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Toward a Community Broader than the Kin

Kung ang pagibig ay wala ang mga Bayan ay dili magtatagal.

If love is absent, countries will not last.

—Emilio Jacinto, ca. 1895–1896

SOME TEACHER-FRIENDS in the Ilocos confide that when they visit an unfamiliar hamlet, even within the same municipality where they reside, they carry small bottles of consecrated coconut oil¹ as protection against sorcery. One supposed sign of hexing is stomach disorder. When I would mention wanting to visit, say, another hamlet a few kilometers down the road, friends would warn me that it harbored sorcerers [*mannamay*]. However, in that hamlet-down-the-road, friends there would be concerned that I had been staying in that hamlet-up-the-road. They feared it for its sorcerers! This suspiciousness toward outsiders, even of the same ethnicity and language, has characterized non-Ilocanos as well at certain times in their history. Maximo Ramos (1971, 48), the folklorist, relates a 1930s tale from the Tagalog-speaking town of Lucban, Quezon. Teachers came from all over the province for a seminar. The townspeople claimed that during that week, black-winged creatures with human heads and torso but no lower bodies flew at night. After the seminar ended, peace returned. Bicolanos have also had a similar tendency to accuse the stranger of witchcraft (Lynch 1963, 151). So do rural dwellers in Samar according to my sociologist colleague Leslie Lopez (2002) who hails from that province.

Often assumed is that a broad sense of community has been present in our culture from the very beginning. Supposedly, Filipinos have always believed in the equality of all human beings, have respected each other's personhood, and have cared for each other even as mutual strangers. Allegedly under the impact of Western colonialism, society split into classes; Visayans, Tagalogs, and Ilocanos fought each other; and people thought only of their own individual selves. Many see erasing Western influence and returning to indigenous ways as the solution.²

However, as data above show, suspicions occur even *within the same ethnic group* and *within the same municipality*. June Prill-Brett, a Bontoc-born anthropologist, told me that a dividing line between the Cordillera peoples, who were not Hispanized, and the Ilocanos is the way each deals with conflict. While Ilocanos hurl sorcery accusations against another village, Cordillerans in the recent past would war against the other village. Edward Dozier,

an anthropologist of American Indian background, talks of the prevalence of feuds between Kalinga villages during the early part of the twentieth century. When Dozier (1966, 60) had to go from a Kalinga village to another just 50 feet away, his boy-companion backed off. The boy feared he “might be the victim of revenge for an unsettled fight several weeks before between two youths.” One of them was his first cousin. During my extended stays in the Ilocos, I personally found the relations between the barangays to be peaceful, though at times laden with suspicions.³ Other colleagues, however, paint a different picture. Raul Pertierra (1988, 66) says that teenage boys in the Ilocos municipality he studied would conduct “organized raids against other barangays.” Presumably this resulted in brawls. Minda Cabilao-Valencia (2001), a sociologist who taught at Batac, Ilocos Norte, in 1982–1985 and 1988–1990, reports that colleagues warned her not to go to particular barangays where feuds were taking place.

Are these patterns of suspicion and conflict true only of Filipinos? Accounts of peasant life in nineteenth-century France report that peasants kept pretty much to their own village. It was too expensive to go out, and many roads were muddy trails. When they would go to a town on a pilgrimage and/or to market, brawls often broke out between peasants from different villages at the slightest provocation. Besides, the men liked physical fights (Weber 1976, 383–4).

Discussions of community are often colored by assumptions regarding the “*bayanihan* spirit.” Many assume that bayanihan is commonly practised by farmers all over the Philippines, and that they must, therefore, have a deep sense of community.⁴ My own observation of Ilocano farmers has been that the dyadic exchange of unpaid labor largely occurs among close kin, friends, and neighbors to favor one individual. It has nothing to do with the interests of the barrio/barangay as a corporate whole. This, too, has been the observation of the sociologist Gelia Castillo (1981, 452). Moreover, farmer-friends tell me that bayanihan is relevant only for particular tasks. For building a house of bamboo-and-thatch, one should indeed throw a party to compensate those who assisted with their unpaid labor. But such a compensation will not do for building a house of hollow blocks and metal roof. My farmer-friends prefer skilled labor and willingly pay for it. Similarly, they prefer to pay for farm labor when transplanting rice shoots because this task has to be done quickly. In contrast if they were to invite their relatives and friends to help them for free for, say, two days, then they would be obliged to reciprocate each of them with two days of unpaid labor away from their farm. On the other hand there are indeed other life-situations in the hamlets, where my farmer-friends willingly help their relatives and neighbors (who are often the same) with unpaid labor. Examples would be a death in the household or preparations for a wedding feast. But this warm intimacy can go hand in hand with sorcery accusations against the Outsider.

Both nationalism and modern democracy assume the importance of the broader community, a community that transcends ties of kinship and locality, a community that is abstractly conceived yet real. Both assume the importance of the Anonymous, Faceless Stranger: the person or persons whom one will never know face-to-face but whose welfare must be considered because they are fellow citizens. In a democracy there is another key idea: that the individual, regardless of background, is a rational being capable of making decisions

on his or her behalf. Consequently even the ragpicker is an end in himself rather than a means to someone else's end. But these notions have not appeared at all times and in all places.

