustin de Albuquerque, one of His first ministers, who would go many times to teach the natives, even before the convent was built, in the

same way he would go to other neighboring towns.

In the Bombong lagoon, there is a small islet which had a volcano that would sometimes spew numerous large burning rocks, destroying many seedbeds of cotton, sweet potato, and other plants that the Taal natives had planted around the base of the volcano. **It was foretold that whenever three people would reach (three fellow travelers arrived there)** the island, **one would stay and die there without knowing the cause of his death (or the kind of sickness he suffered). (When) Fray Augustin de Albuquerque was (told about all this)** informed of this. After asking God in a very lengthy prayer to have pity on the natives of those towns and remove such fatal luck from them, **he went to the island (islet to say Mass …)** He exorcised and blessed it with the ordinary benedictions of the church, then held a very devout procession. He said Mass full of humility and confidence in God. At the moment he elevated the Sacred Host of that bloodless sacrifice, **(But just as he was raising the Holy Host, everyone there heard horrifying roars,)** a horrendous din was heard **(accompanied by screams, cries, and powerful lamentations. The tip of the volcano caved in on itself (sank into the crater… Later on …)** leaving it with two openings: one of sulphur and the other of green water that is continuously boiling. At present, the latter is often visited by deer that go to the beds of saltpeter around the lake formed by the volcano. The mouth that faces the town of Lipa is about one-fourth of a league in width. After some time, the volcano began smoldering so much at the other mouth, which is smaller, that the natives feared a new disaster. They went to **(when a Mass was said in the same place by) Fray Bartolome de Alcantara** who was the minister of the town. He did a similar procession and once more said Mass. From then on, the volcano never again spewed fire or smoke, although **tremulous voices, cries, and some thunder was heard (groans, fearful voices, and thunderclaps could be heard).** Fray Tomas de Abreu, minister of Taal, had a cross carried to the tip of the volcano borne by more than four hundred men, since it was made of very heavy wood called anivión. After setting it up, not only has the volcano never harmed anyone, but the islet returned to its original fecundity (San Agustin, 1698/1998, pp. 603 – 605; De los Reyes, 1886/2014, pp. 77-79).

In *El Diablo*, Gatmaitan responds that the scene described above was "very horrifying" and narrates another incident. But in comparing San Agustin's text and the edited portion used by De los Reyes (boldfaced section), we find that the main idea represented (and questioned) are the same. The mass and prayers by Fr. Augustin expelled the demons in the Taal volcano. The cross installed in the area keeps the "voices" quiet. Gatmaitan compares this scene in Taal as "not so less than what appears in Aduarte's account where a demon appears as a "deformed and monstrous dog." The demon transforms into the figure of Christ, but when Fr. Luis makes the sign of the Cross, the demon transformed into a "fierce, black, and terrifying cat" (De los Reyes, 1886/2014, p. 79).

The narrator, or I, uses reason to debunk the beliefs of Gatmaitan, as in the case of a sick man who saw demons who wanted to take him, or another man being asked by demons why he wanted to convert to Christianity when it was too late. Three Dominican priests manage to get rid of the demon (De los Reyes, 1886/2014, pp. 59-63). The narrator argues that these are just nightmares or "delirium." Baptism is seen as "the best medicine against a demon" (De los Reyes, 1886/2014, p. 69).

Even the sound of rats running in the room are read as the souls of Purgatory knocking and asking for prayers from believers here. *El Diablo* ends with Gatmaitan knocking his head on the door in his haste to leave the room. He heard the noise of a rat in the room, but thought it was the soul of the deceased directorcillo asking for prayers. The "I" character trips on Gatmaitan and their two heads are almost knocked together.

6. Laughter in an Imagined Community

For Smita Lahiri (2007, p. 243), the "last half century of the Spanish rule in the Philippines was an efflorescence in colonial print culture." There was a huge variety of texts: "bureaucratic reports, political polemics, satirical sketches, poetry, *costumbrista* novels, propaganda tracts, devotional works, and sundry forms of ephemera" (Lahiri, 2007, p. 244). While there have been extensive studies on ilustrado and other nationalist writing, the "colonial public sphere as a nexus of discursive and institutional practice" still needs to be studied fully (Lahiri, 2007, p. 243).

Julian Go assesses the development of anticolonial nationalism in former colonies and argues that theories depend on "whether they emphasize the

cultural, discursive, or cognitive bases of nationalism on the one hand or, on the other hand colonial economy and politics" (Go & Watson, 2019, p. 42). Anderson's theory of "print capitalism" in the creation of *imagined communities* and ilustrado writings contribute to "uniting previously distinct linguistic groups and offering, for the first time, the ability to imagine a larger 'national' community" (Go & Watson, 2019, p. 42). Assessing De los Reyes's *El Diablo* text, published in a bilingual version, we can consider it as one of his attempts to develop a broader view of a national community. The choice of language in the text, and in his other writings, shows that De los Reyes had a careful eye on his readership. De los Reyes writings contribute to the cultural and discursive field of nationalism.

Benedict Anderson (2006, p. 17) cites a moving passage in De los Reyes's introduction to *El Folk-Lore Filipino*, wherein he "described himself as brother of the forest peoples, the Aeta, the Igorots, and the Tinguians." No *ilustrado* writer at the time had written about any notion of solidarity with the non-Hispanized, non-Catholic or rural communities. Perhaps in De los Reyes's "proto-nationalist strivings," his study of folklore led him to realize that perhaps the different ethnolinguistic groups in the country could have certain commonalities of beliefs and a possible shared identity (2005, p. 17). Anderson listed three possible reasons why De los Reyes engaged in the study of Folk-lore: 1) "the possibility – the hope – of local cultural renaissance"; 2) "to subvert the dominance of the Catholic Church in the colony" (and to argue that some common superstitions were introduced by the Spaniards here, both in *El Folk-Lore Filipino* and *El Diablo*); and 3) "political self-criticism" – this would include a "self-critical spirit" in evaluating folk knowledge (Anderson, 2006, pp. 17 – 20). This is a similar argument in De los Reyes's essay, *The Religion of the Katipunan*. In re-assessing the old beliefs, a critical approach was necessary to sift out the superstitious beliefs introduced by the Spaniards here and the inclusion of miracles and expulsion of demons that abound to justify the righteousness of conversion into the Catholic faith. De los Reyes's contribution to Philippine studies and folklore cannot be set aside, since his writings on folklore served to not just recover the past, but to "critique the present" (Thomas, 2016, p. 129).

In using satire as an approach to critique the Spanish chroniclers, De los Reyes elicits laughter in his readers. The shared laughter creates an imagined community of readers (during his time, the Filipino natives) who gain an awareness of the misrepresentation of the Filipino natives in the Spanish texts. It is a view that the different ethnolinguistic groups in the country and with varied religious beliefs could attain a level of friendship and brotherhood. But the

notion of a common nationality and shared identity across all Filipino natives was still a revolutionary project.

De los Reyes's method of reading the Spanish sources and citing it out of context puts it in an incongruous situation that elicits laughter from its readers. A critical stance on reading Spanish texts on Philippine history, culture, and religion to evaluate the bias for the Catholic religion, hierarchy, and dominance is crucial. Highlighting its contradictions, or even ridiculous ideas at times, puts it in a laughable position but also serves as a critique of the original text.

7. Conclusion

Laughter is a tool for subversion. As De los Reyes uses humor and satire in *El Diablo*, we find that he challenges the veracity of Spanish writing on its colony. Nationalist writing in the late nineteenth century, whether from the ilustrados or other writers like De los Reyes, contributed to the creation of a public sphere critical of the excesses of Spanish rule. Another crucial facet of the nation is its archive. Mojares (2013, p. 15) believed that "Isabelo created a raw inchoate archive. By placing at its center, folk-lore, 'the people's knowledge' (instead of the elite's or the official), and by rendering it in a wonderfully imperfect form, he raised the specter of its subsequent institutionalization." The counter-reading of the colonial archive, as Isabelo De los Reyes has done in *El Diablo*, shows how literature can appropriate old texts and literary forms in order to subvert colonial power. Shared laughter is one element in creating the nation as a "deep horizontal comradeship" (Anderson, 1983/1991, p. 7).

This paper is a preliminary attempt to unpack humor and satire in one text by Isabelo de los Reyes, which is merely one sample of the writings of the nationalist and ilustrado writers in the Spanish colonial period. While political critique was very clear in Rizal's novels, De los Reyes use of humor in *El Diablo* shows one method to read and critique the Spanish sources on the Filipino natives. Rewriting these chronicles in a creative manner, but in a different context, allows the space for humor, satire, and laughter to emerge. The dialogue format between the narrator and Gatmaitan allowed the presentation of different perspectives, questions, and reinterpretation. And no, demons do not abound in the Philippines.

While we may not have the data on the reception of *El Diablo* by its readers, we can only hope that in critiquing the Spanish colonial period in its representation of the Philippine colonial past, De los Reyes's text elicited a

response to act on its readers. While recognizing the central and broad expanse of Rizal's writing, further studies on different writing styles and techniques used by Marcelo H. Del Pilar, Graciano Lopez Jaena, and other nationalist writers will broaden the Philippine colonial public sphere in the period.

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Authoring the Folk

Emmanuel Jayson V. Bolata

This article examines the relationship between "authorship" and "folk literature" in the case of Ilocano poems by Doña Leona Florentino (1849 – 1884), presented in the first volume of *El Folk-Lore Filipino* (1889) by her son, Isabelo de los Reyes y Florentino (1864 – 1938). I discuss how Leona became an individual "author" (in the sense defined by the modern West)— yet, much to Isabelo's ambivalence, she was also made to represent the Ilocano and Filipino "folk literature." Isabelo's contextualization, as well as a close reading of the poems, reveals that Leona was partly acquainted with a "Europeanized" literary form and practice. This necessitates a discussion on how Isabelo defined "folk literature." Despite Isabelo's failure to qualify and justify an ontological status for the so-called *poetica Filipina* (Philippine poetics), we can still learn a lot from him about the nature of Philippine folk literature, especially the kind conceived, produced, and performed beyond the nineteenth-century Manila and Tagalog region. The last part consists of two experiments that examine the phenomena of repetition and syllabication in folk literature. By doing a "close(r) reading" of Leona's poems through a Python program, we may find their place within and beyond the folk literary tradition.

Keywords: *Leona Florentino, Isabelo de los Reyes, folk literature, Ilocano literature, author*

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1. The Two Events of 1889

In 1889, the world beyond Ilocos had read Doña Leona Florentino's poems twice.

First, in Europe: Polish feminist Andzia Wolska sent letters that called for the establishment of the Bibliothéque Internationale des Oeuvres de Femmes (International Library of Women's Works) for the forthcoming 1889 Universal Exposition in Paris, France. The word *bibliothèque* means 'library' in French, as per the translation of Salud C. Dizon and Maria Elinora Peralta-Imson (De los Reyes, 1889/1994, pp. 283, 323), but it could also be "a loosely ordered, open-ended compilation of items, some of them appended to the book already in press, meant not so much as a finished 'book' as a ready, accessible archive" (Mojares, 2006, p. 306; see also Mojares, 2013, p. 17). Leona's son and foremost Filipino folklorist, Isabelo de los Reyes, thought that his mother's poems would be an important contribution, as attested by the story of her life. Born on 19 April 1849, Leona grew up in a family of local elite in Vigan, Ilocos Sur. It was told that she was "a poet at the age of ten," and was widely respected, not only as a weaver of verses but also as a satirist and a playwright of *comedias*. She was arranged to marry Elias de los Reyes, Isabelo's father, with whom she had a troubled marriage. By 1880, they had separated, the same year the teenager Isabelo went to Manila. She continued writing her works, later amounting to more than ten volumes of standard thickness, as Isabelo thought (De los Reyes, 1889/1994, pp. 322 – 323), while she managed the family properties. In 1884, Leona passed away in Ananam, Bantay, Ilocos Sur due to tuberculosis. Isabelo deeply regretted that he was not with his beloved mother at the time of her passing. Perhaps due to a combination of guilt, debt of gratitude, and his whims, Isabelo sent Madame Wolska a copy of her poems, with generous introductory notes on Filipina women, their status during precolonial times, their education and writings, and on Philippine poetics. The poems, twenty-one in total, are categorized into two: thirteen *felicitaciones* or congratulatory poems, and eight *composiciones eroticas* or love poems.

Second, in Manila: these articles were reproduced in the first volume of *El Folk-Lore Filipino* as its third chapter, with the "belief that they are relevant to Ilocano folklore" (*por creer pertinentes al Folk-lore Ilocano*) (De los Reyes, 1889/1994, pp. 282 – 283). The first volume of *El Folk-Lore Filipino* was published in Carriedo 20, Manila by the Imprenta de Santa Cruz. Its second volume was seen in print a year later. The volumes were a culmination of Isabelo's

efforts in folklore studies since 1884, initially motivated by the Manila-based journalist José Felipe del Pan, and later by the Spanish folklorists Antonio Machado y Álvarez and Alejandro Guichot y Sierra (De los Reyes, 1889/1994, pp. 10 – 11; Mojares, 2013, p. 3).

> The two events in 1889 are historical, at least in Isabelo's point of view, since they signified a kind of bringing into the center a world from the margins. As a literary historian once retold his childhood, "He was born in a province far from 'the light of civilization,' lived with household servants from the hinterland 'where all is shadow and superstition,' and was raised on nighttime stories 'fabulous and superstitious'" (Mojares, 2006, p. 305).

Yet, the significance of the events of 1889 doesn't stop there. It established Leona as an author outside the Ilocandia. Decades later, she will be called "the first poetess of the Philippines," "mother of Filipina poetry", and "mother of feminist literature" (Mojares, 2006; Mabanglo, 2020). Her works, being representative of early women's and feminist literature in the Philippines, have been canonized through translations and anthologies (Quindoza Santiago, 1997a; 1997b). More so, writers of Philippine lesbian literature would treat her as a "literary mother," especially since some of her love poems hinted at women loving women (Cruz, 2005; Zemana, 2024). But these afterlives of the poet and her poems would bring us to a question: why ascribe to *an author* samples of literature which are, in Isabelo's own ambivalent category, presumed to be *folk*?

Isabelo's ambivalence should not be taken as controversial, for that is how we usually read a literary text. The so-called "contextual approach" has been a favorite of students and scholars (cf. Ileto, 1998, pp. 208 – 210; Zafra, 1999); using this, locating the work within an author's life is almost unavoidable. In literary and cultural studies, new approaches have already challenged the biographical way of reading. Roland Barthes' influential essay, *The Death of the Author*, to be paired with *From Work to Text*, assaults the authority of the author over textual meaning. Being "a modern figure" (*un personnage moderne*), the birth of the author was made possible in the West through the combination of English empiricism, French rationalism, the Reformation, and positivism, which all ascribed prestige and importance to the individual, human person (Barthes, 1968/1977b, pp. 142 – 143). Subsequent developments in the social and cultural history of books, print, and reading allow more nuanced takes on the dynamics of authorship, textual production, and reception (e.g., Chartier, 1989).

FIG 1. *Statue of Doña Leona Florentino in Calle Crisologo cor. Florentino Street, Vigan, Ilocos Sur (left). Beside the statue stands the Leona Florentino House, where the Philippine Historical Committee marker was posted (right). Photo by the author, 04 April 2024.*

Filipino historians and scholars of literature may find these ideas and arguments helpful. As Western thinkers sought to redefine the contemporary ways of writing and reading in what they call a "postmodern condition," we in the Philippines may use these ideas to properly situate and discuss our precolonial and indigenous verbal arts and knowledge. This is partly hinted by Barthes when he spoke of "ethnographic societies" (*sociétés ethnographiques*): "In ethnographic societies, narrative is never assumed by a person but by a mediator, shaman, or reciter, whose 'performance' (i.e., his mastery of the narrative code) can be admired, but never his 'genius'" (Barthes, 1968/1977b, p. 142). Our ancient and native literary cultures and communities have a different, if not entirely absent, concept of authorship. Folk literature in the Philippines is collectively produced, performed, and transmitted, mainly by word of mouth, and has multiple existences and variations (Dundes, 1999, pp. vii-viii; Lopez, 2006, pp. 30-53). When it comes to the definition of "folklore," folklorist Mellie Leandicho Lopez stated explicitly that the "loss of identity of author or creator" is one of the basic qualities of folklore materials:

> Every bit of folklore must have had an individual author or collective authors, but once the material enters the stream of popular tradition, the original authors are forgotten and the item

> becomes folklore. The very fact that an author or composer claims individual ownership of a material prevents the material from becoming folklore (Lopez, 2006, p. 38).

The "individualization of authorship" (see Foucault, 1984, p. 101) is partly a consequence of the arrival of print in the sixteenth-century Philippines. With such an event we can now have the first book, the first native poet, the first native novelist, and so on, bringing us to a state of cultural lag and inferiority, as historian Zeus A. Salazar (1997, pp. 106) has long pointed out, because it implied an uneven stature whenever compared to other nations or communities. With the transition from "ear culture" to "eye culture," as labelled by writer Nick Joaquin (2004, pp. 4-5), "readers" had learned to set their "literate eyes" not only on the content of a literary piece, but also, and more significantly, on the title of the work and the name of the author. Literacy was measured through the column of print (Joaquin, 2004), something that can also be surmised among the late nineteenth century propagandists—like Isabelo—and their fascination for precolonial scripts. As the accultured natives got used to the new orthographic system, subversion was marked through the names of authors—Burgos, Del Pilar, Rizal, to name a few—thus necessitating the use of nom de plume, if not outright emigration (Teodoro, 1999).

Our oral literature suffered in this change of standards. For instance, the versions of the Ilocano epic, *Lam-ang*, are named after their documenters: (1) the Gerardo Blanco – Isabelo de los Reyes version (1889-1890), (2) the Canuto Medina version (1906), (3) the La Lucha version (1926), and (4) the Parayno Hermanos version (1927) (Manuel, 1963, pp. 10 – 12; Yabes, 1968 – 1969b, pp. 166 – 168; Ventura Castro, 1984b, pp. 63 – 64). Such phenomenon mirrors the point of historian Roger Chartier (1989, p. 161) that recorders, compilers, editors, manufacturers, and publishers—in the case of Parayno Hermanos and La Lucha, which were publishing houses—would "make" the "book" (that is, the epic in print). Moreover, critics like Leopoldo Y. Yabes would still attempt to look for the "true version" and the "real author" (Yabes, 1968-1969b, pp. 166-168). To these critics, we can ask the questions once posed by a social historian:

> Can meaning be controlled at the moment of writing? How could 'personal authorship' thrive in a situation where works, stories, poems, and other writings freely borrowed elements from each other, were transmitted orally, and were therefore subject to creative alterations; in short, where works were seen as part of a collective enterprise, expressing not an individual point of view but a general

outlook? (Ileto, 1998, p. 209)

In Philippine historiography, historians tried to accommodate this new take on authorship. Tracing mentalities and discourses became an alternative to the customary intellectual history, a subfield that continues to embrace the authorial figure. Historian Reynaldo Ileto, whose quote was cited above, has examined the textual meaning-making by those "from below," whose language, if properly decoded and understood, reflects their collective mentality or consciousness that could bring to reason their expressions, behavior, and actions (see Ileto, 1979; 1982; 1998; see also Guerrero, 1981). This emphasis on the receptive end will lead us back to Barthes' famous closing: "We know that to give writing its future, it is necessary to overthrow the myth: the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author" (Barthes, 1968/1977b, p. 148). With the death of the author, it is now the reader who is responsible for the creation of text (Zafra, 1999). In Isabelo's case, he, the reader—later the translator and publisher, thus a co-author too—not only produces meaning: the reader also authors the author.

2. Leona the Author

To use Chartier's words, Leona did "the work of writing," while Isabelo "made the book," in the sense that Isabelo provided "the support that enables it [i.e., Leona's corpus] to be read" (Chartier, 1989, p. 161). As told, Leona was already a respected writer even before the popularity of her son. Thus, the "support" might not be necessary, perhaps for Leona, and with this, we can understand why compiling her poems was itself against Leona's writing practice. "Perhaps it would not please you," Isabelo said in his dedication to Leona, "for in your lifetime you did not want to publish your writings" (*tal vez no te agrade, porque en ida no querías publicar tus escritos*) (De los Reyes, 1889/1994, pp. 286-287). But Isabelo, as a folklorist, saw the archiving of her poems as a way to give back his mother's "infinite love," to pay his "great debt" which "remained totally unpaid." Thus, the folklorist's intent—if not *caprichos*, 'whims'—prevailed: "However my dear Mother, since you had always been very good and indulgent towards me, forgive me and let your son satisfy another of his whims" (*Sin embargo, madre mía, ya que fuiste siempre muy buena y condescendiente conmigo, perdona y déjame una vez más satisfacer este capricho de tu hijo*) (De los Reyes, 1889/1994, pp. 286-287). In presenting the poems, he reiterated Leona's practice: "The following poems belong to the late Doña Leona Florentino, a poetess well-known in Ilocos region despite the fact that she has not published any of her composition in any newspaper" (*Los que á continuación damos, pertenecen á la difunta Doña Leona*

Florentino, muy conocida poetisa en toda la comarca ilocana, á pesar de no haber publicando [sic] en periódicos ninguna [sic] *de sus composiciones*) (De los Reyes, 1889/1994, pp. 320-321).

Educated in a colonial and Europeanized system, Isabelo was most likely acquainted with the idea of authorship and work. At times, he would substitute El autor for his name, as seen in his dedications in *Artículos varios sobre etnografía, historia y costumbres del país* (De los Reyes, 1887)[1]. *Ilocanadas*, an anthology of creative pieces he penned, bears the subsequent title *Varios trabajos literarios de D. Isabelo de los Reyes y Florentino*, hinting the idea of a "literary work" attributed to a man of letters (De los Reyes, 1888). These instances, however, might simply reflect the standard practice in nineteenth-century book publishing. Nonetheless, he would also refer to Leona as "author" (*autora*) as shown in samples below.[2]

> The author is addressing her niece and nephew. *(Se dirige la autora á dos sobrinos suyos.)* (De los Reyes, 1889/1994, pp. 338-339)
>
> It's really a pity that I did not find the author's congratulatory poetry… *(Siento mucho no haber encontrado la felicitación poética de la autora…)* (De los Reyes, 1889/1994, pp. 368-369).
>
> I found another original poem from the same author that goes… *([M]e encuentro con otra poesía original de la misma autora que dice:)* (De los Reyes, 1889/1994, pp. 394-395)

In Isabelo's framing, the author and the society where she came from are intertwined. To understand the society (or the *folk*), one must understand the author through which it is represented. In presenting Leona's love poems (*composiciones eróticas*), Isabelo wrote,

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[1] The dedications per article are for Ferdinand Blumentritt, José Felipe del Pan, Prudencio Vidal, Alejandro Guichot y Sierra, Miguel Zaragoza, Marco Antonio Canini, Trinidad H. Pardo de Tavera, Pedro Alejandro Paterno, Francisco Gutierrez, and Jose A. Ramos (De los Reyes, 1887, pp. 2-3, 41, 69, 89-90, 115-116, 139, 155-156, 169-170, 179-180, 201-202).

[2] Isabelo also used *tus* 'your,' and *pertenecen á* 'belong to' as he spoke of Leona's poems. In his dedication, he said, "Could I have rendered grateful homage by compiling and publishing your poems?" (*Colecionando y publicando tus poesías, ¿te habré tributado homenaje de gratitud?*) (De los Reyes, 1889/1994, pp. 286-287, emphasis mine). To recall the quote earlier, "The following poems belong to the late Doña Leona Florentino…" (*Los que á continuación damos, pertenecen á la difunta Doña Leona Florentino…*) (De los Reyes, 1889/1994, pp. 320-321, emphasis mine).

> These seem to be better than the preceding and I present them to those who may wish to enter into the heart of the Ilocano poetess or that of the Ilocanos in general, for they are a reflection of their feelings. (*Estas parecen mejores que las anteriores y hacia ellas llamo la atención de los que quieran penetrar en la corazón de la poetisa ilocana ó de los ilocanos en general, pues que reflejan sus sentimientos.*) (De los Reyes, 1889/1994, pp. 378-379)

To know the author, personal information was occasionally provided. In "To Vicenta and Severino on their Wedding Day" (*A Vicenta y Severino en el Día de su Boda*), the reader would know that the addressees were her niece and nephew. In an invitational poem, Leona was asking her niece, Inchay (Cresencia), to come to her daughter Benigna's birthday celebration (De los Reyes, 1889/1994, pp. 324-339, 370-373). As Isabelo conflated the notions of the individual and the collective, there rises a problem on authorial contexts. Some of the contexts that Isabelo provided are so specific that they could not cover the general folk experience. For instance, in a note, Isabelo expressed dismay in not finding Leona's poem for Don Alejandro Girón, who then "took the *bastón*" as the gobernadorcillo of the native gremio. In that poem, Leona "explained the essence of authority and its obligations" (De los Reyes, 1889/1994, pp. 368-369). At the end of the collection, he also spoke of an Ilocano poet named Bernardo Favia, who was once stuck with a stanza he was composing. "When Doña Leona Florentino heard about his problem," Isabelo wrote, "she told him: 'Get your pen and take this down.' She thereupon improvised a stanza, not only did Favia find the stanza satisfactory, he even found it better than any of the other stanzas, better than even the entire poem itself" (*En esto, la señora se enteró de su apuro y le contestó á Favia:—Toma la pluma y escribe. E improvisó una estrofa. Esta no solamente satisfizo á Favia, sino que resulta major que cada una de las demás estrofas y que todo el poema) (*De los Reyes, 1889/1994, pp. 406-407). These instances reveal Leona's stature as an elite, both economic and intellectual, which had set her apart from the "unenlightened folk" (*gente no ilustrada*) (De los Reyes, 1889/1994, pp. 24-25).

In the poem "Lament of a Man Betrayed" (*Ayes de un Burlado*), Isabelo carefully distanced her mother from a possible scandal. Here, a man was in deep sorrow because his lover left him to marry a rich man from Abra. Later, the man approached Leona, and since he "could not express his pain and ill feelings," she wrote a poem for him. Isabelo used the poem as a sample to explain the Ilocano temperament: "In Ilocos these kinds of episodes usually lead to bloodshed. In fact, Ilocanos only commit homicides out of jealousy" (*[E]n Ilocos rarísimo es que*

estos casos no terminen en asesinatos. Allí no se cometen homicidios sino por los celos) (De los Reyes, 1889/1994, pp. 394-395). However, these descriptions might put Leona in a bad light. Anticipating this, Isabelo wrote, "The author withholds expressions of indignation that may be justifiably felt by any honorable man who had been so treacherously betrayed" (*[P]ero la autora suprime esa indignación justa é indispensable en todo hombre honrado tan villanamente burlado*) (De los Reyes, 1889/1994, pp. 394-395). He also emphasized that the crafting of the poem "avoided conflict and scandal" (*evita todo rozamiento y escándalo*) and even though the poem might have a worse motive—that is, encouraging adultery—Isabelo wrote that, "However, I doubt that Mrs. Florentino could have been capable of such contemptuous motives" (*Pero nó, no creo que la señora Florentino haya concebido tan odioso fin*) (De los Reyes, 1889/1994, pp. 394-395).

This occurrence of a son protecting his mother's stature and legacy from unwanted scandal further permeates in the other parts of the collection. Feeling that some of the poems were bad, he wrote to Madame Wolska, "Forgive me, most esteemed Madame, if my natural love for my mother (may she rest in peace) has inspired me to give her poems a significance they may perhaps not really have" (*Perdóneme Vd., muy ilustrada señora, si por mi natural amor á mi madre (q.e.p.d.), he dado á sus poesías la importancia que acaso realmente no tengan*) (De los Reyes, 1889/1994, pp. 284-285). After talking about Leona's habit of not preserving copies of her poems, Isabelo blamed not his mother but the customs of old: "We Ilocanos and generally all Filipinos are like that; we give no transcendence to our compositions and we write them only to be read once and not to be used again. This bad habit probably dates back to pre-historic times, and thus no ancient writings had been preserved when the Spaniards landed on our shores" (*Los ilocanos y todos los filipinos en general, somos así, no damos ninguna transcendencia á nuestras composiciones y las redactamos para leer una vez sola é inutilizamos después. Y esta mala práctica debe datar de las edades prehistóricas y por eso no se conservaba ningún escrito antiguo, cuando arribaron á estas playas los españoles*) (De los Reyes, 1889/1994, pp. 322-323). In one poem, he commented, "If a European poet were to present the foregoing poem embellished by his imagination, I do not doubt that he would achieve remarkable results" (*Que un vate europeo presente la anterior poesía con las galas de su imaginación, y dudo que resultaría notable*). This implies that the poem is naturally weak, given its local origins, if it has to stand before European readers. Yet, in defense of his mother, he added, "As it stands, Leona Florentino has been able to do it brilliantly on her own language" (*Pués bien, Leona Florentino ha conseguido hacerlo en su idioma de una manera brillante*) (De los Reyes, 1889/1994, pp. 344-345), thereby saving

the poem and its author through pinpointing foreign ignorance of local language. In a congratulatory poem for Carmen, where a religious metaphor was used, Isabelo would ascribe such "excessive religiosity" to Filipinos rather than his mother: "What connection could there be between the Virgin of Carmen and the birth of this young lady? This may perhaps be explained by the Filipinos' excessive religiosity that moves them to include Jesus Christ and all the members of the heavenly host even in the most comic situations" (*¿Qué tendría que ver la Virgen del Cármen con el nacimiento de esa señorita? Sin embargo, esto se explica, porque las filipinas son exageradamente devotos y mezclan á Jesucristo y á todo la corte celestial aún en los asuntos más bufos*) (De los Reyes, 1889/1994, pp. 358-359). Contrary to how one historian described Isabelo, that he presented data in "somewhat more dispassionate fashion" (Schumacher, 1997, p. 226), and to how Isabelo, quoting Antonio Machado y Álvarez, pointed out that verses are studied because they are "scientific material" (*las coplas no ha de estudiarse por bonitas, sino como materia científica*) (De los Reyes, 1889/1994, pp. 368-369), these remarks reveal his inherent biases, more filial than local, which he did not entirely deny. He might feel *tuoc nga amucuoc* 'piercing pain' (from Leona herself, qtd. in Navarro, 1968-1969, p. 212) had he lived longer to read the comments of a mid-twentieth-century critic: "Her [Leona's] poems which have survived, however, appear to the modern reader as being too syrupy for comfort, too sentimental to the point of mawkishness, and utterly devoid of form" (Foronda, 1968-1969, p. 183).

By saying that his mother's poems were samples of folk literature in "genuinely Filipino style," and thus far different from the European kind, Isabelo forgot that Leona and her poems were partly a product of colonial times. As Resil B. Mojares (2006, p. 310) observed, "He does not examine the poems in relation to autochthonous poetic tradition or, for that matter, the Europeanization of literary forms already evident in Florentino's poetry." This "Europeanization of literary forms" can be seen in three cases: Leona's use of foreign words, her dislike of plagiarism, and the orthography of her acrostic poems.

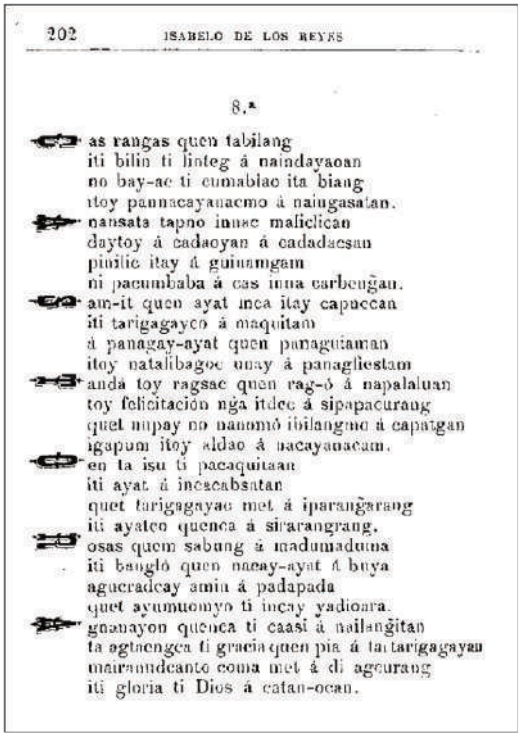
Leona used a lot of Spanish words in her poems, such as *amapola* 'poppy,' *astros* 'stars,' *azucena* 'lily,' *balsamo* 'balm,' *caliz* 'chalice,' *clavel* 'carnation,' *dios* 'god,' *doctor* 'doctor,' *firmament* 'firmament,' *gloria* 'glory,' *horas* 'hours,' *jardín* 'garden,' *perlas* 'pearls,' *rosas* 'roses,' *sacramento* 'sacrament,' *santa iglesia* 'holy church,' and *virgen* 'virgin.' Some of the Spanish words were incorporated into Ilocano through additional morphemes: *adcariño, agfiestaac, agservi, añosen, bendicionna, nadiosan,* and *pannacaconsúmonan*. Again, Isabelo came in defense of his mother: in a poem where she used *astros* and *firmamento*, he explained in a

footnote that, "Stars and firmament have their Ilocano equivalents *bituen* and *langit*; but sometimes Ilocanos prefer to use foreign terms that appear more meaningful or recherché. Notwithstanding this common practice, Doña Leona Florentino used many pure Ilocano words" (*Astros y firmamento tienen equivalentes en ilocano, que son bituen y lañgit; pero para los ilocanos, es mejor á veces emplear términos extraños, que pasan por profundos ó rebuscados. Esto no obstante, Doña Leona Florentino empleaba muchos términos ilocanos profundos*) (De los Reyes, 1889/1994, pp. 358-359).

Regarding plagiarism, Isabelo wrote, "They are written in genuine Filipino style for the lady hated plagiarism and spoke contemptuously of plagiarists" (*[S]on genuinamente del estilo filipino las poesías de dicha señora, á quien repugnaba plagiar, hablando con desdén de los plagiarios*) (De los Reyes, 1889/1994, pp. 322-323). Knowing this, it appears that although Leona had revised and repeated some lines of her poems, these lines are still her own. It implies, at least in Leona's perspective, that she functioned as an author: a creative individual to whom one attributes the work, rather than a mere weaver of *texts*—if to be defined as "tissues of quotations or signs" (Barthes, 1968/1977b, pp. 146-147)— culled from local folklore.

Leona's acrostic poems are also revealing of this divorce from the indigenous tradition. Contrary to the predominantly oral nature of native literature, acrostic poetry is centered on the written or printed.[3] Although acrostic poems can be recited, primacy is lent to the letters, not sound. Isabelo is mistaken in saying that, "Congratulatory poems are done in acrostic verses. Such is the form of Philippine poetry" (*Para las felicitaciones emplean versos acrósticos. Hé aquí la forma de las poesías filipinas*) (De los Reyes, 1889/1994, pp. 320-321), if what he meant by *poesías filipinas* are the "indigenous" or "non-colonial" ones. Yet, this error has its propagandist context: the existence of ancient orthography would serve as proof of a precolonial Philippine "civilization." Nevertheless, Leona's practice in acrostics implied that she would first start with the letters of the addressee's name, followed by line-writing. Using the old Hispanic orthography, she had written "oen" for the word *wen* (De los Reyes, 1889/1994, pp. 362 – 363).

[3] From the Greek words *akros* 'at the end' and *stitchos* 'line; verse.' The *acrostic* was attributed to the Erythraean Sibyl, a prophetess in the Ionian town of Erythrae (now in Western Turkey), whose prophecies were written in leaves. These are arranged in such a way that the initial letters would form a word.



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8.ª

as rangas quen tabilang
iti bilin ti linteg á naindayaoan
no bay-ac ti cumablac ita biang
itoy pannacayanacmo á naiugasatan.
nansata tapno innac maliclican
daytoy á cadaoyan á cadadaesan
pinilic itay á guinumgam
ni pacumbaba á cas inna carbengan.
am-it quen ayat inca itay capuccan
iti tarigagayco á maquitam
á panagay-ayat quen panagutaman
itoy natalibagoc unay á panagliestam
anda toy ragsac quen rag-ó á napalaluan
toy felicitación nga itdec á sipapacurang
quet nupay no nanomó ibilangmo á capatgan
igapum itoy aldao á nacayanacam.
en ta isu ti pacaquitaan
iti ayat á incacabsatan
quet tarigagayac met á iparañgarang
iti ayatco quenca á sirarangrang.
osas quem sabung á inadumaduma
iti bangló quen nacay-ayat á buya
agucradcay amin á padapada
quet ayumuomyo ti incay yadiona.
gnanayon quenca ti caasi á nailañgitan
ta agtinengca ti gracia quen pia á tan tarigagayan
mairamudcanto coma met á di agcurang
iti gloria ti Dios á catan-ocan.

FIG 2. *An acrostic poem for Castora (Poem #8 under Felicitaciones) (De los Reyes, 1889, p. 202). Accessed through Biblioteca Digital Hispánica, Biblioteca Nacional de España.*

Oen ta isu ti pacaquitaan

iti ayat á incacabsatan

quet tarigagayac met á iparañgarang

iti ayatco quenca á sirarangrang.

Oen is the first word for the fifth stanza of a congratulatory poem for Castora, given that the fifth letter of her name is o. As shown in Fig. 2, the placement of the first letters is vertical, emphasizing not only the name of the addressee but also the acrostic form. A colonial legacy, this letter-centrism would bring problems to

contemporary translators and editors accustomed to new orthography. When Lilia Quindoza Santiago (1997b, p. 317) included this poem in her anthology, she "corrected" the word as *wen*, which defeats the purpose of an acrostic. Castora is now awkwardly spelled as K-A-S-T-W-R-A[4].

Wen ta isu ti pakakitaan,

iti ayat nga inkakabsatan

ket tariggayak met nga iparangarang

ti ayatko kenka a sirarangrang.

Nonetheless, this preoccupation with the written word is a favorite weapon of ilustrado propagandists. Isabelo himself spent pages discussing language and orthography, not only in *El Folk-Lore Filipino* (1889), but also in his *Historia de Ilocos* (1890). In one of the introductory articles for Leona's poems, he wrote, "The women would use metal needles to write in their own hand on smooth cane surface or on banana leaves. Morga, that writer of old, writes, "and there were very few who did not write well in a neat hand'" (*Sí; las mujeres escribían con sus caracteres propios en lo liso de las cañas ó en las hojas del bananero por medio de punzones de hierro. "Y muy pocas—escribe Morga, autor antiguo—hay que no escriban muy bién con propiedad"*) (De los Reyes, 1889/1994, pp. 316-317). Showing that the Filipinos had precolonial writing systems, Isabelo and his fellow propagandists could argue that the ancient Filipinos were already civilized long before the colonizers had set foot on the islands. However, this would go against the indigenous nature of literacy and the literary: that the written word is not necessarily the standard of deep knowledge and good literature.

3. Folk Literature

Having established Leona's agency as an individual author, what makes her poems folk?

