Pangayaw

Decolonizing Resistance in a Network of Communities in the Archipelago

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Introduction

Mutual cooperation is inherent in every human aggregation, a relationship that naturally evolved due to people's biological and social needs.[1] Likewise, the absence of authority and coercion is natural to human relationships. This presupposes that every individual human being can voluntarily act and behave in accordance with the social responsibilities and duties established through actual practices.

This view inevitably leads to the assumption that institutionalized hierarchy is not natural but, rather, human-made, a synthetic relationship that through institutions produces slavery and oppression. Competition has been present in human relationships since time immemorial, but we have mistaken it as a core tool for survival. Under hierarchical frameworks like statism and capitalism, competition is catastrophic, dehumanizing, destructive, corrupting, and unsustainable.

The world population in 10,000 BCE was about ten million. People lived in stateless societies. By the time Columbus reached America, the world population had grown to 350 million, and only one percent was living in non-state societies. Today, only 0.001 percent are living outside of the direct influence of states and other centralized institutions. People in non-state societies are autonomous, they generate their own subsistence with no or very little assistance from the outside world. They bow to no external leaders or authorities. Their lifeways are consistent with ecological processes. As a result of European colonization in the sixteenth century, stateless groups have fallen under the influence of states and mainstream Western society.

Competition is the mainstream framework reinforced by markets, states, and religious institutions through their highly bureaucratic relations. People compete at the top of the hierarchy to achieve the highest privilege and influence. The groups of people at the top of the structure compete to exploit people, communities, and the environment to maintain and increase their benefits and power.

Mainstream societies are characterized by social injustices, poverty, the political marginalization of communities, and ecological crises. In the Philippines, these social conditions have not changed despite several uprisings. Government reports of a 7.3 percent expansion of the economy or a domestic liquidity growth of 16 percent in 2006 or an increase in the balance of payments or other alleged proof of positive economic development cannot conceal the real conditions of millions of hungry, homeless, and landless people living without dignity throughout the archipelago. The techno-fascist jargon is not translatable into concrete gains enjoyed by the people.

This paper is an attempt to contribute to the development of an alternative politics against the hierarchical and centralistic politics that dominate our current social relations, causing slavery, hunger, poverty, discrimination, war, oppression, and ecological destruction. Politics and economy will be treated as strictly interrelated—if one of them remains unfulfilled, the concept of direct democracy will be incomplete. Politics of representation is nothing but elite democracy;

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[1] Based on his study of the history of humankind, Peter Kropotkin described how the practice of mutual aid allowed people to improve and develop their knowledge, culture, and human intelligence. In addition, cooperation was based on the premise that only the fittest survive, not individually but as a species.

as long as centralization of power prevails, democracy will not be realized, because power will naturally fall into the hands of a few representatives. Political participation requires concrete manifestations, such as equitable access to benefit streams and social services.

The effort of understanding the pre-Spanish archipelago is an attempt to explore alternative social setups that were once used by our ancestors. Multiple studies have deepened our appreciation and understanding of the social relations of our ancestors, characterized mainly by mutual cooperation and horizontal political relations.

The word *archipelago* is consistently used to affirm the concept espoused by the "Archipelagic Confederation" article issued and published in 2006. The concept captures the geographical characteristics of a network of cultures and the very essential role of rich but fragile and finite natural resources that have strongly influenced the highly diverse lifestyles of the archipelago's inhabitants. Myriad historical accounts indicate that the bodies of water surrounding the different islands actually connected rather than separated them from each other. The economic, social, and political activities of the inhabitants developed due to the interconnectedness of their immediate environments. The group of islands we call the Philippines today is part of an archipelago that connects the borderless communities of islands and islets in Luzon, the Visayas, Mindanao, Maguindanao, and south to the Talaud Islands, Ternate, Tidore, Halmahera, Borneo, the Moluccas, and as far as Makassar and Brunei. Southeast Asian communities in modern-day Thailand, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, and other places were also part of the traditional network.

The word *autonomous* is consistently used to describe the absence of absolute and centralized power—this means there was no figurehead, whether familial or individual. The themes of diversity and respect were dominant and meant recognition of all communities. The absence of a despotic leader allowed the autonomous character of communities to flourish during ancient times. This also included the autonomy of an individual from their group.

It is erroneous to assume that our ancestors' anarchistic ways of life were perfect; like any culture throughout the world, ours has limitations. But such imperfections are incomparable to the Western campaigns of colonization that caused deep misery for the indigenous communities of Africa, America, and Asia. Their sophisticated methods included genocide, torture, rape, massive destruction of natural resources, slavery, and war in the guise of development, democracy, and freedom.

We have our indigenous concepts of development and freedom, evidence from our prehistoric past, historical documents, and ethnographic studies; they all suggest that our ancestors maintained, sustained, and fought for their freedom and self-determination.

Reconnection to our indigenous past is necessary for us to explore the wisdom of autonomy and ecologically sound ways of living. This wisdom will be used in our current context with the aim of abolishing hunger, poverty, discrimination, patriarchy, war, and control.

Key Words

Archipelago

According to Wikipedia, an archipelago is "a chain, cluster or collection of islands, or sometimes a sea containing a small number of scattered islands. The word *archipelago* is derived from the Greek—*pélagos* ('sea') through the Italian *arcipelago*. In Italian, possibly following a tradition of antiquity, the *Archipelago* was the proper name for the Aegean Sea and, later, usage shifted to refer to the Aegean Islands."

As stated earlier, the word will be used for ecological settings and cultural networks of communities before the advent of the nation-state. It cuts across from Luzon, the Visayas, Mindanao, Sulu, Sarangani, the Talaud Islands, Sangihe, Sulawesi, Borneo, Halmahera, Malacca through Brunei to neighboring communities in Malaysia, Indonesia, Vietnam, Cambodia, and other areas in Southeast Asia that were also directly and indirectly part of relations based on kinship, trade, marriage, and war.

Antiauthoritarian

Wikipedia states that antiauthoritarians believe in full equality before the law and strong civil liberties. Sometimes, the term is used interchangeably with "anarchism," an ideology which entails opposing authority or hierarchical organization, including the state system, in the conduct of human relations.

This document will refer to antiauthoritarian politics as a politics against the centralization of power, which is associated with a leader-centered approach and relevant representation. Usually, leaders and representatives are in authority and possess power used to control and exploit people, communities, organisms, and environments to maintain a status quo that is favorable to a few privileged groups and families.

Autonomous

Webster's New World Thesaurus defines *autonomy* as "liberty, independence and sovereignty." The word will be used for a political belief based on one's self-determination and not accepting the external authority, representation, and centralization espoused by the state, market, and religion. Said political belief encourages independent, free, and critical thinking. It has a deep recognition of cultural diversity and a deep respect for ecology.

As we will discuss later, autonomy mainly relates to the capacity of an individual, a group of people, or a community to make decisions based on actual situations, conditions, and available information, as well as the capacity to implement such decisions.

Decolonization

Decolonization is the meaningful and active resistance to the forces of colonialism that perpetuate the subjugation and/or exploitation of our minds, bodies, and lands. Its ultimate purpose is to overturn the colonial structure and realize Indigenous liberation. First and foremost, decolonization must occur in our own minds. The Tunisian decolonization activist, Albert Memmi, wrote, "In order for the colonizer to be the complete master, it is not enough for him to be so in actual fact, he must also believe in its legitimacy. In order for that legitimacy to be complete, it is not enough for the colonized to be a slave, he must also accept his role." The first step toward decolonization, then, is to question the legitimacy of colonization. Once we recognize the truth of this injustice, we can think about ways to resist and challenge colonial institutions and ideologies. Thus, decolonization is not passive, but rather it requires something called praxis.[1]

Anticolonization is the struggle to liberate a particular territory from colonial power and to drive away external authority by establishing another one. In my judgment, the presentation of history where the center subject is the Katipunan is about the founding of a nation-state. But if we focus on the nation-state, it is more about replicating colonial systems rather than cultivating indigenous systems of organization.

