

## BONIFACIO, THE TEXT, AND THE SOCIAL SCIENTIST

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*A dispute over the apparent "facts" of history reveals a deeper linguistic problem. There can never be a straightforward, "scientific" method/language that adequately grasps reality, particularly at the level of mentalities. The dream of an objectivist, factual historiography persists, however. Not only does this view narrow the field of investigation but, worse, it is allied with an orthodoxy that seeks to domesticate and render familiar the past of discontinuities and differences. Historians – or social scientists for that matter – must break out of such narrow empiricism, positivism and elitism (often masquerading as revolutionary) by adopting phenomenological, semiological and other, post-Saussurian, approaches that restore the play between consciousness and the world.*

The starting point of these reflections is an exchange between myself and a colleague concerning a relatively minor episode in Philippine history. I intend to show how arguments deriving from "common sense" and the apparent universality of rules underlying the use of empirical evidence, actually reflect deep-seated preconceptions about historical research. To reduce the debate to a matter of differing or even complementary "methodologies" is tempting but off the point. This would only postpone our confrontation of the real gap that exists between various ways of viewing the past. "Methodologies" are not just tools we acquire to get at a certain reality out there. In a sense, that reality is itself constructed out of the rules of selection, analysis and exposition that we apply. The debate, I intend to show, is more than a simple question of right or wrong, proper or improper. The question of how we relate to the past is very much at stake.

The episode in question is an excursion that Bonifacio and eight fellow Katipuneros made to the mountains of Montalban/San Mateo in April 1895. In our history books, the motive for this act is derived from a statement by one of the Katipuneros that they were looking for a safe haven to retreat to in case of difficulties in the lowlands (Agoncillo 1956:70; Zaide 1968:98). I have argued, however, that there is more than a pragmatic angle in the Katipuneros' excursion. For one thing, they are said to have

ascended mount Tapusi and entered the cave of the legendary Spanish-turned-Tagalog folk hero, Bernardo Carpio. Now the popular awit *Historia Famosa ni Bernardo Carpio* is one we know to have been Bonifacio's favorite. In fact, in his copy of the awit he pencilled in what he imagined to be the Philippine equivalents of the names and places in the text (Agoncillo 1956:67). The general area was the mountains of Montalban where Bernardo Carpio was trapped and from where he would some day descend with an army of liberation. Could Bonifacio have suddenly forgotten this as he and his group arrived in the area? Or, to ask an even more pertinent question, how did the inhabitants of the area who, we are told, came in to be initiated into the society, interpret the event?

Other details complicate a singular, "common sense" explanation. Bonifacio is said to have written on the walls of the cave: "Long live Philippine independence!" If the Tagalog original of this slogan is reconstructed, it turns out to be something like *Mabuhay ang kalayaan ng bayang Pilipinas!*, which can also be translated as "May the (condition of) freedom of (Mother) Philippines come alive." Katipunan manifestos and rituals, and even later anticolonial plays like the well-known *Kahapon, Ngayon at Bukas*, freely manipulated the idea and imagery of *Inang Bayan* rising from her grave or at least her chained condition. I argue that the Katipunan expedition was itself symbolic

event, a scattering of signs of the approaching time of liberation. The possibility of such an interpretation already existed in the popular expectation of their slumbering King finally awakening in his cavernous prison. The analysis might even be extended to the image of the risen Christ emerging from his tomb, an image everyone was familiar with. The Katipunan entry, then, into Bernárdo Carpio's cave has various levels of meaning, one of which points to the assimilation of the Katipunan enterprise into the larger body of myths floating about the region (Ileto 1979:122-8; Ileto 1980:394-499).