Isabelo believes that his mother's poems "will enable a study of the characteristics of Filipino poetics in general or those of the Ilocanos in particular"

[4] Quindoza Santiago replaced C with K in the first stanza's opening line. Yet, she maintained the name "Castora," in the title *Mairuknoy iti kaaldawan ni Castora.* The original has no title.

(*podrán servir para conocer las especialidades de la Poética filipina, en general ó de la ilocana en particular*) (De los Reyes, 1889/1994, pp. 282-283). This could be an encouragement to fellow philologists, if not a subtle apology. For it would be difficult to rely solely on Isabelo as an expert on Philippine folk literature and poetics, despite having both "authenticity" and "authority" as a local scholar (Thomas, 2016, pp. 122-129). He admitted that he was a bad translator (he once remarked, "I find it impossible to come up with a translation that does full justice to all of the composition's beauty"), which was perhaps caused by his Europeanized upbringing and preference ("I have studied European literature since childhood; my aesthetic sense was molded in Spanish schools, and I prefer European infinitely more to Philippine literature") (De los Reyes, 1889/1994, pp. 341, 389). As Mojares assessed,

> Isabelo's discussion of the verses reveals his ambivalent position vis-à-vis "native tradition." On one hand, claiming an ontological status for what he calls *poetica Filipina*, he claims for Florentino's poetry a distinctness of language and style the Spanish translation does not quite convey. Yet, he cannot explain these qualities beyond saying that they are peculiar and effective that they express the native temperament and are loved by the people because they satisfy their "taste" (*gusto*)… While he briefly points out distinctive sound patterns and facets of the poet's sensibility, he is impressionistic in his judgments and rather Eurocentric… Caught in this ambivalence, Isabelo falls back on arguments of nativist sentiment and folkloric value (Mojares, 2006, pp. 309-310).

Here and there, Isabelo would use the terms *poética ilocana* and *poética filipina.* The terms were nearly interchangeable, varying only in scale (*filipina* in general, *ilocana* in specific). However, in introducing what he thought would be their representative samples (i.e., his mother's poems), he would say that they are "interesting for their naturalness and originality" (*…interés, porque son naturales, originales de ella*). Almost in the same breath he continued, "They are not composed in the European style, but in the crude, confused, and unaesthetical manner of chapbooks of Ilocano drama that proliferated in the region" (*no moldeadas en el estilo europeo; sino en todo caso en los indigestos y anti-estéticos libretos de comedias ilocanas que abundan en su país*) (De los Reyes, 1889/1994, pp. 322-323). Being natural, original, crude, and unaesthetic renders the pieces a degree of folkloricity, if we are to understand that folklore, for Isabelo, is "popular knowledge" (*saber popular*) which the "unenlightened people" (*gente no ilustrada*) know and have (De los Reyes, 1889/1994, pp. 4-5, 24-25). Citing his

rival Astoll (Jose La Calle y Sanchez), he agreed that "Folklore could be the origin of Filipino poetry inspired by things Filipino and born in the minds of Filipino poets" (*Además, en el Folk-Lore podría quizás tener orígen la poesía filipina; es decir, la poesía inspirada en asuntos filipinos, y nacida en la mente de vates filipinos*) (De los Reyes, 1889/1994, pp. 14-15).

In tracing the varying definitions of folklore, Isabelo mentioned literary forms and genres that were studied by other folklorists, such as legends, fables, proverbs, songs, riddles, tales, and "other popular poetic and literary forms" (*y demás formas poéticas y literarias del pueblo*) (De los Reyes, 1889/1994, pp. 4 – 7). However, in *El Folk-Lore Filipino*, Isabelo did not identify any types of Ilocano "folk literature" except for his mother's *felicitaciones* and *composiciones eroticas*, and *loa*, which is "a greeting to Santa Rosa of Lima or to her image on her feastday" (*una salutación poética á Santa Rosa de Lima ó á su imagen en el día de su festividad*) (De los Reyes, 1889/1994, pp. 372-373). What were considered the "origins" of Ilocano literature by succeeding scholars like Leopoldo Y. Yabes were aptly categorized by Isabelo as songs. Yabes (1968-1969a, pp. 17 – 18) believed that by looking at genres which were "a combination of poetry, music, and dancing," we can trace where "the literary forms developed from." This is not entirely foreign to Isabelo. Instead of *Materiales folk-lóricos sobre literatura* (Folklore Materials on Literature), he would place the *dal-lot* in the chapter *Música, Cantos y Bailes* (Music, Songs, and Dances). The *dallot*, "believed to be one of the most primitive Iloko songs, is an extemporized song with an ancient air and with a dramatic element" (Yabes, 1968-1969a, p. 20). Isabelo described it the way he described poems: "The *dal-lot* is composed of eight-line stanzas, with a special Ilocano rhyming scheme" (De los Reyes, 1889/1994, 258 -259; see also mention of *dal-lot* in *Historia de Ilocos*, in De los Reyes, 1890/2014, p. 9). Accompanying the *dal-lot* are other music genres: the *dingli* and the *berso*. In the same chapter, one also reads Isabelo's discussion on the "ancient poem" (*antiguo poema*) *Vida de Lam-ang*. Regarding *berso*, a sample was provided in the description of the *mangmangkik* (spirits or anitos of trees). In order not to offend the *mangmangkik* whenever the Ilocanos cut trees, they would "sing the following verses" (*entonan los siguientes versos*), which Isabelo left untranslated (De los Reyes, 1889/1994, pp. 32 – 33; see also Anderson, 2006, pp. 20 – 21).

Barí, barí[5]

[5] Isabelo's authority and authenticity, which Megan C. Thomas (2016, pp. 122 – 129) examined, are shown in his explanation of *barí-barí*, which also fascinated Benedict Anderson. Isabelo said that this interjection has no equivalent in

Dika agunget pári

Ta pumukan kamí

Iti pabakirda kamí

In the literary section of *El Folk-Lore Filipino*, aside from the *dallot* which appeared elsewhere, there was no mention of *badeng* (love song), *dun-aw* (death chant), or *burburti* (riddle) (Yabes, 1968-1969a, pp. 20-21, 27; Yabes, 1968-1969b, p. 170, footnote no. 19, see also Jamias, 1968-1969). Except for *burburti*, these words can be seen in Father Andres Carro's *Vocabulario de la lengua ilocana* (1849), a dictionary Isabelo frequently cited in his Historia de Ilocos (1890). In Carro's dictionary, the *badeng, dallot, dun-aw, and burburti* are terms for musico-literary genres: *badéng* 'to sing about love' (cantar á lo enamorado); dal-lút 'to sing or to dance in the style of those from the North, drinking *basi* at the performance' (cantar ó bailar al estilo de los del Norte, bebiendo basi en la funcion); *dung-áo* 'weeping song of mourning, lamentation; to sing [while] crying' (canto lloroso de duelo, lamentacion; cantar llorando) (Carro, 1849, pp. 40, 97, 111).

Despite his shortcomings, Isabelo is quite right in emphasizing the orality and performativity of folk literature by relating the poetic form to music and dance. In the introductory article, *La Filipina y La Literatura* (The Filipina and Literature), he stated that the Filipina "had to be necessarily inclined towards music and poetry from pre-historic times" (*forzosamente había de inclinarse á la musica y á la poesía, aún la época prehistórica*) (De los Reyes, 1889/1994, pp. 314-315). His perception of literary form is much more acquainted with "ear" rather than "eye culture" (Joaquin, 2004). He would repetitively speak of "native's ear" (*oídis indígenas*), as if not to be "deaf in a land of musicians" (Cruz-Lucero, 2007, p. 10). When he could not explain the poem, he would resort to the native's ear,

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Spanish (*interjección ilocana que no tiene equivalente en castellano*) (De los Reyes, 1889/1994, pp. 32 – 33). Anderson (2006, p. 21) reflects, "Here Isabelo positions himself firmly within the Ilocano world. He knows what the Ilocano words mean, but his readers do not… The reader is confronted by an eruption of the incomprehensible original Ilocano, before being tendered a translation. Better yet, something is still withheld, in the words of *barí-barí*, for which Spanish has no equivalent. The untranslatable, no less; and beyond that, perhaps, the incommensurable." *Barí-barí* is defined as "a kind of shibboleth or charm to drive away evil spirits or forestall evil consequences. It is pronounced, either aloud or silently, when going into the shade of a tree or entering a house for the first time" (Geladé, 1993, pp. 108 – 109).

much to the foreign readers' dismay, since a column of print could not reproduce the music. It seems that in Isabelo's notion of poetics, for things which science cannot comprehend, mere *vibes*—in its literal sense, vibrations—will suffice. And with the same ear, he opened his article on *la poetica filipina* (Philippine poetics):

> The poet's ear is the only rhythm, and his whim, the meter. Rhyme is only very loosely observed, *sui generis*. There is neither assonance nor consonance; or to be more precise, there are, but one does not need to look for them because the verse requires neither. (*En oído del poeta es el único ritmo y su capricho el metro. Sólo una rima muy imperfecta y sui géneris se observa en ella; no hay asonantes ni consonantes; mejor dicho, sí, los hay, pero no es necesario buscarlos, pues en el verso se prescinde de que sean tales.*) (De los Reyes, 1889/1994, pp. 318-319).

With regards to content and genre, what Isabelo spoke of songs could also apply to poetry: "[A]lmost all were the sighs or laments of a sorrowing heart, of a soul in love. Sometimes they were legends and passages from their theogony" (*casi todo son ayes y quejas de un corazón dolorido, de un alma enamorada. A veces eran leyendas y pasajes de su teogonía*) (De los Reyes, 1889/1994, pp. 316-317). These themes, Isabelo implied, are indicative of folk temperament and mentality. Thus, he wrote,

> It is not true, as one poet asserted, that the natives of the Philippines do not know how to love, that their birds don't chirp, or that their flowers have no scent. In Ilocos, for example, murders are committed for these very reasons, and everybody knows that jealousy is born of love. (*Esta demás desmentir al poeta que ha aseverado que ni los indígenas de Filipinas saben amar, ni sus pájaros trinan, ni sus flores perfuman. En Ilocos, por ejemplo, no se cometen homicidios sino por celos y ya sabe que los celos son efecto del amor.*) (De los Reyes, 1889/1994, pp. 320-321)

For Isabelo, Filipinos had "fertile imagination that is as ardent as our sky" (*una fantasía ardiente como nuestro cielo, y fecunda en imagénes*), yet they had no "art that would coordinate and polish their works so that, like European poetry, it would be more literary" (*arte que los coordine y pulimente á fin de que surtieran efecto de gusto literario ó acaso major dicho europeo*). Their ideas are expressed in "high sounding romanticism" (*altisonante romanticismo*) coupled with "improperly used similes" (*similes se emplean con impropiedad*), which, in general, "reveal savagery which precisely makes them interesting" (r*evelan salvajismo, y son*

curiosos precisamente por su valentía salvaje).[6]

Yet it is not only nature and temperament that drove Ilocanos to compose poetry, but also social events. Leona's congratulatory poems, as told, were recited during birthday celebrations, wedding days, assumption of post by a town official, a saint's feastday, and other occasions. Improvisations were done in fiestas, as well as musical debates accompanied by dancing (De los Reyes, 1889/1994, pp. 316 – 317). As musical instruments "talk" to each other, conversations between young men and women are also opened by these gatherings. Here, there is no lone creator that produces the piece, be it music or poetry, nor a separate audience that consumes it. The folk partake in the collective and collaborative act of "playing" texts, wherein the production and reception of literature formed a scarcely differentiated activity" (Barthes, 1971/1977a, p. 162).

How do we make sense of these aspects through which Isabelo defined "poetics" and "literature"—the liminal spaces between music and literature, the themes and motivations of folk for creating and performing texts, and the social events through which folk poetics are constructed, mirrored, sustained, and modified, vis-à-vis the absence of formal labels?

Isabelo might have failed in defining and qualifying the ontological stature of Philippine or Ilocano poetics. Yet, in his defense, it could be that he was merely presenting his data from the field. Instead of delineating boundaries of forms and genres, we are thus asked implicitly to rethink our conceptions of literary concepts, and to see Philippine and Ilocano literature in their own terms. Conscious or not, Isabelo has shown through an archive of his mother's poems that an altogether distinct form or genre for native/folk/local literature had to be posed and discussed. The local categories for literature, music, and performance—*theater*, perhaps?—"should serve to remind us of the fact… [that these] are ethnographically shifting categories" (to appropriate Cannell, 2006, p. 135).[7] The absence of local labels that correspond exclusively to "literature,"

[6] To qualify this observation, he gave an example of a bad simile: "resplendent sun, inebriate me with a sweet fragrance" (*Sol resplandeciente embriágame de dulce aroma*) (De los Reyes, 1889/1994, pp. 320-321). Isabelo's Eurocentrism compelled him to look for metaphorical unity: that the sun is seen, sunshine is felt, but never "smelled."

[7] The perceived dilemma of Isabelo in categorizing folk literature is also apparent among succeeding scholars of Philippine folklore. They have seen the problems

"music," and "performance/theater" in Isabelo's archive may imply that these concepts don't necessarily fit into the established Western genres of "high culture" and "fine arts." Further, this line of argument would assert that these native/local forms are in themselves whole and complete, rather than a sum of "interlocked forms" (cf. Lumbera, 1997), where one assumes boundaries of form. Thus, as cultural relativists have long argued, the realm of the beautiful would only make sense if seen in one's terms, experience, and values; beauty is universal insofar as it is being situated and understood in one's cultural and historical contexts (see Boas, 1955).

Last point on categories: are Leona's poems Ilocano or Philippine, or both? At least for Isabelo, the poems were samples of Ilocano poetry in specific, and Philippine poetry in general. Conflating these domains mirrors the perceived audience of *El Folk-Lore Filipino*—the Europeans, especially those who don't know anything about the Philippines and the Filipinos. When folklore studies became popular in Spain, Spanish folklorists would have viewed Philippine folklore, like the Andalusian, Frexnense, and Extremaduran folklore, as part of El Folk-Lore Español. This was weaponized by the Filipino ilustrados, and thus, Thomas (2016, p. 106) inferred, "De los Reyes found in Spanish folklore a useful vehicle—not just a model—for negotiating the relationship between region and nation, between a people (*pueblo*) and the broader groups of people with which they were in historical or contemporary relation." However, the intended readers were not only Spaniards and other Europeans, but also the "non-Ilocano natives of the archipelago" (Anderson, 2006, p. 21). Some problems arise when the Filipinos themselves read the collection. With the usual sardonic tone, the Tagalog José Rizal once wrote to his friend, the Austrian ethnologist Ferdinand Blumentritt: "Since most Filipino folklorists are Ilocanos, and because they use the epithet *Ilocano*, anthropologists will designate traditions and customs that are properly Filipino as being Ilocano" (Thomas, 2016, p. 114). Additionally, in his criticism of Isabelo's *Historia de Ilocos*, Rizal remarked, "I don't know if Mr. De los Reyes, in his laudable desire to *Ilocanize* the Philippines, thinks it is

and limitations of classification systems that are based on origin, function, and performance. They later opted to adopt genre-based categories (Lopez, 2006, pp. 87 – 104, esp. 87 – 90).

[8] Despite the combative tone, Rizal here has put Isabelo to check by employing modern historical methods, such as corroboration of sources, use of citation, and establishing the reliability and points of view of authors. Moreover, as a Tagalog, Rizal asserted his own authority when it comes to Tagalog terms like *catapúsan*

convenient to make [Antonio de] Morga speak Ilocano" (Rizal, 1890/2011, p. 269).[8]

Isabelo would make his collection "more Filipino" in the second volume by incorporating Folk-Lore Bulaqueño, Pampango, and Tayabeño through the writings of Mariano Ponce, Pedro Serrano, and Pio Mondragón (De los Reyes, 1890; De los Reyes, 1890/2021). Yet, by firstly privileging Ilocano, Zambales, and Malabon folklore in what can be considered as the debut work for "Philippine" folklore (El Folk-Lore Filipino), Isabelo was not only arguing for his local positionality. It was already apparent that he was conceptualizing the "Filipino" as a multi-ethnic entity. In various occasions, Isabelo would provide ethnological insights and speculations, utilizing the term *malayos filipinos* (Filipino-Malays) (see Thomas, 2016, pp. 84 – 91). At times he would speak of *pueblo* and *patria adorada* (Anderson, 2006, pp. 16 – 17), approximating the concepts for race, people, and nation (i.e., the Spanish *raza* and *nación*, and the German *Volk*) (Thomas, 2006, p. 58). He would also muse about "the possibility of adopting a broader sense of the word 'Tagalog,'" highlighting its similarity with—if not proposing to incorporate—Ilocano, Bicolano, and other *malayos filipinos*; thus Tagalog as an autochthonous racial concept that would "transcend linguistic differences but correctly, in his mind, delineate racial ones" (Thomas, 2006, pp. 88 – 89). It was also clear to Isabelo that even some groups who lived outside the colonial society— like "the forest peoples, the Aetas, the Igorots, and the Tinguians"—would belong to what we may call now "Filipino" (see Anderson, 2006, pp. 16 – 17; Mojares, 2013, p. 7). The unity of these ethnolinguistic groups had been justified by his sustained labors on the fields of folklore and ethnology (see Thomas, 2016, pp. 84 – 91; 97 – 140), which can

and *cabarcada* (Rizal, 1890/2011, p. 272) In his *El Diablo en Filipinas* (1887), citing Entrala and Cañamaque, Isabelo defined catapusan as 'banquet' (*banquete*) and 'the last day of a novenary for the dead, or some other end' (el último dia de un novenario de muertos ó algún fin cualquiera) (De los Reyes, 1887, p. 117). Interestingly, this showed Rizal's limited knowledge of Tagalog. Lexicographer Vito C. Santos (1978, p. 349) defined *katapusán* as 'the ninth day of the death of a person, usually observed with prayers by friends and members of the family, while the linguist Vincent Christopher A. Santiago (2013, p. 18, entry no. 93), through his study of Tagalog variety in Morong, Rizal, listed *katapusan* [katapʊsan] and *patapos* [patapɔs] as terms for the final day of the wake for a dead child ('*patapos ng isang batang namatay*').

also be surmised in one of his introductory remarks in the *El Folk-Lore Filipino*:

> I would say that the Ilocanos are of a distinct race from the Tagalogs because there are some differences between them that I could easily distinguish at first glance. But after carefully studying customs, superstitions and traditions of different towns, I changed my mind. (*Es un principio yo opinaba que los ilocanos eran de raza distinta que los tagalos, en razon á que existen algunas diferencias, tanto que muchas veces distingo á primera vista por su solo aspect el uno del otro. Pero después de haber yo estudiado detenidamente las costumbres, supersticiones y tradiciones de uno y otro pueblo, me mudé de parecer*) (De los Reyes, 1889/1994, pp. 8 – 9).

4. Two Experiments

We have already examined how authorship and folk literature were defined, ascribed, and made complex in the case of Leona Florentino's poems in her son's compendium of folklore. For the following part, two experiments will be conducted on the poem samples in order to test some claims (by Isabelo and other scholars) and to elucidate more insights, especially those that skip the "human eye" of a literary critic or reader.

Two formal aspects of poetry, repetition and syllabication, are worth investigating, especially if we are to prove if Leona's poems belonged to the folk tradition (Ilocano and/or Philippine), or if they should be properly located within the poet's imagination and creativity. To do a "close(r) reading" (Guillermo, 2017-2018), digital tools will be used. Two files are prepared: the first file contains Leona's poems (to be called "Leona Corpus"), and the second, for comparison, the Ilocano epic Lam-ang (to be called "Lam-ang Corpus").

Leona's poems and the Lam-ang epic were both documented in the late nineteenth century, thanks to the energetic Isabelo. The epic was recorded by Father Gerardo Blanco, a priest in Bangar, La Union, and later forwarded to Isabelo, who published it in his newspaper *El Ilocano* from 1889 to 1890, with his Spanish translation. It was later republished in the second volume of *El Folk-Lore Filipino* (1890), with the title "Vida de Lam-ang." As told earlier, other versions later appeared: the Canuto Medina version (1906), the La Lucha version (1926), named after an Ilocano weekly based in Pasay, managed by Santiago A. Fonacier, and the Parayno Hermanos version (1927), after the name of a printing house in Calasiao, Pangasinan (Manuel, 1963, pp. 10-12; Yabes, 1968-1969b,

pp. 166-168; Ventura Castro, 1984b, pp. 63-64). Contemporary translations used and improved these versions. Jovita Ventura Castro translated Yabes' composite text, with some revisions (*Lam-ang*, 1984). The version included in Damiana L. Eugenio's *The Epics* is the Blanco – De los Reyes, translated by Angelito L. Santos (*The Life of Lam-ang*, 1890/2001). The most recent translation of the epic, done by Junley L. Lazaga and Ariel S. Tabag, also used the Blanco – De los Reyes version (*Búhay ni Lam-ang*, 1890/2019).

Like Leona's poems, the story of Lam-ang was partly Europeanized. According to Marcelino A. Foronda, Jr. (1968-1969, p. 179), "Evidence is strong that this poem is of pre-Hispanic vintage—the presence of names like Lam-ang, Namongan, would support this claim; but then at the same time the poem, at least in its version that has come down to us, mentions Christian baptism and marriage and Christian names like Juan and Ines." The epic also underwent technological changes, as it became available in print. Yet, aside from surviving indigenous elements, its "reading" still reflects the oral tradition: "The epic is often sung to the tune of the dallot during wedding and baptismal feasts among the peasantry, usually by old men who know the poem by heart" (Yabes, 1968-1969b, pp. 170-171; see also Manuel, 1963, p. 12).

For the Leona Corpus, the twenty-one poems were scanned using a device that has optical character recognition (OCR), and these characters were placed in a text file (.txt). I removed the titles, stresses, and punctuation marks. All characters are converted to lowercase. Aside from *ñ* (which I converted to *n*), characters based on the old Hispanic orthography are maintained (*c/qu* instead of *k, o/u* instead of *w*, and so on). I also maintained Isabelo's omission of repeated stanzas—this will help us in further identifying repetitive words, phrases, or lines that he probably did not notice. Line cutting is maintained, too.

For the Lam-ang Corpus, I used Yabes' composite text, translated by Jovita Ventura Castro, which is mainly based on the Parayno Hermanos version, aided by the three other versions (*Lam-ang*, 1984). My choice of version is motivated by the fact that the Yabes composite text was more complete than the Blanco - De los Reyes version. (Although, it would also be good to compare Leona's poems and the epic version which Isabelo published due to temporal, authorial, and linguistic proximity). Like the Leona Corpus, I removed the titles and punctuation marks, converted all the characters to lowercase, and maintained the orthography (i.e., "the new Ilocano academy orthography" in 1935) and line cutting.

The corpora are opened in AntConc. The Leona Corpus has 1,124 types

(number of unique words) and 2,889 tokens (total number of words), while the Lam-ang Corpus has 5,391 types and 5,783 tokens. As employed in other studies (Binongo, 2000; Guillermo, 2013; Guillermo, 2017-2018), we can identify the corpus' "lexical complexity" (also called "vocabulary richness") through the

TABLE 1. *Types, Tokens, and Lexical Complexity of the Leona and Lam-ang Corpora*

Materials	Types	Tokens	Lexical complexity (types/tokens)
Leona Corpus	1124	2889	0.3891
Lam-ang Corpus	5391	5783	0.9322

4.1 Repetition

Isabelo himself stated: "Repetition is frequent in Ilocano poetics" (*La repetición es frecuente en la Poética ilocana*) (De los Reyes, 1889/1994, pp. 328-329). Similar observation also appears in other Philippine forms: in their studies of Philippine folk literature, E. Arsenio Manuel (1963), Jovita Ventura Castro (1984a, p. 3), Damiana L. Eugenio (2001, p. xxv), and, recently, Alvin B. Yapan (2023), identified repetition as one of its salient features. Eugenio identified various kinds of repetitions among the epics: "Repetition of scene or episode, repetition of lines, repetition of rituals, and repetition of formulaic passages" (Eugenio, 2001, p. xxv). In the case of Leona, she repeated a lot of lines, to the point that Isabelo found it unnecessary to print them. "The dots indicate that a stanza has been omitted to avoid repetition" (*Los puntos indican una estrofa suprimida por evitar repeticiones*), he put as a footnote on congratulatory poems (De los Reyes, 1889/1994, pp. 354-355). More so, Isabelo explains that "the repetitions are not padding but literary embellishments. The easy rules of Philippine poetics make padding unnecessary" (*las repeticiones que se notan en la anterior poesía, no son ripios sino adornos literarios. Las fáciles reglas de la Poética filipina hacen innecesarios los ripios*) (De los Reyes, 1889/1994, pp. 344-345).

To identify repetitions in the Leona Corpus, we can use the N-gram feature. An n-gram is "an adjacent sequence of n elements in a particular language which may consist of phonemes, letters, syllables, or words; an n-gram with n having a value of 1 is a unigram, a 2-gram is a bigram, a 3-gram is a trigram, and so on" (Guillermo & Paluga, 2017, p. 112). To point out valuable n-grams, I maintained Leona's line-cutting. Cuts are not necessarily the legacy of print tradition, for they pinpoint the rhyming scheme, if not the breathing pattern, whenever the piece is performed orally. The highest n-gram without breaking the

line that the Leona Corpus can attain is 6-gram: "ti gloria a puon ti imbag."[9]

With this information, it seems that Leona's repetitive phrases and lines weren't too many. The longest possible n-gram, a 6-gram, as well as the 4-grams, only appear on two occasions, which implies that they are borne out of rehash or improvisation. Perhaps what Isabelo meant by "repetition is frequent in Ilocano poetics" is not in the level of phrases or lines (except, of course, the ones he omitted), but in themes, related concepts, or a collection of things. Nonetheless, we are inclined to look at nouns that may generate themes or images. So far, the sequences can be tentatively themed into religious ('magnificence/glory,' 'our lord god'), material ('jewel,' 'land'), social ('day'), human ('women'), emotions ('cries heavily,' 'heart,' 'love') and conceptual or ('goodness,' 'beauty,' 'gratitude'). These repetitions in the Leona Corpus are strikingly different from those of the Lam-ang Corpus. As shown below, they are immediately indicative of repeated character names and scenes (recall Eugenio, 2001, p. xxv). Thus, it is precisely the lack of "specificity" and "identity" that lent Leona's repetitions a sort of flexibility, which allowed them to be reused and reintegrated into other pieces of varying theme or occasion.

4.2 Syllabication

By looking at syllabication, we can partly respond to Rizal's Tagalist tantrums (see Thomas, 2016, p. 114; Anderson, 2006, pp. 229 – 230). Ilocano poetry, as represented by Leona's poems and the Lam-ang epic, differs from Tagalog poetry in terms of syllabic measure. Isabelo said that "the Tagalogs already count syllables and sometimes use stanzas of five or more verses" (*Los tagalos cuentan las sílabas, y á veces emplean estrofas de cinco ó más versos*) (De los Reyes, 1889/1994, pp. 320-321). Rizal wrote in his *tagalische Verskunst* (Tagalog Versification, 1887) that quatrains would usually have twelve syllables per line, cut in the middle by a caesura. Other forms, such as quintets, would usually have seven or eight syllables per line (Guillermo, 2010). In his study of Tagalog poetry, literary historian Bienvenido L. Lumbera stated that "the heptasyllabic line is a native meter," as shown in most of the Tagalog folk riddles, proverbs, and *tanaga* (Lumbera, 1986,

[9] With additional left or right collocates, other n-grams gravitate towards this 6-gram: "maragpat // ti gloria a puon ti imbag" (7-gram, 2 instances); "gloria a puon ti imbag // cas" (6-gram, 2 instances), and "maragpat // ti gloria a puon ti" (6-gram, shortened from the earlier 7-gram, 2 instances). Line cuts are signified by //.

TABLE 2. *Repetitive n-grams in Leona Corpus (English translation by Ben Vargas Nolasco, Jr.)*

Type	N-gram	English translation	Frequency
6-gram	ti gloria a puon ti imbag	the magnificence/glory which is the origin/root of goodness	2
4-gram	a panagayayat quen panaguiaman	[continuous] love and gratitude	2
	aldao a inguet gasat	day that is luckiest /luckiest day	2
	ditoy daga a napno	here [in this] land that is full [of something]	2
	gapu ti naiduma a	because of a different	2
	ti aputayo a dios	our lord God	2
	ti capatgan a saniata	the most important jewel	2
	iti laguipmo dicanto idian	of your memory you will not be forgotten	2
3-gram	daguiti babbalasang a	the women who	3
	itoy aldao a	this day that	5
	quenca a sumasainnec	to you that cries heavily	2
	ta isu ti	because it is	3
	ti sudi quen	the beauty and	3
	toy pusoc a	this heart of mine that	3

TABLE 3. *Repetitive n-grams in Lam-ang Corpus (English translation by Ben Vargas Nolasco, Jr.)*

Type	N-gram	English translation	Frequency
5-gram	ni lalaki aya ni lamang	the man Lam-ang	5
4-gram	ni dona ines cannoyan	[proper noun marker] Madam Ines Cannoyan	19
	ay ina ngamin namongan	oh mother Namongan	12
	daytoy met ti sinaonan	this is what he/said already	8
	kinona met ni lamang	and Lam-ang said	8
	ay addic a babbalasang	oh my little siblings who are young women	7
	ay anacco ngamin lamang	oh my son Lam-ang	7
	ni babai a cannoyan	The girl who is Cannoyan	7
	idiay ili a calanutian	there in town center that is Calanutian	6
3-gram	dona ines cannoyan	Madam Ines Cannoyan	24
	met ni lamang	also Lam-ang	20
	aya ni lamang	Lam-ang	19
	kinona met ni	also said by	15
	ay ina ngamin	oh mother because	14

pp. 8, 11, 15). He further believed that lines with varying meters (e.g., ten and eight, six and nine, six and seven in couplets) are "doubtless the result of careless transcription or corruption in the process of transmission" (Lumbera, 1986, p. 11). To answer whether these strictures in Tagalog folk poetry are indeed indigenous or are already a product of foreign interaction is yet to be resolved. Nevertheless, the Ilocano materials we have now do not follow these rules. Isabelo's remark, as told earlier, may imply that it was not customary for Ilocanos to count syllables. To recall his words, "The poet's ear is the only rhythm, and his whim, the meter." Line cuts are marked by ending rhyme.

The Leona and Lam-ang Corpora are subjected to a Python program (titled "Don Belong Syllable Counter") developed by Lorenz Timothy Barco Ranera (2024). As described by Barco Ranera, "This program provides descriptive statistics on the syllables in a given Ilokano literary piece."[10] Table 4 provides the number of lines, words, and syllables, the syllabication range and common meter, and the shortest and longest lines according to syllabication of the two corpora. For the Leona Corpus, the number of syllables per line ranges from five (or six)[11]

[10] For the program, we considered the characteristics of Ilocano orthography. Barco Ranera is informed about how I prepared the corpora. As told, the Leona Corpus exhibits the old Hispanic orthography (i.e. *c/qu-* instead of k, and so on), while the Lam-ang Corpus, as stated by Yabes in 1935, uses the "new orthography agreed upon by the Ilocano academy" (Manuel, 1963, p. 12). At first, we are inclined to mimic the "pseudo-baybayin" form by Guillermo and Paluga (2017, pp. 110-116). However, for the aim of this program—that is, to count the syllable per line— it may show different results. Double consonants, for instance, can be cut in half (e.g. *dakkel*—or in Lam-ang Corpus' orthography, dacquel, can be *dak/kel* or *dac/quel*). However, problems arise when it comes to ng, which must be converted first into a single character (e.g. words such as mangan would be cut into either *ma/ngan* or *man/gan*). Thus, I agree with Barco Ranera's suggestion to simply count the vowels per line. Some rules are placed, though, especially for double vowels (e.g. one count only for diphthongs *ao, au, eo, eu, io, iu,* and the Hispanic *-ue and -ui*) and triple vowels (e.g. for [na]daoel, there are only two vowel counts in daoel since one of the three vowels would serve as a "consonant," thus *na/da/oel*). There is at least one special case, the bisyllabic tao, which, if not treated as such, would be read by the program as a monosyllabic diphthong.

[11] This shortest line, "ni baquet D. quen mi M..." (line 108, see Table 4) actually counts seven, if one counts "D" and "M," which are name acronyms, as two syllables. The cleaning of the manuscript, as well as the program's equating of vowel to syllable, unfortunately results to this count. The next shortest lines have six syllables, the two of which contain acronyms again: "ni G... á maragampang" (line 105), "ngem no ninto paay" (line 281), and "á X... quet ingguet ranggas" (line 474).

to twenty-two. The most common number of syllables per line (therefore, the meter) is 11, as seen in 112 undecasyllabic lines of Leona's poems. For the Lam-ang Corpus, the number of syllables per line ranges from five to fourteen. As seen in 517 epic lines, the most common meter is octosyllabic.

TABLE 4. *Lines and syllabication in Leona and Lam-ang Corpora*

	Leona Corpus	**Lam-ang Corpus**
No. of lines	565	1,477
No. of words	2,897	5,786
No. of syllables	6,593	12,715
Syllabication range	5/6 to 22	5 to 14
Most common meter	undecasyllabic (112 lines)	octosyllabic (517 lines)
Shortest line/s based on syllabication	"ni baquet D. quen mi M..." (line 108)	"mangpilica man" (line 522)
	"ni G... á maragampang" (line 105)	"sardeng ti salan" (line 1169)
	"ngem no ninto paay" (line 281)	"ta no addanto" (line 1193)
	"á X... quet ingguet ranggas" (line 474)	
Longest line/s based on syllabication	"dinto coma ipalubus ta gasatmo a didiay ti pacabatiam" (line 452)	"tapno mapudnoac ti panangipalawagco" (line 3)
		"ita panawancan tayac a nagayayaman" (line 307)

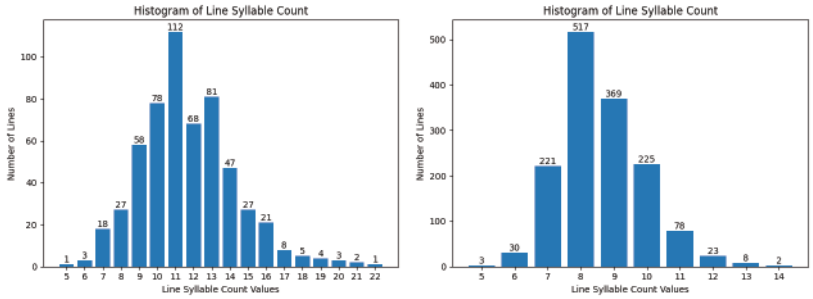

FIG 3. *Number of syllables per line in the Leona (left) and Lam-ang (right) Corpora (Barco Ranera, 2024)*

Such flexibility in meter can partly be attributed to the oral nature of literary performance. The spoken form of Tagalog poetry has established its cadence, thanks to its syllabication and caesura. We may assume that in the case of Ilocano poetic performance, some words can be shortened or prolonged, caesuras are unnecessary, and the poets may have their style of articulation. Yabes stated that the Lam-ang epic was "often sung to the tune of the dallot during wedding and baptismal feasts," probably accompanied by "a guitar or kutibeng" (Yabes, 1968-1969b, pp. 170-171). Furthermore, Isabelo's discussion on vowels, consonants, and diphthongs—which also appeared in Rizal's paper on Tagalog versification—suggests that rhyme, rather than meter, is more important in Ilocano poetry.[12] This is further attested by the rhyming scheme employed by Leona, more so by the epic's monorime (Yabes, 1968-1969b, p. 168).

Arguing that the Tagalog poet Francisco Balagtas (1788-1862) consolidated or formalized the Tagalog poetic tradition, Lumbera stated that, "The dodecasyllabic line became *the* Tagalog meter after *Florante at Laura* demonstrated Baltazar's success with the measure. With the heptasyllabic line associated with folk poetry and the octosyllabic line with religious verse, the dodecasyllabic meter came to be identified with secular poetry during the nineteenth century" (Lumbera, 1986, pp. 136-137). Such an argument is justified not only by the existence of Tagalog short poems (couplets and quatrains in the form of *bugtong*, *salawikain*, and *tanaga*), but also by the absence of epics among the Tagalogs. Nonetheless, this is followed by a statement relevant to Ilocano poetry: "The monoriming quatrain remained, however, as the standard Tagalog strophe… It is one element from the folk tradition that has persisted in Tagalog poetry" (Lumbera, 1986, p. 137). Such a rhyme scheme also persisted in

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[12] However, Isabelo got it wrong when he said, "Each stanza is comprised of only four verses and may have an ending different from the others" (*Cada estrofa contiene solo cuatro versos, y puede tener diferente terminación de las demás*) (De los Reyes, 1889/1994, pp. 320-321). This "difference" can be inferred in his previous examples on vowels, diphthongs, and consonants: for vowels, *e-i* and *o-u* sound the same, but for diphthongs and consonants, "the rest of the verses must end with the same diphthongs…. [or consonant] sound" (De los Reyes, 1889/1994, pp. 318-319). Had he only referred to Rizal's *tagalische Verskunst*, he would know that given the same penultimate vowel, the consonants *b, d, g, k, p, s,* and *t,* and *h, l, m, ng, r, w, y* have the same sound (Guillermo, 2010, p. 560). Thus he would say that, "In Philippine poetry there are no sonnets, sapphic verses, nor quatrains per se" (*Excuso decir que en la Poética filipina no hay sonetos, sáficos, cuartetos, redondillas ni cuartetas propiamente tales*) (De los Reyes, 1889/1994, pp. 320-321), believing that Leona's poems were not quatrains due to different consonant endings.

the Ilocano folk tradition, as seen in the Lam-ang epic. If there is one strong indication for situating Leona's poems within the Ilocano folk tradition, it would be the disregard for syllabication and adherence to strophic monorime. In a strictly formal sense, Leona's poems are "Filipino" insofar as they adhere to the monorime, just like in Tagalog and Ilocano poetry.

5. Conclusion

The phrase "authoring the folk" implies two things. First, it refers to how the folk becomes an author. *Folk*, in the contemporary sense of the word, may refer to "any group of people whatsoever who share at least one common linking factor" (Dundes, 1999, vii). For the anthropologist E. Arsenio Manuel (1962, p. 7), a Philippine epic only becomes a *folk* epic if it has "basis in Filipino folk tradition." In the case of *El Folk-Lore Filipino*, *folk* may refer to Ilocano folk in specific, or to Filipino folk in general. From this folk, Leona rose up as an author, a designated representative of folk poetics. Yet, as proven in this paper, her poems do not necessarily and entirely reflect the folk knowledge, mentality, and practice. The Europeanization of literary forms, as seen in her contempt for plagiarism, use of Spanish words, and mastery of acrostics, would lead us to think that Leona's poems were poems of her own.

