

**The Filipina *Bordadoras* and the Emergence of Fine European-style Embroidery Tradition
in Colonial Philippines, 19th to early-20th Centuries**

By

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Abstract

This thesis examines three anonymous embroidered textiles from the Philippines, created in the nineteenth century and collected by museums in Great Britain and Spain. These textiles, *pañuelos* (shawl) and handkerchief, are made of *piña* and intricately embroidered by young women in *beaterios* (convent schools) and *asilos* (orphanages) run by the Catholic Church. I argue that the study of these objects reveals three important new ways to discuss textile production in the Philippines through art historical and material culture lenses: first, an analysis of social class differences between the embroidered textile works of privileged young Filipina women which were authored and acknowledged by collecting institutions, and those like the *pañuelos* which were created by anonymous working class Filipina women. Second, the importance of acknowledging the works of hybrid or mixed race artists whose blending of cultures is still unrecognized and/or unclassified within major international museums. Third, the tension between displaying and categorizing textile works by non-European artists as ethnographic curiosities and those of European artists displayed as works of art.

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Chapter One:

Introduction

This thesis highlights the importance of hybridity and cross-cultural exchange on the creation and consumption of textiles. Through a sustained investigation of Philippine embroideries by young Filipina women, the research presented here will bring to light unseen issues surrounding mixed race identities. This thesis makes a contribution to the emerging fields of Asian Art History studies in Canada and craft history by highlighting the gaps that remain in art historical scholarship. The majority of scholarly works on craft and cultural identity create binaries between black and white; indigenous and settler; male and female; rich and poor; craft and art when in reality it is the intersections between these that create the hybrid spaces that make up the Philippines. Rather than viewing this as a negative or positive situation, this thesis will argue that contemporary global craft must look to its historical predecessors to understand how richly nuanced craft production has been. My work addresses this gap through an analysis of the embroidered textile works created by mixed race Filipina women in the collections of prominent European and American museums. These textiles are attributable to the underprivileged young *bordadoras*¹ from the *asilos*² and *beaterios*³ in Manila during the Spanish and American colonial era.⁴ This thesis will examine embroidered *piña*⁵ textiles from the nineteenth to

¹ *Bordadoras* is the Spanish term for female embroiderers.

² *Asilos* is the Spanish term for orphanages.

³ *Beaterios* is the Spanish term for convent schools.

⁴ The Spanish colonial era spanned from 1521 to 1898, while from 1898 to 1950 the Americans governed over the Philippines.

⁵ *Piña* is a diaphanous fabric woven from fibres extracted from the leaves of the Red Spanish pineapple. *Piña* has been in production since the sixteenth century following the propagation of the pineapple plant in

the early-twentieth centuries when *piña* textile production reached its pinnacle in the world market.

This thesis, “Filipina *Bordadoras* and the Emergence of Fine European-style Embroidery”, is divided into four main chapters: historical framework, theory, methodology, and the object analysis. This format was designed to lead the reader through a situating of hybrid craft objects within established theoretical frameworks. The chapter providing an historical framework aims to guide the reader through the complex history of the Philippines outlining how hybridity is central in the history of the nation, its people, and its cultural objects. The methodology chapter addresses the research process that enabled archival and historical research to piece together the narratives of the anonymous young women who worked to produce remarkable artworks. Finally, the analysis provides a detailed examination of the embroideries chosen for this study in the context of their socio-cultural importance. Three distinct embroidered *piña* textiles from the collections of the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, England, the *Museo Nacional de Antropologia*, and the *Museo Nacional de Artes Decorativas* in Madrid, Spain were selected because of the information in the accession records that addresses important questions such as: Who wore these textiles? Who purchased them? Who were they given to? And who decides on whether they will be displayed or hidden in dusty museum drawers? This also opens up investigations into the value of the object, the value of the labour, and the value of the maker herself. Seeking to initiate this discussion has been and remains the goal of this thesis.

Philippine soil. The cloth is very sheer; it is as lustrous as silk and has the strength of linen. It lends itself exquisitely to hand embroidery producing a very delicate and intricate lace. *Piña* continues to draw the admiration of Filipinos and Westerners alike.

Collecting data for this research has been daunting for several reasons. First, because I am a scholar who lives and works in Halifax, Nova Scotia, accessing museum collections and materials located in Europe, the US and the Philippines has been a challenge, and as a result the Internet has proven to be an invaluable resource. I have relied on digital archival and museum collections whose importance cannot be stressed enough, email correspondence with archivists, and images of the works that are of high-quality resolution, therefore allowing me to undertake detailed visual analyses. Secondly, there are very few courses and professors of Asian Art History in Canadian universities and in the Atlantic region there are none. Through the course of my research I also discovered that not all academic publications originating outside Europe and North America with an assigned International Standard Book Number are acknowledged as viable sources by Western universities meaning many are unavailable, and those that are accessible are considered to be of questionable scholarship. This creates a challenging situation in gathering scholarly materials for a particular Asian Art Historical topic such as this thesis. Finally, the lack of academic histories and theories that address both postcolonial feminist theory and mixed race studies came as a surprise to me. An unexpected benefit was that in order to analyze the works contained in this thesis, and the gap that currently exists in writings on mixed race studies, I was forced to create a new theoretical framework that united art historical analysis of these embroidered pieces and postcolonial, feminist and emerging mixed race studies. This not only led to the innovative approach being utilized in this thesis, but to my argument that the field of art history must address this lack by encouraging object analyses that combine mixed race studies, art history, and postcolonial feminist theory in new and exciting ways.

Unlike widely documented historical Indian textiles and Chinese clothing trade and culture, Philippine historical textiles and their relevance in discussions of the impact of colonialism and oppression are understudied.⁶ Specifically, the study of embroidered textiles produced by underprivileged young women from the Christianized lowland areas of the Philippines is an overlooked aspect of the ethnographic material culture of nineteenth and early-twentieth century Philippine life. As an art historian what I find particularly troubling is that these objects have also been ignored as art objects. They have not been substantially analyzed as pieces of outstanding craftsmanship, nor has their artistry been explored through any formal analysis. Therefore, this thesis is the first to undertake a sustained analysis of embroidered textiles from the Philippines: as art objects; as portals to expanding on postcolonial hybrid feminist theory; and as social art history lessons in the intersections between the economic, social, and cultural capital of their makers and their consumers.

With the exception of a few books, journal articles, travel memoirs and exhibition catalogues, this topic has not been systematically and comprehensively analysed and documented. Most of the literature found in my research falls short of the critical analysis that is essential in understanding the contribution of women to colonial Philippine society. Much of the literature consists of coffee table or pictorial books that celebrate the beauty of Philippine textiles. Some studies have analysed the role of Philippine clothing and textiles in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries such as B. Lynn Milgram's (2005)

⁶ A recent exhibition and publication titled *Interwoven Globe: The Worldwide Textile Trade, 1500-1800* curated by Amelia Peck, curator of American decorative arts at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, who is also the editor of the accompanying exhibition catalogue glossed over the involvement of the Philippines and the trade textiles produced during the colonial era. The exhibition and publication addressed the fact that the Manila-Acapulco Galleon was responsible for carrying textile goods from Asia to the Americas and Europe. However, there was not a single example of Philippine textiles included in the exhibition nor were any mentioned in the essays in the exhibition catalogue. The Metropolitan Museum is known to have in its collections a large number of textiles from the Philippines which fall within the dates 1500-1800 AD.

“*Piña Cloth, Identity and the Project of Philippine Nationalism*” published in *Asian Studies Review*, and a limited article on Philippine colonial society by Ma. Luisa Camagay (1995) “The *Bordadoras* and the *Costureras*” in *Working Women of Manila in the 19th Century*. This work is significant because it is the first to identify a lack of research and scholarly analysis on the subject of working class women in the Philippines. However, these books are written as anthropological studies and do not incorporate art historical approaches. Academic studies of makers of clothing and textiles are almost non-existent, especially ones that explore the Philippines during the colonial era. The lack of art historical information surrounding Philippine textiles led me to explore them from a feminist perspective. Choosing to pursue this degree through a Gender and Women’s Studies program made sense because of the interdisciplinary nature of this field. It allowed me to incorporate not only art historical and anthropological perspectives, but it broadened my research to include economic history, gender studies and feminist studies. These are the intellectual threads that are woven throughout this thesis and that have allowed me to create a new art historical and methodological approach to this topic.

In writing the theory and methodology chapters, I took inspiration from seminal feminist postcolonial theory texts by Chandra Talpade Mohanty and Gayatri Spivak. A close reading of their works, especially Mohanty’s 1984 publication *Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses*, validated my intention to fill the gaps in Canadian art history by writing this thesis and pursuing an academic career as a feminist postcolonial scholar. Unfortunately, I have been particularly disappointed to find a lack of more recent literature on feminist postcolonial theory and methodology. Since Mohanty and Spivak (1984), almost the entire focus of feminist postcolonial theory has been on “pure” Indigenous cultures thereby setting up binaries between Settler and Indigenous

populations leaving out the subtleties of mixed race populations. Seminal texts in the field of postcolonial methodology include *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* by Linda Tuhiwai-Smith (1999) and *The Handbook on Critical and Indigenous Methodologies* by editors Norman K. Denzin, Yvonna S. Lincoln and Linda Tuhiwai-Smith (2008). While these publications are vital to the development of the field, it is clear that setting up an oppositional “us” versus “them” has been established whether purposefully or accidentally. While it may be helpful to draw parallels, this binary approach only generalizes everyone’s oppression rather than allowing for a recognition that different oppressions can be recognized and researched by moving away from binary categories.

My work has also been inspired by the few texts that begin a discussion of mixed race. One of the most important to this thesis is *Colonial Collections Revisited* (2007) edited by Pieter ter Keurs and his 2005 curatorial essay *Cultural Hybridity in Museum Collections* which was published along with the exhibition *Embroidered Multiples: 18th and 19th century Philippine Costumes from the National Museum of Ethnology, Leiden, The Netherlands* in Manila. Keurs is the first work to highlight mixed race culture and he attempts to analyse why mixed race works have been overlooked in art history and material culture studies.

Important to my theoretical approach is the classic craft history text, *The Subversive Stitch: Embroidery and the making of the feminine* (1984) by Roszika Parker. This was the first book to create a social history of embroidery and it highlighted second wave feminism and craft history in bringing objects that were considered part of the private female sphere into the realm of public art. I have used this book to understand how the textile objects produced by European women were read as social signs that

shaped "proper" decorum. Unfortunately, Parker's work only addresses the textile production of privileged white women, again, highlighting the gap into which Philippine textiles fall. Isabella Campagnol's article "Invisible Seamstresses: Feminine Works in Venetian Convents from the Fifteenth to the Eighteenth Century" (2009) in *Women and the Material Culture of Needlework and Textiles, 1750-1950* is remarkable in that it is the only publication to directly address convent embroideries by a less privileged group, in this case, anonymous nuns in Italy. Although her focus is European, the parallels to the *bordadoras* are important in constructing an historical overview of young Filipina women and the institutions that trained them in embroidery.

I feel passionately about the need to fill these gaps because of my own subject position as a Filipina-Canadian woman. I occupy a unique space in that I study and teach in a Canadian art history program that is completely lacking in any Asian art history courses, with the exception of the one class I have originated and teach only occasionally. I see the growing number of international students from Asia in our art history classes who are longing to learn about their own artistic traditions in our Eurocentric art historical canon. I also note the mixed race students who are unable to place themselves amongst the clear categories of European and non-European art that are still taught as absolutes in art history. It was only recently that art history would even consider incorporating a discussion of objects that were not sculpture, painting or architecture. Sneaking in analysis of textiles was rare. So is it surprising that in the year 2016 art historical discussions around Philippine textiles is still missing? It might not be a shock, but it is certainly time that the art historical canon opens up, or is ruptured, by including not only craft objects but makers that occupy hybrid spaces that challenge outdated dominant narratives. So to begin this thesis, an understanding of the colonial history of the

Philippines and the Philippine textiles trade is imperative. The following historical framework chapter will bring to light the development of the *piña* embroidery industry stemming from the *asilos* and *beaterios* of Manila and the young *bordadoras* whose labour, skill, and artistry need to be acknowledged.

Chapter Two:

Historical Framework: Historical Overview of the Philippines + Textiles

Men have travelled, as they have lived, for religion, for wealth, for knowledge, for pleasure, for power and the overthrow of rivals... The discovery of the new Western World followed, as an incidental consequence, from the long struggle of the nations of Europe for commercial supremacy and the control of the traffic with the East. In all these dreams of the politicians and merchants, sailors and geographers, who pushed back the limits of the unknown world, there is the same glitter of gold and precious stones, the same odour of far-fetched spices.⁷

The sixteenth century was a time of exploration and conquest for European nations. En route to the Spice Islands, the Portuguese conquistador, Fernão de Magalhães⁸ landed on the island of Homonhon in the province of Cebu. He claimed the islands in the name of Carlos I of Spain⁹ on March 16, 1521. Magallanes was successful in converting the ruler of Homonhon, Rajah Humabon to Christianity, but was later killed in battle by Lapu-Lapu, the ruler of a neighbouring island who learned of the Spanish conquest. This disastrous voyage prompted the Spanish monarchy to send three expeditions to complete the conquest. The expedition led by Miguel Lopez de Legazpi in 1564 formally established the country now known as *Pilipinas (Las Islas Filipinas)*.¹⁰

The Philippine archipelago has been an important point-of-exchange in the inter-Asian trade networks since the ninth and tenth centuries.¹¹ Fortified by walls to keep

⁷ Walter Alexander Raleigh, *The English Voyages of the Sixteenth Century* (Glasgow: J. MacLehose, 1910) 3-4.

⁸ Fernão de Magalhães is Fernando de Magallanes in Spanish and Ferdinand Magellan in English.

⁹ Carlos I later became the Holy Roman Emperor Carlos V. With the pontifical designation of Carlos I to Holy Roman Emperor this justified the civilizing and evangelical mission to conquer the indigenous peoples of the Philippines as well as the Americas.

¹⁰ William Lytle Schurz, *The Manila Galleon* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1959), 23.

¹¹ Chinese import ceramics recovered in the Philippines dating as early as tenth century provides material evidence of trade with China. Also, a superintendent of maritime trade in the Fukien province of China

Chinese pirates away and to protect the port city from indigenous uprisings, the city of Manila¹² became an international business centre for foreign merchants including the Americans, the Chinese and the Japanese. Business houses were perched within, Intramuros, the city's walled section located at the mouth of the Pasig River opening out to the Pacific Ocean. According to historians, Mauro Garcia and C.O. Resurreccion, "Two gates led to the river, and three others provided access to the surrounding areas; the gates were closed at night for protection."¹³

Manila was established as the entrepôt between Manila and Acapulco.¹⁴ The significance of the trade route from a global perspective is that it relied on the development of the two regions, Asia and the Americas, which had not previously been in contact or in a direct exchange of goods. The Manila-Acapulco Galleon trade was a Spanish government monopoly and the main source of income for the colony from 1565 until 1815.¹⁵ Commodities such as Chinese porcelain, Indian textiles, as well as gold, pearls and spices from Moluccas were brought over to Manila and then to the Americas

wrote a book entitled *Zhu Fan Zhi* in which he described trade with a country called Ma-i, which was a prehispanic Philippine state. William Henry Scott, "Societies in Prehispanic Philippines" in *Prehispanic Source Materials for the Study of Philippine History* (Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1984), 68. Also in Florina H. Capistrano-Baker, "Beyond Hemp: The Manila-Salem Trade, 1796-1858" in Patricia Johnson and Caroline Frank, *Global Trade and Visual Arts in Federal New England* (Durham: University of New Hampshire Press, 2014), 226.

¹² Manila was a fortified, walled city that occupied about two and one-half miles of land; the streets were laid out in grids running roughly north to south, and east to west. The Manila Cathedral (one of the oldest Catholic churches in the Philippines) and the Plaza Mayor (town square) marked the city centre. Mauro Garcia and C.O. Resurreccion, *Focus on Old Manila* (Manila: Philippine Historical Association, 1971), 247-48.

¹³ M. Garcia and C.O. Resurreccion, *Focus on Old Manila*, 247-48.

¹⁴ Dennis O. Flynn, Arturo Giráldez, "Born with a 'Silver Spoon': The Origin of World Trade in 1571," *Journal of World History* 6 (1995): 201.

¹⁵ On March 10, 1785, King Charles III of Spain confirmed the establishment of the Royal Philippine Company with a 25-year charter. The Basque-based company was granted a monopoly on the importation of Chinese and Indian goods into the Philippines, as well as the shipping of the goods directly to Spain via the Cape of Good Hope. The Dutch and British bitterly opposed them because they saw the company as a direct attack on their Asian trade. It also faced the hostility of the traders of the Galleon trade who saw it as competition. This gradually resulted in the death of both institutions: The Royal Philippine Company in 1814 and the Galleon trade in 1815. William Lytle Schurz, "The Royal Philippine Company," *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 3, No. 4 (Nov 1920): 498.

and continental Europe by way of Acapulco while Mexican and Peruvian silver, wine, olive oil, fruits and vegetables from the Americas, wheat and paper were brought back from the West.¹⁶ These goods were brought to meet the demand of the Spanish population on the Philippine archipelago and for the work of the Catholic Church.¹⁷ The Manila Galleons have been marked as the “Birth of World Trade,” linking the continents of Asia and the Americas in a continuous trade.¹⁸

Commodities and cross-cultural exchange

The cultural and commercial exchanges between Asia and the Americas led to the introduction of new crops and livestock to the islands. Feodor Jagor stated that in 1581 Father Sedeño, a Jesuit priest, introduced sericulture and silk weaving in the Philippines.¹⁹ It was not until 1778, however that agriculture production was stimulated in the Philippines under the governance of Jose Basco y Vargas. He was the only Spanish governor-general who showed devotion to diversifying and increasing agriculture output by introducing new crops and implementing the use of farming equipment. Basco y Vargas also established the *Sociedad Económica de los Amigos del País* (Spanish Royal Economic Society of Friends of the Country). Composed of leading Spanish men in business and industry. The society was tasked to explore and exploit the country’s natural

¹⁶ Schurz, “The Royal Philippine Company,” 498.

