

Field Museum Philippine Heritage Collection

Overview

- ➔ The Field Museum is home to over 13,000 items from the Philippines, one of the largest collections of its kind in the Western Hemisphere. Items include textiles, personal adornments, weapons, ritual equipment, basketry, woodcarvings, musical instruments, smoking pipes, and export ceramics.
- ➔ 75% of this collection came from expeditions between 1906 and 1911 to northern Luzon, Mindanao, Mindoro, Palawan, and Sulu, supplemented later by donations and mid-20th-century private contributions.
- ➔ Today, the Museum is collaborating with communities both in the U.S. and the Philippines to collect contemporary items that reflect diverse stories of Philippine heritage.
- ➔ The Museum also engages in co-curation: partnering with the local Filipino American community to reimagine how these objects are used and presented, fostering collaborative interpretation.

Anthropological Expedition

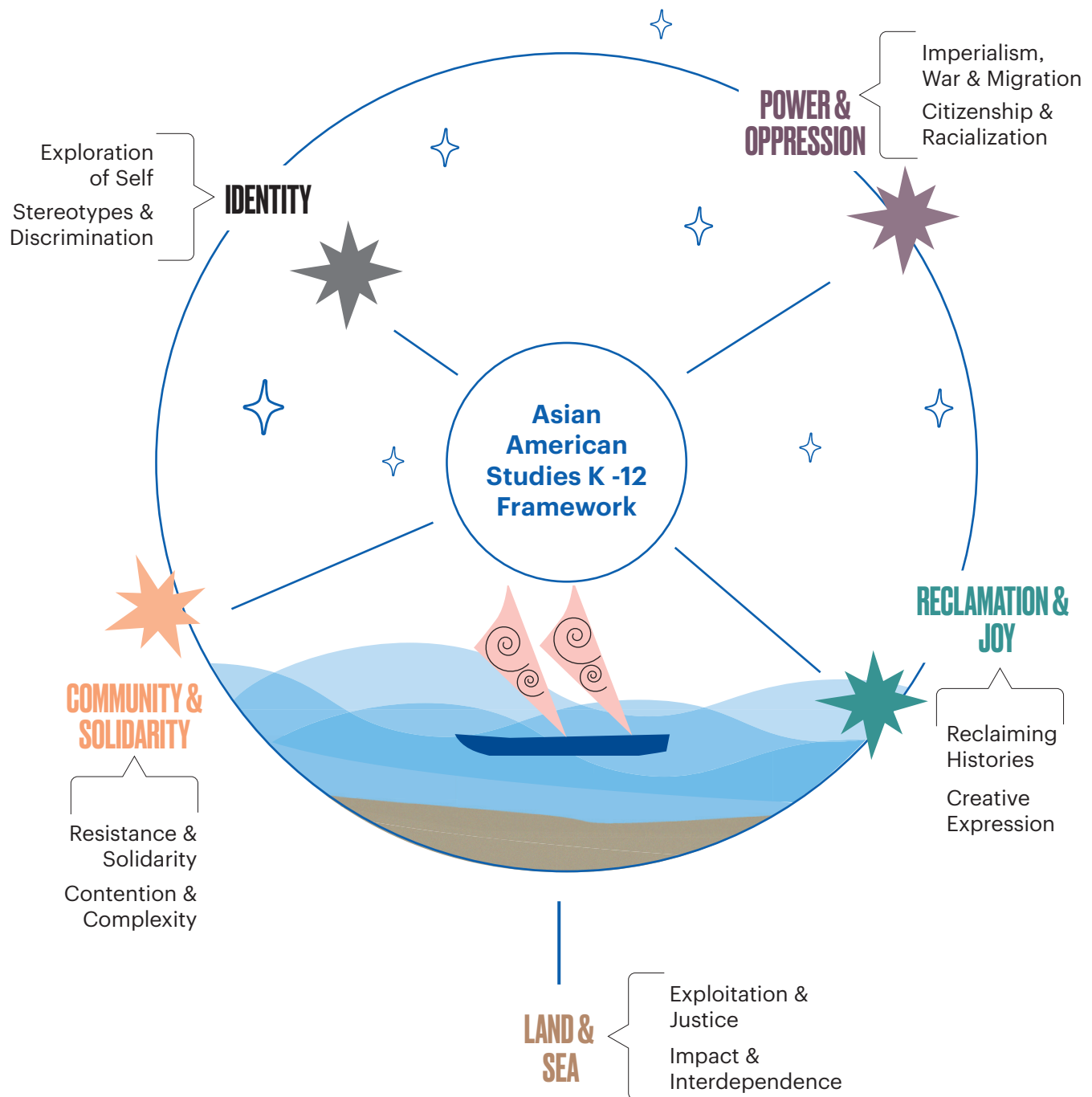
The majority of the objects in the Philippine collection were acquired by anthropologists Fay-Cooper Cole, William Jones, and Stephen C. Simms in the first decade of the 20th century. The Museum's involvement with the Philippines came after the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis, where objects and peoples from the colonies of several nations were on display*. The Philippines, a U.S. colony since the Spanish-American War of 1898, was featured prominently in the exposition as "a fair within a fair." Robert F. Cummings, a grain merchant from Clifton, Illinois, was greatly intrigued by the Philippine exhibition and approached the Museum with a proposition: he was willing to fund extensive anthropological research in the Philippines with two apparent provisions: that the people of Illinois should benefit and that the work should begin immediately. Cummings pledged no less than \$20,000 to cover all expenses of fieldwork. In return, the Museum guaranteed to bear the costs of setting up a large permanent Philippine exhibition.

