

Nationalism and a 'Usable Past'

Kathleen Weekley

This essay analyzes the ways in which official organizers of the celebration of the centennial of independence from Spain, and their critics, treat the notion of 'history', its relationships to 'the past' and to nationalism — as a political project and as a cultural movement. Commentators across the political spectrum seem to share the view that nationalism is still crucial to Philippine development (in a general sense) and that history can serve the goal (Constantino's 'usable past'), yet few ask searching questions about what kind of nationalism is possible today. The essay takes issue with the way in which nationalists understand history, and with the notion that a shared heritage is a necessary condition for building a just and democratic state.

THE 1998 CENTENNIAL OF PHILIPPINE INDEPENDENCE FROM Spain was the occasion for both celebration of Filipino history and renewed calls to make Filipino nationhood a reality. It focused critical attention on the status of nationalism as a political project and as a cultural movement, yet provoked few really searching questions about what kind of nationalism is possible today. Across the political spectrum, commentators seem to share the view that it is right to celebrate the 1896-1898 acts of national sovereignty because, if the nation is to progress, then Filipino feelings of shared values must be strengthened. It is argued further that, in some uncomplicated way, history will serve this goal — that we can make a usable past, as Renato Constantino said several years ago. There are disagreements about what kind of progress is desirable and what events in Filipino history best reflect the sort of values that will underpin that progress. But there seem to be few disagreements, even among left-wing

KATHLEEN WEEKLEY is a postdoctoral research fellow at the Institute for Social Research, Swinburne University of Technology, Melbourne, Australia.

critics, with the notion that a shared 'heritage' is a necessary condition to build a nationalist state; if we excavate enough of 'the past', reveal more of the positive values in it and teach them to Filipinos, then the future will be better. But the realities are much more complicated and the difficulties not limited to the external, political ones but include the very ways in which the intellectuals of the nation-building renaissance view their 'history'.

This essay reviews some of the ideas about history that have been presented during the Centennial in 1998, by official organizers and their critics. My arguments rest on a number of assumptions that cannot be spelled out here but should be mentioned at least in passing: (a) nationalist projects have been made more difficult in both economic and cultural ways by the processes and effects of globalization; (b) globalization is not simply a continuation of age-old 'imperialist' policies in one of its forms nor is it 'merely' the restructuring of capitalism, it is more than this and its social and cultural effects are different from those of earlier versions of the capitalist mode; and (c) therefore, whether nationalist or socialist (or both), contemporary resistance to globalization must address its specific effects carefully. We cannot afford to presume that because history is about the past, it is immune to these changes.

History is not simply 'the past' written down; in the process of being made into stories for the contemporary telling, history is being made. Furthermore, national history has always included the deliberate exclusion of some parts of the past, so that the heritage that a nation claims

**We can no longer assume
a relatively simple relationship
between a 'usable past'
and a workable nationalism.**

is never the whole or 'undistorted' story. Precisely because its purpose is to provide a (usually) heterogeneous national-state with a set of homogenous myths to serve as 'cultural glue', national history always leaves some people's stories out. As discourses of international human rights —

including self-determination for indigenous peoples and national minorities — gain greater purchase around the world, these modern myths of national identity come under increasing strain. We can no longer assume a relatively simple relationship between a 'usable past' and a

workable nationalism. This essay addresses some of the difficulties of this relationship. The first part discusses the Philippine Centennial and its nationalist critics (and the cracks in the national identity project revealed by the Centennial itself); the second part discusses the problems with the way in which 'history' seems to be understood by the Left and other nationalist commentators; and the third section points out the kinds of problems that arise when we attach national identity so closely to the idea of a shared heritage.¹

NATIONALISTS CRITIQUE THE CENTENNIAL

THE resurgence of interest in nationalism in the Philippines was set off not only because the Centennial presented the opportunity for it, it was also a response to wider political realities: 'The whirlwind of globalization is triggering defensive reactions around the world, often organized around the principles of national and territorial identity' (Castells 1998). Discussions about history and identity in the Philippines at this nationally particular time, then, mirror similar discussions and movements occurring in many places as globalization reconfigures patterns of alienation and belongingness. The 1998 Centennial festivities were not only happy commemorations of key Filipino historical events but also attempt to strengthen the national historical myths to shore up a national identity that seems to be under threat. Gregory Bankoff (1998) calls the Centennial 'the centerpiece of an attempt to create a new state-sponsored political ideology [of] Filipinism'.

The Centennial festivities attempt to shore up a national identity that seems to be under threat.

This is not the place for a detailed discussion about the motivations and techniques of the Filipino state's use of history for national-state ends, but we should note that the Centennial constituted a crucial opportunity for the state to pursue its cultural nationalism. For as with every other state today, the Filipino state's nationalist project can only be cultural; it cannot be a traditional economic nationalism (e.g. of protectionism) because such a strategy may weaken the state's competitive edge in the global economy.² The problem for the state is that its neo-liberal restructuring program creates or deepens social cleavages

that have the potential to undermine its development goals. Especially since (for various reasons) the state has not managed to build the kinds of welfare democracy that can ameliorate the political threat of such cleavages, it turns to the cultural sphere to promote its 'trickle-down' message that growth is good for the nation and therefore good for everyone in it. Hence the official Centennial slogan '*Kalayaan: Kayamanan ng Bayan*' (Freedom: The Nation's Wealth).³

