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The Ideology of Philippine National Community

Niels Mulder



If we go by the titles of some of the series serving social studies in Philippine elementary schools, such as *Ang Bansa Natin* ("our nation/country/people") or the programmatic *Isang Bansa, Isang Lahi* ("one country, one people/ancestry"). It clearly suggests that there exists a national community. Besides, special reading exercises are offered under *Diwang Makabansa* ("the spirit of nationalism"), all the time intimating that there is substance to it all. And the title of the ministerial book for the fifth grade, *Ang Pilipinas sa Iba't Ibang Panahon* ("the Philippines in various periods"), even proposes continuity through time, over hundreds of thousands of years.

Maybe the titles are mere promises. Maybe it is the school's very purpose to create national community. After all, school texts are a very important part of national culture, promoting the symbolic violence that molds a people into a single image by spreading shared myths, history, and common wisdom, making a national community out of the diversity of 7,107 islands and 111 languages and ways of life. Perhaps school is nothing more than propaganda machinery, although it cannot be denied that—if anything at all—it is the most powerful instrument giving rise to a shared culture of what is supposed to be the national community. The fascinating thing about Filipino school texts is that they ooze with uncertainty about what the national community actually is.

These texts do not stand alone. They reflect and strengthen a sort of ambiguity of culture, of identity. The question "Who are we?" is bedeviling indeed. According to one of my Filipino friends, "A Filipino is an English-speaking, Roman Catholic Malay with a Spanish name who eats Chinese food." The Educational Development Decree of 1972 was—among others—addressed at "the problem of nationhood." In March 1987, President Aquino expressed her satisfaction

with Fr. English's *Tagalog-English Dictionary*: "This (dictionary) will be extremely helpful in our drive for national recovery since Pilipino is our national language and therefore, a vital element in achieving national unity even as we are the largest English-speaking nation in Asia."

Is a national community defined by a shared language? Is that English, Tagalog, or Pilipino? Or is Pilipino just another word for Tagalog? And who are the speakers of that language? Yet, probably, a national community can be founded on other commonalities than linguistic ones. A shared history may probably be more compelling, while the idea of community also refers to a shared location. Whereas the line between history and myth is thin indeed, the modern idea of a bounded territory seems unambiguous. We noted, however, the 111 nations inhabiting that space.

Modernly speaking, it is the state that defines the nation. Heir to a colonial predecessor state that defined its borders, it legitimizes its sway by a particular interpretation of history that is spread by way of the state school system. Possibly it is the state, as shared government, and its propagation of common knowledge that define "national community" best of all.

Ang Pilipinas sa Iba't Ibang Panahon

Even so, that very state does not appear to be too self-assured when it presents its views. Let us see what happens in the fifth grade when social studies in public school are presented as *Ang Pilipinas sa Iba't Ibang Panahon* (1995). This book is divided into five units; the introductions to these are—in my opinion—sufficiently revealing.

Unit 1. The Way of Life of the Early Filipinos

There are important events in the lives of people and the nation that need to be recorded. This is history—the written record of the important occurrences in diverse periods. It is important to know the past and its relationship to the present as a secure basis to face the future. That is the purpose of the study of history. Not all that happened in the past could be written down, such as the way of life of the original Filipinos. In order to know about them, scientists are engaging in research. According to them, people have been living in the Philippines for the past hundreds of thousands of years. They consisted of Itas, Indonesians and Malays. Strangers came too, such as Arabs, Chinese

and Japanese. They stayed and traded here. The mixing of these groups stands at the beginning of the original Filipinos.

These earliest Filipinos had their own culture. This can be proven by the remains and implements they left behind. It is also proven by the research results of the experts studying the culture of the ancient Filipinos. There are many indications that the culture of the original Filipinos was rich and had reached a high level. This can be demonstrated by the social classes to which they belonged, the method of government, and their types of livelihood. All these illustrate the way of life of the earliest Filipinos.

The society of the original Filipinos was composed of different groups of people who came from different parts of Asia. Together, they established the settlements of our ancestors. Next to setting up their dwellings, they also moulded a system of education. They had ways of worshipping and believing, too, although there were differences in practice among them. When Islam, the religion brought by the Arabs, arrived in these islands, groups of people in Mindanao changed their religious practices. They embraced Islam. This had its influence on their way of life. Whatever the differences of beliefs among the original Filipinos, their culture remained one and the same. This is the culture that we, up to this day, develop, cherish and take pride in.

