

The "Hispanization" of the Filipinos  
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Introduction

In 1492, the year when the Moslem kingdom of Granada was defeated by the Christians and the year when Columbus reached the Caribbean, a Castillian grammar was published by Elio Antonio de Nebrija. Momentous event it was as this had been the first grammar to be compiled of a modern European language. When presented to Queen Isabella I, she was said to have remarked "What is it for?" To this, the Bishop of Avila in behalf of Nebrija answered "Your majesty, language is the perfect instrument of Empire." [J. H. Elliott, *Imperial Spain 1469-1716*. New York: A Mentor Book, St. Martin's Press, 1966, p. 125]

Indeed, the complete domination of the Spanish language in Latin America may be considered as the most important indicator of domination. By looking into the degree by which a local language had absorbed the Spanish grammar and vocabulary, we may also know its degree of "hispanization." In other words, while it may be said that there are other things that would indicate Spanish influence such as in areas of politics, economics and social way of life, these had to be correlated in the last analysis to the extent by which the local language had been "hispanized."

As a proportion to the local vocabulary of various Philippine languages, Spanish words constitute about 30 per cent. [Foreign Secretary Alberto Romulo said "a third of the Philippine national language is composed of Spanish loan words" at the 2005 celebration of the Philippine-Spanish Friendship Day, June 30, 2005. Cited in Ching M. Alano, "Baler: A date with history," *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, July 10, 2005, p. K-2; In Ana Maria Ll. Madrigal, "Que pasa del Espanol hoy en Filipinas?" *Linguae et Litterae* vol. I, no. 1 December 1992, p. 51, the number of these loan words had been placed at 23,000.] Thus, it may be said that all things considered, the degree of "hispanization" of the Philippines may be placed at 30 per cent.

What happened to language was not what happened to the native script, the baybayin, which did not survive with the universal adoption of the Romanized alphabet. As early as the 17th century, Fr. Pedro Chirino SJ (1604) still noted the existence of the script in almost all regions of the colony. By the turn of the 20th century, the same script was only in use among the Tagbanua of Palawan and the Mangyans of Mindoro and perhaps in the Negros Island (where Prof. H. Otley Beyer noted in 1916 its use among the hill peoples up to at least the late 19th century). (Antoon Postma, "Contemporary Mangyan Scripts," in *PNHS Proceedings of the 1998 Centennial Regional Seminar-Workshop on Oral and Local History*, vol. 13, pp. 60-61)

To be fair, the Spaniards in the Philippines in the 300 years of their colonization, did not go beyond 5,000 at any given year. Likewise, the penetration of Spanish bureaucracy did not go beyond the coastal and lowland plains of the various islands. The interior and mountainous areas even in Luzon remained beyond the pale of colonization. Mindanao, with the exception of coastal areas in the Caraga region, Misamis, the Zamboanga peninsula and some outpost in Cotabato and Davao, was under the sway of the Moro sultanates of Maguindanao and Sulu.

Furthermore, there was no replacement of population. The diseases such as colds and measles that destroyed peoples of Oceania upon their initial encounter with the Western colonists, did not completely wipe out the population. As the Philippines was along the route of trade and commerce between India, China and Arabia, the gene pool was more complex than those in Oceania or Latin American. Traders usually took wives in major points of trade within the Philippines, for convenience of having board and lodging and other purposes. Likewise, this exchange of genes through marriage was partly due to the cognatic bilateral kinship system of pre-colonial Philippines which made a wide territory an area of immediate and affine relatives. As incest among relatives was forbidden, the partners in marriage had to come from across the various islands and tribal territories. Over long periods, this had contributed to a robust population able to resist the genocidal policies of, and diseases brought by, the colonizers.

Among the populations of not so complex gene pools, (as noted by anthropologists and medical researchers such as Ivan Illich), there were epidemics as happened in Mexico and other Latin American colonies. In the Pacific itself, many islands isolated from the route of international trade such as Tasmania and some islands of Polynesia were depopulated by diseases so simple as the common colds, measles and syphilis.

