

The Filipino Social Imagination in Regional Context

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Abstract: Whereas the theme of this essay consists of a summary comparison and evaluation of the contents of social studies in Thai, Indonesian, and Philippine schools, it centers on the Philippine curriculum in order to identify the principles underlying the general perception of things social that seem to hold in the former two nation-states, too. As it appears that said contents obscure rather than clarify social life, the predominant imagination remains rooted in the practice of everyday life, and so the question is asked whether Thai and Indonesian nationalistic indoctrination leads to a clearer picture of wider society and a relatively higher degree of identification with the nation and its past. The evidence that it does, is not convincing, and so social life remains a nebulous sphere. In order to clarify it, certain didactic strategies are recommended, such as tracing the becoming of the respective nation-states. In such tying up of the past and the present, the evolution of and the continuities in basic social organisation and world view can be visualised while stimulating the social imagination.

Keywords: Philippines, Thailand, Indonesia, values education, social studies, official nationalism, approach to history

In his juxtaposition of the [intertwined] cultures of locality, the nation-state, and the global, Pertierra (2002) reminded us that locality ensures a strong sense of self rooted in practical life, but that this sense of identity is limited by its lack of self-consciousness. Because of the immediacy of its experience, it is well-nigh impossible to take one's distance of the everyday life of oneself, one's family, clan, and community. There life is taken-for-granted and beyond question. Through expanding

one's horizon to the nation-state, one's identity or sense of self comes to include a wider community, centered in a narrative of collective emancipation or conscious self-constitution (Pertierra, 2002). In the following, we shall investigate in how far school teachings in, first of all the Philippines, then in Thailand and Indonesia, can be expected to succeed in preparing the child for life in wider society and teach it to identify itself as a member of the encompassing nation-state.

Values Education in Southeast Asia

In 1965, when, as a young Dutchman, I set out on my field career in Southeast Asian studies, I was amazed to find that the text my teacher let me read, *The Treasure of Nobility*, was a primer in ethics, then in use in all Thai high schools. Whereas this text is about good manners and right conduct per se, in Indonesia at that time, values education was an integral part of the state doctrine of Panca Sila—a foretaste of what later became known as Asian Values—that, in 1978, was to be formalised as Panca Sila Moral Education. In the same year, erstwhile Prime Minister Thanin's initiative to bring order to the restless nation of 1973-76 resulted in a renewed course of ethics, this time not centering on individual conduct, but on being an obedient subject of Nation, Religion, and King. So, when in 1972 nationhood building was inserted into the Philippine curriculum, and later, in 1989, complemented with the independent knowledge and skill area of Values Education, I had spent long enough in Southeast Asia not to be Dutch-amazed, even as I was still motivated to investigate the deeper reasons why this subject is thought to be important.

When in Thailand, I had become familiar with the Hindu-Buddhist idea of Dharmashastra, that is, the science of the Dharma, or the moral principles of existence, that is the universal law. It is through cultivating insight in the working of the All and the moral motor that animates it that people can mature and grow wise. A person who is on this track will not behave like an automaton, because he understands. It is persons who do not understand cause and effect who upset good society and whose ignorance—or related greed and anger—causes suffering and confusion. This thinking is not about the opposition of good versus bad, but privileges the opposition between awareness and ignorance, and so the cultivation of consciousness and the study of the Dharma are closely related. In other words, in this perspective, values education

or the teaching of the science of ethics makes sense.

Without taking recourse to lofty Indic ideas other than bud(h)i—mind, reason, right thinking, disposition, morals, and, particular to Filipino, conscience and intuition—Indonesians and Filipinos agree with the Thai that ethics must be taught and studied, and that a nice person is considerate because his/her bud(h)i has been trained. This idea is clearly expressed in the everyday expressions of *kurang ajar* (I) and *kulang sa pinag-aralan* (F) that trace rude or wicked behaviour to being low on learning. As a result, there is nothing amazing about teaching values in school, even as there is an important difference in emphasis between the Indonesian and Thai curricula on the one hand, and the Philippine on the other. The basic ethics taught at home and to a certain extent in school emphasize the importance of knowing one's place in relation to others—an emphasis that is particularly acute in hierarchic societies that take the moral inequality of persons as a matter-of-course. Naturally, this teaching of the ethics of place is individual-centered and implies that the wayward behaviour of a single person can upset society, the moral imperative thus being conformity to good order, which, in Indonesian parlance, equates with behaving “harmoniously.”

At the time I studied *The Treasure of Nobility*, it was this ethics of place with its demands of self-control and self-effacement that took center stage. Whatever one thought or experienced of it, was a private matter that had no place in polite intercourse. Meanwhile, the emphasis has changed from the ethics of immediate relationships to the civics of being a compliant citizen according to a doctrine that submits the individual person to the encompassing nation-state. On this point, the contrast with the Philippines is striking. In the absence of an official ideology and its attendant sense of history, the course that was developed upon Senator Leticia Ramos-Shahani's call «to strengthen the nation's moral fibre» (Building a

People, 1988) highlights the individual conscience of students. Its teachings are rooted in systematic Catholic reasoning to the exclusion of other points of view, such as liberation theology, humanism, democracy, and moral equality, or ideas about good citizenship. As such, it ignores the influence of social conditions on individuals and their decision-making.