Decolonial processes do not tell you to adopt indigenous culture, but they do not stop you from doing so either. The most essential in this process is awareness. If someone takes action it should be their decision.

Direct Democracy

There are plenty of practices and ideas with regard to the notion of direct democracy. In a broad sense, direct democracy will be applied by organizing free associations and assemblies at the local level: people's organizations that are based on communal interests, such as those of peasants, fishers, women, youth, indigenous people, vendors, tricycle drivers, jeepney drivers, the homeless, gays, neighborhood associations, religious groups, and other formations at the local level. They should be encouraged to organize themselves. These formations will directly participate in public decision-making processes under the theme of mutual cooperation for the benefit of the community rather than competition, which is designed to outcompete, overpower, and control.

Unlike representative democracy, direct democracy is not leader-oriented; it requires direct participation of the most marginalized sectors or individuals through a process of consultation, education, and dialogue based on relevant information and data. It provides venues for the people to speak with regard to their actual situations without any mediation.

Diversity

Diversity is a perfect indicator of a healthy ecology and free communities and people. Differences of cultures, perspectives, values, and lifeways are natural; we are all organically different,

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[1] Waziyatawin and Michael Yellow Bird, eds., "Introduction," in *For Indigenous Minds Only: A Decolonization Handbook* (Santa Fe: School of Advanced Research Press, 2012), 3.

and that is our strength. Constant exposure to one another improves our culture. Diversity will not thrive in an authoritarian condition.

Self-determination

According to the *Collins Online Dictionary*, self-determination is "the act or power of making up one's own mind about what to think or do, without outside influence or compulsion." In this paper, it describes the practice of communities in many different regions of the archipelago, communities that aim to live their lives based on their indigenous views of the world. They have consciously adopted mechanisms to ensure sustenance, development, and improvement of their own culture collectively through mutual cooperation.

It should be emphasized that these words, ideas, and concepts are based on actual practices that are directly related to one another and used interchangeably.

Systematic Hunger and Poverty

It is reasonable to consider that industrial revolution eliminated the threat of scarcity of foods and other necessary things, making it, in theory, possible for everyone to live comfortably. State-of-the-art technology never ceased to evolve. Given the current state of technology, it is safe to conclude that we have already created highly efficient means to produce foods and other necessities for our daily lives.

In fact, one of the core issues in multilateral and bilateral trade negotiations is market access. Capitalist nations and transnational corporations are looking for markets where they can dump their huge surpluses. Trade-related issues may appear complicated. At the World Trade Organization (WTO), for instance, the negotiations about Non-Agricultural Market Access (NAMA) produced too complex a formula to balance the interests of players. Nonetheless, the aim is to reduce tariffs at a substantial rate, and the ultimate goal is elimination. But tariff elimination will lead to the demise of the local economy and local livelihoods due to incompetent local industries and sectors that become more vulnerable due to a lack of or absence of subsidies.

We do not aim to simplify trade discourse, but we must not let tricky words and concepts revolving around trade issues deceive us. Developed and developing countries alike, especially the US, EU, Japan, and China, as well as others, cannot conceal their intention to expand their markets to allow their corporations to make more profit. Investments are among the critical issues being discussed to access the Third World's remaining natural resources. These facts make one thing obvious: the threat of underproduction and scarcity has long been addressed and totally eliminated. Yet poverty and hunger still persist at the global scale.

The great volume of products, both agricultural and industrial, moving freely at the global scale correspond to the volume of profit created in the process. Meanwhile, a great number of people are starving on a daily basis, especially in the developing and poor nations, which have high figures of impoverished children, women, small producers (peasants and fishers), workers from rural areas, and urban poor. The current situation denies them access to basic things, such as food, clothing, shelter, water, education, health services, and the opportunity for a sustainable livelihood.

The Social Weather Stations' survey results of the fourth quarter of 2014 estimated that 11.4 million families in the Philippines considered themselves poor.[1] Do you have any idea how it is to live on less than one dollar a day? Meanwhile, the few who have access to power and influence over the economy live their lives luxuriously and extravagantly.

Over ten million Filipinos go hungry every year. The latest record puts the number of unemployed and underemployed people at about 4.5 million. Every year, almost one million women and men want to leave the country to seek job opportunities. The country has one of the largest numbers of malnourished children in the world. In 2000, the country ranked 77 out of more than

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[1] "Fourth Quarter 2014 Social Weather Survey: Hunger Falls to 17.2% of families; Moderate Hunger 13.2%, Severe Hunger 4.1%," Social Weather Stations, January 26, 2015, www.sws.org.ph/swsmain/artcldisppage/?artcsyscode=ART-20151122001030.

150 countries, with a poverty incidence of 34 percent. The human development index (HDI) figure was 0.656. Eighty percent of fisher households lived below the poverty line.[2]

Poverty becomes a complicated issue when experts start to raise opinions. If there is a single explanation, it would be social inequality. There is no need for rocket science to comprehend the relationship between the rich and the have-nots. The gap between them is big enough to stare right at the reality of inequality.

Basic logic and mathematics will lead us to the reality that vast productive lands and resources are controlled and occupied by only a few families. This results in the misery of millions of landless farmers. The business of a few influential families who accumulate massive profits continuously expands the gap between the rich and the poor. The same group of people will likely have superior access to the economy due to its influence in decision-making. Public services that could have helped reduce the burden of the poor majority are rarely accessible to common people.

One of the core problems is one that we do not need a genius to comprehend: the privatization of our finite, exhaustible, and limited resources. This inevitably results in marginalization and poverty for millions of people.

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[2] It is unclear where these figures were derived from. The UN's Human Development Report 2000 lists the Philippines' HDI at 0.744 and the poverty rate at 37.5 percent.

Democracy Scandal

The current political setup has created confusion with regard to the meaning and concept of the word *democracy*. What is taught in schools, textbooks, and formal documents is far from the actual practice of democracy.

The fall of the monarchs in France in 1789 ended the idea that "some people are born to rule." Moreover, it was followed shortly after by the downfall of many powerful monarchies in Europe. The ideas of equality and individual rights were expressed and legally adopted by the revolutionary National Assembly in the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen.*

The monarchies collapsed; the merchants and the bourgeoisie rose, cleverly inventing the idea of democracy to maintain hegemony and their privilege and to protect the capitalist setup of a private-property regime.

The neoliberal paradigm is one of the most effective tools of capitalism. It created institutions like the International Monetary Fund-World Bank (IMF-WB) and the WTO. Agreements signed by the Philippines, including ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations), RP (Republic of the Philippines)-China, ASEAN-China, and JPEPA (Japan-Philippine Economic Partnership Agreement), are among the agreements where the agenda of the neoliberals is being pushed.

The economic assistance offered by IMF-WB makes many communities pay a very dear price. In exchange for loans, the Philippine government legislates policies to implement privatization and liberalization based on Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs). With the coercive assistance from IMF-WB, privatization and liberalization are imposed on poor and developing countries like ours. Privatization dispossesses, marginalizes, and displaces communities of farmers, fishers, indigenous groups, and women.

In practice, the capitalist system and the neoliberal paradigm are inconsistent with the idea of democracy. Ideally, democracy is defined as a system wherein all people in a particular territory or community directly partake in decision-making. However, the elites and corporations that control the means of production will not allow workers to participate, because they are just part of machines that produce commodities. Direct-democratic decision-making is a great threat to profits, property, and privileges. In many cases, workers participate through unions, but the results—for example, collective bargaining agreements—are limited and do not really secure substantial gains.

