

BUREAUCRATIC VALUES VERSUS CULTURAL VALUES

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I am sure that all educated readers of this paper understand the terms "bureaucracy" and "culture" as denoting institutions having systems of value. The term "value" is also commonly understood, although philosophers, psychologists, and social scientists define its concept broadly and with a good deal of sophistication. Subsequently, scholars in the Philippines often speak of "lowland values" to distinguish them from "upland values," which these scholars have not yet described. Indeed, value is the building block of an institution, say of culture. Value is to culture as a cell is to a biological organism. It is therefore an important unit of analysis in institutional studies.

This paper's title, "Bureaucratic Values Versus Cultural Values," has been inspired by my past experience as an announcer in the fistic arena. I would have fondly shouted the Latin word *versus* to emphasize a thrilling but sadistic opposition between the two institutions. I would liken their opposition to a boxing bout, as if a Kid Bureaucracy is matched against a Kid Culture in the Mindanao cultural setting, where we witness encounters among different kinds of institutions and their distinct value systems. The fact is that human groups – for example, Christian and Muslim – may not just go to war as biological organisms, but because they represent rival institutions in the power struggle for predominance or survival.

Bureaucracy and culture as institutions are both structurally bound within systems of value. Representing bureaucratic values, for example, are technically-trained officemen and the laws, rules, and regulations which they administer to achieve the goal of the office or organization. In contrast, representing, for example, *cultural* values are the "elder-leaders" who protect customary laws and practices, norms and attitudes, in order to maintain the integrity of the indigenous cultural community. Actually, the focus of our discussion is the encounter between bureaucratic and cultural values. To understand this encounter, bureaucratic values might be described as "modern," while the cultural ones might be viewed as "traditional or indigenous" in a given

social situation.

An illustration of the encounter situation are the historical and contemporary contacts in Muslimland between the modern bureaucratic government and the cultural communities. The former tries to impose its values upon the latter, resulting in instances of overt and covert conflict. The conflict is over when people of different value-judgments physically or verbally express their oppositions in an armed conflict or mere debate. It is covert when people involved are just passive about their rival interests, attitudes, and values. However, the passivity has potentials for overt tension.

With that hypothetical background established, let me now proceed to illustrate through some concrete cases which I have personally observed, the conflict between bureaucracy and its socio-cultural milieu. Let me begin my illustrations with a case not involving any Muslim group.

I

During the early Liberation days, under the so-called parity, a group of American and Filipino businessmen founded a corporation. For our purpose, we shall use a fictitious name for this firm and call it the "Moro Bay Lumber Company" (located and operated somewhere in Mindanao), although none of the incorporators was a Moro. The firm, of course, was a type of private bureaucracy by virtue of its corporate laws and operates under a system which is in contrast with the anthropological "kinship government." An ideal bureaucracy is supposed to be rational and impersonal in its decision-making and action, while a kinship government is generally emotional and personal in its social relationships.

The MBLC, for short, was conceived and organized by its incorporators for profit of the corporation, whereby the individual members and employees would derive their just shares. The firm engaged in logging, milling, and exporting of Philippine *mahogany* which commanded high export price in the American and European markets, as it does today.

The American partners were expert businessmen and technicians equipped with the know-how of the business and industry, from logging to milling and exporting lumber products. Their Filipino counterparts were equally experts in management. The firm had all the necessary

equipment for logging and lumber production. The MBLC offices and industrial plant, including the motorpools, were richly equipped with modern machineries and supplies in view of the multi-million dollar investment of the corporation.

Observers reported that the firm, at first, was very successful, that much profit was derived from its venture. However, the rank and file of the firm was infested with pilferers, blackmarketers, grafters, and corruptors, whose personal goals and values were inimical to the goal of the corporation. The top brass among the Filipino partners, in connivance with their proteges and *compadres* employed by the firm, extravagantly spent for their families and *queridas* far beyond their personal shares, thus invading into the firm's corporate resources. The result was that the firm gradually folded up due to the discouragement of the American partners who failed to control the graft and corrupt practices of their Filipino partners. The firm was comparable to the proverbial "hen which lay the golden egg," but which was killed and fried by the Filipino associates. The shared evil practices of the time which was becoming a social and cultural trait ended the bureaucratic firm's career.

II

My next illustration is Mindanao State University where I am one of the participant-observers of its origin and development. But please don't take this as a personal advertisement.

The University or MSU, for short, represents a bureaucratic type of administration and management in accordance with its charter and the laws of the land. The present 1000-hectare site of the University in Marawi City was a part of the original 6000-hectare U.S. Military Reservation inherited by the Armed Forces of the Philippines. Through Presidential Proclamation and Congressional Act, the 1000-hectare was transferred from the Army Reservation to the University which began developing its academic and physical plant programs on the site in 1961.