¹⁷ Jose Enciso Contreras, “A Long Crossing in History: Spain, Mexico, and the Philippines” in *La Piña: El Tejido del Paraiso* (Madrid: Vive La Moda, 2005), 44.

¹⁸ Contreras, “A Long Crossing in History: Spain, Mexico, and the Philippines,” 44.

¹⁹ Feodor Jagor, *TRAVELS IN THE PHILIPPINES* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1875): 131. Also cited in Lourdes Montinola “The Piña Process: The Manufacture of Piña Cloth” in *Piña* (Manila: Amon Publishing, 1991), 62.

resources. This led to the creation of *Plan General Economico* that implemented the monopolies on the areca nut, tobacco, spirited liquors and explosives.²⁰

With the knowledge of the commercial value of silk, in 1781 Basco y Vargas established a mulberry tree farm managed by Augustinian priests who ran San Jose College. The trees grew profusely on the grounds,²¹ and the worms bred well producing silk all the year round. The fibres produced were superior in quality in comparison to the European variety. Sericulture became a burgeoning industry as propagation of white mulberry trees expanded throughout the city. The exportation of silk to Europe did not happen until 1821. By the middle of the nineteenth century sericulture ended due to the lack of labourers.²²

Cotton culture in the Philippines antedates the Spanish colonial era. Magallanes and his crew found the indigenous population wearing cotton clothes. Historian and journalist Manuel Artigas y Cuerva states that “two species of Philippine cotton were found superior not only to the product of Bombay, but probably to those of any other part of the world.”²³ Cotton is principally, but not exclusively cultivated in the Ilocos provinces and in Batangas. It is often blended with silk, *piña* or hemp, which makes an exceptionally fine fabric. Artigas further states “ a connoisseur who attended the 1887 exposition gave it as his opinion that our manufactured cotton goods compare most favourably with those of Malines and Belfast.”²⁴ Cotton once was recognized as an important agricultural product, every effort was made to increase its cultivation. On April

²⁰ *World Heritage Encyclopedia*, “Spanish Philippines” http://gutenberg.us/articles/spanish_philippines. 29 June 2016.

²¹ Manuel Artigas y Cuerva, “Bibliographical Notes on Philippine Agriculture, Prefaced by a Historical Sketch,” *The Philippine Agricultural Review* XV First Quarter, No. 1 (1922): 7.

²² Artigas, “Bibliographical Notes on Philippine Agriculture, Prefaced by a Historical Sketch,” 7.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*

23, 1836, the government sent Pernambuco cottonseeds to Antique to spread the cultivation of cotton throughout the archipelago.²⁵

The cultivation of plant species from other parts of the globe was vital in colonial expansion and global trade. Driven by profit, cocoa, coffee, pineapple and tobacco were brought over from the Americas and cultivated in plantations established by the Spaniards. The region of the Visayas became the centre for pineapple plantations. The introduction and cultivation of the Red Spanish variety in the Visayas facilitated the development of a diaphanous handwoven textile made of fine pineapple fibres, *piña*. This exquisite fabric once rivalled Chinese silk and luxurious European textiles.²⁶ *Piña* was extraordinary in that the objects made from the fabric were considered worthy gifts for royalty in Europe among them Queen Victoria and Prince Albert of England, and Queen Isabella of Spain. According to Sir John Bowring, “prices which seem fabulous are being paid for the most elaborate specimens- one or two ounces of gold being frequently given for a small handkerchief.”²⁷ The finest examples of *piña* kept in the vaults of prominent American and European museums attest to the superb craftsmanship and sophisticated skills of Filipina weavers and las bordadoras. Furthermore, these textiles reflected the hybridity and multiculturalism of Philippine colonial society by physically incorporating new world materials using traditional techniques.

²⁵ The opening of the port of Manila to foreign cotton on February 3, 1838 was also a measure of importance of the cotton industry in the Philippines. Artigas, “Bibliographical Notes on Philippine Agriculture, Prefaced by a Historical Sketch,” 7.

²⁶ A consular report by Nicholas Loney from the 1860s states that “the annual export of *piña*, silk, hemp and other manufactures from Iloilo to the capital of Manila was set at \$400,000 by a conservative estimate- higher than those of tobacco, sugar, and hemp put together.” Quoted from the Letters of Nicholas Loney, in Robert MacMicking, *Recollections of Manilla and the Philippines in 1848, 1849 and 1850* (London: R. Bentley 1851), 227-228. Also quoted in Lourdes Montinola “*Piña* in History” in *PIÑA* (Manila: Amon Publishing, 1991), 16.

²⁷ John Bowring, *A Visit to the Philippine Islands* (Manila: Filipiniana Book Guild, 1963), 178. Also quoted in Lourdes Montinola “*Piña*, The Queen of Philippine Fabrics” in *La Piña: El Tejido de Paraiso* (Madrid Vive La Moda, 2005): 72.

Philippine textiles tradition: a brief historical overview

*Donde hay textiles hay civilización.*²⁸

From the Cordillera Mountains in the north to Mindanao in the south, the Philippines have a long-standing textile arts tradition that predates the Spanish colonial era. Objects collected from archaeological sites are material culture evidence that spinning fibres, bark cloth production and needlework were practiced by Filipino ancestors. A spindle whorl from the late Neolithic age,²⁹ bark cloth beaters from 4350 B.C. and earlier,³⁰ and a brass needle from 2680 B.C.³¹ are the earliest dated tools used in pre-historical Philippine textiles production. In Sinaunang Habi, art historian Marian Pastor-Roces notes that there are many examples of woven cloth dated from the fifteenth century, but a specimen from pre-contact is yet to be discovered.³² Textiles from Philippine pre-history may well have deteriorated over time because of the tropical environment. The trade and use of cotton cloth by the indigenous Filipinos, however, are recorded in Chinese historical documents according to Pastor-Roces:

the Chinese annals [...], such as the often quoted notes in the fourteenth century Tao I Chih Luch (Descriptions of the Barbarians of the Isles) about the blue cotton garments worn by the inhabitants of “Ma-i” (pre-Spanish period name for Philippines), who furthermore counted kapok, a species of cotton, and “cloth of various pattern,” among their natural products; and about the cut-short coiffure and “turbans” affected by the Sulu natives.³³

Furthermore, this is also previously cited in Artigas that the Spaniards “found the natives

²⁸ In English this quote means “Wherever there are textiles, there is civilisation” F. Arechabala quoted in Javier Fernandez de Angulo and Yolanda Garcia Villaluenga (curators), “! Balikbayan!” in *La Piña: El Tejido de Paraiso* (Madrid Vive La Moda, 2005): 12.

²⁹ Carol M. Tobias, “Archaeological History of Cagayan Province” in *Hukay* vol. 2 no.1 (Nov. 1999): 13.

³⁰ Tobias, “Archaeological History of Cagayan Province,” 15.

³¹ *Ibid*, 16.

³² Marian Pastor-Roces, “Chapter One: A Technical Digest” in *Sinaunang Habi: Philippine Ancestral Weave* (Pasay City: Nikki Books 1991), 17.

³³ Pastor-Roces, “Chapter One: A Technical Digest,” 17.

wearing cotton clothes made in primitive fashion.”³⁴

Pre-colonial Philippine handwoven textiles were woven by women. These textiles were typically made from the fibres of abaka (*Musa textilis*) called lanot³⁵ and locally grown cotton, and dyed from plant sources. The four indigenous fibres used in clothing are abaka, cotton, silk and bark. *Piña* arrived later through colonization. The materials used for embroidery by the young bordadoras who are the focus of this thesis would have been a mix of the four indigenous fibres with *piña*, a combination as hybrid as the makers themselves. Marian Pastor Roces describes these textiles:

Introducing Philippine textiles is, in effect, an introduction into the immensely fecund tropical botanical laboratory with which this archipelago’s peoples were endowed...From the early rice cultivators who also wove and made pots to handle and transform organic materials, to the colonized islander who in turn colonized imported species (as witness *piña* and agave ‘Filipinized’), the story might be jagged but is essentially seamless.³⁶

Weaving patterns come to the weaver through dreams, or inspired by folk tales, myths and the beauty of the surroundings.³⁷ Each fibre and thread, colour and design speak of the weaver's innate artistry and creativity as well as the social narrative that conveys the values she lived by. Not only was she weaving her story on cloth, but she also preserved the history and culture of her people. The subtle differences between these various cloths are loaded with meaning and act as signifiers of social status and class divisions.

³⁴ Manuel Artigas y Cuerva, “Bibliographical Notes on Philippine Agriculture, Prefaced by a Historical Sketch” in *The Philippine Agricultural Review* XV First Quarter, No. 1 (1922): 7.

³⁵ Marian Pastor-Roces, “Chapter One: A Technical Digest” in *Sinaunang Habi: Philippine Ancestral Weave* (Pasay City: Nikki Books 1991), 17.

³⁶ *Ibid*, 22.

³⁷ Fruto Corre, and Nancy Pe Rodrigo. *Hinabing panaginip=Dreamweavers* (Manila: Bookmark Video, 2000). Also in Marian Pastor-Roces, “Chapter Four: A Textile Poetics” in *Sinaunang Habi: Philippine Ancestral Weave* (Pasay City: Nikki Books 1991): 245.

Textiles and Social Rank

In the nineteenth century, the highest rank in Philippine colonial society was the peninsulares or Spaniards born in the Iberian Peninsula who settled in the islands.

Insulares, or Spaniards born in the Philippines, occupied a lower rank, as did the Spanish *mestizos*, descendants of a Spaniard and an indigenous Filipino or Indio. The *Indios* (pure Malay) occupied the bottom register of the social hierarchy. These classifications, which carried corresponding economic implications, such as tax brackets and forced labour (*polo y servicio*),³⁸ were announced and affirmed through prescribed modes of dress. As in most societies, the finest garments requiring the most labour-intensive technologies were reserved for the social and economic elite.³⁹

The galleon trade was a prosperous enterprise that attracted numerous Chinese to settle in Manila. The Chinese or *Sangleys*⁴⁰ were regarded with suspicion and constrained to reside in circumscribed communities called *Parian*. The Chinese *mestizos*, descendants of a Spaniard and a Chinese, however, could live outside the *Parian* and they appropriated Spanish dress, customs, and language. Cross-cultural exchange between Filipinos and Chinese has influenced variations of style and craft techniques. The Chinese gauze weave believed to be an innovation of the Han dynasty (202 BC - 220 AD) was translated as the sheer *nipis* in abaka and/or *piña*.⁴¹ Although most embroidery designs were arranged in symmetrical configurations, some reminiscent of the triangular tumpal

³⁸ *Polo y servicio* means forced labour. This is expected of Filipinos (*Indios*) who were unable to pay tribute monetarily or with trade goods.

³⁹ Marian Pastor-Roces, "Chapter One: A Technical Digest" in *Sinaunang Habi: Philippine Ancestral Weave* (Pasay City: Nikki Books 1991), 18.

⁴⁰ The term used by the Spaniards for members of Fujianese merchant communities. It probably originated from a mispronunciation of *chang lai* (those who come frequently) or *shang lai* (those who come to trade).

⁴¹ Florina H. Capistrano-Baker "Embroidered Multiples: Nineteenth-century Philippine Costumes and Images" in Florina H. Capistrano-Baker, Pieter ter Keurs and Sandra B. Castro *Embroidered Multiples: 18th- 19th century Philippine Costumes from the National Museum of Ethnology, Leiden, The Netherlands*, (Manila: Royal Netherlands Embassy and Ayala Foundation, Inc., 2007), 20.

design widespread in Southeast Asia, others were organic, curvilinear compositions, incorporating Chinese animals such as the phoenix or dragon designs.⁴² Spanish ornamentation were also central to the creation of a Filipino aesthetic. This was the result of the 1834 Spanish Royal Decree that introduced global trade to the Philippines. The use of foreign yarns and sewing threads in textiles and clothing introduced another level of social class distinction as these imported materials signified wealth.⁴³ As Chapter Five will demonstrate *las bordadoras* employed all these designs in their embroideries, yet another reminder of the importance of hybridity to their lives and their material production.

Hybridity and Classification

Embroidery was taught to young Spanish and Filipina girls by Spanish, French and Belgian nuns⁴⁴, and the works they produced were all commissioned by wealthy patrons including diplomats, travelling merchants, researchers, agriculturalists and industrialists, as well as wealthy *principalia*.⁴⁵ Previously, the Philippines was seen as a trading post for international trade but by the nineteenth century it was established as a source of raw materials and as a market for manufactured goods. The agricultural economy of the Philippines rose rapidly and its local industries developed to satisfy the rising demands of

⁴² Capistrano-Baker “Embroidered Multiples: Nineteenth-century Philippine Costumes and Images,” 20.

⁴³ Sandra B. Castro “Dissecting Dress,” in Floriana H. Capistrano-Baker et. al. *Embroidered Multiples: 18th-19th Century Philippine Costumes from the National Museum of Ethnology, Leiden, The Netherlands* (Leiden: Royal Netherlands Embassy and Ayala Foundation, Inc., 2007): 66.

⁴⁴ Eloisa May P. Hernandez “Chapter 2/ Absences: Visual Arts in Nineteenth-Century Philippines” in *Homebound: Women Visual Artists in Nineteenth Century Philippines*, (Quezon City: The University of the Philippines Press, 2004): 39.

⁴⁵ The *principalia* were the elite Filipino and Chinese mestizo class who enjoyed wealth, power and opportunities for education. They were entrepreneurs involved in the development and trading of Philippine products. See Lourdes Montinola “Chapter VII: *Piña* in the Context of other Lowland Fabrics” in *Piña* (Manila: AMON Foundation, 1991), 137.

an industrializing Europe. As goods from the Philippines spread out around the world they became a source of ethnographic interest and it was through this lens that they reached museum collections. One of the most significant ways that these embroideries globally disseminated was through international exhibitions and world fairs. Perhaps the most important from an imperial power perspective was the 1851 Great Exhibition held in London's Hyde Park from May to October. The brainchild of Prince Albert the Great Exhibition was an unapologetic celebration of the exoticism, raw resources and cheap labour of Great Britain and other colonial powers. This was how the majority of British and European society met the rest of the world. This was also how the western world exoticized and classified the rest of the world. The importance of these great exhibitions to the creation of the art historical canon cannot be over emphasized. The universalism of western art led to a neat linear framework for the arts based on European rationalism. For example, at the 1851 Great Exhibition, Superintendent of Works Owen Jones divided the Crystal Palace into sections of art that parallel how we teach western art history to this day: Ancient, Medieval, Renaissance, Baroque, 18th century, and 19th century. The reason this thesis emphasizes British examples is because the Great Exhibition led the way in how all design reformers classified materials such as cotton, silk, wool, and other textile materials like the ones emphasized in this thesis.⁴⁶

While Chapter Five will demonstrate that objects like embroidered textiles clearly have outstanding aesthetics, it was not their artistry that was rewarded in museum collections, rather, by virtue these works were seen as markers of difference or Otherness.

⁴⁶ Some key scholarly publications on the Great Exhibition include Jeffrey H. Auerbach, *The Great Exhibition of 1851: A Nation on Display*, New Haven: Yale U Press, 1999; Peter H. Hoffenberg, *An Empire on Display: English, Indian, and Australian Exhibitions from the Crystal Palace to the Great War*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001; Louise Purbrick, ed. *The Great Exhibition of 1851: New Interdisciplinary Essays*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2001; Jeffery A. Auerbach and Peter H. Hoffenberg, *Britain, The Empire, and The Great Exhibition of 1851*, London: Ashgate, 2008.

By the nineteenth century when the embroideries that are the focus of this thesis were placed into major collections, Western society was well aware of instances of global hybridity but they may have been seen as a challenge to classify than comfortable assumptions around “pure” race.⁴⁷

In museum collections, such as the Victoria & Albert Museum and the *Museo Nacional de Artes Decorativas* in Madrid, the embroidered textiles by *las bordadoras* are catalogued according to the place of origin thereby reinforcing their status as ethnographic curiosities rather than art works. (See Figure 1) This oversimplifies the complexity and cultural richness of the producers, the ornamentation, and the materials.

