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'For the good of the *barrio*' Community associations and the state in the rural Philippines 1935-1965

The men and women of Barrio Canderia described themselves in the early 1950s as being closely tied, that they were 'bound as one, moved as one'.¹ The same sentiments were expressed in Puncan, the adjacent *barrio* (neighbourhood) where the whole population was said to possess 'a spirit of cooperation for the good of the barrio' (HDP, Puncan, Nueva Ecija Roll 47:5). People in small rural communities across the Philippines are usually tied to one another either through descent, marriage, or fictive bonds of kinship, so it is not surprising that they tend to help one another. Yet this sense of neighbourliness extends well beyond the family to encompass a wider, mainly territorially defined group. There is a long history at the local level of formal and informal associations and networks committed to individual and extrafamilial welfare that enhance people's capacity to withstand the magnitude and frequency of hardship as experienced in their daily lives. Moreover, the attainment of nationhood did not significantly alter the situation for most rural people to whom the state often represents more of a threat than a source of benefaction.

The relative lack of state presence at the village (*barangay*) or subvillage level across the archipelago has existed for most of the historical period and still persists in varying degrees today. If, as James Scott contends, the state 'sees' in its own particular way, that certain forms of knowledge and control require a narrowing of vision that 'brings into sharp focus certain limited aspects of an otherwise far more complex and unwieldy reality' (1998:11), so the *barrio* 'sees' in its own way, too, with a look that often bears little relation to the march of grand events on the national scale. To premise the notion of change based around political benchmarks such as decolonization, therefore, may have little immediate relevance to rural communities. People are not necessarily unaware of the larger picture, but it may make little difference to their everyday lives and the way in which they face adversity and cope with misfortune whether personal or from external causes. Moreover, the whole question of independence is one characterized by a great deal of ambiguity

¹ HDP, Canderia, Nueva Ecija Roll 47:31. Research for this chapter was partly funded by the Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study (NIAS) as a fellowship-in-residence 2003/2004.

over when the event actually took place and so what period actually constitutes decolonization. The Philippines has formally declared its independence at least three times: from the Spanish on 12 June 1898, under Japanese tutelage on 14 October 1943, and by American fiat on 4 July 1946.² According to the implied assumptions of the modern state, the whole period of U.S. administration is often represented in national historiography as part of a gradual process of 'tutelage' towards decolonization. As the principal argument of this chapter stresses continuity more than change (though without overstressing the importance of the former or denying the existence of the latter), its temporal framework encompasses roughly a thirty-year period from the inauguration of internal self-rule under the Commonwealth government in 1935 to the presidency of Ferdinand Marcos in 1965, who was to dominate Filipino politics until his flight in 1986. It should be noted, however, that while these dates may constitute significant yardsticks in the history of the nation, they are far less noteworthy in the narrative of the community. To the latter, the real milestone during this period was the Japanese occupation (1941-1945) and the disruption to lives and livelihoods caused by constant low-intensity conflict, widespread migration, and the permanent abandonment of some settlements.³ Throughout these years, rural people mainly relied on their communities and the various forms of associations that operated within them for the extrafamilial services that they required to provide food, shelter, and support. While the political complexion of the state may have changed according to the fortunes of war or the advent of nationhood, the socioeconomic nature of the *barrio* did not or did so only according to its own internal logic and rhythm.

Associations and rural communities

The Philippines sit at a geographical and cultural crossroads that through its Hispanic legacy link Asia across the Pacific to the Americas. It also shares with its neighbours a rich history of community associations that reflects its 'Malay' heritage.⁴ The prevalence of 'traditional' self-help organizations has

² Ambeth Ocampo argues that there have actually been a further three declarations of Philippine independence in addition to the ones already mentioned: by Andres Bonifacio in the Pamintinan Caves on 12-4-1895, the 'Cry of Pugad Lawin' on 23-8-1896, and in the decrees of the Revolutionary Committee signed by Emilio Aguinaldo on 31-10-1896 (1993:74-5).

³ On the Japanese occupation of the Philippines, see Agoncillo 2001. On the wartime experience of communities, however, it is necessary to look through the relevant entries in the national oral history project instigated in the early 1950s and known as the Historical Data Papers held in the Philippine National Library.

⁴ The term 'Malay' is used in this sense to denote a commonality of cultures between people who predominantly share an Austronesian linguistic heritage and who inhabit maritime Southeast Asia.

long been recognized in Indonesia where anthropologists such as Clifford Geertz (1962) and Shirley Ardener (1964) have debated how organizations like rotating credit associations needed to be understood in terms of modernization and the introduction of a monetary economy. Mutual benefit societies existed in urban areas from at least the last quarter of the nineteenth century and were common among wage labourers and their families in the workplace and *kampong* (neighbourhood) by the first decades of the twentieth. Their relationship to organized labour has also been documented, as is their contribution to the nationalist movement by way of the unions. While they are not seen as being pivotal to either, serving more to blunt potential (communist) radicalism among artisans than to foster political consciousness among workers, self-help organizations of every persuasion 'all helped to improve the material conditions of urban workers and gave them at least a modicum of security in a society lacking even a basic social welfare system' (Ingleson 1996:585). Less is known historically about village society, though informal associations that assist people in times of need have probably long existed in one form or another (Ingleson 1996:578). Certainly they still are important groupings within contemporary village communities (Warren 1993).

