

# Asian Studies

## Culture and Society in Asia

Constructing Japan in Travel Writings:  
Notes on Continuing Research

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From Toshokan to Bunko: Rethinking the Public Libraries  
from the View of Japanese Grassroots Children's Libraries

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Indonesian Dancing Bodies: Massacres  
and Restrategizing the Postcolonial State

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“CORDERO”

A Descriptive and Functionalist Study of the Maundy Thursday  
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The *Patók* Jeep: A Descriptive Study

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CULTURE AND SOCIETY IN ASIA

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## Editor's Notes

HAIL TO CULTURE, art and expression!

These three themes link the articles in this volume through their respective explorations of artistic forms, pedagogy, socio-cultural functions, and narratives ,as well as issues concerning continuity in change and change in continuity. In decidedly interdisciplinary ways, the authors of these articles engage Philippine and Asian (in this particular case, Japanese) culture and society through processes of creative examination of *art*, *artistry* and *artifact*.

Dinah Sianturi looks at literary expression and its power to construct specific images of peoples, places and things. In this particular article, Sianturi discusses the effects and impact of travel writings or narratives on the “image” of Japan as viewed by individuals from other countries, especially from the West. A well-known poetess in her own right, Sianturi does not underestimate the power of the word to create images and other mental constructs that sometimes outlive the phenomena they seek to capture. True enough, one can end up captured by travel writings from the past, smitten by nostalgia and yearning for what has come to pass. Sianturi points out that travel writings should be approached as “problematic sources” that should be understood in a specific context and culture, which in turn is reflective of the writer’s biases, prejudices and values. This aspect of being problematic particularly rings true in Japan’s “old/new” binary image that is often conflated with descriptions of the “vanishing,” “lost,” “hidden” and, “modern.”

Lisette Robles examines the contemporary Japanese *bunko*, which may be seen as a community library operating at a small scale. In recent times, the phenomenon has come to be known as a privately funded and volunteer-operated library for children. The bunko provides children access to a wide range of literature and a good reading environment. Robles identifies two variables that are distinctively present in the bunko: the spirit of volunteerism and the strong presence of bunko women. She sees the bunko as a venue of social and cultural transformation at the level of

the local community, reflecting larger changes within Japanese society. The *bunko* emerged from the perceived needs of the community appears to facilitate the establishment of a sound foundation for the development of cultural as well as functional literacy.

Rachmi Diyah Larasati's piece is decidedly political in context and content. Larasati examines how dance as an artifact of "engendered culture" is used to pursue the needs of the state. The state in Larasati's case is that of post-Sukarno Indonesia, a state that needed to recover its bearings after a spate of anti-communist violence. It seems that after the so-called 1965-1967 debacle, a period that saw indiscriminate persecution of individuals and groups that suspected of communist leanings, the Indonesia state sought to deflect attention from its violent tendency to quell dissent by supporting culture. Larasati notes that a "choreographed national identity" was promoted to secure the trust of the international community. Although enjoying various degrees of success in portraying a benign Indonesia rooted in ancient cultures, mainly that of Bali and Central Java, the Indonesian state also opened avenues for women to participate in this process of re-creating the nation. Larasati's piece underscores the limits of state power in the face of highly unpredictable forces of cultural and national transformation.

Art in Edric C. Calma's piece comes in the surprisingly unique form of a lamb sculpted out of potato preserve. This is the *Cordero*, the local interpretation of the *agnus dei*, the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, made collaboratively and sponsored each year by a different *hermano mayor* (literally: big brother). Calma notes the *Cordero* refers to all of the following: the potato-based local delicacy, the procession that snakes through the town exhibiting the potato lamb, the ritual of sharing it among participants, and the feast held on Maundy Thursday. He examines the *Cordero* in aesthetic terms and situates it within social context of the community. He then proceeds to shows how it "reconstitutes" the community from which it emerges through processes of collaboration, performance and assignment of roles.

Carmita Eliza J. Icasiano interrogates art education in the Philippines through the lenses of craft studies. Icasiano observes that in contrast with other Asian countries such as Korea and Japan, crafts are not well integrated in the Philippine education system. Instead, the fine arts, more particularly western genres like painting and sculpture, are privileged in schools and public spaces. To treat this seeming imbalance, Icasiano turns to Discipline-Based Art Education (DBAE) which she incorporates into craft studies. DBAE focuses on four so-called art disciplines: art making, art criticism, art history, and aesthetics. She opines that the great variety of craft traditions across regions, combined with this approach, can make art education in the Philippines more meaningful, effective, and embedded in the local community.

Fame Pascua revisits the theme of the Philippine jeepney as art and yields very interesting, if not “radical” results. Effectively, Pascua’s study casts doubts on the appropriateness of jeepney art when seen only from a visual arts point of view. From a visual perspective, she takes to a different site of inquiry and relocates what can be interpreted as a “performative” or even a “performance art” perspective. Through an empirical study of the Cubao-Montalban route, and thorough interviews of drivers, passenger and manufacturers of the so-called “patók” jeepney, she brings attention to heretofore unstudied aspects of “jeepney as art,” such as attention to forms or distinct vehicle silhouettes, colors and illustration, auditory experience based on specific sound designs made by jeepney drivers, and the kinetic movement of the jeepney itself that is at times demanded by certain passengers. Indeed, the jeepney has, in terms of appreciation and criticism, moved from the level of “seen” art to experiential “artistry.”

This issue through the contributions of its authors celebrates the power of culture to shape and re-shape social discourses, to create new forms of expressions and categories of knowledge, and to interrogate emerging notions art, as well as ideas of nation in fluid and overlapping contexts of local, regional and global orders.

MCM SANTAMARIA  
Issue Editor





# Constructing Japan in Travel Writings: Notes on Continuing Research

DINAH SIANTURI

## Recent Scholarship on Travel Writings

NOW MORE THAN EVER, travel literature has finally been given the scholarly attention it has long deserved. Long treated as embodying the realm of the fantastic that only served the imaginative, adventurous, and escapist, travel texts have recently been examined for the insights they reveal about cross-cultural encounters and as testimonies to historical eras. In the introduction to *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing*, editors Peter Hulme and Tim Youngs (2002)—the latter the founding editor of the groundbreaking journal *Studies in Travel Writing*—affirm the power of travel literature to impinge on other academic fields. According to Hulme and Youngs, “the academic disciplines of literature, history, geography, and anthropology have all overcome their previous reluctance to take travel writing seriously” (2002, 1).

This “previous reluctance” was prompted by a gradual rethinking of travel writing not only as a “subliterary” compendium of narratives stacked in library and national archives but also as artifacts that illumine the complex and sensitive area of cross-cultural encounters. Resisting easy categorization that may pin it to one academic discipline has been travel writing’s richness and complexity. In it can be located many discursive practices employed as well in literature, history, geography, and anthropology. For critics, this melding of disciplines or, rather, the traversing of discursive borders, can become a rich site of contestation.

Be that as it may, many historians assert that if travel accounts were to be considered as sources of historiography, scholars should be cautioned not to see them as wholly transparent documents and neither should they be taken at their face value. They are to be approached as “problematic sources” that at best contain personal observations of geographies and cultures, reflective of the writer’s biases, prejudices, and values. This claim stems from the fact that travelers often do not have the intent to verify information. Their mobility dictates the pace and depth of their interaction with a locality and its inhabitants. Also, many travelers tend to write without any deep knowledge of a place. Whatever observations they make would always be assessed through the prism of their own interests and cultures. In the history of travel literature, it is of little wonder then that charges were made against the excessiveness of the writers’ descriptions and the authenticity of the information found in their accounts.

Yet, one may posit a question: why do travel writings possess a steady and compelling appeal to people? Discussing the origins of the travel genre, Hulme and Youngs concur with other scholars that the strength of travel writing, despite earlier allegations of its propensity for “fictitious” reporting, is its “privileged seeing.” To see is to witness and, therefore, to end speculations. Justin Stagl (1995), in his extensive study, *A History of Curiosity: The Theory of Travel 1550–1800*, argues for the relation of travel and knowledge in the context of Europe’s rise as a powerful modern nation. Stagl claims that what researchers know today as methodologies of the social sciences (e.g., surveys, statistics, and interviews) had their birth as early as the fifteenth century because of Europe’s keen interest in systematizing information into useful knowledge. Travel and documentation were intimately linked tools of empirical knowledge whose applications were even governed by rules relating to the excesses in comparing the country visited and the native country. Soon enough, documentation centers and academic institutions were established in strategic parts of Europe, which undertook the encyclopedic gathering of data about unknown lands.

It is not surprising then that explorations and voyages of the earlier times financed by merchants and imperial sponsors were organized using

the information gathered earlier. Motivations of such enterprises had largely been the promise of wealth and fame, which inevitably sanctioned Europe's incursions into other territories. However, although "curiosity" may be considered the impetus for travel to foreign lands, the ensuing encounters recorded in travel accounts largely teemed with value judgments that serve to critique the unfamiliar people and culture. "Savages," "cannibals," "head-hunting warriors," and "wanton Oriental women" inhabited many of these travel texts and occupied the imagination of readers for a long time. With the dawn of empires where profit and rule became the bloodline for the unflagging conquests of frontiers, these denigrating images served to justify the Euro-American civilizing presence in colonial possessions.

In this regard, recent scholarship on travel texts has convinced scholars to take a closer look at the writings "against the grain" by applying new analytical approaches that allow the deep structure and dynamics of the narratives to surface. With academic interest in travel texts reaching an unprecedented height, scholars have gone so far as to insist on travel narratives as being the first proofs of international relations. And it is with candid proof that such an opinion is made by Jerry Bentley (2009) of the University of Hawaii. He argues for the effectiveness of travel texts in teaching world history by citing historical periods when merchants and pilgrims, lured by the images of grandeur and enticing remoteness of ancient worlds and civilization, were motivated to go on journeys on account of the information circulated through travel narratives. Yet, productive analysis of these documentary artifacts can only be approached, according to Bentley, by asking specific questions about authorship, form, motivations, and influences.

A more systematic inquiry of travel narratives has led to the production of a body of critical works, such as Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978), Mary Louise Pratt's *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (1992), Mary Campbell's *The Witness and the Other World: Exotic European Travel Writing, 400–1600* (1992), and David Spurr's *The Rhetoric of Empire: Colonial Discourse in Journalism, Travel Writing, and Imperial Administration* (1993). These works have engaged

the concepts of “truth,” “knowledge,” and “representation” of the so-called others at whose expense travel texts have established their authority. The unearthing of passages devoted to descriptions of landscape, strange cultures, and peoples has given way to new approaches that now include the relation of travel/mobility with notions and practices of geography, race, and gender.

Complex conditions can be inferred from travel writings, often marked by force, coercion, subjugation, and maneuvering—through which certain agreements, “discoveries,” and treatises were forged. Thus, to retrieve what were once considered personal writings—such as letters, diaries, and journals—and read them against the grain—has been a way of recuperating the voices not only of marginalized peoples but also of those who implicitly affirmed imperial domination. This process can obtain various insights into political and historical disruptions beneath the peaceful veneer of “home.”

Overall, the deconstruction of “representations” has become central to travel studies. This stance is made on the argument that a “representation” of a culture and people significantly results from the writer’s motivations, interests, and values colliding and conflicting with an unfamiliar territory. To make sense of such strangeness or unfamiliarity, the writer resorts to his or her own cultural codes in “understanding” what he or she faces as a different environment. What inevitably results when a writer fixes his or her perspective using his or her cultural lens is a discursive binary that assigns values of superiority, more often than not, to one’s own culture. It is this inequality that renders it vital to identify aspects in travel accounts wherever this binary becomes apparent in cultural encounters.

### **Japan in Travel Narratives**

It is of little wonder that travel narratives have the power to perpetuate perceptions that greatly influence the construction of certain geographies. Asia, for the most part, is a continent that has been both constructed and imagined many times over for its undiminished allure.

An array of its representations inheres from the exotic, grand, and mystic, which the West has long fancied this ancient continent to be. Asia's "primitiveness," for instance, signifies the promise of the pristine. This resulted in creating attributes such as "childlike men and women," which render the place of Asians less threatening and pliant to the mentorship of the West.

Although many places in Asia have historically been known by the same descriptors, Japan as an object of curiosity in travel narratives seems to have been uniquely situated. While it was seen as displaying the same "exotic" traits as the other places in Asia, its tenacity to gain a modern stature was simultaneously viewed as merit and threat by the West. Thus, the rapid changes that heralded Japan's modernity during the Tokugawa period marked the start of Japan's struggle with a geographical sphere—the West. Not only did the period embody Japan's march into intellectual and economic progress but it also defined Japan's consciousness as it anxiously desired the West's privilege in the community of nations though fearing, at the same time, the cultural costs or loss that such desire entailed.

On the other hand, the West, in its curiosity about this "singular" nation that had determinedly isolated itself for 265 years and kept its civilization intact, was triumphant for having opened Japan's waters to world trading. The relation that ensued from this encounter was one of uneasy mentorship as Japan eventually shed off some of its traditional ways to the coercive lure of the Occident. This period was often depicted as a whirlwind romance between the innocent, feminine East and the knowledgeable, conquering West. Japan eagerly learned Western ways whereas the West was ambivalent toward Japan's "mimicking" its ways and appearance. Many commentators had likewise voiced their alarm at the rapid pace in which Japan embraced Western values. One writer sadly noted "the incalculable cost in beauty, refinement, courtesy"—a greatness that could only belong to ancient Japan (quoted in Pham 1999).

Of the tropes that emerged from the writings of this time, the binary of the "old" and "new" dominantly portrayed Japan as a nation caught

between the traditional and ancient, and the modern and automated. The binary, of course, is not peculiar to Japan alone. Clive J. Christie (1994), for instance, in his study entitled “British Literary Travelers in Southeast Asia in an Era of Colonial Retreat,” refers to a period of literary production in which the “old” Asia giving way to a “new” one can be viewed more as a backdrop to the decline of empires. Yet, why this dichotomy of “old” and “new” particularly haunted Japan is explained by anthropologist Marilyn Ivy in the nation’s own anxious complicity in engendering icons of “past” while adopting everything there is about the West (see Ivy 1995, 1–28).

The image of the “old” and “new” Japan from the time of Japan’s opening in 1853 has survived and been circulated in writings. It became a commonplace description in travel writings as the inflow of people into the country welcomed more diverse groups of people. The dichotomy of “old” and “new” was further colored with a romantic tone as ordinary travelers were now able to travel freely into the countryside where many claimed “authentic” Japan was located, a world of sprawling beautiful landscapes and quaint houses. Once more, descriptors such as “strange,” “exotic,” “mystical,” and “spiritual” abound in travel writings that inscribed Japan as an object of curiosity. The tone is nostalgic and at times unforgiving of Japan’s modern lifestyle that prefers the fast-paced neon urban life over the once leisurely, aestheticized yet idyllic living.

As Japan rose as a world power in the last century, the image of it still straddling between the “old” and “new” worlds remained central to the many perceptions produced during Japan’s military and economic height. However, Japan’s dramatic defeat in World War II and its economic revival that impressed the entire world necessarily rendered it this time as an object of envy and veneration, which hearkened to the glorious past that had originally cast Japan as a mystery. The postwar period ushered in a new body of writings on Japan that undeniably turned it into an economic model whose fortitude and resiliency had been elucidated by the martial values of bushido. The figure of the samurai that was found xenophobic and fiercely repulsive by foreigners who came much earlier to Japan has been revived and encoded as the national spirit behind Japan’s fast postwar recovery.

In brief, what charged the writings of this period was the desire to see in Japan the embodiment of a “unique” cultural repository from which everyone could learn and on which they could model a formula for success. It is no wonder that the enormous interest in Japan once again, much as it was in the prewar, gave way to a more systematic and disciplinal approach to the study of Japan that spared nothing of the nation’s identity.

### Readings of “Old” and “New” Japan

Ruth Benedict’s *The Sword and the Chrysanthemum* (1946), a work that greatly influenced the postwar anthropological discourse on Japan, was written from a distance, without Benedict traveling to Japan. Cognizant of the dangers that such a trip during the war might entail, Benedict instead gathered newspaper clippings, relied on observations of her American informants, and referred to earlier travel writings on Japan. The project was meant to know the “enemy” by creating knowledge supposedly shaped through the rigors of the social sciences.

