The Pluralism of Ethnic Cultures and Inclusive Development in the Philippines

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[*Abstract*]

The relation of culture and development is complicated and multilayered. Inclusive development has been the national strategy of the government of President Benigno Aquino III. However, the role the culture is scarcely mentioned. This paper will try to contextualize development in Philippine history to further show the importance of national consciousness, ethnic cultures, indigenous cultures and modern culture,. This paper concludes that inclusive development of the Philippines will be achieved through glocalization, based on the creative reconstruction of cultures in and out of the Philippines.

Keywords: Inclusive Development, Ethnic Cultures, Economic Nationalism, Modernity, Philippines

Inclusive growth is an economic and social concept offered by the Asian Development Bank in 2007 as a solution to the world's development problems. It promotes social equity and sustainable

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development without sacrificing economic growth. Simply speaking, it is a mixture of economic growth, development, and sustainable development within the discipline of development economics. In contrast to simply pursuing GDP growth, it is a form of economic development that synthesizes economic growth and social development. In comparison with anthropocentric and unsustainable development, sustainable development harmonizes humanity and the environment. In this context, inclusive growth is equal to inclusive development. Inclusive development is not only the goal pursued by developing countries in Asia; the effort also involves the need for development of cultural diversity.

The Philippines is a country that seeks to unite various ethnic cultures under a national consciousness. This social engineering, on the one hand, basically supports economic development. On the other hand, it limits sustainable and equal development to some extent. This paper looks at inclusive growth as it is reflected in the *Philippine Development Plan 2011-2016*[1] of the Philippine government through a historical lens, arguing that it should be the development orientation of the Philippines.

Ⅰ. The pluralism of ethnic cultures in the Philippines

The Philippines consists of over 90 ethnic groups, over a hundred local languages and a population of 98 million. The ancestors of most ethnicities migrated to the Philippines from outside. The earliest were the Malays and Negritos who arrived via the Asian land bridge. Both of them hybridized and multiplied into several native groups.[2] Influenced by Indian culture and Islamic culture,

1) The Philippine Development Plan (PDP), based on President Benigno Aquino III's "social contract with the Filipino people", aims for inclusive growth. This means that growth is shared by all. Inclusive growth includes: high and sustained economic growth, equal access to development opportunities, effective and responsive social safety nets. It is the government's blueprint for the next six years.

2) There are two dominant theories explaining the origins of the Filipino people: migration theory and local development theory (Oliveros 2011: 12).

these groups developed their own unique cultures. According to studies by Philippine scholars, some characters of ancient Philippine languages were from India, while 25 percent of Tagalog words were from Sanskrit (for example, Francisco 1963). Islam spread into the southern Philippines in the 14th century, where it was embraced by Philippine Muslims, later called Moros by Spanish colonizers. The Chinese were migrating to the Philippine islands since the 7th century brought with them Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism, although the process was haphazard and at times bloody. Catholicism spread in the Philippines with the arrival of Spanish colonizers in the sixteenth century and soon became the dominant religion in the Philippines. During the long period of Spanish and American colonial domination, some Whites and Mestizos came to identify with the islands and regarded it as their land. Under democratic system introduced by Americans as well as the germinal free market economy, English language and American popular culture were introduced to the Philippine archipelago. These successive ethnic migrations and cultural transplantations made the Philippines a melting pot for various ethnic groups and cultures. It also finally formed the pattern where pluralism contented with the need for a unified national consciousness.

