

Culturally We Are All Mestizos



FERNANDO N. ZIALCITA
ATENEO DE MANILA UNIVERSITY
PHILIPPINES

Two fears have haunted discussions of identity among Filipino intellectuals since independence in 1946. One fear is that, like a house that has inner levels that do not match, Filipino identity is “schizophrenic.” Another fear is that because the lowland Christian majority’s way of life is the child of two different cultures, the Western and the Eastern, it must, therefore, constitute an “illegitimate,” that is, a “bastardized” culture. The assumptions behind these two popular interpretations of Filipino culture are all too often unquestioned. Yet they are problematic. Let us, for a moment, consider the first fear, that Filipino Christianity suffers from a “split-level” identity.

Against Psychologism

Jaime Bulatao first coined the now popular expression “split-level Christianity” to expose the contradiction between ideal Christianity and the actual, day-to-day conduct of Catholic Filipinos.¹ In the popular press, this gave rise to another equally popular expression: “cultural schizophrenia.” “Split personality” and “schizophrenia” are psychological terms for madness: the individual cannot think coherently and cannot distinguish fantasy from reality. It is astonishing that educated Filipinos routinely use these terms to characterize their culture. As an anthropologist, I have always objected to such a use of these terms. They reduce to the level of individual psychology a complex reality that is *cultural*. A culture is the product-in-process, over the course of centuries, of thousands of individuals who may differ from each other in personality, social class, and religion. We cannot expect that the result will be harmonious in every aspect. Culture, as a network of symbols,

¹Jaime Bulatao, “Split-Level Christianity,” in Antonio P. Manuud y Gella, ed., *Brown Heritage* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1967), pp. 16-33.

beliefs and values, may indeed create common linkages. However, particular sectors will most likely interpret and use it differently according to their needs. The potential for disagreement increases with the growing size and openness of a society. In any complex society, we should expect to find two or more traditions co-existing together. Horizontally, in a class-based society, there is at least an elite tradition and a popular tradition: the "Great Tradition" and the "Little Tradition" of which Robert Redfield speaks.² People who are educated, or who live in urban centers where complex ideas are generated, will look at the world differently than a farmer with only a few years of formal schooling. We can improve on Redfield by noting that neither tradition is likely to be fully unified. Within each tradition, imported practices may co-exist with local ones, that is, a particular practice may fuse components of different traditions together to create a new synthesis, or else remain at cross-purposes with local ones. So what the terms "split level" and "schizophrenia" cast as abnormal may in fact be normal, for conflicts between sets of beliefs and practices develop as a matter of course in many complex cultures and often stay around for a long time, even centuries. To illustrate these points, let us take the not dissimilar cases of Islam among the Central Javanese and the Maranao, and of Christianity among the Germanic peoples.

The Central Javanese

Islam takes Christianity to task for what it considers to be Christianity's retention of vestiges of polytheism and idolatry, in its icons, its cult of the saints, its conception of the Triune God. And yet in Central Java, the heart of the world's largest Moslem nation, nominally Moslem peasants revere the spirit of the rice, offer gifts to the founding spirits of their villages, and are fearful of certain places seen as the abode of spirits. A number of these practices, of course, can be traced back to the original animist religion of the places in which one finds them.³ Brahmanic practices that found their way into Central Java from India between the

²Robert Redfield, "The Social Organization of Tradition," in Jack Potter *et al*, eds. *Peasant Society: A Reader*, pp. 25-34.

³See Clifford Geertz, *The Religion of Java* (New York: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1960).

5th and 15th centuries, similarly persist. Even in the 1950s, professed Moslems went to the great temple of Loro Jonggrang outside Yogyakarta to offer money, fruits, and flowers to the goddess Durga and her favorite animal, the goat.⁴ Another tension point between Islam and the older Brahmanic tradition is the desire of many among the Central Javanese elite to seek mystical union with God through meditation. Islam has its own mysticism, but the more purist-minded Javanese Moslems consider it an error to think that God and man are one.⁵ Finally, the treatment of the body is another arena for contending traditions. Orthodox Islam prescribes the covering of certain parts of the body. Thus, a woman should unveil her hair only to her husband, for this incites to sensuality; and she should not leave her arms and shoulders uncovered, for this amounts to nakedness. Yet, in accordance with the traditions of the Indianized courts, during weddings, aristocratic ladies expose and decorate their hair with gold ornaments and wear batik sarongs that cover their torsos and below but leave bare their arms and shoulders. Thus, as much as Central Javanese might find common ground in their embrace of Islam, they differ in their interpretation of it, according to social class. This has led to social and even political conflict.⁶ The indigenous, animist tradition is strong among the peasants, the Brahmanic among the bureaucrats and the descendants of the nobility, and the rigorously Islamic among the traders.

The Maranao

Not unlike Christianity, Islam emphasizes that, in case of an offence, only the individual offender should be held liable. God renders punishment and rewards according to the individual's sins and virtues, not according to the behavior of his or her kin. Yet, among the Maranao of

⁴Bernard Hubertus Viekke, *Nusantara: A History of Indonesia* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, Inc., 1960), p. 27. Pujo Semedi, an anthropologist friend, told me that as a student taxi-driver in Yogyakarta, he once picked up the wife of a high-ranking government official. The couple were known to be Moslems. Nonetheless, she went to Shiva's temple at Loro Djonggrang, prayed inside, and asked to be driven home. In contrast, an anthropologist friend from Sumatra declined to visit the Hindu and Buddhist monuments while at Yogyakarta, on the grounds that they were "pagan."

⁵*The Religion of Java*, p. 317.