That *The Sword and the Chrysanthemum* became one of the key texts that influenced the postwar discourse on Japan and, in fact, became a “must reading” for students of what is now known as “Japanese Studies” would reveal the powerful political context through which the construction of Japan as an “aggressor” was made possible. The icons of the “sword” (Japan’s martial prowess) and the “chrysanthemum” (the fragile, aestheticized, elegant Japan) are part of the metaphors recuperated from earlier writings on Japan, which essentially depicted the nation as an ancient civilization whose sudden venture into modernity unsettled values long held as truths. Yet, more important, the use of these images were more strategic as Benedict held them up to mirror the “ideals” of American society vis-à-vis Japan’s national character (see Minear 1980).

Although the United States could not be taken as singularly representative of the “West,” its role in World War II had established it as a “moral” leader who claimed the initiative to conclude the war. Hence it can be argued that the divide between East and West pervading the writings

evolving from this period complicated the once dominant geographical divide into a new set of parameters that include political and cultural values. This dichotomous worldview influenced many of the writers' descriptions that extended while reconfiguring the discourse of "old" and "new" Japan. Their narratives cast the "old" Japan as the ancient great civilization peopled with elegantly kimonoed men and women while the "new" Japan was portrayed as a fledgling country mimicking the modern West. So while travel accounts largely rhapsodized on the beauty of Japan's landscape and its traditional arts, many also lamented the erosion of cultural and environmental refinements as remote villages and their paddy fields were bulldozed to give way to more modern infrastructures.

Writings modeled on the "East-West," "old-new" dichotomy did more than describe and explain the historical and physical changes in Japan. For example, despite the "objectivity" academic writings claim as their hallmark—a quality that elevates them to sources of "authoritative" information on Japan as a nation, culture, and civilization—the contents and the broad claims they make on Japan assign essentialist values that entrenches the gap between the two spheres. These information feed into the writings of the ordinary travelers who most of the time consult so-called veritable sources of information before embarking on their journeys.

Sharing the same stature as Benedict's work, other writings on Japan that have been hailed as "authoritative" were those authored by such stalwarts as Basil Hall Chamberlain, *Things Japanese* (1890); George B. Sansom, *A History of Japan* (1958–1963); and Edwin O. Reischauer, *The United States and Japan* (1950). Minear's (1980) study threads the career of these three Japanologists in order to trace their influences among the later scholars of Japan Studies (see Stempel 1948). In examining their works, he claims that these three scholars have inadvertently subscribed to a rather *orientalist* depiction of Japan not only by seeing Japan as the cultural opposition of the West but also by imagining Japan as a repository of comparisons against which the West has been allowed to affirm its own "superiority."



Miner's methodology is simple but distinct. By looking at the intersections of the careers of the authors and inquiring into the discourse of their individual work, Miner is able to discern common perceptions and points of departures. The three authors cited above share the notion that despite Japan's highly valued ancient tradition, it still does not equal Europe's greatness. Where Japan is found excelling in political and social aspects, it is given the same footing as the West (British and Americans); but in matters where Japan disagreeably differs from the West, it slides into the category of being Oriental with all of the denigrating nuances such term possesses.

In today's theoretical parlance, the process by which Japan has been represented in these narratives reflects the "constructions" of Japan as an Orient through its geography, race, culture, and custom. However, the term "Orient" as it relates to Japan also implies a complex web of geopolitical relations with the West, relations that has been better understood since the theorizing of Edward Said's landmark work, *Orientalism* (1978).

In the study of historical and travel accounts, it was Edward Said's *Orientalism*, considered a precursor to postcolonial studies, that endorsed a systematic reading of centuries of writings "innocuously" authored by scholars, voyagers, explorers, diplomats, missionaries, and travel writers who were all supposedly in search of knowledge. According to Said, implicit in the act of representing other cultures and peoples is a power structure that relies on a more explicit exercise of domination over the place and people. It is, in fact, by virtue of their being different that they end up disenfranchised and their voices silenced in the texts. In the mobility of the Western writers, in their act of landing on an unfamiliar place and declaring it as "discovered," can be glimpsed an exercise of power manifesting in the creation of an "Orient"—with all of the word's denigrating nuances—passing it off as a "real" given that his presence and being an actual "witness" allows him an authoritative voice. Yet, as Said asserts in his book, the Orient, the vast expanse of difference drawn and

catalogued from various geographies and cultures, are more of “imagined geographies” that serve the writers’ interest and worldview and remotely depict the place’s reality.

The case of Japan, however, differs when the value of the Orient is examined in terms of its unique position in the eyes of the West. P. L. Pham’s study, “On the Edge of the Orient: English Representations of Japan, circa 1895–1910” (1999), analyzes how Japan complicates the discourse of Said’s *Orientalism*. Although Japan was long regarded as the exotic and mysterious orient of the West, Pham argues that Japan’s “exceptional position”—being at par with Western nations but remaining essentially an outsider to it—complicates the category of Japan as Oriental (1999, 163).

To support his contention, Pham chose to consider generalist texts instead of specialized writings by British writers in order to extract the larger structure through which Japan has been imagined (1999, 165). Three aspects were examined in the construction of Japan through these writings: (a) locating Japan within a “conceptual universe,” (b) the specific metaphors and metonyms used to describe Japan, and (c) the attempt to find Japan’s essence through images used to describe the country.

Through the three aspects above, Pham was able to identify the plural, dynamic, and textured images that have been applied to Japan. British writings, for instance, have depicted the nation as a “broker between East and West” or as a people who “think as Orientals [but] act as an Occidental people” (1999, 166). This ambivalence has been defined as one between the “old” and “new” worlds, which locate Japan in a temporal positioning against the West from which other values can be inferred.

Accompanying these binaries are metaphors and metonyms that reinforce Japan’s subordinate position to the West. The tropes of the “diligent student” and the insistence of the feminine Japan through the images of the “traditional” woman are all part of the rhetorical packaging of Japan as an Oriental. The sheer recurrence of these images in travel writings over time has rendered these images as “truth” that has defined

Japan's essence. In this sense, Pham asks why Japan has been known for its refined rituals such as the icons of the kimono or the teahouse. The "spectacular" and "consumable" qualities of these metaphors have made Japan more accessible to ordinary people and distinctly locate Japan in a particular world.

In another study, "Lighter Than Yellow, but Not Enough': Western Discourse on the Japanese 'Race', 1854–1904," Rotem Kowner (2000) surveys another mode of representation of the Japanese within the period. The racial stereotyping of Japan is theorized by Kowner as a method of introducing what used to be an "unknown" and "insignificant" Japan to one that rose rapidly as a modern threat to the West. As Kowner traced the racial discourse on the Japanese race, he also reveals the relevance of Japan's political significance to the West. Known as the "yellow race," this racial difference was publicized in many writings that ranged from diplomats' account of their mission in Japan to travelers' romantic or nostalgic writings on the mysterious Japan. In the range of writings, one notices the discourse of race intensifying or lessening depending on the period during which the account was written. Kowner, for instance, cites that after the Sino-Japanese War in 1904, the Japanese were no longer seen in its former stereotypes, such as the "childish, immature, fun-loving, and good-humored people," but as "aggressive, insolent, and even dangerous imperialists" (2000, 130).

In a study undertaken by Jean-Pierre Lehmann (1984), the "duality" latent in the Japanese character is taken up once more. Focusing on specific Western images of Japan, Lehmann observes that the New and Old Japonisme distinction is Europe's response to Japan's presence. The Old Japonisme emanates from the Edo era and is mostly the "world of the senses" that hailed Japan as possessing aesthetic superiority (1984, 758). On the other hand, New Japonisme celebrates Japan as an industrial model for the Europeans. The flurry that characterized Japan's rise as an economic power contributed to the growing interest of Europe in studying and adopting the "Japanese way" of doing business. Yet, despite the distinction and shift from the Old to the New Japonisme, it is undeniable that Old

Japan's appeal as an "exotic" and "mysterious" nation has remained strong for the European. (A good example of the "romantic" writing on Japan as mentioned by Lehmann is the works of Lafcadio Hearn who is hailed as the "interpreter of Japan." Hearn's writings rely significantly on the argument that the social malaise that Japan has started to experience is mainly due to the influence of the Western civilization.)

Even after World War II, it is notable that old images were never completely abandoned. The powerful image of the samurai was clothed in a new sheen. Despite the radical changes Japan had undergone, the image of the samurai has relentlessly found a rebirth in the modern businessmen.

A longer and more detailed study of the images of Japan in the Western mind, particularly of how the Japanese had been viewed by the British during the Edo period, is Toshio Yokoyama's *Japan in Victorian Mind: A Study of the Stereotyped Images of a Nation, 1850–80* (1987). The author explores the "construction" of Japan by examining the magazine articles written during the decades 1850–1880—a period that was significant to the opening of Japan to the Western world. As Britain pursued Japan (after being closed to other countries for over 256 years), the diplomatic officials involved needed to be equipped with cultural knowledge of how it had long resisted interaction with the Western world. Many of the magazine articles during the mid-1800s, for instance, mentioned the cultural practices that allowed the British to compare their own cultural practices with the Japanese people whom they considered as surprisingly "civilized." Favorable descriptions of the ways of the Japanese were emphasized and served as stark contrast to the age-old comparison between China and Japan, with the latter being favored racially.

Many wrote with great interest and admiration on the figure of the samurai, whom many British officials viewed as honorable men. On one specific occasion, a samurai, distrusting the presence of the foreigners, carried out an attack on the British soldiers without the specific orders from a shogun. As this strained the ongoing treaty negotiations, the samurai

was ordered to commit seppuku. Relevant British officials were invited to this spectacle that was featured in many well-remembered articles during that time and which eventually etched the image of the samurai in the minds of the British readers.

As decades went by and treaties did not result in favorable advantages, writings on Japan took on a more distant tone as it was now relegated to the status of a “remote” country. Magazine editors’ interests in political matters waned, and they were more inclined to publish articles that would certainly make the magazine sell more.

The change over the decades, however, brought out a sympathetic writer in A. B. Mitford (Yokoyama 1987). The sympathetic attitude has been argued by Yokoyama as a product of the writer’s knowledge of the language. Acquiring it in the year that he arrived in Japan, Mitford started writing more on the people’s ways that as a whole argued for the homogeneity of cultures. The Japanese were portrayed as sharing characteristics, both positive and negative, with people not only in Britain but anywhere else in the world. This change in the writing style brought on a new wave of writing on Japan. Mitford had proven false some of the earlier writings on Japan since he had the chance to confer with Japanese intellectuals on the intricacies of Japanese thought and culture.

The later wave of writings on Japan essentially defined Japan as a “remote” country and, being remote, the descriptive quality of these writings did not adhere to any principle of authenticity. In short, the accuracy of details counted less in importance than the imagined Japan—the “elfland” that came out of such writings.

In the last chapter of Yokoyama’s book, the author argues that with the attention shifting from the treaties to ordinary travels to Japan, the “romantic” Japan was significantly energized by the ordinary travelers who came mostly from Hong Kong or China. It was during this time when travelers preferred to visit the rural areas, which were deemed to embody the “lost” Japan or the “old” Japan and where one could still experience the lingering traditions that defined the arts and crafts of these artistic people.

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## Conclusion

The travel literature on Japan is a voluminous body consisting of magazine articles, diary entries, reflections, diplomatic observations, letters, and guide books. Given the recent interest in travel studies, many of these writings, long kept in library archives, have been collected, systematized, and analyzed to reveal information on historical periods, the ways by which intercultural relations were carried out, and the discursive aspects that framed the travel genre.

Critical studies on the travel texts have clearly shown that both the favorable and unfavorable images and perceptions of Japan were a function of the shifting political relations that marked Japan's entry as a modern nation and the West's pursuit of this once "hermetic" land. It became known that positive perceptions by the West of Japan were cast in admiration of its ancient civilization. But as Japan and the West entered an uneasy alliance, with Japan proving its military prowess, descriptions of the Japanese people and culture that emerged in magazines sank into negative images. The trope that particularly served as framework to many of these accounts was that of the binary "old/new" Japan.

The aftermath of the Second World War witnessed a rise in images of Japan that had its core in the "old" and "new" dichotomy. A noted example is that of the samurai. Previously seen as a fierce and unrelenting xenophobic, the samurai—specifically, its code of bushido—was appropriated to explain Japan's rise as an "economic animal."

Continuing studies on the travel literature on Japan have begun engaging the "old/new" binary. The concern focuses on whether this dichotomy has been superseded by other concepts or representations since recent books have drawn in on descriptions such as "vanishing," "lost," and "hidden" Japan. Future studies may find it worthy to inquire into aspects of how these images actually recuperate the same hermeneutic layers through which Japan has remained an object of curiosity until now.

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# From Toshokan to Bunko: Rethinking the Public Libraries from the View of Japanese Grassroots Children’s Libraries

**LISETTE ROBLES**

The library connects us with the insight and knowledge, painfully extracted from Nature, of the greatest minds that ever were, with the best teachers, drawn from the entire planet and from all our history, to instruct us without tiring, and to inspire us to make our own contribution to the collective knowledge of the human species. I think the health of our civilization, the depth of our awareness about the underpinnings of our culture and our concern for the future can all be tested by how well we support our libraries.

– Carl Sagan, *Cosmos*<sup>1</sup>

## **Introduction**

LIBRARIES ARE CONSTANTLY perceived as “chambers” for knowledge accumulation; their contents – books – allow us to travel beyond the boundaries of time and space. Indeed, Carl Sagan was right to say that our understanding of humanity and the importance (or lack thereof) we attach to our libraries is reflected in whether and to what extent we support these institutions.

Known for its high level of literacy, Japanese society gave rise to the *bunko*, an indigenous, community-based library for children. Proliferating throughout the country, the *bunko* sought mainly to cultivate the reading habits of Japanese children. But apart from its pedagogical aims, the *bunko* also reveals community dynamics at work, as evidenced by “volunteerism” and the participation of “*bunko* women.”

The following study seeks to:

- Identify the antecedents of the *bunko* in Japanese history
- Describe the various activities and services the *bunko* offers
- Examine the nature of community participation, including volunteerism and the participation of *bunko* women
- Explore how the *bunko* responds to specific trends in Japanese society

## **Japan, the Community, and the Children’s Library Service: An Overview**

### The Community and the Library

Libraries do not exist in a vacuum. They are an integral part of a particular institution: universities, businesses, and governments, the last of which can put up public, national, or community libraries.

But what is a community? As William J. Martin (1989, 57) remarks in *Community Librarianship: Changing the Face of Public Libraries*, a community has no precise definition, but it is either a collective social unit or a process of social interrelationship. For this study, a *community* tangibly refers to the geopolitical unit with definite physical boundaries; in Japan, the community is the *machi* (街) or neighborhood, which is roughly equivalent to the Filipino *barangay*. Communities are as diverse as the

libraries found in them, but despite these variations, libraries exist mainly as instruments of education and enlightenment (Carnovsky and Martin 1943, iv).

### Antecedents to the Bunko: The Japanese Public Library System

To fully understand the concept of the bunko, the study looks into the development of the Japanese public library system, as well as children's library services in the country.

The Japanese public library system traces its roots to the *Teikoku Toshokan*, otherwise known as The Imperial Library, which was established in 1872 and adapted from the British Museum by the Meiji leaders. Later on, The Imperial Library became one of the branches of the National Diet Library, built in 1948 and patterned after the US Library of Congress.

By the final year of the Meiji era in 1911, local authorities had created 541 public libraries that contained three million volumes (JLA International Exchange Committee 1980). However, only a few individuals used the libraries since they were perceived only as venues for book preservation and formal education. Ninety-eight percent of libraries were concentrated in formal education centers and outnumbered public libraries.

Much of the libraries and other institutions were destroyed during World War II. Under the Americans' postwar educational mission, however, there emerged an emphasis on book borrowing. Attention was given to public libraries, which received a boost from the economic growth of the 1950s.

In April 30, 1950, the Public Library Law was enacted; it stipulated that the public library was to be a tax-supported institution whose purpose is to provide books and materials to the public (JLA International Exchange Committee 1980). The national government also extended its support through local government units such as cities, villages, and towns, all of which shouldered the operating costs of local public libraries (Kawasaki, Yamaguchi, and Takashima 1996). Since then, April 30 has been commemorated in Japan as "Library Day" to encourage support and patronage of libraries.

Japanese public libraries are categorically classified as either prefectural or municipal. The former includes the key libraries in the forty-seven prefectures, while the latter comprises libraries established in the cities, towns, and villages.<sup>2</sup> Most are situated in larger cities, so rural areas generally lack library access.

