

philippine studies

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

Today's Native is Yesterday's Visitor

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Philippine Studies vol. 11, no. 3 (1963): 431—433

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Fri June 30 13:30:20 2008

effective. Teachers and students who are made aware that the school authorities are taking ethics most seriously would be deterred from dishonesty. They would learn that cheating in any form would carry penalties severe enough to have the teacher fired or the student expelled.

As the gates of the schools are flung open again, let us make certain that we shall conduct educational institutions noted not only for their magnitude but also for their excellence; and their integrity.

GERTRUDES R. ANG

Today's Native Is Yesterday's Visitor

In the Philippines, nationalism is *in*—and this is a good thing. Nonetheless, when I was asked to induct and address the new officers and members of the U.P. Botanical Society on August 18, I took the opportunity to make an obvious distinction that is sometimes forgotten. There is a big difference between resistance against something that is alien and bad, and resistance against something that is alien, but good or neutral. My opinion is that the first way of acting is defensible, while the second carries within it the seeds of cultural decay. Cultural growth is nourished by selective receptivity to external influence.

At the present time there are many Filipinos (and non-Filipinos, myself among them) who see modernization in the Western mold as a mixed blessing. This view breeds a certain sensitivity to imports from the West. Sometimes the concern is prompted by an influence clearly recognized as bad. In this case, the outside influence is rejected without hesitation; it is seen as harmful to basic values which (the rejectors feel) should be retained regardless of any change in the social or economic system. Thus we hear outcries against movies and TV shows that glamorize violence, or against an intruding fashionable club of American origin that features scantily-clad hostesses. This kind of concern has probably always been in the Philippines and—in one form or another—it is found in every society in the world. It is part of the cultural danger-warning system. Frontal attacks on cherished values are easily discerned and the posture of defense is correspondingly bold.

There is another kind of concern, however. This worry seems more characteristic of newly independent nations whose reflective citizens wish to be quite sure that they can modernize along lines suitable to themselves. They do not care to be manipulated or

pushed around, as it were, by more powerful nations, whether economically, socially, politically, or culturally. A frequent consequence of this fear of untoward influence is a spontaneous but wavering tendency to reject foreign influences wholesale while turning inward in search of the native soul. This search for self-understanding is both necessary and profitable, and many of us are presently engaged in it in the Philippines. But what about the companion tendency to fear foreign introductions as threats to national integrity?

The wonderful thing about foreign introductions is that, if they are worthwhile and well suited to their host country, they will not be foreign very long. Take rice or, more recently, corn and camote. How many people know that these so characteristically Philippine staples are the offspring of foreigners? So it is with questions of culture. The foreign elements of yesterday (the mestizo dress, Christianity, Islam, and even the jeep) are the native elements of today. At any point in time, Philippine culture is the temporary end-product of development and addition from within and successful innovations from without.

Our uneasiness regarding foreign cultural introductions may be allayed somewhat if we consider a parallel process illustrated by the history of Philippine flora. Seen in broad perspective, two historical facts emerge from a study of the plants of the Philippines. The first is that our economically most important plants and trees are, with few exceptions, the results of introductions made in prehistoric or historic times. Except for Manila hemp, the dipterocarps and certain other timber trees, a few palms, some bamboos, and the rattans, practically all species of plants of the greatest economic importance are the descendants of plants brought in, one way or another, from outside the Philippines. Furthermore, E. D. Merrill tells us that there is not a single food plant or fruit tree that cannot be traced to an origin outside the archipelago; the sires of all were introduced. Foreign introductions can be extremely profitable, and the Philippines, like many other island worlds, has gained greatly from the contributions of neighbors near and far.

Yet this dependence of the Philippines has not been one of passive receptivity. For despite the ultimately alien origin of most of our plants, the Philippine flora of today is characterized by a high percentage of native species, something like 75 per cent of all its plant species now being of Philippine origin. This is the second important fact: though the Philippines' inventory of native *genera* is comparatively small, these genera have proliferated and been modified in the Philippine environment. Again, those foreign plants that have found their way here by one agency or another have likewise adapted themselves to local conditions and produced an abundance

of new forms native to the Philippines. More than a thousand local varieties of rice bear witness to this vital process.

In summary, the Philippine environment has for millennia played host to a multitude of plant visitors. More than that, it has shown them (in characteristic Filipino fashion) such warm hospitality that many of these visitors have settled down and made the Philippines their home. Over time these residents have so adapted to their new surroundings that they have rewarded their host with a progeny that is now no longer foreign, but Philippine. Hence when we now speak of native Philippine flora we rightly include many forms whose ancestors were aliens. Every successfully introduced plant is the likely progenitor of a native Philippine species.

Speaking metaphorically, we can say that our present lush flora (over 10,000 species) is due largely to two forces in the Philippine environment; first, a readiness to receive foreign introductions; second, an equal readiness to adapt those introductions to its own peculiar conditions.

Receptivity to innovation and a capacity for reinterpretation—these are two clues to successful confrontation with the many cultural influences that are impinging on us from abroad. As long as we screen out the obvious cultural weeds, we need not fear any loss of identity because of a receptivity to other cultures. As in the plant world, so in the cultural: today's foreign element, readily received, is the likely progenitor of a new cultural form, distinctly Filipino. The sum of these new forms will enrich the native heritage for Filipinos whose grandparents are not yet born.

FRANK LYNCH