

# Reviving Innovation in the Philippines: An Anthropological Perspective

M. L. Tan

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# Me, too



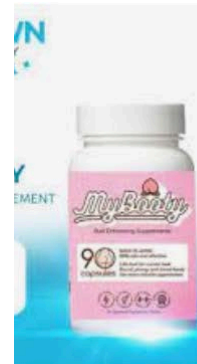
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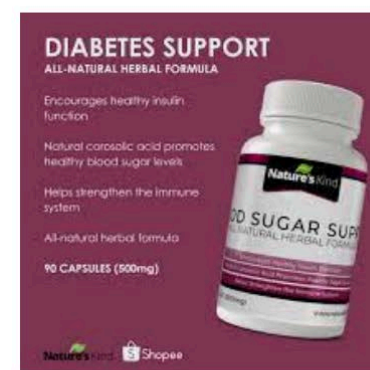
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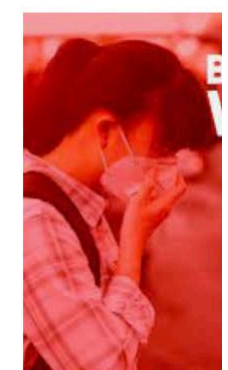
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# Me, too. . .

- Problems:
- Everyone selling the same thing, or similar products with artificial value added (Stateside, knock-offs, knock-offs of knock-offs, fakes. . .)



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# How we killed local innovation

- Economic system that has not encouraged innovation. Import substitution in the 1950s at least tried local production, retaining some innovation, whether for appliances (remember Radiowealth?) or textiles. But always, we were told (by the Americans among others) that our population was too small to allow us our own R&D (research and development), much less production.

# Whatever happened to NACIDA

- 1962 law created the National Cottage Industries Development Authority or NACIDA (which in Spanish means to be born). That should have been the engine for innovation, all the way up to our OTOP (One Town, One Product). . .which we borrowed from Thailand (One Tambon, One Product, 2001), Japan (One Village, One Product, 1979) and Taiwan OTOP (1989, where it is under the Small and Medium Business Authority).

# Impact

- Import dependency, for which we are paying dearly right now with Covid-19, we being so totally dependent on imports, from vaccines and masks to syringes.
- But just as bad was the cultural impact. . .



# The cultural impact, including collateral damage

- GGPM (Copycat). Sell whatever is in vogue. If China is the world's factory, we are the world's sari-sari store.
- Aspiring for easy money, making us prey to scams and schemes. Multi-level marketing and similar schemes, from supplements to insurance and cryptocurrency scams. (Calling DTI).
- An educational system that does not value knowledge and creativity. Just look at what we're doing to books and libraries.

# Artisanal and heirloom products

- Lack of pride in what we have. Food tech students who don't know what the “original” vegetables and fruits look like. Or of the different plants used for kilaw.
- Interior design students who don't know local weaves. Architecture students who have not heard of geotextiles or joinery in carpentry. Medical and health science students who don't know the local medicinal plants.

# Anti-“lansa” natural products

- Tabon-tabon (photo on the right, green fruits, together with biasong, another local lime)
- Plus Batanes' valtinog
- Dungon pulp, pungango (small young coconut), bakawan (mangrove bark)



