

FOUR

Survival and Survivors: The Filipino In an Oppressed Period of His History

It is perhaps a wonder to the Filipinos themselves that at various periods of their history they had survived the depressions that more or less were caused by the oppression of their colonial masters as well as their own leaders. The questions may be asked, Why? and How? The "Why" may be answered in the "How", that is, how the Filipinos managed to survive those seemingly endless chains of calamities through the centuries of oppression.

The "How" is not something that has yet to be sought in a long drawn probe from among them, rather it is to be found in their day-to-day lives, in their folklore, a record of their verbal reaction to all these difficulties, which have been tested and tried through time, and those that are yet in the making in contemporary times. Thus, one of the vehicles through which the Filipino survived may be identified to be the humour, bordering, if not precisely, having the comic effect. Humorous or comic in intention, it has the effect of a critique upon society, in this case that segment of the society, i.e., the leadership, which caused the difficulties that the Filipinos suffer from.

In presenting the Filipino in the context of the oppressed times in their history; and how they had survived, perhaps it would be instructive to see them in terms of what Jacob Levine (1968:6) had to say about humour and the comic in society--

It is clear that society, by tradition and experience, knows the powers of humor in shaping human affairs. But humor is inextricably bound to both inner and outer freedom, and the view that humor gives license hardly does justice to its potential as liberating force. As Worcester expressed it, "The intellectual critical spirit that attacks pretense and acts as watchdog of society is the comic spirit." Where cultures fear freedom of expression and rigidly demand conformity, humor is repressed, and the role of the humorist is dangerous. But nonetheless, humor provides some immunity and permits freedoms otherwise proscribed. Many have perceived this fact.

For example, Freud stated, "In every epoch of history those who have had something to say but could not say it without peril have eagerly assumed a fool's cap." The audience at whom the forbidden speech is aimed tolerated it more easily if they could at the same time laugh and flatter themselves with the reflection that the unwelcome words were clearly nonsensical.

While Levine used the term humorist as an important bridge between the humorous or comic statement and the listener, which is the society itself, in the process of foisting the critique upon those that make their lives arduous, Betty Wang (in Dundes 1965:309) wrote in very precise terms on the role of humour and the comic, viz.,

.....Wherever there is injustice and oppression, one can be sure that the victim will find some solace in folklore. Through jokes, songs and proverbs, the anger of the folk is vent upon the often frighteningly unassailable individual or institution. If the folkloristic protest is permitted, it is perhaps that the blame for its composition usually cannot be affixed to any one person. It is a collective not an individual expression, and consequently the singer of a song of protest is not to be blamed for the content of his song. He is only reporting what the folk say.

As Wang used the term protest, I would like to use it interchangeably with criticism or critique, being "both vehicles of folkloric expressions in times of stress--political, economic and/or socialthat in folklore a society can bear such stresses with lighthearted feelings" (Francisco 1984:5. See Essay 3, in this volume). While the critique may on several occasions evoke laughter, bordering ridicule, it may also evoke feelings of pity and empathy. Of the latter, there is relatively a large body of literature which developed during the Spanish and American colonial rules, which in the context of this presentation may not be possible to cover. It is perhaps sufficient to refer to Jose Rizal's two famous novels, which have been considered classic in their own class, as well as believed to have triggered the revolution against Spanish rule.

Thus, it is not a debatable issue that the Filipino had survived the Spanish rule, then the American benevolent, if colonial, era, into

the period of the Commonwealth, the Japanese, brief, but very destructive occupation, and into the independent Republic. Is it not really a miracle, therefore, that the Filipino is indeed a survivor under all types of calamities, and social-political-economic disorders/difficulties or more succinctly, disasters? Closest to our time is the period of martial rule during which the Filipino's capability for survival was put to test, and in the process produced some of the most biting as well as acidic critical literature that characterized such rule. The acidity of all these critiques certainly draw as much contempt as laughter whenever they are recounted. But for this presentation, I would like to emphasize the latter, for the cathartic effect upon the suffering citizenry.

In Francisco (1984:1-9. Essay 3 in this Volume.) it was presented in general terms the functions of folklore in social criticism, and focussed its role in social control, particularly in very traditional societies (Bascom in Dundes 1965:292; Manuel 1973:236-7; Bruno 1973:184). It included references to social protests as exemplified by the very interesting paradigm on the protests of a very young woman whose husband of only a few days was conscripted for the labour that built the Great Wall of China (Wang in Dundes 1965:311) and the lament of a widow whose husband was killed during the 1911 Revolution in China, the lament being addressed to the Manchus (*ibid.* :312).