In 2003, the Japan Library Association (JLA) published a report stating that there were 2,731 public libraries, 63 prefectural libraries, 1,636 city libraries, and 1,033 town libraries (JLA 2006) in Japan. Despite this, 40 percent of towns did not have libraries. The shortage can be traced to demographic and economic trends. A rapidly aging population and recent economic decline led the government to re-channel resources and address social system concerns, and to resort to private management methods.<sup>3</sup> This included compelling some libraries to outsource their services, which then reduced the employment of library professionals. Financial constraints and personnel shortage thus resulted in the decrease of public libraries. This opened up a larger space for alternative institutions that can provide library services, one of which is the *bunko*.

### Children's Libraries in Japan

The public library system of Japan developed special services to cover the varied needs of the populace. These included the book mobile, libraries for the handicapped, and the children's library, the last of which emerged after the Second World War. As early as 1959, 34.3 percent of public libraries had children's sections. By the end of 1979, it doubled to 67.5 percent (JLA International Exchange Committee 1980). From then on, much of the public libraries would have half of its collection devoted for children.

Through the initiative of the National Diet Library (NDL),<sup>4</sup> the International Library of Children's Literature (ILCL) was established in January 1, 2000. It provides library services for children by conducting various programs that enhance reading and learning.<sup>5</sup> It also collaborates with school libraries and related institutions to promote interlibrary loans

and reference services. Moreover, the ILCL reaches a wider number of readers.

Although the demand for these materials increased, the number of libraries that hold them remained inadequate. The bunko was established to address this matter. *Libraries in Japan*, published by Japan Library Association (1980) says that “through the efforts of mothers, several thousand small private collections have been opened to children.”

### The Bunko Movement

The word “bunko” combines the two Kanji characters 文 and 庫, literally translated as literature and storehouse, respectively. Thus, the combined ideography would mean “storage of literature.”

Typically, a bunko is a room, a corner, or even just a shelf filled with children's books. Children can take as many books as they like from the shelf, read them in a nearby space, and return them right after.<sup>6</sup> Some bunko allow children to bring books home and return them on their next visit.<sup>7</sup>

Furthermore, the bunko was initially classified according to its location. A bunko opened in a private house or home is known as the *katei* bunko or home library, while those situated elsewhere are known as *chiiki* bunko or community library (Takahashi 2006). However, recent trends have rendered such classification outdated. Some bunko were set up along staircases (*kaidan* bunko), while others were built inside a bus<sup>8</sup> (bus bunko) or any place as long as the books could be stored and accessed freely.

### The Five Attributes of the Bunko

In various texts, the bunko are described as indigenously Japanese; privately operated and funded; run by volunteers; and dedicated to providing materials and services to children (e.g. Takeuchi 1995, Yoshida 2004, Takahashi 2006, Cheunwattana 2008). With this string of descriptions, the author drew a relational diagram (Figure 1) of the five attributes of the bunko.

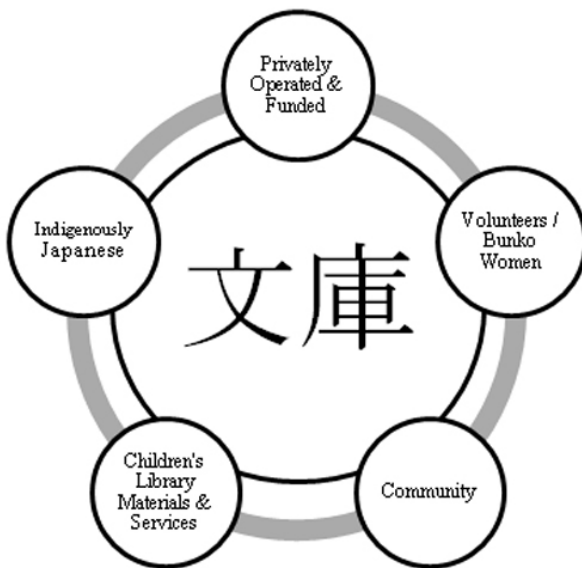


FIGURE 1  
The Bunko and Its Key Attributes (Author's Own Diagram)

### Indigenously Japanese

The bunko can be traced back to the Meiji era. Back then, men were generally in charge of a bunko's operation, which then applied only to libraries registered under imperial rule. The bunko was also established only by affluent members of Japanese society. Although many were not recorded, the oldest known bunko was built by Kasui Takenuki at his abode in Aoyama, Tokyo in 1906 (Takahashi 2006). A well-known children's writer, editor, and librarian, Takenuki filled his bunko with large collections of children's books.

Early bunko owners were mostly children's book writers and editors, including Hanako Muraoka, Tomiko Inui, Miyoko Matsutani, Teruo Teramura, and Momoko Ishii. The post-World War II period was another phase in the development of privately operated libraries, and it proved to be a huge influence on the bunko as we know it today. In 1951, Hanako

Muraoka opened the Michio Bunko (Yoshida 2004). Found mostly in private homes, these early post-WW2 bunkos were the home library type (*katei bunko*) where owners opened a section of the house for the books. In 1955, Shigeko Tsuchiya opened the Tsuchiya Jido Bunko (Tsuchiya Children's Library) in her home in Setagaya, Tokyo.<sup>9</sup> Three years later, Momoko Ishii put up the Katsura Bunko in Suginami-ku. The Katsura Bunko, together with Tsuchiya's book *Kodomo no Toshokan (The Children's Library)*, became very instrumental in the proliferation of the bunko throughout Japan.

Momoko Ishii, a prominent writer, translator, and editor of children's books, is identified as a key figure in the existence and development of the bunko.<sup>10</sup> In the mid-1950s, Ishii traveled to the United States and Europe to observe children's reading and book publishing services (Yoshida 2004). Obtaining a thorough understanding of the functions of the library, she opened her own *katei bunko*, known as Katsura Bunko, in 1958. It was initially intended as a venue to determine which materials would capture the children's reading interest (Takahashi 2006). At the Katsura Bunko, she learned firsthand the impact of providing children with easy access to books in a free and home-like atmosphere (Matsuoka 1994, 10). Children had the liberty to select the materials that interested them. As such, Ishii was able to identify the children's preferences.

Ishii continued to observe and note the significant responses of children to the reading materials. She also became aware of the difficulties involved in maintaining the bunko, which required a great deal of sacrifice and a considerable amount of money (Takahashi 2006). In 1965, seven years after opening the Katsura Bunko, Ishii published the *Kodomo no Toshokan (The Children's Library)*, where she shared key findings of her study and called for the establishment of more public libraries. The book was not a bestseller, but it did attract the attention of several women who were likewise concerned with advancing children's reading skills. Although it was not purposely written to encourage the establishment of individual bunko, Ishii's book did serve that purpose; it became special, influential, and symbolic in the history and development of the bunko movement

(Takahashi 2006). Ishii passed away in 2008, and the Katsura Bunko is now managed by the Tokyo Children's Library.<sup>11</sup> At present, under the stewardship of Keiko Harikae, it opens once a month and maintains an inviting reading atmosphere for children.

The concept of the bunko is indigenously Japanese, although it is not unique to Japan. Home libraries also exist in Thailand and Korea (Hotta 1995), though it was not referred to as a bunko. The early development of bunko, the participation of the community, and the easy access to children differentiate the Japanese bunko from other typical home libraries.

#### Privately Operated and Funded

Libraries are generally supported and financed by its founders or owners, either the academe or the government. The bunko is different in that it is funded and operated by private individuals, mostly parents, whose main interest is to nurture their children's reading in an inviting reading environment (Takeuchi 1995). As such, the bunko depends on citizens, usually mothers and other members of the community, for personnel and operating costs. Budgets vary; some charge a "nominal" membership fee, "usually 50 to 100 yen per month," or even every year (Takahashi 2006). The Tokyo Children's Library, a non-profit foundation, and the ItoChū Memorial Foundation (ItoChū Kinen Zaidan), a grant-giving institution, provide support to some bunko across the country.<sup>12</sup>

As a private and independent entity, the bunko is managed according to their owners' preferences. They have the liberty and autonomy to select the books and operational models.<sup>13</sup> To help improve bunko management and share key practices, bunko managers organize themselves into associations.<sup>14</sup> They conduct letters, publish newsletters, and do resource-sharing activities.<sup>15</sup>

Bunko are established in neighborhoods, set apart from the public library, and are thus generally more accessible to children. They provide a reliable, appropriate, user-centered, accessible, and a neutral and unbiased



facility (Blanshard 1998). Furthermore, it tries to cultivate such atmosphere by making the children experience reading as an enjoyable activity. Since the bunko is beyond the confines of the school, children enjoy the comforts of reading in a more relaxing atmosphere.

However, the private nature of bunko does not necessarily preclude a partnership with local government. This will be clarified in the next section.

### Children's Library Materials and Services

Bunko by definition offer materials of interest to children,<sup>16</sup> the number of which is difficult to determine; small bunko may boast of a modest collection of 100 books while large ones hold over 3,000 volumes (Takeuchi 1995). The bunko resources, especially in the case of a katei bunko, depend on the financial capacity of the owner.<sup>17</sup> To obtain more resources, some bunko cooperate with public libraries, who loan their resources to the bunko, ranging from 20 for several weeks to 600 for 3 months (Takeuchi 1995) The ILCL also lends crates of children's books to bunko and local libraries. The sharing maximizes the use of children's books and exposes the readers to a wide variety of materials.

The bunko's services parallel those of public libraries. These include free voluntary readings, book loans, singing, reciting nursery rhymes, paper folding, and making toys and handicrafts (Cheunwattana 2008). But one of the regular activities is storytelling, which, according to studies on brain development, reinforces the advancement of knowledge (Blanshard 1998). Also, Takeuchi (1995) identified ways that help encourage children to read and learn: reading aloud, book talking, and book displays. In bunko circles, one major advocate of storytelling is Kyoko Matsuoka of the Tokyo Children's Library.<sup>18</sup>

## The Bunko and the Community

The bunko has its roots from the community, catering to the children living and studying within the neighborhood. As shown above, the unavailability of public libraries in most places led to the burgeoning of several bunko. Reading became more accessible to children, and the community became more directly involved in the movement. Community support is vital to the effective operation of the bunko. Even katei bunko (home-based bunko) requires community involvement, including financial and logistical support, as in free advertisements in newsletters.

### The Volunteers

Many of the participants of the bunko movement are volunteers. In Japan, the word for volunteer, and consequently the name of volunteer associations, is known by the English loan word *borantia*; it denotes actions freely chosen, unremunerated, and social-welfare oriented; it takes place without profit or losses for the actor (volunteer) (Le Blanc 1999, 97). Volunteers provide a number of reasons other than pure volunteer work. Nakano (2000) explains that volunteering in Japan is a “lifestyle choice” in which they “negotiate their self-identities.” Volunteer work also develops the self (97) and covers a multitude of forms and organizational structures.<sup>19</sup> Either way, the end result is a productive contribution to society and a sense of accomplishment for the volunteers.

Volunteers are the strongest force in public library and community service; regular staff are employed, but are frequently rotated among various departments and locales. Thus, because they serve for a relatively short time, their involvement in a specific community is limited. In some instances, volunteers last longer than the actual staff and are thus the pillars and mainstays of bunko work.

## Bunko Women

Almost all bunko are run by volunteer mothers; hence, the term “bunko women” was coined (Matsuoka 1994, 10). The term, however, does not apply only to women who set up their own bunko but also to volunteer staff. Many are housewives who do not necessarily have the professional qualifications of a librarian. But their enthusiasm and interest have led them to learn and gain the necessary skills to operate and manage the library.

A number of reasons account for why women volunteer. Women, especially mothers, are critical of the academic curriculum of their children. Takeuchi (1995) argues that bunko are widely appreciated as they offer a more relaxed learning environment than regular schools, which are known to provide intense training and preparation for higher education. Mothers are then compelled to find a less stressful and less competitive place where children could simply read and enjoy literature.

Some women are motivated to establish a bunko because of few, accessible public libraries in their communities. In the case study by Yoshimura (1984) as mentioned in Yoshida's (2004) article, bunko women take responsibility in nurturing their social awareness and development as citizens. They also get to cultivate their individuality (Yoshimura 1984). Furthermore, by helping children read, bunko women serve and contribute to their communities. Compared to arts and music, which require rather more technical skills and expertise, volunteering in a bunko merely entails one's enthusiasm to read and share stories with children. Another reason is personal development (Hotta 1995) and companionship. Because of bunko work, mothers get to exchange recipes and discuss issues on child-rearing and elder care. Through various bunko activities, women foster friendships and derive fulfillment from their participation and contribution in the community (Cheunwattana 2008).

Hotta's (1995) case study of the bunko movement in Higashi Murayama consists of profiles of bunko women, particularly housewives married to regular white-collar job employees. Bunko women in the Tsubomi Bunko in Yokohama fit the same profile of housewives, whose ages range from 30 to 60.<sup>20</sup> This demographic profile also conforms to what Vogel (1971) calls Japan's "new middle class" (Hotta 1995). The social structure of modern living is observed to be proportional to the greater social participation of women. Situated within the neighborhood, the bunko became an ideal outlet for intellectual expression.

### Bunko and Japanese Society

The bunko impinges on specific changes and trends in Japanese society. First, it points to the nature, if not the limitations of the educational system. At present, it focuses on the college entrance examination (*nyūgaku shiken*), so much so that students attend school just to increase their chances of going to college. As a consequence, schools lack the inviting vibe of a free-spirited place of learning. The bunko, in contrast, provides a better venue for reading.

Second, the mobilization by the community members reflects the social transformation within the society, specifically the prominence of confident, well-educated Japanese women, who assert themselves by participating in bunko work. The bunko volunteers also confirms what Vogel (1971) once called the new Japanese middle-class family, whose basic needs are well tended, thus giving women, the wives, more time to participate in the bunko.

Third, the decline in the number of bunko has been partially traced to Japan's aging population. Four thousand of them were around at the end of the 1980s, but that number dwindled to 3,000 in 2004. Takeuchi (1995) attributes the problem to the declining birthrate. Some bunko closed down since no children were no longer visiting the bunko.<sup>21</sup> Others ceased their operation due to the illness or death of the owner.

## Integration: Concluding Thoughts

The bunko is an interesting social artifact of Japanese society. It has emerged in local communities and appealed to the public by fostering strong social interactions and relationships. For children, the bunko exposes them to good literature and helps widen their intellectual horizons.<sup>22</sup> For the adults, the bunko gives them a chance to enjoy volunteer work.

In this age of advanced technology, it is interesting to note that the bunko still attract people to establish them. One possible explanation is the belief in the importance of reading, a traditional form of learning. While the presence of other mediums for learning may be more enticing, reading books continues to be an important habit to develop, especially among children.<sup>23</sup>

The bunko remains as one of the globally applicable models for children's library services (Cheunwattana 2008). Children from any part of the world deserve the chance to be exposed to good reading services. Reading will always be a part of a child's holistic development. In this sense, the bunko can be modified depending on the needs of the children in a particular community. It can also be adopted by a similar movement to open opportunities for more effective community cooperation.

"From Toshokan to Bunko" implies an empowerment of the library service at the local level. Although the bunko is a typical form of library service, it provides a more personal connection between the library and its users. Moreover, it is a significant venue for the personal development of its stakeholders. By understanding its operation, the bunko help us value libraries as more than just a four-walled storage area of books, but as a social system that builds and strengthens the community.

## Notes

- 1 Carl Sagan (1934-1996) was an American astronomer, astrochemist, and author.
- 2 Prefectural libraries are responsible for lending books to individual patrons and to the municipal libraries.
- 3 These private management methods imply the outsourcing of the administration of some public facilities and services (JLA 2006).