The National Centennial Commission (NCC) and other bodies tasked with arranging the Centennial knew that they could not base the celebrations of Filipino identity on a strong ethnic sense of nationhood because the Philippines is not ethnically homogenous. Nor could the celebrations focus entirely on the 1896-1898 Revolution, because too many communities in the country had not participated in it. As Bankoff explains, in order to make the celebration themes as broad as possible, the NCC moved the official Centennial focus from the Revolution to 'the more inclusive concept of the struggle for freedom'. And the perceived necessity to keep the Centennial references as non-specific as possible was the reason for the ubiquity and central symbolic importance of the national flag — here was a national symbol which was supposed to transcend all the regional and cultural differences. This stance was very difficult if not impossible to sustain however when the celebrations are all about the Centennial — the reference always comes back to the fact that what is being celebrated is the victory of the Christian, Tagalog-centered struggle for independence from Spain 100 years ago. And despite best intentions, the flag did not escape from being the subject of intense debates about the symbolic significance of its graphic details.⁴

Other disagreements appeared amidst the celebrations despite government and organizers' intentions; many of these disagreements centered on which historical events should be celebrated and what interpretation should be placed on them. The most common critique was that the NCC had upheld the orthodox, narrow view of the independence revolution. To begin with, Doronila notes (1998a) that the very decision to take the 1898 Kawit declaration of independence as the main event to celebrate, rather than, say, the Cry of Pugad Lawin in 1896 which began the revolution, was to reduce the first two years of struggle

to mere background and to favor the version of the revolution that honors Emilio Aguinaldo rather than Andres Bonifacio. As those familiar with debates about the Filipino independence struggle know, for many historians, this means that the Centennial was a celebration of the revolution after it was hijacked by elites.

Related to the criticism that the state-sanctioned version of the independence struggle downplays non-elite participation is the argument that it also ignores or glosses over many of the less heroic realities of the revolution which began with the 'murderous struggle for power' between Aguinaldo and Bonifacio (Doronila 1998a). Arguments about the perfidy of various elite players start here where, accurately or not, Aguinaldo plays the *ilustrado* more ready to do political compromise, to the 'proletarian' Bonifacio, more resolute in his direct opposition to the Spanish. The critical version says that Bonifacio was betrayed by the emergent bourgeoisie which began to institutionalize the elite nature of the new republic at the Tejeros Convention of 1898. Such was the *ilustrados'* weak grasp of nationalism, this argument goes, that the autonomy from Spain declared on 12 June 1898 was not real independence because Aguinaldo put his faith in the mighty United States to 'protect' the new nation.

The third main criticism of the Centennial program was that it ignored the fact that the independent republic was extremely short-lived; colonization by the United States and the ensuing Filipino-American war was unmentioned. So far, no suggestion has been made for a centenary celebration of the 1899 resumption of the war of independence, this time against the treacherous US occupiers, and it seems extremely unlikely. Even the massive 12 June parade in Manila did not include a float depicting the bloody struggles between Filipinos and US forces, which lasted until 1906 in some places. This hole in the celebrations where the Filipino-American war should have been was noted by critical observers but surprised only a few, since it mirrors the omission on the topic in history textbooks. Conrado de Quiros (1998b) echoes a common lament when he says that

The Centennial program's focus on 1898 to the detriment of 1899 onwards tended to make the story of struggle 'Luzon-centric'.

'most Filipino kids do not even know that we [once] fought the Americans'.⁵ The focus on 1898 to the detriment of 1899 onwards also tended, despite stated intentions to the contrary, to make the story of struggle 'Luzon-centric', ignoring the struggles on other islands by other ethnic groups at the end of the 19th century (cited in Doronila 1998b).

The main political argument in these criticisms of the anti-Spanish and elite focus of the Centennial is that the bourgeoisie in the Philippines has never been interested in real independence and that genuine nationalism would work in favor of the ordinary masses of people. Unfortunately, the argument is rarely spelled out in terms of specific ramifications for the bourgeois state. What we read instead are appeals for a vague form of nationalism that seldom addresses the complex difficulties of class and ethnicity — there is no popular voice in contemporary Filipino nationalist discourses. Even the revolutionary Left offers nothing more than its old, vague slogans about the need to throw off 'US imperialist domination' (CPP 1998). At present, the combination of the spread of popular demands for recognition of all kinds of cultural and ethnic difference, and the social divisions worsened by economic restructuring is creating an urgent need for imaginative Left critiques and alternative programs. But the traditional communist Left continues to present an analysis of the international and national orders, and solutions to their iniquities that are almost 30 years old and no longer relevant.⁶

A recent essay by Satur Ocampo (1998) tells us clearly that the CPP regards the capitalism of the late 20th century as the same beast as it was at the end of the 19th and that hence, it is only right that the 'national democratic' revolution continue as a 'logical' extension of the independence struggle. He does not explain how the CPP's model of nationalism will change Filipino society, beyond familiar formulae such as 'the new democratic revolution continues the Katipunan struggle against foreign domination (now US neocolonialism) and feudalism (by combining agrarian reform with national industrialization.' Interestingly, when he explains some of the recent political work of the national-democratic group BAYAN, Ocampo (1998) describes campaigns taken up to 'resist specific programs [such as] liberalization, deregulation and privatization'. But these are not *nationalist* campaigns, they are campaigns

against the Filipino state and the bourgeoisie. What he calls an 'anti-globalization struggle' is not necessarily a nationalist struggle, though it might be. In this context, it should be noted that the recent 'nationalist resurgence' in some Asian countries (against the imposts of global financial institutions) which Ocampo points to have actually been overshadowed by a resurgence of popular demands for democratic rights. Indeed, in Malaysia right now, massive public demonstrations are being held in support of a symbolic figure, Anwar Ibrahim, who opposes the Prime Minister's extreme nationalist attitude to solving the country's financial difficulties.

