

Isabelo's Nature and Weather: Exploring Isabelo de los Reyes' Notes on the Physical Environment in the El Folk-Lore Filipino (1889)

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In his analysis of Isabelo de los Reyes' *Historia de Ilocos* (1890), Ubaldo (2012) makes a case for the historiographical contribution of the work in local historical studies by emphasizing the Ilocano intellectual assertion of the participation of the people in precolonial and colonial developments. In this observation, local and folk beliefs and practices were important objects and subjects of historical knowledge production. However, an earlier work made De los Reyes a trailblazer in historical and cultural studies in the country. His 1889 work, *El Folk-Lore Filipino* (1889) has been appraised as a pioneer scholarly documentation of Philippine folk knowledge.

This paper presents a historical dissection of the *El Folk-Lore Filipino* and identifies the valuable notes, descriptions, and analyses of the physical environment, found in select sections of the book. This work highlights this specific aspect of De los Reyes' *magnum opus* and offers another look into how the documentation of folklores and cultural vignettes can shed light on how local communities make sense and create meanings on nature and the environmental processes related to it.

Keywords: *Isabelo de los Reyes, physical environment, folk knowledge, local history, knowledge production*



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1. Introduction

In the 19th century, the Philippine archipelago was at a crossroads. Huetz de Lemp (1998, p. 160) describes this period as an era of massive urbanization, landscape change, population growth, and a rise of complex socio-economic movements that made areas, such as the capital city of Manila, experience major urban transformations. From a macro-perspective, the archipelago was a colony with a government facing perennial fiscal imbalance, a territory under the strong influence of various religious orders, and an archipelago hampered by frequent environmental calamities. But the country at that time was also a site of burgeoning scientific advancements in the physical environment, instrumentation and institutionalization of scientific disciplines, and the influx of foreign knowledge and investments to intensify colonial economic transformations. The last decades of this period also saw a pioneering wave of intellectual activities aimed at, on the one hand, campaigning for political and socio-economic reforms, and on the other hand, the silent yet productive efforts to understand the domestic condition of the archipelago from novel lenses, led by educated, local thinkers. The studies made by leading Philippine intellectuals of the 19th century offer a fresh look at colonial history and invite a rethinking of the role of some prominent elite during the country's transition to the complex dimension of being a "modern" nation. For example, Gregorio Sanciango, in his groundbreaking economic commentary *El Progreso de Filipinas* (1881), proved to be not only a critique of the Spanish colonial government's economic policies in the archipelago but also a critical deconstruction of how the ethnic stratification imposed by the colonizers deemed to be catastrophic to the local population (Aguilar, 2019, pp. 375-410). Moreover, some studies exemplify unique documentation and reconceptualization of the idea of indigenous cultures and local histories of ethnolinguistic groups. Theorizing the environment from the point of view of Filipinos (this now includes the native Filipinos and the Spaniards born and raised in the Philippines who considered the islands their mother country) commenced from the attempts to make a scientific description



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of its cultural contents and processes. They illustrate that the Philippine communities have a wide variety of “saber popular” or popular knowledge and superstitious beliefs of the natural environment - a by-product of individual and collective experiences. The works of Jose Felipe Del-Pan (*Llanamento*), Isabelo de los Reyes (*El Folk-Lore Filipino*), Trinidad Pardo de Tavera (*Plantas medicinales*), Pedro Paterno (*La Antigua Civilización Tagálog*), Wenceslao Retana (*Archivo Bibliófilo Filipino*) and even the ethnologist Ferdinand Blumentritt (*Versuch einer ethnographie Der Philippinen*) compose the body of pioneering scholarly works on folk knowledge.



FIG 1. Isabelo F. de los Reyes (1864-1938) (*De los Reyes, 1900; De los Reyes, 1947*). Accessed through the Filipiniana Section, University of the Philippine Diliman Library.

Specific to De los Reyes, scholars have pointed out his unique and expansive contribution to local history and cultural studies as pillars of intellectual emancipation and critical assessment of the colonial society. In his analysis of De los Reyes' *Historia de Ilocos* (1890), Ubaldo (2012) emphasizes the historiographical contribution of the work as a pioneer in local history writing, centering on the people's participation in ancient and precolonial developments. Mojares (2007, pp. 338-364) has praised and appraised De los Reyes' contribution to our corpus of knowledge on local cultures; as a proud product of a provincial environment far from what was perceived as conservative and repressive colonial Manila, he utilized local knowledge as a significant

component of enlightenment emanating from local identity and championed the popularization of cultures from the margins – *costumbrismo* from the “inside.” Moreover, he adds that De los Reyes pioneered the creation of a “national archive” founded on the popularization of local knowledge, to challenge not only the imperial dictate but also the prevailing dominant, elite version, of culture (Mojares, 2013, p. 20). Furthermore, Thomas (2016, pp. 97-140) argues that aside from the objective of legitimizing the idea of the Filipino nation through the legitimization of rural, peasant, and marginalized cultures and communities, De los Reyes attempted to draw a clear demarcation between the native/Filipino folklore and the prevailing concept of Spanish folklore and used the theoretical and methodological parameters of folkloric studies to pursue a localized knowledge production, apart from the Western ethnographic and ethological approaches. Thomas (2006) has also emphasized the need to re/visit De los Reyes’ proactive involvement in the Philippine side of the propaganda work of the Filipino reformists of the 19th century, as his writing in local Manila newspapers also provides a discourse not only of the political aspect of the Philippine reform movement but also reveals the vignettes of local knowledge production of the period amidst the challenges of direct and intensive censorship from Spanish colonial authorities.

This work offers a look at the specific aspects of De los Reyes’ knowledge production efforts: his observations and characterizations of the physical environment. A two-pronged approach is used in this historical dissection: on the one hand, the physical environment served as an important basis of place-based folklores, such as those in Ilocos and Malabon, which De los Reyes’ *El Folk-Lore* made a rich scholarly description; and on the other hand, his insights about these environmental folklores pioneered a form of cultural documentation that enabled the intellectualization of local vignettes on the physical environment. His documented descriptions of the local Philippine environment offer not only vignettes of a local intellectual’s pursuit of an extensive chronicle on folklore and local histories but also of a way of inquiry and thinking that epitomizes the scientific and cultural curiosity of the period.

To serve as theoretical guides for this inquiry on De los Reyes’ *El Folk-Lore*, this study utilizes Franz Boas’ historical particularism and Julian Stewards’ cultural ecology. How do these theories help us appreciate the value of documentation of people’s localized beliefs and practices? Theorizing the environment commences from the attempts to make a scientific description of its cultural contents and processes. Reconstructing the environment from the point of view of local vignettes and lores provides a useful view of the genesis and

progress of cultures and societies through time. Boas' historical particularism puts the environment in a pivotal location where a multitude of human perspectives and motivations drive how society is understood, and the necessity of an elaborate depiction of environmental components shapes the power dynamics and cultural growth of a community (Hitchens, 1994, pp. 245, 250). Boas gave a wide meaning to the term environment, recognizing the natural and cultural components; and argues that cultures are the creative locus of human conduct and are historically derived (Speth, 1978, p. 25). Speth (1978, pp. 7, 13) describes this idea in Boas' historical particularism as "anthropogeographic," an application of specificity as cultures grow on particular environments and periods, emphasizing how environments limit and modify cultures. Furthermore, Speth (1978, p. 25) enumerates the core ideas of Boas' propositions:

- (1) environment alone cannot explain culture because an identical environment is consistent with distinct cultures;
- (2) geographical determinants limit (or favor) and modify existing cultures;
- (3) the direction that an environmental stimulus takes and the meaning that environment depends upon culture type; and
- (4) the relations between the natural environment and culture are mediated generally by economic conditions.

