

SOME THOUGHTS ON CURRENT FILIPINO PEASANT WORLDVIEW

By Noel Mondejar

Very often when Filipinos from the middle class, especially those isolated from the realities of the countryside, think about Filipino peasants, they picture — and are thrilled by — the rustic scenes depicted in Amorsolo paintings, many copies of which grace Christmas cards and the lobbies of banks and big companies. It is a scenery that is peaceful, pleasant, and full of tranquility. In fact, this is a common perception worldwide of many who have lived in cities and the urban centers isolated from the realities of the rural communities, who refuse consciously or unconsciously to understand the problems and issues that confront the food producers, the farmers, the peasants.

Peasants worldwide and in the Philippines long for the realization of those scenes which were theirs long ago — and off and on — when external factors allow them that peace, that tranquility, that unity with nature that guarantees harmony.

I remember an incident a few years ago about an activist-friend from Singapore who joined us in rural Sarawak, Malaysia for an integration-immersion program with the native Ibans. At dusk one evening, there was a big commotion. Our Singapore friend was running and shouting excitedly at the top of his voice, "Watch out! Watch out! There's a huge rat! There's a huge rat!" He was holding on to his pants which were falling and were halfway down his legs. (Apparently, he just came from the bush and was disturbed while doing his private business.) Running vigorously after him was a scraggly native pig in all its blackness!

Poor friend, he mistook the native rural pig for his native urban rat!

In many instances, policy makers, politicians, even academicians and many others fall into the mistaken perception that rural native pigs are their urban native rats. Because of this analyses, solutions, suggestions, recommendations, plans for the rural areas, for the rural people, and for rural development are actually meant for the urban rat.

A good example of this is the much-vaunted and publicized CALABARZON (Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal, Quezon) Project which was recently launched by no less than President

Cory Aquino. It would be interesting to know if any Filipino anthropologist, or for that matter any Filipino social scientist, has been consulted. Among us here in this conference, is there anybody who was consulted or who conducted a study for this project, or who participated in a professional capacity in the CALABARZON project?

I was quite ashamed to read that the "Master Plan on Project CALABARZON (was) prepared by the Japan International Cooperation Agency." (*Philippine Daily Inquirer*, October 19, 1990).

Immediately, on October 21, 1990 the Scientists' Action Committee, an organization of biologists, physicists and engineers based in the University of the Philippines issued a position paper stating that the project would be detrimental to Philippine scientific and technological development. It also stated further that the Project CALABARZON would result in the widespread dislocation of farmers, steep increases in land values and the rise in land rent.

These are issues that are dear and close to the peasants for which time and time again they rose and fought those who would deprive them of their land, society and culture. Even as early as 1745 the peasants of Cavite, Laguna, Rizal, Batangas, and Bulacan, rose against the friar haciendas; during the American regime the *Sakdalistas* and the *Tangulan* fought the government for their land.

I raise these questions because CALABARZON, these provinces, host the varied and diverse and socially organized manifestations of Filipino peasant worldviews. Most of these would have problems and even objections, if not militant opposition, to the plans of this project which has a built-in program of dispossessing peasants of their lands and of peasant proletarianization.

Already the Vice Chairman for the Visayas of the militant *Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas* (KMP) has raised the alarm when he stated that "an imaginary wall separating us, Filipino peasants, from the administration of Mrs. Aquino, a wall growing massive each time it defines its economic and political policies . . . The wall, though imaginary, is real." referring to the same project.

In addition, we are aware that these provinces are also the area of Ka Roger's New People's Army unit, just as the hills and mountains and slopes of Mount Banahaw embrace the

cults of nativistic and millenarian peasants.

Once again, it becomes imperative that social scientists become directly involved in development planning as well as in its implementation. Once again, it is important that we get to know better and understand more our peasants.

What would be the content of a position paper of UGAT or of social scientists?

INTRODUCTION

But who are the Filipino peasants?

The Filipino Peasantry has always been the small agricultural producers with simple farming equipment and with family labor, produce mainly for consumption and to fulfill obligations to the holders of political and economic powers.

Included in this general definition are five components, namely:

- a. relationship to land — some form of control. Landlords are not needed to establish the fact of peasantry.
- b. family farm — a combined production-consumption unit the family being the production-team of the farm.
- c. an occupation that is generally independent of the market economy. Although many of the jobs done by the peasant are also done by other occupational groups, the specificity of the peasant's work lies in its unique combination.
- d. village structure which is characterized with members being born into a single community, undergoing similar life-experiences and necessarily involved in close, personal interaction with consequent absence of anonymity.
- e. the peasantry is a "preindustrial social entity."