This is not to say that the lessons steer clear of realism. On the contrary, they situate individual moral choice in life-like situations that recognise that students' lives are set amidst abuse, cheating, and tricky deals; some of them have oppressive parents, indeed; they are exposed to peer pressure, bullying, and competition among classmates and friends; they may fall in love and their feelings may subsequently be exploited; even teachers and coaches may induce their wards to lie about their age, and so forth (Punsalan, et al., 1995). In brief, the course brings individual choice in focus in a rotten environment, and advises that such surroundings can be improved by following the voice of one's conscience and behaving properly.

The Blinkers of Philippine Social Studies

In the Introduction to Philippine Social History, McCoy (McCoy & de Jesus, 1982) observed that "the post-war emphasis on Manila-centric political history precluded discussion of broader questions," (p. 2) and that, in pre-1970 scholarship, the portrait of "the Philippines as a society was essentially 'political' in nature" (p.3). In the hope of breaking out of this narrow circle, he and De Jesus edited the above-mentioned collection of essays on Global Trade and Local Transformations [subtitle], so giving social and economic factors their due in national history. In the 1970-1980s, Nick Joaquin (1988) was tirelessly and convincingly arguing that national history is the history of its cultural evolution or, more forcefully, that culture is history.

Alas, because of the infatuation with Pilipinology in the 1980s and 1990s, in which

mythology around an archetypal Filipino surviving into the present detracted from critical scholarship, the work of many and otherwise respectable historian was derailed, as amply illustrated by Kasaysayang Bayan (Llanes & Veneracion, 2001; see also Mulder, 2000c). At the same time, the Department of Education was firmly asleep and decidedly stuck to Manila-centric politics to inspire nationhood and pride in country, while allowing some Pilipinological dogma to slip through in the social studies textbooks, such as statements about an admirable pre-colonial culture and a sophisticated political organisation (the *barangay-estado* with its written laws [!]). The allure of such teachings lies with its evocation of the eternal nation, the culture of which is seen as a national "thing" or possession that, as a fixed object is deemed instrumental for the creation of national unity at present.

Its textbook outline of the national course on history and government that all authors should stick to begins with geological theories of the genesis of the territory, the Constitutional shape of the country beefed up by the Archipelagic Doctrine, and an inventory of geographical features. At these, it should be noted that understanding and reading maps and geographical coordinates are taken-for-granted and that the geological theories are way over the heads of 12-to-13-year-olds and even of their teachers.

Upon this follow theories about the original inhabitants, most of which have long been exposed as wild speculations that do not explain a thing. Whereas some of the ideas are sound, they imply so much insight in prehistory and archaeology that, again, students and teachers are left in the cold. The main thing, however, is to inspire pride in original culture and to "know" that the inhabitants had relations with India, Arabia, China, and Japan, and that these contacts enriched the efflorescent Filipino culture.

Since textbook authors are allowed to fill in the outline according to their liking, the early

days may be elaborated up to filling half the length of a book (Gonzales, et al., 1989), but from then on political chronology takes over and follows the familiar sequence of Spanish colonialism, the awakening of nationalism, its high- and low-brow emancipation movements, the Revolution of 1896, the Philippine-American War, the blessings of American colonialism, the Japanese Occupation, Liberation, and Independence. This last period is chopped up in presidential reigns, Martial Law, New Republic, the anti-Marcos demonstration of 1986, more reigns, the anti-Estrada demonstration of 2001, and President Arroyo's administration.

Because of a periodization that highlights the ephemeral, the observations on the period of Independence read like a newspaper and are devoid of any line to imagine Philippine becoming. Some texts are adamant that politics is powered by tricks, opportunism, corruption, and shady deals—in which sense the picture of a rotten society is no different from that in Values Education—even as presidents are credited with their noble intentions that, following the outline, have to be spelled out, and that invariably come to naught.

The last section of the books is designed to explain the system of the Philippine State—its Legislature, Executive, Judiciary, Constitution, finances, and local administration—the working and duties of government, the legal niceties of Philippine citizenship, the rights and duties of the citizen, and civilian responsibilities. So, if this crammed and incoherent course in geography, history, and the form of government is anything to go by, we may safely conclude that students' social imagination has not been kindled and will wander in the wilderness of newspaper titbits and political cackle.

Destroying Historical-Sociological Understanding

Social critics and academics have long been amazed or even appalled by what is being

taught as Philippine history in school. Whereas Constantino (1966), in his essay "The Miseducation of the Filipino," directed his criticism at the colonial nature of the curriculum, the eminent historian of the pre-Spanish period, William Henry Scott, drew attention to the mythical nonsense about those far-off days that, to a large extent, still fills the books. Even the texts written according to the Basic Education Curriculum of 2002 spend attention to Otley Beyer's illusions, while Hindus, Arabs, Chinese, and Japanese keep enriching the culture of the Islands. Apparently those who approve of the textbooks have never read a page of the great essayist Nick Joaquin

According to the introductory statement of the Department of Education, social studies in the first year of high school should create understanding and appreciation of the history of the nation (*bansa*) in order that the students will become desirable citizens, inspired by love of country and people, and instrumental in the development of the nation-state. In fulfilling this aim, history is to be presented from a Filipino point of view by following its chronology (Department of Education, Culture and Sports [DECS], 1989), and so the student is confronted with a succession of events, dates, and presidents that offers little to hold on to and that neither stimulates understanding nor appreciation.

