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Telling Stories:

the persistence of indigenous healing epistemologies and practices in the Filipinx diaspora

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy
in Religious Studies

by

Tara GC Villalba

Committee in charge:

Professor Grace Chang, Chair

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December 2021

The dissertation of Tara GC Villalba is approved.

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Grace Chang, Committee Chair

September 2021

Telling Stories:
the persistence of indigenous healing epistemologies and practices in the Filipinx diaspora

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by

Tara GC Villalba

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There are very few of us indigenous women in academia because academic systems are not built with us in mind. A lot of women made it possible for me to get to this project, and even more to get through the writing process. For now, I want to share my deepest thanks to two women who supported me and my thinking from the beginning of this project, to the end: Dr. Inés Talamantez, and Dr. Grace Chang. Without you two, I would not have made it out of this process. And I also want to acknowledge my blood and chosen family who have moved me from one step to the next. Kira, Dre, Diwa, and Christina, you rock. Kira - now I owe you money 🙄 And Sandibel, Lola, Karen, Cristina, Tress, Gwen, Ce, AL, Teresa, and, Emiko thank you.

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September 2021

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University of California, Santa Barbara

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Concentrations: Social & Psychological Science and Art Studio

Senior Theses: *Latinas in Lexington, Kentucky (Social & Psychological Science)*

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EMPLOYMENT

(2021 –) Nuclear Weapons Abolition Program Organizer, Washington Physicians for Social Responsibility

Create, plan, and implement strategic and tactical work to permanently abolish nuclear weapons
Coordinate Washington Against Nuclear Weapons Coalition (of 60+ grassroots organizations in WA state) to build a statewide mass movement for a nuclear-free future

(2013 –) Founder, Mangrove Collective

Develop a cooperative of educators and trainers offering workshops to regional environmental justice organizations on ending oppression, effective communication and facilitation strategies

(2017 – 2021) Instructor, Western Washington University

Developed and taught equity literacy curriculum for Woodring College of Education. Taught Compass to Campus Mentoring Program in Whatcom and Skagit counties (80-150 mentors per quarter) and Global Systems, Human Services Program (25 seniors per quarter)

(2014 – 2017) Program Associate for Equity and Diversity, Intercultural Center, Whatcom Community College

Managed daily operations of WCC's Intercultural Center including 5-9 student and professional staff
Mentored and supported low income, queer and trans, undocumented, first generation, immigrant, and students of color

(2012 – 2015) Gender Justice Coordinator, Community to Community Development, Bellingham WA

Represented local organization to local, regional, national, and international alliances, managing several local convenings of 5-60 organizations, training facilitators, legal observers, youth, and over 50 community volunteers

Designed and delivered *Cocinas Sanas/Healthy Kitchens* curriculum to 15-30 farmworker families in Whatcom and Skagit counties

(2001-2012) Teaching Assistant/Associate, University of California, Santa Barbara

Developed and taught sections/classes for Asian American Studies, Feminist Studies, and Religious Studies departments.

(2005-2008) Director of Educational Ministries First Congregational Church of Santa Barbara, UCC

Directed Ministry of Spiritual Growth for families and youth, using art and music, for social justice, climate change, and community service projects

(2006) Visiting Scholar, Gadjah Mada University, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

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(2003-2005) Graduate Admissions Specialist, Spalding University, Louisville KY

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Villalba, Tara GC with Delores Mondragon, "She is a Radical" in *Revolutionary Mothering: Love on the Front Lines* (Alexis Pauline Gumbs, China Martens, Eds.), PM Press, 2016

Munson, Tara GV (2009), "Filipinx American Religion" in *Asian American History and Culture: An Encyclopedia* (Huping Ling and Allan Austin, Eds.), M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 2010

Villalba Munson, Tara (2006), "Christianity in Southeast Asia" in *The Oxford Handbook of Global Religions* (Mark Juergensmeyer, Ed.), Oxford University Press, 2006

Munson, Tara (2004), "Moro National Liberation Front", "Moro Islamic Liberation Front" for *Islam Facts on File*

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PAPERS

Ideological Removal: Healing from Displacement. American Studies Association, Denver, CO. November 2016

Babaylan Feminism: Locating Power in Traditional Healing Practices. Critical Ethnic Studies Conference: Chicago, IL. September 2013

Sacred Sights: Framing Unwaged and Invisible Labor in Disaster Recovery in the Philippines. National Women's Studies Association Annual Conference: Oakland, CA. November 2012

Religion and the Military in Asia-Pacific. Respondent, American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting, San Francisco CA 2011

Growing Transnational Communities: Anakbayan on the US West Coast. 1968 – A Global Year of Student Driven Change, Black Studies Department, Santa Barbara CA, Nov 2008

