

## THE PHILIPPINES

Located southeast of mainland China, the Republic of the Philippines is an archipelago of over 7,000 islands that stretches from north to south for more than 1,000 miles. The total land area is slightly greater than the British Isles or the state of Arizona. Bounded on the east by the Pacific Ocean and on the west by the South China Sea, the bulk of the land mass is made up of eleven islands: Luzon, Mindoro, Masbate, Palawan, Panay, Negros, Cebu, Bohol, Leyte, Samar, and Mindanao; Luzon and Mindanao are the largest. The country is customarily divided into three main groups of islands: Luzon and Mindoro make up the northern group; the Visayas (Samar, Leyte, Cebu, Masbate, Bohol, Negros, Panay, and Palawan) form the central islands; Mindanao, Basilan, and the Sulu and Tawi-Tawi archipelagoes comprise the southern division.

Most islands are low lying, but the larger are marked by hilly or mountainous interiors and alluvial plains of considerable size. In Luzon and Mindanao, peaks rise to more than 9,000 feet; many are of volcanic origin and are still active.

Archaeological evidence indicates that areas of northern Luzon were settled more than 200,000 years ago, but the foundations of Filipino culture, as it was known at the time of the Spaniards' arrival in the 16th century, were established over the last 5,000 years. As might be expected, different conditions and circumstances led to regional variations of culture and language. By A.D. 500, the many different Filipino cultures were probably in roughly the same areas where they were first noted in historic times.

From the 8th to the 16th century, trading centers throughout the islands were established, resulting in regular contact with Vietnam, Thailand, Cambodia, and South China. Contact with India was also made, resulting in the use of scripts derived from Pali or Sanskrit by many Filipino groups.

By the 15th century, Islam was established as a dominant force in the south, especially in coastal areas of Mindanao and the Sulu Archipelago where it influenced the artistic forms and styles evolving in these areas.

In the 16th century, Spanish explorers made the first European contact with the Filipino people. Over the next 350 years, Spanish political and religious control resulted in the flourishing of Christian religious art, largely replacing the indigenous art forms. Only in the mountainous regions of northern Luzon, the interior of Mindanao, the Sulu Archipelago, and other isolated areas did existing cultures maintain their traditional arts.

In 1898, Spanish rule in the Philippines ended. After a brief period of independence, the islands came under the control of the United States before gaining full independence in 1946.

Change is not new to Filipinos. Long subject to influences from throughout Asia and the West, they have absorbed aspects of foreign cultures that were of value and forged new identities as circumstances have indicated.

The arts remain a vital, vibrant part of Filipino life and both performing and visual artists have taken their place in the international arena. Their work is solidly based on a shared cultural heritage which reflects the arts of the Christian lowlanders, traditionalist highlanders, Muslim coastal dwellers, and the rich substratum of prehistoric arts.

The current population is approximately 85,000,000. While the majority of the people live in rural areas, Manila is one of the world's major urban centers. Today, over 100 distinct Philippine groups exist and more than 70 different native languages (including Tagalog, Cebuano, and Ilocano) are spoken. The official languages are Pilipino (largely based on Tagalog) and English.

Although Muslims, Buddhists, Traditionalists, and Christians practice their respective religions, currently over 80% of the population are professed Roman Catholics.

## *The Philippine Gallery*

### *Anticipating questions from tour participants....*

Several docents who have given tours in the Philippine gallery identified objects that have prompted questions from tour participants. This "handout" covers some of those questions and their answers. Obviously, it does not cover all the questions that could be asked, but it represents a cross section and should be useful to those of you who are planning future tours.

As much as possible, sources used to answer the questions have been identified. Most of the material is quoted from *The People and Art of the Philippines* published (1981) by the Museum of Cultural History, University of California, Los Angeles. Copies of this book can be found in the Docent Library. Also, for those of you interested in expanding your knowledge of Philippine ethnic groups, history, handicrafts, etc., there is a binder devoted to a variety of subjects in the Docent Library.

Some answers to questions are short and concise; others receive more fulsome treatment. In particular, the section devoted to *bulul* may seem long and weighty. It is hoped that the information will be useful in the near future when the Academy will host an exhibition devoted to the Art of Rice.

*Caring for the dead - for answers to the following, see Mary Flynn's handout*

1. stone burial jar with knopped lid Qs: How were the dead cared for before their bones were placed in burial jars? How did their bones fit into small containers? Where were containers with bones generally kept?
2. funerary boat effigy in the form of a naga Qs: How was the funeral effigy boat used? Did it carry a "soul"? In what ways is it similar and/or different from the boat in the Indonesian gallery?
3. monument or grave marker Q: What does the designation "okir" mean in reference to Muslim grave markers?
4. shaman blankets Qs: Are shaman blankets used in funerals as shrouds? Why are they referred to as "shaman" blankets? Would these be typical of the blankets used to keep evil spirits out of the house?