Unit 2. The Filipino Way of Life under the Spaniards

For 333 years (1565–1898), the Philippines was under Spanish domination. This brought changes in the way of life of the Filipinos. This, however, did not obliterate the native culture. There were changes in the system of government and in the material culture. Most importantly, our country got a name. From then on, it has been known everywhere in the world as the Philippines and the natives living there as Filipinos. . . . When Spain was defeated by the United States in the battle of Manila Bay in 1898, its government came to an end ... It was the duty of the missionaries to teach the Catholic religion and to spread Christianity.

Unit 3. The Incessant Endeavor to Reach Freedom

(The first part of the introduction to this unit states that the establishment of the various colonial governments caused important changes in the system of administration, in society, and in livelihood. Repeatedly, Filipino efforts to realize their freedom and to establish their own government were frustrated, such as when the Americans and the Japanese enforced their dominion.)

The system of government the Americans introduced the Filipinos to was a novelty. They spread the principle of democracy that until this day prevails in our land. They reformed the educational system.

Many children could study in the public schools. They introduced the values of cleanliness and health. Transportation and communication were improved, which resulted in many changes in the livelihood of the Filipinos. . . . There is a strong relationship between these innovations and the present way of life of the Filipinos.

Unit 4. The way of life at the time of the Third Republic (1946–1972)

The fourth of July 1946 is a great day for the Filipinos. It cannot be forgotten in the history of our nation. That day the Republic of the Philippines was inaugurated. . . . Be this as it may, it could not hide the poverty of the environment. The war had caused tremendous devastation. That destruction must be confronted with resolution. Hence, the period of the Third Republic was a veritable time of struggle, too. On that occasion, we had to fight against the poverty of livelihood. Most of all, that time was a period to reestablish ourselves.

Unit 5. The Incessant Endeavor to Establish the Nation/Country

Every period in the history of the Philippines illustrates some sort of serious endeavor of the Filipino people. Many decades have passed since they resisted the Spaniards, the Americans and the Japanese in order to become free. A variety of problems confronted the Filipinos in their liberation and at the time they obtained their freedom. Among these problems was the slow development of livelihood and peace in the country. Another obstacle is the absence of identity as a free people/country.

A common quality of the Filipinos is their capability to adapt themselves to any problem or crisis. Their reaction gives them the flexible power to overcome any difficulty or challenge. How did the Filipinos face up to the problems and challenges of the 1970s and up to the present?

In the introduction to Unit 1, several contrasting statements have been brought together. (1) Filipinos are a highly mixed racial group. (2) In spite of differences in origin, they apparently mixed so well that they had one culture that was well developed. (3) Even religious differences—that resulted in different practices—did not influence the basic way of life. (4) Their culture, therefore, remained one and the same from the olden days into the present. (5) This demonstrates the importance of knowing the past to understand the present way of life.

Yet, there was a snag on that long way. The earliest Filipinos, from deep down in history up to Magellan's arrival, apparently did not

recognize themselves as such until the Spaniards gave them a name. Be this as it may, colonial contact brought about a myriad of changes in the Philippine way of life, although native culture persisted (how?; what?).

The Americans bring development and progress of all sorts; they brought a superior system of government and policies (*patakaran*). When the Filipinos become their own master, they face problems, poverty, unrest. They even lack identity as a free people.

So, on the way from prehistory to the present, something seems to have gone missing. Whereas it has been suggested that people were united in culture—rich, and at a high level—and that colonial contact, especially with the Americans, brought progress, the present seems unclear, riddled with problems, and stimulates absence of identification with community—or perhaps even absence of community.

This weird evolution is difficult to explain. The textbook's authors probably had an idea in mind such as: "When politics, or the state were not interfering, cultural community prevailed. Then, in spite of being named and despite progress—or perhaps the changes leading up to modernity—life somehow loses its cultural hold. What remains are a weak state and a factious society that both miss the integrity to provide identity." As a result, history appears as the undoing of culture, and with it, of community. Of course, the book devotes its last pages to the protest against the degeneration of almost everything valuable in public life. Marcos out. Aquino in. People Power—rebirth.

Does this hope for renaissance mean that the "anarchy of families" will be replaced by a strong civil society anytime soon? Will such a civil society bring order to the public world? Will it restore dignity and responsibility to public office? Or is it that identity as a free people has meanwhile become illusory because the country is more like a market than a nation? Why identify with a market other than as a means serving personal and particular ends? Besides, people do identify with what really matters, that is, with their families and, sometimes, with their community. Societal identification—as in the past—remains weak, and it is only the impositions of the state that define national community and nationhood. The role of the school in all this—generating officially sanctioned confusion, mythology, national symbols, self-doubt and cultural insecurity—cannot be overestimated.