Moros in Mindanao: Nationhood and Resistance. Presented at the Western Commission for the Study of Religion, American Academy of Religion (Western Region), Tempe AZ, 2005

WORKSHOPS

Workshop series on dismantling racism “*Our People Gonna Rise*” for 350.org Seattle, in 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021

Workshop entitled “*Decolonizing Our Activism: Respecting and Protecting Indigenous Sovereignty*” for Idle No More WA, Seattle WA, June 2016

Students of Color Conference (SOCC), Yakima WA

Workshops entitled:

“*Listening for Change: Moving Towards Solidarity*” April 2017

“*Growing Our Roots: Ecofeminism and Healing From US Imperialism*” April 2017

“*Our People Gonna Rise Like The Water: Ecofeminism and Just Transitions*” April 2016

“*Solidarity. Because. Black Lives Matter.*” April 2016

“*Racial and Economic Justice through Queer Liberation*” April 2015

Workshop entitled “*Building a People’s Movement with Families of Color at the Center: Sharing our Stories*” for Got Green? Food Access Team, Tukwila/Seattle, April 2016

Workshop entitled “*Just Transitions: Principles*” for 350.org, BreakFree PNW, Anacortes, March 2016

Workshop entitled “*Beyond Safe Zones: Towards a Flourishing Whatcom Community*” for Student Life, Whatcom Community College, Bellingham WA, November 2015

Workshop entitled “*Into the Garden: Growing Healthy Relationships*” for WA State Coalition Against Domestic Violence Annual Conference, Spokane WA, September 2015

Workshop entitled “*Healthy Families, Healthy Communities*” for WA State Department of Health, Enlace Project, Olympia WA, July 2014

Workshop entitled “*Supporting Farmworker Justice*” for Seminary Consortium for Pastoral Education & Interfaith Worker Justice (SCUPE/IWJ) National Conferences, Chicago IL, June 2014

Workshop entitled “*Cooperatives: The Basics*” for Got Green? Women’s Leadership Institute, Seattle WA, April 2014

Workshop entitled “*Reclaiming Human Rights and Our Struggles for Dignity*” for Martin Luther King Jr. Human Rights Conference, Bellingham WA, January 2014

Workshop entitled “*Anti-Oppression and Liberation in our Social Movements*” for Backbone Campaign Action Camp, Vashon WA, August 2013, March 2014, August 2014

Workshop series entitled “*Anti-Oppression and Intersecting Liberation in our Social Movements*” for WWU Students for Farmworker Justice, Spring 2014

Workshop entitled “*Introduction to Ecofeminism*” for WWU Earth Week, Bellingham WA, April 2014

Workshop entitled “*Filipinas and Migration: A Primer on Issues*” for Women of Color Conference, 2010 UCSB

Workshop entitled “*Kasama and Compañeras: Shared Struggles: Filipinas and Chicanas*” for UCSB’s Raza College Day – 2008 and 2009

ACADEMIC AWARDS AND RECOGNITIONS

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Henry Luce Foundation	Fall 2006
FLAS Fellowship	Fall 2002 – Spring 2003
Departmental Fellowship	Fall 2001 – Spring 2002
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Graduated Summa Cum Laude	May 1996

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

Member of American Studies Association - 2016

Member of, and Attended National Women’s Studies Association Annual Meeting – 2019, 2012

Member of, and Attended Annual National Meeting of the American Academy of Religion – 2019, 2011, 2005, 2004

Attended NACCS Joto Caucus Conference – 2008

Attended Western Commission for the Study of Religion Regional Meeting - 2005

RESEARCH INTERESTS

- ❖ Colonization, imperialism, displacement in Southeast Asia and Oceania, and their diaspora
- ❖ Oral history and participatory action research methods
- ❖ Indigenous and place-based healing practices of women, gender non-conforming, and queer people of color
- ❖ Eco-feminism, food sovereignty, and climate justice
- ❖ Undoing systems of oppression for effective social justice movement building

LANGUAGES

- ❖ Fluent in English, Spanish, Filipino, and Cebuano,
- ❖ Intermediate translation fluency in Bahasa Indonesia, Modern Standard Arabic, and French

ORGANIZING EVENTS AND CONVENINGS

- ❖ Organized Farmworker March for Dignity (200+ in attendance), trained legal observers, safety/peacekeepers, youth space keepers
- ❖ Organized PNW Just Transition Assembly, trained facilitators (coordinating 15 regional organizations, 80 attendees, 30 volunteers, 3 budgets)
- ❖ Coordination of 50+ volunteers for community projects and public events.