Milagros Guerrero (1981: 240-56) dismisses the above arguments to the extent of calling it the work of a creative fictionist rather than a historian. This opens up the question of what the proper activity of a historian is. It concerns methodological limits and therefore justifies a more detailed examination. What do the objections consist of? Paramount among them is my alleged use of "doubtful evidence" to deduce the political motivations of Bonifacio. This particular objection can be broken down into two aspects. One is my use of *awit* literature, as well as other unfamiliar texts like songs, dreams, legends, and even pictorial seals, as evidence. I am told that in using literature as well as, by implication, the rest of the "unorthodox" materials used, we "need to have incontrovertible proof that the slice of life they portray actually happened." Another aspect concerns evidence of Bonifacio's political motivations, his "internal psychological state," his "truth," to be known before conclusions can be made about the significance of the mountain-climbing event.

Evidence is the bread and butter of historians, and some have even claimed recognition on the basis of nothing more than the ownership or control of such. Written documents are considered a privileged means of access to some past reality, sometimes naively equated with that reality itself which the collectors thereby get to "own." Fine, if only they know how to utilize these documents fully. What is often

missing in this obsession with the documentary is an awareness of the relationship between language and the world, the nature of document as *text*.

To take a concrete example, the objection to my use of the Bernardo Carpio *awit* is that the latter refers to a world that is fictive, unreal, ergo "literary." The events therein did not happen in the Philippines; the *awit* therefore is not history. There appears to be a conceptual confusion here. It originates from viewing the *awit* merely as a fanciful representation of some past reality. Its "literariness" is regarded as a hindrance to the faithful reproduction of this past. Enter the historian who, armed with a more "scientific" language of representation, sorts out fact from fiction: yes, those kings and princes did exist, but Bernardo Carpio himself is a Spanish legendary figure; those events could not have happened in the Philippines; the Filipino belief in King Bernardo is a manifestation of a false consciousness, itself an effect of colonial rule. All these points appear to be valid. But if *awit* is viewed in this way, then there is certainly no point in treating them seriously as historical texts.

There would be no cause for dispute if historical documents were mirrors of our society. Can documents, being linguistic productions, be identified with fixed referents, the "facts" in contrast to fiction; There are problems with this "common sense" view, as we will explain later. Let us discuss first what on second thought to be obvious: that certain social classes and sectors have been favored by the written word. Colonial officials, friars, explorers and travellers, ilustrados, the native clergy, revolutionary officers, Chinese mestizos and principales are, as a rule, the principal subjects of our archival records. Histories centered around them have been and will continue to be important in providing some kind of framework for our national past, and a justifiable pride in the achievements of a Burgos, a Luna, a Rizal and so forth. But where are the "ordinary people," the "*pobres y ignorantes*," the "masses" about whom the archives are largely silent? A dependence on

documentary sources amounts to a capitulation to the "tyranny" of the Philippine archives.

Guerrero certainly does not dispute the need for a history from below. In her work on the revolution (1977: chapters 3-4) she has shown how peasants throughout Luzon rose against the Republic in response to abuses by government officials and the local elite which made it seem like "Spanish times" all over again. What her documentation cannot reveal, however, is how the masses lived through and interpreted their condition. Colonial and elite records can be read with the aim of reversing the process by which the activities of rebels or subalterns were distorted by those who observed and wrote about them. For every interpretation of "terrorism" or "banditry" there is a body of suppressed data that can be recovered by a creative rereading of the colonial source. This, of course, is nothing new to many of us. Sakay is too obviously a patriot despite the label *ladron* or bandit plastered all over him. Too often, however, a colonial discourse is simply transformed into a "nationalist" or "progressive" one, with little being revealed about the masses themselves. What did Sakay really mean to those who sympathized with him? What meanings were generated by his appeals for a continued struggle and his mode of death?

The emphasis since the late sixties, in student circles at least, on "learning from the people" has heightened our awareness of the relative autonomy of the masses' thoughts and perceptions. The belief that unity of action can be obtained by enlightenment imposed from above, has given way to an acceptance of differences. As those who actually live among the masses have "discovered," the latter's comprehension of their condition is just as real as the "brute facts" of their material existence. Even today, so-called "superstitions," feudal customs, "fanaticism" and other "survivals" of a pre-modern past are discovered in the most unlikely places and, as a glance at our week-end magazines will show, are the object of great interest. If these phenomena exist today, we can ima-

gine what it must have been like at the turn of the century.