Meanwhile, Steward's cultural ecology highlights the inwards evolutions that ignite the general changes cultures experience, thus cultural adaptation takes a significant role in the process (Moore, 2009, p. 197). This cultural acclimation can be seen through the study of the physical features of nature, societal building blocks, and human technological options (Moore, 2009, pp. 198-199). Therefore, the impermeable entanglement of the natural environment and human adaptation schemes provides a panoramic view of how cultures transform over time (Barnad, 2004, p. 40).

Using these anthropological postulates, this study puts a premium on De los Reyes' documentation of environmental folklores as both a mirror to the cultural past of natural landscapes as well as a window to how communities embraced these ideas as part of their everyday dealings with the physical world.

2. The Physical Environment in *El Folk-Lore Filipino*

2.1. *Historiographical location of De los Reyes' Folkloric Documentation of the Environment*

Ancient Philippine cultural communities developed their own notions of nature, the celestial world, and environmental processes. Everyday life is a clear manifestation of the thriving of a culture based on human adaptation and perception of the natural space. For the native Filipinos in the ancient period, it is important to know and understand the workings of nature as this serves as their source of goods and determines and influences the location of settlements. A component of understanding the natural environment is knowing how and why meteorological and astronomical phenomena exist, such as the sun, stars, wind, lightning and thunder, clouds, rain and storms, eclipses, asteroids, comets, and even, rainbows, as these are part of the universe they view and appreciate (Ambrosio, 2010, p. 4). In pre-conquest ethnolinguistic societies, the heavens were a reflection of how people made sense and maximized the resources of the physical environment – manifested through hunting, agricultural, and trade activities (Ambrosio, 2010, p. 5). As such, economic activities such as farming, fishing, hunting, and trade were influenced or patterned after how the environment “behaves” (Ambrosio, 2010, p. 5). By understanding the celestial and meteorological phenomena, early Filipinos framed their livelihood to the way nature provided them with the appropriate resources and ideas to survive and expand their communities (Ambrosio, 2010, p. 5). The agricultural and maritime cultures developed in the pre-conquest era evolved and converged with the ideological and cultural perspectives on the environment brought by Spanish colonialism, particularly the influences of Christianity on the Filipino worldview about the natural world. Different ethnic groups have their own set of terminologies and deities assigned to every environmental phenomenon (Ambrosio, 2010, pp. 59-60).

In his work *Brains of the Nation*, Mojares (2007, p. 384) argues that the ethnographic documentation and textual material production spearheaded by the Catholic missionaries solidified their position as pioneers of knowledge-making and visualization of the Philippines under the rudiments of European scholarship. The narratives of their missionary experiences, cultural observations, and social interactions with the natives generated not only the essential religious and bureaucratic reports for their superiors and patrons but also scholarly works that provide valuable information about the cultural life of Philippine cultural

communities. The symbiotic relationship between colonial sectors – the missionaries and the colonial government in particular, when it comes to the use and replication of these textual reports operationalized the transfer of knowledge from one institution to another. It is also vital to mention that in early Spanish colonial historiography in the Philippines, accounts of expeditions made by colonial and military officials, and scribes are also a good source of information about the life of the native Filipinos. Throughout the Spanish colonial period, dictionaries are good examples of texts produced by the religious missionaries that exemplify the scholarly nature of their ecclesiastical labor.¹ Published confession handbooks are also a source of usable information about the life and values of the Philippine colonial society. The religious missionaries wrote and used these handbooks as guides and instruments to extract information about the daily life and activities of natives in fulfillment of their Christian duties.² The textual and spoken character of ideas and the linguistic approaches in the understanding of the concepts provide the necessary epistemological contexts on how people understand and impose meaning to the physical environment (Novikau, 2016; Mühlhäusler & Peace, 2006).

However, these sources, albeit useful and rich in information, do not contain a view of the indigenous perspectives, the way the native population views their world. Therefore, the use of oral traditions as valuable and alternative historical sources to extract the indigenous worldviews on the environment comes into



¹ The examples of these dictionaries are the following: Pedro de San Buenaventura's *Vocabulario de la Lengua Tagala, el romance Castellano puesto primero, Primera y segunda parte* (1627), Juan Jose de Noceda and Pedro Sanlucar's *Vocabulario de la lengua tagala: compuesto por varios religiosos doctos y gravados* (1860), Diego Bergaño's *Vocabulario de la Lengua Pampanga en Romance compuesto por el M. R. P. Lector Fr. Diego Bergaño, del Orden de los Hermitaños de N. P. S. Agustín, Examinador Sinodal de este Arsobispado, Difinidor de esta provincial del Santísimo Nombre de Jesús, y Prior del Convento de S. Pablo de Manila* (1860), and Juan Félix de la Encarnación's *Diccionario Bisaya-Español compuesto por el R. P. Fr. Juan Félix de la Encarnación, provincial que ha sido dos veces de Agustinos Descalzos de la Provincia de S. Nicolas de Tolentino de Filipinas* (1885).

² The examples of these confession handbooks are the following: Gaspar de San Agustín's *Confessionario Copioso e Lengua Espanola y Tagala, para dirección de los Confesores y Instrucción de los Penitentes, Año 1713* (1797), Francisco de San José's *Librong Pinagpapalamnan yto nang Aasalin ng Tauong Cristiano sa Pagcoconfesor at sa Pagcocomulgar* (1792), Sebastian de Totanes' *Arte de la Lengua Tagala, y Manual Tagalog* (1865), and Manuel Blanco's, *Confesion at Comunión. Anal Baga na Icacagayac nang Cristiano sa Pagcocompisal at Paquiquinabang* (1865). The religious missionaries from various congregations published their own confession handbooks.

relevance. The most extensively studied among these oral literary forms are the legends and epics. They describe the natural environment where its owner ethnolinguistic group resides. Aside from detailing the physical landscapes, it represents the everyday life of people – life processes, material, and intangible cultures, and events and conditions that pose a threat to their community – whether caused by humans such as piracy, battles, and wars, or induced by the natural environment like storms, flooding, earthquakes, and volcanic eruptions. One of the earliest studies of Philippine oral literature is E. Arsenio Manuel's "A Survey of Philippine Folk Epics" (1963), a lengthy work that compiled available materials about Philippine epic, based primarily on "printed sources, unpublished records, taped materials which have not as yet been transcribed, and such raw notes which have been gathered in the field but of which there is no textual record," and is aimed "to survey the scattered materials, references and information on long heroic narratives found in the Philippines and to determine their folk provenience and epic character..." (Manuel, 1963, p. 2). The multivolume work edited by Damiana Eugenio, titled *Philippine Folk Literature*, is a comprehensive collection and study of selected documented Philippine oral literature, composed of eight books: an anthology of indigenous short stories, myths, legends, folktales, riddles, proverbs, folk songs, and epics (Eugenio, 1989-2001). Moreover, several studies in the Philippines in the previous decade provide a scholarly (re)opening to revisit and comprehensively reconstruct the history of ancient Filipino worldviews and indigenous perspectives on the environment. Some of these include the pioneering study of Dante Ambrosio titled *Balatik: Etnoastronomiya: Kalangitan sa Kabihasnang Pilipino* (2010), which is on the Filipino indigenous views about the sky and the heavenly bodies, and the work of Aguilar (2016) on how the Filipino *ilustrados* in Spain represented Philippine tropicality in their propaganda writings.