As the anthropologist Pieter ter Keurs argues:

A further disadvantage of the 19th century rational categorization is the exclusion of collections and (often hybrid) cultures that did not fit into existing schemes. Since the schemes of analysis were based mainly on ideas of fixed, localized styles, cultures that did not fit were simply not mentioned. Objects from urbanized groups in Southeast Asia- collections from Manila, Batavia, or Singapore, for example- were usually not mentioned as a separate category. They consisted of objects from a population of “mixed blood” and therefore not “purely” [indigenous], implying a category of “less interest.”⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Pieter ter Keurs, “Cultural Hybridity in Museum Collections” in Florina H. Capistrano-Baker, Pieter ter Keurs and Sandra B. Castro *Embroidered Multiples: 18th- 19th century Philippine Costumes from the National Museum of Ethnology, Leiden, The Netherlands* (Manila: Royal Netherlands Embassy and Ayala Foundation, Inc. 2007), 38. Pure race is a difficult term to define. According to the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, “...some thinkers have categorized humans into only four distinct races (typically white or Caucasian, black or African, yellow or Asian, and red or Native American). This classification creates essentialist categories that are socially constructed and not biologically real. <http://www.plato.stanford.edu/entries/race/>

⁴⁸ Ibid, 33- 34. Mixed race is defined as someone who is a mixture of two or more races. “A mixed race person has biological parents of different races (the groups that people are divided into according to their physical characteristics).” Mixed race is also known as mixed blood, hybrid, or biracial. *Cambridge Dictionary*, <http://www.dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/English/mixed-race>

Museo	Museo Nacional de Artes Decorativas
Inventario	CE21378
Clasificación Genérica	Accesorios de indumentaria; Colección de Arte Oriental; Tejidos
Objeto/Documento	Pañuelo
Materia/Soporte	Nipis
Técnica	Deshilados Bordado a realce Punto botonero
Dimensiones	Altura = 51 cm; Anchura = 52 cm
Descripción	Tejido de color amarillento o crema. En el centro una corona y cartela calada con unas iniciales rodeadas por cenefa circular de flores de muchos pétalos y hojas. Frente a las esquinas cintas en espiral con flores y perlas. Bordea al pañuelo cenefa rectangular de flores y rocallas. Exceptuando el círculo central, todo el pañuelo está calado con púa reticular. Bordado con punto de realce, enarenado indefinido, de festón y deshilado con variedad de puntos y cordoncillo.
Iconografía	Motivos florales; Corona de conde
Inscripciones/Leyendas	En el centro, en una cartela CT
Datación	1801=1900
Contexto Cultural/Estilo	Arte Filipino
Lugar de Producción/Ceca	Filipinas (Asia)
Clasificación Razonada	Los números de inventario 21376, 21378-21382 y 21385 son "Nipis", pañuelos de fibra vegetal procedente de Filipinas.

Figure 1
Museum record for *pañuelo*
in the collection of the
Museo Nacional de Artes Decorativas,
Madrid, Spain

The categorization of objects in the colonial collections was based on the intellectual framework of Evolutionism and the eighteenth century rationalist thought of the Enlightenment.⁴⁹ This method of classification was one to bring order to chaos to these “strange” objects and it was done in a seemingly apolitical manner.⁵⁰ These collections are often misrepresented and considered unimportant, as they did not fit any scholarly or scientific project. Researchers were striving for objective knowledge, hence apolitical and romanticized discussion of the objects is widespread to this day. That is why it is essential that art historians begin analyzing these pieces beyond their aesthetics, seeking ways to discuss them that opens up an understanding of the complex global histories at play during the time of their production. It is understandable that curators, collectors and art historians were seeking a palatable and romanticized reading of these objects in the nineteenth century as the (British) Design Reformers and Arts and Crafts Movement encouraged Indigenous and “Primitive” art appreciation but only as a tool for enhancing their political philosophies.⁵¹ This method of careful object organization became an art form in 1851 when the British Empire put their colonies on display at the Great Exhibition. Spain highlighted its own colonies, including the Philippines at the Great

⁴⁹ Ibid, 33.

⁵⁰ Ibid, 33.

⁵¹ Augustus Pugin, John Ruskin, Owen Jones and Henry Cole were the (British) Design Reformers who wished to improve the state of the decorative arts and machine-made products in Britain. As part of their formal education, these design experts completed a grand tour that exposed them to non-western cultures. Of the four, Owen Jones developed great admiration for Islamic and non-western art and design, especially the Alhambra. This in turn led to the creation of the book, *Grammar of Ornament*, which is a comprehensive encyclopaedia of non-western ornament. Although the Design Reformers shared the same intention of improving upon the state of British design, they did not share the same admiration towards non-western ornamentation. The art critic and historian John Ruskin abhorred Asian art, specifically Indian art noted in Dohra Ahmad’s “Introduction: Real Networks and Imaginary Vistas” in *Landscapes of Hope: Anti-Colonial Utopianism in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009) unpaginated; also noted in Steve Edward’s “xi: The Other Story (1989-90), An Exhibition Curated by Rasheed Araeen and its Critical Reception: from Section Five Views of Difference: Different Views of Art” *Art and Its Histories: A Reader* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), p. 267.

Exhibition,⁵² and its objects like all the rest were classified according to race, class, materials and forms. The Superintendent of Works for the Great Exhibition was Owen Jones, a designer of great influence who was part of the Design Reform movement, a loose group that aspired to improve upon Great Britain's poor machine manufacturing. Jones carefully observed the objects on display at the Great Exhibition and inspired many designers, curators and historians to understand ornament as a form of classification. As Owen Jones states in his 1856 essay "The Ornament of Savage Tribes":

From the universal testimony of travelers it would appear, that there is scarcely a people, in however early a stage of civilisation, with whom the desire for ornament is not a strong instinct. The desire is absent in none, and it grows and increases with all in the ratio of their progress in civilisation.⁵³

Nonetheless, as a British designer, Owen Jones used clearly delineated categories for each type of design, leaving no room for hybrid ornamentation like that found on *piña* textiles as hybrid cultures did not fit into the existing classification scheme.

Las Bordadoras and the Embroidered Piña Textile Industry

*To know the history of embroidery is to know the history of women.*⁵⁴

Given the complex historical background of Filipino textiles, with its rich mixing of materials and ornamentation, it is no surprise that in the nineteenth century a global market of interested buyers developed. The export of various forms of textiles from Asia to the Americas and Europe remained a strong and steady exchange until the Asian

⁵² Lourdes R. Montinola, "Embroidery" in *Piña* (Manila: AMON Foundation, 1991), 94.

⁵³ Owen Jones, "Ornament of Savage Tribes," (1856) in Isabelle Frank (ed.) *The Theory of Decorative Art: An Anthology of European and American Writings 1750-1940* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 299.

⁵⁴ From the Foreword of Roszika Parker *The Subversive Stitch: Embroidery and the Making of the Feminine* (New York: Routledge, 1984): n.p.

market was saturated with British machine-made textiles in the mid-nineteenth century.⁵⁵ An increased demand for raw materials sourced from China, India and the Philippines replaced the demand for finished textiles goods. This shift provided the impetus for a slow demise of certain textiles in Asia, specifically the cotton textiles industry in India and the *piña* production in the Philippines.

Textile production is one of the oldest traditions in the Philippines. The development of *piña* weaving and embroidery created a lucrative industry and at the same time it augmented the demand for Philippine textiles. Because of its remarkable quality, embroidered *piña* is hailed the queen of Philippine textiles. Recounting a visit to Manila, Sir Robert MacMicking (1848) noted that *piña* was the best known of all the native productions: “There is perhaps no more curious, beautiful and delicate specimen of manufactures in any country.”⁵⁶ Its uniqueness was desired and sought after in Europe as it complemented a “most feminine and refined look in an age of elegance and romanticism.”⁵⁷ Furthermore, the popularity of *piña* was not only due to its unique and exotic qualities but also its elaborate designs, and its exquisite and intricate embroidery enhanced the textile’s aesthetic appeal.

Historical accounts indicate that at the time of Spanish contact throughout the archipelago, beaten bark and woven cloth in cotton, abaka, and silk were used for

⁵⁵ Richard Brown, “The Revolution in Overseas Trade” in Richard Brown’s *Society and Economy in Modern Britain 1700-1850* (New York: Routledge 2002), 102. Also in Norman G. Owen, “On the margins of Asia: The Philippines since 1500” in A.J.H. Latham, Heita Kawakatsu (eds.) *The Evolving Structure of the East Asian Economic System since 1700: A Comparative Analysis* (New York: Routledge 2011), 116.

⁵⁶ Robert MacMicking, *Recollections of Manilla and the Philippines in 1848, 1849 and 1850* (London: R. Bentley 1851), 216.

⁵⁷ Lourdes Montinola, “*Piña*, The Queen of Philippine Fabrics” in Javier Fernandez de Angulo & Yolanda Garcia Villaluenga (curators) *La Piña: El Tejido del Paraiso* (Madrid: Madrid Vive La Moda IFEMA 2005), 71.

clothing, and ornamentation was in the form of tattoos and silk embroidery.⁵⁸ Also, early observations and reports by Spanish settlers noted that weaving of cloth was practiced all throughout the islands, but reports do not mention embroidery as an industry. The Spanish developed the Philippine textiles industry and capitalized on Filipino women's propensity to weaving and embroidery. Spain being an imperial power such as Britain, France, and Portugal was no different in her motives to acquire the riches of the East; these inspired her colonizing expeditions.

Filipinos are known to use natural fibres from palm, plants and trees in textiles production. However, there is no clear record as to when piña weaving began or who taught the Filipino weavers the use of pineapple fibres for cloth production. Many factors led to the development of this textile industry; the most fundamental factor, according to Montinola, is the imposition of a royal tribute on the Filipinos in 1571 by Miguel Lopez Legazpi who had been appointed governor and Adelantado of the new colony of Spain:

This was a real poll tax that could be paid in gold dust, in cotton or "novel" cloth materials produced by the inhabitants, in rice, or in anything of value that they could obtain. The tribute, financial measure to support the upkeep of the colony, was also a political ruse to keep the huge population busy and subjugated, but fortunately spurred the populace to create for itself commercial and manufacturing industries to assure its well being. *Piña* qualified as tribute, and was therefore given "royal" reason for being.⁵⁹

Another factor was a decree of the Franciscan chapter of 1580 which urged the teaching of crafts and trades besides reading, writing and the Christian doctrine. By 1582, the arts and trades such as carpentry, iron work and cloth weaving from the "pineapple jusi" were

⁵⁸ Montinola, "Embroidery", 92. Also in Marian Pastor-Roces, "Chapter One: A Technical Digest" in *Sinaunang Habi: Philippine Ancestral Weave* (Pasay City: Nikki Books 1991), 17.

⁵⁹ Montinola, "*Piña* in History" 12.

taught together with academic subjects in the primary schools.⁶⁰ Lastly, the influx of Chinese immigrants, merchants who possessed knowledge and skills of various trades, into the Philippines kindled local textiles production as the Spanish also took advantage of them.⁶¹

Piña weaving and embroidery are considered to be of lowland Christian provenance, produced mostly along sea coasts and plains, as distinguished from the weaves of the northern highlands of Luzon, and the non-Christian highlands or provinces of Mindanao.⁶² Cultivated pineapple plants were indeed introduced to the islands by the Spanish settlers in the late sixteenth century. European style embroidery on the other hand, was introduced through the Catholic convent schools or beaterios as well as the asilos and hospicios. These institutions were centres for the care of orphan Spanish and Filipina girls run by religious orders.⁶³ The young women were taught, “To read, write, reckon, the Christian doctrine, to sew, etc.”⁶⁴ They not only received formal education but were also prepared for their future roles as wives and mothers abiding by the strict Catholic moral values and Western social standards imposed on female members of Philippine colonial society. In her book *Piña*, Montinola writes, “Next to religion, these schools emphasized the home arts proper to gentility. Needlework was taught “from the first stitches to the finest embroidery.” As in weaving, young girls were reared to think

⁶⁰ Evergisto Bazaco, *History of Education in the Philippines* (Manila: University of Sto. Tomas, 1953): 48 cited in Ma. Luisa Henson, *The Birth and Growth of Sta. Catalina College*, (n.p., 1976): 34.

⁶¹ Montinola, “*Piña* in History” 13.

⁶² *Ibid*, 12.

⁶³ Sinibaldo de Mas, “Public Instruction: from his Informe sobre el estado de las Islas Filipinas en 1842” (1842) In Emma Helen Blair, et.al. (eds) *The Philippine Islands, 1493-1803: Explorations by early navigators, descriptions of the islands and their peoples, their history and records of the Catholic missions, as related in contemporaneous books and manuscripts, showing the political, economic, commercial and religious conditions of those islands from their earliest relations with European nations to the beginning of the nineteenth century*, (Cleveland: The A. H. Clark Company, vol. 45, 1906), 254-61 and 269. Also mentioned in Lourdes R. Montinola, “Embroidery” in *Piña* (Manila: AMON Foundation, 1991), 94-5.

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, 258; 259; 260 and 261.

that the practice of needlework was a virtue and a necessary preparation for married life.”⁶⁵ In Isabella Campagnol’s article, “Invisible Seamstresses: Feminine Works in Venetian Convents from the Fifteenth to the Eighteenth Century,” she provides a glimpse of the role of embroidery and lacemaking in Venetian convent life that clearly echoes and affirms the parallels between European and Philippine convent life and the role of needlework:

Lower- class children were taught basic sewing skills by their female relatives, and orphans learned needlecrafts in the charitable institutions that housed them; but familiarity with the needle was taught to aristocratic girls during their school years that, for most of them, took place in convents from where they would leave to get married or where they would remain forever as brides of Christ.⁶⁶

The skill of embroidery was taught to the Spanish and Filipina girls at an early age to help earn their keep. Moreover, it was considered a socially appropriate activity and a virtuous means of livelihood for underprivileged young women when they left the institution.

A report by Sinibaldo de Mas (1842) on the state of Public Instruction in the Philippines affirmed that seven beaterios and asilos for poor and orphan Spanish and Filipina girls, and four colleges dedicated to the formal education of young women from the principalia class were established in Manila.⁶⁷ The *Colegio de Santa Potenciana* was the first school established in 1594 under a royal mandate in 1589 instructing the Spanish settlers

Upon [...] arrival at the Filipina Islands, you shall ascertain how and where, and with what endowment, a convent for the shelter of girls, so that both those who should come from here and those born there may live in it, so that they may live

⁶⁵ Lourdes R. Montinola, “Embroidery” in *Piña* (Manila: AMON Foundation, 1991): 95.

⁶⁶ Isabella Campagnol, “Invisible Seamstresses: Feminine Works in Venetian Convents from the Fifteenth to the Eighteenth Century” in Maureen Daly Goggin and Beth Fowkes Tobin (eds) *Women and the Material Culture of Needlework and Textiles, 1750-1950* (Burlington and Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), 169.

⁶⁷ Mas, “Public Instruction”, 254-262 and 302.

modestly and after being well instructed may go out therefrom to be married and bear children.”⁶⁸

Sewing and embroidery were part of the curriculum taught by the Spanish nuns. As early as the age of six or seven the girls were taught basic embroidery stitches and by the time they reached the age of eleven or twelve, the girls were extremely proficient *bordadoras* to take on prestigious commissions from the church and wealthy patrons.⁶⁹ (Figure 2 & 3)

Las bordadoras as Montinola observed, “learned every conceivable stitch both for liturgical vestments and secular use.”⁷⁰ The embroidery designs were fashioned from those that were *en vogue* in Europe, especially in the monasteries and famous embroidery centres in Spain, namely Toledo, Guadalupe, and Sevilla.⁷¹ Montinola adds:

It was natural therefore [for the Spanish nuns to teach the girls the European style of embroidery as] Spain would want to pit the produce of her colony against the best embroiderers in Europe. French work was undisputably the finest to be had and there was much demand for it, and yet in time, piña embroidery would simulate Alençon or Brussels lace, Swiss eyelets, Chinese, Indian and Persian floral patterns, Italian filo tirato or Spanish calado (drawn thread work)- the whole gamut of European and Oriental stitchery and needlework.⁷²

The ornamentation did not have any special significance. Being Western-inspired, designs had no ritual value and were not bound to any indigenous Filipino social tradition. In fact, similar to Chinoiserie⁷³ style, secular works were purely decorative representations of Philippine pastoral life, flora and fauna, ribbons and geometric forms. On the other hand,

⁶⁸ Ibid, 254-55, and 268.

⁶⁹ Patricia Justiniani McReynolds “The Embroidery of Luzon and the Visayas” *Arts of Asia* vol 10 no.1 Jan-Feb 1980, p.129. (129-133)

⁷⁰ Lourdes R. Montinola, “Embroidery” in *Piña* (Manila: AMON Foundation, 1991), 95.

⁷¹ Ibid, 98.

⁷² Ibid, 94.

⁷³ Chinoiserie is the appropriation of Chinese ornamentation suited to the European market.



Figure 2
Las bordadoras
from Asilo de San Vicente de Paul



Figure 3
Las bordadoras shown here under the supervision of a nun and a priest

liturgical vestments closely followed the European models, especially the Spanish Judaeo-Christian symbols.⁷⁴

The markets for handwoven and embroidered *piña* were along the trade routes including Manila and the lowland provinces of Luzon, the western Visayas where handwoven *piña* was produced, the paths and ports of the Galleon Trade- China, Mexico, America and Europe. As such, national and international developments in history and fashion affected the development of the textile. *Piña* was a marker of cosmopolitan sophistication. It commanded a high price because of its laborious weaving process and fine hand embroidery. As previously stated, a small handkerchief cost as much as two ounces of gold and as Bowring observed, the pieces were “for the better-conditioned classes.”⁷⁵ To this day, *piña* is considered a luxury item; it is an indicator of prestige and wealth, being a textile of elegance, rarity and beauty.

Embroidered *piña* as a luxury object in the nineteenth century was well documented in economic, scientific, and travel reports by European and American diplomats, industrialists and scholars who visited the Philippines. In 1846, the French scientist, Jean Mallat, surveyed fifty-two varieties of Philippine textiles and sent samples to the Ministry of Trade and the Conservatory of Arts and Crafts in Paris. Of the various specimens, he wrote eloquently about “the admirable beauty [of *piña*] which is impossible to imitate in Europe because the cost of production would have been prohibitive.”⁷⁶ Jagor’s account of his visit to the *piña* weaving centres in the Visayas

⁷⁴ Montinola, “*Piña* Wear,” 69.