Those who want to pursue this matter will want to consult the classics of Philippine history for their antecedents. Sadly, however, they won't get very far, for these books basically provide an account of the Filipino people's emergence from a Dark Age of colonial rule. Superstitions, ignorance, fanaticism, timidity and the like are the ideological features of this dark past. Instead of an articulation of the categories of meaning implicit in them, subjects of this sort are simply given a negative sign and generally dismissed. The archives, again, are partly at fault for not providing direct access to popular mentalities. But sharing the blame must be the view that only educated, middle-class Filipinos thought, while the masses were kept mesmerized by the fanfare and spectacle of pop culture with its irrational, sentimental and escapist attributes. This view, applied to popular religion, originates from ilustrado propaganda against the friars, which was transformed into a general statement about society (see Agoncillo, 1956:49; Agoncillo and Guerrero, 1977:106-7). The problem is analogous to that of the historiography of Indian nationalism which, according to Ranajit Guha, "has been dominated by elitism — colonial elitism and bourgeois nationalist elitism". (Guha, 1982:1). This denial to the masses of any substantive role beyond that of implementing the thoughts of those above them, rears its head in the very way Philippine history has been conceived within an uncritical, linear-developmental framework, an ilustrado legacy that underpins even the most anti-ilustrado texts (Ileto 1982b:280).

The problematic nature of the masses' role in Philippine history thus forces us to turn to unconventional sources. Symbols, rituals, epics and other aspects of culture can tell us how people who otherwise could not write diaries and reports, manifested their thinking publicly. The shape of a house, dance movements, poetic conventions — these are all clues to how people organize their experience of reality. Works previously assigned to the realm of "literature"

gain a wider range of use, particularly in socio-cultural analysis. But these sources hardly provide us with facts! If we are to use literature, Guerrero argues, we "need to have incontrovertible proof that the slice of life they portrayed actually happened." After all, it is the documentary aspect of the text that the historian is trained to latch on to. In this mode of analysis, the text is situated in terms of its factual or literal dimension, how it refers to empirical reality and conveys information about it. Working in this mode, we would ask how the Bernardo Carpio *awit* corresponds to its Spanish model or to actual events and personalities in medieval Europe. The historical reconstruction of the Katipuneros' ascent of Mount Tapusi, on the other hand, would not stray beyond repeating what the documents said.

Or what the *authors* said. For corollary to the above is the view that a text can only tell us about the mind of its author. The truths and meanings of a text, produced at the time of its creation, are simply waiting to be discovered by literary critics and philologists. Thus any attempt to connect the text to its *outside* — eg., the thinking and gestures of Bonifacio or actions of the mass members of the Katipunan — is regarded as frivolous, tantamount to a transgression of a sacred "canon" of Philippine scholarship today, namely, that text and society can be separated, that the former belongs to the realm of the imaginary, the individual creation, while the latter is real, even capable of statistical verification. The latter is deemed in the final analysis, to "produce" the former. Perhaps this is the reason why, in the growing number of studies of folk literature or literary history that are appearing, "history" plays the role of introductory background to, or causal explanation for, "literature." The latter is subjected to classification procedures, thematic analysis, and author-centered readings that more or less assure the status of a text as non-event, a static receptacle of truths and facts rather than a moving force. This approach now appears "self-evident," "universal" and "common sense" to many. But looking back at the history of historical thinking, how obvious it is that "rules,"

"canons," criteria of true and false, cause and effect, etc., reflect not timeless truths but the epistemic character of particular ages. To take an example provided by White (1979; 1975: 48-67), such a common-sense distinction as the "literary" versus the "historical" derives from changing notions about language and the anxious efforts of nineteenth-century historians to place their work on the side of science and factuality.