- 4 The National Diet Library (Kokuritsu Kokkai Toshokan) is the sole national library in Japan. It served as the legal depository of Japanese publications in accordance with the Legal Deposit System.
- 5 The ILCL also serves as a national center supporting research and study on children's literature.
- 6 There are instances that children can ask the staff from the bunko to read the book for them.
- 7 Some bunko would be open once or twice a week or even a month depending on the availability of the owner.
- 8 In 1969, a bunko used two old buses linked together and open, named the Kumegawa Kodomo Toshokan (Kumegawa Children's Library), but people would always refer to this as the "Bus Bunko" (Hotta 1995).
- 9 The roomful of books she had collected over the years was offered to the neighborhood children for pleasure reading (Matsuoka 1994, 10).
- 10 Momoko Ishii was an editor for the Juvenile Department of the Iwanami Shoten Publishing House (Matsuoka 1994, 10).
- 11 The Tokyo Children's Library (TCL) is a nonprofit organization initiated in 1967 by bunko owners Momoko Ishii, Shigeko Tsuchiya, and Matsuoka Kyoko (Matsuoka 1994, 10).
- 12 The Ito Chū Memorial Foundation and the Tokyo Children's Library would conduct an interview-survey of all bunko chairpersons in the country. In this manner, active bunko can be identified. And as part of the Ito Chū Memorial Foundation's corporate responsibility, identified bunko are provided with financial subsidy.
- 13 Some bunko would be open once a week or even once a month (frequent schedule falls on a Saturday). The owner can suddenly decide not to open if she becomes busy with other engagements.
- 14 Two large bunko associations are the Nihon Oyako Dokusyo Center (Japan Parent-Child Reading Center) and the Oyako Dokusyo Chiiki Bunko Zenkoku Renrakukai (Parent-Child Reading/ Neighborhood Bunko National Association) (Takahashi 2006).
- 15 An example of this is the Bunko Study Group in Yokohama (BSGY). This was established in 1984 for the research and support of bunko activities in Yokohama City (Yoda 1999).
- 16 Bunko collections would often include Japanese folktales, picture books, and various story books that can cater to the different children's age groups.
- 17 Junko Ito's Tsubomi Bunko (a katei bunko) in Yokohama presently contains 3,200 volumes. Most of them were purchased by the owner herself. Similarly, Ms. Tanegawa of Katei Bunko in Kita-Urawa would acquire her collection from personal purchases and gifts from parents and children who visited her bunko.
- 18 The signature for this style of storytelling is the "story candle," which is lit when the session begins and extinguished when it ends (Hotta 1995).
- 19 Volunteers would include nationwide groups like the Parents and Teachers Association (PTA) but also include those that read books for the blind citizens, those that promote leisure and hobby activities, a mother's club, several children's clubs, and professional associations (Hotta 1995).
- 20 The Tsubomi Bunko in Yokohama is owned by Junko Ito, a housewife of a doctor. There are six of them who would usually run the bunko, including a wife of a consultant and another one who does part-time job at the nearby Konan Toshokan (Konan Library).

- 21 The Tokyo Children's Library, operating similarly as a bunko, would cater to the children enrolled in the various elementary schools within the neighborhood. However, in recent years, the children who visit had decreased since less students had enrolled.
- 22 Bunko women would notice that children become more articulate in expressing themselves in conversation.
- 23 Forty to sixty percent of children from the Asian region comprise the greater part of the literate public. These children will be the adult readers of the future if they have caught the reading habit when young (Anuar 1985).

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# Indonesian Dancing Bodies: Massacres and Reostrategizing the Postcolonial State

**R. DIYAH LARASATI**

## **Introduction**

THIS ARTICLE ARGUES that the Indonesian state promoted a “choreographed national identity”<sup>1</sup> in the wake of the 1965-1966 massacres. This cultural reconstruction marginalized many traditional dances, privileged others, and projected a homogenized, standardized notion of Indonesian identity. Such a complex process fulfilled various political functions and hewed to an international discourse of cultural preservation. However, despite its hegemonic thrust, this cultural reconstruction also opened up a space that allowed female dance practitioners to shape and even resist the process.

## **Indonesian Massacre of 1965 – 1966**

The Indonesian people experienced mass killings during the Cold War. This was due to internal political turmoil and also to the prevailing anti-communist policy of the United States. During his tenure as Indonesia’s first president, Sukarno considered establishing a new relationship with China to promote trade and economic cooperation, and to determine other common interests. This potential alliance alarmed the United States and its allies, who feared the advance of Communism. Indonesia was a democratic republic, but its Communist party had a large membership (Zubritzky 2000).

The mass killings and imprisonment of Indonesians were the military's brutal response to an **alleged** communists' attempt to overthrow the state in 1965. The massacre also implicated the United States Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) (Roosa 2006). Political violence in Indonesia therefore began in a Cold War context with the goal of eliminating those opposed to the large, right wing factions within the national military. Many Indonesians who disappeared during that period were suspected of having Communist ties. Plenty of artists were also accused of being members of Partai Komunis Indonesia (PKI), the Indonesian Communist Party, and many dancers were also imprisoned or executed in the 1965–1967 period. In the years that followed, until 1998, the government responsible for the killings remained securely lodged in power.

### **Choreographing a National Identity**

In the aftermath of these massacres, a new form of state representation emerged as the nation-state promulgated a choreographed national identity. Under the rule of Suharto's "New Order" the state targeted a variety of local dance practices, submerging them as variants and re-categorizing them under the preexisting dominance of Javanese and Balinese courts. The result was a literal disembodiment of dance practices, lifting them out of the contexts and people that traditionally performed them and moving them to a standardized aesthetic context based on the court as ideal. And while the project maintained images of Indonesia's ethnic and cultural diversity, it also generated homogenous representations of a "national" Indonesia. The Indonesian state has seen and promoted itself as a rich traditional culture, forging, from over 17,000 islands and thousands of ethnic groups and ecologies, a singular national cultural identity.

Indonesian state-sponsored depictions of national culture have typically emphasized court culture and Hindu epic-based performing arts to the exclusion of other ethnicities and art forms. This policy on cultural representation, with a focus on Bali and Java, is not new and not wholly

attributable to Suharto's decisions during the era. It is a continuation of Dutch colonial policy and Sukarno's policy (Robinson 1995). Building on the symbolic manipulation of Balinese and Javanese court culture enacted by the Dutch, the New Order under Suharto differed from previous attempts by politicizing such cultural reconstruction.

### **The Politics of Cultural Reconstruction**

The choreographed national identity operated under the assumption that certain local dance practices were tinged with Communist ideology, which gave the military, with the support of civilian militias and later the government, an excuse to kill, ban, and imprison excluded dancing bodies—the non-refined and the suspected communist dancing bodies. It was a political rather than an aesthetic choice.<sup>2</sup> Certain dances and dancing bodies were approved, but those that did not align themselves with the state were demonized and marked as dangerous (Larasati 2012).

The standardization and homogenization of Indonesian dance also served two other political purposes: the embodiment of Indonesia's cultural tradition and decontextualization of the dances for a global market. The decontextualization erased the contexts in which these indigenous practices occurred, as well as their histories and practitioners. Further, the cultural reconstruction was undertaken in order to gain the trust of the international community, glossing over the violence and human rights abuses of the past, and opening opportunities for economic development. It was a project that displaced the memory of violence, injustice, and human rights violations by insisting only on the traditional/cultural value of the dances.

### **Indonesian Dance and International Cultural and Economic Policy**

Side by side the reconstruction of Indonesian cultural practices is the financial and cultural collaboration between Indonesia and the United States and international funding agencies. Because the Indonesian state

actively promoted these dance traditions, there was an increase in foreign support for the arts and in international awareness of Indonesia's "rich" culture. In addition, the cultural practices became a means to attract investments and trade to Indonesia, especially the ones that included dance and cultural representation as a way to build and expand the globalizing local tourist economy.

Indonesia's choreographed national identity hewed to the internationalist projects of "development" and "progress"—terms that originally came from industry and economics but can also be applied to cultural practices. After the mass killings, the United States' involvement in Indonesia shifted from political and military affairs to economic and cultural arenas. The resulting cultural policy draws directly from economics-based concepts like "sustainability", a move that connected cultural preservation to development and productivity. Such policy is evident in the funding efforts of the United States and international associations such as the *United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization* (UNESCO 2002). UNESCO is an international body whose work mostly focuses on the so-called Third World countries. UNESCO operates according to universalistic standards of "progress" and "development," against which these countries are measured in terms of their level of industrialization. The prevalent conception of these nations is that although they are in need of economic and even political help, they can and ought to share their culture with the rest of the world. This is the context that underpins UNESCO's funding efforts to preserve local cultures. While such efforts are admirable, they also have the effect of decontextualizing, even ignoring the specificities of local cultural practices, which are seen not on their own terms but rather within global discourses on economic development and cultural preservation. For example, in 2011 when UNESCO placed the Saman dance from Aceh on the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding, it categorized Aceh as a part of Indonesia—an international geographical agreement—while ignoring the fact that Aceh is embroiled in a regional dispute with the Indonesian state.

Cultural policies in Indonesia align with UNESCO's policy of cultural preservation of the so-called "intangible arts." International cultural philanthropy is grounded in the notion that these cultures are endangered by politically volatile situations and fragile security. This view justifies particular kinds of cultural preservation in the Third World. Instead of having a clear mandate for the preservation of cultural life or of living artistic practices in Indonesia and Cambodia, international cultural policy emphasizes that the ancient arts have to be preserved and protected from any kind of new interpretation, approach, or expansion of repertoires. Indeed, international cultural policy serves to police the interpretation of cultural practices. New interpretations are possible, but only if they are under the control and guidance of the "expert," who has funding from the United States, unlike local funding agencies who are not as well-endowed.

When I was working as a civil servant of the Indonesian government, I learned that international funding for projects in Indonesia is focused on two types of cultural practice. The Ministry of Tourism and the Ministry of Education collaborate with foreign funding organizations in their mission to preserve indigenous forms. The first type of project draws attention to Javanese court dance and Balinese mystic ritual dance as dominant representations of Indonesian culture, especially after Suharto took power (1965–1998). The second focuses on newer forms that have developed, and it aims to support cultural practices of peoples living in remote forest areas or those of ethnic groups that are not part of the dominant Indonesian state representation. The latter approach is mostly taken by foreign funding institutions that have a branch office in Indonesia. The programs also mainly fund local choreographers who have studied abroad but practice and teach locally. Further, the staging of new dance forms is restricted to certain audiences (educated) or locations (metropolitan). This new choreography eventually becomes a cosmopolitan practice, requires sponsors, and entails a costly production process. This new work then becomes part of the list of activities supported by the United States' cultural philanthropy in order to uphold "diversity."

At the same time, several processes allow performance and cultural practices of Indonesia to be exported to the United States. Cultural diplomacy is a significant part of state-to-state interaction between Indonesia and the United States. Apart from trade and foreign aid agreements with the US government, Indonesia has produced and sent so-called “cultural missions” abroad and vice versa (Prevots 2001). International arts exchange is another mechanism for the migration of Indonesian artistic practice. These workshops, residencies, or collaborations are for the most part initiated by the United States. At the same time, the granting of US funds to support artistic exchange is always mediated by American foreign policy and, in turn, its immigration policy. Lastly, the “re-production” of Indonesian culture in the United States has also occurred because of the migration of individual artists to that country and because of massive anthropological inquiry into Indonesian traditional culture.

### **Women and Cultural Reconstruction: Resistance**

Women are central to the cultural reconstruction project of the Indonesian state. Indeed, the female body, specifically the female performer, is placed at the center of spectators’ gaze in most performances. This practice is reminiscent of both Dutch and Indonesian-era constructions of Balinese Hindu cultural representation, which foreground the female dancer as a goddess, princess, or the object of desire of some evil character. Marta Savigliano (1994) suggests that this exotic depiction of women is a process of an industry that requires distribution and marketing. As such, women have become an icon that helps market Indonesian culture and represent the nation in the international community. They participate and intervene in the process of cultural reconstruction of the Indonesian nation-state.

This representation demands mastery. For example, the staging of the character Shinta in performances of the Ramayana or Dewi Kunti from the Mahabharata frequently deploy methodological approaches, or

dance techniques, that aim to embody the idealized cultural values of beauty, grace, and acquiescence in the case of Shinta, the princess, while Dewi Kunti, a strong, assertive female character, as portrayed as an evil and murderous queen. Yet as lead practitioners of these highly valued “traditional” Indonesian dance forms, female dancers and choreographers gain a sense of artistic ownership, and become actively involved in the rethinking and re-choreographing of the forms. In doing so, they help shape and define the cultural construction process itself. This aspect of the system creates a potential space of intervention, opening a possibility for the assertion of non-subordination through artistic involvement.

Indonesian female artists may thus be said to possess significant authority in the development of national representation, both domestically and in the global market. In addition, since dance training has become part of the national education curriculum, female artists, in their role as educators, are able to play an important part in the construction of a national culture. The practice of performing arts therefore creates agency for women because they can actively participate in nation-building and national representation, although they must largely rely on artistic knowledge transmitted through official channels.

In this context, despite the hegemonic nature of Indonesia’s cultural reconstruction, it is also necessary to consider how the process of cultural reinvention has allowed the strengthening of various forms of resistance used by “subaltern” – non-Javanese, Balinese, or politically mainstream – performers and choreographers who have entered the national system of cultural representation. I locate this possibility in the continuing existence of certain covert, non-official channels for the transmission of alternate aesthetic knowledge and dance techniques, as well as in the dance and religious practices of marginalized groups and certain indigenous, traditional ceremonies. Anna Tsing notes that from the perspective of marginalized peoples, cultural construction is a strategy to redefine marginality on the periphery of state power (1993, xiii-9). In this vein, the participation of female practitioners in cultural construction can be viewed

as a form of resistance. Indeed, Jeffrey Tobin (1994) suggests that cultural construction can be a strategy employed by native nationalists for cultural resistance and as an instrument in the decolonizing process. In 1945, at the time when nationalists pursued independence, it was necessary to reconfigure a nationalized cultural identity to strengthen Indonesia's nation-building process as a new postcolonial state. During the Sukarno era (1945-67) however, the state's approach to national culture as a medium for development and identity formation was vastly different from that of Suharto's New Order, as detailed above.

In the same way, a few female practitioners have attempted to bring more dissonant voices to cultural representation, engaging in subtle, and sometimes not-so-subtle, attempts at resistance and "decolonization" vis-à-vis the state and religious patriarchy. In the Indonesian academic context, certain female performing artists, through hard-won creative leverage attained via success within the rigid national system, have created a limited space for experimentation with different approaches to traditional dance and exploration of contemporary themes. For example, Setyastuti, a choreographer, dancer, and Professor of Dance from the Institute of the Arts in Yogyakarta (ISI), choreographs dances that take a daring approach to the issue of women within a violent society, strategically breaking with state-approved dance techniques and embracing narrative content that is considered taboo onstage.

Although it is possible to experiment when funded by foreign institutions and, to a small degree, by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, Ministry of Education and Ministry of Foreign Affairs, few instances of new political content and radically resistive choreographies are occurring. This despite several years after the fall of Suharto. Furthermore, funding for contemporary projects often comes from institutions with their own agendas (i.e. earmarked for Muslim countries, "third world" states, developing nations, etc), which may impose, or attempt to impose, restrictions and categorizations on the work of artists who depend on such institutions. Such possibilities, with all their attached limitations, are also mostly on offer for dancers who are educated at the university level and/



or abroad, since they can apply for support through grants and competitions. Many politically, economically, and culturally marginalized artists who perform in villages or on “remote” islands are largely shut out from the above possibilities, or must access them, as suggested above, through a qualified, “expert” mediator.

Thus, through their participation in cultural construction, established female artists may use the above forms of agency and space accorded through cultural practice to begin to redefine the relationship between women and the state-center, gaining mobility and access to discourses of artistic expression that exist beyond the national standard. Yet as implicated in, and dependent on, a complex, highly politicized global system of preservation and funding for the arts, women are still structurally positioned as objects of the male gaze, even as they decolonize themselves from state patriarchy and play out the feminist praxis of Indonesian female performer.

### Notes

- 1 The term is used in Hill, Amy. “Choreographing National Identity: The Political Use of Samba and Tango.” In *Latin American Studies Honors Projects*. Paper 2. <http://digitalcommons.macalester.edu/lashonors/2/>
- 2 I would like to extend my gratitude to Marta Savigliano for all her comments during my presentation at the UCLA 2007 symposium “Arts, State and Violence,” which I curated. Michael Ross and to Geoffrey Robinson for their help and hospitality during my fellowship at UCLA CSEAS. This paper also benefited from the many comments of Matthew Santa Maria and other anonymous reviewers.
- 3 My observation refers to the description of Gerwani dance as represented within the form of “folk culture” in the film *G 30 S PKI*, produced by the Ministry of Defense and Education under Mr. Nugroho Notosusanto and released in 1983–1984, and in a documentary entitled *Shadow Play* by Chris Hilton, released in 2002. I also refer to many interviews during my research in Bali, Java, Aceh and Kalimantan region and has been publish in my book *The Dance That Makes You Vanish* (University of Minnesota Press, forthcoming, 2013).

