

**Diverse yet Distinct:  
Philippine Men's Clothing in the Nineteenth Century,  
1850s-1890s**



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[ *Abstract* ]

The changing of clothes in Balagtas' 1860 fictional comedy *La filipina elegante y negrito amante* (The Elegant Filipina and the Amorous Negrito) is used to explore the ethnic, cultural, and sartorial diversity in 19<sup>th</sup> century colonial Philippines. But, how does plurality in men's clothing reflect the socio-economic conditions of the late Spanish colonial period? This paper focuses on the diversity in Philippine men's clothing around 1850 to 1896, taking into account the limited range of colonial archetypes in iconographic and documentary sources. Underscoring the colonial culture that shaped mentalities and tendencies, this study offers insights on how clothing was used and how it was perceived in relation to the wearer. In discussing clothing diversity, distinctiveness was articulated using the work of J.A.B. Wiselius (1875), a Dutch colonial administrator in neighboring Indonesia, who in comparing Spanish and Dutch systems of colonial governance, underscored the Filipino penchant for imitation.

**Keywords:** Philippine clothing, Spanish colonial period, colonial clothing, imitation, diversity

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## I . Introduction

In the 1860 comedy titled *La filipina elegante y negrito amante* (The Elegant Filipina and the Amorous Negrito) (Balagtas 1860: 161-175) by one of the most famous Filipino literary laureates, Francisco Balagtas<sup>1</sup> (Hernandez 1975: 56), the leading man was Capitán Toming, a loincloth-wearing, pagan Negrito<sup>2</sup> (Hannaford 1900: 22-23; Marche 1970 [1887]: 34; Sawyer 1900: 201-207; Hernandez 1975: 55) street cleaner, who fell in love with a pretentious lowland, Christianized woman named Menangue. In courting Menangue, Capitán Toming found himself discriminated for his dark skin, kinky hair, and lack of “civilized” clothing. As part of the unconverted tribes, he was dressed scantily in loin cloth and was looked down upon as “uncivilized.” Hence, he turned to clothes to reinvent himself until he crossed the sartorial and cultural boundaries that made him feel confident enough to win the girl.

Bearing gifts, the Negrito loverboy first went to see Menangue in loincloth (*bahag*) (Sawyer 1900: 201-207).<sup>3</sup> After being rejected, he tried seeing her in Tagalog mestizo clothes, replete with wig to conceal his kinky, woolly hair. When that failed, he tried again by dressing himself in loose shirt and wide-legged pants commonly seen among the Chinese in the Philippines. Undeterred, he tried insinuating valor and strength through his clothing by garbing himself in Muslim (Moro) warrior’s attire. Finally, much to the

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<sup>1</sup> Francisco Balagtas (b. 2 April 1788- d. 20 February 1862) was best known for his epic, *Florante at Laura*. He would adopt the last name Baltazar, following the 1849 Edict of Governor-General Narciso Claveria y Zaldúa that natives should have Spanish last names. He was born in Bigaa, Bulacan before moving to Tondo, Manila to work as a houseboy. The children of Balagtas indicated that the first production of *La Filipina elegante y Negrito amante* was in 1860.

<sup>2</sup> Negritos or Aetas are the flat-nosed, thick-lipped, kinky-haired aborigines of the Philippines often discriminated for their very dark color. They were called negroid dwarfs for they were, on the average, only 4 feet 8 inches tall. There were different classes of Aetas, Itas, Igorots from Ilocos Sur to Cagayan, Nueva Viscaya, and Nueva Ecija, as well as Negritos from the mountains of Mariveles. A subgroup, the Mayoyaos, were referred to as one of the more ferocious Igorot tribes.

<sup>3</sup> There were some Negritos in Palawan who were scantily dressed in only one piece of garment—a loincloth made of the inner bark of a tree. It is important to note that some Negritos who frequently interacted with the lowland, Christianized Filipinos wore clothes, which they would put on before entering villages.

surprise of his fellow street sweeper-cum-friend Uban, he appeared in the main square where they worked, dressed as a Spaniard. In frock coat—a European-style, knee-length coat with back slit detail—he asked his friend, “Am I not elegant?,” for which his friend replied, “you look ridiculous in that suit of yours.” Capitán Toming went on by saying “Do you know why I am wearing these fine clothes? I am now Spanish in form and fashion. Spanish enough, Uban, to be loved by the beautiful Menangue” (Reyes 2008: 11-13).

