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Folk Activities as Minority Practice: A Post-Colonial Response

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Much of the theoretical/critical perspective that inform this paper are greatly influenced by two introductory texts written by Abdul Jan Mohammed and David Lloyd (in *Cultural Critique* 6). Though particularly dealing with minority cultures which have suffered material and cultural deracination, their theory is expanded to problematize Philippine folk activities in general as minority practice, and its practitioners as minority subjects.

Folk activities/arts are "work done totally outside professional art worlds, work done by ordinary people in the course of their ordinary lives, work seldom thought of by those who make or use it as art at all, eventhough, as often happens, others from outside the community it is produced in find artistic value in it." (Howard S. Becker, *Art Worlds*, 1982, pp. 246-247)

The introductory part of this paper is an empirical research on the Basey mat-weaving process. This was first written with little or even no theoretical/critical perspective but for mere documentation purposes as an undergraduate requirement for a research class. But times have changed, new ideas/paradigms have been utilized to ground specific concerns; and so for this journal the original paper has undergone some revisions. To start with, this research is by no means exhaustive. This is simply a preliminary inquiry on a specific alternative tradition which, following Pierre Macherey the dominant social formation smooths over as gaps and contradictions. An investigation or the processes involved in, say, mat-weaving deprives anyone of mystification. Lloyd and Mohamed states "one aspect of the struggle between hegemonic culture and minorities is the recovery and mediation of cultural practice which have been and continue to be subjected to institutional forgetting. Thus, archival work is essential to the critical articulation of minority discourse." ("Introduction: Toward a Theory of Minority Discourse," p.8)

This is the *raison d'être* of this paper: an empirical work grounded on a theoretical discussion on minority culture. The information contained in this paper comes from the weavers and embroiderers themselves. Further, the writer used the Socratic and

observation method in conducting the research. He used the former (albeit informally) to get relevant facts especially those concerning the technical aspects of the activity.

Basey is a Samar town approximately 40 kilometers away from the city of Tacloban and can be reached by a bus or jeepney after traversing the well-known San Juanico bridge. It is an agricultural town, but it is famous for its *banig* - the local term for mats. There are two distinct activities involved in the production of a Basey mat. The first is weaving the mat itself and the other is the embroidering. In this, there are two prime materials used: the *tikog* and *buri* palms (for further information on these, see the appendix). The former is used to weave the mat and once woven the latter is used to embroider it.

The Weaving Preparations

The following are the operations and preparations involved in the mat-weaving process specifically in making the *tikog* usable.

They described the process in an almost step by step fashion. (At this point the phrase "step by step" must be clarified because this will occur in other discussions, too. Its use is purely for academic purposes. Although the steps exist in the real activity, the conditions are not strict.)

1. Owing to its slender size, the *tikog* plant does not need cutting and division into strips like the *buri*. The first step after harvest involves sun-drying the sedges moderately. If too much heat dries them, they become brittle. And if this happens, weaving will be difficult.

2. After drying them, the dyeing of the sedges starts. Weavers fill a receptacle full of water. Once this starts boiling, the dye is

mixed in it, and eventually the sedges. It must be understood that the dye used in both the *tikog* sedges and *buri* strips are the same. (The dyeing process on *buri* will be tackled differently.) If the dyeing is thorough, then they are removed.

3. After the dyeing process, the dyed sedges are exposed to the midnight dew for one night.

4. The final process involves the *paglagot* method, which makes use of a four-inch bamboo to polish the sedges. After doing this, weavers make a sheaf out of them. A sheaf contains 200 straws (is appropriate to call the "sedges" by this term, now.)

Both steps 3 and 4 are done to prevent brittleness on the sedges and to make them flexible especially during the weaving process.

To weave a Basey mat, the ratio is 1:4. In other words, one mat needs four bundles or sheaf of *tikog* straws. Since a bundle consists of 200 straws and a mat needs four bundles, approximately 800 straws are needed. This mat is actually the family size type which has a length of 2 meters and a width of 1.6 meters. A maximum of two and a half days are needed to weave this type. However, this is accomplished if two weavers do the job. What, then, do they do to lessen their mat weaving days?