According to Scott (1968), distorting history can never substitute for critical explanation of the present and is counterproductive through suggesting a false identity. Simply said, authenticity can only be founded on truth, so, if the course aims at cultivating good citizens whose identity is rooted in the history of the nation, the becoming of the nation—its chains of cause and effect that lead to new cause and new effect—need to be understood, even as the very existence of the nation as a finished product still should be questioned (Rafael, 2000). What the students are presented with, however, is a mere succession of most often unrelated facts and

events, which implies that the memories of the young are crammed with forgettable dates, exotic places, and faceless names. On the contrary, to grasp and appreciate history we need to see relationships, to understand events—not only to know what happened, but how [and why] it came about.

Even so, Ocampo's (1995) 1991 call for "Changing Textbook History" is no more effective than Scott's or the compelling works of other serious historians, such as Benedict Anderson, O.D. Corpuz, Horacio de la Costa, S.J., Doreen Fernandez, Reynaldo C. Ileto, Glenn A. May, Resil B. Mojares, Ruby R. Paredes, John Schumacher, S.J., and so forth.

Over the years of my preoccupation with the Philippines, I have read the official and privately authored textbooks, going back to the late 1960s, then through the books written after the proclamation of the Educational Development Decree of 1972, followed by the texts composed in the spirit of renewal after 1986, to the latest crop according to the Basic Education Curriculum of 2002. Whereas in the beginning I was regularly taken aback by certain late-colonial contents—"don't be ashamed that you are [Malay-style] snub-nosed"; eternal indebtedness to Mother Spain; gratitude to the great US of A; "Luzon is as big as Arizona"; blatant admiration for outstanding thieves and ego-trippers—gradually amazement gave way to exasperation and irritation.

Since I have analysed the contents of these textbooks on various occasions (Mulder, 1997b, 2000c, 2009), it is not necessary to go into detail, other than giving a few examples about what is in and especially what is not in the history-and-government books. When evaluated as a curriculum, we can only conclude that it has not been designed by people who have ideas about history and the way it should be taught in order to make it relevant to the present.

The course's outline is political through and through, and should build up to having

an independent state with sovereignty, three branches of government, and foreign relations. To anticipate this situation, primordial communities are said to be Filipino and to possess all of these, which implies that there was nothing to learn or that the continuous process of change and becoming does not apply in the Islands. People there had a high civilisation, even wrote down [some of] their laws as the *barangay* chieftain (*datu*) lorded it over the 30-100 families of his jurisdiction. So, long before Montesquieu formulated the ideal of the separation of the *Trias Politica* (Montesquieu, 1748), the *datu* is said to be invested with legislative, executive, and juridical power, at the same time that he is the head of the armed forces. This is very much in the image of the absolute monarch who proclaimed *l'état, c'est moi* (the state, that's me) or of somebody like Marcos, the usurper of freedom and rights, and ordinary dictator.

The school's approach to history and government is crammed with this type of ahistorical and irresponsible statements that are a disservice to students and teachers alike. There are certainly many interesting things to be taught about life in the small communities of yesteryear that could [and should] be informed by basic sociological insight into their structure and process, and that could be illustrated and elaborated by the painstaking research of Scott (1968; 1982; 1992) on the pre-Hispanic Islands. But no, the present politics-inspired teaching requirements obscure history and abound in statements devoid of foundation, and so it becomes impossible to imagine, let alone to identify with the nation and its past.

Some Illustrative Detail

Why it is deemed important to know the names of many Spanish governors and all the official positions from the king in Madrid down to the *cabeza de barangay* is a well-kept secret. Instead, it would rather have been relevant to know who the men were who filled these positions, because

colonial rule can only succeed in collaboration with, normally, selected members of the previous ruling class. Especially in the Philippine Islands, where there were never more than pathetically few Spaniards, it could have been a revealing story that would link the far past to the present—which may precisely be the reason not to touch the prevailing relationships of power (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977).

On the other hand, it seems important to assert that the [gradual] opening of the country to world trade after the British occupation of Manila (1762-64) was a crucial element in the birth of nationalism and the genesis of the Filipino nation. According to the official text for the fifth grade, reading American and French magazines [sic] opened the minds to their respective revolutions and the promise of freedom, equality, and brotherhood. The revving up of the economy gave rise to an emergent middle class, composed of rich Filipinos, and Spanish and Chinese mestizos who enjoyed a high standard of living if compared to the ordinary people. As a result, they could send their offspring to Europe for advanced education, which exposed them to new experiences and ideas (DECS, 1989).

