

Philippine native scripts as identity, promotion and preservation in the Filipino American diaspora through art

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Abstract

Due to our unique history, self identity has been a complicated matter and even much more in the diaspora. We seek recognition from the place we migrate to but we don't even recognize ourselves. While we have some symbols such as the Philippine Sun and Stars and Manny Pacquiao, it's time to use our scripts to identify ourselves to foreigners and ourselves.

One of the challenges Philippines businesses in the diaspora is identity. In intimate businesses such as real estate, insurance and medicine, we usually go to people we trust and who do we trust? Usually someone that speaks our language is familiar with our cultural traditions. The problem is that Filipinos can look like many different races. My father sells real estate but had a tough time getting walk-in Filipino clients because they didn't know he could look Chinese or Mexican.

Many Filipino Americans in their twenties and thirties may not be fluent with Philippine native scripts but they recognize it as much as the eight ray sun and 3 stars. Philippine businesses need to be identified by indigenous Philippine writing systems such as our Asian neighbors. We have "Filipino" plazas in San Francisco, California where you can witness our identity crisis.

Every person starts off as an artist. As we get older we forget how to let loose and create. Kids pickup on writing shapes of Baybayin without any issues. Using calligraphy art methods to write Philippine scripts has a unique trait that it can teach as well as entertain. Since the art usually doesn't stand alone, context and a conversation is

needed. While many may not be willing to learn the script via books or the internet, art is a digestible way to educate. The younger generation is looking for something tangible and right now. Art can provide that immediate need. Can one learn Philippine scripts through a canvas piece? Dance? Apparel? Tattoos? Perfume? Movies? Martial arts?

By taking an artistic approach to the Philippine scripts, it makes it more acceptable to the masses. It opens up opportunities such as in 2011, I did a project with the Contemporary Jewish Museum where I met with a female scribe hand writing the Torah to discuss similarities of our writing systems. In 2012, I introduced Philippine Calligraphy Art at the Asian Art Museum with Japanese calligrapher Aoi Yamaguchi with a 3 day lecture, workshop and live performance art on 15' long paper. It was the first time a Philippine writing system was prominently featured in the museum.

On a lecture, workshop, performance and art showing tour in Europe in June 2013, I saw the hunger for indigenous Philippine culture for identity purposes in their 1st generation with my own eyes. If this 1st generation is able to pick up on Philippine scripts, it will be a domino effect. I'm currently working on a series of calligraphy pieces that explores the subject of Filipino Americans in the United States Post Office, Baybayin & Ballet performance, Baybayin & Photography book, a documentary and expanding my apparel to Europe.

1. Introduction

This is my Filipino American story that's fairly typical of those who grew up in the culture rich San Francisco California Bay Area. In the suburbs I had friends who were African American, white Americans, Koreans, Vietnamese, Indians, Australians, Chinese, Japanese, Mexican, Polynesian and of course Filipino.

Unlike other Filipino parents, mine didn't explicitly tell me to speak English to fit in. I think it was because they grew up speaking English in the Philippines. They would speak to me in Tagalog so I understood but would reply in English. We went to a Filipino church, ate at Filipino restaurants and went to cultural festivals. I was fortunate to grow up in the where I did as we were surrounded by Philippine culture. I remember going to concerts and seeing cultural dances.

It was at one of these festivals where I first learned about the script. My formative years were in the 90s during what was considered the "Golden age of Hip Hop" where there was abundant socio-political messages in the music. Public Enemy, Boogie Down Productions, Paris, Brand Nubian and Poor Righteous Teachers were constantly playing in my cassette player. This music that spoke about black power, identity and knowledge of self lead me to research about racism and ultimately the autobiography of Malcom X. I even thanked the Nation of Islam in my year book. After reading countless books, I began to question myself. Who am I? Where did my last name come from? Did I have Spanish blood in me? Why was my grandmother obsessed with white skin? What were the effects of colonialism in the Philippines? Why don't I know much about my origins?

The only time I learned about the Philippines was looking through old books at my grandparents house. We had a Filipino club but One day in high school my social studies teacher briefly covered the Philippine American war. I took it upon myself to learn more about it. I looked up the Philippines in an encyclopedia and learned more

about American benevolent assimilation. In the Spanish colonization parts I learned about the Katipunan freedom fighters. One the images was the Katipunan flag.



Figure 1. Magdiwang Katipunan flag
(Wikipedia 2013)

I was intrigued by the Katipunan as I saw similarities with the the Black American nationalists of the Nation of Islam and the Black Panthers. I couldn't find much info about the Katipunan so I made a copy of of the encyclopedia page and took it with me to a festival where I met an old man who was selling books, flags and Philippine crafts. I showed him the flag and asked what I thought was a capital "I" representing *Independencia* at the time. I was shocked when he said it was our old alphabet and began asking him for more information. He didn't have any info or knowledge of it unfortunately. After searching through history books at the public library, I thought I wouldn't be able to find the whole character set. In 1996 I finally got a hold of a complete chart from a history book when I moved to the Philippines. I taught myself how to write the characters and learned the rules and history from the websites of Hector Santos and Paul Morrow.



The Tagalog Script

by [Hector Santos](#)
© 1995-96 by Hector Santos
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Figure 2. Bibinka.net screenshot
(Hector Santos 1996)



Baybayin - The Ancient Script of the Philippines

Figure 3. Ang Baybayin screenshot
(Paul Morrow 2002)

I learned it pretty fast but there wasn't any practical use for it other than being a gimmick. I remember at parties my friends would ask me to write girls names. I didn't realize the value of the script until I left the Philippines to live in San Francisco, California and started working with the Filipino American community. I learned that the script can be used as gateway to Philippine culture. In order to get a better understanding of the script one would have to look into other aspects of the culture such as language, geography, history and other surrounding countries. Because of my homesickness, I wanted to get a tattoo to represent my time in the Philippines. I did some research on the internet and found a tattoo artist named Aleks Figueroa from the Los Angeles, California area that specialized in the script.



