

***Ukkil* Motifs on Church Bells in the Philippines, 1854-1896¹**

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Abstract: In the course of this author's field research on church bells in the Philippines, a number of photographs of the crosses on the bells show the said crosses resting on bases that curiously resembled motifs related to the art of southern Philippine Islamized peoples. This art is collectively called *ukkil* (in the Sulu Archipelago) or *okir* (in many places in Mindanao). When tabulated, the data show that these bells were cast from about the middle of the 19th century to the 1890s. This article tries to find out how these *ukkil* motifs found their way to church bells.

Keywords: bells, Moro wars, *naga*, *okir*, *ukkil*

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Introduction

The skyline of many an old town in the Philippines is pierced by the bell tower, from which are tolled the hours of the day as well as milestones in its citizens' lives such as weddings and funerals.² But at various points during the three centuries of Spanish colonial rule the bells performed the invaluable role of warning the populace against an impending enemy raid. The enemy in this case were the so-called "Moros," the generic name by which the Spaniards called the Muslims from the southern Philippines. Such raids were the direct result of perceived Spanish encroachment on the Muslims' domain and commerce.

The art of casting bronze bells in the Philippines may have been introduced as early as the last quarter of the sixteenth century, when Manila was settled as capital of the Spanish colony in the Far East. It was the standard practice to mark the bell with a cross or a symbol of the religious order that commissioned it (Figs. 1, 2, 3). While compiling data for a book on church bells in Spanish colonial Philippines, several bells with intriguing designs were noticed. These bells were marked with the usual cross on the shoulder, but the cross in this case stood on a base that at first sight seemed to be composed of motifs from Moro³ art. This paper will try to answer the following questions: 1) What are these "Moro" designs? 2) What could have been their sources? 3) Can we identify who were those who included them on the church bells and why they did so?



Fig. 1. Cross on bell, 1815, cast by Ambrocio Casas; Agoo, La Union.



Fig. 2. Cross on bell, 1821, cast by Benito de los Reyes; Pateros, Metro Manila.



Fig. 3. Cross on bell, 1864, cast by Saturnino Limcaco; Nasugbu, Batangas.

² A baseline study on church bells in the colonial Philippines is Regalado Trota José, *Of War and Peace: Lantakas and Bells in Search for Foundries in the Philippines. Part Two. Bagting: The Valuation of Time and Memory in Spanish Colonial Philippines* (Manila: University of Santo Tomás, 2009).

³ It is recognized that the term 'Moro' is not totally accepted as an identity reference by certain Philippine Islamized groups. However, for lack of a better term for the purposes of this article, 'Moro' will be used to refer to all Islamized groups in the Philippines.

Ukkil Designs?

The cross designs in question comprise a cross standing on a pedestal that is composed of curvilinear elements that strongly resemble motifs from *ukkil* or *okir*, the general term given to the artwork among the Moro peoples of Sulu and Mindanao respectively.⁴ These pedestals may be divided into two types, differentiated by the artistic motifs used in their formation.

The first design, which we may tentatively call the *naga* pedestal design, consists of a triangular base whose gable is formed by a pair of S-shaped forms that recall the *naga* or dragon motif of Meranao *okir* art, or the *hashas* or serpent motif of Sulu *ukkil* art. This design is the one more visually linked with *ukkil* art. (See Table 1, and Figs. A1 to A14.)

Table 1. Bells with *Naga* Pedestals

Figure	Year	Locality	Province	Religious administration	Bell caster
A1	1854	Manaoag	Pangasinan	Dominican	--
A2	1856	Amulung	Cagayan	Dominican	--
A3	1856	San Carlos	Pangasinan	Dominican	--
A4	1857	San Miguel	Bulacan	Augustinian	B.H.
A5	1857	San Vicente	Ilocos Sur	Secular	--
A6	1859	Bulusan	Sorsogon	Secular	--
A7	1862	Borbon	Cebu	Secular	--
A8	1870	San Jose	Batangas	Augustinian	--
A9	1876	San Agustin	Intramuros, Manila	Augustinian	M. Reyes
A10	1883	Tabaco	Albay	Secular	Pujades
A11	1884	Lemery	Batangas	Augustinian	Pujades
A12	1895	Ajuy	Iloilo	Secular	--
A13	1895	Cabatuan	Iloilo	Augustinian	Pujades
A14	1895	Tabaco	Albay	Secular	Pujades

⁴ See Eric S. Casiño, "Arts and Peoples of the Southern Philippines," in *The People and Art of the Philippines*, ed. Father Gabriel Casal et al, (Los Angeles: Museum of Cultural History, University of California, 1981), pp. 170-172, and Mamitua Saber and Dionisio G. Orellana, *Maranao Folk Art. Survey of Forms, Designs and Meanings* (Marawi City: University Research Center, Mindanao State University, 1981). The cognate word in Sulu is *ukkil*: see David L. Szanton, "Art in Sulu: A Survey," in *Sulu Studies 2*, (Jolo, Sulu: Notre Dame of Jolo College, 1973), pp. 3-69; and Ligaya Fernando-Amilbangsa, *Ukkil. Visual Arts of the Sulu Archipelago* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2005). In this article, *ukkil* and *okir* will be used interchangeably.