SERVICE AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

- ❖ Member of Lummi Peacemaking Circle Leadership Team
- ❖ Member of World March of Women, Development Committee – US Chapter
- ❖ Advocated for Latin@ farmworkers access to educational access, human services, and economic resources, towards self sufficiency
- ❖ Provided administrative support for an interdisciplinary conference on the issues of human trafficking, with community workers, academic and legal scholars, and non-profit organizations
- ❖ Research and writing consultant and occasional translation for migrant worker and refugee advocacy groups
 - ◆ Unlad-Kabayan Migrant Services, Philippines Fall 2007 - Present
 - ◆ Refugee & Migrant Ministries, KY and CA Fall 1996 - July 2007

ABSTRACT

Telling Stories: the persistence of indigenous healing epistemologies and practices in the

Filipinx diaspora

by

Tara GC Villalba

Removal and displacement of indigenous people cause spiritual dislocation and something that most healers would consider - a spiritual un-wellness. But migration is often described as a positive step that migrants take to “find a better life”. Most Filipinx families have displacement stories, and we often tell them as migration or immigration stories - something our families are proud of, because it shows our resilience. From the life histories of Filipinx migrant and immigrants, this project looked for any indications of rootedness to any ancestral places, and for the impacts that displacement had on our relationships and connection with both people and places. The life histories showed the deep hurt that migrants sustained because of their separation from their people and their places. They showed that the hurts are not contained in just their generation but rather were passed on to the generations that followed them, especially that profound feeling of loneliness, feeling of not belonging, and the longing for home (*kamingaw*). Their life histories also showed that despite being away from their places and traditional medicinal plants, they still held on as best they could to their healing practices and the epistemologies under the practices.

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I. Introduction

Shortly after moving to Washington state in 2012, I learned about Lummi Nation protecting their territories and resisting what would have been the largest coal terminal on this continent, from desecrating an ancestral village site and violating their treaty protected access to traditional and customary fishing grounds. In 2013 I learned about Unist'ot'en Camp (that had started in 2010) protecting Wet'suwet'en territories that that is not only their ancestral homelands, but also home to generations of salmon, from encroaching gas pipelines. For both peoples, they understood that living in their ancestral territories is necessary to protect it and all the life in and around it.

Today, any indigenous people asserting their sovereignty in and over their ancestral territories do not make their assertions lightly, especially because they are consistently bullied, cajoled, bribed, and threatened with state violence (through the military and law enforcement), bankruptcy (through expensive and long lawsuits, debt and poverty), genocidal assimilation policies, and withdrawal of all other resources including treaty-guaranteed rights and protections. One hundred and twenty years ago similar threats were levelled by the US government and the corporations they protected, against indigenous Philippine islanders. The purpose of the threats now are still the same as those from a

century ago - for indigenous people to leave their territories unprotected, or at least to theatrically “consent” to extraction policies from corporations protected by non-indigenous governments.

Under US colonial administration, many indigenous Philippine islanders left their home towns and ancestral places when their rivers were poisoned by the US military, when they were moved to farm on lands that were unsuitable for farming, or when they were forced to abandon their traditional food ways like fishing, in favor of going to school to “learn” how to farm or work in factories and fruit packing plants. First and second generation migrants describe their parents and grandparents’ moves in terms like “life got so hard that they left”. When asked if they ever heard how life “got so hard”, they easily related stories about the destruction of their ancestral lands because of war or the establishments of plantations and industrial packing plants as the main reasons that “life got hard” for their elders and ancestors. That point in their family histories became the beginning of their families’ migration stories that eventually led to their labors in Hawai’i’s sugar and pineapple plantations, and eventually their settlement in the central coast of California, following the agricultural migrant circuit.

I was around 10yrs old when I first went to Statue Square and Chater Garden in Hong Kong's Central District. I saw Filipinx, mostly women, sitting in groups, hanging out with each other, laughing, singing, and sharing meals. I could hear Tagalog, Binisayâ, Ilokano, and sometimes other indigenous languages I didn't recognize or understand. It was a Sunday afternoon. I had never seen that many workers taking over a public space like that, except in labor union marches. For a few hours, Filipinx took over that public space and Statue Square and Chater Garden were transformed into a vibrant outdoor Filipinx community plaza.

A few years later, I volunteered for the first baseline research project about Asian domestic workers in Hong Kong. I was curious about what would convince anyone to leave their home and community to work somewhere so far away. This was all before I learned about the large scale migration policies from the global south to be low-wage workers for wealthy economies. I listened to their stories about enduring long working hours (often over 12 hours a day), getting just one 24-hour period off per week (and that was hard-won), being exposed to physical and sexual abuse, missing their families, and being treated like they weren't worth the same as the families they took care of. I figured it was a complicated and heartrending decision to migrate. I wanted to understand how the "temporary choice" to

migrate made sense to them. Most of all, I wanted to know how they would eventually get to go home. But the surveys and interviews never had enough time to ask those questions. And they didn't really expect to talk about it.