Just as significant as this Malay influence on the Philippines was the Hispanic heritage brought across the Pacific principally from New Spain. Mutualism in Mexico has its origins in the agrarian communal practices of pre-Columbian societies and the clan-like birthrights that held communities of small property holders together. In urban areas, this custom melded with guild forms derived from a European artisan tradition that gradually became more democratized during the colonial era with broader memberships until they emerged as essentially mutual saving and assistance associations by the second half of the eighteenth century (J. Hart 1996:589-90). In rural areas, indigenous and Hispanic notions combined to produce a state-endorsed form of community-based mutualism known as the *caja de comunidad* (community chest). The dues paid by individual holders of community property were given out as personal loans to meet health, educational, or bereavement needs and were used in the construction of civic utilities or agricultural development.⁵ This colonial blueprint was then introduced into the Philippines in 1565 as part of the basic state structure where it seemingly blended well with indigenous forms of rural cooperativeness.

Evidence that mutualism and cooperation were very much part of rural cultures in the Philippines dates back to the charitable activities of the village religious associations or *cofradías* and to the manner in which extrafamilial

⁵ Hart 1996:589. A conscious effort was made to recreate this 'traditional' rural social structure with the introduction of the *ejido* system following the Mexican Revolution (1910-1911).

work was organized through informal customary practice.⁶ The ensuing structures had much in common with the organizations that assisted people in times of need in Indonesia and with the mutualism of the *gremios* or guilds so characteristic of Mexico. All three also share a tradition in which it is difficult to profitably distinguish the divide between mutual benefit societies and early unionism.⁷ Nor were the more formal types of these associations in the Philippines completely separate from political movements: the Katipunan, the secret society that instigated the revolt of 1896 against the Spanish, was also a multipurpose organization being at the same time a political grouping, a religious brotherhood, and a form of mutual benefit association. The multiple purposes that these kinds of associations often served were evident in the kinds of organizations that thrived during the Revolution (1896-1898) and the Philippine-American War periods (1899-1902). While the Americans were 'unable to learn of any associations of Filipino working people for mutual benefit or self-help', deeming them not to have reached 'a stage of development favorable to the success of such enterprises' (Clark 1905:850), the new colonial authorities were keen to instil the virtues of Jeffersonian democracy in the peoples of their far-flung outpost of empire. They enacted a Rural Credit Law to organize small farmers into self-help cooperatives officially known as rural credit associations (Act No. 2508 of 1915) and created agricultural credit cooperative societies that were envisaged as 'village banks' able to make small loans for farming-related improvements (Census 1921, IV, Part 1:16, 37 and Balmaceda 1924:18-9). The question remains, however, whether such rural credit associations were altogether new or were, in fact, superimposed on an existing network of more informal mutual benefit organizations.

Village cooperation prior to 1946

Apart from these formal officially-inspired organizations, reciprocal exchanges of a more informal nature continued to be practised in rural areas throughout the latter years of the American period. Misfortune and particularly death were occasions that elicited expressions of solidarity and support: 'The good neighbour spirit of the people is best expressed when death comes to a member of a family. Upon being informed of the death of a certain person, the people in the *sitio* [locality] come to the house of the bereaved family,

⁶ Bankoff 2004, 2007. Need or sometimes lot determined the order in which a person or family received help, the notion of succession suggested by the Tagalog term *turnuhan* derived from the Spanish word *turno* meaning 'a turn'. Testifying to the widespread nature of these practices throughout the archipelago, reciprocal forms of labour were known by a wide number of terms and often by more than one in the same province (Balmaceda 1927).

⁷ Bankoff 2005:72-6. On unionism, see W. Scott 1992; M. Kerkvliet 1992; Carrol 1961.

not only to console them, but also to offer whatever help they are capable of giving' (HDP, Putting Tubig, Nueva Ecija Roll 47:95). In Nueva Ecija, this was referred to as the *abuluyan* system, and people showed their sympathy and solidarity by contributing as much money as they could afford, an act that was 'considered a must by each and every family of the neighbourhood' (HDP, Kababao, Nueva Ecija Roll 47:38). Help was not only forthcoming at times of distress but also on more joyous family occasions such as baptisms and weddings when 'people gave their share to the family concerned' (HDP, Saguing Talugtag, Nueva Ecija Roll 47).