These Philippine expeditions led by Fay-Cooper Cole were quite successful. He collected over 5,000 objects from various areas of the Philippines. Williams Jones, however, was not so fortunate. He was allegedly killed by Ilongots during an expedition in March of 1909, while in the Caraballo Mountains of eastern Luzon Island. The reasons and motives surrounding his death remain unclear. After news of the death reached Chicago, Stephen C. Simms traveled to Luzon to complete the work begun by Jones.

By the end of December 1911, all of the objects, photographs, recordings, and notes were in Chicago. The collection consists of correspondence, mainly between the Curator of Anthropology of the Museum, the sponsor of the expedition, and the members of the expedition, maps of the places visited, hand-written notes by the members of the expedition, specimen lists, notebooks, an expense list, a list of photos, and physical measurements.

*After the Philippine-American War ended in 1902 Americans became fascinated by the natives of the newly acquired territory, which led to the development of anthropological exhibits showcasing what "primitive" life was like in the Philippines. During this time period, anthropologists adopted an evolutionary perspective rooted in white superiority. One of the exhibits featured the Igorot people, who anthropologist Albert Jenks believed were the most uncivilized tribe in the Philippines. These exhibits/human zoos sparked the creation of negative stereotypes of both the Igorot people and the Filipino community."—The Asian American Education Project, Lesson 1.1–1094 World's Fair-Exhibition of the Igorot People. "Ifugao" and "Igorot" both refer to a group of indigenous peoples of the Cordilleran mountains.

Asian American Studies K-12 Framework*
Asian American Research Initiative



*Based on the Asian American Research Initiative framework, with the inclusion of an additional Land and Sea section.

Asian American Studies K-12 Framework

Asian American Research Initiative

Standards Alignment

NCSS

Theme 1: Culture

Illinois State Social Science Standards

SS.4.H.2 Generate questions about multiple historical sources and their relationships to particular historical events and developments.

CPS Skyline

Grade 3: Communities Near and Far

Unit 3: Communities and Cultures

Social Justice

DI.6-8.8 I am curious and want to know more about other peoples' histories and lived experiences, and I ask questions respectfully and listen carefully and non-judgmentally.