### *Jewelry and Apparel*

Given that much is not definitively known...

1. Necklaces and earrings Qs: Is it known whether these pieces are indigenous or imported from China? Where do the beads come from that are used in the jewelry and on costumes? Were they indigenous or trade goods? Or both?

*Answers:* from The People and Art of the Philippines... article by Wilhelm G. Solheim II pp 62-69

"Beads of shell, stone, clay, glass and gold have commonly been found with burials all over Southeast Asia. The shell and clay beads found in Philippine sites were probably locally made; but it is likely that most of the stone and glass beads were imported from a distance, while the gold beads and other gold artifacts may have been made in gold manufacturing centers in the Philippines and traded locally. Beads, because of their small size and relative resistance to breakage are ideal trade objects, and study of the stone and glass beads could possibly tell much about trade patterns in Southeast Asia. Unfortunately, there has been little study of beads in Southeast Asia, though the beginnings of this research are very suggestive.

...The major bead-producing area appears to have been southeastern India and Sri Lanka, and it seems the archaeological site of Arikamdu, near Madras, was a major producing center—though not necessarily the only one—for a long period of time. Stone beads, made from substances such as carnelian, agate, crystal, and amethyst, were particularly common at this site. Lamb does not believe this trade in stone beads could have started much earlier than the third century B.C.; but, ...these types of stone beads have been found in Philippine sites going back to close to 1000 B.C....

The objects that have been called paste beads in this paper... were actually made from an opaque glass. In earlier sites most beads of this type are red, and this bead is called a *mutisalah* in Indonesia. This type of bead, found very widely

in Southeast Asian and Philippine sites, was commonly made in Arikamedu and other south Indian centers. Later...blue glass beads, other varieties of monochrome beads, and, later still, polychrome beads were made at Ariamedu. This is just the beginning of the study of beads, but it suggests that South India was an important source of the earlier beads found in Philippine and Southeastern Asian sites. Lamb further suggests that after a time many of these beads were locally made in various centers in Southeast Asia.

Gold ornaments and jewelry have been found in considerable quantity in archaeological sites in the Philippines, but even less has been published on this subject... The first Spanish explorers in the Philippines reported that much gold jewelry and ornament was used by wealthy and powerful local Filipino leaders. The gold artifacts found in graves include ornaments that were probably attached to clothing, finger rings both with and without inset stones, a great variety of earrings, bracelets and necklaces of many different forms, including some combined with glass beads."

Also, in *Fabric Treasures of the Philippines* there is a picture of a men's suit, embroidered with beads that is very similar to the one we are asking questions about in the gallery. Caption says "appliqué Chinese glass beads and brass-plated sequins." On the other hand, a pendant similar to one in our exhibition simply refers to "fine beads made from glass, agate and ceramic and turtle shell dividers" with no mention of origins. (see Nicki Foster)

The graves that yielded most of the gold ornaments were found in the south, on the northern shores of Mindanao. Unearthed by chance, many were melted down and used for exchange. (George Ellis, gallery talk, 11/29/04) Exquisite large gold pieces (1100-1500 ce) stamp decorated or repousse, along with eye covers, nose covers and medallions have been found in graves. (George Ellis, lecture, 10/6/03)

1. hat mask Qs: Is the face on the hat that of a man or a monkey? And, was the hat used as a bowl when inverted? *Answer:* According to George Ellis (gallery talk, 11/29/04), the hat was certainly not used for liquids. The brim would have prevented drinking. George guesses that the design was an artist's "flight of fancy." Hats with faces were not typical.
2. hat Q: Who would wear the hat made of wicker, beads, shells, brass, hair and yarn? *Answer:* This is a bachelor's hat. After marriage, men wore plain hats. See examples in the Ambassador's box. Also, be aware that some students will be making hats as part of their Ambassador and museum experience.
3. hornbill headdress Qs: Who would wear this headdress, and when? *Answer:* The caption under a picture from the Philippine Journal of

Science, 1912, National Library Collection, as reproduced on the website for ... , reads " HORNBILL: A severed head was once a symbol of status and maturity for the male Ilonggot. A successful headhunter wore a headdress incorporating the beak of a hornbill."