The spirit of cooperation included working together. Farmers across the archipelago adhered to loose customary practices that involved contributing labour for the benefit of others or for the community at large (HDP Santicon, Albay Roll 1:266 and HDP Maniango, Pampanga Roll 36:27). The elders of Polangui, Albay, reported the following:

It is a custom of the people that when a certain family plans to build a house, they [...] but only pass a word to their neighbours that on a certain day they will start building their house. On that day everybody in the neighbourhood offers his helping hands [...]. In planting season, one doesn't hire planters to plant palay [unhusked rice]. He only let his neighbours and relations know that on a certain day, he will plant his kaingin [swidden field] with palay and on that day everybody will be there doing their shares. (HDP Santa Cruz, Albay Reel 1:141)

Called by various names and undoubtedly with regional or even local variations, the basic structure of the system was the same: 'Most of their work especially in plowing, planting, harvesting, and building of houses [is] done by the *tagnawa* system. In the *tagnawa* the labour is free but the host feeds the workers' (HDP Cabugbugan, Tarlac Roll 72:17). More precisely, communal labour during the planting and harvesting seasons was performed under the *pinta* system, while working together on the repair or construction of each other's homes was known as *tagnawa* (HDP Caanamongam, Tarlac Roll 72:11). Cooperation was even more pronounced in areas of new settlement such as on the central Luzon plain where 'working cooperatively was their virtue in any undertaking to make work faster and livelier. In clearing a certain place they work together in cutting down the trees to let them dry and later on [burn]'.⁸ This sentiment sometimes found expression in the place name given to a new community. Barrio Caanamongam was so called at its establishment in 1935 after an Ilocano word denoting togetherness 'as a

⁸ HDP Saverona, Nueva Ecija Roll 47:3. On agricultural expansion in central Luzon, see McLennan 1980; Lataillade, Dumontier and Grondard 2002.

symbol of the people's cooperative spirit in grouping together and forming a [settlement]' (HDP Caanamongam, Tarlac Roll 72:10). Not that communal labour necessarily always brought forth success. Joint efforts to establish a water supply and build irrigation canals by the inhabitants of Pajo and Rangayan, *sitios* founded in 1907 by homesteaders in Nueva Ecija were not successful as 'the place where they built the dam was destroyed and became very wide' (HDP Rangayan, Nueva Ecija Roll 47:1-2).

Attention also needs to be paid to the role and function of local Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) as these soon became the most visible *barrio* organizations after their foundation in 1926 (Rivera and McMillan 1952:167). The ostensible focus of their activities was schools and raising the voluntary contributions of money, material, or labour needed for their erection, maintenance, and reconstruction. However, the location of clinics and other community services at these sites and the allocation of communal fields for their support inevitably widened the range of services they provided (HDP La Purisima, Albay Reel 1:257; HDP Dela Paz, Pampanga Reel 36). Much as earlier *barrio* organizations had cloaked their activities in a religious guise as *cofradías* under Spanish colonialism, so now they sought official approval as PTAs given the emphasis placed by American authorities on educational attainments. Given the common Hispanic heritage, there is an interesting comparison between the role of associations in village schools in the Philippines and those on the *ejidos* or collective farms established in Mexico after the Revolution of 1910-1921. Henrik Infield described how such schools introduced new plants through cultivating vegetable gardens and provided communities with collective washing facilities, libraries, adult education courses, and sport activities but required the cultivation of communal plots for their maintenance (1947:88). The dual nature of these organizations has not completely disappeared in rural areas of the Philippines where they are now sometimes known as Parent Teacher Community Associations or PTCAs.⁹

Living conditions in rural areas began to deteriorate during the 1920s and 1930s, especially in the more densely populated regions of Luzon where the effects of the Great Depression and growing landlessness caused unprecedented degrees of hardship (B. Kerkvliet 1979:26-60). Organizations that complemented their social activities with more overtly political aims seeking redress for rural grievances began to appear such as the Tagulan Katipunan Pambansa, a farmer's organization that recruited *barrio* folk in Pampanga and elsewhere in central Luzon (HDP Baliti, Pampanga Reel 36:29). There were even sporadic peasant uprisings, among the best known of which were

⁹ Interview with Danilo Atienza, Program Supervisor, Integrated Community Disaster Planning Program. Red Cross, Bonifacio Drive, Manila, 22-10-2002.

the Kapisanan Makabola Makasinag (1924-1925), the Tayug uprising (1931), and the Sakdalista movement (1934-1935) (Sturtevant 1972; Guerrero 1967; Iletto 1979).