From these historiographical observations, De los Reyes' magnum opus, *El Folk-Lore Filipino* (1889) can be located and centered on. His expansive documentation of local lores and cultural vignettes serves as a vital intellectual springboard to the field of ethnography, cultural studies, and local history. Thomas (2016, p. 140) identifies various themes of the Filipino folklorists' writing in the late 19th century: recreating the Pre-Hispanic Philippines, internal racial dialogues between the peoples, the universality of folklore practices in the archipelago, and using it as an instrument of contemporary critique of the socio-political life in the colony. In his examination of *El Folk-Lore's* scholarly significance, Mojares (2007, pp. 306-313) argues that De los Reyes' ethnographic documentation indeed gives intellectual weight to his objective of a "new science"

and the project of a “total archive” of cultures. This present work presents a discussion of enduring and resonant ideas on how the “native” Filipinos view, make sense, and give meaning to their environments and their natural processes.

2.2. Vignettes on the Environment in El Folk-Lore Filipino

Filipinos have a wide variety of traditional knowledge and superstitious beliefs pertaining to the natural environment. This is historically and culturally a by-product of individual and collective experiences. Based on a definition, traditional-indigenous knowledge is the “cumulative and complex body of knowledge, know-how, practices and representations that are maintained and developed by people with extended histories of interactions with the natural environment... Such knowledge based on the experiences and observations of peoples over generations can contribute to an increased understanding of climate change and help develop community-level adaptation strategies.” (UNESCO/ICSU, 2002, p. 9). By surveying the behaviors of animals, plants, of wind direction, of the land, and of the bodies of water, people estimate and point out weather patterns and disturbances, sans the technical and mathematical predictions.

In his critical and expansive use of De los Reyes’ contribution to Philippine historiography, particularly the creation of a “national archive” of cultural vignettes and popular knowledge, Mojares (2013, p. 13) appraised *El Folk-Lore Filipino* not only as a brave, radical masterpiece of intellectual desire from and for the native Filipinos but also an attempt to illustrate the “sum total of a community’s memory of itself.” This aggregation of cultural ideas includes how the natives see their physical environment and its natural processes. As argued in this paper, *El Folk-Lore* is one scholarly attempt to document local folk knowledge of the environment. This book came to light upon the encouragement of José Felipe del Pan, the director of the newspaper *La Oceania Española*, where it started as a series of cultural pieces published in the *El Comercio* in 1884, about the folklore in Ilocos, Zambales, and Malabon (Thomas, 2006, p. 387). Eventually, he also submitted articles to the *La Oceania Española* starting April 1885, writing his pieces from Malabon (Thomas, 2006, p. 405). As a columnist and eventually, an owner of a printing press, his newspaper served as an avenue for conversation in culture, and as a way to reach the public to share and know their cultural history, particularly, the history beyond the imposed knowledge by the Spaniards (Thomas, 2006, pp. 381-411). In the *El Folk-Lore*, De los Reyes made extensive cultural documentation of the

places where he stayed and lives – in the Ilocos region (specifically Ilocos Sur) where he grew up, and in Malabon, where he had his first wife and first six children. These places were significant spaces in the conceptualization of his intellectual pursuits – both his contribution to cultural studies and in the socio-political birthing of the Filipino nation at the end of the 19th century.

In the first chapter of the Folk-Lore Ilocano section of *El Folk-Lore*, there are four parts dedicated to the local environmental lores of the Ilocos region: *Sabeismo y Astrología* (Ancient Fire-Worship and Astrology), *Consejas Meteorológicas* (Meteorological Fables), *Cosmogonía* (Cosmogony), and *Folk-Lore de mar* (Folklore About the Sea). From these sections, De los Reyes presented his view on select themes of the Ilocano/Filipino worldview on the natural environment: the origin of the earth and the celestial bodies, perspectives on lighting and thunder, and the Ilocano views on the sea.

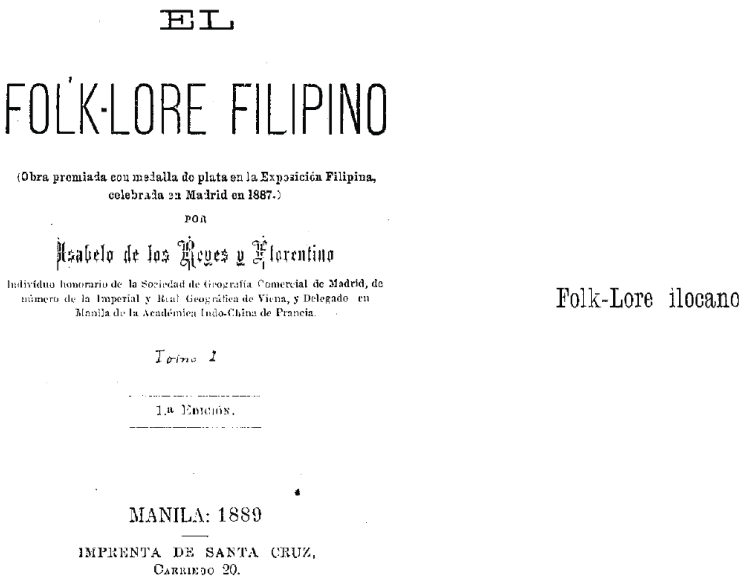


FIG 2. “Folk-Lore ilocano” in *El Folk-Lore Filipino* (1889). Accessed through Biblioteca Digital Hispánica, Biblioteca Nacional de España.

2.2.1. Creationism and the Celestial Bodies

According to De los Reyes' study, the Ilocanos had a version of the creationist story, centering on *Angngaló/Angngalo* as the creator of the physical world, dictated by the gods' desire. In this Ilocano folktale, *Angngaló/Angngalo*, through his actions, created the mountains and the seas, placed the sun, moon, and rainbow in the heaven/sky, and his presence, together with his wife *Aran*, have proof in the landscapes of Ilocos and Abra regions.

TABLE 1. *De los Reyes' Documentation of an Ilocano Creationist Story*

<i>El Folk-Lore Filipino</i> (De los Reyes, 1889, pp. 51-56)	<i>El Folk-Lore Filipino</i> [1994 Translation] (De los Reyes, 1889/1994, pp. 83, 85, 87)
XIV: Cosmogonía	XIV: Cosmogony
Tenemos los indígenas una tradición, que en ninguna crónica hallé escrita y que sin embargo ningún Ilocano ignora; según ella, en un principio, ó sea antes de la creación del cielo, de la tierra y del mar (no digo del hombre, pues según dicha tradición, el hombre existió que el Cielo etc.) había un gigante llamado Angngaló - ¿sería el citado por los PP. Buzeta y Bravo? - de formidables proporciones. Figúrese el lector que de pié tocaba tu cabeza en el Cielo y con un paso venia de Vigan á Manila, es decir, salvando cosa de setenta y una leguas.	We, the Ilocano natives, have a belief which, although not written in any chronicle, is very much known to the Ilocanos. Man, according to the belief, existed before the creation of heaven, earth, sky, etc. There was a giant <i>Angngaló</i> who could be the one cited by the Reverend Priests Buzeta and Bravo. He stood on his feet with his head reaching up to heaven and covered seventy miles from Vigan to Manila in one single step.
<i>Angngaló</i> cavó el suelo que antes era plano, y las tierras que extrajo son hoy los mantes, siendo las colinas las tierras que caian de los agujeros que formaban sus dedos mal unidos.	The earth before was level. <i>Angngalo</i> dug out a cave. The earth from his digging formed the mountains. The soil that fell from his deformed fingers fell on the side of the cave thus forming the hills.
Hecho un abismo, alivió su vejiga y formó loa océanos y los mares, pero no por esus sus aguas fueron saladas como la orina.	His urine gave rise to the oceans and the seas. This explains why the sea is salty.
<i>Angngaló</i> tenía ua mujer nombrada <i>Aran</i> , de la cual tuvo tres hijas. Estas trataban de venir á Manila, para traer sal y rogaron á su padre las trasportase. <i>Angngaló</i> accedió á ello; pero estando en medio del mar cayeron con sus cargas al agua y desde entonces el mar se quedó salado.	<i>Angngalo</i> has a wife called <i>Aran</i> by whom he has three daughters who wanted to go to Manila to bring salt and prayed that their father carry them. <i>Angngalo</i> agreed but in the middle of the sea, they all fell thus adding more salt to the sea.
<i>Angngaló</i> fué También el que colocó la bóveda del cielo, el sol y las estrellas.	<i>Angngalo</i> as the one who placed the rainbow in heaven, as well as the sun and stars.
Los Ilocanos del campo todo lo materializan efector quizás de su escasa penetración, por manera que para ellos el cielo no es más que esa bóveda azul y concave que nos cubre. Se figuran que la tierra no es esférica al igual de los antiguos geógrafos, es una corcunferencia plana sobre cuyos limites se levanta el cielo y para ellos, es de extension muchísimo mayor que la real, de modo de que para que uno pudiera llegar á sus límites ó á los piés del	To the Ilocano peasants, the sky is no other than the blue and concave dome that covers us. They think that the earth is not spherical as ancient geographers have said. It is a circular plane where mountains support the sky which they believe to be much bigger that its actual size. As such it is unreachable and if it could be reached, it would take a whole lifetime of running nonstop towards the horizon.