Figure 4. FilipinoTattoos.com screenshot (Aleks Figueroa 2004)

I contacted him and made an appointment to get the tattoo done. I told Aleks that I was a practitioner of the script and he encouraged me to continue at an artistic level. After I got my family name done I wanted to show it off and explain it to the world. At the time, the only places online I could post and discuss with my friends was on Friendster and Myspace. Since there wasn't any blog dedicated to Filipino Tattoos where I can post my tattoo, I created PinoyTattoos.com. I uploaded my photo, wrote the meaning and a bit about script. To my surprise, people were leaving comments and e-mailing me asking if I could help them translate words and names. I would write the words and names on paper, take a digital photo and email it to them. While I was happy I was getting people contacting me seeking assistance, I was starting to get overwhelmed at the amount of requests. It started out as a few per week to almost everyday. During this time, I was working low paying job at a call center getting yelled at for 8 hours a day by customers and living in my sister's spare room. I decided to try an experiment and see if people would actually pay for a "translation" and art service. I didn't see anyone doing this for a Philippine script. I created a page on my PinoyTattoos.com website where people could order custom artwork for just \$5. To my surprise, it worked and I received a couple orders a week. Over the next few months I played with the pricing structure and within a year, I had a promising side business.



Figure 5. PinoyTattoos.com logo (Kristian Kabuay 2007)

About a year later I partnered with Ray Haguisan from Malaya Designs and started to participate as a vendor at Philippine and Asian cultural festivals from San Francisco to Los Angeles, California.



Figure 6. With Ray Haguisan at the Asian Heritage Street Festival in San Francisco, California, USA (Kristian Kabuay 2013)

After the success of PinoyTattoos.com, I started Baybayin.com to focus on Philippine scripts. I didn't want the script to only be associated with tattoos. The new website



Figure 7. Baybayin.com screenshot (Kristian Kabuay 2008)

would focus on my personal experience and the cultural and economic aspects. This lead me to doing lectures at universities and various Philippine Embassies in Europe where I personally got to talk to hundreds of Filipinos in the diaspora and hear their stories.

I am half Swiss and half Pinay. My mother is from Davao. I was born in Switzerland. Even though I always lived here, my brother sister and I have always been very attracted to our home country. My mother has always made it a point to keep us close to our roots and our family traditions reinforced that. My only disappointment is not being able to speak Tagalog, my mother having made the choice to speak English with us because she thought in would be more useful to us in Europe. I wish I could speak fluently, but it is somewhere in my mind that I will still be able to learn it at some point. It would mean a lot. The more time passes, the more I feel attracted to my country. I am now saving money every month in order to plan a big trip to the Philippines. As soon as my studies are finished I will take at least a few months off just to have time to experience the life there, not just holidays but the real life. My desire is to relate to my country, to my roots has become stronger and stronger. This is why decided to have this tattoo which will be really meaningful for me. I came across your work which completely fascinated me and left me the feeling that i wanted to know more. So here I am! Always hungry for more knowledge about the Philippines, it's history and culture.

Anne Rita - Switzerland, 2013

2. Identity

When I first started to frame my thoughts on the value of Philippine native scripts from a business perspective, I had a flashback to my youth when I spent hours at my father's office where he sold real estate. I am unsure why I spent hours there as we

lived close by. As a bored kid, I pass the time by drawing and trying to make sense of their dirty jokes in Tagalog. “Knock-knock, who’s there? Kal, Kal who? Kalbo!” (meaning bald head). It was a multi-cultural environment there were Filipinos, Chinese, and Caucasians all working together. I observed that while they were all working in the same office, each one had its own clientele mostly of the same nationality. If there was any deviation, it was a caucasian going to a non-caucasian agent. It was rare to see it the other way around.

As an immigrant, my father had a bad experience while working at one of his 1st jobs in America when he asked to go to lunch by a co-worker. The co-worker ended up making him pay for the lunch. While it could have been that the co-worker was just a jackass but it surely left a bad taste in my fathers mouth after coming from a culture of *kapwa* and the *bayanihan* spirit. Many immigrants share these types of experiences that sometimes may cause a certain level of distrust with others resulting in sticking to their own nationality for intimate business services like real estate, insurance, dentistry, mechanics and etc because of familiarity with cultural attitudes, language and writing.

3. Baybayin in America

Guro Dan Inosanto is a Filipino American martial artist who’s spend the much of his life teaching Filipino Martial Arts. He’s was also known as the student of Bruce Lee. In 2011 I had the honor to run a workshop at Guro Dan’s academy in Marina del Rey in Southern California with Jay Enage, the Founding Chairman of Baybayin Buhayin Inc. The lecture & workshop was part of Inosanto’s word wide instructor conference where his official instructors come in from all over the world for training. As part of this training, they were also taught about Philippine culture. Guro was so excited about the workshop, he had someone climb up a ladder and take down a few of the martial arts diplomas to show us the Baybayin as text, logos and signatures. Since I wasn’t allowed by the staff to take photos of the diplomas, I had to quickly scanning the documents and saw dates were from the 80s, 90s, and 2000s. Unfortunately some of them were wrong

but it's understandable back then because there were many resources to learn the script properly. What was also interesting is that some American Kali instructors signed in Baybayin.