The ethnic cultures in the Philippines are plenty and diverse. In the countryside, especially in mountainous areas such as the Cordilleras, some minorities still practice in animism. This may be considered primitive. However, from the viewpoint of postmodernism, it evokes an environmental consciousness that recovers whatever has been destroyed with the estrangement of nature and humans after modernity. These minorities work for their subsistence without a strong sense of the market economy. Chinese-Filipinos in general practice Confucianism; many of them also practice Buddhism. In their adopted home, overseas Chinese could accumulate wealth rapidly, depending on their hardwork and frugality. However, they generally do not like to participate in politics and culture because of pressure and outsidership. The Moros were linked to a Muslim trade network in Southeast Asia. Since the Spanish era, and during the period of the establishment of the Philippine Republic, this economic relation was interrupted (Warren 1981; Abinales

2000). The central government, mainly controlled by Christians, implemented a national integration plan that aimed at creating a national market and pushed for economic growth and social progress in the Moro region. However, to some extent, it intensified the contradictions between Christians and Muslims and exacerbated the cause of Moro separation. In the Philippines, 92.6% of the population is Christian, most are Catholics. Prolonged colonial domination allowed Christianity to penetrate into various aspects of Philippine life. Before independence, religion was certainly influential in society. After independence, religion continues to play an important role in Philippine development, politics, economy and society, even if there is a separation of church and state.

Although there is a plurality of ethnic cultures in the Philippines, national consciousness was shaped in the process of nation-state building. The Filipino is satisfied with his fertile and productive physical environment even while he endures the frequent disasters that occur in the tropics. In this kind of environment, the Filipino came to be optimistic and easily satisfied. Under colonial rule, Filipinos responded with indolence in order to resist the exploitation that oriented the islands to the world market and metropolitan state.[3]When it came to nation-building, the pursuit of national unity and prosperity became the norm. The approach to it was to build the market economy system, based on private ownership, which paralleled the democratic system. This system took root in the plains area, and ensured that the country would not turn toward the Socialism, even under the authoritarian regime of Marcos, and the constant threat of guerrilla warfare by the New People's Army in Luzon Island.

Filipinos in general are very sensitive and very tolerant in human relations. Before the colonial period, the Philippines thrived in "barangay" societies, where the basic social unit was the clan. Living in kinship and affinity, the head and subordinate in the barangay formed a patron-client relation, where the head protects

3) This viewpoint is from Jose Rizal. "When the small farmer sees himself exploited by all kinds of persons in authority…, it is not surprising to find him unwilling to exert himself in the cultivation of lands only to have others reap the benefits of his sweat and toil (Veneracion 2001: 193)."

the subordinate as the subordinate supports the head (Scott 2004). This is really a very stable social network from which no one could escape. The Spanish colonialist added religious kinship to this structure, which recalls the divine relationship of the Christian god the father and god the son. This kinship became all the more holy than the secular one. Although the nationalist government made an effort to revise this social structure, it remained to be the case even after a "New Society" program was introduced by Marcos.

Despite inheriting aspects of American political culture—including the aspiration for human rights, liberty, democracy and equality—the current Philippine political culture is still mainly rooted in its traditional culture (Scott 1972; Anderson 1998). Although the Philippine government practices the American system of separation of three powers (judicial, legislative, and executive) and holds general elections where every person of age has a right to vote, it is superficial. According to the Center for People Empowerment in Governance, a nonprofit group that advocates more grassroots participation in politics, there are an estimated 250 political families nationwide, with at least one in every province, occupying positions in all levels of the bureaucracy. Of the 265 members of Congress, 160 belong to these clans, the group reported. At least, 12 of the 14 presidents elected after independence belonged to these clans (Conde 11/05/2007). Due to the serious disjunction between system and reality, pragmatic culture is so popular in the Philippines. So, there are so many strange things happening in the Philippine political scene, such as party members changing their membership easily,[4] corrupt officials being reelected,[5] etc.

4) For example, Ferdinand E. Marcos, a prominent member of the Liberty Party, in order to be nominated for president, joined and ran as the Nationalist Party standard-bearer against the one fielded by the Liberals in 1965. Surprisingly, he succeeded smoothly.

5) The typical example is former President Joseph Estrada. He was deposed in 2001, and later on arrested and imprisoned for six years. Although he failed in 2010 presidential election, he succeeded in the 2013 election when he ran for Mayor of the City of Manila.