Fig. A1.1854, Manaoag, Pangasinan

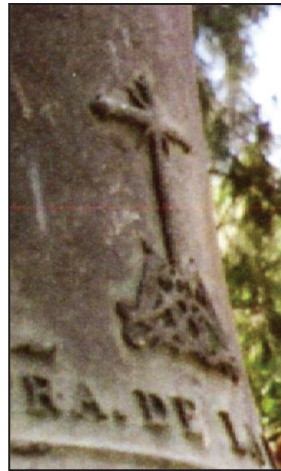


Fig. A2.1856, Amulung, Cagayan



Fig. A3. 1856, San Carlos, Pangasinan



Fig. A4.1857, San Miguel, Bulacan



Fig. A5. 1857, San Vicente, Ilocos Sur



Fig. A6. 1859, Bulusan, Sorsogon



Fig. A7. 1862, Borbon, Cebu



Fig. A8. 1870, San Jose, Batangas



Fig. A9. 1876, San Agustin, Intramuros, Manila

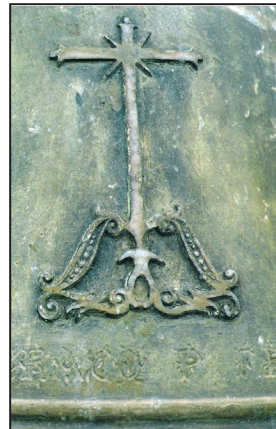


Fig. A10. 1883, Tabaco, Albay



Fig. A11. 1884, Lemery, Batangas



Fig. A12. 1895, Ajuy, Iloilo



Fig. A13. 1895, Cabatuan, Iloilo



Fig. A14. 1895, Tabaco, Albay

The *naga* is a vibrant element of figurative art in the Philippine Muslim south (Figs. 4, 5, 6). We may quote at length from Abraham Sakili, who explains the *naga*'s significance, popularity, and pre-Islamic origins:

Naga is a Sanskrit term for a mythical serpent or dragon found in many Asian literatures. The *naga* or *niaga* (serpent-like) figure is widespread in Southeast Asian art. There seems to be little doubt that its use in Philippine Muslim art is due to influences from elsewhere in the region. The *naga* of the Philippine Muslims is more likely derived from forms of Hindu-Malay origin. It traditionally symbolizes power and bravery, and is in some places revered as the guardian of springs, water supplies and treasures... One indication of the *naga* motif is its scale-like patterns composed of repeated *kuku* or fingernail-like *ukkil* elements. The *naga* form is generally forward-looking, bold, and massive [...] The *naga* is more popular in Lanao than in other Muslim areas in the Philippines, possibly because it is prominent in Maranao folklore [...] The *naga*, for some Maranaos, stands not only for good fortune but also for prestige and respect. There are also Maranaos who still believe that the *naga* carving on the *panolong* protect the members of the household from the forces of evil [...] [*Naga*] forms are widely spread in Muslim areas in the Philippines. Since non-Muslim Filipino groups do not have these forms it is suggested that Islam has played an important role in their formal evolution and development.⁵

⁵ Abraham P. Sakili, *Space and Identity. Expressions in the Culture, Arts and Society of the Muslims of the Philippines* (Quezon City: Asian Center, University of the Philippines, 2003), pp. 197-200.

Fig. 4. Naga motifs, after Orellana and Endriga, n.d.

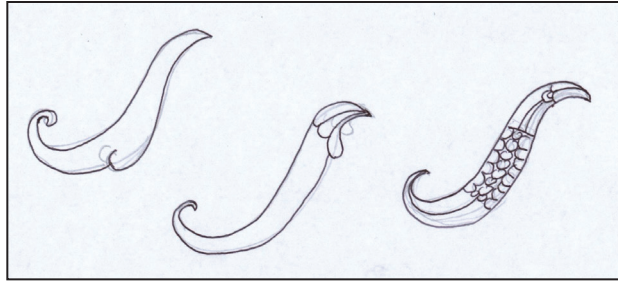


Fig. 5. Panolong beam in a torogan, Dayawan, Lanao del Sur.

Fig. 6. Cross board. Courtesy Notre Dame de Jolo Heritage Hub, Jolo, Sulu.



Remarkably, the *naga* shapes on the pedestals on the bells often include the extended tuft on the beaked head, the body scales, and the coiled tail that are characteristic of such art. The “gable” formed by the pair of *nagas* encloses an eight-pointed star. The base of the triangle and other components of the pedestal are composed of long, drawn-out scrolls that approximate other *okir* lines. A handful of examples shows a variation of the *naga* pedestal, where the “dragons” have been greatly simplified (though still with the head tuft), and incorporated with the other curvilinear *okir* lines (See Table 2, and Figures B1 to B5).