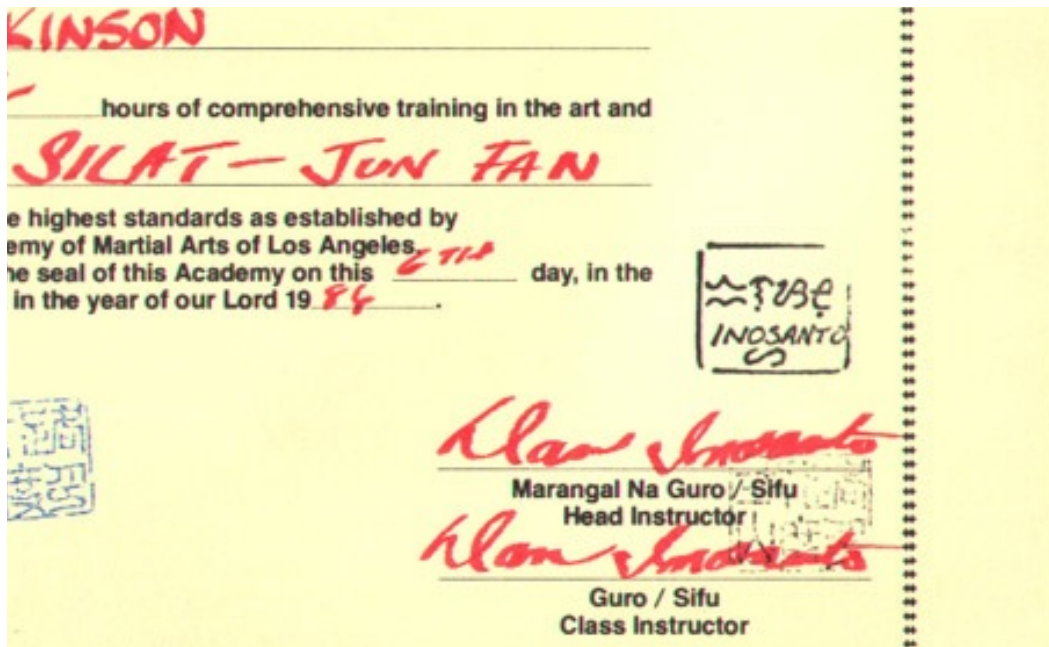


Figure 8. Inosanto signature stamp (Dan Insosanto 1986)

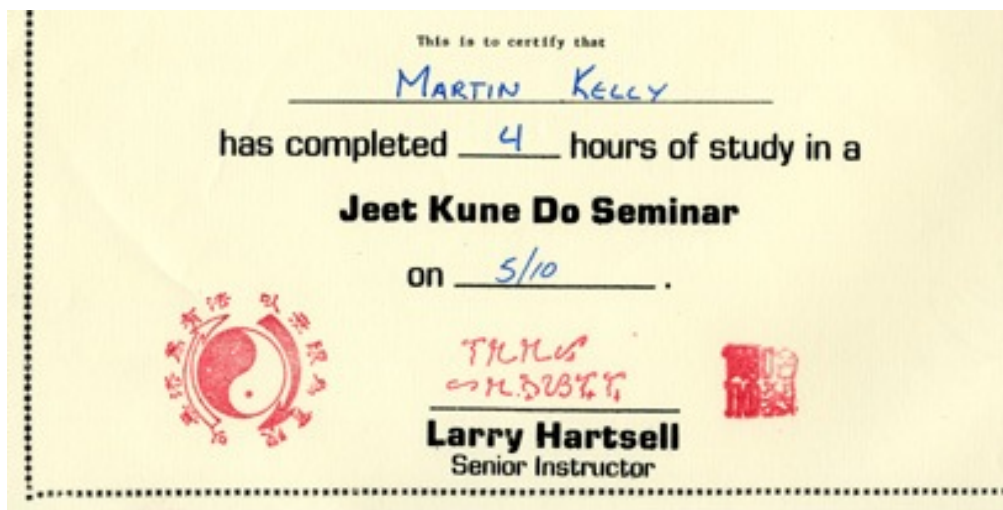


Figure 9. Incorrect signature stamp (Martin Kelly 1990)



Figure 10. With Jay Enage and Guro Dan Inosanto at Inosanto Academy of Arts in Marina del Rey, California, USA (Jay Enage 2011)

Guro was eager to talk to someone about the script, he even showed me that he still knows how to write his last name. When I met Dan Inosanto, he was 75 years old being born in 1936. He's by far the oldest person I met that knows the script. I asked him where he learned how to the script and he told me a story how he learned it from his father growing up in Stockton, California. Apparently, as a kid, he saw the script on a

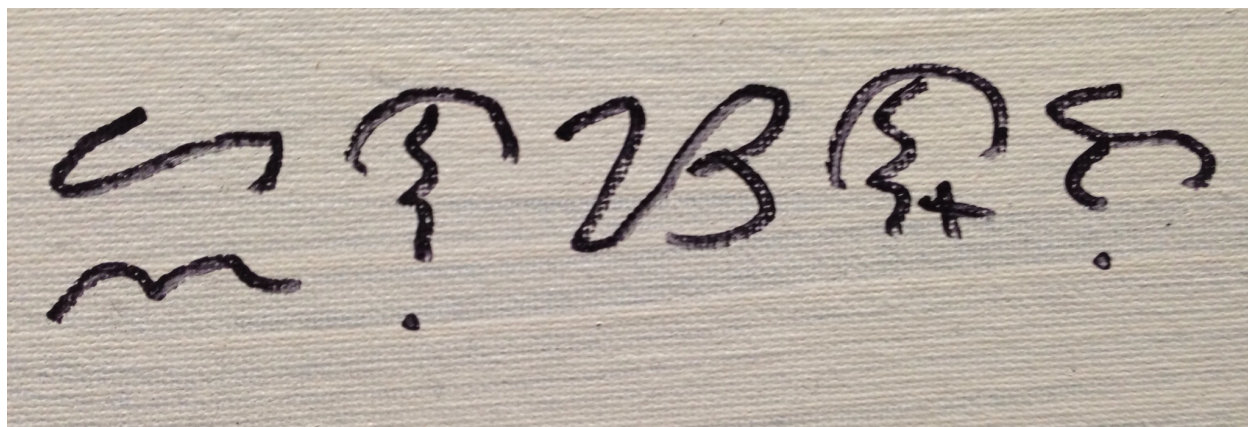


Figure 11. Inosanto autography (Kristian Kabuay 2011)

calendar and asked his father what it was. He also explained that grand masters knew the script and encouraged its usage.

