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Rundell D. Maree

**Ibatan: A Grammatical Sketch of the Language of Babuyan
Claro Island**

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In order to move away from this kind of constricting framework, the book uses Deleuze and Guattari's tropes of flight and rhizomes as a way not only to understand nationhood but also to read Filipino novels in English such as Jessica Hagedorn's *Dogeaters* and Charlson Ong's *An Embarrassment of the Riches*. For the book, therefore, orthodox Marxism is outmoded and as a framework it cannot incorporate alterity or otherness as a nation or the nation as depicted in the novels.

This is where I think the book is making a big claim for the primary reason that Deleuze and Guattari's reading strategy is not far from being Marxist. For one, otherness or alterity has always been part of the dialectical method of Marxism. Otherness, whether in the form of alienation of oneself or as experienced in the repression and subjugation of people, has been a veritable topic of almost all studies that use the Marxist critique. Secondly, the proclivity for Marxist studies to locate such repression in macropolitics or in the state and institutions does not necessarily deny the existence of repression in micropolitics or in cultural formations, performances, fictions, or narratives, the everyday life, submerged communities, and so on. In fact, for Marxism, otherness or alienation is the very condition necessary for confronting contradiction and gaining an understanding of oneself in relation to society. Despite Deleuze and Guattari's renunciation of dialectics, their method of using rhizomes, or a thousand plateaus, stems from their desire to eliminate our fetish for dogmas, concepts that seem to precede thinking itself, autonomous subjectivity, and so on. For them these dogmas, concepts, subjectivity are all immanent or relations of concepts and things that take place in between say an exterior or an interior, strata, folds, or recesses. They believe that there can never be an absolute author, or a definitive book, or a nation. Likewise, at the very core of dialectical thinking, there can never be an absolute synthesis, one that ends history, repression, and struggles.

Dialectical thinking helps us to accept that the nation is always an incomplete project, a work in progress, a becoming. Dialectics enables us to see the nation not only as a performance but also as a pedagogy by which we strategically essentialize our collective experience. Despite our discrepant histories, we still continue to narrate our nation in myths, fictions, dreams, longings, and hopes. The book's disavowal of Marxism is totally unfounded and the use of Deleuze and Guattari as a reading strategy for Philippine literature in English is not totally indispensable.

Lastly, one should also be critical of reading our time, specifically, Philippine experience, in light of postmodernity. Many Filipino writers and

artists have called themselves postmodern and yet have never even bothered to think if we have arrived at our own modernity and what constitutes our modern experience. Alex Callinicos in his book, *Against Postmodernism*, has argued that much of postmodernist aesthetics and sensibilities can be traced back to early modernist projects. Perhaps this fetish for calling and claiming our time and experience as postmodern is a symptom of the unevenness of knowledge production between the West and the rest of the world, such that our scholars, mostly US educated, are quick to reduce everything in light of how the US academia fashion their own experience. Postmodernism is hip and anyone working on grand narratives like imperialism and neocolonialism is outdated. We need to understand that postmodernity, despite its claim to radicalness, can also work against its politics because sometimes the level of engagement can be reduced to a battle of signs, virtual communities, to the interior life or the personal. If one has to take Deleuze seriously, his philosophy is not just a reading strategy to help us formulate a postmodern community or nation but also how we can articulate our own nation in the context of global forces. The challenge therefore for Deleuzian philosophy is how Philippine literature can inform Deleuze and Guattari. Instead of using Deleuze and Guattari to formulate a nation, why not use our becoming-nation as a philosophical addendum to Deleuze and Guattari's works. It will indeed be more exciting to figure out what relation can be derived from Hagedorn's novels and global capitalism, or to the Philosophy of Immanence, or even to scientific rationality and empiricism. It should be the book's ethos to make such relations possible and work. Anyhow, in the Deleuzian sense, nothing is obsolete.

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Ibatan: A Grammatical Sketch of the Language of Babuyan Claro Island

Manila: Linguistic Society of the Philippines, 2007. 410 pages.

