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The Chinese Mestizos and the Formation of the Filipino Nationality

The recorded history of the Philippines would be incomplete as a basis for understanding contemporary society unless it takes into account the Chinese mestizos' contributions to our development as a nation.

The Chinese mestizos were an important element of Philippine society in the 19th century. They played a significant role in the formation of the Filipino middle class, in the agitation for reforms, in the 1898 revolution, and in the formation of what is now known as the Filipino nationality. In contemporary times their role in nation-building continues.

Filipinos with Chinese blood in their veins have occupied important positions in the highest levels of the government. During the first half of the 20th century, one of the dominant national political figures, later the Vice-President of the Philippine Commonwealth, was Sergio Osmena who was a Chinese mestizo. During the American regime, the roster of the Philippine National Assembly was a veritable list of Chinese mestizos. A number of Chinese mestizos have become president : Jose P. Laurel, Elpidio Quirino, Ramon Magsaysay, and Ferdinand E. Marcos. Others in public service recently or today include Prime Minister Cesar Virata, Ministers Carlos P. Romulo, Roberto Ongpin, Arturo Tanco, National Food and Grains Administrator Jesus Tanchanco, Director of the National Library, Dr. Serafin Quiason and Supreme Court Justice Claudio Teehankee.

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Other prominent figures in our history in various fields of human endeavour were of Chinese-Filipino descent or partly so, either on the paternal or maternal side. A few of them can be cited. In religion, mother Ignacia de Espiritu Santo (founder of the first Filipino congregation for Filipino women, Fr. Lorenzo Ruiz (candidate for sainthood), and Jaime Cardinal Sin. In the judiciary, Justice Ramon Avancena and Supreme Court Justice Jose Abad Santos. In education, Vidal A. Tan (UP President), Teodoro M. Kalaw (educator and historian), Manuel Lim (Secretary of Education). In politics, Eulogio Rodriguez Sr. (NP senator) and Arsenio H. Lacson (mayor of Manila). In business and philanthropy, Teodoro Yangco. In the military profession, General Vicente Lim and Cesar Fernando Basa, both heroes of world war II. In art, Tomas Pinpin, the first Filipino printer.

Even these few examples should suffice to make it evident that, through different periods, the Chinese mestizos have exerted a tremendous influence on our history. Yet, paradoxically, the role the Chinese mestizos have played in the making of the Filipino nation has received little attention from our scholars. Only within the last two decades or so have such men like Edgar Wickberg, Fr. Jesus Merino and John Schumacher delved into the contributions of the Chinese mestizos to our society ⁽¹⁾.

The Chinese mestizo played an important part in the creation and evolution of what is now called the Filipino nation. According to Fr. Jesus Merino, O.P. : «The Filipino nationality, no matter how Malayan it may be in its main ethnic stock, no matter how Spanish and Christian it may be in its inspiration, civilization and religion, no matter how American it may be in its politics, trade and aspiration, has been historically and practically shaped, not by the Chinese immigrant, but by the Chinese mestizo» ⁽²⁾.

Underscoring the positive contributions of the Chinese mestizo to the larger society, Juan Fernando grudgingly acknowledged the fact that the only beneficial effect of the Chinese immigrants was the «industrious race of Chinese mestizo» ⁽³⁾.

Of the two main types of mestizos identified in colonial Philippines, the Spanish mestizo and the Chinese mestizo, the latter proved to be a more significant element in Philippine society for three reasons : first, the Chinese mestizo was more numerous as there was a greater infusion of Chinese blood than any other blood in the Filipino. In the mid-19th century, there was 240,000 Chinese mestizos, but only about 7,000 to 10,000 Spanish mestizos. Secondly, the Chinese mestizos were readily assimilated into the fabric of the native society. Thirdly, more than the Spanish mestizo, they were to assume important roles in the economic, social, and political life of the nation. By the second half of the 19th century, they had become so numerous and their influence so great, that the term mestizo, as commonly used by the Spaniards in the Philippines, usually referred to them.

The evolution of the Chinese mestizo

Although the Chinese who settled in the islands before the Spanish colonization had intermarried with native women, the emergence of the Chinese mestizo as a legally distinct class began only with the Spanish colonial regime. Soon after the Spaniards founded the city of Manila in 1571, a large Chinese colony evolved. Performing multiple services as traders, artisans and domestic servants, the Chinese became indispensable to the needs of the capital. Encouraged to come and settle, the Chinese population increased by leaps and bounds. But the Spaniards could only see in this rapid increase a potential threat to their own rule. They feared that the Chinese, being an ethnic group with roots in China, would be far less loyal to the Spanish regime than the Christianized natives whom the Spaniards called Indios throughout their colonial rule ⁽⁴⁾.

Thus the Spaniards faced a dilemma : they wanted the Chinese for their indispensable services in the economy and yet were suspicious and wary of their growing number. This dilemma, however, was resolved through the policy of converting the Chinese and encouraging marriages between Catholic Chinese and Catholic Indios. The missionaries contributed to the achievement of this goal. The friars pursued their calling among the Chinese and worked hard to convert them. This provided the rationale behind the creation of special communities of Chinese, the most important of which was the Binondo Community founded in 1594 ⁽⁵⁾.

The Dominicans became active in converting the place into a community of married Catholics, which by 1600 numbered more than 500 ⁽⁶⁾. When the *Gremio de Chino* (Chinese Guild) was set up in 1687, the mestizo descendants as well as the Chinese residents were enrolled in the same Gremio. In 1738 there were about 5,000 Chinese mestizos living in Binondo ⁽⁷⁾.