Ocampo writes more about revolutionary nationalist tasks in relation to 'cultural consciousness' than to economic and political structures. An important obstacle in the nationalist struggle, he says, has been what the NDF calls 'a culture of subservience, blind imitation of foreign things and backward thinking' among Filipinos, which must be countered by a 'cultural revolution' (Ocampo 1998). Like some of Constantino's work on nationalist consciousness (1978), this is a somewhat elitist description of the 'felt lives' of ordinary Filipinos: it assumes that the decisions people make about how to live in their worlds are 'falsely' made, and that the way they think and feel can be fundamentally changed before their material conditions are changed. This 'voluntarism' (an overly high expectation of the possibilities of agency) stands in contradiction to the CPP's view of the determining power of structures ('neocolonialism' and 'feudalism') and leaves no theoretical space for political action at the 'middle level', if you like, where people can express their agency in such a way as to make impressions on the structures.

In its belief that the structures — the state — must be overthrown and smashed, the CPP postpones all real social change to the final revolutionary moment. The revolution in 'cultural consciousness' is instrumental to this end — it teaches people 'to fight and overthrow their oppressors' through the people's army. While there is reference to the need to 'popularize' culture in the face of hegemonic bourgeois culture which helps to reproduce inequalities, this popular culture appears just long enough for it to be harnessed to a nationalist program, thereby almost instantaneously reducing the class contradiction to a 'second-

ary' consideration. Moreover, it leaves questions of other identities, such as ethnicity, out of the debate altogether. Having thus depoliticized the cultural sphere in an important sense, the CPP ends up at the same place as more 'mainstream' nationalists, promoting Filipino values that are presumed capable of transcending class, ethnic and other cultural differences. Communists and non-communists alike turn to history to find these genuine Filipino values that have been temporarily submerged under the weight of unhealthy 'foreign' interests.

STILL SEARCHING FOR A 'USABLE PAST'

ALL Filipino nationalists, from the far Left to the most conservative, scan the past for transcendent national symbols and for lessons and values with contemporary use-value. Such a search is motivated by concern about 'the alarming state of the Filipinos' sense of identity' (de Quiros 1998a) which, they believe, is underpinned by a widespread lack of basic familiarity with Filipino history, especially among young people. The first step in real nation-building, they say, is to ensure that Filipinos have an informed understanding of their past. This remedy to the identity problem is now decades old: historians in the 1970s, most notably Renato Constantino, lamented the poverty of a Filipino history that could inform an active nationalism and began to construct alternative readings, to produce what he called a 'usable past'. Constantino (1975) declared that only when the Filipino people are

armed with a concrete understanding of Philippine reality can [they] act correctly to change that reality. And this understanding can come about by a systematic and patriotic effort to synthesize the experience of the past in order to obtain a concrete vision of the future.

Constantino's synthesis of the Filipino past was his own 'small contribution toward the emergence of the decolonized Filipino' who has a 'firmly anti-imperialist consciousness' without which, he said, Filipinos could not determine their own future (Constantino & Constantino 1978).

The work of historians such as Constantino was an important antidote to the elitist interpretations that previously dominated Filipino historiography and was crucial in informing radical discourses of na-

tionism and other critiques of anti-democratic politics in the Marcos era. It has also been crucial, fellow historian Ruby Paredes (1989) says, in giving scholars the 'confidence to take long, hard looks at the past and its interpretation by earlier historians', including the post-war nationalists. The problem is that contemporary nationalists are still pursuing Constantino's goal, even though the nature of the global economy has changed, as have progressive ideas about respect for cultural differences and our understandings of the nature of history. A brief review of the early 1998 Ocampo-Doronila debate will illustrate some of the weaknesses of notions about history among nationalists in the Philippines today.

The debate began with Amando Doronila's criticisms of historian Ambeth Ocampo's 90-day Centennial 'countdown' featured in the *Philippine Daily Inquirer*. In brief, while granting that the columns were well-researched 'snippets of historical human life', Doronila argues that Ocampo's accounts of the details of the lives of famed historical figures trivialize history. Ocampo's stories stop short of interpretation, of the weaving of 'a grand tapestry of history' that makes meaning of its events and processes. In particular, in focusing on the 'Bonifacio-Aguinaldo power struggle', Ocampo was 'reducing his research to gossip mongering', Doronila says (1998b). These remarks sparked off many responses, including one from Aguinaldo's great-grandson who agrees with Doronila's criticisms. He deplores the habit among public intellectuals of endlessly talking among themselves more about

the intrigues, the alleged misdeeds and the trivial pursuits of our heroes, leaders, fellowmen and nation than the spirit of EDSA, the courage and ideals of Ninoy [Aquino] and others.... Seldom do I see the beauty of our nation, the virtues of ordinary people or the simplicity of life being written about.

Disagreeing with those who believe that Philippine historiography suffers from a lack of 'accounts about the twin evils of turncoatism and greed' (Launico 1998), Aguinaldo Suntay (1998) argues that Ocampo's focus on the Aguinaldo-Bonifacio conflict 'reflects our damaged culture, a nation divided and close to self-destruction and ignominy'.

Most responses to Doronila's remarks, however, defended Ocampo on the grounds that he makes history more popular and more accessible than dry academic studies ever do. Patricio Abinales (1998), for example, criticizes Doronila's stance as elitist and congratulates Ocampo for writing in a way that means 'ordinary folk, the *masa* are reading — and enjoying — history'. Abinales (1998) writes with understandable pleasure at the thought of 'groups of Filipinos all throughout the archipelago...debating the 1896-1898 period in *sari-sari* stores'; but this vision seems a little fanciful for a few reasons, not least of which is that Ocampo's articles are written in English and the majority of the *masa* do not read the language at that level of competency. Interestingly, this fact does not seem to concern de Quiros, either, who has written often and strongly about the central cultural importance of encouraging the use of the national language in public discourse. He, too, congratulates

The nationalist desire to construct a 'usable past' repeats some of the mistakes of elite or bourgeois history in its tendency to homogenize the past.