Democracy is a political system developed as an alternative to the absolute control by the monarchs over all social and economic affairs. This is supposed to provide not only political freedom but also freedom to access benefit streams and social services.

After a long coercive process of colonization, the archipelago finally became an independent republic based on a constitution upholding democratic principles. In practice, our political system of making decisions and implementing them, described as democracy, is divided into three major institutions. The legislature enacts laws through the congress and the senate. The judiciary interprets laws. Finally, the executive implements policies led by the president and aided by a bunch of secretaries through huge bureaucracies of departments and line agencies. The police

and the military deal with those who stubbornly resist. In theory, these three branches of government have equal power, but in many cases the executive branches exercise overwhelming influence.

Generally, most of the decisions made by "honorable" lawmakers are totally opposed to people's interests. For instance, the government's lousy alibi on E-VAT is fiscal deficit. This is highly doubtful. Let us assume that the situation is real. During the time of Jose Isidro Camacho, formerly a minister of energy as well as finance, the Bureau of Internal Revenue admitted that the institution is inefficient in terms of collecting government revenues; this inefficiency cost the government losses of as much as 40 percent. Included in these are uncollected revenues due to tax evasion by big businesses, smuggling of various products, and, not least, the government's virtual removal of tariffs and the provisions of tax holidays for foreign and local corporations. How did intelligent officials, lawmakers, experts, and doctors in economics miss these facts? Did they run out of brains and turn to people's pockets, not even bothering to rethink the huge amount that goes to useless government debt and loan payments due to automatic appropriation laws?

During Gloria Macapagal Arroyo's administration, she had the power to veto the bill submitted by the legislature. But she herself, as an economist, failed to see the objective conditions and let her government collect E-VAT (12 percent) for every processed product bought, including non-nutrient instant noodles, one of the most affordable food products for millions of poor families.

Going back to the trade liberalization issue, let's say we agree to compete and combine with industrious and creative men and women who can establish great competitive advantage in the agriculture and fishery sectors. Again, the government missed these simple facts and decided to open up our sensitive sectors. Worse, it encouraged foreign investors to exploit our rich mineral and energy resources without clear long-term gains for the communities where the project sites are located. News networks do not run out of news about the violations and abuses of investors in tourism, logging, fishing, natural gas extraction, mineral resources exploitation, and others.

While liberalizing sensitive sectors, leaders made a policy that prohibited the import of cheap drugs and medicines. Because of this, the archipelago has the highest price for medicines in Southeast Asia. They are inaccessible to poor people.

In a democratic system, everyone is entitled to offer their services to the public. If someone wishes to run for office, let's say in a *barangay*, they must be ready to spend one hundred thousand to one million pesos in order to effectively reach the voters (the cost varies based on the size of the barangay). If someone is seeking the office of House of Representative, they must have a minimum of a million pesos for the campaign. During the senatorial race of 2007, for example, GMA 7 reported that at the beginning of the campaign candidates like Prospero Pichay and Ralph Recto had already spent twenty million pesos for TV advertisements alone. The fact is that government offices are expensive and accessible only to the few who have capital and influence. One will conclude that these offices are lucrative businesses under the guise of service and patriotism.

That is why it is not surprising that the political leaders of today are the same families who have held office since the Spaniards left. They used the same old catchphrases, such as "change," "democracy," "development," "pro-people," "progod," and "pro-environment," to make themselves appear worthy of their office, but the trick is that they are the same few families who own and control the economic, political, and cultural institutions of the country.

This is what democracy looks like.

A Shortsighted Sense of History

In order to be able to imagine our ancestors' lives and to comprehend indigenous lifeways to learn from their wisdom, this paper utilizes a multitude of ideas emanated from multiple disciplines, including anthropology, archeology, history, sociology, and folklore.

The "band-tribe-chiefdom-state" model of analyzing sociocultural complexity pioneered by archaeologist Elman Service refers to a hierarchical progression of society. It presents the evolutionary process of a community from a simple stateless egalitarian indigenous organization like a band or tribe to chiefdoms and states, which are generally characterized by central power, uniformity, and non-egalitarianism. The Marxist evolutionary model of the authoritarian Left in the Philippines is consistent with this model, except that it added the twist of Maoism and concluded that the current state of the Philippine society was semicolonial and semifeudal. Criticism of the chiefdom model is prevalent among scholars in related fields of study. Joyce C. White of the University of Pennsylvania, for instance, argues that this model cannot account for the sociopolitical dynamics of communities in Southeast Asia.[1]

The abovementioned model has readily defined a phase of progression and an established pattern of movement; it is meant to help observers predict the outcome of the process. Most Marxists are inclined to this mode of thinking. The semicolonial/semifeudal analysis is based on dialectical materialism, which presents the hierarchical progression of society consistent to the chiefdom model. The word "primitive," as espoused in dialectical historical frameworks, is used to describe "outmoded" and inferior systems that are expected to improve as time progresses. The first stage will be slavery, followed by feudalism, then capitalism, and so on. If this is the case, is it proper to assume that the centralization of political power, the privatization of benefit streams, ecological crises, hunger, poverty, slavery, and other social issues are requirements to attain the perfect society, which is the communist stage?

The word *primitive*, in most cases, is used with prejudice to refer to traditional cultures as underdeveloped. The indigenous communities still exist, because they chose to protect and defend their culture by practicing it, by reproducing and improving it. *They were not left behind by social progression as presented in the chiefdom model or by the dialectical historical tool. Their resilience is attributed to their love of freedom and self-determination.* Most indigenous communities consciously maintained their culture. Like all organizations, they have mechanisms to protect their well-being by continuously doing things the way they see fit. Electricity, gadgets, cars, groceries, malls, appliances, bombs, cannons, nuclear power, churches, guns, and bullets do not exist in remaining stateless societies. They lack sophisticated technology and material culture the same way they lack hunger, malnutrition, coercion, ecological destruction, forced labor, and social issues attributed to large-scale, centralistic forms of power and to authoritarian, consumerist, and patriarchal modern societies.

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[1] Joyce C. White, "Incorporating Heterarchy into Theory on Sociopolitical Development: The Case from Southeast Asia," *Archeological Papers of the American Anthropological Association* 6, no. 1 (January 1995): 101–23.

Mainstream society has programs to integrate indigenous communities: churches, schools, and corporations are among the institutions that are consistently pestering them. The fact that there are indigenous groups that stand their ground and protect their culture the way their ancestors did during Spanish colonization shows that the evolutionary approach is not suitable to analyze our local context. The indigenous communities throughout the archipelago are highly diverse; there is a multitude of cultural patterns that overlap and consistently influence each other through the process of interaction and exposure. Based on historical accounts, the indigenous organizations did not evolve into states but, rather, were coerced to adopt centralistic patterns of organization, such as states and corporations.

Who Discovered the Philippines?

This is a novelty question in Philippine mainstream society; it is usually asked if one wants to joke during history-related conversations. The answer reveals one's wittiness—or historical shortsightedness.

Nowadays, people's sense of history revolves around the idea of Spanish colonization and the Katipunan uprising, which led to the establishment of a republic. This was a historical period that connected many communities in the archipelago to the modern setting dominated by nation-states and characterized by centralized social relations and absolute truths along with poverty, hunger, injustice, discrimination, and ecological destruction.

Spain is perceived as the villain that brought suffering to the people; it is also considered as a "master" who introduced the idea of a civilized life. Since civilization is viewed as the benchmark of development, it is considered plausible to think that we owe Spain our progress.