# From “Palaspas”



# From Treasures of the National Museum





# KANUNGAN

## MANOBO BIRD CAGE

Material: Bamboo, rattan

Dimensions: Length – 50.0 cm

Width – 30.5 cm

Provenance: Loreto River, Umayam

**E**asy, you say. The idea is simple and naive as the Manobo life:

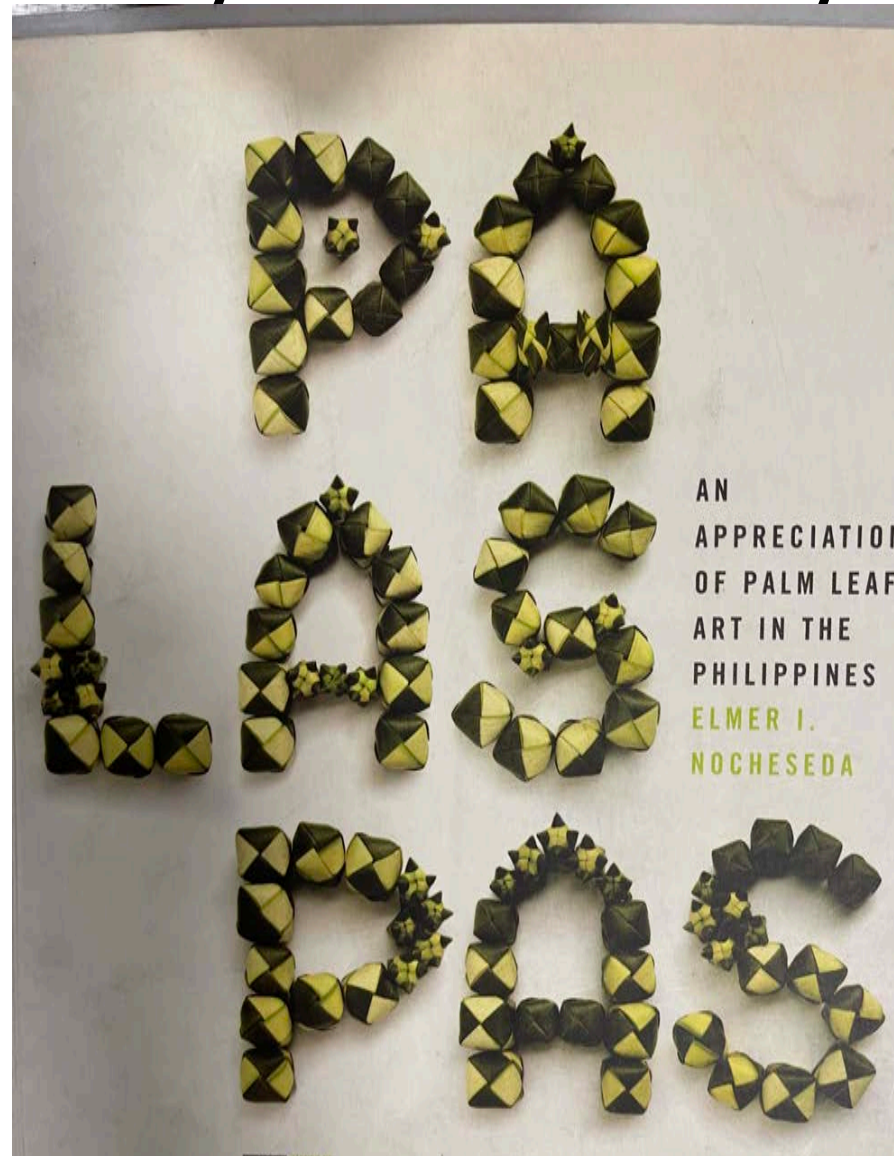
1. Take a piece of bamboo and cut the top half into narrow strips.
2. Make the strips balloon out in the middle to form the skeleton of the cage.
3. Take a young rattan vine and tie it around the bamboo at 1 centimeter intervals to make up the ribs of the cage. Remember to weave the rattan slightly tighter at the top and bottom of the cage.

Done? Now figure this out. How did they put the bird in?

