

There is a false report circulating online by a certain Dr. Flores about the origin of the Barong Filipino. Contrary to what Dr. Flores (supposedly a math professor) alleged, the Barong did not begin as “discriminatory attire” forced on the native people (then called “Indios”) by the Spanish colonizers.

On March 16, 2004, I accompanied my grandson and his kindergarten class from the South Hills Academy to the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County. At the exhibits in the museum's Native-American Indian wing, I pointed out the Barong Filipino's forerunner to the Filipino-American parents and grandparents who joined also the field trip. There was this mannequin of a Native-American Indian garbed in his indigenous attire. Underneath his coat of animal skin was a cotton shirt that exactly looked like a Barong Filipino. The white shirt did not have any collar - it was similar to the traditional Chinese attire that is also collar-less.

I told the Filipinos in that field-trip party the research by Victor Nebrida. He is a cofounder of the Philippine History Group of Los Angeles (PHGLA) and a history graduate from an American university. Mr. Nebrida reported to the PHGLA that the Barong Tagalog (now often called the Barong Filipino) was copied from the Guayabera. In turn the Mexicans and other Latinos adopted the Guayabera from a native North-American Indian garb. The Indian shirt on that mannequin at the Natural History Museum was the precursor or ancestor of the Barong Filipino.

According to anecdotal sources examined by the PHGLA members, what has become the Barong Filipino was first brought to the Philippines in the late 16th century. Filipino seamen, who served on the Spanish galleons used in the Manila-Acapulco trade, brought back the Mexican outfit called the Guayabera. The Guayabera is still used today by many Latino Americans, Mexicans and even Puerto Ricans.

An overwhelming number of the Spanish officials assigned to the Philippines came from Mexico. Many of them also wore the Guayabera, especially during the hot summer months in Mexico. It would only be logical to conclude that many of these Spanish officials wore the Guayabera. This was especially true of the Creoles (the Mexican mestizos or Spaniards born in Mexico) who were sent to the Philippines. Many of them wore this Mexican outfit at their homes in the hot summer-like environment in the Philippines.

Comparison Between the Guayabera and the BarongThe Filipinos made several changes in the Mexican Guayabera, which is not also tucked in. Firstly the Filipinos removed the pockets as found in the Guayabera and then made the front cut (opening) only halfway. The pockets were removed in the Philippines as a logical conclusion: The Guayabera-like outfit was not sturdy enough - especially when Filipino native fibers were used as materials - for it to have pockets. Because pockets are meant to carry items, like those found in the Western coat (called now the "Americana" in the Philippines) that was mainly made of wool. (Even today in the 21st century,

A Realistic History of the Barong Filipino - MabuhayRadio

Written by Bobby Reyes

Monday, 02 June 2008 08:27 - Last Updated Tuesday, 07 December 2010 10:54

Filipino travelers seldom go abroad wearing Barong; many of them use business suits, without neckties.)

Then the Filipinos made use of native fibers, because they were not growing a lot of cotton, as the Mexicans were doing. And silk was too expensive (and still expensive even now in the 21st century). Then of course some added designs, which were normally embroidered, and which made the Barong a lot more attractive and colorful than the original Guayabera.

And in the history of Filipino Presidents, it was Ramon Magsaysay who first used the Barong, then called Barong Tagalog, in his inauguration and formal events in the presidential palace. After President Magsaysay used the Barong starting in 1953, its popularity took off. Many Filipinos took to wearing the Barong, especially after President Magsaysay died in a plane crash in Cebu on March 17, 1957. It became like their tribute to the most popular and best-loved Filipino President.

Today the Barong Filipino comes in different styles and assortment of colors and fabrics used. Some styles of Barong Filipino are almost identical to the Guayabera, where the front cut is complete. Pockets now even appear in some Barongs, although the pockets are sewn inside the shirt. There is also the version of the Barong Filipino called the "Polo Barong," which comes with short sleeves and often with outside pockets like the Guayabera.