Mainstream history is Eurocentric. It will inevitably treat pre-Spanish cultures and lifestyles as underdeveloped, as savages and backwoodsmen that needed to be changed according to the standards of the colonizers.

This is exactly where we are now. We challenge the negative attributes of the society introduced by the colonizers, while invoking alternatives which were also introduced by colonizers.

For instance, the Katipunan challenged Spanish authority by asserting its capacity to self-rule through the system introduced by colonizers. Revolutionary ideas carried by anti-colonialism are Western in origin.

In mainstream terms, Philippine history exclusively refers to the period where written documentation is involved. The year 1521 is recognized by mainstream society as the year of the so-called discovery of the Philippines.

The novelty question is being asked constantly and spontaneously perhaps because our history is haunting us. *The terms* Philippines *and* Filipino *are not ours. They were imposed on us by the colonizers and coercively used to describe and define us. They are the very attributes that reinforced the disconnection from our indigenous selves.* They make us think that we are superior to other cultures. Why the need for superiority? Is it to defeat and outcompete other people and to undermine their cultural orientation?

Our own culture should be our guide in our search for self-determination. Our self-determination is no justification to control or to coerce others. Our ancestors' system displays no center. They never had uniform conduct that exercised control. What they had were diverse cultural orientations that cut across the archipelago and into Southeast Asia, facilitated by marriage, kinship, trade, and war.

We are not Filipinos. We are people raised by diverse cultures. Our culture is a gift from our ancestors. It is not perfect, but it has the complete set of elements under the theme of mutual cooperation and respect.

There is no such thing as a "perfect culture." But ours is far more humane and ecologically sound than the nation-state and capitalism, systems that introduced massive killings of people,

the destruction of culture, and the destruction of the earth. There is no one big formula that could provide a single solution to the problems we are currently facing, but at least we have the wisdom from our ancestors providing us with a framework that has proven to be effective and is still utilized by indigenous cultures across the archipelago.

Lapu-Lapu's victory over Ferdinand Magellan in 1521 is iconic. The message it conveyed was not about a nation and sovereignty. It was about the defense of the autonomy of Mactan Island. Numerous forms of resistance followed the struggle, aiming to reinstitute the indigenous setup in order to protect people's autonomy.

The fragmentation of cultural communities should not be viewed as weakness. It represents freedom and autonomy. These communities have indigenous means to connect and integrate; fragmentation is only a weakness if one has the intention to control and dominate.

Various communities throughout the archipelago have been in existence since time immemorial. The earliest traces of prehistoric humans and their tools are found in Palawan in a group of caves called Tabon Caves, located at the mouth of the South China Sea. Tools from different periods in pre-history have been dug up at these sites. How long ago the tools were used or how long ago the humans and animals whose traces have been found lived is learned through a complex process of analyzing the findings. Excavations in the Tabon Caves have revealed fossils of prehistoric animals (elephants, giant tortoises, and others) along with artifacts that have left traces of human inhabitation. Chert and choppers made of hard stone were recovered with human and animal bones scattered in the surroundings. Based on these fossils, archaeologists have estimated that humans occupied the caves as early as fifty thousand years ago.

Experts and scholars will not cease to amaze with the volume of artifacts recovered in different places in the archipelago that provide clues of the wisdom of our ancestors. Archaeologists believe that at the end of the glacial period, that is about 10,000 BCE, human dispersal across half of the planet began from Burma (Myanmar) and the south coast of mainland China. This particular stock belongs to Malayo-Polynesian or Austronesian cultures believed to be our ancestors, and to those of the Malaysians, Indonesians, and Polynesians. These peoples are considered the first boat people of human history, highly mobile in that borderless part of Asia. It is said that before the Phoenicians roamed the Mediterranean with their wooden ships, our ancestors had already tamed the violent and treacherous waves of the Pacific and successfully reached islands, such as Fiji, Samoa, and Hawaii, with tiny makeshift boats we call *balanghay*. Therefore, we have a deep and meaningful base of cultural identity that cannot be erased by the culture of consumerism and authoritarian politics of colonialism reinforced by the state, religion, and market institutions.

As mentioned above, the group of islands we today call the Philippines is part of the archipelago that connects the borderless communities of islands and islets in Luzon, the Visayas, Mindanao, Maguindanao, and to the south, including the Talaud Islands, Ternate, Tidore, Halmahera, the Moluccas, Borneo, and as far as Makassar and Brunei. We also have indigenous connections in Thailand, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, and other southeast Asian societies. What we had was a highly diverse culture, a culture that was inherited by remaining indigenous communities and deposited to folklore transmitted through oral tradition. We have ancient historical roots, a rhizome of complex cultures deeply crisscrossing the upland, misty rainforests and river systems and lakes freely reaching to bays, gulfs, and coves connected to the Celebes Sea, the Sulu Sea, and up in the South China Sea.

The 1521 incident, when Lapu-Lapu defeated Magellan, marked a milestone in the resistance against the West intending to control us. Our ancestors roamed in borderless seas, rivers, and

lakes. Our culture cannot be contained within the boundary set by the Treaty of Tordesillas.[1] The treaty cannot limit the movements, interactions, and relationships of the diverse cultures of our ancestors. *The "Philippines" symbolize the acceptance and submission to the concept of development, politics, and culture of the West. It is a disconnection from our indigenous selves.*

Nowadays, indigenous groups and their practices are neglected due to the dominance of Western ideologies in all aspects of our lives. This situation has, in most cases, reduced them to subjects of ridicule, and we failed to explore the wisdom inherent in their practices that is more meaningful than the framework and alternative crafted by the intellectuals and cultures from the West. The intention of this document is to reinforce and support what existed prior to the creation of the nation-state. Our ancestors were better off and lived in freedom, to its closest proximity.

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[1] The Treaty of Tordesillas, signed in 1494, divided the lands colonized by Portugal and Spain between them.—editor's note

Pangayaw as a Process in Decolonizing Our Well-Being

Colonization generally refers to the process that is perpetuated after the initial control over Indigenous Peoples is achieved through invasion and conquest. Perpetuating colonization allows the colonizers to maintain or expand their social, political, and economic power. It is detrimental to us because their power comes at the expense of Indigenous lands, resources, lives, and self-determination. Not only has colonization resulted in the loss of major rights such as land and self-determination, most of our contemporary daily struggles are also a direct consequence of colonization (poverty, family violence, chemical dependency, suicide, health deterioration). Colonization is an all-encompassing presence in our lives.[1]

This definition is from the book *For Indigenous Minds Only.* In my own understanding, colonialization is the complete acceptance of an external culture and authority which leads to the denial of one's indigenous self, identity, and community. An obvious fact is the current modes of thinking of mainstream culture, in which the superior practices and frameworks are Western. This concerns language, food, drugs, music, politics, education, and beliefs. Almost all aspects of our lives are highly influenced by centralized and absolute truths, as well as by uniformity.

I know that many of us are hell-bent in terms of addressing social issues that affect our very own families and households—social issues that were introduced in connection with colonialization. Since Western thinking is deeply inculcated in us, even the very alternatives we employ are derived from external authorities. We tend to turn to the idea of democracy, sovereignty, development, socialism, GNP, GDP, and progress rather than the wisdom and practices we inherited from our ancestors.

With the adverse impacts and bad results of statist socialist and authoritarian leftists, communities and social movements inevitably seek viable and sustainable systems to protect and maintain our households and communities.

None of us would disagree with the fact that we have our own set of systems. Systems that colonization, by Westerners and Asians alike, tried to eliminate. These indigenous systems refuse to give up; they maintain their existence. The remaining cultural communities owe their resilience to the continuous practice and improvement of indigenous systems. These are sustainable systems being subjected by mainstream society to ridicule and marginalization. Mainstream and centralized institutions, such as states, corporations, and churches, are set to eliminate them by intensifying mining and logging activities and building schools and religious structures within territories of indigenous communities.