Since a family size mat needs four bundles, the two weavers divide them into two. Both use the two bundles on different sides. They do this simultaneously such that they eventually meet in the middle.

Basey mat-weaving is hand-woven, thus dependent on people, young and mostly old, who had gotten their skills by observing the mat weavers themselves. No formal training is needed to know the process. This is understandable because it is community-based. It is noteworthy to mention that he witnessed a group of weavers mostly women, with an age range of 15-28, weaving

and embroidering at the same time.

The processes that have been mentioned appear simple and easy. But readers must understand that mat-weavers themselves face a lot of difficulties, such as scarcity of materials, overproduction but low demand, and the like. These become problems precisely because mat-weaving is their source of income.

Embroidery Preparations

Before dyeing the *buri* strips, there are post-harvest preparations involved to make them functional just like the *tikog*. The following are the steps involved in the pre-dyeing process.

1. After harvesting the mature *buri* palms, they are washed with hot water to remove the impurities attached to them.

2. After doing step no. 1, the palms are immersed in a receptacle full of water. Accordingly, a "blackening effect" will result if this will not be followed.

3. Once 3/4 of the water in no. 2 has evaporated, another washing ensures the removal of the stains. (In step 1, not all impurities are removed. These are removed after the harvest, while the stains are the result of the soaking step.)

4. Once the stains have been removed, the palms are sun-dried for three days, obviously to remove the excess water.

5. After three days the palms are ready for dyeing. But if the embroiderers wish not to dye them, it is just fine. The steps nos. 1-4 are done to preserve the *buri* palms after the harvest.

The dyeing process has been mentioned in the discussion of the *tikog* as a material in the weaving process. But the process seems

easier and simpler because it only involves one hue. In other words, the *tikog* straws are either colored red or green in toto. But dyeing the *buri* strips is more delicate because it uses, ordinarily, three hues, namely: red, yellow, and green. For both materials, Basey mat-weavers do not prepare their own dyes.

They just buy from the bigger stores in the town. These dyes are, therefore, commercially made. What the local stores do is make packages of dyes (of particular hue) and sell them through a retail basis.

In Basey, a package usually weighs 5 grams, which as of May 1990 costs fifty cents. And this amount can dye a large number of *tikog* straws and *buri* strips.

The Dyeing Procedure:

1. In a big container, water is boiled. As mentioned above three hues are utilized. The first one to be used is the color red. But not the whole 5 gram package, only a small amount of it is put in the boiling water. This will produce pink strips.

2. If the desired number of pink strips is enough, then, a greater amount of red dye is mixed in the water. This addition will yield fuchsia strips.

3. Finally, the remaining red dye is mixed with the same water used in steps 1 and 2. This will produce the red strips.

4. The water used in step 3 is discarded; then another boiling starts. This time the yellow dye is used. Unlike the red dye which was divided in varied quantities, the whole amount of yellow dye is mixed in the water. Obviously, yellow strips are produced.

5. When dyeing the strips in step 4 is through, they are removed from the container. If finished, the water is not dis-

carded.

Instead a small amount of green dye is mixed in it. This process will produce strips of yellow-green saturation.

6. As in step no. 3, the remaining green dye is put into the water, producing green strips.

The whole process involved in dyeing mats invites comments especially on the manner it is being done. And if one indulges in academism, one is surprised that this mat-weaving practitioners know something about color mixing similar to the ones found in the color wheel. Of course, one is sure that they have known this through possible experimentation with the dyes used, and not from art schools.

Furthermore, it is evident that after decades of weaving and embroidering, they have developed a keen sense of color mixing in dyeing, especially in the buri strips.

