

The 1915 Panama-Pacific International Exposition and the Colonial Exhibition of Philippine Education

Benelyn P. FERRER

University of the Philippines Diliman/Independent Scholar

bpferrer@up.edu.ph

<https://orcid.org/0009-0007-0820-922X>

ABSTRACT

The United States has been known for organizing International Exhibitions or World Fairs, particularly during the 20th century, where it showcased its various achievements as an imperialist nation. In 1915, the United States hosted the Panama-Pacific International Exposition in San Francisco, California. The Philippines was included as one of the displays, mainly centered on the education system—an area the American colonial government had prioritized since its annexation. The Bureau of Education organized the details of the exhibit under the directorship of Frank L. Crone. This paper examines the Philippine exhibit on the education system at the Panama-Pacific International Exposition. It addresses key questions such as: Why did the American colonial government include the education system of the Philippines as one of the exhibits? What is the implication of exhibiting the educational system in an international exposition? And what is the relevance of the Philippines in this Exposition? The study uses the physical copy published by the Press of Marnell & Company in 1915, a series of articles prepared by Frank L. Crone, annual government reports, speech manuscripts, and scholarly literature to explore the Philippine exhibit in the Panama-Pacific International Exposition. This paper contributes to a deeper understanding of the Philippines' role as a U.S. colony in international expositions.

Keywords: Philippine education, US imperialism, Colonial Exhibition, Public schools, Panama-Pacific International Exposition

The Panama-Pacific International Exposition



The International Exposition, also known as the World's Fair, was used as an agency to promote and project a positive image of each

participating nation.¹ The United States' involvement in expositions was influenced by European models, showcasing various achievements and presenting itself as a highly civilized nation.² The Philippines, as a U.S. colony, first appeared at the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis, Missouri. This event attracted visitors because of its large exhibit demonstrating different aspects of Philippine culture. Among the highlights was the "Philippine Reservation," a living display wherein a group of people from the Philippines was positioned in a way that emphasized a portrayal of so-called primitive cultures. This reinforced the prevailing narrative of the paternalistic notion of American guidance over the Philippines.³

Subsequently, the Philippine colony participated in another international exposition: the Panama-Pacific International Exposition, regarded as one of the most remarkable art exhibitions in the history of U.S. expositions.⁴ San Francisco's hosting of the exposition was authorized by President William Howard Taft in 1911.⁵ Charles C. Moore, a local businessman, was elected President of the Exposition Board in recognition of his contributions for securing an international fleet of warships for San Francisco during the Portola festival in 1909, which allowed others to see the beauty of the city.⁶ Rueben Hale was also appointed as one of the vice presidents of the Exposition, along with William H. Crocker, Michael Henry de Young, Isaias W. Hellman, James Rolph, and Leon Sloss, after introducing the concept of holding the exposition in San Francisco, as early as 1904.⁷ Their persuasive efforts were crucial in demonstrating the city's potential as a suitable host for the fair.

¹ Patrícia Ferraz de Matos, Hande Birkalan-Gedik, Andrés Barrera-González, and Pegi Vail, "Introduction: World Fairs, Exhibitions and Anthropology Revisiting Contexts of Post-colonialism," *Anthropological Journal of European Cultures* 31, no. 2 (2022): 2, doi: 10.3167/ajec.2022.310202.

² Merle Curti, "America at the World Fairs, 1851-1893," *The American Historical Review* 55, no. 4 (1950): 833, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1841163>.

³ Beverly Grindstaff, "Creating Identity: Exhibiting the Philippines at the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition," *National Identities* 1, no. 3 (1999): 245-247, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14608944.1999.9728114>.

⁴ Laura Ackley, *San Francisco's Jewel City: The Panama-Pacific International Exposition* (Berkeley, California: Heyday, 2014).

⁵ Ackley, *San Francisco's Jewel City*.

⁶ Ackley, *San Francisco's Jewel City*.

⁷ Ackley, *San Francisco's Jewel City*.

