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## **Two Yankee Women at the St. Louis Fair: The Metcalf Sisters and their Bagobo Sojourn in Mindanao**

Cherubim A. Quizon

*The sisters Elizabeth and Sarah Metcalf went to the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis as ordinary fairgoers. They encountered the exhibit of living Bagobo people at the Philippine Reservation, were impressed by their music and their splendid dress, and traveled to Mindanao a year later to live and work there. This article traces their travels, occupation, and collecting activities, especially their relationships with the Bagobo of Santa Cruz, the kind of information that they were interested in, and the actual objects that they collected and on which they focused their energies. Their relationships in the field with another pioneering female, Laura Watson Benedict, whose extended fieldwork among the Bagobo briefly overlapped with the Metcalfs, are also discussed. Finally, some general observations concerning the nature of fieldwork for women anthropologists in the 1900s compared with the 1990s are presented.*

KEYWORDS: *World fairs, ikat textiles, ethnography, museums, colonialism*

In the dozen or so years since I first got engaged with the historical phenomenon of the displays of colonized peoples in world's fairs, key analyses of these encounters between peoples of contrasting color and status often trace symbolic relations, where the question of being White/non-White as well as of occupying high or low status are politically circumscribed within the overarching frame of colonialism. The now classic work *All the World's a Fair* by historian Robert Rydell frames the enterprise, especially that of St. Louis' Louisiana Purchase Exposition of 1904, as the American nation's projection of itself as a

new world power. In specific terms, Rydell (1984) looks at the displays of Filipinos within the serious “educational” sections of the Fair as an extreme expression of an already realized dominance argued by way of physical anthropology and social evolution. This compelling analysis has deeply influenced a generation of writers, scholars, and filmmakers in ways that rightly foreground the fundamentally unequal relations that make such displays possible.

The display of Filipinos at St. Louis was indeed framed in a strictly educational context, a spectacle that was meant to educate the American fairgoers about the people in their new territory. The educational displays in the Philippine Reservation, however, need to be contrasted with a separate but related display of people at the Pike, a part of the Fair not associated with science but with entertainment (*ibid.*, 178–82). There were no Filipinos at the entertainment concessions in St. Louis but there were several in subsequent fairs in the United States and Europe, especially those involving the Igorot, developments that are addressed by two other articles in this publication. Another ancillary mode of display in the Philippine Reservation was not of “ethnographic people” but of their “ethnographic things,” set up and executed by a category of U.S. government exhibitors separate from those tasked with the living village displays. But even in 1904 it was clear that displaying people differed from displaying artifacts; especially challenging for exhibitors was the tendency of individuals to behave in atypical ways, going against the script without always meaning to. Educational displays of serious culture, such as the way a thousand Filipinos were exhibited in their “authentic” rebuilt environments in the American midwest, were fundamentally unstable not only because they blurred categories of human with mannequin but because of the unavoidable tension with the not-so-educational attractions of the Pike, which was also filled with peoples of contrasting color but was framed by profit, pleasure, humbug, and desire rather than by serious stentorian intent (Quizon 1991; Parsons 1990; Poignant 2004).

Thus, if we pursue James Clifford’s notion of modes of representation as machines for making authenticity, we can actually point to three kinds of displays of the faraway and the exotic at St. Louis: living authentic people in authentic settings in the government exhibits (the

pure); living inauthentic people in blatantly fake settings in the Pike concessions (the fake); and dead authentic objects in very authentic looking museum-type displays (the relic) (cf. Clifford 1988, 224).

What is of interest, too, is that the “pure” people, especially as far as the Bagobo were concerned, came to the fair with their own clothes. What they had on their backs and in their possession, what was on display were not only themselves but their personal belongings. The museum-like displays with no living people among them, the things that we can also call ethnographic “relics,” were also in the Philippine Reservation but in separate buildings somewhere else (Jenks 1904). These exhibits of ethnographic objects were not located in the ethnological villages and, unlike the living displays, one did not always have to pay to see them. Hence, the Bagobo at St. Louis were not in costume, they were in their *clothes*. Many fairgoers surely must have approached them as costumed spectacles but, in the case of the Metcalf sisters whom I will be discussing, they were approached as fellow musicians, artists deserving of sympathy, unfortunate, left behind in quarantine, and eventually given musical instruments that were inferior or broken. In Tagalog we call this emotion *awa*, a combination of pity, sympathy and reaching out which has been discussed extensively by Fenella Cannell (1999) in the case of Bicol social interaction, and linked to seminal ideas on emotion and social action developed by Reynaldo Ileto (1979), Vicente Rafael (1988), and others. *Awa* is also a sympathetic response understood by Bagobo,<sup>1</sup> one that elicits connectedness and, in the case at hand, clearly facilitated communication and correspondence between the Metcalfs and the St. Louis Bagobo prior to their arrival in Santa Cruz in Davao. From the perspective of contemporary ethnography, the Metcalfs’ entrance into the “field” in 1906 was exceptional: not only were they known and expected by certain members of the Bagobo community but had also been introduced to the community of expatriate plantation owners who wielded more than the usual influence in daily life.

Thus, without disagreeing with a heroic theory of an all-embracing colonialist project, since it is mostly correct, it is still necessary to make some intellectual space to understand how the experience of being displayed played out in these people’s own lives, as well as the American

fairgoers who interacted with them (cf. Anonymous 2000). In this instance, I would like to grasp how individual Americans, and not government anthropologists, imagined a rubric of “ethnographic knowledge” that was so painstakingly constructed for them, a scientific authenticity that was projected onto the fairground through a show of living people and their things. This article is about such an encounter at the Fair and an attempt to trace the life trajectories that came afterwards, an arc that encompassed an amateur ethnographic project that ultimately wove together folk idioms of culture and nation.