Ocampo for his 'popularization of Philippine history' in a context where Filipinos 'do not understand the past at all because we do not *know* the past' (de Quiros 1998b).

There are at least three criticisms to be noted regarding the assumptions about 'history' revealed in this short debate: (a) some commentators tend to

think that history is not made, but that 'the past' can simply be 'retrieved' for packaging and distribution if only the will is there; (b) the nationalist desire to construct a 'usable past' repeats some of the mistakes of elite or bourgeois history in its tendency to homogenize; and (c) despite intentions to the contrary, we can detect an elitism in the assumptions about what the masses do not know but 'need to know' about the past.

When de Quiros (who is not alone in this among nationalist commentators) exhorts Filipinos to 'seize the past' because that is the 'surest way to finding our identity as Filipinos', he does not say *which* past is to be seized. He writes as though he believes that 'the past' and 'history' are the same thing, which they are not. There are many 'pasts' out of which an identity could be constructed and endless ways of in-

interpreting stories to render them useful for a political project. It can never be a matter of simply adding more stories, though that in itself may be an improvement in a context of strong cultural hegemony by one social group. In all the commentary about history provoked by the Centennial celebrations, Randy David was one of the very few to question the notion of 'history' used in both conservative and critical nation-building discourses. Restating arguments at least as old as EH Carr's answer to his own question 'What is History?', David (1998) says

We expect history to yield to us its lessons, forgetting that the past is always selectively revisited, that it offers no intrinsic messages, and that there is no single correct approach to the past which best captures its meanings...*the past does not speak for itself.*

History, the telling of a story about the past, is made out of the selection of available facts; since these facts are infinite, there can be no complete or objective representation of the past, regardless of what empiricists such as Glenn May say about it.⁷

Arguments about history have gone beyond the debate between empiricist and 'constructionist' views, which brings us to the second problem posed by the contemporary search for a history that will inform a renewed national identity: Conscious constructions of Filipino history for stated political purposes (as opposed to bourgeois history which pretends to do nothing more than tell 'the truth' in disinterested fashion), have tended to impose an order on the past that in its own way blinds the historian to his or her own place in the reproduction of unhelpful assumptions. Reynaldo Ileto (1986) has taken his fellow historians to task for reproducing the elite disregard for the 'interruptions, repetitions and reversals...the subjugations, confrontations, power struggles and resistances at the level of the *local* and *specific* which...dominant histories tend to conceal'. It is worth quoting at length his criticism of the production of teleological history, which

orders the data of the past into a trajectory of emergence, growth, complexity and increasing rationality...that celebrates great moments and individuals... that mindlessly cites Rizal, Bonifacio, or the "masses" as if they were stable and fixed entities....Ever since the triumph of nationalist historical writing over the old colonial

and neocolonial kinds of history, we have become complacent, failing to see that in subtle ways we may be replicating the historical constructs of the past or our present rivals.... Thus we are troubled by the continued persistence of "terrorism", "banditry", "fanaticism", "opposition", "disorder", "superstition", "anarchy", "heresy", "disunity", "error", "lack of discipline", etc.

'We would be better nationalists', he adds, to write 'national history that welcomes difference, disorder and uncertainty' (Ileto 1986). Ileto was chiefly referring to the differences between elite and popular experiences, but his remarks about how history-making should be approached are applicable to other differences such as ethnicity.

Ileto makes another point which brings us to the last and perhaps most difficult criticism of the notion of the 'usable past': historians are troubled by disorder, he says, because 'time and again something happens that contradicts the grand schemes that we intellectuals envision for the development of the people, schemes which we regularly justify through the manipulation of history' (Ileto 1986). This raises profound questions about history that deserve detailed discussion for which we do not have space here, but some comments are worth making in passing.

The importance of making popular ('local') history⁸ lies not only in giving history a different content and thereby including more people's stories, but also in what it means for the way we view history's purpose.

It is assumed that the purpose of nationalist history is to teach Filipinos something about their lives that they do not yet know.

Without stating so explicitly, all those who defend Ocampo against Doronila's criticisms because they believe he is popularizing history seem to assume that the purpose of nationalist history is to teach ordinary Filipinos something about their lives that they do not yet know because they have not had access

to this more abstract and meaningful interpretation of reality. (In Marxist terminology, they labor under 'false consciousness'.) Doronila, on the other hand, is criticized precisely for his 'elitist' view that the role of the historian is to make meaning out of all the events and facts of the past.⁹ His critics seem to assume that, in repackaged form, nation-

alist historical knowledge can be received or accessed in a more or less uncomplicated manner and will spur 'the masses' on to greater political things. The problem is that no 'knowledge' is received in an uncomplicated, uncontextualized way and people do not live and feel their lives as the 'bearers of structures' utterly without comprehending that fact. This is not to say that alternative narratives are not crucial to larger projects for social change, but to restate that such narratives cannot be politically efficacious unless they actually do 'make sense' of the world for the people they are intended to benefit. It means that in order to construct such politically useful discourses, intellectuals must learn something of these popular experiences and understandings of life; to do so, intellectuals must first internalize the idea that they might have something to learn from 'the masses'.

A final point to make in this regard is that while Ocampo makes history-reading more enjoyable in some senses, by putting flesh on sometimes dry bones, he does not popularize history in either sense of the word. Aside from the limitation posed by the fact that he writes in English, he does not tell popular stories, but sticks to embroidering — albeit in a novel and sometimes interesting way — stories of events and persons already known in their generalities. Though the intention may be different, it is still history for and about elite figures and institutions: this is no 'history from below'.