⁷⁵ John Bowring. *A Visit to the Philippine Islands* (Manila: Filipiniana Book Guild, 1963), 96-7.

⁷⁶ Jean Mallat. *The Philippines: history, geography, customs, agriculture, industry, and commerce of the Spanish colonies in Oceania* (Manila: National Historical Institute, 1983), 195.

remarked that the fabric was the “finest in the world.”⁷⁷ This fascination with Philippine embroidered textiles reached the European aristocracy and pieces were presented as tributary or gifts for royalty. In his memoir, *Memorias Historicas y Estadisticas de Filipinas*, Don Rafael Diaz Arenas wrote that in 1850 a petticoat and undergarments were presented to Queen Victoria and Prince Albert.⁷⁸ Also worth noting in the collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum is a replica of a *piña* handkerchief presented to Alexandra, Princess of Denmark on the occasion of her marriage to Edward VII in 1862 as a wedding gift from Edward Parr, an influential British figure who lived in Manila.⁷⁹ (See Figure 4)

Among the *piña* textiles located in Spanish collections are ones that were commissioned by Don Francisco Yriarte, Governor of Laguna in the 1860s for Queen Isabela II. However, the embroidered ensemble including a *pañuelo*⁸⁰ and yardage for a gown were not presented to the queen as a revolution forced her to abdicate from the throne in 1868.⁸¹ Notable examples of the fine embroidered works of *las bordadoras* are scattered throughout Spain and kept in national archives and museums among the colonial treasures collected from the islands. Pilar Romero de Tejada, an anthropologist for the *Museo Nacional de Antropologia* in Madrid, states:

These collections had arrived in Spain at different times and, for different reasons, they have remained in our country forming part of the museum’s inventory. [...] over 4,000 objects coupled with a collection of 19th century photographs [...].

⁷⁷ Jagor, *Travels in the Philippines*, 131.

⁷⁸ Rafael Diaz Arenas *Memorias Historicas y Estadisticas de Filipinas*, Imprenta del Diario de Manila, 1850, p. 8.

⁷⁹ Montinola, “*Piña* in History,” p. 22.

⁸⁰ *Pañuelo* is a square cloth folded triangularly and worn in the Philippines like a great ruffle or collar.

⁸¹ The detail of Isabela II’s abdication is cited from Carl Cavanagh Hodge *Encyclopedia of the Age of Imperialism, 1800-1914* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2008): 138. The detail on the embroidered *piña* pieces is cited from Montinola, “*Piña* in History,” p. 18 and 20-21.

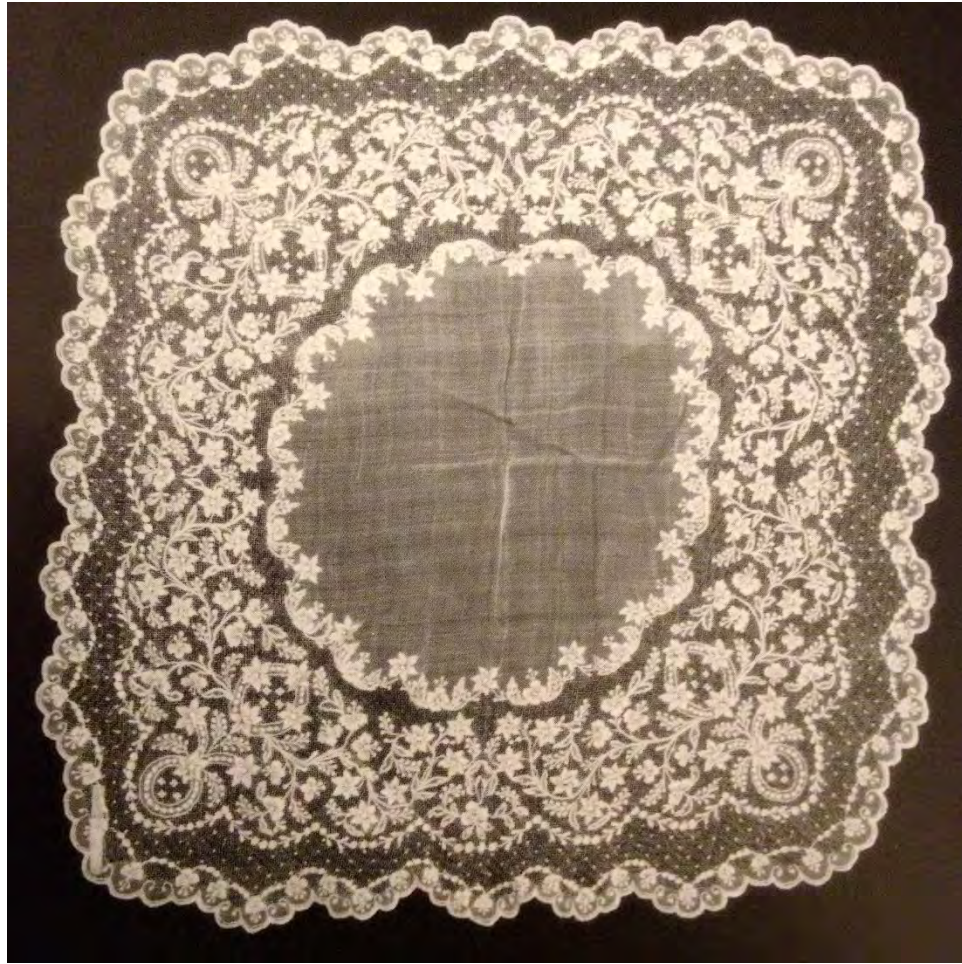


Figure 4

Replica of the *piña* handkerchief presented to Princess Alexandra
from Queen Mary's Lace Collection, Victoria & Albert Museum, London
Calado, whitework embroidery
c.1863

This clearly evidences the fact that the peoples of the Philippines stand out for their handicrafts.”⁸²

Tejada adds:

Most of the collections including those housed by the Prado and the Reina Sofia arrived in Spain on the occasion of the Exposicion General de las islas Filipinas, which took place in Madrid in 1887. [...] Many of them were made especially by some Filipino towns to be shown only at the exhibition, and others were to be sold in Madrid, as sale price appears in the General Catalogue of the Exhibition: but objects from the islands were also exhibited that already belonged to Spanish institutions.⁸³

As I have discovered in the digital collection of the *Museo Nacional de Antropologia* in Madrid, there are at least four embroidered *piña* produced in Manila specifically for the *1887 Exposición General de Las Islas Filipinas*⁸⁴ in Madrid. (See Figure 5) In the *Crónica de la Exposición de Filipinas: estudio crítico-descriptivo*, 1887 Antonio Flórez Hernández and Rafael Piquer y Martín-Cortés noted that embroidered garments and accessories were sent from one of the convent schools for orphan Spanish and Filipino girls in Manila:

Otros trabajos, justamente apreciados por el puesto y la colocacion que ocupan, son los bordados primorosos en pañuelos, pecheras de camisa, zapatillas, peinadores y otras prendas que presentan las señoritas del Real Colegio de Santa Isabel de Manila.”⁸⁵

⁸² Pilar Romero de Tejada “The Philippine Islands in the National Museum of Anthropology. A Personal Account” in Javier Fernandez de Angulo & Yolanda Garcia Villaluenga (curators) *La Piña: El Tejido del Paraiso* (Madrid: Madrid Vive La Moda IFEMA 2005), p. 127.

⁸³ Tejada, “The Philippine Islands in the National Museum of Anthropology. A Personal Account,” p. 128.

⁸⁴ The *1887 Exposición General de Las Islas Filipinas* aimed to showcase the natural products from the Philippines as well as their industries, handicrafts, art and culture. This exhibition was modelled after the Great Exhibition of 1851 in London, England. Ibid, p. 128-29.

⁸⁵ Antonio Flórez Hernández and Rafael Piquer y Martín-Cortés *Crónica de la Exposición de Filipinas: estudio crítico-descriptivo*, 1887 (Madrid: Tipografía de Manuel Gines Hernandez, 1887): 80. Accessed from Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin - Preußischer Kulturbesitz, http://digital.staatsbibliothekberlin.de/werkansicht?PPN=PPN640989233&PHYSID=PHYS_0086&DMDID=DMDLOG_0001.



Figure 5

1887 Exposicion General de las Islas Filipinas
Life drawing by Comba. Recorded by Rico.
The Spanish and American Illustration
1887, vol. II no. XXV, July 8, 1887, pp. 8-9
From the National Library of Spain, Madrid

It is difficult to link the museum pieces to the exhibition entries since these embroidered works were unsigned and no other documentation confirms this. However, the probability that these pieces are the works of the young orphan girls is quite possible as no other anonymous embroidered works originating from Manila were documented in the catalogue.

The inclusion of artistic works by Filipinas in the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries world's fairs was not uncommon. In fact, a number of these creations garnered accolades in the areas of painting, sculpture and needlework. Two framed embroidered pieces rendered in human hair by Paz Longos⁸⁶ were shown in the 1887 Madrid exposition, "*dos cuadros con bordados al pasado, en blanco, lausin y sedas de colores.*"⁸⁷ The following year Longos submitted to the *1888 Exposición Universal de Barcelona*, *Retrato de D. Alfonso XII, bordado al lausin*, an embroidered portrait of Alfonso XII also rendered in human hair.⁸⁸ There were also the Paterno sisters, Concha and Adelaida⁸⁹ whose artistic works are well noted in Philippine art history. (See Fig. 6)

⁸⁶ Paz (Pacita) Longos studied art under Lorenzo Guerrero, a famous Filipino painter and art instructor in the late nineteenth century. Guerrero taught drawing at the *Colegio de Sta. Isabel, La Concordia* and *Instituto de Mujeres*. Cited in Eloisa May P. Hernandez "Introduction/ A Look at Mainstream Art History" *Homebound: Women Visual Artists in Nineteenth Century Philippines* (Quezon City: The University of the Philippines Press, 2004): 2 and 30.

⁸⁷ (-), *Catálogo de La Exposición General de Las Islas Filipinas 1887*, sec. Septima, Grupo 51, #12, p. 528.

⁸⁸ D. Graciano López Jaena "Conferencia 10A: Filipinas en la Exposición Universal de Barcelona" in *Conferencias públicas relativas á la Exposición Universal de Barcelona* (Barcelona: Tipo-Litografía de Busquets y Vidal, 1889): 248. Also cited in Eloisa May P. Hernandez "Chapter 3/ Presences" *Homebound: Women Visual Artists in Nineteenth Century Philippines* (Quezon City: The University of the Philippines Press, 2004): 56.

⁸⁹ The Paterno sisters, Paz, Concha and Adelaida, also studied drawing and painting under Lorenzo Guerrero. Paz Paterno was an accomplished painter. Concha was known for her embroidery works, while Adelaida was an accomplished painter and embroiderer who used the embroidery as a drawing tool. She is noted for her embroidered landscapes using hair as thread. This is discussed in Hernandez "Chapter 4/ Reconstructions: The Space of Women in the Works of Paz and Adelaida Paterno" in *Homebound: Women Visual Artists in Nineteenth Century Philippines* (Quezon City: The University of the Philippines Press, 2004): 78-130.

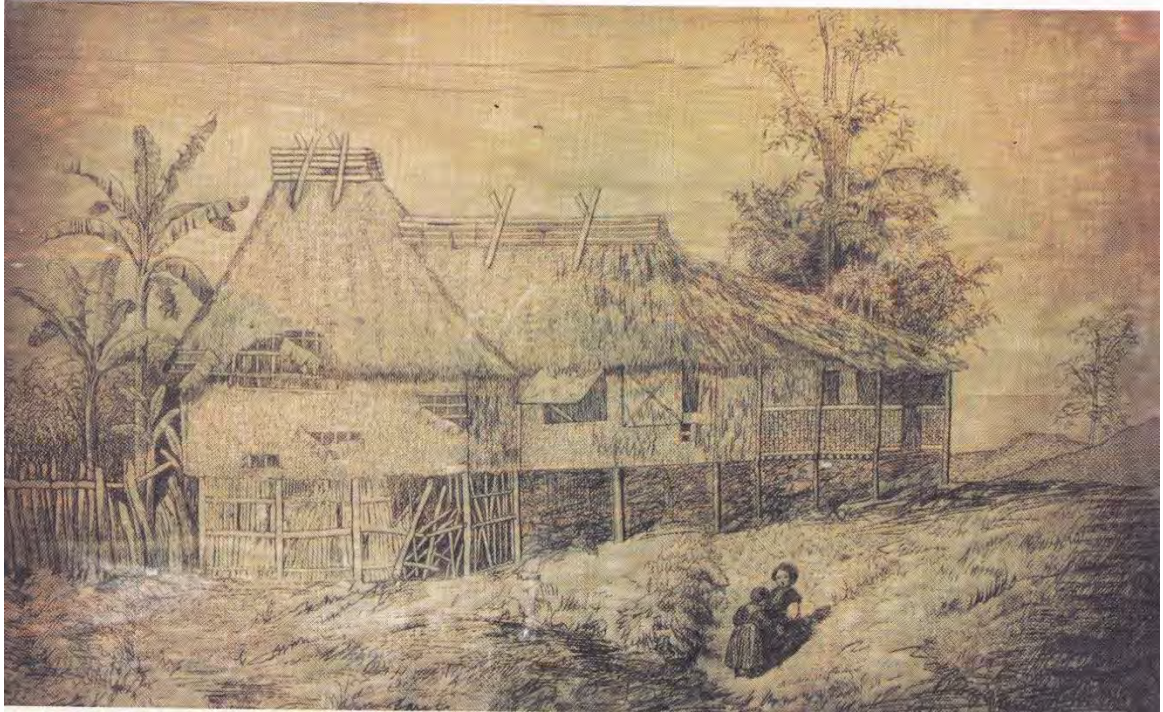


Figure 6

Adelaida Paterno
Rural Scene with Child, undated
33.9 x 45.7 cm
Human hair embroidery on *jusi*
Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Collection

Their half-brother, Don Pedro Paterno,⁹⁰ who in 1887 was based in Madrid, submitted *la pañuelo de piña bordado* in the 1887 Madrid exposition, which was likely the work of one of the female members of the Paterno family.⁹¹ It is possible that he submitted the piece of either of his half-sisters, specifically Adelaida or Concha, as the two women have participated in other exhibitions, such as the *1895 Exposición Regional de Filipinas en Manila* where their works were classified under the *bellas artes* (Fine Arts) section.⁹² Of the existing embroidered works of the Paterno sisters, only one of Adelaida's human hair embroideries⁹³ was signed; this piece is in the collection of the *Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas*. (See Figure 7) In order to confirm who among the Paterno women embroidered the *1887 Exposición General* entry, the actual piece needs to be viewed for examination to determine if there was anything resembling a signature. The majority of notable Filipina artists have come from a privileged *Ilustrado*⁹⁴ background.

⁹⁰ Don Pedro Paterno was one of the 13 children of Don Memo with his second wife, Doña Carmen. The Paternos were and still are a wealthy *mestizo de Sangley* family from Santa Cruz, Manila. Among his half sisters were the artists Paz, Adelaida and Concha Paterno. Cited in Raissa Claire U. Rivera, "Women Artists and Gender Issues in 19th Century Philippines," *Review of Women's Studies* 8, no. 2 (2012), <http://journals.upd.edu.ph/index.php/rws/article/view/3059/2878>; Also in Flaudette May V. Datuin, "Filipina Artist in the Fine Arts: Disrupted Genealogies, Emerging Identities." In Maria Luisa T. Camagay (ed) *More Pinay than We Admit: The Social Construction of the Filipina* (Quezon City: Vibal Foundation, 2010): 161.

⁹¹ The entry was listed as "Paterno, Don Pedro- Madrid." This suggests that the listings indicate the current place of residence of the exhibitor, not the place where the piece was made. Filipino exhibitors based in Madrid had their city of residence listed beside their names. (-), *Catálogo de La Exposición General de Las Islas Filipinas 1887*, sec. Septima, Grupo 51, #16, p. 528; Grupo 53, #759, p. 539

⁹² Eloisa May P. Hernandez "Chapter 2/ Absences" *Homebound: Women Visual Artists in Nineteenth Century Philippines* (Quezon City: The University of the Philippines Press, 2004): 40.

⁹³ The use of human hair in embroidery is linked to the Chinese craft of human hair embroidery practiced by Chinese embroiderers who settled in Manila. This type of embroidery can also be traced to the Victorian art practice of hairwork.

⁹⁴ The term *ilustrado/a* means enlightened or educated. *Ilustrados/Ilustradas* are Filipino men and women who most often were of the *mestizo* background and belonging to privileged families; in fact, these families continue to be among the *crème de la crème* of Philippine society. *Ilustrados* received formal education from exclusive schools in Manila and Europe. As women were limited in terms of travelling and accessing formal education, they received formal art instruction from family members and tutors while some were sent to exclusive convent schools. The *Ilustrados* are discussed in detail in Eloisa May P. Hernandez "Chapter 3/ Presences and Chapter 4/ Reconstructions" *Homebound: Women Visual Artists in Nineteenth Century Philippines* (Quezon City: The University of the Philippines Press, 2004): 30 and 42-130.