### **Outsiders, Others**

Elizabeth Henshaw Metcalf and her sister Sarah Sprague Metcalf went to the St. Louis Fair in 1904, made friends with some of the Filipinos on display, mostly Bagobo and some Igorot, and wrote about what they did afterwards. I call these women American “others” because, as unmarried, older, yet economically independent women in the 1900s, and as part of an expanding group in the northeastern United States since the advent of teaching as a mass profession for women in the 1850s, they were still to a large extent mocked (Hoffman 2003, 26–31; Clifford 1991, viii–ix). Moreover, they were outsiders to a relatively new profession of anthropology that was centered in a small number of universities offering PhDs in that discipline, along with the key museum institutions with which they partnered.

In early-twentieth-century Europe and United States, ethnology and museology were professions ran and dominated by men. With no formal training in either anthropology or museology, with neither affiliation, supervision nor financial support from museum institutions or curators, and with no professional or familial obligations that had brought most of their compatriots, male or female, to the Philippines, how did these sisters make it to the Bagobo homeland in southern Mindanao a year later, stay for nearly four years, and amass one of the best collections of Bagobo textile and dress in the United States? More importantly, from their encounters with the “pure” at the Fair, they managed to come back with ethnographic objects that were so unlike “relics,” alive with references and connections to the social life of their

communities of origin, a community that was changing but not necessarily dying out. What was it about the nature of their encounter with Bagobo individuals in St. Louis that persisted in subsequent interactions with the community and in turn was reflected in their ethnographic collections?

### **Travels, Trajectories**

In 1904 Elizabeth and Sarah Metcalf went to the Fair as private individuals, another couple of ticket holders among the nearly 20 million that would visit the Fair by the time it closed its seven-month run. They visited the Philippine Reservation where entrance was free, but in order to visit any of the six “ethnological villages,” they had to buy a ticket. The Metcalf sisters subsequently struck up conversations with a number of Igorot and Bagobo participants, individuals whom they would later on refer to as their friends. They had a particular affinity for the Bagobo men, women and children, numbering thirty-eight in St. Louis, and in many separate instances in letters as well as interviews explained this sympathy in terms of misfortune and music. Elizabeth Metcalf was the musician of the two, and was deeply impressed by Bagobo gong music, which they initially called bells. Even more impressive to Elizabeth was the fact that the Bagobo played so well with broken or inferior gongs. The Bagobo had come very late into the Philippine Reservation, when the best gongs reportedly had already been taken by the Sama and Lanao Moro group. An outbreak of smallpox among the Bagobo on the ocean voyage caused the death of an unnamed American interpreter and friend, leading them to be quarantined.<sup>2</sup> When they finally joined the others on the Reservation, they were given an area close to the entrance near the Spanish fort and the manmade lake called Arrowhead.

At the Igorot and Bagobo village, the Metcalfs took a number of photographs with an Eastman Kodak Brownie camera that had been introduced into the American market in 1900, a new handheld amateur picture-taking device that did not require permission from Fair officials. The more cumbersome tripod cameras used by professional photographers Jessie Tarbox Beals or the Gerhard sisters were, by contrast,

carefully regulated. Eric Breitbart (1997) in his book *The World on Display* makes the case that these pictures provided interesting foils to the official photographs as they allowed “amateur shutterbugs” like the Metcalfs to “take pictures to their hearts’ content.” The book shows three photos taken by the Metcalfs at the fair—Elizabeth posing with a Bagobo woman; both sisters with a Bagobo man; and a third showing an unidentified female companion posing with the same man, but the latter now wearing a Western-style jacket (*amerikana*) atop his Bagobo clothes (*ibid.*, 49, figures 39–41).

The young man in the photographs is the much-admired 19-year-old Bulan, repeatedly referred to in publications and news reports as Datu (chief or headman) Bulan. It is highly unlikely that such a young man would be considered the principal leader of the group; it is clear from photographs, for example, that most others in the Bagobo contingent were much older, such as another Bagobo man, Santiago Palad (also named Agol), who was 38 years old in 1904 (Dabbay 1987, 71). Bulan’s youth and handsome demeanor certainly contributed to his popularity among fairgoers, but press reports that attributed wealth and status to him based on reports of his family’s abaca plantation holdings certainly added to his scientifically “savage” yet aristocratic appeal (*Washington Post* 1904, 3). In the case of the Bagobo woman photographed with Elizabeth, she is referred to by the Metcalfs by name, Ermolina.<sup>3</sup> She is most likely to have been one of their contacts when they traveled to Mindanao, although her name does not appear again in any of their notes and papers.

In the following year, the two women visited the Lewis and Clark Centennial Exposition in Portland, Oregon, sometime near the end of its run from June to October. (The other papers in this issue address the question of Bontoc Igorot from St. Louis who also ended up on display there, and whom the Metcalfs visited and sought out by name.) Several months later, the two women were residing in Mindanao, renting a house in the city of Zamboanga from April to August 1906.<sup>4</sup> Zamboanga, a bustling port city on the north coast of western Mindanao, was both a commercial and military hub for seagoing traffic. It was also the administrative seat of the American government in the south, with the vast island of Mindanao and the Sulu archipelago