*Christian Influences - for help, see John Pearson's handout "Some of the Saints"*

1. wall of Santos Qs: On the two sculptures of St. Isidoro, is he the kneeling figure or the largest figure? Or, is the largest figure the boss who was converted when he saw the bountiful crops after the angels took over? Who is the other small figure? *Answers:* St. Isidoro is usually the largest figure in a grouping that may also include farm animals and implements, and other figures (perhaps his boss, John de Vargas) or an angel. Popular in agricultural areas, Isidoro is usually portrayed as a farmer with long hair and dressed in a tunic, trousers and boots. (George Ellis, gallery talk, 11/29/04)

from The People and Art of the Philippines... article by Father Gabriel Casal and Regalado Trota Jose, Jr. pp.94-6:

"Santos, and other sculpture to some extent, may be described according to three styles, largely independent of chronology: popular, classical, and ornate...

Art work in the popular style is chiefly characterized by a tendency towards symmetry, emphatic but simplified iconography, disregard for or ignorance of proportion, and a crude, uneven technique that was usually offset by a color scheme of bright, primary and clashing colors. Often intended for family use, images produced in this manner exuded a strong sense of faith coupled with charming naiveté. Objects in the classical style have a more sophisticated appearance, but (as opposed to works in the ornate style) make no real attempt to disguise their material. These objects require no additional ornaments; most of the finest work produced falls into this category. The ornate style is an elaboration of the classical, sometimes to the point of degeneration; it is very rich and elaborate in feeling and is characterized by 'dishonest' use of materials (making a surface look like something else, by painting, gessoing, etc.) a heightening of lifelike qualities, and a profusion of ornament (without which the image would be only a support). On stylistic grounds, the ornate manner corresponds roughly with the Antillean look in architecture and cannot be dated earlier than the late eighteenth century."

2. two ivory heads of Purisima Concepcion Q: What was the source of the ivory used in the two small heads, and as appendages on other religious figures? *Answers:* Not all appendages were made of ivory; wood was also used. (George Ellis, gallery lecture 11/29/04)

from *The People and Art of the Philippines...* article by Father Gabriel Casal and Regalado Trota Jose, Jr. p. 96

"Santos were made of ivory or, more commonly, of wood, though some were carved of stone or molded in clay; these last two types were destined mainly for church facades. Ivory came mostly from China, and its peculiar quality enabled artists to engage in carving such things as fingernails, the tongue and teeth appearing between partly opened lips, and the folds of the eye in even the smallest statue... The slight vertical curve in larger Chinese works following the incline of ivory tusks could have influenced local carving in wood, as some Santos also exhibit a similar curve.... Head, hands, and feet could also be carved of ivory and similarly attached (pegged); sometimes only an ivory 'face mask' was applied..."

2. San Miguel Qs: Is that a devil under St. Michael's feet? Why is he dressed as a Roman soldier? *Answers:* Yes, San Miguel, the warrior archangel, is usually portrayed slaying the devil. (George Ellis, gallery lecture, 11/29/04)

Also, according to Lorie Leininger's research, "The friars, monks and priests who taught the Filipino children (and sometimes adults) in schools taught their advanced students Latin and sometimes Greek, and also taught them Roman and Greek history, myths and traditions---as seen through Christian eyes. So the Filipinos were much more familiar with, and at ease with, the Greco/Roman traditions than were the other Asian countries."

### *Islamic Influences*

1. Which objects reflect Islamic influences? What design elements can be attributed to Islamic influences? *Answers:* The objects with "okir" motifs (curvilinear, spirals, tendrils, etc) were influenced by Muslims. However, similar influences also came from India. The objects are among the most elegant found in the gallery. See the jars, the saddle, grave markers. (George Ellis, gallery talk, 11/29/04)
2. brass food jars with minaret lids Qs: Were these large metal jars with elaborate designs used as food vessels for special occasions, or only for ceremonies? What did they hold? Dried food, or cooked stew and rice? *Answers:* The silver and brass jars were used to store precious belongings. Sometimes used for non-perishable food, but not for a meal. (George Ellis, gallery talk, 11/29/04)
3. betel boxes Qs: What exactly would be stored in a betel box? Are areca seeds and betel nuts the same thing? Is the betel nut tree a special areca palm that can also be found in Hawaii? Where? *Answers:* from *The People and Art of the Philippines...* article by George Ellis, p. 208

" Containers for lime are produced in areas where betel chewing occurs. Technically three ingredients (lime, betel leaf, and areca seed) are mixed together to form the "chew," but the practice is commonly referred to as betel nut chewing. Although the mixture acts as a mild stimulant, it frequently plays a much more important role as a medium for the establishment of friendly social intercourse. Exchanging ingredients and chewing together indicate friendly intentions on the part of the people involved and provide the occasion for a bit of relaxing."