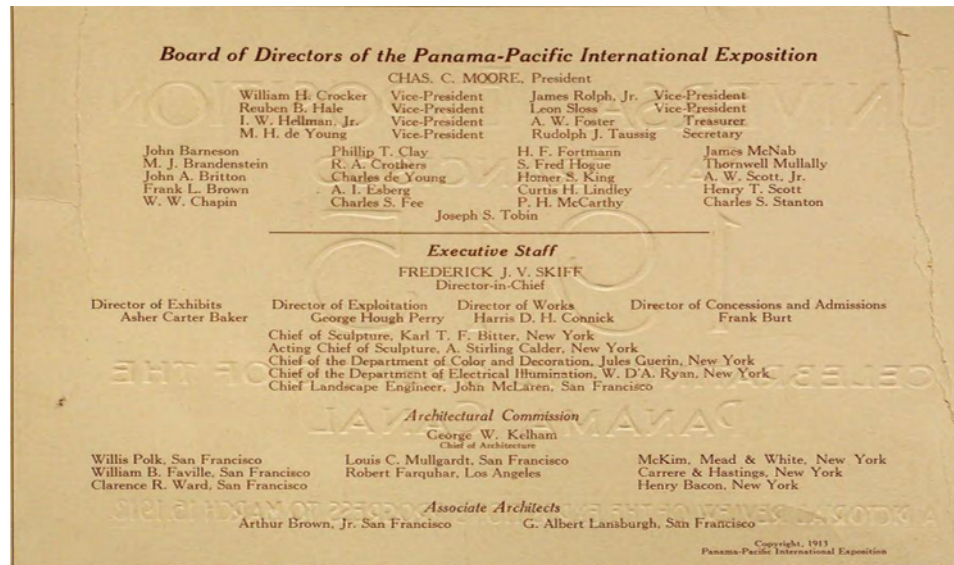


Figure 1: “Board of Directors of the Panama-Pacific International Exposition” (Courtesy of San Francisco: The Expositions)⁸

Held from February 20 to December 4, 1915, the event celebrated the completion and opening of the Panama Canal in 1914, marking another milestone for maritime trade and commodity shipping. The inauguration of the canal not only advanced the United States economically but also amplified its reputation on the global stage. The international exposition also served as a memorialization event for the reconstruction of San Francisco following the havoc of the historic 1906 earthquake, which resulted in the deaths of an estimated 3,000 people and causing \$500 million in property damage.⁹ This incident demonstrated the capacity of the United States as a nation to recover and restore itself following a catastrophic event.

Given the monumental significance of the Panama-Pacific Exposition, the displays were carefully curated to reflect its vision. In contrast to the “savage” depiction at the 1904 Exposition, the highlights of the Philippine exhibits in 1915 centered on education, an area the American colonial government had placed great importance on since its annexation. It stemmed from their social responsibility of civilizing the Filipinos by cultivating them through education. This perfectly aligned with the exposition’s core values, presenting the pride of the United States as a tool and central character in fostering the condition of humankind and showcasing the nation’s achievements as reflections of its progress and development.

⁸ “Universal Exposition San Francisco 1915,” Smithsonian, Archive.org, Accessed Month 00, 0000, <https://archive.org/details/panamapacificin00pana/page/n1/mode/1up>.

⁹ Ackley, *San Francisco's Jewel City*.

Philippine Preparation for the Panama-Pacific International Exposition

Frank L. Crone served as the Director of the Bureau of Education during the Panama-Pacific International Exposition. One of his responsibilities was the management of necessary details and documents concerning the education system exhibited at the Exposition. Prior to becoming a director, Crone had already played a significant role in education in the Philippines. He was among the first American teachers to arrive following the enactment of Act No. 74 in 1901, which officially established the Bureau of Public Instruction in the Philippines. He then initially took on the role of Principal in Camarines Sur, later rising to the position of Division Superintendent. He stepped in as the Acting Director when Frank Russel White, the then-current Director of the Bureau of Education, fell ill.¹⁰ Following White's death in 1913, Crone officially succeeded him as Director from 1913 to 1916.

Being the fourth director since the establishment of the Bureau of Education in the Philippines, Crone's term was marked by the amalgamation of the past policies and plans from the first three directors. Fred Atkinson, who first advocated for a utilitarian approach to education; David Barrows, who promoted literary education; and Frank Russell White, who finally focused on industrial education.¹¹ The transition of leadership and differing ideals shaped the education system and left a lasting impact. Therefore, it is only logical that the education system became the Philippines' primary exhibit at the Panama-Pacific International Exposition, as it aligns well with the exposition's theme. It was a strategy and a manifestation of the development of the Filipinos under the U.S. colonial government.

