

THE ETHNIC TRADITION IN PHILIPPINE VISUAL ARTS

There are Filipino cultural communities from the highlands of the Cordilleras to the expanses of the Sulu Sea with lifestyles antedating the coming of the colonizers. They mold, weave, carve, and build in the ancient traditions barely influenced by the outside world. To this day their adherence to these traditions persists. Even more stunning, they continue to develop these traditions along directions that reaffirm and strengthen the core of their own culture.

Due to long periods of sometimes self-imposed isolation, these pockets of culture remain rooted in a world of pristine patterns created in communion with nature's forces. It is a world with its own aesthetic integrity, to which the dominant culture now often turns for sources of inspiration.

Pottery

Archaeological excavations reveal masterpieces of Pottery that attest to the high level of artistic skills that ancient Filipinos possessed. The eighth-century BC Manunggul Jar, found in a cave in the island of Palawan and whose lid portrays two figures paddling a boat, speaks eloquently of the native vision of the afterlife (Fox 1977:169-172). In the Kulaman plateau in the western coastal highland of Cotabato, tapering limestone containers with stylized human heads carved on its covers were used as secondary burial urns by the ancient Manobo. Complex geometric and linear motifs have been gouged on its surfaces in symmetrical patterns. Reaching as high as 1.3 meters, these were found among terra-cotta anthropomorphic figures carbon-dated at 585. Ancient burial jars were also found in Sorsogon and Samar (Briones 1977:205-209). Smaller ancient pieces were unearthed in Luzon and the Visayas (Solheim 1977:121-125). One of the better documented sites is Calatagan, Batangas where diggers uncovered a whole range of pottery styles and forms: ring-footed bowls, stemmed and wide-bottomed cups, jars in the shape of turtles, female breasts, and gourds. Some sites in Batangas have also yielded small stone human figures, called *licha*. Of the existing ethnic pottery traditions, that of the Kalinga of northern Luzon is unique for its overall stamped-in designs on the jars which are used for storing grains. The detailed, repetitive geometric designs are applied with metal stamping tools on the full roundness of the jar as well as on the lid which has a handle on top.

In Vigan, Ilocos Sur, a tradition of high temperature pottery, called *burnay* persists in response to the continued demand for all kinds of containers: the *palayok* (clay pot) for cooking, the *banga* (clay jar) for storing drinking water, the *asinan* (salt container) for storing salt, and the *tapayan* (liquid container) for fermenting *basi* or sugarcane wine or curing *bagoong*, small fish or shrimps preserved in brine. The materials for these pots are clay and sand mixed by carabao feet trudging round and round for about six hours. The mixture is prepared for the potter's wheel and there shaped into pieces which are excellent studies in

form. They are fired with wood gathered from nearby hills in a giant walk-in kiln that measures half-a-city-block long and is set on an incline. Only five of these kilns are still operating. Fidel Go, 1990 Manlilikha ng Bayan awardee, is one of the notable potters in Vigan today.

Carving

Many centuries ago in northern Luzon, the Ifugao built their magnificent stone-walled rice terraces. These terraces make way for water from the mountain tops to irrigate the tiered fields and the valley below. These structures and the rugged terrain have also served to isolate the Cordilleras for centuries from intensive acculturative influences.

Central to the Ifugao rice culture is the *bulul*, a stylized sculpture representation of a human figure in wood, used in rituals associated with the many stages of rice planting, healing, and the resolution of intertribal feuds. The bulul also appears in spoons, bowls, walking sticks, grain containers, and even chili crushers. In the central post of the traditional house the same carved human figure appears and is referred to as *kinabagat*. On both sides of the main entrance door frame, similar guardian figures in relief are often found. The outer walls, never left plain, are often etched or gouged in geometric designs.

Status-conscious Ifugao society has numerous ways of demonstrating rank. The *hagabi*, a huge wooden bench with a slightly arched midsection, is the ultimate status symbol and proof of the owner's economic and political power. As the hagabi is transported over mountains and hills from the carving site to his house, the owner has to host a ritual feast in every village the hagabi passes. When the bench finally arrives in his place, it is positioned under the house where it is visible to the passersby (Peralta 1977:314-318).