Figure 7
Adelaida Paterno (signed)
Vista de Mariquina, 1897
Human hair on *jusi*
34 x 45.5 cm
Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Collection

These young women had the support of their families to develop their skills in drawing, painting, sculpting, sewing and embroidering, “in keeping with their status as women.”⁹⁵ The application of skills and artistic talents within the home were celebrated and encouraged. Thus, perfecting embroidery skills was a leisurely pursuit for young *Ilustrado* women; it was a form of recreation and even diversion. These young women embroidered as an expression of their creativity, and not as a means of livelihood. Their creative works were then displayed on the walls of their homes to demonstrate and even flaunt their skills, in hope that their talent would render them “more attractive,” if not “more marriageable.”⁹⁶ Young women’s education and training were geared towards their future roles as mothers and wives, and for their extended roles as their future husband’s social partners, which would complement his esteemed status in society. It can be presumed that their families envisioned them marrying someone of either equal or higher status. The young *Ilustrado* women were educated to bring prestige to the family through the skills they acquired and their artistic talents.

While *las bordadoras* from the lower classes were unnamed and unrecognized, their female *Ilustrado* counterparts were identified only because their names were documented in the exhibition catalogues of the world’s fairs they joined. In Ma. Luisa Camagay’s study of the working women of Manila in the nineteenth century, she asserts that there were indeed *bordadoras* from the working classes. Yet, not one of them is known, as historical records are almost non-existent.⁹⁷ There are three explanations for

⁹⁵ Hernandez, “Chapter 3/ Presences,” 70.

⁹⁶ *Ibid*, 70.

⁹⁷ Ma. Luisa Camagay “The *Bordadoras* and the *Costureras*” in *Working Women of Manila in the 19th Century* (Philippines: The University of the Philippines Press and The University Center for Women Studies, 1995): 39- 44. Camagay offers a very brief chapter on the *bordadoras* and *costureras* of Manila with limited information on the background and working lives of the *bordadoras*. This is the only scholarly publication that talks about the working class Filipina women in the Spanish colonial era.

the anonymity of *las bordadoras*. First; unlike Adelaida Paterno whose embroidered and inscribed work (See Figure 7) was created at her own leisure and for her own gratification, the works of underprivileged young *bordadoras* were unsigned because these were commissioned by the Catholic church, a wealthy patron, or geared for the export market. Secondly, socioeconomic status played a significant part in the recognition of these resplendent works. The young *bordadoras* from the *asilos* and *beaterios* had limited freedom and opportunities to present their works in competitions and fairs, as they were wards of the Catholic Church. As previously stated in the case of *la pañuelo de piña bordado* submitted by Don Pedro Paterno in the 1887 Madrid Exposition, male family members of the elite class submitted artistic works to international competitions and fairs on behalf of their wives, sisters or mothers.⁹⁸ Thirdly, the lack of interest by museum curators and scholars in the objects created by a racially and culturally hybrid group meant that no efforts were made to find or catalogue the names of their makers. The embroidered pieces made by the young *bordadoras*, who were perhaps mostly of the Spanish-Filipino and Chinese mestiza background were considered insignificant in contrast to the textile works created by the “pure” indigenous groups of the northern highlands and southern parts of the Philippine archipelago. Pieter ter Keurs affirms this in the case of the embroidered *piña* collection from the Rijksmuseum in Leiden:

The objects originating from the inhabitants of Manila in the Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde in Leiden were collected before 1886 and identified culturally as Tagalog or mesties (mestizo). In 1886, they were mentioned in the museum’s inventory books as having been collected by a certain Mr. Bregard living in Paris and, many years later, were described in a catalog written by H.H. Juynboll (1928). Apart from these two instances, no other article, book, academic and/or museum discourse mentions the collection. In one hundred twenty years, these objects and the culture from which they came were hardly noticed by museum

⁹⁸ (-), *Catálogo de La Exposición General de Las Islas Filipinas 1887*, sec. Septima, Grupo 51, #16, p. 528; Grupo 53, #759, p. 539

curators and virtually excluded from professional discussions.⁹⁹

Fascinated by the many cultures that inhabit the Philippine archipelago, a vast number of indigenous textiles and other culturally significant objects were collected and studied by European and American scholars. These objects were studied using a framework that were legacies of Enlightenment and Evolutionist philosophers from which the system of classification of ethnographic objects is based upon.

The varied traditional indigenous textiles of the Philippines were given prominence in comparison to the embroidered pina in museum collections and a comprehensive inventory record often accompanies these pieces. However, this system of classification does not include numerous works created from mixed or hybrid cultures, as we have seen in the case of the works of *las bordadoras*. Western scholars studied the unique materials and production techniques of indigenous textiles and these “primitive” objects were viewed with awe and curiosity. A desire to expand knowledge of the indigenous peoples and to preserve the “vanishing” traditions of the “savage” cultures were the fundamental reasons behind the collecting of material culture from the colonies. The objects were treated as trophies of the conquest of the “savage” and tokens of difference. These indigenous textiles were taken out of their cultural context and displayed as ethnic curiosities. They are frequently or permanently displayed as ethnographic specimens representing the *tao*¹⁰⁰ who were and remain present in the Philippines. In its traditional context, indigenous Philippine textiles are regarded as

⁹⁹ Pieter ter Keurs, “Cultural Hybridity in Museum Collections” in Florina H. Capistrano-Baker, Pieter ter Keurs and Sandra B. Castro *Embroidered Multiples: 18th- 19th century Philippine Costumes from the National Museum of Ethnology, Leiden, The Netherlands* (Manila: Royal Netherlands Embassy and Ayala Foundation, Inc. 2007), 39.

¹⁰⁰ I use the Tagalog term *tao* to collectively refer to the indigenous peoples of the islands.

signifiers of distinction, identity, power and social status and they identify kinship and rank through colour, design, ornamentation, and technical details. Their cultural significance as ceremonial and ritualistic objects for funerals, betrothals, peace pacts and rites of passage sets them apart from the embroidered *piña* textiles that were created by the young *bordadoras* of Catholic and mixed heritage.

Embroidered *Piña* Industry under the American Regime

Enormous social changes arose in the last decade of the nineteenth century. These were the twilight years of the European monarchy. In the span of a few years, the United States came to govern over the archipelago and shifts in world economic power brought political and socio-economic changes to the Philippines. The import of Western mass-produced goods increased and overwhelmed the local products. Filipinos would once again undergo the process not simply of acceptance, but of active adaptation to different patterns of life.

A census of the islands conducted in 1903 shows that local textiles were still popular for clothing despite the influence of American fashions.¹⁰¹ The principal varieties woven were *sinamay*, *jusi*, and *piña*. A total of ₱1, 278,600¹⁰² were earned by 5,277 women weavers in the provinces of Abra and Iloilo where cotton and *piña* were produced. The 1903 census also revealed that the women of the working class were wage earners to an even greater extent than in the United States. Weavers or spinners engaged in the manufacture of cloth totaled 18.8% of the islands' population.¹⁰³ James A. Le Roy, an American visiting in 1905, observed that the local textile industry had suffered a decline when the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 brought in cheap cotton from

¹⁰¹ 1903 Census of the Philippine Islands, p. 464.

¹⁰² Ibid, 464. ₱ is the monetary symbol for Philippine peso.

¹⁰³ Ibid, 464.

Germany and England.¹⁰⁴ Yet, the looms of Filipino households continued to be an important factor in the industrial life of the archipelago.

Piña cloth, although still admired for its beauty and suitability to the climate had slowly declined in popularity because of high costs and style changes. With the coming of the Americans, Filipino fashion was revolutionized. According to Montinola,

The traje de mestiza was soon supplanted by the Gibson Girl's leg-of-mutton sleeves, belts, ankle-length skirts, black stockings, and hair piled high on the head, as young ladies aped their American lady teachers. Those who hesitated to take the plunge into the latest fashions wore versions of the traditional dress."¹⁰⁵

The embroidery industry on the other hand, benefitted from tremendous support and reached a height of development which surpassed that of the Spanish era. The American colonial administrators aimed to establish home crafts to supplement agriculture and other existing industries.¹⁰⁶ The purpose was to increase the earning capacity of families and to improve the living conditions of communities but like the Spanish colonizers, the Americans saw in the young *bordadoras* an aptitude for fine embroidery a great opportunity for expanding an export industry.

The educational system was organized to systematically upgrade the local industry and skills. The *beaterios* or convent schools, which had always included industrial work in their curriculum, remained instrumental in training artisans. Young girls were taught lace-making, crochet, and embroidery from Grade I to Grade VII, and many of them helped to supplement the income of their families while doing their regular work in school. Among the convent schools for girls were the Colleges of La Concordia, La

¹⁰⁴ James A. Le Roy *Philippine Life in Town and Country* (New York and London: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1905): 45-47.

¹⁰⁵ Montinola, p. 164.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid*, 165.

Consolacion, Santa Rosa, and St. Paul in Manila. With a growing demand for private education for young girls and the emphasis on learning a craft, more schools were founded all over the country. Prominent among schools with a reputation for doing fine industrial work were the asilos or schools attended by orphans and the poor, such as the *Hospicio de San Jose* and the *Asilo de San Vicente de Paul* in Manila. The nuns continued the instruction of young children to do high quality work so that they could acquire a trade that would enable them to earn a living outside the *asilo*. Belgian nuns opened schools in Manila and in other provinces with the idea of teaching children how to make several kinds of textiles especially embroidered lace of commercial value. In only a short time, they were filling orders for top-grade embroidered pieces.¹⁰⁷

Among the expensive embroidery work found in the convent schools were beautiful pieces in etching or in shadow embroidery, some of which were produced under a magnifying glass. Pieces of high quality work were also exhibited in various exhibitions, among them the Pan American Exhibition in 1901 and the Panama-Pacific Exposition at San Francisco in 1915.¹⁰⁸

The School of Household Industries was created by an Act of the Second Philippine Legislature in 1912 to further spread the interest in embroidery and to counteract cheap work and sweatshop methods.¹⁰⁹ The purpose was to train young women from different provinces in various household industries so that they in turn would organize classes and establish working centres for the production of lace, embroidery and other needlework in their hometowns after leaving school. The demand

¹⁰⁷ P.S. O'Reilly, "Industrial Education in Private Schools for Girls," *The Philippine Craftsman* 3 (February 1915): 627-28, 631-32.

¹⁰⁸ No author. Editorial Section, *The Philippine Craftsman* 2 (April 1913): 117.

¹⁰⁹ "The School of Household Industries," Bulletin No. 45, Bureau of Education (Manila: Bureau of Printing, 1912): 5.

for superior quality work especially in the US, was steadily increasing, and it was thought that by adhering to the high standards taught in the school, the products of the centres to be organized by the graduating students would have a ready market and would establish a new standard of excellence for Philippine embroidery and other textiles.¹¹⁰ These schools, as it turned out, were set up as huge workshops for a lucrative embroidery trade with the young female students as the formidable work force.

Philippine embroidery remained popular and in demand over the next ten years. Embroidery centres spread throughout the lowland region of Luzon; these were established by women who were once students in the beaterios and the industrial arts schools in Manila. The demand for embroidered *piña* began to decline by the 1920s, the same time as the decline in the purchasing power of Americans. Consumers sought out bargains rather than exquisite cloth and embroidery. Substitutes for local handmade fabrics were introduced from the United States and the indigenous and *piña* textiles industry declined further.

The Philippine traditional textile industry had been a thriving industry, but now in the twenty-first century it is barely sustainable. In addition to declining economic activity, the cultural traditions preserved by textile production have seemingly faded. Several factors contributed to this slow decline. Raw materials were hard to find as some plants (the source of natural materials) were slowly disappearing because of overuse when materials were available, they were so expensive for weavers to afford. Another factor was the low demand for traditional textiles as Filipinos can only afford to purchase cheap mass-produced fabrics from other countries, it appears the younger generation is no

¹¹⁰ “The School of Household Industries,” Bulletin No. 45, Bureau of Education (Manila: Bureau of Printing, 1912): 5.

longer interested in continuing the tradition. Weaving and embroidery are viewed as time consuming and unprofitable and many prefer working for multi-national corporations in the urban centres.

The once flourishing art form created by numerous anonymous young *bordadoras* that was collected internationally helped to place Filipino artistry and skill in embroidery on the world stage. Although the social history of the Philippines and the history of embroidery are important, it is also important to undertake an art historical examination of the objects themselves.

Postcolonial theory has contributed to an expanded discussion that brings marginalized groups toward the centre, in relationship to art history it still suffers from a troubling dependence on a linear western art historical cannon that can be traced back to the Great Exhibition. This traditional approach emphasizes clear or “pure” categorizations of peoples, materials, forms, and ornamental styles that again reflect the ways in which the Great Exhibition of 1851 was designed. This leaves out any narratives of hybridity or uncomfortable mixing. The *pañuelos* created by the *bordadoras* fall into this gap and therefore remain largely unexamined. Chapter Three, the theoretical framework will argue that the gap in postcolonial theory around mixed race theory parallels the gap in art history that does not address craft history. This chapter will theorize why the marginalization of labour parallels the marginalization of the craft.

Chapter Three:

Theoretical Framework:

Feminist Postcolonial Theory

To define women artists as an homogenous cohort, irrespective of the dynamics of their histories, or to seek in women's art some monolithic 'female essence', preceding specific practices as their knowable 'origin point', erases differences between women and reinstates that exclusionary paradigm which rendered female subjectivity invisible, illegible and impossible to articulate. Moving beyond that logic to engage with women's art and radical difference interrogates traditional modes of historical enquiry; the nature of the artist, concepts of authorship, intentionality and the very definition of 'art'.¹¹¹

Over the past forty years, a substantial body of literature on the topic of women artists and their work has clearly demonstrated that women have been active participants in the cultural and social production of art for centuries. Born out of the feminist movement in the 1970s, writing about women artists and the ability of women to create art that influences change in the way we think about the world has been an important agenda for a number of feminist art historians, critics and artists. The results are mixed. While the art historical canon now includes a larger number of women (not difficult to do as H. W. Janson's seminal art history textbook Janson's *History of Art* was first published in 1962 and contained no women artists until 1978¹¹²) it still suffers from a lack of inclusion of artists of colour, as well as craft objects which continue to fall outside art history's holy

¹¹¹ Marsha Meskimmon, "Introduction" in Marsha Meskimmon's *Women Making Art: History, Subjectivity, Aesthetics*, London: Routledge, 2003, p. 3.

¹¹² Janson's book was not revised thoroughly until 2006, an event so momentous that even the New York Times wrote an article on it. See Randy Kennedy, "Revising Art History's Big Book: Who's In and Who Comes Out?" *New York Times*, Art and Design section, 7 March 2006 <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/03/07/arts/design/revising-art-historys-big-book-whos-in-and-who-comes-out.html> accessed 6 October 2016.

trinity of the fine arts: sculpture, painting and architecture. How, then does a thesis on embroidery done by orphaned Filipino girls fit into art theory and feminist postcolonial theory, both of which struggle to fight the art historical canon? As this chapter will demonstrate, despite the advances in theoretical writings that address the gaps in art history, the topic of this thesis is important for the ways it questions what remains unaddressed: the discomfort felt by theorists when faced with objects and makers who mix race and materials to create social and cultural hybrids like the bordadoras who created the exquisitely embroidered pañuelos which form the case studies in this thesis. To understand why contemporary theory struggles with hybrid craft producers and their artworks it is necessary to provide a brief overview of the development of feminist postcolonial theory.

Feminist art theory developed during the time of second wave feminism in the Western world. Pioneers of feminist art critiques and writings that began to include craft concerns were the art historians Griselda Pollock, Linda Nochlin and Lucy Lippard. These women were instrumental in the initiation of feminist discourse concerning the (in)visibility of women in the art world. Notably, Linda Nochlin's landmark essay published in 1971, *Why Have There Been No Great Women Artist?* which was pivotal in addressing and challenging the issue of gender inequality in the overtly white male dominated art world. Nochlin describes her sense of excitement as feminist scholars took on the task to document the historical, political and artistic contributions of women in society, because the significance of long-forgotten women and their art began to unfold in scholarly articles, art history lectures and exhibitions:

[...] It was no mere passive conjunction of events that united me to the history of that year [1969] and those that followed, but rather an active engagement and participation, a sense that I, along with many other politicized, and yes, liberated,

women, was actually intervening in the historical process and changing history itself: the history of art, of culture, of institutions and of consciousness.¹¹³

These pioneering efforts of the second wave Western feminist scholars in redressing history and the issues of gender inequality were fundamental to the cause of feminism. However, as genuine as these efforts, they were also seen as problematic in a reductive and essentialist way by scholars of colour.

In her seminal essay published in 1986, *Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses*, Chandra Talpade Mohanty points out the problem of methodological universalisms and the treatment of women's oppression as a global phenomenon. She underscores that feminism is not singular but rather a multiplicity.¹¹⁴

Mohanty argues:

It is in the production of this third world difference that Western feminism appropriate and colonise the constitutive complexities which characterize the lives of women in these countries. It is in this process of discursive homogenization and systematization of the oppression of women in the third world that power is exercised in much of recent Western feminist writing, and this power needs to be defined and named.¹¹⁵

One could argue that the same issue applies to art history, where art, like feminism, is often considered to be a singular entity, rather than a complex multiplicity of materials, forms, ornamentation and cultural traditions. Instead art theory unapologetically privileges capital "A" art which is Eurocentric, drawing upon European artists, philosophies and notions of progress. The remainder of this chapter traces the development of feminist postcolonial art theory by exploring the works of feminist art

¹¹³ Linda Nochlin, "Memoirs of an *Ad Hoc* Art Historian" in *Representing Women*, NY and London: Thames and Hudson, 1999, p. 33.

¹¹⁴ Chandra Talpade Mohanty, "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourse" *Feminist Review*, No. 30 (Autumn, 1988), pp. 63 and 74.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 63.

historians and feminist postcolonial theorists. By doing so, I intend to address the following: a) the historical context that brought about the need to develop a new paradigm for criticality in the visual arts. What transpired in the last three decades that allowed the flourishing of work in this area? b) What was the reception of feminist postcolonial theory in the field of art history and visual studies? And, c) By engaging a feminist postcolonial perspective, how does one view the visual arts differently?