Elsewhere, similar Chinese mestizo communities developed. The Jesuits had established a community of Catholic Chinese in the district of Santa Cruz, which in turn produced its own mestizo community ⁽⁸⁾. In Tondo village the Chinese mestizos as well as the Indios came under the charge of the calced religious of St. Augustine ⁽⁹⁾. In the early 17th century, there were more than 100 Chinese married to native women in Iloilo ⁽¹⁰⁾. In the wake of the Chinese massacre in Manila in 1603, many Chinese fled to Pampanga and intermarried with the local women ⁽¹¹⁾. In the early 18th century, the Parian of Cebu was a predominantly Chinese mestizo community ⁽¹²⁾.

In northern Luzon, where marriages between Chinese and lowland natives had already taken place, members of the Limahong expedition which put up a short-lived colony along the Lingayen Gulf in 1574-1575, intermarried with the upland women, the Igorots and Tinggians. The lighter complexion and the graceful built of the Igorots have been ascribed by many

writers to this Chinese infusion ⁽¹³⁾. It is interesting to note that Lingayen, a town in Pangasinan where Limahong had founded a short-lived kingdom, had the most Chinese mestizos. In 1787, they numbered 2,793, out of a native population of 6,490 ⁽¹⁴⁾. The continued intermarriage of many Chinese with Indio women resulted in an increasing class of Chinese mestizos.

As the Chinese mestizo population increased, the question of their legal status arose. From the beginning of the Spanish occupation to about 1740, the inhabitants of the Philippines were classified into 3 classes : Spaniards, Indios and Chinese. The legal status of the Chinese mestizo were ultimately resolved in 1741 when the whole population was reclassified for purposes of tribute or tax payment into four classes : Spaniards and Spanish mestizos who were exempted from the tribute; Indios, Chinese mestizos, and Chinese who were all tribute-paying classes although each class was assessed a different amount. In the 19th century the tribute or head tax paid by the Indio was equal to P 1.50; that of the Chinese mestizo was P 3.00; and that of the Chinese was P 6.00. With the classification of the mestizos as a legally distinct class, they were entitled to form their own *Gremio de mestizos Sangleyes* (Guild of Chinese Mestizos) ⁽¹⁵⁾, and listed apart from the records of the natives under their own *gobernadorcillo*. In villages where the mestizo tribute payers numbered from 25 to 30, they formed their own *barangay*, otherwise they belonged to the nearest *barangay* of the natives ⁽¹⁶⁾.

By 1810, there were 121,621 Chinese mestizos in an Indio population of 2,395,676. In 1850 the Chinese mestizo population increased to about 240,000, while that of the Indios to more than 4,000,000 ⁽¹⁷⁾. In half a dozen provinces the Chinese mestizos made up one-third or more of the population, and in another half-dozen they accounted for 5 percent to 16 percent of the local inhabitants ⁽¹⁸⁾. By this time the infusion of Chinese blood was evident in all the towns. By the end of the 19th century there were about half a million Chinese mestizos, with some 46,000 living in Manila ⁽¹⁹⁾.

Any person born of a Chinese father and an Indio mother was classified a Chinese mestizo. Subsequent descendants were listed as Chinese mestizo. A mestiza who married a Chinese or mestizo, as well as their children, was registered as a mestizo. But a Chinese mestiza who married an Indio was listed, together with her children, as Indio ⁽²⁰⁾.

It is interesting to note the ways by which Chinese mestizos acquired their names. This has been explained by Edgar Wickberg ⁽²¹⁾, but is elaborated on here.

Sometimes, a mestizo retained the name of his Chinese father, making such transliterated names from the Chinese ideograph as Co, Tan, Lim, Yap, Ong, Uy, Filipino surnames. Another way was to create a Filipino name by combining parts of the full name of the Chinese father. Thus when

the full name of the Chinese father was Tee Han-kee, the mestizo children might decide to create a new name, Teehankee. The same also explains the proliferation of names once Chinese and later romanized into forms like Yuzon, Limkao, Limcauco, Leongson; if a Chinese name like Yap Tinchay had been popularly known as Yap-tinco, using the Hokkien (the dialect of Fukien were most of the Philippine Chinese came from) polite suffix Ko (meaning «elder brother») with the personal name, the new name might be Yaptinco. This explains why there are today numerous Filipino names that end in *co*, names like Sychangco, Angangco, Tantoco, Tanchanco, Tantuico, Tanlayco, Cojuangco, Syjuco, Ongsiako, Soliongeo, Yupangco, Tanco, Yangco, etc. Although the names cited above were reminiscent of the mestizo children's ancestry, Catholic Chinese also acquired a Spanish name upon baptism. Fr. Jesus Merino examined some of the 17th century baptismal records of the Church of Three Kings in the Parian and came up with this interesting discovery. An entry in the baptismal registry of 21 December 1632 showed that a 36-year old Chinese born in China of Chinese parents was baptized Don Pedro de Mendiola, after his godfather Sergeant Major Don Pedro de Mendiola ⁽²²⁾. An entry on 14 May 1627 showed that a three-week-old daughter of Mateo Giang San and Ynes Lamanis was baptized Joanna Joanio, after her godmother, Maria Joanio ⁽²³⁾. Sometimes a child of Chinese-Filipina parents was given the name of the Filipino mother. An entry in the Binondo Church in 1700 noted that a nine-day old boy was baptized Hilario Camacho, a legitimate child of Juan Ten Say and Maria Camacho ⁽²⁴⁾.