The Process of Embroidery

It is through the process of embroidery that the Basey mat becomes a product of dexterity. What then does an embroiderer do to prepare for this activity? The undecorated mat is laid on the floor. The embroiderers hire or request somebody who can draw a particular design on the *tikog* mat. She (the use of this pronoun is more appropriate since the most number of people engaged in this activity are women) usually uses a big needle to insert the dyed *buri* strips and a household knife to cut them. This entails precision because a long or short strip may alter the design. The major designs that the Basey embroiderers use are: the image of Sto. Niño, the San Juanico bridge, and flowers mostly of unknown origin. The use of design is, apparently, regional. The image of Sto. Niño, for instance, is the most popular icon in the region and the whole Visayas itself. Furthermore, most of their mats are sold in the city whose

patron "saint" is the Sto. Niño himself. Likewise, the religious fervor that pervades the city is another significant factor. As mentioned, the San Juanico bridge is another favorite design. This piece of architecture is well-known throughout the Philippines, especially during the Marcos regime, because it was once heralded as the longest bridge in Asia. True enough, the bridge is a marvelous sight and truly a triumphant symbol of science and technology. On the other hand, the San Juanico bridge is special among the people of Region VIII because it connects the islands of Leyte and Samar. With this infrastructure, the business contacts between the region and other provinces from the North were strengthened.

Another constant and recurring design is the flower. There is difficulty in identifying the flowers because they are not in cultivation in the country, but rather West-grown.

This writer was surprised to find out that the embroiderers got this design from the front covers of high school notebooks. Since manufacturers have stopped reproducing this kind of notebooks, the embroiderers have preserved them through the years. They only retrieve this when the time to draw/weave a flower design comes.

Aside from the designs mentioned, the mat also has motifs on the sides and near the edges. It functions as a border or it contains the design such that beyond the motifs no designs are embroidered. Often the motifs are zigzag and rectilinear lines.

Thus, from these observations, one can conclude that the Basey mat as folk art is basically representational in its mode of representation.

Although the weavers embroider designs such as those mentioned, they also make some abstractions of it. For example the San Juanico bridge. They abstract some

parts to suggest a water here, a mountain there, project some curves to shorten the bridge and so on.

It is worth noting that after his assassination, Ninoy Aquino's portrait became a popular design among the the embroiderers. This came to being because some buyers ordered from them his woven portrait. In this kind of enterprise, the mat has become a canvas for portraits not only of famous personalities but eventually of the middle class people themselves.

One type of portrait that is quite unique is that of newly-wed couples. What these couples do is they submit their photographs to the embroiderers for patterning. This relationship brings to mind the portraiture that developed in the late 19th century Manila—the *miniaturismo*. There are similarities: for example, both are commissioned, the subject matters come from the moneyed class (obviously, the *ilustrados* were more affluent), and both recognize the talent of the home-grown artists. With the aforementioned innovation, scales of mats likewise changed.

There are now small and medium sizes of mats. In the former category, framed mats predominate. The mats or any other folk objects have to adapt to the changes taking place in the society for them to survive. "As living traditions they are not static, but possess a dynamism that adapts to historical change and permits their transformation in the historical process." (Alice G. Guillermo, *Kultura*: p33)

Notes On Contemporary Basey Mat-Weaving

In previous years, especially during the former regime, a number of programs had been implemented which affected the mat-weaving conditions in the town. For example, the former government's effort

to promote mat-weaving and basket-making as a cottage industry, through its agency NACIDA, had repercussions on the working relations among the weavers in the town. (and this continues to the present) What was it? What NACIDA was hire trainors from the town and let them disseminate the information and technology about mat-weaving process itself. Thus, many a person, mostly from the province of Leyte, underwent training to learn the skill, instead of acquiring the knowledge through the immersion-type found in the town.

The idea here was, precisely, to provide jobs for more people. On the other hand, the government's thrust was (and is) to have an abundant production of mats and baskets for the world market. This is a significant point because town-based weavers responded to this development by altering the modes of production and production relations within the town.

A significant change that took place is the decentralization of the mat-weaving activity. It was no longer confined in towns and "barangay." But, as mentioned, the Basey weavers responded to this by likewise decentralizing the whole process within the town.

The production of *tikog* mat is an independent process and so is the emroidery. Instead of weaving and embroidering at the same time, the emroiderers just buy woven *tikog* mats from the weavers of Basey. But usually they buy dozens of *tikog* mats from nearby coastal towns. They do this because the production of *tikog* mats in the town is inadequate.