The deeper I delved into migration, the more it became clear that migration was more than a decision to find a job that just happened to be outside our home countries. But every migrant and immigrant I ever interviewed (not just from the Philippines but also from Indonesia, Mexico, Guatemala, and the Pacific Islands) always talked about the feeling of wanting to go home and knowing they weren't going to get to go home "for a while". Sometimes that "while" was a few years. Sometimes, it was actually a "never". In the meantime, I witnessed migrants and immigrants literally create space for themselves and their communities, layered on top of places where other indigenous peoples had been forced off. I wanted to understand migration inside this complex matrix of relationships.

A large part of this research project got started when I started to study under Dr. Inés Talamantez. From her classes and her mentorship, I learned about the significance of place to different Native American tribes and nations. At her suggestion, I also started to learn about the tribes and nations around me so that I could understand the importance of this place in particular, where I live, work, and play. Through her guided readings and our

discussions, I began to put an academic framework around the many things my grandmother and my family, had taught me about the places we're from. I began to understand my studies and my research as part of a conversation about indigenous people and our histories across the world.

Before I studied with Dr. Talamantez, I had been taught, bewilderingly, to look for indigeneity outside of my own people, heritage, tradition, and outside of the places where I was raised. It was something that was outside of me, my family, and our places. I had learned from school, including graduate school until my time with Dr. Talamantez, that indigenous people were a "they", and that "we" were not "them". While insisting that I learn the differences in experience and histories between indigenous peoples, Dr. Talamantez encouraged me to study the histories of colonization for the many indigenous peoples in our islands. When I started to shift my project to look at migration from the lens of removal policies, Dr. Talamantez supported me with deeper studies of removal and displacement and their effects on removed and displaced indigenous people.

In this dissertation in particular, I chose to ask for life histories with follow up guiding questions. I chose to use this method because of its open endedness, and because of the possibility of being able to follow the mind of my interviewee, getting to see what was

important to them about their displacement stories, based on what they found important to relate, rather than basing the interview on a survey of questions. I visited their homes and other spaces they curated such as a community center, and a community history event. I listened for the impact of removal and displacement policies on my interviewees' ancestors, on the cultural practices that they considered to be indigenous or place-based, and thirdly, on their own relationships with their ancestral places, and with the places they ended up settling on after they and their ancestors were displaced. Each of these aspects: ancestry, cultural practices (ie. traditions around healing), and relationship to place, are components of indigenous experiences of removal and displacement. There are other components of indigenous experience impacted by removal and displacement such as language, food, cosmologies, governance, that I did not attempt to address in this project.

The first chapter deals with the question of why Filipinx peoples leave our islands in the numbers that we do, and why many of us consider this a "choice" that makes the most sense for us. I use the phrase "ideological removal" to describe the process of inculcating in indigenous Filipinx the belief that it is better to leave our ancestral territories than stay and defend them. I argue that the creation of a national identity (not just the national identity but also the national minorities - those who form the edges - the margins - of that national

identity), history, and language, convinces indigenous Philippine islanders to abandon our territories and identities. The second chapter describes the impacts of leaving our ancestral territories. This includes the external financial and social impacts as well as the internal emotional and spiritual impacts. The third chapter describes the role of assimilation as the colonial and imperialist force that makes people want to cleave to a settler identity that is “better than” the indigenous identity we left behind because of the ideological removal process. The fourth chapter delineates the surviving indigenous traditional healing practices in the Filipinx diaspora. It includes some of the surviving indigenous healing epistemologies that undergird the practices. The final section suggests directions for further study into what survives from our autochthonous relationships with our ancestral ecosystems.

IDEOLOGICAL REMOVAL

Introduction

If we look at the long story of indigenous healing traditions in the Philippines, we would find practices that mediate, for their human inhabitants, the awesome and sacred life forces in the land and in the ocean. Often, these practices depend on plants, animals, and objects from their shared natural environments. Just as often, these practices are profoundly shaped by the shifting relationships between the naturally occurring environment (land- and water-scapes, plants, and animals), and the people living in that environment. This project investigates what happens to these indigenous healing traditions when their practitioners are removed spiritually, ideologically and physically from the lands and waters that initially supported both their people and their traditions. In this section, I argue that while physical removal was initiated and accomplished during the colonial administrations of Spain and of the United States, the anti-colonial nationalist project to create the Philippines, and its people – the Filipinxs, deeply disturbed the connection between the land and waters of the islands and its inhabitants by removing the people ideologically from their ancestral places. I argue that people have to be ideologically removed concurrently, in order for physical removal to be naturalized. I focus on three mechanisms through which ideological removal is instituted in the Philippines in particular: (1) the creation of a national history; (2) the creation of a national language; and (3) the creation of national ethnic/cultural minorities. I further argue that these three processes are implemented and communicated through a national education program that indeed naturalizes the existence and subsequent devaluation

of indigenous and traditional practices and marginalization of the peoples that hold on to these practices.