Ifugao carving is distinguished by its technique of using a sharp tool to contour, mold, gouge, and etch wavelike patterns and animal forms, such as pigs, lizards, and birds on the surface of ritual boxes and containers, wooden food bowls, spoons, and other household utensils. Simpler carvings of stylized animal heads are found on the lids of the squarish coffins in the cliffs of Sagada and the caves of Kabayan, whose lids have reliefs of stylized animal heads in various permutations.

Wood sculpture among Muslim groups in western Mindanao is basically decorative. Its use of geometric patterns and stylized representations of floral and animal forms derives from the orthodox Islamic prohibition of realistic representations of humans and animals. This repertoire of carved forms is referred to as *okir* in Maranao or *ukkil* in Tausug, meaning "carved." In the islands of Sulu, limestone tombstones mark Sama and Badjao graves which are small enclosures resembling beds with headboards. These are embellished with stylized *naga* or serpent figures, and vine-and-leaf designs. In Tunggusong and Tubig Indangan in

the islands of Simunul and Manok Mangkao are found the most elaborate grave markers that make use of limestone blocks quarried from the site and stylized in openwork carving. Where wood is used, the figure of a horse or serpent is set inside the squarish enclosure. In Manubul island, small upright human figures mark the graves. When these figures are shrouded with a piece of white cloth, this means a ritual has just been performed. Okir also decorates the enormous naga figure while the sides of the boat sport elaborate vine-and-leaf motifs. These decorations are seen less and less nowadays with the introduction of outboard motors and the increasing tendency of the Islamic acculturated Badjao to settle.

The *torogan* of the Maranao in mainland Mindanao features the flamboyant *panolong*, the protruding beams with colorful and exuberant serpent and vine-and-leaf okir. This impressive structure is expressive of the prestige, power, and wealth of its noble occupants. Side panels and boards are also embellished with okir and so too is its *tinai a walai* central crossbeam. The okir also ornaments other objects such as the *lankongan* or kulintang holder, the *kudyapi* or two-stringed lute, the *kampilan* or fighting sword, and the *pairaan* or tobacco container. It is also used in carving horns to produce the traditional Maranao chess set whose most elaborate piece is the knight. This knight is normally carved in the serpent motif identical to that used in the *panolong*. A variation of the okir is manifested in the handwoven *malong* (Maranao cylindrical skirt) and in the surface decoration of metal, brass, and bronze containers used for betel-nut chew. Other carvings worth mentioning are the backstrap loom weaver's backrest which is delicately carved with okir, and the wooden horse saddles and kris handles often made of bone or ivory. Scabbards are embellished with mother-of-pearl shell plates etched with tiny okir designs. The kris, encased in a mother-of-pearl-decked scabbard, used to be a dress imperative for the Tausug male who felt insecure without it, but the modern gun has just about rendered it extinct.

The Tagbanua of Palawan use whimsical sculptures of birds, lizards, turtles, snakes, pigs, and other animals for their rituals, as house decor and, at times, as toys for children. For these sculptures, a white soft wood, called *tika*, is sundried for two days, carved then shaped with a small knife. After this, the figure is sandpapered with *is-is* leaves, rubbed with fresh *camote* leaves which serves as primer, and blackened with soot produced either from burning the bark of the cashew tree or holding the figure over an open flame in which wood resin burns. Minute designs are then incised or etched on the surface, exposing the white wood underneath. Other notable pieces from the Tagbanua are animal figures on dart holders. Blowguns made of double-layered bamboo tubes that propel darts at a phenomenal speed are themselves elaborately decorated with burnt-in surface designs.