But I must not lead you into boredom which such unexciting examples. I must proceed to the paradigms that certainly led the Filipino to survive through the years of oppression. Let me then commence with a riddle that bears on the economy of the Philippines in 1985, viz., "What is the bad news and the good news about the economy of the Philippines in 1985?" The response is "The bad news is that 1985 will be worse than 1984, but the good news is that 1985 will be better than 1986" (in Francisco 1984:7). Again, on the economy though perhaps apocryphal in origin, the following conversation will put you into convulsions with very cathartic effect:

"Customer: The sausages you sold me were meat at one end, and cereal at the other.

"Grocer : Yes, Ma'am. In these hard times, it is difficult to make both ends meet."

(Weekend, October 28, 1984, p.24)

Note that these two paradigms on the economy came out in print in 1984. But let me bring you back a year earlier, the year Ninoy Aquino met his death upon his return to the Philippines. At the height of Filipino's reaction to the assassination, there were literally hundreds of jokes and statements that brought to the consciousness of the people the gravity of their condition, at the same time create a sense of expectant release and hope. F. Hornedo (1984:11-27) presents a collection of these jokes and statements from which I would like to cite a few. Called a "Political Nursery Rhyme" (*ibid.*:25), it gives us an idea of how the people had come to identify themselves with the cause for which Ninoy Aquino died, but with the effect of a ridicule, if comic in effect. Here it is:

Ninoy, hindi ka nag-iisa;
 Ver, naka-isa ka;
 Marcos, nag-iisa ka...;
 Romulo, hindi ka na maka-isa.
 Ninoy, you are not alone;
 Ver, you did one;
 Marcos, you are now alone;
 Romulo, you can not do one (anymore)]

According to Hornedo, this "political nursery rime" was the result of an observation made to the effect that Ninoy's coffin looked bigger than expected, and the question "Why?" was asked. The answer was Hindi siya nag-iisa, "He is not alone." (*ibid.*) This is indeed, indicative of the Filipino's love for the juego de palabras, "play of words", for comic effect.

Sombre though it may have been, but carrying a rather very strong meaning, is the sign on Ninoy Aquino's funeral vehicle. Again from Hornedo (*ibid.*:23): "A sign plastered on the truck [that was] used to carry the Aquino remains on its way to the cemetery: ANOTHER PROJECT OF THE FIRST LADY: DO NOT DELAY." This sign mimics every sign plastered on trucks that are used to haul sand and gravel, lumber, boulders, etc. that are intended for all Government construction projects, viz., PROJECT OF THE PHILIPPINE GOVERNMENT: DO NOT DELAY.

To follow-up our earlier references to the "play of words", it would be most profitable as well as exciting to cite in full the widely

circulated menu of political dishes called Lutong Macoy by the Los Enemigos (cf., ibid.:25). Let me give you the physical description of the "Menu". A four-page piece printed on hard cartolina paper 5 1/2 x 8 1/2 inches when spread open, and 4 1/2 x 5 1/2 inches folded. When folded, the title page would have Los Enemigos presents Lutong Macoy, A Political Feast. The inner page would have listings entitled Order ni Misis and Ihaw Ihaw Ballot; and the back page contains Pasalubong Counter (Gate 8). The bottom of the back page also contains a statement about how the "dishes" when ordered were served.

Los Enemigos

presents

LUTONG MACOY

A Political Feast

ORDER NI MISIS

Azucena a la Valencia
Blas Souffle
Bola Bola Cendaw'a
Callos Romulo
Cesar Salad
Chicharon-ong Bulaklak
Chicken Aspiragos
Cocojuangco Macaroons
Eggs Benedicto
Glaced Tantoco

IHAW-IHAW BALLOT

Bagoong Lipunan
Boneless Comelec with
Perez Sauce

Crony Norte
Daing ng Bayan
Kinurakot na Kangkong at
Kamote (KKK)
Lengua Estupida a la
Señora
Nilasing na Cronies
(Available on Saturdays only)
Paksiw na Eleksyon
Pinaupong Tuta
Piniritong Ibong May
Layang Lumipad
Sariling Sikwat
(Snails with toothpicks)
Tinhog na Peña
Tostados Estados Unidos
Utang Sapin-Sapin
(All year round)

PASALUBONG COUNTER
(Gate 8)