⁶*Ibid.*

Lanao, who became Islamized in the 17th century (two centuries later than the Taosug of Sulu), the practice of assigning collective culpability to an offender's kin for an offence, persists. Should an individual commit a crime against another, even his innocent close of kin may be viewed by the offended party as liable for his kinsman's offense, to the point even of paying for it with his life. The kin group is viewed as One Moral Person. Feuds can thus last for years.⁷ The notion that kin are collectively liable for offence, formed an integral part of the moral code of many Austronesian-speaking peoples⁸ before the advent of the High Religions and of States with armies bureaucracies capable of compelling warring kin groups to an agreement. Certainly this has been a feature of the non-Islamic Manobos of Mindanao until fairly recently, but not of Sulu where a single Sultanate imposed itself on all the local leaders.⁹ Significantly enough there never was a single Sultanate over the Maranao. Instead there were many autonomous local leaders, supported

⁷Mamitua Saber gives the case of the feud between Batuampar and Sorosong. The feud started with Sorosong kissing Batuampar's sister in 1898. In retaliation the Batuampar killed Sorosong. But Sorosong's allies killed Batuampar's two young male cousins and reduced Batuampar's sister to slavery. Sorosong's grandson decided to take further revenge in 1945 by slaying Batuampar's wealthy grandson and his entire family before they got the chance to even fathom the reason. Grant Carter-Bentley recounts other cases of protracted violent conflict, stemming from incidents as trivial as a quarrel over a card game (see "Dispute, Authority, and Maranao Social Order," in Resil B. Mojares, ed., *Dispute Processing in the Philippines* (Quezon City: Bureau of Local Government Supervision, Ministry of Local Government, 1985). The following case, from the 1990s, was told to me by a friend who runs a non-governmental organization, specializing in legal cases, in a Mindanao city. "A Maranao woman had been kissed by Ali. His relatives agreed to have the matter brought to the Islamic court, the Shari'ah. A compensation in the form of audiovisual equipment was given to the woman's relatives. However, some of her relatives decided to extract additional vengeance. They insisted on being permitted to kiss a close relative of Ali. Anticipating the prospect of violence, the intended victim escaped from Lanao and sought help."

⁸The literature on this is abundant. As an example for Northern Luzon, see the highly detailed ethnographies on the Ilongot of Nueva Vizcaya; see for instance, Michelle Z. Rosaldo, *Knowledge and Passion: Ilongot Notions of Self and Social Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980).

⁹See John Garvan, *The Manobos of Mindanao* (Washington D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1931); Giovanni Soledad, *Pangayao or Resistance in a Manobo Community Against Capitalist Incursion* (Quezon City: M.A. Thesis, Ateneo de Manila University, 1997); Thomas Kiefer, *The Tausug: Violence and Law in a Philippine Moslem Society* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1972).

by their kin; each claiming to be a sultan.¹⁰ The Islamic notion of individual responsibility conflicts with the older notion of collective responsibility based on ties of kinship.

The Germanic Peoples

Christianity spread among the Franks in the 5th century, and subsequently among other Germanic peoples, at times accompanied by force. The last of the Germanic peoples to receive Christian baptism were the Swedes in the 11th century. Notwithstanding the arrival of Christianity, practices dating from the time when indigenous, pre-Christian religions were hegemonic, continued to persist. The horse had been the totemic beast of the god Odin; following its sacrificial slaughter, its flesh would be consumed in the context of a sacred meal. Despite the ban on the consumption of horseflesh imposed by the bishops in the 8th century, the slaughter of horses remained part of the funeral rites for kings and knights in England, France, and Germany, well into the 14th century. Even monks and priests were known to bend or disobey the church prohibition. On the occasion of the foundation of a monastery at Königsfelden in Germany in 1318, a horse was sacrificed. Horse skulls have been found in churches in England. As recently as 1897, a horse's head was buried at the site of a newly founded Primitive Methodist chapel in Cambridgeshire.¹¹ What is more, beneficial pagan deities were renamed by the Christian priests during the Early Middle Ages: Freya became Maria; Baldur, St. Michael; Thor, St. Olaf. In some medieval Christian churches in England and Germany, the Germanic gods and goddesses, along with their attributes, are respectfully depicted in stone and pigment. As late as the 15th century, Istein in Germany dedicated a temple to Jupiter Christus.¹² When freedom of worship became accepted throughout the West in the 19th century, neo-pagan cults intent on restoring the worship of the ancient deities sprang up through-

¹⁰Melvin Mednick, *Encampment on the Lake: the Social Organization of a Moslem-Philippine (Moro) People* (Chicago: Philippine Studies Program, Department of Anthropology, University of Chicago).

¹¹Prudence Jones and Nigel Pennick, *A History of Pagan Europe* (London: Routledge, 1995), pp. 139-40.

¹²*Ibid.*, pp. 160-161.

out northern Germanic Europe, and continue to spread to this day.¹³ These prompt the question: Have the Germanic peoples ever been truly Christian?¹⁴

If even the members of societies that have never been colonized live in the conjuncture of conflicting religious traditions, why should it be indicative of a kind of "cultural schizophrenia," and by implication, a kind of cultural dysfunctionality, that religious beliefs and practices dating from the pre-colonial era — e.g. a proneness to see spirits in trees, a reverence for sacred mountains, the use of animal blood in consecrating structures, an ethic that tends to center exclusively on the kin group, etc. — should persist among Christian Filipinos?¹⁵ There are other problems with the concept of "cultural schizophrenia." (1) It ignores the possibility that, over the course of centuries, tensions between opposing traditions may eventually be resolved in a new synthesis. (2) It overlooks the possibility that the tension itself may prompt the emergence within an institution of complex but dynamic relationships.

Consider the conflict between centralization and localism which has been a running theme in German history for over a millenium. The monarchical state that governed what is now called Germany had as its ideal a centralized empire in the Roman style. But the Lords (bishops, dukes, and counts) upon whom, during the Middle Ages, the emperor depended for his governance of localities were jealous of their rights and privileges. While they swore allegiance to the emperor, they were at the same time careful to keep the emperor away from the small, political formations over which they were masters. Only in the 19th century were the Germanies unified by force, under the rulership of Prussia. Still, the main architect of this union, Bismarck, complained of "the German urge to division into smaller groups."¹⁶ Under the Nazis in the

¹³*Ibid*, pp. 218-220.

¹⁴ This question was raised about Germany in particular on account of the Nazi horror. See Esther Harding, *Psychic Energy: Its Source and its Transformation*, with a foreword by C. G. Jung (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), p 6.

¹⁵ William Henry Scott, in *Barangay: Sixteenth Century Philippine Culture and Society* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1994), reconstructs in detail the indigenous religious systems in each of the different peoples of the Philippines at the point of their contact with Spain.