This experience led me to the idea that practitioners of Filipino Martial Arts were the ones who brought Baybayin to America in en masse during the Manong migration in the early 1900s. Although, Guro Dan's father came to America via the Pensionado program that allowed Filipino students to go to an American college. These Filipino Martial Artists held on to pre-Filipino indigenous culture.

So what happened to the script in America from the early 1900s? Why wasn't it passed down to the next generations? The main reason was that they probably didn't use it on a regular basis like practitioners do today. We were lucky that the Manong generation was able to keep their martial arts because if it wasn't for that, we may not have seen it passed down to some students like Guro Dan. There was also the usual necessities of adopting American culture and language in order to survive. While this seems like it would be something passed on to children, many were not able to marry due to the lack of Filipina women in the US at that time. The disproportionate ratio between Filipino men and women was 20 to 1. Dating white women was socially unacceptable and it was downright dangerous to be seen in public with them. They couldn't marry these white women as it was against the law. Even if they did marry a white woman by driving out of California, the children were now part of 2 different cultures. The second generation Filipino Americans were then taught to speak English and be as "American" as possible so that they could get a job and live the "American Dream" and not go through hardships as they did. With that, cultural items like language, dance, martial arts and the script basically ceased in the name of survival and economic prosperity.

4. Filipino Americans

In the mid 1990s, in the San Francisco California area, there were a few factors that gave birth to the new Filipino American consciousness. With nearly 1/2 a million

Filipinos in the area, children of first generation immigrants of the 1970s were coming of age and looking for their identity. This search for self coincided with new college classes on Philippine studies, cultural festivals, technology advancements, Filipino Americans making a splash in American pop culture, Filipino businesses and the “golden age” of socio-political Hip Hop.

Philippines Studies became a popular course in colleges for Filams as well as taking part of cultural social activities such as Philippine Cultural Night and Friendship Games.

Young Filipino American businesses started to popup in the areas of promotions, entertainment, restaurants and apparel.

Technology advancements enabled individuals were now able to layout their own magazines with desktop publishing software. Digital scanners became affordable for artwork and font creation. It wasn't uncommon to have a recording studio in your bedroom. Digital photography eliminated the limit of of traditional film. Instead of reserving photos for higher priority items, one could document social gatherings and hobbies. However, the biggest innovation was the Internet as it allowed communication



Figure 12. Konshus Pages logo (Kristian Kabuay 1996)

with other likeminded individuals, story sharing, publishing and commerce. I started my very first website in 1996 titled Konshus Pages.

There were a few Filipino Americans that from San Francisco that made a splash on American pop culture in the 90s. Jocelyn Enriquez hit the Billboard music charts with her songs “Do you miss me?” and “A little bit of ecstasy”. DJ Q-Bert (Richard Quitevis) emerged as the best scratch DJ in the world winning numerous competitions. He was also part of the legendary DJ group, the Rock Steady DJs with fellow Filipino Americans DJ Apollo and Mixmaster Mike. Mike Francisco aka Dream was an internationally known graffiti artist before his murder in (2000). On KMEL, a popular radio station, you could hear Filipinos as the on air personalities. Comedian Rex Navarrete was a up and coming comedian. A singing group known as Pinay made their debut in 1995. Their logo was in Baybayin that read Diwa meaning spirit exposing it to a new generation of Filipinos. The effect was many Filipino American women getting the Baybayin tattoo thinking it meant Pinay.

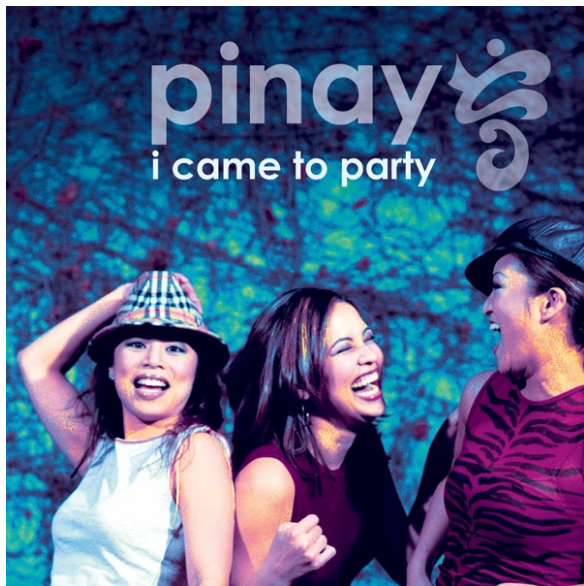


Figure 13. Pinay album cover
(Planet Hype 2004)



Figure 14. “Pinay” tattoo
(PinoyTattoos.com 2012)

The Fiesta Filipina and Pistahan festivals attracted thousands in the 90s bringing Philippine culture in the form of dancing, music and products and provided small Filipino entrepreneurs a venue to sell their goods. One of these vendors was Reflections of Asia who specialized in importing hard to find books on jewelry, music and clothing. This is where I bought my first Baybayin book, Baybayin: The Ancient Script of the Philippines by Bayani de Leon.