“Kindred” and “kindness” come from the same root according to the anthropologist Edward Tylor ([1871] 1958, 10). “Kindred” refers to those kinspersons that an individual believes he or she can rely on within a bilateral kinship system. So Bituin feels close to two paternal first cousins plus a maternal uncle and two second cousins. On the other hand Tala, her sister, is drawn to four paternal first cousins and three maternal first cousins. Though sisters, their kindreds differ in size and composition. Originally the kindred constituted the basic social organization of the Anglo-Saxons, as of other Germanic peoples up until the fifth to the sixth centuries. Thus, says Tylor, benevolence, cooperation, and nonviolence—in other words “kindness”—were reserved for the kin but not for those outside it, for the latter were potential enemies. In case of conflict with others, no other group but the kindred could be expected to help the individual. The kindred, too, has constituted the moral universe of many Filipinos, whether in the lowlands or in the uplands.

Who is regarded as the Insider in the indigenous notion of community among Filipinos? Who is the Outsider? What role might the state and the Church have played during the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries in facilitating a “We” that was broader than the kin? Finally, in building a broader “We,” are we obliged to choose between the indigenous and the Western? These are the questions I wish to explore.

By “indigenous” here, I mean two peoples: (1) non-Moslem Filipinos of pre-seventeenth-century Luzon and the Visayas; and (2) non-Hispanized, non-Moslem Filipinos who, down to the middle of the twentieth century, lived in relative isolation in the uplands.

In this essay, I look at the role of the state during the late sixteenth to the nineteenth century. I am interested in the interaction between Spanish and indigenous traditions. I argue that in the non-Moslem areas of Luzon and Visayas, our first experience of living in a wider polity, the state, took place under Spanish rule. This explains why particular Spanish/Western institutions continue to play an important role in constituting our sense of community today. Contrary to what some Filipino nationalists and our Asian neighbors say, we are not “colonial-minded” in retaining these. I say this with full awareness of the ambivalent role of the state. On the one hand democracy and, to a certain extent, nationalism were conceptualized in opposition to the monarchy. On the other hand, despite itself, the pre-twentieth-century state created the conditions that made these new forms of consciousness possible by articulating the “I” and broadening the “We.” It has been both Enemy and Facilitator. I base my interpretations on both historical accounts and on field data drawn from years of living among farmers for extended periods of time.

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Marx on Communal Ownership

Marx ([1846a] 1969, 22) speaks of communal ownership [*Gemeindeeigentum*] in early societies. But what did he mean by this? Furthermore, was he really so enthusiastic about it that he regretted its demise?

The first form of ownership, according to Marx, is “kin-centered ownership” [*Stammeigentum*].¹⁰ Production is still undeveloped: People live by hunting and fishing, by breeding animals or, in the highest stage, by agriculture. Since the division of labor is undeveloped, the social structure merely extends the family. Above are patriarchal leaders of the kin group, below are kin members, at the bottom are the slaves who are owned. Not only does inequality occur, the communal ownership of the means of production does not even exist (Marx [1846a] 1969, 22, 29; [1846b] 1994, 142–43).

With untamed peoples [*Wilden*] every family has its own cave or hut, just as with nomads each family has a separate tent. This separate domestic economy is made even more necessary by the increasing development of private ownership. With agricultural peoples a communal domestic economy is just as impossible as is a communal cultivation of the soil.

The second form of ownership is the “ancient communal and state ownership” that appears when several kin groups form a city either because they have come to an agreement or because one has been conquered by the other.¹¹ So widespread is communal ownership that even slaves are owned in common (Marx [1846a] 1969, 22). However, the individual economy, which cannot be separated from private property, cannot be abolished “for the simple reason that the material conditions were not present” (Marx [1846b] 1994, 143). A communal domestic economy presupposes the development of machinery and the common provision of services. Marx cites, as an example, the provision of services such as water, gas-lighting, and steam heating. Save water, all of these presuppose industrialization. Moreover, all of them, including water, are normally no longer obtained individually in a modern city. They require common ownership and management; in contrast to this, in a preindustrial city, each household procures its own water and firewood.

Through a dialectical process the ancient and communal form of ownership leads to another form, feudalism, which in Europe led to capitalism.

Philippine societies of the sixteenth-century lowlands and of the twentieth-century uplands would be seen by Marx as dominated by kin-centered or tribal ownership—*Stammeigentum*. On the other hand he probably would see the beginnings of “ancient

communal and state ownership” in the municipalities founded after 1565 where particular resources, like the municipal house, the plaza, and the ejido, are regarded as belonging to the municipality as a corporate reality. Finally, it would be in contemporary cities of semi-industrialized Philippines that he would see the potential growth of common ownership and management, for here basic services, such as water and electricity, despite water pumps and generators, are generally not obtained individually by each household. The management of water in Metro Manila has shifted from government control to capitalist enterprise under the Lopezes, back to government control; while the management of electricity has been a capitalist enterprise, also under the Lopezes. For Marx, the de facto socialization of these basic services indicates that, for rationality, these should eventually be run by all the beneficiaries acting together as a corporate body.