### The Spiritual Dimension

So daunting was the task of conversion in rugged tropical terrains that early in the Spanish regime, the Catholic hierarchy thought of teaching the doctrines in the local languages instead of doing so in Spanish. In the first Synod of Manila in 1586 convened by Bishop Domingo de Salazar, O.P., this issue was decided with finality. [“Bakit mahalaga ang wika sa dominasyong kolonyal?” in Jaime B. Veneracion, *Espanya: Kasaysayan, Kalinangan at mga Gunita ng Paglalakbay*. Malolos: BSU Center for Bulacan Studies, 2003, p. 18. Also in Horacio de la Costa, *Readings in Philippine History*. Manila: Bookmark, 1965, p. 27] It was thought that it would be more economical that the various congregations produced translation guides and dictionaries than to teach Spanish to prospective converts. Beginning the 17th century, examples of these ‘arte en la lengua y diccionarios’ had been produced such as those of San Buenaventura and San Lucar for Tagalog, Sanchez for the Bisayan, Fray Francisco Coronel (1621), (then Fray Alvaro de Benavente in 1700 and Fray Diego Bergano in 1732) for Kapampangan [“Grammar and Dictionaries,” *Singsing*, Holy Angel University, vol. 4, no. 1, p. 7] and others. This policy started by the Synod of Manila of 1586 was a case of “obedezco pero no cumpro” (I obey but do not comply), a pragmatic way adopted by colonial officials which neither seemingly did not violate the royal order yet either did they implement it at the ground.

This had mixed results. By teaching the Christian doctrines in the local languages, there was no complete transfer of religion. The old belief systems in the “anito”, or ancestral spirit, was reincarnated in the new religion. Thus, “simbahan” became the equivalent of the Spanish “iglesia.” This made the Spanish concept, through metaphors and translation, easily understood by the native population. But by using the word “simbahan,” some of the old nuances associated with pre-Spanish sacred places had been retained. As a counter measure to the prevalence of pre-Hispanic beliefs and in order to extirpate this pre-Christian association of “simbahan” to the old practices, some clergymen constructed the church on these sacred sites such as what they did in Sta. Ana, Manila, in Antipolo and Taytay along the coast of Laguna de Bay. [Various excuses were used by the missionaries. In Laguna de Bay, there was flooding. “It (flooding) was for this reason that a little knoll near by, where at this time the dead were buried, had from way back been reserved for a church site.” Upon the request of the people of Antipolo for him to say mass there, Pedro Chirino told them: “If you want me to see you again, you will build for me on the knoll, where you now bury the dead, a little church where I can say mass for you, with a small room where I can retire.” Pedro Chirino, SJ, *The Philippines in 1600*. Translated by Ramon Echevarria, Manila: Historical Conservation Society, 1969, p. 256-257 ] Meanwhile, the “Dios” or God Almighty had become “Bathalang Maykapal,” “Apo,” and “Poon,” words that were associated with the “anito” of pre-colonial times. Thus, Jesus has been known as “Poong Hesukristo.” St. Peter has been called “Apung Iru” and St. Nicholas became “Apung Kulas” among the Kapampangans. Even the “babaylan” or local priestess was reincarnated as an associate of the priest. In the absence of a parish priest in the barrios, the former babaylans administered the “pahesus,” the local version of the extreme unction, the last ritual for the dying. During the period of drought when they used to plea help from their “anitos,” the babaylan led into the recitation of the litany in a procession pleading for rain, which the people would label as the “lutrina.” In many places, the babaylans secretly practiced their old function as faith healers.

### The Social and Cultural Aspect

Language as indicator of influence would likewise bring us to the world of vice where the Spanish language had made its presence. Together with Chinese terms such as “madjong”, Spanish seemed to have insinuated itself well in gambling and vice. “Siesta” or afternoon rest had become synonymous with idleness. Words such as “sugal,” “bisyo,” “loteria,” “pusta,” and “cara y cruz” including those associated with horse racing and cockpits such as “llamado,” “dejado,” and “logro diez,” would indicate a very strong Spanish influence on this aspect of Filipino life. Cockfighting, as observed by the crew of the Magellan expedition in 1521, was originally used for ritual purposes, such as to determine if it was opportune to go to war or not. But under the Spanish regime, it was transformed into gambling because as a government monopoly, it had been used to collect revenues in a game of chance the common Filipinos got addicted to.