Asian American Studies K-12 Framework

Asian American Research Initiative

Student Discussion Guide: Philippine Heritage Collection

Identity

- ➔ **Pre-visit:** Ask students to consider their own identities.
During virtual visit: Choose and examine an artifact—prompt reflection: Whose identity is this? What layered identities does it carry?

Power & Oppression

- ➔ **Review historical context:** Discuss colonial-era exhibitions and stereotypes. Ask: How is the object shaped by or resistant to these narratives?

Reclamation & Joy

- ➔ Reflect on co-curated contemporary pieces. **Ask:** How are communities now shaping their own representation? What contributions and narratives emerge?

Community & Solidarity

- ➔ How did viewing objects through this lens deepen your understanding of identity and representation?

Land & Sea

- ➔ Ecological crisis—threats to environment

Glossary:

A glossary of relevant terms AARI Website. The framework emphasizes exploring the complex, diverse histories and identities of Asian Americans, including those of Southeast Asian communities like Filipino Americans, and building solidarity across groups.

This framework was developed by Sohyun An (Kennesaw State University) and Noreen Naseem Rodríguez (University of Colorado Boulder) in consultation with Theodore Chao (The Ohio State University), Edward R. Curammeng (California State University, Dominguez Hills), Esther June Kim (William & Mary), Melanie McCormick (Michigan State University), Mohit P. Mehta (University of Texas at Austin/Asian Texans for Justice), Venkat Ramaprasad (The College of New Jersey), Bic Ngo (University of Minnesota), Tran Nguyen Templeton (Teachers College, Columbia University), Van Anh Tran (Stanford Graduate School of Education), Phitsamay S. Uy (University of Massachusetts Lowell), and other reviewers who have asked to remain anonymous.

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Discussion Guide

Slow Looking: The Art and Practice of Learning Through Observation

➔ Define Slow Looking

Define Slow Looking: Explain that slow looking is about intentionally focusing on the details of what you see, hear, smell, or even feel. Emphasize that it's about quality of observation, not just quantity or surface impressions.

➔ Discuss the Importance

Slow looking helps you notice things you might normally overlook, giving you a deeper understanding of the subject, whether it's art, nature, or history. It allows for mindfulness and a more meaningful connection to the environment.

➔ Set Expectations

Let the students know that they'll be practicing observing closely and documenting their findings without rushing.

➔ Encourage

Encourage them to take notes, make sketches, or simply describe their observations in detail. Prompt them to slow down their thinking and look at all aspects of their environment.

Prompts for Observation

- What is the texture you notice? Do you think it would feel smooth, rough, or cold?
- What do you think it is made of?
- What colors, shapes, and lines do you notice? Are there patterns?
- How does the light affect it?
- If it's a natural object: What sound might it make in the wind? Does it smell?
- What condition is the item in: broken, worn or in perfect condition?
- Are there markings, symbols, or inscriptions on the item?
- What do you find that is interesting?

Field Museum Philippine Heritage Collection Discussion Guide

Group Discussion and Reflection, after the observation time

- What is unique about what you observed? What's unexpected about it?
- How does this environment make you feel? (calm, curious, excited, etc.)
- Are there hidden details that are only noticeable after prolonged observation?
- How do things change depending on where you stand or how you look at them?
- What do you think the details signify about the importance and purpose of the house?

Exploring Identity Through Objects

➔ Discussion Prompt

Choose an object—Whose identity does it represent? How does that item reflect the wearer's ethnicity, region, social role, or spiritual beliefs?

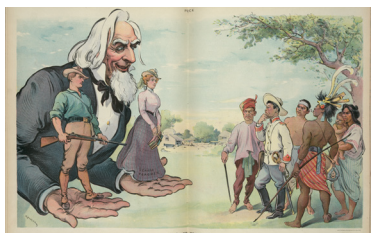
Consider the analysis of layered identities—ethnic, regional, colonial, religious—that may emerge from an object.

How might the object's cultural context differ in the Philippines versus in a diasporic Filipino American community?