# What to do now, to revive innovation?

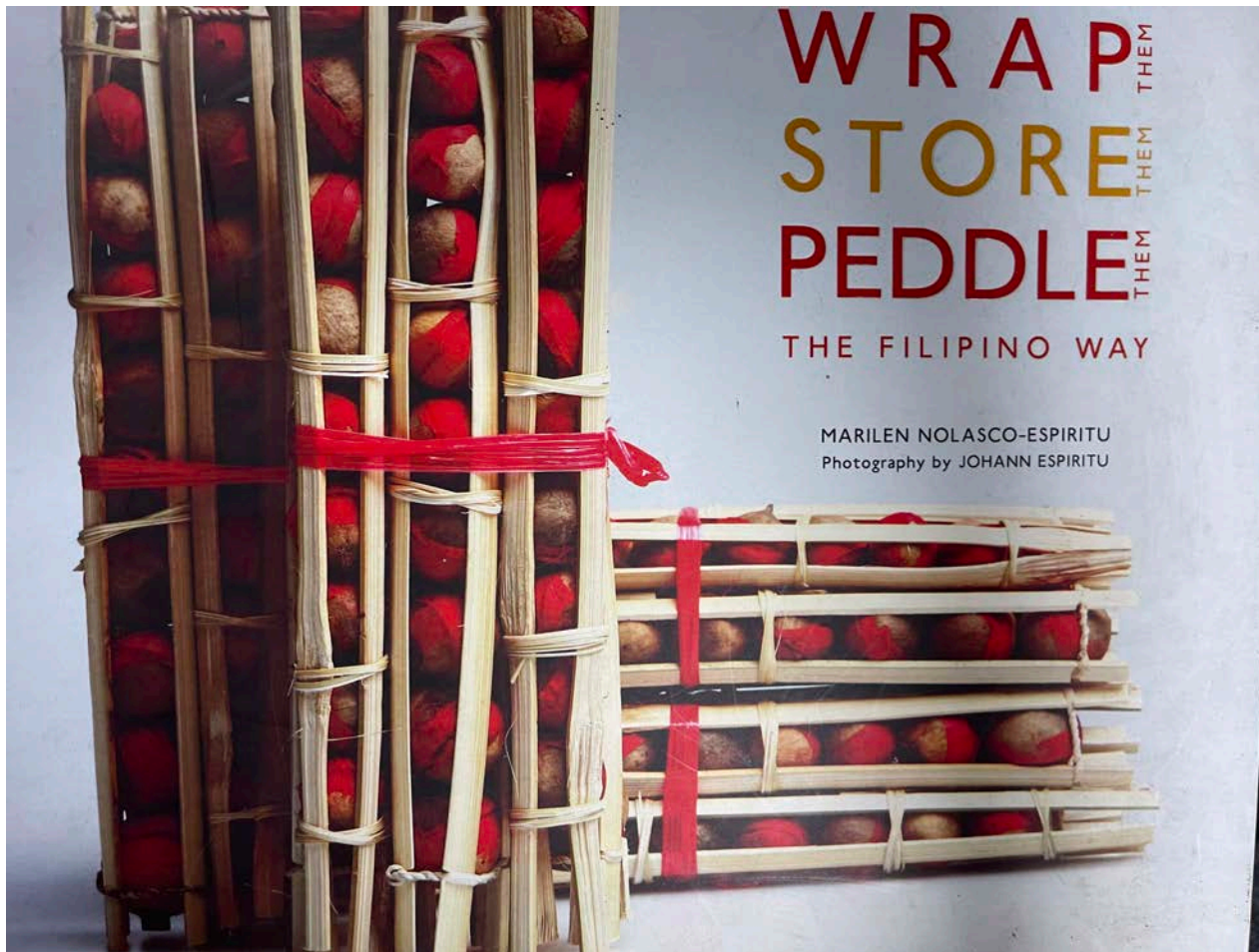
- In homes, retrieve what's left of knowledge.  
Do you know the fruit trees in your backyard?  
How often do you serve “new” old local foods  
and explain what the ingredients are, how  
they are prepared? How much of local crafts  
and furniture do you have at home?

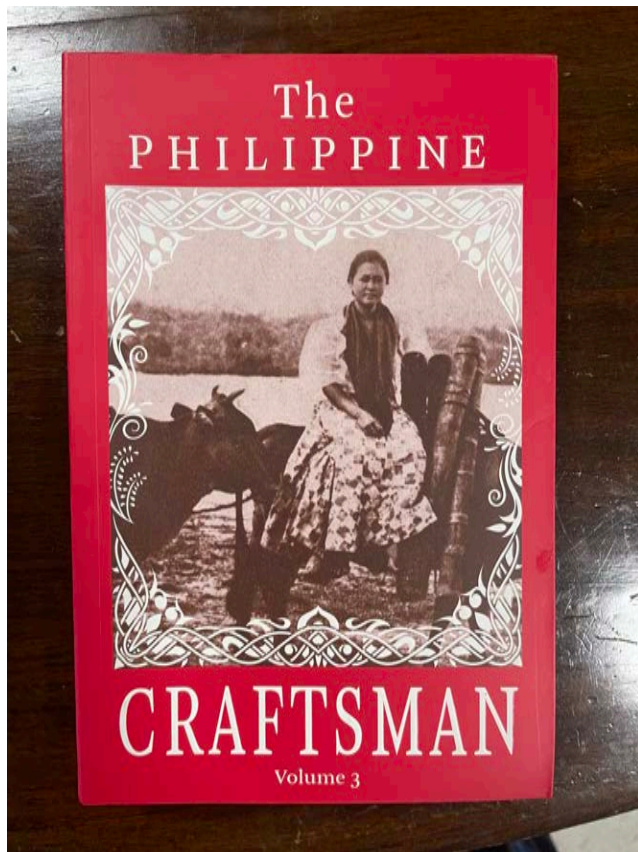
Schools: these books should be in  
every school library