In the midst of absolutism, authoritarianism, anthropocentrism, and intolerance to diversity, our indigenous roots are the remaining unexplored alternatives. *Pangayaw* was the practice of our ancestors most feared by the colonizers. They had every reason to eliminate pangayaw due to its efficiency in countering early attempts of colonization. Pangayaw is an act of raiding, on

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[1] Waziyatawin and Yellow Bird, "Introduction," 2–3.

land or on sea. The reason could be revenge, unsettled disputes, or simply the desire to loot and capture slaves. The raiders of the Visayans were among those most feared, their notoriety reaching all the way to communities in southern China. Major languages within the archipelago use the word *pangayaw* to refer to this activity. Historian William Henry Scott noted that it was an accepted practice.

In my current mode of thinking and values, I will definitely go against this practice. Why would I support such acts of atrocity? Such practices are totally opposite to the culture that raised me. But an attempt to understand our ancestors' culture will require us to suspend our judgment influenced by the standards of mainstream society. I would be inclined to disagree if one were to consider pangayaw as wrong and evil, because, in the end, it is no different from the policy of Spain, which set out to eliminate our ancestors' culture, including tattooing, the defiling of teeth, earlobes, body piercings, g-strings, and so forth. If one insists on the barbarity of pangayaw, I ask in return: How barbarous were the colonizers when they robbed and stole our lands? When they raped and killed our people and destroyed our natural resources?

The practice of pangayaw was a major obstacle to Spanish conquest. One of the early colonies of the Spaniards was the Visayans. With the allegiance of the Visayans to Spain, they were particularly targeted, and there was a prohibition of arms in Cebu and in Bohol. The long-lasting Moro Wars significantly depopulated communities in the Visayas.

It is probable that many of us agree with the objective of making our world better. I would directly equate the term *better* with social justice, ecological sustainability, equal access to services for all, respect, love, and peaceful coexistence. Our common experience tells us that we cannot achieve a better world if we allow control, uniformity, centralism, competition, and absolutism in our different aspects of life.

Pangayaw is an unexplored alternative to commence decolonization. If one were to take me as literally advocating pangayaw, one would conclude that I advocate violence.

Waziyatawin and Michael Yellow Bird note the following:

> Scott DeMuth begins chapter 6, "Colonization Is Always War," by describing how any Indigenous challenges to state authority today, even peaceful challenges, are met with threats of police violence, arrests, and heavy surveillance. This serves as a useful reminder to Indigenous people who have come to believe that because we do not observe open repression on a daily basis, we have made progress in our relationships with our colonizers, or that colonization at its core is not still serving the same purpose it always has. DeMuth asserts that because colonization is inherently a war for territory and resources, "If colonization continues today, then it follows that war continues to be waged against Indigenous Peoples and territories." In this context, it is imperative that Indigenous people develop a proper response to warfare, requiring the development of an organized resistance movement. Rather than viewing a potential resistance movement as an offensive action, however, DeMuth points out that decolonization is actually a self-defensive action against the war that is colonization.[2]

Perhaps it is not easy to figure out the direct relationship of colonization to the daily lives of the people, especially if most poor people are busy seeking jobs or livelihood opportunities. The ma-

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[2] Ibid., 8.

jority of the people would not immediately suspect that colonization is a very effective means of control to maintain inequality in society and ignorance among the people. This situation means war against our very selves. Super-institutions are well equipped in terms of propagating and maintaining legitimacy of inequality, ecological destruction, and the assault on cultural communities through formal processes of the law. Homelessness, hunger, war, and ecological terrorism are accepted social facts that are generally the results of activities of super-institutions.

The process of decolonization is not uniform. It appears and exists in many forms but should start within ourselves, within our families and communities. It is a process that can respond to the immediate impact of macro-events like poverty and ignorance, while strategically laying foundations of future alternatives through increasing awareness of our indigenous roots.

Communities, households, associations, and other formations at the local and grassroots level, particularly if they operate in nonauthoritarian processes, will never run out of ideas and creativity. Decolonial processes are no blueprint and do not follow standardized conduct; they offer diverse methods and actions but won't reinforce and promote authoritarianism, absolutism, and hierarchy. Indigenous systems and traditions are banks of information; they offer multitudes of practices that facilitate the improvement of our consciousness and lifeways toward claiming our self-determination.

To engage in decolonization means to engage in war. Our age is the age of the propaganda war. We can use pangayaw to engage in a propaganda war against centralized institutions. Direct action always delivers strong messages; it's an effective means of propaganda that sends a message of sharing, respect, love, ecology, social justice, and self-determination.

Solidarity actions to uplift the spirit of autonomous resistance and to support independent movements and communities through the sharing of skills, resources, and knowledge are concrete activities that would definitely hit hierarchy at its core.

Overall, our activities toward decolonialization will establish the reconnection to our indigenous roots.

Historical Notes on Decolonial Events

The historical victory of Lapu-Lapu was temporal and just the beginning of autonomous resistance that plagued 333 years of Spanish occupation. The resistance became more intense in 1581, when Friar Andres Aguirre implemented the policy of gathering locals in order to teach indigenous communities to live in a "civilized" and European way.

In 1587, Tagalog leaders set up a conspiracy to topple Spanish rule, where the primary objective was to regain the privileges they had lost. They wanted to collect taxes for themselves rather than the Spaniards, and they wanted the return of their slaves and women, whom the friars had freed and sent back home. The group of leaders who conspired were Magat Salamat, the son of Rajah Matanda, from Tondo, Pedro Balinguit from Pandacan, Felipe Amarlangagui from Catangalan, Omaghicon from Navotas, Felipe Salonga from Polo, in Bulacan, his brother Dionisio Capolo from Candaba, in Pampanga, and Pitongatan, Joan Banal, and other members of the feudal *maharlika* class from Tondo. Salamat particularly demanded the reestablishment of the *datu* regime.[1]

The revolt was well-planned but never executed due to the betrayal of Antonio Surabao, a Tagalog who happened to be employed by the Spanish captain Pedro Sarmiento. On November 4, 1588, Governor De Vera ordered the arrest of all the leaders of the conspiracy.

According to the account *The Philippine Islands, 1493–1898, Volume XXIII, 1629–30,*[2] eight years after Rajah Sulayman and Rajah Matanda fell from power, Maynila (now Manila) came under the control of the Spaniards. The colonizers went to the town of Li Han (now Malolos) and conquered four thousand residents. The following years, there were sporadic revolts around the area that would later be called Bulacan, but this was not sustained until 1643, when a Bornean, Pedro Ladia, came and convinced the Bulakenyos to turn their backs on the Spaniards. He claimed that he was the Rajah of Tagalog and was supposed to inherit Rajah Matanda's throne. He insisted on reinstituting traditional practices, such as the belief in local spirits and deities like *bathala*, *anyito*, and *diwata*. The Augustinian priest Cristóbal Enríquez discovered Ladia's plot. Ladia was secretly arrested and transferred to Manila to be executed.

In 1621, Tamblot, a traditional priest from the province of Bohol, preached traditional beliefs. He told people that it was about time to abandon foreign religion; diwata, anyito, and the spirits of their ancestors would provide them with food and protect them from the Spaniards. His followers went into hiding in the forest, where they built a holy place of their own and performed their traditional rites. Tamblot's teachings spread like wildfire due to the organizers he had strategically deployed on the entire island. Many Boholanos joined the barangay he established in the heart of the forest. The Jesuit priests, who were powerful on the island at that time, did, of course, condemn what they were doing. Tamblot and two thousand followers revolted. They burned down all the churches and statues of saints on the entire island, except for Loboc and Baclayon. The Jesuits went to Cebu and told Alcalde Mayor Juan Alcarazo about the revolt.