Table 2. Bells With *Naga* Variant Pedestals

Figure	Year	Locality	Province	Religious administration	Bell caster
B1	185-	San Juan	La Union	Augustinian	--
B2	1857	Alcala	Cagayan	Dominican	--
B3	1857	San Vicente	Ilocos Sur	Secular	--
B4	1862	Borbon	Cebu	Secular	--
B5	1895	Santa Barbara	Iloilo	Augustinian	Pujades



Fig. B1. 185-, San Juan, La Union



Fig. B2. 1857, Alcala, Cagayan



Fig. B3. 1857, San Vicente, Ilocos Sur



Fig. B4. 1862, Borbon, Cebu

Fig. B5. 1895, Santa Barbara, Iloilo



The second design, which we may tentatively call the *birdo* pedestal, consists of a squat base formed by undulating and swirling leafy tendrils that recall the *birdo* or plant motif on *ukkil* carvings and especially embroidery.⁶ This second design has many more examples than the first one (See Table 3, and Figures C1 to C39).

Table 3. Bells With *Birdo* Pedestals

Figure	Year	Locality	Province	Religious administration	Bell caster
C1	1854	Jasaan	Misamis Oriental	Augustinian Recollect	--
C2	1855	Jasaan (now in Tagoloan)	Misamis Oriental	Augustinian Recollect	--
C3	1855	Malolos (San Jose)	Bulacan	Augustinian	--
C4	1855	Malolos (Santa Ines)	Bulacan	Augustinian	--
C5	1856	Taal	Batangas	Augustinian	--
C6	1859	Santa Catalina	Ilocos Sur	Secular	--
C7	1861	San Sebastian	Manila	Augustinian Recollect	--
C8	1862	Itbayat	Batanes	Dominican	--
C9	1864	Pasig (Cathedral)	Metro Manila	Augustinian	--
C10	1865	Sto. Niño Basilica	Cebu City	Augustinian	--
C11	1866	Bacolod (Cathedral)	Negros Occidental	Secular	--

⁶ Fernando-Amilbangsa, *Ukkil*, p. 18.

C12	1867	Hinigaran	Negros Occidental	Augustinian Recollect	--
C13	1867	Imus	Cavite	Augustinian Recollect	--
C14	1867	Maasin	Southern Leyte	Secular	--
C15	1868	Amulung	Cagayan	Dominican	--
C16	1869	Amulung	Cagayan	Dominican	--
C17	1871	Catmon	Cebu	Secular	--
C18	1871	Hinigaran	Negros Occidental	Augustinian Recollect	--
C19	1871	Maribojoc	Bohol	Augustinian Recollect	--
C20	1872	Maribojoc	Bohol	Augustinian Recollect	--
C21	1873	Aparri	Cagayan	Dominican	--
C22	1873	Tanza (Sta. Cruz de Malabon)	Cavite	Dominican	--
C23	1878	Alicia (Angadanan)	Isabela	Dominican	H. Sunico
C24	1879	Pilar	Sorsogon	Franciscan	--
C25	1880	Binmaley	Pangasinan	Dominican	Santos Supangco
C26	1881	Lingayen	Pangasinan	Dominican	Santos Supangco
C27	1881	Larena (19@)	Siquijor	Augustinian Recollect	Santos Supangco
C28	1881	Larena (25@)	Siquijor	Augustinian Recollect	Santos Supangco
C29	1881	Larena (31@)	Siquijor	Augustinian Recollect	S. Supangco
C30	1884	Tayug	Pangasinan (recast from 1875)	Dominican	F. Pujades
C31	1889	Bulakan	Bulacan	Augustinian	H. Sunico
C32	1889	Guiguinto	Bulacan	Dominican	H. Sunico
C33	1889	Samal	Bataan	Dominican	H. Sunico
C34	1890	Echague	Isabela	Dominican	H. Sunico
C35	1896	San Agustin	Intramuros, Manila	Augustinian	--
C36	--	Baybay	Leyte	Secular	--
C37	--	Caoayan	Ilocos Sur	Augustinian	Ybar
C38	--	Santiago	Ilocos Sur	Augustinian	--
C39	--	Siaton	Negros Oriental	Augustinian Recollect	--