Some Concrete Teachings

In an ingenuous, almost artless way the first chapter of the ministerial text *Sibika at Kultura*, grade one (1989/92), begins to explain that all people living in the islands are Filipinos, whether their complexion is dark, brown, or white; whether their hair is kinky or straight; whether their eyes are slanting or round; whether they are Christians or Muslims. However that may be, "We can be proud of the Philippines" because the country is beautiful, which is illustrated by a standard listing of famous sights, such as the Mayon volcano, Bohol's Chocolate Hills, the island of Boracay, waterfalls, the colorful southern *binta* outrigger sailing boat, the *Nayong Pilipino*, and animals, forests, mountains, water, and fish. Upon this follows an exhortation to take good care of all that, to keep it in fine order, and not to destroy but to plant trees while keeping the water clean.

The next section introduces some of the national symbols, such as the flag that should be honored; the name of the national anthem, that is, *Lupang Hinirang*; the names of national heroes who made sacrifices for the sake of freedom, namely, Rizal, Bonifacio, Sultan Kudarat, and Melchora Aquino; then, the national flower, the *sampagita*, that stands for nice manners, and the national tree, the *nara*, that symbolizes sturdiness (*katatagan*).

Under the inviting title, "Be Proud: We Are Filipinos," the book for the second grade (1989/92) commences with a listing of the people's positive qualities. They are courteous, polite, and considerate, especially in relation to elders and authorities; they have a loving disposition which is demonstrated by the bond between parents and children, respect for elders and the dead (*Todos los Santos*), gift-giving and sharing; they are diligent workers and quick to extend help; they are resourceful and systematic, self-dependent (buying native products), and sincere (*matapat*). They are valiant, too, as illustrated by their fight against the colonizers.

Then follows a list of national symbols: the flag that should be honored; the lyrics of the national anthem; the national language; Rizal, who became an emblem because of his peaceful method of resistance; the national costume (*barong tagalog* and *baro't saya*); the national animal, leaf, flower, tree, dance (*carinosa* [sic]), and game. Then comes an illustrated listing of eight historic places, from Magellan's Cross to the Rizal Shrine in Dapitan, while the beauty and resources (*yaman*) are demonstrated by geographical formations, tourist spots, and animal life.

Under the heading "We Filipinos Are United," mutual assistance and solidarity, along with the provision of basic necessities, are said to be essential elements for a quiet, orderly, and safe life in a clean environment where people functionally depend on each other, as illustrated by dentist, nurse, police officer, fire-fighter and street-sweeper. As an ideal community, they cooperate, help each other through disasters, share tasks in agriculture, and deliberate in a democratic manner to solve problems. These people also rallied to recover freedom from the dictatorship, which was a period in which the leaders were separated from the ordinary people. Now, however, people enjoy freedoms again; they are free to vote and select their leaders; enjoy freedom of worship; are free to express their opinion, to associate and deliberate; and have the right to confidentiality. Then follows a long listing of fifteen national and local celebrations and traditions, including three Moslem feasts, and one for the Cordillera; of interest is the observation about the 25th of February, the Day of Thanksgiving and Solidarity, "We are admired by the whole world because of it."

The third grade still uses an edition out of Marcos's days (1985), reprinted in 1991. Its emphasis is on development and progress; the preface, however, formulates the book's purpose somewhat differently. The course should cultivate the spirit of nationalism and love for the country; foster right attitudes and good character in order to become good members of family and community, imbued with national identity and feelings of unity and loyalty. So, after a repetition of some geographical knowledge, the text switches to "Being Proud Of Being Filipino" through taking the example of model Filipinos. Then information is given about the legendary ancestors: Itas, Indonesians, Malays, arriving in succession, each new arrival driving the earlier groups deeper into the interior, each succeeding group smarter than the preceding ones. Whatever their accomplishments, they were hierarchically organized under *datu*; they were courageous, courteous, and naturally liked music.

