

philippine studies: historical and ethnographic viewpoints

Ateneo de Manila University • Loyola Heights, Quezon City • 1108 Philippines

Editor's Introduction

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Philippine Studies: Historical and Ethnographic Viewpoints
vol. 61 no. 3 (2013): 261–62

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Editor's Introduction

What do artifacts recovered from archaeological sites mean? Looking at the objects retrieved from Calatagan, Batangas, from the 1930s to the 1960s and again from the 1990s to the 2000s, Grace Barretto-Tesoro argues that artifacts possess biographies and their meanings and interpretations change with the context in which they are viewed. The meanings also differ for the individuals who excavated, possessed, examined, recorded, stored, displayed, or withheld them from view in public and private museums.

An important context is the practice of archaeology itself. The process of systematic excavation, Barretto-Tesoro points out, is what lends ceramic and other objects the status of artifacts—which effaces their prior meanings as grave furniture, domestic utensil, prestige good, and artisanal product. From the 1880s through to the introduction of carbon dating in the 1950s and until the 1970s, diffusion and migration theories dominated archaeological practice in the Philippines. The assemblage of artifacts was seen primarily as props in narrating a linear chronology, featuring long-distance trade networks in the fifteenth century, cultural interactions and population movements, the evolution of artifact styles, and the search for manufacturing affinities and genealogies. Barretto-Tesoro contends that this paradigm minimized local meanings and the social identities Calatagan's ancient inhabitants deployed in their use of foreign materials—vital issues that, since the 1990s, archaeologists like Barretto-Tesoro have sought to recuperate using new methods.

The recuperation of meanings is also what I undertake in my article on rice, which has gone through a process of disenchantment: today no farmer sees rice spirits in the plant. Nonetheless, the precolonial inhabitants of these islands held a belief in rice spirits akin to other rice-growing cultures in Asia. However, irrigation and plow technology introduced by Spain, together with Catholicism, eclipsed rice magical beliefs but transformed rice into a staple. Seeking to reverse the rice deficiency that commenced in the 1870s, the Green Revolution of the 1960s profoundly altered rural ways of life and drained the

rice plant of much cultural significance. However, data from the Institute of Philippine Culture (IPC) show that contemporary farmers still deploy culturally meaningful strategies to deal with uncertainties, even as the meanings of rice for commensality, kinship, and social solidarity have proven resilient.

A key plank in the Propaganda Movement's campaign for assimilation was Philippine representation in the Cortes. The assertion of this right was informed by the short-lived Constitution of 1812, fruit of the Cortes de Cádiz where the creole Ventura de los Reyes represented the Philippines. María Dolores Elizalde revisits Reyes's participation and proposals for reform, particularly the elimination of the exclusivist galleon trade and the opening of the transpacific trade to merchants other than peninsular Spaniards. After much debate, "free trade" within the empire won the day. But Reyes championed the interests of only the creoles, who thereby crystallized their distinct identity and right to greater political participation. The historical irony, Elizalde suggests in retrieving the meaning of Cádiz, is that the representation of colonies in the Cortes was Napoleon's strategy of coopting creoles to maintain the empire's unity.

By painstakingly analyzing a baptismal book, a list of debts owed to non-Catholic Chinese, and lists of occupational guild members, Joshua Kueh reconstructs the social relationships of Chinese in the Parián in the seventeenth century. To forge and expand alliances, two mechanisms were deployed: fictive kinship and credit. At the baptism of adult converts, godparenthood helped to recruit fellow tradesmen who shared ties to villages in China; at the baptism of their sons, but not of daughters, Chinese became coparents with key Spanish persons. The extension of credit linked Parián Chinese to even broader networks of Spaniards, natives, and other Chinese, which protected the moneylenders even during a time of expulsion. The documents Kueh has unearthed and first presented at the 2013 IPC International Summer School serve as reminders of the meaningful, if expedient, ties these historical actors knowingly entered.

In a research note, Nathaniel Weston translates five correspondence from 1897 to 1900 found in the *Proceedings of the Berlin Society for Anthropology, Ethnology, and Prehistory*. Although offhand the letters seem inconsequential, Weston's essay sheds light on their significance in the historical relationship and exchanges between German and Filipino intellectuals.

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