Between the simple loin cloth and the layered frock coat, Capitán Toming went through three sartorial transformations, dressed as Tagalog mestizo, Chinese, and Moro. He clothed himself in the different garments that not only represented the diverse ethnic and cultural groups that inhabited the Philippines but also in garments that represented his own understanding of civilization, elegance, and modernity.

In loin cloth, with only his private parts covered, he looked uncivilized and primitive. As a pagan, he stood at the peripheries of colonial society but in fully covering<sup>4</sup> his body in Tagalog mestizo, Chinese, and Moro attires, he looked civilized; he even appeared “integrated” as one of the recognized subjects of Spain. As a Negrito clothing himself in the attires of the “other Filipinos,” before eventually dressing up like the Spanish masters of the colony, the leading man conveyed exclusion from the rest of the converted, lowland population (Cariño 2002: 240-241).

Ultimately, more than just fully clothed, he dressed himself in layers completely inappropriate to the tropical climate. More than to convey civilization, he felt the frock coat conveyed modernity, even sophistication. All dressed up and literally overdressed, he felt he looked elegant enough to win the girl.

But, the love story did not end there. Much to his disappointment, he did not win the girl by changing his outer appearance. Even in

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<sup>4</sup> In addressing issues relating to nakedness or partial nakedness, the playwright understated the fact that full conquest was a challenging endeavor for Spain. Due to the fragmented nature of the islands, the highland tribes of Northern Luzon, Mindanao as well as some Muslim groups in Sulu were not subdued by Spain and were, therefore, less influenced by the West.

a coat, he was everything but a Spaniard. The more the loverboy continued to dress to impress, the more his naiveté and lack of sophistication was emphasized.

Everytime he was turned down, Capitán Toming poured his heart out in *kundiman*, the poignant love song of the Tagalog. In the end, moved by her enamored suitor's resolve and purity of intentions, Menangue accepted Capitán Toming's love. Though externally unrefined, his beauty emanated from within.

## II. Clothing Diversity

The changing of clothes in Balagtas' 1860 fictional comedy, *La filipina elegante y negrito amante* (The Elegant Filipina and the Amorous Negrito) was used to explore the ethnic, cultural and sartorial diversity in 19<sup>th</sup> century colonial Philippines. But the question this paper seeks to answer is how does plurality in men's clothing reflect the socio-economic conditions of the late Spanish colonial period?

This paper focuses on the diversity in Philippine men's clothing around 1850 to 1896, taking into account the limited range of colonial archetypes in iconographic and documentary sources. Underscoring the colonial culture that shaped mentalities and tendencies, this study offers insights on how clothing was used and how it was perceived in relation to the wearer.

In discussing clothing diversity, distinctiveness was articulated using the work of J.A.B. Wiselius (1875), a Dutch colonial administrator in neighboring Indonesia, who in comparing Spanish and Dutch systems of colonial governance, underscored the Filipino penchant for imitation.

Capitán Toming's changing of clothes was used by this *sainete's*<sup>5</sup> (Hernandez 1975: 56) notable playwright, Balagtas, to paint a satirical and critical portrait of Philippine society close to the end

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<sup>5</sup> A *sainete* was a Spanish one-act play, usually performed with music. Typically, it was performed in the vernacular style and featured scenes of common life.

of the Spanish colonial era, particularly making fun of the Filipinos' propensity for sartorial imitation and/or disguise. Although the characters were fictional, they offered insights into the ethnic, cultural and sartorial diversity in the colony and such insights could lead to discussions on social exclusion and hierarchy.

The changing of clothes showed the playwright's recognition and familiarity with (1) how typical groups dressed at that time, often in proportion to their ethnic and social status in colonial society; (2) the diverse forms of dress that men may choose from; and (3) the way by which ethnicity, clothing and class were connected. Balagtas' use of a limited range of classes and types of people was without precedent. The range of colonial archetypes were finite in 19<sup>th</sup> century iconographic and textual sources and were usually drawn along the lines of the binaries colonizer/colonized, civilized/uncivilized, clothed/partially clothed, lowland, Christianized/highland, unconverted, and by the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, frocked/unfrocked. Clothing was at the center of how the main character announced and hoped to demonstrate his civilization; but, as he discovered along the way, displays of sophistication supplanted mere displays of civilization.