¹⁶Theodore Mayer, "The Historical Foundation of the German Constitution," in Geoffrey Barraclough, ed., *Medieval Germany: 911-1250* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1961), pp. 1-33.

1930s, the pendulum swung in the opposite direction: Germany became highly centralized, and local autonomy came to be deemphasized. The Federal Republic, which rose upon the rubble of Nazism, represented a synthesis between the centralization of a nation-state and local autonomy. Each of the German states (*Länder*) would have the freedom to decide its own economic, housing, health and educational programs. Defence and foreign affairs would be the Federal Government's responsibility. Had one visited the Germanies at any time between the 1600s and 1870, one might have come to the conclusion that the so-called German propensity for division would permanently impede the development of an over-arching unity. One might have believed, as many Germans did, that French centralism was more efficient. Yet, developments since World War II appear to suggest the contrary. Because federalism allows important decisions to be made at several levels below the nation-state, Germans are able to arrive at decisions more quickly than the French in a European Union where regions cooperate, bypassing the capital cities.

In the case of the Philippines, the tension between bureaucratic centralization and local autonomy (yet another instance of conflict between a Western governmental style and indigenous practice) has been productive of certain dynamic syntheses. While the authority structure — a State based in Manila — imposed by the Spanish colonizers upon the hundreds of small, independent political units comprised of interrelated kinship-based groups, that existed throughout the archipelago, and were known as *barangays*,¹⁷ did succeed in reducing the bloody conflicts that routinely marred relations between *barangays*; and in bringing about a milieu where people from every point of the Christian territories could peaceably work and study together, it produced as well a whole new set of problems.¹⁸ Mayors and provincial governors were forever running to Manila to wheel and deal for the approval for their

¹⁷Pedro Chirino, *Relación de las Islas Filipinas*, trans. by Ramón Echevarría (Manila: Historical Conservation Society, 1969); Antonio de Morga, *Sucesos de las Islas Filipinas (1609)*, with notes by Wenceslao Retana (Madrid: Libreria General de Victorinao Suarez, 1910); Francisco Ignacio Alcina, *Historia de las Islas e Indios de las Bisayas (1668)*, in Paul S. Lietz, ed., *The Muñoz Text of Alcina's History of the Bisayan islands*, Vols. 1-3 (Chicago: Philippine Studies Program, Department of Anthropology, University of Chicago).

¹⁸*Ibid.*

local projects, insofar as it was Manila that controlled the national purse. To resolve this problem, the 1991 *Local Government Code* devolved functions that traditionally pertained to the central government, to the provincial, municipal and barangay governments. In contrast to what they had to do in the past, municipal governments are now allowed to retain a major share of the taxes they collect.

Is this tension between centralization and local autonomy another example of “cultural schizophrenia”? One where local forms of behavior subvert imported forms of organization? I prefer to see this tension as one that is both necessary and potentially creative in any Nation-State. If centralization were to be completely ignored and all power turned over to the local governments, then the Filipino nation-state would cease to be. On the other hand if local autonomy were ignored, cities and provinces would continue to have little incentive to plan for their future. I am not suggesting that the *Local Government Code* is the ideal solution, but am merely stating that tensions may be inescapable when the institution is complex. But when handled imaginatively, such tensions pack the potential of engendering new syntheses. Indeed, areas in Filipino culture exist where the fusion of indigenous and Western styles over the course of centuries has resulted in blends that draw on the strengths of both styles. One example is religious ritual. The procession of the Holy Sepulchre (*Santo Entierro*) on Good Friday commemorates the death of Christ and uses processional tableaux depicting individuals and scenes that figure in the Passion and Death of Christ. Fashioned from ivory and precious woods and dressed in gold- and silver-embroidered brocades, these processional images are, in Spain and Spanish America, owned either by the Church or by confraternites. In the Philippines, however, they are privately owned, by families who treasure them both as family heirlooms and as one of those things, the ownership of which affords them public prestige. Indeed, the *Mater Dolorosa* and the *Santo Entierro*, the two principal images, are often owned by the currently — or formerly — most important families in a municipality. Significantly enough, it was standard practice, in pre-colonial times, for the ruling family to place the mummified corpse of the deceased *datu* or local chieftain, along with the family heirlooms, in a coffin kept at home, as

¹⁹*Historia de las Islas e Indios de las Bisayas*, Bk. 3, Part 1, Ch. 16; *Relación de las Islas Filipinas*, p. 88.

a sign of the esteem in which even his memory was held.¹⁹ Instead of centralizing the ownership of these processional images in the Church, as their counterparts both in Spain and in Spanish America had done, the Philippine missionaries granted the privilege of ownership of these images to the most influential local families, apparently in an effort to substitute the cult of Christ In Repose for that of the dead *datu*. The Good Friday procession is, by far, the one annual event in most Luzon and Visayan municipalities that draws massive participation. I ask: Could it be that by dispersing ownership, the Church made it possible for private owners and their followers to develop among the local families an experience of deeper involvement in the affairs of their church? Those who analyze Philippine reality in terms of “cultural schizophrenia” and “split-level Christianity” are welcome to interpret the Good Friday procession as one more instance of incoherence, but if they do, they could be overlooking the important interplay between the private ownership (by families) of the processional paraphernalia and the public management (by the parish priest) of the event itself, at the basis of the tremendous popular enthusiasm for it a stark contrast to the situation in Europe where, at least in part because of unrelenting Church control over the processional paraphernalia, religious processions have increasingly become a rarity.

Let us turn now to the second fear of which we spoke at the outset, the fear of illegitimacy. Filipinos themselves have characterized their own culture as “mongrel,” “bastard,” sometimes even as “half-breed.” The term “mongrel” contrasts the mixed with the pure bred, typing the former as inferior on account of its supposed incongruities; “bastard” refers to birth outside a formal union; “half-breed” connotes that awkwardness which stems from a lack of fit with the established categories. It is not for no reason at all that Filipino have nursed this fear. Asian peoples (not to mention Non-Latin Europeans and Americans) have traditionally looked down on unions, both cultural and physical, between East and West, precisely, as “bastard.” But in what sense “bastard”? Let us examine a couple of the presuppositions involved:

(1) Intercultural unions between East and West are like interracial marriages: they produce “abnormalities.”