The Panama-Pacific International Exposition, paramount in the global scene, required extensive and meticulous preparations to ensure its success. A year after San Francisco was declared the official site, the Philippine legislature enacted Act No. 2163 to form a commission for organizing the Philippine exhibit at the Panama-Pacific International Exposition. A total of \$250,000 was allocated for the construction and logistics of the displays.¹²

In the year Act No. 2163 was enacted, Frank Russell White remained as the Director of the Bureau of Education. However, during this time, he was confronted with serious issues concerning education, including a decline in primary school enrollment, largely due to the growing emphasis on the

¹⁰ Sarah Steinbock-Pratt, *Educating the Empire: American Teachers and Contested Colonization in the Philippines*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 262.

¹¹ Glenn Anthony May, *Social engineering in the Philippines the aims, execution and impact of American colonial policy, 1900-1913* (Quezon City: New Day Publisher, 1984), 117.

¹² Paul Kramer, *The Blood of Government: Race, Empire, the United States, and the Philippines* (North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 374–375.

expansion of industrial education. The closure of barrio schools and concerns regarding student promotion rates were also prevalent during his term. Among those, there were also disparities in teacher salaries.¹³ These problems obscured the directorship of White, making the proper preparation and management of the Philippine exhibit his last priority. Above all, this was the worsening of his health. The responsibility was then passed on to Frank Crone, who assumed the headship of the Bureau of Education in 1913.

His preliminary measure was to reach out to division superintendents from various municipalities to gather documents and materials concerning the education system. This effort included collecting information on the curricula for primary, intermediate, industrial, agricultural, and normal schools, as well as statistics and surveys regarding student enrollment and the number of teachers. There were also documents about the historical evolution of the Philippine public school system, the list of handicrafts made by Filipino students, and textbooks supplied by American educators.¹⁴

After Frank Crone consolidated and systematically compiled all the documents, he proposed them to the Philippine Exposition Board—the main organizer of the exhibit in accordance with Act 2163. He actively coordinated with the Board, which was composed of prominent figures during the American colonial period: Leon Maria Guerrero, the appointed President; William W. Barclay, acting Director-General; and Francisco Liongson, a member.¹⁵

Guerrero had experience presiding over an exposition board, having served as a board member in the St. Louis Exposition of 1904. Similar to his involvement in the 1904 exposition, he was instrumental in planning and carrying out the Philippine exhibit at the San Francisco Exposition.

¹³ May, *Social engineering in the Philippines*, 121–122.

¹⁴ Articles Prepared for San Francisco circa 1915, Box 7, Folder 1, Crone Collection.

¹⁵ Philippine Bureau of Civil Service, *Official roster of officers and employees in the civil service of the Philippine Islands* (Manila: Bureau of Printing, 1914), 15, <https://archive.org/details/acx2371.0001.001.umich.edu/mode/2up>.

PHILIPPINE BOARD OF THE PANAMA-PACIFIC INTERNATIONAL EXPOSITION.					
<i>President.</i>			<i>Secretary.</i>		
Leon Ma. Guerrero.....	4- 1-14	10000	Daniel R. Williams	4- 1-00	None
<i>Acting Director-General.</i>			<i>Chief clerk.</i>		
William W. Barclay.....	3- 7-01	10000	Allen T. St. Clair.....	6- 9-06	5000
<i>Member.</i>			<i>Clerk.</i>		
Francisco Liongson.....	10-16-12	8000	Donato Halili.....	11- 1-12	720

Figure 2: "Official roster of officers and employees in the civil service of the Philippine Islands" (Courtesy of Manila, Bureau of Printing 1914)¹⁶

The Philippine Education Exhibit

The Panama-Pacific International Exposition spanned an impressive 635 acres and featured eleven distinct palaces. There were also designated areas for foreign pavilions for each participating state and colony. The Philippine Pavilion was positioned adjacent to the Sweden Pavilion along the Avenue of the Nations.

On the other hand, the Education exhibit was situated northwest of the Palace of Education and Social Economy.¹⁷ Spanning approximately 10,000 square feet, the Philippine education exhibit was the largest within the Palace. Given its size, it was essential to enhance the aesthetics and facade of the exhibit booth. The design incorporated local materials, such as palm stems and *tindalo* woods, as the structural foundation, while translucent shells were used for the windows.¹⁸

The compilation and description of the Philippine education system were documented in the Press of Marnell & Company publication, titled "The Philippine Public Schools at the Panama-Pacific International Exposition." This work served as a guidebook that offers an overview of what was shown in the Exposition. Mainly, it presents the organizational structure of the Philippine government and the Bureau of Education; industrial and vocational education; textbooks and materials used by teachers and students, and the construction of school facilities.