Second, it pertains to the making of the idea of folk. This finds its most expressive articulation in Isabelo's pursuit of an "ontological status" (Mojares, 2006, p. 309) for what he called *poética ilocana* and *poética filipina*. However, he was convinced that Philippine and Ilocano folk literature is different from, if not inferior to, its European counterpart. As shown in this paper, we became aware that Isabelo himself might not be the best to speak about folk literature. However, this does not mean that all of his observations and interpretations are erroneous or invalid. With a careful re-reading and corroboration of folk materials, it can be surmised that some of Isabelo's remarks are true. Further, his discussion on the overlaps of music and literature, form and style, content and genre, and social events where literature is performed are genuine efforts in attempting to author the folk that authors folk literature. His insights may serve as a starting point for delving deeper into the "nature" of folk literature, as done in the software-aided experiments on repetition and syllabication in Leona Florentino's poems and the Lam-ang epic. As seen earlier, Leona's disregard for syllabication and adherence to monorime are also apparent in the Ilocano epic. This not only situates Leona's poems within the Ilocano folk tradition, but also sets the *poética ilocana* apart from *poética tagala* and even from the more generic, if there indeed was, given

such differences, *poética filipina*.

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Folklore as a Decolonial Tool: Examining Isabelo de los Reyes's El Folk-Lore Filipino

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We employ reflexive content analysis to examine Isabelo de los Reyes's *El Folk-Lore Filipino*. Written in Spanish and rooted in the folklore of Ilocandia, de los Reyes's seminal work counters the colonial assertion that a sophisticated Philippine civilization did not exist prior to Spanish colonization. This article's analysis, informed by the authors' positionality as Ilocanos born and raised in Ilocos Sur (first author) and Ilocos Norte (second author), attempts to situate Ilocano folklore within its contemporary cultural framework. We argue that folklore, as seen in de los Reyes's work, acts as a subversive force against colonial narratives by accomplishing three key objectives: *umuna* (first), it reveals how Ilocano folklore is a dynamic knowledge system that integrates and recontextualizes colonial influences. *Maikadua* (second), it challenges the colonial dichotomy that juxtaposes perceived barbaric traditional beliefs with so-called civilized modernity. *Maikatlo* (third), by comparing Filipino superstitions with those of their colonizers, folklore demonstrates the universality of such beliefs while dispelling notions of primitivism surrounding Filipino cultural practices. This analysis aims to showcase *El Folk-Lore Filipino* as a pivotal text in decolonizing Philippine history, culture, and society through the text's contribution in correcting a distorted view of Ilocano and broader Filipino identity.

Keywords: *decolonization, decolonial narratives, content analysis, sociology of knowledge, nationalism, Isabelo de los Reyes*

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1. Introduction

That Philippine folklore is crucial in understanding Filipino cultural identity is generally agreed upon. In this paper, we try to show that Philippine folklore is a dynamic force in the decolonial process in contemporary times, and not merely a passive repository of the nation's cultural memory. These stories and customs, some traceable to pre-colonial times, encapsulate Filipino identity. They can confront and refute the colonial narrative that labeled pre-colonial Indigenous cultures as inferior, specifically by reflecting diverse cultural heritage and traditions (Eslit, 2023), Indigenous knowledge systems (Makgabo & Quintero, 2024), and even folk religion (Macaranas, 2021).

Folklore is oftentimes perceived as mythic (Labiste, 2016). Indigenous folklore, including that of Ilocanos, is often regarded as storytelling, metaphor, explanatory device, or fiction, which has its functions but may also reinforce folklore's categorization as "false." Labiste (2016) asserts that there is more to folklore than its superstitious and supernatural characters. She posits that people are able to know more about themselves through folklore. It exposes a community's beliefs, yet also shows the practices that have been adapted or forced by a more powerful culture. Folklore serves a dual function: domination and resistance, or what Labiste (2016, pp. 31) labels as 'acculturation' and 'subversion.' In various folkloric tales, some dimensions that agree with the influence of the colonizers exist, but at the same time also showcase that people already had complex cultures and practices even before the colonizers arrived.

Studying Philippine folklore encompasses a wide range of genres (Lopez, 2008). Folklore takes various forms from folk dances (Namiki, 2011), the grand narratives of epics recounting heroic deeds (Gangoso, 2023), to traditional textiles like piña cloth (Milgram, 2005). These cultural expressions are central to building a national identity (see Avila, 2019). Yet, scholarly attention and preservation efforts remain lacking and uneven across various Philippine regions, leaving gaps in the documentation and study of regional folklore (Makgabo & Quintero, 2024). In response, this paper positions Isabelo de los Reyes's seminal

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work, *El Folk-Lore Filipino* (1994)[1] as a decolonial tool that recontextualizes folklore—in this context, Ilocano folklore—as a legitimate system of knowledge which facilitates an understanding of how people engage with the mythic. By critically examining *El Folk-Lore Filipino*, we attempt to demonstrate how folklore functions beyond storytelling or superstition; rather, it constitutes a dynamic epistemological structure that resists colonial impositions and affirms Indigenous worldviews.

2. Towards an Understanding of Don Belong, Folklore, and Nation

2.1. Isabelo de los Reyes, Ilocano Scholar and Hero

Isabelo de los Reyes (1864-1938), also called 'Don Belong' (Tan, 2014), was a prominent Filipino intellectual, journalist, and political figure in the Philippine independence movement and labor organizing (Damier, 2022). He was born in Ciudad Fernandina de Vigan (now Vigan City) on July 7, 1864 in the province of Ilocos Sur in the Northern Philippines. His mother was Leona Florentino, prominent for being the first Filipina poetess who wrote in the vernacular, and his father was Elias de los Reyes, a businessman. Isabelo de los Reyes is known as the Father of the Philippine Labor Movement (Dela Peña, 2021) and co-founder of Iglesia Filipino Independiente, also known as Aglipayanism (Rodell, 1988). He contributed to Filipino theology (Demetrio, 1993) and wrote for various newspapers, often using pseudonyms (Thomas, 2006, pp. 386-390). Nationally, he was a significant contributor to *La Solidaridad* (Liwanag & Chua, 2019), a Filipino political advocacy newspaper established in Spain in 1889 aimed at promoting social and political reforms in the Philippines during the Spanish colonization (see Thomas, 2006). De los Reyes's activities, along with those of Apolinario Mabini, helped shape the emergence of a national public sphere in the late 19th century Philippines (Mojares, 2016).

However, despite de los Reyes's contributions to Philippine society and history, Tan (2014) comments that Don Belong is an under-recognized Filipino hero. Tan adds that the most popular heroes hail from provinces surrounding Metro Manila. De los Reyes is one of the few ilustrados who did propaganda

[1]We use the 1994 English translation by Salud C. Dizon and Maria Elinora Peralta-Imson.

against the colonizers right in his hometown (Bragado, 2002), as compared to the others who mostly wrote abroad. At 25, he founded El Ilocano, published in Ilocano and Spanish, which, at that time, made him the only *indio*[2] to legitimately operate a licensed newspaper in the colony. *El Ilocano* also enjoys the status of being the first vernacular newspaper in the Philippines, recognized as such even when *Diariong Tagalog* was first established because *Diariong Tagalog* stopped after just seven months, while El Ilocano was operational for years, even acquiring its printing press in the fourth year (Scott, 1982).

De los Reyes wrote about and for Ilocos (Labiste, 2016). Some of the events he covered were the revolt of Ilocos led by Diego Silang, the invention of the Vigan calesa, the inauguration of a town hall, and even a start-up business. Aside from these, Bragado (2002, pp. 66-70) lists other de los Reyes works such as *Ilocanadas, Cuentos Filipinos* (Ilocano Anecdotes, Tales from the Philippines), *Historia de Ilocos* (History of Ilocos), and *Theogenia Ilocana* (Ilocano Theogony). Alongside his literary contributions that challenged the politics of the colonizer is de los Reyes's politics as a statesman. In 1898, he was appointed as the Consejo del Ministerio de Ultramar and was elected as councilor of Manila twice, from 1912 to 1919. From 1922 to 1928, he also served as senator of the first senatorial district composed of Ilocos provinces. De los Reyes died on October 10, 1938. The National Historical Commission of the Philippines states that the Isabelo de los Reyes Elementary School in Tondo, Manila, was named in his honor.

Don Belong has a monument in Bantay, Ilocos Sur, a town just beside Vigan. Nevertheless, that Isabelo de los Reyes is not a central figure in Ilocanos' consciousness is something both authors have experienced growing up. For example, the history taught in primary education was a Manila-centric history that privileged recognizing national figures from that region. On a national level, Ocampo (2012) mentions de los Reyes as among the Filipino heroes and intellectuals whose light declined under Rizal's shadow. According to Ocampo, this diminished recognition of other national heroes is due to three reasons: *umuna* (first), their works are hard to find due to the destruction of the libraries that housed them. *Maikadua* (second), their works were mostly written in Spanish, a language the current generation of Filipinos generally does not speak. That de los Reyes wrote in his native language of Ilocano was also a complicating factor for his diminished recognition nationally. *Maikatlo* (third), Isabelo de los Reyes was particularly painted as eccentric, with unpopular politics mixed with

[2]Indio is the Spanish pejorative for native inhabitants of the Philippines.

religion, specifically the Aglipayan Church. It must be noted, however, that Bragado (2002) clarified that Don Belong rejected the Church but embraced Roman Catholicism.

2.2. Folklore and Decoloniality

Documenting folklore among colonized societies was neither neutral nor apolitical; instead, it has been a part of the colonial enterprise. As a result, colonialism influenced the production of folklore and its reception and circulation (Briggs & Naithani, 2012). As Naithani (2001, pp. 187-188) observes, the colonized produced, recorded, and translated their folklore mediated through the colonizers' language and frameworks. At the same time, these recorded traditions remained largely inaccessible to the very communities from which they originated. Simultaneously, colonial meaning-making became enmeshed with pre-colonial thought and practices, stripping them of their context and presenting them as immutable features of historical and modern realities (Fox, 2021).

Colonizers systematically constructed stereotypes that positioned Filipinos as inherently part of nature, thereby branding them as "wild" and "barbaric" (Casanova, 2019, p. 27). The term "indio," which was historically used to racially categorize native Filipinos, groups together all non-Western peoples, and rationalizes the exercise of authority and the perceived need for colonization (Bhabha, 2004). As a counter, folklore prompts a heightened awareness of past and present oppression and suppression experiences (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018). Hence, by its very nature, it can be argued that folklore is decolonial, as it serves as both a repository of cultural indigeneity and a lens through which the ruptures caused by colonial violence become evident. This ideation of folklore as a decolonial tool is crucial, as it enables the transmission and preservation of cultural epistemes while facilitating their reinterpretation in ways that resonate with contemporary socio-political realities.

3. Content Analysis and Reflexivity in Reading El Folk-Lore Filipino

Bascom (1973, p. 376) defined folklore, culture, and verbal art as knowledge not transmitted through written forms. Folklore survives orally. Furthermore, he asserted that when researchers write down folklore, they give only a small glimpse of reality if they do not write folklore in terms of the culture in which they exist (see also Bascom, 1954). Therefore, any attempt to document or interpret

folklore must be undertaken by individuals with a deep understanding of the culture to which these narratives belong to better ensure that their meanings and cultural significance are accurately conveyed. This pronouncement proves one of the strengths of looking at and writing about Ilocano folklore in terms of the eye of an Ilocano. De los Reyes, more than writing folklore with his own Ilocano context in mind, also exhibited reflexivity (Labiste, 2016) in *El Folk-Lore Filipino*, seeing how he inserted his comments in the book. These comments were wide-ranging, from simply providing context to the folklore to agreeing with and disagreeing with the cultural practice presented.

We can define reflexivity as "(a) the process of critical self-reflection on one's biases, theoretical dispositions, preferences; (b) an acknowledgement of the inquirer's place in the setting, context, and social phenomenon he or she seeks to understand and a means for critical examination of the entire research process" (Kleinsasser, 2000, p. 155). Reflexivity, moreover, involves positionality or the acknowledgement of the researcher's place (Kleinsasser, 2000). This definition enjoined the authors to lay down our positionalities within this paper. Both authors are Ilocanos by heritage, with the first author hailing from Ilocos Sur and the second author from Ilocos Norte, and both were born to Ilocano parents. Ilocano is our lingua franca, which we continue to use in communication with family and childhood friends. Additionally, the first author has a conversational proficiency in Spanish, enabling her to engage directly with Don Belong's assertions in *El Folk-Lore Filipino* in their original linguistic form.

We specifically employ content analysis due to its efficacy in examining cultural materials (Leavy & Harris, 2018). Reflexivity further complements this approach, which allows us to acknowledge our active role in interpreting and constructing meaning from the data. Rather than perceiving subjectivity as a limitation, this methodological framework positions the researchers' perspectives as integral to the analytical process (Brown, 2019; Mauthner & Doucet, 2003). By actively engaging with the data through our lens and lived experiences (Campbell et al., 2021; Terry & Hayfield, 2020), we can better ensure a nuanced interpretation that is attuned to the cultural complexities of the text.

4. Discussing Decoloniality and Nation in El Folk-Lore Filipino

The following section examines how Isabelo de los Reyes, recognized as the Father of Philippine Folklore, employed folklore in El Folk-Lore Filipino to challenge colonial narratives. The book presents narratives as tools of resistance and agents of identity formation within the context of Spanish colonialism. The

following discussion unfolds as follows: *umuna* (first), it demonstrates that Ilocano folklore is a dynamic knowledge system that incorporates and recontextualizes colonial influences. *Maikadua* (second), it critiques the colonial dichotomy that contrasts "barbaric" traditional beliefs with "civilized" modernity. *Maikatlo* (third), it reveals the universality of folkloric beliefs, challenging notions of primitivism of Filipino cultural practices. Together, these points may contribute to understanding a national identity constantly in negotiation with colonial legacies, particularly emphasizing its localized expression in Ilocandia.

4.1. Recognizing a Dynamic Knowledge System

De los Reyes viewed folklore as a collection of knowledge of the past that scholars and non-scholars can access. He first published Ilocano folklore materials in *El Eco de Vigan* (The Vigan Echo), which sparked a discussion on the definition of folklore that was earlier conceptualized as popular knowledge. In these works, de los Reyes exhibited a sense of nationhood limited to the Ilocano region (Labiste, 2016, p.37). Nevertheless, his work still represented a unified and even political view of a people now included in the broader ambit of the Filipino identity. Therefore, what de los Reyes introduced then had vestiges of nation-oriented knowledge dissemination. His work, inextricably linked to the broader project of national identity formation of the 19th century Philippines, was interwoven with the cultural preservation and transmission of folklore, which in turn functions as a collective memory of the people. To illustrate, Ocampo (2012) posits the pioneering role of Don Belong in the intellectual movement that sought to define the Filipino nation. This role is evident in his book *El Folk-lore Filipino*.

As an illustration, de los Reyes (1994, p. 9) posits,

> Can we say with certainty who were the aborigines of this archipelago? I would say that the Ilocanos are of a distinct race from the Tagalogs because there are some differences between them that I could easily distinguish at first glance. But after carefully studying customs, superstitions and traditions of different towns, I changed my mind.

The above quotation shows that Don Belong conceived of the Ilocanos and the Tagalogs as the same because they have similarities in customs, superstitions, and traditions. What this indicates about de los Reyes is that aside from the rallying cry against the colonizers that united many Filipinos, folklores can also serve as a point of unity for all the members of the larger Philippine nation, whether one is

an Ilocano, a Tagalog, or even a Bisaya, an Igorot, a Dumagat, and so on. *El Folk-Lore Filipino* also showcases de los Reyes's politics, which are intricately tied to his imagination of a nation.

Many folklores in *El Folk-Lore Filipino* show the fusion of Ilocano, Spanish, and Chinese practices. The book even had a whole section outlining the similarities between Europeans and the Ilocano beliefs. For instance, de los Reyes (1994, p. 141) wrote,

> The *duende* is one of the mythological beings introduced in the Philippines by the Spaniards. It has no equivalent term in Ilocano and has been retained up to present.

The *dwende*, as the Ilocanos and the Tagalogs spell it, has been imagined as a vernacular entity. De los Reyes informs that the *dwende*, loosely translated as elf in English, originally was a Spanish word that, instead of getting translated into the local language, was only adapted by the community. Bascom (1954) posits that folklore serves as a mirror of culture. In this case, the persistence of supernatural beings the colonizers introduced illustrates how Ilocanos and Tagalogs may have reappropriated and indigenized what was once foreign. This act of assimilation to the vernacular transfigures what could be seen as a symbol of colonial imposition into expressions of Indigenous agency and realities. In this manner, folklore may be considered to actively form a critique of colonial histories while reconstituting Indigenous worldviews.

At another point in his text, de los Reyes (1994, p. 97) reflects,

> People believe they [firstborn puppies] bring buisit (a Chinese word which means bad luck) to their masters.

The term *buisit*, now commonly spelled as *bwisit* (bad luck) in Tagalog and Ilocano, showcases a complex cultural exchange and adaptation within the Ilocano community. Initially derived from Chinese, indicating its origins outside the Spanish colonial influence, this term reconsiders the reductionist narrative that Ilocanos' adoption of foreign elements was solely a response to Spanish colonial dominance. In modern Filipino discourse, *bwisit* remains a common expression of frustration or misfortune. While it no longer strictly connotes supernatural punishment, its continued presence in everyday language reveals the enduring influence of folk expressions in shaping cultural narratives. This persistence also aligns with broader colonial structures, as expressions of misfortune in colonized societies often reinforce narratives of powerlessness. As such, Ilocanos' engagement with Chinese and Spanish cultural inputs may disrupt the colonial framework that

casts colonized societies as passive recipients of foreign impositions. Such disruption aids in resisting a dichotomy that locates modernity with the colonizer and barbarism with the colonized (Meghji, 2021).

4.2. De-dichotomizing So-called Barbaric Beliefs and Civilized Modernity

Don Belong's documentation of Ilocano and Filipino folklore in *El Folk-Lore Filipino* challenges the imposed dichotomies of civilized/barbaric, developed/underdeveloped, and Western/non-Western that have long structured colonial discourse. Moreover, Don Belong does not position Indigenous culture in static opposition to colonial impositions but instead recognizes the negotiations that arise from colonial encounters. In doing so, he upsets the colonial narrative that aligns modernity with the West and backwardness with the Ilocano.

De los Reyes (1994, p. 93) wrote

> It is also bad to stay under the trees, hold mirrors, glasses, crystals, and any shining metal [during the storm].
>
> It is bad to point with your finger at a rainbow because the finger will be cut.

In Ilocos, such practices still exist even today, as both authors' lived experiences also confirm. Notably, de los Reyes did not explain why certain actions, such as avoiding mirrors during a storm or refraining from pointing at a rainbow, were considered taboo. In each of the authors' upbringing, these prohibitions were enforced without clear justification, existing as passed down wisdom. However, we assert that not all knowledge requires rationalization within a Western empirical framework. The expectation that every belief or practice must be explained through colonial epistemologies reinforces the hegemony of Western rationality while marginalizing Indigenous ways of knowing, which includes experiential, spiritual, and communal understandings of the world. Despite the non-primacy of rationality, seeing these cultural beliefs documented in writing had a legitimizing effect. This perpetuation affirms the understanding that Indigenous knowledge systems, even those that resist empirical justification, are valid in their own right.

Meanwhile, folklore can serve as an instructional device and a means of discipline and control (Bascom, 1954). For instance, the tales of *kumao, sirena,* and *duende* presented in El Folk-Lore Filipino function to tell people, especially

children, what they should and should not do. In this sense, folklore is crucial in upholding cultural values while delineating moral boundaries between right and wrong. Such folklore may have been strategically advantageous to colonizers, who recognized its power to regulate behavior and instill discipline, thereby reinforcing societal structures and minimizing resistance to colonial dominance. This dual function of folklore helped preserve Indigenous traditions and maintained the social order necessary for the perpetuation of colonial hegemony (Labiste, 2016, pp. 40-43).

Some of the other folkloric beliefs in the book that are still practiced up to this day are,

> It is prohibited to sweep the floor at dusk lest one offends the invisible beings who can retaliate by causing illness (de los Reyes, 1994, p. 103).
>
> One who bites his tongue knows that someone is talking about him somewhere else (de los Reyes, 1994, p. 105).
>
> It is bad to bite the neck of children even in a playful caress because when they grow up and we unconsciously hold them in our arms, they will respond by wrenching themselves free (de los Reyes, 1994, p. 105).
>
> To dream that a tooth falls or to feel an itch in the rectum is a sign that a relative will soon die (de los Reyes, 1994, p. 111).

In many cases, these beliefs are Indigenous ways of making sense of the mundane and the supernatural. They provide Ilocanos with frameworks to navigate and understand the complexities of their world —realities that often elude purely logical or rational explanation.

Meanwhile, there were also those included in *El Folk-Lore Filipino* that now carry a different meaning. For example, de los Reyes (1994, p. 101) wrote,

> A butterfly that flutters around or enters the house is a sign that somewhere a relative has died.

In contemporary Ilocano culture and households, the fluttering of a butterfly is believed to signal the arrival of a deceased relative's soul paying a visit to the living. It is understood that the departed relative may be seeking to check on the well-being of the family members they left behind in the mortal realm.

On the other hand, de los Reyes (1994, p. 109) also noted,

> No one should pass on top of the little children or else they shall receive misfortunes.

Growing up, for example, the first author avoided getting passed by adults, not out of fear of misfortune but because it was believed that doing so would hinder her physical growth. This change illustrates how folklore often carries deeper meanings that shift according to the societal context in which it is cherished (Bascom, 1954). As the Ilocano community has transformed over time, so too have its cultural practices and the meanings attached to these practices.

Modifications in folklore, from the belief in the ominous nature of butterflies to ideas about growth and bravery associated with children, indicate an active reimagining and adaptation to contemporary contexts. This ability to modify and adapt folklore challenges the colonial depiction of Ilocanos—and, by extension, the broader Filipino community—as stagnant or backward. This aligns with Bascom's (1954) view of folklore as a pedagogic device, and, in the Ilocano context, these narratives also evolve with the community.

Where colonial powers might have used folklore to impose order and ensure compliance, the Ilocano response through the evolution of these narratives illustrates a form of resistance or subversion. Moreover, the transformation in the meaning and application of folklore reveals a community actively engaging with its history and traditions in a dialogue that is both retrospective and prospective (see Jocano, 1982).

4.3. Dispelling Primitivism while Asserting Universalism

There is a striking irony in the writings of Don Belong in *El Folk-Lore Filipino*. He (1994, p. 145) wrote,

> These beliefs were very popular during the ancient times when people were ignorant and credulous.

De los Reyes, at times, portrays the Ilocanos as illiterate and even implies that documenting their culture serves as an "emancipatory act," or one that would enlighten them to the supposed primitive backwardness of their own beliefs. In this view, writing folklore becomes a vehicle for cultural introspection, potentially leading the Ilocano people to reconsider and modify their superstitious practices. However, this equation of Indigenous beliefs to primitivism reflects a paradox: de los Reyes's documentation and writings on

Ilocano folklore implicitly endorsed the colonial rationalist framework that equated progress with the rejection of native epistemologies. Though invaluable in safeguarding folklore, his approach demonstrates the lingering effects of coloniality, even the internalization of the "Other" (Sánchez, 2015), of Western epistemic superiority that positions Indigenous knowledge as something to be corrected or outgrown. On another instance of this internalized "Othering," de los Reyes (1994, p. 21) wrote,

> As brother of the forest dwellers—the Aetas, the Igorots and the Tinguians—of this remote Spanish colony that has yet to know the full light of civilization…

Here, de los Reyes's work reveals a contradiction: on the one hand, he expresses a strong sense of Ilocano pride, as seen in his assertion:

> The Ilocano vinegar is superior and is known all over the Philippines. It is stronger than those produced in Europe (de los Reyes, 1994, p. 93).

Yet, on the other hand, despite this pride, de los Reyes simultaneously employs the language of colonial discourse, framing certain Indigenous groups as uncivilized. Don Belong's framing of the "Aetas, the Igorots, and the Tinguians" as peoples who "have yet to know the full light of civilization" situates him within what Thomas-Olalde and Velho (2011, p. 29) describe as "a constitutive relationship with the self-image of the West." Even the language that de los Reyes used is intriguing. The Ilocano folk recounted their folklore in their native vernacular and Don Belong also documented these narratives in Spanish. This linguistic shift is significant, as it mediates the transmission of Indigenous knowledge through the colonial language. While it is true that de los Reyes addressed a Spanish-speaking audience and, as Thomas (2006, pp. 398–399) compellingly argues, used the colonizer's language to open discursive spaces for dialogue and resistance, the act of translation is never neutral. It involves linguistic and intellectual choices that inevitably shape how Indigenous knowledge is framed, received, and (re)interpreted by its intended audience, thus reinforcing the Occidental framing of the *El Folk-Lore Filipino.*

That de los Reyes saw Ilocano folklore as barbaric may largely be because its narratives often leaned toward the shocking, the superstitious, and the unscientific. As Bascom (1954) notes, folklore often unsettles because it defies modern, scientific, and urban sensibilities. Don Belong's work, while pioneering, also reflects the contradictions of colonial knowledge production where the

attempt to record, catalog, and classify Indigenous knowledge within the colonial framework often reinforces the very hierarchies it aims to critique. His study of Ilocano folklore thus serves as both a site of decolonial potential and a reminder of the complexities inherent in the colonial encounter.

That being said, it is essential to recognize de los Reyes as a product of his historical context. While his approach to folklore may be critiqued for its internalized colonial biases, his work nonetheless represented a groundbreaking scholarly endeavor of his time. Even as he appeared to ridicule his people at times by documenting what he saw as their superstitions, his dedication to Ilocano folklore and identity remains undeniable. De los Reyes (1994, p. 9) reflects,

> Nobody, nevertheless, will doubt that it is the innate affection for the writing of one's own people that moves me.

Meanwhile, de los Reyes (1994, p. 19) writes,

> I believe that the worst of all men is the one who is not imbued with this noble and sacred sentiment called patriotism.
>
> And who is responsible for those articles and gazettes in the Philippine press that proclaim their [Ilocanos] good traits, defend them and ask reforms for them? Each one serves his town according to the way he thinks and I believe that with El Folklore Ilocano, I can contribute to explain the past of my town.

Further, de los Reyes (1994, p. 19) asserts,

> This proves that this is a serious task, far more serious that ridiculing my countrymen who after seeing themselves described will know how to correct their mistakes and improve themselves.

Don Belong's depiction of Ilocano practices as both primitive and culturally sophisticated can be interpreted as a subtle critique of colonialist assumptions, suggesting that the 'civilized' West was not immune to the superstitions and so-called backward beliefs it ascribed to colonized peoples. Through this juxtaposition, de los Reyes's work can be seen to challenge the colonial narrative and expose a universal reality: that cultural fallacies also underpin imperialist ideologies, much as how the colonizers claimed Indigenous folklore to be.

By emphasizing the more shocking or superstitious aspects of Ilocano folklore not absolutely different from elements found in Spanish folklore, Don Belong subtly subverts the colonial binary of civilized versus barbaric cultures. In doing

so, he not only highlights the universality of such beliefs but also challenges the reductive notions of primitivism.. Both colonizers and the colonized shared cultural elements that could be deemed irrational by the emerging standards of modernity, thereby challenging the hegemonic constructs that oppressively positioned Indigenous cultures as inferior.

5. Conclusion

Mignolo (2000, pp. 12-14) points to the significance of a critical 'border thinking' in understanding colonialism and coloniality. Filipino scholars and writers situated within the colonial racial hierarchy yet trained in colonial knowledge systems engaged in intricate and creative forms of border thinking. These intellectual practices are evident in colonial folklore texts, such as de los Reyes's *El Folk-Lore Filipino* which may have contributed to the early stages of decolonial thought in the Philippine nationalist movement.

Furthermore, de los Reyes's decision to write in Spanish may have ensured that his writings were accessible to the colonizers. This strategic choice illustrates his role not just as a preserver of folklore but as an active participant in the cultural dialogue of his time. He maneuvered within the colonial rules' constraints to examine Ilocano culture. As Bragado (2002) mentions, returning to de los Reyes can give valuable insights into Philippine culture, history, politics, and literature. Aside from giving us a deeper glimpse of the Ilocano culture, Don Belong, through folklore, was also able to expose conditions of domination. Tan (2014) asserts that de los Reyes's approach to folklore was criticized for looking at Filipinos as backward, but his work inspired numerous works in the discipline.

In revisiting *El Folk-Lore Filipino*, we find preserved critical cultural narratives that contest the colonial narratives imposed on our identity. Isabelo de los Reyes's approach challenges the colonial logic that positioned the West as the standard of rationality and civilization while presenting Filipino traditions as "irrational" or "primitive." De los Reyes, especially through *El Folk-Lore Filipino* as a decolonial tool, therefore may have contributed to the early process of decoloniality in nineteenth century Philippines, where "othered" cultural practices and knowledge systems previously deemed inferior were reframed and reclaimed. His work invites a reexamination of Filipino culture for the ongoing decolonization efforts with respect to both Ilocano and Filipino epistemologies. Hence, the legacy of Isabelo de los Reyes extends beyond his time. We hope this paper goes beyond showcasing *El Folk-Lore Filipino* as a pivotal text in decolonizing Philippine history, culture, and society and forward its contribution towards

correcting a distorted view of Ilocano and broader Filipino epistemology.

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Recording Maladies and Remedies: Isabelo de los Reyes and Folk Medicine in Late Nineteenth Century Philippines

Joseph Adrian D. Afundar

Renowned as the pioneering figure of Philippine folklore studies, Isabelo de los Reyes exhaustively documented and wrote about the Filipino people's customs and ways of life, including popular knowledge about health and medicine. Considerably his magnum opus, Isabelo's *El Folk-Lore Filipino* (1889–90) houses an abundance of folkloric notes relating to Philippine medicine, exhibiting the wide-ranging varieties of folk medical knowledge from the natural to the supernatural. Despite this, numerous scholarly engagements with Isabelo's intellectual endeavors have yet to carefully delve into the many mentions of medical knowledge present within his works on folklore. In response, this essay explores *El Folk-Lore Filipino* as an overlooked archive of Philippine folk medicine, covering folk medical knowledge existing by the late nineteenth century. This essay also attempts to locate *El Folk-Lore Filipino* within the rising professional medical community at the time, particularly the reception of Isabelo's work on folk medicine. Against a backdrop of colonial rule, Isabelo's keen attention to medicine in his research not only fulfilled his proposed understanding of folklore, but also contributed to his aspirations toward the development of the Filipino people's conditions at the time.

Keywords: *folk medicine; El Folk-Lore Filipino; Isabelo de los Reyes; folklore; history of medicine*

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1. Introduction

"What is it that we cannot get from Filipino folklore with regard to medicine? The plants of the country are all, without exception, medicinal" (De los Reyes, 1889/1994, p. 11).

Isabelo de los Reyes—renowned as the pioneering figure of Philippine folklore (Scott, 1982; Bragado, 2002)—firmly declared his conviction in the value of the then burgeoning field of folklore to the advancement of medicine, along with other disciplines already considered as 'scientific' like botany, languages, and anthropology (De los Reyes, 1889/1994, pp. 6–7). As part of his endeavor to establish folklore as a legitimate science in the Philippines, Isabelo exhaustively documented and wrote about the Filipino people's customs and ways of life, including about health and medicine. This was also in response to the gap in the available knowledge regarding the archipelago's precolonial past. In doing so, Isabelo produced what many considered as his magnum opus, the two-volume work *El Folk-Lore Filipino* (1889–90), in which popular beliefs and practices of the Filipino masses were foregrounded (De los Reyes, 1889/1994; De los Reyes, 1890/2021).[1] While several scholars have already read and delved into *El Folk-Lore* (Scott, 1982; Mojares, 2006; Thomas, 2012; Anderson, 2013), there has yet to be a dedicated inquiry into Isabelo's presencing and valuation of health and medicine in his notes on folklore. For instance, Megan Thomas cites Isabelo's notes on medicine and its manifestations in folk knowledge—such as the "charlatans who practiced as healers and government officials who abused their positions" (Thomas, 2012, p. 129)—to posit how the folklorist utilized his intellectual pursuits as a source for his critiques toward the society he lived in. Similarly, William Henry Scott (1982, p. 257) makes a passing mention of Isabelo's inclusion of these folk narratives about medicinal flora and quack doctors. These examples, however, are but a few mentions related to health and medicine made by Isabelo in *El Folk-Lore*; one only needs to scan through the voluminous book to identify the numerous bits of folk medical knowledge present within its pages.

This essay explores *El Folk-Lore Filipino* as an overlooked archive of

[1] Albeit branded as *El Folk-Lore Filipino*, a majority of Isabelo's work revolves around the folklore of his home region in the Ilocos, which, at times, have garnered criticism from his contemporaries (Thomas, 2012, p. 114).

Philippine folk medicine existing by the late nineteenth century. Despite not being trained in medicine, Isabelo's treatment of health and medicine as significant aspects of the country's folklore affirms his belief in the place of indigenous knowledge within the realm of the scientific. In this paper, the folk medical knowledge documented by Isabelo and his contributors in *El Folk-Lore Filipino* shall be presented in order to surface these for contemporary readers. In particular, this essay heavily relies on the aforementioned *El Folk-Lore* and its compilation of notes about Philippine folk medicine.[2] The two volumes contain not only dedicated sections to medical folklore, but also various health-related observations scattered across the books' different chapters.[3] Moreover, this essay also attempts to locate *El Folk-Lore Filipino* within the colony's rising professional medical community at the time, particularly its reception of Isabelo's observations on folk medicine. This provides a glance at the influence that *El Folk-Lore* possibly had on the understanding of folk medicine by those who are invested in its status.

Against a backdrop of colonial rule, Isabelo's keen attention to medicine in his research not only fulfilled his proposed understanding of folklore, but also contributed to his aspirations toward the development of the people's conditions at the time. Apart from enriching the archipelago's body of medical knowledge, Isabelo's study consequently shaped his perception of the prevailing public health system in the colony. In comparison to his intellectual contemporaries who were mostly trained as physicians such as Jose Rizal and T. H. Pardo de Tavera (Mojares, 2006; Chiba, 2020), Isabelo's unconventional method of scholarship provided him the capacity to understand and communicate his concerns regarding the upliftment of Philippine health and medicine in the late nineteenth century.

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[2] Skimming through Isabelo's other ethnographic and historical works reveal various mentions relating to the ways Filipinos then viewed health and medicine. While not deeply examined in this essay, it should be noted that some of these notes are similar to what has been recorded in *El Folk-Lore* (especially the ones coming from Isabelo's *Historia de Ilocos*) and can be further reviewed in future studies.

[3] I primarily read *El Folk-Lore Filipino* with the aid of the published translations made by Salud C. Dizon and Maria Elinora Peralta-Imson for the first volume (1889/1994), and Jean Auguste Dominique Monsod, Anna Marie Sibayan-Sarmiento, Joaquin Lerma, and Aaron Jordan Sta. Maria for the second volume (1890/2021).

More importantly, the insights present in Isabelo's folklore shed light on the ways in which the peoples of the Philippines made sense of what was considered 'medical' then. Since time immemorial, the pursuit of health and medicine has been a common component across different cultures due to the practical need for survival. The communities consulted by Isabelo and his contributors become valuable informants in comprehending how Philippine societies viewed what was 'medical' in the past. This approach can support studies about indigenous perceptions of health and medicine, especially in consideration of the colonial regime's scant attention to the development of medicine beyond Manila up until the last century of Spanish rule (Planta, 2017; Joven, 2012).

2. Caring for the Colony

Similar to any intellectual work, the production of *El Folk-Lore Filipino* dealt with various historical contingencies that inadvertently shaped how Isabelo organized and presented *El Folk-Lore's* contents. As mentioned earlier, the available literature has intensively examined the historical significance of *El Folk-Lore* as a monumental piece of scholarly work for the nascent nationalistic movement flourishing in the Philippines at the time (Mojares, 2006; Thomas, 2012; Anderson, 2013). However, what is of particular interest to this essay is Isabelo's folklore and its relation to the conditions of Philippine medicine by the time the nineteenth century was coming to a close.

There is a need to revisit the seminal work of Jose Bantug (1953), as it delves into the state of Philippine medicine under the Spanish regime. Bantug divides this period into the primitive and modern epochs, ostensibly to separate the two streams of development—despite this development often occurring simultaneously—in Philippine medicine. The primitive epoch deals with the popular and folk sectors of health and medicine. Bantug further categorizes this epoch into periods: first, the mythical (Filipinos first believed in animist gods and goddesses that influenced their health); next, the superstitious (supernatural and magical beings tormented their victims with illnesses); and third, the empiric (medicinal plants in the archipelago were widely utilized and deeply studied by Spanish missionaries who concerned themselves with the natives' wellbeing). Meanwhile, Bantug straightforwardly relates the modern epoch with the colonial regime's establishment of institutions involved in today's professional public health systems (i.e., hospitals, laboratories, vaccination efforts). Through this view, a teleological view of the country's history of medicine is endorsed, only

showcasing the primitive/indigenous epoch as a path toward the modern/Western-oriented epoch that was ushered in by the Spanish regime. From this, it is understandable that recent scholarship has attempted to provide more nuance on this interpretation. For one, Planta (2017) covers a lot of historical ground regarding the development of traditional medicine and pharmacopeia in the Philippines from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries. In the early centuries of Spanish colonization, foreigners arriving in the Philippines "simply described Filipino traditional medical practices as fascinating and exotic" (Planta, 2017, p. 19). As a result, the Spanish's superficial appreciation of the ways in which the Filipinos originally valued health and medicine led to the colonial regime's concentration of medical services to be around the imperial center of Manila and other urban centers across the archipelago. Concomitantly, the colony's supply of medicine was too reliant on the shipment coming from either the Galleon Trade or the inter-Asian trade network (Joven, 2012; Bantug, 1953).

It also did not help that the health status of Filipinos deteriorated throughout the Spanish colonization of the islands, as evidenced by natives' experience of the violent realities of military conquests and the introduction of Old World diseases like syphilis—both brought about by the arrival of European explorers (Newson, 2009; Labidon, 2012). Moreso, the archipelago constantly faced famines as well as epidemics under Spanish control. The late nineteenth century, in particular, witnessed infectious diseases like smallpox and cholera ravage across Philippine communities, even compelling medical personnel such as Spanish medico José Gomez to say that these diseases can take "a million souls" a day (De Bevoise, 1995, p. 6). Under these conditions, the colonial regime only managed to provide healthcare for the few who were within the vicinity of their medical institutions. For the majority of Filipinos, folk medicine was still the most available option of attending to their health-related problems, largely through the *curanderos* (native faith-healers) and *herbolarios* (herbalists).