Fig. C1. 1854, Jasaan, Misamis Oriental



Fig. C2. 1855, Jasaan (now in Tagoloan),
Misamis Oriental



Fig. C3. 1855, Malolos, Bulacan



Fig. C4. 1855, Malolos, Bulacan



Fig. C5. 1856, Taal, Batangas



Fig. C6. 1859, Santa Catalina, Ilocos Sur



Fig. C7. 1861, San Sebastian, Manila



Fig. C8. 1862, Itbayat, Batanes



Fig. C9. 1864, Pasig, Metro Manila



Fig. C10. 1865, Sto. Niño Basilica, Cebu City

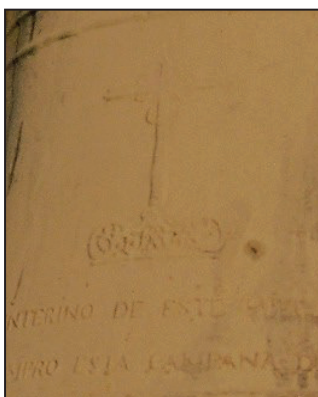


Fig. C11. 1866, Bacolod, Negros Occidental



Fig. C12. 1867, Hinigaran, Negros Occidental



Fig. C13. 1867, Imus, Cavite



Fig. C14. 1867, Maasin, Southern Leyte

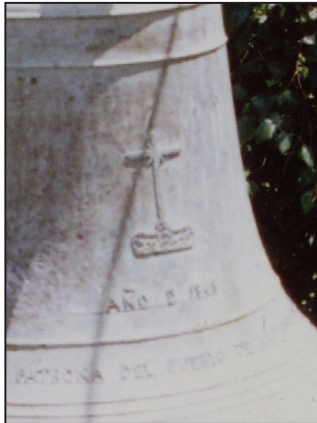


Fig. C15. 1868, Amulung, Cagayan



Fig. C16. 1869, Amulung, Cagayan



Fig. C17. 1871, Catmon, Cebu



Fig. C18. 1871, Hinigaran, Negros Occidental



Fig. C19. 1871, Maribojoc, Bohol



Fig. C20. 1872, Maribojoc, Bohol



Fig. C21. 1873, Aparri, Cagayan



Fig. C22. 1873, Tanza, Cavite



Fig. C23. 1878, Alicia, Isabela



Fig. C24. 1879, Pilar, Sorsogon



Fig. C25. 1880, Binmaley, Pangasinan



Fig. C26. 1881, Lingayen, Pangasinan



Fig. C27. 1881, Larena, Siquijor

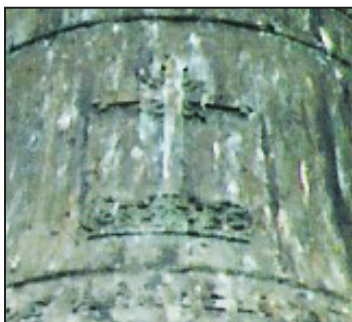


Fig. C28. 1881, Larena, Siquijor



Fig. C29. 1881, Larena, Siquijor



Fig. C30. 1884, Tayug, Pangasinan



Fig. C31. 1889, Bulakan, Bulacan



Fig. C32. 1889, Guiguinto, Bulacan



Fig. C33. 1889, Samal, Bataan



Fig. C34. 1890, Echague, Isabela



Fig. C35. 1896, San Agustin, Intramuros, Manila



Fig. C36. --, Baybay, Leyte

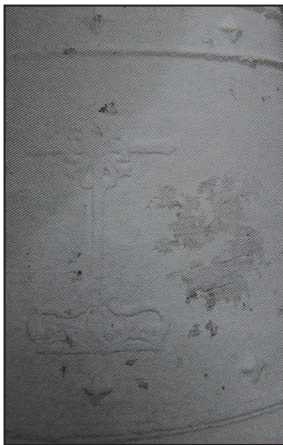


Fig. C37. --, Caoayan, Ilocos Sur



Fig. C38. --, Santiago, Ilocos Sur



Fig. C39. --, Siaton, Negros Oriental

In the center of both *naga*- and *birido*-pedestals, there appears an ornament shaped like an inverted heart that recalls the *pako rabong* or “growing fern” motif among the Meranao, or the *sumping* (flower) or *kayapu'* (lotus) among the peoples of Sulu (Figs. 7, 8).⁷

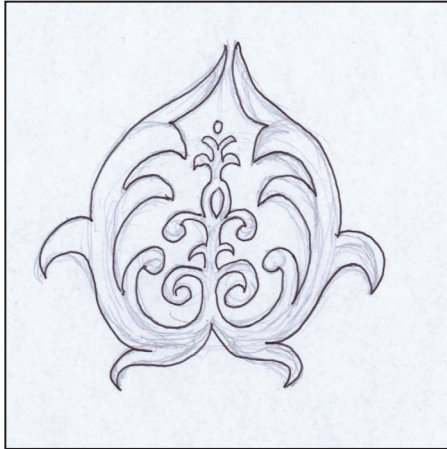


Fig. 7. Sketch of a pako rabong, after Orellana and Endriga, n.d.



Fig. 8. Discarded sunduk tomb markers with sumping motifs, South Ubian, Tawitawi.

⁷ Ibid.; for illustrations, see especially pp. 138, 145.

In *ukkil* or *okir* art, the *naga* often appears with the *pako rabong*. Both elements are particularly prominent in woodcarving, such as the *panolong*, beam protrusions of Meranao ancestral houses; *sunduk* or Sulu funerary monuments; and watercraft. They also appear on brass containers such as the *gador* or urn, and weapons.⁸ They can be found embroidered on flags and wall hangings (Figs.9, 10, 11, 12, 13).

Fig. 9. Ornamentation on the hilt of an unfinished barung, Indanan, Sulu.



Fig. 10. Section of a habul tyahian (multi-purpose cloth). Courtesy of National Museum, Jolo, Sulu.



Fig. 11. Upper section of a stand for agungs. Courtesy of National Museum, Jolo, Sulu.