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**“CORDERO”**  
A Descriptive and Functionalist Study  
of the Maundy Thursday  
Potato Lamb Feast  
in Morong, Rizal, Philippines

**EDRIC C. CALMA**

**Introduction**

ON MAUNDY THURSDAY, the town of Morong, Rizal, forty-two kilometers east of Manila, hosts a grand *Cordero* procession under the scorching mid-afternoon sun. The *Cordero* – Spanish for “lamb” - is carved out of a mixture of mashed potatoes, *kamote* (sweet potato), milk and sugar, and coated with icing. It is placed on a bamboo platform and carried in a festive procession that starts at the home of the *hermano* and *hermana* (sponsors; Spanish for “brother” and “sister” respectively) and passes through the town plaza until it reaches the church of Morong.

This paper is a descriptive and an evaluative case study of Morong’s *Cordero* tradition. It provides a detailed picture of the event (its origins, features, and procedures), evaluates its relation to Roman Catholic beliefs, and briefly examines the various functions it plays.

A resident since birth of the locale and an active community member, the researcher was most at ease doing an anthropological participant observation held weeks before, during and after Holy Week. He likewise conducted in-depth interviews to obtain and validate observed practices and information.

## History

It is not surprising to see and experience very old traditions, nonexistent in adjacent locales, still being practiced in Morong, the old capital town of Rizal province during the Spanish era. After all, it was the venue of old cultural and socio-religious activities, including those for Lent (if not the whole year round). One such activity is the *Cordero*.

The earliest recorded mention of the *Cordero* was in 1931; the yearly invitations to the illustrious residents of the town list the names of the *hermanos* and *hermanas* from that year to 2008 (Invitation 2008).<sup>1</sup> The list also forms the basis of a 1993 two-page write-up on the *Cordero*:

*Nagsimula ang tradisyong ito noong 1931. (This tradition started in 1931) (Kordero ng Diyos 1993).*<sup>2</sup>

However, holding a feast on the date of the *Cordero* could have started as early as pre-colonial times. In the absence of other written accounts, this statement is mere speculation, but one based on the *Cordero*'s similarities with the pre-Hispanic feasts.

A reading of Scott (1985), Junker (2000) and other anthropological accounts of pre-colonial Philippines points to some indigenous feasts whose elements and rituals are similar to the *Cordero*. Such feasts celebrated a bountiful harvest, victory in war, or the birth of a child of the local chief. These auspicious events were seen as favors from the gods, but they were also opportunities for others to assert social status and to vie for social standing and power among the elite, among others (Junker 2000).

At any rate, the festivities of the pre-Hispanic community in Morong during or immediately after each harvest season may have been the precursors of the *Cordero* festival as we know it today. Like the *Cordero*, these indigenous celebrations feature:

- Feasting that is a calendrical ritual or periodic activity;
- Sponsored by the local elite;
- Serving of specialized or high-value foods, such as pigs or cows;

- Voluntary participation of local people termed *panunulungan*;
- Expansion of social prestige and political patronage on the part of the feast sponsors, etc.

The Cordero, however, differs from pre-Hispanic traditions since it has been incorporated into Roman Catholic belief systems. This fusion is consistent with early anthropological and historical studies, which show that Spanish friars proselytized the natives by merging Catholic teachings with local beliefs and rituals. This convergence resulted in what has been called “folk Catholicism,” of which the Cordero could be an example.

Such convergence is also seen in the timing of the Cordero and the pre-Hispanic festivities; Holy Week celebrations coincide with the first harvest season of the year, which is around March to May. Thus, it could be inferred then that the Spanish colonizers, seeing that the locals were holding feasts at this time of the year, merely adopted the tradition and injected it with a Christian flavor.

### **Defining the Cordero**

For this study, the term “Cordero” covers the following definitions:

1. a lamb offering
2. a lamb-shaped potato and *kamote* delicacy
3. a procession that carries the Cordero delicacy
4. a ritual that takes place before the mass of the Last Supper
5. a feast that is held on the night of Maundy Thursday after the Cordero processions and the mass of the Last Supper
6. a tradition found only in the town of Morong involving nos. 2, 3, 4 and 5 above.

As a Roman Catholic event, the Cordero can be best understood in the context of Philippine Lenten traditions. Unlike other Catholic countries, the Lenten season is one of the more colorful events in Morong.

*Morongueños* (people from Morong) from other parts of the globe usually come home to take part in the community observance of Holy Week traditions. Activities include processions and plays that reenact the suffering of the Christ; the *pabasa* or chanting of the Christ's passion; novenas and acts of contrition, among others. The *Cordero* is held on Maundy Thursday and is a preliminary ritual before the Mass of the Last Supper.

### Traditional preparations

#### Selection of the hermano and hermana

The hermano and the hermana, with help from the local moneyed class, manage and finance the preparations for the procession and feasting. Indeed, social status and wealth are two important factors in the selection of the hermano and hermana. Hence, the role commonly falls to the elite and influential families of Morong.



The Cordero

## Participants

Although the Cordero is commonly led by Roman Catholic-based organizations of lay people and families of the sponsors, everybody is expected to participate. In fact, the formal list of the participants in the Cordero procession, as included in the yearly invitations, includes various church-based organizations, local politicians, the town mayor and the town council, the “Apostles” (lay people appointed to take part in the various church activities during Lent), *hermanos/hermanas pasados* (past sponsors) and their representatives, the family of the current hermano and hermana, future hermanos/hermanas, and the men who carry the Cordero. In the past, students from high schools and colleges were also asked to join. The participants represent a cross-section of the community, from the rich to the poor, and from the young to the old.

## Food

Preparations for the ritual begin as early as three in the morning and last until the afternoon procession. The participants, regardless of age and social background, take part in the *panunulungan* (ie. providing voluntary help or labor). The actual Cordero is made of mashed potatoes, *kamote* (sweet potato), milk and sugar, which are mixed and molded into a shape of a lamb, and coated with icing to create a fluffy woolen coat similar to that of the real animal. The food is shared in a feast that serves various other Filipino dishes.

## Physical structures

A *papag* or bamboo platform, where the Cordero is carried in procession, is constructed and beautifully decorated. Traditionally, the construction also involves artisans, and an accompanying *baluarte* or arch and *habong habong* or dining tables welcome the guests and visitors.

## Procession

The procession begins at 3:00 in the afternoon in a festive and lively mood. A marching band alerts the townspeople to the arrival of the procession. The sponsors plan the routes, taking into consideration the location of major thoroughfares, the proximity of the hermanos' house to the church, as well as their individual preferences. Weather conditions are also taken into account; for instance, because of extreme heat or the inaccessibility of the hermano and hermana's house from the church, the Cordero is sometimes paraded only around the plaza and then to the church. Also, when the house of the sponsors is very far from the church, they could opt for a nearer, more suitable starting point for the procession. At any rate, the route traditionally includes the hermano's house, the town plaza, and the parish cathedral or church. Men who carry the Cordero are handpicked by the hermano and hermana depending on their connections and perceived standing in the community.

After the procession reaches the church, the Cordero is blessed with holy water. As an act of offering, the hermano performs the ceremonial and partial severing of the head, but reserves it for the feast. Public readings from the Old and New Testaments are held, followed by the Last Supper Mass. Afterwards, the whole procession leaves the church and returns to the hermano's house, where a lavish feast awaits the whole community.

In the procession following the church ceremony, the hermano carries the Cordero banner (a white cloth bearing the haloed sheep symbol of the Cordero with a cross) while his wife or the hermana would have a serving of the delicacy on a small plate with a *banderita* (a small flag, bearing the haloed sheep symbol of the Cordero with a cross), as would other participants.

After the feast, the head of the Cordero is handed over to the following year's hermano and hermana. A procession then proceeds to the house of next year's sponsors. There, festivities continue until late in the evening, though on a much smaller scale.



### Attire

The hermano and the hermana, their immediate family and participants of the procession typically dress in *Filipiniana* attire: *barong Tagalog* for men and *terno* or *baro't-saya* for women. Everyone would be carrying a matching umbrella made of either *jusi* or *piña* fiber to match the formal *Filipiniana* wear. The Cordero procession cannot do away with umbrellas, not because of any religious significance but because of the sheer necessity of shielding the participants from the sun.

### Feast

After the traditional procession and mass, the Cordero is sliced and shared among the community. It is believed that once blessed, it represents the body of Christ and that the community of believers should partake of it (Santiago, 2008). Some attribute healing powers to the Cordero and thus bring home a portion to sick family members. This belief is stressed in the following:

*Bawat isang dumalo sa pagdiriwang ay nagsisikap na makakain o makapag-uwi ng Cordero dahil sa paniniwala ng mga taga-Morong na ito ay nakapagpapagaling ng maysakit at nagpapalakas ng katawan. Marami rin ang nagsasabing nagiging maswerte o tumatanggap ng biyaya ang mga nagiging Hermano ng Cordero. (Everyone who comes to the feast tries to eat or take with him a portion of the Cordero in the belief that it will heal the sick and strengthen the body. Other people also say that those who become an hermano of the Cordero become lucky or are blessed.) (Kordero 1993; Soriano 2008)*

## The Cordero and the Roman Catholic Tradition

The Roman Catholic faith in the Philippines observes and maintains a list of festivities that occur all over the country; however, the Cordero tradition is nowhere to be found on this list, as well as in the doctrines of the church.<sup>3</sup> A thorough research by this writer of published materials and interviews yielded the same conclusion.

Prior to the late 1980s, the Cordero ritual was held in the early afternoon of Maundy Thursday. The procession of the potato lamb commemorated the lamb offering of the Jews during the time of Moses. The lamb also signifies Christ, who is the “Lamb of God.” In the Old Testament, the Jews used to kill prized lambs for the Passover as an offering to God (Exodus 12: 3-28). However, since the Philippines is not a pastoral country, the sheep offered in the Cordero is not a live animal.

By the late 1980s local parish officials and the religious lay people began associating the celebration of the Cordero with the Last Supper of Christ. The latter refers to the following biblical passages from the Book of Mark in the New Testament:

“On the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, when they sacrificed the Passover lamb, his disciples said to him, ‘Where do you want us to go and prepare for you to eat the Passover?’

He sent two of his disciples and said to them, ‘Go into the city and a man will meet you, carrying a jar of water. Follow him.

Wherever he enters, say to the master of the house: ‘The Teacher says, ‘Where is my guest room where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?’”

Then he will show you a large upper room furnished and ready. Make the preparations for us there.’

The disciples then went off, entered the city, and found it just as he had told them; and they prepared the Passover.

When it was evening, he came with the Twelve.” (Mark 14:12-16, NASB version)

Later, these two biblical stories—the Jews’ offering and the Last Supper—have been combined to underscore the biblical relevance of the Cordero, which, as stated above, commemorates Christ as the Lamb of God, who offered His body and blood to save mankind from sins.

It is symbolic. Lamb of God is one of the titles given to Jesus in the New Testament and consequently in the Christian tradition. It is believed to refer to Jesus' role as a sacrificial lamb atoning for the sins of man in Christian theology, harkening back to ancient Jewish Temple sacrifices in which a lamb was slain during the Passover, the blood was sprinkled along the door, and the lamb was eaten. (Kordero 2007).<sup>4</sup>

In addition to this, San Miguel<sup>5</sup> (2008) commented that the *hermano* symbolizes the owner of the house where Christ and his twelve apostles held the Last Supper. Just as the owner hosted Christ and the Twelve, so does the *hermano* host the people and spend for the feast.

### **Changes in the tradition**

Over the years, the Cordero tradition has undergone some changes, especially concerning the selection of the *hermano* and *hermana*. While the sponsors are generally taken from the elite of Morong, the non-elite (the traditional elite anyway) have now received the privilege to take over the management of the festivity. Most of these new *hermanos* and *hermanas* are *balikbayans* (Filipinos who have lived or worked abroad), who have acquired a new social status because of their (modest) wealth from foreign-currency earnings. Indeed, from 1997 to 2007, except in 2006, the *hermanos* and *hermanas* were taken from such a group. All in all, the selection of the sponsors now largely depends on one's volition and financial capabilities. In 2007, the *hermano* spent approximately Php 800,000 – Php 1,000,000.

The impact of the *balikbayan-hermanos* on the Cordero has been felt in several other ways. For instance, they have introduced M&M chocolates and Sun Maid raisins, which are popular coming-home presents, as ingredients of the Cordero. The potato lamb has acquired a new look, yet the change has also opened up and reinforced differences from traditional practice.

Moreover, since they arrive a few weeks before the festivities, the balikbayan-hermanos are not able to perform traditional responsibilities thoroughly. At times, the communal preparation (the *panunulugan*) of the food is set aside; the food is now simply catered. In addition, the construction of the traditional physical structures has now been relegated to labor outside of the town for cost-efficient purposes. They recruit craftsmen outside Morong who do not necessarily practice the indigenous, traditional artistic styles when building the *baluarte*, *habong habong*, and the *papag*.

### **Functional study of the Cordero tradition**

The Cordero festivity is performed primarily for religious reasons. For the locals, it serves as an offering (lamb) to God and a celebration of God's gift (Jesus Christ) to men. For the *hermanos* and *hermanas*, it is a venue to "pay forward" the blessings they have received and to seek divine favor (it is a local belief that becoming the *hermano/hermana* brings good fortune). For the believers, the partaking of the blessed *cordero* heals ailments. However, as may be derived from this study, it has social and economic benefits as well.

#### **Reconstitution**

As an annual "public event" (Handelman 1990, quoted in Breeman 1993), the Cordero has the function and effect of "reconstituting" the town and its people. Beyond the religious significance, the act of coming together re-draws the town folks as a community. Held during the Lenten season when the locals are in a time of rest and reflection, it gives them the opportunity, despite recent changes, to:

- (1) catch up on each other's and the community's concerns as they come together to prepare and contribute to the *panunulugan*
- (2) express community spirit through communal artistry
- (3) watch the procession, or
- (4) attend the feast as a community.

The tradition brings together families, colleagues and old friends who may have been separated by distance or work. The Lenten season, the Cordero ritual and the tradition of working together for the *panunulungan* have effectively functioned as a “reconstituting” agent of the Morong community.

#### Outlet for collective art

Despite the recent changes, the Cordero has been a traditional outlet of Morong’s collective art, tangible (i.e. the Cordero delicacy, the kinayas and the baluarte) or otherwise (the panunulungan and the actual cooking of the delicacy). Regardless of the output these expressions provide, they become manifestations of the living spirit of the community.

#### Assertion of social status

For the balikbayan hermanos/hermanas of the past decade, the Cordero validates their ascension to a new social class. Since being a hermano was a sign of community approval, it also becomes an affirmation of the person’s social standing and prestige. Clarke (2001) stresses that “feasts as mechanisms for redistribution, others as means for demonstrating heritable holdings and status, while many claim that they demonstrate and amplify prestige” (x). Likewise, Hayden (2001) argues that in societies all over the world, people hold feasts to demonstrate status and amplify prestige, among other things. Indeed, the idea of social prestige attracts the community’s new moneyed class to flaunt their newly acquired status by taking on the responsibility of the hermano and hermana, a post which was traditionally reserved to a different set of privileged few.

#### Business Opportunity

Small and medium entrepreneurs profit in the celebration, which serve as an avenue for them to sell their merchandise and products to locals and visitors. Food and beverage vendors work tirelessly to serve the volume of participants who join in the procession. Laborers also get commissioned projects for the construction of the physical structures prior to the event.

## Conclusion

In keeping with the tradition and maintaining its relevance to the lives of the Catholic observers, the local people of Morong commemorate the passion and death of Christ through the Cordero. Over the years, it has undergone significant changes in its preparation and observation. Such changes, however, are inevitable if this tradition is to survive in a shifting social atmosphere. After all, living community traditions are expressed not in a vacuum, but within the whole social spectrum where they exist and act in.

In looking at the functions of Cordero tradition, the paper used the concept of a “public event” (Handelman 1990, in Breeman, 1993). By means of its structure and yearly enactment, the Cordero has the function and effect of “reconstituting” the town and its people. It was likewise determined that taking part in this tradition has varied significance for its participants, from the simplest reasons (i.e. religious, communal expression which may be artistic or otherwise, good neighborliness and *panunulungan*) to the grandiose and sociological (i.e. validation and assertion of social status) ones. More importantly, the performance and observance of community expressions, like the Cordero, enable the people to achieve a sense of unity in their privileged participation in a significant tradition.

## Notes

- 1 (2008 Kordero Invitation, unpublished data)
- 2 (1993 Kordero Invitation, unpublished data)
- 3 Rev. Fr. John Gallagher, a former parish priest of St. Jerome in Morong, confirms that the tradition is nowhere to be found in the list of festivities or in the doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church.
- 4 Armeen (Morong resident), comment on the Kordero 2007
- 5 Mike San Miguel, (local patron of arts and culture; Morong resident), personal interview on 22 March 2008.