A common assumption today is that indigenous traditions become lost, as indigenous people “disappear” through disease, death, and intermarriage. When indigenous people begin to accept that losing their place-based traditions, knowledges, languages, and practices, is inevitable and necessary, indigenous traditions are also believed to become lost. But the reality is that even though they do change (as all traditions do), indigenous traditions persist even through physical, ideological, and spiritual dislocations. They persist in spite of the changes experienced by the natural environment, and by the people of that place. But how does this assumption about the disappearance of indigenous peoples, their knowledges, and their practices, become a common assumption? I argue that the internalization of physical removal, what I am calling here “ideological removal”, is a process by which peoples with colonial histories are coerced and convinced to have a stake in their own removal. Ideological removal is the process through which we, as people with colonial pasts, are enticed to give up specific attachments to our ancestral places and the knowledges and practices that come from these places, and to re-create new places invested with “superior” values, knowledges, and practices.

In the Philippines, this simultaneous loss and re-creation of indigenous traditions often runs like this:

Indigenous or “place-based” traditions are most purely “preserved” in “tribal” or “ethnic minority” communities. Often, this means that the category “Filipinx” is left undisturbed as the normative community centered as the national “spirit” of the Philippines,

and at the periphery of the Filipinx community the “tribal” or “ethnic minority” communities continue the ancient and “primitive” traditions of “native” Filipinxs. Filipinxs of the normative national community no longer adhere to these traditions that are considered primitive and superstitious. Instead, they are engaged in “modern” scientific worldviews and integrated into modern capitalist cultures. By the time that Filipinxs reach the diaspora, not only are they fully Filipinx they are also English speaking world-citizens. Presumably, these Filipinxs would be the least likely to maintain traditional healing practices, and the least versed in traditional knowledges and languages.

However, the reality of migrant and immigrant Filipinas is rarely this clear-cut. In 2011, from tiny Filipinx-owned markets in Spanaway, WA to the mega-malls in Eagle Rock, Los Angeles, traditional Filipinx medicines, oils, and foods are being sold. As part of their healing practices, Filipinas are engaging in *hilot*, looking for *babaylan*, planting *kamunggay*, doing *baños*, as well as praying at their respective churches, working out in zumba and yoga classes, and consulting medical doctors. I am compelled to look for possible archives where indigenous practices and traditions still remain active today in the Filipinx diaspora. Although the process of ideological removal continues, it is also still incomplete and contested. Even in the small area of traditional healing practices, we can see ideological removal working in the deployment of two unspoken but assumed myths.

The first myth here, that Filipinxs are no longer indigenous people but rather simply citizens of a modern nation state, argues that indigenous practices and knowledges fall in two places: the past distanced from the present as pre-history, and the present indigenous communities who are physically and ideologically distanced through their assigned status as

national minorities. The second myth at work is that Filipinxs are an unproblematic mix of Malay, sometimes Polynesian, Chinese and European ancestries. This second myth is further augmented by class investments because middle and upper-class Filipinxs particularly and consistently claim this mestiza identity, and its attendant class privileges and mobility.

Indigenous and feminist critiques can be a systematic analytical lens connecting the histories of Native American communities, the effects of colonialism, and the present large scale migration of Filipinas. Studies of Native American religious traditions and its experiences with colonialism offer a fresh beginning place to consider labor migration as an extension or present day manifestation of colonial removal policies. In later sections, I will frame how ideological removal is essential to the large scale physical removal of Filipinxs from the Philippines and their dispersal throughout the global labor market as low-wage workers.

Shared colonial histories with Mexico, Native America, Oceania, and Southeast Asia contribute meaningful perspectives towards physical and ideological removal experiences that seem to be the roots of what Filipinxs call “colonial mentality” – the preference for colonial ideologies and practices over valuing the beliefs and practices of pre-colonial indigenous life ways. Using Bonfil Batalla’s *Mexico Profundo* it seems useful and relevant to ask how nationalist projects and policies, often born out of anti-colonial movements, end up continuing colonial policies of removal, prying indigenous peoples from their lands and traditions. Situated between Oceania and Southeast Asia, the Philippine archipelago connects and separates these two larger regions. In addition to pre-colonial linguistic

connections with Austronesian/Malayo-Polynesian languages¹, the Philippines also share physical and historical connections with both regions. From the 17th century importation of Filipinx labor and the exile of Filipinx rebels against Spain, through the US importation of Filipinx laborers to work in agriculture, Filipinxs continue today to be a large community of displaced settlers in Guam, the Marianas, and Hawaii. On the other side, sultanates in Mindanao and Luzon had established relationships with sultanates in Borneo as well as seafaring and trading connections with communities in Sulawesi as well as larger Southeast Asia². Therefore, it seems fitting that while I trace mechanisms of ideological removal, I also rely on critical scholarship about Southeast Asia and Oceania to re-place Philippine relations with these two regions as crucial contextual relationships.