⁸ Sources for Philippine Muslim metal casting include Robert Cato, *Moro Swords* (Singapore: Graham Brash (Pte.) Ltd., 1996); W-A. Mialhe de Burgh and Fe B. Mangahas, *Of War and Peace: Lantakas and Bells in Search for Foundries in the Philippines, Part One: Lantaka: From 16th to 19th Centuries* (Manila: University of Santo Tomss Publishing House, 2010); and Dionisio G. Orellana and Efren V. Endriga, Jr., *Maranao Traditional Brasscasting*, vol. 2: *Materials and Process* (Tibanga, Iligan City: Coordination Center for Research and Development, MSU-Iligan Institute of Technology, and Endriga, n.d.).



Fig. 12. Detail of ornamentation on table. Courtesy of National Museum, Jolo, Sulu.



Fig. 13. Embroidered festive cloth used in a pagana M'ranaw, Sapadan Garden Resort, Marawi, Lanao del Sur.

It should be noted that the range and variation of *naga* and *pako rabong* among the various Muslim Filipino groups still await rigorous documentation and the corollary study and publication. We know about these motifs through studies of the Sama, Tausug, and Meranao people, the three groups most written about by ethnographers. By comparison, very little is available about the visual arts of the Maguindanao, Iranun, and Balangingi people, who historically were at odds for the longest time with the Spaniards.

Possible Sources for the Motifs

This author began documenting church bells in the 1980s. For the most part, only the inscriptions on the bells (year, patron saint, weight, name of parish priest or locality, and of bell caster, if any) were copied by hand. Not all bells were

photographed, as the author mistakenly believed then that they were all of the same shape. As it later turned out, the silhouettes indeed changed over time. Similarly, it was only in the last decade or so of research, upon a chance comparison of photographs, that differences in cross designs were noticed. Thus, the *okir* motifs on cross pedestals were observed, with much curiosity and questioning. Undoubtedly, more examples of *okir* motifs on church bells will be ‘discovered,’ as documentation becomes more systematic.

Tabulating the years cast on the bells with *okir* pedestals is instructive in providing a time frame for such curious artifacts. Of the 16 known examples of the *naga* pedestals, the earliest dates from 1854, while the latest is from 1895. Of the four ‘abstract’ *naga* pedestals, the earliest is from 1857, while the latest is from 1862; an interesting variation ‘inspired’ by the abstract *naga* pedestal dates from 1895. Of the 39 examples of *birdo* pedestals, the earliest example dates from 1854, while the latest dates from 1896 (the years of four other examples were not accessible). The period in which these Islamic motifs appear, the last 50 years of Spanish occupation, coincides with the final phase of the so-called “Moro Wars.”⁹ Spanish military action, fanned by centuries of encounters with the Muslims, was also egged on by British, French, Dutch, and even German economic and territorial interests. In 1861, with cannon-laden steamships purchased from the British, Spanish forces bombarded the nerve centers of the sultanates in the Sulu Archipelago and western Mindanao (See Table 4).¹⁰

Table 4. Significant Spanish Raids on Mindanao and Sulu, 19th Century

Year	Place of raid	Source in Montero y Vidal
1848	Balangingi	Vol. 1, Chapter XXVII
1851	Sulu- various islands	Vol. 2, Chapter XXXI
1858	Basilan	Vol. 2, Chapter XXXII
1861	Sulu	Vol. 2, Chapter XXXIII
1861	Cotabato	Vol. 2, XXXIII
1861	Tawi-tawi	Vol. 2, XXXIII
1864	Balanguingui, Tonquil	Vol. 2, XXXIV

⁹ Basic sources include Luis Camara Dery, *The Kris in Philippine History. A Study of the Impact of Moro Anti-Colonial Resistance, 1571-1896* (n.p.: The Author, 1997); Cesar Adib Majul, *Muslims in the Philippines*, 2nd ed. (Quezon City: Asian Center, University of the Philippines, 1973); and James Francis Warren, *The Sulu Zone 1768-1898* (Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1985) and *Iranun and Balangingi: Globalization, Maritime Raiding and the Rebirth of Ethnicity* (Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 2002).

¹⁰ José Montero y Vidal, *Historia de la Piratería Malayo-Mahometana en Mindanao Joló y Borneo* (Madrid: Imprenta y Fundición de Manuel Tello, 1888), Vol. 2, p. 477.