It must be noted that the Spanish experienced resistance to their colonial project, with the preaching missionaries—rather than the might of the military—proving more effective in subjugating the native population. In doing so, these missionaries had to respond not only to the spiritual but also to the corporeal demands of the natives, including their health-related needs. This context stands as the reason as to why the Spanish priests became the primary representatives of the colonial regime toward the pursuit of folk medicine. These "spiritual ministers," "and not lay or secular-trained scientists or medical practitioners," were forced to adapt, learn, and master the locals' traditional

medicine (Joven, 2012, p. 172). This development, moreover, eventually coincided with the Spanish empire's realization of the economic value in Philippine plants, thus prodding the Spanish to implant more resources and personnel to the colony for the systematic study of its flora (Planta, 2017; Bankoff, 2011). It is not surprising then, starting from the seventeenth century onwards, that the Spanish priests became the foremost figures for the documentation of Philippine traditional medical knowledge,[4] featuring the likes of Manuel Blanco's *Flora de Filipinas*, Fernando de Sta. Maria's *Medicinas caseras para consuelo de los pobres Indios en las provincias y pueblos donde no hay médicos ni botica* (which was translated to Tagalog in 1883), Gregorio Sanz's *Embrologia Sagrada*, and Pablo Clain's *Remedios Fáciles para Diferentes Infermedades por el P. Pablo Clain de la Compania de Jesus para el alivio, y Socorro de las PP. Ministros Evangelicos de las Doctrinas de los Naturales* (Joven, 2012, p. 178)—interestingly, all four priests were recognized by Isabelo, while discussing medical folklore in his book, for their valuable work (De los Reyes, 1889/1994, pp. 10–11, 408–9).

Considering these meager foundations, the nineteenth century ushered in developments that would significantly reshape how the Spanish colonial regime approached the matter of public health in the Philippines. As mentioned above, scholars have regarded the multiple occurrences of cholera and smallpox epidemics in the archipelago as one of the primary motivations for the Spanish to introduce improvements to the colony's health interventions (De Bevoise, 1995; Planta, 2017; Costelo, 2021). To explain why the colonial regime became more mindful of epidemics and its devastating effects in the nineteenth century, the period's socioeconomic transformations, particularly encapsulated by the termination of the Galleon Trade followed by the opening of the Philippines to global trade, not only cut off the Philippines' dependency to Acapulco for its medical supply, but also provided the ripe conditions for virulent contagions to easily spread among a growing population (Joven, 2012, p. 183; Planta, 2017, pp. 57–65). With these challenges posed by a rapidly globalizing world, the Spanish empire then had to swiftly patch up its colonies' public health mechanisms, especially when considering the peninsula's firsthand experience with epidemics in the early eighteenth century that resulted in the creation of the

[4] See, as well, Anderson (2007, pp. 289–93) for a discussion of the Spanish missionaries' direct engagement in the production of scientific knowledge in Spanish-colonial Philippines.

Junta Suprema de Sanidad (Costelo, 2021). Additionally, Costelo delves into the establishment of the "first sanitation institution" in the Philippines at the turn of the nineteenth century as one solution[5] to the epidemic problem:

> By the nineteenth century, organizations like the Junta de Sanidad/ Junta Superior de Sanidad and the Subdelegación de Medicina y Cirugía and the Subdelegación de Farmacia played important role in the advancement of public health discourse and the articulation of the unique environmental realities of the Philippines. In the late eighteenth century to the mid-nineteenth century, these institutions were composed by military doctors and health professionals. The incorporation of civil health professionals would only begin in the last quarter of the nineteenth century when the Facultad de Medicina y Cirugía of the University of Santo Tomas in Manila started to produce its first medical graduates after the faculty´s establishment in 1871 (Costelo, 2021, pp. 113–14).

As the Spanish invested more into health and medicine, this wave of professionalization served as a catalyst for the colonial regime's deeper influence on the practice of medicine in the Philippines. From these efforts of institutionalization, the nineteenth century saw the creation of posts tailored for medical personnel within the colonial bureaucracy who facilitated its appointments. Moreso, this provided the state the capability to sponsor scientific projects geared toward the betterment of the archipelago's health conditions, with one prominent example being *Topografia medica de las islas Filipinas* (1857) by Antonio Codorniu, a Spanish medical inspector and military doctor employed in the Philippines. Aside from having "enduring appeal" that "would influence a range of medical literature that included advice manuals or *cartillas* on hygiene and even doctoral dissertations on medical geography written in the late 1890s" within Spanish and French universities, Codorniu's work was representative of the "environmentalist" disease causation theory prevailing amongst the circles of European imperial scientists since the eighteenth century (Reyes, 2014, p. 559). This environmentalist perspective was evident in *Topografia medica* through:

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[5] It is also worth mentioning that another solution employed by the Spanish empire was the Royal Marine Vaccine Expedition—also known as the Balmis Expedition—that pursued to inoculate the peoples of the Spanish colonies with the smallpox vaccine in the first decade of the 1800s (Planta, 2017).

> Codorniu's discussion of the characteristic features of a tropical climate; social customs and diet, and differences in physiology, temperament, and even the mental capacity of races and ethnic groups of the Philippine archipelago would, in certain respects, foreshadow much later work written by Europeans on the illnesses of hot countries . . . Codorniu's key point—that environment shaped a people's character, physiology, and adaptability—placed at center stage the dynamics of geography and culture. His related point—that bodies themselves responded differently according to their constitutions, temperament, and geographic locale—introduced an important dimension of racial politics that was imperial in thrust and scope (Reyes, 2014, p. 560).

Apart from these developments, the colonial regime at the time employed Spanish medical professionals and, eventually, trained Filipino students to become licensed white-collar workers (vaccinators, midwives, and physicians) in service of the colony's public health systems (Joven, 2012, p. 183; Planta, 2017, pp. 65–68; Chiba, 2020, pp. 8–17). These changes, nonetheless, were arguably still outweighed by the colonial regime's failure to penetrate the grassroots, with most natives who were residing beyond the colony's urbanized centers still choosing to rely on the *curanderos*, *herbolarios*, *hilots* (traditional midwives), and other practitioners of folk medicine (Planta, 2017, pp. 65–74; Camagay, 1995, pp. 81–98).

The Spanish, however, were aware of this difficulty in reaching out to the natives. Akin to the earlier works of the missionaries on traditional medicine, medical writers in the last two decades of the nineteenth century began publishing *cartillas de higienicas* in the Philippines that acted "as a sort of everyman's medical instruction booklet, a practical and straightforward aid in the recognition and treatment of illnesses" (Reyes, 2014, p. 564). Catering to readers coming from both the health sector and the general public, these *cartillas* followed the environmentalist thinking of disease causation emanating from Europe. It is not surprising, then, that most of these medical manuals were created by Spanish authors. A notable exception was Pardo de Tavera's *Arte de cuidar de enfermos* (1895) that tackled concerns regarding personal hygiene, albeit it was still written in the Spanish language (Reyes, 2014). While these *cartillas* still generally subscribed to the dominant environmentalist view in pathology, their ideas were not monolithically accepted anymore by the burgeoning class of native physicians and pharmacists at the time. After being educated locally at the

University of Santo Tomas and abroad in European medical institutions, Filipino scientists conducted their own experiments to validate the other theories of disease causation emanating from Western science by then, particularly the germ theories of disease from Louis Pasteur and Robert Koch. This ultimately paved the way for Filipinos to begin challenging the hegemonic environmentalist approach of the Spanish toward comprehending and treating diseases by the turn of the century (Reyes, 2014).

These insights, altogether, paint the general conditions of Philippine medicine in the centuries leading up to Isabelo's creation of *El Folk-Lore*. Evidently, Spanish rule left its indelible mark on the production, practice, and dissemination of Philippine medical knowledge since 1565. Under this context, Isabelo and other folklorists were racing to record and preserve the still untainted "traditions, customs, legends, [and] superstitions," "so that later, the scholars could compare them" with the newly-arising practices of folk and professional medicine (De los Reyes, 1889/1994, p. 9). This outlook of Isabelo served as the anchor of his envisioned usage of his folkloric research. Ultimately, he hoped that readers see the merit in the "novelty of the popular customs and beliefs" presented in *El Folk-Lore*, "which are rarely found in books about the Philippines" (De los Reyes, 1889/1994, p. 19).

3. Foregrounding Medical Folklore

Writing *El Folk-Lore* took considerable effort from Isabelo to produce the two-volume collection altogether.[6] With tasks ranging from reading the relevant works within the field of folklore to tediously gathering all kinds of folkloric data available to them through archival and field work, the early Filipino folklorists worked with rigor and diligence in order to ensure their data's "faithfulness and sincerity in description" (De los Reyes, 1889/1994, p. 19).

Additionally, the pursuit of folklore during these times offered a unique

[6] Credit must also be given to Miguel Zaragoza, Mariano Ponce, Pedro Serrano Laktaw, and Pio Mondragon for their respective article contributions in *El Folk-Lore*. Additionally, Felipe del Pan was crucial not only for encouraging Isabelo to study folklore early on, but also for compiling and submitting his various articles to the 1887 Madrid *Exposición General de las Islas Filipinas*. In the exposition, a silver medal was awarded to Isabelo due to his writings on Philippine folklore (De los Reyes, 1890/2021; Mojares, 2006; Thomas, 2012; De los Reyes, 1886/2014).

opportunity for Isabelo and his cohorts, as the discipline of folklore has only existed in Europe for a few years before the first call for contributors to a "Folk-Lore de Filipinas" was published in *La Oceania Española* on March 25, 1884 (Thomas, 2012; De los Reyes, 1889/1994, pp. 10–11).[7] Being the premier Filipino folklorist then, Isabelo was able to directly address and enter discussions regarding the scholarly nature of folklore. On one hand, it was regarded as a science that studied 'primitive' societies and was closely related to anthropology; while on the other, it was merely a method of archiving traditions and customs that were slowly fading away from societies' collective memories (De los Reyes, 1889/1994, pp. 20–23). In response to this dichotomy, Isabelo proposed his own understanding of folklore: "It is that particular task of the folklorist to gather popular data about the illiterate and simple people, which are still unknown" (De los Reyes, 1889/1994, p. 25). To illustrate such an approach toward folklore, Isabelo conjures up a hypothetical situation in which an indefatigable folklorist encounters medicine amidst his research:

> Let us suppose that a savage man from the forests of Abra discovers an antidote for the cholera virus, more effective than the anticholera virus of Dr. Ferran [Jaime Ferrán y Clúa]. As folklorist, you would not hesitate to write it down in your folklorist's memo book, would you? Otherwise, folklore would lose a precious gem, since its etymological significance does not exclude the knowledge of the people that may not be traditional. And here you see that folkloric medicine is not always magic as claimed by Mr. Wake [Charles Staniland Wake] (De los Reyes, 1889/1994, p. 25).

Through this example, Isabelo's view on folklore is elucidated as not necessarily being limited to the people's traditional forms of knowledge. Instead, Isabelo also underscored the necessity of documenting folklore originating from contemporary times, as long as it arises from the folk's knowledge and practices (Thomas, 2012, pp. 129–38). This consideration becomes important in examining Isabelo's notes on health and medicine, since his work showcases Philippine folk medicine not only in its traditional but also syncretic forms brought about by three centuries of Spanish colonization. In brief, all kinds of undocumented engagements the people had toward medicine were deemed by

[7] See Megan Thomas's (2012, pp. 101–12) discussion on folklore in the Philippines and in Spain during the nineteenth century.

Isabelo as necessary for recording. Due to health being a significant aspect of people's daily lives, folkloric notes on medicine are scattered across *El Folk-Lore*.

Frankly, Isabelo stated his reason regarding the organization and presentation of *El Folk-Lore Filipino*: "But since I am alone in the preparation of this book, I will adopt a simple division organized according to my opinion and the material at my disposal" (De los Reyes, 1889/1994, p. 26). Isabelo stayed true to his words.[8] In both volumes, *El Folk-Lore* followed an outline based on geographical location. The first tome showcased the majority of Isabelo's work on the folklore of areas including the Ilocos region, Zambales, Malabon, and even Pandacan. The second volume featured the contributions of Ponce, Serrano Laktaw, and Mondragon on Bulaqueño, Pampango, and Tayabeño folklore, respectively. Delving more into this kind of geographical folklore, Isabelo—along with his contributors that generally followed this arrangement—organized his numerous notes around the themes of: 1) "religion, mythology, and psychology"; and, 2) "types, customs, and practices" (Mojares, 2006, p. 308). Whenever these folkloric notes went beyond these themes, Isabelo placed them into appendices or miscellaneous sections. Finally, Isabelo allotted special spaces for aspects he deemed were too distinct from the abovementioned themes, such as the particular chapter of Ilocano folklore dedicated to the literary works of Isabelo's mother, Doña Leona Florentino, and another chapter entitled "Administrative Folklore" that told the fictional story of Isio and his experience of working within the colonial government (De los Reyes, 1889/1994; Thomas, 2012, pp. 132–38). Zaragoza's article "about a corpse" during a wake also falls under this distinction, yet Isabelo—believing that "in folklore there should be nothing imaginary"—did not classify Zaragoza's contribution as folklore due to its "more fantastic" portrayal of Visayan customs "to entertain the readers" (De los Reyes, 1890/2021, pp. 31–33). Still, Isabelo recognized that what Zaragoza depicted did "exist" (De los Reyes, 1890/2021, p. 31).

Sifting through all these sections reveals an abundance of notes regarding folk medicine in *El Folk-Lore*. In one such obvious case, the appendix to Ilocano folklore contains a whole section on medicinal flora. In the section, Isabelo—

[8] Additionally, Scott (1982, pp. 252–63) and Mojares (2006, pp. 308–13) also provided their own overviews of Isabelo's organization of El Folk-Lore's contents. Mojares (2006, p. 308) observes that Isabelo dreamt "of a total archive" in "the contents of *Folk-Lore Filipino*," yet what turned out was an "eclectic" organization "system he does not quite sustain."

lamenting the lack of time for "such a delicate task"—actually planned to create a whole chapter on *Leechcraft* or "folklore materials on popular medicine" (De los Reyes, 1889/1994, pp. 407–9). However, Isabelo did not devote an entire large chapter on "medical folklore," despite the many obscure notes about folk medicine present throughout the two volumes. For example, the very first topic of the book's first chapter (Ilocano folklore) is about the *mangmangkik*, which had an ability to "inflict grave illness" as an anito or spirit (De los Reyes, 1889/1994, pp. 34–35). Instead of compiling these instances altogether into one chapter, Isabelo followed the organizing pattern set by the Spanish folklorists who mentored him (Thomas, 2012, pp. 105–6). While not framed as the primary subject, health and medicine still contributed a lot to the various chapters on literary stories, superstitions, and customs within the works of Isabelo and the Spanish folklorists (De los Reyes, 1889/1994; Machado, 1884). Due to folk medicine's nearly ubiquitous presence in *El Folk-Lore*, examining its notes surfaces not only what were the primary health-related concerns of the public, but also how Filipinos made sense of and dealt with their illnesses.

3.1. Illness Causation

A central idea to any understanding of medicine is the explanation of what causes such diseases that people attempt to cure across different societies, considering that medicine is "not just a random collection of exotic beliefs and practices but are systems of knowledge" (Tan, 2008, p. 5). Similar to Tan's ethnographic approach on comprehending illness causation in contemporary Philippines, Isabelo's folkloric notes also highlight the folk's explanation of disease contraction during the Spanish colonial era. While Tan's proposed illness causation theories[9] can be observed in *El Folk-Lore*, it is, at best, a guiding framework for those interested in tracing back the persisting practices of folk medicine in present-day communities of the country. Nevertheless, Isabelo's accounts on folk medicine that explain illnesses still tell a lot about the health-seeking behaviors of and the construction of what was 'medical' for Filipinos then.

[9] According to Tan (2008, pp. 29, 55, 76), the medical cultures of Filipinos tend to explain illness causation through three types: (1) mystical theories of illness that have "impersonal" causes; (2) personalistic theories of illness that can be traced back to a "causative agent"; (3) naturalistic theories of illness that are not "supernatural" yet derived from "natural forces.

Across *El Folk-Lore*, it is easy to identify the many mentions of illnesses being caused by both supernatural and natural sources. For one, folk beliefs toward religion reveal how intertwined medicine is with the Filipinos' view and worship of higher beings, especially with practices originating from precolonial times. As mentioned earlier, the tree spirit *mangmangkik*—Isabelo believed it to be an old *anito* (animist gods of the natives)—possessed the power to "inflict grave illness" on those who fail to pay respect to the forest's primary inhabitants (De los Reyes, 1889/1994, pp. 33–35). Similarly, those hailing from Ilocos Norte[10] also believed in another *anito*, the *sangkabagi*, that can "[inflict] evil" if its expectations are not properly appeased. In comparison to the *mangmangkik*, the *sangkabagi* is more vengeful toward "those who scorn and reject them," due to its acts ranging from dragging their victims on the floor, snatching their livers, or even commanding termites (*anay*) to destroy their targets' food and belongings (De los Reyes, 1889/1994, p. 39). At the same time, those who befriend the *sangkabagi* are rewarded favorably, such as the *sangkabagi*'s supplying of special roots that can "cure any sickness" to their friends. Seeing how these supernatural beings can quickly and gravely affect one's health, folk medicine then becomes concerned not only with the care for one's corporeal state, but also with the intangible aspects of everyday life.

Beyond Ilocos, other instances representing this notion can also be mined from *El Folk-Lore*.[11] Based on the stories of an elderly man, Pedro Serrano's account of Mt. Sinukuan of Arayat, Pampanga and its capability of bringing death and disease to those who attempt to enter and disrupt the mountain's possessions without the "favor" of its residing god Sukú is a prominent example. According to Pedro Serrano's story, young men—who picked fruits from Mt. Sinukuan without reciting a prayer for permission—began to shriek in pain induced by throat inflammations before being "horribly disfigured" for their lack

[10]In Ilocos Sur, the Ilocanos residing there believe instead in the *katatao-an*, an *anito* that travels on a flying boat (*barañgay*) in search for corpses. As a result, "Ilocanos watch over their dead before burying them" to avoid the *katatao-an* (De los Reyes, 1889/1994, p. 37).

[11] Other examples include a mystical forest in Camarines Sur that functioned similarly to Mt. Sinukuan in Arayat, Pampanga and the presence of an *anayo* (nymph) in Tayabas that disciplines people who fail to pay respect to spirits—especially those who go to seldomly visited rivers (De los Reyes, 1890/2021, pp. 277, 273). On another note, even animals, like owls and other birds, are treated as sources of mystically-occurring illnesses (De los Reyes, 1889/1994, p. 103).

of respect (De los Reyes, 1890/2021, pp. 173–79). Interestingly, Isabelo vividly recalled his experience from 1880 in which the passengers of a boat going to Manila "were asked to kneel down and pray in front of a rock" near Zambales; noncompliance would result in sickness once they dock (De los Reyes, 1889/1994, p. 59). In spite of the temporal gap between these two events, the persistence of this belief in the potency of supernatural beings and mystical forces to bring about illness signify its continuation across generations of natives. Amidst the backdrop of three centuries of Spanish rule, this prevalence of folk explanations to illnesses—largely grounded from the relationship between the body and its environment—shows how the colonial enterprise of engendering "a significant re-inscription of the [native's] body through a reformatting of physical geography" was not a singular experience throughout the archipelago (Bautista & Planta, 2009, p. 150). Moreso, even the Spanish—particularly its missionaries—were not always quick to understand the value of the environment in the natives' folk knowledge regarding their bodies and their health. To make sense of what they deemed were 'primitive' beliefs and customs, these missionaries relied on their own superstitions, like introducing the idea of the "Devil" and its ability to possess pagan bodies as an explanation to natives who appeared to be severely ill (De los Reyes, 1886/2014).

While the flesh was indeed a focal point for the colonizers, it was difficult for them to not also pay attention to the 'spirit' of the native. The advent of Spanish rule found an important avenue for its proselytizing efforts in the indigenous population's belief in the soul, since missionaries had at their disposal an idea that was already familiar to both sides. According to Isabelo, "Ilocanos knew the existence of a kind of soul because up to now they believe that an incorporeal thing called *karkarma* is innate in man"; later on, he also declared that "the soul of the Catholic is called *karkarma* in Ilocano," thus directly comparing the two conceptualizations of the body's spirit (De los Reyes, 1889/1994, pp. 71–73). Regarding their similarities, the two belief systems both view the immaterial soul as apart from the physical body, but not completely unaffected by the experiences of its counterpart. To illustrate, Christian doctrine teaches its followers that the body is the vessel of the soul, and one must take care of the former to nourish the latter. Meanwhile, Ilocanos believed that "when one becomes crazy or deeply pensive," that person's *karkarma* "was lost somewhere." Despite these alignments, Isabelo highlighted a different view on the soul by the Ilocanos, with Ilocanos believing that the dead's spirit—called *a-alia/araria/anio-as*—was able to go to around the material world "from the third to the ninth day of his death" (De los Reyes, 1889/1994, p. 71). In contrast to Christianity's idea of the purgatory for

the postmortem soul, the perpetuation of the *a-alia/araria/anio-as* up to the nineteenth century serves as a reminder for the complex terrain that the religious conversion of Filipinos took place on, as exemplified by varying degrees of reception, co-optation, and resistance across different aspects of society (Rafael, 1988).[12]

3.2. Medicinal Flora

Jumping off from the ideas of Mr. Blak (William George Black, author of *Folk-Medicine: A Chapter in the History of Culture* published in 1883),[13] Isabelo advocated for folklore to not only simply learn about the past of folk medicine, but also to "enrich" it (De los Reyes, 1889/1994, p. 423). For the Ilocano folklorist, this translated to a need for the documentation of Philippine plants, their scientific and local names, and their medicinal uses, with Isabelo already planning to go over sources that were left untapped by Blanco and other missionaries who wrote on medicine. This was what Isabelo desired for his unaccomplished *Leechcraft* project. Despite *Leechcraft* never coming to fruition, *El Folk-Lore* still featured data on locally utilized medicinal plants across its two volumes, indicating again these plants' value for natives who lived far away from the colonial state's medical institutions.[14]

Why was Isabelo so convinced in the capacity of plants and trees to see that there is a need to complement its scientific understanding? Folklore's method of gathering data from people's firsthand experiences allowed Isabelo to directly observe how medicinal flora improved the health conditions of his fellow countrymen. In one case, Isabelo recalls two women he personally knew that were

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[12] On the other hand, the Catholic view of the soul was also very much entrenched into the medical culture of Filipinos then, such as the missionaries' introduction of the troublesome *duende*, *tianak*, and *tikbalang* as spawning from the soul of an aborted fetus or the spread of the practice of praying over and recommending the soul of a dying person to God and his saints (De los Reyes, 1890/2021, pp. 127, 245).

[13] William George Black's book was translated into Spanish by Antonio Machado, one of Isabelo's folklorist mentors from Spain. This translated version was published in 1889 as *Medicina popular, un capitulo en la historia de la cultura*. It is possible that Isabelo learned about Black's work from the materials that Machado likely gave to him (Thomas, 2012, p. 110).

[14] See Isabelo's section on "medicine and flora" under Ilocano Folk-Lore for a concentrated example of how these folklorists recorded folk practices relating to medicinal plants (De los Reyes, 1899/1994, pp. 422–25).

healed by Ilocano herbalists only "after the doctors had given up" (De los Reyes, 1889/1994, p. 423).[15] This example becomes more remarkable as the herbalists were still taken to court despite their help, all because one of the treated women was the wife of a Spaniard. Isabelo does not mention the outcome of the herbalists' court trials anymore, but his point stands: in light of the forces that aim to discredit it, medicinal flora is essential to further develop medical science. This makes more sense for Isabelo to believe in it, after personally seeing the ineffectiveness of some roots, given to him by his Tinguian friend, that were promised to make anyone fall in love when applied to that person (De los Reyes, 1889/1994, p. 81).[16] With different plants producing different results, the need for a systematic review of the indigenous population's understanding of these medicinal plants was present in Isabelo's folklore. Additionally, some mentions of medicinal plants in *El Folk-Lore* included the plants' scientific names due to the rise of Linnaean taxonomy in the 18th century.

And so *El Folk-Lore* attempted to record and preserve prominent specimens of medicinal flora and its application across different towns of the Philippines. Isabelo saw that the Spanish colonial state was not completely willing to recognize the merits of Philippine folk medicine. Thus, *El Folk-Lore*'s accounts of medicinal plants serves as a legitimization of the value of indigenous knowledge as a form of science, especially in the face of the hegemonic science of Western medicine espoused by the Spanish in the colony. As Planta (2017, p. 74) has argued, the native *herbolario* also provided the basic medical demands of the archipelago's population—usually apart from the ambit of the state. And in their arsenal, these herbalists relied on plants and trees to cure their patients, such as the duhat/lomboy (*Syzygium cumini*) which cures stomach aches and the ligas (*Semecarpus anacardium*[17]) which treats the *baklay*, a strain of measles (De los Reyes, 1889/1994, p. 423; 1890/2021, p. 329). Up until today, these plants are

[15] See also Ma. Mercedes Planta's (2017, pp. 69–74) discussion on Filipino *herbolarios* in the nineteenth century.

[16] Additionally, there are other mentions of "love grass" (gayuma in Tagalog and *tagiroot* in Ilocano) in the second volume (De los Reyes, 1890/2021, pp. 95, 277).

[17] While *El Folk-Lore* identifies the ligas tree as *Semecarpus anacardium*, modern taxonomy regards it as a different species, namely as *Semecarpus cuneiformis.*

documented to have healing properties through ethnopharmacology.[18] Another notable example mentioned in *El Folk-Lore* is the betel plant (*Piper betle*). According to Isabelo, one use of the betel plant was by healers that tried to relieve a child of its high fever. Moreover, "sorcerers" also made betel nut leaves jump around in the pot, after also including lemon and cloves, for its curative brew (De los Reyes, 1889/1994, p. 213; 1890/2021, p. 315). Regardless how discordant these accounts were in portraying the *herbolario*, the betel plant remains relevant to Filipinos today.[19] From then until now, *El Folk-Lore* has contributed to the better understanding of Philippine medicinal flora and, to an extent, the upliftment of living conditions in the archipelago.

3.3. Folk Healers

Needless to say, any discussion of folk medicine abounds with folk healers as one of its primary actors. In the case of *El Folk-Lore*, Megan Thomas (2012, pp. 129–30) has already elucidated upon the topic of folk healers in relation to the contemporary nature of Isabelo's folklore, pointing out that "De los Reyes decried charlatans who practiced as healers . . . [by pretending] to have healing skills or powers but in fact simply duped the common people for their own benefit." This sentiment was not entirely unique to Isabelo's time, with an 1859 article in the periodical *Ilustracion Filipina* already casting a bad light onto the *mediquillo*[20] for their deceptive healing practices not founded on Western medical science—even describing the *mediquillo* as "one of the plagues with which God wanted to afflict the miserable mortals, in the blessed Philippine land, besides the vagaries, thunders and tremors" ("El Tio Nadie," 1859, p. 121). The folk healer's exploitative quality for Isabelo, going back to Thomas, was "quite

[18] With its search engine, the Philippine Traditional Knowledge Digital Library on Health (PTKDLH), jointly operated by the Department of Science and Technology - Philippine Council for Health Research and Development (DOST-PCHRD), Philippine Institute of Traditional and Alternative Health Care (PITAHC), and University of the Philippines Manila (UPM), possesses records on the contemporary usages of the duhat/lomboy and ligas trees as medicinal flora (PTKDLH, 2016a; PTKDLH, 2016b).

[19] Similarly, the betel plant is also richly documented for its medical usage by contemporary Filipinos (PTKDLH, 2016c).

[20] A local folk healer usually identified as a quack doctor by Spanish officials (Joven, 2012, p. 183).

unlike the ancient *babailan* and *katalonan* (healers, priests or priestesses, or shamans) who were authentic figures of the ancient religion." Thomas's arguments, however, are only valid up to a point, if we are to consider other insights. On one hand, the existence of quack healers does not entail the nonexistence of folk healers who were actually trusted by the people for their capabilities in providing medical care, especially if we expand our understanding of a folk healer not only resembling a "doctor" (in the modern sense of the word). *Hilots* in the late nineteenth century were still preferred by native women over the *matronas titulares* (licensed midwives), largely because these *hilots* were already known to the community that the patient was a part of. Additionally, these hilots "administered post-partum care to the mother and even helped in the household chores until such time that the mother regained her strength" (Camagay, 1995, pp. 93–94). On the other hand, Thomas's interpretation of Isabelo's appreciation of the *babailan/katalonan* seems to be too simplistic. While Isabelo clearly traced the historical roots of nineteenth century-era folk healers to these ancient Filipino shamans (De los Reyes, 1889/1994, pp. 41, 67, 83, 281, 461), the Ilocano folklorist also showed the nonlinear reception of the *babailan/katalonan* who were "not well-liked" and only "remembered when some great disaster occurred" (De los Reyes, 1889/1994, p. 461). And comparing them to their male counterparts, these healer-priestesses possessed similar qualities to that of a charlatan, only overpowering the males with the "surprising verbosity of said women" (De los Reyes, 1889/1994, p. 281). While still serving as an important pillar of precolonial society, the babailan/katalonan was not immune to the disdain of certain Filipinos then—an experience that is not completely afar from what was experienced by folk healers during Isabelo's time.

It is not surprising, then, that the conversion efforts of Spanish missionaries were mostly effective in displacing the ancient healer-priestess from her place as the community's primary figure for health and medicine. Some assimilated into the colonial order through co-optation of newly introduced beliefs, while others rejected and revolted against the Spanish. Still, there are some *babailan/katalonan* who were able to maintain their precolonial status and ways because of the colonizers' failure to reach their communities (De los Reyes, 1889/1994, pp. 459–63; Salazar, 1996). Given this tripartite trajectory of the *babailan/katalonan*, the stage was set for a dynamic folk medicine scene under Spanish rule, especially with the entry of novel actors like Spanish missionaries who dabbled in the study of Philippine folk medicine (Planta, 2017; Joven, 2012). Beyond these consecrated men, this religious conversion imparted another set of actors that deeply seeped into the health-seeking behaviors of the Filipino people then: the

holy figures of Christianity. Primarily, the holy family of Jesus Christ, Mary, and Joseph figured heavily in practices relating to folk medicine, particularly in times when a person nears death; beyond these three, Filipinos also worshiped saints to avoid or heal from specific illnesses. According to Isabelo, people prayed to St. Vincent Ferrer for their sick children, while epidemics were dealt with by parading the image of St. Roque in a procession (De los Reyes, 1889/1994, pp. 109, 167, 177; 1890/2021, pp. 247, 279). Despite these new personalities entering Philippine folk medicine, the practice of attributing health to supernatural persons or forces has already been prevalent among precolonial Filipinos. Ultimately, this new, syncretic form of folk medicine was undeniably shaped by the interacting desires of (1) the Spanish missionary to efficiently convert the local population, (2) the folk healer to stay relevant amidst the changing society, and (3) the native patient to simply remain healthy.

Beyond these undeniably important matters of the folk healers' charlatanism and evolution across centuries of Spanish rule, *El Folk-Lore* also provides a few sketches of the daily life of folk healers and how they carry on with their work during Isabelo's time. In Pio Mondragon's "Folk-Lore Tayabeño," a dedicated section on medicine features a lengthy conversation between a *mediquillo* and his patients during a house call.[21] Through the dialogue, the section showcases some of the routinary acts performed by the folk healer in his work, such as checking the patient's body and pulses, providing an instantaneous diagnosis and prescription, and even grandly declaring their certainty in the patient's recovery thanks to the will of God (De los Reyes, 1890/2021, pp. 330–37). This last act has a slight variation in *Ilustracion Filipina's mediquillo* story. Instead of crediting God, the folk doctor simply announces "it is nothing" in ensuring the sick's recuperation ("El Tio Nadie," 1859, p. 122).

Aside from these customs, Mondragon's account also exhibits an important skill of the *mediquillo*—his observative nature. Prior to the consultation, the *mediquillo* tells the patients that he cannot enter the house immediately, for he might spread a disease that he could have contracted outside. As to how this idea came to him, it was from his experience of seeing a sickly man vomiting before going home to his otherwise healthy son, who suddenly started vomiting as well thirty minutes upon the *mediquillo's* arrival. The encounter only occurred a day

[21] Another version of a "house call" that folk healers did then was the act of accompanying their patients to places they have visited in order to find their lost *karkarma*/soul (De los Reyes, 1899/1994, pp. 70–71).

prior to the folk doctor's house visit, yet he was able to quickly incorporate it into his medical practice. Meanwhile, *Ilustracion Filipina* depicts a *mediquillo's* keen attention to his surroundings in a manner that keeps in line with its scathing critique of the folk healer. In the story, the *mediquillo* keeps his ears open to ideas coming from the murmurs of the crowd overwatching his patient, especially when these people mention their past encounters with prescriptions from other folk doctors. As such, this mixed reception to the *mediquillo*—despite having general traits—points toward a spectrum of health-seeking experiences for the Filipinos in the latter half of the nineteenth century. This range requires further nuance when considering the contingencies when encountering different folk healers such as the *hilots*, the *tauak/tawak* (those who can heal snake bites),[22] the *sohi/suhi* (those who can remove fish bones stuck in one's throat), among others (De los Reyes, 1890/2021, pp. 113–21, 286–87, 308–309). Through *El Folk-Lore*, a slight glimpse into the complex realities of Philippine folk medicine and its primary actors is provided, further showcasing what were considered as part of the "medical" by Filipinos in their daily lives then.

FIG 1. *A sketch depicting a Philippine mediquillo by the latter half of the nineteenth century (Andrews, 1859, p. 122). Accessed through Biblioteca Virtual de Prensa Histórica.*

[22] See Emmanuel Jayson Bolata's (2022, pp. 409–54) study of the tawak as a cure for venomous bites, along with its other meanings.

4. Beyond El Folk-Lore Filipino

Considering the abundance of Isabelo's notes on Philippine folk medicine, one may wonder about the reception of *El Folk-Lore* amongst individuals or groups who may be interested in the subject matter during that period, such as the rising class of Filipino healthcare professionals in the late nineteenth century (Chiba, 2020). On this matter, interestingly, the introductory pages of *El Folk-Lore*'s first volume provide an insight on how Isabelo's endeavors for folklore was perceived by none other than a medical doctor. A few months after the March 1885 press release of Isabelo's call for contributors that were willing to conduct their own folkloric research, there was only a limited response to the call which prompted Dr. Jose La Calle y Sanchez (writing under the nom de guerre *Astoll*)—a professor at the Facultad de Medicina y Cirugía at the University of Santo Tomas who published in 1886 an ethnographic book entitled *Tierras y Razas del Archipiélago Filipino*[23]—to react somewhat ambivalently:

> A learned son of the country wrote about the usefulness of undertaking (folkloric) studies and did not hesitate to go on courageously with all his efforts. Only the press helped the good purposes of the founder, but the steps it took met with the same success like those taken by others before in the name of culture. That is why Filipino folklore cannot be established. Neglect and indifference together with everybody's indolence hamper this endeavor (De los Reyes, 1889/1994, p. 13).

Dr. La Calle, in correspondence with Isabelo through the press, later on declared that he will "contribute what I know to the study of folklore which you are undertaking with great care" (De los Reyes, 1889/1994, p. 13). For *Astoll*, a medical physician serving in the Philippines' only faculty of medicine at the time, to view folklore as an "institution [that is] destined to serve as the *museum where scholars can study in the future* the past of these peoples [emphasis in original]" (De los Reyes, 1889/1994, p. 15), it is probable that other members of the medical community—be it Dr. La Calle's university colleagues or other

[23] La Calle's book formed a part of a larger project focused on the medical geography of the Philippines, which was never fully finished. Interestingly, *Tierras y Razas* was also recognized—along with Isabelo—in the 1887 Madrid *Exposición General de las Islas Filipinas* as a book that was worth reading (*Exposición General de las Islas Filipinas: Guía*, 1887, p. 50).

professionals—also became interested in Isabelo's work and, to a more specific extent, its coverage on folk medicine.

While Dr. La Calle's exact thoughts on *El Folk-Lore's* notes on folk medicine may never be known, it was not completely rare for Filipino medical doctors in the late nineteenth century to take notice of and appraise the practice of folk medicine, with Pardo de Tavera and Rizal being prime examples (Mojares, 2006). In Pardo de Tavera's case, Resil Mojares finds a commonality between the views of the renowned doctor and Isabelo, claiming that Pardo de Tavera "staunchly advocated the regulation and professionalization of medicine yet was cognizant of the value of "pre-scientific" knowledge and practices." Furthermore, Pardo de Tavera "distinguished between folk knowledge and popular quackery, blaming some of the latter on Spanish authors of popular medicine (as did Isabelo de los Reyes in his work on Philippine superstitions)" (Mojares, 2006, p. 213). Unfortunately (and similarly to Dr. La Calle), Pardo de Tavera did not translate these particular thoughts of his into much writing, with him writing medical treatises instead like the aforementioned *Arte de cuidar de enfermos.*

There is, however, *Plantas medicinales de Filipinas* (1892)—Pardo de Tavera's monumental contribution to the comprehension of an essential aspect of Philippine folk medicine which was published only a few years after *El Folk-Lore*. Planta (2023, p. 74) contends that Pardo de Tavera's *Plantas medicinales de Filipinas* stands third in line of the significant works studying Philippine traditional medicinal plants, following the contributions of Francisco Ignacio Alcína's chapter on medicinal plants in his *Historia de las Islas e Indios de Bisayas* and Blanco's *Flora de Filipinas* released in 1668 and 1837, respectively. Additionally, Planta (2023, p. 74) also remarks that Pardo de Tavera's is "a remarkable work, notable for being both financed and meticulously crafted by a Filipino with an exceptional educational background who also happened to be a colonial subject." Comparing Pardo de Tavera's *Plantas medicinales de Filipinas* to Isabelo's work, it is quite clear that financial support was one key factor in determining the production of intellectual works back then. Isabelo did not receive funding for his folkloric research on medicinal flora, thus the nonfulfillment of his envisioned *Leechcraft* project. Moreover, it is lamentable that there is a lack of documented collaboration between Isabelo and Pardo de Tavera on the subject of plants and trees. The two make no mention of each other in their respective works on folk medicine. In comparison, the two scholars have dabbled intellectually with one another in the fields of linguistics and history, while also sharing a few interactions surrounding their personal and political lives—with Pardo de Tavera publicly voicing out his "low regard for Isabelo's

intellectual abilities" during the advent of the American colonial period (Mojares, 2006, p. 342).[24] Moreover, *El Folk-Lore* did not mention Pardo de Tavera's earlier work "La médecine à l'île de Luçon [Medicine on the island of Luzon]" that was published in 1886 (Chamberlain, 1903, p. 119). Nevertheless, it is worth noting the similarities between *El Folk-Lore Filipino* and *Plantas medicinales de Filipinas*: both were published by the last decade of the nineteenth century; both were influenced and supported by Western science and institutions; and despite this hegemonic background, both managed not only to assert the value of Philippine folk medicine (Anderson, 2000; Planta, 2023), but also planted the seeds for botany as a science that future Filipinos can meaningfully contribute to, as exemplified by Eduardo Quisumbing later on (Gutierrez, 2018; Menzies, 2021).