In the United States some Filipino Americans even use bow ties when they wear the Barong Filipino. And many Filipino-American women wear a lady's version of the Barong Filipino.

The Lauchengco Suit Over the Barong In the 1970s a Filipino-American lawyer, Joe Lauchengco, was barred while wearing a Filipino Barong from entering a "black tie" dinner and ball in Los Angeles, California. Despite his explanation to the event organizers that the Barong Filipino was the national attire in the Philippines, Atty. Lauchengco was prohibited from entering the ballroom. He sued. The court ruled in favor of Atty. Lauchengco. From then on the Barong Filipino was considered the equivalent of formal attire in Los Angeles and in many cities in the United States.

To a growing number of Filipino Americans, the Barong Filipino has become a symbol of Filipino-Mexican friendship. It is also treated as a historical linkage to the indigenous people of North America.

And in case some Filipino do not know the most important aspects of Filipino-Mexican history, here are some facts: The Filipino Galleon-Trade sailors who jumped ship in Mexican ports introduced cockfighting and the manufacture of "tuba" (coconut or palm wine or "vino de coco"). In turn the Mexicans introduced to the Filipinos the Guayabera and the Mexican varieties of the pepper (Jalapeño). And talking of the Jalapeño, the Bicolano crewmen of the Spanish galleons brought it with them and also the Mexican green and red peppers. Then they planted them in Bicolandia, which is the only region in the Philippines that uses a lot of chili, pepper and spices in their cooking.

The Errors of Dr. Flores Dr. Flores, an alleged math professor, should have confined

A Realistic History of the Barong Filipino - MabuhayRadio

Written by Bobby Reyes

Monday, 02 June 2008 08:27 - Last Updated Tuesday, 07 December 2010 10:54

herself/himself to her fort . Because she/he could not decipher even the arithmetic of Filipino history.

Dr. Flores claimed that "When the Spaniards colonized the Filipinos, they had to make it abundantly clear who the boss was through the imposition of a dress code." Mr. Watson would have said that it was elementary for the color of the skin to be the better feature in showing who the bosses were. The colonizers were white-skinned and many of the native people of the Philippines were brown-skinned.

Dr. Flores claimed that "Only a member of the principalia could be addressed by the title DON, and only they were allowed to vote. They had all the trappings of power and status, but for one undeniable fact: they still had to wear their shirttails out, if only to remind them that they were still Indios." This claim does not hold water. The Filipino elite and landowning individuals and their sons who were called the "Ilustrados" wore the same shirts, coat and ties that the Spaniards and other Westerners in the Philippines wore at that time. Proof? Even Jose Rizal was in Western attire at his execution. And even if they had the opportunity to wear the Barong, they wore them according to the style the Guayabera was used.

Dr. Flores claimed that "The Barong Tagalog gained it power, prestige, and status when President Quezon, the first Filipino president, declared it the National dress." Dr. Flores does not even know the Philippine presidential history. Manuel L. Quezon was the first President of the Philippine Commonwealth. Gen. Emilio Aguinaldo was the first and only President of the First Philippine Republic in 1898. Gen. Manuel Roxas was the first President of the Second Philippine Republic in 1946.

Dr. Flores erred even in telling what it is today. She/he alleged, "Today, every visitor and foreign dignitary invited to a Malaca ang Palace state function must, by necessity, and dictated by protocol, be dressed to the nines in a Barong Tagalog. The invitations specifically say come in 'Barong' instead of the traditional 'Coat and Tie.'" This observation is not true, as foreign diplomats can also wear their national attire. Many of the foreign diplomats come in wearing "black tie" formal wear or tuxedos.

Perhaps this Dr. Flores is also a fictional character. Then she must be a kin of a fabricated Agapito Flores who allegedly invented the fluorescent bulb or lamp in a rustic area in the Philippines, which at that time did not probably have any electricity. # # #

<!--[if !supportLineBreakNewLine]--><!--[endif]-->

[Joomla SEO powered by JoomSEF](#)