<p>cielo, necesitaría, desde que nace has su vez, correr sin cesar en dirección al horizonte.</p> <p>Según esta tradición, pues <i>Angngaló</i> y <i>Aran</i> fueron los primeros hombres, y quizás los padres de los demás, como Adán y Eva; pero debemos advertir que en esta tradición no se menciona la creación del hombre, y que los ilocanos cuando quieren decir que aún no había nacido Fulano en tal tiempo, expresan con esta frase metafórica: estaba aún en el otro lado del mar, que viene a ser el Asia, lo cual parece indicar que según creencia Antigua, los hombres vienen del extranjero como el trozo de caña arrojada por las olas a lo spiel del milano, de qué salieron los primeros hombres, según otra tradición Antigua de Filipinas, que mentan algunos historiadores. En Ilocos, cuando uno dice en broma no haber nacido de mujer le contestan: - Entonces has Salido de un trozo de caña.</p> <p>En el monte de Piedra, Bangbang, que hay un bocana del Abra, hay una huella muy grande al parecer de hombre, y otra, según dicen, en la cumbre del Bul-lagao, Ilocos, ó en Cagayan, que se atribuyen a <i>Angngaló</i>. Lo cual nos recuerda la tradicional y fabulosa <i>Bota del Mandarin</i>, que hay cerca de Fochow, más arriba de los puertos de Mingan. <i>Angngaló</i> dejó estas huellas al subir al cielo.</p> <p>En Abra hay un gran subterráneo que dicen ser de Aran, y cuyo agujero llega a Cagayan, según la conseja, cual un tonel.</p> <p><i>Angngaló</i> fué el Creador, según la tradición ilocana, pero de orden e un Dios cuyo nombre se ignora, no hay noticia de que fuera objeto del culto de los ilocanos, lo cual es incomprensible, puesto que según todas las demás religiones de que tengo conocimiento, todo Creador del universo es Dios, y es acorde la creencia de que solo la omnipotencia de un Dios es capaz de obrar tantas maravillas como las que encierra la creación.</p>	<p>According to this Ilocano tradition <i>Angngaló</i> and <i>Aran</i> were man's first parents like Adam and Eve but in this context, the creation of man is not mentioned. Wherever the Ilocanos said that Fulano had not been born, they meant it in the metaphorical sense. <i>He was still on the other side of the sea</i>, or another part of Asia, which is in the olden times meant that the Ilocanos believed being born meant coming from a foreign land like a piece of bamboo carried by the waves to the feet of Milano. From this bamboo originated the first men according to another ancient belief cited by some historians. In Ilocos, saying that a woman bore you meant that you came from a piece of bamboo.</p> <p>In the rocky mountain of Bangbang, located at the boundary of Abra province, there is a big footprint similar to that of a man. There is another on the peak of Bul-lagao, Ilocos region or in Cagayan. Both are believed to be those of <i>Angngaló</i>. This reminds us of the traditional and fabulous <i>Bota del Mandarin</i> located near Foochow, higher than the ports of Niagan. <i>Angngaló</i> left three footprints upon his ascension to heaven.</p> <p>In Abra, there is a mammoth underground tunnel. Said to be the <i>Aran's</i> foot, it reaches up to Cagayan.</p> <p>In the Ilocano tradition, <i>Angngaló</i> was the creator of heaven and earth. A god ordered him to do so but the name of his god is unknown. Nor he is an object of worship among the Ilocanos. That is incomprensible because according to all religions the Creator of the Universe is God for God alone is omnipotent.</p>
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De los Reyes' curiosity of the origin, or probably, the quest for the cultural reference of this creationist story led him to theorize about the Ilocano belief system's cosmopolitan nature – a product of local and foreign interactions, especially from the Chinese (De los Reyes, 1889, p. 54). He also consulted Ferdinand Blumentritt about this story, in which the latter affirmed his observation of the prevalence and/or universality of this kind of creationist folktale – wherein a super being was the one who created the physical environment where the first human settled. Blumentritt stated in his letter to De los Reyes that the said folkloric archetype is also present in Malay communities

in Pasir in southeast Borneo, Celebes, and Java, and even in Leitmeritz in Germany (De los Reyes, 1889, pp. 54-56). To add, the story of *Angngalól*/*Angñgalo* and *Aran* also have parallelisms with the Japanese *kami* (gods) Izanagi and Izanami, the central deities of the Japanese creationist myth ("Izanagi and Izanami," n.d.).

De los Reyes also pondered on the Ilocano views on celestial bodies, such as the planets, the moon, and comets. He mentions that the planets were respected and labeled as Apo (Señor), and the moon is a dwelling place of Bathala (Supreme Being), and its craters were his footsteps (De los Reyes, 1889, p. 42). With regards to comets, De los Reyes argues that similar to the Chinese astronomical belief, the Ilocanos consider the sight of comets as a signifier of the coming of pestilence, wars, fall of governments, and hunger and misery for the people (De los Reyes, 1889, p. 43). He adds that fragments of comets, therefore those aerolites from shooting stars, could symbolically be used as a miraculous stone for love (called babató) (De los Reyes, 1889, p. 43).

2.2.2. Views on Lightning and Thunder

De los Reyes' discussion in *Consejas Meteorológicas* (Meteorological Fables) centered on the meanings attributed to lightning and thunder. The superstitions on lighting (rayo in Spanish) were prevalent in different towns in Ilocos Norte. Precautions and defenses against lightning and thunder emanate from local plants and their uses, proof of the presence of indigenous knowledge in the meaning-making regarding these meteorological phenomena (De los Reyes, 1889, pp. 56-58).

From these documentations made by De los Reyes, evident is the attribution and correlation of lightning and thunder to agriculture and animal-related beliefs. These both appear in the explanations of their causes and the means of protection against them. There is also the portrait of a mixture of indigenous/folk ideas and colonial concepts, as seen in the examples of God's car (*el coche de Dios*) and the *hedor* or the "undesirable odor resulting from decomposed organic substances." (De los Reyes, 1889, p. 58; De los Reyes, 1889/1994, p. 93).