On language documentation. The Philippines is home to more than a hundred autochthonous languages. The *Ethnologue: Languages of the World* (16th edition, edited by Paul M. Lewis; SIL International, 2009;

online, <http://www.ethnologue.com/>) lists 171 living languages spoken in the Philippine archipelago and four languages reported to be extinct. Not all of the languages included in the list, however, are indigenous to the Philippines or are descendants of Proto-Austronesian. The list also includes English, Spanish, Chinese Mandarin, Chinese Min Nan, and Chinese Yue. Of the living spoken languages, 164 are indigenous to the Philippines. Other surveys and lists, however, are more conservative in the estimates of the total number of indigenous languages spoken in the Philippines. Darrell T. Tryon (in the work he edited, *Comparative Austronesian dictionary*, Mouton de Gruyter, 1995) lists 150 languages, while Ernesto Constantino ("Current Topics in Philippine Linguistics," in *Parangal Cang Brother Andrew: Festschrift for Andrew Gonzalez on his Sixtieth Birthday*, edited by Ma. Lourdes S. Bautista, Teodoro A. Llamzon, and Bonifacio P. Sibayan, 57–68; Linguistic Society of the Philippines, 2000) estimates the number to be 110 and believes that there may still be languages in the more remote areas in the Philippines that have not been recorded. Only a handful of these languages have been sufficiently described. The lack of description of these languages is one of the reasons perhaps behind the wide disparity in the estimates of the total number of languages spoken in the Philippines today. The methodical comparison and analysis of the differences and similitudes in the various levels of grammatical study between these languages to establish the distinct linguistic identity of each language, and subsequently to define the phylogenetic categorization and relationships of all the indigenous languages, start from an adequate description of these languages or at least of the languages to be compared.

Maree's grammatical sketch of the language spoken in Babuyan Claro called Ibatan of the Batanic or Bashiic microgroup, closely related but different from Ivatan, is an important addition to the description and analysis of Philippine languages. The sketch discussed some of the basic features of Ibatan: the sound system and some of the rules in the patterning of these sounds were discussed in the second chapter; morphological features and their extensions to syntactic formations in phrases and sentences were discussed in the succeeding chapters, e.g., nouns, pronouns, and their extensions in phrases were described in the chapter on nominals and the chapter on noun phrases, and the like; the last chapter introduces the reader to the semantic structure of Ibatan through the discussion of the relations of propositions and propositional clusters; and finally more examples of verbs,

affixes, and texts are provided in the appendix. The texts included in the appendix illustrate the linguistic features discussed in the sketch. They can also serve as secondary data for researchers in Ibatan.

The linguist in the field. Data for Maree's grammatical sketch were collected from almost three decades of field research from 1978 to 2006. Maree was able to collect oral recordings (speech data) and written texts that came up to a 480-page text corpus. Apart from this remarkable corpus, Maree also used an unpublished dictionary with 5,000 main entries compiled by Judith Maree, his near-native speaker insight and the intuition of the Ibatan native speakers as data and tools for his analysis of Ibatan.

Being in the field, instead of relying simply on data previously collected by other field researchers, gives the linguist not only an unlimited access to data but also to the functional and contextual frame words, phrases, and sentences as these are used. While sentences gathered using designed elicitation materials, devoid of context and relations, may prove useful in the definition of certain sentence types, it also limits the linguist from describing structures and constructions that may not be elicited by the material. Having to elicit isolated sentences also does not account for all the possible constructions, including irregular or sometimes problematic structures that are found in natural and spontaneous speech. Some linguists look at only a few sentences usually in isolation as illustrative examples to argue for certain theoretical concerns. The linguist in the field, however, documenting and describing languages, some of which are previously unrecorded, should always account for most, if not all, possible constructions in that language. Maree's clarity of purpose in documentation and his conscious and careful process of collecting and describing data are quite apparent in his grammatical sketch. Maree, being a linguist in the field, knowingly chose to provide a wide array of descriptions for his grammatical sketch rather than argue for a certain theoretical view of Philippine languages.

