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Why Insist on an Asian Flavor?

Fernando N. Zialcita

Javanese dip fried and roasted foods either in *sambal*, a paste made from red chili peppers, garlic, salt and sugar, or in *terasi*, a fermented shrimp/fish paste that may be studded with chopped red chilies. Tagalogs prefer dipping sauces with a sour base: palm vinegar with a lone crushed chili pepper pod; vinegar with slivers of onion with mashed garlic and pepper; chopped green *camias* and tomatoes; or small raw pickled mangoes mixed with tomatoes and coriander. Though the Javanese use some tamarind juice in their dishes, they complain that the Tagalog's sour dishes, especially those cooked in vinegar, upset their system. On the other hand while the Tagalogs use some chili pepper, many of them claim that sambal burns their stomach. Which taste is more authentically "Asian": the Javanese or the Tagalog?

Many assume that an identifiable pan-Asian sensibility exists in all domains, from philosophy to literature to music to cooking; and that while Javanese culture is authentic, because it conforms to this ideal norm, Tagalog culture is inauthentic because submission to Spanish colonization has alienated it from this norm. Thus, the writer Mariles Vitug (*Newsweek* 1997) asked the culinary expert Doreen Fernandez, "The Philippine has been colonized twice. Did this confuse the country's cuisine?" Note the loaded word "confuse." In an interview for the *Philippine Star*, Lorrie Reynoso, a chef-instructor at the prestigious New York Restaurant School, says that the consensus of Filipinos and American food editors and critics is that when Westerners think of Asian cuisine, "whether it is Thai, Burmese, Indonesian," they always associate it with indigenous spices "which Philippine cuisine does not have" (Martel 1997).

I question, however, whether a pan-Asian sensibility has ever existed—especially one that favors burning spices. For their dipping

sauce, North Vietnamese favor *nuoc mam*—which like our *patis* is an amber-colored fish sauce. On this they sprinkle a few slices of chili. Cantonese food, which has influenced Filipino sensibility, uses ginger, pepper and soy sauce but not the variety of spices one finds in Java, certainly not the chili pepper that Szechwanese love. While Koreans love plenty of chilis and garlic, Japanese abhor their taste and their smell as low class. They prefer mustard (*wasabi*) and soy sauce. Who is more Asian: the Japanese who hate garlic and chili or the Szechwanese and Koreans who love these? I also question whether indigenous prehispanic, pre-Islamic Philippine societies participated in a pan-Asian passion for piquancy. According to my anthropology students, who have lived in the uplands of Mindanao, both the hitherto animist upland Bukidnon and Manobo only use salt for flavoring, and sometimes not even that because of the cost of transport from the coast. The town centers of Ilocos Norte were exposed to hispanization from the late sixteenth century onwards. But Ilocano farmers, among whom I stayed while doing field research, generally use only bagoong to flavor their everyday vegetables and occasional meats. Peppers come out when they fry and sauté (*guisa*), usually for feasts. Their term for black pepper is *paminta*, from the Spanish *pimienta*. It is hard to imagine that their ancestors enjoyed spicy meals before the coming of the Spaniards. Or that their taste is “confused.” As far back as the early seventeenth century, the missionary Alcina (n.d., Part 1 Bk. 3, Ch. 21: 351) observed of the Visayans that “many times [they take] their roots or rice alone or with a little salt and not all have this always.” The Boxer Codex of 1590 said of the Visayans that “their ordinary food is a little of rice boiled solely in water and some sun-dried fish” (Quirino and Garcia 1960, 364). Neither author mentioned pepper and other spices. Just because we are close to the Spice Islands does not mean that a taste for black pepper was widespread here before Legazpi. Westernization supposedly resulted in the loss of piquancy. And yet the descendants of the Mexican Indians, who domesticated the chili before Columbus (Sabau 1992), came here during the Galleon trade, bringing with them new plants, cooking styles, and the fiery fruit. In the rest of Asia, Portuguese traders introduced the chili.¹ That a taste for it spread like fire in other Southeast Asian countries, whereas it merely simmers among us, says something about the intensity of the Filipino sensibility.

In an essay written for Tokyo University and now in the press, I question the prevailing notions of what “Southeast Asia” is and advo-

cate looking at it more holistically so as to cover non-Indianized cultures like Northern Vietnam and the Philippines. In this essay, I propose questioning a concept that is over two millenia old, namely "Asia." Simplistic notions of what Asia is and should be in relation to the West have succeeded in marginalizing, on the international scene, the achievements of lowland Christian Filipinos, not only in cuisine, but in the other arts as well. They have also succeeded in making many educated lowland Christian Filipinos apologetic about their culture *when they reflect on it and have to articulate it before outsiders*. Often they assume that since the costume, the music, the architecture, and the literature of lowland Christian Filipinos have an obvious Hispanic component, they cannot be Asian, for to be Asian means to be non-Western. Therefore they cannot be "authentic" either, for to be in Asia means thinking and behaving like a true Asian. Thus the anguish in defining the Christian Filipino's identity. The maps indicate that his country is in Asia but both fellow-Asians and Western authors (generally Non-Latin) question his credentials as an "Asian." On the other hand though Hispanic elements continue to be vivid in the Filipino's culture, Spanish as a spoken language has practically disappeared from his home, office and school. This is a situation shared by the Filipino with the Guamanian. Hence, despite interest in the Philippines among educated Spaniards and Spanish Americans and despite invitations to join their group activities, non-Spanish speaking Filipinos shun such activities whether these be informal get-togethers and formal conferences. And while the educated Filipino is fluent in English, he cannot join either that club of English-speaking ex-colonials, the British Commonwealth, simply because he was colonized by the Americans rather than the British. He does not play cricket. In which gathering of nations is the Lowland Christian Filipino fully accepted for what he is, given his unique history? This dilemma galls especially if we consider that in Filipino culture, one has to belong to a *barkada*—to a peer group. Who are our likely barkada mates in the assembly of nations?

Assumptions about "Asia" resonate in other fields, for instance political economy. During the economic boom in Asia from the late 1980s to 1997, the Philippines lagged far behind. Citizens of the wealthier Asian countries and influential Filipinos conveniently explained this as the result of Westernization. Being individualistic, Filipinos supposedly do not have the "Asian sense of community-orientedness." They did not mention the fact that Laos, Cambodia, Bangladesh, and India were also behind. Or that North Korea, where

the State owned the strategic resources and the important enterprises, in the name of the people, experienced famines because individual farmers had no incentive to increase or improve production.

In this article, I would like to show that the Filipino should not feel embarrassed about not being sufficiently "Asian," for this Western-invented construct has no clear content. He should not feel embarrassed either about being Westernized, for the West is a syncretism-in-process; and the insistence on measuring Filipino achievements according to a supposed Asian norm has prevented many, including Filipinos themselves, from appreciating the originality of some of these achievements.