Earlier works (Pastor-Roces 2000; Capistrano-Baker 2007: 16-31; Moreno 1992) based 19<sup>th</sup> century Philippine fashion hierarchies on the one-dimensional race-based colonial hierarchy, which situates the peninsular Spaniards on top, followed by the insular Spaniards, Spanish mestizos, Chinese mestizos, Chinese mestizos and indios at the bottom (Table 1). However, a study of clothes must be based on a two-by-three triangular structure (Table 2), taking into account three dominant sartorial cultures (European, Philippine, and Chinese) (Cariño and Ner 2004: 74)<sup>6</sup> and two main social classes (upper and lower classes) (Gironière 1854; Fee 1910).<sup>7</sup> The 19<sup>th</sup> century Philippine elite was drawn from the wealthiest, if not the most influential people of the various races, from peninsular to

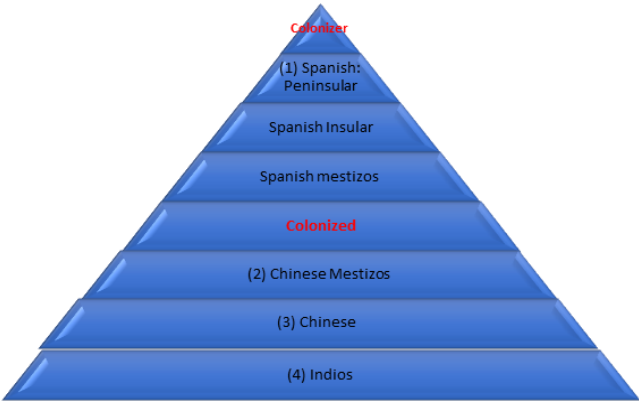
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<sup>6</sup> Referring to the festivities in Manila in 1825, Cariño and Ner remarked that "the paintings portray the dominance of three cultures in Manila: Chinese, Spanish and Filipino."

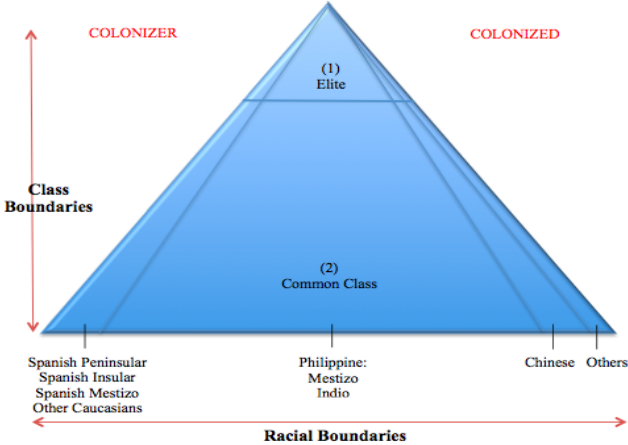
<sup>7</sup> Using different terms, almost all authors identified two main classes and some semblance of a third class, which was quite difficult to define.

indios to the other ethnic groups that inhabited the colony. When it comes to clothing, what occurred was a blurring of differences between colonizer and colonized (represented by the blurring of the vertical lines in Table 2) and the sharpening of differences between the upper and lower classes, which supports the theories of Thorstein Veblen (1912) and Kristin Hoganson (2003: 266, 271) that the “paramourncy of class helps explain why fashion subordinated nationality.”

<Table 1> Existing Colonial Structure



<Table 2> Proposed Sartorial Structure



It is apparent that the play was written during a period of change and fluctuating categories. Menangue's acceptance of the lowly, pagan Capitán Toming paralleled resolutions relating to some earlier tensions on civilization, conquest, and conversion. While in the early years of colonization, juxtapositions such as clothed and partially-clothed marked differences between civilized and uncivilized, in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the markers changed. Frocked and unfrocked men literally distinguished the urbanized or cosmopolitan from those who were not. Clothing was a marker not so much of civilization as defined post-conquest but civilization as variably defined in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

In the *sainete*, cultural change clearly did not parallel Capitán Toming's sartorial change. He manipulated his clothing, but he failed to display *urbanidad*, an urbanized, mestizo sartorial culture which was hybrid in nature, in the sense of being neither completely native nor completely European. From the mid-nineteenth century, upper class status also expanded to include peoples not only of wealth but a combination of talent, education, social networks, and culture. They displayed *urbanidad* by embodying sophisticated filipinized Spanish-ness/European-ness, integrating European tastes, consumption practices and education.