Interestingly, two years before the publication of *El Folk-lore*, Jose Rizal, in his novel *Noli me tangere* (1887), presented a philosophical portrait of lightning and thunder. Through the conversation between (Pilosopong) Tasyo and the *gobernadorcillo* (town chief), the former complained about the non-accommodation of his proposal to the town officials to purchase lightning rods

TABLE 2. *Causes and Protection against Lightning and Thunder*
(De los Reyes, 1889/1994, pp. 91, 93, 95)

Causes	Protection
<p>"The Ilocanos confuse thunder and lighting and believe that both have something to do with the pig that appears suddenly during a storm. A respectable and reliable person (I do not say illiterate) has assured me on his word of honor that during a storm he saw a pig come out near a trunk of a certain tree and it turned to fire. It thundered and the pig disappeared. The same person assures is of seeing with his own eyes a white rooster before he saw an electric spark in the sky over the townhall of Sarra in Ilocos Norte. It was running swiftly when it changed into thunder and then it became ashes. How can it be explained? An electric discharge must have hit the rooster, reduced it to ashes and made it disappear. Many meteorologists state that the thunder can reduce its victims to ashes but the Ilocanos believe that the thunder strikes only animals."</p> <p>"The Ilocanos are more afraid of thunder than of lightning and claim that it is dangerous to eat during a storm because it is possible that the hungry thunder may come and grab the food. It is also dangerous to ride on a four-legged animal or wear valuable jewelry such as gold, silver, and diamonds."</p> <p>"According to Ilocanos, thunder respects water and sugarcane leaves,..."</p> <p>"Some old Ilocanos say that the thunder is not only a noise produced by God's car when it goes out."</p>	<p>"Due to this belief, oftentimes you find jewels in the fields thrown by the owners during the storm. It is also bad to stay under the trees, hold mirrors, glasses, crystals, and any shining metal."</p> <p>"..., therefore, a man who is under water or is in a sugarcane field is saved from thunder. It is also said that sugarcane leave can wound the lightning."</p> <p>"The people from Ilocos Norte usually cover their heads with coconut palms blessed during Palm Sunday to avoid danger during stormy days."</p> <p>"The Ilocanos believe that fire produced by thunder and lightning cannot be put out by water but by vinegar. For this reason, when the provincial hall in Abra was burned, all the houses Bangued suffered scarcity of vinegar. "</p>
<p>"The Ilocanos attribute the sprouting of mushrooms to the lightning. To say that someone is a victim or thunder is an insult to the Ilocanos and Tagalogs."</p> <p>"The person who do not die when hit by thunder but only faint for a moment are said to have received the <i>hedor</i> of the thunder."</p>	

(*parrayos*) to “catch” lightning (Rizal, 1887/1996, p. 76). His proposal was met with laughter, and instead, the town government of San Diego purchased firecrackers and rockets and tolled the church bells in instances of lightning and thunder (Rizal, 1887/1996, p. 76).

De los Reyes also listed some additional meteorology-related Ilocano folk beliefs: (1) “It is bad to point with your finger at a rainbow because the finger will be cut.”; (2) “If a strong wind blows on the feast of St. Lawrence, the Ilocanos believe that the martyr of the grill is awake. Otherwise he would be asleep.”; and (3) “The fire of St. Elmo makes one lose his way... It appears to be near but as one walks towards it, it seems to be farther away... If you get lost at night time, you should take off your shirt and put it on again on the wrong side... By doing this you can avoid getting lost but according to Ilocanos, this is the work of the devil.” (De los Reyes, 1889/1994, pp. 94, 95). Moreover, in another essay titled “Supersticiones ilocanas que se encuentran en Europa” (Ilocano Superstitions that are Similarly Found in Europe), De los Reyes made a brief comparison of select Ilocano beliefs on clouds, the moon, and the sun that have similarities with several European (or Spanish) folklores (De los Reyes, 1889, pp. 74-81).

2.2.3. Folklores about the sea and wind

One cannot fully picture the totality of Ilocano culture without the acknowledgment of the maritime basis of their collective identity. In his essay about the folklores on the sea (*Folk-Lore de Mar*), which was his reply to the query Paul Sebillot, the author of *Les contes des Marins*, tackles briefly his known documented information about the Filipino maritime beliefs, particularly those of Ilocanos and Tagalogs (De los Reyes, 1889, p. 70).

De los Reyes made a brief geographical description of the parts of the sea with respect to the land, highlighting the local terms in Ilocano and Tagalog languages, respectively: *baybay* and *dagat* for the seaside/seashore, and *taao* and *kalautan ng dagat* (or simply, *laut/laot*) for the sea itself, or the middle of the sea (De los Reyes, 1889, p. 70). He also recognized the scientific nature of various sea-related processes, such as the tide and waves: “The rising and ebbing of the tide is called *atab* and *ugut* in Ilocano. In Ilocos, the increasing and decreasing in the size of the moon is attributed to this phenomenon of the tide. The ebbing of the tide could alleviate suffering while the rising tide could cause the reverse... The wind causes the formation of waves...(Moreover) [t]he Ilocanos claim that the sun sinks into the sea because the coastal dwellers see the sun go down into the sea”

(De los Reyes, 1889/1994, p. 121)..

De los Reyes also provided some superstitious beliefs related to the sea. These beliefs can be categorized into two: beliefs indicating good luck or omen, and the opposite, those beliefs that translate into bad omen.

De los Reyes also described what are the Ilocano winds and their respective direction:

“La Rosa de vientos de los Ilocanos se reduce á los puntos cardinales, ó sean: *Amián* (Viento del Norte), *Puyupuy ó Laud* (Oeste), *Abagat* (Sur), y *Dugudug ó Daya* ó sea el que se cree proceder de la Bocana del Abra, llevando fienbres en sus alas.” (De los Reyes, 1889, p. 72)

TABLE 3. *Superstitious Beliefs about the Sea in the “Folk-Lore Ilocano” chapter of El Folk-Lore Filipino (De los Reyes, 1889/1994, pp. 119, 121, 123, 125)*

Indication of Good Omen	Indication of Bad Omen
“The sea is sacred and all who die by drowning will go to heaven.”	“It is bad to throw waste matter into the sea or to show one’s buttocks and shout because he will get swallowed by the waters.”
“Sea water cures wounds and tuberculosis.”	“When snake grows to an extraordinary proportion, he goes to the sea together with other smaller snakes who bid him farewell. Once on the beach, he raises his head and throws himself into the sea until he reaches the imaginary island of the snakes whether he will die. The Ilocanos say that once upon a time, a boat happened to pass by this island and found many snakes around stone or wood.”
“In the sea not far from Corregidor, according to the people, one can see through the water some bewitched building owned possibly by fairies who stop the ships that pass unless they are thrown cooked rice as a tribute.”	“They say that in a town of Ilocos Norte, a very proud man was swallowed by the waves and converted into a lake which today is known by the name of <i>Nalbuan</i> (isthmus). The inhabitants of the town were very vain. When one wore a new dress, everybody tried to do the same. God punished them by turning them into fishes which, as the belief goes, had earring. Due to the curse, all government efforts to convert it into a port by joining it to the sea through a canal, became completely useless.”
“A rainbow appearing in the east is a sign that the rain which has begun to fall will stop completely. If it shines in the west, it will stop only temporarily and if it encircles the moon, there will be dry winds.”	

"The nautical rose in the wind of Ilocanos is reduced to cardinal points: *amian* (wind from the North); *puyupuy* or *laud* (from the West); *abagat* (from the South); or *dugudug* or *daya*. The last one believed to carry fever on its wings comes from the Bocana of Abra" (De los Reyes, 1889/1994, p. 123).