Roland Barthes has a simple explanation for the typical historian's anxiety about "the facts." It's all part of the prestige of "this happened," another consequence of a certain historical conditioning of Western man. When history was trying to establish itself as a genre in its own right in the nineteenth century it took as a guarantee of "truth" the abundance of concrete details in a carefully constructed narrative that was deemed to express "reality" out there. It was this attraction to the reality effect that also led to the popularity of the realist novel, the diary, the documentary and photography. Today, this nineteenth-century aspiration towards an objective and realistic historiography is seen as part of that complex of myths peculiar to Western culture "at a time when it was trying to deal with the social pressures caused by the impact of industrialization on institutions and beliefs peculiar to feudal social systems and agricultural economies" (Barthes 1970: 153-5) The Enlightenment drive to approximate reality through reason coincided with establishing the "facts of history," which meant that literature, which seemed to undermine the ideal of factuality, had to be kept at arms length.

Author-centrism, too, can be traced to a certain historical conditioning. It could stem from our own bourgeois conceptions of personal property, individual works, and the private control of meaning. Michel Foucault traces back to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in Europe the beginnings of a preoccupation with writing as an expression or even extension of an author's individuality. The value attributed to a text began to depend on infor-

mation such as author, date, place circumstance or writing, and so forth. Without an author to shoulder the responsibility for truth, evidence was not "reliable" (Foucault, 1977: 125-7).

It is author-centrism that seems to lie behind the insistence that my first duty is to probe into the origins (i.e., the authorial circumstances) of the *pasyon*, religious rituals, folk beliefs, *awit* and the like. We can raise at least two objections to this approach. First, can meaning be controlled at the moment of writing? How could "personal authorship" thrive in a situation where works, stories, poems and other writings freely borrowed elements from each other, were transmitted orally, and were therefore subject to creative alterations; in short, where works were seen as part of a collective enterprise, expressing not an individual point of view but a general outlook, the product of the culture at large? Second, how far back should one go in the search for origins, when any "origin" is already the outcome of a prior event? Doesn't this preoccupation with ultimate origins, absolute ground, in fact reveal a metaphysical rather than some disinterested "scientific" outlook? Barthes goes as far as to link the notion of the unitary (ie. author-determined) meaning of a text to two forces: Protestantism and Capitalism. He sees in a certain attitude towards the text (including the "properly" historical) the same impulse that brought forth notions of the individual's personal relationship to God and the personal commitment to acquire and accumulate money (Barthes 1977:142-3; Hawkes 1977:119-20; Iletto 1982a:105-7).

It is unfortunate that the "documentary" approach to sources has come to be identified with the historian's "proper" activity. For any text, whether this be *awit*, personal memoir of proceedings of a trial, has also its "performative" or "worklike" (to borrow a term from Heidegger) aspects. The "performative" aspect of a text refers to how it does things with words that brings about a change in the situational context; how it engages the reader — the past audience as well as the historian or critic

himself — in a recreative dialogue with the text (La Capra 1980: 250ff). The Bernardo Carpio *awit* was written within the limits of a prevailing system of conventions (eg. the tagalog language, rules of poetry, current figures of speech). Already, at the moment it was composed, the author (whose identity remains problematic) was in a relational situation to an imagined audience. Furthermore, the publication of the work meant that it took on a life of its own, moving through its nineteenth century readership and engaging it in thinking about self-identity, control of inner being (*loob*), relationship with kinfolk and patrons, stages of the life-arc, love, *utang na loob*, revenge and even freedom from domination by a foreign power (see Iletto, 1989; 1982b: 281-87). Textual analysis makes available the units of meaning which the historian working equally with conventional sources can use to restore the play of meanings between text and ever-present context. We can say that meanings were generated outside the *awit*, with the participation of its mass audience, and in relations to nineteenth-century social and material conditions.