Frameworks and debates. The structures and the internal processes of grammatical constructions in Philippine languages are contentious, to say the least. Decades-old arguments on issues, such as the nominative–accusative interpretation of Philippine languages on one hand and the ergative–absolutive interpretation on the other, or the use of terms such as subject, topic, or pivot, were avoided in Maree's work. Some linguists might say that Maree's reluctance to position himself in these theoretical debates, despite the wealth of data behind him, is unfortunate. One may argue that it is

impossible to be totally neutral and descriptive; after all words and categories such as the terms “subject” or “transitive” are theory laden. Maree’s conscious effort to avoid the pitfalls of theoretical debates is one of the reasons why he employed more general categories instead of very specific labels. The result is an eclectic approach to describing grammar that developed organically from the actual data as opposed to using carefully selected data to support a particular theory or viewpoint.

Being a grammatical sketch, Maree’s work is sufficient. Being a grammatical sketch, however, a lot of features and processes still remain undescribed, such as the formation of complex and compound sentence constructions and the internal hierarchy and structure of such constructions, the morphosyntax of affixes, and so on. Given that Maree has an enormous amount of data and access to near-native speaker insight, it is hoped that a full grammar of Ibatan will be written and published soon.

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ALFRED W. MCCOY

Policing America’s Empire: The United States, the Philippines, and the Rise of the Surveillance State

Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2009. 659 pages.

This latest book of Alfred McCoy, renowned historian at the University of Wisconsin, is sure to raise eyebrows and spark discussion. The result of years of research and reflection, it is a history of Philippine security institutions—police, the Constabulary, and to some extent the government investigative services—from their roots during the Spanish period, with special focus on the American colonial period and the continuance of major—and disturbing—trends after independence and into the recent past.

McCoy opens his opus with US Pres. George Bush Senior’s visit to the Philippines, and his selective memory of the Philippine colonial experience under the United States. He then draws disturbing parallels between the Philippine experience in the early twentieth century and what was currently going on in Iraq. McCoy points out that techniques of control and

subjugation in both countries were similar in many ways, although he is also careful to state that there are many differences. From here he launches into his exploration of the history—particularly the dark underside—of the Philippine government security forces. The relevance of the Philippine experience in the US war on terror is so stark to McCoy that he places his conclusions in the opening chapter of this book, so that hopefully American decision makers will realize the errors of their ways in Iraq. McCoy states: “At first glance, this book seems a study of Philippine policing, both colonial and national, throughout the 20th century. At a deeper level, however, this is an essay on the exercise of American power, from imperial rule over a string of scattered islands in 1898 to today’s worldwide dominion. By focusing on the actual mechanisms of Washington’s global reach, both conventional and covert operations, this study explores the nature of U.S. force projection and its long-term consequences for both the nations within America’s ambit and America itself” (4).

The book is divided into two parts: US Colonial Police and the Philippine National Police. In Part One, he traces the roots of the Philippine police and Constabulary and their techniques—and effectiveness—to quell Filipino resistance toward the Americans. He sorts through familiar details but also adds many new bits of information regarding the early Philippine Constabulary and its officers. He summarizes the highlights of each chapter and thus reinforces the conclusions he had set out in the introductory chapter of the book.

Among McCoy’s major conclusions for Part One are the maximization by the US of the information revolution then sweeping the mainland, and utilizing these new technologies to compile a comprehensive database of potential and actual criminals, brigands, revolutionaries, and other threats to the US colonial regime, and neutralizing them before they could cause any damage. The development of a highly modern and systematic web of intelligence nipped the bud of many uprisings and contributed to the pacification of the Philippines. So successful was the constabulary’s intelligence network that a number of nationalists were allegedly tamed and brought to the side of the Americans—such as former revolutionary war generals and nationalists like Aurelio Tolentino. The compilation of damaging information (sexual innuendos, involvement in illegal gambling, and the like) and the threat of leaking these to the press served as a Damocles sword to keep these individuals in check. Not that the information was always