In a similar fashion, Rizal was another physician that paid attention to folk medicine, yet he never took notice of Isabelo's notes on folk medicine. There have been interactions between the two intellectuals as they appraised one another's works, with the most prominent one being published on the October 31, 1890 issue of *La Solidaridad*. In the issue, Rizal responded to Isabelo's comments on his annotations of the chronicles of Antonio de Morga, ultimately encapsulating Rizal's lowly view on Isabelo's lacking scholarship and "excessive Ilocanism" (Mojares, 2006, p. 342). Additionally, through Rizal, we get to know that Ferdinand Blumentritt was also aware of Isabelo and his works, even translating some of them into German for their publication in the European journals *Ausland* and *Globus* (Mojares, 2006, pp. 343–44; Thomas, 2012, p. 102). Nevertheless, the closest we get to the intersection of the works of Rizal and Isabelo in the medical field lies in Rizal's 1895 medical treatise entitled *La Curacion de los Hechizados*. *Apuntes hechos para el estudio de la Medicina Filipina*.[25] A psychiatric article in nature, Rizal discusses "the psychodynamics and treatment of mentally ill patients, then believed to be possessed by a witch" in this piece, upon the request of the Spanish medical officer Benito Francia (Santiago, 1995, p. 64). Although it is a short piece, Rizal's training in the medical arts is evident in *La Curacion*, as he believed that the supposed possessions can be explained through suggestion or auto-suggestion. Fittingly, Rizal also proposed that the solution to this 'illness' is through "counter-suggestion" in order "to displace the suggestion by another suggestion" (Santiago, 1995, p. 70). Whilst an

[24] For these encounters, Mojares (2006) covers a lot of ground: on the intellectual, see pp. 294, 296, 300–302; on the personal and political, see pp. 272, 282, 333, 342, 351. It remains to be seen if Isabelo's personal relationship with Pardo de Tavera was affected by Isabelo's friendship with Juan Luna.

interesting piece on illness causation, Rizal's work was written much later on compared to *El Folk-Lore*. No more exchanges between Rizal and Isabelo would arise in the years prior to Rizal's execution, with Isabelo's eulogy for Rizal published in the April 15, 1899 issue of the Spanish magazine *La Revista Blanca* being the only one existing after.

Finally, there is also the need to look into the reception of *El Folk-Lore's* discussion on folk medicine during the period of US rule in the Philippines, especially since Isabelo remained active in the colony's political scene in the first decades of the twentieth century. Regrettably, no direct engagement came to Isabelo's folk medicinal notes, with the closest being Alexander Francis Chamberlain's[26] annotated bibliography on Philippine folklore which mentions *El Folk-Lore* "[containing] much interesting information" (Chamberlain, 1903, p. 119). Due to its generalized description, one could only wonder if Chamberlain had noticed the book's content on folk medicine. Within the same publication, Chamberlain lists down other folkloric works that discuss medicine and superstitions, thus hinting at his interest in the popular practices of medicine in the Philippines then. Furthermore, the earlier publication "Filipino Medical Folk-Lore" by Chamberlain (1901) stands as proof again to the anthropologist's curiosity on Philippine folk medicine. Yet, "Filipino Medical Folk-Lore" does not recount Isabelo's work at all, instead focusing solely on Dr. Philip F. Harvey's[27] 1901 article "Native Medical Practice in the Philippines, with Introductory Observations" and its discussion of folk medicinal practices by the Moros and other groups in Mindanao. As shown by these works, there are little to no materials covering folk medicine that attempted to engage with Isabelo's book during the American colonial period in the Philippines. Altogether, there was a relatively minimal reception to the ideas regarding folk medicine present in *El Folk-Lore Filipino*, be it from the medical community or not.

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[25] The article also contained Rizal's drawings that portrayed different scenes in Philippine folk medicine, such as the *hilot* caring over a patient, an individual worrying about superstitions related to head lice, among others (Santiago, 1995, p. 65).

[26] Chamberlain is known for receiving in 1891 the first doctorate degree in anthropology in the United States, being trained under the guidance of Franz Boas, another renowned anthropologist (Gilbertson, 1914, p. 338).

[27] Harvey was the chief surgeon of the Department of Mindanao and Jolo under the US colonial state at the time of his article's publication (Harvey, 1901, p. 203).

5. Conclusion

This essay has demonstrated the richness in the content of Isabelo de los Reyes's *El Folk-Lore Filipino*, leading to *El Folk-Lore* being overlooked for its contributions to the understanding of Philippine folk medicine and for local knowledge to be seen on the same level as the hegemonic science of the Western world. Through scattered mentions across his data, Isabelo—despite not being a part of the burgeoning medical community in late nineteenth century Philippines—left behind significant accounts on Philippine folk medicine that can help recreate how Filipinos in the past understood illness causation and dealt with medicinal flora and folk healers. In light of the available historiography on Isabelo de los Reyes and folk medicine in the Philippines, this rereading of *El Folk-Lore* not only provides new pieces of information hitherto untapped by former researchers, but also attempts to place more nuance on some claims made in past studies. Moreover, *El Folk-Lore's* intellectual contributions to folk medicine presents the case of Isabelo de los Reyes as an interesting Filipino figure who served as another trailblazer in the development of a Philippine botanical science, with Isabelo being unique in his scientific approach through folklore.

However, there is still a need to delve deeper into the minimal reception of *El Folk-Lore's* notes on folk medicine by Isabelo's contemporaries. It could be due to the simple fact that *El Folk-Lore* was not written as part of the medical literature, thus setting him apart from his contemporaries that came from the medical discipline like Rizal and Pardo de Tavera. Moreover, this resulted in readers from or interested in the health sector not paying attention to Isabelo's work at the time. This helps explain why there have been few scholarly works paying attention to the contributions of Isabelo de los Reyes in the field of medicine, with his notes regarding folk medicine only beginning to be surfaced in the twenty-first century by the likes of Thomas and Mojares. Nevertheless, the few interactions that *El Folk-Lore* had with other folk medicinal works released during that time does not diminish the merit of Isabelo's findings regarding the health-seeking traditions and customs of Filipinos then. *El Folk-Lore* finds its merit in two things: first, it served as a platform for Isabelo to air out his critique on the shortcomings of both the colonial state in addressing the healthcare needs of the Filipinos as well as the natives' tendency to take advantage of others through folk medicine; second and more importantly, it provides folkloric material for future researchers, including our generation, to understand the Filipino's past—which would have been lost to time if not for the folklorists' intervention.

For contemporary researchers of Isabelo de los Reyes, folk medicine, or folklore and medicine separately, there is much more to uncover in *El Folk-Lore Filipino* that has not been included or may have been overlooked in this essay. For one, there might be errors in the translated copies of *El Folk-Lore* used for this paper. On the other hand, others have begun taking note of the value of looking for records of medicinal plants and practices in folklore archives (Sile et al., 2020), and this can be done better in the Philippine case by simultaneously digging more into and expanding beyond Isabelo's folkloric work. To illustrate, a prevalent theme of folk medicine in *El Folk-Lore* that should be further investigated is the matter of maternal and child health, with many subsections dedicated to the popular practices relating to pregnancy, child growth, and even spirits interacting with the mother and the child. This theme in *El Folk-Lore* becomes relevant due to its continuation in childbearing practices still present in contemporary times, such as the idea that a newly-born baby's umbilical cord should be cut with wood and not steel nor iron (De los Reyes, 1889/1994, pp. 206–7). Almost a century later, Dr. Juan Flavier (1970, p. 44) relates in *Doctor to the Barrios* his experience in dealing with the barrio people's usage of a piece of bamboo called 'buho' in the cutting of umbilical cords during childbirths, for this leads to neonatal tetanus. Due to his Western-oriented scientific background, Flavier ordered for the stoppage of using the buho and instead replaced them with scissors, thinking that this will solve the tetanus problem. Not only did it fail to stop the problem, but Flavier shares that the buho was still in use by the barrio women. Upon learning more about the barrio's beliefs, the doctor found that:

> The barrio [believes] that when an unnatural instrument, such as a pair of scissors, is used in the delivery of a baby the child will become disloyal to the family. A child must be delivered by something that is indigenous to the barrio. Buho satisfied that requirement since bamboo grows in the barrio.
>
> Eventually, we found that the buho was more readily available and sharper than the scissors. Furthermore, it was free (Flavier, 1970, pp. 44–45).

In light of this newfound knowledge, Flavier's team then suggested that the barrio people should boil the buho first in order to disinfect it before usage—this solved the healthcare problem while also keeping in mind the cultural beliefs of the community. Through this example, one can see the parallels between the practices of the barrio people in Flavier's story and Isabelo's observation on the

usage of wood to cut the umbilical cord during delivery. Perhaps there are more comparisons to be made among Isabelo's folklore and Philippine society's continuing practices in contemporary times. Ultimately, we see that what was considered as 'medical' then for Filipinos—be it in the realm of illness causation, medicinal flora, folk healing, or even maternal and child health—still affects our modern perception of what the 'medical' truly means for our culture.

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Isabelo's Nature and Weather: Exploring Isabelo de los Reyes' Notes on the Physical Environment in the El Folk-Lore Filipino (1889)

Kerby C. Alvarez

In his analysis of Isabelo de los Reyes' *Historia de Ilocos* (1890), Ubaldo (2012) makes a case for the historiographical contribution of the work in local historical studies by emphasizing the Ilocano intellectual assertion of the participation of the people in precolonial and colonial developments. In this observation, local and folk beliefs and practices were important objects and subjects of historical knowledge production. However, an earlier work made De los Reyes a trailblazer in historical and cultural studies in the country. His 1889 work, *El Folk-Lore Filipino* (1889) has been appraised as a pioneer scholarly documentation of Philippine folk knowledge.

This paper presents a historical dissection of the *El Folk-Lore Filipino* and identifies the valuable notes, descriptions, and analyses of the physical environment, found in select sections of the book. This work highlights this specific aspect of De los Reyes' *magnum opus* and offers another look into how the documentation of folklores and cultural vignettes can shed light on how local communities make sense and create meanings on nature and the environmental processes related to it.

Keywords: *Isabelo de los Reyes, physical environment, folk knowledge, local history, knowledge production*

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1. Introduction

In the 19th century, the Philippine archipelago was at a crossroads. Huetz de Lemps (1998, p. 160) describes this period as an era of massive urbanization, landscape change, population growth, and a rise of complex socio-economic movements that made areas, such as the capital city of Manila, experience major urban transformations. From a macro-perspective, the archipelago was a colony with a government facing perennial fiscal imbalance, a territory under the strong influence of various religious orders, and an archipelago hampered by frequent environmental calamities. But the country at that time was also a site of burgeoning scientific advancements in the physical environment, instrumentation and institutionalization of scientific disciplines, and the influx of foreign knowledge and investments to intensify colonial economic transformations. The last decades of this period also saw a pioneering wave of intellectual activities aimed at, on the one hand, campaigning for political and socio-economic reforms, and on the other hand, the silent yet productive efforts to understand the domestic condition of the archipelago from novel lenses, led by educated, local thinkers. The studies made by leading Philippine intellectuals of the 19th century offer a fresh look at colonial history and invite a rethinking of the role of some prominent elite during the country's transition to the complex dimension of being a "modern" nation. For example, Gregorio Sanciangco, in his groundbreaking economic commentary *El Progreso de Filipinas* (1881), proved to be not only a critique of the Spanish colonial government's economic policies in the archipelago but also a critical deconstruction of how the ethnic stratification imposed by the colonizers deemed to be catastrophic to the local population (Aguilar, 2019, pp. 375-410). Moreover, some studies exemplify unique documentation and reconceptualization of the idea of indigenous cultures and local histories of ethnolinguistic groups. Theorizing the environment from the point of view of Filipinos (this now includes the native Filipinos and the Spaniards born and raised in the Philippines who considered the islands their mother country) commenced from the attempts to make a scientific description

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of its cultural contents and processes. They illustrate that the Philippine communities have a wide variety of "saber popular" or popular knowledge and superstitious beliefs of the natural environment - a by-product of individual and collective experiences. The works of Jose Felipe Del-Pan *(Llanamento)*, Isabelo de los Reyes *(El Folk-Lore Filipino)*, Trinidad Pardo de Tavera (*Plantas medicinales)*, Pedro Paterno *(La Antigua Civilización Tagálog)*, Wenceslao Retana *(Archivo Bibliófilo Filipino)* and even the ethnologist Ferdinand Blumentritt *(Versuch einer ethnographie Der Philippinen)* compose the body of pioneering scholarly works on folk knowledge.

FIG 1. *Isabelo F. de los Reyes (1864-1938) (De los Reyes, 1900; De los Reyes, 1947). Accessed through the Filipiniana Section, University of the Philippine Diliman Library.*

Specific to De los Reyes, scholars have pointed out his unique and expansive contribution to local history and cultural studies as pillars of intellectual emancipation and critical assessment of the colonial society. In his analysis of De los Reyes' *Historia de Ilocos* (1890), Ubaldo (2012) emphasizes the historiographical contribution of the work as a pioneer in local history writing, centering on the people's participation in ancient and precolonial developments. Mojares (2007, pp. 338-364) has praised and appraised De los Reyes' contribution to our corpus of knowledge on local cultures; as a proud product of a provincial environment far from what was perceived as conservative and repressive colonial Manila, he utilized local knowledge as a significant

component of enlightenment emanating from local identity and championed the popularization of cultures from the margins – *costumbrismo* from the "inside." Moreover, he adds that De los Reyes pioneered the creation of a "national archive" founded on the popularization of local knowledge, to challenge not only the imperial dictate but also the prevailing dominant, elite version, of culture (Mojares, 2013, p. 20). Furthermore, Thomas (2016, pp. 97-140) argues that aside from the objective of legitimizing the idea of the Filipino nation through the legitimization of rural, peasant, and marginalized cultures and communities, De los Reyes attempted to draw a clear demarcation between the native/Filipino folklore and the prevailing concept of Spanish folklore and used the theoretical and methodological parameters of folkloric studies to pursue a localized knowledge production, apart from the Western ethnographic and ethological approaches. Thomas (2006) has also emphasized the need to re/visit De los Reyes' proactive involvement in the Philippine side of the propaganda work of the Filipino reformists of the 19th century, as his writing in local Manila newspapers also provides a discourse not only of the political aspect of the Philippine reform movement but also reveals the vignettes of local knowledge production of the period amidst the challenges of direct and intensive censorship from Spanish colonial authorities.

This work offers a look at the specific aspects of De los Reyes' knowledge production efforts: his observations and characterizations of the physical environment. A two-pronged approach is used in this historical dissection: on the one hand, the physical environment served as an important basis of place-based folklores, such as those in Ilocos and Malabon, which De los Reyes' *El Folk-Lore* made a rich scholarly description; and on the other hand, his insights about these environmental folklores pioneered a form of cultural documentation that enabled the intellectualization of local vignettes on the physical environment. His documented descriptions of the local Philippine environment offer not only vignettes of a local intellectual's pursuit of an extensive chronicle on folklore and local histories but also of a way of inquiry and thinking that epitomizes the scientific and cultural curiosity of the period.

To serve as theoretical guides for this inquiry on De los Reyes' *El Folk-Lore*, this study utilizes Franz Boas' historical particularism and Julian Stewards' cultural ecology. How do these theories help us appreciate the value of documentation of people's localized beliefs and practices? Theorizing the environment commences from the attempts to make a scientific description of its cultural contents and processes. Reconstructing the environment from the point of view of local vignettes and lores provides a useful view of the genesis and

progress of cultures and societies through time. Boas' historical particularism puts the environment in a pivotal location where a multitude of human perspectives and motivations drive how society is understood, and the necessity of an elaborate depiction of environmental components shapes the power dynamics and cultural growth of a community (Hitchens, 1994, pp. 245, 250). Boas gave a wide meaning to the term environment, recognizing the natural and cultural components; and argues that cultures are the creative locus of human conduct and are historically derived (Speth, 1978, p. 25). Speth (1978, pp. 7, 13) describes this idea in Boas' historical particularism as "anthropogeographic," an application of specificity as cultures grow on particular environments and periods, emphasizing how environments limit and modify cultures. Furthermore, Speth (1978, p. 25) enumerates the core ideas of Boas' propositions:

> (1) environment alone cannot explain culture because an identical environment is consistent with distinct cultures;
>
> (2) geographical determinants limit (or favor) and modify existing cultures;
>
> (3) the direction that an environmental stimulus takes and the meaning that environment depends upon culture type; and
>
> (4) the relations between the natural environment and culture are mediated generally by economic conditions.

Meanwhile, Steward's cultural ecology highlights the inwards evolutions that ignite the general changes cultures experience, thus cultural adaptation takes a significant role in the process (Moore, 2009, p. 197). This cultural acclimation can be seen through the study of the physical features of nature, societal building blocks, and human technological options (Moore, 2009, pp. 198-199). Therefore, the impermeable entanglement of the natural environment and human adaptation schemes provides a panoramic view of how cultures transform over time (Barnad, 2004, p. 40).

Using these anthropological postulates, this study puts a premium on De los Reyes' documentation of environmental folklores as both a mirror to the cultural past of natural landscapes as well as a window to how communities embraced these ideas as part of their everyday dealings with the physical world.

2. The Physical Environment in *El Folk-Lore Filipino*

2.1. Historiographical location of De los Reyes' Folkloric Documentation of the Environment

Ancient Philippine cultural communities developed their own notions of nature, the celestial world, and environmental processes. Everyday life is a clear manifestation of the thriving of a culture based on human adaptation and perception of the natural space. For the native Filipinos in the ancient period, it is important to know and understand the workings of nature as this serves as their source of goods and determines and influences the location of settlements. A component of understanding the natural environment is knowing how and why meteorological and astronomical phenomena exist, such as the sun, stars, wind, lightning and thunder, clouds, rain and storms, eclipses, asteroids, comets, and even, rainbows, as these are part of the universe they view and appreciate (Ambrosio, 2010, p. 4). In pre-conquest ethnolinguistic societies, the heavens were a reflection of how people made sense and maximized the resources of the physical environment – manifested through hunting, agricultural, and trade activities (Ambrosio, 2010, p. 5). As such, economic activities such as farming, fishing, hunting, and trade were influenced or patterned after how the environment "behaves" (Ambrosio, 2010, p. 5). By understanding the celestial and meteorological phenomena, early Filipinos framed their livelihood to the way nature provided them with the appropriate resources and ideas to survive and expand their communities (Ambrosio, 2010, p. 5). The agricultural and maritime cultures developed in the pre-conquest era evolved and converged with the ideological and cultural perspectives on the environment brought by Spanish colonialism, particularly the influences of Christianity on the Filipino worldview about the natural world. Different ethnic groups have their own set of terminologies and deities assigned to every environmental phenomenon (Ambrosio, 2010, pp. 59-60).

In his work *Brains of the Nation*, Mojares (2007, p. 384) argues that the ethnographic documentation and textual material production spearheaded by the Catholic missionaries solidified their position as pioneers of knowledge-making and visualization of the Philippines under the rudiments of European scholarship. The narratives of their missionary experiences, cultural observations, and social interactions with the natives generated not only the essential religious and bureaucratic reports for their superiors and patrons but also scholarly works that provide valuable information about the cultural life of Philippine cultural

communities. The symbiotic relationship between colonial sectors – the missionaries and the colonial government in particular, when it comes to the use and replication of these textual reports operationalized the transfer of knowledge from one institution to another. It is also vital to mention that in early Spanish colonial historiography in the Philippines, accounts of expeditions made by colonial and military officials, and scribes are also a good source of information about the life of the native Filipinos. Throughout the Spanish colonial period, dictionaries are good examples of texts produced by the religious missionaries that exemplify the scholarly nature of their ecclesiastical labor.[1] Published confession handbooks are also a source of usable information about the life and values of the Philippine colonial society. The religious missionaries wrote and used these handbooks as guides and instruments to extract information about the daily life and activities of natives in fulfillment of their Christian duties.[2] The textual and spoken character of ideas and the linguistic approaches in the understanding of the concepts provide the necessary epistemological contexts on how people understand and impose meaning to the physical environment (Novikau, 2016; Mühlhäusler & Peace, 2006).

However, these sources, albeit useful and rich in information, do not contain a view of the indigenous perspectives, the way the native population views their world. Therefore, the use of oral traditions as valuable and alternative historical sources to extract the indigenous worldviews on the environment comes into

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[1] The examples of these dictionaries are the following: Pedro de San Buenaventura's *Vocabulario de la Lengua Tagala, el romance Castellano puesto primero, Primera y segunda parte* (1627), Juan Jose de Noceda and Pedro Sanlucar's *Vocabulario de la lengua tagala: compuesto por varios religiosos doctos y gravados* (1860), Diego Bergaño's *Vocabulario de la Lengua Pampanga en Romance compuesto por el M. R. P. Lector Fr. Diego Bergaño, del Orden de los Hermitaños de N. P. S. Agustín, Examinador Sinodal de este Arsobispado, Difinidor de esta provincial del Santisimo Nombre de Jesús, y Prior del Convento de S. Pablo de Manila* (1860), and Juan Félix de la Encarnación's *Diccionario Bisaya-Español compuesto por el R. P. Fr. Juan Félix de la Encarnación, provincial que ha sido dos veces de Agustínos Descalzos de la Provincia de S. Nicolas de Tolentino de Filipinas* (1885).

[2] The examples of these confession handbooks are the following: Gaspar de San Agustín's *Confessionario Copioso e Lengua Espanola y Tagala, para dirección de los Confessores y Instrucción de los Penitentes, Año 1713* (1797), Francisco de San Jose's *Librong Pinagpapalamnan yto nang Aasalin ng Tauong Cristiano sa Pagcoconfesor at sa Pagcocomulgar* (1792), Sebastian de Totanes' Arte de la *Lengua Tagala, y Manual Tagalog* (1865), and Manuel Blanco's, *Confesion at Comunion. Aral Baga na Icagagayac nang Cristiano sa Pagcocompisal at Paquiquinabang* (1865). The religious missionaries from various congregations published their own confession handbooks.

relevance. The most extensively studied among these oral literary forms are the legends and epics. They describe the natural environment where its owner ethnolinguistic group resides. Aside from detailing the physical landscapes, it represents the everyday life of people – life processes, material, and intangible cultures, and events and conditions that pose a threat to their community – whether caused by humans such as piracy, battles, and wars, or induced by the natural environment like storms, flooding, earthquakes, and volcanic eruptions. One of the earliest studies of Philippine oral literature is E. Arsenio Manuel's "A Survey of Philippine Folk Epics" (1963), a lengthy work that compiled available materials about Philippine epic, based primarily on "printed sources, unpublished records, taped materials which have not as yet been transcribed, and such raw notes which have been gathered in the field but of which there is no textual record," and is aimed "to survey the scattered materials, references and information on long heroic narratives found in the Philippines and to determine their folk provenience and epic character…" (Manuel, 1963, p. 2). The multivolume work edited by Damiana Eugenio, titled *Philippine Folk Literature*, is a comprehensive collection and study of selected documented Philippine oral literature, composed of eight books: an anthology of indigenous short stories, myths, legends, folktales, riddles, proverbs, folk songs, and epics (Eugenio, 1989-2001). Moreover, several studies in the Philippines in the previous decade provide a scholarly (re)opening to revisit and comprehensively reconstruct the history of ancient Filipino worldviews and indigenous perspectives on the environment. Some of these include the pioneering study of Dante Ambrosio titled *Balatik: Etnoastronomiya: Kalangitan sa Kabihasnang Pilipino* (2010), which is on the Filipino indigenous views about the sky and the heavenly bodies, and the work of Aguilar (2016) on how the Filipino *ilustrados* in Spain represented Philippine tropicality in their propaganda writings.

From these historiographical observations, De los Reyes' magnum opus, *El Folk-Lore Filipino* (1889) can be located and centered on. His expansive documentation of local lores and cultural vignettes serves as a vital intellectual springboard to the field of ethnography, cultural studies, and local history. Thomas (2016, p. 140) identifies various themes of the Filipino folklorists' writing in the late 19th century: recreating the Pre-Hispanic Philippines, internal racial dialogues between the peoples, the universality of folklore practices in the archipelago, and using it as an instrument of contemporary critique of the socio-political life in the colony. In his examination of *El Folk-Lore's* scholarly significance, Mojares (2007, pp. 306-313) argues that De los Reyes' ethnographic documentation indeed gives intellectual weight to his objective of a "new science"

and the project of a "total archive" of cultures. This present work presents a discussion of enduring and resonant ideas on how the "native" Filipinos view, make sense, and give meaning to their environments and their natural processes.

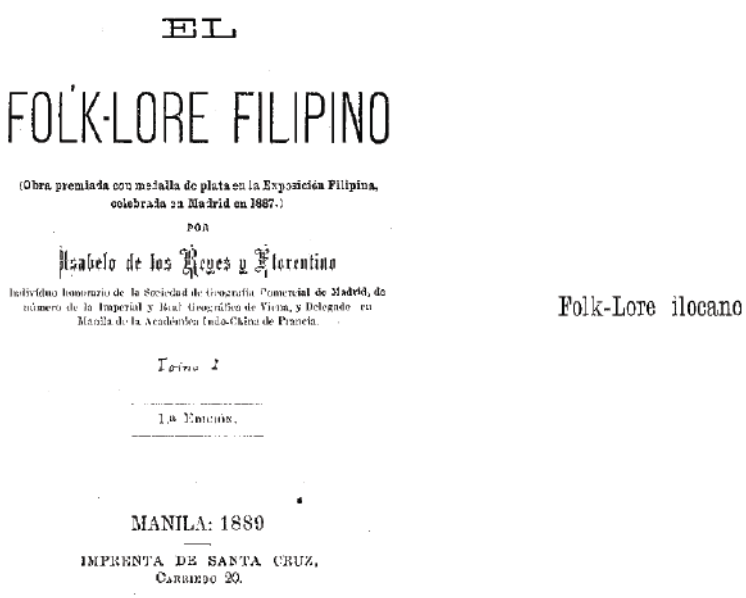
2.2. Vignettes on the Environment in El Folk-Lore Filipino

Filipinos have a wide variety of traditional knowledge and superstitious beliefs pertaining to the natural environment. This is historically and culturally a by-product of individual and collective experiences. Based on a definition, traditional-indigenous knowledge is the "cumulative and complex body of knowledge, know-how, practices and representations that are maintained and developed by people with extended histories of interactions with the natural environment… Such knowledge based on the experiences and observations of peoples over generations can contribute to an increased understanding of climate change and help develop community-level adaptation strategies." (UNESCO/ ICSU, 2002, p. 9). By surveying the behaviors of animals, plants, of wind direction, of the land, and of the bodies of water, people estimate and point out weather patterns and disturbances, sans the technical and mathematical predictions.

In his critical and expansive use of De los Reyes' contribution to Philippine historiography, particularly the creation of a "national archive" of cultural vignettes and popular knowledge, Mojares (2013, p. 13) appraised *El Folk-Lore Filipino* not only as a brave, radical masterpiece of intellectual desire from and for the native Filipinos but also an attempt to illustrate the "sum total of a community's memory of itself." This aggregation of cultural ideas includes how the natives see their physical environment and its natural processes. As argued in this paper, *El Folk-Lore* is one scholarly attempt to document local folk knowledge of the environment. This book came to light upon the encouragement of José Felipe del Pan, the director of the newspaper *La Oceania Española*, where it started as a series of cultural pieces published in the El Comercio in 1884, about the folklore in Ilocos, Zambales, and Malabon (Thomas, 2006, p. 387). Eventually, he also submitted articles to the La Oceania Española starting April 1885, writing his pieces from Malabon (Thomas, 2006, p. 405). As a columnist and eventually, an owner of a printing press, his newspaper served as an avenue for conversation in culture, and as a way to reach the public to share and know their cultural history, particularly, the history beyond the imposed knowledge by the Spaniards (Thomas, 2006, pp. 381-411). In the *El Folk-Lore*, De los Reyes made extensive cultural documentation of the

places where he stayed and lives – in the Ilocos region (specifically Ilocos Sur) where he grew up, and in Malabon, where he had his first wife and first six children. These places were significant spaces in the conceptualization of his intellectual pursuits – both his contribution to cultural studies and in the socio-political birthing of the Filipino nation at the end of the 19th century.

In the first chapter of the Folk-Lore Ilocano section of El Folk-Lore, there are four parts dedicated to the local environmental lores of the Ilocos region: *Sabeismo y Astrología* (Ancient Fire-Worship and Astrology), *Consejas Meteorológicas* (Meteorological Fables), *Cosmogonía* (Cosmogony), and *Folk-Lore de mar* (Folklore About the Sea). From these sections, De los Reyes presented his view on select themes of the Ilocano/Filipino worldview on the natural environment: the origin of the earth and the celestial bodies, perspectives on lighting and thunder, and the Ilocano views on the sea.



EL

FOLK-LORE FILIPINO

(Obra premiada con medalla de plata en la Exposición Filipina, celebrada en Madrid en 1887.)

POR

Isabelo de los Reyes y Florentino

Individuo honorario de la Sociedad de Geografía Comercial de Madrid, de número de la Imperial y Real Geográfico de Viena, y Delegado en Manila de la Académica Indo-China de Francia.

Folk-Lore ilocano

Tomo I

1.ª Edición.

MANILA: 1889

IMPRENTA DE SANTA CRUZ,
CARRIEDO 29.

FIG 2. *"Folk-Lore ilocano" in El Folk-Lore Filipino (1889). Accessed through Biblioteca Digital Hispánica, Biblioteca Nacional de España.*

2.2.1. Creationism and the Celestial Bodies

According to De los Reyes' study, the Ilocanos had a version of the creationist story, centering on *Angngaló/Angñgalo* as the creator of the physical world, dictated by the gods' desire. In this Ilocano folktale, *Angngaló/Angñgalo*, through his actions, created the mountains and the seas, placed the sun, moon, and rainbow in the heaven/sky, and his presence, together with his wife *Aran*, have proof in in the landscapes of Ilocos and Abra regions.

TABLE 1. *De los Reyes' Documentation of an Ilocano Creationist Story*

El Folk-Lore Filipino (De los Reyes, 1889, pp. 51-56)	*El Folk-Lore Filipino* [1994 Translation] (De los Reyes, 1889/1994, pp. 83, 85, 87)
XIV: Cosmogonía	XIV: Cosmogony
Tenemos los indigenas una tradición, que en ninguna crónica hallé escrita y que sin embargo ningun Ilocano ignora; según ella, en un principio, ó sea antes de la creación del cielo, de la tierra y del mar (no digo del hombre, pues según dicha tradición, el hombre existió que el Cielo etc.) habia un gigante llamado Angn̄galó - ¿seria el citado por los PP. Buzeta y Bravo? – de formidables proporciones. Figúrese el lector que de pié tocaba tu cabeza en el Cielo y con un paso venia de Vigan á Manila, es decir, salvando cosa de setenta y una leguas.	We, the Ilocano natives, have a belief which, although not written in any chronicle, is very much known to the Ilocanos. Man, according to the belief, existed before the creation of heaven, earth, sky, etc. There was a giant *Angñgalo* who could be the one cited by the Reverend Priests Buzeta and Bravo. He stood on his feet with his head reaching up to heaven and covered seventy miles from Vigan to Manila in one single step.
Angn̄galó cavó el suelo que antes era plano, y las tierras que extrajo son hoy los mantes, siendo las colinas las tierras que caian de los agujeros que formaban sus dedos mal unidos.	The earth before was level. *Angñgalo* dug out a cave. The earth from his digging formed the mountains. The soil that fell from his deformed fingers fell on the side of the cave thus forming the hills.
Hecho un abismo, alivió su vejiga y formó loa océanos y los mares, pero no por esus sus aguas fueron saladas como la orina.	His urine gave rise to the oceans and the seas. This explains why the sea is salty.
Angn̄galó tenía ua mujer nombrada *Aran,* de la cual tuvo tres hijas. Estas trataban de venir á Manila, para traer sal y rogaron á su padre las trasportase. *Angn̄galó* accedió á eloo; pero estando en medio del mar cayeron con sus cargas al agua y desde entonces el mar se quedó salado.	*Angñgalo* has a wife called *Aran* by whom he has three daughters who wanted to go to Manila to bring salt and prayed that their father carry them. *Angñgalo* agreed but in the middle of the sea, they all fell thus adding more salt to the sea.
Angn̄galó fué Tambien el que colocó la bóveda del cielo, el sol y las estrellas.	*Angñgalo* as the one who placed the rainbow in heaven, as well as the sun and stars.
Los ilocanos del campo todo lo materializan efector quizás de su escasa penetración, por manera que para ellos el cielo no es más que esa bóveda azul y concave que nos cubre. Se figuran que la tierra no es esférica al igual de los antiguos geógrafos, es una corcunferencia plana sobre cuyos limites se levanta el cielo y para ellos, es de extension muchísimo mayor que la real, de modo de que para que uno pudiera llegar á sus límites ó á los piés del	To the Ilocano peasants, the sky is no other than the blue and concave dome that covers us. They think that the earth is not spherical as ancient geographers have said. It is a circular plane where mountains support the sky which they believe to be much bigger that its actual size. As such it is unreachable and if it could be reached, it would take a whole lifetime of running nonstop towards the horizon.

cielo, necesitaría, desde que nace has su vejez, corer sin cesar en dirección al horizonte.	
Según esta tradición, pues *Angngaló* y *Aran* fueron los primeros hombres, y quizas los padres de los demás, como Adan y Eva; pero debemos advertor que en esta tradición no se menciona la cración del hombre, y que los ilocanos ciuandro quieren decir que aún no había nacido Fulano en tal tiempo, expresan con esta frase metafórica: estaba aún en el otro laso del mar, que viene á ser el Asia, lo cual parece indicar que según creencia Antigua, los hombres vienen del extrangero como el trozo de caña arrojada por las olas á lo spiel del milano, de qué salierpn los primeros hombres, según otra tradición Antigua de Filipinas, que mentan algunos historiadores. En Ilocos, cuando uno dice en broma no haber nacido de mujer le contestan: - Entones has Salido de un trozo de caña.	According to this Ilocano tradition *Angñgalo* and *Aran* were man's first parents like Adam and Eve but in this context, the creation of man is not mentioned. Wherever the Ilocanos said that Fulano had not been born, they meant it in the metaphorical sense. *He was still on the other side of the sea*, or another part of Asia, which is in the olden times meant that the Ilocanos believed being born meant coming from a foreign land like a piece of bamboo carried by the waves to the feet of Milano. From this bamboo originated the first men according to another ancient belief cited by some historians. In Ilocos, saying that a woman bore you meant that you came from a piece of bamboo.
En el monte de Piedra, Bangbang, que hay un bocana del Abra, hay una huella muy grande al parecer de hombre, y otra, según dicen, en la cumbre del Bul-lagao, Ilocos, ó en Cagayan, que se atribuyen á *Angngaló*. Lo cual nos recuerda la tradicional y fabulosa *Bota del Mandarin*, que hay cerca de Fochow, más arriba de los puertos de Mingan. *Angngaló* dejó estas huellas al subir al cielo.	In the rocky mountain of Bangbang, located at the boundary of Abra province, there is a big footprint similar to that of a man. There is another on the peak of Bul-lagao, Ilocos region or in Cagayan. Both are believed to be those of Angñgalo.This reminds us of the traditional and fabulous *Bota del Mandarin* located near Foochow, higher than the ports of Niagan. *Angñgalo* left three footprints upon his ascension to heaven.
En Abra hay un gran subterráneo que dicen ser de Aran, y cuyo agujero llega á Cagayan, según la conseja, cual un tonel.	In Abra, there is a mammoth underground tunnel. Said to be the *Aran's* foot, it reaches up to Cagayan.
Angngaló fué el Creador, según la tradición ilocana, pero de órden e un Dios cuyo nombre se ignora, no hay notice de que fuera objeto del culto de los ilocanos, lo cual es incomprensible, puesto que según todas las demás religions de que tengo conocimiento, todo Creador del universe es Dios, y es acorde la creencia de que solo la omnipotencia de un Dios es capaz de obrar tantas maravillas colo las que encierra la creación.	In the Ilocano tradition, *Angñgalo* was the creator of heaven and earth. A god ordered him to do so but the name of his god is unknown. Nor he is an object of worship among the Ilocanos. That is incomprehensible because according to all religions the Creator of the Universe is God for God alone is omnipotent.

De los Reyes' curiosity of the origin, or probably, the quest for the cultural reference of this creationist story led him to theorize about the Ilocano belief system's cosmopolitan nature – a product of local and foreign interactions, especially from the Chinese (De los Reyes, 1889, p. 54). He also consulted Ferdinand Blumentritt about this story, in which the latter affirmed his observation of the prevalence and/or universality of this kind of creationist folktale – wherein a super being was the one who created the physical environment where the first human settled. Blumentritt stated in his letter to De los Reyes that the said folkloric archetype is also present in Malay communities

in Pasir in southeast Borneo, Celebes, and Java, and even in Leitmeritz in Germany (De los Reyes, 1889, pp. 54-56). To add, the story of *Angngaló/ Angñgalo* and *Aran* also have parallelisms with the Japanese *kami* (gods) Izanagi and Izanami, the central deities of the Japanese creationist myth ("Izanagi and Izanami," n.d.).

De los Reyes also pondered on the Ilocano views on celestial bodies, such as the planets, the moon, and comets. He mentions that the planets were respected and labeled as Apo (Señor), and the moon is a dwelling place of Bathala (Supreme Being), and its craters were his footsteps (De los Reyes, 1889, p. 42). With regards to comets, De los Reyes argues that similar to the Chinese astronomical belief, the Ilocanos consider the sight of comets as a signifier of the coming of pestilence, wars, fall of governments, and hunger and misery for the people (De los Reyes, 1889, p. 43). He adds that fragments of comets, therefore those aerolites from shooting stars, could symbolically be used as a miraculous stone for love (called babató) (De los Reyes, 1889, p. 43).

2.2.2. Views on Lightning and Thunder

De los Reyes' discussion in *Consejas Meteorológicas* (Meteorological Fables) centered on the meanings attributed to lightning and thunder. The superstitions on lighting (rayo in Spanish) were prevalent in different towns in Ilocos Norte. Precautions and defenses against lightning and thunder emanate from local plants and their uses, proof of the presence of indigenous knowledge in the meaning-making regarding these meteorological phenomena (De los Reyes, 1889, pp. 56-58).

From these documentations made by De los Reyes, evident is the attribution and correlation of lightning and thunder to agriculture and animal-related beliefs. These both appear in the explanations of their causes and the means of protection against them. There is also the portrait of a mixture of indigenous/folk ideas and colonial concepts, as seen in the examples of God's car (*el coche de Dios*) and the *hedor* or the "undesirable odor resulting from decomposed organic substances." (De los Reyes, 1889, p. 58; De los Reyes, 1889/1994, p. 93).