Within this concept many of the indigenous ethnic and tribal communities would be included. While many lowland farming communities may be seen not to qualify, it would be a mistake to judge the "book by its cover" for many of what may apparently be perceived as modernized farming communities are deep inside still those archaic communities which possess common consciousness so vital in peasant societies.

Definitely upland farming and settler communities would best describe the Filipino peasants.

Philippine peasant worldview has been manifested in history in the form of nativistic (seeks to perpetuate or reestablish native cultural traits and practices that are understandable and within control) and millenarian (refers to the millenium or the Golden Age mentioned in Revelation 20 during which holiness is to triumph and Christ is to reign, a kind of fairy-tale-like-living-happily-ever-after-society.) movements. They have been militant (armed and violent and using amulets and *anting-anting* and rituals for protection) and mystical (religious, spiritual, full of archaic knowledge and consciousness). These two characteristics continue to dominate.

One of its current manifestations is in the form of local cults, like the Rock Christ, the 4Ks (*Kasalanan, Kaluwasan, Kinabuhi, Kabus* – Sin, Salvation, Life, Poverty), the *Pula-Puti*, the *Tadtads*. Like in the past, these have been used for political purposes, and in particular for counterinsurgency, as anticommunist groups, fodder for the frontline war against the New People's Army.

Sadly, it is the poor is pitted against the poor, because on the one hand the majority of the rank and file of the NPA Red Fighters are the same peasants – nativistic and millenarian.

On the other hand, there are the mystical movements that find haven in many sacred places and mountains, in many a so-called "new Jerusalem."

Mount Banahaw, in the Quezon/Laguna borders, embraces many of these, such as the *Rizalistas* of different varieties and forms, the *Ciudad Mistica de Dios, Tres Persona Solo Dios, Sagrada Familia*.

SOME SOCIO-HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Spanish colonial period before the Revolution of 1896 showed two general types of peasant reaction to their displacement and dispossession and which reflect their typical worldview:

Those of the first type maybe described as the "Encounter" (1565-1663).

It was during this period that the Filipino peasantry was being confronted by new forms of economic, social and political formations, such as the establishment of the *encomiendas*

and later on the imposition of the tribute and corvee systems.

Other determinant factors were the Spanish demand for free labor for the galleon trade, which overshadowed the development, at this period of the hacienda economy. Because of the shortage of labor — one of the chief characteristics of pre-modern Philippines — the Spanish colonial administration had to exact free labor from the peasantry for its economic, religious and political endeavors. Because of this the peasantry had to be dislocated from its regular agricultural cycle and new forms of controls had to be established against which the peasantry revolted.

It was this disruption rather than the issues on land, which occasioned the revolts and rebellions. Covert resistance, for example, which took the form of "Philippinization" or selective borrowing of the preferred Spanish culture rather than being completely swallowed in the foreign and alien culture. Overt rejection took the form of retreat to the interior. Those who retreated were later on called *remontados* or *montestas*, as they called those who inhabit the hinterland of many Rizal towns. Many of our present indigenous and ethnic cultural communities belong to this tradition.

Nativistic revolts such as those of *Tamblot*, *Bankaw*, *Tapar* and *Dagohoy*, incorporated a demand to return to the indigenous religion and culture, which was within their control and comprehension. The immediate appeal and success of these revolts reflected the distance from the Spanish center of power and hence the weakness of Spanish influence.

Revolts against the new intervention in the life of the peasantry were: the Pampanga Revolt of 1584 against the forced labor in the Ilocos mines; the Sumuroy rebellion in Samar (1649) against the forced labor in the Cavite shipyards; the 1661 Pangasinan and Ilocos revolts against taxes and forced labor; and the revolts again in Pangasinan, but this time spreading to the Cagayan Valley in 1717 to 1719; and in Pangasinan once more in 1762-1764.

It was only toward the second half of the 18th century that the revolts and uprisings took a more distinctly agrarian character. The land issue became a major grievance, identifying a marked departure from the first phase. The rise of the value of land as a commercial commodity was reflected in the expansion

of the friar estates. In Cavite alone, a total of 48,243 hectares of the best agricultural lands were appropriated from the peasantry. Land usurpation became the order of the day. The Filipino peasant was dispossessed of his land rights in several devious ways, besides outright and violent landgrabbing methods. Many subsistence peasants found themselves either dispossessed of their lands or were subjected to land rent. Feudal exploitation under share tenancy within the haciendas was exemplified by peasant demands for the lowering of land rents, protests against usury and false measurements of share during harvests.