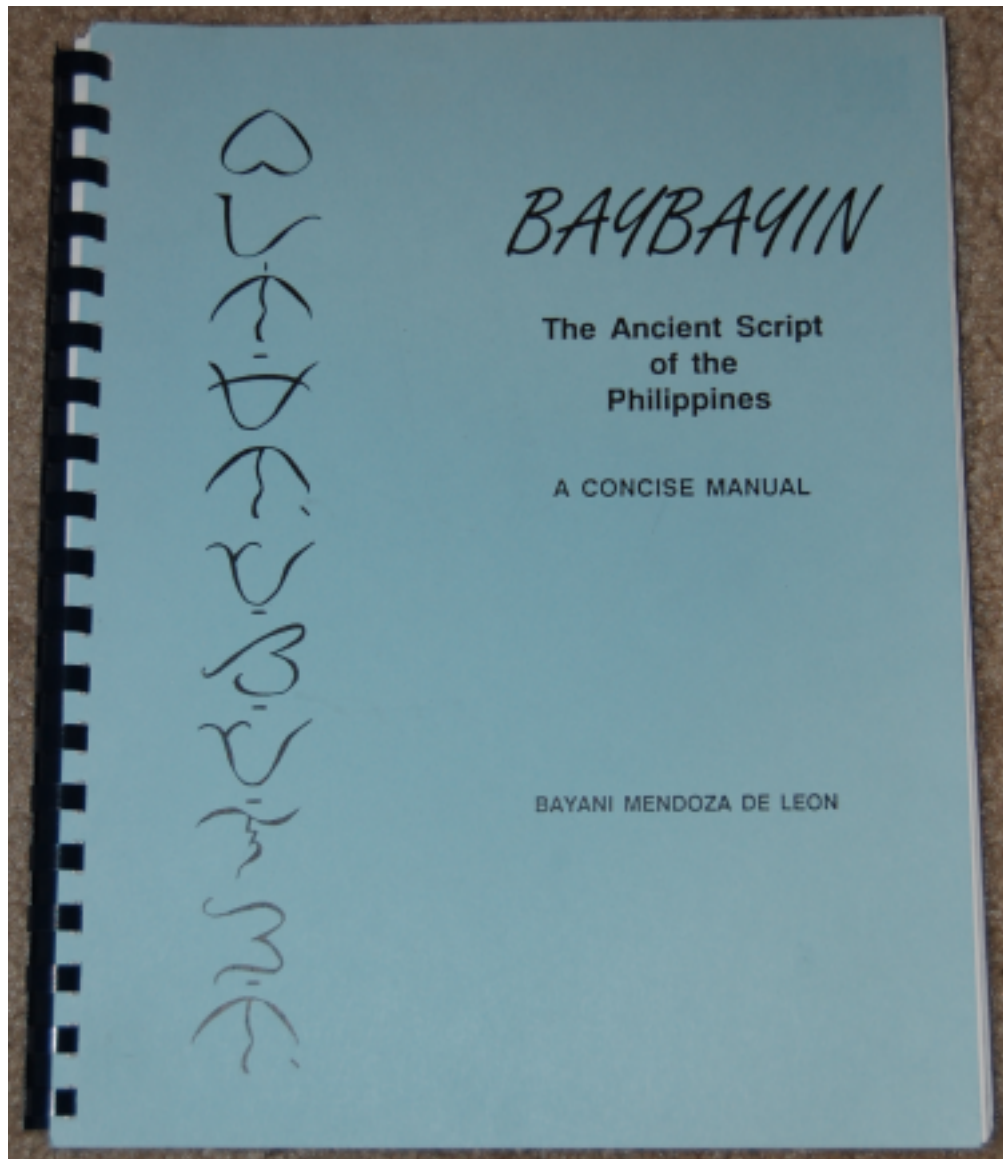


Figure 15. Baybayin: The Ancient Script of the Philippines (Kristian Kabuay 2010)

These developments in turn created perfect mixture that gave a sense of pride for Filipino Americans to see people from their same neighborhood and same nationality "make it".

5. Why the diaspora?

One of the frequent questions I get is "Why are most of the active advocates of Philippine scripts not from the Philippines?" This is a complicated matter with a lot of grey areas, but there are several factors that may explain why.

Living and growing up outside the Philippines gives us an itch that we cannot seem to fully scratch. That itch is our identity. While we mostly like living in America for the conveniences, many long for a cultural purpose and ask who am I? After we go to school, get a job and have a family, we finally have a chance to look at ourselves in the mirror. What do I want to pass on to my kids? What do I want to pass on to my community? When I'm dead, what do I want to be remembered as? The kids will eventually ask where am I from and for many of us, we're clueless. Other than lumpia and Manny Pacquiao, what else do we know about our culture? Dance? Martial arts? Cooking? Language? Weaving?

In the Philippines, by living there one is defaulted to being Pinoy. Even if you only speak English, go to a prestigious school like Ateneo, drive a Ford, only watch American movies, eat American food and wear American clothes.

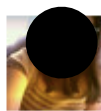
Because we live in a multicultural environment with the ideals of western individualism, we want to make a statement that we're Filipino. In America and Europe, Asian means Chinese or Indian. With all due respect, we don't want to be bunched in with the Chinese, Japanese, Cambodians, Vietnamese, Koreans or Indians. We feel the need to be recognized as Filipino. If we see a Filipino on TV, we need to post on Facebook that this person makes us proud as if we get a free ride on their

accomplishments. We don't want people to think that talented singer on American Idol is Chinese.

We have the luxury to be impractical and invest in our hobbies. Learning the basic rules of Philippine scripts is easy. One can learn it in an afternoon if needed. What takes time and effort is advocating in our spare time, such as making websites, art, traveling, being away from family and investing our own money. In the Philippines there are bigger issues that take precedence over the Philippine scripts. In the US, one may go to college to "find oneself" while students in the Philippines are groomed to think about what is practical and money making rather than exploring personal interests to see if they can make a living out of it. Is being a practitioner and advocate of the scripts going to put food on the table?

6. The value

The way the script is commonly taught is like math sprinkled with a little bit of history and treated as a cultural artifact. The teacher walks in the class, passes out a chart and advises there's a test on Friday - done. No discussion of value in the modern context other than an undefined chant of "Pinoy Pride". The ultimate question is what is the value of the script? In the Philippine context, is learning the script the same as learning historical events? How does it help me provide for my family?



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Dear SS Test, please explain to me how
I'm gonna use the Alibata when I'm
directing films, treating patients and
defending clients.....