Many of these new peasant organizations still strongly displayed characteristics that stressed reciprocity and mutual assistance. The Kapatiran Magsaka (Farmer's Brotherhood), for instance, a militant anti-landlord peasant union in central Luzon was essentially a millenarian nationalist society whose affiliates bore triangles branded on their shoulders, wore the omega or yoke symbol on their hats, and marched in uniform at each other's funerals. Members swore a blood oath not to betray the names of their associates, to resist eviction, to refuse to pay exorbitant rents or accept the tenancy of anyone evicted, and to support those in trouble with the landlord especially when the latter tried to enforce his rights to a share of the harvest or collect debts. The Kapatiran had many features in common with mutual benefit societies but also reorganized reciprocal farm labour on a morally euphoric and more militarized basis. Each affected village appointed a *kabisilya* (headman) who kept a book for each farm and its family. Farm work was organized in turns: each day of labour contributed by a family and their buffalo (together representing one day's labour) was entered as a credit and each day of labour performed by another was entered as a debit. At the end of a season, the credits and debits for each family were totted up and any difference between the two made good by payment in *palay*. Farm work was organized in teams, the start and finish signalled by the *kabesilya* blowing a *tambuli*, a buffalo-horn bugle.¹⁰ There were specific bugle calls for fires, to summon help to resist to the landlord's thugs, and to warn of the arrival of the owner or his overseer. Such organizations were a source of concern to landowners and government officials who viewed them as potentially if not actually seditious. During the Great Depression of the 1930s, the Commonwealth government under Manuel Quezon even approved the passing of the 'Tambuli Ordinances' all over Luzon that made it an offence to use a bugle in such a manner.¹¹

Though mutual assistance and millenarianism remained significant aspects of these movements, increasingly many rural associations fell under more socialist or even communist influences. The Aguman ding Malding Talapagobra (AMT or General Workers Union) that had a following of 70,000 in Pampanga and southeastern Tarlac was an organ of the Socialist Party; the Kalipunang Pambansa ng mga Magsaka sa Pilipinas (KPMP or National Society of Peasants in the Philippines) founded in 1919 by the

¹⁰ The sounding of the *barrio* lieutenant's horn was also a signal for all able-bodied men to report for advising on needed community work that required collective labour (Rivera and McMillan 1952:168).

¹¹ Brian Fegan, personal communication, NIAS, Wassenaar, the Netherlands 2003. See also Connolly 1992:94-6.

communist leader Jacinto Manahan claimed a membership of 60,000 by the time it merged with the AMT in 1939 mainly in Nueva Ecija and Bulacan (B. Kerkvliet 1977:45). Political considerations have always been important in leadership circles if not among the rank and file membership of civic associations dating back to the Katipunan of the 1890s and the early union movement whose initial founders, Isabelo de los Reyes and Dominador Gómez clearly had reformist agendas. However, as misfortune and mishap in the Philippines increasingly came to be seen as having its roots in human activity as much as in natural causes, to be as much the product of the social structure as it was of hazard or misfortune, so mutual assistance increasingly came to take on political overtones.

The Japanese occupation in 1941 only further encouraged communities faced by adversity to help themselves. Many people were forced to relocate to safer locations to escape the fighting where they were not only welcomed but often greeted royally by *barrio* folk who showed their hospitality by serving them with roasted pig, chicken and even slaughtering *carabao* (HDP Mangandingay, Nueva Ecija Roll 47:2). Organizations were established in communities with the express aim of helping their members to promote mutual relationship between each other and to advance agriculture such as the one known as Kalaoman in Polangui. 'Much was [sic] the accomplishments of this organization that it may be the reason why not a single life and property was damaged during those tumultuous days', the local history of the town recounts (HDP La Purisima, Albay Roll 1:257). In other cases, however, it was the Japanese occupation forces themselves that instigated such neighbourhood associations 'to have the civilians cooperate with them in their fight against the guerrillas' (HDP Bularit, Tarlac Roll 72:69). There were particular attempts to enlist young people in this respect with the formation of the Junior Kalibapi and the Melchora Aquino sisterhood in villages, organizations created by the occupation administration in 1942 as supposedly nonpartisan and dedicated to the social, spiritual, cultural, moral and economic advancement of the nation under suitable Japanese tutelage.¹² The consequences, however, were not always those intended by the occupying forces. As one village respondent remembered: 'The Japanese soldiers did not know that the members of the neighbourhood associations were guerrillas themselves' (HDP Bularit, Tarlac Roll 72:69).

¹² HDP Mangandingay, Nueva Ecija Roll 47. The parent organization, the Kalibapi or Kapisanan sa Paglilingkod sa Barong Pilipinas (Association for Service to the New Philippines) had chapters in every province, its 'tentacles reached into almost every home' (Agoncillo 2001:367).

Village cooperation after independence

Far from being a recent manifestation, then, there is a long history of formal and more informal associations among the peoples of the archipelago. The advent of independence did not constitute a discrete break in the consideration of these organizations; the status of the Philippines in the immediate decades following 1946 remained largely neocolonial as a result of tariff and military agreements favourable to the USA and the heightened tensions of the Cold War period. The element of continuity in form and substance remains very pronounced at least until the long presidency of Ferdinand Marcos that began in 1965. During his presidency, there was a concerted attempt to curtail the power of the traditional elites and modernize the socioeconomic basis of society, culminating in his introduction of a corporatist model for the country under martial law, the 'New Society' (Stauffer 1977). An important development during the first postwar decades, however, was the increasing prominence paid by government to the political ramifications of community welfare. The years following independence were largely dominated by events connected to the outbreak of a large-scale peasant rebellion in central Luzon known as the Huk Rebellion (named after Hukbong Mapagpalaya ng Bayan – the People's Army of Liberation) and the full-scale military operations involved in its suppression from 1946-1954.¹³ In the ensuing climate of fear, all associations not sanctioned by the state or church were regarded with suspicion as harbouring communist sympathies and subject to repeated repression by police and military agencies.