Ice Cold Ver
 Jaimelaya Ube
 (Also known as giniling na mamera)
 Joly B Cheeseburgis Sandwich
 Macaroni Velasco
 Maruya Katigbak
 Okoy Romualdez
 Olivas Alone Hototay Soup
 Sharks Ongpin Soup
 Tinolang Manotoc
 Macapuno Supreme

Agravadulce Sauce
 August 21 Lechen Plan
 Dreaded Metrocom
 Dinuguang Tarmac
 Fabian's Tira-Tira
 Galman con Sago
 Pusila Pusit

All orders served in New
 Society portions (very
 small),

Sariling Sikap style (self-
 service) except on 'the feast
 of Nuestra Señora de las
 Alahas, Patron of the Poor.

(See Hornedo 1984:25, 27. He claims it was published in Mr. & Ms. but does not cite the specific issue.)

The "Menu". Los Enemigos literally means "The Enemies", means the "Political Opposition". Lutong Macoy literally "The cooking of McCoy", McCoy is a parody of Marcos, which in Philippine political scene during Martial Rule showed that the person to reckon with was no other than then President Marcos. The phrase Lutong Macoy is a mimic from the phrase Lutong Macao. It means literally "Cooked in Macao", in Philippine language means "that which is half cooked", or more precisely, "that which is decided upon without consultation, i.e., without the benefit of a thorough study or consensus." In this case, Lutong Macoy, means "that which is cooked by President Marcos," i.e., "that which is decided upon by President Marcos." And, indeed, in Martial Rule, there is no other "cook" but the strong man, in the case of the Philippines, President Marcos!!!

The inner pages of the "Menu" are, indeed, a record of the "political feast" that was celebrated throughout the Rule. The page ORDER NI MISIS is a collection of various appetizers, soups, sweets, desserts. The other page IHAW IHAW BALLOT is the main course. Antecedent to giving the meanings of each item, in the list, let me explain ORDER NI MISIS. It means, literally, "Wife's Order", in Philippine context, the wife orders the husband to purchase something. It is a catch phrase of an advertisement, which sells a

brand of cooking oil, i.e., Baguio Oil. IHAW IHAW BALLOT is a play of words. Ihaw means "roast" barbeque; in reduplicated form, it emphasises the main offering of the restaurant. Ballot, here, in Tagalog should be balot, meaning, "to wrap, wrap." It means that the "roast" is to be "wrapped" and taken home, e.g., in American parlance, the take-home practise of ordering food. BALLOT, as used here, refers to elections. The dishes in the list are a collection of various types of dishes from local preparation to Spanish to American cooking.

The ORDER NI MISIS page is also a parade of names that were identified with the Rule; and whose fortunes were tied up to their being under the beck and call of the former First lady, the Mrs. I would not wish to go through the list and explain each item, because I am certain that a few if not all here would be familiar with each piece. I will reserve explanations of each item during the forum. But let me refer to just one item, i.e., Jaimelaya Ube (also known as giniling na mamera). Everyone knows Jaime Laya; he was the former Central Bank Governor and later Minister of Education, Culture and Sports. Ube is a root crop, violet in color, which is used to make sweets/desserts. As a sweet, it is normally known as Halaya Ube, mashed into paste and to which are added milk, butter, little sugar with food essence, hence the mimicking into Jaimelaya Ube with just two syllables, i.e., ime inserted into halaya. Why 'also known as giniling na mamera'? It is also common knowledge that it was during his term as Governor of the Central Bank that the one-centavo piece made of perhaps an alloy of tin and aluminum was issued. It was, indeed, a worthless piece! Giniling na mamera, here means, "ground one-centavo pieces," which has become the second important ingredient of Jaimelaya Ube.

The IHAW IHAW BALLOT collection is also a grand parade of items with only a few names referred to, but each item having to do with practically all major "policies" of the Rule. Let us look at the meanings in the game of words:

Bagoong Lipunan. The Rule had declared at the beginning of its existence that the Philippine is a "New Society" (Bagong Lipunan), but to the opposition it was a Bagoong, "Rotten", Lipunan, "Society".

Boneless Comelec with Perez Sauce mimics the dish Boneless

Bangus (with some kind of sauce). It is well known that during Martial Rule, the Commission on Elections (Comelec) then chaired by Leonardo Perez, was an instrument for controlling all those who were elected through manipulations by the Comelec. The world knows how the Comelec manipulated the elections to elect those who followed orders of the Rule. Boneless here refers to the fact that the Chairman himself was not independent of the dictates of the Ruler.