Bamboo, which grows extensively and prodigiously throughout the country, has been utilized in so many ways by the different cultures. One of the most unique uses of the bamboo is found among the Maranao in its *lakob*, the traditional container for tobacco leaves. Multicolored geometric and okir motifs are imprinted

on the body of the bamboo tube in a dye-resist process similar to the ikat which is a complex process of paper pasting, tying, and boiling. The Maranao also do burnt-in designs on the *insi* or bamboo flutes, and the pairaan. Like them, the Kalinga, Bagobo, Mangyan, Hanunoo, and Palawan groups also burn in designs on bamboo, the latter more notably on their bamboo blowguns. Containers are of lime also often embellished with these designs. The Hanunoo Mangyan of Mindoro burn in *ambahan* designs on the surface bamboo containers and strips of bamboo. The *ambahan* is a poem consisting of set of syllables and written in an ancient Mangyan script.

Weaving

The oldest textile in existence in the Philippines is a piece of cloth from a cave site in Banton Island which is now in the National Museum. The Philippines was known to have woven fibers, such as pineapple, abaca, ramie, maguey, cotton, and bark cloth, but very few survived the humid tropical conditions that make the fiber disintegrate very fast. It is only through accounts of the early explorers and colonizers as well as travellers' drawings that the materials of the clothes of the early lowland Filipinos have been documented.

Evidence of bark cloth is found among the Ifugao and some of the Aeta groups scattered throughout the Philippines. To make this cloth, the bark of two trees is stripped and spun into rough threads and then woven. Later, the introduction of cotton, which was successfully cultivated in the Ilocos region, was to alter the use of weaving materials, particularly in the adjoining regions of the Cordilleras. The use of indigenous dyes from the indigo plant also resulted in a major resurgence in traditional weaving.

Santa Maria, Santiago, and Vigan in Ilocos Sur; Sarrat and Paoay in Ilocos Norte; and Bangar in La Union are major weaving towns. Santiago, Vigan, and Sarrat produce blankets with intricate designs which in Manila have been mistaken for those of the Tinguian of Abra. These blankets, called *binacol* and *pinilian*, are still being produced. Early samples of these in handspun cotton dyed in light or dark indigo occasionally surface in the antique shops in Manila. Some of these blankets are characterized by repetitive geometric designs that produce optical illusions. Among the Cordillera people, especially the Ifugao, Bontoc, Kankanay, Ibaloy, Tinguian, Isneg, and Gaddang, the *tapis* is standard wear for women and the G-string or loincloth for the men. Some wear capes, like the Gaddang; or a blanket, like the Bontoc and Ifugao; or an abbreviated shirt, like the Isneg or Kalinga—but the basic dress remains the same.

The ancient art of the ikat was known among the Ifugao, but by the 1970s it had all but totally vanished as a tradition. However, in the mid-1970s an old lady named Kahhimangan Palatic, 1990 Manlilikha ng Bayan Awardee, who still remembered the process, revived the tradition. Today, the ikat is woven regularly

only in her native Amganad, 6 kilometers from Banaue.

Binodbodan (tied), a remarkable technique of embedding a design on the thread, is done by dyeing the tied threads in a vat with colors derived from natural sources—yellow from wild ginger, red from narra shavings, and black from mud with a high-iron content. The tied section will resist the dye. Once untied the design appears on the finished cloth. This method is used for weaving blankets, G-strings, and tapis. The ikat process is also the dominant and, in some places, the only method used by the highland groups of eastern Mindanao, such as the Tboli, Bagobo, Tagakaolo, Mandaya, Bilaan, Ubo, and Kalagan. Highly precise human, animal, and plant figures on top of geometric designs are produced on abaca cloth. The complexity of the ikat process is appreciated most with figurative designs, which may include frogs, birds, lizards, and human figures. Often the finished cloth is further enhanced by the addition of antique glass or ceramic beads, particularly among the Bagobo.

Another method is the *tritik*, tie-and-dye-on the cloth technique used on the Bagobo male headdress. The design is produced by sewing in portions of the cloth to resist the dye during the dyeing process. A headpiece may signify bravery and masculine power, the ultimate status symbol. The ikat process is also known among the western Mindanao Muslim groups, particularly among the Maranao and the Maguindanao. Producing intricate ikat designs on the malong and using as many as four colors is definitely a very complex process, for it entails dipping in dye as many times as the number of colors.