The entry of the Chinese mestizos into the agricultural sphere as landowners brought increasing monetization in the agrarian economy and through their aggressive commercial practices captured whatever limited surplus existed, allowing them to become landowners especially via the *pacto de retro-venta*. Beginning in the 18th century and toward the 19th century, there was an increasing concentration of land in the hands of the mestizos, creating new friction between them and the indigenous population. In many cases they were already the *inquilinos* or direct lessors of the friar estates, while the Filipino peasants were the actual cultivators. This created further social stratification in what was already a destabilized traditional peasant society.

It was also during this period that Philippine agriculture was integrated into the global capitalist system. From a basically subsistent agriculture, the transition to a distinctly feudal mode of agricultural production which was partially export-oriented but for the most part for domestic consumption, introduced Philippine agriculture in the world market. Sugar and tobacco, although produced under feudal rather than capitalist arrangements, were exported under a Spanish policy of monopolies. This fostered more intensive development of agriculture in response to its link with the capitalist economy.

The Manila-India trade brought about by British capitalism finally culminated in the British occupation of Manila in 1760—another factor which facilitated the linkage to the global market system of Philippine agriculture.

Thus crop production increased because of the impetus of a commercialized agriculture accompanied by a rapid population

growth, which led to high land rents and increasing indebtedness of the share tenants.

Another feature which added to the disruption of traditional peasant economy was the civil incorporation of estates. The civil incorporation of the Calamba estate into a British company led to the eviction of tenants.

The support of social bandits, and the engagement of many peasants in petty thievery, pilferage of crops and the other forms of banditry, became a ready response to their increasing exploitation.

These instabilities resulted in different forms of peasant struggle, e.g. reformism – an attempt to restore the status quo of independent relations with landlords against the impersonal and in-cash kind of relations.

Notable among the agrarian revolts during this period is the revolt of 1745 which raised the land issue against the friar haciendas and which mobilized the peasants of Cavite, Bulacan, Laguna, Batangas, and Rizal. The *Guardia de Honor* of Pangasinan, Tarlac, Nueva Ecija, Ilocos (1886-1990), although dominantly millenarian, contained agrarian issues and an incipient class consciousness in their anti-*ilustrado* demands. The Basi Revolt in Ilocos (1807) also directed its fury against the *principalia* composed of those who became the main agents of the colonial rulers and who already incorporated into themselves the class status of the ruling powers.

While the class contradictions between the peasants and the colonial rulers and their local representatives, the *principalia*, were apparent, especially in the land issue, there were also the beginnings of unity between the peasantry and the *principalia* in their common struggle against the Spanish colonialists. The Diego/Gabriela Silang Revolt of Ilocos (1762-63), for example, was *principalia*-led and was directed against Spanish abuses.

This unity provided the Revolution of 1896 its nationalist (antiimperialist) and democratic (antifeudal) content.

The eight provinces where the Revolution of 1896 started were the areas where the Spanish exploitative impact was most intense in terms of appropriation of the peasantry's limited "surplus." The agrarian conditions were oppressive, and the *ilustrado* class was capable and willing to lead the peasantry.

It was no longer merely a peasant revolt, it was a revolu-

tion. It did not merely demand land rights within the context of a peasant economy, it demanded independence, the establishment of a new social order, which rightly integrates the peasant vision of a new world where he is in peace and tranquility with nature, his community, his society.

At its height, according to one source, 400,000 peasant revolutionaries participated. They comprised the main force of the Revolution of 1896. The peasants did not identify the *inquilinos* or the local landlords as their class enemies, but as their patrons. They relegated to some future date their immediate agrarian demands for the sake of national liberation against colonial rule. The revolutionary army provided them with the discipline and organization which led to Spanish defeat, only to be co-opted by the new US imperialist power in connivance with the vacillating and indecisive *ilustrado* class.

Although the peasant army disbanded, the first two decades of American rule were confronted by several peasant revolts and uprisings which continued the demands of the Revolution of 1896, but due to the changing social conditions, assumed different forms.

The *Bagong Katipunan* (1901-1904) in Bulacan and Rizal continued the anticolonial battlecry and continued to resist American rule. Sakay's Republic (1902-1906) in Bulacan, Rizal, Cavite, Laguna and Batangas was another manifestation. So were the *Pulajanes* of Samar, Leyte, Cebu and Bohol, the *Colorums* of Surigao and Agusan, the *Babaylanos* of Negros and Panay, which assumed nativistic forms in their anticolonial, anti-*principalia* struggles.