One must remember that they no longer sell their products to the town or region alone but to a larger market. This is the same case with the mat weavers; they resort to weaving because they have the necessary market. In other words, at present, two specialized activities are evi-

dent: emroidering and mat-weaving. But it does not mean that an embroiderer does not know how to weave a *tikog* mat. So the phrase "mat-weaving" (and the word weavers, too) bears two meanings. Specifically, it means using *tikog* straws to weave a mat, and the more encompassing one which refers to the two specialized activities. (Unless specified, the phrase refers to the latter in this paper.)

Which other agencies, aside from NACIDA, coordinate with the Basey weavers?

One of the non-government organizations (NGO) that is very much involved in the mat-weaving process is the YMCA, one of Basey's prime buyers. What it actually does is set a quota on mat production of a particular weaver before the acquisition. The YMCA buys both bare mats and decorated ones. It buys bare mats because it has embroiderers employed in the company in the city of Tacloban.

The mat-weaving process in Basey has endured the test of time. It will undergo changes but always determined by forces: social, economic, cultural.

After introducing a certain folk tradition in the form of the Basey mat-weaving, how is it possible to construct this and other practices such as pottery, basketry, etcetera as post-colonial activities and not fall back on exoticism? But first, how can intellectuals interpellated by the dominant ideology and formed along its apparatuses, transcend their constraints?

The text, "Introduction: Toward a Theory of Minority Discourse," points out that "an emergent theory of minority discourse must not merely be negative in its implications." (p.10) But it should be positive in its theorizing and should involve "a critical-discursive articulation of alternative practices and values which are embedded in

the often damaged, fragmentary, hampered or occluded works of minorities." (ibid.) If so, then, What is a minority? Who/What qualify for it? Is it possible to conflate ethnic and folk cultures/activities as both minority? How can an academic intellectual become a minority intellectual? Again, these are questions that must be addressed before proceeding to the problematization. The other text, "Introduction: Minority Discourse - What is To Be Done?" critiques Western humanist ideology because this still continuously constructs former colonies "as the ontological, political, economic and cultural other." It argues that the manichaeian ideology (i.e. light vs. dark) still operates and still seems to be the central trope of Eurocentric colonialist/humanist discourse. This in spite of the abolition of slavery, "the success" of Civil Rights movement or in this paper the institutionalization of mat-weaving process as an artistic activity.

Now, how does this interpellate academic intellectuals? The text distinctively critiques the traditional humanist academic intellectual because this systemic function "has always been the legitimization of the sets of discriminations which the economic and social domination requires." (p. 12) This practice is very much evident among academic intellectuals who treat/study cultural products (i.e. mats) as folk objects with beautiful patterns and motifs. This kind of study is problematic because it focuses on formalistic aspects (i.e. designs), universalizing them instead of historicizing and locating their existence against the larger social matrix.

The projection of an academic intellectual into a minority one involves "knowing that exploitation and discrimination are neither the inevitable products of universal history nor rationally justifiable, but, rather, historical developments, the minority intellectual is committed to the critique of the structures which continue to legitimate them." (p.13)

In final terms, one becomes a minority intellectual not on essential and natural grounds but as Lloyd and Mohamed citing Caren Kaplan state "becoming a minority is a question of position... subject-position that can only be defined in the final analysis in "political terms." Patrick Flores, likewise citing Kaplan explains, "the idea of positionality resists a totalizing reading of the World and refuses the privilege of universalizing paradigms." ("Cracking the Canon, Repositioning the Other: Towards a Reterritorialization of the Philippine Visual Arts," *Diliman Review*, 1990, p. 53) Hence, it is possible for a white South African intellectual critiquing the Western humanist project to become a minority worker in the same way that a male homo/heterosexual can qualify as a feminist.

So, after knowing that a minority intellectual positions him/herself against the totalizing universalist ideology, then how can s/he position folk activities such as mat-weaving as minority practice? Lloyd and Mohamed writing in the same text ("What is To Be Done?") explain that "given such a historically sustained negation of minority voices we must realize that minority discourse, is, in the first instance, the product of damage, of damage more or less systematically inflicted or cultures produced as minorities by the dominant culture." (p.7) It is, then, perfectly invalid to speak of damaged culture as essentially inherent in a particular society. In the context of the writings of Lloyd and Mohamed, the minority cultures are those which have experienced a damage/destruction of various social formations, functional economic systems, deracinated populations.