A simpler form of ikat is the *tanggob* (blanket), generally referred to as *babaloban* (tied) in Maranao. The design on the *malong landap* of the Maranao is characterized by the use of a narrow woven vertical strip called the *langkit*, crisscrossed horizontally by two narrower strips of *langkit*. Before World War II the *langkit* was done in silk. As the supply of silk dwindled, the production of the tapestry strip also diminished. However, the small village of Bacolod Chico on the shore of Lanao Lake in Marawi continues to weave these strips. Their weaving style include the *seputangen*, the square headdress; the *piantupan*, the brief skirts used over women's pants; the *siniluan*, pants material for both sexes; the *bunga sama*, for blouses; and the *inalaman*, the ceremonial skirts. Each of these woven materials uses a different weaving technique. Special weavers are needed for special pieces because each type needs a special skill.

The *pis siyabit* and the *kandit* are outstanding examples of Tausug weaving. The *pis* is a square headdress for the male, with complex multicolored geometric designs. The *kandit* or sash is a silk waist band in bold geometric patterns with sharp color contrasts. The sash has practically disappeared, while the *pis* continues to be woven in the towns of Parang and Maimbung in Jolo, Sulu. Also noteworthy is the “tree of life” applique tapestry of the Sama of Tawi-Tawi. Impressive in its size of 2.1 x 3 meters, it adds color and a festive air to weddings, circumcision rites, and other celebrations.

The weaving of hats, baskets, and mats is also widely practiced in the Philippines.

The heat of the tropical sun and the recurrent rains make head covers necessary. These come in various forms and materials, as may be seen in the fine twine Tausug hat, the conical Maguindanao hat, the flattish Maranao *sayap*, the “cardinal” hat of the Bontoc, the rattan skullcap of the Ifugao, the wide-brimmed salakot of the Ilonggo, the gourd helmets of the Ilocano, and many others.

The basketry traditions in the country are many. On the eastern Mindanao highland is woven one of the most interesting baskets—the Mandaya backpack with an arched cover and trimmings that contrast with its black resin-coated body. The Bagobo baskets, on the other hand, are generally simple and functional but personal bags are often decked with tiny bells and multicolored beads. The baskets of the Tiruray of Cotabato are embellished with geometric motifs achieved by interweaving natural and dyed materials of contrasting colors. Occasionally, human figures appear as motifs. Among the Tagbanua of Palawan a highly attractive basket, called *basag*, with a conical cover stands out. The Hanunoo baskets of Mindoro are characterized by over plaiting on a basic woven surface. Basketry attained a high level of sophistication in form and function among the Ifugao. The sheer number of variations in design, form, and function is truly impressive. No decoration is added that is not intrinsic to the function of the basket. It is, however, the manner of plaiting, trimming, and shaping that make the Ifugao basket unique. Major Ifugao basket categories include the *acob*, a basket with a square base and a round cover used for storing husked rice; the *agawen*, a small, open basket carried on the hip and used for gathering snails in the fields; the *bangaw*, a traveler’s backpack with a smooth black fiber covering it against the rain; the *binali*, a coiled-technique basket used to store grain; the *bulot*, a locust-storage basket; the *camoan*, a storage basket for husked rice; the *hoop*, a square basket for carrying food to the fields; the *hulol*, a funnel-shaped basket to catch locust; the *pasiking*, a backpack; the *topil*, a food container for the field; the *ulbong*, a spherical basket using the coiled technique for grain storage. Another unique Cordillera basket is found among the Kankanay: a grain-storage basket trimmed with figures of lizards on all four corners, their necks serving as hooks for the string handles.