Asia or Asias?

Arnold Toynbee questioned the relevance of the terms "Asia" and "Europe" in his *A Study of History* which lists and compares the genesis of all known civilizations (1948–1961, 8: 706 ff.). Then followed John Steadman's *The Myth of Asia* (1969), an entire book which focused on questioning the concept of an Asia. But these critiques were largely ignored. It was Edward Said (1984) who popularized the notion of "Orientalism" by claiming that Westerners had created a simplistic and degrading stereotype of the Orient. By "Orient," he meant largely the Arab countries. I will sum up the arguments of Toynbee, since they are not known to the general public, and I will add my own observations regarding the philosophical systems and culinary traditions of the region. Moreover, I propose using a new term "Continentism" to refer to the habit of dividing the world into continents and imagining that each has an unchanging Platonic essence.

Every society has a system for classifying all human societies known to it. The Chinese regard their country as the Middle Kingdom (*zhung guo*). Indeed they call it such today. In imperial times, the Chinese regarded their country as the centerpoint of the world; all other peoples were outsiders in varying degrees of inferiority. Moslems on the other hand have classified people as either Believers or Infidels.

The ancient Greeks first used the terms, "Asia" and "Europe," to refer to both a continent and a way of life (Toynbee 1948–1961, 8: 708 ff.). While Asia was intuitive and emotional, Europe was supposedly rational. Ironically, at this stage, the land mass that they called "Asia" was the Anatolian peninsula whose coastline, like the Greek mainland itself was then populated by Greek colonies. The Romans called

Anatolia "Asia Minor" and the vast unknown realm beyond "Asia Major." They continued the Greek habit of imagining that Europe was "rational" while Asia was "mystical." But what was the basis for these pat generalizations? Did they send study missions to that vast realm to examine the way of life of the different societies in detail? None. It was left to one of their successor peoples, the Westerners, to do detailed, factual studies of the peoples of Asia starting in the eighteenth century. But while the Greek notion that the sun revolved around the earth was rejected by Copernican astronomy, the Greek habit of dividing the world into continents, each endowed with a Spirit, was retained. In the meantime another dichotomy, unknown to the Greeks, entered. This was the dichotomy between "West" and "East." The Roman empire split up in the fifth century into two halves: the Western and the Eastern. Christendom divided accordingly: Western Christians acknowledged the authority of the Pope in Rome; Eastern Christians respected the Patriarchs, chief among whom was the Patriarch of Byzantium/ Constantinople. Eventually with increasing secularization, Western Christians simply referred to themselves as "Westerners."² They saw themselves as the heirs to Graeco-Roman rationalism, in contrast to the supposedly mystical Easterners. One curious thing about this dichotomy is that it regards even the Byzantines, who spoke Greek and kept alive the Greek philosophical tradition, as mystical, being Easterners, and therefore less rationalistic than the Latin-speaking Westerners.

That there has been no Asia can be shown if we examine the following: geography, race, language, and culture.

Geography

Toynbee (1948–1961, vol. 8) questioned whether Asia and Europe can be neatly separated from each other in terms of physical geography. By convention the Ural Mountains running vertically across Russia divide Europe from Asia. But these are really low-lying hills. They have not barred the movements of empire-building pastoralists like the Huns and the Mongols. To use the language of the 1970s, the hills do not divide ecosystems from each other. The Russian steppes constitute a single ecosystem: the Black Earth. Another boundary is supposed to be the Hellespont between the Greek and Anatolian peninsulas. Still another are the Suez marshes between Egypt and the Sinai. We may doubt whether the latter two boundaries do separate distinct ecosystems. On the other hand, Asia as currently defined, covers many con-

trasting ecosystems: tundras, steppes, fertile flood-plains, the towering Himalayas, rain forests, tropical archipelagoes. We should ask: why not cluster the Philippines with other Pacific Islands which fall outside "Asia"? Why does attention focus solely on what it has in common with the rest of an "Asia" which includes even the snow-capped Himalayas and the deserts of the Arabian Peninsula?

Race

We hear talk of an "Asian look." Supposedly this means being non-white. The fact is that representatives of the Caucasoid race, the same race to which Europeans and Americans belong, form the majority among Arabs, Jews, Pakistanis, Iranians and Afghans. In India, the white-skinned Aryans constitute the upper castes while the dark-skinned Dravidians form the bulk of the lower castes. On the other hand there are the Mongoloids to which the Chinese, Japanese, and Southeast Asians belong. There is no Asian look.

Language

Often India and the West are sharply contrasted with each other, with India somehow representing the quintessence of "Asia" because of the wide influence of Hinduism and especially of Buddhism throughout the region. Juan Francisco (1985) says that before the sixteenth century, Indian influence did indeed enter the Philippines, particularly the Visayas and Luzon; but this was in diluted form via visitors from Indonesia rather than from India. However, Filipino intellectuals like to believe that the Filipino spirit is closer to the Indian than to the Western. Be that as it may, it is worth emphasizing that the Indian, Iranian and European languages all belong to the same family of languages, the Indo-European (Burrow 1955). The Aryans were a cattle-herding people who spread in all directions from a hypothetical heartland in Central Europe. Groups entered India, overcame the local kingdoms and constituted themselves as the priestly and warrior castes (Lincoln 1987). "*Diwata*" may seem so Filipino, but in fact it comes from "*dev*," the Sanskrit word for god to which the Latin word, "*divus*," is related. From *divus* came words like "*dios*," "*divino*" and "*divine*" which have entered common usage in the Philippines. Which indeed is more "Asian" and therefore more Filipino: "*diwata*" or "*Dios*"?

One of the West's sources of unity, despite the bitter wars among its member countries, are languages that transcend national boundaries.

Latin was such a language, then French, and now English. In Islam, Arabic has played an even more important unifying role. But for Asia as a whole, we would be hard put looking for a unifying Asian-based language. There are different language families in Asia: the Tibeto-Chinese-Burmese, the Japanese, the Turkic, the Austroasiatic, the Austronesian, the Arabic and the Indo-European. Arabic unifies Moslems; thanks to Buddhism, Pali and Sanskrit have influenced the languages of Tibet, Burma, Thailand, Cambodia, Java, Vietnam, China, Korea and Japan; for centuries Japanese, Koreans and Vietnamese read Chinese script and incorporated this into their languages. But historically no language from within the region has brought together Japanese Buddhist, Iranian Moslem, Chinese Confucian and Hindu. The lingua franca of all four today is English.