The Philippines is a state with plural ethnic cultures and a high happiness index. Its national consciousness is a complex contradiction that mixes modernity and tradition, family forces and democratic principle, enjoyment of life, and special dynamics of economic development.

Ⅱ. The fluctuation of economic development in the Philippines and its cultural roots

The Philippines was once the second most developed Asian country in terms of industrial base, just next to Japan. Since the beginning of the 1980s, the Philippine economy has grown slowly and even became the "Sick Man of Asia". In the 21st century, it rebounded and seemed to grow rapidly.

Before the Spanish invasion, the Philippines was a subsistence economy that consisted of hunting, gathering, simple agriculture, limited handicraft industry, and commerce. After the establishment of Spanish rule, the economy was characterized mainly by extensive agricultural cultivation on Haciendas, Estancias, and Encomienda. At the end of the 18th century, the Philippine economy was integrated into the world market and shaped the plantation economy where cash crops were planted. During the American period, sugar, coco, abaca, and tobacco became the main export products. The commercial economy and free market system was initially established as well in urban areas. However, the development of an export economy restrained grain production to some extent and further resulted in the shortage of food in some areas. Overly dependent on American and international markets, the Philippine economy fell into a periodic fluctuation cycle, and failed in forming an integral domestic economic system (Pomeroy 1970; 1974;1992).

After independence, the nationalist government of the Philippines practiced an import substitution industrialization strategy, as well as agrarian reform plans, in order to change the economic dependence and maintain its hard-won political independence. Based on a partial import control and foreign exchange control, the administration

of President Elpidio Quirino restrained the surge in imports from the US and obtained the balance between income and expenditure in 1956. President Carlos P. Garcia's administration practiced the "Filipino First" economic policy that aimed at supporting Filipino businesses by using foreign exchange and supporting Filipino enterprises to enter the industries monopolized by foreign companies. The Marcos regime pushed the national economy forward by increasing export to get foreign exchange for industrialization, absorbing foreign investment, and borrowing large sums of foreign currency, especially on infrastructure in Metro Manila. Land reform and support service made Philippine agriculture dynamic and the Philippines achieved food self-sufficiency in 1976, becoming even a grain exporting country in 1977. However, import substitution strategy, practiced in the Philippines for over 30 years, did not result in sustainable economic growth. On the contrary, it made economy fluctuate. From a rapid growth in the 1950s, the country experienced slow growth in the 1960s, which accelerated once again in the 1970s, only to slow down in the 1980s and 1990s.

The sustained economic downturn and political corruption in the 1980s led to the 'EDSA (people power revolution)' in 1986 that deposed Marcos and sent his family fleeing to Hawaii. After adapting the post-Cold War neoliberal framework, the Philippines' economic development strategy was repositioned to an export-oriented one, while hounded by an unstable political climate. Because the Philippine Senate rejected the Military Base Agreement signed with the United States in 1947, the US military had to withdraw from the bases in the Philippines in 1992. Some parts of Subic Naval Base and Clark Air Base were reconstructed to become export processing zones and special economic zones. The Philippines activated its economy by opening its financial market and introducing foreign investment. Although the economy did not grow rapidly in the 1990s, it underpinned the speedy growth of the economy in the 21st century. On March 18, 2014, Arsenio M. Balisacan, Socioeconomic Planning Secretary and Philippine National Economic Development Authority Secretary-General said:

> "The Philippine economy has been one of the bright spots in the region. Just last year, our real GDP expanded by 7.2 percent, improving from the 6.8 percent achieved in 2012. These results were realized despite the uncertain global environment, as well as natural disasters that the country has experienced since 2011. On the demand side, the 7.2 percent growth was mainly contributed by household spending, followed by fixed capital formation. This is primarily due to stronger growth in investments in durable equipment and construction. Moving on to the supply side, we see that while services continue to be the major contributor to growth, the contribution of Industry has been increasing over the years. In 2013, it was responsible for 3 percentage points of the total 7.2% growth rate" (Balisacan 18/03/2014).