In the warm and humid climate of the Philippines, mats provide cool comfort. The giant and dwarf species of the pandanus leaf, swamp grass, buri palm leaf, bamboo, and rattan are used as basic materials for mats. In Romblon, wedding couples dance on a white buri mat with lacelike design on the edges resembling an outsized doily. As the couple dance, both groups of relatives compete with one another in pinning the biggest amount of money on their clothes. The mats of Basey, Samar come in bright primary colors embroidered with designs of flowers, peacocks, and imaginary scenes, and when commissioned may carry the image and name of the owner. Just as colorful are the Maranao *sesed* mats which are mostly done in stripes and plaids. On the other hand, the Bontoc use the simple *oho* mats

for rituals outside the house. The mat makers of the Tagbanua in Palawan are notable for their workmanship which produces uniform strands, while the Aklanon are known for plain brown mats woven over with beige geometric decorations. But nowhere is mat making as developed as among the Sama or Badjao of Tawi-Tawi. The Badjao display bolder and freer use of color and concepts in comparison with the Sama who show a more restrained and disciplined approach to design. The mats of these groups are technically excellent, highly pliable, uniform in strand length, and durable because of their tight weave.

The Sama mats made in the island of Laminusa in Tawi-Tawi use the dwarf pandanus leaves that grow abundantly in the limestone and coral-based island. The leaves are cut, their spines and ribs removed, then halved, rolled into a coil about 25 centimeters in diameter, and boiled in salt water to make them insect proof. After boiling, the coil is sundried, opened, sliced evenly into smaller strips, and dyed in various colors using commercial dyes. The strips are then dried in the shade and pounded into the desired softness. After this, the strips are all woven into an intricate geometry of colors unmatched in the world. A complicated mat can take as much as a month and a half to finish. It is lined with a plain and coarser mat for protection and durability. Of the mats created in Laminusa, those woven by the household of Maluy Lasa Sambaloni, 1990 Manlilikha ng Bayan awardee, are among the finest. **Metalwork**

Metalwork has ancient roots in the Philippines. In practically all the archaeological sites, metal surfaced in the form of jewelry and weaponry. One of the most stunning achievements in this line, generally unknown even to most Filipinos, is the precolonial gold jewelry retrieved from diggings in Butuan and Agusan. Most of the gold sites associated with the remains of the *balangay*, the huge hulking boats, have been plundered by illegal excavators. Nonetheless, what have surfaced in the antique market—such as belts, buckles, earrings, necklaces, head ornaments—are most impressive, demonstrating high technological skill.

One of the Mandaya woman's prized possessions is the huge silver-disk neckpiece. Some are as much as 20-25 centimeters in diameter, heavily etched with geometric motifs arranged in concentric patterns. The Bagobo attach tiny bells to practically everything they use: carrying bags, necklaces, anklets, bracelets, bolo handles, musical instruments, horse saddles, and others. The use of tiny bells is also popular among the Tboli. They use wide belts entirely made of brass chains trimmed with tiny brass bells. The Ifugao and the Bontoc cast small brass or gold jewelry pieces. They produce necklaces in the form of stylized animal heads or full animal figures like pigs, dogs, and deer. The *dudong*, a small brass piece, sometimes but rarely in gold, representing a human figure and worn as wedding accessory, is one of the rarest and most valued status symbols. Walking sticks used for balancing on the terraced rice fields have handles ornamented with brass figures. The Ilongot of Nueva Vizcaya use belts made of brass coiled tightly over copper wires and trimmed with tiny shells with serrated edges.

Metal casting is actively pursued in the town of Tugaya where it is the main source of income of most residents. Small figures with intricate okir motif are produced in the ancient “lost-wax” technique, rendering each piece unique. This process involves the making of a wax model of the piece. A mixture of beeswax and wood resin is used for the model as well as for the intricate okir motif that overlays these. After the wax model is finished, it is cut into halves to extricate the wood mold inside. The halves are pieced together once more and coated on both sides with a mixture of pounded charcoal mixed with some clay. To make the wax model steady, the insides are filled with packed earth. The outside is once again coated with another layer of clay on top of the charcoal-based coat. After the model dries in the sun, the clay-coated piece is heated to melt out the wax model inside the piece, after which the molten brass is poured into the hole. After firing, the piece is split open and out comes the brass-casted piece. This piece is refined by filing, while the separate cast pieces are welded together.