Reading texts in the above manner, the historian gains some idea of how human actions are defined and limited, or the range of possible meanings in an event. His activities are no longer limited to scouring texts for facts and ordering the data in cause-and-effect chains. Not all need to scrap well-tried methods, but when we are recovering a Philippine history "from below" and faced with an apparent scarcity of records by and pertaining to the masses, do we have any choice? In undertaking a new reading of Bonifacio's favorite *awit* in relation to events of the war against Spain, we are in effect identifying the structures of meaning that informed both the popular mentality and that of the Kapitunan's founder. We can state with virtual certainty that the ascent of Mount Tapusi was more than a search for a safe haven, for the event was thoroughly imbedded in "culture."

This stress on social significance is related to another criticism of my reading of the Mount Tapusi affair: the absence of direct evidence

that Bonifacio had the intentions and motivations I seem to have ascribed to him. History, Guerrero reminds us, should deal with the "articulation of conscious experience"; it is dangerous to draw inferences about Bonifacio's psychological state (Guerrero 1981:249). But is it Bonifacio's psychological or internal state that we are after? Must we limit our investigation to the consciousness of individuals, of the "great men" who changed the course of history?

Philippine historical writing has traditionally put a premium on the utterances and personalities of national heroes. This may be the fault of the archives as well as the hagiographic tradition developed by our predecessors. But then there are other traditions: "Men make their own history," Marx once said, "But they do not know that they are making it." Social science today bears the imprint not only of Marx but of Ferdinand de Saussure's linguistic revolution. Saussure proceeded from a simple insight: the distinction between *parole and langue*, the everyday speech of individuals and the underlying grammar or linguistic system which unconsciously structures utterances and which is by nature "social" (Saussure 1959; see Streuver 1974). Must we forever attempt to link the "speech" of Bonifacio and the Katipunans to conscious motives? The present dispute began when I broke out of the preoccupation with "Bonifacio's truth" to probe into the social meanings generated by the events of 1886, whether Bonifacio intended them to happen or not.

In fact, Philippine historiography in the last decade has already removed the individual from center stage. Renato Constantino's *A Past Revisited* (1977), with its insistence on economic and class explanations, has eroded much of the cult of personality-centered history. There is now a "new wave" of structural explanations of the economic, sociological and demographic sort, recently summarized exhaustively by John Larkin (1983) and which can be sampled in the recently published book *Philippine Social History* (McCoy and de Jesus 1982). Key events in

our past, so these works maintain, were made possible by changes occurring beyond the pale of individual intentions or "conscious experience." These historians have made more efficient use of the archives, exploiting the abundance of land transfer records, economic transactions involving local compradors and foreign capitalists, colonial reports, census-type data, and the like. The relative lack of personal correspondence, diaries, and autobiographies is no longer regarded as a handicap.

This particular enrichment of Philippine historiography is not, however, without its limits. Brian Fegan's contribution to the Social History volume is one of the few that grapples with the actual categories through which people experienced the changes around them. (Fegan 1982: 107-8, 115) Larkin, generally regarded as the pioneer of Philippine social history; is still the dominant — though absent — voice in the book. We recall how Larkin, in his book on the Pampangans, explained the appearance of the charismatic leader Felipe Salvador in terms of the rise of export agriculture and deteriorating landlord-tenant relations in Pampanga (Larkin 1972:235-9). But we do not know from his work how Salvador managed to mobilize peasants from all over Central Luzon to join the Santa Iglesia. Writing in the Social History volume, Guerrero merely reiterates Larkin's explanation of the Santa Iglesia while emphasizing the local elite's abuses that triggered such phenomena (Guerrero 1982: 156, 179). One senses the limit of their "methodology" when the consciousness of the Santa Iglesia cannot be articulated in a specific cultural milieu; when the rationale for their acts is preconceived rather than demonstrated — the assumption being that Salvador (or Bonifacio, for that matter) was really "just like us." The peasants were oppressed and so they quite *naturally* rose up in arms. Salvador's "interests" were no different from those of budding capitalists, except that cultural factors made him a bit more "fanatical" or "religious" or "emotional" as "men of the masses" are deemed to be.