(2) Like interracial marriages during the colonial period, intercultural unions between East and West create “bastards.”

Against presupposition (1), the following should be noted: (1) Intercultural mixing is not like a marriage across racial lines. The realm of culture is symbolic; it is made up of codes invented by human beings. Its meanings, therefore, can change. There is no law of nature that forbids human beings from borrowing ideas from each other. On the other hand, marriages across racial lines do involve biology, a realm different from the symbolic, for here a genetic apparatus is at work, impervious to what an individual may want, since he inherits, rather than chooses, genes that determine skin-color, hair-color, skeletal proportions. These physical characteristics are commonly called "race." But are such interracial unions against nature? (2) The concept of "race" is itself problematic. True, many physical anthropologists classify human beings according to race. One scheme distinguishes the Negroid, the Caucasian, and the Mongoloid.²⁰ Other anthropologists question the adequacy of a concept of "race" that classifies humankind on no more than the basis of physical qualities. They suggest other classificatory schemes, such as one based on blood-type — in which case, it is conceivable that people who differ in skin-color would resemble one another according to their blood-type, whereas those with similar in skin-color would differ on the basis of their blood type.²¹ This critique is ignored in the Philippines, where "race" (*lahi*) and "culture" are often confused with each other, thanks to a long-discredited anthropological discourse inherited from 19th century Europe. Writers routinely speak of the "Filipino race" of "Rizal, the pride of the Malay race." From the point of view of physical anthropology, there is no Filipino race, nor Malay race, nor, for that matter, a German or Japanese or Chinese race. But there is a Filipino or German or Japanese culture. (3) Granting that it makes sense to speak of race, inter-racial unions are not contrary to nature, insofar as they take place within one single species: *Homo sapiens*. A race is not a species, but a variation within one species. Successful interbreeding between races is possible whereas members of a species cannot successfully interbreed with those of another species.²²

²⁰Clifford Jolly and Fred Plug, *Physical Anthropology and Archeology* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1982), p. 411.

²¹Henry Nelson and Robert Jurmain, *Introduction to Physical Anthropology* (St. Paul, Minnesota: West Publishing Company, 1985), pp. 196ff; Bernard Campbell, ed., *Humankind Emerging* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1985), pp. 479 ff.

²²*Introduction to Physical Anthropology*, p. 106.

(4) The terms “mongrel” and “half-breed” carry, in English, a history of prejudice against inter-racial and intercultural unions between Europeans and Non-Europeans. It is noteworthy that, until the 1940s, particular states in the U.S. such as California, forbade intermarriages between Whites and “Mongolians/ Malaysians.”²³ True, inter-racial and intercultural fusions have since presented a common pattern in the coastal U.S. states, especially California. But negative overtones continue to haunt the use of “half-breed” and “half-caste.” In a similar vein, the term “Eurasian” connotes bastardy in countries like India.²⁴

What is disturbing about these prejudices is that they have sometimes masqueraded around under the guise of Modern Science. Herbert Spencer, for instance, the 19th century British thinker who helped laid the foundations for the emerging science of sociology, put forward the claim that degrees of cultural development correlated with the brain size and skin color of the members of a culture. He likewise argued that because the half-caste inherits characteristics from two ancestors who are physically distinct from each other, he does “not fit” into either ancestor’s institutions. No wonder, then, Spencer conjectures, contemporary Mexico and other South American Republics were plagued with perpetual revolutions.²⁵ Though racism is no longer politically correct in the Anglo-American academy, one suspects that the prejudice against intercultural unions between Europeans and Non-Europeans lingers. This brings us to the second presupposition which imagines that inter-racial and intercultural unions in Spanish America and the Philippines denote illegitimacy.

Inter-racial unions were accorded civil legitimacy as early as 1503 by the Spanish crown, provided, of course, that they were formalized in a Catholic wedding.²⁶ An important contributing factor to this turn

²³Carlos Bulosan, *America is in the Heart*, (Manila: A. S. Florentino, 1973), p. 143.

²⁴In contrast, despite its own checkered history, the term “mestizo” as used today in the Spanish-speaking world has gradually come to mean merely a “mixture.”

²⁵Herbert Spencer, *The Study of Sociology* (London: Henry S. King and Co., 1873), p. 592.

²⁶“The king’s instructions to Governor Ovando were that that Spaniards should marry *Indios* so that the latter would become “people of reason” (*gente de razón*). In 1514, Ferdinand the Catholic formally authorized mixed unions” (Augustine F. Basave Benitez, *México Mestizo: análisis del nacionalismo mexicano en torno a la mestizofilia de Andres Molina Enriquez* [México, D. F.: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1992], p. 17).

of events was the scarcity in the colonies of Spanish women.²⁷ Initially, only one out of ten Spaniards who migrated to the New World were women. Moreover, what barriers existed to intermarriage between Amerindians and Spaniards stemmed more from such social considerations as particular differences in customs and religion, rather than from skin color, since the Spaniards themselves, being of mixed origins, displayed different skin tonalities from alabaster to dark olive. Remarks Alfredo Jimenez Nuñez: "The population of the Iberian peninsula has been historically *mestizo* (*es historicamente mestiza*)."²⁸ It is worth noting that Northern Europeans have traditionally looked down on Latin Europeans, not only for being economically backward, but also for not appearing fully white.

Over the course of three centuries, the fortunes of the *mestizo* in Spanish America, particularly Mexico, went from acceptance in the 16th century to discrimination in the 17th and 18th centuries, then to respectability in the late 19th century. In the 17th century, the Spanish crown made the legal position of the *mestizos*, of European and Amerindian descent, unstable. It forbade the *mestizos*, along with the Spaniards, Blacks and *mulattos*, from living in Amerindian towns. At the same time it kept them from bearing arms and from holding both royal or public office, and imposed restrictions on their eligibility for membership in the religious orders. The undesirability of having a *mestizo* offspring with uncertain legal status rendered illicit unions between Spaniards and native women. During the 18th century, to be a *mestizo* amounted to being illegitimate, even as the *mestizos* became increasingly numerous.²⁹ The importance given to the matter of legitimacy prompted the stringent screening of aspirants to the local colleges, although there were indeed *mestizos* and *mulattoes* who earned university degrees.³⁰ In contrast, the *creoles*, or local-born Spaniards, could

²⁷Maria Cristina García Bernal, *La población de la América Hispana en el Siglo XVI* (HA, Vol. 2, 1991), pp. 153-182, at 177; José Muñoz Perez, *La consolación de la sociedad india* (HA, Vol. 2, 1991) pp. 627-659, at 155).