This hopeful, albeit awfully compressed aside on social evolution spanning some 140 years is followed up in the first year of high school with the statement that the economy developed in step with new agrarian technology, new products for export, and a general invigoration of trade throughout the islands that all contributed to the mental awakening of those on top (DECS, 1989). Yet, where these got their money from, the sea change caused by the fact that agricultural property was becoming valuable, the subsequent quest for it—foreclosure, grabbing, clearing—and the resulting class formation are, again, [deliberately?] left untouched, at the same time that it is suggested that the level of living of all and sundry rose because of the active economy.

Let one more “missed” chance for sociological explanation suffice. In the wake of Marcos’s exit

in 1986 and “I am a proud Filipino”-optimism, Marcos era textbooks had to be substituted by new ones, and to this day I find the *Pagtatag ng Bansang Pilipino* (DECS, 1989) the best among a multitude of counterproductive texts. In the chapter dealing with the early neo-colonial period, “The Challenges to Independence”, we even find a five-page section under the Cold-War title “The Problem of Communism” in which the injustice inflicted on the lower class is exposed, and in which its members’ hope is pinned on socialism, trade-unionism, and Marxism. It offers a sketch of emerging socialist and communist parties during the American and Commonwealth periods. After Independence, however, the duly elected candidates of the Democratic Alliance are cheated out of their seats in Congress. It was, as throughout the political history of the Islands, collaborators in, and those who contest landlordism out. And so, in the Cory era text it is clear who triggered the subsequent and very vicious civil war, the Huk Rebellion, in Central Luzon.

Now, this book is almost out of circulation. In its post-2002 successor volume, President Roxas is said to have earnestly persuaded the Huks to side with the government, but to no avail, and so the rebellion spun out of hand. In the privately authored *Kayamanan*, the Huks are said to have kept on fighting the Republic even as their original Japanese foes had surrendered. As a result, there were frequent clashes between them and the armed forces and the private armies of the big landlords, which led to quite a few massacres of civilians [we are not told who was massacring those villagers]. Anyway, when Roxas finally outlawed the Huks in March 1948, the Soviet Union further refused to recognise the independence of the Philippines. According to Moscow, the country was even then under the authority of the USA, which [interestingly] is said to be proof that the country was still deprived of freedom and independence (Antonio, et al., 2010).

The only part of the texts I went through that is plausibly, albeit sketchily, argued, is the arising of nationalism in the latter part of the 19th century. The fate of it and its effective destruction in the 20th century are not brought into view, and neither are the land grabbing and abuses of power and privilege when Filipinos got a good say in their affairs—such as during the short-lived First Republic and then as of 1920. Later, all presidents of the Republic are said to have been committed to land reform, but why the problem is perennial is never explained. Traditional politics? Political dynasties? Classes and class conflict? Quezon's dictatorial inclinations? Why politics and elections are so violent? Never heard of those things! Every issue that would invite historical-sociological analysis is side-stepped and left in the dark.

Regional Imagination: Caught in Everyday Life

Whereas sociological concepts, such as class, have become part of the western imagination, for Southeast Asians these are at best abstract tools that are not very relevant to understanding their experience of social life. To them, social life is rooted in their familiarity with a hierarchically ordered social arrangement based on the essential inequality of individuals, which gives rise to the view of society as a moral edifice that is supposedly in good order if everybody lives up to his/her ethics of place. As a result, there is nothing naive or amazing about persons high up in politics, be it senators or the president, to repeatedly appeal to a moral way of life to fight endemic corruption that, to a sociologist, is rooted in the exploitation of office and privilege in an a-moral public domain beyond the obligations of the concretely experienced life world.

This is not to say that there are no well-trained sociologists in the Region capable of all the tricks of western social analysis. Yet, in my experience with them since 1965, I have always been amazed that many revert in our

discussions to their indigenous moral view at the drop of an unwelcome hat. Consequently, in order to make social life imaginable, it could be a good idea if teaching departed from an action theory that highlights native principles of social construction among the far-flung Southeast Asian lowland populations that trace descent bilaterally and whose religious imagination mirrors their kinship organisation. Through this procedure, we could focus on dominant perceptions that can convincingly be traced back to the days when Animism prevailed, such as awe for the reproductive power of women (Andaya, 2006), the "sacred" position of parents, hierarchy as the moral backbone, related kinship principles, and competition for power as the highly admired social good (King, 2008). Such principles are experience-near in the same way as a western labourer knows himself to be a member of the working class.

Stimulating the Historical-Sociological Imagination of the Filipino

Whereas it is didactically sound to depart from familiar situations, school does have the task of preparing its wards for membership in the nation, and so it had better do so carefully and on the basis of critical explanation of the present instead of on the basis of weird assumptions about primordial Filipinos that merely suggest a false identity. It is the very becoming of the nation that needs to be explained, while even raising the question whether this becoming has already been achieved or still is in progress. Teaching mere chronology will not be very helpful to this project; what we need are theoretically and factually sound assumptions about the chains of cause and effect that stretch from the past to the time being.

At present, social studies seem to be stranded on the sterile and shifting sands of political events whose chronology explains painfully little. Even so, if politics must be the guide, then let us follow the line of becoming of the public

domain. Starting with baranggay organisation, we can safely posit that communities of 30-100 families were [face-to-face] communities in which governance, economy, and religion were integral parts of everyday life, in the same way as my present baranggay captain is a small farmer like most, of whom we may ask the honour to stand as a godfather at baptism or marriage, and with whom we share our small-talk as with anybody else.