This period also witnessed the establishment of unarmed peasant organizations, such as the *Kusug Sang Imol Mainawaon* of Negros Occidental (1923), which brought together peasants in mutual aid.cooperation as well as in common demands for higher wages.

The *Kapisanan Makabola Makarinag* of Nueva Ecija (1928) advocated a secret people's army to lead successful local uprisings which would provoke mass actions leading to wholesale property redistribution.

The Philippine National Association of Tayug, Pangasinan advocated armed uprising, spontaneous revolution and an anti-*ilustrado*, antimilitary (constabulary) position.

The millenarian *Intrencherado* (Iloilo, 1927) was antielite and antialien merchant.

As we can see, the first two decades of American rule did not result in any new changes of peasant oppression. For this reason, the response of the peasantry continued to be the same, this time, however, with more sophistication learned from their participation in the Revolutionary Army of 1896.

Land concentration and accumulation continued unabated with sham American land reform, purportedly to buy out the Friar Estates and redistribute these among the peasants. The Friar Lands Act did not give land ownership to the peasants but to the *inquilinos* and to the newly-established American corporations as well as to certain key persons in the American colonial government.

Examples of large estates were: Hacienda Lian — 7,799.8 hectares, Buenavista Estate (Bulacan) — 27,407.2 hectares, San Pedro Tunasan (Laguna) — 2,286.7 hectares, Dinalupihan Estate (Bataan) — 4,125 hectares. We are aware that these estates until today are still subject to agrarian unrest.

The land concentration further increased the rate of share tenancy relationship. The land policies of the Americans assured the continuation of feudal arrangements and the growth of a Filipino elite landlord classes now gradually being Americanized through a system of colonial education. (Remember the *Thomasites*?)

The entrenchment of capitalist relation was further strengthened with a vigorous development of export crops production which was institutionalized by a free trade policy.

The homesteading program of the government which opened the Mindanao Moro and Lumad homeland to Filipino settlers created its own problems. [See Aijas Ahmad, *Class and Colony in Mindanao: Political Economy of the 'National Question' (A Case in the Politics of Genocide)*.]

The successful October Revolution in Russia (1917) also had its impact on the Philippine sociopolitical situation.

The Communist Party of the Philippines was founded by Evangelista in 1930. However, even before this, peasant unions, associations with a distinct class orientation were already emerging.

In 1917 the *Unyon ng Magsasaka* (Bulacan) raised the issues

of tenancy and usury, in 1919 the *Anak-Pawis* in Pampanga, the *Union de Aparceros de Filipinas* in Bulacan, the *Kusog Sang Imol Mainawaon* in Negros Occidental; in 1922 the first tenants' congress of the *Katipunan ng mga Manggagawa at Magsasaka sa Pilipinas* (KMMP) was held. In 1928 it changed its name to *Katipunan Pambansa ng mga Magbubukid sa Pilipinas* (KPMP) under the leadership of Manahan and Feleo.

Together with the Socialist Party (1929) and the *Agumnan Din Maklong Talapagobra* (AMT, 1930), the KMMP and the CPP merged in 1938 to present a united front against colonialism and landlordism.

Meanwhile, *Tangulan* (Manila-Bulacan-Tayabas-Laguna-Pampanga-Nueva Ecija-Cavite) led by a former newspaperman and an erstwhile member of the CPP, mobilized 97,000 members, both peasants and workers along revolutionary social and economic objectives.

The *Katipunan ng Anak-Pawis* of Laguna-Tayabas led by Teodoro Asedillo, a former CPP member who was forced to flee to the countryside as a result of his participation in a workers' strike, and Nicolas Encallado, came under strong CPP influence.

Robin Hood-type outlaw band of peasants like the Lope de la Rosa Band of Bulacan-Nueva Ecija slipped in and out of the already growing numbers of peasant organizations in the area.

Side by side with the nativistic movements like the *Jesus-Maria-Jose* (Soldiers of Christ) and the Colosa-led Tayug uprising of 1931 were the politically inclined *Sakdalistas* (1935) who participated in the elections of 1934 and raised three main issues against colonial education, US economic control and military bases. They promised the peasant followers the confiscation of large landholdings to be redistributed to the landless. In the 1935 plebiscite they campaigned for electoral boycott in accordance with their demand for absolute independence. Forced by repression they responded through an armed uprising which spread to many provinces only to be violently quelled.

Peasant militant action, while limited in its armed action, engaged in strikes, attacking landlords' granaries, demonstrations to seek redress for grievances, setting fire to sugar cane fields of despotic landlords, and legal court cases. Generally

nonviolent, it pursued moderate objectives. Violence was more local than widespread, they staged demonstrations for reforms rather than rebellion or revolution.