How did this affect the cultural formations? To quote: "In time with this material destruction, the cultural formations, languages, the diverse modes of identity of the 'minoritized peoples' are irreversibly affected, if not eradicated, by the effects and their material deracination from the his-

torically developed social and economic structures in terms of which alone they 'made sense.'" (ibid.)

One need not think hard but simply invoke the colonialist experience of the American-Indians, the colored peoples of North America and "Latin Americans," and of course the "Filipinos." But, first, how did the aggressor make sense out of this destruction? The displacement of various mode of cultural development into a single line model of historical development constructed the minority culture as "the underdeveloped, the imperfect, the childlike or where already deracinated by material domination - as inauthentic, perverse, criminal." And this continued even after the colonizer had let go of its stronghold. What engenders this? Edward Said has a term for this phenomenon: orientalism. Said defines this complex process as "a distribution of geopolitical awareness into aesthetic, scholarly, economic, sociological, historical and philological texts, it is an elaboration not only of a basic geographical distinction (the world is made up of two unequal halves, Orient and Occident) but also of a whole series of 'interests' which by such means as scholarly discovery, philological reconstruction, psychological analysis, landscape and sociological description; it not only creates but also maintains; it is, rather than expresses, certain will or intention to understand, in some cases to control, manipulate, even to incorporate, what is manifestly different or alternative and novel world." (*Orientalism*, 1978, p. 12) In her article "Introduction: Discourses of World-ing and Philippines Post-Colonial Responses," Priscelina Patajo-Legasto explains how Orientalism constructed the "Third World" and supported/maintained itself through institutions such as foreign service, Department of Oriental Studies/Languages and Literature and History, vocabulary such as the use of women's name for vanquished areas which, following Peter Hulme, is a collusion between sexism

and Orientalism: America from Amerigo Vespucci, Filipinas from King Phillip; scholarship like conventional anthropology; doctrines exemplified by "white man's burden," "evangelical mission," "benevolent assimilation;" and through imagery. Legasto writes on the latter: imagery such as colonial postcards and Macaulay/Conradian type novels and later-day adventure literature and movies like the Indiana Jones series perpetuate the "Orient" and the "Dark Continent" and the "Pearl of the Orient" as the virginal lands to be conquered; images of veiled women behind wrought iron grills, "pintados," bare bosomed women, inscrutable Chinese, despotic Hindu rajahs, thick-lipped Africans, dark deceitful Arabs, Filipino *manongs* and now Filipina domestics form part of the colonialist/and today's white racist repertoire of stereotypes for non-whites. To add, there are at present institutions that continually perpetuate the Philippines as a festive, enchanted, and exotic nation. Among these are PAL, Department of Tourism, Trade and Industry, and others.

The bottomline of the aforementioned discussion is that ethnic and even folk activities are minority practices because the circumstances under which they evolved underment colonialist expansion/experiences. Again, to reassert but not to excuse, this is a commonsensical notion but must still be interrogated for this has far reaching consequences and implications in Philippine cultural formation. For instance, how did the Spanish colonialist expansionism affect the indigenous traditions? In his same article Patrick Flores states:

Spanish colonialist discourse on art, which was mainly articulated through the educational ideological state apparatuses (the system of the different public and private schools), imposed upon native Filipinos this particular notion of an artworld governed by the sacrosanct tenets of the bellas artes or the beaux arts. Philippine visual arts from then on was to be built around

the assumptions of a European criterion which considered only the academic forms of easel painting and sculpture, rendered in a certain "manner" to presumed be having artistic value and aesthetic import, and excluded the indigenous traditions, say, in weaving, carving, mat making, et cetera by giving them the secondary, derivative, and lowly status of crafts; indeed, para-art. (p.55)