Legally speaking, the university owns the land. What, then, was the problem? The fact was that the land has never been permanently occupied or used by the government. Families among the indigenous community of Marawi (distinct from new residents of the City, as a government corporate entity), had traditional claims to the land where

they had their homes and farm lots. Consequently, they protested the legal ownership by the university, which soon began its physical plant construction. In this situation, the university's *legal* claim was challenged by the *traditional* claim of the indigenous community. *Legality* and *tradition* are both values that create rival interests between the university and the community.

Land is a basic human need of an individual or group. If there were no other land where a person can be relocated, he and his family cannot live in thin air or under water. Guided by this simple logic, the first constituted MSU Board of Regents approved a resolution authorizing the giving of "amelioration" awards to traditional landowners, who executed a quitclaim over their parcel of land used as a university site. Legally, the university could not purchase a property which, by virtue of public law, belongs to it already or to the government. But under the concept of "amelioration," human charity is applied to minimize if not fully resolve the problem between legal and traditional values in opposition.

A brave sultan stood on his farm lot and threatened that if any university official should touch his land for the physical plant construction, he would use force to drive away the intruder. And he meant it. A group of university personnel including professors appeared on the spot to pacify him, but he was enraged. He had a weapon under his *malong*. He knew me as a professor, hence a government agent, trying to invade what he considered to be his traditional "private" property. I advised my companions that we should retreat and approach him later.

Before midnight, I knocked on the sultan's door for a more diplomatic negotiation. He loudly asked, "Who is there?" I said, "I" or *saken* in Maranao. "But who are you?" he asked. I mentioned my nickname in a voice familiar to him. After a brief silence, he intimately called, "Ah, Radiamoda, why are you here? Come in!" He opened the door.

In a respectful tone I told him about the value of the university in the education of Muslims. But of what value was the university to a non-literate sultan? What appealed to him more was that I would be shamed if I could not convince him to execute a quitclaim of his land in favor of the university. I was his kinsman and a Radiamoda (a princely title) who should not be shamed due to a failure of the negotiation.

Outside of the amelioration award due him, which he did not mention at the moment, he declared that "his land was as good as mine," that I could dispose of it to the university. We parted in mutual satisfaction. Days later, he executed the quitclaim. Besides payment of his amelioration award, I asked the construction engineer to hire the sultan's poor kinsmen in the labor contract. I would have disgraced his sultan's status if he himself were employed for the lowly job of manual labor.

The point of interest in this anecdote is that the sultan did not attach much cognitive value to my professor's rank or status. He instead respected my being a Radiamoda and his kinsman. In this instance, both bureaucratic and cultural values were satisfied. The sultan did not consider my professor's position as superior to his native title or office. In this sense of value, I was his co-elder in the traditional leadership roles in the community, hence entitled to his "kinship" cooperation and support.

III

My third illustration centers on the contact between local government agencies and the traditional socio-political organization of the *pangampong* among the Maranao. Before the inception of modern government (at the beginning of this 20th century), the Muslim had their form of government often called sultanate or datuship in Lanao, Cotabato, and Sulu. I shall use the Lanao material which others may later find useful for comparison with other cultural communities in contact with the governmental or bureaucratic system.

In Lanao, the sultanates under traditional alliances are theoretically organized into four *pangampong* (principalities or states). Territorially and politically, the entire *pangampong* alliance is divided into communities geographically composed of Bayabao, Masiu, Unayan, and Baloi, which any knowledgeable native can trace on the modern maps of the two Lanaos and part of Misamis Oriental.

A *pangampong* is sub-divided into districts, each called a *soko*. Each *soko* is sub-divided into townships called *inged*. This again is divided into village communities, each called an *agama*. Each of these community levels, from the *pangampong* down to the *agama*, has its own sultan and other leaders holding titles of nobility inherited from found-

ing ancestors. Lanao is therefore a land of hundreds or thousands of sultans having different degrees of power, prestige, and influence. A sultan is simply a chief or chieftain in western translation. Although the old Arab title means the same royal title, a Maranao sultan is not as powerful as a Medieval Turkish sultan who was equivalent to a big king or an emperor. There is no legitimate sultan for the whole Lanao.

The four *pangampongs* may be contrasted to the organization of the local government branches of the national government. Over the territory and people of the *pangampong*, there has been superimposed the structures of provinces, chartered cities, municipalities, and barrios now called *barangays*, with their bureaucratic or constitutional types of administration.

The contrasting features between a modern Provincial-City-Municipal-Barrio government of the nation-state and the *pangampong* are described in the following tables:

Features/Values	Pangampong Taditional Gov't.	Constitutional Local Gov't. Province, Etc.
1. Source or location of authority/power	— Sultanate or datuship	— Government of the Philippine Republic
2. Territorial juris- dictions	— Territory of the Four Principalities of the <i>pangampong</i>	— All national, provin- cial, city, municipal, and barrio territo- ries of the Republic
3. Local or Regional Territorial units	— Bayabao, Masiu, Una- yan and Baloi*	— Two Lanaos, Mara- wi & Iligan Cities, and Misamis Orien- tal
4. People or Citizens	— Indigenous Maranao inhabitants, a homoge- nous ethnic population	— All inhabitants in the two Lanaos, Marawi and Iligan Cities, & Misamis Oriental — a mixed population