It was not unusual for the mestizo descendant to drop the Chinese part of the name and use only the Spanish part. The descendant of Jose Castro Ongchengco may simply be known by the name Castro, or the Chinese father himself after acquiring a new name might be called by just that new name. Thus Mariano Velasco Chua Chengco, a wealthy merchant in the late 19th century, was popularly known as Mariano Velasco ⁽²⁵⁾. Another example was that of Antonio Osorio, father of Francisco Osorio, one of the 13 martyrs of Cavite, whose original name was Tan Kim Ko. Juan de Vera, printer of the book, *Doctrina Christiana*, was originally Keng Yong ⁽²⁶⁾.

The naming of baptized Chinese mestizos after their godparents, as noted previously, had been very common during the Spanish regime. In the late nineteenth century several Chinese adapted the not too common Spanish surname Palanca. Among the first to assume the name was Tan Quien Sien who was *gubernadorcillo* of the *Gremio de Chino* in the last quarter of the 19th century. He acquired the name of his godfather, Colonel Carlos Palanca y Gutierrez, of the Spanish colonial army, and became Carlos Palanca. The latter in turn might have acted as godfather to Tan Guin-glay, a wealthy distiller from the late 1890s to the late 1940s, who also acqui-

red the name Don Carlos Palanca. The well-known Palanca clan today might have descended from him.

That Spanish or Filipino names are not guarantee of Castilian or Filipino descent is obvious. The list of Chinese mestizo names under the *Gremio de Mestizos Sangleyes* (Guild of Chinese Mestizos) in 1882 for several towns in Cavite for instance, showed that such names were hardly distinguishable from those of the natives. The following surnames were listed as mestizo de Sangleyes ^(26 bis) : Tagle, Sabali, Sapica, Dairet, Sanquilayan,, Bautista, de Guzman, Villanueva, Camarce, Marimbao, Mayasa, Sarinas, Camua, Mateo, Carino, Aransasu, Tarim, Gianco, Topacio, Calocada, de Castro, Cuevas, Camerino, Tirona, Ylano, Marquez, Sarmiento, Sarreal, Sayoc, Samson, Madlansacay, Virata, Monzon, Malbal, Espiritu, Herrera, Alejandro, Yubienco, Bustamante, Poblete, Vasquez, Aguinaldo, Encarnacion, Legaspi, Jimenez ⁽²⁷⁾.

Such names as San Agustin, Basa, Feleteo, Jose, Fernandez, Ballesteros, de Cuenca, Lazaro, Miranda, Pagtachan, Narvaez, Javier, Estandante, Lumanog, Alis, Madlansacay, Espeneli, Mojica, Pareja, Loyola, Villacarlos, Malimban, Alvarez, Salud, Poblete, Bustamante, Nazareno, were also names of Chinese mestizos who served either as *cabeza* or *gobernadorcillo* in various towns of Cavite from 1830 to the 1890s ⁽²⁸⁾.

Students from Camarines and Albay in the seminary of Nueva Caceres in 1796, listed as Chinese mestizos, had such filipinized or hispanized names as Vicente Tagle, Narciso Cecillo, Bernardo de la Cruz, Vicente Racios, Juan Nepomuceno, Eulogio Modesto, Pablo de Santa Ana, Fabian de Vera, and Jose Rodriguez ⁽²⁹⁾.

In Bacolod, an 1852 *barangay* record (n°. 54) listed as Chinese mestizos the following hispanized or filipinized names : Cayetano, Villanueva, Balayos, Fereon, Segobia, Bringas, Lanes, Tomas, Rodrigazo, Arcenas, Medel, Gonzaga, Torello, Salmeo, Sta. Rita, Rodriguez, Guanzon, Puntuan, Suanson, Sianson, Togly, Asaola, Felicia, Picson, de la Pena, Brujola, Singco, Jocsing, Villamena, Quijano ⁽³⁰⁾.

In the list of *gobernadorcillos de mestizo* in Bacolor, Pampanga from 1746 to 1826, one finds such hispanized names as de Ocampo, Basillo, Mesina, de los Reyes and de los Angeles ⁽³¹⁾. In Mabalacat and Mexico, the list of *gobernadorcillos* reveals the list of hispanized Chinese mestizos like Pinping, Lusing, Tuazon, etc. In Angeles, there were such mestizo names like Henson, Dizon, and Quiason ⁽³²⁾.

In Negros and Iloilo, families with names such as Lacson, Conlu, Locsin, Jocson, Tionko, Yunpue, Tinsay, Jison, Yulo, Cuaycong, Montilla, Yusay, Lopez, Gonzaga, Yanzon, Guanco, Montelibano, Araneta, Ditching, Limsiaco, Magalona, de la Rama, Ledesma, Valderrama, Consing, Guanzon, de la Pena, and others represented the Chinese mestizo class in the

area ⁽³³⁾. In Cebu, the Velezes, Osmenas, and Climacos came from Chinese mestizo families ⁽³⁴⁾. In the Bicol region some of the most important families of the 20th century descended from 19th century immigrants of Tagalog-Chinese mestizos (Samson) and Ilongo-Chinese mestizos (Locsin) ⁽³⁵⁾.

If there are many Filipinos today who descended from mixed Filipino-Chinese parentage and do not carry Chinese names, it is because Filipino and Chinese mestizo names were hispanized by the 1849 decree which required every family head to choose a new surname from a catalogue of Spanish names.

The Chinese Mestizos as Middle Class

The development of the Chinese mestizo as an entrepreneur from the 1750s to the 1850s paved the way for the emergence of the Philippine middle class. Inheriting the economic dynamism of their Chinese ancestors, they were described by John Bowring as «more active and enterprising, more prudent and pioneering, more oriented to trade and commerce than the Indios» ⁽³⁶⁾.

The expulsion of many Chinese in the late 1760s for their cooperation with the British who occupied Manila in 1762-1764, and the prohibition of those who remained in Manila from going to the provinces, enabled the energetic and enterprising Chinese mestizos to penetrate markets which had been the preserve of the Chinese.