Beside advantageous international economic relations, these results came from pro-economic elements in its culture, such as nationalism, the tradition of market economy, etc. In the initial stages of independence, being at the forefront of Cold War in Asia, the Philippines got economic assistance and opportunities for market opening in the West. After the Cold War, Philippine democracy found favor in the value-oriented diplomacy of western countries. In the American strategy of rebalance in Asia-Pacific, the Philippines remains to be an important partner in Asia. All these enabled the development of Philippine economy. Philippine nationalism played a role in national economic development just after independence. In order to get rid of economic dependence on the American market, the nationalist government facilitated national enthusiasm to practice an import substitution strategy and push economic development. After the EDSA revolution, the Philippines adjusted its economic development strategy where the market played a greater role in resource allocation and economic growth. During American period, the free market economic system was transplanted to the Philippines (Giesecke 1987). Although it was not completely successful, the Philippines began to be acquainted with the principle of market economy and its operating mechanisms. This helped the Philippines avoid the impact of Asian financial crisis and support the latest economic growth. It is the economic nationalism and idea of market economy in national consciousness that contributed to Philippine economic growth and takeoff once

again.

However, high growth rate of GDP does not easily equate to sustainable economic development. The cost of Philippine economic growth was natural resource exhaustion and environmental damage. As an archipelago, its most important resources are land and sea. The timber export catapulted Philippine industrialization. However, some of the export value was siphoned by crony families in different ways. The increasing deforestation not only destroyed the diversity of Philippine ecology and cultures, but also weakened the country's environmental base for economic development and progress of civilization (Bao 2008). The Philippines is one of the richest countries in marine biodiversity. It was estimated that its coral reefs could contribute US $ 1 billion a year to its economy. However, its marine biodiversity has been reduced largely since the 1980s. Due to marine pollution, overuse and siltation from the land, its coral reefs were damaged seriously. In the context of international environmentalism and internal environmental consciousness, the Philippines launched reforestation and marine conservation that recovered or improved deteriorating environments. However, some damaged environments may never be reversed. Clearly, environmental destruction as a consequence of economic development is disastrous for both the Philippines and the world.

Environmental destruction was brought to the Philippines by modern culture introduced by the West. Prof. Lynn White wrote in his well-known paper that ecological crisis is culturally rooted in the bible where everything God created served man's purposes (White 1967). The cultures introduced by Spain and the US displaced indigenous connection to nature and made it only valuable only when it was useful. After independence, the Philippines insisted on this modern knowledge as guide to its economic development.[6] In the context of catching up with modernization, this paradigm was extensively practiced. Developed countries and the wealthy benefit from this prejudicial practice while Filipinos suffer ecological deterioration.

While growing economically, the Philippines in the process

6) Actually, there is a continuity of colonial modernity and nationalist modernity.

became starkly polarized. The polarization intensified whenever economy grew or stagnated. Growth did not trickle down to the majority. According to statistics by *Forbes Asia*, the 40 richest individuals in the country saw their fortunes increase faster. Their collective wealth grew over $13 billion to $47.4 billion (Nam 20/06/2012). Their collective growth accounted for 76.5% of the Philippines GDP growth, while the income gap was so large that the Philippines was listed first in Asia in terms of income inequality. From 1962 to 1986, the average population growth rate was 2.7%, while the growth rate of per capita national income was only 2%. The income ratio of the 20% highest income population increased from 48.5% in 1957 to 53.9% in 1991; the income ratio of the 20% lowest income population decreased from 6.5% in 1957 to 4.7% in 1991. The Gini coefficient increased from 0.461 in 1957 to 0.468 in 1991, beyond the international recognized warning mark of 0.4. The rate of unemployment was 34% by the 1980s. The number of poor families increased from about 50% in the beginning of 1970s to about 60% in the beginning of 1980s (National Statistical Coordination Board 09/12/2013). According to Asian Development Bank, of the 90 million Filipinos, about 26% lived below the poverty line. The Second Quarter 2013 Social Weather Stations Survey fielded between June 28 to 30, 2013, revealed that 22.7% or an estimated 4.9 million families experienced involuntary hunger at least once in the past three months. This is 3.5 points above the 19.2% (est. 3.9 million families) in March 2013, and almost 3 points above the 19.9% four-quarter average of 2012. From March 2013 to June 2013, overall Hunger rates (i.e. Moderate plus Severe) rose from 25.5% to 33.4% among the Self-Rated Poor. It also rose from 12.2% to 12.6% among the Not Poor/On the Borderline over the same period.[7] Although the growth rate reached 7.8%, many are yet to feel its benefits.