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# Philippine Traditional Crafts in Discipline-Based Art Education: A New Prospect

**GARMITA ELIZA J. ICASIANO**

THIS PAPER LOOKS INTO the possibility of studying Philippine traditional crafts using an art education framework called discipline-based art education (DBAE). The prospect is borne of a desire not only to offer an alternative to existing art education but more importantly, to give traditional crafts attention and recognition within a formal classroom setting. The discussion will first deal with the term “craft” or “crafts” and its connotations, followed by the position of crafts in Philippine art schools, and how crafts studies is handled by the Philippines’ Asian neighbors. This will be followed by a description of DBAE and, finally, a list of suggestions on how crafts can be incorporated into formal secondary education.

## **Craft/Crafts**

The term “craft” originally came from the Old English word *craft*, which means power, strength, or might. Later on, it came to mean “skill or art” and was associated with an idea of “mental power” (Harper 2001). Eventually, it was linked to “things made by hand” (Oxford Dictionaries 2009). Other connotations of the word are decorative arts (handmade luxury goods for use and display inside buildings or on the human body), “trade and folkways,” and “long traditions of pre-industrial production of handmade objects” (Metcalf 1999).

The term “crafts” came into wide use with the Arts and Crafts movement, which was founded in the late nineteenth century and drew upon the vision of English theorist and critic John Ruskin (1819–1900). Ruskin was known for his criticism of classical architecture and for his essay in praise of Gothic cathedrals. He saw in the Gothic the “democratic spirit” (Rodel and Binzen 2003, 22) and the individual worth and effort of the craftsman. He shunned the uniformity of symmetrical buildings and saw such work as the “subjugation of the craftsman” by the architect (22). In Victorian England, Ruskin took issue against industrialization and the factory system, which for him deprived the worker of individuality (22). He exalted the dignity of human labor and was known to have said: “No one can teach you anything worth learning but through manual labor” (6).

William Morris (1834–1896), a student at Oxford, took up the vision of Ruskin and translated it into criteria for action. While Ruskin championed the dignity of labor, Morris practiced it himself, engaging in work that was previously “reserved for the lower classes” (Metcalf 1999). He spearheaded the Arts and Crafts Movement, founding in 1861 his manufacturing and decorating firm called Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co. The firm produced furniture, tapestry, stained glass, furnishing fabrics, carpets, printed books, and much more, all made by hand (Danky and Wiegand 2006, 163). It also was part of a collective reaction against the “mechanization of labor” and mass-produced goods (Rodel and Binzen 2003, 5-6). The “term Arts and Crafts was coined after the Arts and Crafts Exhibition of 1888 in London” (9). The movement itself, which stressed “fine handcraftsmanship, honest design, and local materials began in England and spread to continental Europe and America” (9).

As the Arts and Crafts Movement gained steam, crafts came to be reckoned for their aesthetic qualities—beauty was no longer the exclusive preserve of fine arts. In the previous decades, philosophers like Immanuel Kant (1724–1804), argued that the aesthetic experience must involve a “disinterested attitude” or “disinterested contemplation” (*Encyclopaedia Britannica* 2005, 13:9; Copleston 1985) and that art, the object of an aesthetic experience, “is a kind of representation which has its end in

itself, but which nonetheless, although it has no purpose external to itself, promotes the culture of the mental powers with a view to social communication” (in Copleston 1985, 366). On this note, crafts do not fall under Kant’s idea of art, as they are necessarily imbued with functionality and possess a purpose “external to itself.” Similarly, Ruskin’s view of aesthetics was tied to social awareness; it moved away from Kant’s “disinterested contemplation” of an artwork and towards “a broader examination of the environment from which the work emerges” (Metcalf 1999). Morris, following Ruskin’s lead, opposed the notion of fine art. For Morris, art is “man’s expression of his joy in labour” (Chilvers and Osborne 1994); hence, craft for him qualifies as art.

### **UNESCO Definition**

The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) defines “crafts” as follows:

Those produced by artisans, either completely by hand, or with the help of hand tools or even mechanical means, as long as the direct manual contribution of the artisan remains the most substantial component of the finished product. These are produced without restriction in the terms of quantity and using raw materials from sustainable resources. The special nature of artisanal products derives from their distinctive features, which can be utilitarian, aesthetic, artistic, creative, culturally attached, decorative, functional, traditional, religiously and socially symbolic and significant (Vencatachellum 2004, 51–52).

Such definition consolidates the connotations and implications of the term “crafts.” However, this proposal refers to traditional crafts or what Metcalf relates to as “folkways” (Metcalf 1999). Even so, the author is also keen to note the social dimension of every piece of traditional craft; it considers the dignity of human labor and the cultural and social milieu to which the craftsman belongs.

## Crafts on the Margin

The history of crafts education in the Philippines parallels the rise and fall of an empire. It started small, with the scattered and informal teaching and learning of crafts during the pre-Hispanic period, where crafts production catered to the needs of a chief, a social elite, or the general population of consumers (Brumfiel and Earle 1987 in Junker 2000, 262). In Spanish colonial Philippines, convents were turned into schools and workshops of carpentry, iron works, drawing, painting of images, cutting and sewing of altar cloths, designing and sewing of altar pieces, textile weaving, and other forms of practical arts (Flores 1998, 143). Such schools, serving as handmaidens of missionary work, came to an end when the *Academia de las Bellas Artes* opened in 1785. At that time, painting and drawing then came to be regarded for its purely academic worth (Flores 1998). Crafts education in the Philippines reached its peak during the American period when the educational system was revised and expanded to include industrial work and crafts for livelihood, like woodwork, clay modeling, basket and mat weaving, and embroidery and lace making (Sobritchea 1996). Over the decades, crafts subjects offered under the American public school system would be jettisoned, save for woodwork and clay modeling, which still figure in the present curricula of the public elementary school system. What have come to take the place of crafts are painting, sculpture, architecture, photography, printmaking, dance, theater, and cinema (Department of Education 1998). Such a trend continues into the tertiary level. In three major Philippine universities conferring fine arts degrees, common areas of specialization include painting, sculpture, advertising arts, and industrial design.<sup>1</sup> Although crafts may be part of the curricula, no undergraduate or graduate degrees are offered in the area of crafts.

The Philippine art scene echoes the same preference for painting and sculptural works and also draws a broad distinction between crafts and fine arts. While the fine arts enjoy the patronage of the higher centers of learning, crafts—much less, traditional crafts—have not been equally fortunate. The marked difference between functionality and pure aesthetics assigned to crafts and fine arts, respectively, seems to have relegated crafts

to a position of inferiority. As such, public exhibitions of crafts have not been common in the local art scene. Galleries are wont to present painting and sculptural works, which are seen as the sole possessor of commercial and aesthetic value. Even the locally conferred National Artists Award sees art as distinct from craft and, therefore, is open only to artists who are or were practitioners of Western-oriented art.

To help remedy this, the National Commission for Culture and the Arts launched the *Gawad Manlilikha ng Bayan* (literally, National Creators Awards) to honor traditional artisans and culture bearers. Also, in 2002, the exhibition “Crafting Economies” opened at the Cultural Center of the Philippines. Curated by Patrick Flores, the exhibition aimed to confront the “marginalization of ‘craft’ in the contemporary art world; it sought to integrate it with the present-day concerns in aesthetic judgment, and then finally discredit the distinction of art and the discrimination of craft without ceding the agency of aesthetic critique and experience” (Flores 2001, 11). Clearly, this exhibition acknowledged the aesthetic properties of craftworks, to help clear the way for their integration into the art world. Its aim is not to end up calling craft art but to see craft’s “aesthetic potential.” Flores clarifies:

To reconsider craft is not to invest it with artness (to do so would be to fall into the ‘art’ trap once again), but to reoperationalize its aesthetic potential. By the same token, to renounce art is not to reduce it to craft, but to redeploy the mode of its making in society and history. It is this ‘society and history’ that renders art/craft material to our lives, that allows it to circulate in an economy of exchange and reciprocation (11).

Seen this way, crafts become de-marginalized and could rightly find a place in mainstream art society and education in the Philippines. Its aesthetic qualities could be recognized, as well as their production within a particular social and historical environment, which renders both craft and art significant to ordinary life.

## Crafts Studies in Asian Education Systems

Interestingly, the marginalization of crafts does not appear to be a universal phenomenon. In some regions of East and Southeast Asia, crafts institutes and colleges are well-attended. Craft education in Korean universities, for instance, falls under the art department, which runs three main programs: the “fine art” program, which offers painting and sculpture; the “craft” program, which features work on metals, ceramics, wood, fiber, and glass; and the “design” program, which offers industrial design, graphic design, and fashion design. Until the 1970s, craft and design were classified as “applied arts” (Jeon 2004, 218). According to a 2004 report delivered by Yong-il Jeon, a professor of Design from Kookmin University, the state of craft education in Korea is well-attested by impressive figures. Universities with crafts majors total fifty-eight, with some 2,042 students majoring in the various fields of crafts, like ceramics, metal and jewelry, woodworking, fiber, and glasswork. The highest number of enrollees is in ceramics, which also happens to be one of the oldest craft practices in the country. The regions of Seoul and Kyongsang-do are the biggest sites of universities and, therefore, of crafts colleges. Within a college curriculum, crafts majors complete 130 units of humanities and take up subjects such as drawing, modeling, and computer-aided design. The humanities subjects take up the first and second years, while the major classes take up the third and fourth years. In lieu of a thesis, students create works for a Bachelor Degree Show.

Crafts graduates have a wide array of career opportunities; they may pursue an independent craft practice, work in a team as a studio artist, work in a company or industry, land a post in the education sector, work in a craft distribution firm, or form part of a craft research organization or agency, such as a museum or a restoration company. Professor Jeon notes that a majority of craft practitioners, which he calls “craft artists,” are highly educated. They create and exhibit works in shows at par with international standards.

In Korea, the high school curriculum prepared by the Korea Institute of Curriculum and Evaluation aims “to enable students to attain knowledge and skills in diverse fields so that they will be able to carve out a career in accordance with their aptitudes and interests” and “to encourage students to work to develop our traditions and culture in a way appropriate for the global setting.” Such skills include crafts-making; hence, ceramics and textile are offered under the Industry subject area (Korea Institute for Curriculum and Evaluation: 2006). There are also specialized high schools devoted to the arts, which most likely include crafts, considering that Korean universities are known to group crafts courses with fine arts programs under the same faculty of arts. Unfortunately, no detailed information regarding specialized Korean high schools could be accessed by this author. Reference to it was simply made in a website of the Office of the Prime Minister of Korea (2006).

Japan’s integration of crafts into university education varies little from that of Korea. Crafts courses are offered in arts and design universities under the Faculty of Arts’ Department of Crafts. The courses take four years to complete, with specializations in the following fields: ceramics, metalwork, textile, glass, lacquer, dyeing, and embroidery. Unlike Korean crafts programs, crafts departments in Japan do not offer woodworking. The most common crafts specialization is in ceramics, whose practice dates back to the ancient Jomon period (c. 7500–300 BC), followed by metalwork and textile, then glass, lacquer, weaving, dyeing, and finally embroidery. Crafts specialization programs are offered not only at the undergraduate level but also at the M.A. and Ph.D. levels. Students are expected to blend traditional techniques with contemporary aesthetics. Their work must also be informed by a sense of “functional beauty,” which the Joshibi University of Art and Design (2006) termed as “beautility” (beauty of utility) or which the Tohoku University of Art and Design (2006) expressed as “the unity of functionality and beauty.”

In Southeast Asia, crafts education has also established itself in formal learning centers. Keris-making is offered as a course in the fine arts department of the Indonesia College of the Arts in Surakarta (Guntur 2004). In Malaysia, the state-run Malaysian Handicraft Development Corporation operates the National Craft Institute, which provides academic and skills training in various fields of Malaysian crafts such as batik, weaving, ceramic, woodcraft, bamboo and metal-based craft. The institute offers diploma and certificate programs; diploma programs run for a total of three years, while the certificate programs are completed in two. A 2004 report on the state of Malaysian crafts noted a total of 436 institute students (Malaysian Handicraft Development Corporation 2004).

Thailand incorporates craft studies in its secondary-education curriculum, which consists of the “academic stream” and “vocational stream” (Sedgwick 2005). In the latter, crafts education occurs alongside “Thai and foreign languages, science, mathematics, social studies, physical education, and art” (Sedgwick 2005). Students under the former are prepared for university education and graduate with a Certificate of Secondary Education (*Mayatom VI*), while vocational stream students receive a Certificate of Vocational Education (*Por Wor Chor*) upon graduation and are prepared for employment and further studies (Sedgwick 2005). Under the vocational stream program, students specialize in one of the five major fields: agriculture, home economics, business studies (marketing, travel and tourism, public relations), arts and crafts, and technology (mechanical, civil, electronic, industrial) (Sedgwick 2005).

The foregoing has listed how crafts are incorporated into formal education systems of some East and Southeast Asian countries. The accommodation of crafts courses within formal education in the Philippines therefore has precedent and should not therefore be dismissed. Not unlike her neighbors, the Philippines has a long history of craft production that goes back to pre-Hispanic times. It is about time that crafts education is elevated to a new level of reckoning, at the very least, in the secondary school system.



## Discipline-Based Art Education as a Framework for Studying Crafts

The following discussion describes DBAE and explores how various Philippine crafts could serve as course content. This section draws from two authors, Robinson Castellano Soria, a Filipino, and Stephen Dobb, an American. Soria's dissertation entitled "Art Education and Student Artistic Development across Three Cultures" uses the DBAE framework to assess student artistic achievement in the Philippines, Taiwan, and the United States. His recommendations include adopting the DBAE approach in art classrooms to enhance public school art education, and to upgrade the quality of life of the general public (Soria 1997, 205). This present proposal carries Soria's recommendation further by integrating traditional craft objects into a DBAE-based curriculum. On the other hand, Stephen Mark Dobbs is the author of *Learning in and through Art*, which comprehensively describes the DBAE method of teaching art. His book serves as a major source in this section's discussion.

### What Is DBAE?

Robinson Soria (1997), in his study of Philippine art education, defines DBAE as:

"a contemporary approach to art education that presents a broad view of art and emphasizes art in the general education of all students from kindergarten through high school. This approach integrates content from four art disciplines, namely: aesthetics, art criticism, art history and art production through a focus on works of art" (Soria 1997, 205; cited in Dobbs, 1998, 3).

Stephen Dobbs, author of *Learning in and through Art*, describes DBAE as "designed to provide exposure to, experience with, and acquisition of content from several disciplines of knowledge, but especially from four foundational disciplines in art—art making, art criticism, art history, and aesthetics" (1998, 3). By teaching art using these foundational

art disciplines, learning is centered on the “creation, understanding, and appreciation of art, artists, artistic processes, and the role and function of art in cultures and societies” (3).

Before DBAE, art classes had been centered on creative self-expression. This approach considers the learner innately creative and expressive (Soria 1997, 4), who needs nurturing rather than instruction. As such, teachers only need to provide motivation, encouragement, support and opportunity; they are in no way to impose adult concepts or images; they must take caution against inhibiting the learner’s self-expression; indeed, a learner’s underdevelopment is attributed precisely to adult intervention. Furthermore, under this educational philosophy, works of art are not viewed as material for study. They are perceived to negatively affect the learner’s self-expression and creative development. As for evaluation, what is paramount is the learner’s growth and process of art making (Soria 1997).

On the other hand, DBAE calls on a balanced art curriculum that stresses content from four art disciplines (Soria 1997). It is a reaction against an approach that saw art primarily as creative self-expression. In the 1960s, the creative-self-expression school was at its peak in the art curricula; however, in a number of conferences in the United States, art educators began questioning the dominant pedagogical philosophy. Later on, theorists, scholars and researchers proposed alternatives (Soria 1997). And by the middle of the 1980s, DBAE had emerged as a solid counterpoint to art education (Soria 1997).