Culture

There are societies that differ from each other in many aspects of their culture, but nonetheless share felt communalities because they all revere similar symbols in various fields such as art, law, literature, philosophy, or religion. They therefore constitute an "*oikumene*"—to use this Greek-derived expression: a universe of spiritual and cultural meanings revered by several societies (Toynbee 1948–1961, vol. 1; Toynbee 1972). Oikumenes become possible when fulltime occupational specialization is established in a society and a distinction is thus drawn between mental and manual labor. The fortunate privileged few are freed to speculate, to plan, to innovate, often in urban centers, and to dialogue with their peers in other societies. Such a broad cultural community constitutes a "civilization" or what I prefer to call "civil culture." Unlike Tylor (1958) and some historians, Toynbee and Anglo-American archaeologists do not regard "civilization" and "culture" as equivalent terms. A civilization is a *type* of culture. It implies a state, indeed a "universal state," according to Toynbee—a state that embraces many diverse peoples. In most cases it has implied the existence of a city (*civitas*). Moreover, at the heart of every civilization is a vision of how people of diverse backgrounds can relate to and live with each other (Toynbee 1972, 44). This vision is manifest in a particular artistic style (46). An example of an oikumene or of a civilization is Islam which transcends the boundaries of "Asia," "Africa," and "Europe." The Community of Believers extends from Lanao in Mindanao to Morocco in North Africa, from Uganda to Bosnia in the Balkans. Before the advent of nineteenth century nationalism, any

Moslem "entered, upon his arrival in a Muslim country, into the rights and duties of the local population" (Von Grunebaum 1955, 44). Even during the nineteenth century, the Barbary States in North Africa and Aceh in Sumatra both turned to the Ottomans, as brother Moslems, for help against the Western powers (Mehmet 1990).

For this article, my examples of ecumenical styles are drawn primarily from cooking, secondarily from philosophy.

Toynbee (1948-1961, vol.1) catalogues all the known "civilizations."³ Of these, four are relevant to our discussion: the Islamic, the Indian-influenced, the Chinese-influenced, and the Western. A previous essay pointed out that differences between them make it difficult to speak of "Southeast Asia" as an oikumene. Here I would like to stress that differences between the first three make the concept of an "Asia" questionable. The prophet Mohammed's vision inspires Islam; Brahmanism animates India; Theravada Buddhism flourishes in Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand, Laos and Cambodia; Confucian ethics guides China, Korea, Japan, and Vietnam. To force these divergent traditions into one mould disfigures them.

Islam, for instance, stresses the Absolute Oneness and Otherness of the Lord. It bans representations of the divine in human form. And yet such representations play a vital role among Buddhist, Christian and Hindu alike. Islam carries its quest for purity into the kitchen. In the name of God, it bans foods, like pork, as unclean (Ali n.d.,173). It prescribes slaughtering procedures to expel impurities; it requires that animal blood be drained from the meat. Brahmanism starts from the opposite direction. Unlike Islam and Christianity, it believes that the self must be reborn into several lifetimes and be purified before it can dissolve into Ultimate Reality. There are many gods and goddesses who dwell in the universe. Some can teach humans the path to ultimate union through meditation. While the Moslem preaches a universal brotherhood of all Believers, Brahmanism divides society into castes and imposes a strict separation between them. Contact with lower castes pollutes, for these selves have been so reborn because of vices in a previous lifetime. Food prepared by them likewise pollutes. Ideally a Brahmin cooks his own food, especially at a large party (Cohn 1971, 131). To end the cycle of death and rebirth, Brahmins avoid killing and causing pain towards sentient life; they thus advocate vegetarianism. But meat, including beef, is basic to the Moslem diet. Unlike Brahmanism and Islam, Confucianism does not ask about the world's origins nor about what lies beyond. Instead it has concen-

trated on ordering social relations in the here and now: between elder brother and younger brother, between son and father, between subject and emperor. Thanks to this pragmatism, Confucians can tolerate the veneration of the many divinities of Mahayana Buddhism and of Taoism, as long as this does not threaten the integrity of the State. Thanks to it too, the Chinese have been omnivorous. True, Confucius in Book 10 of the *Analects* enjoins the gentleman to avoid "fish that is not sound, nor meat that is high." But he adds that the gentleman "must not eat what has been crookedly cut, nor any dish that lacks its proper seasoning" (1938, 148–49). Confucius' concern is for health and esthetics rather than for fulfilling a Transcendental Law laid down by a Personal Creator.

The "Asian" taste to which Filipino cuisine should aspire is vague. Indian and Indianized Southeast Asian cooking blends together cardamom, mace, nutmeg, cinnamon, black pepper, chiles. This is not true of Cantonese or Japanese cooking, nor indeed of the cooking of traditional upland Filipinos, such as the Bontoc or the Manobo. Moreover, the heavy use of milk products in everyday Indian and Arabic cuisine has not been echoed by Chinese-influenced and even Indian-influenced Southeast Asian cuisine, probably because of lactose intolerance.

In contrast there is a unity to the West both in cooking and in the realm of thought. The West has a common moral vision that its member countries share despite bitter internecine wars. In my view, its version of Christianity interprets God as both Transcendent and Immanent: God is beyond the ordinary, material world yet is present within it because of the Incarnation and the Indwelling of the Spirit. Thus the paradox: a stress on ascetic self-denial and at the same time a preoccupation with improving this world, affirming human rights, and advocating responsibility to all human beings. The Christian vision of the self communing with God, as spirit to spirit, made food taboos unnecessary from apostolic times. No doubt restrictions on the consumption of food, especially meat, during periods of penance like Lent have been imposed by the Catholic Church. But these have been seasonal restrictions rather than taboos. And it is significant that even these restrictions have faded away in the late twentieth century because the Church has recognized that more important is the inner attitude. But can one speak of a common vision in the face of a division into a Catholic South and a Protestant North? In answer, let us note that when the split occurred, during the fifteenth century, a secularizing attitude began to appear, has since triumphed and, save in pockets like

North Ireland, has made these differences largely unimportant. Moreover, particular cities like Catholic Paris and Protestant London, became focal points for all of the West. For instance, over the past three centuries, the Parisians introduced a table protocol that became pan-Western: the fork and the knife; food courses served in sequence with light foods leading to heavier ones; sauces where reduced meat and vegetable juices are melded together with butter-and-flour mixtures (Jacobs 1979; Guy 1962). In addition within the West there are regional cooking styles that create a sense of communality. Unlike Northern Europeans and Anglo-Americans, Spaniards, Provençals and Italians all love garlic. They also combine this with onions and tomatoes, and at times sauté in it. Tagalogs, Pampangos, and Visayans have adopted the fork, spoon and knife; have developed recipes using sauces with butter-and-flour mixtures; and enjoy using the classic trio for sauteing.