As part of a counterinsurgency strategy to thwart the spread of communist influence, the national government and the Catholic Church placed increasing emphasis on rural development and introduced policies aimed at decentralizing government and promoting cooperative organizations at the grassroots level. The establishment of *barrio* councils with the passage of the Revised Barrio Charter of 1963 (RA3590) and the Decentralization Act of 1967 (RA5185) led to the progressive emergence of elected local government empowered to promulgate ordinances and implement public works and was paralleled by attempts to sponsor more functional community organizations such as 4-H Clubs, farmers' associations, cooperatives and women's rural

¹³ The Huks had their origins in the prewar peasant unions of the 1930s. These became the mass basis for the rural united front formed by the communist and socialist parties of central Luzon to wage guerrilla warfare against the Japanese and were known as the Hukbalahap or People's Army against the Japanese. Peasant radicalism was heightened in the postwar period by: the reimposition of traditional agrarian systems; the harassment, arrest and assassination of Huk cadre and their outlawing in 1948; and the refusal of the national government to allow seven peasant-supported elected representatives of the Democratic Alliance to take their seats in Congress (Lachica 1971; B. Kerkvliet 1977).

improvement clubs.¹⁴ An attempt was also made to mobilize farmers with the formation of Farmers Cooperative Marketing Associations in 1953 and to coordinate the government's approach to community organizing through the creation of a Presidential Arm on Community Development in 1956 (Clarke 1998:58).

The Catholic Church, too, was actively engaged in organizing rural associations. In 1953, the Federation of Free Farmers (FFF) was established by a group of Catholic laymen affiliated with the Jesuit-inspired Institute of Social Order. The FFF sought to achieve land redistribution and improve agricultural production through promoting peaceful reforms, mass bargaining and the formation of cooperatives. Though initially strongly anticommunist, many of its more youthful membership began to advocate a form of social action influenced by the new liberation theology of the 1960s.¹⁵ At the height of its popularity in the early 1970s, the FFF claimed a membership of around half a million people.¹⁶ A comparable programme of mass mobilization of the peasantry was also attempted by the Philippine Communist Party (Partido Kuminista ng Pilipinas or PKP) with the founding of Malayang Samahang Magsaka or Free Farmers' Union (MASAKA) in 1964. Despite the union's rapid growth in membership to 68,000 by 1968, it only really functioned more as a pressure group and never undertook collective projects or attempted to strengthen group cohesiveness at the *barrio* level (Po 1980:54-8). These forms of community programmes were imposed on communities from the outside mainly as a response to the formation of the national government's attempt to restore law and order in rural areas and were of questionable efficacy (Romani 1956:236).

With the inauguration of internal self-rule under the Commonwealth in 1935 and especially after independence in 1946, certain local associations and even some grassroots ones became associated with one or other of the principal political parties of the period, the Nationalistas and the Liberals, even in some instances delivering votes en bloc in return for material benefits or patronage (Lewis 1971:142-3). Such political affiliations were clearly apparent in the municipality of Hulo, Bulacan (studied by Mary Hollnsteiner during the 1950s), although the associations here were ones whose leader-

¹⁴ Po 1980:31-2. While a measure of functional *barrio* government was achieved with these reforms, local government continued to remain chronically under-funded. 4-H Clubs were initiated in 1952 with the aim of providing young people (15-18-year olds) with opportunities to learn through individual, group and community projects that enhance self-reliance, instil a spirit of voluntarism, and promote cooperation and fellowship. They are still active today with a membership of over a 100,000 youths distributed across the archipelago in 3,881 clubs.

¹⁵ These members were later expelled during the purges that followed the declaration of martial law in September 1972.

¹⁶ Po 1980:39-54. An urban-based Federation of Free Workers was also established (Constantino-David 1998:31-2).

ship was dominated by local elites.¹⁷ At the *barrio* level, however, evidence suggests that village cooperation and the formal and more informal forms of associations that were prevalent there continued to provide communities with their only reliable form of social security. Fieldwork studies conducted in the 1950s and 1960s show the persistence of arrangements based upon an exchange of labour or for mutual advantage. Henry Lewis points to the continued importance of *zangjeras* or cooperative irrigation societies in the Ilocos area of northwestern Luzon. These associations existed to provide a stable and reliable supply of water to increase crop production. To achieve this end, the associations employed a wide variety of organizational means. Membership might include landowners as well as tenants and even, in some cases, involved investing outright ownership of the land in an association. In the main, membership was determined more by the hydraulic engineering necessary to distribute water.¹⁸ People contributed their labour to maintain a network of dams and canals in return for water. Water was then 'sold' to non-members and the money used to purchase materials required for the upkeep of the works and to hold an annual fiesta. Associations cooperated with one another as need or topography dictated and even formed loose kinds of federations to mediate disputes between their members or act on their behalf on matters of political importance (Lewis 1971:128-30). One association even had a written agreement dating from 1937 that claimed to be a copy of the 'original' constitution dating from 1793 and written in Spanish despite the fact that no one in the community could read or write that language. Ilocanos who migrated to the Cagayan valley at the turn of the twentieth century took with them this form of mutual-benefit association, and though such organizations did not prosper in quite the same way as in Ilocos, they were still a notable feature in some communities at the time of Lewis's research (Lewis 1971:135-8). The operation of less formal types of contractual labour arrangements were also observed by Donn Hart in the Visayas where it was known as *bolhon* and by Mary Hollnsteiner in Bulacan (Hart 1955:431-3; Hollnsteiner 1968:22-31).

