

# baláy

## DESIGN ACCULTURATION AND THE VERNACULAR RENAISSANCE OF FILIPINO RESIDENTIAL BUILDINGS

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In the words of Francisco Mañosa, “We must be aware of what we have. Therefore the Filipino designers must be aware of the forms, spaces, symbols, and materials – how they have been used in the past, how they are being used today, and the technologies that can be applied to these raw materials to make them responsive of our needs today (Caruncho, 2017).” The *baláy* (Filipino house) has continuously been changing over time from colonialization or through constant reflection and evolution, leading to changes and innovation, which form the current Filipino residential design expressions. This presentation aims to refocus on understanding how the Filipino residential design is practiced from monolithic and singular to heterogeneous and polyvalent design expressions and the opportunity to learn the perils and fruition of residential building design in the Philippines that could set the parameters in defining the current Filipino design identity.



### BACKGROUND

The current thinking about residential design norms among Filipinos is generally influenced from centuries of colonialization. Oftentimes, Westernized design ideas, materials, and methodologies reflects these colonial influences (Ogura, Yap, & Tanoue, 2002). Acculturation does not only happen through immigration, one can be acculturated through constant exposure to foreign influence (Redfield & Herskovits, 1936; Berry, 2005) – that is what happened in the Philippines. The purpose of this case study is to explore the influence of design acculturation on vernacular residential buildings in the Philippines on its development and quest for identity. This research hinges on the residential built environment in the Philippines, specifically exploring the blurred edges between westernized and vernacular design.

The knowledge base on this area reflects the ideas of acculturation strategies of integration and assimilation, (Berry, 2005) and from centuries of continual exposure and adoption under colonial rule. Although the Filipino residences have evolved from pre-colonial to contemporary period, precedents suggests that the materiality and structural elements may have changed, yet the core of the Filipino style still follows the norms of the vernacular architecture.