Postcolonial feminist theory and its influence on postcolonial feminist art theory:

I do, however wish to help make a world wherein scholarship and work by black women is valued so that we will be motivated to do such work, so that our voices will be heard. I wish to help make a world where our work will be taken seriously, given appreciation, and acclaimed, a world in which such work will be seen as necessary and significant.¹¹⁶

The Civil Rights movement, Black Power, the Student Peace Union and the anti-war movement of the 1960s were instrumental in the formation of Women's Studies programs in the 1970s which, according to Stanlie James, "by 1985, numbered nearly 500 in universities and colleges across the USA, along with some 50 research centers for women."¹¹⁷ The second wave of feminism found a voice in the midst of many other social movements in the 1960s and continued into the mid-1990s. Although the second wave drew in women of colour in the United States and from the global south, all seeking

¹¹⁶ bell hooks "Feminist Scholarship: Ethical Issues" in bell hooks' *Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black* (Boston: South End Press, 1989) p. 48.

¹¹⁷ Stanlie James, "Introduction" in Stanlie M. James and Abena P.A. Busia, eds. *Theorizing Black Feminisms: The Visionary Pragmatism of Black Women* (London: Routledge, 1993) p. 3.

sisterhood and solidarity, educated white middle-class women dominated this generation of feminists.

The dynamism of the second wave feminist movement gave impetus to art historians and critics as well as women artists. In an interview with Maura Reilly, Nochlin states that "in 1970 there was no such thing as a feminist art history [...]. New materials had to be sought out, a theoretical basis put in place, a methodology gradually developed."¹¹⁸ At the same time, women artists pushed the boundaries set by art institutions and moved towards the forefront of art production. Not only did feminist artists challenge the notions of domesticity, femininity and motherhood in art, but also French feminist theorists Luce Irigaray and Julia Kristeva were influential in the engagement with psychoanalysis in feminist art practice. For example, Mary Kelly's feminist and psychoanalytically informed narrative installation, *Post Partum Document* (1973-79), a six-part process-based project, had a profound influence through its critique of conceptual art. *Post Partum Document* is a six-year exploration of a mother and child relationship wherein one part of the project, *Document I*, Kelly diligently collected her son's fecal stained diaper liners and recorded his feeding chart. This installation according to Katy Deepwell is Kelly's approach to "Kristeva's analysis of "Women's Time" and redeploys Foucauldian ideas of history as a form of genealogy and archaeology, continuing her critique of and dialogue with Lacan concerning femininity and the construction of women's identity."¹¹⁹ With Kelly's use of unconventional materials and diligent record keeping for a period of six years, the project provoked the

¹¹⁸ Maura Reilly, "Linda Nochlin on Feminism Then and Now" in *ArtNews*, vol. 114, no.6, (June 2015), p. 71.

¹¹⁹ Katy Deepwell "Introduction" in Katy Deepwell, ed. *New Feminist Art Criticism: Critical Strategies* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press: 1995) p. 4.

audience to question what can be shown as art and further expanded the limits of materials in art making. Nonetheless, the project triggered outrage from the public when it was first shown at the ICA in London, England in 1976.

Feminist artists, art historians and critics came to question the under-representation of women artists and their works in the major art institutions. The infamous poster by the Guerilla Girls publicly exposed the issue of gender inequality in the art world. However, as the focus of second wave feminist agenda was to rid society of male oppression, the notion of universal womanhood came into question. During second wave feminism the crafts entered art theoretical discourse. Specifically, craft was linked to domestic art production and the separate sphere in which they were created. Craft was private and Art was public. The art historian John Ruskin first theorized this in his polemical 1865 essay “Sesame and Lilies” in which he described the separate duties of men and women in relation to their essential differences. In the section “Of Queens’ Gardens” Ruskin argued that women were to use their craft and domestic skills to act as the moral guides for men, and their influence remained in the home.¹²⁰ To many second wave feminist art historians including Griselda Pollock and Roszika Parker, this was a perfect example of repressive Victorian ideas of femininity, although they drew from it Ruskin’s acknowledgement of the importance of female domestic craft production. While second wave feminist art historians did an excellent job introducing these lost histories of women’s craft making, it was privileged, white crafts that were the focus. This left the art historical canon relatively untroubled.

¹²⁰ John Ruskin, “Of Queens’ Gardens,” in *Sesame and Lilies*, (1865), <http://www.bartleby.com/28/7.html> accessed 6 October 2016.

Third wave feminism developed in the mid-1990s as academic women of colour challenged the notion of universal womanhood. Art historian Lisa Bloom describes this new approach by women of colour in academia as:

a discussion that is occurring both inside and outside the field of Art History regarding a feminist visual culture and how it can develop new paradigms of social criticism that do not rely on either the traditional underpinnings of the discipline nor on unitary notions of “woman.”¹²¹

Women artists of colour who found themselves outside the frame of dominant feminism contested the terms of the discourse and a new theoretical framework informed by postcolonialism and postmodernism emerged during the third wave of feminism. The application of a feminist postcolonial theoretical framework in the fields of art history and cultural studies opened up a new set of questions for discussion. Unfortunately, these new discussions rarely included craft. If it was present it was used as material culture background to describe personal narratives. In her 2004 book *Belonging: A Culture of Place*, bell hooks uses the quilts in her grandmother’s house to describe her own subjectivity as an African American scholar.¹²² While this is a powerful way to integrate craft and race, it highlights how craft operates as an easy marker of domestic identity. Craft here is not seen as art. It is not recognized as an artistic achievement of the maker. It represents home, comfort, love and female expectations around labour. Ironically, hooks’ use of craft can be seen as unwittingly echoing Ruskin’s segregation of art, labour and materials in “Of Queens’ Gardens.”

¹²¹ Lisa Bloom, “Introducing with Other Eyes: Looking at Race and Gender in Visual Culture” in Lisa Bloom, ed. *With Other Eyes: Looking at Race and Gender in Visual Culture*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999, p.1-2.

¹²² bell hooks, *Belonging: A Culture of Place*, New York and London: Routledge, 2004.

This is not to say that global craft production is absent in postcolonial writings. It is common but is found most often in anthropological writings where textiles are popular as starting points for discussions around labour, class, and race. Joan Livingston and John Ploof edited the seminal text *The Object of Labor: Art, Cloth and Cultural Production* in 2007 which brought together an interdisciplinary mix of scholars studying textiles, however the majority of the book's essays utilized an anthropological framework to discuss non-European cloth production. Similarly, Mary A. Littrell and Marsha A. Dickson's book *Artisans and Fair Trade: Crafting Development* made an important contribution to theories around the global trade in textiles, but again, utilizing an anthropological lens. *Piña* has been the subject of anthropological investigation by the Canadian anthropologist Lynne Milgram, who again approaches it as an anthropologist rather than as an art historian. As long as global textiles such as those examined in this thesis are regarded as anthropological objects they will remain ethnographic curiosities, reinforcing the ways in which they were regarded in the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It is time to shift the focus. These textiles are art and are deserving of the recognition second wave feminist art historians fought for when they argued that domestic craft production was legitimate art. It is essential that theoretical gaps are addressed or art history will march forward continuing to obscure the work of non-European craftspeople like the bordadoras. Therefore, the methodology employed in this thesis has been carefully developed to balance the need to read the textile case studies as art objects while simultaneously providing a social art historical approach.

Chapter Four:

Feminist Methodology

To write this piece I have relied on fragments, bits and pieces of information found here and there.¹²³

My interest in works of art, historical artifacts and museums has been the starting point of my research projects past and present. I am particularly interested in the Western interpretation of material culture from my homeland, the Philippines. These objects in the collections of public museums and galleries in Europe and the United States, which I will refer to as Filipiniana, were acquired through colonization. They are meticulously stored in controlled environments and catalogued according to a Western classification system that has been in place since the nineteenth century. Material culture is tangible evidence that helps inform our understanding of the relationship of people and society to the objects consumed and collected. An object or artifact embodies the process of making, the culture of the maker as well as the consumer, and contextually, it is a marker of historical, political and socio-economic significance.

When I began the research for this thesis, I first considered what art historical method to employ. In traditional art history, the preferred methodology was formalist, meaning that the art historian would undertake only an aesthetic analysis of the art work. This meant that any questions beyond the significant form of the art piece (here significant form refers to the composition, materials, scale, dimensionality and subject matter) would be excluded. Especially disliked by Formalist art historians like Roger Fry

¹²³ bell hooks, "Aesthetic Inheritances: History Worked by Hand" in bell hooks' *Talking Back: Thinking feminist, thinking black*, Toronto: Between the Lines, 1989, c1988: 8.

and Clement Greenberg were the banalities of everyday life. To them, the domestic sphere or kitsch (meaning easy imagery borrowing from popular culture) was a distraction from the sublime liminal effects achieved by “Great” artworks. Indeed, the embroideries done by young Filipina women, like those contained in this thesis, would automatically fall outside the boundaries of art because they were not only too bound up with gender and domesticity, they were outside the progressive European art world. Despite the fact that Formalist art historians neglected pieces like these, the textiles analyzed in this thesis were still impacted greatly by the demands of the European art world; the patterns in these embroideries were designed for European tastes and the stitching technique itself is European. This technique involves tiny, intricate stitches done on *piña*, creating an overall design that appealed to traditional European taste and was exotic in material and origin. Embroidery is a tradition in the Philippines but the type of embroidery was not of European style until colonialism. As is the case in so many histories of colonial art production, indigenous materials and patterns were modified to suit dominant tastes. If one was to analyze a piece of this needlework utilizing only Formalism, then the intricacies of social art production could be glossed over entirely as was the case in the pieces documented in European and North American museums.

Social art history became my preferred methodological approach for this thesis. It encourages art historians to embrace the social, economic and political motivations of artists, therefore expanding beyond the significant form preferred by earlier white, male art historians. Janet Wolff’s 1981 book *The Social Production of Art* revolutionized how art can be read. It is no coincidence that it emerged at the same moment that feminist art historians like Roszika Parker urged art history to include crafts such as embroidery in its canon. A social art historical analysis allows for an appreciation of aesthetics while

opening up the discussion to larger issues around race, class and gender. It reflects the methodologies that make up the interdisciplinary magic of gender and women's studies programs where economic, social, racial, class and gender politics are examined equally. It is essential to use a social art historical methodology in this thesis as it engages with economic capital, third wave feminism and post colonialism in relation to the textiles under study. As argued previously in the theory chapter, social art history is important because it provides reflection on the spaces in between dominant discourses – the gaps where hybridity and craft materials have languished as unspoken subjects for far too long.

The application of feminist methodology in historical research and material culture studies offers a means of organizing and interpreting the material to address historiographical questions and issues pertaining to the contribution of women as active participants in the production of art and culture.¹²⁴ This type of critical analysis allows the feminist postcolonial researcher to grasp the root of social issues in order to tackle the questions at hand in a holistic manner, one where knowledge gained from the Western academy is applied or integrated to the knowledge and lived experience gained from the East. This approach produces an analysis that identifies symptoms but most importantly, it also exposes root causes of marginalization. Contextualizing history through material culture brings a practical way of learning and understanding the significance of events and issues in society and material culture analysis is a vital element in knowledge production.

¹²⁴ Linda Nochlin urges Art Historians to take on the revisionist project by inserting the neglected narratives of women artists in the discourse of Art History. See Linda Nochlin's seminal essay "Why are there no great women artists?" and the interview by Maura Reilly, "Linda Nochlin On Feminism Then and Now" in *Art News* June 2015, p. 71.

In the collections of European and North American museums and galleries are culturally significant material culture collected during the colonial era. The practice of collecting from ancient and non-Western cultures has been a long-standing tradition by the cultural elite beginning with the cabinets of curiosities in the 16th century. These objects are preserved and studied for ethnographic, historical and scientific purposes. While these pieces are meticulously catalogued, a vast number remain without proper attribution to their makers, place of origin, modes of production and physical descriptions. It is worth noting that the Western museological method of classification selectively elects what is relevant knowledge. This method tends to disregard the significance of a large number of non-Western objects and devalues Indigenous knowledge. With missing information, these objects remain hidden and inaccessible to the public. The inattention to these historical works reinforces not only a hierarchy among collected objects, but also marginalizes knowledge associated with the objects and their makers with regard to gender, class and race. Only recently have opportunities emerged to explore these inequalities.

I am a Filipina diasporic scholar who is benefitting from these new scholarly prospects. Ironically (or luckily), there are ideas and lessons that I learned in university in Canada about my own culture that I never learned in the Philippines: about the Indigenous Filipino script, baybayin that was obliterated by the Spanish during colonial times; and, the importance of craft traditions and how they have been undervalued in terms of skills and worth in Filipino culture.¹²⁵ Craft was a group of practices taken for

¹²⁵ Of late there has been interest in the revival of traditional craft techniques among the upper- and middle-class Filipinos. Maria Isabel G. Ongpin, an anthropologist and widow of former Philippines Minister of Finance Jaime V. Ongpin (Aquino regime) led the revival of traditional textile weaving by establishing the

granted as part of Filipino cultural identity. I grew up believing that craft could not be intellectually engaging. I was exposed to sewing through my mother's dress shop, located in Manila and I learned embroidery at the age of seven where it was part of the elementary curriculum in the Catholic girls' school I attended since Grade One. My mother and grandmother also were exposed to the same curriculum when they were students, and as a result, I have always had a history and an affinity towards textiles. Class is also important to my story because I did not learn the skill of embroidery as an economic necessity but rather as a form of finishing for a proper young lady. Nonetheless, in my mother's dress shop I was introduced to women who did use their sewing skills as a means of livelihood. I learned about the importance of craftsmanship and quality control because through spending time with these women, I was exposed to sewing skills, different provincial dialects, the Spanish language, and the language of piecework production. They were paid by how many buttons or sleeves they sewed in a day. When I returned to university after immigrating to Canada I found myself passionate about textiles, specifically Philippine textiles. I began to integrate materials from my culture into my art practice, and I explored techniques that I thought were traditional only to discover that some, like the embroidery traditions I thought were from the Philippines, were actually European influenced such as the whitework embroidery also known as the Dresden style.¹²⁶

This surprise over my own assumptions around textile traditions from the Philippines led me to research three examples of whitework. Whitework is a particular

initiative, Habi Philippine Textile Council, in 2012. This initiative aims to preserve traditional textile techniques such as *ikat* and *piña* and to promote these textiles in the global fashion market.

¹²⁶ Whitework is a satin stitch and drawn thread embroidery technique using white or ecru coloured thread on white or off white fabric. European nuns that ran the beaterios in the Philippines taught this technique.

embroidery technique popularized in Europe, which uses white or ecru embroidery thread on white fabric (or off-white coloured fabric). This embroidery technique applied to *piña* results in a delicate and intricate lace-like textile with much elegance that was fashionable in Europe from the mid-eighteenth century. The style remained popular until the early-twentieth century when the United States government took control of the Philippines. Once I had determined to explore these objects, I was faced with practical questions of method. As an Asian art historian working in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada, how would I access these sources? What online sources were available? And what were the implications of using two dimensional images for my object analysis?

Museum collections and archives are important primary sources for historical research. This primary data formed the basis of my critical feminist analysis of these material culture objects. Since I read and write several languages, my search of on-line databases was not restricted to the English language, allowing me to gather materials from England, North America, Europe and Asia. Rather than providing a straight aesthetic analysis, I approached these objects through the lenses of feminist postcolonial theory and the theory of intersectionality. Within this framework, I asked the following questions: 1) Where do we look for bits and pieces of information to create a narrative when the identities of the makers are considered irrelevant? 2) How do we begin to tell the narrative of the anonymous, the marginalized and voiceless individuals who created the objects found in art and ethnographic museums?

I found the embroidered *piña* textiles by conducting an online search of traditional Philippine textiles in European and North American museums websites. Such pieces are difficult to find as they are catalogued as ethnographic specimens rather than as works of art. The search results led me to archival photographs of young Filipina women working

on embroidery projects and digital museum collections websites that held Philippine textiles among their collections. These archival photographs of the young Filipino women are located in the Library of Congress's Frank G. and Frances Carpenter Collection, the University of California, Riverside's California Museum of Photography's Keystone-Mast Collection and the University of Michigan's Museum of Anthropological Archeology's Dean C. Worcester Photograph Collection. The three pieces of embroidery works discussed in Chapter Five are found in the digital collections of the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, England, *Museo Nacional de Artes Decorativas*, and *Museo Nacional de Antropologia* in Madrid, Spain.

My choice to contribute to Filipino history through the analysis of these three embroidered works offers an important way of re-interpreting the Filipino colonial experience through a postcolonial feminist theoretical framework. It also opens up questions about intersectionality, my subject position as the researcher, and access. I acknowledge that I am privileged as a scholar to have easy access to computers, the internet and vast networks of library and archival supports. I find myself experiencing an insider/outsider dilemma as my analysis draws from Western feminist theory, at times leaving me feeling like an outsider to my own culture. As well, my middle-class position growing up in the Philippines places me as an outsider in relation to the underprivileged girls whose work I am studying. This situation forces me to be thoughtful and considerate in how I place my subjectivity within the context of the art objects. As discussed previously, within traditional Western art history, the historian, critic or curators' subject position is not overtly stated; it remains assumed that the "expert" can apply universal aesthetic truths onto objects. Or as the historian Susan Sleeper-Smith argues:

The public museum became a meeting ground for the official and formal versions of the past. Because history was constructed through objects, curators created the interpretative context for each object. Objects that were placed in museums were initially decontextualized and made to tell an evolutionary narrative about the progress of Western societies and the primitiveness of Indigenous communities [not the subject position of the curators themselves].¹²⁷

My struggles to situate my own identity in relation to these objects is essential in order to address a lack in Philippine historiography as well as fill the gap in Western art history created by grouping such objects into an ethnographic mass. The Philippines is a diverse set of islands with an even more diverse population that consists of an estimated fourteen to seventeen million Indigenous peoples belonging to one-hundred and ten ethnolinguistic groups.¹²⁸ Therefore, the Western tradition of classifying objects to one homogenous notion of the Philippines means that its art objects have existed as a social, cultural and geographic construct designed by nineteenth century scholars and collectors.