In other parts of Luzon, *puroks* or small neighbourhood associations persisted, concerned with overall municipal improvements, that in one incidence were responsible for the construction of a new public plaza and recreation area almost entirely funded through donations of labour and materials (Rivera and McMillan 1952). Many of these activities were accomplished in

¹⁷ Thus the Knights of Columbus and the Daughters of Isabela were identified with the Nationalistas, while the Lions Club and the Hulo Women's Club were associated with the Liberals (Hollnsteiner 1963:112, 116).

¹⁸ Rivera and McMillan (1952:168) attribute the success of *zangjeras* to the fact that the majority of their members held plots of commensurate size, were of similar backgrounds and had long been resident in the community.

cooperation with local Parent Teacher Associations. Practically all the postwar rebuilding of damaged schoolhouses, the construction of new ones and the provision of equipment for both were carried out by PTAs (HDF Cabiao, Nueva Ecija Roll 47:9; Romani 1956:235). John Romani and M. Ladd Thomas (1954:133) estimated that between 50-60 percent of all the schools they visited had been built through this means. Meanwhile, community-centred school movements promoted literacy, better health, economic development and civic character at the local or *purok* level (HDP Cabanatuan, Nueva Ecija Roll 47:21). In more remote areas, access roads and other public constructions were built in a similar fashion, with municipal authorities sometimes setting aside funds for the purchase of materials and loaning equipment as their contribution to the programme (Romani and Thomas 1954:132). Outside observers saw these voluntary projects as a necessary result of the failure of local government and the need for unofficial groups to assume the *barrio's* 'normal functions'. At the same time, however, these mainly American anthropologists assessed them to be of only limited efficacy due to their 'shortage of human and material resources' (Romani 1956:235-6). Such views, of course, reflect the lack of any real appreciation of the role such organizations have played in local communities.

Equally interesting is the evidence that shows the operation of rotating credit associations in Ilocos. According to Lewis, the essential features of these types of financial savings associations or *ammong* were their fixed regular contributions. Participants agreed to a schedule of collections (often weekly) with the order of pay-out usually determined by lot. According to 'the luck of the draw', the first recipient obtained an entire week's collection but continued contributing till all participants had received their share, at which point the association dissolved or formed anew with the same or different members. There was also the added attraction of chance as to who would receive the first payment but without any of the corresponding risks associated with gambling (Lewis 1971:147-9). Similar forms of enforced savings were observed in the central Philippines where they were known as *bu-bu-ay* on the island of Leyte (Pal 1956:408). There is evidence that money saved in this manner was 'often loaned to needy members' (Rivera and McMillan 1952:168). The approximately 500 members belonging to Ang Uliran (The Paragon or Model of Excellence), an association dedicated to the improvement of *barrio* life through unity and cooperation were supporting several families who had fallen on hard times in 1951 (HDP San Josef, Nueva Ecija Roll 47:88). Lewis noted the existence of other forms of organizations associated with social as opposed to financial savings. In these *arayats*, whose membership was exclusively female, payments were made in the form of food but were unscheduled and occurred only as individual need arose. An organizer recorded all such contributions and was charged with informing

the members of an upcoming event (such as baptism, wedding or funeral) and the time and place at which their payments were due. Contributing members were likely to be guests at these functions. Lewis concluded that these *arayats* were a form of social investment that used economic goods to reinforce established social ties (Lewis 1971:149-50).