The AMT, KPMP, the Socialist Party even fielded candidates in the 1940 elections and won 9 mayorships. The *Sakdals*, too, participated in the 1933 elections.

While the socioeconomic conditions of the peasantry had not improved but rather worsened, the mixture of force and intimidation, the moderate legislation, the increased militarization and the deceptive Social Justice Program of Quezon, as well as the organizations of landlord associations and private armies like *Cawal Ning Capayapaan* forced the peasantry to wait for the opportune time and the favorable material conditions before again rising up in arms during the Japanese occupation with the establishment of the Hukbalahap.

It was during the struggle against the Japanese invaders that the peasants established control and power anew over their lands. Landlords who collaborated with the Japanese, and who fled to the countryside, were dispossessed of their lands and property. The *Huks* controlled and liberated many towns and municipalities, especially in Central Luzon. They did not need the Americans as their liberators.

Soon the peasantry would experience a new betrayal from their nonpeasant leadership, when instead of pursuing their objectives and goals to their ultimate conclusion, the new American-sponsored Philippine Republic trapped them into a parliamentary struggle, only to be repressed violently later on, after they were lulled into unpreparedness. (See *Peasant War in the Philippines*.)

Many things have been written about the demise of the peasant struggle at this period until the early 1950s, and the rhetorics are still very much alive. Many of the leading actors are still alive and have expressed their views. Suffice it to say that the peasant victories before, during and after the Japanese occupation were pyrrhic victories.

US imperialism, in its hegemonic desire to maintain leadership in the capitalist countries, could not allow the victory of the peasants to be sustained. They had to be crushed, and new peasant groups like the Federation of Free Farmers (1953) as well as new labor organizations, had to be sponsored to

counteract the so-called communist menace.

The victory of the Communist Party of China and the People's Liberation Army under the leadership of Mao Zedong in 1949 frightened US Imperialism. Although the Partido ng Komunista ng Pilipinas (PKP) continued to maintain the remnants of the Hukbalahap, now the *Hukbong Magpalaya ng Bayan* (HMB) and started to reorganize the peasants under the *Pambansang Kaisahan ng mga Magbubukid* (later to be succeeded by the *Malayang Samahan ng Magsasaka* (Masaka) in the 1960s), its weakened leadership and its gravely battered organizational structures could no longer provide the class leadership to the peasantry. The peasantry had to wait for another time, another place when the material basis would allow its new rebirth.

Meanwhile, reformist organizations which did not raise the peasant demands to their global and systematic levels continued to come and go. They must be credited, however, for maintaining the "light at the end of the tunnel" because it was also from their ranks that the new blood of millenarian militant peasants was born.

In the 1960s, eight major peasant organizations formed themselves into the Philippine Council for Agricultural Workers (PCAW-ALU, CIO, FFF, MFL, NUPAAW and PLUM) modeled according to the standard American labor unions. They provided an initial outlet for the brewing storm in the countryside.

As the oppression of the peasants was heightened by global economic crises, sporadic, spontaneous peasant uprisings very local in nature occurred. Members of the Lapiang Malaya were massacred. The Monkees and the Beatles fought it out in Central Luzon in an effort to neutralize peasant unrest. In Mindanao, the Ilagas were founded as the Muslims established the Mindanao Independence Movement (MIM).

In 1968 the CPP (MLMZD) was reestablished and in 1969 the NPA was inaugurated.

The late '60s and the early '70s witnessed the growing militancy of the oppressed sectors of Philippine society. Peasants, workers, students, jeepney drivers, urban poor staged mass rallies, demonstrations, protests, strikes, human blockades etc. At the height of its activities, the FFF had over 200,000 mem-

bers and a mass base of 3 to 4 million, sufficient for it to establish its political party, the *Kamayan Party*, and to field candidates in the Davao Provinces in Mindanao.

In Bais, Negros Oriental (1971) the organized sugar workers at the different haciendas were also entrapped into participating in the November 1971 elections under the banner of the Concerned Action Group — with the slogan of “ballot offensive — bullet defensive.” Of course, they lost!

The MASAKA, the KASAKA, the FFF, FARM, FLRF, HUKVETS, FAITH, AMA continued to pursue reformist demands hoping to influence a basically landlord—controlled and —dominated government to also accede to the conservative issues—even when they were generally denied, the growing anti-feudal, antifascist, antiimperialist fervor of the peasantry continually stifled.