It is also important to recognize that contemporary Canadian art historical methods, while vastly developed compared to the Formalist methodology preferred in the early twentieth century, suffer from their own gaps. Notable for my research is the lack of Asian art history in the country. We are a vast country with a relatively small population but the art history being taught and consumed in Canadian universities continues to reflect the Eurocentric art historical canon. While our classrooms are filled with students that reflect an increasingly hybrid, global population, they are not learning about art works that reflect their own histories. At this point in time, only a handful of dedicated Asian art historians are tenured at Canadian universities and it is important that this

¹²⁷ Susan Sleeper-Smith, "Contesting Knowledge: Museums and Indigenous Perspectives," in Susan Sleeper-Smith (ed) *Contesting Knowledge: Museums and Indigenous Perspectives*. Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2009: 2.

¹²⁸ "Indigenous Peoples in the Philippines" *ph.undp.org* last modified February 2010. http://www.ph.undp.org/content/philippines/en/home/library/democratic_governance/FastFacts-IPs.html

number continue to grow in order to introduce students to art historical methods that open up discussion of art and craft works like the *piña*.

Any growth in the field of Asian art history depends on an increase in scholarly research and publications on topics including textiles from the Philippines. The limited number of Philippine scholarly publications may be attributed to a tradition of women's writing that developed largely among the middle class intellectual elite of the Philippines, as is true of Philippine feminism in the earlier stages when women campaigned for women's suffrage.¹²⁹ (See Figures 8 and 9) Although there are a number of prolific Filipina academics whose contributions inform Philippine studies, Thelma B. Kintanar points out that, "Not all women writers write from a fully developed or even an emergent female consciousness."¹³⁰ In addition, she asserts that the androcentricity of knowledge is due to the "legacy of male professors, advisers and critics who have shaped our academic lives that underlie our previous readings, especially of Philippine literary texts."¹³¹

Kintanar further states that feminist consciousness stems from:

Women reading women, questioning what we read starting from an androcentric position in which we assume and give assent to androcentric values both in the way we read and in what we read to the development of a feminist consciousness where we deliberately read as women, conscious of ourselves as "the Other" particularly in the reading of male texts.¹³²

Women's way of knowing brought about feminist epistemologies, according to Lorraine Code, "have exposed the androcentricity and, latterly, the racial, cultural, historical, class, and numerous other "centricities" of the epistemologies of the mainstream Anglo-

¹²⁹ Kintanar, 1992: 3. The struggle for Filipina women's right to vote spanned for three decades that began in 1906 and culminated on April 20, 1937

¹³⁰ Ibid, 6.

¹³¹ Ibid, 1.

¹³² Ibid, 6.



Figure 8

The National Federation of Women's Clubs of the Philippines took the lead in campaigning for women's suffrage in the country.

STANDING: Judge Natividad Almeda-Lopez, Bessie A. Dwyer, Florence D. Cadwallader, Atty. Rosario Ocampo, Laura L. Shuman; SEATED: Alicia S. Quirino (married to Elpidio Quirino), Geronima Pecson (who would later be the first woman senator in the country), Pilar Hidalgo-Lim, Sofia R. de Veyra, and Josefa Llanes-Escoda



Figure 9
Former first ladies, Mrs. Manuel Roxas and Mrs. Sergio Osmeña assisted by Filipina women representatives sewing the finishing touches to the last American flag on Philippine soil.

American traditions.”¹³³ The richness of feminist criticism lies in the plurality of approaches, which the feminist reader brings to both male and female texts.¹³⁴

How then to consider ways to counteract the fact that Filipina women’s history has largely been written from the perspective of outsiders? Important groundwork has been laid in the areas of Asian studies, history, philosophy, sociology, and women and gender studies but it is time to give agency to the voices of the women who not only produced the historical artworks under investigation, and to Filipina scholars who have struggled to gain acceptance within academia (in the Philippines as well as Europe and North America). So little research and writing has been done on the embroidered pieces executed by the *bordadoras* that the first obstacle is simply finding the works. The lack of information surrounding these artworks is a reflection of the method of collection and classification established in the West:

Ethnography has provided the “scientific” justification for much of the colonial project in the Americas and in Africa. The strategy emerged two-hundred years ago and persists to this day - it is a mode of thinking that has proven difficult to shake off and continues to influence how Indigenous peoples are represented in museums and related cultural institutions.¹³⁵

As a result, not only are there pieces that could have been classified as works of art with authored artists placed into collections as “ethnographic” specimens, they remain there today. The difference between how museums elevate a work of art with a known author versus one that is made by an anonymous maker toiling in a production workshop is significant here because it means a lack of record keeping, lower economic, symbolic

¹³³ Lorraine Code, "How do we know? Questions of method in feminist practice" in Sandra Burt and Lorraine Code (eds.) *Changing methods: Feminists transforming practice* (Peterborough: Broadview Press 1995): 15.

¹³⁴ Kintanar, 1992: 6. This is also the premise of the book *Why Stories Matter: The Political Grammar of Feminist Theory* by Clare Hemmings published in 2011.

¹³⁵ Ray Silverman, “The Legacy of Ethnography,” in Susan Sleeper-Smith’s (ed.), *Contesting Knowledge: Museums and Indigenous Perspectives* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2009): 9.

and cultural valuation, and limited opportunities for the public exhibition of these objects. Therefore, the methodologies I employ in this thesis have taken into consideration these absences.

Finally, a practical methodological question that I had to answer for this thesis is what are the implications of using two dimensional images for my object analysis? My undergraduate degree is in textiles and as a textile artist I am intimately aware of the power of material knowledge. To interpret an artwork one must touch it to understand concrete things that include structural elements such as the weight of the fabric, the weave of the cloth and its dimensions, as well as the surface of the textile – is it embroidered, screen printed, coloured with natural or artificial dyes, or is the ornamentation part of the structure, like weaving? It would have been impossible to undertake the writing of this thesis a decade ago, as the imagery available on-line was not of sufficient quality to allow scholars to see the physical details of textiles. However, enormous breakthroughs have occurred in relation to museum and archival on-line databases that have brought three-dimensional images to life on a two-dimensional screen. Notably, the image quality has dramatically improved. Now it is possible to obtain high resolution close-up images that in the case of this thesis, allowed me to see in minute detail the stitching of these textiles, the quality of the fabric's weave and the ornamental motifs. As well, on-line images are now available in the round, meaning that with some of the pieces I was able not only to zoom in and out of the images, I was able to rotate them to explore the front and back and well as the top and bottom. As a result, I am confident that the object analyses make a significant contribution to our understanding of the aesthetic and social history of these works.

Chapter Five

Object Analysis

As a textile artist I was drawn to *piña* embroidery not only for its artistry but also because of the labour involved in its creation. The production of *piña* itself is by hand even today. Extracting the fibres from the pineapple leaves is done by using a shard of pottery, then the fibres are bleached out in the sun before being hand knotted end to end then hand woven. It is one of the only textiles that cannot be produced by machine, a fact which led to the demise of the industry. This hand woven textile naturally lends itself to hand embroidery. To this day, hand embroidered *piña* is expensive because of its labour intensive nature, but most importantly, because of its delicate nature, *piña* appears like an ephemeral piece of lace. That is its magic.

The three pieces under investigation were discovered after I came upon a Spanish exhibition catalogue from the late nineteenth century while searching for Filipino women artists. The inventory for textiles listed *piña* so I began investigating museum sites to see their collections online. I started with England's Victoria & Albert Museum (V&A) where I saw accession records but no photographs. The Metropolitan Museum of New York (The Met) had numerous photographs of *piña* work but the specific makers of these beautiful objects were unidentified. I began reflecting on the fact that in every museum I visited, textiles were listed as ethnographic examples stating the Indigenous tribes while the artistry behind national Filipino costume¹³⁶ was only listed by place of origin with no Indigenous affiliation. Also, what is commonly known as the Philippine national costume

¹³⁶ The traditional national costume of the Philippines is the *Barong Tagalog* for men and the *Traje de Mestiza* also referred to as *Terno* for women.

for men, the *barong Tagalog*, and *traje de mestiza* also referred to as *terno* for women are not clothing styles indigenous but rather they are derived from the Spanish colonial era. These styles were the prescribed dress for which social class position to which one belonged.

The three pieces of *piña* embroidery under investigation are: a *pañuelo* created for a Spanish dignitary that features the person's initials (See Figure 10); the second example is another elegantly embroidered *pañuelo* produced specifically for the *1877 Exposicion General de las Islas Filipinas* (See Figure 11); the third example is a replica of a handkerchief created for Danish Princess Alexandra, to celebrate her marriage to Edward VII in the 1860s (See Figure 4, p. 30). All three examples were created in the nineteenth century and all three were fashioned after the monochromatic laces and whitework embroidery in vogue throughout Europe. Museum records confirm that at least two of the embroidered *piña* in this analysis were commissioned and were most likely produced by a young *bordadora*. The embroidery designs were most likely derived from European pattern books and not likely a reflection of the girls' artistic or design abilities but rather of their technical capabilities and skills in executing fine embroidery.



Figure 10
Pañuelo from the collection of *Museo Nacional de Artes Decorativas*,
Madrid, Spain
Piña
51 cm x 52 cm
Calado, whitework embroidery
Nineteenth century



Figure 11
Pañuelo from the collection of *Museo de Antropología*,
Madrid, Spain
Piña
84 cm x 84 cm
Whitework embroidery
c. 1887 (Nineteenth century)

***Pañuelo* (In the collection of the *Museo Nacional de Artes Decorativas*, Madrid, Spain)**

The first example under study, titled *pañuelo* (See Figure 10), was created between 1801 and 1900. It is cream coloured *piña* and it is described as *nipis*, which means it is a very thin fabric difficult to work with because it is so fine. The embroidered designs are tiny flowers and leaves adorning the borders with an inner circular border. In the middle is a laurel wreath with the initials “CT.” It is 51 cm by 52 cm in scale, so quite a good size. We do not know if it was actually used by the owner but it has some holes that would imply wear from use. The initials indicate that it was made for a distinguished person because the initials are the mark of a royal. This would be in keeping with the patrons who were able to commission and purchase such detailed fine crafts. Although I was unable to identify the specific maker and where exactly in Manila this *pañuelo* was made, it was likely made by one of the seven *beaterios* (a convent school or an orphanage for young girls) in the city of Manila because European and American dignitaries stayed in Manila when they were stationed in the Philippines.

The designs on this *pañuelo*, described in museum records as having the combined design elements of Baroque, Rococo and Neoclassical styles, were produced by Filipina girls. Yet, they bear no resemblance to any indigenous Filipino designs because these European designs had been forced on them by the Spanish. Traditional indigenous Filipino ornamentation vary from one tribe to another; the ornamentation is representational and would either be abstracted, anthropomorphic, or geometric patterns. Indigenous Filipino textiles would also be bursting with varied hues that bore no resemblance to the subtle European elegance of the white-on-white *piña* pieces. Another distinction between this *pañuelo* and indigenous textiles is that one can distinguish the

origin of *pañuelo* as a textile made by the lowland Christian (Catholic) converts. This is clear in the photographs of *las bordadoras*. (See Figures 2 & 3) The girls pictured embroidering the intricate patterns or most prestigious commissions are most likely between the ages of eleven to sixteen. Since girls started their training as young as age six, by age eleven, they were technically proficient.¹³⁷ The photographs feature discernable skin tones, differentiating between *beaterios* that were specific to Spanish girls only, ones who came from Spain with their parents but were subsequently orphaned, and indigenous and *mestiza* orphans with darker skin tones. All the girls wear simple Western-style clothing that was adapted to Filipino climate and bears no resemblance to the intricate and beautiful embroidered textile pieces they were making.

Part of the appeal of this *pañuelo* was that it resembled lace that was very popular in Europe yet was produced with exotic materials in an exotic locale. The embroidery technique employed on the *pañuelo* is called *deshilado* or *calado*, which means drawn thread work, a form of counted-thread embroidery created by removing threads from the warp and/or the weft of a piece of a plain weave fabric. The remaining threads are grouped or bundled together with a hemstitch forming a variety of patterns. This technique involves extremely detailed thread work that required the sharp eyesight and dexterous hands of youth. In addition, small dots of thread are applied around the border of the *pañuelo* that is approximately two inches thick. Around this border are flower and ribbon designs that are rendered to capture a three dimensional effect. Of the three embroidered *piña* discussed in this thesis, this example is the least documented.

¹³⁷ Patricia Justiniani McReynolds, "The Embroidery of Luzon and the Visayas" *Arts of Asia* vol 10 no.1 Jan-Feb 1980, p.129.

Pañuelo (In the collection of the Museo Nacional de Antropología, Madrid, Spain)

Of all the fashion accessories done in *piña*, none was as notable and beautiful as the *pañuelo*. This second object in the analysis is located in the collection of the *Museo Nacional de Antropología* in Madrid, Spain. (See Figure 11) This embroidered textile is one of the objects commissioned by Spanish naturalist, Domingo Sanchez for the 1887 *Exposicion General de las islas Filipinas* in Madrid. The museum record indicates that an unknown Christian convert in the Tagalog region of the Philippines embroidered this *pañuelo* between 1801 and 1900. With the knowledge that the embroidered piece was commissioned for an exhibition in 1887, it is interesting that the museum's archivist neglected to document the correct date of the piece. This inaccurate documentation of an important detail brings up the question of whether the museum and its archivists care about the accuracy of the collection's records. Along with numerous works from the 1887 exhibition, the object was given to the *Museo de Ultramar* in 1887 and was then acquired by the *Museo Nacional de Antropología* in 1908 when the *Museo de Ultramar* closed.

The *pañuelo* measures 84 cm by 84 cm in size. It is ivory in colour with an embroidered floral garland border in white linen thread. Various embroidery stitches such as the seed, satin, backstitch, and feather stitches were employed to create a floral garland design on to the plain-woven *piña*. This usually adorns the perimeter of the square fabric. Naturalistic floral and human iconographies derived from liturgical vestments were typical design choices on *piña* textiles. Until Spanish intervention, indigenous decorative patterns on clothing were geometric and stylized versions of flora and fauna similar to those seen today in the indigenous textiles of northern and southern tribes of the

archipelago. The Indigenous Philippine lowland peoples¹³⁸ who were Christianized and Hispanicized developed unique versions of the European Baroque embroidery designs that still reflect the surrounding flora and fauna in the islands.¹³⁹ The *pañuelo* was embroidered in a monochrome after the classic whitework or ecru laces in vogue in Europe. The adaptation of European aesthetics and the integration of *piña* fibres to indigenous Philippine textiles production created a hybridization that was reflective of the culture and racial background of the young women that created embroidered works.

The *pañuelo* evolved from the *alampay*, a Tagalog version of a large neckerchief worn over the shoulders and about the neck like a shawl with the ends pinned together in front. The *pañuelo* was the perfect accessory to cover up the sheer embroidered *camisa* (blouse) that the women wore. It was deemed the answer to the *cura parroco* or parish priest's edict that "the too-transparent and revealing *camisas* of the ladies should be covered."¹⁴⁰ The *pañuelo* and the *camisa* coordinated in fabric and embroidery. It was a distinctive feature in the *traje de mestiza* worn by the *Insulares* (Spaniards born in the Philippines) and the *Mestizos* (hybrid or mixed blood Spanish and Indio), and fashionable *Indios* (Indigenous).¹⁴¹ The silhouette of the entire ensemble resembled that of the ones in Europe.

The *pañuelo* must have been inspired by the nineteenth century shawl worn in Europe and America, Ann Hollander describes it as,

¹³⁸ The coastal and inland regions of the islands of Luzon and the Visayas are considered the lowland areas of the Philippines. The Spanish conquistadors and clergy settled these regions. The indigenous peoples of the northern highlands of Luzon and a large portion of the island of Mindanao remain non-Christian.

¹³⁹ I refer to the European designs as European Baroque since the designs were sourced from liturgical vestments in the 16th century.

¹⁴⁰ Montinola, p. 78.