It was Spain that appropriated a set of disparate islands that were given the name Filipinas, the geography of which was shaped over the first 200 years of her presence and upon which a state was imposed that was intimately connected to its religious establishment. As these evolved, the communal borders between the various baranggay were opened, so to say, thus expanding horizons and heightening the consciousness of belonging to certain ethnicities, such as Ilocanos, Pampangans, Tagalogs, and so forth. For a long time, because of its foreignness and onerous impositions, the legitimacy of the state was low in the eyes of the subject population, but for most it was inescapably there as they remained under the control of their betters who collaborated with the new master, and gained status and privilege to boot.

To be incorporated in the empires of the more powerful and to be moulded in the image of more advanced civilisations does not come for free and certainly is no fun for the ordinary people concerned (Zialcita, 2005). In the Indic or Hindu-Buddhist kingdoms of the Khmer or on Java, they were press-ganged to build Angkor Wat, the Borobudur, and Prambanan, to serve in the armies of their lords, to neglect their fields, and to give up parts of their previous way of life. Even so, nowadays there is nobody who complains about it, whilst even simple people take pride in those monuments as proof of a glorious past. When the Romans overran Gaul, the native Celtic tribes were forced to build their roads, strongholds, early cities, aqueducts, amphitheatres, spas,

and to pay taxes to Rome, while, in the process, they were absorbed into a more sophisticated civilisation that, despite the subsequent invasions of the Franks and Burgundies, still puts its stamp on contemporary France and with which the French are smugly at ease. The experiences of the natives of the Islands are no different, even as many lowland Christian Filipinos experience unease when reflecting on their Hispanic heritage (Zialcita, 2005).

Whereas the impositions of State and Religion came early [and were, so to say, of a “feudal” nature], it took some 200 years before the Economy began to differentiate from the practice of everyday life to become a separate institutional realm. As a result, it is only in the late 18th and the 19th century that a fully fledged public domain came into existence, that classes differentiated, and that the current pattern of society came into view. In the 19th century, the secularisation movement and the blatant abuses of the Spain-born regular clergy resulted in depriving Religion of its erstwhile God-given [feudal] character, at the same time that the Spanish colonial State still seemed to be stuck in the Middle Ages.

Under American “colonial democracy” (Paredes, 1989), Religion as a public institution was officially separated from the State, and the hegemony of the state-owning oligarchic class came to full bloom. When it was finally granted sovereignty, it could only maintain itself by kow-towing to the former American master and by splitting the potential nation into the privileged and the exploited who did not share in a narrative of collective emancipation or conscious self-constitution, as Pertierra (2002), would have it. By subscribing to the position that the Filipinos had no identity as a free nation, they recognised that building the nation was at best a task stretching way into the future. I can imagine that schoolbooks that must glorify the eternal nation are not likely to be rewritten anytime soon according to the rather coherent historical-sociological scenario of political

development suggested above. It would short-circuit the holy cow of mythology with the reality of life, and goes uncomfortably against hegemonic interests. Gracefully, if we follow Nick Joaquin's advice that Culture is History and History is Culture, we can draw other than political lines to make the present and the past relevant to each other.

However often the texts claim a respectable past in which primordial "Filipinos" [practically, the consciousness of being Filipino only evolved after 1872] were in contact with the major civilisations of Asia, such contact did not contribute anything to native technological development. At the time that all of Asia and most of the Austronesian world were ploughing their fields as a matter-of-course, the people in the Islands still depended on the hoe and corresponding low yields. Now, if I were a teacher, I would revel in opening the minds of students through the story of the coming of the plough, the harnessing of the carabao, and what it did to production. In a few years, a land of relative scarcity became a land of milk and honey, with the exception of the dry islands of the Visayas that were henceforward safeguarded against hunger through the introduction of the Mexican crops of camote and maize.

The interesting thing about such real events is that a teacher can make students think about the consequences of technological innovation and that they can reason and discuss what is likely going to happen without his or her prompting. He could well begin with letting the students think about the effects of recent technological devices that changed the worlds of students and their parents, such as the shopping mall, the cell phone, and the Internet. Even as their fathers still may know how to strum a guitar, the current generation is hooked on the self-help of the videoke screen. In this way the students can draw parallels with their own experience while appreciating that the advent of Spain caused an agricultural revolution through the introduction

of new technology and a gamut of New World crops that changed diets throughout the world.

Let the students think about the literally far-reaching consequences of the introduction of the horse, the wheel, roads and bridges, and let them dwell on the opening up of mental and geographical horizons brought about by shortening distances and getting acquainted with further-away neighbours. As McLuhan commented in now far-off 1964, the medium is the message, and new media, new "extensions of man," new sources of power, production, and efficiency irreversibly changed the world and with it, mentality (McLuhan, 1964).

A very far-reaching new medium was cash. With the gradual monetisation of economic life—for the common man as a consequence of the head tax—personal relations based on barter exchange gave way to the businesslike "anonymity" of the market. With the differentiation of the Economy from everyday existence in the 19th century, the opposition between capital and labour changed the way in which life was organised. All these, and the advent of many more crucial media throughout the history of the last 200 years and into the future can be reasoned and discussed by the students and may give them the feel for history most Filipinos so far go without.