Ideological Removal through the creation of a National History

Struggling to center indigeneity in scholarship about the Philippines today is, by necessity, related to the real life struggles of indigenous peoples today for land and resources in these islands that for over 500 years have been subject to colonial rule and its legacies. It is equally important to link the erasure and survival of indigenous peoples in the Philippines to their subjugation first under the Spaniards, their later “pacification” under the Americans, and today, their assimilation and integration into the secular Philippine nation state. The 1896 anti-colonial nationalist movement struggled to piece together a unified nationalist identity despite the cleavages of religion, language, geographic region, class, and gender.

¹ William Henry Scott, *Prehispanic Source Materials for the Study of Philippine History*, Rev. ed (Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1984), 34.

² *Ibid.*, 80–90.

Mainstream historiographic material of the Philippines describes it as a colorful exotic nation that encompasses just over seven thousand islands peopled through “migration waves” over thousands of years, from Oceania on one side and Southeast Asia on other side. According to this master narrative, Filipinxs are generally described as a racial mix of Malay, Austro/Poly-nesian “stock” enlightened by Chinese, Spaniards, and Americans. *Mestiz@s* are lighter-skinned Filipinxs whose Chinese, European, or American ancestry can be easily differentiated from their darker skinned Malay ancestors. Filipinxs are predominantly Christian: mostly Catholic, with minorities of Protestants; minorities of Muslims, and an almost miniscule portion of “Tribal Filipinxs”. Although over 120 languages are spoken in the Philippines today, Filipino and English are the national languages and are the medium of instruction in elementary and secondary schools in the public school system. In fact, no other indigenous language is formally taught in the Philippines other than Filipino, although there are growing moves towards first language multilingual education³.

Philippine nationalist historiography differs from these mainstream historical narratives by aiming to tell a “people’s history”, most notably Renato and Leticia Constantino, Patricio Abinales, Teodoro Agoncillo, Samuel K Tan and W H Scott⁴. In addition to their affirmations that Filipinxs do indeed *have* a rich pre-colonial history, they

³ Catherine Young, “First Language Education in Multilingual Contexts in the Philippines,” in *Endangered Languages of Austronesia*, ed. Margaret Florey (Oxford ;New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

⁴ Renato Constantino, *The Philippines : A Past Revisited* (Quezon City: Tala Pub. Services, 1975); Leticia Constantino and Renato Constantino, *The Philippines : The Continuing Past* (Quezon City: Foundation for Nationalist Studies, 1978); Teodoro Agoncillo, *History of the Filipinx People*, 5th ed. (Quezon City: R.P. Garcia Pub. Co., 1977); Patricio N. Abinales and Donna J Amoroso, *State and Society in the Philippines* (Lanham MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2005); Samuel Tan, *A History of the Philippines Samuel K Tan*. (Univ of the Phillipines Pr, 2009); William Scott, *Barangay* (Quezon City Manila Philippines: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1994).

also use that pre-colonial history in the service of the Philippine nationalist impulse to create a genealogy from today's Filipinx to a pre-colonial past, with differing degrees of concern for the actual communities who survived Spanish and American colonization and are presently negotiating the often coercive Philippine nation state.

For Constantino, "human society is the cause and the result of people in motion and in constant struggle to realize human potential". Moving away from idealizing histories told in the format of famous individual men, Constantino calls for moving historical agency from any individual to "writing Philippine history from the point of view of the Filipinx". Going even further, Constantino states that a "truly Filipinx history" is "the history of the Filipinx people". He describes history as "the recorded struggle of people for ever increasing freedom and for newer and higher realizations of the human person", which can only be reached through struggle which for him is the "essence of life" where "men must work together to fight natural or social forces stronger than their individual selves."⁵

Constantino sees the "masses" as the "inarticulate in history" who make great actions and events possible, but whose collective labors are hardly recognized in historical telling. In step with classic Marxist analysis, it is important for Constantino to retrieve a diverse but collective history that must become "reusable" to the development of the unified collective Filipinx body. He begins his historical project by being clear that "Filipinx resistance to colonial oppression is the unifying thread of Philippine history" and out of this resistance "the Filipinx emerged"⁶.

⁵ Constantino, *The Philippines*, 5.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 11.

In recent years, there has been a generation of historical scholarship which has complicated the nameless “inarticulate” masses in history who, through their invisible labors, brought a modern nation state into being. Mojares rightly points out that the “history of nations is often imagined as...a progression in time...from racial beginnings, genealogies of heroes, myths of founding fathers...stirred by a nostalgia for origins, out of which we trace a pattern of testing and maturation...toward a future”⁷. This recent generation of historians have pushed at the limitations of Agoncillo’s and Constantino’s historical narrative paradigm. While they critique the nation-making project and enrich our present understanding of the situation of all kinds of Filipinxs, they do also still take for granted that the preferred and indeed the most appropriate form of political organization is the modern nation-state and the most fitting economic organization for that nation state is globalized capitalism.