The exhibit also featured a collection of documents from the Bureau of Education, including "a series of annual reports, bulletins, civic-educational

¹⁶ <https://archive.org/details/acx2371.0001.001.umich.edu/page/2/mode/2up>

¹⁷ Philippine Bureau Of Education, *The Philippine public schools at the Panama-Pacific international exposition*, (San Francisco, California: Press of Marnell & Company, 1915), 3, <https://www.loc.gov/item/45022835/>.

¹⁸ Frank Morton Todd, *The story of the exposition; being the official history of the international celebration held at San Francisco in 1915 to commemorate the discovery of the Pacific Ocean and the construction of the Panama Canal*, (New York, London: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1921), 49.

lectures, miscellaneous publications, *The Teachers Assembly Herald*, and *The Philippine Craftsman* journal.”¹⁹ In addition, the exhibit emphasized industrial education through the handicrafts created by Filipinos at the Philippine School of Arts and Trades. Among the highlights of the exhibit were the industrial booth and sales department, which featured distinct products (i.e., furniture and accessories) made from local materials such as woods, palms, bamboo, and abaca. They were all sold publicly at the Philippine Pavilion and the Palace of Education and Social Economy during the Exposition.

The Success of the Philippine Education Exhibit

The Philippine exhibit on its education system was met with resounding success due to its physical scale—for being the largest exhibit of its kind—and for its financial gain. In the report of Francis Burton Harrison, the Governor-General of the Philippines at this time, to the U.S. Secretary of War in 1915:

*“For the first time the Philippine Islands were presented to the outside world by an exhibition of the education, and accomplishments of the 8,000,000 civilized inhabitants of the islands, instead of an exhibit of the 1,000,000 or less partly civilized inhabitants of the mountains and more remote regions, as has been the case in exhibitions, pictures, and lectures upon so many occasions in the recent past. Attention is also invited to the fact that the Philippine exhibit was a financial success, there having been P20,000 returned to the treasury instead of a deficit to be made up by further appropriations as in the past.”*²⁰

Their financial success was obtained from selling industrial crafts at the booth, both in the Philippine Pavilion and the Palace of Education. It was significantly enough that the return would be highly useful in the appropriation of other government projects in the future. The exhibits of Philippine education at the Panama-Pacific International Exposition were indeed spectacular displays of what they claimed was a "complete" public school system, taking advantage of the assigned area that was actually the largest compared to the other exhibits. Their accomplishment was further validated through the awards and recognition it had received.

The success of this event was attributed to the exposition board members and to the current Bureau of Education Director, Frank L. Crone. Crone’s role during and after the exposition was delineated through his appearances at different international congresses and National Education Association

¹⁹ Philippine Bureau of Education, *The Philippine public schools at the Panama-Pacific international exposition*, 13.

²⁰ Philippine Commission, *Report of the Philippine Commission to the Secretary of War*, (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1916), 33, <https://play.google.com/store/books/details?id=IDTSAAAAMAAJ>.

meetings, where he discussed and shared his perceptions regarding the success of the Philippine education system.

The “Colonial Exhibition” of Philippine Education

Most nations desire to host or take part in remarkable exhibitions, aiming to highlight their accomplishments and reinforce their status on the global stage. In the case of the Philippines, their involvement in the International Exposition offers valuable insights into the imperial ideologies of the United States. The rationale for choosing the education system as one of the Philippine exhibits perfectly aligned with the overarching aims of the Panama-Pacific International Exposition: to showcase the nation's achievements as a reflection of its progression and development.

The selected displays in the exhibition primarily showcased the positive aspects of the education system. However, it is important to acknowledge that there were significant downsides associated with the development and policies of the public school system in the Philippines. These issues included a decline in enrollment, challenges posed by private schools ran by clergy, the closure of barrio schools, and various curriculum-related problems.

It is also important to note the racialized ideas and attitudes held by American colonial officials. The governor-general of the Philippines during the 1915 Exposition was Francis Harrison, and the U.S. President was Woodrow Wilson, both figures came from the Democratic party who was a staunch opposition of the Republicans.²¹ For a long time, the Philippines was under the rule of the Republican party, from McKinley until Taft. With the appointment of Democrat leaders, the hope for Philippine independence was revived. However, even though Harrison leaned towards *Filipinization* and was a proponent of granting autonomy to the Philippines, he still had a degree of intolerance and discrimination towards the Filipinos.