In the absence of much of the Chinese traders, the Chinese mestizos became the provisioners of the colonial authorities, the foreign firms and residents of Manila. In the capital, the Chinese mestizos shared economic power with the Chinese as exporters-importers, wholesalers, retail traders and owners of majority of the artisan shops. In the provinces around Manila, they practically took over from the Chinese as retailers.

By the early 1800s, Chinese mestizos south of Manila, particularly in Laguna and Pasay, were engaged in landholding and wholesaling. North of Manila, the Chinese mestizos of Tondo, Malabon, Polo, Obando, Meycauayan and Bocaue were involved in rice growing as lessees of estates and as middlemen trading between Manila and the Pampanga-Bulacan area which produced rice and salt. East of Manila, Chinese mestizos in Pasig were specializing in wholesale and retail trade between Manila and Laguna ⁽³⁷⁾.

In the Visayas, Chinese mestizos handled wholesale trading between the islands ⁽³⁸⁾. The opening of the port of Manila in the 1830s followed by those of Sual, Iloilo and Cebu stimulated coastline trade among the various islands in Manila. The opening of the country to foreign traders facilitated growth of export in tropical products – indigo, sugar, coffee, coconut, tobacco and hemp for the world market ⁽³⁹⁾.

Manila carried a lucrative interisland trade with Cebu and Molo and Jaro in Iloilo. From Cebu the mestizo merchants sailed to Leyte, Samar, Caraga, Misamis, Negros and Panay to gather local products like tobacco, sea slugs, mother of pearl, cocoa, coconut oil, coffee, gold, wax, and rice. These goods were shipped to Manila where they were sold to Chinese and European merchants returned with manufactured goods for distribution throughout the Visayas ⁽⁴⁰⁾.

Chinese mestizos in Molo and Jaro collected similar items in the Visayas for export to Manila and bought European goods for resale to Molo, Jaro and other towns. Molo and Jaro mestizos were also engaged in pina cloth-making for export. It was this thriving coastwise trade which made Cebu and Iloilo wealthy ⁽⁴¹⁾.

Chinese mestizo merchants bought tobacco in Nueva Ecija and Cagayan, and transported the product to Manila ⁽⁴²⁾.

The demand for sugar and other tropical products encouraged many of the Chinese mestizo and Indio merchants to clear and cultivate increasing amounts of land. In Pampanga, Bulacan, Bataan, Batangas, Laguna, Cebu, Negros and Iloilo the Chinese mestizos were involved in the production and marketing of sugar ⁽⁴³⁾.

In the 1840s, with the opening of the port of Manila, the Spanish colonial authorities encouraged the Chinese to return to the Philippines to accelerate the development of the economy. Chinese immigration quickened, increasing from 6,000 in 1847 to 18,000 in 1865, 30,000 in 1876 and 100,000 in the 1880s ⁽⁴⁴⁾. These new arrivals who fanned out to the provinces began displacing the Chinese mestizos as wholesalers and retailers. A great many of the displaced mestizos shifted to the cultivation of export crops and became landowners. Others shifted to the professions as doctors, lawyers, writers or journalists and still others to various occupations ⁽⁴⁵⁾.

The transformation of Philippine agriculture from subsistence to export production in mid-19th century witnessed the rise of the Chinese mestizos as an economically independent middle class, both in Manila and the provinces ⁽⁴⁶⁾. Thus even though the Chinese mestizos were eased out of the retail trade, they did not lose all their sources of economic income, or their social prestige.

This opulent merchant class so visible in Manila, Iloilo, Cebu and many other towns caught the attention of foreign observers of the Philippine scene. In 1842, Sinibaldo de Mas referred to the Chinese mestizos who inherited the «industry and speculative spirit» of their ancestors, as constituting the «middle class» of the Philippines ⁽⁴⁷⁾. In late 1850s while traveling in the islands John Bowring described the Chinese mestizos as «a great improvement upon the pure Malay or Indio breed», and the most industrious, prudent, and economical element in the Philippine population ⁽⁴⁸⁾.

Feodor Jagor who was in the country in the 1880s called the Chinese mestizo «the richest and most enterprising portion of the entire population» (49). It is to this vigorous mestizo class to which many contemporary Filipino entrepreneurs trace their origin. Incidentally, wanting to increase the industrious Chinese mestizo population, the Spaniards granted them the privilege to marry at the age of 16 without parental consent, a privilege not granted to the Indios (50).

The Rise of the Middle Class to Social Prestige

The Chinese mestizos' economic wealth had a great effect in increasing their standards of living and their social prestige. Unwilling to accept the limits of the past, the members of this middle class would express themselves in novel artistic terms. By the mid-19th century elegance was replacing mere comfort in the houses of the rich. The new middle class, often graceful and cultivated, following the model of Hispanic-European culture, was getting itself firmly entrenched in many *pueblos* or towns. The graceful structure and delicately carved furniture of the house of the mestizo revealed his familiarity with European ways. «In towns around Manila», Bowring noted, «almost every *pueblo* have some dwellings larger and better than the rest, occupied mainly by a mixed race of Chinese descent.» (51). The wealth they acquired and the manner they spent it, according to Wickberg, made them the arbiter of fashion, customs, and style of living (52). John Bowring in 1850 wrote :«Many of them adopt the European costume, but where they retain the native dress it is finer in quality, gayer in color, and richer in ornament. Like the natives, they wear their skirts over the trousers but the shirts are of *pina* or *sinamay* fastened with button of valuable chains, and a gold chain is seldom wanting, suspended around the neck. The men commonly wear European hats and stockings, and the sexes exhibited no small amount of dandyism and coquetry (53).»