The nativistic and millenarian types also continue to exist — *Lapiang Malaya*, the *Adarnista* of *Ibong Adarna* in Nueva Ecija, the *Caballeros de Rizal* Agricultural Enterprises (CRAE) of Agusan, and the many Rizalist cults.

On September 21, 1972, Martial Law was declared and the ranks of the basically peasant-dominated NPA rose with the entry of numerous workers, students and professionals. For a time, it became the most effective peasant organization in the country.

Martial Law forced the open legal peasant movement to lie low and reexamine its strategies and tactics.

The underground Left movement launched its guerrilla zone preparation which assumed the organization of the Filipino peasants in the countryside similar to the steps taken by the banned or restricted open legal peasant movement, including those which were organizing the peasants under Church auspices Basic Christian Community — Community Organizing (BCCCO).

In spite of the “salvaging” and hamletting launched against the peasants in the countryside by the Martial Law regime, and the rampant militarization therein, the peasants now strengthened by the presence and leadership of the NPA and the support of the Church and of what was to be the core of today’s nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), open legal peasant organizations flourished and resisted the regime. It was almost

reminiscent of the historical epoch when the "blood of the martyrs nourished the early church," similarly the blood of peasant leaders, of the peasant masses, brought forth numerous local, even municipal and provincial peasant associations. They engaged in mass rallies and demonstrations on agrarian issues and also participated in mobilizations that took up national issues such as the dismantling of the Martial Law regime, the removal of the US military bases, and a new component — environmental issues which brought them back to their pristine origins, unity and oneness with nature.

Toward the end of the Marcos regime, in 1985, the Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas was to be inaugurated. Shortly thereafter other national peasant organizations were to be established or reestablished. Others broke away from the Marcos regime-sponsored peasant organizations.

The Congress for People's Agrarian Reform (CPAR), a coalition of national peasant organizations and NGOs was soon established. Central to the coalition is the agrarian issue — the issue of peasant land tenure.

In 1987, in what may be reflective of the foreboding future of the peasants under the Aquino government which was swept into power by a popular nonviolent uprising, peasants and their supporters were massacred in Mendiola on their way to Malacañang where they were to appeal for genuine agrarian reform. Unarmed but undaunted, they were mercilessly felled by bullets fired by the soldiers of the "new" Armed Forces of the Philippines, under its Commander-in-Chief, the landlord of Hacienda Luisita, Corazon Cojuangco Aquino. (Does the name Cojuangco remind anybody of the Chinese mestizo *inquilinos* who were the main beneficiaries of the American colonial regime's land reform?)

In another dramatic twist of events, the Supreme Court of Aquino was to send to maximum security prison in Muntinlupa the fiery and feisty peasant leader and the KMP national chairman Jimmy Tadeo. In a visit to his Muntinlupa prison, Jimmy said that he viewed his present predicament as the revenge of the landlord against the "usurping" and disrespectful tenant who lives and dies by the grace of his/her landlord.

Reflective too of the present government's attitude toward the peasants is its Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program

(CARP) which is a mangled version of what was originally proposed by the Gillego committee. Gillego resigned from the sponsorship of a bill which he said he no longer recognized afterward. CPAR has come up with a People's Agrarian Reform Code (PARCODE) in challenge to CARP.

Similarly telling is the leadership of the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR). Since the installation of the Aquino government the agency has had five Secretaries. One became a politician, another was forced to resign because of DAR anomalies, two were not confirmed by the landlord-dominated Commission on Appointments (perhaps they did not even want their pseudoagrarian reform law to be implemented by committed and dedicated public servants), and the current secretary who has been described by peasant leaders and by national peasant organizations and even by the progressive DAR employees as "without a backbone who would cater to the wishes and demands of landlord politicians, and who is a prolandlord Secretary of the Department of Agrarian Reform."

The peasant struggles onward without letup.

SOME CONCLUSIONS

We have presented the content of the Filipino peasant worldview as it has unfolded in history and as it continues to unfold today.

Like many peasant worldviews, it is *nativistic* — it seeks to keep within its control and comprehension the events that impact on peasant lives and communities; it rejects the intrusion of alien and foreign instrumentalities that complicate their daily lives and societies. Its present-day manifestations are many and varied. The cultists' use of amulets and *anting-anting* is a manifestation of this nativism, just as is the use of symbols that protect and identify them. The Philippine Benevolent Missionary Association as well as many Rizalist cults are famous for these. Among the more modern peasants, the return to traditional farming, to indigenous knowledge of agriculture reflect this. After the havoc and damage that the green revolution has dealt nature, the soil and the environment, many peasants seek the old ways that kept the earth fertile, the surroundings pleasant and nontoxic — indeed an Amorsolian scene!