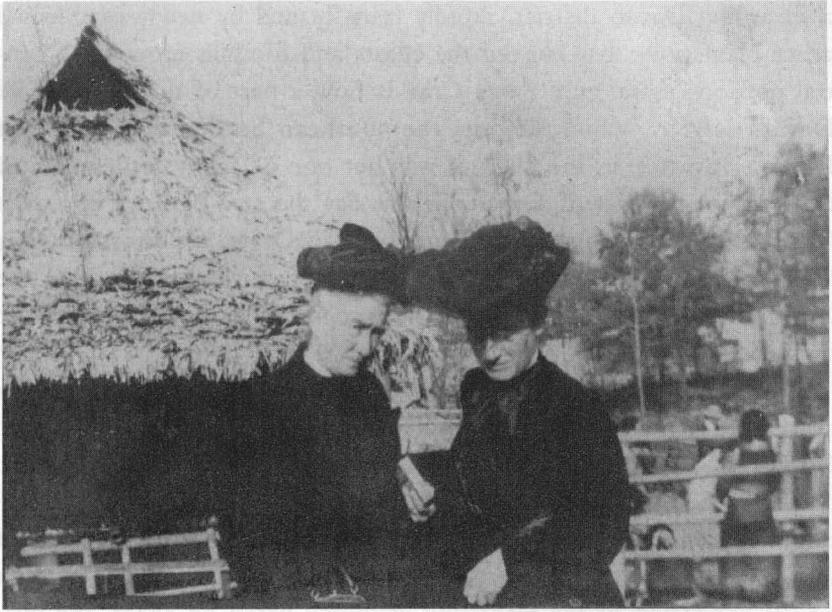


Figure 1. Elizabeth Henshaw Metcalf and Sarah Sprague Metcalf at the Bagobo village at St. Louis in the autumn of 1904. This photograph was taken using a handheld amateur camera introduced by Eastman Kodak in 1900 and extensively marketed at the 1904 Fair. Elizabeth, at left, was the older of the two, and was a musician and composer. The Metcalfs initially came to St. Louis to view the mock-up of the Boer War but ended up being deeply impressed by the Bagobo as well as the Igorot they met at the Philippine living ethnological displays. They left for Mindanao a year and a half later, stayed in the Bagobo homeland for four years, and accumulated one of the finest collections of Bagobo traditional and non-traditional textiles and clothing. (Smithsonian Institution-National Anthropological Archives, Neg. No. 93-15910)

placed under the jurisdiction of what was called the Moro Province. Zamboanga was strategic to the bloody pacification campaigns that took place in Muslim-ruled enclaves, especially the areas now known as the provinces of Sulu, Basilan, Cotabato, Maguindanao, Sultan Kudarat, and Lanao.

The Metcalf sisters' objective, however, was to find their Bagobo friends in a totally different part of Mindanao, in the region surrounding the Davao Gulf. They aimed to move to the settlement of Santa Cruz, which at that time would have delineated the southern reaches of

a sprawling Davao district, rapidly transformed by newly-established abaca plantations that hugged the coasts and foothills around the central portion of the gulf. Santa Cruz is now a part of the province of Davao del Sur, which adjoins the southern border of the city of Davao. However, in the 1900, it was but one of many settlements of the booming district of Davao. To this day the area of Toril in Davao City and the adjoining area of Santa Cruz in Davao del Sur, stretching from the coast towards the uphill and inland territories south of the Apo mountain range, continues to be recognized as a southern Bagobo homeland.

The Metcalfs hoped to move to Santa Cruz from Zamboanga despite the violent killing of the Davao district governor, Edward Bolton, by a Tagakaolo leader named Mangulayon (Tiu 2003; Bronson 1982). The Tagakaolo, like the Bagobo, are one of several ethnolinguistic groups that share the lands surrounding the Davao Gulf and whose communities experienced massive transformation as a result of the expansion of the plantation economy based on abaca, the missionary initiatives of several Protestant denominations, and the introduction of public schools which were widely subscribed by the children of plantation workers. A significant number of these plantations were wholly- or partially-owned by Bagobo, at least on paper, but more often operated as leaseholding arrangements between Bagobo landowners (who did not always participate in the day-to-day operations of the plantation) and their Japanese, American, or European partners. Meanwhile, plantation workers were made up of both poorer sectors of the indigenous Bagobo, Tagakaolo, Mandaya, and others, along with economic migrants from Luzon and the Visayas (Davao Planters Association 1909; Payne 1985; Hayase 1984; Goodman 1967; Quizon 2000). Consequently, the potential for conflicts existed not just between indigenous communities and settler Filipinos competing for the same wage-based work but also between indigenous Davao-area leaders, such as Mangulayon, and American government agents who customarily supported the interests of plantation companies over their native partners.

A week after the killing, while still in Zamboanga, Elizabeth wrote rather graphically to a friend about the incident: that Bolton and another

American were “cut to pieces with a bolo” by “one of his own savages,” a “Tagacola [sic] chief and one of his brothers” while visiting Malalag (which today is still considered a Tagacaolo homeland). The extraordinarily accurate detail in Elizabeth Metcalf’s account could not be explained solely by the limited seagoing links between Davao and Zamboanga, nor by the usual expatriate gossip. The rest of the letter explains her sources:

Our own pet tribe, the Bagobos, brought the news [of Bolton’s murder]: we were expecting to go down to Santa Cruz, the Bagobo town, in August to live. There are two white planters and a Frenchman and his wife, possibly the Congregationalist Missionary and his wife. Now that this has occurred 40 or 45 miles away, perhaps we won’t be allowed to go.

—Elizabeth Henshaw Metcalf to “Nellie,” 13 June 1906<sup>5</sup>

Elizabeth then echoed the encouragement of Gen. Leonard Wood, outgoing governor of the Moro Province, to take up residence in Davao precisely because there had been no prior problems with the non-Muslim indigenous population.<sup>6</sup> Elizabeth went on to speculate that some American, “a tactless fool or someone who couldn’t make money fast enough (at 60 or 70%) [profit] to suit himself” caused the trouble and got Bolton killed.

Patricio Abinales (2000, 75–77), in his book *Making Mindanao*, has observed that Leonard Wood himself certainly encouraged the policy of positioning Davao as a special case. In Wood’s view Davao had, on the one hand, a suitable class of American settlers with a hardy frontier mindset and, on the other, a more politically accommodating non-Muslim and non-Christian indigenous population than that found in western Mindanao. For this reason, the American plantation owners of Davao, which in the 1900s were a very anti-Filipino group, were in a sense a self-regulated economic power allowed to take on many tasks of the district authority and were answerable only to Washington, D.C.

An anti-Filipino American in the 1900s was not necessarily aligned with the imperialist/expansionist view so eloquently articulated by Theodore Roosevelt in his presidency (cf. Salman 1991). The Metcalfs’

position, like a number of their compatriots living in the territory, used the term “Filipino” in the 1900s to refer to the Christian lowlanders who made up a majority of the population and whose elites had dominated the political life of the archipelago from the nineteenth century onwards. In Luzon, “Filipinos” were mostly Tagalog, Kapampangan, and Ilocano and not “Igorot”; in Mindanao, “Filipinos” were Visayan, not “Moro” or “Bagobo.” “Filipinos” then were generally seen as oppressors of minority groups such as the Bagobo.<sup>7</sup> As far as the Metcalfs were concerned, the Visayan Filipinos too easily colluded with the local representatives of the Catholic Church to exploit Bagobo souls as well as their labor and resources. This antagonistic perception was influenced, no doubt, by their own connections with American missionaries of varying denominations who started to be active among the Bagobo from this period, with consequences still felt today.