A decade earlier, Mas expressed this kind of opinion :«They (the Chinese mestizos) are luxuriantly dressed and more elegant and handsome than the Indians. Some of their women are decidedly beautiful. But they preserve most of the habits of the Indian, whom they excel in attention to religious duties because they are superior in intelligence (54).»

The mestizo traders provided the *pueblos* with much more than finished goods. They changed the life of a community that had been isolated for lack of outside influences, a community that had changed little over the years for lack of external stimuli. Now the traders brought excitement and novel items. Observing the same phenomena in Iloilo, the British Vice Consul Nicholas Loney, wrote in the late 1850s :«During the last few years a very remarkable change had taken place in the dress and general external appearance of the inhabitants of the larger *pueblos*, owing in great mea-

sure to the comparative facility with which they obtained articles, which were formerly either not imported, or the price of which then beyond their reach. In the interior of the houses the same change was observable in their furnitures and other arrangements, and the evident wish to add ornament to the same articles of household use ⁽⁵⁵⁾.»

The rise of the middle class to economic importance had another great effect. The acquisition of a certain amount of wealth made it easier for some mestizo families to provide education for their children. By the late 1860s, as a result of the educational decree of 1863 which gave the Indios and mestizos access to higher education, a few people, mostly wealthy natives and Chinese mestizos, had the opportunity of getting some college education from institutions like Letran, San Jose and Santo Tomas. In the 1870s more families were able to send their children not only to Manila but also to Spain, and later to progressive European countries like France, England, Austria and Germany ⁽⁵⁶⁾.

During the colonial period, as higher education remained the privilege of wealthy families, the economic and political leadership constituted the intellectual elite as well. Numerically, the middle class of Chinese mestizos seemed almost inconsequential, but the educational attainment of these mestizos, combined with their economic wealth and social prestige, enabled them to dominate public opinion. In 1876, W.G. Palgrave commented :«Intellectually they are generally superior to the unmixed around them. Their members, taken in comparison with that of the entire population is not great; but their wealth and influence go far to make up for this deficiency ⁽⁵⁷⁾.»

Regardless of their ethnic, social and economic origin, the Chinese mestizos tended to dominate not only the economic and social but also the political leadership of the local communities. By the turn of the 19th century, the frequent occurrence of names of Chinese mestizos in the *cabeza* of *gobernadorcillo* lists for the provinces reflected considerable assimilation of the ranks of native elite by the Chinese mestizos ⁽⁵⁸⁾.

In 1861 the British vice-consul in a report to the British foreign office stated :«The Iloilo mestizos, especially those of Chinese origin, are a remarkable commercial, industrial and speculative race, increasing yearly in social and political importance, and though not so fully pronounced as the Chinese of the persevering and commercial qualities necessary for a continued success under the pressure of great competition, are not without prevision, energy and enterprise sufficient to warrant expectation of a considerable development of cultivation from their operations ⁽⁵⁹⁾.»

Referring to the prestige and rising influence of Cebu's upper elite in the 1890s, made up of the 30 to 40 Chinese mestizo families descended from the principales of the old Parian, a Cebu journalist wrote with lavish praise :«I ... take delight in bringing to mind the days when the Velezes,

the Osmenas, the Climacos, and others like them brightened the Cebuano sky like stars of the first magnitude, they stand out more by the height through which their wealth had ranked them, and as such, they were honored with respect and admiration by their own and by foreigners (60).

The Chinese Mestizo in the Formation of the Filipino Identity

In looking at the Chinese mestizos' contribution to the formation of the Filipino nationality and in the making of the nation, we must turn to the latter half of the 19th century.

Paradoxically enough, in the process of getting wealthy, the middle class of Chinese mestizos was also ceasing to be a compliant subject of Spain. They were becoming too wealthy and consequently too independent-minded. The Chinese mestizo in some communities were becoming sizeable enough to be able to form their own *Gremio Mestizo de Sangley* and thus evolve into a legally distinct class. This led Padre Murillo Velarde in 1741 to complain that «now we have a querrulous group of mestizos who could cause discord in society» (61). Time was to prove the correctness of this prediction.

By the 1800s, the emergent middle class of Chinese mestizos in the provinces began to set the tone of public opinion. As early as 1827, Manuel Bernaldez Pizarro already observed that the Indio and mestizo clerics had «dangerous tendencies to revolution» (62). The Spaniards felt little or no affinity at all with the Indios, and saw themselves threatened by the very existence of the Chinese mestizos, who were described as having «no sympathy for Spain» and «would be difficult to subdue» (63). In the words of Wickberg, the Spaniards were now «haunted by the fear of an Indio revolution led by mestizos» (64). There was reason for this concern. In 1841, Sini-baldo de Mas, in a secret report to the Madrid government, suspected the Chinese mestizos as a potential nucleus around which the Indio insurrection might be organized, and predicted that the Chinese mestizos would in time dominate public opinion. He then recommended that should Spain decide to keep the Philippines as a colony, «race hatred between the Chinese mestizos and natives» must be developed, and the two classes must be «separated and at sword's point», in order that the native class which was «strong through its number» and the mestizo class «through its intelligence, activity and wealth», may never form a common mass or public spirit (65).

Under the idea that their union would imperil the entrenched power of Spain, Madrid authorities tried various means to sow discord between different races and classes in their colonial possessions (66). One approach Mas suggested to promote rivalry and jealousy between the two classes was to declare the rank of *gobernadorcillo* for the Indio superior to that meant for the mestizo. Other measures recommended to foment antago-

nism between the two groups included separate theaters for each, by which they could attack and ridicule each other, a proposal that land taxes be imposed on the Chinese mestizos, and a distinctive dress for them ⁽⁶⁷⁾.