The above *sainete* also acknowledged that the main ethnic groups of Negritos, Tagalog mestizos, Chinese, Moros, Spaniards were, by the middle of the nineteenth century, also no longer existing in mutually exclusive, cultural, political and economic enclaves; rather, the boundaries were porous, intersecting and influencing each other by force of coexistence, interaction and observation.

### **2.1. Tagalog Mestizo Clothing**

The typical attire of Tagalog mestizo men in the 1850s was *baro* (shirt, usually made of locally woven fabrics) and trousers in muted tones like black, white or neutral tones. The subtle use of colors digressed from men's attire in the earlier decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century when explosions of color and mixed patterns in both the upper and lower garments were the norm. It must also be mentioned that the

*baro* or shirt of the Tagalog, referred to as the Barong Tagalog, was also worn untucked, similar to the Indian *kurta*.

In dressing himself specifically like a “Tagalog mestizo,” Capitán Toming conformed to the conventions of the lowland Christianized community, which meant covering both the upper and lower parts of the body. Second, the inclusion of the term Tagalog to refer to the attire emphasized the dichotomy between the urbanized Tagalogs of the capital city (*taga-bayan*) and those from the countryside (*taga-bukid*) (Álvarez Guerra 1887: 76-68; Patajo-Legasto, 2008: 738).<sup>8</sup> Third, the mestizo<sup>9</sup> as a class, were known to have possessed much wealth and influence. Many of the colonial enterprises from plantations to pawnshops were in the hands of principal mestizo families (Sawyer 1900: 31; Mojares 2006: 6). The use of the term mestizo as a clothing identifier stood for the nuanced, urban style and sophistication with which the relatively good-looking and wealthier class of mestizos carried themselves and their attires. Fourth, the combined use of Tagalog and mestizo in clothing served to reflect that by the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, racial or ethnic factors, in the sense of being Tagalog or mestizo, became less of an issue as the different groups were showing obvious signs of shared culture. Since the 1850s, the newfound prosperity of the islands produced a class of new rich poised to display their status and wealth through clothing, jewelry, lifestyles,

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<sup>8</sup> *Taga-bayan* literally means urban-dwellers; figuratively, it refers to urbanized, upper class citizens. Álvarez Guerra also talked about the *taga-tabi*, which literally means on the margins, to refer to those who aspired to belong with the *taga-bayan*.

<sup>9</sup> In many historical accounts and illustrations, the term mestizo was used loosely to refer to either the fair-skinned Spanish mestizos or to biracial children with no specific reference to bloodline. Although precise terms were used to distinguish Spanish or European mestizos with Chinese mestizos, the widespread use of the term mestizo as a blanket term has contributed to the problem of articulating how race might have influenced style and clothing choices in the colony. Félix Laureano, *Recuerdos de Filipinas: Álbum-Libro: Útil Para El Estudio y Conocimiento de Los Usos y Costumbres de Aquellas Islas Con Treinta y Siete Fototipias Tomadas y Copiadas Del Natural*, ed. Felice-Noelle Rodriguez and Ramon C. Sunico, trans. Renan Prado (Mandaluyong, Filipinas: Cacho Publishing House, 2001), fig. The Mestiza, pp. 157-160; “La Mestiza de Malate,” *La Ilustración Del Oriente Revista Semanal*, March 21, 1878.; Paul Proust de la Gironière, *Twenty Years in the Philippines* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1854), fig. Chinese métis; José Honorato Lozano, *Gervasio Gironella Album (1847)*, fig. mestiza de sanglely.



and parties. This Tagalog mestizo crowd appeared to propagate the social hierarchy and establish their distance with the way they wore their clothes (Álvarez Guerra 1887: 65-68).