It is hard to believe that a common "Asian" style of thinking and feeling so underlies Islamic, Indian, and Chinese civilizations that the Chinese Buddhist can easily understand Islamic philosophy, while the Arab can readily identify with the Rig Veda. In contrast in the West, despite bitter wars, German and French can converse with each other because Descartes plays a central role in the development of German philosophy, as Kant and Hegel do in modern French philosophy. Indeed French and German can converse at table because of a common menu and etiquette. Thus far no analogous thinkers or menus bring together Moslems, Brahmins and Confucians.

Two objections will be made against my position: first, that while Westerners are rationalistic and this-worldly, Asians are one in being mystical and supernaturalistic; and second, that Asians unlike Westerners are familistic. Thus there supposedly exists a common Asian vision of the world. To the first, I answer that an other worldly, mysticism and other-worldliness has thrived in the West in the same way a pragmatic, this-worldly rationalism has been active in Asia. Nineteenth century Vietnamese Confucians mocked Noah's Flood and the Tower of Babel as irrational (Woodside 1971, 288). The dogma that Bread and Wine are the Body and Blood of Christ repelled seventeenth century Buddhists in Sri Lanka not only because they were vegetarians, but also because symbolic blood-drinking struck them as cannibalistic (Roberts 1989, 71). Christianity's espousal of the Trinity, the God-Made Man, and the cult of the saints shock the Moslem as polytheistic. The notion too that men and women in the prime of their life should for-

sake marriage and torment the flesh with severe mortifications is, for the Moslem, irrational. And yet through the centuries thousands of Catholics have taken vows of poverty, chastity and obedience; contemplatives have forsaken legitimate pleasures, such as those of the table, and have entered the Dark Night of the Soul on the way to union with God. On the other hand Steadman (1968) cautions against generalizing about "Asian mysticism." China has indeed had Taoism and Mahayana Buddhism, both of which espouse separation from the everyday, secular world. But it also has Confucianism which dismisses metaphysical and theological debates as irrelevant, and prefers to concentrate instead on mundane matters like the running of the State. China too has a long empirical tradition that enabled her technology to surpass that of the rest of the world until just three centuries ago when the Scientific Revolution took place in the West (Needham 1954 vol. 3).⁴ Since the advent of modern science in the seventeenth century, Westerners have summoned every institution, be this the legal order, the economy or Christianity before the tribunal of Reason. But this mentality has since been assimilated by particular Asian countries, like Japan, Korea, Taiwan and Singapore, and is one explanation for their economic success. Indeed when it comes to managing cities or to developing science and technology, our neighbors are more Westernized than us.

Regarding the second objection, namely, that concern for the family is uniquely Asian and is not Western: the fact is that familial concern has been strong among Latins. Latins and Latin Americans are visibly close to their mama; even after they have left home, they come home frequently for leisurely family meals, and enjoy close links with their siblings and cousins. Traditionally many Latin households have been extended families. Indeed family corporations continue to be common in Spain and Italy, as in the Philippines. At the same time let us not forget that kinship systems in Asia vary widely. The Chinese prefer patrilineality: only the sons inherit and transmit property; only the father's relatives are recognized as the self's relatives. When a woman marries, it is understood that her husband's relatives should henceforth command her prior attention. In contrast the system among Indonesians, Malays and Filipinos is bilateral, as is the case among Western Europeans.⁵

There is a Western tradition, despite differences between member cultures. There too is an Islam. From an outsider's perspective, there seems to be a tradition shared in by Chinese, Korean, Japanese and

Vietnamese. But we can conclude that there is no single, definable, coherent cultural tradition that embraces all the Asias together. When people therefore say that the Filipino is confused because Westernization has altered his pristine Asian identity or that he is a strange animal because he is neither Asian nor Western, we should ask what being "Asian" means in the first place. Often it is simply understood as that which is *not Western*. On the other hand what many mean by "Western" is not that clear either. The West is supposedly materialistic and indifferent towards family ties. As shown above, this is simplistic. Because of unwarranted generalizations, the West is defined as the negative of "Asia"—a concept that, in the first place, is nebulous. The "West" has thus become the shadow of "Asia," a phantom it created. Because the West's wealthier members have dominated the world for over two hundred years and, as colonialists, have warred against indigenous cultures, the "West" has become a favorite bogeyman. I too resent this dominance which has led to exploitation and bullying. At the same time, however, I propose that the West is not a monolithic culture. In the process of spreading and conquering other peoples, circumstances have compelled it to recognize local traditions.

Westernization, Indigenization and Asianization

Let us look closer at what Toynbee means by the West. First of all, Toynbee does not confuse civilization with continent; he distinguishes between Western Christendom and Europe. The latter is a continent. Eastern Orthodox Christendom is also in Europe but is not the same as Western Christendom. His reasons for so distinguishing would take us far from this topic. Secondly, Toynbee takes Western Christendom to mean that synthesis between the Hellenic heritage (he prefers this term to "Greco-Roman") and Latin Christianity that emerged in the ruins of the Western part of the Roman empire. Western Christendom was born along an axis extending from the mouth of the Rhine down to the Tiber and the Po in the eighth century, expanded to include the rest of Western Europe, and leapt overseas to take in the Americas, Oceania and the Philippines (Toynbee 1948–1961, 1: 37–38; 12: 93, 192). Components of the Western tradition that form part of the Filipino's discourse today are: Roman-inspired civil law; Greek, Scholastic, and Modern philosophy; art styles like the Baroque and the Neo-Classical; art forms like the sonnet and the sonata; and economic theories from

liberalism to its opposite: socialism. One cannot dismiss all these as negative.

It is true, of course, that over the past two centuries Western capitalist powers colonized the rest of the world—which is why the “Asia” versus “West” dichotomy became popular. The U.S. annexed the Philippines in 1898 and supported the Marcos dictatorship almost till the end in 1986. Indeed we must look out for our own interests. But Western states are not the only colonizers; some of our neighbors have been. The Asia-West dichotomy can play tricks. Despite the Philippine experience of 1942–1945, the subjugation of Korea by Japan in 1910–1945, or the Chinese invasion of Tibet, prominent Filipino intellectuals claim that Japan and China pose no threat because they are “fellow Asians.”