Crony Norte is another interesting mimic from the canned meat, carne norte, a South American Spanish term for the Norte Americano corned beef. Crony, of course, is the term applied to all the people who worked as business partners of the Ruler.

Daing ng Bayan, literally, "people's complaint" or "people's moan". This has something to do with the people's complaint about the national condition--the economic as well as the political difficulties obtaining during the Rule. The dish daing na bangus or daing na carne, "smoked milkfish" or "smoked beef/pork" is quite appropriate. The play of words is focussed on the word daing, which has two meanings according to the accent, da'ing, "smoked, dried;" dai'ng, "moan, complaint." Thus, one cannot ignore the distinction of the two words, but would have the effect of a critique in the form of a humourous if biting statement.

Kinurakot na Kangkong at Kamote is indeed a most picturesque reference to an organization or movement during the Rule, i.e., Kilusang Kabuhayan at Kaunlaran (KKK: Movement for Livelihood and Development). Kinurakot na Kangkong at Kamote means "Stolen Kangkong and Kamote". It could be the best commentary of the economic conditions of the country, when even the two green creeper vegetables which are available at no cost because they grow almost everywhere without cultivation, are stolen for food.

Another Spanish dish in the list, Lengua Estupida a la Señora reflects the real Spanish dish Lengua Estofado. The message that Lengua Estupida projects is meaningful in terms of the reference to a la Señora. Literally, it means, "The Stupid Tongue that is the Lady's". In proper language it should read "The Lady is not intelligent enough to be understood or to understand," or is she? The question is "Who is the Lady?" Now, lengua estofado is beef tongue cooked in tomato sauce with potatoes, sliced bananas, laurel leaves and black pepper.

Paksiw na Eleksyon should properly be discussed along with

the second item in the list, viz., Boneless Comelec with Perez Sauce. First, however, let me refer to the actual dish, Paksiw na Lechon. Lechon is the roast whole pig, which is famous as one of the required preparations in large and important celebrations. Paksiw refers to the preparation that is made when there is a large amount of unconsumed meat, hence it is prepared into another dish, which uses vinegar, black-pepper, laurel leaves to give it another flavour distinct from the original preparation. The parody is that the elections during the Rule were never really seen as expressive of the people's will.

Symbolic of one's unquestionable loyalty to a master is one's being referred to in Tagalog as tuta ni (name of person) like in the case of all Marcos's men during his Rule. Tuta literally means "puppy," but its meaning is more intense if applied to one whose life depends upon someone. The item in the menu Pinaupong Tuta is, indeed, reflective of being made to sit upon being commanded to do so. The real dish is pinaupong manok, "chicken cooked in salt steam." The procedure is plain dressed chicken, set on a grill under which is an inch thick of salt, covered with a large tin can, then on top and around the tin can are dried twigs and hay which then are set to fire until the chicken inside is cooked.

Another chicken dish is Piniritong Ibong May Layang Lumipad, "Fried bird (chicken) with Freedom of Flight." Pinirito means "fried." Ibong May Layang Lumipad is a phrase from the famous song, Ang Bayan Ko, "My Country," which became the rallying music during Martial Rule. It was symbolic of a people with the freedom that must be enjoyed, but was stifled by the suppression of their rights. Pinirito would mean suppression/oppression of rights.

Snails cooked and served in their shell would require a piece of toothpick to extract the meat before eating it. Sariling sikwat is the Tagalog term for one to pick the snail meat out of its shell a la self service. But Sariling Sikwat is a phrase applied to those who take upon themselves to partake of any largesse in Government or in any of its agencies.

In an earlier paper (Francisco 1984:7-8), which I prepared for the 5th National Folklore Congress, the theme being Folklore and Social Criticism, I had the occasion to use the last two items in the list--Utang Sapin-Sapin (all year round) and Tostados Estados Unidos. (See Essay 3 in this Volume, pp. 20-29.)

The back page of the Menu seems to have been intended to be the "coup de grace", for it brings us back to the assassination of Ninoy Aquino. Pasalubong Counter (Gate 8), in Philippine tradition, as is seen on the way to the arrival area, where every Filipino who arrives from abroad may make his final purchases of items which he gives to all his friends, including relatives. Salubong in Tagalog means "to meet". Pasalubong means "something one brings with him from travels abroad, as gifts or tokens of being met on arrival." Gate 8 refers to the gate where Ninoy Aquino disembarked upon his return. But he did not bring with him his pasalubong for those who met him; rather he was given a great pasalubong, he was sent to the great beyond.