Thus, this colonialist experience radically altered certain cultural practices by repressing the discourses that informed them. Why? How? The noted French philosopher Michel Foucault in his discourse theories talks about discursive fields: a particular social formation has various discourses, for instance, to explain a single phenomenon. In the Philippine context, for example, the Church has its own discourse on family planning which inevitably collides with that of the State. But are these the only possible discourses? What about the rural folks's discourse on this subject? Is it not valid? Foucault is after the interrogation of these. What happens/happened to the various discourses that supposedly exist in a society? Why does one only articulate this and not the other? Why valorize scientific discourses over the intuitive and personal? Foucault explains that in "every society the production of discourses is at once controlled, selected, organized and redistributed by a certain number of procedures whose role is to ward off its powers and dangers, to gain mastery over its chance events, to evade its ponderous, formidable materiality." (*Modern Literary Theory*, 1989, p.221)

In the same text, he mentions procedures of exclusion such as declaring objects and speech as taboo (in Philippine setting, sex is the prime example) and giving exclusive/privilege right to speaking subjects (the popularity of Margarita Holmes accounts for this), procedures of division and rejection (fine arts vs. craft; fine vs. primitive art) and opposition between true and

false discourse. The Spanish and, later, American colonialist discourse triumphed over the indigenous because, following the Foucauldian thesis, these procedures especially the latter are institutionally supported. As he succinctly puts it: "this will to truth, like other systems of exclusion, rests on an institutional support, it is both reinforced and renewed by whole strata of practices such as pedagogy, of course, and the system of books, publishing, libraries, learned societies in the past and laboratories now. But it is also renewed, no doubt more profoundly, by the way in which knowledge is put to work, valorised, distributed and in a sense attributed, in a society." (p. 223) This explains, further, the continuous valorization of certain texts such as painting as in oil/easel, of sculptures as in marble/bronze, and yes, works of art in schools/colleges of fine arts, galleries, museums. The billboard paintings, the takas of Paete are not painting and sculpture respectively, but commercial objects and deserve little recognition. It should be stressed, however, that minority forms/texts achieve their status because of the overdetermination not just by historical, but also by economic, technological, religious forces, and by culture itself.

How can one position folk activities as minority practice in contemporary times? What is its relation to the hegemonic culture that is urban, such as Manila, Cebu, Davao. Further, when we speak of Manila as the center of hegemonic culture and to position rural culture as the site of certain folk/minority practices, what notion of culture do we implicate here? Jim Collins, writing in the *Uncommon Cultures: Popular Culture and Post Modernism*, reevaluates the notion of culture as "no longer a unitary fixed category, but a decentered, fragmentary assemblage of conflicting voices and institutions." (p.22) Where now does this situate essentialist aspirations of National Art/Identity as advocated for instance by Ricarte

Puruganan in his book *Folk Art: The Thread To National Art?* (1983, printed by Heritage Art Center) Puruganan believes that:

National art, therefore, is something we do not yet have, and will never have through all eternity if we remain complacent with Western art as is and do not graduate from it. We should stir and shake ourselves free from it as it is. Surely we can find a way, but, we must start finding the way, and the time is now. (p.38)

Artists could involve themselves in this significant venture into the more lofty aspirations of our race, into the search for the very substance of our being, and our new society, into the realization of our national identity in terms of our art. (p.39)

Example of national arts in the world are Javanese or Indonesian art, Moslem, Aztec, Egyptian and Hindu... (p.40)

But what race? What being? Whose identity? Of course, it is valid to call for a contextualization of exogenous "influences," but apparently Puruganan has this still convoluted notion of culture as a monolithic empire. But, following Collins, Philippine Culture is a differentiated and decentered terrain just like Javanese or Hindu culture/art. It should not be singularized but rather pluralized so that it is possible to speak of (Philippine) cultures: the culture of the ethnic peoples like the Itnegs, T'bolis, Manobos; the urban/popular cultures of Manila, Cebu, Davao and so on; the folk/rural culture of Basey, Paete, Pakil, Taal; the minority cultures of the various Muslim communities dispersed throughout the archipelago. But this "pluralism" must again be interrogated in the context of Third World/post-colonial conditions. Mohamed and Lloyd state that this is nothing but an aspiration/project also of white, liberal and conservative alike. They write:

The semblance of pluralism disguises the perpetuation of exclusion, in so far as it is enjoyed only by those who have already assimilated the values of the dominant culture. For

this pluralism, ethnic or cultural difference is merely an exoticism, an indulgence which can be relished without in any significant way, modifying the individual who is securely embedded in the protective body of dominant ideology. ("Introduction: Toward a Theory...", pp.9-10)

A glaring example is the T'boli's T'nalak fabric which is made into bracelets, bags, covers, wallets, etcetera. These are ubiquitous and one might think this group is prosperous, belying the embattled condition this group faces right now: they are being driven away from their ancestral lands to give way to business ventures of multinational corporations.

The aforementioned exposition is concisely articulated by Gayatri Spivak in a forum with American intellectuals like E.D. Hirsch Jr., Roger Shattuck, and others on what to teach American freshmen. Says Spivak, "I'm not arguing for the fabrication of a national culture or suggesting that there is one. We should teach the young American to recognize that this is a multiracial, multicultural country." (*Harp-er's Magazine* 1988, p.45) But how? On what basis? Is to be aware/to be tolerant of all these different cultures that exist in the country and to acknowledge that differences can exist enough? Spivak states:

Tolerance is a loaded virtue, because you have to have a base of power to practice it. You cannot ask certain people to "tolerate" a culture that has historically ignored them... (p.46)

In the same vein, those advocacies for national culture/art/identity always relate to certain position/class/race/gender at the expense of shutting a lot of people/culture. After problematizing the notion of culture as non-monolithic entity, the category "dominant" must likewise be understood in this manner. Thus, the category "urban/hegemonic culture" is not a single mass but is composed of heterogenous elements: folk practices, beliefs, superstitions which are

frequently associated with the rural/folk culture are likewise found in Manila, which is considered the highly urbanized/modernized area in the country. Similarly, popular forms such as radio melodramas, fan magazines, comics, and so on which are produced in urban centers verily exist in the countryside.

Having been constructed as a dynamic entity, how does the dominant culture make sense of these folk activities? Raymond Williams writes in "Dominant, Residual, Emergent" (*Marxism and Literature*, 1977, Oxford University Press) proposes for an amplification of the epochal analysis on culture to include not only the dominant/hegemonic but likewise variable elements that exist within an existent social formation. These elements are what he termed the residual and emergent which have both alternative and oppositional character in relation to the dominant culture/practice. William defines the residual element as those "created in actual societies and actual situations in the past which still seem to have significance because they represent areas of human experience, aspiration and achievement which the dominant culture neglects, under values, opposes, represses or even cannot recognize." (p.125) Folk activities such as mat-weaving then are residual elements in relation to the dominant culture, although in those specific societies such as Basesy, Samar such practice is a dominant one. In other words, to position a particular practice/activity as either dominant or residual is itself overdetermined by the processes of production, distribution, and consumption. For instance, in the Philippine setting, hand-woven, organic-type mats were produced earlier than the machine-made, plastic/synthetic mats. But the latter in contemporary times are largely consumed in urban centers while the former are utilized in rural areas. Hence they dominate. Here, the word "dominate" pertains to the availability of the product in specific cultures. Thus, in relation to the

dominant culture, organic mats are residual products, the synthetic mats, on the other hand, though cannot yet be considered dominant in rural culture, prefigure the event. Why? The hand-woven mats are numerically few because these are subject to availability of resources and manpower, while the synthetic mats are mass-produced and owned by huge corporations. This difference creates traces of imbalance and, yes, domination. What the dominant culture does is to exotify it, to undervalue its durability, and to de-emphasize its organicity. According to Mohamed and Lloyd, "in relations with the dominant culture, the syncretic movement is always assymetrical: while members of the dominant culture rarely feel obliged to assimilate various ethnic cultures, minorities are always obliged, in order to survive, to master the hegemonic cultures without thereby necessarily gaining access to the power that circulates within the dominant sector." ("Introduction: Toward a Theory...", p.9) This is particularly true to ethnic cultures like the T'boli, as exemplified in the preceding discussion. The cultural products of this people abound in say, Manila, but the distribution is beyond their control. The video *Vanishing Earth* (1985) shows that several Visayan traders exploit the intellectual comprehension of these people on matters of business and trade such that they are forced to vend/exchange their products -- the T'nalak fabric, gongs, bracelets, musical instruments, and others.