These ancestors came into contact with the Chinese, Arabs, Japanese, Indians (*Bumbay*), Spaniards, Englishmen, and Americans. The Chinese were rather white, had slanting eyes, came for trade, and were diligent; they mixed with the Filipinos. Filipinos and Spaniards mixed too; the latter brought Catholicism, prayer, baptism, and formal education. The Americans came with human rights, democracy, and the equality of all, whether rich or poor, in education and public life. From all this sprouts the new Filipino; he is the result of the

mixing of the blood and cultures of his ancestors and the foreigners. Then follow his qualities: he is gentle, dignified, hospitable, religious, trusting in God, and respectful towards other religions; he is obedient and honors his parents, likes to help, and respects women: he is polite to them and defends them always. He is able to endure hardship and is diligent; he does not surrender to adversity. Moreover, he is courageous and filled with love of country, such as Gabriela Silang. We can be proud, we are enduring (*matibay*) and steadfast (*matatag*).

Then, in the section on "Duties and Rights," the pupil is assured that a state (*bansa*) needs loyal citizens and that, in order to progress and make it a better place, the latter have obligations and responsibilities to their country and people. The country asks us that we give our direct and wholehearted support to all its ambitions and ideals. In exchange we have the right to a secure, quiet and prosperous life that will inspire our loyalty. The services of the government are many; there is free elementary and vocational education for all, and books need not be bought for they can be borrowed. The center provides health services, and its police officers and fire-fighters are always prepared to help. There are orphanages, free legal assistance, a Government Service Insurance System and a Social Security System.

The image of the nation the DECS's course materials for the higher grades evoke is different from that projected in the lower. In the latter, wider society was imagined along the lines of a family, the government becoming a superparent showering beneficence on its nationals. The general view was hierarchical and ethically obliging. The later picture is less orderly. While the little that is given about the family conforms to the earlier teachings, citizens and government are projected as mutually dependent partners who together shape the nation state. Of course government, and thus the state, are awfully important, but they can only succeed if people and officials hold the positive values that create a good society. Because the curriculum of the higher grades is very repetitious and basically leads up to the material presented in the seventh, we shall skip it here.

Grade Seven (First Year High School)

The perspective of *Pagtatag ng Bansang Pilipino* ("the establishment of the Filipino nation," 1989) is immediately clear from the table of contents. In the first unit, the origins of the Filipino people must be

explained, which is followed by chapters on the oppression of Filipino freedom, then the sprouting and evolution of nationalism. The second unit, "Towards Independence," consists of the repression of Filipino nationalism and the delay of liberty. The third, "In the Period of Being on Our Own" (*pagsasarili*), presents challenges to independence (*kasarinlan*) and the authoritarian regime. The final unit is about "The New Filipino" and discusses the reestablishment of democracy and Filipino citizenship.

The picture this evokes is that of the eternal Filipino, from primitive times up to the present, whose freedom has periodically been frustrated and who, immediately after attaining his independence, had to surmount challenges and authoritarianism. Now, however, the Filipinos face the future with constitutionally inspired confidence. This view, of seeing early history in the light of the present, raises its own problems and, as we shall see, presents an obstacle to understanding "the process of Philippine becoming."

Here it is to the point to note the very opening sentences: they demonstrate a remarkable preoccupation with foreigners who, from the third chapter onwards, seem to play an important role in the islands, but whose most crucial contribution, namely, the creation of the Filipinos as a nation, and their country as a state, cannot be admitted. Yet, that there is something strange about Philippine unity is immediately apparent from the interesting statement that the country consists of 7,107 islands. This far-flung archipelagic diversity is recognized as a barrier to transportation and communication, and so to the unity of the inhabitants, and the evolution of their national freedom/independence.

A second obstacle to unity and mutual understanding among the Filipinos is the presence of the many different tongues, customs and traditions that give rise to strong feelings of local and regional chauvinism that are more powerful than the national sentiment. To overcome this impediment, the national language, Filipino, should be enriched and developed in accordance with the Constitution of 1987, in the hope that it may intensify the bond of union among the population.

So, what remains to be explained is the presence of so many ethnic groups who, all of them, are Filipino, in spite of their cultural and linguistic differences. This type of presentation, "We are all Filipinos," and the diversity these Filipinos display, forces the authors to write highly ambiguous and inconsistent paragraphs. By introducing the old-fashioned, or archaic, Filipino (*sinaunang Pilipino*), they

create a unity about which general statements can be made and a precolonial past that should either be idyllic or, contrarily, anticipate the present.

Historians say that, even in those days, Filipinos had political organization. This is known as the *barangay-state*. As a state, the *barangay* had a territory, a group of people, government, and authority (sovereignty). It also had a chief, laws, a juridical system. . . . The head of the *barangay* is normally called *datu*. . . . The *datu* holds authority and is the head who discharges the tasks of government. He is the chief law-maker, executive, justice, and military leader. The chosen chief has prowess, strength, and determination in order to defend the *barangay* against enemies. It is also necessary that he is a respected person in order that people will immediately submit to his orders. The *datu* could be replaced when he was not obeyed by his subjects. From time to time the *datu* was chosen on the basis of his suavity and intelligence (33).