Actually, it was becoming increasingly difficult to separate the two groups as the Chinese mestizos were inclined to identify themselves with the Indios culturally and socially. Also, they were starting to gravitate towards each other politically due to common grievances. The Chinese mestizos were independent-minded, vociferous, and liberal to the point of being radical. They were gifted and wealthy enough to make their opinion felt. While the «natives» of the islands had been, for over two centuries, resisting colonial domination and abuses in the form of pocket and regional revolts against unjust taxes and forced labor (as witness the uprisings of Tapar, Tamblot, Bankaw, Dagohoy, and many others), it was the emergent middle class of Chinese mestizos who rekindled and intensified the growing national opposition to colonial abuses, and who demanded sweeping social reforms. As Dr. Trinidad H. Pardo de Tavera noted :« Already the 'brutes loaded with gold' [i.e., wealthy natives and Chinese mestizos] dared to discuss with their curate, complain against the alcalde, defend their rights against such misconduct of the lieutenant or sergeant of the police force, emancipate themselves insensibly as a consequence of their economic independence... they were actually becoming insolent according to the expression of the dominators : in reality, they were beginning to defend their rights» ⁽⁶³⁾.

The foregoing commentary reveals a transformation of the people's habit of deference to the master of the land, a spontaneous and unthinking acquiescence to the order of things, into a growing disposition to talk back and ask why.

In the 1860s Father Jose Burgos (of mixed Spanish, French and Chinese-native descent) ⁽⁶⁹⁾ and Father Mariano Gomez (both his parents were of mixed Filipino-Chinese blood) ⁽⁷⁰⁾ and Father Jacinto Zamora (also a Chinese mestizo) ⁽⁷¹⁾, asserted the capacity, intelligence, and achievement of the native clergy and demanded the appointment of native secular priests. Executed for alleged conspiracy in the Cavite Mutiny in 1872, in which both Indios and Chinese mestizos participated, the three martyrs' brilliant defense of the clergy of «our race» aroused a certain degree of national or racial consciousness as secularization defined the issue between the ruler and the ruled.

The deportation to Guam and punishment of prominent Indios, Chinese mestizos and Spanish mestizos for complicity in the Cavite mutiny compelled middle and upper class families to send their sons to Europe to study ⁽⁷²⁾. These students met some of the Guam deportees who managed to escape and flee to Spain where, as exiles, they could most conveniently

conduct their propaganda work without harassment and with the advantages found in cosmopolitan cities. For the first time closer social ties and relations between Chinese mestizos and Indios coming from different regions in the islands would be formed. Now provided with formal education and influenced by the liberal ideas prevalent in Europe, these growing intellectuals (*Ilustrados*) from the middle class of Chinese mestizos and Indios who became politically conscious and began to think in terms of national instead of provincial or even sectoral concerns, would evolve a philosophy of Filipinism⁽⁷³⁾. The unusually severe punishments meted out to the Indios and Chinese mestizos bridged the gulf that had separated these two groups. Unlike the Creoles and many of the Spanish mestizos who were predisposed to identify themselves with the peninsular Spanish, the Chinese mestizo identified himself with the native Filipino as Indio⁽⁷⁴⁾. The last quarter of the 19th century was to see the rise of the Chinese mestizo and Indio as Filipino. Until then, only the Creoles, or Spaniards born in the Philippines from Spanish parents were called Filipinos.

The most obvious manifestation of this budding sense of Filipino nationality appeared in the late 1870s in the writings of Pedro Paterno and Gregorio Sancianco, both Chinese mestizos. As students in Spain before 1880, they were, according to Jesuit historian Fr. John Schumacher, the trailblazers in formulating the nascent idea of a «Filipino identity»⁽⁷⁵⁾.

Pedro Paterno was «the first to project» a «Filipino personality» or to define the «Filipino character» in his writings. His collection of poems, *Sampaguita* (1880), and his novel *Ninay* (1885) were attempts at defining the Filipino national feeling⁽⁷⁶⁾.

These first glimmerings of a Filipino national sentiment were expressed more cogently by Gregorio Sancianco in his book *El Progreso de Filipinas* (Progress of the Philippines), written in 1881. While the book dealt with the economic and political problems and the potentialities for development of the islands in both spheres, it also vehemently condemned the tribute or tax payment which exempted the Spaniards and Spanish mestizos but classified the inhabitants of the islands into Indios and Chinese mestizos as legally distinct, with each class paying different taxes. Such a policy not only smacked of racial discrimination but also tended to foment class division. To put an end to such patent racial discrimination and ethnic divisiveness, he suggested the assimilation of the Philippines into Spain, so that all its inhabitants could be declared citizens of Spain, be given the same rights and privileges as Spaniards, and be subject to a uniform tax system⁽⁷⁷⁾.

Sancianco's more significant contribution in his writings was his defense of the dignity of the Filipinos. He was the first to explain that the «indolence of the Filipinos» was not something inherent in the people but

was the reaction of the common *tao* to centuries of exploitation. To make the Philippines progressive, and in the process to make the people enterprising, he suggested the introduction of industrialization, public education, good roads, and the liberation of the common people from burdensome taxation (78). His book anticipated and enunciated all the themes that Jose Rizal, Graciano Lopez Jaena, Marcelo H. del Pilar and others would later elaborate (79).

The birth of Filipino consciousness was already indicated in the writings of Paterno and Sancianco; nurtured by the powerful mind of Jose Rizal, it would bloom. Rizal, known as the pride of the Malay race, was a Chinese mestizo, having been descended from a pure Chinese ancestor and a long line of Chinese mestizos and Chinese mestizas (80).