Harrison considered those non-Christians or living in the highlands (such as the group of Igorot) still uncivilized or not yet capable of self-governing compared to those in the lowlands who were properly educated by the Americans.²² Hence, he opposed the use of humans as exhibits, particularly from the highlands. The Governor-General wanted to shift the attention of the audience from the perception of the Filipinos being uncivilized to the belief that the Americans had finally succeeded in civilizing the Filipinos. Harrison concealed the people from the highlands, neglecting their existence

²¹ Roy Watson Curry, “Woodrow Wilson and Philippine Policy.” *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 41, no. 3 (1950): 435, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1897492>.

²² Shelton Woods, *Governor of the Cordillera: John C. Early among the Philippine highlanders*, (Illinois: Northern Illinois University Press, 2023), 134.

to forward the image of the American's success in the Philippines. In 1914, a law was passed that prohibited sending groups of Igorot overseas for exhibition purposes.²³

Nonetheless, the exhibit aimed to emphasize the success attributed to the education system enforced by the Americans, which explains the omission of these “negative” aspects. This scheme allowed them to gain recognition and awards for the education exhibit, ultimately helping Americans reaffirm their lasting relevance in their profile and image as an imperialist nation.

Part of the recognition of their success involved attending international congresses. Given that Crone was the current Director of the Bureau of Education, it was his duty to participate in this significant event. In August 1915, he delivered a speech at the general session of the National Education Association held in Oakland, California. Here, he promoted how education that was based on American ideals cultivates the Filipino people. In Crone's words:

“Almost from the beginning the Spanish priests entertained the dream of using the Philippines as a stepping-stone for the conversion of the great nations at their door. In great measure this dream failed to realize. But we who have devoted our energies to the solution of Philippine educational problems dream another dream: that of making the Philippines a great storehouse of Western learning and civilization, upon which the Orient may freely draw.”²⁴

During the Spanish occupation, most Filipinos lacked education because access to it was limited only to the elites. Moreover, the mere focus of the instruction during that time was on converting individuals to Catholicism. The curriculum centered heavily on Christian doctrine.²⁵ In contrast, the Americans placed a great emphasis on providing a public school system as part of their pacifying mission and colonial domination over the Filipino people, with the promise of giving them a chance to govern themselves.

Furthermore, Alvin E. Pope, the chief of the Departments of Education and Social Economy for the Panama-Pacific International Exposition, delivered a speech at the Second Pan-American Scientific Congress held in

²³ Paul Kramer, *The Blood of Government*, 376.

²⁴ University of Michigan Library Digital Collections, "The Philippine review (Revista filipina) [Vol. 1, no. 1]." In *the digital collection The United States and its Territories, 1870 - 1925: The Age of Imperialism*, <https://name.umdl.umich.edu/acp0898.0001.001>.

²⁵ Karl Schwartz, "Filipino Education and Spanish Colonialism: Toward an Autonomous Perspective," *Comparative Education Review* 15, no. 2 (1971): 203, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1186730>.

Washington, D.C. in 1916, the year the Exposition concluded.²⁶ In his remarks, he referenced the Philippines:

“The Philippine system was organized by a number of American school teachers who, unhampered by local tradition and political restraints, have solved problems of education, labor, commerce and colonization. They brought the results of their work to the Exposition, and their Commissioner of Education and Assistant Commissioners personally demonstrated the principles which they advocated.”²⁷

Pope comprehensively commended the Philippine exhibit of the education system, discussing how the Bureau of Education has cultivated the Philippines with the different aspects of the system, from academic, character, physical, and industrial education. In his concluding remarks, he stated that the Philippines could serve as a model for other countries by providing a platform for marketing their products.²⁸ This was exemplified in the industrial exhibit and sales booth in the Exposition, which was also the highlight of the Philippine exhibit. The prominence of these sales booths was due to the growing importance of industrial education during this period.