This outlook takes an extreme form in the

writings of David Sturtevant (1976). A pioneer in the study of popular traditions of Philippine protest, Sturtevant nevertheless paints his rebels as pathological failures reacting rather "irrationally" to stresses and strains in rural society and the economy until more rational and properly political leaders appear. Moving to more familiar ground, we can cite Constantino's reference to "mystic mumbo-jumbo" in otherwise comprehensible peasant revolts as a sign of the limits of his analysis (Constantino, 1977:267 and *passim*).

What characterizes these works is the absence of any real attempt to understand the masses in their own terms, and the consequent reliance on colonial and elite-nationalist representations of the masses' behavior. The current engagement in "objective" socio-economic analyses of the Philippine past may be taking for granted some deeply-ingrained, behaviorist assumptions of key models (eg. patron-client ties) and archaic notions of language, textual analysis, human motivations, and the role of the unconsciousness. The problem is certainly not confined to Filipinists. Keith Thomas, author of *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, replying to a critique by Hidred Geertz admits that historians, though equipped to handle underlying social structures, are much less accustomed to searching for "invisible mental structures, particularly the mental structures underlying inchoate and ill-recorded systems of thought, which are only articulated in a fragmentary way" (Thomas, 1975: 106).

Predictably, anyone who engages in this sort of history based on "fragments" will incur the wrath of the empiricists. For a history that prides itself in being "objective" displays its character by the amount of unambiguous, documented statements of fact it contains. Not surprisingly, Guerrero says that I am treading "dangerous ground" when I "evaluate the collective mentality during the Revolution largely by indirection." But is there any choice for us? To combat the "tyranny of the archives," to avoid that lapse into silence about the masses while waiting in vain for conventional docu-

ments to surface, "indirect" methods must be resorted to. This is nothing new. Some seventeen years ago, Claude Levi-Strauss cited the Annales historian Lucien Febvre's work on sixteenth-century thought for its constant reference to "psychological attitudes and logical structures" which "can be grasped only indirectly because they have always eluded the consciousness of those who spoke and wrote" (Levi-Strauss, 1967:24; see Burke, 1973).

What we are doing is simply enlarging the scope of "social history," which for the Philippines is needlessly dominated by Larkin's socio-economic legacy. No matter how "dangerous," looking into the "collective mentality" rather than "Bonifacio's truth" is another way of removing the individual from center stage. Its basic premise is that, just as Copernicus de-centered man and his planet from a privileged place in the universe, man is de-centered from his own meanings. The conscious subject is displaced from the center of social activity. Just like a "text," Bonifacio cannot be pinned down to a particular meaning and truth. He could only operate within the prevailing social structure and mode of discourse of his time. There were limits to what could be thought. But within such limits, there was also play: Bonifacio's writings, speeches, and gestures were texts which generated meaning which he may not have intended.

Ultimately it is the notion of text that leads us to justifiably circumvent Horacio de la Costa's advice, recently reiterated by De Jesus (1980:x), that students skirt the subject of Rizal and the Revolution in order to do socio-economic history. The present dispute about the Mount Tapusi affair is a good example of what I mean. Half a century or more of scholarship on the Revolution has actually domesticated a subject matter which, in itself, ought to be strange and exotic, a product of a different time and sociocultural milieu. We have all come to identify Bonifacio and the Katipunan with a stock repertoire of meanings, and I suspect that the sense of indignation provoked by my reading of the subject comes from the simple

fact that it is unfamiliar. It fails to reiterate the contours of the "thing itself" that Agoncillo and others have "objectively" laid down.