Although economic problems mainly stem from economic

7) Moderate Hunger refers to those who experienced hunger "Only Once" or "A Few Times" in the last three months, while Severe Hunger refers to those who experienced it "Often" or "Always" in the last three months (Social Weather Stations 2013).

actions, the cultural aspect should not be ignored. The rising population in the Philippines may be traced with of the strong influence of the Catholic Church in society. The Church has strongly opposed divorce, abortion, and artificial contraception. In Filipino families, the fertility rate of every woman is 3.1. The poorer the family, the higher the fertility rate, and this impoverishes many. The large income gap is a result of both the market economy and the serious culture of corruption rooted in the traditional patron-client culture. Due to corruption, the Philippines lost 30% of its fiscal expenditure. Officials in different ranks misappropriated state property in different ways. Under the Marcos dictatorship, relatives and cronies misappropriated or pocketed 5 to10 billion dollars (Aquino 1987: 14). According to a study by the World Bank in 2008, corruption in the Philippines is considered to be the worst in East Asia. The Philippines ranked 3rd among 180 countries included in the 2009 Corruption Perceptions Index published by global watchdog Transparency International. Corruption exists in all levels of the government. This widespread corruption enlarged the gap between the rich and the poor. The other reason why the Philippines is impoverished is its low savings rate that stems from the populace's mentality of instant gratification. The savings rate was pegged at just 18% of the GDP, lower than other Asian countries. In East Asia, the Philippines is exceptional, because its consciousness is shaped by nationalism, Christianity, and American consumer culture of the USA.

Ⅲ. Working hard for inclusive development in the Philippines

Faced with serious an economic challenges, as well as international and internal pressures, the Philippine government began to adjust its goals for economic development, pursuing anew economic development model that harmonizes economic growth with social justice and environmental protection. On August 20, 2010, the World Bank promulgated the report titled "Philippines: Fostering More Inclusive Growth" (World Bank 2010). In this report, the World Bank suggested that the Philippines could improve its

sustainable development only if it fostered more inclusive growth projects that benefited the poor. On March 28, 2011, the Philippine government released the *Philippine Development Plan 2011-2016,* where inclusive growth was underlined as the main aim (National Economic and Development Authority 2011). On June 20, 2013, the President Benigno Aquino III announced that the Philippines is projected to reach inclusive growth, where economic development will be more felt by the poor, by way of socialized housing, expanded employment opportunities, developed tourism and agriculture, and comprehensive poverty alleviation. Concretely speaking, the average growth rate of GDP should reach 7-8% from 2011 to 2016; the poverty incidence by 2015 should decrease by half in 1991.

The key to alleviate poverty is to improve income in relation to employment. Aquino III promised that unemployment will be decreased to 6% when he steps down in 2016. The preconditions of full employment are expected to develop the labor industry and control population growth. On December 29, 2012, President Aquino III signed the law providing for free access to contraception and family planning. Though the law intends to decrease maternal mortality rate and help reduce poverty, the Catholic Church and its political allies expressed their disagreement. Several bishops threatened to contest the bill's legality in the Supreme Court. More than 80% of the population in the Philippines is Catholic, and the Church has had the support of many politicians, media commentators, and businessmen (BBC News 29/12/2012).The Catholic Church insists on its traditional doctrine, while compromising the quality of life of the public. Valuing life, the Church advocated natural family planning. This option however could not decrease the current fertility rate. The literacy rate among females aged 10 years and over in 2010 was 97.6 percent. Among males of the same age, literacy rate was at 97.4 percent. School attendance was higher among females than males. Females aged 5 to 24 years who attended school during the school year 2009-2010 comprised 65 percent of all females in this age group. In comparison, 64.1 percent of all males aged 5 to 24 years old attended school in the same period (National Statistics Office 27/12/2013). This implies that while Philippine women still adhered to conservative views