Near the end of the Metcalfs’ stay in Mindanao in 1910, Sarah Metcalf made several drafts of a letter, with an eventually more diplomatic version sent off to the governor of the Davao district:

I am told that an order went out a week ago to the [mountain] people in one region to the effect that all who paid *cedulas* must bring to Santa Cruz for the construction of the Catholic Church within this week 10 *hyab* [bamboo] 5 *varras* long. That the Governor ordered it, & if they did not fulfill the order they must pay 2 [pesos]. We have always felt it an injustice to the Pagans (whom the Padre orders in the baptised and who are Wild Pagans even after they are baptised) to be obliged to do the work which the (Cebuans and Visayans) Christians do not do so far as we can learn. But if such an order has come from the Governor we should not wish to [stricken: “interfere”] criticize. One man who brought in the *hyab* brought me a piece for which I paid him. He is I am sure a half starved man and always makes me think of the pictures in a famine. He told me he brought the *hyab* to the church because he was afraid not to do so. I took the names of several of the people who had brought in *hyab*. The boys who work for us have cut the *hyab*, some of them, and wish to know if they must bring it in.

—Sarah Sprague Metcalf to the Governor, 2 April 1910<sup>8</sup>

The Metcalf sisters lived in Santa Cruz from August 1906 to 1910. There is no mention in the Metcalfs' notes and papers of a more specific address within Santa Cruz, but it is very likely that the two women maintained their own residence for a considerable portion of their four-year stay. This may be inferred not only from the existence of an independent income and from their collection notes but also from a good number of Bagobo textiles that show signs of having been taped or tacked onto a wall for extended periods, something that they would not be able to do in someone else's home, and something that they subsequently continued to do when they lived in Manila from 1915 onwards (cf. Reed 1928, *illus.*). On their last year, Elizabeth took on the job of teacher of industrial arts in the Santa Cruz public school. She was honored by the provincial superintendent of schools with a letter of appreciation for her work "utilizing . . . the characteristic handicrafts of the Bagobo tribe" in the past school year:

You have brought to the position of teacher the advantages accruing from a residence among, and a sympathetic study of the Bagobo tribe extending over a period of several years prior to the date when you assumed charge of the Santa Cruz school. Without any doubt, you (and your sister) are better qualified for educational work among the Bagobos than any one else in the World.

—Supt. of Schools, Moro Province,  
to Elizabeth Henshaw Metcalf, 21 April 1910

The first year of the Metcalfs' stay overlapped with the sojourn of Laura Watson Benedict (1911), whose well-known Bagobo collection was eventually purchased by the American Museum of Natural History in New York City. Benedict also worked as a public schoolteacher in both Davao district proper and Santa Cruz, but the financial and logistical burden of intensive field research funded only by a teacher's salary and limited by time away from school was difficult to sustain, especially with field sites in inland settlements far into what is now Davao del Sur. Nevertheless, the three women were well acquainted with each other. It was also in this latter period that they met Fay-Cooper Cole, who accumulated his southern Mindanao collection in less than a year as part of the Field Museum of Chicago's Cummings Expedition to the Philippines.

At the end of the Metcalfs' four-year stay they had evidently learned enough Bagobo and cultivated good enough relations with the local community to be able to speak with confidence on behalf of their Bagobo workers and neighbors, as they did in the case of the bamboo levy mentioned earlier. The degree with which they had been accepted by leading Bagobo men and women is even more apparent in the quality, breadth, and depth of their collecting activities. Later in this article, I will return to the Metcalfs' work as collectors in Davao, considered alongside the work of Benedict and Cole.

After Mindanao, partly brought home by the uncertainties of the First World War, Elizabeth and Sarah returned to the United States. During their five-year visit home, Elizabeth presented her work at the American Anthropological Association and began the negotiations that led to the sale of the most significant portion of their Bagobo collection to the University Museum of Pennsylvania at Philadelphia (Metcalf 1912; Hall 1916). They stayed in their home in Worcester and with friends in Baltimore until 1915 after which they returned to the Philippines and eventually settled in Manila, where they became reluctant entrepreneurs, purveyors of "native handicrafts" in The Little Home Shop. It was also during this period when they sought to collect among the Igorot and Ifugao in northern Luzon. After many hiccups and address changes, they eventually operated out of a large rented house on Mabini Street in Manila, where they also sold material culture artifacts by Igorot, Bagobo, and Muslim groups (Quizon 1992; Afable 2003). Their core business, however, was driven by *jusi* or *piña* embroidery and patronized mostly by American expatriate women and their families. Upon arriving in Manila in the first quarter of 1916, Elizabeth was very quickly taken ill and remained in frail health all throughout their remaining years together managing The Little Home Shop. It was in Manila where Sarah continued to live for fourteen years after Elizabeth died in 1925. Sarah returned to the United States one more time in late 1932, but returned to The Little Home Shop the following year. Both women died in Manila, more than a decade apart, with Sarah, the younger sister, passing away in 1939 on what would have been at least her eightieth year.<sup>9</sup>

### Spinsters, Not wives

Elizabeth and Sarah Metcalf were from the city of Worcester, famous for producing suffragettes and other female activists and social reformers (WWHP 2004). They were also rather mature women in 1904, both born sometime in the late 1850s to 1860, sharing an independent spirit and frank writing style which most probably reflected their speaking manner, and were in possession of some kind of regular income. They presented themselves as archetypal spinsters of the New England variety empowered with the agency of their age, education, and finances. Later in their lives, while being interviewed in their shop in Manila, Sarah spoke frankly of their having to work, “We have always worked . . . we have always had to work. And it was difficult for us to do the things we wanted to do in the Philippines” (Reed 1928, 17). Sarah, for instance, was employed by the Lawyer’s Cooperative Publishing Company in Rochester, New York, in the late 1800s.<sup>10</sup> At the same time, there were indications of a dependable though modest income up until about 1916, with a family home in Worcester that had a family crest *Esse quam videri* (To be rather than to seem), some speculation on the stock market, enough financial freedom to travel widely and live in Mindanao for several years with Elizabeth working for but a year out of four as a schoolteacher, and without the same kind of financial hardships experienced by other self-supporting American women in the Philippines.