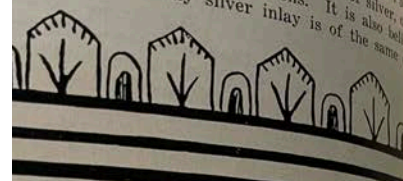


# Marlen Nolasco-Espiritu's Wrap, Store, Peddle

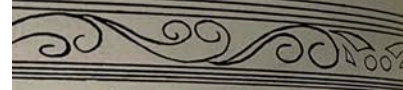




white metal from old spoons. It is also believed of the supposedly silver inlay is of the same com-



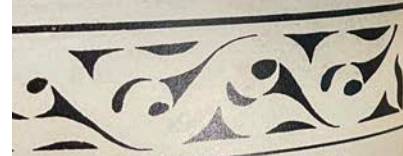
Moro raised ornament on silver hammering; resembles Echinus.



Cotabato raised border. Talagalan.



Lanao inlay or scroll. Gadur.



Cotabato Moro scroll. Betel box.

Typical Moro designs from brass articles.

Although American collectors never question its genu-

ould be written on the style of betelnut boxes, especially in Lanao. This is the most common article among the poorest man may use a sardine can, while the betel box worth ₱200. Most betel boxes from Lanao are copper and inlaid with silver; many are hammered from

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silver and have decorations in raised relief. All shapes are found—round, square, oblong, and oval. A vase shape is the crescent, made to fit the body as it is string tied around the waist. Betel boxes vary in size from ₱1 to ₱100. They are often made in sets of 4—a nut box, a lime box, and a tobacco box. The sets are a larger box or on a tray. Generally the larger box has wheels or castors on the bottom four corners and is used over the floor from one guest to another. The fruit dishes are very much like the finger bowls, both in ge-



Brass made in Lanao Province.

and in design. The fruit dish is usually set on a high stand and would make a handsome ornament anywhere. This is the most beautiful and expensive article among the Moros. They are made in pairs and are valued at ₱100; the designs on all are very similar.

The Lanao work is distinctive. In a collection of brass articles, they are far superior to those picked out in Cotabato.

I shall not mention gongs as more than 95 per cent are imported. A few are made in Lanao, but the quality is not as rich as that of the gongs from Java. Great difficulty

# Integrated curricula

- NSTP can be more interesting if converted into field research around local natural resources, crafts and production methods.
- Teach biology through economic botany; chemistry through distillation of essential oils and fermentation; physics and earth sciences through dehydration and preservation techniques. Even algebra based on weaving, on local musical instruments.

- Social sciences and humanities' integration.  
Build creativity curricula using retrieved local knowledge about products and processes.  
Don't forget the history part: how we survived and thrived, how we killed the spirit of innovation and the consequences (one more on the next page; how come China knows a good "deal" when there's one?)



# Sagada from China



# Culture and the supply chain

- Lack of integration – forward and backward linkages, and in a big way.
- Japanese space industry subcontracts production of some parts to artisans because of the very detailed specifications.
- Abaca for peso bills (with human heroes we hope) and masks.

# Relate to the waves of the future

- Packaging in an era where we phase out single-use plastics.
- Nutrition in an era of LOHAS (lifestyles of health and sustainability). There are now Departments of LOHAS in Taiwanese and South Korean universities.

# And note the emphasis should be on a culture of creative thinking

- Crafts (and I include culinary arts) should be seen as a carrier for developing a culture of creative thinking as an antidote to the problems of the Internet:
- a) combining hand and brain;
- b) developing mindfulness and flow (Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi) that produces joy, wonder and work.



# Inclusivity

- Priority should be given to small scale enterprises. UP ISSI has worked on this but we need more support to expand into training, market intelligence.
- Not to forget inclusivity and gender, especially if we take crafts as a take-off, since these

# Still on inclusive innovation

- Next page: an article from The Guardian about the return of clay cups (kulhad) to India's 7000 train stations, in a bid to end the use of plastic cups. The project also creates livelihood for potters and preserves artisanal skills. Best of all, tea (and coffee? – let's test and innovate) tastes better from clay cups. Screen shot from:  
<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2020/dec/03/all-change-indias-railways-bring-back-tea-in-clay-cups-in-bid-to-banish-plastics>

**Stations switch to humble earthen kulhads in move to cut down on toxic waste and boost incomes of village potters**



To a better 2022! (Pastille papercut wrappers from San Miguel, Bulacan. Photo from Wrap, Store, Peddle.