The nature of social services 1935-1965

The evidence suggests, then, that the formal processes of decolonization between 1935 and 1965 did not materially affect the manner in which the provision of social services in rural communities remained largely dependent on local-level networks of reciprocity and mutual assistance. The nature of these informal associations, however, and the services they provided (and continue to provide) people with defies easy definition. On the one hand, they were recognizable groups in their own right that appealed, if not to an abstract sense of community consistent with a politically or geographically defined area, then at least to identification with a more socially circumscribed one like a neighbourhood. As the elders of Sitio Taluate in Gapan, Nueva Ecija described the formative process that generated their associations: 'Group activities began in the family, spread to neighbours and then to the whole village' (HDP Taluate, Nueva Ecija Roll 47:131). The inhabitants in nearby Sitio Balante confirmed this, adding: 'Little by little people associated themselves into a bigger and stronger group, until they voluntarily assembled in connection with their industrial, religious, political or social interest' (HDP Balante, Nueva Ecija Roll 47:20). On the other hand, evidence suggests that the operative mechanism at work here was one that involved more dyadic bonds, a concept of reciprocity that existed on an individual or family basis that was both temporary and shifting. In fact, what often constitutes an association was not a group with a bounded and stable composition so much as a temporary set of people, each with dyadic exchange obligations to other individuals. In cases of labour reciprocity, for instance, a farmer needed to assemble a large team of men who brought with them their buffalo and gear as well as the women and boys required to harrow and carry out transplanting. A person needed to build up sufficient 'credits' and reciprocal obligations that permitted him to organize this and pay off all his outstanding 'debts'. It was more of tit-for-tat reciprocity than a form of group solidarity.

Agaton Pal identified different types of cooperative labour exchange in his anecdotal study of social organizations in Barrio Esperanza on the south-western coast of Leyte in the postwar years. *Sangga* was characterized by a joint investment of labour and the sharing of resultant income or produce and was usually closely related to subsistence activities such as farming, fishing

or forest-harvesting and rarely necessitated an exchange of money. Outright labour exchange or *ayon* involved the accumulation of respective workdays for others by each member of a group that could then be called upon when required. Not everyone's workdays, however, were assessed in the same way, so a carpenter's labour was held equivalent to two days weeding, and ploughing was assigned a higher value than transplanting rice as it involved the use of a *carabao* (Pal 1956:402-5). Brian Fegan also described a number of reciprocal arrangements he encountered in rural parts of central Luzon in the early 1970s that were known collectively as *gantihan* (where the root *ganti* means to reciprocate, while the suffix indicates a form of payment).¹⁹ First, there was *lusungan* (to go out to the fields) or *suyuan* (ingratiation) in which groups of farmers discussed their ideal planting schedules, decided when each would plant and in what order, and arranged a schedule to avoid any clashes of interest. Then there was a form of reciprocity known as *bataris* or *batarisan* in which the farm holder repaid labour on the spot through providing food, drink, and cigarettes. *Tulungan* was more generalized help that was not restricted to farm work and covered all forms of tit-for-tat reciprocity. Amounts given were meticulously recorded and set the standard of reciprocity each family had to meet when called upon on a similar *okasyon* or in case of need. There was even a more sinister form of reciprocity known as *purga* derived from the Spanish word for a purge to force someone into providing help. On the eve of threshing, widows and old women might press a gift of pork or chicken on a farmer's wife in order to put that family under an obligation to repay her generously with paddy the next day.

Pal, however, also specified another form of labour exchange that, though still dyadic in nature, was manifestly more altruistic. *Alayon* was a form of worker bee where people offered their labour to those in need of assistance. Help was rendered to avoid the criticism of unneighbourliness but also with the expectation that it would be repaid if and when the giver found him or herself in similar circumstances. Only *tagbu* was labour contributed completely free of obligation and involved work on community improvements such as the repair of the *barrio* chapel, the construction or maintenance of school buildings, and the upkeep of bridges. Even here, though, the motives might still be of a rather personal nature: avoiding the displeasure (and cash fines) of local authorities, earning *panalangin* or merit from the saint to whom the house of worship was dedicated, or maintaining thoroughfares used by one's family (Pal 1956:404-7). According to Fegan, only *bayanihan* (from the root *bayan* meaning people or nation) appealed to a more abstract sense of community welfare and was a form of emergency labour rendered in the face of a disaster such as fire, flood, or typhoon when everyone nearby

¹⁹ Brian Fegan, personal communication, NIAS, Wassenaar, the Netherlands 2003.

contributed. Events such as these could happen to anyone and so could not be anticipated. They were not a matter of reciprocity, but those who refused assistance in such circumstances were noticed and might find it difficult to obtain help in the future.²⁰ In the main, Generoso Rivera and Robert McMillan (1952:168) concluded that forms of community cooperation were most successful when the number of people involved were few, the organization simple, and the objectives clearly defined.

The various forms of community assistance were subsequently categorized by anthropologists in the 1960s who divided them neatly between contractual and quasi-contractual forms of reciprocity. However, they reserved a special place in their typology for those forms of dyadic bonds that were reified under the rubric of *utang na loob*, a debt from within, where favours or services were rendered to one outside the immediate family and that were expected to be repaid with interest so as to ensure that one did not remain in another's debt. This somewhat romanticized view of society was said to characterize social relations among Filipinos creating respectively temporary or permanent superordinate or subordinate relationships that in effect lasted indefinitely as neither party could ever be entirely sure that the debt had been fully discharged. Those who wilfully ignored its precepts and did not reciprocate in kind on the appropriate occasion were said to be *walang hiya*, literally without shame, a derogatory term that was considered to place someone below that of a beggar or a dog.²¹ Many of these notions were championed by a Christian sociology that espoused voluntarism and pushed modernization theory.