It is likely that one or both were retired schoolteachers belonging to a significant demographic of Boston area women whose newly emerged standing in the classroom and in city life allowed them to enter public discourse and demonstrate control over their lives within a culture that saw women as weak (Hoffman 2003, 26, 46). Definitely by 1904 it was the Metcalfs’ upper-middle class cachet (or at least their well deployed savings, investments, and inheritance) that allowed them to be less of outsiders to the powers-that-be in the colonial social space, despite their very contrarian political views, and be critical participants in the American colonial hierarchy in the Philippines. They had some access to the ruling colonial segment, indirectly when writing letters to government officials, of which they wrote several, and more

directly through social contacts with other expatriates and military officers and their wives both in Davao and later on in Manila.

But it was precisely also their economic independence as well as their amateur academic interest that set them squarely apart from other American women in the early-twentieth-century Philippines. Vicente Rafael (2000, 52–57) in his book *White Love* writes about “colonial domesticity” as a particular perspective of American women, many of whom came to the Philippines as wives. He characterized this perspective as having a rarefied take on relations with Filipinos, whether when writing about the devotion of their native servants or their occasional ironic commentaries on their husbands’ masculinized epic work of the empire. Since the Metcalf sisters were not married, they did not structure their interactions in any way that was subsidiary to any other, male or otherwise. Furthermore, they often castigated segments of the American colonial presence itself not by profession but by moral ideas: not one American general or officer or planter; not one native or even one tribe, but instead the people they met were sorted as “good” versus “bad” types in ideological piles that were often contrary to “official” policies. All this took place while they maintained personal friendships with key figures in the American colonial government, such as Leonard Wood, Tasker Bliss, or even Najeeb Saleeby who was both their personal physician and friend.<sup>11</sup>

Hence, the Metcalfs’ activities and social selves cannot really be understood within the framework of colonial domesticity precisely because they were so ideologically and economically removed from the domain of the home and instead squarely positioned in its early-twentieth-century opposite, the market. Despite the quaint name of their business, The Little Home Shop, signaling domestic bliss or a very uncontroversial placement of women’s work within a woman’s domain, their lives, letters, and personal trajectories contradicted this conventional view of proper spinsterhood. Amy Dru Stanley (1996, 84 quoted in Hoffman 2004, 32), in an article on home life and the morality of the market, writes:

In the 18th century, to engage in special exchange relations, to be buffeted by fortune, was to be degraded, the fate of women. The emergence of a new “market psychology” entailed valorizing impulse,

passion, fantasy and appetite. That meant re-conceiving as inherent in man's nature the very propensities that had been equated shamefully with female hysteria, slavish dependence and social disorder.

The Metcalfs, who were not wives but spinsters, acted with a significant degree of personal agency by going off to Mindanao in search of the Bagobo. They did so as private individuals armed with good local information, and indeed by their actions they valorized impulse, passion and fantasy. They were acting, in a way, like men imbued with a new market psychology. Because they were independent women, on their own in the colonies, and having the mindset of men but wearing skirts, it was all too easy to not take them seriously or to misunderstand their objectives.

### **Contrasting Patterns Underlying Bagobo Collections**

I now turn to the Metcalfs' ethnographic collection which was accumulated during their time with the Bagobo in Mindanao. This significant body of work came about not only because of their interest in museums, material artifacts and crosscultural representation, but also developed from their personal ideologies and poetics of collecting. With this in mind, the initial encounter in 1904 can be more fully understood. Moreover, that collection must also be connected to Cole's and Benedict's in order to grasp a broader picture of how American colonial anthropology in the Philippines was imagined and expressed in both professional and amateur lives.

The Metcalfs, Benedict, and Cole were working around the same area in the Davao region at overlapping periods. They were, to a very large degree, in competition with one another both for Bagobo ethnographic material as well as for access to key informants. Despite this situation of being in potential competition with each other, the Metcalf sisters were not viewed as peers by either Cole or Benedict. Cole, who traveled to the Philippines as a well-funded representative of the Field Museum, did not come as an agent of the U.S. colonial government the way Dean Worcester, Albert Jenks, and others did in the northern Philippines. Private monies from the Field Museum's Cumming's Expedition gave him a different though related agenda than

that of Worcester and Jenks. Cole, who would subsequently finish his doctoral studies with Franz Boas at Columbia University, represented a brand new professional identity, that of American anthropology as a newly emerged science; in this manner he shared his mandate with his government counterparts. Hence, although he went to Mindanao as a nongovernment scientist, his mode of interaction with Filipinos, Bagobo, and the other non-White inhabitants of southern Mindanao followed classic colonialist models. He was assisted in his research by the official agents of the Davao administrative district, depended on Bagobo and other indigenous leaders who already had working relations of varying degrees with the American administration, and like his peers in government brought along his new wife, Mabel, who would go on to write her own account of their travels (Cole 1929).

We know for a fact that the Coles and the Metcalfs were acquainted with each other but, in all likelihood, it was a social rather than a professional connection established within the expatriate circles of planters and missionaries in Davao City and Santa Cruz. In a letter written to his supervisor George Dorsey on 25 July 1910, he would refer to them as “two old maids from Boston.” In the same letter he sought to present the individual he considered his rival of sorts, Laura Benedict, as an isolated and troubled woman who suspected the Metcalfs of “trying to set the natives against her and [stealing] her notes” (Bronson 1982, 30).