Of course, new media need to be initiated and pre-existing situations may shine through for a long time to come. The organisation of the inner core of life with its loyalty to family and the identity-confirming clan of relatives has withstood the onslaught of time. People still identify with their home-base in the near community. The relations that count are those to personally known others and often involve debts of gratitude and their resulting obligations. So, even as horizons have expanded and a vast public realm, composed of the institutions of State/Politics, Economy/Cash and Religion/Church, surrounds the experience of everyday life, the reasoning proposed in the last few paragraphs gives students the chance to draw lines and to

connect their cell-phone experience with the time we had to meet face-to-face in order to get a message across.

The great Institution in which the past irreverently shines through is Filipino Catholicism (Mulder, 1997b), at the same time that it has occasioned a decisive change in mentality and world view. Much of pre-Hispanic Animist practice is recognisable in its present Roman cloak, at the same time that the teeming world of spirits, chthonic representations, dewata and gods has, to a large extent, given way to a family consisting of Father, Son, Mama Mary, and Sto. Niño, and to the company of saints that includes the near ancestors whose companionship is invoked on All Saints Day and in prayer. At the same time, the female and cross-dressing male mediators with the supernatural, the babaylan, have largely given way to celibate men.

This process of Catholicism's localisation and acceptance allows for many good stories that make sense as long as these are based on a solid understanding of Austronesian Animism. To refer to Bathala as adumbrating monotheism, and thus as a respectable achievement of primordial culture, is as inane as referring to Zeus or Jupiter as such. As Indra, Bathala holds a similar position to the former in Indic religious discourse, which is to say, in a discourse where the quest for human meaning is grounded in the immanent animus that enlivens the universe. In spite of its numerous animistic accretions, the coming of Catholicism signals a mental break with the past as it privileges the transcendence of the Creator Force over a mundanely rooted animus.

Missing: The Common Social Imagination

Whereas the explanation of the effects of new media, the emergence of the public domain, and localisation of extraneous religious inputs may fire the historical imagination, it should be complemented with a basic understanding of the students' everyday situation, on which all texts are deafeningly silent, and that yet needs to be

conceptualised in order that the resulting mental ordering may provide basic tools to build a conceptual apparatus for further, not experience-near analysis and understanding.

In the above, I have drawn attention to family and community as the anchors of personal identity. Whereas the Philippine texts do draw attention to the hierarchical or pyramidal organisation of baranggay society, they fail to explain that this order of social relationships comes "naturally" in Regional thinking as it jibes with the stratified system of moral relationships current in the basic family and wider descent group. In Southeast Asia, moral inequality exists "for itself," which may explain the vagueness characteristic of the mandatory teachings about egalitarian citizenship, the role of civil society, democracy, and Constitutional rights, even as these are repeatedly invoked as respectable emblems of the nation's civilisation.

From their earliest days on, Thai, Javanese, and Filipinos experience that they are part of a ranked arrangement, in which seniority prevails over gender, and that extends to the near ancestors, as well. For their wellbeing, the latter depend on the prayer, offerings, invitations, and news of their descendants who, in turn, depend on the hearing and blessing of those who cared for them earlier in life. *Vis-à-vis* their children, parents practically are ancestors whose sacrifices and boundless care place their children under a debt of gratitude (*nii bunkhun* (Th); *hutang budi* (I); *utang-na-loob* (F)) that can never be repaid and that requires their unconditional respect. As far as the mother goes, this results in her position at the pinnacle of the moral hierarchy, so becoming her children's primary super-ego representative.

In the intimate milieu of family and communal relationships, hierarchy—from prowess to dependency, from moral pinnacle to indebtedness, from seniority to being the Benjamin, and from communion with the supernatural to being left to one's own devices—not only comes "naturally,"

but is moral per se; people are morally unequal—such is the order of the world—which results in the perception of known society as a moral edifice. Within this edifice of unequal positions, individuals are keenly aware of their relative place vis-à-vis others, be it merely on the basis of seniority and more particularly because of relative obligations, debts of gratitude, and credits. This awareness and the behaviour it induces is known as the ethics of place in a highly person-focussed and personalised sociality.

This concretely experienced life world shades off into a not morally obliging space that appears as the property of others, be it the king, politicians, landlords, or other power-holders. That space may be seen as "public in itself," but is not experienced as "of the public" or "for itself." It is the vast territory of impersonal and thus a-moral relationships where one ventures—if at all—to serve one's political and economic well-being. This domain is reported about in the newspaper and other mass media that provide the ephemeral images and scandals by which it is, often deceptively, substantiated.

Comparing with the Neighbours

We embarked on this essay with a summary exposition on the logic of the teaching of values in Thailand, Indonesia, and the Philippines. In doing so, we were struck by a crucial difference between these neighbours: whereas the emphasis in Thailand and Indonesia lay on conformity with encompassing groups—from family and community to nation—Filipinos were advised to follow the voice of their trained conscience.