In safeguarding our independence of spirit vis-a-vis the Western powers, let us advert to a key word in Toynbee, “syncretism,” which refers to the fusion of different cultural traditions to form new ones. For Toynbee, many civilizations are syncretistic. An example is Western Christendom itself which sprang from the union of two seeming incompatibles: Hellenism and Christianity. This synthesis fused in turn with the Germanic and the Celtic. After it crossed the seas, it merged with American Indian cultures to give birth to Mexico, Peru, and other Latin American societies which differ both from each other and from Spain. On the other side of the Pacific, it united with the indigenous cultures of the Philippines. A receiving society is not necessarily passive. Even as it receives, it transforms because indigenous patterns persist. Toynbee (1948–61, 8: 565) notes that the Spanish conquerors of the Philippines and Peru were “more eagerly concerned to impart their Christian religion than to propagate their Castilian language.” By using the vernacular languages in the Catholic liturgy, they enabled these to become literary languages that resisted the spread of Castilian. In other domains a spiritual distancing likewise occurs because of syncretism. Consider cooking. In Mexico, the Spanish *sauté* was baptized with chili peppers, which are “anathema” to many Spaniards (Feibleman 1969, 10). In the Philippines (Fernandez 1996), shrimps are thrown in together with spoonfuls of fermented fish sauce (*patis*). Sometimes bagoong or fermented shrimp paste is itself *sautéed*. Both *patis* and bagoong are equally anathema to sensitive Spanish noses. Thus while a Filipino prefers Spanish cooking to, say, Pakistani or Indian cooking as more familiar, nonetheless even vis-a-vis the former, he experiences some distance. At times he will look for those heady

marine fragrances that recall home. This interplay between the local and the foreign, the familiar and the imported, can be used in such a way that while we remain open to the West, we can feel spiritually distinct.

The pervasiveness of Western literature and philosophy in the Philippine world is such that we cannot understand some of the Filipino's more outstanding works without referring to Western literature and philosophy. *Florante at Laura*, Balagtas' long romance, can indeed be read as a veiled attack on colonialism. And yet that poem is thick with references to Greco-Roman antiquity and Western history. The same can be said of the novels and poems of Jose Rizal. Western philosophy played a key role in the movements that led to the foundation of the Filipino nation: the Propaganda and the Revolution of 1896. The notions of Rizal, Del Pilar, Bonifacio, Jacinto and Mabini concerning the need for democracy were clearly influenced by the spirit of the Western Enlightenment which focused the light of reason on the social order. In the case of Mabini, the Moslem scholar Cesar Majul (1960, 98–99) sees the presence of an even older Western philosophical tradition, Scholasticism, which Mabini was exposed to in the Dominican University of Sto. Tomas. The second half of the twentieth century is an exciting period: to protect the environment, promote gender equality and advance social justice, activists question the established order. Though they often blame Western influence for problems, nonetheless their theoretical framework and methodology are Western in inspiration. This is not surprising, for the quest for both rationality and empirical validation has defined the Western spirit since the Enlightenment.

On the other hand, the complete triumph of the Western sensibility has been checked by a variety of factors. One is local taste. Sautéing may be commonplace among the Tagalog farmers where I stayed. This was in Bulacan, which has become a suburb to Manila. But my farmer-hosts in distant Ilocos generally sauté in garlic and onion only for feasts. The garlic they cultivate they eagerly export to the Tagalogs for cash. Another factor, as Toynbee correctly points out, is the persistence of the vernaculars. The very grammar and vocabulary of a language compels its users to abide by its logic, its implicit interpretation of the world. For this reason it is important for us to know as well the mythology of Austronesian peoples, past and present: the mythology of our ancestors and of our upland siblings. Some of these myths can be shown to be still at work among the Lowland Christian majority.

Knowing them will help develop a philosophy that is truly rooted. Unfortunately, the term "Asianization" has confused matters because it is equated with "indigenization."⁶ Philosopher friends argue that, as Filipinos, they are "Asian" and should therefore study Indian or Chinese philosophy; surprisingly, they ignore the myths of the Ifugao and other peoples of the Philippines. Island myths give us a balcony from which to appraise ideas from the West and elsewhere (see for instance Barton 1946; Magos 1986).

Indigenization and Westernization are not necessarily contradictory processes. Sometimes they have complemented each other. While crushing some indigenous habits, Westernization may have actually enabled others to survive and flourish among Catholic Filipinos rather than among their Moslem brothers. The pre-Islamic, pre-Christian Filipinos drank wine; ate pork and raw fish; and most likely (as in the Cordillera) they fancied dog meat. Whereas these have disappeared among Moslem Filipinos and strict Moslem Indonesians, they thrive among Ilocanos, Tagalogs and Visayans because Christianity has not made a moral issue out of them. Notable too is that the local relish for sour flavors may have received a boost from the Mexicans who pickle (*adobar*) meats in spices with some lemons (Fernandez 1994, 195). In another realm, that of costume: pagan Filipino women showed off their hair and, depending on class and ethnicity, either covered their breasts with a blouse or else exposed them. This ran counter to the Islamic insistence on covering a woman's hair and figure and—in some places—her face. Even as Catholics, Filipino women wear shorts and sleeveless blouses. And they let their hair fly in the wind.

Nor is Westernization incompatible with the Filipino's Asianization—if by this we mean connecting with our neighbors. Sinicization intensified from the sixteenth century onwards—precisely after Legazpi. Although the Chinese had been trading with Filipinos since the tenth century, they really settled in large numbers only with the arrival of Spaniards willing to pay in coined silver. "Native Philippine products were of limited variety and value, and handling them was not enough to attract a resident Chinese colony" (Scott 1994, 207). In 1570 there were only a few Chinese residing in Tondo, consisting of political refugees and recent arrivals. Thirty years later "the Chinese quarter had four hundred shops and eight thousand residents" (207). It took some time for popular Chinese foods like *bihon*, *hopia*, *mami*, *pansit* and *petsay* to become part of the culinary landscape. They are not mentioned by seventeenth century dictionaries (208). Nick Joaquin (1989,

28) thus says that our *pancit-and-lumpia* culture really dates back only to the Spanish period.

On the other hand Spanish influence brought in Arab practices. Often forgotten is that a major part of Spain was under Arab and Berber influence for eight centuries. Many things that we consider Spanish are thanks to this influence. For instance the Spanish fondness for flavoring and coloring rice with spices, like saffron, and mixing scraps of food with it, as in *paella*, has affinities with Near Eastern styles of treating rice. While the Maranao acquired the habit of coloring their rice yellow from fellow Moslems coming in from a geographically western direction, we got ours from the Spaniards who sailed in from the rising sun, the Americas. In the realm of thought, let us remember that the Arab scholars preserved the Greek texts of Aristotle and transmitted them to Spain and to the rest of Western Christendom with their own commentaries. Thomas Aquinas dialogues with ibn Sina (Avicenna) and ibn Rushd (Averroes) throughout his *Summa Theologica*.⁷ As a result such Moslem philosophers may be relevant to us Christians but not necessarily to the Buddhist. Curiously while Filipino philosophers advocate Chinese and Indian philosophy, they have neglected the study of Arabic philosophy despite the strong presence of Islam. Once more the Asia-West dichotomy confuses. Since, when reading St. Thomas, one cannot but know something as well about Avicenna and Averroes, a Filipino philosopher asks: "But are they Eastern thinkers? They seem Western."