Cole and Benedict could not have met each other in Mindanao; the latter ended her stay there under almost tragic circumstances late in 1907 after a long period of extremely difficult and poorly-funded fieldwork. Benedict would write about the Metcalfs as “two good ladies . . . who are voluble talkers” (Bernstein 1985, 187), but it is difficult to assess if Cole’s evaluation of Benedict’s stay in Davao in general or of her mental state in particular was in any way derived from information from the Metcalfs themselves, who stayed on in the field longer than either Cole or Benedict, or was a retelling of gossip from the same expatriate circles from whom Benedict so clearly removed herself. Although there is no explicit mention of Benedict in any of the Metcalf papers that I have studied so far, and the place names that Benedict assigned to her field sites, Talun and Mati, do not appear in

any of the Metcalfs' notes, it is a safe assumption that, as single and educated American women who maintained residences in Santa Cruz town during overlapping periods and had similar interests in Bagobo material culture and everyday life, these three women had a great deal of personal knowledge of and interaction with each other. It is possible that they shared some of their informants, but Benedict's emphasis on conducting research on ritual behavior in the interior and the Metcalfs' more widespread collecting pattern in both village and coast significantly differentiated the nature of both their data and sources.

The Metcalfs did not mention the names of principal informants in the notes that accompanied their collections in the University of Pennsylvania's University Museum of Anthropology and Archaeology (UMAA) and in the National Museum of Natural History (NMNH).<sup>12</sup> They did not return to their collections in Philadelphia or Washington, D.C., for further study nor did they publish any full-length reports on their time in Mindanao, something that both Benedict and Cole eventually did. Elizabeth presented a paper on the Bagobo at the conference of the American Anthropological Association in 1911 (becoming a member shortly before this), but only the abstract and not the full paper was published. This more than any other marked their outsider status: they were self-taught anthropologists and museum collectors with good connections but ultimately no institutional affiliation.

Elizabeth and Sarah's names and activities as visitors to the Bagobo in St. Louis as well as long-term visitors to the Bagobo in Mindanao have been mentioned in more than one instance, often as foils to Benedict, the other eccentric spinster, or, as in the case of their amateur photographs at the 1904 World's Fair, as foils to the work of the professional female photographer Jesse Tarbox Beals (Breitbart 1997, 34–50). In more ways than one, they moved between the zones of insider and outsider.

By contrast, both Fay-Cooper Cole and Laura Benedict were students of Franz Boas at Columbia. It is within a well-established body of American ethnological practice that we must understand the work of Cole and Benedict while they were in Davao in the late 1900s, and while they were writing up their findings several years later for their degrees while affiliated with separate museums in the United States.

Although there were important differences in how each funded, conducted, and devoted time to their respective research, their published works and their large collections reflected a general belief in the definitiveness and durability of ethnic or “tribal” boundaries, a perspective greatly influenced by Boas, that in turn marked much of the anthropological thinking of their place and time.

Cole collected among ethnic groups all over non-Muslim Mindanao as part of the Cummings Expedition’s mandate. Benedict, like the Metcalfs, stayed only among the Bagobo. The Metcalfs were not in pursuit of an advanced degree in anthropology. Moreover, they were not employed or affiliated with any museum during that time, whereas Benedict was unofficially affiliated with and closely supervised by George Dorsey, Fay-Cooper Cole’s senior colleague at Chicago (Bronson 1982). The Metcalf sisters, however, successfully sold their Bagobo collection to the UMAA in Philadelphia in 1916 after more than two years of negotiations, and loaned the remainder of their collection to the Smithsonian NMNH (which subsequently became a donation in later years) before returning to the Philippines.

Benedict’s time in the field contrasted with Cole’s in many ways: in terms of their very objectives, which for Cole was to collect from all the “wild tribes”; in terms of their funding, which for Benedict came from working as a public schoolteacher for the children of Bagobo and Visayan who had settled on the coast to work in the American and European-operated abaca plantations; and in terms of their relationships with other White people in Davao, which for Benedict was marked by increasing social and psychological isolation and personal hardship (Bernstein 1985). By contrast, Cole was accompanied in his travels by his young wife Mabel whom he had married just before leaving for the Philippines and whose own book on her experiences offered a parallel and often candid account of conditions in the field. The Metcalf sisters, of course, had each other’s company throughout their many years in Mindanao and, later on, in Luzon.

The differences between the three collectors, however, are more than a matter of temperament and circumstance. Instead, they reflect three views of the same early-twentieth-century project: to make a scientific collection that visually reflects the culture and social life of the Bagobo.

Consequently, all three collections represent attempts to show the breadth of Bagobo material culture, but did so in very distinct ways.

Cole's collection does not stress the individual quality of the textiles and garments; in this Benedict surpasses him. However, he obtained a greater range of both common and more ceremonial articles of dress that consisted of upper body garments of men (*ompák ka mama*) and women (*ompák ka bayi*), men's short trousers (*saroár*), and women's tube skirts (*panapísan* in the 1900s). All were made with abaca fiber, tailored following very specific patterns, and embellished with an elaborate repertoire of decorative sewing techniques. Cole's regional approach to collecting put him in a better position to understand the remarkable similarities between the textiles and apparel in use all over the region. When considering Cole's Bagobo collection within the context of the entire Davao Gulf accession, strong patterns of interaction between the named groups are evident, patterns which he attributes to extensive slave raiding, intermarriage and warfare, which were "powerful influences in obliterating tribal lines" (Cole 1913, 49). His careful documentation of the provenance and local names for the garments and the cloths also gives some of the best insights into the movement across culture groups of certain textile types more than others (Reyes 1992).