As a student in Spain in the 1880s, Rizal helped stoke the smoldering fire of nationalism. Finding the group of brilliant young Indio and mestizo students still groping and lacking in effective leadership, he was able to transform their «unformed sentiments» into the «nationalist fervor of the years to come» (81).

His first article in the *Diariong Tagalog*, entitled *El Amor Patrio* (Love of Country), advised his compatriots who has been disappointed with the Philippine state of affairs to love their country, for to do so was the «greatest, the most heroic, and the most unselfish deed» (82).

Rizal's two novels completed in the 1880s, *Noli Me Tangere* and *El Flibusterismo*, gave a profoundly touching picture of the oppression and suffering experienced by his countrymen, but they were more than an indictment of the existing colonial system. The *Noli Me Tangere* was a proclamation of the creed of Filipino nationalism; *El Flibusterismo*, on the other hand, was a clarion call to awaken the people's sense of nationhood (83).

His essay, «Indolence of the Filipinos», stripped away the myth propagated by the Spanish writers that the Filipinos were by nature lazy, without individual initiative and wanting in civilization. To prove his point, Rizal annotated Morga's *Sucesos de las Filipinas*. Like a social scientist marshalling facts, he showed that the Filipinos were not ignorant Indios and that in fact they had a rich past, their own civilization, and were hardworking before the Spanish conquest of the islands (84). Throughout almost three centuries and a half, the Indios were denied all active participation in the affairs of the state. They were deprived of the fruits of their labour. Incentives were non-existent and all avenues to advancement were closed to them. Under these circumstances, the «native» yielded to the excruciating conditions of his environment, preferring the lazy joys of indolence rather than labour for the benefit of his oppressor» (85). Much of the blame for the alleged indolence of the people and the backwardness of the country he laid at the door of the colonial regime. Through this work Rizal sought

to instill in the people a national feeling and racial pride to erase once and for all any sense of servility toward the ruling master.

The growing conviction that the natives were entitled to human dignity and that the Indios and the Chinese mestizos were only one people, ran through the polemics of the reformist writers of the late 1880s and mid-1890s : Jose Rizal, Graciano Lopez Jaena, Marcelo H. del Pilar, Pedro Paterno, Antonio Luna, Mariano Ponce, Jose Panganiban, Eduardo de Lete, and many others. In the end, as the mestizos and Indios became more radicalized, and as their articulation of grievances as colonial subjects was shaping up into a powerful Filipinist cause, some of the creoles and Spanish mestizo students and writers who had been collaborating with the reformist movement eventually withdrew from the circle, «with the lines largely drawn», as Shumacher puts it, «between the creoles and Spanish mestizos on one side, and the Chinese mestizos and Indios on the other» (86). Unlike the creole and the Spanish mestizo who were inclined to identify with the peninsular Spanish, the Chinese mestizo identified himself with the Indio.

In 1892, Rizal, returning to the Philippines, founded the *Liga Filipina* in the house of a Chinese mestizo, Doroteo Ongjungco. The League was a movement aimed at forging a united Philippines into one compact and homogenous body. Rizal wanted to create a feeling of national unity that would transcend class distinctions and parochialism. In this sense, he was the first who sought to unite the whole archipelago and who preached that the «Indio could be something else, Filipinos who were members of a Filipino nation» (87).

Meanwhile, the ethnically determined *gremios* for the Indios and Chinese mestizos in existence since 1741 had steadily declined under the impact of the Chinese mestizos demand for the abolition of the tribute of tax payment based on ethnic considerations, and its replacement by a tax applied uniformly to all to erase the legal distinction between the two (88). In 1878, the tribute was modified by the industrial tax which in turn was replaced by the *cedula*, made uniformly applicable in 1894. The *cedula* broke down the legal distinction between the Indios and Chinese mestizos as the latter were now classified as Indios (89).

Possibly in allusion to the Chinese mestizo's agitation which signalled increasing political dissidence, Manual Scheidnagel, writing in the 1880s, observed :«... Indeed, the enormous inconvenience for us and to the archipelago where it is found is the intermixture of the natives with the Chinese that results into the most possible wickedness ... known as the Chinese mestizo» (90). On March 1, 1888, a petition signed by 810 natives and mestizos demanded the ouster from the islands of the Spanish friars from the various religious orders as well as the archbishop, the secularization

of the Benefices, and the confiscation of the estates of both Augustinians and Dominicans ⁽⁹¹⁾.

The critical posture of the Chinese mestizos caught the attention of another writer, Rafael Guerrero who, in 1890, commented somewhat bitterly :«... today, in all towns of the Philippines, there is a number of persons, almost all mestizos, who agitate and provoke the surge of opinion. They attempt to set the people into a critical thinking of the meaning of individual rights and freedom» ⁽⁹²⁾.

A Friar Memorial of April 28, 1888 voicing the protest of all religious orders against the prevalence of free thought lamented that only after the masses had been imbued with «revolutionary free thought of free masons have the islands been disturbed» ⁽⁹³⁾.

Although the middle class was Hispanic-Christian in culture, they were nationalistic in politics. The trade ties which drew Chinese mestizos together earlier, the regular postal service and the road building which facilitated communications among them, the numerous vessels that plied the coastal areas, their widening contact with the people in the capital, the increasing appearance of propaganda materials and reformist newspapers, and the influx of liberal ideas from Europe following the opening of Manila to the world, created the environment for the Chinese mestizos to intensify their campaign for reforms. The Chinese mestizos and Indios returning from Europe to Manila or to their respective towns brought with them «subversive ideas» later decried as «Filibusterismo» by the Spaniards who branded those who were in favor of reform and progress as «Filibusterers». Such ideas, in time, infected their compatriots ⁽⁹⁴⁾.