²⁸Alfredo Jimenez Nuñez, "Los habitantes, mestizaje, población actual," in *Gran Enciclopedia de España y América, Vol. 2* (Madrid: Gela S.A., Espasa-Calpe/Argantonio, 1989), p. 61.

²⁹*La población de la América Hispana en el Siglo XVI*, p. 180; *La consolación de la sociedad india*, p. 658.

³⁰Pilar Gonzalbo Aizpuru, *Historia de la educación en la época colonial: la educación de los criollos y la vida urbana* (México, D.F.: El Colegio de México, 1990), p. 112.

go to the university, become religious, and hold public office.

The Wars of Independence against Spain in the early 19th century were waged by the *creoles*.³¹ Initially, therefore, the privileged status of the *creoles* was maintained. However, the demographic reality was that the *mestizos* had become far more numerous. By the late 20th century, three-fifths of Mexicans were classified as *mestizo*, one fifth pure Amerindian or *indio*, one fifth *creole*. Meanwhile, the revolutions in Mexico after 1810, those of 1858, and 1910, brought down the legal barriers to the upward mobility of *mestizo* and Amerindian alike, and thus made being *mestizo* respectable. Indeed, the ideology of the 1910 Mexican Revolution consciously exalted the notion of *mestizaje* or the process of mixing races and cultures, as will be shown.

The question whether, in the Philippines, the term “*mestizo*” carried by the 18th century the same connotation of illegitimacy, is one that surely needs to be further researched.³² On the other hand, it is significant to note that the Roxases, one of the most prestigious and wealthiest families at the turn of the 18th century, and ancestors of the Ayalas, do not at all look *creole* in their portraits. They look *mestizo*. And in Rizal’s novel, *Noli Me Tangere*, it is significant, as Nick Joaquin has observed, that the characters Maria Clara and Crisostomo Ibarra are *mestizos*.³³ But while the former is the illegitimate daughter of a native woman and a Spanish friar, the latter is the scion of the Basque, Eibarramendi, who had opened a farm and married a native woman.³⁴ Ibarra’s background is ignored by those who use this novel to equate *mestizo* with bastardy. The Noli’s depiction of relations between *indios*, *mestizos* and *creoles* are worth re-examining, especially as it brings peninsular, *mestizo* and *indio* to the same table.³⁵ Indeed, despite the very

³¹Luis Villoro, “*La revolución de independencia*” in *Historia general de México 2* (México, D.F. SEP/El Colegio de México, 1976), p.324.

³²Clarita Nolasco studies the Filipino *creoles* from the 16th to the 19th centuries in an M.A. Thesis entitled, “*The Creoles in Spanish Philippines*” (Manila: Far Eastern University, 1969). There is need for a similar study to be conducted of other *mestizos* whether European or Chinese.

³³Nick Joaquin, *A Question of Heroes: Essays in Criticism on Ten Key Figures of Philippine History* (Makati, Metro Manila: Filipinas Foundation, 1977).

³⁴José Rizal, *Noli Me Tangere* (Manila: Comición Nacional del Centenario, 1961), pp. 50-51.

³⁵*Noli me Tangere*, p. 11ff.

real interracial conflicts recounted by the German traveller, Jagor, in 1875,³⁶ Sir John Bowring, the British consul at Hong Kong, observes that the lines of separation between ranks and classes in the Philippines were “less marked and impassable than in most Oriental countries.” Indeed, he continues, “I have seen at the same table Spaniard, *mestizo* and Indian — priest, civilian and soldier.”³⁷ Catholicism’s influence upon this development should not, of course, be overlooked. 16th-century Church teaching held that the dark-skinned peoples who the European colonists encountered were fellow human beings who it was their responsibility to save.³⁸ This early assimilation of Non-Whites into a moral community made inter-racial mixing more common in Catholic countries than in Protestant ones, asserts the Non-Catholic historian, Arnold Toynbee.³⁹ And as much as the space of a church might have been zoned to favor individuals and families of higher social standing, it was open, as a ceremonial center, to all the faithful, regardless of skin color or ethnicity. Indeed, within the sacred space, the cults of such dark-skinned holy men and women as St. Martin de Porres of Peru, and of a dark-skinned Mary and Jesus — e.g. Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico, and, in the Philippines, the Black Nazarene of Quiapo and the Brown Virgin of Antipolo — flourished. The principal ecclesiastical institutions that in the colonies remained the preserve of the European colonizers were the religious orders, into whose ranks *indios* and *mestizos* were not granted entry; or if they were, even if they were *creole*, they were barred from assuming within these orders positions of responsibility.⁴⁰

³⁶Fedor Jagor, *Travels in the Philippines, 1875* (Manila: Filipiniana Book Guild, 1965), p. 16.

³⁷Sir John Bowring, *A Visit to the Islands* (London: Smith, Elder, and Co., 1859), pp. 18-19.

³⁸Declares the Papal Bull, *Sublimis Deus* of 1537, against the “devil’s” claim, impressed upon his minions, that the newly discovered Indians are brutes incapable of receiving the Faith and created to serve European masters: “We know ... that the Indians are true human beings” (cf. “*Los habitantes, mestizaje, población actual*,” in *Gran Enciclopedia de España y América*).

³⁹Besides, only in the 19th century onwards did Protestants proselytize among Non-Europeans (Arnold Toynbee, *A Study of History, Vol. I* (London: Oxford University Press, 1948-61), pp. 211ff).