## 2.2. Chinese

The average Chinese living in the Philippines in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century was recognizable by their distinct round-necked, collarless loose shirts with limited front or front-side opening, wide, loose drawstring pants, thick-soled Manchu shoes, and queue or pig-tail coiled into a chignon (Chu 2010: 119-120; Wickberg 2000 [1965]: 191).<sup>10</sup> Their heads were typically shaved in front, with the rest of their hair worn long and braided. They sometimes wore small caps with a red knot. Their loose pants in particular contrasted with the relatively narrow trousers of the natives (Rizal 1996 [1891]: 132).

Historical sources from the 19<sup>th</sup> century revealed that the Chinese living in the Philippines preserved the customs and clothing of their homeland. Although it must be emphasized that the clothing of these overseas Chinese developed not so much in conformity with the status-based hierarchical traditions back in mainland China; rather, they varied according to circumstances, fortunes, and the nature of their work in the colony. Preserving the unique clothing, hair, food, and business culture of their race, which were distinct from both the colonizing and colonized populations, they were often regarded as outsiders in Spanish colonial Philippines (Abinales and Amoroso 2005: 98).

Capitán Toming might have chosen to dress like the Chinese because they were perceived as having greater income potential than the indios. The colonial taxation system correlated ethnicity with earning potential, hence, it is known that the Chinese belonged to the highest income tax bracket (Wickberg 2000 [1965]: 140). The Chinese were recognized by Spanish colonial authorities as the highest taxpayers; thus, in Jose Rizal's 1891 novel, *El Filibusterismo*, the author quipped that by virtue of paying the highest taxes, the

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<sup>10</sup> According to Chu, baptized Chinese were required to cut off their queues to symbolize "their loyalty to Spain and the Catholic Church" but by the late nineteenth century, this requirement was lifted.

Chinese could even impose their own laws during church celebrations (Chu 2010: 82).

As taxes were computed according to occupation status and incomes, many Chinese were prudent about displaying wealth and status through clothing and appearance. Since the higher the income, the higher the taxes, and the more affluent they looked, the more they may attract suspicions from colonial authorities, many have learned to undermine their status by maintaining austere appearances.

Particularly interesting was how the Chinese were portrayed in 19<sup>th</sup> century travel accounts. Foreign observers linked appearances with wealth and emotional states. The general perception of the average Chinese was that they looked miserable, often “looking very ugly (Mallat 1983 [1846]: 337)” in tattered clothes, as opposed to the better off who were described as cheerful, happy and able to enjoy life (Sawyer 1900: 337).

If Capitán Toming was eager for prestige, then he might have chosen to dress like a wealthy Chinese merchant, referred to as *chino comerciante* in Spanish sources.<sup>11</sup>

### 2.3. Moros

In contrast to the semi-clothed mountain tribes, Moros from the south were fully clothed. Their elaborate, colorful attires also contrasted with the subdued colors used by lowland Christians. The clothing and material culture that developed among these coastal trading communities under the Muslim sultanates showed more of Indian, Chinese, and Southeast Asian rather than European influences. Moro chieftains of Mindanao for example were distinguished with sashes draped diagonally across their bodies. Relative to the narrow trousers worn by Christianized men, Moro men’s trousers were slim-cut, even tight-fitting (Cárlos 1887: 332). The tight fit of the trousers of Mindanao chiefs (*datu*) was highlighted especially when viewed in relation to the loose, knee-length breeches of their retainers. The slim fit reflected the

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<sup>11</sup> See José Honorato Lozano, *Gervasio Gironella Album* (1847).

lives of upper class Moros as generally free from hard labor. Moros also tend to wear different types of headdresses which were described as “most likely of Mohammedan imports from neighboring Malayan countries (Cruz 1992: 3, 24).” One type of headdress is the *potong* or *pudong*, a rectangular piece of cloth, wrapped around the head, which were rarely seen among lowland Christians.

But as Capitán Toming wanted to channel the appearance of Moro warriors, whose activities generally required clothes that allowed for greater freedom in movement, then, he must have favored wearing loose trousers, not the tight-fitting ones worn by the Moro elite.

