

## LESSON 15

### Mga Talang Pangkultura: Mga Lungsod Cities

In *Tagalog for Beginners*, you learned about the brief history of Manila: the plant “nila”; the walled city of Intramuros built by the Spaniards; the government buildings built during the American colonial period; and contemporary rally sites such as Plaza Miranda and Mendiola.

Consider studying other places in Metro Manila. One example is Cubao, which I had also talked about in a short essay piece—with its origins from the word **kuba** (hunchback); tales of horror (the woman in white in Balete Drive); beauty contests in Araneta Coliseum; the private girls’ school Stella Maris College of my youth; the **bahay-na-puti** owned by the Araneta family; its lamentable decline because of traffic, disrepair of old buildings, and filth; and the revitalization project that includes a train station, new shopping malls, and high-rise condominiums.

The cities and spaces of Metro Manila invite us to look into geographical spaces in the contexts of history, politics, economy, culture, class, race, and gender. Let us take, for example, the historical accounts of the outbreak of the Katipunan revolution in August 1896. In an article entitled, “Balintawak: The Cry for a Nationwide Revolution,”<sup>1</sup> Milagros Guerrero, Emmanuel Encarnacion, and Ramon Villegas, assert that eyewitness accounts such as Pio Valenzuelan and Guillermo Masangkay disagree about: the site [is it Pugad-lawin, Kangkong, or the larger area of Balintawak?]; the exact date [is August 23, 24, or 26?]; and the specific act (tearing of community tax certificates; shouting of slogans; first battle). The article traces the history of the controversy, as well as the work done by several commissions formed to investigate, and concludes that the event should be called the Cry of Balintawak, and that it should be celebrated on the 24th of August at the site of Tandang Sora’s house in Gulod, now **barangay** Banlat, Quezon City.

As you navigate your way along the streets of Metro Manila, try to learn more than the ability to say directions like **kumanan ka** (turn right) and **dumiretso ka** (go straight) and identify markers (Luneta, Manila Hotel, Fort Santiago). Your knowledge of Tagalog/Filipino will serve you well—at least you will know that Pugad-lawin, as Tandang Sora’s great-granddaughter pointed out, only referred to a “hawk’s nest on top of a **sampaloc** tree at Gulod, the highest elevated area near Balintawak.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Guerrero, Milagros, Emmanuel N. Encarnacion and Ramon N. Villegas. “Balintawak: The Cry for a Nationwide Revolution.” Originally published in *Sulyap Kultura*, Quarterly Magazine. National Commission for Culture and the Arts, 1996. National Commission for Culture and the Arts webpage. <http://www.ncca.gov.ph/about-culture-and-arts/articles-on-c-n-a/article.php?subcat=13&i=59>

<sup>2</sup> From Guerrero et.al, 1996.