According to Mif Flaharty, Lyon Arboretum has trees that produce the material used for "betel nut chewing."

### *Utilitarian Objects*

1. food bowls; spoons Qs: Were dishes for communal use? Were spoons for individual use? Are the carved figures on the spoons significant? On the one small wooden container? *Answers:* from *The People and the Art of the Philippines...* article by Geo Ellis pp215-19, 200-202.

"...Utilitarian objects are often handsomely crafted and decorated which indicates a desire to create objects that are beautiful as well as useful. Some of these objects are used by everyone, while others are restricted to members of the upper classes. Still others have special ritual functions in addition to their ordinary uses. Together they form a diverse body of material, rich in form and vitality..."

Figurated spoons and ladles are, perhaps the most numerous and often the most beautiful works produced by mountain artists...

Because they were beautiful, portable, and readily available, literally thousands of spoons now grace both public and private collections... Like all woodcarving, spoons were made by individuals with special skills, usually for use within a specific geographic region...

Ifugao spoons are stored in special baskets when not in use and males carry them in their hip bags while away from home. Considering the limitations imposed by functional considerations (i.e., one must be able to grasp the spoon handle easily and a bowl must be present) an amazing variety of themes is depicted... Spoon motifs... represent the entire spectrum of Ifugao life, its pleasures and enjoyments as well as its duties and grief.

The majority of spoons, however, depict either seated or standing human figures, sometimes referred to as ancestor figures or deities. ... It seems unlikely that divinities are represented, since figurated spoons play no direct role in ritual nor have any sacred connotations. Spoons are handed down as heirlooms, but there is no indication that the figures represent specific individuals...



Spoons are carved from a variety of woods. They are carefully maintained and washed after each meal....Although they may be used to remove solid foods from a common container, they are usually used for liquids, such as water, wine and soups.

Almost all single figures carved on spoon handles face the bowl, but the figure on a dipper...faces away...

Ladles and dippers are used for removing food from cooking containers... Handles are usually decorated with standing or seated figures, and the range of motifs is not as extensive as on spoons, although there are some exceptions to this rule. The majority of ladles have a ring carved on the head from which they are suspended while not in use.

Ifugao forks with figured handles have been carved since the late nineteenth century, but not for traditional use...all seem to have been made for the tourist trade...

Wooden bowls and containers in one form or another are used by most Cordillera groups, but they have been developed to a high state by the Kankanay and Ifugao...While most Ifugao families dine from a single container, members of the upper class eat from individual bowls, and all bowls with small side containers are said to be used by individuals of this class... These bowls (duyu) are carefully maintained and are washed after each meal. Duck fat or lard is carefully rubbed over the outer surface and this, in combination with deposits of soot from the cooking fire, produces a shiny black finish... The majority have a round circumference with a deep central cavity flanked by two smaller shallow openings. The central cavity is for food, the others, for spices...

Another type of food bowl (dinalulu) is carved in the form of a pig, the cavity located in its body. These beautifully sculpted bowls are among the finest examples of Ifugao art. They have no ceremonial function, but are usually found in the families of priests, and are said to hold only certain types of meat and vegetables...Most of these containers form a complete animal—the head at one end of the bowl and the tail at the other... Some examples have cavities in the heads for spices, and the best examples have the dark, glasslike finish common to the notched bowls. Small bowls in this form were used for spices. Occasional examples are carved with fitted lids and these containers are said to be used for storage.

The children of wealthy Ifugaos eat from bowls supported by animal or human figures, and these figures conveniently place the bowl at the height of the seated child. According to Beyer, food for children was kept separate from that of the other persons of the households, and more care was taken to keep the bowl clean."

2. stools Q: What is special about the two stools? *Answer*: They are beautiful examples of "pure form." (George Ellis, gallery talk, 11/29/04)

### *Miscellaneous*

1. rice granary guardian figures Q: What was/is the purpose of these figures? What ceremonies were/are performed using the *bulul* figures?  
*Answers*: from The People and Art of the Philippines... article by George Ellis, pp.195-197

"Perhaps the best known examples of Ifugao artistry are rice granary or guardian figures called *bulul*. They represent a class of deities associated with the production of bountiful harvests, capable of miraculously increasing the rice before and after it is stored in the granary.