Unlike in gambling where the influence could be found among the common people, Spanish cuisine seemed to have penetrated the upper classes to a greater degree than other aspects of colonial life. But even in this, the native cuisine had continued up to now. Sweets and native cakes survived as “kakanin,” (native desserts) in such examples as the “bibingka,” “puto,” “sapin-sapin,” “kutsinta,” “palitaw,” “ginatan,” and “pinipig.” Native dishes had been in the local language as in “pinakbet,” “nilaga,” “pinausukan,”

“halabos,” “inihaw,” “dininding,” “paksiw,” “dinuguan,” “kare-kare,” “sinampalukan” and “sinigang” and had continued as favorite dishes among the masses. The ingredients such as chicken, fish and vegetables had been in great supply and could be found everywhere. Most of these foods had been cooked as broth and laced with spices. Food experts attributed this liking for the soup as a function of the staple food the Filipinos got used to, the eating of rice. [Doreen G. Fernandez and Edilberto N. Alegre, *Sarap: Essays on Philippine Food*, 1988] As the latter had a bland taste, the somewhat sweet sour soup would provide flavoring to the meal. If the family could not afford such dishes, the daily fare would include dried fish such as the “tuyo” “tinapa” or dried meat such as the “pindang.”

Where the ingredients had to come from Spain and elsewhere, the food bearing Spanish names were usually related to meat especially beef as in “punta y pecho,” “cadera,” “lomo” and “solomillo.” This would indicate that where meat was the main ingredient, perhaps with the exception of chicken and pork, the cuisine had been an importation. However, without our knowing it, some of these foods were quite ordinary in the locality of their provenance. The “paella” for example, started as the ordinary fare among farmers in southern Spain cooked in ad hoc stove in their fields. “Cocido” was likewise a simple and daily food with beef and “morcilla” or sausage made from coagulated blood and “tocino” or dried salted pork thrown into the pot. But because they came as the food of the colonizer, they entered at the level of domination. To the Filipinos, these thus symbolized status or “class” that may only be consumed during special occasions such as fiestas and anniversaries.

During fiestas however, even the masses aped the elites and had to show their best foot forward through their “handa” (special preparations). Various versions of the cake or bread such as the “biscocho,” “ensaymada,” “maja blanca” and “brazo de mercedes” became the substitute for the native “tinapay.” Aside from the “lechon,” the “handa” during fiestas were the “arroz a la valenciana” or the local “paella,” “jamón,” “menudo,” “picadillo,” “morcon,” “apritada,” “sarsiado,” “escabeche,” “adobo,” “queso,” and “pastillas de leche.” In some instances, when the Chinese and other Filipinos wanted to create the impression of being exotic, Spanish names had been given to what appeared as common dishes. Thus, in any Chinese restaurant could be found “arroz caldo,” “relleno,” “embutido,” “camaron rebusado,” and “calamares.” Particularly in the case of “arroz caldo,” it is doubtful if it had Spanish provenance as it seemed to have been a reincarnation of the native “lugaw” or the Chinese “congee” that westerners had no particular liking for.

#### The Political Aspect

It was in the establishment of what political scientists would call “civil society” and “polity” that Spanish influence was perhaps greatest. It was because the pre-Spanish society did not have a professional bureaucracy and military personnel receiving regular salary as in the colonial society. The Spaniards had this situation overhauled. To organize the people according to a new political framework, the physical contours of habitation had been changed. (OD Corpuz, *The Roots of Filipino Nation*. vol. I. Quezon City: Aklahi Foundation, Inc., 1989, p.180ff.). From their traditional linear pattern of settlement along rivers and coastlines, many communities were forcibly brought within compact “pueblos” according to a design known as the “plaza complex.” The buildings and houses were arranged according to a grid of quadrilinear streets for easier monitoring of inhabitants and movement of military troops. The central square was where the Spaniards constructed the church, the “casa real” or “casa tribunal,” the prison as well as the market. Although the local term “simbahan” for the religious sacred place had survived, the parts of the building and the method of construction had taken Spanish names. Thus, terms such as “pader,” for walls, “arco” for arch, “ventana” for the window and many others became part of the vocabulary of local languages. Parts of the traditional nipa hut however continued to be used: “bubong” for roof, “haligi” for post, “hagdan” instead of the Spanish “escalera” for the stairs and “pinto” instead of “puerta” for the door.