1876	Sulu	Vol. 2, XXXV
1886	Cotabato	Vol. 2, XLII
1887	Cotabato	Vol. 2, XLIII
1887	Maimbung, Siasi, Tapul, Pata (Sulu)	Vol. 2, XLIV, XLV, XLVI
1888	Patikul (Sulu)	Vol. 2, XLVIII

During all these years of siege, untold quantities of artillery and weapons were seized and brought as souvenirs to Manila and places much further. The first major attack on Sulu in the 19th century took place in 1848, on the fort of Balangingi on the island of the same name. The Balangingi were the most notorious slave raiders, and they sold their victims to slave markets in Sulu and elsewhere in Island Southeast Asia. In 1848 Spanish forces led by Governor-General Narciso Clavería himself, razed their settlements to the ground. Fourteen pieces of artillery and much ammunition were taken.¹¹ In the raid on Sipac, one of the forts on the island, 66 pieces of artillery and various firearms and swords were recovered. Apart from these weapons, many flags, rolls of silk and brocade, vases of silver, and Korans were also collected. 150 prisoners were taken, mostly women and children. Furthermore, 300 captives from the slave raids, mostly Filipinos and some Indonesians, were rescued.¹² In 1858, an expedition on Simisa, Basilan, liberated 76 captives, took 116 prisoners, and collected a rich assortment of textiles, mother-of-pearl, turtle shell, resins, and even small watercraft.¹³ This taking of weapons, booty, Moro prisoners, and slave captives would be a pattern for the rest of the punitive expeditions carried out in Sulu and Mindanao for a large part of the middle and second half of the 19th century. The Balangingi captives and much of the booty were transported on ships that unloaded them at Fort Santiago, the center of military activities in the walled city of Manila. After incarceration in Fort Santiago, the hapless captives were then transported to the Cagayan Valley in northeast Luzon to work in the tobacco plantations there. Their numbers were augmented by prisoners taken from Jolo in 1851.¹⁴

Collections of *lantakas* (local cannon) ended up in several Spanish museums such as the Museo de Antropología, Museo de América, and Museo Naval in Madrid, the Museu Etnològic in Barcelona, and the various military museums throughout the country. Included among the firearms carted away was a significant number of *lantakas* and *kris*es or swords crafted not for defensive purposes but as trophies or

¹¹ Montero y Vidal, *Historia*, 1, p. 409.

¹² Montero y Vidal, *Historia*, 1, pp. 411-412.

¹³ Montero y Vidal, *Historia*, 2, p. 469.

¹⁴ See the account in Margarita de los Reyes Cojuangco, *Kris of Valor. The Samal Balangingi's Defiance and Diaspora* (Manila: Manisan Research and Publishing Inc., 1993).

prestigious gift items.¹⁵ The collection of the Museo del Ejército (formerly in Madrid but now in Toledo; see Fig. 14) is significant because the provenances are well documented.¹⁶ The table below lists the *lantakas* in Museo del Ejército, along with data on when and where they were taken (Table 5, Fig. XIV)). The years fit in with the dates in the table above. In turn, the dates of both tables strongly point out the connection with the production of the bells with *ukkil* motifs.

Table 5. *Lantakas* In The Museo Del Ejército (Now in Toledo, Spain)

Year	Provenance	Province	Number of pieces
1848	Balangingi	Sulu	3
1851	Jolo	Sulu	3
1876	Jolo	Sulu	1
1887	Pata	Sulu	1
1887	Maimbang	Sulu	2
1887	Tapul	Sulu	5
1893 and 1895	Marahuit [Marawi]	Lanao del Sur	5
no provenance	--	--	5
	Total:		25

In all these raids, we may posit that some metalworkers from Sulu and Mindanao were among those brought to Manila. They may have been made to work in the foundries in Fort Santiago in the districts of Binondo and San Nicolas across the Pasig River. These foundries produced not only bells but also anchors, chains, and other naval hardware, and even chandeliers.

Despite the constant notices of wars and raids between Manila and Jolo, some sort of trade was conducted between the two capitals: even if intermittent or by way of indirect channels. In 1836 the temporary governor of the Philippines, Pedro Antonio Salazar, commissioned the commandant of the naval forces in Zamboanga to commence trading with the Sultan of Jolo. In the treaty, various items of cloth coming from Manila were specified, with their corresponding tariff rates. Although the kinds of cloth coming from Jolo were not mentioned, it is probable that a similar market for Sulu cloth also existed in Manila. No vessel of Jolo is reported to have reached Manila at this time, although materials from Sulu reached Zamboanga, and thence Manila.¹⁷

¹⁵ Mialhe and Mangahas, *Of War and Peace- Lantakas*, pp. 6 and 46, refer to Annechien Bertheux, "The Brunei Cannon" (unpublished thesis), University of Leiden, 1996.

¹⁶ The *lantakas* in this collection are described with much detail in Luis Bermúdez de Castro, *Catálogo del Museo del Ejército, Tomo 1* (n.p., Museo del Ejército, 1953).

¹⁷ Montero y Vidal, *Historia*, Vol. 1, pp. 375-376; Vol. 2, apéndices, pp. 43-44.

The flags taken from Sulu and Mindanao were hung ceremoniously in places in Manila like San Agustin church. This may be linked with the presence of several wooden chests inlaid with mother-of-pearl in the said church (Fig. 15). Chests like these are precious commodities in Sulu and Mindanao; some may be seen in the Aga Khan Museum in Marawi City. The chests in San Agustin do not form part of the Araneta collection,¹⁸ and indeed may have been brought there together with the flags and left behind. The presence of the chests in San Agustin further gives us some idea, however imperfect, of the presence of related artifacts of metal, wood, textiles, and other materials in the metropolis, whether brought there as booty or other means.