#### **2.4. Spaniards**

As Spaniards represented the highest status in Philippine colonial society, Capitán Toming ultimately dressed himself in a frock coat typical among Spaniards and upper class natives. When the Negrito—who as a pagan from a highland tribe represented not the lowliest class but a group outside the recognized lowland, Christianized subjects of Spain—donned a frock coat, it set the stage for the play to reflect both an admiration for and a disregard for boundaries. It is a riotous defiance of existing conventions of dress.

Perceptions of beauty in colonial Philippines were also strongly influenced by the notion of white supremacy, where beauty was associated with the fair skin and sharp features of the Spanish and Europeans. As the colored among the colonized may not alter skin and facial features, clothing was manipulated and employed creatively and intuitively in order to establish status. The changing of clothes by a member of an excluded tribal minority conveyed the application of clothes as a marker of status.

Acquired prejudices, however, influenced how clothes were perceived on people. The complexity of this study lies in the fact that not every well-dressed Spaniard was a person of status, not every wealthy native was well-dressed, and not every poor Negrito was poorly dressed. This supports Roche’s assertion that “the most costly and abundant of clothes were not automatically found where

there was the greatest of wealth (1996: 107).”

Balagtas’ Capitán Toming openly admitted his desire to be equal with the Spaniards as he was street sweeping with his friend and co-worker at the plaza mayor. At that time, projections of equal status required the inclusion of Western garments (Hoganson 2003: 3). Cultural capital was also acquired through connections with Spain or Europe. Controller with the Dutch Colonial Administration in Java, J.A.B. Wiselius, visited the Philippines in 1875 and remarked how “it should be noted that if someone can claim at least some connection with a European (through descent or work as housekeeper), they consider themselves mestizas rather than natives. They [women] will no longer wear the native *sari* to cover an underskirt...(2016 [1875]: 85).” Wiselius’s observations revealed the desire of many natives to claim connections to what they perceived as the more superior, privileged white minority.

The white minority’s retention of their own clothing habits in a predominantly colored milieu was a sign of cultural superiority. There was obviously a sartorial gap between a dominant white minority and an inferior colored majority—a gap, which was blurred by the emergence since the 1850s of a prosperous and educated class of natives (indios and biracial mestizos) who had the capacity to dress, accessorize, and present themselves as persons of status.

The better classes among the various races in the colony, hoping to distinguish themselves among the common *tao* (Laureano 2001 [1895]: 51-52), switched to sleek, dark Western suits. Depending on the occasion, they also wore attires that combined elements of both Philippine and Western styles. The overt expansion of male wardrobes that included native, European, and hybrid ensembles demonstrates what Finnane (2008: 35) once noted: “in dress as in other respects, a society was more commonly represented by reference to its male members.”

In the Philippines, as in Europe, “the mid-nineteenth century was the high-water mark of male domination, and in such patriarchal periods, the clothes of the two sexes are as clearly differentiated as possible (Laver 2002: 184).” From a fashion perspective, Philippine women’s clothing may appear to have

defined the era. For one, colorful clothing in dramatic proportions were much talked about and discussed in 19<sup>th</sup> century travel accounts and periodicals (Bárrantes 1876; Mallat 1846: chapters 20, 22, 23; Jagor 1917 [1875]).<sup>12</sup> But, it was the diversity and overt expansion of men’s clothing that delivered exciting narratives about their varied activities.

The ballooning of skirts among the wealthy were restrictive, preventing women from pursuing laborious tasks (Laver 2002: 170-172). Women’s impractical attires were not only marks of status but also symbols of their exclusion from the usual avenues of power—careers in law, ecclesiastics, politics, and military—which men could strive to achieve distinctions for in the colony. Women who engaged in business incorporated it with their social lives. In short, the blurring of their professional and leisure activities did not require separate types of garments. As I have argued previously (Coo 2014: 158), their clothing requirements developed differently from that of men. The same styles cut with different fabrics and adorned with varied embellishments distinguished women’s ordinary, social, and professional attires. Meanwhile, men’s wardrobes included native, European, and other types of hybrid ensembles, depending on their separate work, leisure, and social activities. Furthermore, Simmel (1957: 545) called to mind that the expansion of circles to include previously unfamiliar categories and the development of different groups within the same class contributed to variabilities especially in men’s clothing.