Folk beliefs about the wind were also mentioned by De los Reyes. For example, Ilocanos believe that the winds that go down to the region come from the bamboo groves in Abra (De los Reyes, 1889, p. 72). A type of fish called the *lumba-lumba* guides the seafarers about the strength and direction of the wind: if it follows the same route as a boat or ship, it would be a smooth sail, but if the fish moves to or jumps in the opposite direction, a rough sail is to be expected, as it counters the wind direction (De los Reyes, 1889, p. 73).

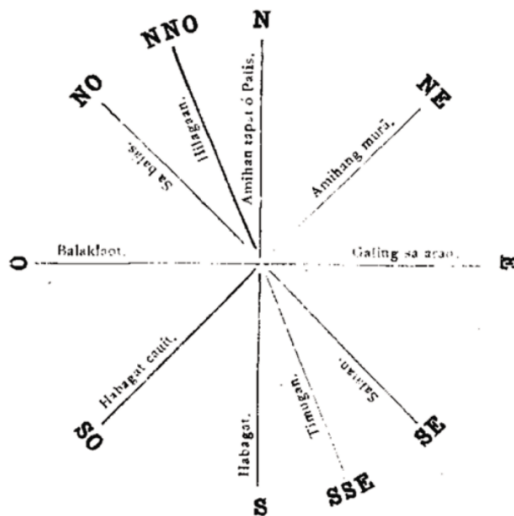


FIG 3. De los Reyes' Diagram of the Ilocano winds and their directions (De los Reyes, 1889, p. 75). Accessed through Biblioteca Digital Hispánica, Biblioteca Nacional de España.

To add, in an earlier work, De los Reyes also mentioned an interesting account related to the vignettes on the sea and wind, about a "demon" in Cagayan that people feared as it can cause a tempest once its wishes are violated. In *El Diablo en Filipinas* (1887), a satirical work of De los Reyes, he narrated the

“experience” of Don Luys Pérez Dasmariñas (Governor-General of the Philippine Islands from 1593 to 1596) in Cagayan:

“Espere V., hombre, que en la misma página se encuentra esto otro: — “Cuando D. Luys Pérez Dasmariñas hizo una noche junto á la falda de un pequeño monte que estaba dedicado al demonio (en Cagayan) por lo cual nadie se atrevía á cortar de él ni un palo, ni otra cosa, no siendo para servicio del demonio, porque luego la mar se alteraba y embravecía, y los vientos se soltaban y les derribaban las casas... aquella misma noche vino un viento tan terrible, que alborotando la mar, la hizo salir á la playa, y llegó al alojamiento, que estaba (al parecer) muy seguro de tal suceso y obligó á los soldados y al mismo D. Luys á huir su peligro, perdiendo mucha” (De los Reyes, 1887, pp. 122-123).

“Just wait, hombre! On the same page you will find something else. Don Luys Péres Dasmariñas...spent a night on the slope of a small hill dedicated to the demon (In Cagayan)...No native would dare to cut down trees to make poles or anything else, except in service to this demon. If these rules are violated, then the ocean will get very rough, and the winds leap high, destroying houses... That very night the most violent wind-storms blew high and stirred the ocean to surge over the shoreline and reach as far inland as the military billets, usually thought to be very safe under dangerous conditions. The storm obliged the soldiers and even Don Luys to flee, the latter losing a lot of his assets because he had cut down so much on ‘his’ hill (branches and sugar cane)” (De los Reyes, 1886/2014, pp. 37, 39).

2.2.4. Valuation of Environmental Vignettes

How does one make sense of the historical relevance of De los Reyes’ documentation of these environmental beliefs and folklores? On the one hand, it is through the post-*El Folk-Lore* works on the documentation of folkloric beliefs and practices. On the other hand, it is through contemporary Ilocanos preserving nature-based concepts to determine everyday or seasonal cycles.

One example is The H. Otley Beyer Ethnographic Collection of the National Library of the Philippines, which contains thousands of digitized papers from the collected and preserved materials of pioneer American anthropologist Henry

Otley Beyer, covering the period from the 1900s to the 1930s (NLP, n.d.). The digitized materials are unique references to local and regional customs, traditions, beliefs, superstitions, and folktales and myths about the origin, life, and culture of Philippine communities. These archival materials, both products of Beyer's ethnographic fieldwork as well as written submissions from local informants and resource persons fall under the scholarly tradition set by De los Reyes and *El Folk-Lore*. Another example is the book *Our Folkways* (1955) by Armando J. Malay and Paula Carolina Malay. This work is a valuable compilation of local beliefs and practices of a multitude of agricultural communities in the country, and it resembles *El Folk-Lore Filipino* in its objective to collect and visualize the vast folkloric beliefs and practices of rural townfolks in the country. Specifically, the chapter "Old Man Weather" tackles the select, documented beliefs and superstitions about the weather (Malay & Malay, 1955, pp. 156-188). As the authors lament:

Rural folk everywhere in the world make use of the behavior of animals, plants, birds, bodies of water, and mountains, to predict the weather. Some can tell when the rain is going to fall by the way their corns or bunions hurt them. This knowledge has been the result of experience, and is handed down from one generation to another. (Malay & Malay, 1955, p. 157)

In their study about traditional weather forecasting in various towns in Ilocos Norte, Galacgac and Balisacan (2003, pp. 5 – 14) made a case on how local-agricultural weather lores are used by farmers and fishers in the province, particularly, how they determine the arrival of the rainy season, upcoming rain, and adverse weather conditions through the behaviors of plants, animals, and their local reading of meteorological processes. Through this ethnographic-scientific study, De los Reyes' vignettes on Ilocos weather and environmental processes, in a way, have persisted or have existed as valuable and usable popular knowledge for the local residents. For example, they included in their study various forecast indicators collected from local residents: atmospheric and astronomic (appearance of clouds and sky, direction of the wind, humidity, rainbow, phase and appearance of the moon, and sea waves), plants (its phenology in particular), and animals (unusual behaviors observed) (Galacgac & Balisacan, 2003, pp. 7-12). Certain similarities with De los Reyes documented vignettes and the helpful reliance of current local residents to these environmental predictors as their traditional weather forecasting methods emphasizes the continuities in embracing local cultural beliefs and practices spanning more than a century.

2.3. *Malabon and its Environment*

De los Reyes' intellectual contributions to Philippine knowledge production have been extensively analyzed in the past years. But one aspect of his intellectual sojourn is important to be emphasized – his personal, familial, and cognitive affinity with the town of Malabon (old name, Tambobong). For two decades starting in the 1880s, he lived in Malabon and built a family, organized labor unions in the town, and helped establish one of the first parishes of the Iglesia Filipina Independiente (IFI) in the province of Manila.

In Malabon, he married a mestiza, Josefa Sevilla, a member of an elite family in the town. Josefa was one of the 11 children of Gregorio Sevilla and Genoveva Hizon, part of the large clan of Sevillas and Hizons in old Malabon (Sevilla & Oreta, Jr., 1977, pp. 36-37). De los Reyes and Josefa had six children: Jose, Luis, Angel, Pablo, Elias, and their only daughter, Menang (Sevilla & Oreta, Jr., 1977, p. 38).