### **Characteristics of DBAE**

To understand DBAE in finer detail, we turn to Stephen Dobbs’s work, *Learning in and through Art*, in which he enumerates the characteristics of DBAE. Quoting Dobbs verbatim:

- “Students are engaged in the rigorous study of art derived from the four art disciplines;
- A long-range program-planning capacity for art is in place, given impetus by the adoption by the local

school district, university, or art museum of a policy statement and goals for student learning that include comprehensive art education;

- A written art curriculum framework exists, or is in the process of being developed, in which learning is sequenced within and between grades to reflect the developmental and age-appropriate factors;
- Written, sequential lesson units and learning experiences engage students in balanced attention and study derived from the content of the four foundational art disciplines: art making (also known as studio art or art production), art history, art criticism, and aesthetics (also known as philosophy of art);
- Art is taught by certified teachers who are given opportunities for professional development to build their knowledge, skills, and understanding of DBAE. Art specialists and classroom or other subject teachers collaborate in planning and teaching;
- Students have access to school-sponsored and community-based art experiences and resources, such as frequent visits to art museums or to other public art settings;
- Assessment of student learning is conducted regularly, with the results reported to stakeholders, including students, teachers, administrators, policy makers, and parents;
- Art may be integrated into the general curriculum through application of the distinctive lenses acquired through study of the four art disciplines to content in other subject areas. Art may be integrated into other subject areas and vice versa;
- Art education is for all students, not just for those who demonstrate talent in making art. Students with special needs are also identified and provided with art

instruction at all levels. DBAE is for all students, not just for those who are identified as “gifted and talented” and therefore favored with art instruction;

- The art program is appropriately coordinated, administered, and supported at different levels: by the faculty leader and principal within the school, and by the curriculum supervisor within the school district. The superintendent may assume responsibility for advocating and explaining the program to the school board, which in turn can support the program with parents and the community; and
- Technology is used to broaden art teaching and learning options. Teachers and students have access to technology and use it (a) to enhance production, creation, and/or design of works of art; (b) to communicate about art; and (c) to access and manage information about art (1998, 5-6).”

A comprehensive program needs the cooperation of not just a few teachers but also the entire body of educators in a given school or district. At this point, there may be reservations about its application to the local Philippine setting, what with a dearth of resources: physical and material, including professional training for DBAE educators. These shall be discussed in due course. In the meantime, it is important to dwell on the four foundational art disciplines, the heart of DBAE, and how they can be applied to the study of crafts in a Philippine context.

### **The Four Art Disciplines and the Study of Crafts**

The four foundational art disciplines of the DBAE are: art making, art criticism, art history, and aesthetics. The discussion of each owes heavily and exclusively to Stephen Dobbs’s *Learning in and Through Art*, but the possible applications of each discipline to the study of crafts are entirely the present author’s.

## Art Making

Art making is the process of “responding to observations, ideas, feelings, and other experiences by creating works of art through the skillful, thoughtful, and imaginative application of tools and techniques to various media” (Dobbs 1998, 27). Through art making, students can explore and study a host of concerns and issues. By studying and encountering an array of media and tools, students may ask about the sources of the “artist’s visual idea” and how these take form in an “art object” (31). Students can also learn “traditions of craftsmanship,” including “potentialities of materials” could give rise to insights on artists’ preference for materials to be used, the steps involved in working with certain media, the influence of the environment, and work habits on a piece of work (31). Students learn to “express thoughts, values, and feelings” visually through methods developed by artists, and they can come up with a variation of somebody’s work or a completely new take (31). Art making also teaches students about “visual problem solving” or how artists resolve “the tension between opportunities and limitations at hand.” (31). Lastly, it also brings students to “the motivations and attitudes of artists,” as well as “their contributions to society,” and how personal, social, and cultural backgrounds shape their works (32).

As for actual craft making, this segment of the DBAE creates an opportunity for the students to engage in actual craft making—for instance, Ilocano pottery.<sup>2</sup> An actual pottery sample may first be examined in class in terms of texture, material, and even use. Students would then try their hand at actual pottery making. They learn the steps and discover the skills to produce a clay vessel. In the course of the activity, they can:

- Discover the techniques—for instance, the right pressure to apply, the moderation needed to handle wet clay, and other technical details.
- Identify the tools used to create designs and fashion the clay into their desired form. They may realize, for instance, that a kitchen ladle could be a good paddling tool, or that a fork could be used to impress designs on

the clay's surface. This way, students learn the traditional way of making Ilocano pottery, which they may see from an invited artisan or even from a video documentary. Also, innovation and improvisation are introduced and even encouraged.

- Explore potentialities of the material and tools and gain insight into what makes one molding material better than another. For instance, students can grasp how different types of commercial clay behave compared to clay soil. And in taking up, say, Bulacan paper-cutting craft, they can point out why a specific type of scissors works better than another; why a certain kind of paper is more suitable for paper cutting; or what motif is best given the available tools.

In the area of visual problem solving, the students can discover how to resolve tensions between opportunities - the means available - and the restraints encountered, say, in clay molding. What does one do when he or she discovers a weak layer of clay at the bottom of the vessel? Certain issues would press for solutions, too. Where is the best place to conduct an open firing, for instance? What time of the day? What precautions should be observed? What kind of skills would be needed to mold a newspaper, which has been soaked in water for days and mashed? Could this be combined with other molding materials like clay soil or commercial clay? How would one resolve its internal supports? In the case of paper cutting, how does one remedy a situation where the paper is accidentally wet? Could a cut-out still be executed on it?

Issues of work space will also demand attention. How should the work space be arranged? Is sitting better than squatting as one shapes the clay? How do work habits affect the production of a craft? Is having a snack while working compatible with pottery making or with other craft-making activities, for that matter? Other issues of interest are themes, subject matter, and the function of a craft. Again in clay molding, what does one

need the clay pot for, and how will its use determine its size, shape, and design? Will it be painted over or glazed?

Lastly, students can also read about artisans and appreciate their philosophy, as well as their social contributions, not least of which is to keep some traditions alive. However, a lot of work in this aspect has yet to be done since traditional artisans are not famous and celebrated. All the same, in looking at the artisans themselves, students can appreciate various influences and contributions to an artisan's work: training, experience, and cultural and social backgrounds. They can also develop some good habits and personal qualities for good craftsmanship, like perseverance, patience, self-awareness, and resourcefulness.

### Art Criticism

Art criticism has to do with “describing, interpreting, evaluating, and theorizing about works of art with the end of increasing understanding and appreciation of art and its role in society...” (Dobbs 1998, 38). Here, the roles of “language, thoughtful writing and talk about art” come to the fore (38). The DBAE classroom draws on art criticism to help students carefully observe works of art, comparing and contrasting them while considering the contexts in which they were produced. A class can discuss: “the subject and theme of the work;” “the intentions, interests, or social or political concerns of the artist;” the “significance” of the medium; the opinion of critics about the work and how it bears on the development of artists; the artwork's function in society and audience's interpretation of and reaction to the artwork; and the “aesthetic experience” the artwork provides and how it “sustains attention” and stimulates “active discovery of new things” (38).

In incorporating art criticism into craft education, one can take, for instance, the tradition of handloom weaving. Traditional textiles, such as those produced in weaving centers in the Mountain Province, Ifugao or Ilocos Norte, are adorned with motif, both figurative and nonfigurative. In art criticism, students can take up these subjects and explore how they

relate to the main function of the textile piece within a given cultural environment. The prevalence of the lizard motif in Ifugao textiles, or the flowers, mountains, and rivers in Itneg textiles, can be points for discussion. So is the crocodile motif in most T'nalak and B'laan fabrics, or the *ukkil* or *okir* motif in Tausug and M'ranao textiles, metalwork, and woodwork. These design patterns and motifs may also be studied by comparing the views of anthropologists and the communities that actually use them.

Furthermore, art criticism can study the colors of a craftwork. Topics of note could be:

- Why traditional pottery is stained reddish-brown or sometimes left alone with the natural color of the clay soil reveal information well related to the function of each clay piece.
- Why certain indigenous communities prefer certain colors in their fabrics has much to say about that community's perception of a certain hue. Why do Ilocanos, for instance, use yellow and its related hues a lot, even in their food?
- Why bamboo poles, which are used as procession arches in parades are never painted over is also worth taking up. Despite there being no red horses endemic to the Philippines (or anywhere else for that matter), why do Paete *taka* (papier-mâché) makers paint their horses bright red?

Art criticism can also discuss aesthetic experience; students can focus on, say, the power of a Vigan silver frontal<sup>3</sup> to sustain attention—what with its seemingly simple fern pattern pressed on the metal's surface, but which, upon closer inspection, reveals human faces hidden within the fern pattern. Optical illusions figuring in Itneg or Ilocano blankets are capable of mesmerizing the viewer—more so, after learning what the motif stands for.



Within the art criticism segment of DBAE, students are trained to express their appreciation for crafts in written and verbal discussion. Here, the opportunity for students to go deeper into the understanding of a certain craftwork is immense. The functionality of a craftwork is seen within the context of its designs, colors, and form.

### Art History

Art history is described as “inquiry into the historical, social, and cultural contexts of art objects, focusing on the aspects of time, tradition, and style’ as they relate to artworks” (Dobbs, 1998, 38). Dobbs states that the purpose of art history is “to establish and sustain a systematic order in the cultures and traditions of art” (Dobbs: 1998, 38). As far as educational goals are met, art history has the ability to develop in students the notion of “historical thought” by discussing “the processes of causation, change, continuity, motivation, and evidence.” Such a concept may be taken up as “elements that influence the development of art” (Dobbs 1998, 39). There, too, is the concept of “historical imagination,” which is accessible through art history when “students speculate about the beliefs and values of other people and cultures” as seen and articulated through their art (39).

Historical imagination can enter the discussion by highlighting the development of the *bakya*, or Filipino wooden clogs. The *bakya* used to be carved with rural images on its heel and created with a crocheted *dahon* or flap. Its variations through time are matters of historical study. The same holds true for native Filipino costumes, the history of which is linked to different and specific sociocultural conditions.

According to Dobbs, historical inquiry into a work may take a wide range of forms:

- Authentication
- Iconography, or “the meanings of the objects and symbols in the work”
- Provenance, or the “history of the ownership of the work”

- Function
- Style
- Psychology, or “the personal factors that help relate the artist to his or her time and the work to a particular social or cultural milieu;” and
- Connoisseurship, or how “the intensive study of the work reveals or helps resolve with regard to problems of authorship, ownership, or physical condition.” (43)

Applying art history to the study of crafts, students get an idea of the long tradition of craft making in the country. However, unlike art history, volumes of which have been widely circulated, a consolidated reference for the study of Philippine craft history has yet to be produced. Early historical accounts about the Philippines by chroniclers and travelers, ethnohistorical data, and dictionaries produced during the Spanish colonial period all refer to traditional crafts. Yet all these have to be compiled and published to benefit Philippine craft education under the DBAE framework. Is not this belated publication on Philippine craft history another indication of the marginalized position of Philippine traditional crafts? In the study of craft history, other references may include early samples of crafts in museums, where developments in craft production can be noted. Both continuity and divergence may be detected by comparing old craft samples with new ones.

In the path exploring craft history, some areas of historical inquiry may not always be possible. Authentication, which requires modern equipment and methods, need not be studied at the elementary and secondary education levels. However, this area could easily be integrated into a heritage conservation program at the university level. The same is true with connoisseurship or the study of works in terms of issues of authorship, ownership, or physical condition.

When integrating art history to crafts education, visits to ethnographical museums, where crafts are displayed, become necessary.

The only problem is that in the Philippines, ethnographical museums are not aplenty. And until they are established, craft samples, especially the early specimens, can be exhibited with the cooperation of private collectors. Schools may also begin building their own collections of inexpensive crafts such as hats, mats, cooking utensils, pottery, and the like, which the DBAE-inspired crafts classes can eventually use as teaching materials. Such a collection may serve as a laboratory for craft history classes, where cataloguing methods to establish provenance and documentation can be practiced.

### Aesthetics

Aesthetics is a “branch of philosophy... that examines the nature, meaning, and value of art” and other things, from an aesthetic point of view” (Dobbs 1998, 46). The study of aesthetics helps students “understand what distinguishes art from other kinds of phenomena, the issues that such differences give rise to, and how one may justify judgments about art objects” (46). Concretely, classes can inquire into whether crafts can possess aesthetic qualities, that is, whether crafts can hold qualities that make them art or render them “beautiful.” Discussion may revolve around the aesthetic qualities of, say, the *abel iloko*, the *piña*-made *barong tagalog*, the bamboo procession arches of Quezon province, the humble clay *caramba*, or the *kiping*-decked Lukban house on a Pahiyas festival day (held in May each year). More advanced classes can look into the aesthetic issues that surround crafts vis-à-vis paintings and sculptures.

As an adjective, aesthetic speaks of “a particular kind of experience one can have with any phenomenon. (46) As Dobbs says, aesthetics encompasses the “study of the special qualities of the aesthetic experience and its unique contributions to human life and culture, with the complexities and subtleties of aesthetic experience, which, for the purposes of DBAE, focuses on the visual imagery of art objects” (46). In this regard, an experience in attending the annual Pahiyas festival, a visit to a traditional artisan’s workshop, or one’s hands-on experience in sitting with a back

strap loom in a small Ifugao village can become a subject for aesthetic discussion in a crafts class.

Aesthetic inquiry builds on the “content of the other three disciplines” (Dobbs 1998, 49). It “directs attention to the act of artistic creation, the art object itself, its interpretation and appreciation, critical evaluation, and the cultural and social context” (50). Following Dobbs, one can ask whether the value of an art work is external to it. In responding to this, one would refer to artist’s motives and intentions; the tools used and constraints faced; the theme or subject; the sociopolitical influences on the artist; the media, etc.

The question of beauty is also part of aesthetic inquiry. Students get to think philosophically about the nature of art and beauty; that is, they explore reasons why (or why not) a work is beautiful, drawing from the three other disciplines mentioned above.

When applied to crafts education, aesthetic inquiry takes actual craft pieces as subjects on which to base aesthetic judgments. Students explore questions related to its production; for instance, the artisan’s possible considerations in designing a wooden *bulul* (Ifugao rice god); the aesthetic reasons why a particular textile pattern is effectively placed in one portion of the tapestry and not in another; or the reasons for one’s preference for a certain craftwork over another.

Aesthetics can also look into the value of crafts within a given cultural context, and the demands on or responsibilities of the artist. If, for instance, a life-sized *bulul* is used by an art collector as a clothes hanger, is its aesthetic value reduced or enhanced? And why or why not is this an aesthetic issue?

Aesthetic inquiry raises the level of craft appreciation by teaching students how to argue for or against their interpretations and perceptions of crafts. To bring this discipline to a common and accessible level raises not only the position of crafts in Philippine society but also the awareness of the general public.

### Other Benefits of a DBAE-Crafts Curriculum

Aside from the benefits that the study of craft offers using the four foundational art disciplines, it may also be noted that through crafts the student can heighten his or her understanding of the communities that serve as cradles of crafts traditions by direct contact with these crafts and the dynamics involved in their production. As such, the learning that the students arrive at is firsthand and not mediated by a secondary source. Moreover, an emphasis on the value of crafts as works of beauty promises to create appreciation for ordinary things, which in the long run ought to develop a sense of integrity and pride in products, no matter how commonplace, simple, or inexpensive. Much later on, this attitude could extend to ordinary manifestations of what is national, giving rise to national pride.

Still, the fact that crafts education promises to empower the youth who may have no available means to pursue professional courses could not be ignored. Countries like Thailand have long realized the export potential of crafts products. There is no reason why the Philippines could not likewise benefit from the export of its crafts and boost its gross national product by building up its pool of crafts practitioners. This breed of craftsman may well become “craftsman-businessman,” as opposed to “craftsman-artists,” both of which metalsmith and scholar Bruce Metcalf have distinguished (Metcalf 1997). That the DBAE-crafts proposal could give rise to such a breed is not to be a bemoaned possibility. After all, crafts are admittedly functional to begin with. And yet, as the experience of beholding an *abel* Ilokano fabric or a Pahiyas festival house could prove and as the previous discussion had shown, crafts can be reckoned with aesthetically. The possibility of extending its functionality *per se* to encompass its monetary benefit to the craftsman does not veer away from its nature in the present time or a century ago.

### Envisioning the DBAE-Crafts Curriculum

Having discussed the four foundational art disciplines and their possible applications to the study of crafts, this paper has argued for reconsideration of crafts in formal education. And now it offers a proposal for a DBAE-based curriculum for secondary education. This includes classroom activities, issues, and questions with each of the four disciplines of the DBAE.