5. Leaders or Power-holders	– Council of Elders (<i>Pe- lokloksen</i>) e.g. sultan, datu, imam, etc.	– Government agents (Officials and em- ployees) e.g. gover- nor, mayor, police- man, etc.
6. Ascension to or Recruitment for office	– By ascription or inheritance	– By achievement, ap- pointment or elec- tion
7. Instrument of Social Control	– <i>Adat</i> and Islamic (Customary and reli- gious) laws	– Constitutional law (formal contractual laws)
8. Religion	– Islam (Theocratic)	– No state religion (non-sectarian)

To avoid lengthy presentation of detail, which can be accomplish-
ed elsewhere, let us just say that the areas of opposition between the
bureaucratic government and the *pangampong* (an example of a kinship
government) can be traced for their differences in:

- (1) Sources of authority
- (2) Territorial jurisdiction
- (3) People or citizens
- (4) Leaders or powerholders
- (5) Types of law and order
- (6) Religions or creeds

1. *The source of authority* or power of the *pangampong* and its
sub-division is its traditional organization and the traditional laws of
customs which govern them. On the other hand, the provincial or city
government and its sub-division derives power from the Republic and
its constitutional law.

2. *The territorial jurisdiction* of the *pangampong* is composed of
its *pangampong* state and sub-divisions of *soko*, *inged*, and *agama*. In
contrast the province is composed of sub-territories of the city, municipi-

*Each of these is a principality or sultanate (state) with territory and people,
sub-divided into districts (*suko*) down-ship (*inged*), and villages (*agama*). The four
pangampong (principalities) are allied or confederated under an ancient order
(*taritib*) handed down by founding ancestors.

pal, and barrio units. These two concepts of territory overlap in boundaries and interests.

3. The people of the *pangampong* comprise a kinship nation bound together by blood and kinship ties. In contrast, the residents of the province are called citizens related together not necessarily by blood and kinship but by the common rights of citizenship defined by constitutional law.

4. *The leaders or powerholders in the pangampong* are called "elders," who inherit their offices or titles. In contrast, the provincial leaders are called "agents" who ascend to office by appointment or election.

5. *The type of law and order in the pangampong* are called *adat* or *taritib* (custom) laws and the *Shariah* or Islamic laws, while in the province the regulative system is generally called constitutional law.

6. In the *pangampong* a community member is Maranao-born. It is restricted or closed society. In the province, a citizen can either be a religious man or even an infidel. As the government is non-sectarian its community membership is open.

IV

In a bureaucratic type of administration a rational selection of officeholders is the ideal rule regardless of emotional ties between the recruiting chief and the applicants to positions. Such rationality is again a value supposed to be observed. But it is not uncommon for many Philippine bureau chiefs to prefer their relatives, friends, and *compadres* who may be less qualified for office (we call such practice nepotism, favoritism or *tutatism*.) This is so because kinship value, which is personal and emotional in motivation, often predominates over the rational and impersonal policy of a true bureaucracy.

Indeed, there is a widespread practice of bureau chiefs of recruiting their close relatives, townmates, provincemates, and co-speakers of a regional language. An Ilongo neighbor of mine in Manila once told me that in a factory where he worked, his foreman from Batangas recruited mostly Batangueño laborers so that he himself became a part of the lonely minority in the factory. Ilocanos are stereotyped as industrious people. With such an ethnic pride, Ilocano chiefs are often accused of preferring their *paisanos* for employment. A defunct agency charged with the scholarship affairs of National Cultural minorities was succes-

sively headed by chiefs identified as Maranao, Maguindanao, Igorot, and Tausog. Those chiefs were often the subject of gossips that each favored his ethnolinguistic group for office employment and scholarship grants.

From these cases, it is evident that bureaucratic rationality is often bastardized by ethnic kinship values and interests. Thus, it is not uncommon that the bureau chief's employed relatives often behave in office as if they were also chiefs or junior chiefs over and above non-relatives in the same office. This pattern of relationship is like that of a sultan's son who could behave like his father from whom the son inherited a royal rank or status.

V

In these contrastive descriptions, the two systems of value, of bureaucracy and culture, are rivals, both implicitly and explicitly. It would require cultural engineering to establish toleration and accommodation among peoples as a means to bridge a more peaceful relationship between them and their institutions.

What do we think is the relevance of this discussion to the general situation in Mindanao?

This region we call "Land of Promise" is a multi-cultural setting involving Christians, Muslims, tribal groups, and foreigners — each having a value system with potential and real conflicts with the others, and in relation with the bureaucratic type of government administered by local, regional, and national state agencies.

Conflicts are inimical to progress. People go to war, not because they differ in species or ethnicity, but because their institutional values and economic, political, cultural, and religious goals are in conflict. There are no hard and fast rules to resolve these institutional conflicts. However, it is the responsibility of the regulative institution called "the government" and the societal groups concerned to hold dialogues to resolve or at least minimize conflicts. Thus, a land of promise may transform into a land of reality and progress.

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