Did Marx eulogize the tribal mode of production? Consistent with his dialectical approach, he looks at both its costs and the benefits. True, he extols the advantages of a society where little or no full-time occupational specialization occurs. It is possible to shift from one interest to the other, “to hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, breed cattle in the evening, criticize after dinner.” In contrast, the emergence of the division of labor locks a man into a calling for the rest of his life, and intensifies the division of society into classes. Nonetheless, this has benefits. Marx ([1846b] 1994, 118, 117) says that under tribal ownership, the individual’s consciousness of himself as an individual different from his group and from nature is limited. “It is the mere consciousness of being a member of a flock, and the only difference between sheep and man is that man possesses consciousness instead of instinct.”

What then enables man to transcend this “sheeplike” or tribal consciousness [*Hammel-oder Stammbewusstsein*]? None other than increased productivity, increased needs, increased population, and the division of labor into mental versus manual labor. Thus the separation between mental and manual labor has no doubt divided society into nonproducers and producers and has oppressed the impoverished majority, for “the division of labor and private ownership are really identical expressions.” Nonetheless, it has been the necessary basis for the emergence of “pure theory” such as philosophy, theology, ethics, all of which have increased man’s understanding of himself and the world (ibid., 117, 32, 118).

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Filipino Genius

“Local genius,” too, asserted itself in the encounter between Spanish and indigenous culture, and resulted in what we now call “Filipino culture,” more accurately the culture of lowland Christian Filipinos. The creators of this new culture came from the different ethnic groups of the islands: the indigenous peoples of the lowlands; the mestizos, whether Chinese or Spanish; and the creoles, or island-born European settlers. The “we” I discuss is thus broader and more inclusive than the “we” of doctrinaire, reductionist nationalism which would confine the “we” to the native and the indigenous which supposedly are “not tainted” by outside influences. My model for nationalism is the French which revolves around sentiment rather than blood, and which regards as “French” anything excellent created on French soil even if by foreigners. Thus Scholasticism, which was created in Paris by Abelard (French), Aquinas (Italian), and Albert the Great (German) is French. So is Modern Art: Matisse, Braque (French); Picasso, Gris, (Spaniards); Modigliani (Italian); and Chagall (Russian). My other model is the Mexican which, in spite of reaction against colonialism, resembles the French in its generous definition of the “national.” This I discuss in the next essay.

I propose seeing these different ethnic groups in the Philippines as taking into account, consciously or unconsciously, the natural environment, the existing social structure, and the local economy in their response. In brief they made use of available local knowledge. Another factor should be considered: There were Peninsular Spaniards, like the priests, who came over to stay. When, for instance, they had to commission a building or to organize rituals, they had to take into account not only Spanish conditions, but the Philippine as well. Meanwhile the Filipino also received influences from China, India, and Islam. But this was not a matter of blind acceptance. In real life, many Filipinos have not been like Rizal’s Doña Victorina who aped foreign ways. Brumfiel (1992) has shown how the cultural ecological approach can be enriched if we look at the relationships between people as a continuous negotiation where social class, gender, and membership in a faction exert influence. What we regard as the culture of a society is really the outcome of this negotiation. I would like to look at the relations involving Filipinos and Spaniards from the same angle. In this case, I would use gender, social class, and ethnicity as influential factors. The text below is an outline that, I hope, opens doors for future research in cooking, costume, architecture, and religion.

Local cooking styles at the advent of the Spanish centered on boiling, steaming, broiling, roasting meats, fish, and vegetables, or on steeping raw fish in souring agents. Flavoring was with salt, *patis*, bagoong, and souring agents like green tamarinds. It is not

clear whether pepper was used, despite our proximity to the Spice Islands. The local term is Spanish in origin: *paminta* from the Spanish *pimienta*. Mediterranean influence brought in new ways of cooking. One important method was sautéing [*guisa*] with garlic, onions, and tomatoes. However, local taste created a new flavor. Local sautéing, according to Doreen Fernandez,⁶ differs from the Spanish in its liberal use of shrimps and patis, both products of a riverine environment, and that Chinese condiment, soy sauce. This is evident, for instance, in the Filipino version of Chinese noodles, *pansit bihon guisado*. The Spanish form of beef stew, *mechado*, is flavored locally by combining tomato paste with soy sauce. Pre-Hispanic Filipinos most likely pickled their foods in vinegar, as in *paksiw*. So did the Spaniards, using peppercorn and plenty of garlic, as in *adobado*. The two traditions met together with Chinese soy sauce to form the highly popular *adobo*.

Relations of power may not seem obvious in cooking. But taste preferences have been used to advertise class and ethnicity.⁷ Some Filipinos of European descent proudly proclaim that they do not care for bagoong. In Hawaii Filipinos' fondness for bagoong is mocked. However, in the Philippines, the cooking style that did triumph, both at home and at banquets, fuses together the Spanish, the Chinese, and the indigenous.