The coming of the Spaniards is the beginning of the oppression of Filipino freedom. The widely scattered and independent *barangay-states* and the Moslem sultanates did not have the opportunity to unite. Thus the independence of the Filipinos as a nation did not prosper. When the Spaniards came, the freedom of the Filipinos was destroyed before it got the opportunity to arise (38). In the following forty-five pages this line is then explained, devoting almost half of them to Spanish rule and cultural contributions, the other half to the opposition to said rule and the evolution of nationalism.

"The Filipinos who were subdued by the Spaniards, received, were changed and enriched by the colonial culture that became a part of their own civilization," which is a reasonable assessment. It is therefore sad that it is not traced to its deepest consequences: without Spain, no Philippines; without Catholicism, no common culture. The relationship between colonization and the sprouting and development of nationalism is, however, taken up in the following chapter that begins by restating that the changes in the style of life ranged from the system of government to religious belief and conceptualization, and are expressed in literature, architecture, clothing, and food (60).

The text's preconceived opinion about the perennial Filipino does not detract from a realistic and excellent discussion of the origin and growth of nationalism:

While the Filipino Muslims were successful, most of the uprisings in other parts of the nation failed. The unity of the Muslims is not something one could ordinarily find in other areas of the Philippines.

Many uprisings happened because of the personal interests of the leaders. The Filipino custom of merely caring for oneself helped the colonizer to separate and divide the Filipinos. In those days, the Filipinos were not yet forged together as a nation. With everybody minding their own interests, Ilocanos, Tagalogs, Visayans, Bicolanos, and other groups fought each other. Because of this, it was easy for the Spaniards to use Filipinos to suppress the rebellions of fellow Filipinos.

However much the uprisings were frustrated, the consciousness was also growing that all Filipinos alike were experiencing oppression and maltreatment. They felt the absence of freedom and the low esteem the foreigners held them in. The quelling of the many uprisings cultivated a hatred that slowly awakened the Filipinos to the real necessity of uniting in order to obtain freedom. Is this the beginning of nationalism?

Nationalism is a feeling for the nation of those people who show loyalty to their own country and not merely to a single leader or chief. The root of this word is "nation" which is how an association or group of people is called who have a single desire and purpose in life and who are tied together by a single race, language, religion, and customs and traditions. It is not enough for people to have a place to live, a recognized government, and officials in order to have the feeling of nationalism. These are important elements, but the most important is the unity of the people, who acknowledge that they are members of a single nation and prepared to defend their freedom. This feeling is not natural to people, but sprouts gradually and can emerge quickly or slowly because it will be in accordance with the historical experience of the people. In the course of time the forms nationalism takes will also be different (63).

With so much honesty, and attention to the present problems of a pervasive "individualism," plus the weaknesses of common purpose and nationalism, the origin of the word Filipino can then be explained. . . . While the reformists are recognized to have first formulated the separateness of the Philippine nation from Spain and even threatened that the country could secede from the Spanish empire (71), they remained *ilustrados*, too. "The *ilustrados* did not have the determination to use violence in order to obtain reforms. The groups constituting the middle stratum of society reacted similarly. They avoided armed rebellion because that could harm their properties and businesses. While these two groups continued with their reform movements, the masses, under the leadership of Andres Bonifacio, grew restless and also lost the hope that there would be change" (70). Consequently, Bonifacio gets the spotlight (71-77) until he was to give way to Aguinaldo.

The American and Commonwealth periods are presented as a political development; the evolution of culture is treated scantily, even though it begins with the acknowledgement that even up to the present the strength of American cultural influence remains a problem. . . . The chapter closes on an interesting question, "MacArthur abandoned the Philippines and left the management of their own government to the Filipinos. Having been subjected to the rule of foreigners for many centuries, would the Filipinos be prepared to take care of their own affairs already?" (143).

The account of the ensuing presidencies highlights the perennial problems of American interference, frustrated independence, the struggle against the Huks, jurisdiction over the military bases, the lack of political will to initiate land reform, corruption, political manipulation and electoral fraud, the desirability of foreign investment, the irritation at American advice, the weak economy, the deceit of politicians, and the poverty of the masses. It is a pity that the rediscovery of nationalism and Recto's candidature for the presidency receive no attention at all, since these paved the way for subsequent student protest against Marcos. . . . The section begins with the observation that all problems are rooted in the long colonial past, a statement that seems to relegate responsibility to others.