The focus on industrial education began during White’s directorship in 1909 and continued throughout Crone’s term. White concentrated on the industrial aspects of education in collaboration with Cameron Forbes, the Governor-General at that time, who consistently championed the essence of industrial education in the economic development of the Philippines.²⁹ As Forbes argued in his advocacy for industrial education, “Philippine public schools should aim, above all, to improve material conditions,”³⁰ echoing his justification that education will serve as a means to uplift the standard of living of Filipino people by developing a workforce capable of strengthening the nation’s economy. This is a deliberate plan by Forbes to redirect the people’s aspirations for independence, emphasizing that what they need are tangible gains in everyday life: “better housing, better food, and better clothes,” rather than a change in political status.³¹ In general, it all ties back to their broader economic motivations: ensuring continued access to Asian markets and establishing military footholds to secure commercial and strategic advantages in the region.

²⁶ Shaunna Harrington, “The U.S. Colonial Education Project: Race, Citizenship, & Schools in the Philippines, 1909–1916,” (Doctor of Philosophy in History Dissertation, Northeastern University, 2019), 30.

²⁷ Alvin E. Pope, “Educational and Social Economic Contributions of the Panama-Pacific International Exposition to the PanAmerican Interests,” Address Delivered January 7, 1916, to the Pan-American Scientific Congress: 7.

²⁸ Pope, “Educational and Social Economic Contributions of the Panama-Pacific International Exposition,” 8–9.

²⁹ May, *Social engineering in the Philippines*, 113–116.

³⁰ May, 116.

³¹ Peter W. Stanley, “William Cameron Forbes: Proconsul in the Philippines,” *Pacific Historical Review* 35, no. 3 (1966): 289. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3636789>.

The industrial education was also designed to position the Philippines to become an exporter of local products.³² The display of industrial crafts at the exposition is a manifestation of the U.S. colonial government's keenness to market the “industrial possibilities” of the Philippine islands to an international audience.³³ This objective sought not only to enhance Filipinos' practical skills but also to foster a mindset oriented toward the commercialization and export of local products.³⁴ Historically, the Philippines' export economy had depended heavily on cash crops and raw agricultural materials, but the colonial administration recognized the volatility and limitations of relying solely on agricultural exports, given their susceptibility to seasonal fluctuations. In response, the Bureau of Education, through its industrial education program, encouraged the production of handicrafts and other manufactured goods to supplement income “derived from agriculture” and provide every Filipino household with additional earnings for the “schooling of children, better clothing, shelter, and food.”³⁵

The handicrafts produced by students were featured in the monthly journal *The Philippine Craftsman*, which was established during White's directorship. This publication not only kept teachers informed about developments in industrial education but also served as a platform to document the progress of Filipinos under U.S. colonial rule. Borrowing from Steinbock-Pratt, “industrial education provided tangible markers of progress.”³⁶ There were also efforts to increase the visibility of student handicrafts through public exhibitions, such as the Manila Carnival, and through sales events. The commodification of their arts and crafts was established during Crone's tenure through the “General Sales Department,” allowing students to profit from their creations.

This process was applied during the 1915 Exposition, where the Bureau of Education purchased students' work to sell it and to demonstrate to the global public that the Philippine islands are worthy of investment by private

³² Joel Spring, ed., “Education and White Love: The Foundation and Language of the Global Economy,” in *Education and the Rise of the Global Economy*, (Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2009), 16.

³³ Philippine Bureau of Education, *The Philippine public schools at the Panama-Pacific international exposition*, 4.

³⁴ Glenn Anthony May, “The Business of Education in the Colonial Philippines, 1909-30.” in *Colonial Crucible: Empire in the Making of the Modern American State*, eds. Alfred McCoy and Francisco Scarano (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2009), 153.

³⁵ “Some Commercial Output of Industrial Education in the Philippine Public Schools,” Box 7, Folder 1, Articles Prepared for San Francisco circa 1915, Crone Collection.

³⁶ Sarah Steinbock-Pratt, *Educating the Empire: American Teachers and Contested Colonization in the Philippines*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 194.

enterprises.³⁷ As exemplified, many American visitors in the exhibit expressed their interest in buying handicrafts and made large purchases.³⁸ Notably, baskets emerged as the most popular items due to their practical uses, which Americans found essential for a variety of purposes in their daily life. This high demand underscored both the utility and marketability of Filipino craftsmanship on the international stage. Thus, the expansion of the craft industry is also a way to boost colonial revenues, appealing to American economic interests and reinforcing the perceived value of the islands under U.S. administration.