### III. Imitation and Colonial Culture

Imitation are significant themes of Balagtas’ *sainete*. The text revealed so much about the era and colonial culture that shaped the mentalities and tendencies of 19<sup>th</sup> century Filipinos. Jukka Gronow (1993: 89) pointed out that blind imitation is “the opposite of good

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<sup>12</sup> See also *El Bello Sexo: Semanario Ilustrado de Literatura, Bellas Artes, Ciencias y Conocimientos Útiles, Dedicado Exclusivamente a La Mujer*, Año 1, (Manila, 1891); *Ilustración Filipina Periódico Quincenal*, Año I (Manila: Imprenta y litografía de Ramírez y Giraudier, 1859); *Ilustración Filipina Periódico Quincenal*, Año II (Manila: Imprenta y litografía de Ramírez y Giraudier, 1860).

taste” while Georg Simmel (1957: 543) linked imitation with the primitive state of the wearer.

Wiselius, who as part of the colonial administration in neighboring Batavia (now Jakarta, Indonesia), was interested in comparing Dutch with Spanish approaches to managing their colonies in Southeast Asia, discussed imitation by describing it as “adoption of European customs.” He noted that “the native and mestizo population of Manila is quite a bit ahead of the Javanese, Malay, or Annamite in adopting European customs (1875: 14).”

Although exhibiting great European influence, Philippine clothing also registered influences from its Southeast Asian neighbors. For example, the construction of men’s shirts, replete with folded collars and long, cuffed sleeves, were European-inspired but acclimatized or reworked using local fabrics. The fact that the shirts were also loose and worn untucked—as opposed to the tucked shirts called for in Western clothing—revealed cultural links between the Philippines, India, and Southeast Asia (Torre 2000: 6). The same terms were also used in Indian, Southeast Asian, and Philippine contexts to refer to specific clothing pieces. *Salawal* or *salauwal* referred to a type of loose men’s trousers while *sayasaya* referred to the loose silk trousers that featured embroideries along the hemlines (Canta 2009: 123).

Apart from his observations on how Philippine clothing registered more European influences compared to its neighboring Southeast Asian countries, Wiselius also spoke of the importance natives gave to appearances:

But one should not take this apparent civilized behavior too seriously. What one sees are the customs and behavior of emancipated children, cosseted by an unwise government that gives importance to outward appearances and spoiled by a crowd of ignorant clergymen...everywhere the influence of the church on dress and customs can be seen. This influence is stronger in the cities, weaker in the countryside...The nature of Spanish colonization explains why a Polynesian people have—at least in appearances—so radically broken with ancestral customs and practices (Wiselius 1875: 14).

First in a series of publications by Wiselius offering comparative perspectives on Spanish, French, Portuguese, and British systems of colonial governance, his views clearly reflected the European-outsider's "oriental" gaze, particularly that of a civil servant of Dutch Indonesia's representation of Spanish Philippines. Implied in his orientalist view of Spanish Philippines was the "more effective and morally responsible" Dutch approach to managing its colonial project (Muijzenberg 2016: x). Equating the colonized subjects of the "unwise government" of Spain as "emancipated children" who valued appearances spelled out his critical view of the culture that took root in the Spanish colony. He traced the culture of dress and appearances that developed and prevailed in colonial Philippines to the influence of the church and its "ignorant" representatives, which confirmed what was common knowledge on the role of friars and church institutions in the colonizing process. Wiselius' use of the word "children" to describe Spain's colonized subjects resonate with the connections Georg Simmel (1957: 543) made between children's tendency towards imitation and their stage of development. In his sociology of fashion, Simmel likened a child who repeats facts to the primitive man. This is linked to another study on fashion and style by Jukka Gronow (1993: 89) who said that "a person blindly following the whims of fashion was without style, whereas a man of style—or a gentleman— used his own power of judgement." The propensity of Filipinos to imitate may hence be viewed as signs of their primitiveness, lack of style, and colonial mental captivity.