A metal product from Tugaya is the brass *gudur*, traditionally used as ceremonial containers for rice and tobacco. Cannons, as well as ceremonial pieces that could go as high as 2.4 meters and carry complex figurative designs, are also produced by highly skilled metal workers. One of them, Rasid Laidon, 1990 Manlilikha ng Bayan awardee, is known for the fine artistry of his brass works.

The *loto-an*, betel-nut container, is an excellent example of silver-inlaying technique. Some boxes that are not inlaid are found in the Bagobo, Tboli, Maguindanao, and Sulu areas. Larger boxes are used at home, while lighter pieces are carried around the waist. Most are rectangular, but a few are shaped like crescents, butterflies, and frogs. Metal buttons used to deck ceremonial clothes of both men and women are used by the Tausug, Yakan, Maranao, and Maguindanao. Weapons, such as the kris, *kampilan*, or *gonong* are cast in iron. Cooking pots, serving trays, tobacco-leaf trays, fireworks dispensers, as well as bracelets and rings with intricate designs are all crafted in metal.

Whether in weaving, metal casting or brassware, surfaces are covered with rhythmically repeated geometric shapes, stylized male figures and animal forms, and other symbolic and decorative patterns. Of all the motifs, the male figure is most preferred by the Bagobo. The use of the male figure encased in broken line borders is expressive of the Tboli’s confidence in themselves, their reverence for ancestral spirits, and their need for protection from evil. Animal forms have their own meanings: crocodiles and lizards are believed to have special magical traits; birds signify the flight of the soul to another realm; and frogs symbolize rain, magic, and fertility. Nature is represented by abstract symbolic designs. Horizontal zigzag lines stand for clouds, vertical ones for lightning, upright parallel lines connote rain, and crisscrosses are rice paddies. The river, which is associated in Bilaan mythology with the origin of life, is represented by three lines and is sometimes done on cloth with glass beads and mother-of-pearl.

Personal Ornamentation

Beautifying oneself is a universal preoccupation. The Kalinga and other Cordillera groups practice tattooing for beauty and status. A tattoo on a male may be a mark of seniority, bravery, and prowess in headhunting. Among women the tattoo tends to be purely ornamental, although it may also indicate her status as the headman's wife (Cabrera 1977:141-145).

Tattoo or *hakang* is also popular among the Tboli. The forearm and chests of the men and the forearms and calves of the women are tattooed with zigzag or geometric and highly stylized animal and human forms. It is believed that the *hakang* not only enhances one's appearance but also facilitates a person's journey to the afterlife. For a Tboli woman, being fashionable means wearing many earrings, necklaces, bracelets, rings for fingers and toes, with her anklets and tresses done in traditional style—even while working in the fields or doing household chores. Other articles of personal adornment are made of beads; carabao horn; bone; feathers; and seashells, the mother-of-pearl being the favorite. Kalinga women combine the shells with brightly colored antique beads to embellish their skirts. Shell butterflies are also worn by the Kalinga and the Gaddang as ear ornaments. The Bontoc use the whole shell as hip ornaments, usually etched with designs similar to those used for body tattoos. The Ifugao circular shell disks with scalloped edges held together with rattan are called *ginoto* and hang as hip ornament next to the bolo. This is often matched by a necklace of flat, square pieces of mother-of-pearl also strung together in rattan. The Ilongot use shells as part of necklaces and head ornaments. A ceremonial piece made out of the head of a hornbill is likewise decked with small shell pieces serrated at the edges.