In the last part of this essay, I want to make one more argument about history that perhaps throws a larger spanner in the nationalist works than any of the preceding arguments: the appeal for a society united on the basis of a shared, proud heritage does not explain how contemporary Filipinos who cannot lay claim to the dominant heritage are to be included as active citizens of the national-state. Whose heritage is deemed to be the authentic experience that will form the basis of the national identity? Whose stories must be actively forgotten, written out of Philippine history, in order to forge this symbolic unity?

HERITAGE: DOES IT BELONG TO EVERYONE?

THE notions of national belonging and citizenship are tightly intertwined; almost everyone in the contemporary world lives in a modern 'national-state', a political entity based on abstract principles (i.e. theo-

retically empty of cultural and ethnic assumptions) but which pretends to a 'nationhood' that often ends up functioning something like ethnicity. The modern state has required this in order to manufacture the 'belonging' required to hold the plural identities together. When a resident of that national-state becomes a citizen (through birth or 'naturalization') he or she also acquires a 'nationality' — which may or may not have any connection with the ethnicity into which he or she was born. As Aguilar (1998) puts it, citizenship is 'the mechanism that hinge[s] the fictive nation to the empirical state'.

However, as indicated by some of the messages sent in the Centennial 'People's Parade' (e.g. the Chinese-Filipino float which carried the message, *Ang mga Tsinoy ay Pinoy rin* [Chinese-Filipinos are also Filipinos]) there are those in Filipino society who do not feel as though they belong in the same sense as others. Then there are those who do feel as though they belong but find out that this status is not as assured as they think. A case of the latter type was seen in a disturbing controversy during the 1998 national election campaign period, when three electoral candidates' right to run for office was legally questioned on the basis of their citizenship. One candidate, Edu Mandazo, was initially disqualified by the Commission on Elections (COMELEC) from the race for vice-mayor of Makati City because he holds dual US and Filipino citizenship, which he claimed under the 1935 Constitution. Under the 1987 Constitution, dual citizenship is not permitted Filipinos and only a 'natural-born' Filipino (one whose parents was a Filipino citizen at the time of his or her birth) is permitted to hold certain elected positions, including president and vice-president, governor and vice-governor, and certain judicial offices. Manzano's case received the least publicity, since the other two were much more prominent figures, both of whom were running for the presidency.

The candidature of Emilio 'Lito' Osmeña, ex-governor of Cebu, was challenged too, by Homobono Adaza, the head of immigration, who accused Osmeña of regarding Filipino citizenship as 'a matter of convenience and not a matter of commitment to principles' because he had used a US passport (afforded him because his mother was an American) on trips to the US in the past two years. Osmeña put up a historical argument against this legalist one by saying, 'I don't know why I

am being asked to prove my Filipino citizenship.... My grandfather was president of this country and my father...was beheaded by the Japanese when he refused to serve as governor of Cebu under their puppet regime' (PDI 1998a).

Osmeña's appeal to his family background is perfectly reasonable in one sense. Emotional commitment to the self-sacrifices of ancestors is strong in all civic cultures. But where does this argument leave the Filipino who does not 'inherit' this particular honor (and the obligations that come with it) from his or her ancestors? That is, one whose grandparents or parents were immigrants and did not hold Filipino citizenship? Can one be a 'real' Filipino without being able to support a claim to this sort of past? The case against Alfredo Lim, former mayor of Manila, suggests not. His case, too, was dismissed by the COMELEC, which finally declared that it did not have jurisdiction over the matter, but not before Lim had suffered considerable public humiliation (and lost, possibly, thousands of votes). Lim's right to run for the office of president was legally challenged on the basis of his not being a 'natural-born' Filipino (he was born in the Philippines to Chinese mestizos). While insisting that his parents were Filipino citizens, like other notable figures with Chinese ancestry, Lim could not claim a family heritage of self-sacrifice for the nation as Osmeña did. Instead, he asserted his commitment to the Filipino nation during his own life-time: 'I grew up as a Filipino. I have served the Filipino people and on several occasions, I placed my life on the line in defense of our Constitution, this country and our people' (PDI 1998b).

Can one be a 'real' Filipino without being able to claim a family heritage of self-sacrifice for the nation?

Not having a heritage like that of the Osmeña family to point to as proof of his 'Filipino-ness', Alfredo Lim had to base the defense of his identity on what he does as a committed member of Filipino society. This is an important aspect of what has been called, in the French debate on the topic, the 'scruples' view of citizenship, which is favored by younger people over the 'heritage' view, which is generally favored by the older French generations. The latter 'have a strong sense of the need to protect and conserve what their forefathers and mothers have

handed on' and see 'the immigrant [as] a problem' in their vision of the nation-as-community. In contrast, young people tend to believe that 'citizenship is about living with the Other convivially', that 'resemblance' of national origin does not matter and that 'the past is not crucial'. The young generation 'tends to favor a regional future where [the nexus between] nationality and citizenship [is] severed' (Davidson 1998). In a slightly different context, British writer Paul Gilroy (1991) argues against the notion of fixed or 'essential' national identity and quotes a line from a rap song, 'it ain't where you're from, it's where you're at' that matters.¹⁰

The citizenship controversies during the 1998 election highlight two causes for concern: the first is that *jus sanguinis* is still not only legally but also popularly regarded as the only proper basis for the kind of citizenship that extends to the right to hold the highest offices of the land. In particular, the campaign against Alfredo Lim illustrated a residual anti-Chinese sentiment in the country which can be provoked into rear-

The campaign against Alfredo Lim's citizenship illustrated a residual anti-Chinese sentiment in the country which can be provoked on certain political occasions.