Filipinos have often been characterized as "indolent," a perception rooted in the Spanish colonial. However, the period of American rule marked a significant turning point, particularly through the emphasis on industrial education. For Filipinos, industrial education enabled them to understand dignified labor as a way to improve their quality of life. But for the Americans, it embodied their rhetorical belief in "Manifest Destiny," asserting themselves as the ones responsible for uplifting Filipinos from their "uncivilized states." The Americans used industrial education to align local skills with the needs of the colonial economy and American commercial interests. It is also a means for them to exercise social control and eschew challenges to colonial governance.

Following the transition from Spanish to American rule, there was an organized effort not only to introduce Western-style education, but also to reshape the culture and minds of the Filipino people. Thus, it was certainly fitting to showcase the education system, especially given that nearly a decade has passed since the public school system was established. This considerable time frame already provided an ample opportunity to engage the audience and see how the Philippines transformed itself as a colony under U.S. tutelage. This event then became another tool for promoting American values and securing its legitimacy as a colonial power. The exposition positioned the Philippines as an uplifted nation, proven by the large area of the exhibit and positively selected displays.

“Reclaiming Identity and the Call for Independence” through the Education Exhibit

The success and awards granted to the education exhibit reflected varying implications for the Filipinos. Unlike the Americans, who sought to reinforce

³⁷ Adrienne Francisco, "From Subjects to Citizens: American Colonial Education and Philippine Nation-Making, 1900-1934," (Doctor of Philosophy in History Dissertation, University of California, 2015), 34.

³⁸ Philippine Experiences Vol. 13, circa 1913-1914, Box: 4, Folder: 6. Frank L. Crone Collection

their image as an imperialist nation, the Filipinos aimed to reclaim their identity. As manifested in the structure and aesthetics of the exhibit, the facade and foundation used palm stems and *tindalo* wood, both of which are native to the Philippines. Shells were incorporated into the windows to symbolize the country's proximity to the surrounding bodies of water. This idea aligns well with Filipinos' strong desire to shift the focus to handicrafts and decorative art made with native materials, making the overall exhibit more recognizable and embodying Philippine culture.

Moreover, the 1915 report by the Governor-General highlighted that the Philippines' success at the Exposition stemmed from showcasing the education and achievements of the "civilized inhabitants of the islands." This stood in contrast to the portrayal of the "less partly civilized inhabitants of the mountains" displayed in the "recent past." This comparison draws a line between the 1915 Panama-Pacific Exposition and the St. Louis Exposition of 1904, where humans were the prominent displays of the Philippines. Leon Maria Guerrero was a former St. Louis Exposition board member and later served as the Philippine Board President for the Panama-Pacific International Exposition. As a Filipino nationalist, Guerrero sought to project the progress of the Filipino people in the next International Exposition and dispel the notion of Filipinos being "uncivilized," which was portrayed in the St. Louis Exposition.³⁹

One of the principal reasons as to why the education system was the central exhibit in the Panama-Pacific Exposition was to prove that Filipinos are capable of self-governance. When Act 2163 in 1912 was enacted, Filipino legislators advised the board members of exposition to "take the necessary precaution to avoid exhibits at the Panama-Pacific show that will mislead foreign opinion concerning the real condition of the Filipino people."⁴⁰ Thus, the legislators advocated for a proper and genuine exhibition that would present the development of Filipinos, rather than the approach taken during the St. Louis Exposition of 1904, in which individuals were exhibited as objects, where they were portrayed as "dog-eaters" and "head-hunters." This led to a ban on human exhibits at international expositions, in accordance with the law passed by Harrison in 1914. However, it is important to clarify that Filipinos' opposition to human exhibits is rooted in a desire to eliminate negative portrayals of their identity that were brought about by the 1904 Exposition. This perspective aligns with their pursuit of independence, as advocated by Harrison, who supported *Filipinization* and the movement towards Philippine independence.

³⁹ Paul Kramer, *The Blood of Government*, 374–375.

⁴⁰ Kramer, 375.

Furthermore, several Americans commented during their visit to the Philippine Exhibit, particularly about the Filipinos and their works. One is from Helen Keller, a deaf-blind individual and renowned humanitarian, who expressed her admiration for the baskets and embroidery crafted by Filipino students.⁴¹ Other visitors echoed similar sentiments, praising the handiwork of the Filipino schoolchildren with comments such as “a revelation of Filipino progress” and “the best exhibit” they had ever seen.⁴² However, many remarks from American visitors, especially from U.S. officials and prominent figures, focused mainly on the colonial administration’s excellence. These perspectives were shaped by the fact that it was presented in their realm. Nonetheless, the handful of positive remarks helped Filipinos move beyond the prejudices and racial attitudes associated with the 1904 Exposition. It also indirectly supported their aspirations for independence by recognizing their achievements and capacity for self-governance.