Since rice constitutes the most important part of the Ifugao diet, *bulul* are extremely important deities, and the ritual sequence associated with the production of *bulul* images is long, elaborate, and requires considerable expenditure of resources. Ceremonies are held at every stage of production, a process which may take more than six weeks to complete. Once the decision to commission the figures has been made, and the deities approve of the chosen tree, carving begins in the forest. After being roughed out, the figures are carried to the house of the owner. On arrival an 'entrance' ceremony is held, and this is followed at a later time by another ceremony which marks the beginning of the final carving. A male and a female figure are carved at the same time. More than one carver may work on the project, but the final touches are added by the more skillful if there is a recognizable difference in talents. Carving is done during the day, and the nights are devoted to dancing and feasting...

... By reciting the *bulul* origin myth during ceremonies involving the activation of newly carved examples, the powers and benefits bestowed in the mythological past are transferred to the present...

... During activation ceremonies the *bulul* figures are bathed in the blood of a sacrificed pig, and at the conclusion of the ritual the figures are placed in the granary. After a month or so, another ceremony is held to mark the end of certain food prohibitions previously in effect and the lift the ban on sexual activity by the presiding priests... One last ceremony concludes the consecration cycle, and this time an offering of rice cakes is placed at the feet of the *bulul*.

At harvest ceremonies held at the house of the rice fields' owner, *bulul* deities, along with many other deities and ancestors appropriate to the occasion, are invoked by the priests, urged to join in the festivities, and asked to make the rice continue to grow as it had grown in the fields. During these ceremonies carved *bulul*, jars of rice wine, and ritual boxes are placed

alongside the presiding priests and the figures are bathed with the blood of a sacrificed pig. Later, the *bulul* are placed next to the first bundles of rice brought from the fields. Before being placed in the granary the rice is allowed to dry, and *bulul* are in attendance during the period prior to this action. At a later date, one last rite, *takdog*, is held to mark the ritual termination of the harvest and the rice year... At this time ceremonial *runo* mats are spread out and all the *bulul* figures in the district placed on them, along with ritual boxes, and wine containers.

*Bulul* are inherited by the first child of a family, along with associated rice fields. Figures are much more prevalent in the central, southern, and western areas. While *bulul* deities are invoked during harvest ceremonies held to the east and southeast, no images are present. Even in regions where *bulul* deities are numerous, every family may not have *bulul* in their granary or home. The expense of *bulul* production can normally only be afforded by wealthy families who possess substantial numbers of fields...

The wood for *bulul* figures usually comes from the *narra*, a tree which figures prominently in Ifugao life, usually in contexts pertaining to general welfare and wealth. {Note: The *narra* trees are almost extinct today. George Ellis, gallery talk, 11/29/04}... *Bulul*, carved from *narra*, whose {red} sap is unfading, and bathed in the blood of sacrificial animals, are imbued with powers and characteristics that assure their owners' lives will be fruitful and successful.

*Bulul* are carved as seated or standing human figures, although in the Kiangnan area *binabbuy* (pigs) as well as humans are sculpted. In size they generally range from approximately 30 to 60 centimeters in height. Seated figures are depicted with legs drawn up and arms folded across them; hands are placed on, in front of, or just above the kneecap, or the forearm rests just above the kneecap. There is no absolute reference to human anatomy; legs become arms and sections of arms are placed in accordance with sculptural dictates rather than observed reality...

In the Kiangnan area a unique configuration, commonly referred to as a 'dancing' *bulul*, is found. These, as opposed to all others, have separately carved and pegged arms which extend outward from the shoulders in a parallel line; this configuration will be discussed later in relation to brass hair ornaments from the same area. {Note: It is possible that Christian influences account for the pose adopted by these images. George Ellis, gallery talk, 11/29/04}

*Bulul* are usually made in pairs, one male and one female; but there seems to be no consistent correlations between sex and posture. In some instances it is impossible to tell whether a figure is male or female. Sexual parts are very schematically treated in many cases. Breasts are rarely indicated, although nipples are indicated on both male and female figures. Many are or were

dressed... Hair is sometimes inserted in holes in the head, and bits of metal or shell placed in the eyes...

Considerable stylistic variation exists, from masterful cubists renditions with heart-shaped faces to others which adhere more closely to natural form. *Bulul* carvers were generally selected from among the kin group of their patron; and consequently there is considerable variation in quality and style, although the best available carvers were always chosen for this task."

2. two moro cannons or swivel guns Q: Where were the guns made?  
*Answer:* The guns were made by craftsmen in Brunei with whom trading was active. (George Ellis, gallery talk, 11/29)