¹⁴¹ The *Peninsulares* (Spaniards born in Spain) wore European, even Parisian fashions; the *Insulares* (Spaniards born in the Philippines) and the *Mestizos* (hybrid or mixed blood Spanish and Indio), and fashionable *Indios* (indigenous) wore the *mestiza* dress.

a cloak of propriety, symmetrically spread over all the busy flounces of the dress, covering the wide skirt like the cover of a birdcage, hiding the little waist and rounded bosom, and holding the elbows close to the body. It was the only proper outer garment: its cloaking action suited to the then current view of Woman.¹⁴²

The *pañuelo* or the shawl is not an invention of the Victorian era although it was commonly used as part of proper decorum. Its roots can be traced to the Middle East and Central Asia where it was a characteristic part of women's dress for centuries. Also, the word shawl is derived from the Persian *shal*. Embroidered shawls were also part of the upper class women's dress in China during the Tang dynasty and may have resulted from cultural exchanges brought about by trade with the Middle East.¹⁴³ From the eighth to the fifteenth centuries in Spain, the Moors influenced the use of the shawl. Although when the Moorish influence declined and covering the head was no longer required, shawls were used as cloaks. In the United States, as a result of the American Pacific trade, American women wore the *Mantones de Manila* and in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, British clippers took them to Great Britain.¹⁴⁴ Thus, the influence of the shawls went full circle from China to Manila, to Spain, and America, to Victorian England and back to Manila. By the late 1800s, the fashion trend was incorporated into the *traje de mestiza* of the Philippines from Victorian fashion.¹⁴⁵ Undeniably, the Victorian moral standards and sensibilities towards propriety were easily adopted in colonial Philippine society as it was in line with the strong patriarchal values upheld by the Catholic Church.

¹⁴² Ann Hollander, "The Subtle Language of Scarves," *Avenue* (December 1988), p. 149.

¹⁴³ Natalie V. Robinson, "Mantones de Manila." *Arts of Asia: Costume and Weaving*, (Jan-Feb 1987): 65.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p.68.

¹⁴⁵ Montinola, p. 81.

The Princess Alexandra Handkerchief (In the collection of the V&A Museum, London, England)

Handkerchiefs, according to Beverly Lemire, “were one of the most widely traded and widely smuggled commodities [...]to other world communities.”¹⁴⁶ In 1863, a prominent Englishman, Edward Parr, who conducted business in the Philippines and Hong Kong, commissioned an embroidered *piña* handkerchief that he presented to Danish Princess Alexandra on the occasion of her marriage to Edward VII (See Figure 4). The handkerchief was so well received by the royals that Parr commissioned two replicas from the same unnamed artisan. Parr’s granddaughter later donated the replica to the museum and this handkerchief is in the *piña* collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum in London today. In the case of the replica of Princess Alexandra’s *piña* handkerchief, although the museum’s record and the literature on embroidered *piña* infer to a possibility that a young *bordadora* known to produce such exquisite work must have been commissioned by Parr while in Manila, there is no definitive way to identify this talented artisan unless comparing the work against one that is signed. It was uncommon for *las bordadoras* to inscribe embroidered works for the commercial market.

While one of the methodological limitations of this thesis has been an inability to conduct personal visits to the museums where the *piña* examples are located, the physical descriptions offered in this chapter are attempts to establish a formal analysis based on one photograph found in the book, *Piña*.

The delicately sheer and lace-like *piña* handkerchief is an exquisite example of whitework embroidery. The scalloped edging is adorned with a continuous vine of tiny

¹⁴⁶ Beverly Lemire, “Review of *Interwoven Globe: The Worldwide Textile Trade, 1500-1800* edited by Amelia Peck (Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2013)” *Fashion Theory* vol.19 iss. 4 (2015): 462.

flowers and leaves done in satin stitch. The background of the border is in the *calado* or *deshilado* style lined with dots. A dense row of continuous scrolling vines with star-like flowers and tiny leaves make up the inner border. At each of the four corners of this border are two roundels lined with dots and flowers. A scalloped edging with more flowers and leaves form a border that reinforces the *calado* technique against the plain weave in the centre. The star-like flowers appear to be the *sampaguita*¹⁴⁷, a fragrant jasmine variety that is commonly found in the Philippines.

Piña was highly praised by visiting foreigners. European and American industrialists, clergy, scholars, and merchants have written about the extraordinary embroidered textiles. As noted in MacMicking and many visitors, *piña* was the best known of all the textiles produced in the Philippines and was “proof of the advance in the manufacturing arts.”¹⁴⁸ Market prices varied according to the *piña*’s texture and quality, ranging from “a bastard sort of cloth,” the lowest costing was twenty dollars, and reached as high as fifteen hundred dollars for a finely embroidered dress.¹⁴⁹ Another visiting scholar to Manila, L. Oliphant (1857, 1858, and 1859), described *piña* as “one of the most beautiful fabrics in Manila ... only used in the dress of the wealthy, being too costly for common use, and set the price of an elaborately embroidered *piña* dress at £300 and up.”¹⁵⁰ In addition, Morton J. Netzorg (1851) comments that its value was equivalent to the salary of a provincial governor.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁷ The *sampaguita* is the national flower of the Philippines proclaimed by Governor Frank Murphy proclaimed on February 1, 1934. Gregorio F. Zaide *Philippine History and Civilization* (Manila: Philippine Education Co., 1939): 11.

¹⁴⁸ MacMicking, p. 74.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 82.

¹⁵⁰ L.Oliphant cited in MacMicking, p. 82.

¹⁵¹ Morton J. Netzorg cited in MacMicking, p. 82.

Although it is a long distance away, Manila society reflected European manners and fashions in copies, adaptation or indigenization. The tastes of the aristocracy in the West rubbed off on the *Ilustrados*, the privileged Filipinos who were educated or travelled to Europe. The embroidered *piña* handkerchief and the *pañuelo* were incorporated in Filipino dress at the height of Victorian fashion in Europe. Nineteenth century portraits of genteel ladies in their *traje de mestiza* dress invariably showed them holding the ubiquitous *abanico* (Spanish fan) and a *piña* handkerchief, revealing how surprisingly up-to-date Manila was with the prevailing customs in the highest circles of Europe (See Figure 13).

The *piña* handkerchiefs had an international appeal. Not only were they finishing touches to a well-bred lady's wardrobe, they served as vehicles of artistic expression for elite women to flaunt their embroidery skills, and most importantly these became displays of wealth and taste. The *piña* handkerchief made an appropriate gift even for royalty, such as this one presented to Princess Alexandra and a small pocket-handkerchief sent to the Queen of Spain in (1858) that cost 500 Mexican dollars according to Sir John Bowring.¹⁵²

The handkerchief was not only an ornamental object. It was a fashion accessory that served as a means of communication. Together with the *abanico* or Spanish fan, handkerchiefs were coyly used in the art of coquetry or flirtation even when strict propriety was the rule. In courtship in colonial Philippine society, flirting was *de rigueur* despite the extreme conservative standards and religiosity of the period. According to Montinola, the fan and the handkerchief were suggestive of secret fantasies and elicited secret responses even though they were standard parts of an appropriate dress.¹⁵³

¹⁵² Bowring, p. 96.

¹⁵³ Montinola, p. 85.



Figure 12
Portrait of Agueda Paterno, sister of artists, Adelaida and Concha Paterno
(in *traje de mestiza* holding a *piña* handkerchief and *abanico*)
By Justiniano Asuncion, 1860
Oil on canvas,
84 x 65 cm

Husbands and suitors also used handkerchiefs as keepsakes carried to wars or on long voyages. Sometimes, names of ladies were embroidered into the fabric with human hair, a style that must have evolved from the tradition of Victorian hair work and mourning jewelry including the practice of carrying a golden locket with the hair of a loved one for sentimental reasons.

It is not surprising that whitework technique reached colonial Philippines because of its commercial ties with Spain and Great Britain, or from the European pattern books used in the convent schools, and perhaps the well-travelled *Ilustrados* brought this trend back from their travels of Europe. As mentioned in Chapter Two, two Filipino women artists from the *Ilustrado* class, Paz Longos and Adelaida Paterno, are known to have incorporated human hair in their embroidery works. The use of human hair simulates pen and ink drawings as evinced in Paterno's works. There are three of Paterno's pieces in the collection of the Bangko Sentral in the Philippines, one of which is signed by the artist (See Figure 7).

The variety and beauty of the embroidery on these three Philippine textiles give the *piña* visual and tactile appeal like those of the popular shawls that developed all over the world from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries. These three examples of embroidered *piña* are interesting examples of the merging of the Indigenous Filipino expertise in weaving and embroidery with the Spanish influence and European taste in design. The pastiche of techniques, materials, style, and cultural references makes it difficult to classify these textiles under the traditional terms of Western Art Historical categories. This analysis of the embroidered *piña* textiles brings to the forefront the need for a new methodology in addressing historical works by mixed race artists and makers, as well as the hybrid nature of their works.

Chapter Six:

Conclusion

Philippine textiles, in general, have a long and meaningful history. The multiplicity of influences arising from colonialism, race (in terms of indigeneity and hybridity), class, and gender have contributed to the complexity of the narratives behind these textile works. The study of Philippine textiles, in particular embroidered *piña*, is vital in tracing the relationship between the East and the West, especially since Manila became the centre for trade between Asia, the Americas, and Europe. These textile works symbolize not only the complex networks of trade and the cross-cultural exchange between the East and the West, but most importantly these embroidered *piña* textiles embody the labour of young underprivileged women whose skill and craftsmanship are glossed over in art historical research.

This thesis brought to light the importance and value of material culture research in understanding the valuing of women's labour, aesthetics, and social history. Hidden away in storage rooms, these embroidered works embody the untold narrative of the exploited young *bordadoras* in the care of the Catholic church. Embroidery was taught to girls as young as the six or seven years old by the Spanish nuns, and by the time they reached the age of eleven, these young *bordadoras* were taking on large commissions for wealthy patrons. Since the skill of embroidery was taught by the nuns, the technical and structural details of the embroideries were essentially European. The Spanish colonizers capitalized on the propensity of young Filipina women to weaving and needlework by developing a market for embroidered *piña* textiles abroad. While these young girls were

disadvantaged and had no means to pay tribute to the Spanish crown, they were subject to *polo y servicio* (forced labour).

There were disparities in the economic and socio-cultural lives between rich and poor Filipinos. The colonial economic structure, from the galleon trade to the various government monopolies, resulted in huge gaps between social classes. The socio-economic advantages of young Filipina women from the upper classes were in stark contrast to that of young orphan girls in the *asilos* and *beaterios*. This is evidenced in the reception of the embroidered textiles created by Paz Longos and the Paterno sisters, Concha and Adelaida. These three women had autonomy over their embroideries and their works were created for their leisure and personal use. They also were able to inscribe their names or initials on the embroidered pieces and display their talents in embroidery and art in prestigious international exhibitions. Their creativity was formally acknowledged in exhibition catalogues and art institutions, therefore, this enhanced their marriageability and status in society. On the other hand, the young *bordadoras*' works remain in storage and in most cases, these works are improperly documented in ethnographic museums. The embroidered *piña* textiles by the young *bordadoras* were uninscribed as these were primarily sold commercially. While there were some embroidered *piña* exhibited internationally in world's fairs the girls who laboured behind these pieces were not given credit and certainly we can infer that their labour was undervalued and underpaid. The lack of representation of these young mixed race *bordadoras* and their labour in historiography reinforces their marginality in society.

This thesis, "The Filipina *Bordadoras* and the Emergence of Fine European-style Embroidery," supports the project of addressing the gaps in art history, postcolonial feminism, and mixed race studies. While small, this thesis makes an important

contribution to these growing fields. I am well aware of the limitations of being a Filipina-Canadian scholar living in Canada and conducting diasporic research, however, due to the increasing scholarly resources available on the Internet I am encouraged by the research I was able to uncover.

There is a lack of theoretical and methodological resources in addressing the set of questions I have posed in this thesis. The gaps are in art history, global history, and labour history which are needed to address the labours of young women in the Philippines who are under-represented in historiography. As much as I was inspired by feminist postcolonial theory in this research, this body of work does not address the issue of mixed race in its scope. In the realm of race studies, mixed race studies is still an emerging field of scholarship with limited sources. I also found that there is a lack of current academic sources authored by Filipino scholars pertaining to Philippine culture and history available in Canadian university libraries, especially in the universities in Nova Scotia where I conducted my research. Collections in university libraries are reflective of the general academic research interests of their faculty members and the courses they offer. While there is a growing amount of Asian scholarship in Canadian university libraries' databases, the Philippines remains under-represented. An inclusion and recognition of the research produced by Asian scholars would be beneficial in conversations of race, gender, and class. Despite several decades of efforts to rewrite the art historical canon, it is clear that the study of global history will remain Euro- or Western-centric if it continues to be closed off to Asian perspectives.

In this thesis, I have identified the gaps in art historical scholarship on Philippine textiles and have identified the practical implications of misclassifying these objects. When they are treated as ethnographic curiosities very little effort is made to understand

who made them, why they function as art, and why the labour of their makers is important. This thesis and all other art historical writings encouraging curators and art historians to rethink their collections and collection practices can help to change perspectives and shift these hidden artworks not only from incorrectly labeled drawers, but ideally from the storage vaults to the museum and gallery walls.

As a Filipina postcolonial diasporic scholar, feminist postcolonial theory has been my foundational approach. In writing this thesis, I have been inspired by the works of feminist postcolonial theorists, such as Chandra Talpade Mohanty, bell hooks, Linda Tuhiwai-Smith, and Gayatri Spivak. Their writings motivated me to take on the task of investigating an important feminist historical and cultural issue. Further, I have applied Kimberle Crenshaw's theory of intersectionality to address the rhetorical failures within feminist and race studies. These include the analysis of the embroidered *piña* to compare and contrast the works of privileged young Filipina women and those of anonymous commercial *bordadoras* to highlight the social class distinctions at play. The maker parallels the hybridity of the materials used in the *pañuelos* themselves; not only were the makers able to adapt to the Western values that were imposed upon them in their colonial educational system, they created their own aesthetic and symbolic statements by subtly "Filipinizing" their artistic works. These women were given European pattern books but they created reflections of their own lived surroundings. The limitations of class, race, and gender on their social status impacted upon how much freedom they were given in their work. As a result, the makers were not considered artists in comparison to the privileged women who are celebrated artists in the Philippines and abroad; instead they were simply labourers, ensuring that their creations would remain in dusty museum drawers rather than being properly catalogued and exhibited. The intersectionality of

these makers is directly tied to the value (or lack of value) that is still given to their works.

A central question that inspired the writing of this thesis is who benefitted from the labours of the young women when the remuneration was very little for their intensive labour? It requires up to eight months to complete an intricately embroidered *pañuelo*. The payment from commissioned works went to pay for the girls' board and lodging, and if there was any compensation at all for their artistic labour, it was very little. The convents were run by the Daughters of Charity, a group of nuns who took the vow of poverty and service to the poor and therefore the religious sisters who continue today to operate these institutions rely on the "Grace of God" and charitable donations, not profit.¹⁵⁴ Unfortunately, despite my best efforts, this question remains unanswered, although it is possible to speculate that like so many craft producers, the profits were gained by the merchants and middle men who marketed these objects.

The research for this thesis incites other relevant questions. In particular, I am interested in how American regulations were enforced to guarantee the quality of works to protect against cheap and inferior quality of production. This leads to questions about how the extent to which regulations and trade policies continue to shape sweatshop production that is still in place worldwide. Unfortunately, by relegating the *pañuelos* of the *bordadoras* to ethnographic curiosities, we place them in the same category of anonymous labour as the makers of the cheap items of clothing we can so easily buy today. Furthermore, the makers of these goods are only valued within the Western

¹⁵⁴ Telephone Interview with Sr. Mely Espinili, Administrator of the *Asilo de San Vicente de Paul*, 27 June 2016. It is interesting to note that the Daughters of Charity founded Mount Saint Vincent University. Records from the *Asilo de San Vicente de Paul* was lost in the fire and during the war. Records for *Colegio de Sta. Potenciana* were destroyed in an earthquake.

institutional hierarchy when their economic and cultural value is acknowledged, a value determined largely by the naming of artists. Hence, there is a huge difference between the works of known artists and those of anonymous labourers. The works of the young female producers (despite being outstanding examples of textile artistry) are relegated to ethnographic specimens because the producers are anonymous. Despite the excellence of these pieces, they will never be acknowledged as artworks. This means they will rarely be exhibited, they are under-studied, and their curatorial interpretations will be homogenized, and essentialized down to the national identity of their makers. Yet, the distinction between Indigenous and mixed race works is important in Filipino culture. For example, the basketry originating from the Ifugao is attributed accordingly to the basket makers of the tribe whereas embroidery works created by mixed race young women from the textiles workshops in the *asilos* and *beaterios* of Manila are deemed anonymous in the museum's accession records. (See Figure 13) In this system, the aesthetic value of these textiles is also erased, and as this thesis has demonstrated, the artistry of these works is remarkable and well worth further investigation.

Another complicated question is how I, as a Filipina researcher, can assert that the cultural production by anonymous young Filipina orphans collected during colonial times is as relevant for study as the works done by white European artists and craftspeople? To do this, I must return to the idea of not homogenizing Filipino culture myself as well as avoiding the common danger of over-romanticizing the artistic production of my homeland that is apparent in contemporary revival projects taking place in the Philippines. It is with these cautions in mind that I endeavored to write a scholarly narrative of these exceptional artworks and the young women who produced them. However, once the stories are pieced together how should these neglected accounts be

inserted in the master narrative of art history? Should collecting institutions, such as museums, go through a reconceptualization to appropriately address the numerous anonymous works collected in the colonial era? The young women are an integral part of what makes Filipino culture and while their works are important in the proliferation of a craft tradition in the Philippines, a number of anonymous Filipino works remain in the storage rooms of major international museums awaiting to be uncovered. This thesis is but one small step toward uncovering and recognizing these works; exciting research in this area lies ahead.



Figure 13

Object Name: Carrying basket for sweet potatoes (*balyag*)

Artist: Unknown

Cultural Group: Ifugao peoples

Place of Origin: Philippines

Date: Early to mid-20th century

Materials Used: Rattan

Dimensions: H: 71 cm

Credit Line and Accession Number: Fowler Museum at UCLA.
Gift of Helen and Dr. Robert Kuhn. X78.2245

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