The difficulty, to once more address the question of "methodology," originates from a simple faith in the transparency of all historical phenomena. It is supposed that in the course of a historical narrative — the story of Bonifacio and the Katipunan in this case — what appears to be "strange" and opaque to reason can be rendered susceptible to understanding by ordinary, informed common sense: the standards of universality imposed by present consensus. Nietzsche's admonition of nineteenth-century historiography still rings true for our times: What the much touted "objectivity" of the academic establishment amounted to, he said, was simply "the measurement of the opinions and deeds of the past by the universal opinions of the present . . . They call all historical writing 'subjective' that does not regard these popular opinions as canonical" (Nietzsche, 1974:37).

When Bonifacio is somehow linked to "primitive" and "superstitious" beliefs in a slumbering king who would one day descend from Mount Tapusi at the head of a liberating force armed only with *anting-anting* (amulets), the effect can be disconcerting. For the established "truth" is that Bonifacio was a radical nationalist who led a movement that was far advanced in a developmental sequence from "primitive" to "modern." Hobsbawm's legacy is well established within us. But what is concealed by this construct? I have suggested that the Katipunan, whatever ancestry it had in the Propaganda movement, of necessity absorbed the characteristics of earlier brotherhoods and the potency of existing religious symbols and linguistic usage.

A well-meaning friend once complained to me that her grandfather was a Katipunero who believed in liberal principles, so how dare I suggest that the "fanatic" Valentin de los Santos (of Lapiang Malaya fame) carried on the Katipunan tradition! In reply I would ask, do we really know Ka Valentin or, for that matter, the Katipunan? Every scholar is convinced that

he or she has pinned down the Katipunan's true nature. Jim Richardson (1980:320) writes: how could Bonifacio "who read Victor Hugo and spoke of Reason . . . be allied with a rustic prophet (Ruperto Rios) who professedly spoke with European emperors, climbed to heaven up a rope and kept independence in a magic box." The problem with Richardson and co-author Jonathan Fast is that they think they have "got" the ideology of the Katipunan because of their careful research into the rise of the capitalist economy that preceded it (Fast and Richardson 1970:70-84). We can forgive the two Englishmen for ignoring developments in Marxist thought across the Channel in the 1960s, but the fact is that the two never really learned enough about Philippine culture and society to justify their discussion of consciousness.

The Katipunan leadership's middle-class origins, urban or provincial, are all too obvious. But this leadership also sought to mobilize lower class Filipinos in an armed struggle. Why was it, to a great extent, successful? If we can go beyond the notion that these Katipuneros were not simply blind followers, we can go on to ask what it was about the gestures of some of these "middle class" leaders (notably Bonifacio) and the language of their manifestos, that proved so efficacious. Without a sensitivity to the range of meanings that could be generated by words or ideas like *kalayaan*, *kasaganaan*, *kaginhawaan*, *damayan*, *katuwiran* and *kaliwanagan* — the images like independence jumping out of a box (*Inang Bayan* rising from the grave, of course!) — no wonder Richardson and Fast were able to convince themselves of the essentially bourgeois ideology of the Katipunan as a whole.

But let us not blame the English when expert "Tagalists" are guilty of the same thing. In our universities, as we all know, traditions and factions have played a great part in determining which kinds of history are "in" and which ought to be purged. Instead of constructing and defending the "correct" (or, more ominously, "official") version, should we not perhaps



reflect upon the function of historical studies in the first place? When first published, the well-known works of Agoncillo and Constantino simultaneously reflected current thinking about the Revolution and added new, "unfamiliar" dimensions to it. The problem is that these have become classics, reduced to certain stock anti-colonial and/or antifeudal meanings, self-evident "truths" which — unless brought alive by those who practiced new modes of reading — no longer have the revolutionizing effect they once had. The aim of historiography, Michelet once said, was "resurrection," to restore to "forgotten voices" the power to speak to living men. Once these voices are drained of their strangeness and mystery as once vital events in our past become reduced to unquestionable truths and facts, they have been "domesticated."