But let us look at the items in the list. Another sweet sauce, Agravadulce sauce, flavoured with something called "Agrava" tops the list. It is well known that the Commission appointed by Marcos to investigate the assassination of Ninoy Aquino was chaired by Justice Corazon Juliano Agrava. The Commission found that the soldiers who escorted Ninoy were innocent, but declared that Rolando Galman was the triggerman. Indeed, Ninoy's death must have been rendered sweeter with two other desserts or merienda items--August 21 Lechen Plan, read Leche Plan, and Galman con sago, also read Gulaman con Sago. Certainly, the death could not have occurred without elaborate plans as in the actual carrying out of the Plan (August 21 Leche Plan); and the "fall guy" (in American language) was there to be seen by the world as one who carried out the killing, Rolando Galman, in the menu Galman con Sago (from Gulaman con Sago), "sweet pudding."

Dreaded Metrocom (Metrocom is the acronym of the Armed Forces of the Philippines Metropolitan Command) mimics Breaded Chicken or any other food fried with ground bread. Dinuguang Tarmac gives one the idea of the Tagalog dish, which uses cooked pork blood (from dugo, blood) for sauce, hence dinuguan, that which is cooked in blood, in the case of the dish. Tarmac here is the area in the airport where the plane had berthed (parked). What a sight, that was, with the blood of Ninoy spilled on the tarmac. Hence, the bloodied tarmac.

Fabian's Tira Tira. Fabian can never be other than Fabian Ver, the Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces of the Philippines during Martial Rule. Tira Tira may be the Spanish tirar, to hit. As a food item, tira-tira is no other than flour with sugar, milk made into paste and twisted to look like a rope and fried in oil. So that Fabian's

Tira-Tira gives the meaning that immediately conjures image of shooting, i.e., killing. And related to this item is Pusila Pusit, which means, separately--pusila from Spanish fusil, firearm, to Cebuano pusila, to shoot; pusit, Philippine squid.

Hornedo (1984:27) published Lutong Macoy as an appendix of his paper, but did not include what one would call the punchline at the back page of the Menu. Let me quote--

All orders served in New Society portions (very small), Sariling Sikap (self service) except on the feast of Nuestra Señora de las Alahas, Patron of the Poor. (see page 29 of this essay)

We must not forget that current Philippine English usage is laced with any of the Philippine languages, as well as Spanish. In the citation above, Nuestra Señora de las Alahas is translated "Our Lady of the Jewels." It is not difficult to identify the lady who, according to reports, is notorious for her outrageous tastes and habit of excessive expense.

The above presentation is just one of the items in the mechanisms that made the Filipino sensitive to the events happening around him, and perhaps within him as influenced by these external stimuli. It is no longer a wonder that the repertoire by which he plans his survival in the state of depression, if not oppression, one is his ability to laugh at himself, sometimes in very sombre mood, sometimes in the exuberance of the joking situation, careless very often "devil may care" attitude.

The jokes that he tells about the social conditions or the political situation of his homeland are symbolic of his capacity to absorb such difficulties yet with determination to overcome them. The Menu which was cited in full in the earlier part of this essay gives you a full range of his creativity to respond to the events that surrounded his condition at a time in his history that seemed beyond redemption. And yet he is not just a survivor, he is one with the resolve to do the best under such conditions.

In very real terms, it was said "that many people are politically soiled by association with the hated holders of power, and, therefore, deserve to be counted among those to be held in contempt by the

people. Thus the outrageous "Lutong Macoy" (*ibid.*:26). The use of humour or jokes is, indeed, the height of contemptuous expression. In the case of the Menu, each one of those referred to are irretrievably beyond raising from that state.

As I have shown in rather very brief discussion of the role of folklore in social criticism, by presenting what I would like to call the locus classicus in the context of Philippine conditions during Martial Rule, I hope I have whetted your appetite for more to the effect that you will also join us Filipinos in studying these for the benefit of gaining better understanding of his psyche. Folklore "maybe the best 'weapon' for survival. Humour, riddles, ridicule or plain sayings whether they are in the guise of protest or critiques have somehow kept us [the Filipinos] sane" (Francisco 1984:9. Essay 3 in this Volume.) There could have been no better way of keeping the Nation look forward to another round of jokes under any circumstance and condition.

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