Figure 16. Philippine college student complaining about having to study Baybayin (Twitter 2012)

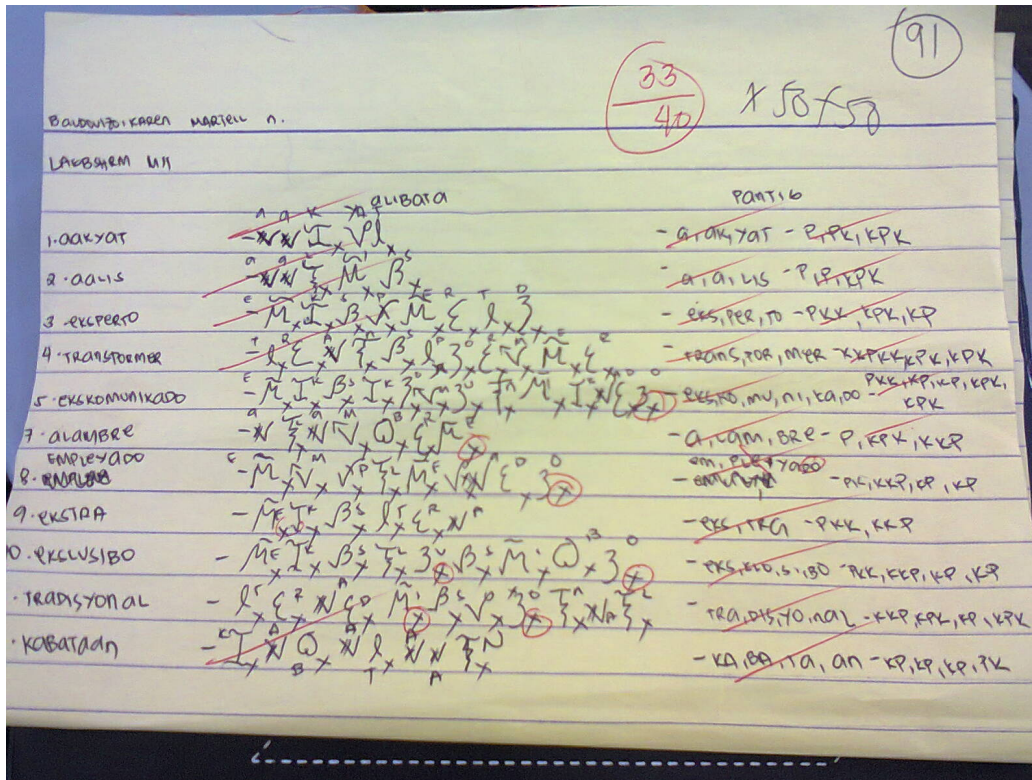


Figure 17. School test (Instagram 2012)

If you ask most Filipinos if Philippine scripts should be preserved or not, most would give an astounding, “Yes, of course it should.” When asked *why*, they’ll probably say something along the lines that “it’s part of our culture and it must be pass on to the next generation.” While it’s a valid and passionate response, do we really care about cultural value at the end of the day when we all have bills to pay? In order for Philippine scripts to be used on a mass scale and go beyond a hobby, there has to be proven economic value. Economic value from an individual, corporate and government perspective. Without economic value, we’re left to depend on government, NGO and individual funding for preservation efforts. We all know that arts and culture in general isn’t high on the priority list of funds, especially in the Philippines.

The value of the Philippine scripts in the diaspora is cultural identity. Using the it to visually represent and promote Philippine culture for economic gain. Once economic value is proven, preservation automatically will follow. It’s much easier to preserve something with value.