Historians can no longer bask in the confidence that all they need in order "to do research" (a cliché nowadays) is a lot of documents (living informants included) and rare books plus some rudimentary training in historical detective work (such as submitting the evidence to cross-verification, being fair to all sides, getting at the facts). The culturally-specific sources of their own analytic or sorting categories must be recognized and evaluated. How, for example, do the oppositions primitive/modern, superstitious/rational, religious/secular, backward/forward, or even regional/national, draw their aura of factualness from their place in the culture of Westernized, educated Filipinos? How do they draw their legitimacy from the social prestige of the groups who may have employed these categories as an ideological weapon in the past? What are the configurations of power in our society that conspire to institutionalize certain favored constructions of our history? Historians today, rather than clinging to the security of past practices, should be asking themselves such questions. They should be recovering what has been ignored or swept under the rug in past works, letting this "excess" challenge the dominant "truths" and thus preventing history from becoming, in Nietzsche's words, the "harem or a race of eunuchs." For

Foucault, the task is one of *disordering, de-structuring, un-naming* — an extreme view, yet so relevant to our present situation (see White 1973:50; Ileto 1982a:98-102).

In the nineteenth and early twentieth century, to climb the mountains of San Mateo — the so-called Montes de la Libertad — was a demonstration of one's exceptional valor. It was in achieving this singular feat that many *tulisanes* (lit., bandits) — a term which according to Teodoro Kalaw, had past connotations of *instigador revolucionario* — became enshrined as heroes in the folk memory (Kalaw 1935:20). Not surprisingly Jose Rizal, whose extraordinary powers and eventual martyrdom endeared him to the masses, was rumored to have climbed the mountain, entered Bernardo Carpio's cave and proven his intelligence and inner control to the trapped King. With the outbreak of hostilities against Spain, the *gentes ordinarias* of the region joined the fray expecting their King Bernardo, with only one food left chained, to finally break free and descend from Mount Tapusi to aid his people. Even today, I have heard peasants and artisans in Batangas and Quezon provinces (which are quite a distance from San Mateo) speculate about the meaning of *nag-uumpugang bato* (lit., "where two rocks collide"), the mountain where Bernardo, now in the company of the patriots of the Revolution, still lives until the next war when they all will return (Ileto 1979:125; 1982b:281-6).

There is behind all these "folkloric" details a coherent view of the world, not consciously articulated and, at least until recently with their discovery of Gramsci, ignored by the intellectual class. As a matter of fact, there has been no place in our histories for such mental categories. To illustrate this point, we need only go back to when the dispute on Andres Bonifacio actually began. In 1897 Carlos Ronquillo, the secretary of Emilio Aguinaldo, in his "history" of the Katipunan uprising, castigated Bonifacio for raising false hopes than an army would descend from Mount Tapusi "to lead his whole army." "This plain falsehood," writes Ronquillo, "was a deception or morale booster (*pangpalakas*

loob) perpetrated by Bonifacio; because at the appointed hour neither men nor arms arrived from Tapusi. Up to now we do not know where this mountain is" (Ronquillo 1898: 6, 21).

When I posited a connection between the Katipunan ascent of Mount Tapusi and the Bernardo Carpio myth, I lacked the assurance of such a direct statement as Ronquillo's. But other signs, made intelligible by the use of literature as a historical source, pointed to the same thing. And there is something else, even more important, that Ronquillo's account reveals: As early as 1897, this nationalist, revolutionist and historian, a believer in enlightened liberalism, was already decrying the "dark underside" of Bonifacio's mentality, adding it to

the litany of faults (the assumption of "kingship" being one of these) that he felt justified Bonifacio's execution at the hands of Aguinaldo and the Caviteño elite. Things are different now, you say. Bonifacio's unswerving patriotism has been given just recognition since the appearance of Agoncillo's book. But is the angry, bolo-waving Bonifacio and his followers, contrasted with the effete likes of Rizal, all there is to it? Have we, perhaps, constructed this Bonifacio to suit our own needs and desires? Despite the nationalist and revolutionary badges conspicuously displayed by some of our vociferous intellectuals, I suspect that it is Ronquillo, not Bonifacio, that lurks within them.

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Northern Philippines

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