An Unappreciated Originality

I come to my third point: the insistence on measuring the Filipino's achievements against supposed "Asian" norms makes it difficult to appreciate the lowland Christian Filipino's originality. Those who identify "Asia" with complex seasoning find Tagalog or Visayan cooking "uninteresting" because of the restrained seasoning. Worse still, as unoriginal. Unfortunately, they overlook the distinguishing feature of Lowland Christian Filipino cuisine which is not the seasoning, but the fondness for sour flavors. On one level there is an interplay between the salty and the sour. The sea is evoked by the fermented shrimps and fish; the flavor of young gardens by the green fruits. On another level, the sour is used as a foil against the texture of fats and oils. *Adobo* and *paksiw* both pickle meat and fish in vinegar, pepper, and

garlic before cooking them. *Kinilaw* is raw fish soaked in green mangoes or limes and flavored with raw onions, ginger and a dash of pepper. Cebuanos roast fish stuffed with green tomatoes to produce an exquisite tart flavor. As in other parts of Southeast Asia, we have broths (*sinigang*) that are cooked with green tamarinds. However, we have added tomatoes to this plus substitutes for tamarinds: sandor (*santol*), green mangoes, guavas or *catmon*. Green chili peppers are cooked into the broth, though sparingly. Possible dipping sauces are either fermented fish sauce (*patis*) or tiny fish (*dulong*). In the fifty-one Tagalog dipping sauces that Des Bautista and Mila Enriquez list for Fernando (1992, 57), ninety percent are either sourish or sour. Recipes imported from China, Spain and Mexico are transformed by the taste for the sour. Manileños dip their Chinese-inspired spring rolls in a vinegar sauce where chopped raw onions and pepper soak. Ilocanos do the same for their Mexican-inspired *empanadas* which are fried crepes, of rice in the Ilocos rather than corn, stuffed with mashed mung beans where a raw egg has been mixed while cooking. The Manila *puchero* is derived from the Spanish *cocido* which is a stew of chicken, beef, sausages, chickpeas and leafy vegetables. What differentiates the Manila version is its dipping sauce of broiled and peeled eggplants soaked in black pepper, raw onions and vinegar. The Tagalog style of preparing beefsteak dips thin slices of beef in pepper, soy and *calamansi* juice before sautéing them, Spanish-style, in garlic and onions. Paradoxically a mild sourness communicates cheer, for it creates a glad expectation.

While the pleasure of a Javanese meal derives in part from the ornate medley of spices, the pleasure of a Tagalog or Visayan meal is more subtle. The faint sourness does not totally hide the natural flavor of the fish or the meat. It half reveals the juices, half conceals them. This quality that I call "translucency" appears as well in our other art forms. Even the houses of wealthy nineteenth century Filipinos do not have the gold-encrusted, jungle-like lushness of the carved screens and walls of Javanese and Balinese palaces. Instead interior wall transoms have strips of lace-like tracery, often in natural finish, and exterior walls with sliding window panels whose flat *capiz* shell panes half-reveal, half-conceal the landscape while catching its shadows. Our traditional textiles in Luzon and the Visayas do not have the silk, the gold or the ornate vegetation of batik. Rather they are delicate gauzes, as in *piña*, *jusi* and *sinamay*, that tease the beholder's eyes, particularly when they have cutwork embroidery. Filipino paintings of the twen-

tieth century, be this the late cubism of Manansala, the stylized realism of Carlos Francisco or the gauzy abstractions of Chabet, Albor and Olazo, echo this diaphanousness. Who expects that visual and gustatory spectacle that characterizes particular Southeast Asian art forms will be disappointed by Filipino art. This need not be the case, however, if he relishes the subtle play of overlapping film-like surfaces whether in food or in the visual arts. Or if he enjoys seeing light hovering, in its various moods—around the body, in a room or on canvas.⁸ The theme of translucency runs through nineteenth-early twentieth century Filipino couture and architecture; it is also manifest in 20th century painting since Amorsolo. All these could be further explored.

The Philippines is original for a second reason. The French economic historian Chaunu (1960, 18) remarks that “the Philippines constitutes . . . the only true end-point (*bout*) of the world.” Here the westward expansion of the Atlantic world and the eastward expansion of the Mediterranean world, of which Islam forms a part, meet each other again. “Never before have men of races and cultures that are basically opposites to each other met each other in a more reduced area or within a more reduced period of time” (23). Aside from the indigenous populations, there are the Spaniards, the Chinese, and the Japanese (23). As mentioned above, saffron entered the archipelago from both directions: east and west. Particular Filipino dishes reveal an encounter between distant cultures. *Pansit bihon guisado* is Chinese noodles sautéed Spanish-style in garlic and onions and flavored with soy sauce, a Chinese-Japanese invention, and *patis*, a Southeast Asian innovation. *Champurrado* is rice cooked in chocolate, following Mexican fashion, mixed with milk which was introduced from Western Europe, and is then sprinkled with a Southeast Asian favorite: tiny fried fish. In both dishes the sea’s tang is vividly present. Lately “fusion” cooking, or cooking that brings together flavors from East and West, has become popular in English-speaking countries. Unfortunately, because of our preoccupation with having an “Asian” flavor, we hesitate to project our cuisine as an example of fusion cooking. But, as Joaquin (1989, 31) asks: “Why want to be East or West or North or South when we can be our own singular self as culture or history have shaped us?”

