

philippine studies

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

Inside Philippine Society, by Mulder

Review Author: Jorge S. Davide JR, S.J.

Philippine Studies vol. 46, no. 3 (1998): 400–402

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Fri June 27 13:30:20 2008

pino guerrillas. Order was restored only upon the arrival of reinforcements in 1945—a good three years too late.

The epilogue of the book tells of the “unfairness” that happened to the soldiers after the war. It talks about the compensations which the World War II veteran received from the United States. Fighting under the standard of the USAFFE, the soldiers were considered as “American troops.” And as “Americans,” they were acclaimed for their bravery, sacrifice, loyalty, and dedication to the democratic ideals of freedom and equality. However, they were not given the same benefits as the American soldiers. They were only given a mere fraction of what was promised.

It is a sad thing to note that most of the Filipino soldiers’ effort have not garnered much support from the U.S. government. Until now, the promises made to the veterans of World War II are still not fulfilled. We still see war veterans in the news reports demanding their rights to be recognized and be given the proper benefits due them.

Demanding their well-earned benefits is not a simple question of receiving monetary payment. The matter directly tackles how the veterans are valued for their contribution during the war. They are presented as mere support players to the American troops when in fact, the Filipino troops endured the brunt of the Japanese onslaught.

Money is but secondary. Recognizing the contribution of the Filipino soldiers as an important player in the war stands as the primary issue. Reading and understanding Nieva’s narration affirms the validity of their heroism, and of their lives.

*Joaquin Jose Mari C. Sumpaico III, SJ
Loyola House of Studies
Ateneo de Manila University*

Inside Philippine Society: Interpretations of Everyday Life. By Niels Mulder. Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1997. 154 pages.

The book is a collection of essays about contemporary Filipino culture by the author, an independent European anthropologist, based on a six-year period (1985-91) of research in Lucena City. He further qualifies the culture as a “lowland Christian society” as expressed by members of “urban, Tagalog-speaking middle classes.” It presents analyses from the point of view of an outsider-observer of how members of that particular class look at life and understand it. With these analyses, the author hopes to arrive at a better understanding of Filipino culture and how the Filipino thinks. Having had extensive experiences in Thailand and Indonesia (specifically Java), he furthers the analysis by comparing the lowland Filipino Christian culture with the two Southeast Asian cultures.

The book is divided into four parts. The first part introduces the book and includes the first chapter where the author describes his initial impressions upon entry into Filipino culture. He relates his experience encountering an "overwhelming Americanization" and westernization which is evident in the use of the language, food, and entertainment. He notes a seeming preoccupation with "self-searching and self-evaluation" and a "failure of organized public life" that is evident in a disregard for public space.

The second part deals with what the author calls the "inner world of primary relationships or the morally-binding area of life." This part consists of three chapters that deal separately with the dominant religion, Catholicism and the family, how conflicts in primary relationships are handled, and ends with a critique on family and gender relationships. He observes that the localization theory explains the Filipinization of Catholicism. He sees the family as a strong social institute that goes to the extent of becoming "its own closed moral universe existing next to other such families."

The third part analyzes the wider society. In the sixth chapter, Mulder investigates cultural reasons for the country's economic and political woes. He points out the oligarchy, or the family culture which prevents the development of a "transcendent national interest." In the following chapter he traces the historical evolution of Filipino culture. Surprisingly, he does not mention Asian influences, such as the Chinese and other Southeast Asian cultures. He focuses instead on the Spanish and American colonial influences and how these brought about the concept of the "wider society."

The next chapter pursues the culture of the wider society as it is "maintained and reinforced by schoolbooks and the press." He follows it up with a chapter that analyzes the development of a participatory form of politics which arose during the later years of the Marcos dictatorship.

The last part is a comparison of the Filipino culture with Javanese and Thai culture. The first point of comparison is in religion—Catholicism, Islam and Buddhism. Religion is seen as a "likely candidate to fill the moral vacuum," "a personal identity marker and a source of moral guidance" in these three cultures. The next chapter compares the rise and fall of nationalism in the three countries. Mulder notes the fall of nationalism as a consequence of the emergence of globalization and a consumer culture.

The final chapter, as stated by Mulder in the introduction, "proposes a model to grasp the basic organization of social life...in many of the societies along the inner littoral of Southeast Asia." It analyzes the concept of order, society as a personal experience and its wider sense, gender, and religious representations as seen in the three cultures.

These final chapters reassure us that the Filipino is not different from his Southeast Asian neighbors and instead propose Filipino society as having a "pioneering function than constituting a deviation."

In the Introduction, Mulder is aware of the limitations of his work and he admits that it is intended mainly to stimulate "serious discussion that

clarifies both indigenous assumptions and outsiders' prejudices." He states clearly that the book is an "exploratory introduction" and as such is conceived to be a "heuristic tool useful to clarify prevailing modes of thinking." The introductory nature of the book makes it simple but interesting reading for those interested in knowing more about Filipino culture.

Based on the author's objectives, the book discusses adequately and clearly Filipino culture and the aspects of Western influence to it. Eastern influences, however, are missing and are mentioned fleetingly only as a pre-Spanish influence. As such, a significant component of Filipino culture is disregarded. However, Mulder succeeds in giving a good comparison of the Christian-Filipino, the Buddhist-Thai and Islamic-Javanese cultures and identifying parallelisms among the three.

The book is a successful attempt by a Western anthropologist to provide an introduction to lowland Filipino Christian culture. For people interested in knowing more about Filipino culture, it can be a helpful guide into the labyrinth.

*Jorge S. Davide Jr. S.J.
Loyola House of Studies
Ateneo de Manila University*