⁴⁰Rolando V. de la Rosa, *Beginnings of the Filipino Dominicans: A Critical Inquiry into the Late Emergence of Native Dominicans in the Philippines and Their Attempt at*

With the attention given to a person's color of skin waning in Spanish-speaking countries, particularly in Mexico and Central America, where, because of intermarriage, there developed a tremendous gradation in skin color ranging from very dark to white, criteria such as *indio*, *mestizo*, and *criollo*⁴¹ have in the course of time given way to other criteria such as a person's language, custom, community membership, dress and self-identification.⁴² For Latin Americans, an *indio* today is someone who speaks an Amerindian tongue, wears sandals and a different costume, and is a poor farmer, as opposed to someone who speaks elegant Spanish, has a university degree and has developed a refined taste, regardless of whether he might look Amerindian. This contrasts sharply with the situation in the United States where, because one's ethnicity depends almost exclusively on one's racial ancestry, even a fair-skinned individual whose occupation, manners, and economic position are middle to upper class, is classified as Afro-American for as long as he can trace his roots back to an African ancestor.⁴³ As evidence that *mestizo* has acquired a positive ring, consider the inscription upon the monument in the *Plaza de las Tres Culturas* in the district of Tlatelolco

Self-Government (Quezon City: Dominican Province of the Philippines, 1990), p. 21; "La revolución de independencia" in *Historia general de México* 2, pp. 312ff.

⁴¹In late twentieth century Spanish America, *mestizo* refers both to individuals of mixed parentage, and to the product of a mixture of influences. *Mestizaje*, on the other hand, refers to the process by which this mixture has taken place. As used today in Spanish, *mestizo* does not bear a negative connotation. The entry for *mestizo* in the 1917 edition of the *Enciclopedia Universal Ilustrada Europeo-Americana* reads:

All cultures are characterized by a mixed combination (*combinación mestiza*) of cultural elements of diverse origin and have been preceded by greater or lesser proportions of *mestizaje* by blood (p. 1091).

In French, however, *metis* which translates as *mestizo*, connotes inferiority vis-a-vis the purebred, sort of like the English term, "hybrid," increasingly used to refer to intercultural mixtures all over the world, which has an air of the forced and the unnatural about it. The Black French-speaking African writer, Léopold Sedar Senghor, reports, however, that when Charles De Gaulle was asked if African infusions would "pollute French blood," his answer was "The future belongs to *metissage*" (Léopold Sedar Senghor, *Liberté 1: négritude et humanisme* (Paris: Editions de Seuil, 1964), p. 395).

⁴²Charles Wagley, *The Latin American Tradition: Essays on the Unity and Diversity of Latin American Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), pp. 52, 166.

⁴³*Ibid.*, p. 165.

in Mexico City, commemorating the fall of Cuauhtemoc, the last Aztec emperor, before the Spanish invaders. It ends with the words:

No fue ni triunfo ni derrota, fue el doloroso nacimiento
del pueblo mestizo que es el México de hoy.

In English it would read:

It was neither a triumph nor a defeat, it was the
painful birth of the *mestizo* people that is Mexico today.

Substitute “half-breed” or “hybrid” for *mestizo*, and the sentence becomes nonsensical.

Cultural *mestizaje*, as a desirable process, has a long tradition in Mexico. It gained early acceptance among the *creoles*. To be sure, the Spaniards were shocked at the human sacrifice and cannibalism that formed an integral part of the Aztec’s indigenous religion. Stamping out the “devilish rites” became an excuse for them to destroy the Aztec monuments and raise their churches and palaces over them. This contemptuous attitude towards the indigenous has been one running theme in Mexican history down to the 1910 Revolution which, in addition to being a social and economic upheaval, was also a cultural one, for it affirmed the dignity of the Amerindian cultures. Yet the 1910 Revolution, as a cultural event, had predecessors. By the late 16th century, the Spaniards who had elected to stay permanently in Mexico, in other words, the *creoles*, consciously used their Indian past to differentiate themselves from the peninsular Spaniard: the *gachupin*. The *creoles* formed the highest layer of the social order in Mexico and were highly educated.⁴⁴ Among them were writers, both lay and religious, who wrote about the indigenous past in glowing colors. An example is Sor Juana Ines (1651-1695), often regarded as Mexico’s greatest poet. This widely-read nun was aware of the barbarism of the prehispanic rites, yet she tried to show that the Aztec religion was essentially the “true” religion and, for this reason, evangelization was easy: the ancient Mexicans worshipped the Great God of the Seeds who had taken the form of food and was consumed.⁴⁵ Cultural *mestizaje* was vividly symbolized by the Guadalupe

⁴⁴Jorge Alberto Manrique, “Del barroco a la ilustración,” in *Historia general de México*, 2 (Mexico, D.F.: SEP/El Colegio de México), p. 368.

⁴⁵*Ibid*,

who was revered by *indio*, *mestizo* and *creole* as the symbol of Mexicanness.

An Alternative Concept: Cultural Mestizaje

The 1910 Revolution overturned the dictator Porfirio Diaz and sought to affirm Indian culture and rights to land.⁴⁶ The study of the indigenous tradition became more systematic and widespread. Though the Spanish contribution was critiqued, it was not rejected either. It was realized that the fusion of traditions was what had made Mexico to be what it uniquely was. Thus, Octavio Paz says that the Christianity brought in by the Spaniards was itself syncretistic: it had assimilated the pagan deities and transformed them into saints and devils. The phenomenon was repeated in Mexico: the ancient beliefs and divinities assumed a Christian veneer and continued to appear in popular religiosity. Mesoamerican civilization may have died a violent death; the religion, language and political institutions of Mexico are indeed Western, but the Indian face of Mexico continues to be alive and to give her a different orientation. The situation is different in the United States, where the Indians who were not exterminated were forced into reservations. While the Indian dimension does not appear significantly in the U.S., Mexico is a land "between two civilizations and two peoples."⁴⁷ In an analysis of cultural *mestizaje* and the baroque, Bolivar Echeverria points out that the Amerindians and Blacks of Latin America used the baroque style in a paradoxical manner. Instead of literally following the strict canons of Western art, they so played with these canons that they inverted their meaning. *Mestizaje* is "the natural form of all cultures." The usual biologicistic metaphor of *mestizaje* as a "combination of qualities" is inadequate. *Mestizaje* is rather a "semiotic process", for the symbolic subcodes drawn up by various human groups do not just co-exist. Faced with a new subcode, a symbolic subcode devours it and assimilates it.⁴⁸ In neither of these authors does cultural *mestizaje* appear

⁴⁶cf. *México Mestizo*.