Fig. 14. Some of the lantakas as they were previously exhibited in the old site of the Museo del Ejército, Madrid (1992).



Fig. 15. Wooden chests with shell inlay work, presumably from Sulu. San Agustin Museum, Intramuros, Manila (1992).

It is suggested in this article that the decorations on the weapons, textiles, and related artifacts may have provided the design ideas for the *naga*- and *birdo* pedestals for the bell-casters in Manila. Related to this idea, are motifs strongly reminiscent of *ukkil* that were carved on the borders of certain pieces of furnishings in the sacristy of Baclayon church, Bohol (Figs. 16, 17).

¹⁸ As told to this author by Father Ricky Villar, O.S.A., curator of the San Agustin Museum, April 30, 2025.

Fig. 16. Okir-like motifs
ornamenting a sacristy chest.
Baclayon, Bohol.



Fig. 17. Okir-like motifs ornamenting a
frame in the sacristy. Baclayon, Bohol.

Possible Artists and their Motives

Bells with *ukkil* designs have been found as far north as Itbayat, the northernmost inhabited island of the Philippines (Fig. C8), and far south as Jasaan in northern Mindanao (Figs. C1-2). Some towns commissioned bells with *ukkil* pedestals on two consecutive years; others even ordered a maximum of three bells with these designs in a single year (Larena, Siquijor, in 1881; Figs. C27, C28, C29). At this point, we do not know if there was any motivation, if any, to order bells with *okir* designs.

Similar questions on artistic preferences are raised in relation to their religious patrons. The data on Tables 1, 2, and 3 show that the Augustinians, Augustinian Recollects, Dominicans, and Secular priests figure prominently as owners of such *ukkil* bells. Could this have something to do with the fact that members of the first three congregations joined many Sulu and Mindanao expeditions as chaplains? (But the same cannot be said of the Seculars.) The Jesuits and Franciscans do not figure in the tables, except for one bell in the Franciscan parish of Pilar, Sorsogon. These two latter congregations utilized their own logos in place of the crosses on pedestals (Figs. 18, 19).



Fig. 18. Franciscan coat-of-arms, on an 1871 bell, Oras, Eastern Samar.



Fig. 19. Jesuit seal on an 1875 bell, Dipolog, Zamboanga del Norte.

We know that there were a number of foundries in Manila by the mid-19th century, though there were also smaller ones in Cebu and Iloilo. Furthermore, bells were also cast by itinerant entrepreneurs who set up foundries within the church compound.¹⁹ Most of the bells with *ukkil* pedestals do not carry names of their makers or foundries; those that do, were cast in the 1870s and later, when Manila-based bell casters had their names inscribed. However, considering that the *ukkil* on bells consistently retained their characteristic designs throughout the period in question, it would seem safe to assume that the great majority of these bells were cast in Manila and its environs.

An undated bell with a *birdo* pedestal from Caoayan, Ilocos Sur, is inscribed: *Fundidor Jose Ybar* (Fig. C37). Bells cast by Ybar date from 1853 to 1863; unfortunately, the crosses on these bells were not photographed. Jose Ybar appears as a *maestro mayor de armeros de la Compañía de obreros, Maestranza de Artillería de Manila* in the *Guías de Forasteros* from 1846 to 1857. (The *Guía* of 1857 states that Ybar returned to the peninsula, although bells bearing his name can be found up to 1863; a contradiction that cannot be reconciled at this time.) At least, we know that Ybar cast both bells and arms; an occupation he shared with two other metalworkers,

¹⁹ For a listing of bell foundries, see José, *Of War and Peace- Bagting*, Chapter Four.

Ambrocio Casas (active 1809-1846) and Felipe Alonso (active in the 1780s).²⁰ So we have one source of this type of *okir* base: the foundry of Jose Ybar. Since he cast both bells and arms, he may have harnessed the Sulu captives brought to Fort Santiago; they may have introduced the *okir* designs to the casters, if not applied the designs themselves. On another track, Ybar may have been inspired by the *okir* designs on the metalwork and other booty brought from Sulu and incorporated them on his bells. An early *naga* pedestal bell is in San Miguel, Bulacan, and is dated 1857 and mystifyingly inscribed “B.H.” (Fig. A4).

After the ‘B.H’ bell of 1857, the next known bell with an *ukkil* motif—a *naga* pedestal—with a named bell caster was cast in 1876. It bears the name ‘M. Reyes,’ and is prominently displayed in the San Agustin Museum in Intramuros, Manila (Fig. A9); bells with this name were cast between 1875 and 1879. Nothing else is known about this artist.²¹

The most famous bell caster throughout the last part of the 19th century and the first decades of the 20th century was Hilario Sunico. His foundry was along Jaboneros Street in San Nicolás, Binondo, Manila. Despite his enormous output—which used various styles of crosses and cross pedestals—only a few bells bear the *birdo* pedestal (1878, and 1889-1890; Figs. C23, C31-34 respectively).²²

Near the Sunico foundry was another owned by Santo Supangco, who turned out bells between 1877 and 1887. A handful of bells bear *birdo* pedestals, and were cast in 1880-1881 (Figs. C25-29). The huge bell in Binmaley, Pangasinan, was cast in 1880 and boasts a rare cast plaque with the foundry’s address: No. 6, Camba, San Nicolas, Binonodo, Manila (Fig. 20).