Is it valid to once again conflate the struggles between ethnic and folk cultures? Folk cultures in the Philippines tend to be lowland, rural, communal, Christian as opposed to ethnic cultures which are usually upland, animist, though still communal. The interpellations of hegemonic ideology then is immensely evident in the former, though as shown historically the latter suffered economic, social, physical displacement. But even interpellations are by no means total

and complete. The members of a certain folk community occupy several positions in relation to the dominant culture. As a subject/citizen, s/he participates in several elections; as a Christian, s/he gives donations to the Church; but as weavers, s/he becomes minoritized. Their becoming a minority is overdetermined by the kind of practice they perform, by which (economic) class they belong, by gender (which in Basey, for instance, is dominated by women, by their access to the materials, by their connections with other local organizations/capitalists, etcetera. The task of juxtaposing the two cultures—dominant/hegemonic and residual/folk/rural—is not to create a binary opposition, but, as Lloyd and Mohamed states, "relations of domination [which] permeate every facet of our personal and social lives, as well as our literature and culture, a critique of culture that ignores such relations can be, at best, a distorted one." ("Introduction: Minority Discourse," p. 13-14) The juxtaposition is founded on a premise that culture(s) is a site of domination and most significantly of resistance. To view culture in this way dispels the notion that things can remain immutable. Must one forever consign cultures/practices as "minority?" One can neither mystify nor glorify folk culture/art as the true national culture/art as most scholars are wont to do. But one can critique relations/structures of domination that try to minoritize it in order to unmask the power invested in them ideologically and discursively.

And herein lies the possibility of change.

APPENDIX

Tikog

- Scientific name - *Fimbristylis globulosa*
 Local names - *tikog*, tayok-tayok, anahiuian (Bis.); badang-badang (Ilk.); sud-sud (Buk.); pilokong-kabo (Mbo.); anahuan (Sub.)
 Description - The *tikog* plant is leafless and has branches in several directions from the base. It is a slender sedge which usually grows to 1.5-3 meters high.
 Growing conditions - Propagation of *tikog* is by means of seeds. It abounds and grows best at low altitudes such as in wet grasslands and rice paddies.
 Places of Abundance - *Tikog* is widely distributed in the country. But it is more abundant in the southern part than in the north. Further, very few people have really cultivated it as a major agricultural product.
 Harvesting - Harvesting the mature *tikog* sedges almost coincides with the reaping. In Leyte and Samar as well as in other parts of the country, this occurs in the months of April, May, and June.

Buri

- Scientific name - *Corypha elata*
 Local names - buri, buli, piet, busi (Tag.); silag (Ilk); buli (Bis.); buri (Waray) buri, silad (Bik); buri, buli, ebus (Pamp.) piet, buli, silag (Pang.)
 Description - The *buri* plant looks like a coconut tree. The reason for their resemblance is that both belong to the Palmae family. It reaches 30 meters (maximum) in height and bears fan-shaped, rounded leaves of about 3 meters long. These leaves are used for making hats, bags, mats, and even roofs.
 Growing conditions - Like the *tikog* plant, *buri* is propagated by seeds, which have hard fibrous covering. The cover must be broken before the seeds can germinate; and it usually takes 1 or 2 years. When the seeds are removed from the hard cover, the seeds may start to germinate within a month. The plant flowers only once and dies.
 Places of Abundance - The *buri* plant grows in abundance in Quezon, Cebu, Bohol, Leyte, Samar, and in Mindanao areas.
 Harvesting - For mat weavers and embroiderers, the *buri* palms can only be ready after ten years. The reason is that it takes ten years for the mature trunk to appear. A thirty year old *buri* plant can likewise yield "tuba," a local wine. But "tuba" extraction can kill the plant.

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