In his biography of his father, Jose S. de los Reyes describes his father as “Padre de los Obreros” (Father of the Workers) (De los Reyes, 1947, p. ?). This homage can be rooted in De los Reyes' notable labor initiatives in Malabon. Through the Union Obrera Democrática (UOD), a labor union and political party, he organized thousands of factory workers of several tobacco companies in Malabon. They led and initiated several strikes in Manila and Malabon, meant to paralyze the operations of some companies (Scott, 1992, pp. 37-39). Companies such as the *Oriente*, *Philippine Tobacco Company*, *Tabacalera*, *Germinal*, *Insular Tobacco*, *Maria Cristina*, and *La Minerva* were some of the companies that discharged illegally some workers, and this led to the strikes of their workers, organized by UOD (Scott, 1992, p. 37). In August 1902, he led several strikes against tobacco companies in Malabon, prompting the American government to take action to stop the inter-city workers' strikes (Scott, 1992, p. 39). On 16 August, the Philippine constabulary arrested him; the reason for the arrest was his alleged involvement in an assassination plot against the owner of one of the tobacco companies in Malabon (Mojares, 2007, pp. 279-280; Wise, 1954, p. 166). He was arraigned in the Malabon Justice of the Peace and was jailed in the town until the following year (Mojares, 2007, pp. 279-280). His supporters made him a celebrated political prisoner. On 30 December 1902, during the Rizal Day celebration, his speech was read, wherein he urged the people to look back at the reasons Rizal died for – liberation, progress, and well-being of our land (Mojares, 2007, p. 280). Some revolutionaries even offered to take him out of jail and install him as president of an anarchism-inspired republic (Mojares,

2007, p. 280). De los Reyes was also an indispensable character in the founding of the IFI in Malabon. Together with Aglipay, they crafted and sharpened the idea of a new and independent church for the Philippines. Though his ideas became pillars of the IFI's intellectual tradition, the laymen accepted him in such a slow manner, because he was "a socialist, a labor leader, a revolutionist of the most violent type" (Wise, 1954, pp. 162-166).

In *El Folk-Lore Filipino*, De los Reyes dedicated sections on Malabon history and folklore, namely "Folk-lore Malabonés" and "Monografía de Malabon." The former contains essays on popular beliefs, riddles, medicinal practices, love affairs, and the practices during the day of the dead (ondas); while the latter is a socio-cultural profile of the town, containing information about its historical foundation and evolution, location and territorial jurisdiction, the barrios and the infrastructures in the town, its population and culture, and its agricultural, industrial, and commercial status and condition (De los Reyes, 1889, pp. 271-296). Malabon historian Severino Marcelo describes De los Reyes' time in Malabon as a prototype of a provincial man's sojourn in the colonial capital:

When Malabon beauty Josefa Sevilla married the 20-year old El Ilocano, Isabelo de los Reyes in 1884, her parents did not lose a daughter but gained a son, unico hijo of famed poet and Mother of Philippine women's liberation, Leona Florentino of Vigan. Time, however, proved that the biggest gainer was the town of Malabon. It took the audacious all-around Ilocano journalist, to finally allow, with the publication of his *El Folk-Lore Malabon*, a peak at what goes on behind Malabon inscrutability.

His early business ventures, first a pawnshop, then a bookstore failing, Isabelo decided to do what hopefully would not flop: writing. He wisely spent stay in Malabon writing about the town and compiling the town's folklore, along with Ilocandia's and Zambales'. By 1887, along with *El Folk-Lore Ilocano* and *El Folk-Lore Zambales*, *El Folk-Lore Malabon* was finished in time to warrant the title of his book, *El Folk-lore Filipino*, which, upon its publication, promptly won a silver medal at the Philippine exposition in Madrid.

In 1897, while Isabelo, along with many prominent Filipinos implicated in the Katipunan uprising, was under preventive arrest in Bilibid prison, Josefa died, cutting short their romance, but not his romance with Malabon... The death of Isabelo's first wife while

he was in incarcerated in Manila's Bilibid Prison, was indeed a blow in a time otherwise well-spent in jail. For only then was he able to ask everything he wanted to know about the Katipunan but did not know what to ask because he knew next to nothing as far as the Katipunan was concerned. (Marcelo, 2004, pp. 64-65)



FOLK-LORE MALABONÉS

I

PREOCCUPACIONES POPULARES

Los del barrio de Letre cuando desean que llueva, hacen en procesión la imagen de S. Isidro Labrador y después le echan agua en la cabeza y le cubren como a un moribundo cualquiera, diciendo: *Malabon na San Isidro, paulenta na pa.*
Traducción: Rascarecido S. Isidro, haz que llueva.
—Las primeras niñas, que se curian a los niños, se colocan en los agujeros de la escalera ó ventanas, para que no se caigan en las escaleras ó ventanas. Y si se desea que el niño frecuente las Iglesias, se ponen dichas niñas en el agua bendita.
—Es malo bañarse en viernes, porque si llegamos a tener alguna enfermedad, ésta será grave.
—Si ves algún cuclú de animal (fascional), no pases encima de él, si estás embarazada, porque no parirás, sino en la época, en que deba parir las hembras de la especie del animal, cuyo cuclú has pisado, es decir, si las hembras de aquella especie suelen parir 14 meses, después de concebida la



MONOGRAFIA DE MALABON

I

ALGO DE HISTORIA

Como apéndice del *Folk-Lore de Malabon*, vamos a dar una Monografía de dicho pueblo, que suponemos no dejará de gustar a nuestros lectores por la importancia comercial de dicho pueblo, y porque los mismos folk-loristas encontrarán en ella no pocos materiales, advirtiendo que casi todo lo que hemos dicho hasta aquí de los malabonenses, se puede aplicar a los demás tagalos.
Este pueblo ha tenido el primer tranvía a vapor de Filipinas, lo cual indica su gran importancia, y, a la verdad, después de la ciudad de Manila con sus arrabales, es el pueblo más notable de esta provincia y es mas grande y rico que muchas cabeceras de otras del Archipiélago.
El nombre verdadero de dicho pueblo es Tambobo, así consta en la historia, es decir, desde antiguo: como en los documentos oficiales; pero el vulgo sigue denominándolo *Malabon* y es mas conocido con este nombre, el cual lo tenía el barrio principal que hoy se llama Concepción.

FIG 4. “Folk-Lore Malabonés” and “Monografía de Malabon” in *El Folk-Lore Filipino* (De los Reyes, 1889, pp. 271, 282). Accessed through Biblioteca Digital Hispánica, Biblioteca Nacional de España.

Malabon was De los Reyes’ innocent yet long-drawn introduction to a semi-rural, semi-urban Tagalog society in Manila: “The town enjoys better weather than Manila: it is usually temperate, war, during the dry season and cold in the morning” (De los Reyes, 1889/1994, p. 549). He extensively described Malabon’s geography in the following manner:

In “Folk-Lore Malabonés,” De los Reyes provides a glimpse of the beliefs and practices of the Malabon people he witnessed during the first years of living in the town. The select entries are categorized into what environmental aspect they refer to: meteorological, animal-related, astronomical, and seismological.

De los Reyes’ life in Malabon, aside from his historical contribution as a revolutionary, labor leader, and church founder, was also a unique period of his

intellectual journey, where the beginnings of his scholarly documentation of local cultures blossomed and came into fruition.