Manuel L. Quezon, serving as Resident Commissioner at this time, played a crucial role in advocating for Philippine autonomy. At the opening of the Panama-Pacific International Exposition, Quezon delivered his remarks by telegraph, addressing the Philippines’ participation. He represents the Filipino people by showing how interested they are in taking part in this exposition, as this is the only avenue through which they can show who they are.⁴³ He even challenged the misconception that Filipinos are uncivilized and highlighted their great efforts and contributions, encouraging visitors to witness Filipinos' capabilities firsthand. In his words:

“There still prevails in many minds the idea that the majority of them are practically uncivilized. When you make the circuit of this pavilion and examine our exhibits in arts and in science, in agriculture, in industry, and in commerce, you must come to the conclusion that a people capable of accomplishing such results is not altogether foreign to civilization. Here you will see the products of Filipino minds and Filipino hands, and unless I am very much mistaken, when you leave this place you will carry with you the conviction that the Filipino people are far from being uncultivated.”⁴⁴

Quezon also stated that Filipinos want to be “free and independent from any foreign domination.” By making this statement at the exposition, Quezon asserted the call for independence to the U.S. colonial government, while maintaining a diplomatic tone and stressing the importance of the relationship. In his remarks:

⁴¹ “Some Visitors to the Exhibit of the Philippine Public Schools in the Palace of Education, P.P.I.E., and their Remarks,” *Philippine Experiences* Vol. 13, circa 1913-1914

⁴² “Some Visitors to the Exhibit of the Philippine Public Schools in the Palace of Education, P.P.I.E., and their Remarks,” *Philippine Experiences* Vol. 13, circa 1913-1914

⁴³ “MR. QUEZON’S REMARKS AT SAN FRANCISCO,” *The Filipino People* 3, no. 7 (1915): 7–8. https://repository.mainlib.upd.edu.ph/resource_details.php?id=270751

⁴⁴ “MR. QUEZON’S REMARKS AT SAN FRANCISCO,” 7–8.

“The granting of independence would in itself create so strong a sentiment of gratitude on the part of the Filipino people toward the United States that you would have created in the heart of the Pacific a nation true in its allegiance and friendship to you both in peace and in war.”⁴⁵

Quezon was unable to attend the exposition’s opening as he was engaged with critical legislative affairs. He was particularly focused on his campaign for greater autonomy for the Philippines. This effort was instrumental in the passage of the Jones Law in 1916, which expanded Filipino legislative authority. While full independence had not yet been realized, these developments represented pivotal progress in the Philippines’ journey toward self-government and the affirmation of its national identity.

Conclusion

The period of American colonialism in the Philippines was often defined by the establishment of a public school system and the continued efforts to formulate educational policies intended to uplift the Filipino people. During the 1915 Panama-Pacific International Exposition, the Philippine exhibit on education was met with success. Yet this accomplishment should not solely be attributed to the effectiveness of the public education system introduced by the Americans; it must be credited to the actors of the exhibit, the Filipinos.

The Philippine education exhibit was encountered by an audience who had an initial perspective regarding the Philippines as a colony of the U.S. They had admired the extensive displays through the lens of American benevolence. For the Americans, the colonial exhibition reinforced their imperial ideology. As they masked any details of negligence throughout the development of the public school system, the exhibit was expectedly centered on the positive impacts of their effort. The pride of the Americans that came from the exhibit echoed another validation for them—reaffirming their tutelage over the Philippines.

But the Exposition for the Filipinos presented them with an opportunity to prove their progress as a colony to their colonial rulers. The Filipinos, in its desire for autonomy, wanted to prove themselves ready for self-rule considering the decades of education they acquired. It was an avenue to showcase the excellence and skills of Filipino people, manifested by the achievements of the students. They have deemed it as a tool to secure their independence and construct a new identity.

⁴⁵ “MR. QUEZON’S REMARKS AT SAN FRANCISCO,” 8.

In hindsight, the Panama-Pacific International Exposition provides an underlying narrative of two parties: the Philippines as a colony and the United States as an imperial power, with the same objective of showcasing achievements, but with different motivations. *

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