

Sa Ginhalinan it Akean: A Postcolonial Analysis on the Talibong Tradition of the Taong Labas of the Municipalities of Libacao, Madalag, and Malinao, in the Province of Aklan

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ABSTRACT

The Talibong is a fighting bolo of the Panay Bukidnon of the Central Panay mountain range, but is also common among the lowland agricultural communities in Aklan. Often characterized by carvings on its hilt and ornaments such as old coins embedded on its sheath, the Talibong is part of the daily attire of the Akeanon Bukidnon who live in the interiors of Libacao, Madalag, and Malinao; a hinterland people who, historically, have been ‘othered’ by the predominantly Christian lowlanders and branded with derogatory terms such as *buyongs* (savages/bandits), *buki* (rustic/uneducated), or *mundos* (of the mountains). As of the present, the Province of Aklan has made the Talibong into one of the key symbols of Akeanon cultural heritage – with it now being displayed in the offices of local government officials and representing the province in digital posters promoting Akeanon culture for ecotourism. By viewing the history of upland-lowland relations in the province through Francis Gealogo’s concept of the *Taong Labas* and Gayatri Spivak’s theory of ‘othering’, this thesis looks into how these hinterland communities were ‘othered’ during the colonial period up to contemporary times; identifying how the Talibong had once become a defining representation of a perceived savagery, backwardness, and culture of violence ascribed to these communities by those in the town centers. With the use of archival sources pertaining to accounts of these hinterland peoples in the late 19th century up to the present and key informant interviews with elders from the town centers and the very cultural bearers of the tradition, this thesis points out that the hinterland peoples of the interiors of Libacao, Madalag, and Malinao are historically the *Taong Labas* of Aklan, whose Talibong tradition has been appropriated by the centers, in their bid to construct a genuine local identity built upon the notion of indigeneity.