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[1] The term *datu* refers to traditional leaders in the archipelago later known as the Philippines.

[2] Emma Helen Blair and James Alexander Robertson, *The Philippine Islands, 1493–1898, Volume XXIII, 1629–30*, Project Gutenberg, www.gutenberg.org/files/16451/16451-h/16451-h.htm.

Alcarazo knew that Cebuanos would not fight Boholanos and waited for one hundred Pampango soldiers to come from Manila. He also recruited a thousand people from Sialo and fifty homeless Spaniards.

On January 1, 1622, four outrigger warships went ashore to suppress Tamblot. The first attack made Tamblot retreat and establish another camp. The second encampment did not last due to serious losses inflicted during the first attack. The rebels ran out of arrows and so the battle was bolo knives and stones against guns. As expected, Tamblot's revolt failed.

The Babaylan had already been in fifty years of hiding when the Spanish took control of the archipelago. The Spanish were alerted by Tamblot's revolt and began chasing them again actively. On the island of Leyte, the seventy-year-old Bancao established a barangay in Carigara, similar to the one in Bohol. The Waray-Waray were prepared to revolt and waited for results from Bohol. In late 1622, after almost a year of waiting, Bancao's group started the uprising. They burned no churches and destroyed no Christian symbols, but they denounced Spaniards and their teachings. The churches were emptied and the locals stopped rendering services to the friars.

Friar Melchor de Vera went to Cebu and asked assistance from Juan Alcarazo. He brought his soldiers to Leyte and, with the help of locals, discovered Bancao's whereabouts. Alcarazo divided his forces into three and attacked the barangay from various sides; the many guns of the Spanish forces overwhelmed Bancao's warriors. The Waray-Waray fled to the forests; children and women in traditional Babaylan wardrobe were killed by soldiers upon the orders of the priests.

Mang Abu was a known leader in 1629 in Caraga. It was a time when Davao del Sur and Davao del Norte still belonged to Caraga. The rebellion was started when Mang Abu confronted Spanish soldiers who were involved in the illegal business of capturing locals for the slave trade. He was mauled by a captain, assisted by twenty soldiers, when he asked them to free the Tagabaloys and Mandayas.

Mang Abu asked the people why they let foreigners harm their peers. They were superior in numbers, and Mang Abu was conscious of this advantage. He convinced the locals to act immediately. They chased out the Spanish troops, killed them all, including the priest, and then freed all the locals.

Conscious of the danger of retaliation, the Mandayas urged the indigenous groups to kill all Spaniards in the village of Basuag. The Mandayas attacked the Spanish fortress, but the Spaniards had already been warned and had closed all possible entries. The Mandayas decided to lock them in. Hundreds of boats surrounded the Spanish fort in Tandag to intercept all possible help. The Spaniards were terrified. They did not have sufficient capabilities to fight the Mandayas, and their supply of food was not enough to hold them standing until reinforcements arrived.

The news reached Cebu. The Alcalde mayor was Friar Jacinto de San Fulgencio. He informed Manila about the attacks, and then he assembled a fleet commanded by Capitan Juan de Chaves, an *encomendero* from Caraga.[3] The rebellion was suppressed, and the leaders brutally punished, but Mang Abu was pardoned due to the support from his friar friends.

Similar resistance took place in other places: in Pangasinan and Pampanga in 1660; in Iloilo in 1663; in Bohol in 1744; in Ilocos Norte in 1807. All these revolts were to defend the autonomy of the local communities. Betrayal caused serious damage to most of the resistance, which

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[3] An *encomendero* was equipped with an *encomienda* and ruled over subjects, mostly indigenous people, whose labor he could exploit at will.—editor's note

contributed to its failure. This is because the colonizers were able to penetrate the indigenous political structure. Through blood compacts with the local leaders, the Spaniards were able to exploit their loyalty. They were also able to capture the deeply spiritual locals, using Christianity to control and pacify resistance.

Some have called these uprisings "pocket resistance," revolts intended to reclaim communities' self-determination, which had been undermined by the centralized and authoritarian system. Obviously, they did not stage revolts to establish systems similar to monarchies or republics. Their intention was to regain their indigenous lifeways and to protect their cultures from exploitation by the colonizers.

Our experience tells us that an effort of a community to resist is futile if it is disconnected from other communities that are cooperating with the oppressors. This is perhaps one of the reasons why some considered the Katipunan as the culmination of the resistance. It is plausible to conclude that the Katipunan was the "aggregation" of experience of exploitation and resistance of diverse communities in the archipelago. This aggregation represents common sentiments reinforced by the will to expel Spaniards and to claim sovereignty. Thus, it established a basis of unity among dissenters through the process of representation. A system learned by the local elite from the exploiters and colonizers.

The lens to be used in interpreting the best available data with regard to "our history" is imperative. Representative systems will not work in a highly diverse context, particularly for those communities who practice autonomy. Republicanism is an idea adopted by the few educated people from the privileged section of society dominated by Luzon-based activists, particularly of Tagalogs. It was the second attempt to claim the archipelago under one uniform system after the regalian doctrine introduced by Spain, a treacherous and pretentious claim that would inevitably misrepresent the communities that are not amenable to statism, civilization, uniformity, and authoritarianism.

I do not question the integrity and commitment of our ancestors who fought against the colonizers and oppressors, but adopting the system that was supposed to be overthrown was tantamount to replicating oppression.

The idea of sovereignty through self-governance could have been a tactic to consolidate the locals, while winning support from the international community. The flourishing modernist ideas from the West, such as nationalism, reinforced statist thinking among the locals. It had reached the minds of the likes of Rizal, Aguinaldo, Mabini, Jaena, and del Pilar. Retelling what had been told, Bonifacio, unlike his contemporaries, saw no hope in diplomatic processes. For him, establishing an independent state (republic) required war.

In 1896, the uprising of the Katipunan broke out, but prior to this, Isabelo de los Reyes was arrested. He was not part of any revolutionary group during that time, but his name consistently appeared in newspapers attacking the colonial administration. An activist from the countryside (Ilocos region), he was a journalist, a profession which gave him the opportunity to plant his revolutionary ideas effectively. After he was freed, he wrote a letter calling people to take up arms and launch a guerrilla war, a letter adopted and issued by the Katipunan as an official communiqué signed by Emilio Aguinaldo, as president.

Isabelo was rearrested, and this time he was sent to the prison of Montjuic in Barcelona—a grave mistake by Spanish authorities, because he got connected to various radical people including anarchists. Spain at that time was already highly influenced by anarchism. A few years earlier, Bakunin's comrade Guiseppe Fanneli had gone to Spain to organize workers, and, after several

years, workers grasped a profound understanding of anarcho-syndicalism. While José Rizal, considered a national hero by the Philippine Republic, went to universities in Europe, Isabelo joined workers in the streets and learned the anarcho-syndicalist ways.

Spain backed down when Americans asserted their interest over Cuba and the Philippines. In 1901, during this early phase of colonization by the US and the emerging economic order, Isabelo de los Reyes arrived from exile in Spain. Fresh from exposure to anarcho-syndicalism, he introduced an anti-imperialist mode to the resistance. To the amazement of the American capitalists and the local elite, Isabelo was able to mobilize thousands of workers and urban poor in Manila and its surrounding communities. The anti-imperialist resistance was able to organize the Unión Obrera Democrática (UOD), the very first labor union in the so-called Republic of the Philippines. Its basic documents were derived from Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, an anarchist, but the union did not last very long.