“Continentism” has worked against the Lowland Christian Filipino, whether peasant or urbanite. While many Asian intellectuals see him as an intruder, Non-Latin Westerners regard him as unexotic and unoriginal.⁹ Even when Filipinos sing in Tagalog, his songs are subtly stigmatized. Because some Americans and British hearers find his style

of singing familiar—it is not pentatonic and the pitch is defined—they dismiss it as derivative. I use the expression “Non-Latin” because, from my personal experience, I find Italians and Spaniards to be more appreciative of many aspects of the Filipino’s cultural products. They are not as concerned that his food, music or architecture be “exotic.” In comparison, I have the impression that, until the 1970s, museum exhibits and writings by Americans on Filipino art tended to emphasize primarily either the Upland Tribal or the Moslem. While the high art of our neighbors was on display—silks, porcelains, Buddhas—a favored specimen from the Philippines on exhibit was the headhunting axe. The assumption was that the Christian Filipino’s artifacts would be out of place in the Asian wing. No doubt this has begun to change since the 1980s. Under George Ellis, the Honolulu Academy Arts opened a permanent exhibit on Filipino santos, featuring an almost Romanesque Christ-in-the-Grave. He located this, of course, in the Western, rather than in the Asian wing. Pasadena Museum in California has featured Philippine oil paintings and ivory carvings. But prejudice persists elsewhere. In a guidebook (Peters 1997, 29–36) dedicated exclusively to the Philippines, there are detailed drawings of the different types of houses in the Cordillera, none on the variations of the *bahay kubo* in the lowlands, none either on the gentry’s Wood-and-Stone House.¹⁰ The Lowland Christian Filipino should be bothered. In order to project his culture, must he ignore his farmer’s houses with their various weaving styles, his graceful nineteenth century houses and churches, his empanadas and his *pastillas* to live up to the image, as defined by the Non-Latin Westerner, of what an Asian is supposed to be? Paradoxically, this means surrendering to a disguised form of cultural imperialism.

Flavors Beyond Asia

Because of the eagerness to be “Asian” at all cost, many Filipinos apologize about their varied heritage. To appreciate Filipino culture in its singularity, we should suspend our preoccupations with what is or is not Asian and experience phenomenologically particular artifacts. Moreover, like Chaunu, we should assume that, on a globe, influences can move in any direction. Realistically speaking, however, the Greek-inspired dichotomy of Asia versus Europe will probably never disappear. It persists for several reasons. First, it is one way to bond

different societies that have historically been bullied by the U.S. and Western European powers. Although the Japanese are themselves a power, they too resort to that discourse when they feel pressured by the U.S. They speak of their affinities with other Asians while projecting themselves as the spokesman of Asia vis-a-vis wealthy Western powers. Second, it is a convenient way to classify cultures and societies in a diverse world even though the dichotomy is simplistic and therefore misleading. In the meantime an entire network of academic departments, institutions and journals has arisen internationally, using the term "Asia." It would be too costly to scrap the term.

Nonetheless alternatives are possible. We could restrict the use of "Asia" to mean a physical zone of the globe and articulate instead other bases for cross-cultural comparisons, as well as for cross-cultural cooperation. In other words, let us treat Asia as a continent, albeit with fuzzy, arbitrary boundaries, but not as a single cultural unity. Instead of "Asian civilization," it is better to speak of "Asian civilizations." It may be that in the future because of increased interaction between Asians, a strong sense of Asian identity will emerge. Fine. But in the meantime, we have to be wary of a priori definitions that exclude Lowland Christian Filipinos. Other bases for cross-cultural comparisons and cooperation are the following:

1. *Austronesia*. The Philippines, like Malaysia and Indonesia, belongs to a language family that takes in Madagascar and covers most of the Pacific islands. Because of the longing to belong to a prestigious Asia of sophisticated civil cultures, Filipinos have forgotten their links with a major part of this cultural region. And yet they share myths, seafaring lore, and a crafts tradition with other Pacific Islanders. The ancestors of Micronesians and Polynesians sailed for their new homes millenia ago from the Philippines and Indonesia (Bellwood 1985). They also partake of a widespread cooking style. In Hawaii as in Bicol, they mix pork, fish, taro and taro leaf together and steam the package. However, they flavor it only with salt, not with chili, as in Bicol. During the 19th century, Spanish documents often referred to the Philippines as *Oceanía española*. Together with the Carolines and the Marianas, it formed an administrative unit.¹¹ Today some anthropologists and travel writers prefer to locate the Philippines within Oceania rather than Asia because, unlike most of Southeast Asia, it has not been deeply influenced by Indian ideas, social practices, and art.¹² I

should add that since the nineteenth century, Oceania, like the Philippines, has become a member of Western civilization.

2. *Southeast Asia.* The Philippines is situated in a tropical region characterized by inland seas, large islands, narrow river valleys, an extensive mountainous terrain, and deep forests (Winzeler 1976). There are four civilizations present in the region, the Chinese-influenced, the Indian-influenced, the Islamic and the Western, and four language families, the Austronesian, the Austroasiatic, the T'ai and the Tibeto-Burmese. Yet if one looks at the region as a particular type of ecosystem requiring a particular response, it indeed forms a unity, though not as a single civilization. Throughout the region, because of the preference for living by or on the water where the main sources of protein are found, wooden houses are built on stilts. Food, in the lowlands at least, is flavored with fish/ shrimp pastes and fish sauce and often has fish as the main course. If religious prejudices on both sides be suspended, Christian Filipinos, Moslem Malays, and Moslem Indonesians can easily be comfortable with each other because of linguistic and other affinities.

3. *The Hispanic World.* The Philippines was the westernmost extension of the Spanish empire. However, Spain ruled it through the Viceroyalty of Mexico; after 1821, she ruled it directly. Ideas came in that are common to all Spanish-influenced countries; at the same time some ideas were Mexican in origin. Conversely, the Philippines influenced the Mexican West Coast. Baroque art entered the islands; in exchange Manila workshops exported exquisite ivory saints to all of Spanish America and Spain. Mexican soldiers and missionaries brought in fruits and vegetables (chicos, squash, cacao, tomatoes, guavas) and flavoring agents (chilis, annato seeds). They inspired the making of cakes mixing peanuts and cereal paste as in *tamales* or cooking with a paste of ground peanuts *mole*-style. Filipino migrants reciprocated by bringing in the mango and the coconut wine which continues to be called *tuba* on the Mexican West Coast. There too vegetable dishes cooked in coconut milk are called *guinatan*—from *guinataan* reports Jorge Loyzaga (1996), a Mexican architect interested in this exchange of influences. A pan-Spanish way of cooking present in all Spanish-influenced countries are such habits like sautéing in garlic, onions and tomatoes or stewing (puchero, cocido) greens, tubers, meats and sausages together. Shared habits foster sympathy.

During my travels abroad, I keep meeting ordinary Spaniards and Spanish Americans whose remarks reveal much reading on the Philippines. Sympathy in turn can lead to a helping hand. At a parish in Hamburg, I met non-Spanish speaking Filipino workers who had been invited by Spaniards and Spanish Americans to join their club on the grounds that they were brothers in spirit.

There are other taste clusters that the Filipino kitchen participates in. The Chinese-influenced cluster, with its ginger and soy, is one; the Arab-influenced, with its saffron, another. Filipino cooking has thematic flavors that give it coherence; at the same time, like a poem, it alludes to other culinary worlds. Surely this opens advantages on a shrinking planet.