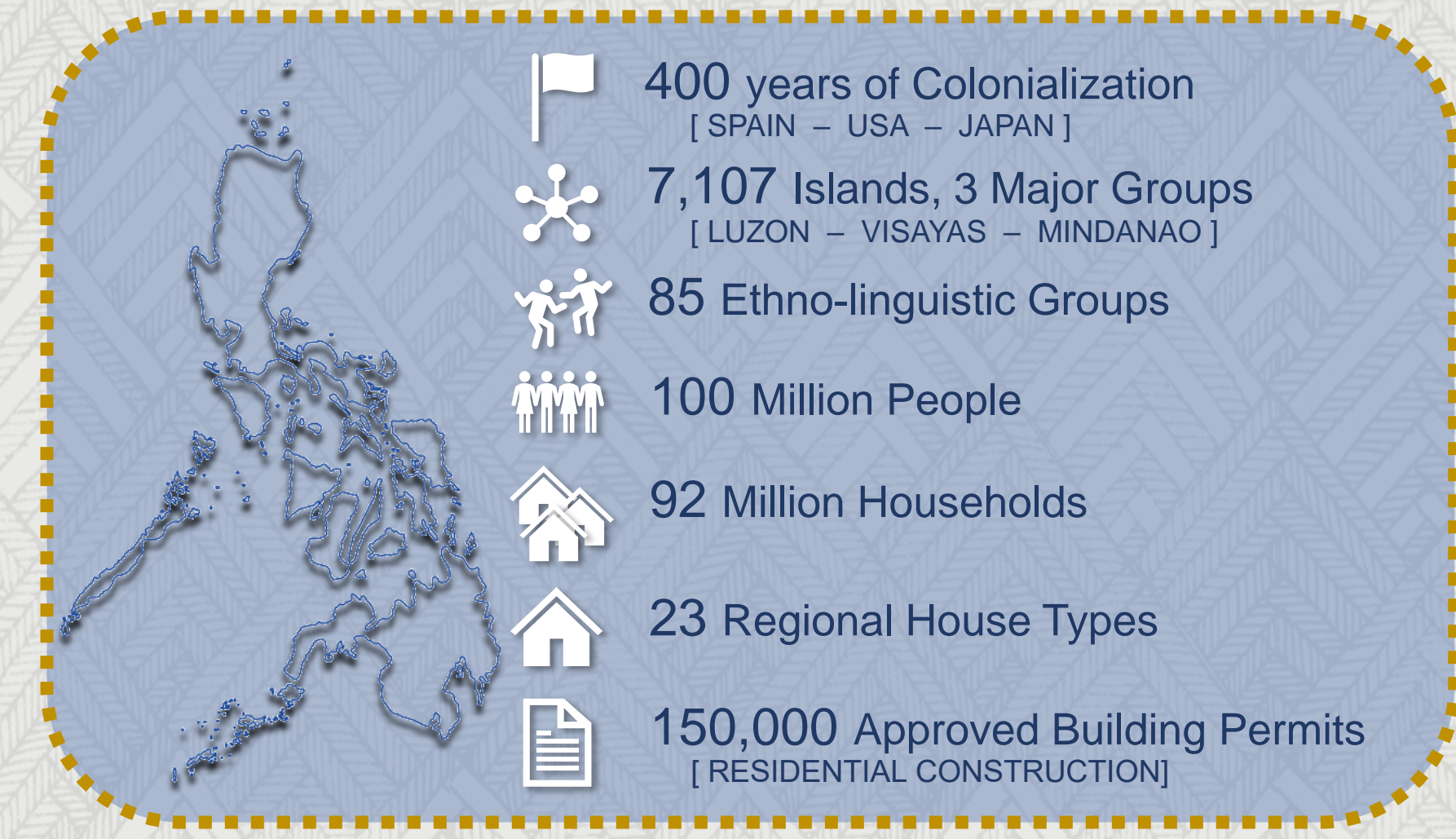
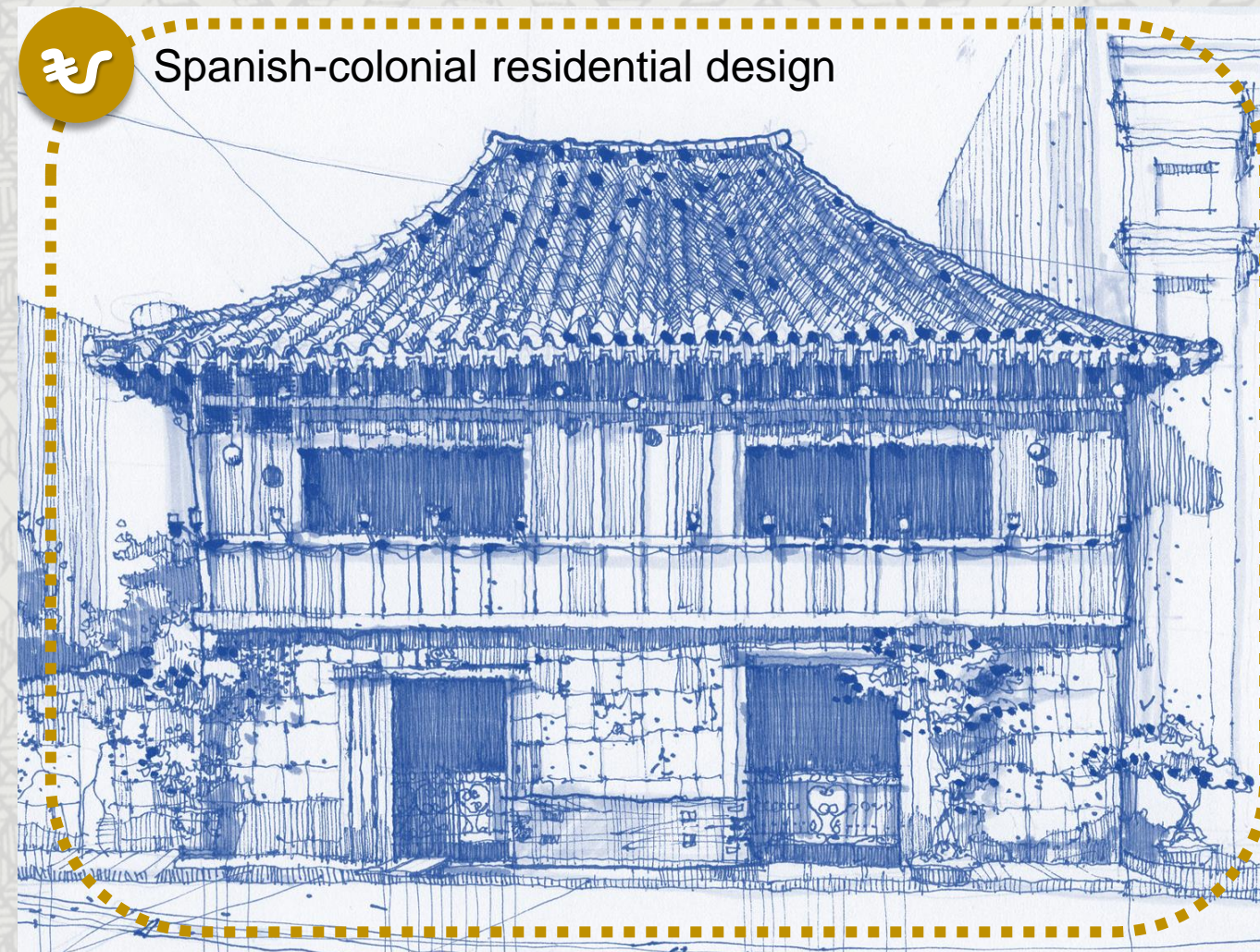
Substantial documentation has been gathered on ethnocultural multiplicity within Filipino residential design juxtaposed with the rapidly growing metropolis that has certainly destabilized the long-standing construction practice of the traditional Philippine society. For example, preference over mechanical and equipment dependent residences against the natural passive cooling strategies of the vernacular design was favored among urban residents. In many regions of the country, the traditional *bahay kubo* (Philippine provincial cube house) and *bahay na bato* (stone house) was replaced by a more modern and light structured building type despite dissonance of the environment and surroundings. As a result, the vernacular design often undermined. drawings the development of a vernacular design.