TABLE 4. *De los Reyes' Description of Malabon's Geography*

<i>El Folk-Lore Filipino</i> (De los Reyes, 1889, p. 293)	<i>El Folk-Lore Filipino</i> [1994 Translation] (De los Reyes, 1889/1994, p. 543)
<p>Se halla al NNO. De Manila, á una legua y dos millas de distancia: dos brazos de mar que algunos llaman rias, se dan la mano en dos partes, dividiéndolo en una isla y otra península, además del terreno en que se asientan los barrios de Tinajeros y Meysilo.</p> <p>La Isla es la parte más principal; tiene una legua, poco más ó menos, de largo, por unos quinientos metros de ancho; en ella se halan la yglesia y convento, las casas-ayuntamientos de los gremios de naturales y mestizos, y los barrios de la Concepción, Tañong y Dampalit. Confina al N. con el pueblo de Polo, al O. y S. con el brazo de mar de que le separa de Nabotas y al E. con el otro brazo que le aleja de la península de Tonsuya.</p> <p>En esta se hallan los barrios de este nombre, Lungos y Niugan, y confina á su vez al N. y O. con el brazo de mar que le separa de Tinajaeros y de la isla anteriores; al Sur con el mismo en su parte ancha y al E. con el Dagatdagatan ó sea el mismo brazo, pero que se llama así, porque se parece á un lago ó bahia en forma de lago. Está unido por el itsmo de Salitre con un pedazo de terreno perteneciente á este pueblo, pero unido al de Caloocan.</p> <p>Existen varios viveros de pescados; muchos se dedicand á la pesca, y algunos por medio de los corrales que les producen considerable ganancias ó pérdidas según que los huracanes los respeten ó no. Hay algunas casas de poca importancia que se ocupan en salar pescados, calculándose en 100 pesos los rendimientos de esta industria.</p>	<p>It is located one league and two miles North-Northwest of Manila. Two arms of the sea that some call estuaries, meet at two points, dividing it into an island and a peninsula, in addition to the area occupied by the barrios of Tinajeros and Meysilo.</p> <p>The island is the most important district it has. A length of approximately one league, and a width of about 500 meters. It has a church, a convent, the council halls of the associations of natives and mestizos, and the barrios of Concepcion, Tañong, and Dampalit. In the North, it is bounded by the town of Polo; in the West and South, an inlet separates it from Nabotas; and in the East, another inlet cuts it off from the Tonsuya Peninsula.</p> <p>On Tonsuya we find the barrios of Tonsuya, Lungos, and Niugan. It is bounded in the North and West by a river that separates it from Tinajeros and Malabon Island; so the South is Tinajeros, and to the East Dagatdagatan which is actually part of the same river previously mentioned so called because it is more like a lake. It is joined by the isthmus of Salitre to a piece of land belonging to Malabon, but attached to Caloocan.</p> <p>There are many fishponds. Many go fishing while others build fish pens that earn considerable profits or incur huge losses depending upon whether the typhoons spare them or not. There are some small outfits that engage in salting fish, an industry that is estimated to bring in one hundred pesos.</p>

TABLE 5. *Select Popular Beliefs and Riddles in Malabon*

Popular Beliefs (De los Reyes, 1889/1994, pp. 493, 495, 497)	
Belief	Category
When inhabitants of Letré want rain, they carry the statue of San Isidro Labrador around the procession, throw water on his hear, and bathe him like any regular human being, saying: <i>Mahal na San Isidro, paunlanin mo po</i> (Dear San Isidro, please make it rain.)	Meteorological
During a storm do not go near any horned or hornless animal (meaning irrational animal); neither you seek shelter under iron or any other metal.	Meteorological
Fisherman who involuntarily gets a fish get away will be inconstant in everything.	Animal-related
If, as seen from Malabon, the moon in its new quarter looks towards Manila, there will be rain; if it looks towards the sky there will be no rain.	Astronomical
If, after a rain, a rainbow appears in the East, it means that there will be no more rain. If one appears in the West, there will be more rain. There will also be more rain if thunder is heard in the distance.	Meteorological
If stars shine very brightly, the next day will be fine and clear; cool in the morning and war, the rest of the day.	Astronomical
If the comet's tail is towards the East, there will be plentiful harvest; if it is towards the West, pestilence, hunger or war.	Astronomical
Reddish clouds appearing in the West announce a storm or strong winds; yellow ones indicate thunder. In the morning, if clouds look like calm waves, there will be an earthquake.	Meteorological Seismological
When the pig makes his bed in garbage, there will be rain.	Meteorological
A woman should not look at an eclipse of the sun or the moon during the first months of her pregnancy to avoid giving to a mad or retarded child.	Astronomical Animal-related
Ants changing the site of their anthill is a sign of rainstorms.	Meteorological Animal-related
Riddles (De los Reyes, 1889/1994, p. 501)	
Riddle	Category
A king's bedsheet covered with patches. A cloud-specked sky.	Meteorological
"C" when it is small, "O" when it is big. The moon.	Astronomical

3. Conclusion

In conclusion, this work presents an approach to looking at De los Reyes' *El Folk-Lore Filipino*, and how his pioneering cultural work is not only a mere compilation of randomly selected cultural beliefs and practices but a rich compendium of local knowledge, specifically, on the natural environment. The sections on Ilocano and Malabon folklores, though limited, are emblematic representations of the dynamic presence and practice of cultural beliefs in certain Philippine communities. Moreover, understanding the environmental dimension of the *El Folk-Lore* shows how popular knowledge can be framed in such a way to serve as a microscope to the dynamic details of local life in colonial Philippines. Furthermore, the scholarly and/or scientific approach in looking at cultures and communities as sources of knowledge and sites of colonial interactions clearly illustrates the daunting task De los Reyes, and his fellow propagandists, successfully did and how they contributed to the vision of a national culture at the end of the 19th century. Through this study's approach, *El Folk-Lore Filipino* can be further viewed not only from the lens of cultural history but also through other fields, such as environmental history and the history of (native Filipino) science.

Going back to Boas' historical particularism and Steward's cultural ecology, De los Reyes' *El Folk-Lore* encapsulates the plurality of voices in understanding cultures and raises ideas on how local cultures evolved, and illustrates how peoples and communities adapt to environmental changes by crafting meanings and perspectives on the nature's features and processes. Through this, we can further view De los Reyes not only as a journalist and propagandist that compiled historical and cultural studies to converse and counter the derogatory cultural views of Spanish towards the native Filipinos, but also a scholar, a historian-anthropologist-ethnologist who engaged himself in understanding local cultural realities that he himself embraced for several decades of his political and social career.

To end this study, De los Reyes' *El Folk-Lore* can also be characterized as an environmental history narrative that emphasized the value of geographical knowledge in reconstructing an important episode in the Filipinos' "cultural past." As historian J. Donald Hughes laments,

The task of environmental history is the study of human relationships through time with the natural communities of which they are part, in order to explain the processes of change that affect

the relationship. As a method, environmental history is the use of ecological analysis as a means of understanding human history. It studies the mutual effects that their species, natural forces, and cycles have on humans, and the actions humans that affect the web of connections with non-human organisms and entities...An environmental historical narrative should be an account of changes in human societies as they relate to the changes in the natural environment (Hughes, 2009, p. 4)

Using physical environment-human being relationship, the *El Folk-Lore* presented also rested on De los Reyes musing on geographical knowledge, a vital construct in examining the influence of physical environment to human history. As a body of knowledge, geography “includes above all the study of physical environment and the prime goal in interrelating it the historical reconstruction is to discover in what ways and to what extent this environment affected history” (Hughes, 2009, p. 2). Lastly, reflecting on Lucien Febvre’s characterization of the “marriage” of history and geography, De los Reyes’s set his intellectual legacy through the documenting folklores and cultures:

Man, a malleable being, submissive to the action of his natural environment (let us say the Earth) acts on him and transforms him by means of two powers, two sovereign forces: soil and climate. It is granted certainly that, heredity forms one of the factors in human evolution, but all of the others are derived from habitat. These exercise their power at the same time on individuals and communities, and are not only efficacious agents in somatic transformation, but are equally the determinants of political and moral ideas and realizations – the very basis of history” (Febvre, 1925, p. 9).

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