Bone, and sometimes ivory, are used in making jewelry and other accessories. The *rinti* bracelets of the Maranao are supposedly made from the bone of the giant fish or whale, which they used to hunt near the Visayan area. Some rings and cosmetic containers are also made of this bone. The Tboli use small bone pieces on wooden ear ornaments which hold their elaborate necklaces in place. The Mandaya wear bracelets similar to the Maranao, with alternating black bands made of black ebony wood. Although carabao horn is very difficult to carve and is seldom used, the Maranao *gukom*, traditional container for the aromatic beeswax used for massaging the lower lip, is made of carabao horn. The *gukom* has a beaded train handle topped with another piece of carabao-horn carving. Wild boar's tusks, topped with a small carved sitting human figure, are used by the Ifugao as armlets. Similar tusks are strung together with fine rattan into a necklace for men (Fox 1977:757-766). Glass and ceramic beads imported from Europe, India, and China as trade items or as legal tender during the colonial period are valuable ornaments. Among the Mansaka, a biblike piece totally made of beads is used as a neckpiece. Something similar but smaller in scale is used by the Tinguian of Abra. The Tboli and the Bagobo use beads more extensively than any other group. Tiny beads are sewn on clothes and bags, and made into armlets, anklets, and belts.

The Gaddang are extremely fond of beads and use them extravagantly on their clothes and as personal ornaments. Even the men use them on their capes, loincloth, jackets, and hats. The women's blouses, skirts, pouches, hairpieces, and combs are encrusted with beads. The Kalinga and the Tinguian wear arm bands that completely cover their forearms with beads up to the elbow. Among the Kalinga are found antique agate and other beads from Chinese sources. Among the Muslim groups, only the Maranao use beads extensively to decorate their silver box, their *gukom*, and, occasionally, some belts.

The varied traditions of personal accessories and decor will persist for as long as the aesthetics of the ethnic communities remain intact. In many groups, however, the intrusion of Western concepts of beauty and mass-manufactured beauty products have already relegated these traditions to the background or, worse, to oblivion.

Ethnicity Today

Fortunately, many of the ethnic traditions in weaving, carving, pottery, and metalwork continue to produce articles needed for everyday life as well as for newly developed commercial demands. The burnay jars of Vigan are still in demand for storing food and water, and as decorative objects in gardens and houses. The Tboli *tnalak* or the dyed abaca cloth is used for bags, folders, cigarette cases, and wall hangings. The Maranao and Maguindanao *tubao* has become fashionable among students, just as Maranao metalwork such as *kulintang*, *gadur*, *kendi*, and carvings such as *sarimanok* and *lakob*, and inlaid *baul* are popular among foreign and local tourists. Conscious efforts by individuals and groups to revive and experiment with traditions, such as the *ikat*, have resulted in the revitalization of these traditions with new design concepts. Furthermore, the interest of different cultural communities in each other's artistic traditions has resulted in ingenious mutations. The *pasiking*, for instance, has now been interpreted by the Dumaguete folk and by the Tboli using home grown materials, while the mat weavers of Basey, Samar render the Tausug *pis siyabit* in an outsized mat version.

Finally, in their effort to evolve Filipino themes and idioms in the visual arts, contemporary artists have rediscovered the ethnic traditions and now use them as bases for their creations. Many urban-based artists are collaborating with ethnolinguistic groups or have lived with traditional communities and run workshops among these groups. Thus takes place a lively interchange between the artist and the communities. *Uma ti Biag* (Garden of Life) by Roberto Villanueva of Baguio features the *dap-ay*, a spiral space defined by a bamboo fence, derived from a Bontoc rice-field design, and dotted with Cordillera-inspired sculptures and stone arrangements to represent a ritual center. Paz Abad Santos has used the *tnalak* and other native fabrics for her tapestries, while Fil de la Cruz and Roberto

Feleo have taken characters and elements of ethnic culture to make contemporary statements. Such works underscore the importance of ethnic traditions in the contemporary search for a national culture. An understanding and appreciation of the past and a sensitive and sympathetic attitude towards the events that have altered, shaped, and enriched Philippine culture are important guiding lights in the journey towards self-discovery. • D.B. Baradas

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