In the section about language and literature that follows, American influence is pointed out again. People seem to be more attached to the borrowed language than to Tagalog. Besides, many people object to the use of the latter because they fear that it will weaken their proficiency in English. Moreover, Tagalog is not representative of the native tongues of the Philippines. In order to avoid this criticism, Pilipino (nowadays Filipino) is replacing Tagalog as the national language. In any case, the influence of English remains stronger than that of Filipino. On many occasions, English is mixed with Filipino when people are pressed to use the national language.

If this were not enough yet, a long list of book titles is given, devoid of any context, of which it is said that they exemplify the influence of English in the works of poets and authors, even if they write in Tagalog/Filipino. Even the subject matter they choose to write about is said to be influenced by the Americans. Besides, many prefer to write in English. Also the painters do not find native ways of expression; first they worked in the Spanish style, and now in the American. The exception is Carlos V. Francisco who works in a style of his own. Foreign music is more popular among Filipinos than their own styles. This compilation of comments is concluded with, "The

Filipinos received, changed, and enriched the foreign influences on their style of life. The borrowed elements became part of their own culture, got a Filipino stamp, and became part of the distinguishing characteristics of the nation" (186).

The last unit, "The New Filipino," basically introduces the political system of the Philippines under the Constitution of 1987 while referring to its preamble, or list of the very good intentions that it is hoped to achieve:

We, the sovereign Filipino people, imploring the aid of Almighty God, in order to build a just and humane society and establish a Government that shall embody our ideals and aspirations, promote the common good, conserve and develop our patrimony, and secure to ourselves and our posterity the blessing of independence and democracy under the rule of law and a regime of truth, justice, freedom, love, equality, and peace.

Then the question is raised, "How to become a true Filipino citizen?" and the legal criteria surrounding Philippine citizenship are introduced, followed by the rights and obligations of the citizen. The book ends on:

The fulfillment of their duties by the citizens is of great importance for the stability and the progress of a nation. They are the true hope of the country. From them emanates sovereignty. They are the government and they also resolve any political, social, or economic problem. Because of this, every citizen should actively participate in contributing to the development of their own nation (227).

Presenting the Nation

By drawing programmatic lines through history, such as from the free Filipino to the new Filipino with an interval of oppression, or by projecting an archaic, idyllic past as the direct precursor of the present, history is seriously distorted. Also, this does not provide a framework to explain the current state of the nation, or how it came into being. Because of this, it becomes very difficult to explain the presence of certain institutions in perspective. Formerly, society was stratified, with a valiant datu as its head. This model makes today's dispensation recognizable: a powerful president, surrounded by his clan/family, and loyally followed by his privileged *maharlika*, or cro-

nies, relatives, and sycophants; below these special people, one finds the freemen, or the middle classes, who pay the taxes; the lowest stratum, the *alipin*, is composed of the suffering peasants and laborers who provide the better-off with food and services.

1. This interpretation of national society is definitely not intended; still, the text's hidden model results in a scattered, internally divided 'community' within which people identify with class rather than with nation.
2. The national awakening has been relegated to the past. While it is the period that is most convincingly argued in historical-sociological terms, it predates the watershed event of the American Occupation.
3. It is the latter years that are invariably positively evaluated: the Golden Age before degeneration and decay take their hold.
4. Then the ideas of 'nation' and 'national community' become unclear slogans while self-glorifying politicians become the rule.
5. In their wake, the school presentation of the country becomes political rather than national, with the national community firmly secured in a harmless 19th century.
6. The present has been divorced from historical continuity; this results in a confusing picture of contemporary society in which individual people each fight their own battles.
7. National, then, is the bickering among politicians and, of course, the legal finesses of civics, ideal Philippine Government, and the New Constitution (PGNC, a compulsory course at first year college), in this way substituting a state and its organization for national vibrancy.

Throughout the school curriculum, a legalistic approach has been taken to explain things national, such as the laws on citizenship, the teaching of the Constitution, and the organization of the state. In the first three grades, this is compensated by the image of the nation as a family. From the fourth grade onwards, this image is destroyed: history is disconnected from the present; society no longer coheres; government is taken over by politics. In the last pertinent year, 'national' is fully equated with constitutional law. The nation seems to have disappeared. Such is what the school texts have to offer about national community.

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