It has been also millenarian. Throughout the centuries the peasants have struggled for a better life, for the life where peace and justice reigns, for a "Peasant Utopia" that is a free village, untrammled by tax collectors, labor recruiters, large landowners, officials, with "dreams of deliverance, the visions of a *mahdi* who will deliver the world from tyranny." (Eric Wolf: *On Peasant Rebellions*) Although patient and forbearing — there is a Tagalog saying which goes, "*Ang taong naiipit, sa patalim kumakapit!*" — the peasant also becomes violent in the defense not only of the present but also of the future, when cornered and unable to bear the pain and suffering of the present. Serious analysis of the attraction of the peasants to the Marxist classless society is imbedded in this millenarian spirit that mobilizes the peasant against his present and future oppression, as a peasant and as a proletariat. A near-classic revelation of the millenarian spirit was the "exodus" of almost a thousand peasant families from the different evacuation centers, although they came from different barangays in North Cotabato. They rejected their continued mendicancy and beggary in the evacuation centers and in a long procession with their families and children and whatever belongings they had — sought their promised land, their Zone of Life and Zone of Peace. Its continuing manifestations are reflected in the New Jerusalems of Mount Banahaw, or in Dinagat Island, or in Nueva Ecija, or Bicol. Even the ancestral domain of the Lumads and indigenous peoples, and the clamor for autonomy in the Cordillera and Muslim regions reflect this millenarianism.

While nativistic and millenarian, however, the Filipino peasant worldview has not been wanting in militancy and mysticism.

The Filipino peasant's militancy is well-recorded in Philippine history. Very often the Filipino peasant has been depicted as the patient and hardworking carabao. Indeed he is patient and hardworking but he can also fight like a bull. The tamaraw embodies this fighting spirit. The majority of the NPA Red Fighters are peasants. Many of them are there not necessarily because of the lofty ideological aspirations that the CPP banners (the NPA is officially the armed wing of the CPP, although it may be argued that it does not necessarily come under its military command), but perhaps more because of the Revolu-

tionary Agrarian Reform that it implements and the Peasant War that it undertakes. (See Amado Guerrero: *Philippine Society and Revolution*.) Peasant militancy especially in the last few decades can be characterized as an independent call action where the initiative is from them and the corresponding organizational structures are created by them and the leadership is within their ranks; or it can also be a guided political action in which nonpeasants, as in the case of the ilustrados of the Revolution of 1896, assumes the leadership and the directing influence in order to achieve common aims and goals. "The common element found in all these different types of movements is the existence of a closely-knit group of activists, having its own impetus, specific organizational structure, aims and leadership — a group for which the peasantry is an object of leadership or manipulation." (Shanin: *Peasant and Peasant Societies*)

The mysticism that surrounds the Filipino peasant worldview is replete among the cults that peasants flock to. Many of the native cults and religions, particularly the Rizalistas embody that deep communion with nature, that unity with the other world without mediation. This has often been depicted as superstition and a block to progress. But precisely because as agriculturists, as food producers who work closely with nature, with the earth, with the sea and the forest these peasants claim an affinity, with nature. Even the impassioned and logical Tadeo kept his Holy Week *panata* on Mount Banahaw. He confided to me when I visited him in prison that he believed he would not be able to break his vow even while in prison. It is this mysticism, this ability to directly commune with nature and reality, that has allowed indigenous peasant knowledge of agriculture to endure, to ensure that earth and nature continue to provide the food that men need to survive. Compare this with modern science that exploits rather than conserves, that rapes nature for profit! Environmentalists and peasants are the genuine environmentalists who share this mysticism.

A common consciousness permeates the Filipino peasant worldview. It is this common consciousness that emanates from its mysticism. It is this common consciousness that allows continuity, that gives strength and life. Destroy this common

consciousness and we have a disembodied peasant, unable to cope with the reality and a prey to industry, the reserved labor force.

The current manifestation of the Filipino peasant worldview combines and shares all these aspects. In some cases one dominant perspective prevails; in others, it is a combination.

The understanding of these have led many powers-that-be to use it for their selfish and greedy and even malicious intents. The proliferation of fanatical groups in counterinsurgency operations is just one example. This is not only practised here in the Philippines but in other countries as well, where the peasants' genuine struggle is being waged. It is one of the best "divide-and-rule" tactics.

On the other hand, understanding the peasant worldview can be very important in development planning and development work. Working within the premises of this worldview will not only prevent the violence that often results from peasant rejection; it will also allow more participation and consequently will incorporate those aspects of the peasant worldview that the development decades have missed so miserably.