about reproductive health, they were significantly literate. Secularizing education and improving its quality must be prioritized in reforms.

While controlling population growth, it is most important to expand employment opportunities. In reforming the industrial structure, the Philippine government has set its sights on the service sector and capital-intensive industries. In this regard, what should be emphasized is that agriculture and labor intensive-industries could play a positive role in improving employment and speeding up economic development. Although Philippine agriculture improved, its development was actually slow. Agricultural development could be instrumental in stabilizing rural areas, as well as improving the chain of agricultural production (grain and cash crop cultivation), agricultural services (logistics, transportation, and credit), industrial investments (fertilizer, pesticides, and mechanics) and farming industry. This will enable the strengthening of the agro-industrial complex produces value-added commodities. This agricultural program is sure to employ locals and to balance the increasing city-countryside gap and disparate regional economies. In manufacturing, the Philippines should follow the example of the Japanese who developed micro businesses that create jobs, as suggested by Japan International Cooperation Agency. These small enterprises mainly thrive on labor-intensive production, where raw materials are purchased and processed for domestic consumption. This kind of industry could absorb rural surplus labor, but also move them into migrant labor and urbanization. Additionally, tourism is a small-investment and labor-intensive industry. In the Philippines, there are so many tourist spots to develop and this industry can certainly be prosperous.

Although agriculture, primary manufacturing, and tourism are labor-intensive, they need investment to be pushed forward. Traditional culture characterize the Philippines as embodying vigorous private consumption that result in underinvestment. Under saving meanwhile means that banks and individuals could not accumulate enough to invest. In this context, consumption culture of the Philippines is causing it to overdraw its economic future according to the consumption model of the developed countries. In the current international economic system, the Philippines has

to change its consumption culture for it to prosper.

Philippine economy should be sustainable. Environmental damage weakened the resource and environmental base of its economic development. Today, the Philippine government and environmental NGOs are working hard to reverse the deterioration and use resources efficiently. On the one hand, the economic growth model should shift to one that promotes recycling. Buying, processing, sale, and consumption of materials should consider ecological limits. On the other hand, the positive meaning of traditional culture should be reintroduced and the indigenous should be empowered. Eurocentrism considers uplanders as backward and a hindrance to development. This is clearly a misunderstanding. It is necessary to empower uplander cultures and sustain their communities (Utting 2000). The Philippines has launched a social forestry plan and marine conservation that attempt to practice this idea.

Aiming at inclusive development, the Philippine government should pay more attention to reforming the distribution system, and balancing efficiency and justice. Corruption must be eradicated. These reforms take time to accomplish, but President Aquino has accomplished a lot by taking the first steps towards reform.

Ⅳ. Brief Conclusion

The Philippines is a hybrid culture that combines national consciousness with plural ethnic and external cultures. Because of these cultural underpinnings, the Philippine economy has followed a long and tortuous way towards development. It is very difficult to distinguish clearly which culture is helpful for economic development and which one is not. We could assert that the economic growth in the Philippines was not sustainable and inclusive. With help from the Asian Development Bank and World Bank, the Philippine government under the Aquino III administration realized and tried its best to make Philippine economy more sustainable and inclusive. In this process, it is

necessary to selectively reconstruct the ethnic cultures and national consciousness of the Philippines. In this sense, the inclusive development of the Philippines will definitely be the result of glocalization that harmonizes the global and the local in development discourses and practices.

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