A DBAE-crafts curriculum for first to fourth year high school levels may take the following form:

Year level / Craft	First Quarter	Second Quarter	Third Quarter	Fourth Quarter
1 / Philippine Paper cutting	Paper cutting	Paper cutting criticism	Paper cutting history	Paper cutting aesthetics
2 / Philippine Mats	Mat weaving	Mat weaving criticism	Mat weaving history	Mat weaving aesthetics
3 / Philippine Costumes	Costume making	Costume Criticism	Costume history	Costume aesthetics
4 / Possible selections: taka (papier-mâché), lanterns, leaf art, indigenous jewelry, textiles, pottery, etc.	Craft making	Craft criticism	Craft history	Craft aesthetics

The proposal above takes into consideration the current state of public school system resources—from the points of view of both the school and the students. As such, pedagogical concerns pertain to level of difficulty, expense, and safety. It is noticeable that the materials needed for the crafts courses are easily accessible and inexpensive. Crafts classes, like mat weaving and costume making, leave plenty of room for innovation, given various materials that can be potentially used. Synthetic materials, like plastic or even paper, may be employed for the mat-weaving classes. Costume-making classes, on the other hand, could make use of fabrics from old clothes, blankets, and curtains. Neither are the crafts dependent on expensive equipment or tools. The emphasis is clearly on handmade products, which rely on inexpensive materials and almost hazard-free tools.

The curriculum above covers all four years of secondary crafts education, and is formulated as a government-defined curriculum for all public schools. The last year of craft education allows some flexibility because it is open to regionalization and is determined by the traditional craft originating from a particular region—for instance, taka-making for the Southern Tagalog region, lantern making for the Northern Tagalog region, textile weaving for the Cordillera region, and pottery and textile for Northern Luzon. The Visayas region could adopt leaf art and Mindanao may adopt indigenous jewelry making, drawing from the T'boli tradition of personal ornamentation. Using this scheme of regionalization, the crafts curriculum makes for embedded learning, where the crafts studied include those native to the particular region, and from which the students ought not to be alienated.

With such specialized knowledge required by the curriculum, crafts educators must have a strong background in Philippine art and anthropology. Educators may also come from the ranks of artisans, especially during the first quarter classes. Schools, with the help of local government units, must also procure appropriate teaching materials. In known crafts-producing centers or regions, crafts classes may go more deeply into its inherent crafts practice. As such, weaving production centers

may dedicate more time to textile subjects. This would ensure the preservation of the region's cultural heritage at the institutional level.

A DBAE-curriculum would rely on a district- and even province-wide cooperation. This would include the involvement of local governments, which would provide logistical support for the artisans who in turn will train instructors and visit schools and art classes. Since the public schools are wont to deviate from the Department of Education art curriculum and follow an arts program suited to resources available to them, the implementation of a crafts-centered art education need not be highly contentious. The crucial element rests more on the preparation of the instructors, which in this case would have to come from the ranks of Philippine Art and Philippine Studies graduates. How to lure them into the public school education system will constitute the greatest challenge to this program. Nonetheless, just as the present National Service Training Program is working in public schools all over the country, so perhaps Philippine Arts students could serve in public schools and help carry out crafts education in the country.

### **Conclusion**

The foregoing discussion showed the current position of crafts within the Philippine education system and how the Philippines falls short among other Asian countries in adopting an intensive crafts education curriculum. A framework to reintroduce the study of crafts has been proposed in this paper through a discussion of the discipline-based art education. By recommending DBAE, this paper has suggested not only a new manner of studying crafts but also, more importantly, the feasibility of integrating crafts into formal instruction by using the four art disciplines of art making, art criticism, art history, and aesthetics. Ultimately, the paper demonstrated that crafts could be considered and taught in classrooms using a specific framework. To further extrapolate the feasibility of a crafts curriculum, the paper also developed a division of craft topics for a high school crafts curriculum program. The envisioned curriculum may, once successfully



realized, spur the opening of crafts degree courses. The author is aware, however, that several other factors and forces will have to come into play to turn that dream into reality. For the purposes of this paper at least, the author had set forth her vision and broached that possibility.

### Notes

- 1 These degree programs are commonly offered in the University of the Philippines College of Fine Arts, the University of Santo Tomas College of Fine Arts and Design, and the Philippine Women's University School of Fine Arts and Design.
- 2 The artisan may be invited through an agency-to-agency arrangement where the municipal government where the artisan resides could be requested to sponsor the travel cost of the crafts person. Or if the school happens to be in a locality where a craft is practiced, then a practicing artisan may be invited to the classroom to demonstrate and teach the students. The artisan could also instruct the teachers, who will later on be responsible for demonstrating craft making to the students.
- 3 A silver frontal is pressed metal that serves as a decorative panel facing the congregation on altars inside Catholic churches. It was a practice introduced during the Spanish period.

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# The *Patók* Jeep: A Descriptive Study

FAME PASCUA

## Introduction

IF THERE WERE a “national mode of transportation” in the Philippines, it would have to be the jeep. A “cultural specimen” or “national art expression” (Ortega 2002, 83), this public utility vehicle is a common sight throughout the country. But the province of Rizal, east of Metro Manila, has given it a rather unique twist; it developed the *patók* jeep.

This study inquires into the origins and features of the *patók* jeep (or simply, *patók*). Why are some jeeps in Rizal province called such? What purpose do they serve? How are they different from regular jeeps? Throughout the discussion, the study will:

- Trace the etymology of the word “*patók*”
- Explore the origins of the *patók* jeep
- Describe the features of the *patók* jeep
- Describe the *patók*-riding experience

## Methodology

Although *patóks* are found throughout the province of Rizal, the research focused on the Montalban (officially named as town of Rodriguez, Rizal)-Cubao (Quezon City, Metro Manila) route, since the Montalban terminal is the nearest and most accessible from the researcher’s residence. Also, most of the drivers and operators in this route use *patóks*, unlike those of Montalban-Lamuan (Marikina, Metro Manila) and Montalban-

Philcoa (Quezon City, Metro Manila). Jeeps plying the Montalban-Cubao route also pass through San Mateo, a town next to Montalban, where Morales Motors, manufacturer of the first patóks, can be found. The researcher utilized primary data by riding a patók on the Montalban-Cubao route and by staying at the jeepney terminals. She also interviewed the employees – an artist and a secretary – of Morales Motors.

### Etymology

While the word “jeep” comes from the first two letters of GPV, which stands for General Purpose Vehicle (*Philippine Motor Review* 1972, 224), the term “pátok” first appeared in a Spanish-Tagalog dictionary by Pedro Serrano Laktaw. The word, whose stress falls on the first syllable, means “to jump” (Laktaw 1965, 1053).

“Patók,” with the stress on the second syllable, is listed in a 1978 dictionary; it means “sure winner in a horse race” (Santos 1978, 2058). In 1989, the Komisyon sa Wikang Filipino (KWF or Commission on the Filipino Language) released a dictionary with detailed meanings of the word:

Patók. (Adj.)

1. In gambling, favorite in betting; most likely to win  
(*Sa sugal, maraming taya; lyamado*)
2. In movies, blockbuster (*Sa pelikula, maraming nanood*)
3. gorgeous/ fabulous (*magandang-maganda*) (KWF, 1989, 717)

The Filipino dictionary of the University of the Philippines (UP) added the meaning “ax” to the KWF definition of the word (SWE, 2001, 665).

### The Patók Jeep: Definitions

As a passenger, the researcher can describe the patók as follows: it is painted with elaborate, bright and colorful designs (*magara*), is equipped

with a booming sound system, runs fast (*humaharurot*), and creates a lot of noise on the road (e.g., scratching tires, screeching brakes, and other engine sounds).

For a driver, a *patók* is elaborately decorated (*maporma*), generates clear and booming sounds, and moves fast.<sup>1</sup> For an employee of the Morales Motors Corporation, a jeepney manufacturer, it must have a lot of accessories (*maborloloy*), must produce loud sounds, and must be capable of banking.<sup>2</sup>

From these various descriptions, it is clear that the *patók* somewhat reflects the dictionary meanings of the word: the sense of being a “blockbuster” and “sure winner in a race.” Synthesizing these descriptions, the study defines a *patók* according to its (a) appearance, (b) sound, and (c) movement (see Table 1).

TABLE 1. Descriptions of *Patók*

Sources	Categories		
	(A) Appearance	(B) Sound	(C) Movement
Passenger	With bright and colorful designs ( <i>magara</i> )	With booming sound system	Runs fast
Driver	Elaborately decorated ( <i>maporma</i> )	Generates clear and booming sounds	Moves fast
Manufacturer	Must have a lot of accessories ( <i>maborloloy</i> )	Must produce loud sounds	Capable of banking
Dictionary	Gorgeous/ fabulous/ ax	---	

TABLE 2. Comparison between Regular Jeeps and Patók

	Typical Jeep (Sarao)	Patók
<b>APPEARANCE</b>		
Design	Depends on the designer of the jeep (Logarta 1978) Depicts countryside sceneries (Ocampo 2000)	Personalized, choice of the owner
Drawing (procedure)	Follows the curves of the jeep's body (Torres 1979)	Disregards the curves of the jeep's body
Lettering	Different font styles (Subido 1993)	Tribal lettering
Materials	Predominantly stickers	Predominantly airbrush paint
<b>SOUND</b>		
Music	Songs played in radio stations (Bigkislahi 1992)	Recorded remix
Song Selection	Driver's choice	Both driver's and passengers' choice
<b>MOVEMENT</b>		
Style		Banking

### Origins of the Patók

It is said that the jeep emerged in the Philippines after World War II (Antonio 1982, 13), when Filipinos adopted and modified abandoned American jeeps. Some of these American vehicles were sold, prompting the emergence of “a ready market for spare parts” of the jeep (Nofuente 1983, 40).



The Patók

Before the 1980s, Francisco, Sarao, and Atendido were the prominent names in the jeepney industry. Anastacio Francisco of Las Piñas, the owner of the Francisco Motors Corporation, set up a painting shop that later expanded into jeep-building and repair in 1951. Leonardo Sarao, the owner of the Sarao Group of Companies, also in Las Piñas, incorporated and popularized the Sarao trademark: the horse. The hood of a Sarao jeep features three to fourteen stallions, whose tails and reins are painted on the sides (Bondoc 1982, 12), along with images depicting rural life (Ocampo 2000, 30). Ignacio Atendido designed and patented the Bagong Lipunan Jeepney, which featured a side entrance. His trademark was not the horse but the Concorde Supersonic Transport (Bondoc 1982, 12-13). Later on, new brands and challengers emerged: Legaspi, Gonzaga, Melford, Tabing, Arquiza, Pabling, Valenzuela, Amante, Narding, Belando, Davis, Marquez, Medina and De Nova (Bondoc 1982, 11). The patók would come from one of these brands, Melford Motors.

Melford Motors was finding business tough. Aware of the situation, Rufino Morales, a native of Taytay, Rizal and an employee of Melford Motors, decided to move to San Mateo in Rizal and start his own motor shop, Morales Motors, in 1978. Twelve years later, in 1990, he conceptualized the patók jeep, whose design has evolved and changed

much since then.<sup>3</sup> Other manufacturers come up with new designs every year; even Mr. Morales is still expected to generate innovative and better patóks.

The patók jeep was built to cater to passengers' preferences and help increase drivers' and operators' earnings. Passengers on the Montalban-Cubao route were refusing to ride an "ugly" jeep,<sup>4</sup> which could be defined as having a "box-like" frame, "narrow and crowded," and "almost drags on the ground when full of passengers" (Nofuente 1983, 40). An ugly jeep also doesn't have designs, cushions, and music. It travels slowly, and could always use a wash. The patók sought to address these flaws, as it were.

### **Patók Appearance: Design and Features**

Earlier, it was said that a patók boasts of bright colorful designs, and its five unique features attest to that: (a) airbrush drawings, (b) tribal lettering, (c) boomerang, (d) top-down, and (e) trumpets.

#### **Airbrush Drawing**

Colorful stickers typically decorate a jeep's body. But a patók uses acrylic and enamel paints, sprayed with airbrushes. According to a patók designer/painter, using custom-made stickers is more expensive and time-consuming.<sup>5</sup> Thus, new patók owners prefer airbrush-painted designs, so that they can complete rush orders and save production costs. Though cheaper, these designs are not necessarily inferior because the outcome still depends on the creativity of the designer.

#### **Tribal Lettering**

Different typefaces are usually inscribed on a typical jeep (Subido 1993, 17). But a patók jeep commonly uses "tribal" lettering, as a designer calls it.<sup>6</sup> The tribal font features jagged edges and is laced with a lot of color. Sometimes, the design of a patók incorporates both letters and objects to construct words. The technique is similar to that of Jose Honorato



Lozano's *Letras y Figuras*, a style of writing in which letters form images of humans, plants, and animals. *Letras y figuras* also features landscapes and real-life scenarios that sometimes spell the words themselves (Subido 1993, 17). As for medium, *patók* lettering sometimes uses both stickers and paints.<sup>7</sup>

### Boomerang

The boomerang, as drivers call it, helps passengers identify an incoming *patók*.<sup>8</sup> It is placed prominently on the roof towards the front. Made of stainless steel, the boomerang is positioned like the letter V and resembles the horn of the Philippine national animal, the water buffalo (carabao).

### Top-down and Trumpet

The “top-down” is a section of the roof that can be pushed up and opened for additional ventilation. In jest, drivers call it “aircon” (air conditioner) or “cooler.”<sup>9</sup> This is unique to the *patók* separating it from jeeps with real airconditioning, which are made by Tolentino Motors Corporation and ply the routes in the Makati Business District (Ocampo 2000, 30).

Trumpets are additional stainless steel ornaments atop the hood. The number of trumpets on a *patók* can vary, depending on the size and the owner's preferences.<sup>10</sup> It can be assumed that trumpets signify the loud, attention-seeking nature of the *patók*.

## Patók Sound

If *patók* jeeps have particular designs and features, they are also known for loud music. Jeepney drivers see this as part of good service and great entertainment. Loud music adds life to the ride (*Philippine Hotel* 1971, 19), but unlike the typical jeeps, the *patók* plays remixes. And since no radio station plays such type of music all day, many drivers bring their

own compact disks (CDs). The compilations vary according to the driver's preferences. Some CDs feature the driver's favorite songs, while others are ready-made collections bought at the jeep terminal in Montalban. Most patók drivers use CD drives because they are cheaper than stereos and are shockproof, making them ideal for rough and bumpy rides. They are also small, light and can be easily hidden in case of inspections, where law-enforcement personnel can confiscate them.<sup>11</sup>

The driver and the passengers may agree on the playlist, although the driver makes the final decision. According to one driver, he plays a particular genre depending on the situation. For example, in the evening when passengers are usually tired from work, he plays ballad love songs to help them relax. The driver also considers his passengers' preferences and does not just play his favorites. Some passengers bring their own CDs and ask the driver to play them. If several have to be played, the driver allows only a few tracks from each disk to accommodate everyone.<sup>12</sup>

Lamberto Antonio describes the jeep's sound system as so loud that "even if you're asking the driver to stop, you can never be heard" (Antonio 1982, 13). This is particularly true for patók jeeps. Thus, they have a device that signals the driver to stop. A string at the ceiling of the jeep produces a beep and lights up a red bulb when pulled, alerting the driver that a passenger wants to alight.

The patók jeep also calls attention through a siren, which is produced when the driver pulls a string. There are around fifty other sound effects,<sup>13</sup> including a talking parrot that says "I love you." Jeep manufacturers, and some electronic shops in Rizal, develop these sound-producing devices.

### **The Patók Movement: The Riding Experience**

It is said that the drama does not end when a vehicle steps onto the road; on the contrary, it is only about to begin (Marquez 1989, 16). This is true particularly with the patók. The mountainous terrain of most parts of Rizal demands a unique, roller-coaster kind of driving. Jeeps have to

make a number of turns, and climb uphill and down. They also have to do sudden stops, hit the gas, or even spin (depending on the quality of the engine and tires), which may lead to the “banking” movement, the *patók*’s signature move. The term matches the dictionary meaning of the verb “bank”—that is, “to rise in or to form a bank ... to incline laterally ... to follow a curve or incline.” Banking is popular enough that some are even willing to pay an extra amount for every turn.<sup>14</sup>

### Notes

- 1 Rod and Toto (driver and collector, respectively, of a *patók*, TWR 899, Montalban–Cubao route), interview by the author, May 15, 2008.
- 2 Rose Lacay (secretary, Morales Motors Corporation), interview by the author, May 21, 2008.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 Rod and Toto, interview by the author.
- 5 Jhun Relon (jeep designer, Morales Motors Corporation), interview by the author, May 21, 2008.
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 Ibid.
- 9 Rod and Toto, interview by the author.
- 10 Jhun Relon, interview by the author
- 11 Rod and Toto, interview by the author
- 12 Ibid.
- 13 Jhun Relon, interview by the author.
- 14 Rod and Toto, interview by the author.

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