### LINE OF INQUIRY

#### HOW HAS THE DESIGN OF DOMESTIC DOMICILE OF THE PHILIPPINES EVOLED OVER TIME?

- Review existing literature on design acculturation relating to the residential buildings
- Synthesize the development of the built environment in relation to its sociocultural and socioeconomic factors typified in the construction of a vernacular houses in the Philippines to be later supplemented by onsite documentation.



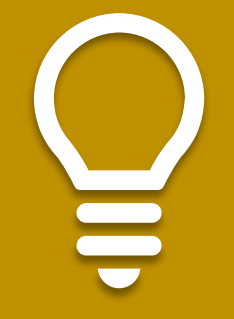
### THE FILIPINO RESIDENCE

The distinctive traditional architectural models that most modern Filipino designers make references to as Filipino design – the “national architectural style” is the *bahay kubo* (Villalon, 2002) and the *bahay na bato* (Javellana, 1987). Moreover, the *bahay kubo* (provincial cube house) is an indigenous domestic house while *bahay na bato* (house of stone) has been a product of reciprocation between Filipino and Spanish people which were developed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as a domicile of choice among the wealthy populace (Zialcita and Tinio, 1996) and derived its spatial arrangement from the pre-colonial style native hut.

A new hybrid-type of construction was developed – the *arquitectura mestiza* – refer to the structures built partly of wood and partly of stone (Klassen, 1986). The house stayed precisely the same as the *bahay kubo*, but the *bahay na bato*'s elevated wooden skeletal building was walled by a stone shell on the ground floor and a wooden covering on the upper floor (Hila, 1992). Instead of a thatched roofing, the *bahay na bato* was designed using *tejas*, a fired terracotta roof tiles (Manahan, 1994). And its enclosure, functions as ventilation made entirely of *ventanas*, a sliding lattice window glazed in *capiz* (translucent shell).

At present, exemplified by the garish application of pastel colors and the mixing and matching of ornaments and styles. Designers incorporated some modernist formal principles by employing local materials and referencing vernacular traditions. Inspirations were drawn from aircraft technology, robotics, and cyberspace. Presence of design deconstruction, which is characterized physically by controlled fragmentation, non-linear design process, asymmetric geometries, and orchestrated chaos (Lico, 2008). Rise of master planned micro-cities and gated communities with suburban pretensions (Caballin, 2006).

Illustrations by: Ar. Ryan Cabanlit



### CONCLUSION

- Acculturation can take place in a colonial context. Although design acculturation is a valid construct, it is often overlooked, and there has been little research in a colonial setting. Most often, Acculturation is associated with immigration.
- Within the Philippines, the practice of vernacular design has lived. It has gone through several versions brought on by history and need, and its underlying philosophy is the synergy with the environment and understanding the necessities of its inhabitants and the whole ecology. In general, the Filipino vernacular is a synthesis of beliefs and behaviors, which define and support a culture that has become an element of the identity of the Filipino people.
- the design of the *baláy* or the domestic domicile should be viewed in different design expressions. These are valid interpretation and/or reinterpretation of the traditional dwelling. It does not make less of a Filipino if the design is approached from a modern or western perspective. However, it should be taken into consideration that in order for the traditional and vernacular design to continue and thrive, it should be elevated and perpetuated in the same manner as the modern and western residential design.

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