ing its ugly head on certain political or other occasions. It is a prejudice partly nourished by a narrow notion of what it means to be a Filipino, which in turn is upheld by the constant reproduction of certain 'mainstream' versions of Filipino history that continue to marginalize the roles and experiences of Chinese-Filipinos (Ang-See 1997). More broadly, the Lim case demonstrates the hegemony of

a notion of Filipino-ness that is still basically Tagalog-centric. (One of the few Filipino writers who seriously criticizes the processes involved in building Filipino patriotism is Arnold Azurin. Referring to the sometimes discursive, sometimes actual obliteration of ethnic difference by Filipino nationalists, he says that the demand for 'erasure of ethnicity...in order to become a full-fledged *Filipino* or a nationalist...has made [our] sense of nationhood quite callously chauvinistic because it is anti-cultural' [see Azurin 1995]).

Solutions to the problems of the sorts of social divisions exemplified by the Lim case cannot be found in any simple project designed to honor 'the past', not least because significant numbers of Filipinos

have had to forget and some must constantly try to forget elements of that past in order to live daily in their country (Weekley 1998). It is bad enough that citizens' civil and political (and other) rights can be threatened on the basis of perceptions about their 'true-bloodedness'. The problem is that even uglier things can develop from an intolerance to difference that is in part sustained by the attitude that it is the past rather than the future that matters. Around the world today, events are warning us all of what happens when underlying prejudices meet severe social strain. We need look no further in this region than the appalling treatment of Chinese-Indonesian women during the riots in Indonesia earlier this year.

Similar (if less dreadful in scale) phenomena are occurring in countries that have long considered themselves more civilized and tolerant than others, namely France and Germany. In the economically strained wake of German reunification, neo-fascist organizations and gangs of aggressive youth terrorize and attack those they see as not 'real' Germans. At the same time and not coincidentally, conservative, nationalistic German historians are out of the closet again, proclaiming the central importance of the notion of the German nation as an ethnic entity. In what one historian describes as 'the revival of Prussianism in German historiography', even some supposedly progressive intellectuals are taking up the theme and one has recently rebuked the Left for failing to comprehend 'the imponderabilities of the soul of the Volk' (Seebacher-Brandt cited in Berger 1995). It is not mere coincidence that such rethinking is going on at the same time as 'foreigners', including those born (to Turkish *gastarbeiter* parents) and raised in Germany and speaking no other language, are being targeted by the hate groups. Armed with an ethnically-determinist interpretation of the 1989 reunification and faced with the social and economic instability that has followed it, these revisionist historians have 'come to perceive their task as shaping national identity according to political expediency' (Berger 1995).

In France, too, extreme right-wing nationalists have been demanding that full human rights not be extended to 'foreigners', especially from North Africa, even those who have lived and worked for years, and born and raised children in France. Heated debates are taking place between those who support the long-standing model of a democratic

republic which requires all newcomers to submit to its already-made rules, and those who argue that if France is to call itself a democracy then it must allow those newcomers to participate in making the rules. It is a difficult and sometimes painful debate, because as Davidson (1998) says, 'the sentiment that outsiders [must] compromise to reap the benefits [for which] others have fought and died...is doubly difficult to avoid where a state has successfully developed a remarkable system of social benefits.' The problem is that the world simply does not look like it did when these systems were developed. It is not only finance and other forms of capital that are moving about the world and creating porous borders, but also people. And, as Filipinos know all too well, people migrate in order to work (excepting refugees, of course), to earn sufficient remuneration to raise their families in a manner they consider reasonable. They no longer migrate to other countries in order to settle permanently and to take on a new nationality of the type that requires them to abandon their cultures and values.

Also, migrant workers both increasingly need and are aware of the need to be able to exercise their internationally-sanctioned human rights in order to survive their overseas experiences as workers in a dignified way. It is simply not sufficient or acceptable in today's world for states to claim that immigrants must accept the cultural specificities of their

It is simply not sufficient or acceptable in today's world for states to claim that immigrants must accept the cultural specificities of their national-states.

national-states, even if that includes, for example, attitudes toward women that allow the kind of treatment that Filipinos find repulsive and unacceptable. This means that those who are not yet citizens, and have no intention of becoming citizens because it usually involves giving up their original citizenship, must be allowed to participate in making the rules in the place where they live and work. To argue

otherwise is, effectively, to be content to leave overseas contract workers to their fates.¹¹ The solution, say the critics of the traditional models of citizenship, has to be a 'renegotiation of the [old political] contract' (Davidson 1998) with the participation of those who do not already 'belong' according to the existing rules of nationality and citizenship.

Berger's conclusion is typical: 'The ethnic definition of Germanness has to be replaced by a definition via citizenship, participation in the political process and allegiance to *universal* values' (Berger 1995, emphasis added). In such a scenario, national identity cannot be based mainly on the myth of a shared heritage and thus, the notion of a 'usable past' becomes fraught with difficulties.

CONCLUSION

NONE of this is to say that history is not important; it most certainly is, if we care about forging a different future. As Randy David (1998) says

We need history to remind us of the conditions that have obstructed the realization of [earlier] visions. We need history to tell us about the origins of institutions and laws that contradict the basic values that to this day animate our social movements. We do not need history to tell us about our supposed destiny as a people, for there is no such thing apart from the destiny we create by our own actions. We only need history to remind us how we have come to live the way we do in spite of what we believe in.... Critical history lets us examine how we came to where we are today so that we may free ourselves from the chain of past errors. This is [its] liberative function.

It is the critical function of history, David (1998) says, which was missing in the 1998 Centennial celebrations, the kind of looking back that might allow an honest review of the current 'minoritization and inferiorization' of national minorities of Mindanao and the Cordilleras.