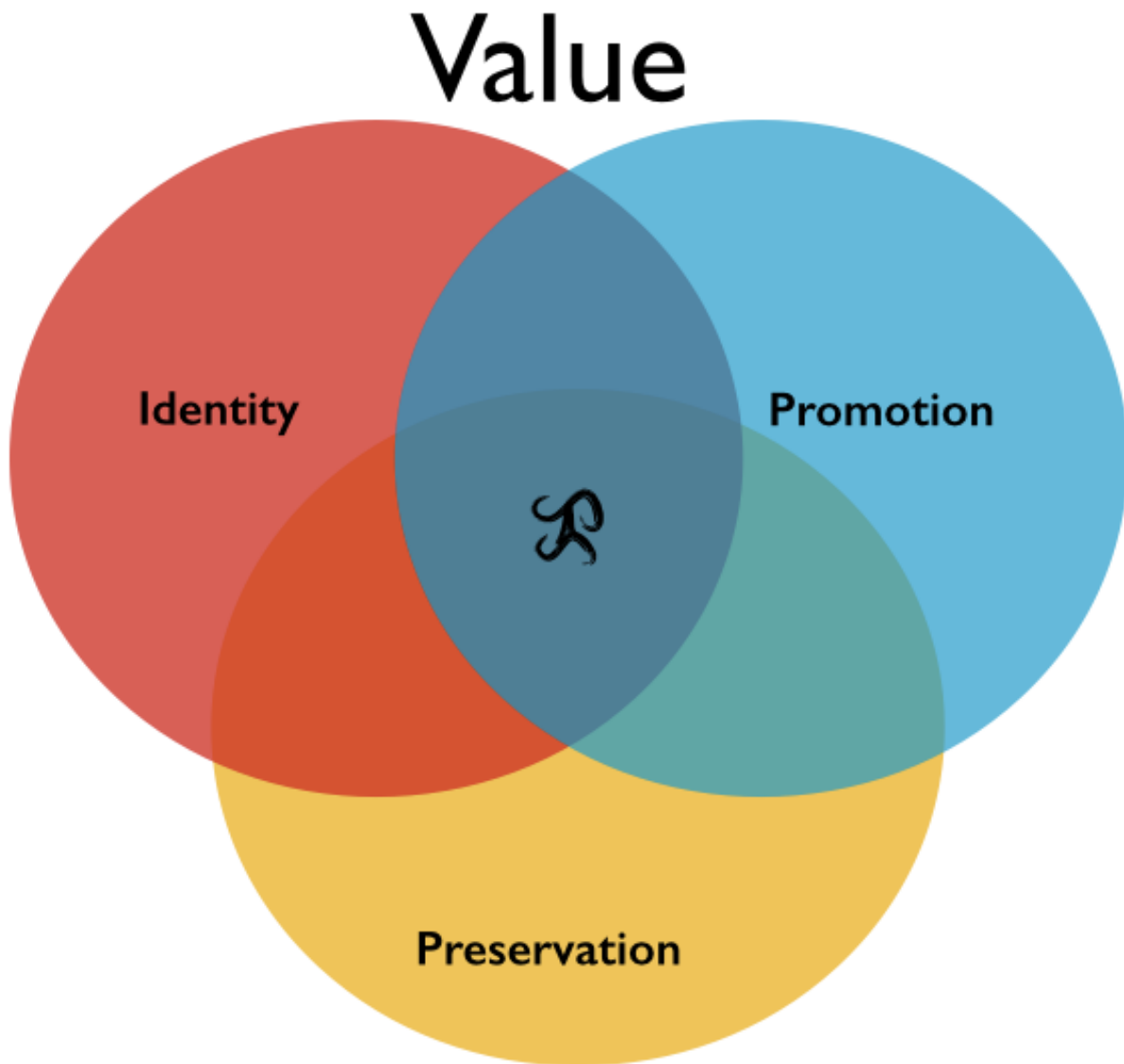


Figure 18. Venn diagram of the value of Philippine scripts (Kristian Kabuay 2011)

I've been using this model for my work in Baybayin since 2008 around websites, books, apparel, apps, events, and art. One industry that can benefit from this model are the Filipino restaurants. Shopping destinations, sights and fancy resorts are good cultural ambassadors but food is an experience one can have for immediate cultural propagation. It's common to see restaurants such as Japanese, Chinese, Korean and Thai to use native scripts in signs, menus and wall decorations. On the flip side (no pun intended), Filipino restaurants and markets have little visible culture.



Figure 19. Mifune restaurant in Japantown - San Francisco, California, USA (Mifune.com 2013)



Figure 20. House of Nanking restaurant in Chinatown - San Francisco, California, USA (HouseofNanking.net 2013)

Fried whole trout, marinated, sautéed vegetables, mushroom rice.	
"ปลาตุ๋นผัดเผ็ด"	
Pla Dook Pad Ped***	13
Saute'ed fillet Catfish, long bean, Thai eggplant, Gra-chai root, green pepper corn, bird's eye chili.	
"แซลมอนพริกไทยอ่อน"	
Grilled Salmon*	14
pepper corn curry sauce. Thai Hom Mali rice.	
"ปลาราดพริก"	
Pla Rad Preeg**	15
Pan-roasted red snapper, crushed long hot chili-garlic, caramelized tamarind sauce. Hom mali rice.	
"เปิดสยาม"	
Siam Duck	15
Half duck, sliced, sautéed bok choy, honey plum ginger sauce, mushroom rice.	
"กระเพราไข่ดาว"	
Gra Prow Kai Dow***	11
Minced chicken (or pork) basil with bird's eye chili, over rice, with Thai style fried egg.	

Figure 22. Thai Market restaurant in New York, New York, USA (GrubHub.com 2013)



Figure 21. Tofu House. Korean restaurant in San Jose, California, USA (SaratogaTofuHouse.com 2013)



Figure 23. Typical Filipino establishment in Los Angeles, California, USA (Kristian Kabuay 2011)

Pepe's Kitchen, a pop-up restaurant based in the United Kingdom approached me in early 2013 to commission me to design a seal that would help them show their Filipino identity. In the United Kingdom, Filipinos are not that well known as a culture as the diaspora is fairly young. Mae Williams, as a second generation Filipino English, it's very important to her. The problem statement was how to create a Filipino identity for her food business combines old with the new. There was also the potential for customers to think Pepe's Kitchen could be a Spanish or Chinese business. I created a Baybayin of "Pepe" that incorporated part of the Times New Roman font that looks like bamboo for the right side of the character. I then finished it off with some brushwork that looks like grass, giving it an organic feel.

There was something missing in my logo, I thought it needed an identity. When I looked at other Asian/Oriental logos/brands/names they all have their own writing on it. I then thought why couldn't I do that for mine with Filipino script on it? We should be proud that we have our own writing system and more importantly we should use it!

Mae Williams, Owner, Pepe's Kitchen



Figure 24. Pepe's Kitchen logo (Kristian Kabuay)

Ulam အဟုံ main	
6. Sinugba ချော့ဇွန်	£8.50
Famous Filipino BBQ chicken served with homemade atchara (pickled papaya), dipping sauce and rice or as a salad	
7. Pancit Canton ချော့ဇွန် ချော့ဇွန်	£6-£7
Stir fried egg noodles and rice vermicelli noodles Filipino style! (Veg or Chicken or Prawn)	
8. Bicol Express ချော့ဇွန် ချော့ဇွန်	£8
Pork cooked in coconut milk until tender served with rice and fresh chillies (mild or hot)	
9. Kare Kare ချော့ဇွန်	£9
A Filipino favorite! Beef stew in peanut sauce and vegetables served with rice and alamang (sautéed shrimp paste)	
Pinatamis ချော့ဇွန် sweets	
10. Turon ချော့ဇွန်	£5
Banana fritter served with homemade mango ice cream	
11. Suman at Latik ချော့ဇွန်	£4
Warm sweet glutinous rice cake in banana leaves served with homemade coconut caramel sauce	

Figure 25. Pepe's Kitchen menu (Mae Williams 2014)

7. Art as a promotional tool

As an artist, my experience has been that my promotion of Baybayin has been much more accepted and digestible to the general public compared to my academic counterparts. I learned early in my career that in order to promote a new product, there has to be an allure to it. My end goal is for people to use Philippine scripts in everyday life such as signatures and business promotional materials. For those casually interested, the academic aspects may be too much at first and may turn them away. I use my art as a gateway for those to learn more about our scripts and indigenous culture.



