Bakya

A fashionable example of the wooden bakya with carved sides and embroidered straps

“Bakya” is the Filipino version of the wooden clogs often used or worn by Filipino women in bygone days ...yes, when laundry was still done in unpolluted creeks and life was simpler without the demands of mobile phones and Twitter.

Made of cheap light wood the bakya has faded into memory with the entry of cheaper, mass produced flip-flops, rubber sandals and shoes in the 1970s. The more ‘fashionable’ bakya however was more detailed and include carved details and embroidered straps. These variants are close to being folk art or native crafts. Today, the bakya is now associated with costume attire to match native sarongs or skirts.

Since the bakya was the popular footwear for the “massa” or the great toiling plebeian masses, the word bakya connotes in Filipino slang as “low class” or “unsophisticated.” Thus, the word also betrays the class politics and consciousness that prevails in Philippine society. Later on as the footwear bakya slid into non-use, the slang bakya (to connote low class) was replaced by the variant “baduy” which means “cheap” or “low taste.”

Bakya as footwear, however, may yet return or stage a comeback in these of days of sustainability and other green-centred concerns. In any case, when it comes to resourcefulness, one can count on the Pinoy to make up something like the bakya.

Long live Pinoy resourcefulness!

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