The important point is that no one history can be the exhaustive source for a contemporary national identity or a democratic, inclusive citizenship (Tolibas-Núñez 1997)¹² and furthermore, if that identity is not singular and fixed but is rather a set of relations, the historical identity myth must be challenged by 'critical counter-histories' (Thomas 1998). Such counter-histories would be both positive and negative, and would include all the stories about non-Tagalog communities, about social actors — both individual and collective — who have not been considered heroic yet help to explain 'how we have come to live'. Such an approach would yield stories that show how the social and cultural relations which are the manifold Filipino identities have been built, dis-

mantled and rebuilt over the years. In this, historians could do worse than begin at Doronila's (1998c) observation that

what Filipinos are today... is a function of their interaction and adaptation to the waves of migration, invasions, cultural influxes and trade that have crossed paths over the Philippine archipelago from pre-historic times [through] the Age of Exploration and down to the current age of economic and technological globalization.... Perhaps, the most important legacy bequeathed by the encounters of conquest, trade and cultures and religions in our lands is that they have transformed the Filipinos into a nation that can bridge East and West in Asia because their exposure to these encounters has made them familiar with the values and idiom of [both].

The myriad stories behind these encounters and transformations would make for both ennobling and confronting experiences for contemporary Filipinos — what David calls 'liberative' history. Moreover, their effects put the Philippines in a singular place in the region, as a nation that can 'look both ways' to the 'East' and the 'West'. This puts it in a good position to lead efforts to develop a more inclusive model of nation-building in this part of the world — one that attempts to meet the destabilizing challenges of globalization without insisting on a pseudo-ethnic oneness.

NOTES

1. The notion of heritage in this essay is taken from the French discussions, introduced to English-language political literature by Alistair Davidson (forthcoming). Since France is the world's oldest republic and in civic terms, one of the strongest, the French debate about national identity and citizenship has lessons for all societies attempting to generate similar attachments to the nation-state. One might also add in anticipation of certain protests, that Australia is not a bad place from which to write about such questions, still plagued as it is by long-standing quandaries and confusions about its national identity which arise partly from its status as a former colonial power that never engaged in a cathartic struggle for independence (and hence, somehow remains tied to 'mother'), and partly from the extraordinarily rapid demographic changes resulting from mass immigration (Castles et al 1992).

2. This is not to say that the state can do nothing but submit to the 'invisible hand' of the global market — there is no such thing.

Neither is there any such thing as a successful national economy that does not plan carefully how it will play in global economy. Of course, the stronger an economy is, the more likely it is to be able to play as it chooses, but even the largest economy in the world cannot make up its own rules.

3. In the Philippines, state nationalism is also complicated by the political requirement of anti-authoritarianism, hence the official ideology of 'development with democracy'. This democratic status has become important to the Philippines' national esteem in a region of nation-states whose economies have almost all performed better in recent years but whose politics attract international opprobrium over human rights issues.

4. Disagreement about appropriate recognition of non-Tagalog communities in Filipino nation-making is reflected in one of the more serious debates about the symbolism of the national flag: whether or not a ninth ray should be added to the sun, to symbolize the part played by the Muslim communities in the making of the Filipino nation. Historian Ambeth Ocampo declares this 'ahistorical' nonsense, since President Aguinaldo himself explained that the rays symbolized the 'spread[ing] of the light [over] every spot in the Philippine Islands [including] the Aetas, Igorots, Manguians and Moros...whom I (Aguinaldo) recognize as our brethren' (Ocampo 1998a). Similar arguments were made in the 1970s by Teodoro Agoncillo against a 'ninth ray' proposal; but more lately, Arnold Azurin reminds us that the eight rays always did and *do* stand for the eight Tagalog provinces. He argues in favor of added rays and argues that the 'eight-ray viewpoint' itself does not respect history, 'forgetting conveniently that the flag's configuration has been changing since it was unfurled for the first time' (Azurin 1995). Here, Azurin is making an important point that the accuracy of historical facts can always be challenged, rendering the 'factual' a less than reliable basis on which to make decisions about matters such as the political representation of marginalized groups.

5. See de Quiros (1998c) who called upon Filipinos to look to history in order to understand the nationalist argument against the Visiting Forces Agreement currently being negotiated between the US and the Philippines. Filipinos need look no further than the events in and around the US military bases in recent decades to know that they cannot rely on written provisions: 'American capacity to break treaties is everywhere in evidence'.

6. The new post-Communist Left, on the other hand, is still busy distinguishing itself from the Communist Party in both analytical and organizational terms and has hardly broached the subject of nationalism at all. Having grown frustrated with the 'big picture' politics of yesteryears which consigns all social change to the endgame of strategic victory over the state, they tend at present to be involved in electoral and

'development' politics whose focus is empowering people to engage the state in 'ground-level' political struggle.

7. This debate is, of course, ongoing. The latest example in the Philippine context can be seen in the heated discussions between May and his interlocutors over the historical treatment of the story of Andres Bonifacio, see May (1997) and Churchill (1997).

8. I say 'making history' here rather than 'writing history' because, especially these days, there are many more forms for such expression than books.

9. In a sense then, Doronila is more honest about the elitism of current Filipino history when he says that the task of historians to make grander narratives out of the facts that they know, to make meaning out of a nation's past. This approach at least leaves room for the possibility that such elite history can be counterposed in a political dialogue by other, popular, interpretations.