Positions of power were mostly given Spanish names. Thus the Filipinos got words such as “gobernador,” “alcalde mayor,” and “gobernadorcillo” as well as “encomendero,” “hacendero” and “encargado” from the colonizers. But at the point of their weakest link with the people, at the barangay level, the term used was a combination of Spanish and Pilipino, “cabeza de barangay,” literally, “head of barangay” which was the social and political organization based on kinship. The pre-Spanish “datu” had become outdated and became part of a class known collectively as the “principalia.” The various branches of government made use of a combination of Spanish and Pilipino terms. Both “provincia” and “lalawigan” for province as well as “ciudad” and “lungsod” for city and “barangay” for “barrio” were used. To implement justice, the “hukom” of pre-Spanish Sanskrit origin co-existed with “juez” for the judge. To

extract taxes from the people, the generic term was the local “*buwis*” but the specific ways this had been paid for took various names, such as “*tributo*” for the civil officials, “*limosna*” or “*donacion*” for the church and “*polo y servicio*” for forced labor, all of Spanish provenance.

Likewise an evidence of colonial influence was the introduction of a Spanish legal system especially as these affected the ownership of land. Under such legal arrangements, the title over lands previously controlled by the *datu* or commonly owned by the community came under the ownership of the King. Theoretically, all lands were royal lands and could only be distributed to individuals upon the behest of the King. The exception to these were those that the ruling families of pre-Spanish times who collaborated with the colonizers, supposedly already owned individually as for instance, in the case of Lakandula and Soliman of Manila. The various edicts and laws with respect to land, including friar lands, and the Spanish titling system such as the “*composicion de tierras*” became the basis of the legal system adopted by the Americans and by the Philippine government in the twentieth century.

The other exemption of hispanization of lands occurred among the indigenous peoples where the ancestral domains or common lands continued to exist as these did not fall within the pale of colonization. Apparently, even in Latin America, this respect for the ancestral domains continued to be the case as illustrated by the persistence of the great respect given by the political leadership to what came to be known as the “*ejidos*,” the common lands of the indigenous peoples valorized for instance in the Mexican constitution and various laws.

#### The Economic Aspect

In the field of the economy, the Spanish presence as reflected in the language was superficial as the colonists were mostly engaged in the limited commerce provided by the Manila-Acapulco Galleon up to first decade of the 19th century. Later, the Spanish engagement was mostly in the monopolies such as the sale of tobacco, betel nuts and opium. Therefore, agriculture was basically an activity of the native population. Thus, words such as “*tubigan*” for irrigated field, “*parang*” for uncultivated field, “*bukid*” for field, and “*pilapil*” for embankment remained as the words of choice in describing agricultural farms. There had been claims that “*arado*” or “*araro*” for plow was an evidence that it had originated from Spain as this word replaced “*pambungkal*” in describing the main equipment for cultivation. But the design and the similarity of the type of plow used in the Philippines with those in China and Southeast Asia made this claim preposterous. [Fernand Braudel, *The Structures of Everyday Life*. Translated by Sian Reynolds, New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1979, p. 148 citing Etienne Pasquier, *Les Recherches de la France*, 1643” “Drawings in a Chinese work of 1210, the *Keng Tche Tou*, already show the checkered pattern of the paddies, divided into small patches, irrigation pumps worked by pedals, the planting and harvesting of the rice, and ‘the same plough as today, yoked to a single buffalo.’”] For one thing, the various parts of the plow such as “*batangan*” for the handle and “*lunas*” for the lower main frame as well as the “*sudsud*” for the metal point and “*lipya*” for the plowshare were all of pre-Spanish origin. “*Lipya*” in particular could have been from the Fookien Chinese who introduced it before the coming of the Spaniards. (S. V. Epistola, “Cultural Grafting in the Philippines,” in *Filipino Heritage*. QC: Lahing Pilipino Publishing, Inc., 1977, vol. III, p. 621] The other agricultural activities such as preparation of the field, “*linang*” and harvest or “*ani*” all had the technology described in local terms: “*suyod*” for harrow, “*lilik*” for scythe, “*gapas*” for the act of harvesting, “*giik*” for threshing and many others. The cooperative act of cultivating the field, planting and harvesting took the name of “*bayanihan*.” (Jaime B. Veneracion, *Agriculture During the Spanish Regime*. Q.C.: University of the Philippines, CSSP Publications, 2001)