Benedict's collection consisted mostly of extraordinarily fine abaca textiles and articles of dress. She focused on the cloths that had the most elaborate ikat patterns, the women's tube skirts. She was especially interested in the type of skirt that was the most difficult to make and had the highest status, the three-panel tube garment she called by the market term *panapísan* in the 1900s but which I refer to in my own work more specifically using the Tagabawa Bagobo word *sonnod*. Consequently, she had obtained an inordinate number of unsewn central ikat panels called *íne* or "mother" piece that were intended to become focal points of such valued women's garments. Prior to coming to the Philippines, she met with pioneers in expeditionary fieldwork in Cambridge and key Borneo and Mindanao collections in Leiden (Bernstein 1985). In the latter city, she was able to study some of the Bagobo textiles that were accessioned there in the late nineteenth century (Juynboll 1928). It was most probably in Leiden where she first saw the three panel tubes and understood the aesthetic significance of the central

portions of the skirts, and subsequently collecting several unsewn mother panels in Davao. It was taboo for Bagobo weavers to part with unfinished cloth, which was how stand-alone ikat patterned panels would have been viewed, and her efforts in that direction presented some special problems. Her interest in unsewn central panels and her efforts to acquire them have made her collection of Bagobo textile unique in the world (Quizon 1999).<sup>13</sup>

The Philadelphia accession was purchased by the University of Pennsylvania in 1916 and written about by the curator in the same year. Interestingly, no mention was made in the publication of the identity of the collector and the discussion was heavily dependent, not on the notes supplied by Elizabeth to accompany the pieces, but on the letters of the Jesuit missionary Mateo Gisbert in the 1880s as well as on Cole's publication that appeared in 1913 (Cole 1913; Hall 1916). Prior to this author's study which commenced in the 1990s, no research had been conducted on the Metcalf collection and the pieces for the most part had remained untouched.

The Metcalfs' Philadelphia accession, like that of Cole's and Benedict's, represents all the main types of men's and women's upper and lower garments made of abaca cloth. Unlike that of Benedict's, it has a broader sampling of lower status non-ikat textiles that are very much a part of the Bagobo repertoire. This includes a truly unique cloth in Mindanao called *dua talian*, which, unlike all others in the region, is patterned not by ikat or any other resist-dye process but by a subtle and technically demanding twill weave that requires a totally different warping and harnessing procedure. The appearance of these cloths is not as prepossessing as those of the spectacular ikat, but this cloth is significant when considering the textiles of the Davao region as a whole. The Metcalf collection in Philadelphia is distinctive in that it has several examples of these cloths. Apart from the *dua talian* pieces, there are also two examples of the rarest Bagobo three-panel skirts that have elaborate mother panels and have been overdyed, a technique called *sináke*, i.e., colored not just once but twice, first with black patterns and then once more with red. To my knowledge there are no other *sináke* Bagobo textiles in any other American museum collection; it is also not present in Leiden among the Bagobo pieces that date to the 1880s.

Acquiring not just one but two of these types of very rare textile signals the Metcalfs' unparalleled access to Bagobo weavers. Not all Bagobo women weave, and even fewer had knowledge of ikat and the associated dyeing techniques. Knowledgeable weavers by tradition had very high status in Bagobo society (the Metcalfs refer to them inexactly as Bagobo "aristocracy") and these elder women often had a great deal of control over the tailoring of their textiles and where these would eventually go.

When we consider the Metcalf collection in Philadelphia in unison with their collection at the Smithsonian, it becomes clear that the Metcalfs were not only interested in the more traditional garments made with abaca but also in those that were made with store-bought cotton cloth. Benedict despaired of the rapid mixing of Bagobo and non-Bagobo artifacts in their everyday lives on the coast, which was what drove her to try to collect more thoroughly in the less cosmopolitan mountain villages. The Metcalfs, however, might not have been disturbed by this phenomenon and included several examples in their collection. At the same time, when compared with the Metcalfs', Benedict's limited personal finances must have also played a role in decisions about what would constitute a strategic use of her teacher's salary.

The Metcalfs' Philadelphia and Washington, D.C., accessions, taken together with Cole's and Benedict's, provide us with the best perspective by far on the breadth and depth of cloth made and used by a Philippine textile producing group in the early twentieth century. These collections give an unprecedented view of the repertoires of cloth and clothing in a region where dress and self-presentation have long been integral identity markers. Of even greater significance is the way these collections allow us to grasp the deep-seated responses of the Bagobo and other communities indigenous to Davao to changes in their social, political, and cultural milieu.

### **Stories from Davao**

During my fieldwork among the Bagobo in Santa Cruz, Toril, Calinan and Bansalan in 1994 and 1997, nobody really remembered any old

ladies from a hundred years ago, whether the hard-to-miss Metcalf sisters or Benedict. Even the famous Datu Tongkaling of Sibulan, appointed by the Americans as chief of all Bagobo, who worked closely with Cole as well as every other American official that traveled through the southern Davao region on their way to the peak of Mount Apo, was assessed by my informants as but one of several famous datu. Every family in every large village has some ancestral claim to one or another, and the bases of their fame varies. In the few times that I mentioned the World's Fair in St. Louis, I had expected that the name to come up would be the well-photographed Datu Bulon, the putative nineteen-year-old chief of the Bagobo at St. Louis. Instead, people mentioned Datu Ingay, a man in his late thirties in St. Louis in 1904, who most probably went there with members of his family and village community (Dabbay 1997). Upon returning to Mindanao, he was widely known to have worn only white linen suits (locally known as *amerikana*). His earlobes, which were stretched over time to accommodate the high status ivory ear disks worn by ranking Bagobo males, were reportedly stitched up in order to underscore what he clearly desired as a Western appearance (Dabbay 1987; Bangkas 1997). Clothing was a concrete signal of where one stood in the colonial hierarchy, so much so that the changing social relations within colonial societies was also often codified by state or local authorities into what consisted appropriate and inappropriate non-Whites' dress (Niessen 1993; Mrazek 1997; Heringa 1998). What was interesting to me was how differently I, as a young person and outsider to Bagobo upbringing, understood clothes.