Stereotypes & Discrimination

➔ Discussion Prompt

During the early 20th century, U.S. exhibitions often displayed Filipinos in ways that reflected colonial and racial stereotypes.



Uncle Sam (to Filipinos)
You can take your
choice; I have plenty
of both!
Illus. in: Puck,
v. 50, no. 1290
(1901 November 20),
centerfold.
Library of Congress.



Ringmaster McKinley
You've got to jump
through, and the
sooner you do it
the better!
Illus. from Puck, v. 46,
no. 1176, (1899
September 20), cover.
Library of Congress.



American flag on
it crashing down on
Emilio Aguinaldo.
Illus. from Puck,
v. 45, no. 1148, (1899
March 8), cover.
Library of Congress.

- How might these attitudes have influenced which objects were collected or how they were interpreted?
- When you imagine "Asian American," who is included and who is left out?
- How are identities represented or misrepresented?
- In what ways might the Field Museum's current co-curation efforts challenge these earlier stereotypes?

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Co-curation & Contemporary Relevance

➔ Discussion Prompt

These objects now include contemporary additions chosen in collaboration with communities.

What do these newer objects say about Filipino American culture today? What contributions and stories are they highlighting?

United States - Philippines Relations Timeline

➔ Discussion Prompt

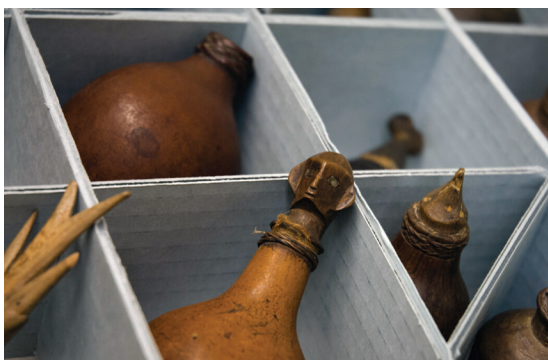
How did American intervention in the Philippines set the stage for future Filipino migration to the United States?

Why were Filipinos allowed to migrate to the United States when other Asians were not? What does that imply about rights and exclusion in America?

How might the American presence in the Philippines throughout the 20th century have affected the cultures of both nations?



Bamboo hanger in the Philippines Collection.



Lime holders within storeroom in the Philippines Collection.

Images @Field Museum

Tips for Educators

Use local context (e.g., Chicago's Filipino American community partnerships with the museum) to make the learning experience grounded and relatable.

Encourage students to consider not just what is displayed—but why, who chose it, and who is being represented or omitted now.

Connect with the framework to move beyond superficial multicultural teaching to a deeper interrogation of identity, power, and community.

Helpful Links

- [What is co-curation?](https://philippines.fieldmuseum.org/heritage/narrative/4166)—learn what co-creation means in our collection
(<https://philippines.fieldmuseum.org/heritage/narrative/4166>)
- [Lesson: 1904 World's Fair Exhibition of the Igorot Filipino People, The Asian American Education Project](https://asianamericanedu.org/1904-worlds-fair-exhibition-of-the-igorot-filipino-people.html)
(<https://asianamericanedu.org/1904-worlds-fair-exhibition-of-the-igorot-filipino-people.html>)

Books

- [Bone Talk](https://www.candygourlay.com/2018/08/born-today-meet-bone-talk.html) (<https://www.candygourlay.com/2018/08/born-today-meet-bone-talk.html>)
- [Wild Song](https://lernerbooks.com/shop/show/25760?srsId=AfmBOopRBC4iQ4-JTpbgvzORLby-4CRmHLQgKjqDZIfjyHH6qUBoiW4we) (<https://lernerbooks.com/shop/show/25760?srsId=AfmBOopRBC4iQ4-JTpbgvzORLby-4CRmHLQgKjqDZIfjyHH6qUBoiW4we>)



Shelf with Ilongot baskets in the Philippines Collection.



Shelf with rolled up textiles in the Philippines Collection.