Notes

1. Hutton (1996, 8) explicitly says: "The Spanish were responsible for the introduction of chilies, which they discovered in the New World and carried to the islands of the Philippines. These fiery fruits swept throughout Southeast Asia and India." A lesson to be drawn is that we cannot assume that the order of things that we see in other Southeast Asian countries today has always been there or is truly indigenous.

2. Following Toynbee, I distinguish between "Europe" and the "West." Europe is a continent from the Western Christian perspective. But it has been home to three civilizations: Western Christendom, Eastern or Orthodox Christendom, and Islam. Only since Peter the Great in the eighteenth century, did Russia seek Westernization. The 19th century debate between the "Westernizers" and the "Slavophiles" about the appropriateness of Westernization reveals that there was in fact a difference between the two Christendoms. Toynbee (1972, 401 ff.) sees the twentieth century attempts of the Soviets to set themselves up as the world capital of a new orthodoxy, using Marxism which they imported from the West, as another chapter in a centuries-old rivalry with the West. On the other hand Western civilization crossed the seas to embrace the Americas, the Pacific Islands and the Philippines.

3. Toynbee (1935, 130–32) identifies some of the following pertinent "Societies" which he uses interchangeably with "civilization," when the former is spelled with a capital "S." These are: 1) the Western, 2) the Orthodox Christian (in both Russia and the Balkans), 3) Arabic, 4) Hindu, and 5) Far Eastern (China, Korea and Japan). Years later he (Toynbee 1972, 72) modifies some of these terms. He prefers "civilization" to "Society." He lists Orthodox Christian, Western, and Islamic civilizations as "affiliated to" both Syriac and Hellenic civilizations; the Korean, Japanese and Vietnamese civilizations as "satellite" civilizations of the Sinic; and South-East Asian civilization as "satellites" first of the Indic, then, in Indonesia and Malaya only, of the Islamic. By "affiliated to" he means born from and have become totally independent. While "satellite" means that those civilizations "developed their loans . . . on lines of their own that are distinctive enough to entitle them to rank as separate civilizations."

4. Needham (1954, vol. 3) attributes the Chinese failure to develop higher forms of mathematics to the fact that foreign trade under the Qing was gradually deemphasized. The advent of statistics in the West was stimulated by the challenges of trade. Thankfully he does not fall back on the cliché of a “mystic, intuitive, non-rationalistic Asia.”

5. Often what is meant by “Western” may be “American.” For instance, a Filipino friend who grew up in Hawaii came over and enthused: “What I like about Asians is that they touch each other a lot when talking. It’s so unlike Westerners.” Arabs and Filipinos do pat and hug, but Japanese, Chinese or Javanese? These are no-touch societies. On the other hand, while White Americans squirm when touched by just anybody, Spaniards and Italians do love to touch. As popularly used, “Western” is a catch-all for all that is negative.

6. The false supposition that all indigenous, pre-Western cultures in the Philippines are the same has led to artifacts that insult Islam. Filipino painters of the 1930s and 40s painted wedding scenes set in pre-hispanic Philippines where the dancing girls display their naked breasts. In one corner is a pig’s head for the banquet. They would call this “Moslem Wedding”! The famous Carlos V. Francisco was guilty of this (see Duldulao 1988, 132–33). A news item about a Sinulog Festival in Cebu in the early 1990s says that a float carried women “who represented Moslem princesses offering gifts to idols”! One of the organizers of the Pammulinawen Festival in Laoag, Ilocos Norte, tells me proudly that they had a similar tableau. The ₱1000 bill of the Philippines features on one side: the rice terraces, stone idols and a *langgar*. The last is a sacred place of worship for Moslems. Why should this be featured along with a stone idol which is the very antithesis of Islam? “Asia” is a catch-all for all that is supposedly non-Western.

7. The distinction between contingent being and necessary being, between being that does not have to exist (like plants, animals, humans) and being which must exist (like God) entered Scholasticism from Islamic theologians. This close relationship between Islamic and Western Christian thought is overlooked by those who see all “Asians” as the same, and as sharply different from the Westerners.

8. Lor Calma is designing a towering sculpture for the Fort Bonifacio complex. It is made up of translucent sheets of glass lit from within. Why so? he was asked. His reply illuminates: “It’s more Filipino, *mas malambing* (more tender and caring).”

9. Just how arbitrary “Asia” is can be seen when we consider an adjacent continent, “Oceania.” Another term is “Pacific Islands.” It covers several clusters: Micronesia (Guam and the Marianas, and the Carolines), Melanesia (Fiji, Papua) and Polynesia (Tahiti, Samoa, the Marquesas, Hawaii, Easter Island). This continent is often represented as semi-aboriginal: grass huts, half-naked women, angular ancestral idols, seafood with simple seasoning. And yet Westernization, which became pervasive since the nineteenth century because of conquest, is often accepted as part of the cultural landscape by Westerners themselves. Despite an independence movement in Tahiti, Americans tend to look at Tahiti’s Frenchness, particularly its cuisine, as part of its appeal. Nor would Americans consider Guam and Hawaii as unnatural because of their heavy Americanization. However, the Lowland Christian Filipinos are seen as unnatural because they live west of the supposed boundary between “Asia” and “Oceania” rather than east of it.

10. While finishing my doctorate at the University of Hawaii in the early 1980s, I went to one of the publishing houses to ask if they would like to market to Americans high-quality books made in the Philippines. I showed them my book on the Wood-and-

Stone houses of the nineteenth century Filipino houses. They were frank: "If it were a book on tribal Filipinos, there would be a ready market. But for a book like this we are not sure." Meanwhile overviews of Southeast Asian art and encyclopedias of the cultures of the world either ignore the Lowland Christian Filipino's achievements or emphasize those of hitherto aboriginal Filipinos and Moslem Filipinos (O'Connor 1988; Wicks 1988; Maxwell 1990; Kennett 1994; Fraser-Lu 1988).

11. Because of this preoccupation with our links with Asians, who admittedly are more prestigious, we have neglected our links with Guam which used to be administered by the Governor-General of Spanish Philippines and by the Archbishop of Cebu. The national costume of Guam is a *traje de mestiza* of the 1930s: a *saya* and a *baro* made of gauzy *arenque* with butterfly sleeves—without the *pañuelo*.

12. For instance Lavenda and Schultz (1987, 200), when citing facts about the Ilongot of the Sierra Madre, locate them in the Philippines, which they classify with Oceania. The Ilongots' belief that, by cutting off the head of a victim, they can make a servant out of the spirit finds parallels elsewhere in Micronesia and Polynesia. This used to justify going to war: Some guidebooks I have seen group the Philippines together with Guam, Fiji, Ponape, Tahiti and Hawaii: under Oceania rather than under Asia because there are no ancient pagodas and Brahmanic temples here. All these positions make sense.

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