10. I came to this article via another by Nicholas Thomas (1998).

11. In an interesting twist to this argument, challenges to the Philippines' stipulation of single citizenship are now coming from Filipinos outside the country as well, who have been moved for economic reasons to leave their homeland. A few days before the election, the *Ako ay Pilipino* movement in the United States had an 'Open Letter to the Filipino Nation' published in a Manila daily (*Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 8 May 1998). Among many messages about the need to protect and expand democratic government in the Philippines, the letter exhorted Filipinos to exercise their 'sacred right' to vote on May 11 in an honest way and even, where possible, to 'document anomalous voting activities'. But the letter was also a broader, if vague, appeal for the kind of economic development that would focus on exporting goods rather than people, and suggested that given the right incentives, Filipinos abroad would invest in their home country to better effect than 'foreign bankers'. The gist of the appeal is that *kababayans* [countrymen] abroad are no less Filipinos than those in the Philippines and therefore, the government should formally recognize their sense of Filipino belonging.

12. Tolibas-Nuñez (1997) repeats an old plea that 'Philippine history be rewritten to include the highlights of the Muslims' and other cultural communities' struggle for freedom'.

REFERENCES

- Abinales, P. 1998. In Defense of Ambeth. *Philippine Daily Inquirer*. 18 April.
Aguilar, F. 1998. Migration, Identity and Citizenship in Southeast Asia. Paper presented to ISEAS 30th Anniversary Conference on Southeast Asia in the 21st Century; Challenges of Globalization. Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore, 30 July to 1 August 1998.

- Alfonso, O. University of the Philippines Centennial Celebrations available html <http://www.dilnet.upd.edu.ph/~up100/hunyo/parade.html>.
- Ang-See, T. 1997. *The Chinese in the Philippines: Problems and Perspectives*. Manila: Kaisa para sa Kaunlaran Inc.
- Azurin, A. 1995. *Reinventing the Filipino Sense of Being and Becoming*. Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press.
- Bankoff, G. 1998 (forthcoming). History at the Service of the Nation State: The Philippine Centennial of 1898.
- Berger, S. 1995. 'Historians and nation-building in Germany after reunification.' Past & Present, n148, August. available html http://web2.searchbank.com/infotrac/session/318/734/22843985w3/9!xrn_1
- Castells, M. 1998. *End of Millennium*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Castles, S; M Kalantzis; B Cope & M Morrissey. 1992. *Mistaken Identity Multiculturalism and Demise of Nationalism in Australia*. Sydney: Pluto Press.
- Churchill, BR (ed). 1997. *Determining the Truth: The Story of Andres Bonifacio*. Manila: Manila Studies Association Inc.
- Communist Party of the Philippines. 1998. On the June 12 Declaration of Independence. Statement of Armando Liwanag, Chairman, Central Committee. June. available html <http://www.geocities.com/~cpp-ndf/cpp23.htm>.
- Constantino, R. 1975. *The Philippines: A Past Revisited*, Vol. 1. Quezon City: Renato Constantino.
- Constantino, R. 1978. *Neocolonial Identity and Counter Consciousness*. London: Merlin Press.
- Constantino, R & L Constantino 1978. *The Philippines: The Continuing Past*. Quezon City: Foundation for Nationalist Studies.
- David, R. 1998. The Centennial That Was. *Philippine Daily Inquirer*. available html <http://www.inquirer.net/issues/aug28/aug02/opinion/andy.htm>.
- Davidson, A. 1998. 'Open Republic, Multiculturalism and Citizenship: the French debate'. In *Theory and Event*. available html <http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/tae/>.
- de Quiros, C. 1998a. A is for Aray. *Philippine Daily Inquirer*. 3 February.
- de Quiros, C. 1998b. Footnote to History. *Philippine Daily Inquirer*. 21 April.
- Doronila, A. 1998a. The disservice of a Narrow Centennial Perspective. *Philippine Daily Inquirer*. 16 March.
- Doronila, A. 1998b. A Truer Focus for the Centennial. *Philippine Daily Inquirer*. 9 March.
- Doronila, A. 1998c. A Celebration of Constitutional Democracy. *Philippine Daily Inquirer*. available html http://www.inquirer.net/issues/jun98/jun12/news/news_6.htm.
- Gilroy, P. 1991. It ain't where you're from, it's where you're at. *Third Text*. (Winter):3-11.
- Ileto, R. 1986. Critical Questions on Nationalism: A Historian's View. Inaugural lecture for the Lorenzo Tañada Professorial Chair in History, De La Salle University, Manila.

- Launico, M. 1998. The Centennial Sisa. *Philippine Daily Inquirer*. 16 June.
- May, G. 1998. *The Making of a Hero*. Quezon City: New Day.
- Ocampo, A. 1998a. The Death of Young General Goyo. *Philippine Daily Inquirer*. 3 June.
- Ocampo, A. 1998b. US Consuls Double-Talked Aguinaldo. *Philippine Daily Inquirer*. 21 April.
- Ocampo, S. 1998. The Revolution Continues. *Public Policy* (2):70-82.
- Paredes, R (ed). 1989. *Philippine Colonial Democracy*. Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press.
- Philippine Daily Inquirer* (PDI). 1998a. Lito O Used US Passport in '96. 2 May.
- Philippine Daily Inquirer*. 1998b. Lim: I'm Filipino, Like Rizal. 15 April.
- Suntay, AE III. 1998. Spoiling our Centennial Celebration. *Philippine Daily Inquirer*. 26 March.
- Thomas, N. 1998. Hybrid Histories: Gordon Bennett's Critique of Purity. *Communal/Plural* 6(1).
- Tolibas-Nuñez, R. 1997. *Roots of Conflict: Muslims, Christians and the Mindanao Struggle*. Makati City: Asian Institute of Management.
- Weekley, K. 1998. Whither Nationalism in the Philippines? The Political Challenge of the Global Age. *Policy, Organization and Society* (Summer):1-22.