One organizing principle in Philippine historiography is that colonization installed an order to what was unmanageable heterogeneity so that Filipinxs could develop towards self government. Vergara quotes a passage from 1910 as saying:

There are 63 different tribes of Filipinxs speaking 81 separate...dialects, worshipping several different forms of a God, and possessed no common national ideals to bind them together in a compact whole; thereby rendering their own self-government practically impossible until such time as [they], under the leadership of the United States, shall be taught to speak but one language, honor one flag and in general worship but one God.⁸

⁷ Resil Mojares, *Waiting for Mariang Makiling : Essays in Philippine Cultural History* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2002), 270.

⁸ Benito M Vergara, *Displaying Filipinxs : Photography and Colonialism in Early 20th Century Philippines* ([Quezon City]: University of the Philippines Press, 1995), 51.

Vergara calls this a “colonial fantasy – the gradual homogenization of subjects” using state discipline and its technologies of surveillance administered through the U.S. Census⁹. Agoncillo and Constantino both challenge this “leadership” of the United States but ironically both also paint a Philippine history where heterogeneous communities, in their anti-colonial struggles, develop a unified national consciousness that can no longer be divided by their previous affiliations and loyalties. In Constantino’s words, out of this struggle “the Filipinx” is born. Although the “inarticulate masses” become elevated into necessary historical actors towards independence rather than unmanageable “wild tribes”, for the American colonial officials and for Filipinx nationalists alike, nation-making is both “liberating” and coercive.

The drive towards a national homogeneity is contested by historians claiming othered archives to rebuild co-existing and different histories. *Kasaysayan: The Story of the Filipinx People*¹⁰ uses archeological evidence to systematically build a fuller picture of the earliest periods of history in the islands. Scott underscores that archeological, geological, linguistic, and palaeographical data as equally important as actual written records to describe the pre-hispanic past of the Philippines¹¹ and to set right “discrepancies” in Philippine historiography that is taught in the country’s public schools. In addition, several other historians have published their studies that seek to include folklore, genealogies, dance,

⁹ Ibid., 52.

¹⁰ Gabriel Fr. Casal et al., “Volume 1: The Earliest Filipinxs,” in *Kasaysayan : The Story of the Filipinx People*. ([Hong Kong]: Asia Publishing Company Limited., 1998).

¹¹ Scott, *Prehispanic Source Materials for the Study of Philippine History*.

photographs, and literature to frame critiques of the master narratives of the Philippine past¹² that organizes history through the prism of nation-making, whether it is in a nation built through imperial designs, or whether it seeks an anti-colonial design.

Attempting to homogenize many peoples into one homogeneous nation is not only an erasure project against the differences that exist between indigenous communities, it can also be seen as a project that seeks to redefine and re-structure differences into identity categories that the nation state can manage. The imposition of structures of domination, such as patriarchy and racism, becomes visible when we can view the erasure of difference from feminist critiques that speak to the need for a diversity of voices and the recognition of marginalized experiences. Audre Lorde advocates that recognizing difference is a source of power for marginalized peoples:

Difference is that raw and powerful connection from which our personal power is forged. As women, we have been taught either to ignore our differences, or to view them as causes for separation and suspicion rather than as forces for change. Without community there is no liberation, only the most vulnerable and temporary armistice between an individual and her oppression. But community must not mean a shedding of our differences, nor the pathetic pretense that these differences do not exist...*survival is not an academic skill*. It is learning...how to make common cause with those others identified as outside the structures in order to define and seek a world in which we can all flourish. It is learning how to take our differences and make them strengths...the failure of academic feminists to recognize difference as a crucial strength is a failure to reach beyond the first patriarchal lesson. In our world, divide and conquer must become define and empower.¹³

¹² Mojares, *Waiting for Mariang Makiling*; Luis Camara Dery, *A History of the Inarticulate : Local History, Prostitution, and Other Views from the Bottom* (Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 2001); Vergara, *Displaying Filipinx*; Neferti Tadiar, *Things Fall Away : Philippine Historical Experience and the Makings of Globalization* (Durham N.C.: Duke University Press, 2009); Arnold Azurin, *Reinventing the Filipinx Sense of Being & Becoming : Critical Analyses of the Orthodox Views in Anthropology, History, Folklore & Letters*, 2nd ed. (Diliman Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press University of the Philippines, 1995).

¹³ Lorde, Audre. 1984. *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*. Trumansburg, N.Y: Crossing Press.