The authoritarian Left started to gain influence during the 1930s, and later dominated the radical movement in the archipelago. The Marxists-Leninist ideology of the Bolsheviks proliferated, and its adherents became one of the armed elements that resisted Japanese occupation during World War II. During the 1960s, the Maoists took the steering wheel. Jose Maria Sison's group veered away from the insurrectionary methods of the Bolsheviks and held on to the "protracted people's war": a guerrilla tactic that had raised Mao Zedong to unprecedented popularity during the peasant revolution in China. Sison's group later merged with armed rebels to establish the armed component of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), the New People's Army (NPA). Both became part of the National Democratic Front (NDF).

CPP-NPA-NDF became the most influential within the leftist blocs during the 1970s and up to the latter part of the 1980s. In the 1990s, the dominant leftist formation suffered a crisis that inflicted serious damage on the mass movement. It initially emerged as a question of tactics, and later developed into ideological struggle, becoming the basis of a split that started the fragmentation process and decrease of popularity and influence of the leftist movement.

From early nationalist resistance up to now, whether people advocated arms or education, there was just a difference in tactics, not in objectives; they were all for the creation of centralized political systems with centralized power.

Exchange, Sharing, and Debt: The Autonomous Communities and Indigenous Social Stratification

According to ethnographic accounts by the early Spanish chroniclers, a small barangay was composed of communities with thirty to one hundred households. The biggest were found in Sulu, Butuan, Cebu, Panay, Batangas, Bicol, and Manila, with populations ranging from two thousand to twenty thousand.

Human communities have existed and thrived in different places in the world, with varied social arrangements developed from their interactions with one another, their direct utilization patterns, and the management of natural resources. The social stratification of the communities of the prehistoric archipelago was not uniform, as presented earlier. Communities had their similarities, peculiarities, and variations. The purpose of the discussion with regard to rankings, particularly of Tagalog culture, which shares features with Visayan and Central Luzon traditions and customs, is to be understood in this context. We are used to viewing "slavery" in the context of the European experience, which may not be applicable to our indigenous context and situation. Our indigenous setup has its peculiarities that do not surface if we use conventional analytical thinking.

The practice of sharing and a culture of exchange are imperative when it comes to analyzing society. The processes of exchange and sharing bring significant influence to the relationships of individuals, organizations, and institutions.

Nowadays, economics is a recognized field of study with a special interest in exchange. For many economists, long before money was invented, there was barter: a system of exchange that entailed the swapping of things. In our modern age, money is the most efficient means of exchange, generally adopted by the majority of societies in the world. Anthropologist David Graeber's critique of barter is intriguing. Economists would surely raise their eyebrows, as an anthropologist makes incisive comments on economic discourse.[1] Anyway, the idea of barter, as discussed by the moral philosophy professor Adam Smith in the book *The Wealth of the Nations*, started with the premise that exchange is a behavior exclusive to humans. Humans, if left to their own devices, will exchange and compare things. To reinforce his claim, he described North America where, according to him, indigenous people were engaged in the process of barter. How does barter work? First is the idea of double coincidence, without which barter will not take place. How does double coincidence work? A person, for instance, who has no use for her bike may wish to dispose of it in exchange for a juicer. She needs to find a person who has a juicer to dispose of and needs a bike in exchange. There are two persons who are willing to exchange

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[1] David Graeber, *Debt: The First 5,000 Years* (New York: Melville House, 2011), chapter 2, "The Myth of Barter," 21–41.

their items. If their transaction works out, both will dispose of the respective things they don't have use for and acquire new things that satisfy their needs.

However, many centuries have passed, and this land of barter mentioned by Smith is nowhere to be found. Explorers attempted to find this fabled land but to no avail. If economics is an objective field of study, it is disappointing to know that no economist paid attention to this fact. It is plausible to think that the system of exchange we are using today derived from the story made up by Smith. Instead of barter, researchers discovered diverse processes and systems of exchange among indigenous groups.

Based on studies by scholars, the prehistoric communities in the archipelago engaged in trading within Southeast Asia through barter. From the community level to regional communities, everyone was involved in trading. Are the scholars and academics referring to the double coincidence idea of a barter from the fabled land espoused by Smith? The ideas of barter and debt are very important fields of study for analyzing the social relations of our ancestors. It has been reported that the insubordination of people in prehistoric Tagalog, Visayan, and Kapampangan communities was primarily due to debt that could be passed to children and children's children. Freedom could be regained once the debt was settled. This form of insubordination should not be mistaken for slavery in the West, where human beings owned other human beings.

In the Tagalog context, barangay was a big aggregation of people with established complex social stratification. Datu was the ruling elite. Next to datu was the maharlika class. The warriors, called *bagani*, who were expected to aid the datu in times of peace and war, were recruited from this rank. The bulk of the population consisted of the *timawa* class, or freemen, as described by the early Spanish chroniclers.[2] The lowest rank in the primitive social order was that of the *alipin,* or *oripun* in Visaya. They were the least privileged and consisted of two categories:

1. The *sagigilid* lived in their own houses and served the person they were indebted to. They provided assistance during the harvest and planting seasons, or when their masters traveled to faraway places. The subordination of the sagigilid was caused by debt, so if they were able to settle their due, they were freed of the obligation to render services.

2. *Namamahay* on the other hand lived with their master in a small hut or makeshift house near the farm. They attended to all kinds of work and had no social privileges at all. Most of them were captured during pangayaw (wars and raids). They could marry only if their master allowed it. Some writers refer to them as slaves, but unlike chattel slaves in the West they could only be sold on rare occasions.

The large population and division of labor explained why trading activities with other Southeast Asian communities could be maintained. It is important to note that the defense carried out by Lapu-Lapu would not have been possible for a small population. As recounted by Antonio Pigafetta,[3] Lapu-Lapu mobilized hundreds of warriors overnight and repulsed Magellan's forces in a low-tide battle along the shores of Mactan, where the cannons from the Spanish ships didn't reach.

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[2] They served the datu and maharlika, and in return they received economic assistance and protection in times of danger.

[3] Antonio Pigafetta (c. 1491–c. 1531), a member of the 1519–1522 expedition to the Philippines led by Ferninand Magellan, left a detailed journal of the journey.

Coastal areas around Manila Bay were littered with barangays. Larger barangays were located at the Pasig River's various openings. The finest seaports were in Tondo and Navotas. People traded goods heavily in fragmented patterns. A myriad of unknown barangays participated for a long time. Archeological evidence proved that Sulu, Basilan, and the western part of Mindanao were haven of traders. The movement of *parao* (Indonesian boats) and huge ships back and forth to Sumatra and Java had never stopped since its beginnings in the year 650, before Islam came. After the year 987, *sampan* (Chinese boats) visited the Lingayen Gulf in Pangasinan and the Ilocos region on a regular basis. In the year 1290, parao and sampan started to trade goods along the Pasig River in Luzon. The trading activities led to the establishment of a *nayon* (big town) called Maynila; across the river was Tondo, a large fishing barangay.

The economic prosperity achieved by Maynila attracted Paduka Sri Sultan Bolkiah,[4] who arrived in 1500 and conquered Maynila twenty years before the Spaniards came. He can be considered the first colonizer—not of the archipelago but of Maynila, which soon became the seat of political power in the republic.

In 1521, Ferdinand Magellan reached Panay, which started the colonization of the archipelago for the kingdom of Spain. Inhuman acts, cruelty, and oppression were perpetuated against the inhabitants in the name of the church and civilization. The entire archipelago was declared to be a part of the territory of Spain, thus establishing centralized government on more than 1,700 islands.

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[4] From 1485 to 1524, Paduka Sri Sultan Bolkiah was the king of Brunei, a rich town on the island of Borneo.