Interestingly, two years before the publication of *El Folk-lore*, Jose Rizal, in his novel *Noli me tangere* (1887), presented a philosophical portrait of lighting and thunder. Through the conversation between (Pilosopong) Tasyo and the *gobernadorcillo* (town chief), the former complained about the non-accommodation of his proposal to the town officials to purchase lighting rods

TABLE 2. Causes and Protection against Lightning and Thunder (De los Reyes, 1889/1994, pp. 91, 93, 95)

Causes	Protection
"The Ilocanos confuse thunder and lighting and believe that both have something to do with the pig that appears suddenly during a storm. A respectable and reliable person (I do not say illiterate) has assured me on his word of honor that during a storm he saw a pig come out near a trunk of a certain tree and it turned to fire. It thundered and the pig disappeared. The same person assures is of seeing with his own eyes a white rooster before he saw an electric spark in the sky over the townhall of Sarrat in Ilocos Norte. It was running swiftly when it changed into thunder and then it became ashes. How can it be explained? An electric discharge must have hit the rooster, reduced it to ashes and made it disappear. Many meteorologists state that the thunder can reduce its victims to ashes but the Ilocanos believe that the thunder strikes only animals."	
"The Ilocanos are more afraid of thunder than of lightning and claim that it is dangerous to eat during a storm because it is possible that the hungry thunder may come and grab the food. It is also dangerous to ride on a four-legged animal or wear valuable jewelry such as gold, silver, and diamonds."	"Due to this belief, oftentimes you find jewels in the fields thrown by the owners during the storm. It is also bad to stay under the trees, hold mirrors, glasses, crystals, and any shining metal."
"According to Ilocanos, thunder respects water and sugarcane leaves,…"	"…, therefore, a man who is under water or is in a sugarcane field is saved from thunder. It is also said that sugarcane leave can wound the lightning."
	"The people from Ilocos Norte usually cover their heads with coconut palms blessed during Palm Sunday to avoid danger during stormy days."
	"The Ilocanos believe that fire produced by thunder and lightning cannot be put out by water but by vinegar. For this reason, when the provincial hall in Abra was burned, all the houses Bangued suffered scarcity of vinegar. "
"Some old Ilocanos say that the thunder is not only a noise produced by God's car when it goes out."	
"The Ilocanos attribute the sprouting of mushrooms to the lightning. To say that someone is a victim or thunder is an insult to the Ilocanos and Tagalogs."	
"The person who do not die when hit by thunder but only faint for a moment are said to have received the *hedor* of the thunder."	

(*parrayos*) to "catch" lightning (Rizal, 1887/1996, p. 76). His proposal was met with laughter, and instead, the town government of San Diego purchased firecrackers and rockets and tolled the church bells in instances of lightning and thunder (Rizal, 1887/1996, p. 76).

De los Reyes also listed some additional meteorology-related Ilocano folk beliefs: (1) "It is bad to point with your finger at a rainbow because the finger will be cut."; (2) "If a strong wind blows on the feast of St. Lawrence, the Ilocanos believe that the martyr of the grill is awake. Otherwise he would be asleep."; and (3) "The fire of St. Elmo makes one lose his way… It appears to be near but as one walks towards it, it seems to be farther away… If you get lost at night time, you should take off your shirt and put it on again on the wrong side… By doing this you can avoid getting lost but according to Ilocanos, this is the work of the devil." (De los Reyes, 1889/1994, pp. 94, 95). Moreover, in another essay titled "Supersticiones ilocanas que se encuentran en Europa" (Ilocano Superstitions that are Similarly Found in Europe), De los Reyes made a brief comparison of select Ilocano beliefs on clouds, the moon, and the sun that have similarities with several European (or Spanish) folklores (De los Reyes, 1889, pp. 74-81).

2.2.3. Folklores about the sea and wind

One cannot fully picture the totality of Ilocano culture without the acknowledgment of the maritime basis of their collective identity. In his essay about the folklores on the sea (*Folk-Lore de Mar*), which was his reply to the query Paul Sebillot, the author of *Les contes des Marins*, tackles briefly his known documented information about the Filipino maritime beliefs, particularly those of Ilocanos and Tagalogs (De los Reyes, 1889, p. 70).

De los Reyes made a brief geographical description of the parts of the sea with respect to the land, highlighting the local terms in Ilocano and Tagalog languages, respectively: *baybay and dagat* for the seaside/seashore, and *taao* and *kalautan ng dagat* (or simply, *laut/laot*) for the sea itself, or the middle of the sea (De los Reyes, 1889, p. 70). He also recognized the scientific nature of various sea-related processes, such as the tide and waves: "The rising and ebbing of the tide is called *atab* and *ugut* in Ilocano. In Ilocos, the increasing and decreasing in the size of the moon is attributed to this phenomenon of the tide. The ebbing of the tide could alleviate suffering while the rising tide could cause the reverse…The wind causes the formation of waves…(Moreover) [t]he Ilocanos claim that the sun sinks into the sea because the coastal dwellers see the sun go down into the sea"

(De los Reyes, 1889/1994, p. 121)..

De los Reyes also provided some superstitious beliefs related to the sea. These beliefs can be categorized into two: beliefs indicating good luck or omen, and the opposite, those beliefs that translate into bad omen.

De los Reyes also described what are the Ilocano winds and their respective direction:

> "La Rosa de vientos de los Ilocanos se reduce á los puntos cardinals, ó sean: *Amián* (Viento del Norte), *Puyupuy ó Laud* (Oeste), *Abagat* (Sur), y *Dugudug* ó *Daya* ó sea el que se cree proceder de la Bocana del Abra, llevando fienbres en sus alas." (De los Reyes, 1889, p. 72)

TABLE 3. Superstitious Beliefs about the Sea in the "Folk-Lore Ilocano" chapter of El Folk-Lore Filipino (De los Reyes, 1889/1994, pp. 119, 121, 123, 125)

Indication of Good Omen	Indication of Bad Omen
"The sea is sacred and all who die by drowning will go to heaven."	"It is bad to throw waste matter into the sea or to show one's buttocks and shout because he will get swallowed by the waters."
"Sea water cures wounds and tuberculosis."	"When snake grows to an extraordinary proportion, he goes to the sea together with other smaller snakes who bid him farewell. Once on the beach, he raises his head and throws himself into the sea until he reaches the imaginary island of the snakes whether he will die. The Ilocanos say that once upon a time, a boat happened to pass by this island and found many snakes around stone or wood."
"In the sea not far from Corregidor, according to the people, one can see through the water some bewitched building owned possibly by fairies who stop the ships that pass unless they are thrown cooked rice as a tribute."	
"A rainbow appearing in the east is a sign that the rain which has begun to fall will stop completely. If it shines in the west, it will stop only temporarily and if it encircles the moon, there will be dry winds."	"They say that in a town of Ilocos Norte, a very proud man was swallowed by the waves and converted into a lake which today is known by the name of *Nalbuan* (isthmus). The inhabitants of the town were very vain. When one wore a new dress, everybody tried to do the same. God punished them by turning them into fishes which, as the belief goes, had earring. Due to the curse, all government efforts to convert it into a port by joining it to the sea through a canal, became completely useless."

> "The nautical rose in the wind of Ilocanos is reduced to cardinal points: *amian* (wind from the North); *puyupuy or laud* (from the West); *abagat* (from the South); or *dugudug* or *daya*. The last one believed to carry fever on its wings comes from the Bocana of Abra" (De los Reyes, 1889/1994, p. 123).

Folk beliefs about the wind were also mentioned by De los Reyes. For example, Ilocanos believe that the winds that go down to the region come from the bamboo groves in Abra (De los Reyes, 1889, p. 72). A type of fish called the *lumba-lumba* guides the seafarers about the strength and direction of the wind: if it follows the same route as a boat or ship, it would be a smooth sail, but if the fish moves to or jumps in the opposite direction, a rough sail is to be expected, as it counters the wind direction (De los Reyes, 1889, p. 73).

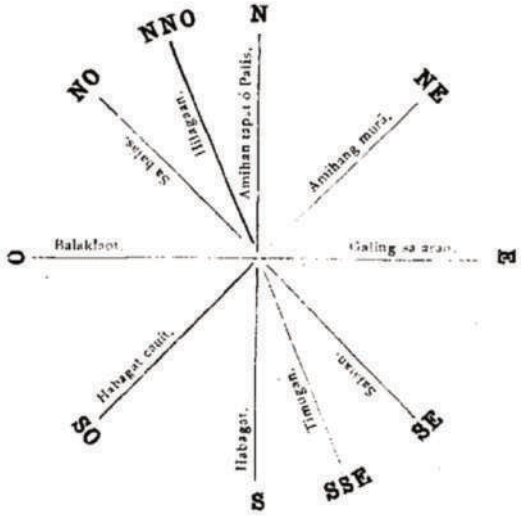


FIG 3. *De los Reyes' Diagram of the Ilocano winds and their directions (De los Reyes, 1889, p. 75). Accessed through Biblioteca Digital Hispánica, Biblioteca Nacional de España.*

To add, in an earlier work, De los Reyes also mentioned an interesting account related to the vignettes on the sea and wind, about a "demon" in Cagayan that people feared as it can cause a tempest once its wishes are violated. In El Diablo en Filipinas (1887), a satirical work of De los Reyes, he narrated the

"experience" of Don Luys Pérez Dasmariñas (Governor-General of the Philippine Islands from 1593 to 1596) in Cagayan:

> "Espere V., hombre, que en la misma página se encuentra esto otro: — "Cuando D. Luys Pérez Dasmariñas hizo una noche junto á la falda de un pequeño monte que estaba dedicado al demonio (en Cagayan) por lo cual nadie se atrevía á cortar de él ni un palo, ni otra cosa, no siendo para servicio del demonio, porque luego la mar se alteraba y embravecía, y los vientos se soltaban y les derribaban las casas... aquella misma noche vino un viento tan terrible, que alborotando la mar, la hizo salir á la playa, y llegó al alojamiento, que estaba (al parecer) muy seguro de tal suceso y obligó á los soldados y al mismo D. Luys á huir su peligro, perdiendo mucha" (De los Reyes, 1887, pp. 122-123).
>
> "Just wait, hombre! On the same page you will find something else. Don Luys Péres Dasmariñas…spent a night on the slope of a small hill dedicated to the demon (In Cagayan)…No native would dare to cut down trees to make poles or anything else, except in service to this demon. If these rules are violated, then the ocean will get very rough, and the winds leap high, destroying houses…That very night the most violent wind-storms blew high and stirred the ocean to surge over the shoreline and reach as far inland as the military billets, usually thought to be very safe under dangerous conditions. The storm obliged the soldiers and even Don Luys to flee, the latter losing a lot of his assets because he had cut down so much on 'his' hill (branches and sugar cane)" (De los Reyes, 1886/2014, pp. 37, 39).

2.2.4. Valuation of Environmental Vignettes

How does one make sense of the historical relevance of De los Reyes' documentation of these environmental beliefs and folklores? On the one hand, it is through the post-*El Folk-Lore* works on the documentation of folkloric beliefs and practices. On the other hand, it is through contemporary Ilocanos preserving nature-based concepts to determine everyday or seasonal cycles.

One example is The H. Otley Beyer Ethnographic Collection of the National Library of the Philippines, which contains thousands of digitized papers from the collected and preserved materials of pioneer American anthropologist Henry

Otley Beyer, covering the period from the 1900s to the 1930s (NLP, n.d.). The digitized materials are unique references to local and regional customs, traditions, beliefs, superstitions, and folktales and myths about the origin, life, and culture of Philippine communities. These archival materials, both products of Beyer's ethnographic fieldwork as well as written submissions from local informants and resource persons fall under the scholarly tradition set by De los Reyes and *El Folk-Lore*. Another example is the book *Our Folkways* (1955) by Armando J. Malay and Paula Carolina Malay. This work is a valuable compilation of local beliefs and practices of a multitude of agricultural communities in the country, and it resembles *El Folk-Lore Filipino* in its objective to collect and visualize the vast folkloric beliefs and practices of rural townsfolks in the country. Specifically, the chapter "Old Man Weather" tackles the select, documented beliefs and superstitions about the weather (Malay & Malay, 1955, pp. 156-188). As the authors lament:

> Rural folk everywhere in the world make use of the behavior of animals, plants, birds, bodies of water, and mountains, to predict the weather. Some can tell when the rain is going to fall by the way their corns or bunions hurt them. This knowledge has been the result of experience, and is handed down from one generation to another. (Malay & Malay, 1955, p. 157)

In their study about traditional weather forecasting in various towns in Ilocos Norte, Galacgac and Balisacan (2003, pp. 5 – 14) made a case on how local-agricultural weather lores are used by farmers and fishers in the province, particularly, how they determine the arrival of the rainy season, upcoming rain, and adverse weather conditions through the behaviors of plants, animals, and their local reading of meteorological processes. Through this ethnographic-scientific study, De los Reyes' vignettes on Ilocos weather and environmental processes, in a way, have persisted or have existed as valuable and usable popular knowledge for the local residents. For example, they included in their study various forecast indicators collected from local residents: atmospheric and astronomic (appearance of clouds and sky, direction of the wind, humidity, rainbow, phase and appearance of the moon, and sea waves), plants (its phenology in particular), and animals (unusual behaviors observed) (Galacgac & Balisacan, 2003, pp. 7-12). Certain similarities with De los Reyes documented vignettes and the helpful reliance of current local residents to these environmental predictors as their traditional weather forecasting methods emphasizes the continuities in embracing local cultural beliefs and practices spanning more than a century.

2.3. Malabon and its Environment

De los Reyes' intellectual contributions to Philippine knowledge production have been extensively analyzed in the past years. But one aspect of his intellectual sojourn is important to be emphasized – his personal, familial, and cognitive affinity with the town of Malabon (old name, Tambobong). For two decades starting in the 1880s, he lived in Malabon and built a family, organized labor unions in the town, and helped establish one of the first parishes of the Iglesia Filipina Independiente (IFI) in the province of Manila.

In Malabon, he married a mestiza, Josefa Sevilla, a member of an elite family in the town. Josefa was one of the 11 children of Gregorio Sevilla and Genoveva Hizon, part of the large clan of Sevillas and Hizons in old Malabon (Sevilla & Oreta, Jr., 1977, pp. 36-37). De los Reyes and Josefa had six children: Jose, Luis, Angel, Pablo, Elias, and their only daughter, Menang (Sevilla & Oreta, Jr., 1977, p. 38).

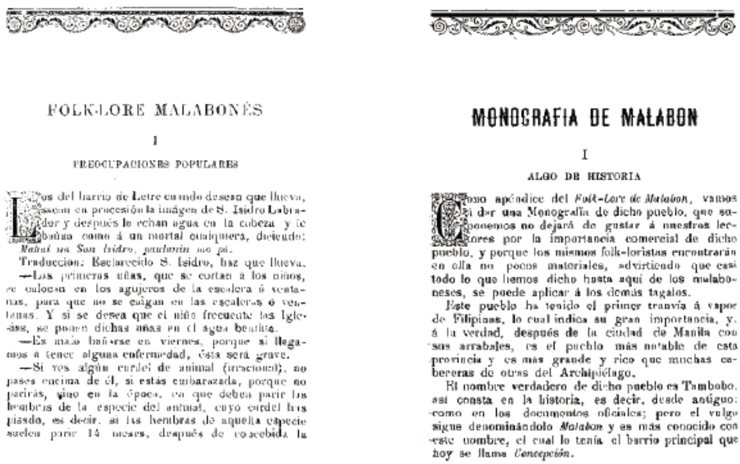
In his biography of his father, Jose S. de los Reyes describes his father as "Padre de los Obreros" (Father of the Workers) (De los Reyes, 1947, p. ?). This homage can be rooted in De los Reyes' notable labor initiatives in Malabon. Through the Union Obrera Democrática (UOD), a labor union and political party, he organized thousands of factory workers of several tobacco companies in Malabon. They led and initiated several strikes in Manila and Malabon, meant to paralyze the operations of some companies (Scott, 1992, pp. 37-39). Companies such as the *Oriente, Philippine Tobacco Company, Tabacalera, Germinal, Insular Tobacco, Maria Cristina*, and *La Minerva* were some of the companies that discharged illegally some workers, and this led to the strikes of their workers, organized by UOD (Scott, 1992, p. 37). In August 1902, he led several strikes against tobacco companies in Malabon, prompting the American government to take action to stop the inter-city workers' strikes (Scott, 1992, p. 39). On 16 August, the Philippine constabulary arrested him; the reason for the arrest was his alleged involvement in an assassination plot against the owner of one of the tobacco companies in Malabon (Mojares, 2007, pp. 279-280; Wise, 1954, p. 166). He was arraigned in the Malabon Justice of the Peace and was jailed in the town until the following year (Mojares, 2007, pp. 279-280). His supporters made him a celebrated political prisoner. On 30 December 1902, during the Rizal Day celebration, his speech was read, wherein he urged the people to look back at the reasons Rizal died for – liberation, progress, and well-being of our land (Mojares, 2007, p. 280). Some revolutionaries even offered to take him out of jail and install him as president of an anarchism-inspired republic (Mojares,

2007, p. 280). De los Reyes was also an indispensable character in the founding of the IFI in Malabon. Together with Aglipay, they crafted and sharpened the idea of a new and independent church for the Philippines. Though his ideas became pillars of the IFI's intellectual tradition, the laymen accepted him in such a slow manner, because he was "a socialist, a labor leader, a revolutionist of the most violent type" (Wise, 1954, pp. 162-166).

In *El Folk-Lore Filipino*, De los Reyes dedicated sections on Malabon history and folklore, namely "Folk-lore Malabonés" and "Monografia de Malabon." The former contains essays on popular beliefs, riddles, medicinal practices, love affairs, and the practices during the day of the dead (ondas); while the latter is a socio-cultural profile of the town, containing information about its historical foundation and evolution, location and territorial jurisdiction, the barrios and the infrastructures in the town, its population and culture, and its agricultural, industrial, and commercial status and condition (De los Reyes, 1889, pp. 271-296). Malabon historian Severino Marcelo describes De los Reyes' time in Malabon as a prototype of a provincial man's sojourn in the colonial capital:

> When Malabon beauty Josefa Sevilla married the 20-year old El Ilocano, Isabelo de los Reyes in 1884, her parents did not lose a daughter but gained a son, unico hijo of famed poet and Mother of Philippine women's liberation, Leona Florentino of Vigan. Time, however, proved that the biggest gainer was the town of Malabon. It took the audacious all-around Ilocano journalist, to finally allow, with the publication of his *El Folk-Lore Malabon*, a peak at what goes on behind Malabon inscrutability.
>
> His early business ventures, first a pawnshop, then a bookstore failing, Isabelo decided to do what hopefully would not flop: writing. He wisely spent stay in Malabon writing about the town and compiling the town's folklore, along with Ilocandia's and Zambales'. By 1887, along with *El Folk-Lore Ilocano* and *El Folk-Lore Zambales*, *El Folk-Lore Malabon* was finished in time to warrant the title of his book, *El Folk-lore Filipino*, which, upon its publication, promptly won a silver medal at the Philippine exposition in Madrid.
>
> In 1897, while Isabelo, along with many prominent Filipinos implicated in the Katipunan uprising, was under preventive arrest in Bilibid prison, Josefa died, cutting short their romance, but not his romance with Malabon… The death of Isabelo's first wife while

he was in incarcerated in Manila's Bilibid Prison, was indeed a blow in a time otherwise well-spent in jail. For only then was he able to ask everything he wanted to know about the Katipunan but did not know what to ask because he knew next to nothing as far as the Katipunan was concerned. (Marcelo, 2004, pp. 64-65)



FOLK-LORE MALABONÉS

I

PREOCUPACIONES POPULARES

Los del barrio de Letre cuando desean que llueva, pasean en procesión la imágen de S. Isidro Labrador y después le echan agua en la cabeza y le bañan como á un mortal cualquiera, diciendo: *Mabait na San Isidro, paulanin mo pô.*

Traducción: Esclarecido S. Isidro, haz que llueva.

—Las primeras uñas, que se cortan á los niños, se colocan en los agujeros de la escalera ó ventanas, para que no se caigan en las escaleras ó ventanas. Y si se desea que el niño frecuente las Iglesias, se ponen dichas uñas en el agua bendita.

—Es malo bañarse en viernes, porque si llegamos á tener alguna enfermedad, ésta será grave.

—Si ves algún cordel de animal (irracional), no pases encima de él, si estás embarazada, porque no parirás, sino en la época, en que deben parir las hembras de la especie del animal, cuyo cordel has pisado, es decir, si las hembras de aquella especie suelen parir 14 meses, después de concebida la

MONOGRAFIA DE MALABON

I

ALGO DE HISTORIA

Como apéndice del *Folk-Lore de Malabon*, vamos á dar una Monografía de dicho pueblo, que suponemos no dejará de gustar á nuestros lectores por la importancia comercial de dicho pueblo, y porque los mismos folk-loristas encontrarán en ella no pocos materiales, advirtiendo que casi todo lo que hemos dicho hasta aquí de los malaboneses, se puede aplicar á los demás tagalos.

Este pueblo ha tenido el primer tranvía á vapor de Filipinas, lo cual indica su gran importancia, y, á la verdad, después de la ciudad de Manila con sus arrabales, es el pueblo más notable de esta provincia y es más grande y rico que muchas cabeceras de otras del Archipiélago.

El nombre verdadero de dicho pueblo es Tambobo, así consta en la historia, es decir, desde antiguo; como en los documentos oficiales; pero el vulgo sigue denominándolo *Malabon* y es más conocido con este nombre, el cual lo tenía el barrio principal que hoy se llama *Concepción*.

FIG 4. *"Folk-Lore Malabonés" and "Monografía de Malabon" in El Folk-Lore Filipino (De los Reyes, 1889, pp. 271, 282). Accessed through Biblioteca Digital Hispánica, Biblioteca Nacional de España.*

Malabon was De los Reyes' innocent yet long-drawn introduction to a semi-rural, semi-urban Tagalog society in Manila: "The town enjoys better weather than Manila: it is usually temperate, war, during the dry season and cold in the morning" (De los Reyes, 1889/1994, p. 549). He extensively described Malabon's geography in the following manner:

In "Folk-Lore Malabonés," De los Reyes provides a glimpse of the beliefs and practices of the Malabon people he witnessed during the first years of living in the town. The select entries are categorized into what environmental aspect they refer to: meteorological, animal-related, astronomical, and seismological.

De los Reyes' life in Malabon, aside from his historical contribution as a revolutionary, labor leader, and church founder, was also a unique period of his

intellectual journey, where the beginnings of his scholarly documentation of local cultures blossomed and came into fruition.

TABLE 4. *De los Reyes' Description of Malabon's Geography*

El Folk-Lore Filipino (De los Reyes, 1889, p. 293)	*El Folk-Lore Filipino* [1994 Translation] (De los Reyes, 1889/1994, p. 543)
Se halla al NNO. De Manila, á una legua y dos millas de distancia: dos brazos de mar que algunos llaman rias, se dan la mano en dos partes, dividiéndolo en una isla y otra peninsula, además del terreno en que se asientan los barrios de Tinajeros y Meysilo.	It is located one league and two miles North-Northwest of Manila. Two arms of the sea that some call estuaries, meet at two points, dividing it into an island and a peninsula, in addition to the area occupied by the barrios of Tinajeros and Meysilo.
La Isla es la parte más principal; tiene una legua, poco más ó nenos, de largo, por unos quinientos metros de ancho; en ella se halan la yglesia y convento, las casas-ayuntamientos de los gremios de naturales y mestizos, y los barrios de la Concepción, Tañong y Dampalit. Confina al N. con el pueblo de Polo, al O. y S. con el brazo de mar de que le separa de Nabotas y al E. con el otro brazo que le aleja de la peninsula de Tonsuya.	The island is the most important district it has. A length of approximately one league, and a width of about 500 meters. It has a church, a convent, the council halls of the associations of natives and mestizos, and the barrios of Concepcion, Tañong, and Dampalit. In the North, it is bounded by the town of Polo; in the West and South, an inlet separates it from Nabotas; and in the East, another inlet cuts it off from the Tonsuya Peninsuya.
En esta se hallan los barrios de este nombre, Lungos y Niugan, y confina á su vez al N. y O. con el brazo de mar que le separa de Tinajaeros y de la isla anterios; al Sur con el mismo en su parte ancha y al E. con el Dagatdagatan ó sea el mismo brazo, pero que se llama así, porque se parece á un lago ó bahia en forma de lago. Está unido por el itsmo de Salitre con un pedazo de terreno perteneciente á este pueblo, pero unido al de Caloocan.	On Tonsuya we find the barrios of Tonsuya, Lungos, and Niugan. It is bounded in the North and West by a river that separates it from Tinajeros and Malabon Island; so the South is Tinajeros, and to the East Dagatdagatan which is actually part of the same river previously mentioned so called because it is more like a lake. It is joined by the isthmus of Salitre to a piece of land belonging to Malabon, but attached to Caloocan.
Existen varios viveros de pescados; muchos se dedicand á la pesca, y algunos por medio de los corrales que les producen considerable ganancias ó pérdidas según que los huracanes los respeten ó no. Hay algunas casas de poca importancia que se ocupan en salar pescados, calculándose en 100 pesos los rendimientos de esta industria.	There are many fishponds. Many go fishing while others build fish pens that earn considerable profits or incur huge losses depending upon whether the typhoons spare them or not. There are some small outfits that engage in salting fish, an industry that is estimated to bring in one hundred pesos.

TABLE 5. *Select Popular Beliefs and Riddles in Malabon*

Popular Beliefs (De los Reyes, 1889/1994, pp. 493, 495, 497)	
Belief	Category
When inhabitants of Letré want rain, they carry the statue of San Isidro Labrador around the procession, throw water on his hear, and bathe him like any regular human being, saying: *Mahal na San Isidro, paunlanin mo po* (Dear San Isidro, please make it rain.)	Meteorological
During a storm do not go near any horned or hornless animal (meaning irrational animal); neither you seek shelter under iron or any other metal.	Meteorological
Fisherman who involuntarily gets a fish get away will be inconstant in everything.	Animal-related
If, as seen from Malabon, the moon in its new quarter looks towards Manila, there will be rain; if it looks towards the sky there will be no rain.	Astronomical
If, after a rain, a rainbow appears in the East, it means that there will be no more rain. If one appears in the West, there will be more rain. There will also be more rain if thunder is heard in the distance.	Meteorological
If stars shine very brightly, the next day will be fine and clear; cool in the morning and war, the rest of the day.	Astronomical
If the comet's tail is towards the East, there will be plentiful harvest; if it is towards the West, pestilence, hunger or war.	Astronomical
Reddish clouds appearing in the West announce a storm or strong winds; yellow ones indicate thunder. In the morning, if clouds look like calm waves, there will be an earthquake.	Meteorological Seismological
When the pig makes his bed in garbage, there will be rain.	Meteorological
A woman should not look at an eclipse of the sun or the moon during the first months of her pregnancy to avoid giving to a mad or retarded child.	Astronomical Animal-related
Ants changing the site of their anthill is a sign of rainstorms.	Meteorological Animal-related
Riddles (De los Reyes, 1889/1994, p. 501)	
Riddle	Category
A king's bedsheet covered with patches. A cloud-specked sky.	Meteorological
"C" when it is small, "O" when it is big. The moon.	Astronomical

3. Conclusion

In conclusion, this work presents an approach to looking at De los Reyes' *El Folk-Lore Filipino*, and how his pioneering cultural work is not only a mere compilation of randomly selected cultural beliefs and practices but a rich compendium of local knowledge, specifically, on the natural environment. The sections on Ilocano and Malabon folklores, though limited, are emblematic representations of the dynamic presence and practice of cultural beliefs in certain Philippine communities. Moreover, understanding the environmental dimension of the *El Folk-Lore* shows how popular knowledge can be framed in such a way to serve as a microscope to the dynamic details of local life in colonial Philippines. Furthermore, the scholarly and/or scientific approach in looking at cultures and communities as sources of knowledge and sites of colonial interactions clearly illustrates the daunting task De los Reyes, and his fellow propagandists, successfully did and how they contributed to the vision of a national culture at the end of the 19th century. Through this study's approach, *El Folk-Lore Filipino* can be further viewed not only from the lens of cultural history but also through other fields, such as environmental history and the history of (native Filipino) science.

Going back to Boas' historical particularism and Steward's cultural ecology, De los Reyes' *El Folk-Lore* encapsulates the plurality of voices in understanding cultures and raises ideas on how local cultures evolved, and illustrates how peoples and communities adapt to environmental changes by crafting meanings and perspectives on the nature's features and processes. Through this, we can further view De los Reyes not only as a journalist and propagandist that compiled historical and cultural studies to converse and counter the derogatory cultural views of Spanish towards the native Filipinos, but also a scholar, a historian-anthropologist-ethnologist who engaged himself in understanding local cultural realities that he himself embraced for several decades of his political and social career.

To end this study, De los Reyes' *El Folk-Lore* can also be characterized as an environmental history narrative that emphasized the value of geographical knowledge in reconstructing an important episode in the Filipinos' "cultural past." As historian J. Donald Hughes laments,

> The task of environmental history is the study of human relationships through time with the natural communities of which they are part, in order to explain the processes of change that affect

> the relationship. As a method, environmental history is the use of ecological analysis as a means of understanding human history. It studies the mutual effects that their species, natural forces, and cycles have on humans, and the actions humans that affect the web of connections with non-human organisms and entities…An environmental historical narrative should be an account of changes in human societies as they relate to the changes in the natural environment (Hughes, 2009, p. 4)

Using physical environment-human being relationship, the *El Folk-Lore* presented also rested on De los Reyes musing on geographical knowledge, a vital construct in examining the influence of physical environment to human history. As a body of knowledge, geography "includes above all the study of physical environment and the prime goal in interrelating it the historical reconstruction is to discover in what ways and to what extent this environment affected history" (Hughes, 2009, p. 2). Lastly, reflecting on Lucien Febvre's characterization of the "marriage" of history and geography, De los Reyes's set his intellectual legacy through the documenting folklores and cultures:

> Man, a malleable being, submissive to the action of his natural environment (let us say the Earth) acts on him and transforms him by means of two powers, two sovereign forces: soil and climate. It is granted certainly that, heredity forms one of the factors in human evolution, but all of the others are derived from habitat. These exercise their power at the same time on individuals and communities, and are not only efficacious agents in somatic transformation, but are equally the determinants of political and moral ideas and realizations – the very basis of history" (Febvre, 1925, p. 9).

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Legal Codification of Family-Related Filipino Proverbs (Salawikain) in the Civil Code of the Philippines, 1947-1949

Lorenz Timothy Barco Ranera

The Civil Code of the Philippines became the foundation of civil law in the postwar Philippines. In legal history, it is a common understanding that the Civil Code was heavily derived from the Spanish legal system. This article aims to highlight the Filipino element and Filipino contribution to the development of its legal system. This article shows that two proverbs (salawikain), "ang lahat ng tao mag-away man huwag ang mag-asawa sa loob ng bahay" (the whole world may quarrel but not the husband and wife at home) and "ang sakit ng kalingkingan, damdam ng buong katawan" (the pain of the little finger is felt by the whole body), were transformed as provisions in the Civil Code (1949) such as "the family is a basic social institution which public policy cherishes and protects" (art. 216) and "the law governs family relations. No custom, practice, or agreement which is destructive of the family shall be recognized or given any effect" (art. 218). The legal luminary Jorge C. Bocobo, who served as Chair of the Code Commission tasked to design a new civil code from 1947 to 1949, has been instrumental in the codification of proverbs in civil law due to his prior interest and engagement in collecting Filipino proverbs. These provisions exist up to this day in the Family Code of the Philippines (1987) and the 1987 Constitution and remain relevant in the governance of Filipino families. Familiarity with Philippine folklore could serve as an unconventional but important way to understand their own laws.

Keywords: folklore, proverbs, legal history, family law, Philippines

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1. Introduction

1.1. Reflection on Marriage Practices in Don Belong's El Folklore Filipino

Don Isabelo de los Reyes (1864-1938), colloquially known as Don Belong, pioneered folklore studies in the Philippines through his prizewinning two-volume work titled *El Folk-lore Filipino* (1889, 1890) at the invitation of a friend and fellow journalist, José Felipe del Pan. He compiled beliefs, superstitions, mythologies, customs, practices, and tales in the selected regions of Ilocos, Zambales, Malabón, Bulacán, Pampanga, and Tayabas. In addition, the two-volume local historical work titled *Historia de Ilocos* (1890) supplemented folkloric content about his native region. Taking time to browse these materials is insightful and entertaining. There are already familiar customs known today, but some listings remain strange and unheard of, at least for me. I am amused, for example, with the fact that some people in Ilocos Sur, according to Don Belong, "throw the placenta into the river, hoping that the child will someday be a good swimmer" (De los Reyes, 1889/1994, p. 209). This would be interesting advice for Filipino parents considering that seas surround the country. However, due to the circumstances of my research in the legal history of family law in the Philippines, I specifically focused on reading marriage practices.

As I continue to explore the book, I have gathered the following information on marriage practices. In Ilocos Sur, De los Reyes (1889/1994, p. 217) wrote, "when a young man wants to get married, he informs his parents. If they approve of his choice, they themselves look for a spokesman or a person close to the family of the girl and together, they all go to ask for the hand of the girl in marriage." In Ilocos Norte, Don Belong describes that "some parents plan the future marriage of their children as early as when they are newly born or even before their birth. These contracts are formalized when the children reach the age of ten or eleven for girls and twelve or thirteen for boys. Later in life, they actually get married denying their true age in the process" (De los Reyes, 1889/1994, p. 219). In La Union, "there is another way of asking for a woman's hand in marriage. When one wishes to marry, he tells it to his parents. This wish is transmitted to the family of the girl and if they approve of the planned marriage, they open the doors of their house to her suitor so he can ask her personally" (De los Reyes, 1889/1994, pp. 227, 229). Lastly, about a similar practice in Abra, "the consent of the parents of the bride is given under certain conditions. It is necessary for the

parents of the groom to promise to give the couple a dowry or whatever the girl's family might request" (De los Reyes, 1889/1994, p. 229).

I came to realize that these practices resemble elements of *marriage law*. Most Filipino marriages are presently governed by *Exec. Order 209, Family Code of the Philippines* (1987), apart from the *Pres. Dec. 1083, Code of Muslim Personal Laws of the Philippines* (1977), which on the other hand regulates Muslim marriages. According to law professor Elizabeth Aguiling-Pangalangan (2019, p. 25), marriage is a "consent-based institution" which requires consent freely given by the parties to contract marriage (art. 2) and parental consent for contracting parties between the ages of eighteen and twenty-one (art. 14). The *Family Code* declares that a marriage may be annulled (in legal terms, a voidable marriage) if one of the parties between the age of eighteen and twenty-one had no parental consent (art. 45). This is not yet the final requirement needed from the parents as the law further requires parental advice for contracting parties between the age of twenty-one and twenty-five (art. 15); however, absence of parental advice does not affect the validity of marriage. Nevertheless, the law recognizes parental influence and authority in the marriage of their children.

Legal history shows that parental influence or authority has long been embedded in culture since the pre-colonial Philippines and was later incorporated as law. The Spanish colonial official Antonio de Morga (1609/1868, p. 300) described marriage in the Philippines during that time as nothing more than the agreement between families of the spouses. The Jesuit friar Pedro Chirino (1604, p. 70) similarly observed that two families may negotiate as early as when one mother is pregnant with a male child and the other is pregnant with a female child. For historian William Henry Scott (1994, p. 140), marriage does not merely unite two individuals "since they were contracts between families rather than individuals, they were also political events creating new alliances." Indeed, Spanish colonization introduced significant changes to the political, social, and cultural system. Nevertheless "much of the preconquest culture survived the conquest" (Phelan, 1959, p. 15). The practice of asking parental consent in matters of marriage was later codified in *Real Pragmática of 23 March 1776* (Camacho, 2021, pp. 466-467). The statute being part of the Bourbon reforms in Spain was promulgated to strengthen secular authority over marriage affairs since the Roman Catholic Church favors the individual freedom of choice over parental influence (Camacho, 2021, pp. 470-471). The requisite of parental consent continued to persist in the genealogy of statutes that governed marriage in the Philippines: *Novísima Recopilación* (1805) in the nineteenth-century Spanish period, *Gen. Orders 68* (1899) under the US military occupation

of the Philippines, *Act No. 3613* (1929) under the US insular government regime, *Rep. Act 386, Civil Code of the Philippines* (1949) in the postwar period, *Code of Muslim Personal Laws* (1977) in the Marcos period, and finally, *Family Code* (1987) in the post-Marcos period. Based on this instance alone: the law reiterates folklore.

1.2. Law and Folklore, A Theoretical Appreciation

Law and culture cannot be divorced because humans, after all, are the ones who create laws (legal positivism). According to anthropologist E. Adamson Hoebel (1967, p. 5), understanding the law requires a "proper frame of reference" which for him was "society and culture." Thus, he says that "we must have some idea of how society works before we can have a full conception of what law is and how it works" (Hoebel, 1967, p. 5). Culture may serve as one of its references because the law is a "culture object in the domain of purposive human behavior" (Fernandez, 2005, p. 105).

The relationship between law and folklore can be discerned starting with the *double-institutionalization* theory. Anthropologist Paul Bohannan (1965, p. 33) framed law as a "double institutionalization of norm and customs." The first institutionalization occurs when human beings create norms/rules called "customs" to establish proper behavior. Then, the second institutionalization occurs when a legal institution, like the government, formally recognizes "custom" and reiterates it as "law," for instance, through statutes/codes (Bohannan, 1965, pp. 35-36). Law professor Perfecto V. Fernandez (2005, p. 100) simplifies this relationship in a single statement: "law is any norm enacted by a Sovereign Order in Society." Similarly, it has been long established by a line of folklorists that Philippine *folklore* carries the *customs* of the Filipino people (De los Reyes, 1889/1994; Eugenio, 2007; Lopez, 2006). It is through folklore that every generation of Filipinos acquires, learns, and remembers customs and practices.

1.3. Law and Folklore, A Theoretical Appreciation

For a very long time since the 1950s, Philippine legal history relied heavily on the mixed-legal system as a framework to characterize the development of the Philippine legal system through time. According to Atty. Hilarion U. Jarencio (1956, p. 3), "The Philippines is fortunate in having received the beneficent influences of both legal systems." Law professor Pacifico A. Agabin (2016, p. 2)

characterizes this legal framework as "mestizo," describing it as the product of "cross-breeding the common and the civil law systems." This hybrid refers to the influence of the Spanish legal tradition (under the Romano-Germanic civil law system) and the American legal system (under the Anglo-American common law tradition) over nearly four centuries of colonialism. Despite subscribing to a framework that privileges colonial legacy, Agabin pointed out that Philippine culture matters in the history of the Philippine legal system by incorporating indigenous law and Islamic law in his narrative (Agabin, 2016, p. 3). This article wants to go beyond the colonial framing of the Philippine legal system by looking at the Filipino contribution to the development of its own legal system through *folklore*. Folklorist Damiana L. Eugenio (1987, p. 175) once said that "there exists an intimate relation between the rise of nationalism and an interest in its folklore." It used to be the case of Don Belong's *El Folklore* and the beginning of Filipino nationalism in the 19th century (propaganda movement towards the Philippine revolution). This could also be the case of the Civil Code and postwar nationalism in the postwar Philippine era.