⁴⁷Octavio Paz, "Posiciones y contraposiciones: México y Estados Unidos," in Octavio Paz, ed., *El peregrino en su patria: historia y política de México* (México, D.F.: Circulo de Lectores/Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1994), pp. 437-453, at 442.

⁴⁸Bolivar Echevarria, "El ethos barroco," in B. Echevarria, ed., *Modernidad, mestizaje cultural, ethos barroco* (México, D.F.: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México: El Equilibrista, 1994), pp. 13-36, at p. 32.

as an easy fusion of traditions. It is articulated in terms of tensions and oppositions which are accepted as part of the meaning of being human.

A study of the emergence of the notion of cultural *mestizaje* in the Philippines has yet to be conducted. It would look at the union between traditions of the Mongoloid Austronesian-speaking peoples, who form the majority, and those traditions of both the earlier inhabitants, the *Agtas*, and later settlers, like the Chinese, Europeans, Mexican Indians, and Americans, with a view to both the fusions and the tension points in the emerging culture. Such a history would also examine conscious attempts by Filipinos to deal with these cultural unions either through rejection or acceptance. Since a selective acceptance is what I personally espouse, I would look at the rationalizations of those who were proud of the 1896 Revolution, yet accepted what was best in the Spanish tradition. An example would be Cecilio Apostol who wrote:

... sabemos que, al principio, para pactar su alianza,
juntaron y bebieron, a la nativa usanza,
*sus sangres, en un vaso, Legazpi y el Rajáh.*⁴⁹

[...we know that, in the beginning, to seal the alliance,
Legazpi and the Rajah came together and, in the
native way, drank their blood from a common cup.]

The Blood Compact was a recurring image among Filipino intellectuals of Apostol's generation. Then came the generation after, among them Claro Mayo Recto, who saw that, to battle American cultural imperialism, it was important to firm up pride in the Filipino tradition, with its strong Spanish component, and to promote the education of Filipinos in the literature of the 1896 Revolution, largely written in Spanish.⁵⁰ The crusade was continued by the much-misunderstood Nick Joaquín whose icon is not only *Nuestra Señora del Santísimo Rosario*, Queen of the Sea Battles, but likewise the ecstatic female shamans of indigenous rituals.⁵¹ But we must go beyond Nick Joaquin.

⁴⁹Cecilio Apostol, *Pentélicas (Poesías)* (Manila: Grafica, Inc., 1941).

⁵⁰Claro Mayo Recto, "Por los fueros de una herencia" in *The Recto Valedictory and the Recto Day Program*, English translation by Nick Joaquin (Manila: Claro M. Recto Memorial Foundation, inc., 1960), pp. 10ff.

⁵¹The encounter between Christianity and paganism, as both opposition and fusion, is the theme of his short stories, "Summer Solstice," and "Legend of the Virgin's

Though he talks of the fusion of the indigenous, the Chinese, the Spanish and the American in the Filipino, he remains silent about the potential contribution of the *Negritos/ Agtas*.

Discussion

The question of identity, whether local or national, is a cultural one. Yet it is often discussed in psychologistic terms; worse still, it is approached in a biologicistic manner that is unwittingly racist. The cultural identity of the lowland Christian Filipino is thus often conceived of in a pejorative manner. There is need to go back to the concept of "culture" as articulated by 20th century cultural anthropologists and its difference from "race." Franz Boas (1948) had emphasized that there is no correlation between ways of thinking and body form. People think differently from each other on account of their moorings in particular cultures, each of which has its own way of interpreting the world. He observes it is normal for a culture to accept new ideas from other cultures. However, the pre-existing local tradition filters and transforms importations. At the same time, because of the unending inflow of new ideas, no culture can ever be fully integrated.

We should examine the lenses Anglo-American writers use when viewing lowland, hispanized Filipino culture. True, Boas and the American Historicalist school liberated the study of culture from the biologism of the 19th century. Nonetheless, I fear that this biologism continues to tint the lenses of many Anglo-American writers when they look at intercultural and interracial fusions between Europeans and Non-Europeans in places such as the Philippines. While many Anglo-Americans may respect the fusion of cultures in Java (Indian-Islamic-indigenous) or in Thailand (Indian-indigenous), a number look condescendingly on mixtures of Western and indigenous cultures and consider it inferior to either the purely Western or the purely indigenous. Thus in the new overviews being written on costumes, music, or art across cultures, the achievements of Tagalogs and other hispanized Filipinos in those fields are either studiously ignored or cursorily treated in

Jewel." In other stories, like "Candido's Apocalypse," the indigenized Spanish tradition is opposed to the intrusive American culture. This, too, ends in a new synthesis (1991). His essays articulate his view on intercultural fusions (1989).

comparison to the extensive treatment given other Asians, including our Non-Hispanized brothers in the Cordillera and in Sulu-Mindanao.⁵² An American colleague, an anthropologist who has lived in the Philippines, once put it: "Give me dances from the tribes or from the Moslems. Your lowland dances are third-rate Spanish." He was then enjoying Filipino dishes prepared by his Filipina girl friend. Mediterranean influence underlay the dishes, for they were sauteed in garlic, onion and tomatoes. At the same time Southeast Asia scented them with its fish-sauce. At least he implicitly appreciated another aspect of *mestizaje*. That a brown-skinned Asian people should dance *jotas* with bamboo *castanets* (*Jota Moncadeña*) or with bamboo poles (*Tinikling*) while wearing Western-influenced costumes puzzles Non-Filipinos who bear stereotypes about what Asia should be. Not knowing where to place us—neither in Asia nor Spanish America they end up ignoring us. Unfortunately, even Filipino nationalists inadvertently use these stereotypes.