Such romanticized notions of indigenous pre-Hispanic society were later taken up by President Marcos to form the core values of his martial-law New Society, an attempt to find a Filipino third way and exemplified by his suggestion that the country be renamed *Maharlika* (the noble or aristocratic one).²² Similar ideas were pursued in Indonesia where President Soekarno modelled his vision of the indigenous state on an idealized village society writ large. State propaganda for Guided Democracy claimed the *desa* (village) as a cradle of consensus (*musyawarah* and *mufakat*), mutual aid (*gotong royong*), and reciprocity (*tolong-menolong*) (Lev 1966:46-59). Despite the somewhat clumsy political rhetoric that accompanied such state-championed visions of society, there was at least some recognition of the people's intrinsic resilience to cope with hardship and an appreciation of their multifaceted abilities to manage risk that is somehow lacking from contemporary perspectives.

²⁰ Brian Fegan, personal communication, NIAS, Wassenaar, the Netherlands 2003.

²¹ Hollnsteiner 1968:28-31. 'A beggar prays for the good health of whoever gives him alms, and a dog barks for his master': a person without shame does not acknowledge the giver in any way.

²² See the multi-volume history of the Philippines, *Tadhana* (Fate), supposedly written by Ferdinand Marcos (Marcos 1976-1980).

Unfortunately, all these postcolonial attempts at reform became hopelessly mired in cronyism and nepotism and proved of little lasting benefit to folk in the *barrios*. They can be said, however, to mark the real beginning of the decolonization process in that government policies attempted to employ non-Western, community-based models for the first time as a basic framework of society and the provision of social services.²³

Conclusion

Social security is usually defined as the totality of public measures that provide some form of protection for the members of a particular society in specified situations of need and distress.²⁴ The main issue of debate concerns those institutions established by the state to fulfil these public services and pays only scant attention to the sets of customary practices that also operate, though not exclusively, in this sphere (De Swaan 1988). State provision is regarded as modern and progressive, a function of specialized agencies in the formal sector of the economy. Provision, however, based on indigenous cultural mechanisms that obligate individuals, groups, or communities to provide assistance is seen as traditional and regressive to capital formation, ill-defined and part of the informal sector of the economy (Midgley 1984). Accordingly, the latter is supposed to gradually give way to the former as societies become more urbanized, their economies more industrialized, and an increasingly larger percentage of the population is included within the provision of the state sector. Despite the manifest failure of such a process to eventuate in many non-Western societies over recent decades, attention has still largely been focused on the shortcomings of the former rather than on the potentialities of the latter (F. von Benda-Beckmann and K. von Benda-Beckmann 2000). Yet not only do customary practices extend the only form of social security coverage that most of the world's rural populations actually experience, indigenous welfare systems may actively contribute to realizing the so far elusive goal of universal provision (Midgley 2000:224-5). The

²³ These types of strategies comprised an enormous variety of possible recourses including land utilization and conservation strategies, crop husbandry and diversification practices, exploitation of geographical complementarities in ecosystems, symbiotic exchanges between communities, the development of patronage relationships, migration, the redeployment of household labour, and complex dietary adjustments (Drèze and Sen 1989:1-75).

²⁴ The International Labour Organisation defines social security as 'the protection which society provides for its members, through a series of public measures against the economic and social distress that otherwise would be caused by the stoppage or substantial reduction of earnings resulting from sickness, maternity, employment injury, unemployment, invalidity, old age and death; the provision of medical care; and the provision of subsidies for families with children' (Social security 1984:2-3).

current emphasis on the importance of local knowledge to tackle intractable social, economic, and environmental problems is a belated recognition that non-Western peoples have historically developed sophisticated strategies and complex institutions to reduce the constant insecurity of their lives.

As the case of informal associations and networks in the Philippines shows, there has been a long history of non-state provision of individual and community welfare that stretches back for as long as the written record exists. In this it has much in common with its nearest regional neighbour, Indonesia. However, the shape and form those organizations took derived as much from its transpacific heritage as it did from its 'Malay' origins, and especially from Mexico and perhaps even more latterly from the United States of America as well. There is ample evidence that informal groupings continued to play an important role in the period between 1935 and 1965. Independence, whether determined to have occurred in 1898 or in 1946, offered no real change in how community associations worked or in how they provided a form of social security to people in rural areas. Nor did the decades immediately following the establishment of self-government or a national government substantially change matters; only the increasing incorporation of these associations into the structure of national politics appears to have been a relatively novel development. This politicization only accelerated in the 1970s and 1980s as leftward-leaning, 'progressive', nongovernment organizations began to emerge with a more direct focus on education, community-based primary care, the promotion and protection of civil and political rights, and providing material support for the activities of grassroots organizations (Silliman and Noble 1998; Clarke 1998:72-7). While the role of the state in rural areas also increased substantially during these decades, particularly its policing and military writ during the long presidential tenure of Ferdinand Marcos, it is debateable whether its greater presence has always been to the advantage of local people or 'for the good of the *barrio*'.

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