This article hypothesizes that proverbs served as inspiration in the creation of laws, such as civil law, to the point that *salawikain* was reiterated as *provision*. Circumstantial evidence can be found in the juxtaposition of proverb and civil law provisions demonstrated in law professor Crisalito Pascual's *Introduction to Legal Philosophy* (2003). The book served as a textbook reference to the nature of the law for legal education in the Philippines. In one chapter "Historical Perspective," Pascual (2003, p. 76) argued that the "historical school of jurisprudence" as a good starting point to "study the nature of law." He posited that the "concept of soul and spirit of the people" (which folklore holds) "provides the sense of beginning and unfolding of law" (Pascual, 2003, p. 77). Table 1 shows three examples showing how certain proverbs were retold in the language of the law.

In this present article, I attempt to investigate the legal codification of two proverbs (salawikain) as family provisions during the development of the *Civil Code*, from 1947 to 1950: "ang lahat ng tao mag-away man huwag ang mag-asawa sa loob ng bahay" (the whole world may quarrel but not the husband and wife at home) and "ang sakit ng kalingkingan, damdam ng buong katawan" (the pain of the little finger is felt by the whole body). This article also reveals the interesting link between Philippine folklore and Jorge C. Bocobo, Chair of the Code Commission who drafted the *Civil Code.*

TABLE 1. *Proverbs (Salawikain) and Equivalent Marriage Provisions according to Pascual (2003, p. 84-85).*

Proverb (*Salawikain*)	**Legal Provisions**
Ang mag-asawa sa ariarian ay iisa ["Husband and wife have no separate property"] (Pascual, 2003, p. 84).	*Family Code* (1987), art. 88. The absolute community of property between spouses shall commence at the precise moment that the marriage is celebrated. Any stipulation, express or implied, for the commencement of the community regime at any other time shall be void. art. 89. No waiver of rights, shares and effects of the absolute community of property during the marriage can be made except in case of judicial separation of property. When the waiver takes place upon a judicial separation of property, or after the marriage has been dissolved or annulled, the same shall appear in a public instrument and shall be recorded as provided in Article 77. The creditors of the spouse who made such waiver may petition the court to rescind the waiver to the extent of the amount sufficient to cover the amount of their credits. art. 90. The provisions on co-ownership shall apply to the absolute community of property between the spouses in all matters not provided for in this Chapter.
Huwag kang pumasok sa bakuran nino man ng huwag kang masakupan ["Do not enter the premises of another if you do not wish to be under his control"] (Pascual, 2003, pp. 84-85).	*Civil Code* (1949), art. 680. If the branches of any tree should extend over a neighboring estate, tenement, garden or yard, the owner of the latter shall have the right to demand that they be cut off insofar as they may spread over his property, and, if it be the roots of a neighboring tree which should penetrate into the land of another, the latter may cut them off himself within his property. art. 681. Fruits naturally falling upon adjacent land belong to the owner of said land.
Daig ng maagap ang masipag ["A busy person is nothing compared to one who immediately takes care of his interests"] (Pascual, 2003, p. 85).	*Civil Code* (1949), art. 1544. If the same thing should have been sold to different vendees, the ownership shall be transferred to the person who may have first taken possession thereof in good faith, if it should be movable property.

2. *Salawikain*, *Pag-aasawa*, and *Pamilya*, A Historical and Sociological Overview

"Ang lahat ng tao mag-away man" and "ang sakit ng kalingkingan" are popular salawikain related to ideals of marriage and family life in the Philippines. At present, these proverbs can be heard repeated on social media platforms such as YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok. Based on folklore definition, it is a general characteristic of verbal folklore, such as proverbs, to have an untraceable provenance (Lopez, 2006, p. 38). However, there is clear evidence showing that these proverbs already existed in the nineteenth-century Philippines under the Spanish colonial regime. The earliest record of the proverbs can be found in the manuscript of Spanish Franciscan friars Gregorio Martin and Mariano Martinez Cuadrado titled *Colección de Refranes, Frases y Modismos Tagalos* (1890). The friars collected 879 Tagalog proverbs in Tanay and Pililla, Rizal, to serve as guides to the language of the natives and to fast-track Christianization (Eugenio, 2002, pp. vii-viii). In folklorist Damiana L. Eugenio's compilation of proverbs, she lists all used equivalents of the proverbs totaling 13 Philippine languages (see Tables 2 and 3). It suggests that there is long and widespread observation in preserving marriage and family relationships in the entire archipelago.

TABLE 2. *"Ang lahat ng tao mag-away man" in Three Philippine Languages (Eugenio, 2002, p. 452).*

Proverb (*Salawikain*)	**Philippine Language**
Ang lahat nang tao mag-away man, Huwag ang mag-asawa sa loob ng bahay	Tagalog
An entiro kalibutan mag-away Pero dili an mag-asawa	Surigao
The whole world may quarrel But not the husband and wife at home	English

TABLE 3. *"Ang sakit ng kalingkingan" in 13 Philippine Languages (Eugenio, 2002, pp. 196-197).*

Proverb (*Salawikain*)	**Philippine Language**
Ang sakit nang kalingkingan, Damdam nang boong katawan	Tagalog
Ing saquit ning kalinquingan Panamdan ne ning mabilog a catawan	Kapampangan
An lugad sa gigis sa bilog na hawak	Bikolano

An kulog minasaripsip	
Ti sakit ti ramay rienaen Ti amin nga parte ti bagi	Ilokano
No ansakit ed kiking Ansakit na interon laman	Pangasinense
Masaquit tanguinis Sa salban lalaman ancalayam	Zambal
Angkiki paga y mabigaran, Taguenappan na tangabagguian	Ibanag
Ang samad sa kumingking Pagabation sa tibuok lawas	Cebuano
Ang kasakit sa gamay mong tudlo Pagabati-on sa tibuok mong lawas	Boholano
Ang sakit sang kamalingking Mabatyag sang tanan nga kalawasan	Hiligaynon
Sakit it kumingking Batyag it kaeawasan	Aklanon
Ang sakit naa sa tudlo Pagabati-on sa tibu-ok lawas nato	Waray
An tagbati nan king-king Bation nan entiro lawas	Surigao
The pain of the little finger is felt by the whole body	English

The literature on the sociology of Filipino marriage (*pag-aasawa*) and family (*pamilya*) presents a strong alignment with the spirit of proverbs. In his discussion of Filipino common traits, historian Teodoro A. Agoncillo (1990, p. 6) said, "Filipino family has very close ties. The family has been the unit of society and everything revolves around it." The Jesuit sociologist Frank Lynch (1960, p. 49) argued that there are social and economic factors involved that keep spouses together. As mentioned earlier, many marriages are arranged to unite two families putting pressure on one spouse not to break the marriage tie, considering that there is too much effort done to celebrate their marriage (Lynch, 1960, pp. 48-49). The spatial arrangement also contributes to this social pressure. Filipino spouses tend to live near their kin and the proximity can help family members ensure their reconciliation and police them from activities that can harm their marriage (Lynch, 1960, p. 49). Most especially in the rural setting, the family functions as an economic unit such that family members perform a role in the industry such as farming, cottage, and local fishing (Lynch, 1960, p. 49; Medina, 2001, p. 66).

Marital stability can be crucial to the fulfillment of parenthood. Sociologist Belen T. G. Medina (2001, p. 219) says that "because of the family's importance

to the child, parents are morally and legally bound to take care of children and to impart to them the ethical values, norms, and standards of conduct of society." Parents also must provide necessities such as food, clothing, shelter, and education (Macaraig, 1933, p. 5; Medina, 2001, p. 56). Apart from material needs, the family serves as space for the "protection of husband and wife by each other, of young children by their parents and of aged parents by their children" (Medina, 2001, p. 64). In this light, Medina (2001, p. 64) describes the family as a "center of love, affection, intimacy, and companionship, it is a source of emotional gratification and psychological security." This is why "the Filipino family is noted for its great solidarity" (Medina, 2001, p. 64); therefore, the two proverbs above seek to propagate an ethos that highly values the preservation of married spouses and family life.

Spanish accounts on *pag-aasawa* unanimously conclude that spouses may divorce (*paghihiwalay*) their spouse (Colin, 1663, pp. 71-72; Chirino, 1603, p. 70; Donoso, 16th century/2022, p. 49; Loarca, 1582/1903, p. 154-159; Morga, 1868/1609, p. 301; Plasencia, 1589/1903, pp. 183-184). The marriage begins after negotiating the amount of the dowry (*bigaykaya*) between their families which the man provides to the family of the woman before the actual celebration of the wedding. In divorce, a complete or partial return of the *bigaykaya* may occur depending on the circumstances and regulations of the community. For instance, based on his experience in the areas of southern Luzon and the Visayas, the Jesuit friar Pedro Chirino (1604, p. 70) observed that *"si la causa del divorcio no es justa: y el divorcia: pierde la dote. Si ella, la restituye* ['if the cause of the divorce is not just; and he divorces his wife: he loses the dowry; otherwise, she returns it']." Scott (1994, p. 143), however, suggests that "legal divorce was often avoided only because of the difficulty of restoring a bigaykaya that had already been 'spent'" and not to mention that there was *pangoli* which was a "gift to attract back a wife who had fled to her relatives."

3. The Creation of the New Civil Code in the Postwar Philippines

3.1. Lawyer, Leader, and Folklorist: The Life and Career of Jorge C. Bocobo (1886-1939)

Jorge Cleofas Bocobo was born on October 19, 1886, in Gerona, Tarlac, and had his childhood and early education during the final two decades of Spanish colonial rule. Under the new colonial order, his education continued under the tutelage of an American educator, a Thomasite, until he enrolled in a Teachers

Normal Institute in Manila City (Salamanca, 1985, pp. 204-205). In 1903, a colonial policy was passed that granted an opportunity for several chosen Filipinos to study abroad in the United States (Teodoro, 1999, pp. 157). Bocobo was selected as one of the first overseas scholars called pensionados in 1904 until he earned his Bachelor of Laws degree at Indiana University in 1907 ("Dean Jorge Bocobo," 1918). Bocobo's adulthood occurred in the period of post-revolutionary nationalism and *Filipinism*, and the period of US colonial state-building, the schools, theatres, and libraries, that allowed the flourishing of culture and arts in the Philippines (Mojares, 2006, pp. 12-14). It is precisely this context that inspired his fascination with folklore. Thus, Bocobo, together with nationalist contemporaries Rafael Palma, Teodoro Kalaw, and Epifanio de los Santos, advocated for the preservation of the "Filipino soul" (Mojares, 2006, p. 14). Furthermore, he was already advocating for national independence as early as his days at Indiana University (Salamanca, 1985, p. 208). Like the pioneering folklorist Don Belong, Bocobo collected Filipino proverbs as early as 1919. His first collection was published in an article "There is Neither East nor West" in the issue of The Independent on June 28, 1919. Out of the 51 proverbs listed was "ang sakit ng kalingkingan" which he labeled as "Love of Home."

Upon his return to the Philippines, he brought his services to the University of the Philippines and rose through the ranks. He became a lecturer in 1911, instructor in 1912, assistant professor in 1914, associate professor in 1916, and full professor and college dean in 1917 at the University of the Philippines College of Law. The Board of Regents selected Bocobo as the fifth President of the University of the Philippines in 1934 as the successor of former statesman Rafael Palma. As a scholar of law, he specialized in the field of civil law where he was known for outlining the civil code, perhaps, as a study guide for law students ("Dean Jorge Bocobo," 1918; Salamanca, 1985, p. 205). In his 1915 article "Civil Law under the American Flag" published in the *Philippine Law Journal*, he demonstrated vast knowledge of the civil law systems abroad (e.g., Puerto Rico and Louisiana) and even hailed the continuation of Spanish civil law remnants in the Philippines (Bocobo, 1915, p. 302). Bocobo's *Filipinism* manifested in his legal works eventually as soon as the country was promised independence and self-governance after a series of independence missions to which he also contributed (Salamanca, 1985, pp. 208-209). In 1936, Bocobo recommended the need to reform Philippine civil law in an article titled "The Need of a New Civil Code," from the same journal, where he listed one of the reasons: "Filipino customs on the family and successions should take the place of many of the present exotic provisions" (Bocobo, 1936, p. 381). "A new Civil Code of the

Philippines should be prepared and approved," said Bocobo, "because the Philippine nation should contribute something of its native genius to the great body of modern Roman Law throughout the civilized world" (Bocobo, 1936, p. 384).

Bocobo believed that "preservation of cultural heritage" was a prerequisite for instilling nationalism (Salamanca, 1985, p. 210). Thus, as President of the University of the Philippines, one of his sixteen-point programs was "conservation of Filipino customs and tradition" (Salamanca, 1985, p. 647). He wanted to "create an atmosphere for the study of Philippine culture and history" through Philippine *folklore*. He formed the President's Advisory Committee on Dances and Folk Songs in 1934, and UP Folk Song and Dance Club in 1937 (Salamanca, 1985, p. 214). On October 24, 1938, Bocobo delivered a speech on Filipino ethics to students at the University of the Philippines during the opening of the second semester. "Filipino proverbs," according to Bocobo, is a principal source of Filipino ethics. "The proverbs of any people express their perspective on life," said Bocobo (1938). Bocobo had amassed 1,200 proverbs. Among the examples he had shown, tagged under "Family Solidarity," he listed two proverbs—"ang lahat ng tauo mag-away man"; and mentioned again, "ang sakit ng kalingkingan" (Bocobo, 1938). The entire speech was reproduced under the title "Ethics in Philippine Proverbs" in the *Filipiniana Reference Shelf* in August and September 1941.

3.2. Proverbs as Policies: Bocobo's Involvement in the Code of Ethics and the Code Commission (1939-1949)

Bocobo ended his term as University President in 1939 and later became part of President Manuel L. Quezon's cabinet as Secretary of Public Instruction (Salamanca, 1985, p. 203). As Education chief, he encouraged the promotion of Philippine folklore. He ordered the inclusion of Filipino proverbs in the teaching material for Character Education and ordered the gathering of proverbs in different parts of the country. Considering his 1938 speech, he was involved in the creation of the *Code of Citizenship and Ethics* to be taught in all schools according to President Quezon's issuance of Exec. Order 217 on August 19, 1939 (Eugenio, 1987, p. 182). He was part of the Committee which included National Library Director Teodoro M. Kalaw, Finance Secretary Manuel A. Roxas, Rep. Norberto Romualdez of Leyte, and Supreme Court officials, Chief Justice Ramon Avanceña and Associate Justice Jose P. Laurel (Code of Ethics

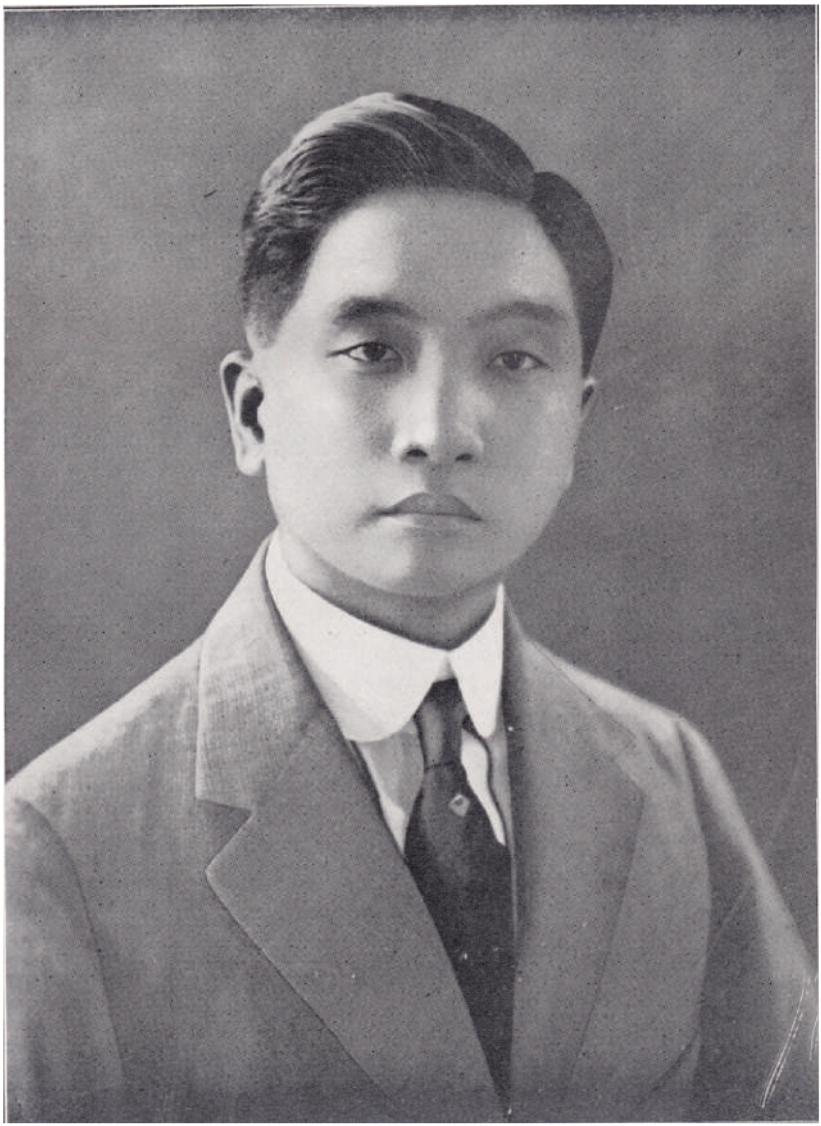
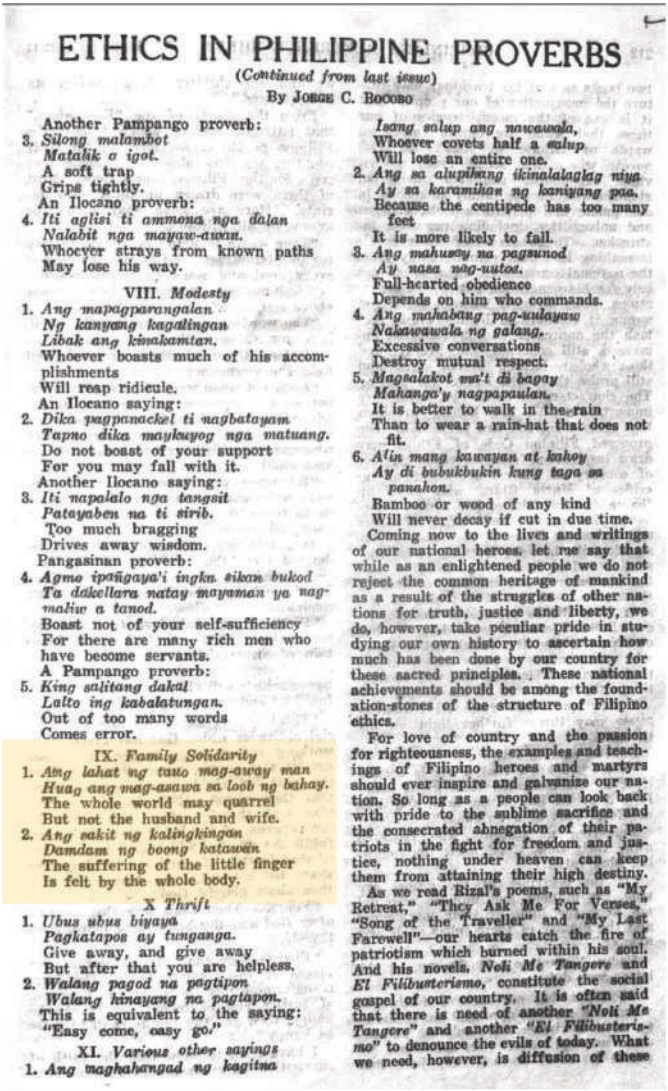


FIG 1. *Jorge C. Bocobo's portrait as Dean of the University of the Philippines College of Law (Philippinensian 1933, p. 207). Accessed through the University Archives, University of the Philippines Diliman.*



ETHICS IN PHILIPPINE PROVERBS

(*Continued from last issue*)

By JORGE C. BOCOBO

Another Pampango proverb:

3. *Silong malambot*
Matalik a igot.
A soft trap
Grips tightly.

An Ilocano proverb:

4. *Iti aglisi ti ammona nga dalan*
Nalabit nga mayaw-awan.
Whocver strays from known paths
May lose his way.

VIII. *Modesty*

1. *Ang mapagparangalan*
Ng kanyang kagalingan
Libak ang kinakamtan.
Whoever boasts much of his accomplishments
Will reap ridicule.

An Ilocano saying:

2. *Dika pagpanackel ti nagbatayam*
Tapno dika maykuyog nga matuang.
Do not boast of your support
For you may fall with it.

Another Ilocano saying:

3. *Iti napalalo nga tangcit*
Patayaben na ti sirib.
Too much bragging
Drives away wisdom.

Pangasinan proverb:

4. *Agmo ipañgaya'i ingkn sikan bukod*
Ta dakcellara natay mayaman ya nagmaliw a tanod.
Boast not of your self-sufficiency
For there are many rich men who have become servants.

A Pampango proverb:

5. *King salitang dakal*
Lalto ing kabalatungan.
Out of too many words
Comes error.

IX. *Family Solidarity*

1. *Ang lahat ng tauo mag-away man*
Huag ang mag-asawa sa loob ng bahay.
The whole world may quarrel
But not the husband and wife.
2. *Ang sakit ng kalingkingan*
Damdam ng boong katawan
The suffering of the little finger
Is felt by the whole body.

X *Thrift*

1. *Ubus ubus biyaya*
Pagkatapos ay tunganga.
Give away, and give away
But after that you are helpless.
2. *Walang pagod na pagtipon*
Walang kinayang na pagtapon.
This is equivalent to the saying:
"Easy come, easy go."

XI. *Various other sayings*

1. *Ang maghahangad ng kagitna*
Isang salup ang nawawala,
Whoever covets half a *salup*
Will lose an entire one.
2. *Ang sa alupihang ikinalalakag niya*
Ay sa karamihan ng kaniyang paa.
Because the centipede has too many feet
It is more likely to fall.
3. *Ang mahusay na pagsunod*
Ay nasa nag-utos.
Full-hearted obedience
Depends on him who commands.
4. *Ang mahabang pag-uulayaw*
Nakawawala ng galang.
Excessive conversations
Destroy mutual respect.
5. *Magsalakot ma't di bagay*
Mahanga'y nagpapaulan.
It is better to walk in the rain
Than to wear a rain-hat that does not fit.
6. *Alin mang kawayan at kahoy*
Ay di bubukbukin kung taga sa panahon.
Bamboo or wood of any kind
Will never decay if cut in due time.

Coming now to the lives and writings of our national heroes, let me say that while as an enlightened people we do not reject the common heritage of mankind as a result of the struggles of other nations for truth, justice and liberty, we do, however, take peculiar pride in studying our own history to ascertain how much has been done by our country for these sacred principles. These national achievements should be among the foundation-stones of the structure of Filipino ethics.

For love of country and the passion for righteousness, the examples and teachings of Filipino heroes and martyrs should ever inspire and galvanize our nation. So long as a people can look back with pride to the sublime sacrifice and the consecrated abnegation of their patriots in the fight for freedom and justice, nothing under heaven can keep them from attaining their high destiny.

As we read Rizal's poems, such as "My Retreat," "They Ask Me For Verses," "Song of the Traveller" and "My Last Farewell"—our hearts catch the fire of patriotism which burned within his soul. And his novels, *Noli Me Tangere* and *El Filibusterismo*, constitute the social gospel of our country. It is often said that there is need of another *"Noli Me Tangere"* and another *"El Filibusterismo"* to denounce the evils of today. What we need, however, is diffusion of these

FIG 2. *Jorge C. Bocobo's "Ethics in Philippine Proverbs" (1941, September). This page shows "ang lahat ng tao mag-away man" and "ang sakit ng kalingkingan" under the label "Family Solidarity." Accessed through Reference Division, National Library of the Philippines.*

Committee, 1940, p. 2).

Set in the aftermath of Japanese occupation and the Second World War, Bocobo would be involved in another massive project under the leadership of a young rising politician and fellow cabinet member under Quezon—Manuel A. Roxas. The independence of the Philippines on July 4, 1946, facilitated decolonization in the country, which was a characteristic of this new brand of nationalism in the postwar Philippines. President Roxas formed the *Code Commission* to create a new civil code for the Philippines, from 1947 to 1949, proclaimed through Exec. Order 48, on March 20, 1947. Furthermore, according to the executive order, it is their objective to codify civil law "in conformity with the customs, traditions, and idiosyncrasies of the Filipino people and with modern trends in legislation and the progressive principles of law." President Roxas appointed Bocobo as the Chairman of the Commission composed of respectable civil law experts and legal educators of the country: Judge Guillermo B. Guevara, law professors Pedro Y. Ylagan, and Francisco R. Capistrano. Indeed, being experts in civil law, the Code Commission accomplished the first draft in "less than eight months" from May to December 1947 (Bocobo, 1950/2005, p. 468).

The Code Commission (1948/2005) fulfilled its task with passion and excitement: "It is fitting that in this formative period of the Republic of the Philippines, it should promulgate its own Civil Code. For the first time in four centuries, the Filipinos make their own laws, without any foreign restraint or supervision" (1948/2005, p. 546). The Code Commission reported that new provisions in the first draft constituted 43% (1948/2005, p. 551). While the Commission took inspiration from other jurisdictions, they claimed the opportunity "to transform into positive law, those native customs and traditions that are worthy of perpetuation, and to derive legal solutions from the postulates of morality and justice" (p. 546).

One of their principal reforms was titled "Consolidation of the Family" (Code Commission, 1948/2005, pp. 561-568) which introduced state policies on the Filipino family that did not exist in any constitution or statute at the time and were entirely novel. "It would seem to be wise to lay down certain general principles that sustain, the solidarity of the family, not only for the guidance of the courts and of administrative officials, but also for their wholesome influence upon the members of every family" (Code Commission, 1948/2005, pp. 561-562). The First Congress approved everything under the title "The Family" and Chapter "The Family as an Institution" which became articles 216 to 222 of the

approved *Civil Code of the Philippines, Rep. Act. 386,* signed by President Elpidio Quirino. A year later, Chairman Bocobo had the opportunity to discuss the general nature of the civil code to a wider audience at the University of the East Manila in November 1950. In his third lecture about "women's right and family solidarity," Bocobo had an interesting and unique way of communicating the law to his audience by adding bits of proverbs that encapsulate the spirit of the provision. This connection between family-related provisions and proverbs is summarized in Table 4 below.

TABLE 4. *"Family Law Provision in the Civil Code and Bocobo's Analogy using Proverbs (Salawikain)*

Provisions in the Civil Code	**Bocobo's Analogy using Proverbs (*Salawikain*) in the Lecture**
Civil Code (1949), art. 216. The family is a basic social institution which public policy cherishes and protects. art 218. The law governs family relations. No custom, practice or agreement which is destructive of the family shall be recognized or given any effect. art. 219. Mutual aid, both moral and material, shall be rendered among members of the same family. Judicial and administrative officials shall foster this mutual assistance. art. 220. In case of doubt, all presumptions favor the solidarity of the family. Thus, every intendment of law or fact leans toward the validity of marriage, the indissolubility of the marriage bonds, the legitimacy of children, the community of property during marriage, the authority of parents over their children, and the validity of defense for any member of the family in case of unlawful aggression. art. 221. The following shall be void and of no effect: (1) Any contract for personal separation between husband and wife; (2) Every extra-judicial agreement, during marriage, for the dissolution of the conjugal partnership of gains or of the absolute community of property between husband and wife; (3) Every collusion to obtain a decree of legal separation, or of annulment of marriage; (4) Any simulated alienation of property with intent to deprive the compulsory heirs of their legitime.	"*Family as foundation of society*. I come now to the solidarity of the family, which the new Civil Code effectively fosters. It is a happy coincidence that this is Family Week, devoted to the unification and sacredness of the family. It is a truism that the family is the foundation of society, and every wise legislation should make a supreme effort to strengthen that foundation. How beautiful a picture Rizal portrayed of early morn in the home in that second verse of Maria Clara's song: 'Ardientes besos en los labios juegan, De una madre en el seno al despertar, Buscan los brazos a cehiir el cuello, Y los ojos sonriense al mirar.' So, the new Civil Code provides, among other things, that 'the family is a basic social institution which public policy cherishes and protects' (Art. 216) that 'no custom, practice, or agreement which is destructive of the family shall be recognized or given any effect' (Art. 218) and that 'mutual aid, both moral and material, shall be rendered among members of the same family'. (Art. 219) And then there is Article 221 which specifically outlaws certain agreements. Said article provides: … The foregoing transactions are rather frequent in the [Philippines], BALANGAYAN ARKIPELAGO, so they are now expressly declared void. And in case of doubt, all presumptions favor the solidarity of the family. (Art. 220). There is a Tagalog proverb which likens the family to the human body, thus:

	'Ang sakit ng kalingkingan Ay sakit ng buong katawan.' (The pain of the little finger Is the pain of the whole body.)" (Bocobo, 1950/2005, pp. 502-503)
art. 116. When one of the spouses neglects his or her duties to the conjugal union or brings danger, dishonor or material injury upon the other, the injured party may apply to the court for relief.	"...This measure of accord and concord between husband and wife is necessary because, unfortunately, many couples are still a far cry from the ideal depicted by Longfellow in Hiawatha: 'As unto the bow the cord is, So unto the man is woman; Though she bends him she obeys him, Though she draws him, yet she follows, Useless each without the other.' And there is a Tagalog proverb which says: 'Ang lahat ng tao mag-away man Huwag ang mag-asawa sa loob ng bahay.' (Let the Whole world fight, But not the husband and wife.)" (Bocobo, 1950/2005, pp. 504-505)

Furthermore, I cannot help but notice that a similar ethos was expressed in the provision "marriage is not a mere contract but an inviolable social institution" (art. 54)—a definition introduced for the first time in Philippine legal history. Under the subject of "legal separation" (relative divorce), a provision states that "in every case the court must take steps, before granting the legal separation, toward the reconciliation of the spouses, and must be fully satisfied that such reconciliation is highly improbable" (art. 98). These family law provisions that empower the solidarity of the family are still preserved in the present legal basis of persons and family relations in the Philippines, the *Family Code of the Philippines* (1987) and affirmed by the *1987 Constitution* (see Table 5).

TABLE 5. *Statutory Development of Selected Family Law Provisions*

Civil Code of the Philippines (1949)	**Family Code of the Philippines (1987)**	**1987 Constitution of the Philippines**
art. 52. Marriage is not a mere contract but an inviolable social institution. Its nature, consequences and incidents are governed by law and not subject to stipulation, except that the marriage settlements may to a certain extent fix the property relations during the marriage.	art. 1. Marriage is a special contract of permanent union between a man and a woman entered into in accordance with law for the establishment of conjugal and family life. It is the foundation of the family and an inviolable social institution whose nature, consequences, and incidents are governed by law and not subject to	art. 15. The Family sec. 1. The State recognizes the Filipino family as the foundation of the nation. Accordingly, it shall strengthen its solidarity and actively promote its total development. sec. 2. Marriage, as an inviolable social institution, is the

	stipulation, except that marriage settlements may fix the property relations during the marriage within the limits provided by this Code.	foundation of the family and shall be protected by the State. sec. 3. The State shall defend: (1) The right of spouses to found a family in accordance with their religious convictions and the demands of responsible parenthood; (1) The right of children to assistance, including proper care and nutrition, and special protection from all forms of neglect, abuse, cruelty, exploitation and other conditions prejudicial to their development; (2) The right of the family to a family living wage and income; and (3) The right of families or family associations to participate in the planning and implementation of policies and programs that affect them. sec. 4. The family has the duty to care for its elderly members but the State may also do so through just program of social security.
art. 98. In every case the court must take steps, before granting the legal separation, toward the reconciliation of the spouses, and must be fully satisfied that such reconciliation is highly improbable.	art. 59. No legal separation may be decreed unless the Court has taken steps toward the reconciliation of the spouses and is fully satisfied, despite such efforts, that reconciliation is highly improbable.	
art. 216. The family is a basic social institution which public policy cherishes and protects.	art. 149. The family, being the foundation of the nation, is a basic social institution which public policy cherishes and protects. Consequently, family relations are governed by law and no custom, practice or agreement destructive of the family shall be recognized or given effect.	
art. 218. The law governs family relations. No custom, practice or agreement which is destructive of the family shall be recognized or given any effect.		
art. 219. Mutual aid, both moral and material, shall be rendered among members of the same family. Judicial and administrative officials shall foster this mutual assistance.	(No direct equivalent)	
art. 220. In case of doubt, all presumptions favor the solidarity of the family. Thus, every intendment of law or fact leans toward the validity of marriage, the indissolubility of the marriage bonds, the legitimacy of children, the community of property during marriage, the authority of parents over their children, and the validity of defense for any member of the family in case of unlawful aggression.	(No direct equivalent)	
art. 221. The following shall be void and of no effect: (1) Any contract for personal separation between husband and wife; (2) Every extra-judicial agreement, during marriage, for the dissolution of the conjugal	(No direct equivalent)	

partnership of gains or of the absolute community of property between husband and wife; (3) Every collusion to obtain a decree of legal separation, or of annulment of marriage; (4) Any simulated alienation of property with intent to deprive the compulsory heirs of their legitime.		

4. Conclusion

Family, indeed, is an important and cherished institution in the Philippines that is embodied from its *salawikain* to national policy, in civil law and constitutional law. The two popular proverbs "ang lahat ng tao mag-away man huwag ang mag-asawa sa loob ng bahay" (the whole world may quarrel but not the husband and wife at home) and "ang sakit ng kalingkingan, damdam ng buong katawan" (the pain of the little finger is felt by the whole body) affirm the solidarity of the Filipino family, as well as the permanence of marriage. To borrow Bohannan's *double-institutionalization* framing of the law, this article has demonstrated a unique development: the Filipino custom of strong family ties as expressed by our proverbs was reiterated as law, particularly in the *Civil Code of the Philippines* (1949).

Throughout the country's colonial history, no colonial policy ever defined marriage or family. This article transcends the colonial framework of the country's legal system (the *mestizo* framework in Philippine legal history) by highlighting the Filipino element and contribution to the development of their own laws. Direct evidence of codifying *salawikain* in the civil code points us to the man behind this project—Jorge C. Bocobo and his fascination with Philippine folklore. Like the folklorist Isabelo De los Reyes, Don Belong, in the 19th century, Bocobo collected thousands of proverbs and used them as a learning material and a primary source of ethics to empower national identity in postwar Philippines. As Chairman of the Code Commission, Bocobo incorporated "native customs and traditions worthy of perpetuation" inspired by proverbs in the *Civil Code* draft from 1947 to 1949 (Code Commission, 1948/2005, p. 546). Even more intriguing is the fact that these family law provisions are still enshrined in the *Family Code of the Philippines* (1987) and the supreme law of the land, the *1987 Constitution*.

This article suggests that Philippine folklore could be an effective way of teaching and understanding the language of law. I return to the question I posed

earlier, and I wonder again, what other elements of our legal system are reiterations of Philippine folklore?

5. Acknowledgment

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Is Sungka a Wargame? An Investigation into Conflict and Strategy within Pre-Colonial Philippine Ludic Culture

Micah Jeiel R. Perez

This paper intends to analyze the Philippine folk game known as *sungka* within the context of an indigenous culture of conflict encountered by the Spaniards in the 16th century. It explores parallelisms between a unique Philippine discourse on war and the game's ludic dimension, primarily focused on its in-game lexicon and its rules of play. The paper argues that sungka reflected—if not reinforced—specific attitudes and approaches towards competitive activities, including conflict, due to several unique elements of the game: a) a focus on resource acquisition and circulation, b) relatively weak spatial considerations, and c) an ability to reverse prior setbacks in what is usually a drawn-out competition between two individuals. A correlation thus seems to exist between the strategic thinking extant in *sungka* and the indigenous methods of waging war.

The paper is inspired by a gap in the works of Isabelo de los Reyes. His planned multi-volume work on Filipino folklore included a tome on what he referred to as "folk wit." This volume would have included children's games—such as *sungka*—but the currents of history swept Don Belong's plans aside. This paper contributes to the legacy of his unfinished work by building on Mellie Leandicho Lopez's studies of Filipino folk games and thus takes a tentative step towards connecting Philippine leisure culture to Philippine warfare.

Keywords: *sungka, folk game, wargame, warfare, strategy*

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1. Introduction

Often, work unfinished is work entrusted.

Such is the case with Isabelo de los Reyes and *El Folk-Lore Filipino*, a two-volume work that stands testament to the efforts of Philippine folklore's greatest champion in the 19th century. Don Belong, as Isabelo was called by some, initially planned *El Folk-Lore* to be a multi-volume work that would cover a vast array of folklore material across the Philippine archipelago's multitude of provinces. His original vision saw him as only one of many contributors, and he went about asking his peers—ilustrados in the Philippines and abroad—to send him folklore materials from their home province. Yet his relative isolation in this herculean effort can be observed in the tome's incomplete nature. Its contents are limited to the provinces of Ilocos, Malabon, and Zambales, with the majority of its pages being filled with examples from its Ilocano author's home province. Furthermore, Don Belong's extensive coverage of Ilocano folklore pales in comparison with his vision of publishing volumes of work on Ilocos alone, with each volume covering a different category from folk medicine to popular wit. One such unexplored category was folk games.

Don Belong's mention of children's games as folklore belies his sensitivity to patterns of play and the space they occupy within communities. Yet mentions of play in *El Folk-Lore Filipino* are few and far between, usually mentioned in connection to merrymaking activities during celebratory occasions like weddings (De los Reyes, 1889/1994). This gap has since been filled by other folklorists, most prominent of whom is Mellie Leandicho Lopez—her *A Study of Philippine Games* (2001) was shortly followed by *A Handbook of Philippine Folklore* (2007), both of which analyzed and systemically classified Filipino folk games commonly played by children. One such game is *sungka*, which Lopez classified as a formula game, and might barely count as a "board" game today.

In her *Handbook*, Landicho describes how the Tagalog *palaro* encapsulated the form of play found in folk games, which was different from non-competitive play with no ludic dimensions (like the childlike playing in the rain) and from the more competitive and controlled characteristics of modern sports (such as the rule-oriented institution of basketball). It was Johan Huizinga (1938) who first argued that the play-element (*spel-element*) of culture was a fundamental part of human nature, and the natural development of such games in the communal lore of a particular people fills this need in human societies. Children are especially important in the preservation of gaming culture in society, serving as "keepers"

of game culture—everyone was once a child, after all, and an inseparable aspect of childhood is playing games (Arcangel, 2010). Games thus serve as an important vehicle for attitudes, behaviors, and lifestyles that shape communities as the children that play them grow into adulthood.

An interesting aspect of games is their ability to adapt certain characteristics of the culture; incorporating them into local leisure activities and thereby creating new ludic cultures. Even competitive sports like basketball—already artificially designed—still generate sub-cultures with vast vocabularies and norms of play. The Filipino tendency to drive to the basket, colloquially known as *salaksak,* is but one example. The same is true for all sorts of other games. From gambling games to board games, how a community chooses to adapt rules and modes of play tends to reflect their historical and cultural contexts.