Figure 26. Asian Art Museum calligraphy performance. San Francisco, California, USA (Akko Terasawa 2012)



Figure 27. Baybayin calligraphy (Kristian Kabuay 2013)



Figure 28. Baybayin & Ballet. Morro Bay, California, USA (Kristian Kabuay 2013)

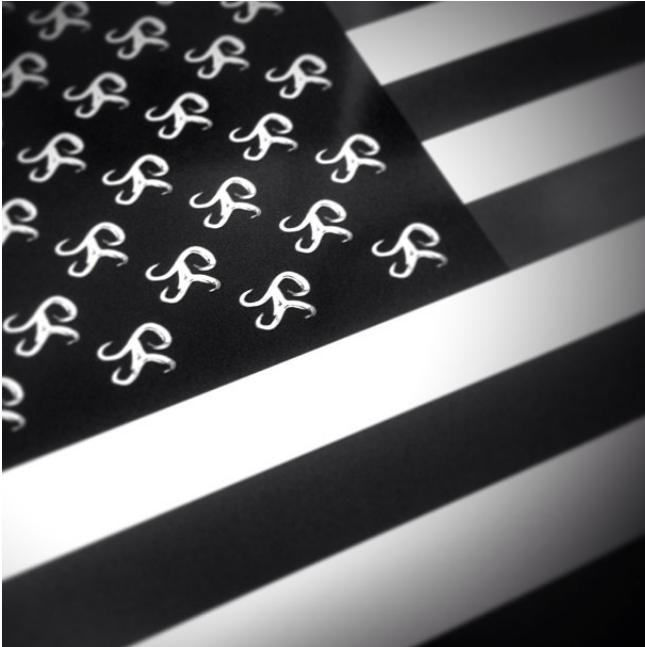


Figure 29. Filipino American
(Kristian Kabuay 2013)



Figure 30. Nadia (Kristian Kabuay 2013)



Figure 31. Magdalena (Kristian Kabuay 2013)



Figure 32. Baybayin skateboards
(Kristian Kabuay 2013)

The typical interest sequence has four parts one may go through on their journey to advocacy. Initial interest tends to be cosmetic. It starts with art based and may be for getting a tattoo or a cool looking shirt. The next phase is where one starts to dig deeper and goes beyond the cosmetic features of the scripts. While there are only a handful of books and lectures, there's a healthy online community that's ready to discuss the scripts and culture. After the 1st two parts that are largely consumerist, the practitioner actually has practical use of the script by means of communication and art. The final part is the advocate. By advocate, I don't mean someone posting a Facebook status update saying "Use Baybayin!" but rather someone who takes part of their community outside the internet. An advocate is one takes time, uses their own personal resources and creates value. It's much easier to hop from part 1 to 2 but it's difficult to hop from 3 to 4. This is because in order to be an effective advocate, one needs to be well skilled and rounded outside their interest in Philippine scripts and culture. I mean someone who's a leader in their community, knowledgeable in entrepreneurship, technology, art and generally "in-the-know" in terms of what's currently going on.



Figure 33. Typical interest flow (Kristian Kabuay 2014)

8. The scripts today

There are two main paths the scripts are taking today. One path is in the Philippines where there's been a stronger sense of "Filipino pride" among the youth due to it being "cool to be local". With a newfound middle-class with disposable income, a new generation of entrepreneurs have challenged the decades long monopoly of westernized products. TV shows and movies are taking on indigenous knowledge systems. Baybayin has been featured on several news channels and recently is now a permanent display at the National Museum. Surat Mangyan remains preserved thanks to the Mangyan Heritage Foundation. The Kapampangan, the script is becoming more known thanks to the efforts of Michael Pangilinan and his book, An introduction to Kulitan. Sulat Inaborlan from Palawan had a movie released in 2012 by Kanakan Balintagos. An advocacy NGO, Baybayin Buhayin Inc seeks have laws passed to require Philippines scripts in education and commerce.

In America, Baybayin is a fixture at Philippine festivals and at cultural conferences. There are a few advocates that have started businesses based on Philippine scripts.

9. Revival issues

With any advocacy there will always be issues present. The following outlined issues are fairly complicated with no easy way to fix. Many of these are fallout from our colorful history.

9.1 Nationalism at the expense of regional culture

The Philippines has hundreds of languages but have been largely demoted to regional dialects when Filipino, disguised as Tagalog, became the national language.

Many feel that if a “Baybayin Bill” pending in Congress is passed, it would make the living scripts secondary and possibly put on the extinction list.

9.2 No standards

There are currently no standards for Baybayin, the most popular script. No governing body to make decisions on standardization. How will it support modern language?

9.3 Lack of teachers

Even if any of the Philippine native scripts are revived and put to use on a mass scale, who will be the teachers? Who will teach the teachers?

9.4 Philippine born vs the Diaspora

There are some Filipinos living in the Philippines that simply don’t like Fil-Ams, Fil-Cans, non-Filipino and etc. The feeling is that they are not “true” Pinoys because of language, culture and simply geographical location.

9.5 Culture as a business

In order for this movement to preserve and promote our scripts, it will cost money. For those that engage in business selling artwork and products based on the script, there’s a sect that’s against the “whoring” of the culture.

9.6 Economic cost

If we were to use native scripts in street signs, goods manufactured goods in the Philippines and training, what will that cost be?

9.7 Lack of data

One of my favorite quotes is: “You can’t manage what you can’t measure” - Peter Drucker, Management Consultant. Advocates and practitioners are making a lot of our decisions based on gut rather than quantifiable data. What is the interest level? What is the sentiment? How do we measure the value? What’s the success criteria if scripts were used?

9.8 Living scripts

There are still actual living scripts in the Philippines. Scripts that never went away even after hundreds of years of colonialism. Why are we seeking to bring back something that hasn't been in regular use for about a hundred years? Shouldn't we be using the living scripts instead?

9.9 Lack of seasoned full-time well rounded advocates

The biggest issue is that we need an army of seasoned full-time advocates. There's only a handful in the world. If any retire, it will be a big blow to the movement. We need more than just people staying within the Facebook and online ecosystem. They need to get out and do the dirty work and take chances.