I would like to end this article with this image, taken of Sarah sometime in the late 1920s in Manila in the garden of her home in The Little Home Shop (figure 2). She had arranged for a contingent of Bagobo to travel and participate in the famous Manila Carnival. In this photograph we see a group drawn probably from among her closest friends, with the man in the middle, wearing non-Bagobo clothes, identified as their leader or, in Manila's Hispanized lingua franca, *jefe*. In the middle of a stalled conversation with a particularly difficult old lady in Sibulan in 1994 (she did not really take me too seriously since it was



Figure 2. Sarah Metcalf photographed with a contingent of Tagabawa (Southern) Bagobo that she arranged to be invited to the carnival in Manila in 1932. They are photographed in the garden of the Metcalf sisters' Little Home Shop on Remedios Street in Malate, Manila, seven years after the death of her older sister Elizabeth. The man in everyday clothes standing behind Sarah is identified as the *jefe* or leader of the party; the man on the extreme left also operated an airplane during a demonstration flight at the carnival. The second man from the left was identified by an elder Tagabawa Bagobo woman living in Sibulan, Toril District in Davao, as the father of a peer who comes from the Santa Cruz area; she positively identified him by his clothes, specifically the magnificent trousers (*samar*) that have since been lost to the family. (Worcester Sunday Telegraph 13 September 1932; Smithsonian Institution-National Anthropological Archives Neg. No. 88-17235)

only my second visit to the village and my Bagobo at the time was practically nonexistent), I took out this photograph to show her younger female relations who were always interested in looking at pictures and generally more convivial toward outsiders like myself. The old lady took one look at the photo and exclaimed with amazement, not at the sight of Sarah with her friends, but at the man on the extreme left. "That is Tawan's father," she exclaimed, "I know because I remember those trousers, that jacket, those clothes!" She went on to say that, without the old man's permission, the clothing ensemble had been sold by the children, useless bunch that they were, to a Muslim shopkeeper in Toril who dealt in Mindanao antiquities on the side. The

old woman remembered details of the clothing almost lovingly and, when asked where the family now lived, motioned to a community on the other side of the river. She was not the least bit interested in Sarah even if I took great pains to have her nieces explain who she was and why the picture was taken. All she would remark on was how long ago it was and speculated on whatever became of that jacket, those trousers, and what a shame that they were gone. The Metcalfs are mostly forgotten, too, but what we do have are their collections that have their own stories and trajectories, commentaries of outsiders in the know, that began as an impulse, an emotional connection, a conversation between the viewer and the displayed that played out over decades in most surprising ways.

## Notes

This article draws from many roots but I gratefully acknowledge the earliest: Paul Taylor of the NMNH-Smithsonian who handed me a set of keys and made it possible to have full access to the Philippine ethnographic collections and papers many summers ago, and Patricia O. Afable, also of the NMNH, who shared her time, insights, and friendship over the years. I also thank Bennett Bronson, Adria Katz, Brian Durrans, Pieter Keurs, Lisa Whitthall, and Paul Beelitz for truly professional museum research support, as well as the following institutions: the University Research Council of Seton Hall University summer fellowship program, the Grants for Isolated Scholars of the Southeast Asia Council-Association for Asian Studies, and the Smithsonian Institution's Graduate Student Fellowship program.

1. Benedict (1916) uses the term *midowido*, while Gisbert (1892) lists in separate instances *caido* as pity (*piedad*) or *caido-an* as mercy (*miser cordia*).

2. The *Washington Post* (1904) reports that Albert Jenks, former ethnologist of the Bureau of American Ethnology (BAE), traveled to Mindanao and facilitated the recruitment of the Bagobo contingent that went to St. Louis. Jenks was also responsible for the separate ethnological museum in which he emphasized material related to the Igorot, Moro, Bagobo, and Negrito, placing them squarely within the framework of scientific claims being made at the Fair as a whole (Rydell 1984, 171–72). The identity of the deceased American traveling with the Bagobo is still unclear but may have been an individual affiliated in some way with the BAE.

3. NAA Box 4, Photo Lot 107, mounted print no. 154.

4. They lived at 103 Sevilla Street, Zamboanga, renting their home for US\$25.00 a month from an Antonia Ygnacio.

5. Unless specified, all quoted epigraphic texts and letters come from the Metcalf Accession Papers at the National Anthropological Archives (NAA) at the NMNH, Smithsonian Institution (Accession Nos. 57787, 114868, 292361; Photo Lot 107; and Boxes 6, 40, and 66).

6. On 15 May 1911 Leonard Wood, then chief-of-staff in the War Department in Washington, D.C., wrote a letter of introduction for the Metcalf sisters to then governor general of the Philippines Cameron Forbes as the two women prepared to return to the Philippines after a few years' interlude in the U.S. He referred to their "excellent" and "beneficial" nonsectarian missionary work among the Bagobo while continuous residents of Santa Cruz (NAA Metcalf Accession Papers).

7. On 30 December 1909, for instance, they received a letter in Santa Cruz from a boat officer named J. Chapman that contained some political commentary, with some especially disparaging remarks on Christian Filipinos and their attitude toward the "so-called savages" (NAA Metcalf Accession Papers).

8. The governor responded to Sarah Metcalf with a note denying giving any such order. We can assume that the sisters proceeded to put a stop to their perceived exploitation of the "mountain" people.

9. Based on letters and correspondence written by Sarah Metcalf late in her life that referred to her age in relation to that of well-known friends such as Najeeb Saleeby.

10. Letter of Ezra Hale to Herbert Goodrich, 8 June 1937, Metcalf papers, UMAA.

11. This moral sorting out also occurs in the home front as can be seen in commentaries of the differential qualities of Little Home Shop staff shown in a group photograph as enumerated by Sarah in the late 1930s (NAA Photo Lot 107).

12. There is some mention of a few individuals, such as a certain Una photographed on his horse in Santa Cruz. They were also in possession of a studio portrait of Datu Tongcaling of Sibulan (Cole's primary contact for his Bagobo research), who was appointed by the American district government as chief of all Bagobo. Tongcaling was well known to every expatriate who resided in Davao and his photographs were widely available as he was considered to be an exemplary Mindanao tribal leader who was a friend of Americans. It is worth noting that the crucial dependence of foreign anthropologists upon a small number of bilingual local informants is well established, especially when intensive collecting activities are concerned. See, for instance, Knowles' (2000) discussion of Beatrice Blackwood's activities in Melanesia.

13. The collection she was working on in Davao was initially intended for the Field Museum; however, she declined a request to part with the pieces as soon as she obtained them because of her desire to make use of these for further elicitation with her informants (Bernstein 1985). It appeared to have alienated her from

that institution. In any case, she did not prematurely part with any of her collection, which was eventually purchased intact several years later by the American Museum of Natural History in New York where she was able to write about them in greater detail (Benedict 1913).

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