In distributing the produce in the market, words of various origins came into use. “*Tiangui*” for the rotating markets as well as “*palengke*” for market were from Mexico. A temple site in southern Mexico was called Palenque. A local version of the *tiangui*, especially for fish and meat was called “*talipapa*.” The generic term for commerce or “*comercio*” did not supersede “*kalakal*,” a local word. Likewise, the Spanish for market, “*mercado*,” did not come into popular use but the name for store, “*tinda*” and “*tindahan*” came from the Spanish “*tienda*.” A special kind of “*tienda*” came to be known as “*sari-sari*” or a variety store. The words for wholesale, “*pakyaw*” and retail trading, “*tingi*” were from the Chinese. In fishports where an agent got the various bids for the fish through “*bulungan*” or “*whispers*” the process came to be called “*asignacion*,” the Spanish for awarding or allocating the supply. The “*tawad*” or discount and “*dagdag*” or item added to the thing paid for, were from Pilipino. When the buyer was overzealous in getting the discount, he became a “*barat*,” a negative term which came from the Spanish “*barato*” or cheap. The first customer who was given all the courtesy and discount was called “*buena mano*,” literally “*good hand*” in

Spanish. Meanwhile, someone who had the loyalty to buy repeatedly from a seller was called a “suki” which was Chinese. Except for “barya,” or small change, which came from the Spanish “barilla,” the other words for market transactions were of local or Chinese origin: “pahunan,” or investment; “sukli,” or change, “lugi,” or loss, “sulit-pahunan,” or break even, “tubo, kita” or profit and “pera” or money.

#### Epilogue

By using language as indicator of influence, this essay has shown hispanization in its limited meaning. As suggested by other authors, hispanization could be measured by the number of ancient Christian churches in communities. The more churches there were, the more hispanization and colonialism there had been. (Fr. Salgado, Adhika Keynote Lecture, St. Mary's College, 2003). Others could have described influence at the level of architecture (Fr. Rene Javellana and Rene O. Mata). In looking at influence at the linguistic level, the essay has elaborated on the thesis of Fray Nebrija in 1592 and reaffirmed later, in the writings of the Algerian revolutionary Franz Fanon in 1961. It would seem that Spanish domination was never complete and barely penetrated beyond the surface since the local languages absorbed but around thirty percent of the language of domination. Being at the periphery of the Empire helped but perhaps more importantly, the Filipinos were creative enough to go around the bush, to feign obedience and at other times, to resist physically through revolts and eventually through a national revolution.

In 1961, at the centennial of Rizal's birth, the issue of language entered at a crossroad. On the argument that the best way to appreciate literature was to read the original, the Philippine Congress debated on the issue of requiring the teaching of Spanish at the collegiate level. It had been said that the mastery of Spanish was needed to really appreciate Rizal's writings which were mostly in Spanish. It became the last attempt to make the presence of Spanish permanent and contest the domination of English. The pro-Spanish group included such luminaries as the nationalist senator, Claro M. Recto. The 24 units of Spanish requirement was passed but because it came as an imposition on the academe, learning the language was not taken seriously. Furthermore the debates over language created a third force composed of students who had revived the move towards a national language based on Tagalog enunciated by President Manuel L. Quezon in the 1930's.

Under the influence of Franz Fanon (*The Wretched of the Earth*, 1963) and others who had looked at language at the level of psychology and culture (e.g. Merleu-Ponty), the students understood that a language was also an instrument of liberation. Fanon had shown that the lack of mastery of the language of the colonizer by a native was psychologically the cause of his inferiority complex. Therefore, a sense of pride was necessarily an objective in developing one's own language and culture. This preception was proven in later years when, under the influence of radical thoughts, the students went to the countryside and learned from the masses. They were thus forced by circumstances to use the language of the common “tao.” And it marked the beginning of modern Philippine nationalism that would later launch the First Quarter Storm at the end of the decade of the 1960's. In the early 1970's, those from the religious sector discovered Paolo Freire whose book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* became a primer in the concientization movement among the Martial Law activists as could be seen in the group called the Education Forum. Like Fanon before his time, Freire advocated a system where the oppressed expressed themselves through their own words, discover the words that would best express their thoughts and put these thoughts into the written form. Instead of teaching the unlettered the A, B, and C's, learning and literacy was facilitated by asking the learner what the most important thing in their minds. For instance, among squatters, this word would be “demolison”, the danger of losing habitation with the government removing them for the sake of development. By making them write this word, copying from the board but in their own way, they learned faster, not in a linear way as in the case of A,B,C's but in an analogic way through the sound associated with the concept. The process of thinking in one's language and expressing these in one's own language was to the oppressed the beginning of the very act of liberation.

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