

philippine studies

Ateneo de Manila University • Loyola Heights, Quezon City • 1108 Philippines

Unequal Partners

Review Author: Wilfrido Villacorta

Philippine Studies vol. 24, no. 4 (1976) 465–467

Copyright © Ateneo de Manila University

Philippine Studies is published by the Ateneo de Manila University. Contents may not be copied or sent via email or other means to multiple sites and posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's written permission. Users may download and print articles for individual, noncommercial use only. However, unless prior permission has been obtained, you may not download an entire issue of a journal, or download multiple copies of articles.

Please contact the publisher for any further use of this work at philstudies@admu.edu.ph.

<http://www.philippinestudies.net>
Fri June 27 13:30:20 2008

Another shortcoming of the volume is its being somewhat out of date. Though it was published in 1975, the latest bibliographic entries are as of 1972. This is especially noticeable when use is made of the 1960 Census of the Philippines — already 15 years old by the time this volume appeared, and superseded long since by the 1970 census. Hart's description of the sociopolitical organization of the Christian Filipinos, with its references to elections, a bicameral Congress, and a two-party system (pp. 21–22) make for especially nostalgic reading.

Because of my personal interests and experience, I was bound to find fault with a number of generalizations in the entry on Christian Filipinos. One such statement, made obliquely, is that "massive indirection" characterizes Christian Filipino behavior (p. 21). I am not sure just what Hart intended, but my reading (or misreading) of the sentence is that Christian Filipino behavior is frequently, or characteristically, evasive. Not so. This kind of behavior occurs, to be sure, but it appears in predictable situations and in a small minority of interpersonal episodes. What *is* characteristic is the *value* placed on pleasant interpersonal dealings, which may *on occasion* call for the use of conventional euphemisms. Before leaving Hart's contribution, let me register one tentative, friendly suggestion. I wonder if Donn Hart, old Philippine hand that he is, would consider giving up on such anglicisms as Cebuan, Ilokan, and Samaran (for Cebuano, Ilocano, and Samareño) and following instead the local usage.

One more point, and a much more important one at that. Contrary to what we read in the volume, the Tasaday are *not* "hunters and gatherers" (p. 40). They are *food gatherers* (period). It is in this that their world-wide near-uniqueness consists, in fact, rather than in their using stone tools or living in caves.

Especially as handy reference work on the so-called minor culture-language groups of the Philippines and Taiwan, this volume will serve the reader well. It belongs (with its companion volume) in every Philippine college and university library, and in the reference set of any agency dealing with these smaller groups.

Frank Lynch

UNEQUAL PARTNERS. By W. Scott Thompson. Lexington, Mass.: Lexington Books, 1975. 183 pages.

The book seeks to disaggregate the external and internal sources of Thai and Philippine foreign policy vis-a-vis the United States. The external sources relate to the complex network of dependent relationships of the two Asian countries with their traditional ally, as well as their dealings with other powers. The internal sources of foreign policy — the existing political and social structures —

determine the resistance of these dependent countries to external pressures.

The author endeavors to be as exhaustive as possible in identifying and analyzing these foreign-policy sources. He delves into attitudes of Thais and Filipinos toward Americans in general and toward the Vietnam war in particular; the dynamics of American presence in the two countries; formal and informal interaction between Thai and Filipino officials, on the one hand, and American diplomats, on the other; unique features of the decision-making processes of Thailand and the Philippines; role of the military and the activists; and the adaptation of their social and political systems to the American withdrawal.

The significance of the study lies in the comparative generalizations made about Thai and Filipino international behavior. Some of the more interesting generalizations are worth examining:

1. In the 1960s, Thailand sought to develop closer ties with the United States as a result of influences from the latter power and from her bureaucratic elite. A decade later, her concerns were the stabilization of her democratic institutions and the appeasement of Hanoi by phasing out security links with her American protector.

2. Philippine foreign policy has evolved from one shaped by dominant political elites to be a mere continuation of friendly relations with a former colonial power, to a new set of relationships formulated by a self-confident technocratic elite.

3. American policy toward Thailand has been based on considerations of security, while the policy toward the Philippines has been based on trade and American investment, as well as security.

4. A principal pattern of the policy process between Thailand and the United States is one of American hierarchies interacting directly with parallel Thai hierarchies, and countervailing ambassadorial attempts to achieve coordination. In the Philippines, there is the tendency to develop cross-cutting and informal alliances with one or another of the Philippine strongmen.

5. While Thais have institutionalized barriers between themselves and the foreigners, the Filipinos have not only failed to do so, but in relation to Americans, have also suffered from a "deep-seated inferiority complex."

6. Thailand was more sensitive to the regional consequences of the Vietnam war than was the Philippines. Being an island-nation, the latter could afford to look at the Vietnam issues on their merits, rather than in terms of contingent necessity.

7. Unlike the Thais, Filipinos were much more sensitive to developments in America for historical reasons. They considered democracy to be a vital interest and appreciated, much more clearly than did the Thais, the importance of the growing protest against the Vietnam war in America.

8. The Thais got more in the bargain than the Filipinos, in specific Vietnam-related funds, as a result of their "lengthy haggling and shrewd orchestration of their bargaining process" (p. 88). However, when the indirect

benefits are summed up, the Filipinos got more, especially because they contributed much less manpower to the war.

9. Societal sources of policy on Vietnam were stronger in the Philippines than in Thailand. "Only in the broadest sense did the highly important question of sending troops abroad elicit a public reaction in Thailand, whereas in the Philippines, one of the most intelligently conducted public debates in the nation's history helped to shape the nature of that commitment" (p. 99).

10. From an internal perspective, Thailand seemed to have fared better with a new elected government which deposed the former corrupt regime. From an external perspective, the Philippines appeared to have done better than Thailand. She received American support, "while laying the basis for a more autonomous position in the international system" (p. 161).

Many of the dichotomies presented above no longer hold, in view of recent occurrences in the region. Although Thompson's findings must be judged in the context of the period of his concern (1965–1975), the fact that some of his findings have been reversed by current developments somehow weakens the bases of his conclusions.

We might make some observations in this connection. It would have been ideal if the author consulted sources in the languages of the two countries. Most of his sources were periodicals and other secondary sources. The Vietnam war was a major stimulus to the resurgence of Thai and Filipino nationalism. Nationalistic literature as are most other literature in Thailand are written in Thai. In the Philippines, Pilipino was the medium of nationalistic writings and speeches, even during the Constitutional Convention of 1972.

On American policy, the author used as main source the *Pentagon Papers*. He could have used primary sources that would have lent more credibility to his claims.

It is also obvious that the data used for the period 1965–1970 are more complete and organized than those for the period 1971–1975. Comparative statements are, in fact, more developed for the earlier period than they are for the latter. Behind this discrepancy is perhaps the shorter length of time that the author spent in Asia in December 1973 – January 1974, compared to his earlier visits in 1970 and 1971.

It would also have been more meaningful if the case study chosen was the policy shifts of Thailand and the Philippines toward the Middle East question, instead of the Vietnam war. The interplay of the identified external and internal sources of foreign policy would have been more visible and of more lasting interest.

Otherwise, Thompson's study is a significant contribution to the field of comparative foreign relations, and serves as an impetus to Thai and Filipino scholars to pursue similar investigations, this time from an Asian perspective.

Wilfrido Villacorta