We also need to do more cross-cultural comparisons and analyses. Too often, Filipino scholars believe they can examine the Filipino identity without trying to understand other cultures as well. In reality, many often make cross-cultural comparisons without realizing it, as when they claim that other Asian cultures have retained their primordial identity

⁵²In a book on national costumes from around the world, the costumes of the Cordillera peoples rather than those of the Christian majority are discussed and illustrated (Frances Kennett and Caroline MacDonald-Haig, *World Dress* [London: Mitchell Beazley, 1994]). In two books on textiles in Southeast Asia, textiles from the Cordilleras and Mindanao are given much emphasis in both pictures and print. Textiles from the Christian majority are given scant coverage (Sylvia Fraser-Lu, *Handwoven Textiles of Southeast Asia* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988]); Robyn Maxwell, *Textiles of Southeast Asia: Tradition, Trend, and Transformation* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990]). And yet *jusi* and *piña*, a product of the ingenuity of the Christian majority, are original inventions. A mini-encyclopedia on popular music from around the world downplays contemporary Filipino music for being influenced by Spanish and American models. It discusses only Freddie Aguilar and yet ignores the Apo Hiking Society. Surprisingly it ignores *Kontragapi* and Joey Ayala's *Bagong Lumad* (Simon Broughton *et al*, *World Music: The Rough Guide* [London: The Rough Guides, 1994] pp. 438-9). Noteworthy is that in ASEAN Music Festivals, Filipinos regularly win prizes. One suspects that these writers had pre-existing biases against mainstream Filipino culture, for being *mestizo* and were not willing to understand it in its particularity. A complicating factor, is that many believe that there is an "Asian" identity and that the Philippines must be strange for not conforming to this supposed identity. I will show in another essay that this "Asia" is in fact a Western invention.

whereas we have lost ours. This claim is doubtful if we do an explicit cross-cultural comparison that does not look at Western influence as the only extraneous influence. Before Islam came, our fellow Austronesian-speaking confreres in Mindanao and Indonesia worshipped a variety of spirits, ate pork, kept dogs, ate raw fish and drank wine. Islam forbade all of these practices. It is significant that little is known of what Taosug, Maranao and Maguindanao cultures were like before the advent of Islam. Surely they did not begin only with Islamization in the same way that Tagalog and Visayan cultures did not begin only with Christianization. And yet we hear that among Moslem Indonesians and Mindanaonons, ordinary people still propitiate spirits in the environment, eat raw fish, and, while avoiding domestic pigs, will eat wild pig. We should examine other Asian cultures, too, keeping an eye out for similar incongruities.⁵³ We can go beyond Asia. Mention was made earlier of incongruities between Germanic culture and Latin influences. For all the English arrogance about purity of culture, theirs is a *mestizo* culture. The English language itself, though Germanic, has many Latin and French words. The combinations continue to clash and mess up rules of pronunciation. Thus “-ain” in “mountain” because of French influence (“montagne”) is pronounced differently from “-ain” in “rain” which is of Germanic origin.

Filipinos should re-establish contact with Spanish America, particularly Mexico. The Filipino is looked upon as an oddity by other Asians, by Anglo-Americans and by Non-Latin Europeans for being in Asia and being, at the same time, Hispanized. Their reactions range from puzzlement, to condescension and contempt. These reactions subtly act upon many educated Filipinos and make them apologetic about their culture. In Mexico and some other Spanish American countries, however, at least officially, the notion of cultural *mestizaje* is regarded as a given. While they emphasize the bonds created by a common Hispanic culture, they also articulate their differences from each other and from Spain — differences brought about in part by the ethnic mix in each country. Thus while Anglo-Americans question why we dance *jotas*, Spanish

⁵³In Vietnam, Chinese impositions led to the substitution of patrilineal kinship for bilateralism. However, Vietnamese women have maintained a higher status than their Chinese sisters. The Chinese tried to ban betel nut chewing. But the Vietnamese practise it to this day!

Americans examine how our *jotas* differ from theirs: they look for the “this-ness”, their *haecceitas* to use Gerald Hopkins’ expression. While some Britons, Germans, Australians deplore the Spanish influence on Filipino food and look in vain for that burning flavor that they equate with Southeast Asian cooking, Argentines, according to the culinary expert Nora Daza who lived in Buenos Aires for some time, are fascinated by the novelty of Filipino cuisine: the tomato sauce that is omnipresent in all Latin cooking is flavored with soy sauce. My experience with Mexican and Italian friends has been similar. While books on Asian art ignore the ecclesiastical and civil architecture of the 16th-19th century Philippines, Dorta’s overview on Hispanic architecture includes the Philippines and articulates its singularity *vis-a-vis* Spanish American countries.⁵⁴ Within the last decade, a steady stream of Spanish and Spanish American art scholars has visited the islands; they praise the originality of the local visual styles.⁵⁵

For sure, in Mexico and in Spanish America, tensions between races and ethnic groups exist. Cultural *mestizaje* is still an ongoing process.⁵⁶ In the Philippines, the terms, “*mestizo*” and “*mestizaje*” may themselves be supplanted by better terms. But at least, in the process of dialoguing with Spanish Americans, we may realize that we are not an aberration at all.⁵⁷ In Andersen’s tale, the duckling, who was scorned by other ducks for having a long neck, in the right company awakened to the realization that it was a swan. ↪

⁵⁴Enrique Dorta, *Ars Hispaniae: historia universal del arte hispánico. Arte en América y Filipinas*, Vol. 21 [Madrid: Espasa-Calpe S.A., 1973]

⁵⁵Some of the following architects who have visited within the last five years are: Javier Galvan Guijo, Javier San Roman, Juan Porras (from Spain); Nelson Herrera (from Cuba); Jorge Loyzaga (from Mexico).

⁵⁶Basave Benitez asks whether Mexico has a mere superposition of cultures, as opposed to a true *mestizaje* where the *indio* substratum permeates the European layer imposed on it (*México Mestizo*, p.143-4). Economic equality is needed. Likewise cultural equality: the indigenous past should be a source of inspiration in the creation of a contemporary culture. In this regard, the Philippines has an advantage: the continued use of the vernaculars inevitably refashions imported ideas.

⁵⁷Friendly Spanish Americans can understand one side of our identity: the very fact of our having mixed the European and Non-European. But the other side, the Austronesian, is surely accessible only to fellow Austronesian speakers like Indonesians and Malaysians. I feel an affinity when mixing with ordinary Dyaks, Sundanese, Sumatrans and Javanese.