For example, the issue of sustainable development is rooted in the peasants' indigenous knowledge of nature which they derive from a mysticism and common consciousness so prevalent among archaic communities. They, as I mentioned earlier, are the first and the genuine environmentalists.

For centuries this indigenous knowledge has preserved our forests while making them productive for food consumption. It has saved the herbs and medicinal plants for our health. It has made our plant genetics varied and diverse for the future of our children. It has kept our rivers and creeks safe for drinking that even today water from these "hidden" springs are exported to other countries.

It is a challenge to us anthropologists and social scientists and our policy-makers and those engaged in development planning and implementation to have a better and deeper knowledge of our peasantry. Many problems and confrontations that occur daily in the countryside could be prevented. Perhaps even our development process would be more sustainable for the future for our children.

Our nation would find more unity if that common consciousness that is so paramount among peasant communities would be allowed to overflow to the national society so that we become aware that we are one nation and one country.

POSTSCRIPT

In 1981, I presented a paper at the annual UGAT National Conference held at the Silliman University in Dumaguete City, Negros Oriental. My paper was titled "The Peasant Struggle for Power in the Philippines: An Overview."

The paper's thesis indicated that the NPA seemed to be the most concrete and militant manifestation of the continuing millenarian tradition of Filipino peasants as may be interpreted in their worldview. In fact today, as it was in 1981, it is known that the majority of the Red Fighters are peasants.

I also mentioned that one of the main reasons for the attraction of the NPA was the appeal to the Filipino peasant worldview of a common liberation from their present poverty, misery, deprivation and exploitation, a return to their control of land and their sociopolitical, cultural and natural environment, as well as from a future oppressed state of being proletarianized, the peasants — in Marxist language — being the reserved labor force of industry and capitalism.

I remember that I mentioned in an aside, but not recorded in my published paper, that as early as the mid-seventies, studies on the Philippine peasantry were being vigorously conducted at the UP Asian Studies Center. In fact, the Tanglaw seminars, if some of us can remember, were regularly being conducted among others, for and by military officers at that time at the Center. Many of the topics discussed or presented in seminars were the results of these studies.

Some field researchers even penetrated the normally secretive and "invincible" traditional and mystical cults, and succeeded in influencing some of them. I remember one Rizalist cult which proclaimed the belief among its members that Ferdinand E. Marcos was the seventh reincarnation of Rizal, and prominently displayed his picture on their altar of rituals.

The success of these studies can also be validated in the esta-

blishment by the military. (Justus M. van der Kroef: *Asian Survey*) of the so-called counterinsurgency cults that have baffled and even caught by surprise, and in some cases literally with their pants down, the many nonpeasant leaders of the NPA. It seems to be of record that the results of these studies have been the basis for many of the precepts of the Total War Policy of the previous and present governments as they are being made operational in the rural areas.

The same millenarian and nativistic tendencies of Filipino peasants that have fuelled their historical militancy found their identification in the military-formed cults that apparently seemed to have been more scientifically organized and planned by social engineers. How long they can be sustained, however, is another question.

It is a fact that many former Red Fighters are in the ranks of Col. Rudolfo Abao's Pula-Puti (also known allegedly as Body of Christ), which operates in Zamboanga del Sur, or among Octivio "Ongcoy" Parohinog's Kuratong Baleleng (Misamis Occidental) which receives support from the military Southern Command in Zamboanga City (Red Batario: "Men of the Cults"), as well as among the 4Ks which had reportedly been set up by Lt. Aplaca of the Airborne Division (Tribal Forum).

Apparently, these military-influenced cults which appeal to a common consciousness and are organized parochially, are filling in the vacuum created by the "modernization" or "upgrading" of the NPA formation. What I mean is, as the NPA improves its military organization and command, its personal and common appeal to the peasant which is bolstered by a familiarity of the terrain and the pervading culture, gradually disappears in favor of a more impersonal, and of a vaguer and subjectively unrealistic and ununderstandable vision. The breakaway of Conrado Balweg from the NPA, and his formation of the Cordillera People's Liberation Army (CPLA) would be an interesting part of a study which can be entitled, "How and Why the NPA is Gaining and Losing Peasant Support and Peasant Red Fighters."



Filipino fiestas always bring out the most ornate clothes, expensive jewelry and lavish banquets. This old 19th century print captures the festive finery matched only by the extravagant preparations in food, rituals and fireworks. But after the feast, revelers usually find themselves deep in debt.