Images ©Field Museum

Field Museum Philippine Heritage Collection Discussion Guide

Timeline of US-Philippine Relations, 1896 to 1965

In the late 1890s, after 333 years of Spanish colonial rule in the Philippine islands, a developing sense of nationalism among educated Filipinos grew into a war for independence. At the same time, the United States was waging a successful war against Spain. One outcome of this war was that the United States took control of the Philippines from Spain. The Philippine-American War and US colonization of the archipelago established patterns of racial hierarchy and paternalistic governance that would influence US-Philippine relations for decades to come.

**August 23,
1896**

The Philippine War for Independence from Spain began. The war was the climax of a nationalist movement led by educated Filipinos that had been growing in the years leading up to 1896.

**April 21,
1896**

The Spanish-American War began. The US wanted to assert its dominance over the Western Hemisphere and intervened in Cuba, which was revolting against Spain. Shortly after, a part of the US Navy attacked the Spanish forces in the Philippines at Manila Bay.

**June 12,
1898**

Philippines declared independence from Spain. Filipino nationalists designed a flag, created a national anthem, and established a constitutional republican government.

**December 10,
1898**

The Treaty of Paris is signed, ending the Spanish-American War and transferring the Philippines, Cuba, Guam, and Puerto Rico from Spanish to US control. The latter condition directly undermined efforts for Philippine sovereignty. No Filipino representatives were present at negotiations for the treaty, and the decision would ultimately lead to the Philippine-American War.

Field Museum Philippine Heritage Collection Discussion Guide

1902**The Philippine-American War ended with a US victory.**

The three-year conflict resulted in heavy loss of life among Filipinos. The Americans established a civilian colonial government as well as both public education and health systems. Although the Philippines was now technically under the control of the United States, Filipinos were not considered citizens and had virtually no pathway to citizenship.

1904

The World's Fair was hosted in St. Louis. The Philippine exhibition that featured over 1000 Filipinos. One of the most popular displays within the exhibition was an "authentic" village constructed and lived in by the Ifugao people of northern Luzon. Their depiction at the fair created and enforced a negative image of Filipinos as an uncivilized people and was used to justify American colonization of the Philippines.

1910s**Filipinos began to migrate to the United States.**

Most were workers employed seasonally in fish canneries and farm fields along the American west coast (including Alaska). Some, called "pensionados," were students sent to universities across the US to be educated for a career in government back in the Philippines. The first Filipina nurses also visited the US in this period with similar goals to the pensionados—to learn American healthcare practices and implement them in the Philippines.

**May 24,
1924**

The Immigration Act of 1924 (AKA the Johnson-Reed Act) was signed into law, creating an annual quota system to control immigrant entry into the US that entirely excluded Asians. Filipinos were exempt from exclusion because they were US colonial subject and were therefore allowed to move between the archipelago and America.

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1934

The passage of the Tydings-McDuffie Act began the process of giving full sovereignty to the Philippines. The US guaranteed that it would recognize Philippine independence after a ten-year adjustment period. A transitional state, the Philippine Commonwealth, was created. Filipinos lost the status of “US colonial ward” which made movement between the two states significantly harder.

1946

On July 4, **the Treaty of Manila was signed**, which stated that the US formally recognized the Philippines as an independent nation-state. In the same year, the Luce-Celler Act went into law, which finally extended naturalization rights to Filipinos and Asian Indians. However, The United States maintained a presence in the Philippines by way of multiple military bases, which would remain operational until 1991.

**October 23,
1965**

The Immigration Act of 1965 (AKA the Hart-Celler Act) was enacted, ending the restrictive quota system established by the 1924 Johnson-Reed Act. The new law’s emphasis on family reunification and the migration of people with “professional” skills caused a demographic shift on who could come to the United States. In the decades that followed, Filipinos would cross the Pacific in larger numbers. The most visible migrants were nurses recruited by American hospitals.

This educator guide was developed by:



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