Reflections

Hierarchical relationships are the apex of social problems. A person or group cannot represent the interests of people with very diverse needs and convictions. After the introduction of centralized government, vast numbers of communities and people in the archipelago no longer controlled their own destiny; decisions and policies were made in Spain without any participation from the locals. This setup did not change when the US came and stole the victory from the Katipunan in the name of democracy. The Japanese had their share in the aggression. In the short time of their stay, they inflicted deep misery on the people. Although the US is no longer here physically, their influence, as well as the influence of international institutions, on the central government through the elite group is undeniable.

Ecological crises are just reflections of human relationships based on hierarchy. The privatization of resources and benefit streams cannot be carried out without hierarchical relationships. The accumulation of masses of profit and the control of benefits cannot be realized without exploiting natural resources and human labor.

The existing political structures maintain and reinforce the ownership and control of resources and the economy by the corporations and a few families. This kind of relationship leads people to a dog-eat-dog type behavior. They compete for higher positions for greater incentives and privilege.

The alternatives of state socialists in Russia, China, Cuba, Cambodia, and North Korea failed to install participatory and equitable processes. In many cases, communist parties surpassed in cruelty, slavery, and oppression the previous oppressors of the people they were supposed to liberate. The state socialist and labor parties in Europe also failed to introduce democracy in its real substance.

Why did this happen? It is because hierarchy accumulates privilege. The higher the position in a structure, the greater the access to power and benefits. This promotes competition that makes relationships between people revolve around incentives of privilege and political power. Incentives entice people to produce more for the markets and shops, which results in the massive extraction of natural resources and the exploitation of the earth as a sink, which causes ecological crises. The accumulation of the few "winners" of the competition will eventually lead to poverty and the marginalization of the many.

This pattern can be found in all states in the world, be they welfare, communist, or socialist states. Thus, taking the path toward centralizing political power was an erroneous tactic. The baranganic resistance and primitive communities could have taken advantage of developing their informal ties not through the pattern introduced by the colonizers but through expanding federations of the barangays/communities and through strengthening traditional networks of support and coordination against the oppressors.

Pulling back history is not practical; I believe that humanity recorded it in order to imagine our future. Sure, it is difficult to picture a humane, nonhierarchical, confederal order constructed under the wisdom of indigenous organizations. As human history unfolds, many parts of the earth

reveal practical, applicable, and genuinely democratic political processes of decision-making bubbling from below. Some of them were the free assemblies of the Paris Commune of 1871, the early phase of the Russian Revolution, specifically in the Ukraine, Kronstadt, and among the workers of Petrograd. The large-scale application of confederations, free assemblies, and millions of collectives, together with the direct appropriation of anarcho-syndicalist ideas, occurred during the Spanish Civil War of 1936–1937. In Buenos Aires, Argentina, the actual direct management by the workers of two hundred industries took place in 2001; many have survived to this day. The Zapatista experiment offers concrete processes of non-hierarchical and antiauthoritarian alternatives.

These experiences prove that people can be organized not in hierarchical ways but in a horizontal fashion. This means that no individual can exercise authority over others. People come together to cooperate, collaborate, and work in a confederal process in order to meet their needs in an ecologically sustainable, non-oppressive, and equitable manner. We cited foreign experiences not to look for a model but to derive wisdom to enrich our indigenous versions of an anarchist society. We need only turn to our ancestors and current indigenous groups. The anarchist theme subtly passed to us by our ancestors materializes whenever we act directly and without intermediaries on concrete issues, whenever we talk and apply equality and socialism in our circles, whenever we stand for ecological protection, and whenever we send solidarity to the communities of the world who attack hierarchies.

The dominant political relationships in our society are clientelism, patronage, and fantasy politics. The very foundation of these oppressive politics is deeply rooted and has been established through long historical coercive processes of colonization. These made us believe that there are experts who can handle our lives and gave politicians and leaders the power to take care of things that they know nothing about.

The idea of direct democracy is a concrete alternative framework to statist politics and hierarchical relationships. It is mainly associated with Western thought and practice but definitely consistent with our tradition of decentralism, autonomy, and nonhierarchical politics based on cooperation.

To apply this to the archipelago is a great challenge. The privileged class absolutely will never agree to this system, and we do not need to convince them anyway. What we need to do is to retake our own lives from corporations, the state, and other institutions. We do not have to be anarchists embracing propaganda by the deed; we can be anarchists in our everyday lives. We can start at home, attending to household chores, such as laundry, dishwashing, and taking care of our children. Such activities are surely anarchistic in nature, specifically if you do it because you are convinced that you need to partake in housekeeping, because all members of the family should share it.

Production of things we need on a daily basis is another challenge. Corporations provide us with almost all things, but most of them are irrelevant to our daily sustenance. We are trained to work and conditioned to shop and consume. This process actually consumes the world's ecosystems by controlling resources and exploiting people to work in different industries in order to create commodities for shopping. This is designed to achieve limitless growth.

Alternatives should be doable at home, because if it will not work in our own household, we do not have the basis to encourage people to adopt alternatives. Techniques in gardening to maximize space which promotes chemical-free vegetables has been proven effective by many infoshops and collectives in the archipelago. Adopting renewable energy technology increases

our independence from greedy power corporations. Creating independent spaces for recreation and learning at the community level will increase solidarity and participation of the people within our community. There are plenty of things we can experiment with and explore; groups as well as individuals can engage in activities that encourage autonomy.

We can replicate this at the community level by initiating nonhierarchical activities that can directly contribute to addressing concrete manifestations of oppression. For instance, organizing one-time feeding activities (Food not Bombs) is not appealing for the mainstream political parties. Providing foods for the homeless collected from luxurious gatherings for instance is a direct action that confronts hunger. Organizing a feeding activity for a tiny fraction of hundreds of thousand hungry people can concretely deliver results, more concrete than organizing a mobilization to publicize demands. The question of sustainability is indeed a critical concern, but we should be reminded that we are not the solution to hunger but, rather, contributors to realize food security.

We cannot change the world by providing food alone, but as long as we handle things directly to achieve particular objectives without any intermediaries, we contribute to the critique against the machineries of hierarchy. Propaganda is inherent in every action. If an individual or a collective successfully meet their objectives, this will definitely send messages to their immediate environments. The public probably will be first surprised to learn that the annoying-looking kids are providing food for the homeless and organize art workshops for poor communities, but they will soon realize that they can do the same to support their marginalized peers.

Avenues that encourage people's meaningful participation in decision-making are crucial. Meaningful participation will not be possible in a republican and representative setup. Education is key to address bossism, clientelism, dependency, and ignorance. People will be more active and critical if they have information and appropriate venues.

Direct democracy will allow us to explore processes that are liberatory and participatory—a critical component in shifting power relations from centralization to power-sharing.

Anarchy

I intentionally placed anarchy last because the anarchist framework can summarize major points and assertions of this text. Anarchism is a political idea invented by people not out of abstraction. It was developed through actual interaction of the people among themselves and with ecological systems, and it can be traced during prehistoric times. Anarchist practices are diverse, based on the multitude, and they have a myriad of variations. Despite the diversity, there are characteristics common among these anarchist practices, such as solidarity, decentralization, mutual aid, noncoerciveness, anti-patriarchy, direct action, and ecologically sound ways of living. Thousand years before Europeans coined the word *anarchism*, it was already practiced by myriad indigenous communities in many places around the world. In fact, the traditional social relations of our ancestors were anarchistic, and the remaining indigenous communities up to the present day are still practicing such cultures and lifeways.

Social revolution is indeed a process that will educate the people about the evil of the state; it is a process that will abolish hierarchy to regain self-determination. Political revolution in many instances mentioned above is a hindrance to social revolution.

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Sa gabay ng ating mga ninuno...

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