Alongside the Filipino penchant for copying, Wiselius also observed disparities in color choices between the Philippines and its neighbors:

Although the natives in Manila and its surroundings meet us in Spanish-looking dress, and although they receive us with a welcome in perfect Spanish, one still feels that both are out of place, and that varnish hides rotting trusses. A sense of beauty that one observes in neighboring countries (the least developed not exempted) in decoration and the use of colors is totally absent among these Spanish-speaking natives. Elsewhere one can see a sense of design even in the most common articles for daily use; here it is copying... (Wiselius 1875: 16)

Paintings of Philippine artists in the 19<sup>th</sup> century began to register how the color of men's shirt and pants evolved from colorful to monochromatic, muted tones like natural, white and black.<sup>13</sup> Robert Ross, in his work *Clothing: A Global History* (2008: 74), pointed out that the color black has, "since the 1840s, become universal, even in the hottest weather." While men's clothing increasingly became somber, Philippine women's clothing became more dramatic. The sleeves were amplified, the skirts ballooned, and skirt material expanded to include imported velvets and silk in celestial and floral patterns. While women's lower garments may have become more colorful and voluminous, it is important to note that their upper garments made use of natural colors. This explains why Wiselius had the sense that the use of color was absent among Filipinos.

Wiselius' descriptions of aspects of Philippine culture were mostly based on his understanding of customs in neighboring Southeast Asian colonies. For instance, in detailing women's clothing, he referred to the *tapís*, a rectangular piece of cloth wrapped over the skirt, typical among native women, as *sari* or *sarong*, terms widely used in neighboring Southeast Asia and India; the blouse of *sinamay* simply referred to as made of "white fabric or colored chintz" (the *kabaka tjita* of Malay women) (Wiselius 2016 [1875]: 14-16).

#### IV. Conclusion

Through Balagtas' 1860 comedy, *La filipina elegante y negrito amante*, the varied types of men's clothing styles were presented to reflect the ethnic, cultural, and sartorial diversity in colonial Philippines. There were those within the Spanish sphere of influence like the non-Spanish Europeans, Chinese, native indios, and

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<sup>13</sup> See the following images: José Honorato Lozano, *Nyssens-Flebus Album: Album de Manille et ses environs*, 1844 to 1846, Watercolor, 247x343mm, fig. Mestizos en traje de fiesta, Christie's London 2002; José Honorato Lozano, *Karuth Album: J.A. Karuth Album on the Philippine Islands*, September 2, 1858, Watercolor, 30x22.5 cm, September 2, 1858, fig. Mestizos in fiesta attire; Félix Martínez y Lorenzo, *Mestizo Español*, 1886, Watercolor, 1886, Museo Nacional de Antropología, Call #: CE3796.



mestizos referred to as lowland, Christianized; and those outside or in the peripheries, like the pagan, highland tribes, and the Moros.

In the final decades of the Spanish colonial era, the natives achieved socio-economic and cultural power that allowed them to traverse the boundaries set forth by the Spanish in the early days of colonial rule. As Manila opened up to world commerce, as indio and mestizo families were enriched by commercial cash cropping, and as Europe became accessible after the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, *urbanidad* (Camacho 2010: 295) became linked with the cosmopolitan, hybridized culture displayed by the wealthier, educated, and better-looking mestizos. Through clothes, mestizos and indios of similar status expressed who they were or who they wanted to be, who they wanted to be associated with, what they wanted to highlight and what they wanted to hide as a result.

*Urbanidad* was articulated in this paper by looking at how clothing fashioned by the wealthier or superior class and the status they embodied were perceived, received, and espoused by the wider society, which came to include groups earlier considered as “outsiders.” Clothing like frock coats—originally adopted by indios and mestizos enlarged by wealth, education, and urbanized culture—worn by the common *tao*, or worse, by pagans considered “outside” of Spanish colonial rule reflected that the Spanish were losing grip on the colony and their subjects.

Critical of Spanish colonial rule were non-Spanish Europeans like J.A.B. Wiselius who was working as a Dutch civil administrator in neighboring Indonesia. From a foreign, external gaze, he made observations on the culture of clothing and appearances in Spanish Philippines with inter-colonial comparisons in mind. He often described clothing styles and customs relative to how clothes were worn and referred to in other European colonies in Southeast Asia.

Although Philippine men’s clothing were diverse, often reflecting European, native and Southeast Asian elements, what made them distinct were (1) in certain cases, the material and the hybrid combinations; and (2) in many cases, the wearer, whose propensity to imitate exhibited inherited prejudices brought about by centuries of Spanish colonization (Memmi 2003).

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