Here we will venture the opinion that this important dissimilarity has to do with the absence of a national ideology in the Philippines. Whether this is the root of the much commented upon underdevelopment of nationalism and the failure to visualise the whole, is a moot point; the issue is that, in view of the very incoherence of the social studies curriculum, the social imagination remains locked in the experience of everyday

life and personal patron-client networks. The Philippine newspaper fare confirms this, as it is almost exclusively devoted to political personalities and the scandals they cause or are involved in. With this narrow focus, the wider picture remains as blurred as it did in school.

Hostage to National Ideology

In both Thailand and Indonesia, the teaching of social science subjects and the humanities is held hostage to the mandatory indoctrination of the national ideology. In the Thai case, it is substantiated in the doctrine of the Three Institutions—Nation-Religion-King—and its contemporary expatiation on the dogma of "democratic government headed by the King" (Mulder, 2000a), while in Indonesia it is presented as "Pancasila and Civics", in which the doctrine of the Panca Sila (Five Principles) is expatiated on in all school years (Mulder, 2003).

As "democratic government headed by the King" has become a well-worn phrase, it has, in more recent texts, been enlarged on as "the Thai democratic way of life." In this, democracy is represented as the expression of the will of "the people" or nation, and not as the expression of the positions of citizens in their diversity. The idea of society as an arena of conflicting interests and opinions, let alone the democratic negotiation of these and the role of active citizenship, are not considered. Contrarily, students have to make do with democracy as an ethical way of life in which people give in to each other rather than deliberate.

In order not to be totally led astray, the idealisation of Thai ways as eminently democratic is then balanced through noting the widespread disinterest in elections, the prevalence of highly competitive politics, together with blatant abuse of, and admiration for, power. To these, high school adds money politics, the persistence of "feudal" practices, and ego-centeredness. It is implied that Thai society is or should be seen as a well-structured moral community under the benevolent guidance of the King, and so the

above touch of realism is said to root exclusively in the flawed morality of certain individuals (Mulder, 2000a).

Similar to the Thai texts in which civic rights need to be acknowledged even as people are warned that claiming them irrespective of concern for others will lead to trouble and confusion (Mulder, 2003), the Indonesian explanation introduces them as God-given and guaranteed by the state. This notwithstanding, such rights do not give rise to individualistic citizenship, because in Pancasila thinking the morally autonomous individual simply does not exist. The smallest social unit is “community,” of which the individual is a fully integrated part.

In order to argue this convincingly, the Pancasila state usurps religion, as belief in God is acknowledged as its moral basis, and as religious devotion leads to good citizenship. The individual is under the moral obligation to yield to what is more exalted than his or herself, which implies submission to God, state, nation, society, teachers, and parents. The resulting harmony is the precondition for national development and the future prosperity of all.

That life looks different on the other side of the school gate needs, like in the Thai case, to be acknowledged. There, people like to depend on government or are given to fatalism, pessimism, and indifference. Corruption, individualism, materialism, the lure of money, obsession with status, egoism, and secularism are basic problems. All of these reflect the separation of worldly and ultimate concerns, that is, the separation of state and religion, and can be reduced to certain individuals’ flaws of human nature (Mulder, 2003).

Dharmashastra Triumphant

The anti-sociology of the Thai and Indonesian national doctrines reappears in the teachings on social science subjects. Similar to the Philippine case, in Thailand these teachings aim explicitly at creating people who will behave in conformity

with their culture and society-big community-state (Mulder, 1997a), while in Indonesia they are supposed to foster mutual respect and social solidarity in order to achieve an orderly social life (Mulder, 2000b). Apart from this, the social studies courses at senior high school in both Thailand and Indonesia [so far, the senior level does not exist in the Philippines] are thought to be introductions to sociology and anthropology that will result in basic analytical skills and an understanding of the social process. In order to do this, both pretend to make a conceptual approach that has been specified by the respective Departments of Education and that recurs in all the relevant textbooks.

The four officially sanctioned Thai texts had at least one Ph.D. on each team of authors, most of the others holding Master degrees. Alas, these teams were not coordinated and were ignorant about the texts the others produced. Apart from this, even within single semesters confusion is introduced through repeatedly “defining” or circumscribing ideas anew. For instance, four different objectifications of culture—all of them at variance with the familiar Thai idea of good order—are further substantiated with its five qualities followed by its five functions. And so it goes on.

In other words, “concepts” are presented in isolation from each other and are not placed in any theoretical frame, and so the students and their teachers will never see the wood for the trees, and persist in the age-old tradition of memorisation. It would have been a big step forward if all those PhD’s and MA’s had confined themselves to a single theoretical frame in which concepts cohere and allow for rational insight. As it stands, however, the Thai course impairs sound reasoning.

Needless to say, it is crammed with moral advice that is guided by the blinkers of keeping the prevailing relationships of power out of sight. So, through privileging “common sense” over causality, we learn that poor people are

poor because they have no education; because they lack education, they have no moral sense; they come to town, and then live of crime and prostitution. They should be taught manners and morality, both by the government and the private sector.