Fig. 20. Seal of Fundicion de Metales de Santos Supangco, Sn. Nicolas Camba No. 6, Manila, on an 1880 bell, Binmaley, Pangasinan (see Fig. C25).



²⁰ Ibid., pp. 231, 233.

²¹ Ibid., pp. 204-208.

²² Ibid., pp. 215-226.

There are *naga* pedestal bells dated from 1883 to 1895, and a *birdo* pedestal bell cast in 1884, that were cast by the company of F. Pujades, who had a shop on 9 Camba Street in San Nicolas, Binondo, Manila (Figs. A10-11, A13-14, C30, respectively). Nothing is known about Pujades, but this family name appeared a few times in connection with the military in Manila. F. Pujades may have been related to a Jayme Pujades y Tortella listed in the *Guias de Forasteros*, the yearbooks of the time, first as an artilleryman (1849-1859), and then a scribe working for the civil authorities (1862-1865). An entry in the marriage registers of the Archdiocese of Manila shows that Jayme Pujades married Antonia Carmen Basilio in 1861, which may have resulted in his change of career. Another Pujades, José Pujades y Solá, was listed in *Guias de Forasteros* as an infantryman from 1851 to 1859. Could F. Pujades have been the son, or younger brother, of either Jayme or José? If so, F. Pujades may have had access to Moro workmen or Mindanao workers in his foundry given the military background of Jayme and José.²³

Like the foundry of Sunico, those of others like Supangco and Pujades drew from many styles of crosses and pedestals, apart from casting bells with Jesuit and Franciscan seals.

(Curiously, conspicuous motifs on weapons and artillery such as the sharp triangular *songket* or “bamboo shoot” motif are absent on our bells. Fig. 21).



Fig. 21. Details of lantakas taken from Marawi in 1895, showing the songket motif; Museo del Ejército, Madrid (1992).

²³ Ibid., pp. 195, 197-201.

An unusual example must be highlighted. All the examples except for one were articulated by the usual technique of applying the design by means of wax or clay wires, over which a ‘negative’ mould or *falsa campana* was laid.²⁴ In the sole exception referred to—an 1856 bell in San Carlos, Pangasinan (Fig. A3)—the design seems to have been incised after casting, by a sharp tool that cut away voids leaving the *naga* in flat, low relief (Fig. 22). The effect of the design is very much like that on certain Tausug carvings or ornamentation (Fig. 23). Indeed, this may be one elusive example where the artist may very well have been one of the captives from Mindanao or Sulu.

Fig. 22. Detail of naga pedestal of 1856 bell, San Carlos, Pangasinan (from Fig. A3).



Fig. 23. Detail of carving on chair. Courtesy of National Museum, Jolo, Sulu.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 38.

Unanswered Questions

Despite the pictographic evidence, we still need data to clarify how such Moro designs migrated to church bells. Archival research can turn up data or even names of Moro prisoners and their occupations. If there were metalworkers among them, then it is very possible they would have been set to work in the bell foundries. If that happened, then we may ask what their motives were for incorporating *ukkil* motifs on the bells. They may have placed these at the base of the cross, as a subtle way of demonstrating that the cross was supported by the *naga*. Or, they may have had nostalgic or esthetic reasons.

Another avenue to explore is that the designs from the looted artifacts were considered beautiful enough to apply on the bells even by non-Moro artists, as suggested by the participants in the conference in 2011 when this paper was first given.

There is still the question of why the motifs appear as they did. I may be walking on thin ice here, but I pose these hypotheses in the interest of discussion and documentation methodology. In the majority of examples, it seems that the *okir* motifs were derived from examples seen from Moro art captured from Mindanao and Sulu. The Manila bell casters (who were mostly Christian) may have positioned the cross over the said motifs in a sort of triumphalist manner.

However, the exceptional effect of the *naga* on the 1856 San Carlos bell suggests otherwise. Could this have been the product of a Sulu metalworker taken prisoner? By depicting the *naga* as the base for the cross, could this have been his personal way of expressing his internal conflict?

That any of these exquisite works would have raised the eyebrows of the priest assigned to bless the bells is a moot possibility. And once the bells were raised to the towers, the turmoil of the *naga* and the cross were consigned to oblivion. In like manner, the beasts affixed on the rafters of Gothic churches and the bestialities carved on the undersides of the misericords or mercy seats in choir stalls were never seen by their end-users. They could have been put there by carpenters taking their revenge after an altercation with the monks. Some others read them as the builders' way of chaining the demons to the edifice of the church. We may never know the real score, but that is what keeps us questioning. And I keep on thinking: perhaps unwittingly, the anonymous artists who incorporated the cross and the *naga* on the bells imbued these instruments of time with two ancient symbols of life.^{PS}

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