This study thus builds on earlier works by exploring how a Filipino folk game—*sungka*—reflects a particular aspect of indigenous culture. In this case, that aspect is warfare. The study does this by making two important presuppositions. First, that the lowland, coastal communities across the Philippines shared common cultural characteristics with the greater region of insular Southeast Asia. Second, that sungka entered the Philippine archipelago via the vast maritime trade networks stretching from Eastern Africa and the Arabian Peninsula to the Indian Subcontinent and, finally, Southeast Asia. Thus, it would have been these same lowland, coastal communities that adopted the game as a form of leisure. It follows that similarities shall be traced between the cultural referencing of the game's variants in Southeast Asia and its same referencing of the shared cultural discourse on war among Philippine communities.

The broader theme binding all aspects of the paper together would be Don Belong's assertions that folklore is best understood within the contexts of the communities they inhabit, intimately entwined with the pulse of daily local life. The paper thus embarks on this exploration by asking a simple question: is *sungka* a wargame?

2. The Cultural Diffusion of *Sungka* in the Philippines

Sungka is a derivative of the game known as *mancala*, which originated in Africa. Its existence has been documented as early as 1500 B.C. According to Anthula Natsoulas (1995), common elements of the game can be observed even

among geographically diverse peoples, even as distinct variations in the rules of play adopted by neighboring communities belie the cultural diversity of the folk game. De Voogt (2001) even makes the claim that *mancala* and its derivative games are "perhaps the most widely played board game in the world," having observed it played "from West Africa to the Caribbean and South America, from North to South Africa, from the Middle East to South Asia to Southeast Asia" (De Voogt, 2001, p. 38).

Mancala is a two-player game played on boards containing rows of holes, most commonly referred to as "houses." Each player distributes counters—small pieces that can range from small stones to shells—into each of their holes and the "ultimate goal of the game is for one player to render his/her opponent incapable of continuing play by capturing his/her counters" (Natsoulas, 1995, p. 8). The number of rows may vary, and so do the ways in which counters are captured, but three universal aspects remain: the board format and its single direction of play; the need to capture counters; and the two-player system of play. The capture of the counters is the single most important aspect of the game, while the elimination of the opponents' houses facilitates the goal of capturing counters. As de Voogt writes:

> Mancala games are played on rows of holes and with a number of playing counters, usually seeds, shells, or stone. In all mancala games moves are made by taking up the counters contained in one hole and spreading (sowing) these counters one by one in consecutive holes around the rows of holes. In most cases the object of the game is to capture the majority of the counters. Captures are made by reaching a certain part of the board or accumulating a certain number of counters in a particular hole. The ways of capturing and moving counters around the board seem endless and new variations on this theme are still being found in the world (De Voogt, 2001, p. 44).

From Africa, *mancala* games traveled eastward to Southeast Asia, where they have been recorded to exist since the seventeenth century. It came to be known as *congka* or *dakon* in Indonesia and Malaysia, *ohvalhu* in the Maldives, and *sungka* in the Philippines (De Voogt, 2010, pp. 334-335). In each region, divergences in game rules developed in terms of the number of holes, the number of rows, the number of shells, the rules of capture, and the game's win condition. However, some commonalities remained.

One commonality between *mancala* games in Africa is the practice of playing

it during long festivities, such as wedding ceremonies. Another commonality is the game's association with death. On the Ivory Coast, the game is thought to influence the sex of a child at birth. Some groups play the game as part of a ritual to determine the next chief, with the belief that the spirits of the ancestors will seal their approval by assuring victory for their chosen candidate. ("Mancala," n.d.)

Associations with death is one aspect that seems to have carried over when the game spread across the Indian Ocean maritime trade networks and into Southeast Asia. In Kedang, Indonesia, R.H. Barnes makes the connection between *motiq*—the colloquial term for the game—and beliefs about the afterlife. The game was popular "during the night of vigilance when guarding a corpse," and certain game terms (e.g., *eu leu*) were homonyms for the stage and the clothing in a funerary ceremony (Barnes, 1975, pp. 79-80). In the Philippines, Lopez also takes note of a belief that sungka is associated with death given the involvement of terms like *mamamatay* (will die), *masusunog* (will burn), and *butas* (hole) reminiscent of "a grave in the ground" (Lopez, 2001, p. 534).

Such connections reveal how the cultural genealogy of the Philippine *sungka* is rooted in African *mancala* games. That the game was played widely in the Philippines is also supported by the number of languages which use the word to indicate a game played on wooden boards with holes and using shells as game pieces, as seen in Table 1. The words and definitions listed here can be separated into two categories. First, those words found in Spanish language dictionaries, scoured from various digital archives online and dating back to the 19th century. Second, the words from the Austronesian Comparative Dictionary website (2023) by Robert Blust, Stephen Trussel, Alexander D. Smith, and Robert Forkel (shortened as ACD), coming mostly from sources published in the 20th century.

The oldest of the Spanish dictionaries surveyed is Fray Diego Bergaño's 1732 Kapampangan dictionary. According to De Voogt (2010), however, some scholars claim that the earliest mention of *sungka* can be found in the manuscript of the *Bisaya Diccionario* by Jesuit missionary priest Father Jose Sanchez, whose work remained unpublished after his death in 1692. In this dictionary, he "mentioned a game called *kunggit* in which players scooped and distributed seashells across a row of bins on a wooden, boat-like board" (De Voogt, 2010, p. 335). The manuscript exists, listed as it is in several comprehensive bibliographies of Philippine language dictionaries, but a digital copy has yet to be accessible as of this article's writing. Still, Sanchez' 17th century observation is supported by the Aklanon word *congit*, which appears in Father Juan Felix de la Encarnacion's

TABLE 1. *Sungka and Kunggit in Various Dictionaries*

Language	Word	Definition	Sources
Agutaynen	*soŋka*	'A native shell game, played with a board with scooped-out holes in it referred to as, 'houses', and using small cowry shells called as tokens'	*ACD* [Entry based on Marilyn A. Caabay and Josenita L. Edep, and Gail R. Hendrickson, and Melissa S. Melvin, *Agutaynen-English dictionary* (2014)]
Aklanon	*súŋka?*	'Game played with stones or marbles, attempting to get all the pieces of one's opponent'	*ACD* [Entry based on R. David Zorc, *A study of the Aklanon dialect* (1969)]
Bikol	*súŋka?*	'Game in which shells or stones are dropped in consecutive order into holes in a game board'	*ACD* [Entry based on Malcolm W. Mintz and Jose del Rosario Britanico, *Bikol-English dictionary* (1985)]
Bisayan (Cebu, Bohol, Negros, Mindanao, and other islands)	*conğit*	'Game played using shellfish'	Juan Felix de la Encarnación, *Diccionario bisaya-español* (1885)
Bisayan (Cebu)	*súŋka?*	'A game for two played with a board and pieces, the object of which is to get as many pieces as possible'	*ACD* [Entry based on John U. Wolff, *A dictionary of Cebuano Visayan* (1972)]
Bisayan (Leyte-Samar)	*sungcá*	'To play or have fun with the game called *sungcaan*'	Antonio Sánchez de la Rosa, *Diccionario Bisaya-Español* (1895)
	sungcáan	'A game played on a rectangular piece of wood, about three hand spans long, with two rows of seven holes each, and a hole at either end in which are placed pebbles or snails, and from there they are placed one by one in the remaining fourteen holes'	
Bisaya (Panay)	*cunguit*	'A game of shells'	Alonso de Mentrida, *Diccionario de la lengua bisaya, hiligueina y haraya de*
	songca	'A manner of joining pieces of wood together end-to-end, such as on a stage'	
	tongca		

			las Isla de Panay (1841)
Kapampangan	*sungcá*	'A game of shells, played on a piece of wood with seven holes; played either on the board or via betting'	Diego Bergaño, *Vocabulario de la lengua pampanga en romance* (1732/1860)
Ilokano	*songca / chonca*	'A children's game'	Andrés Carro, *Vocabulario de la lengua ilocana* (1849)
	songca	'A calculation game between two players, played on a piece of wood with fourteen holes, seven facing each side, and one on each end called the mother. Seven shells are placed on each of the fourteen holes and, taking from the holes at the end, are distributed one by one in the seven empty holes, depositing a shell upon each pass and making sure there are no shells opposite when reaching an empty hole, because then you lose the game. At the end of the game, they count the shells deposited in the mothers, and the excess of one player represents their winnings.'	Andrés Carro, *Vocabulario iloco-español* (1888)
	suŋká	'Kind of native game played with small butiti shells and a board with twelve holes'	*ACD* [Entry based on Andrés Carro, *Iloko-English dictionary* (1956), and Carl Ralph Galvez Rubino, *Ilocano dictionary and grammar: Ilocano-English, English-Ilocano* (2000)]
Tagalog	*suŋká*	'A native game played (in some areas) by two people using something like a small, flat wooden boat with scooped-out	*ACD* [Entry based on Jose Villa Panganiban, *Talahuluganang Pilipino-Ingles* (1966), and Leo James

		holes in the deck containing small shells used in the game'	English, *Tagalog-English dictionary* (1986)]
Tausug	*suŋka?*	'An indoor game usually played by two people on a wooden block shaped like a boat, and having shallow holes along the sides where shells, pebbles, or any counters are dropped by each player'	*ACD* [Entry based on Irene U. Hassan, Seymour A. Ashley, and Mary L. Ashley, *Tausug-English dictionary: Kabtangan Iban Maana* (1994)]

1885 dictionary, and the word *cunguit*, found in Alonso de Mentrida's 1841 dictionary. It was also noted by Scott (1994) when he mentioned "a children's game called *kunggit* played with *kigay* or *buskay* shells—probably modern sungka" (p. 111). This term seems to have been fully replaced by *sungka* in the 20th century, a term that, according to Mentrida, had meant a woodworking technique on Panay Island up to the 1800s. Ultimately, the word *kunggit/congit/cunguit* lends credence to the fact that some form of *mancala* game already existed in the Philippine islands at the time of Spanish advent.

Aside from the dates, Table 1 also shows the wide use of *sungka* across the Philippines to refer to a game played 1) on a wooden board with holes and 2) using shells as game pieces. From the Ilocanos of Northern Luzon to the Tausug of Mindanao and across the major islands of the Visayan group in the middle, the game's cultural diffusion cannot be contested, regardless how opaque the timeline of its spreading remains. That several of the Spanish dictionaries refer to the game as one played using the Tagalog *sigay* (shell)—as in *"juego de sigay"* and *"juego de sigueyes"*—also reinforces the folk nature of the game—it was one played by the locals, described by Spanish observers using local words.

3. A Game and Its Folk

With the geographic diffusion of this cultural artefact, a unique gameplay mechanic arose: the inclusion of an enlarged hole at opposite ends of the game board, which were optional in other regions (De Voogt, 2010, p. 334). In Africa, these larger holes are called "banks." (Natsoulas, 1995, p. 8). In Southeast Asia,

they're commonly referred to as some type of store or storage space (De Voogt, 2010, p. 334). There also tends to be less rows of holes in the games of Southeast Asia. De Voogt (2010, p. 335) notes that "one particular set of rules is shared by players in Indonesia, Malaysia, the Maldives, and the Philippines" and that the Philippine variant is almost always played using two rows of seven holes each. Philippine boards, called the *sungkaan* or *sungkahan*, can also vary widely in the elaborateness of their designs, though it seems to have been common for them to be carved into the shape of a boat.

Lopez (2001; 2007) categorized *sungka* under "folk custom" together with festivals, superstitions, gestures, and medicines. As a folk game, *sungka* is repeatedly transmitted within a particular group, exists in different versions at different places, can no longer be traced to an original "inventor," and exhibits both stability and malleability across its many variations across spatial and temporal geographies (Lopez, 2007, pp. 36-39). Lopez makes a special note of the game, writing:

> In the Philippines, as elsewhere in the world, folklore materials have the capability to adapt to historical changes…The same can be said of Philippine folk games. The Tagalog game sungka for example, a variant of the African mancala, has adjusted to the encroachment of modern technology. Filipino children in urban areas are now seen substituting egg cartons for the traditional wooden game board and marbles for the cowrie shells or stones used by children of rural towns and villages. But despite the change of game props or artifacts, the sequential movement or structure of the game remains the same (Lopez, 2007, p. 40).

The difference between *mancala* games and *sungka* games shows both the variation and constancy when modes of play are geographically diffused over time. Barnes (1975) writes that "it would not be surprising for a game, even one which has been recently borrowed, to be reinterpreted during play in terms of local principles…[and] as play is often an imaginative fantasy on ordinary life, we should expect their co-optation by collective traditions" (p. 81). In this respect, variations in the common play of *sungka* can be best understood as reflective of indigenous aspects of the local cultural communities who adopted the game. After all, how better to learn a new form of leisure activity than to utilize what is already known—what is lore—as reference for its rules?

Such malleability explains the unique agricultural slant of some versions of *sungka* Lopez described. She noted that in Nueva Ecija, "especially in rich

agricultural areas," the larger "Mother Hole" is referred to as *kamalig*—a granary or storehouse of agricultural products (Lopez, 2001, p. 529). Her analysis of this variant coincides with the realities of life in the province:

> The symbolic meaning of the Nueva Ecija game becomes obvious when one takes into account the fact that before action starts in the game, the player distributes the tokens from his own "granary" to the "tenants" [little holes] in the same manner that the landlord, who owns the rice fields or plantation as well as the granary, distributes seedlings and money for the year's crop to his sharecroppers or tenants. All through the game, each player tries to bring as many tokens as possible back to his "granary." In real life, the landlord tries to collect as much as he can from the rice harvest of all his tenants and deposit the grains in his granary. Thus, *sungka* reflects the feudal agricultural system prevalent not only in Central Luzon but also in the entire Philippines (Lopez, 2001, p. 537).

Despite these agricultural references, a lasting characteristic of *sungka* boards are their boat-like shapes. While *sungka* boards can vary widely in their decorations, including the carving of all sorts of animal motifs for the board's base or on the board itself (De Voogt, 2010, pp. 338-340), locally made *sungka* boards tend to be shaped like boats, their slight curvature creating a distinct silhouette easily recognizable to any player. These are most likely traces of the maritime influence of pre-colonial Southeast Asian culture on the mancala game. It is this maritime characteristic that also permeates native warfare in the Philippines at the time of Spanish contact. However, for parallels to be drawn between the game and armed conflict, one must first understand how it is played.

4. Rules of the Game

Lopez categorized *sungka* under "formula games"—that is, games "in which the whole game is the sum-total of all its parts, and each part is related to and derives its ultimate significance from the entire whole. A formula game is governed by precise contingency rules" (Lopez, 2001, p. 449). She described it as a "board distribution game," played on a board that usually takes the shape of a boat, although others can also take the shape of animals or intricately carved art pieces with no obvious physical world reference (Lopez, 2001, pp. 528-529). The game's rules are as follows:

1. A player must drop only one shell at a time into every small hole

("house") and into his own "Mother Hole."

2. He must not drop any shell into his opponent's "Mother Hole" or in any "burnt house" (*sunog*, i.e., a "house" left empty due to lack of enough tokens accumulated by a player in his "Mother Hole").

    a. The opponent is entitled to any shell which his rival drops carelessly in any "burnt house."

    b. A "burnt house" can only be refilled in the next game after a complete set of seven (or whatever number fills a hole) tokens are accumulated in the owner's "Mother Hole."

3. Four things can happen to the last shell in a player's hand:

    a. It is dropped in an empty hole in the opponent's row and the player and his move are declared "*dead*" (patay) and he stops playing.

    b. It is dropped in a filled hole and all the contents are scooped out and distributed around.

    c. It is dropped in an empty hole in the player's own row of "houses"; if the opposite hole belonging to the opponent contains shells, he "eats" (*kain*) them up, i.e., he scoops them and deposits them, plus his last shell, in his "Mother Hole."

    d. If the last shell winds up in the player's own "Mother Hole," he is entitled to continue by picking up any lone shell in his first "house" [a player's leftmost hole]… and dropping it into his "Mother Hole" before he starts the next move. This move is called *sampa* (to climb) or *subi* or *subida* ("made to advance"). He continues playing by picking up the contents of anyone of his own "houses" and distributing them in the same manner as before.

Objective – Each player should try to accumulate more tokens in his Mother Hole than his opponent (Lopez, 2001, p. 531).

While Southeast Asia is known for the variety of *mancala* games played across its cultures, *sungka* also maintains similarities with some of its peers. To focus the discussion, Indonesian *mancala* serves as a good example, where the game is more well-known as *congklak, congkak*, or *conkak*, though variants also exist in some islands—the game is known as *dakon* in Java, *kungkulan* in Sumatra, and *motiq* on Kedang. *Motiq* is also notable for having two variants: *ka ia* and *eu/keu leu*

(Nugroho, Anna, & Jarusawat, 2023; Barnes, 1975).

In *congkak*, players may play simultaneously instead of turn-by-turn. The usual direction of play is clockwise for *congkak* and *sungka* while it is counterclockwise in *motiq*. While the traditional way of playing all games is on the floor, *motiq* can also be played by simply digging holes in the ground. Meanwhile, *congkak* retains some shells in "dead" holes that are skipped by either player, based on the results of the previous match, while *motiq* and *sungka* both keep these skipped holes empty of shells. The *ka ia* variant of *motiq* proves the most divergent, since it has no large hole or "storage" at either end of the board, which was the unique evolution in Southeast Asian *mancala* games. However, the *eu leu* variant does, where it is called the "village" and the gathering of counters into the whole was known as "entering the village."

While rulesets may differ from place to place, more variety can be observed in the shape of the boards, even those used for the same game. De Voogt (2001) observes that the boat-like shape is indicative of the coastal provenance of such boards, whether they were found in Africa or Asia. He also notes that the number of holes seems to be fixed in West African boards, while Southeast Asian boards have a wider variety. In fact, the number of holes can be an easy indication of the local rules of the game as, for instance, in Southeast Asian variants "a board with two rows of nine holes will usually have nine counters per hole, and a board with two rows of seven holes will have seven counters per hole." (De Voogt, 2001, p. 44). Along with the variation of board shapes and designs comes a variety of terms used to describe parts of the board, the moves a player makes, and the current state of play. Arranging these terms side by side for easy comparison also reveals some interesting similarities, as seen in Table 2.

In the table above, we see multiple overlapping terms that refer to holes as houses or villages. In the game, the player's interaction with holes is qualified only in reference to what they do against their opponent—they enter their villages, burn their holes, and continue doing so in a steady advance until they die, i.e., their turn ends. Once burned, these houses can be refilled, with the exception of a match ending. Henceforth, in variants wherein the previous game state carries over to the next, a hole is left out of play and is thus ruined, reminding one of a grave. Counters are usually referred to by their type, from cowry shells to tamarind seeds, and were therefore too many to list above, but it is also interesting to note that there exists in *congkak* a reference to the shells as a child.

Interestingly, in the Kapampangan version of *sungka*, the very first hole in a player's row (first from the left) is distinguished by calling it *asbuc* or "mouth"

TABLE 2. *Comparison of Game Terms in Sungka, Congkak, and Motiq*[1]

Game Element	Term in *sungka*	Term in *congkak*	Term in *motiq*
Game board	*sungkaan*	*papan congkak*	-
Small holes	*bahay* (house)	*kampong* (village)	-
	bale (house)	*lubang anak* (hole/crater child)	-
Large holes	*buntuc* (head)	*lubang rumah* (hole/crater house)	*leu* (village)
	ulo (head)	-	-
	ina (mother)		
Ending turn on large hole	-	*naik rumah* (enter the house)	*seu leu* (enter the village)
Empty hole (still in play)	*cutcut* (grave)	-	-
Skipped hole (empty or with less shells)	*sunog* (burnt)	*telega burok* (ruined well)	-
	duluc (burnt)		
Capture of opponent's counters	*kain* (eat)	*tembak* (shoot)	*ka ia* (eat fish)
		mati bela (sacrifice)	*paq mo leu* (burn your village)
Continuation of player's turn	*sampa* (to climb)	-	-
	subi (to advance)		
End of turn	*patay* (dead)	*mati* (dead)	*mate* (dead)
Victory	-	*menang biji* (win the seeds)	-
		menang jalan (win the journey)	
Defeat	-	*mati kena abu* (utterly destroyed)	-

(Henson, 1965, p. 4), like how *motiq* is played in Kedang. There, the holes are named after parts of the body—from left to right, they are the foot, shin, knee,

[1]For Table 2, sungka terms were pulled from the work of Lopez (2001; 2007), Mariano Henson's How to Play Sungka (1965), and Table 1 of this paper. Terms for congkak come from several sources: Iida, et al. (2012), which looks at the Malaysian variant; notes from M. Heller (1907) and H. Overbeck (1915) published in the Journal of the Straits Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society; and a website maintained by Indonesian expatriates called Living in Indonesia, A Site for Expatriates (last updated 2022) that has an instructions page oft cited by many other webpages for congklak rules. Terms for motiq come from Barnes (1975), whose in-depth observations of the game in Kedang, Indonesia provides a unique example with high variance.

stomach, chest, throat, and head (Barnes, 1975, pp. 78-79). In fact, it was these labels that helped Barnes argue for the connection between *motiq* and armed conflict:

> In a different way, the game is a war between the inhabitants of the two territories; and one occasionally burns an opponent village, taking all captured souls to one's own store. The taking of heads…is another element of this culture which finds expression here. Finally, in both *ka ia* and *eu leu*, the holes in one row correspond to the parts of a body; just as the original hamlet of a Kedang village is symbolically divided into sections corresponding to parts of a body. In both versions, final victory in the game comes when a player reduces his opponent's holes progressively to the point where he captures the final, head, hole" (Barnes, 1975, pp. 79).

What can these games reveal about those who played them? What states of mind are required to play effectively? Ultimately, the objective of these game creates an emphasis on collecting or capturing game pieces. The regulated placement of shells encourages skills that involve not only layers of counting but also a type of strategic planning that simulates moves and counter moves into the immediate future. The ability to count shells, count holes, and count one's revolutions around the board helps a player determine where they must start to end their turn where they want. It is therefore not surprising that many of the literature on *sungka* comes from the field of mathematics (Lee-Chua, 2001; Dimzon, 2009; Vistro-Yu, 2010; Abay & Parola, 2024), especially those espousing the use of boardgames to push pedagogical boundaries by integrating play into the education of children. However, in the socio-cultural context of the native societies encountered by the Spaniards, a folk game like *sungka* may have had other uses—not that there is evidence of conscious utilization of the game to train specific skills, but that the skills involved in its play reflect similar skills necessary to perform and excel in other aspects of indigenous culture.

Other aspects such as warfare.

5. Parallels between Play and War

Central to understanding a society's attitude towards armed conflict is the idea that distinct discourses on war exist within each cultural tradition. Borrowing from other military historiographies, J.A. Angeles (2007, p. 8) described a

society's discourse on war as "its comprehensive image of ideal war as influenced by its larger body of culture. This image of 'ideal' war affects the way a society wages war and, therefore, determines the ensuing reality of war." Such a discourse effects how people fight, what they value in a fight, how many casualties they are willing to sustain, etc. As a cultural artefact with a long history in the country, any investigation of *sungka*'s possible value as a game of military strategy will entail an investigation of the ways it references indigenous society's attitude towards armed conflict—its discourse on war.

Today's idea of "conventional" warfare is rooted deeply in the Western tradition. There normally exists a state of peace between polities, a breakdown of diplomacy causes war to be declared, armies march on the battlefield, and the side that loses its will to fight first surrenders. Thus are the central tenets of strategic thinkers like Carl von Clausewitz and Sir B. H. Lidell Hart. Meanwhile, victory is viewed differently in the Eastern traditions. Restraint in war, moderate and balanced attitudes towards the use of force, and the attainment of legitimacy through just practice are recurring themes in the classic works of Kautilya and Sun Tzu (Cordova, et al., 2022). Since conflict between polities exists as a spectrum, with open warfare as the destructive extreme, the two Asian intellectuals also had a unique understanding of the costs of war—the devastation of a prolonged conflict of attrition would be just as undesirable as never having gone to war at all.

The waging of war changes further as one travels to insular Southeast Asia, especially in the Philippines. At the advent of Iberian influence in the 16th century, the region was a fragmented landscape of smaller polities in endless competition with each other (Junker, 2000; Rodriguez, 2003; and Angeles, 2007). Like the larger established polities in the mainland, conflict across the islands existed as a continuous spectrum of positioning and influence among rival chieftains. While some have argued that Southeast Asia was no stranger to massive battles and prolonged sieges with high casualty rates, Angeles (2007) countered that these were not the norm. Instead, what dominated was a type of warfare fought mainly via raiding of rival coastal settlements, with belligerents seeking loot in the form of material wealth, human labor, and individual prestige.

According to Angeles, warfare among the coastal peoples of the Philippine islands revolved around the displays of spiritual potency—what he called "soul stuff"—as part of power rivalries in which local chieftains engaged each other. In a culture that had yet to experience the formation of any large and lasting polities with leadership passing via direct blood relation, leaders would ensure the service

of people via personal loyalty to themselves. Without an inherited legacy of leadership from their parents, leadership was won by proving themselves capable in warfare, trade, knowledge, and other acts that directly implied the potency of their spiritual might. Angeles further explained that:

> *Datu* did not have the need, willingness, or the means for sustained campaigns of annihilation or conquest. In this context warfare had a tendency to be indirect, avoiding direct confrontations even in the field of battle, and there was a general unwillingness to sustain heavy casualties. Even headhunting had served to limit casualties and display prestige, or spiritual potency. The weapons, tactics, and strategies employed by the indigenous warriors reflected their concerns and cultural mores…True victory lay in the incorporation of more people into a ruler's alliance network. Flight was not necessarily the reaction of a defeated party, but a proactive endeavor meant to create a 'victory' for the fleeting datu by denying the attacking datu any new slaves or followers (Angeles 2007, pp. 24-25).

Ultimately, Angeles showed that native warfare was different from Spanish warfare by dint of their values during a state of war. The Spanish waged war to occupy territory, sought to bring native forces to battle, and inflict as much damage to them while keeping their own cohesion intact. Meanwhile, the natives cared not for territory, valued life more than the Iberians, and saw conflict as opportunities for individual displays of prowess instead. The potential consequence of annihilation was alien to them but was a real possibility for the Spanish *conquistadores*.

It is within this context that skills honed by a game like *sungka* begin to parallel skills necessary to thrive within the native discourse of war, and it does so in at least four interesting ways. First is the emphasis on resource management. In *mancala* games, the objective is to end the game as the player with the greater number of game pieces. The *sungka* variants in the Philippines have the players collect these pieces in their "Mother Hole." The total number of shells serve as a finite number of resources on the board that each player is fighting over, with a shell possibly changing hands multiple times during play until it finally lands in a "Mother Hole." The skill of knowing which hole to begin a turn for maximum shell collection is of utmost importance, since once a player starts, they do not stop until they no longer have shells in their hands. *Sungka* is also a zero-sum game due to the finite number of shells, and the pattern of play is cyclical—not only because turns go around the board but because its turn-based nature ensures

that each player gets a chance to take and lose resources at regular intervals, especially when they are of similar skill.

The same patterns can be observed in the native discourse on war. War was normally associated with the prestige or social standing of a chieftain or *datu*, so a martial leader waged war not only to vanquish his foes but also to retain the loyalty of his followers. Economic motivations for slave raids, piracy, and the storming of ports entail economic motivations, but all of that remains subordinate to the primary goal of increasing or maintaining prestige. This means the accumulation and redistribution of wealth, which includes human resources in the form of slaves, is an important skill to develop in any martially inclined leader, which would involve mathematics and the ability to predict responses of friends and foes alike once redistribution had been accomplished. Such resource management occurs in what Junker calls "political cycling" in a region of perpetual competition, as any chieftain who succeeded in creating alliance networks and increasing power can lose all of his gains and sink in importance if he failed to maintain his power base (Junker, 2000, p. 88). Sungka paralleled this reality by making the collection of resources (i.e., the counters) its primary goal, the development of mathematical insights in its veteran players, and the circular direction of play.

The second parallelism can be seen in the role of territory—that is, in the way that territory (in the form of land) is a mostly inconsequential resource in the Philippines. In *sungka* each player has a set number of holes (each called a "*bahay*" or "house") on their side of the board, symbolizing the extent of any territorial significance. These symbolic houses are never occupied by an opposing player. Instead, they are simply spaces where one's resources (shells) are placed. While an opponent can add or subtract resources from houses, hand stretching out across the board to do so, they ultimately withdraw to their side of the board and are mostly concerned with their own row of houses. Defeat in a match may end with the burning (*sunog*) of a house, but the burnt status leaves the house ultimately unusable by either side. It is a heavy blow to the losing player, but the winning player also cannot do anything with the hole that is eliminated from play.

In a similar way, land is an inconsequential resource in Philippine indigenous warfare because its potential use pales in comparison to the material loot and the slaves used in the raiding, trading, and feasting that form the foundation of a chieftain's power (Junker, 2000). In the fragmented landscape of small polities in Southeast Asia, alliances can stretch vast distances, connected by sea lanes, and rivalries can be nurtured and fought by chieftains inhabiting the same island.

Sungka references these things in the absence of most spatial considerations during play—unlike chess, the pieces do not maneuver across a battlefield, the opponent's holes can't be occupied and claimed as one's own, all direction is uniform, and distance is only felt in the counting of the pieces as they are distributed. Battlefield maneuvering is non-existent, but competition remains symbolically deadly as a player "dies" when their resource distribution—their turn—ends.

Third, there is no specialization of roles among the pieces or the spaces on the *sungka* board. One hole is no different from the other. So too is one shell no different from all the rest. The "Mother Holes" are larger in size, but they share the same purpose for each player. The sungka board is symmetrical in all meaningful ways and it is only via the players' actions that the spread of resources may differ from round to round—the shells are ultimately just resources to be gathered and distributed from and into equally sized holes.

Similarly, only the *datu* and his immediate retinue would have stood out on the field of battle, and then only due to the status exuded in the quality of their attire and equipment. All warriors were expected to possess similar skills and the division of forces into unique units with different roles was unheard of (Angeles, 2007). There was no distinction in task and purpose among native warriors, no units of dedicated archers that stood apart from massed heavy infantry or lances of armored cavalry. There was only the *datu* and those who followed him into battle, all shells brought out of their homes to capture other uniformly attired shells on the opposing side.

Fourth, *sungka* references indigenous notions of defeat through its rules on how play ends. In connection with the political cycling mentioned earlier, there is always a potential to bounce back from a disadvantageous position. In one of the *mancala* variants observed by Barnes in Indonesia, the defeated player in each round covers one of their holes until, at the end of several rounds, the person who first loses their "head" hole (the last in their row last) ends up losing the game. In Philippine *sungka*, the game ends when all shells are in each opposing player's store, with no more ability to place and collect them in each other's houses. In both cases, empty holes are considered burnt houses and cannot be used. However, what is important to note is that the game does not need to end upon the loss of a player. They can continue into another match while carrying over a consequence of the loss: a burnt house on the loser's side. In this case, a player may be handicapped by having less houses on his side, but it remains possible for them to win the next match and similarly handicap their opponent. Loss of

territory is a minor setback as long as you remain able to manage your resources intelligently with the houses you have left.

Within the context of indigenous warfare, entire villages are usually burnt not by the attackers but by their inhabitants—the people being raided tended to flee deeper inland and, upon returning from their hideouts or fortified positions in the woods, if they deem their coastal village too devastated or vulnerable to repair and inhabit again, then they will opt to burn it all down and move elsewhere (Rodriguez, 2003; Angeles, 2007). A single destroyed house, or even a burnt-out minor settlement, means nothing to a strong *datu*. Raiding and trading can continue, resources can still be gathered, and prestige gained, even if territory is lost. Only after the complete destruction of all houses does the game end in truth—both in the sense of *sungka* and the ambitions of an indigenous chieftain—and this can even occur by one's own hand. More importantly, it is not the loss of one's houses that determines ultimate defeat in the Philippine context, but rather the ability to collect more resources than the opponent.

Given these similarities, it is not outside the realm of possibility that norms of warfare in indigenous Philippine culture influenced the *mancala* game that pre-colonial Philippine societies assimilated before (or even during) Spanish advent. These, in turn, could have encouraged specific attitudes and modes of thinking that matched the reality of armed conflict waged by competing island chieftains.

One rebuttal to the argument being posited is the fact that multiple scholars have noted how *sungka* was usually played only by women and children in Southeast Asia (Heller, 1907; Overbeck, 1915; Barnes, 1975; and De Voogt, 2010). How then, could such a game have been used to teach certain types of strategic thinking necessary for success as a *datu* in constant conflict with his peers?

Yet what is being argued here is *sungka*'s role as a folk game, first and foremost. True, there remains no known evidence that *sungka* was played by a particular class of people in pre-colonial society as a form of training. However, as a folk game, it remains part of a broader cultural life that references other aspects of a society's patterns of behavior—including warfare. If its play was as widespread as other scholars believe it to be, then the skills honed through years of gameplay, even as a child, would undoubtedly permeate across broader native society. In so doing, it would have reinforced certain values and lessons useful in native warfare, and those values would in turn diffuse into the region and across communities not just from *sungka* but from other cultural artifacts as well. Ultimately, *sungka* remains the artifact most likely to carry the cultural baggage

related to warfare because it is a game—it is competitive by nature and competition is the foundation of any type of conflict.

6. Can a Folk Game be a Wargame?

Still, the question remains: is *sungka* a wargame? Do the abovementioned parallelisms with a native discourse on war allow us to consider it as a wargame within the context of precolonial Philippine society?

There has been a resurgence lately in the study and use of wargames due to the potential geopolitical flashpoints of the 21st century. For example, the Center for Strategic & International Studies (CSIS) published a report on January 2023 that detailed what a Chinese invasion of Taiwan might look like. To predict possible outcomes, they simulated different scenarios using a tabletop game they custom-built in-house called the "Taiwan Operational Wargame." Such wargames are multi-sided abstract representations of combat where the decisions of human players affect the flow of events. An experiment in human interaction, they are best used when trying to simulate how effective long-prepared plans and resources will work in a possible future conflict scenario—that is, they test set strategies over and over again with minor adjustments to different variables in each iteration of potential future conflict. (Perez, 2023, pp. 53-54). Military plans for operations have to be tested somehow outside of actual conflict since all the research and modeling in the world will mean nothing if plans do not survive first contact with a human opponent. A wargame can provide a simulation that is as close to the real thing as military planners can get.

This type of gamification of military preparation can be traced back historically to the German *kriegspiel* (literally "wargame") invented by Prussian Officer Georg Leopold von Reisswitz in 1812 (Caffrey, 2000, p. 34). Yet even that can be traced further back to boardgames such as *rithmomachia*, a math-heavy variant of chess; *kartenspiel*, a card game depicting military units and leaders; and chess itself, which is referenced heavily in the literature of medieval and renaissance Europe (Mason, 2018, pp. 78-79). All of these were played by European nobility in the belief that they taught a distinct martial class of society the mental agility required to eventually plan and execute a military campaign. Similar games can be found in the military cultures of Asian civilizations: Indian *chaturanga*, Chinese *go*, and Japanese *shogi* are all examples.

As stated earlier, there currently exists no hard evidence that directly links sungka to a distinct martial class of natives in the Philippine archipelago at the

time of Spanish advent. It is therefore doubtful if *sungka* can be classified as a wargame insofar as it trains an elite class of leaders and/or warriors in the type of strategic thinking necessary for their particular culture of war. What is known is that the game was played in many parts of the archipelago, having entered the area by the time the Spaniards arrived and remaining widespread until the 19th and 20th centuries.

There exists a belief, propagated in the 20th century by some anthropologists, that so-called "simple societies" were incapable of widespread appreciation for strategic games and would have resisted borrowing them. The idea here connected the complexity of strategic thinking to the existence of complex hierarchical societies. However, since then, scholars have proven that *mancala* games "in all their complexity have been connected with non-hierarchical communities and societies, dispelling the idea that the complexity of a state is somehow connected to the possibility of conceiving of complex games" (De Voogt, 2021, p. 7). This means that even societies of fragmented warring chieftains, lacking the social institutions commonly ascribed to larger and more intricately organized polities, could and would have adopted games of such strategic complexity.

So, two things remain clear. First, much like modern wargames, sungka teaches its players "down-board" thinking—the ability to anticipate the consequences of one's possible actions and an opponent's possible responses to those actions. Second, it does so while referencing the reality of conflict as experienced by a given culture. Thus, the parallels made in this paper show a possible connection between the board game and the native discourse on war. Such a connection can perhaps be a line of inquiry worth pursuing for those willing to do more archival work for research into Philippine cultures of leisure and conflict.

7. Conclusion

Is *sungka*, therefore, a wargame? Taken at face value, no, it is not. Assuming that wargames must be accurate simulations of specific conflict scenarios, then sungka does not fit the bill. However, games are cultural artifacts that would be hard to adopt if they did not make sense within the broader world of the communities who play them. There is much in *sungka* that would make it palatable to the communities native to the Philippines in terms of logic and strategy.

Sungka and native warfare share similarities in several aspects. They emphasize resource management. They understate the value of territory. There are no distinguishing features between the resources at one's command, and notions of defeat do not involve the complete annihilation of the opponent, with losses being only temporary setbacks in the immediate short-term of any competition. The cyclical pattern of play in *sungka* also parallels the cyclical pattern of raids and counterraids, as well as the ever-constant rise and fall of individual prestige, that was emblematic of conflict between rival chieftains in the islands.

Such similarities are even more glaring when contrasted with the strategic boardgames of mainland cultures with large polities and standing armies. Unlike chess, go, or *chatarunga*, victory in *sungka* is not tied to one's positioning of unique pieces on a board. The lack of emphasis on such spatiality is also reflected in the lack of value found in seizing and holding territory in the conflicts between rival *datu*, which are instead focused on capturing and distributing resources (either material wealth or manpower). There are no special units or unique formations: pieces had no delineating purposes on the board meaning that the only pattern of movement to consider was the player's own. Furthermore, each match in board games of large continental cultures is self-contained, with the board reset after a player wins, signifying the complete loss of the opponent and a need to create a new scenario. This is different from *sungka*'s long-term game mechanic of leaving a house "burnt" after every match. This runs contrary to the wars of conquest and/or annihilation of other places but finds many similarities in the discourse on war found in the Philippines. In *sungka*, as in *datu* conflict, the contest only ended when any and all capability to acquire counters/shells had been lost and, even then, victory was still a possibility if enough counters had been stored in the storage or "Mother" hole.

Sungka is a game that can teach its players much about the indigenous maritime warfare of the precolonial Philippines, providing insights into the native discourse on war even today. Perhaps this is one of the reasons behind its wide geographic adaptation across the archipelago. It may not be a wargame in the modern sense of the word, but it is a game that could easily be about war.

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