Another Spanish writer in the late 1880s, Enrique Polo de Lara, wrote of the mestizos in the same vein :«The Filipino mestizo is a breed of all components; he is the herald of restlessness, the adviser of disturbances, and the adversary in obeying colonial laws. All officials must keep guard of them very specially so that with everybody's watchfulness, they will not mix with the ordinary masses» ⁽⁹⁵⁾.

These comments by the Spaniards were confirmed by the American official reports which described the Chinese mestizo as «intelligent» but «restless» and «difficult to subdue» ⁽⁹⁶⁾. An American school superintendent wrote :«The Chinese mestizo is an exceedingly difficult fellow to manage. He combines the keenness and stolidity of the Chinamen with the smoothness and secretiveness of the natives. The combination is not particularly a pleasant one. The greater portion of the trouble that Americans have experienced in the provinces (the Ilocos) has been caused by this class» ⁽⁹⁷⁾.

Although the reformists and propagandists who now called themselves Filipinos were still assimilationists, they had already assumed the task of

contending for their nation's right to exist, even to the extent of promulgating the idea of developing loyalty to the Philippines as a united and distinct nation. These Filipinos, loving the Philippines and being loyal to it as «their country, not just a cluster of islands they happened to inhabit», were nationalists ⁽⁹⁸⁾. Why did they think the Filipinos were different from other people, and what made them identify themselves as one nation? These sentiments could only be rooted in their Filipinistic concepts, in their common sufferings and grievances, and in their aspirations as a people.

Pedro Paterno, Gregorio Sancianco, and Jose Rizal were, to a certain extent, responsible for instilling in their countrymen an incipient sense of nationality and national self-esteem. These writers, «each in his own way», to quote Fr. Schumacher, «articulated the growing consciousness of a national self, of an identity as a distinct people» ⁽⁹⁹⁾ with a destiny of their own. They and the other Filipino intellectuals of the reform movement expressed, in the words of the eminent historian, professor Teodoro A. Agoncillo, «the submerged feelings of the masses», and they «unconsciously pointed the way to revolution» ⁽¹⁰⁰⁾.

The contradiction between the Spaniards and the Filipinos having a destiny of their own would be translated by the *Katipuneros* under Andres Bonifacio into political action – the Philippine Revolution. The Filipinos were no longer vassals of Spain, but a separate and distinct people capable of making their own history. The revolution was a test of the Filipino people as a nation. Growing economic, social, and political identification with the Indios as Filipinos would put the Chinese mestizo on the side of the revolution.

When the Revolution broke out, Chinese mestizos were participants «not necessarily as mestizos», but as Filipinos. General Emilio Aguinaldo who took over leadership from Andres Bonifacio and founded the first Philippine Republic was of Filipino-Chinese descent. Even his able chief adviser, Apolinario Mabini was «a Tagalog with perhaps some Chinese blood». Many Chinese mestizos participated prominently in the Revolution in many ways. Some were militarily involved like Generals Flaviano Yenko, Francisco Makabulos, Manuel Tinio, Teodoro Sandiko, Severino Taino, Maximino Hizon. Others were financial contributors like Roman Ongpin, Mariano Limjap, Telesforo Chuidian, and Luis R. Yangco ⁽¹⁰¹⁾. In the provinces, the Chinese mestizos constituted a great portion of the local revolutionary leaders and the rank and file ⁽¹⁰²⁾. According to an observer, the Chinese mestizos «formed so large a part of the rebels that the high-class natives hesitated so long about joining the insurgents» ⁽¹⁰³⁾.

The overall involvement of the Chinese mestizo in the Revolution was discussed by Captain John Taylor in *The Philippines Insurrection Against the United States* :«... Natives who have led during the past few years of

revolt have probably been almost all partly Chinese... Chinese mestizos, the descendants of Chinese, in many cases educated in Spain and other parts of Europe, are the leaders in the islands in wealth and intelligence. They are the men who were chiefly instrumental in overthrowing the power of Spain, and they are the men who, with the loudest voices, arrogate to themselves the right of speaking for the people of the archipelgo. It is not always easy to identify them; they... prefer to call themselves Filipinos... but out of the 164 men who were sufficiently important to require separate index cards in classifying the papers of the insurrection in the Philippines against the United States, 27 seem undoubtedly to be of Chinese descent, and probably a more careful investigation will increase the number. Aguinaldo is one of the 27, and so are 2 of the members of his cabinet, 9 of his generals (one of them a pureblooded Chinese), 1 of 2 heads of his cabinet or council of government, and his principal financial agents» (104).

The role of the Chinese mestizo in the making of the nation did not end in 1898. During the Filipino-American war, a great many of the mestizo families «were among the insurrectors» (105).

On the eve of the Revolution, it was clear that a new nationality held together the people of the islands. The Chinese mestizos' involvement in the Revolution was part of the accelerating political trend toward common action with the Indios – as Filipinos. Earlier, the term Filipinos referred to the Creoles, the Spaniards born in the Islands. In 1898, the term was consistently applied to the natives. Thus, the distinct nationality of the Indios came to be fully recognized.

The Philippine Revolution of 1896 was the final act of determination on the part of the true Filipinos – Indios and Chinese mestizos alike – to claim for themselves and for future generations the incomparable birth-right of nationhood. And the accomplishment of this historic mission was due, to a significant extent, to the patriotic awakening of the Chinese mestizos and their complete absorption into the social, cultural and economic fabric of the emerging Filipino nation-state.

NOTES

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