The ways in which the texts proceed are way out-of-date, and in view of the fact that social subjects are taught for the full twelve years before going on to higher studies, it is a shame that the chance has been missed to kindle either the sociological or the historical imagination (Mulder, 1997a). The hotchpotch Indonesian students are presented with (Mulder, 2000b) is not more appetising than its Thai counterpart, so a single example of its taste should suffice: “The tension between order and freedom results in the fact that regulations always have to be enforced. That is why people prefer traditional values that no longer change. Such conservatism is challenged by ‘innovatism’... A social value can be defined as an acceptable attitude and feeling serving to formulate what is true and important. In addition, a social value can also be formulated as a guideline or a social evaluation of things ... As attitudes and feelings about social values, these are tied together as a system that is thus known as a social value system” (Mulder, 2000b, p. 60).

In summary it appeared that individuals have a will and a drive toward freedom. These should be tamed in order that the person can be integrated as a position-cum-role in a harmonious totality of such positions. The young person is seen as an empty vessel to be filled with rules, values, and further conventions. If this is not done, he/she will endanger society. In this view, the person has no independent existence, but should be a subservient part of the social whole.

The social body has been dressed up as a—harmonious—community. This extremely functionalistic position was paired with a concept of “knowledge as ethics,” which reinforced the tendency of objectifying values as causes. As a result, society’s most natural conditions, that is

as an arena of conflicting interests that is always on the move, remained hidden from view to give way to mutual deliberations that always lead to unanimity.

In such a scheme, the course of history becomes functionalistic, too; it relates the—purposeful—destiny of the nation. As a result, it becomes a creed in which the expediency of the present dictates the past. In doing so, it ignores the process of becoming and precludes the development of any sound historical imagination (Mulder, 2000b).

With the Thai and Indonesian assumptions about the individual person, society, and history, it is safe to conclude that current school education should still be understood as dharmashastra, as moral education that is not concerned with creating morally autonomous citizens who take their decisions in good conscience and still are socially responsible. On the contrary, students should be taught wisdom, and for as long as they behave unwisely, they must be taught discipline, obedience, and submission. At a certain moment, though, they are expected to be wise, to conform, and foster social harmony.

Evaluation

Whereas the importance of values education among the neighbours recurs in the Philippine Islands, the latter’s curriculum is redeemed through the boon of realism and a straightforward approach that highlights the individual choice that sets persons apart from each other; this contrasts with the obfuscation in Thailand and Indonesia where the person is assumed to give him/herself up to the encompassing group. By itself this does not mean that Filipinos have a heightened sense of individual social responsibility as they are very much at ease with the anonymity of the public sphere and with seeking protection in the identity-confirming inner circle of life (Mulder, 2011). In relation to their neighbours, Filipino students may be deemed lucky that the course on their own history and government takes the first

year of high school only. Similar to the Thai and Indonesian teachings, it does not bring the historical-sociological imagination to life, as among the former the teachings are systematically distorted by the imposition of national dogma, at the same time that in the Philippine case history is dogmatically misrepresented by Philippinological assumptions that should evoke historical respectability, but that miss any foundation. As a result, the becoming of the countries, their states, and emerging nations remains out of sight, even as the evolution of social classes and the structure of power are not allowed for. This results in the homogenisation of culture and populations, and an uninspiring range of political events.

The question that remains is whether school teachings in Thailand and Indonesia are more successful than in the Philippines in expanding their students' horizon to the nation-state, and whether their identity or sense of self indeed comes to include a wider community, centred in a narrative of collective emancipation or conscious self-constitution. Whereas it is obvious that the sheer endless bombardment with The Three Institutions or The Five Principles does result in a sense of national uniqueness and identity feelings, it is equally obvious that it does not succeed in bridging the gap between the privileged center and the far-flung provinces.

With this gap I do not aim at Muslim separatisms in Southern Thailand, Aceh, or Mindanao, or at home-grown ethnic nationalisms of Malay speakers in Southern Thailand, Papuans in West Irian, or the never Hispanicised "Moros," but at populations that identify as provincial Thai and Indonesians. The dogged protesting of the Northern and North-eastern-based Red Shirts was a clear expression of their sense of disenfranchisement in the Thai polity (Phongpaichit & Baker, 2014; MacGregor Marshall, 2014); to them, former PM Thaksin represented hope, as much as former PM Banharn did in his province of Suphanburi

(Nishizaki, 2011). The neglect and obvious non-identification of those who are without influential national politicians was clearly brought out by the depredations of the "neo-colonial" elite of "decentralising" post-Soeharto Indonesia (Collins, 2007). As a result, in Thailand and Indonesia, despite their national doctrines, the promise of "collective emancipation" and a sense of self that includes the nation-state should not be taken for granted.

Apart from the obvious chasm between centre and periphery, the sense of national community may also be difficult to instil among those whose social imagination is bound by their experience of everyday life and personalistic relationships. Consequently, the various teachings fail to bring a credible overarching or integrating narrative to life that ties private life to State, Religion, and Economy and that gives rise to a vibrant imagined Nation. In school this is aggravated by the way the general social imagination is ignored through not learning to conceptualise the everyday life of the students, with the result that social studies remain hanging in the air as its teachings do not connect with ordinary experience while persisting in the myth that national society is or should be like a harmonious family.

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