Insisting on historical space for the diverse communities of the Philippines instead of collapsing languages and communities into the state's manageable categories seeks to restore the existence of that diversity in the narrative, to match the reality that is already diverse. Insisting on heterogeneity also resists the "divide-and-conquer" management strategies of state and colonial powers once they have re-defined and re-structured difference.

Furthermore, Hernandez-Avila expresses that "the loss of linguistic diversity represents a huge loss in intellectual resources," as indigenous epistemologies, including unique ways of "synthesizing the world" and problem solving, disappear along with languages.¹⁴ Recognizing and recovering linguistic and therefore intellectual diversity would be one way to empower communities based on their difference.

Not only is there a flattening of difference across linguistic and cultural diversities, there is also an erasure of the experiences of women throughout Philippine historiography, so that nationalist master narratives preserves the experiences of men, even in the anti-colonial struggle, and makes it appear as if women were not central in these same struggles. Lorde's statements about the power of women are particularly salient here. Patriarchy is undoubtedly at work when women are automatically absent from the retelling of historical events. A medicinal history seeks to remedy that absence, and moves beyond, according to Aurora Levins Morales:

Making truly medicinal history requires that we do more than just add women (or any other "disappeared" group of people) to the existing frame works...For example,

¹⁴ Hernandez-Avila, Ines, "The Power of Native Languages and the Performance of Indigenous Autonomy: The Case of Mexico," in *Native Voices: American Indian Identity & Resistance*, ed. Tinker George Grounds, Richard and Wilkins, David (Lawrence KS: University Press of Kansas, 2003), 60.

if you ask: “Until what point did the indigenous Arawak people of Puerto Rico have a significant impact on the society?” most Puerto Rican historians say that the Arawaks stopped playing a major part by around 1550 because they no longer existed as a people. But what no longer existed in 1550 were organized lowland villages, caciques, war bands — in other words, those aspects of social organization that European men would consider most important and most likely to recognize. If we ask the same question centered on women, we would need to look at those areas of life in which women had the most influence. Evidence from other parts of the Americas shows that traditional cultures survived longest in those areas controlled by non-elite women. If we put women at the center, it may be that Arawak culture continued to have a strong influence on rural Puerto Ricans until much later, particularly in the practices of agriculture and medicine, certain kinds of spirituality, child rearing, food preparation, and in the production of cloth and pottery.¹⁵

More than simply adding voices, centering the experiences of women necessarily changes the archives we might use to tell histories in order to recognize the places of indigenous women’s power not only in the past, but more importantly in the present. Such a recognition would reshape the narrative of the present day nation state as a community where indigenous knowledges and practices only survived in small tribal communities. Instead we might find that indigenous knowledges and practices exist in the larger “assimilated” population’s practices and persist in the social and physical areas where women have “more influence”.

Another critique of Philippine historiography is its use of chronology as a technology that disciplines pre-colonial history. Most Philippine histories are told about people and events after “the Filipinx emerged” – that is, after the anti-colonial nationalist movement began. Usually, there is a cursory introduction about the pre-colonial state of the peoples of the Philippines – often in terms of their political organization into *barangay* units and their

¹⁵ Aurora Levins Morales, *Medicine Stories : History, Culture, and the Politics of Integrity*, 1st ed. (Cambridge MA: South End Press, 1998), 27.

economic system of labor and paying “tribute” to their barangay leader. This chronological framework devalues pre-colonial history in two ways: first by structuring history’s beginning to coincide with European colonialism so that Philippine history *really* starts in 1521. This effectively implies that prior to colonial contact, the Philippines is pre-historic and therefore primitive. Secondly, it sets up an evolutionary structure where pre-historic Philippine lands and peoples gradually evolve into higher and more complex forms of self-organization and movements culminating in the post-colonial independent secular nation-state.

WH Scott tries to avoid these two forms of devaluating indigenous Philippine histories by renaming the pre-colonial sources as “prehispanic”¹⁶, which he believes is a more accurate descriptor rather than “pre-historic” sources of Philippine historiography. Abinales and Amoroso explain that the “standard narrative adheres closely to the conventional historical periodization: “pre-Hispanic”; Spanish; revolutionary; American; Commonwealth; Japanese; and, in the Republican era, by presidential administration.”¹⁷ Bankoff and Weekley caution that “the frequent adoption of chronology, of moving from the past to the present, as the ordering framework...implies an evolutionary progression from the seemingly more ‘primitive’ economies of the past to the more developed ones of the present...confer[ing] a sense of historical inevitability upon such a sequence as preface to modernity”¹⁸.

¹⁶ Scott, *Prehispanic Source Materials for the Study of Philippine History*, 141.

¹⁷ Abinales and Amoroso, *State and Society in the Philippines*, 4.

¹⁸ Greg Bankoff and Kathleen Weekley, *Post-Colonial National Identity in the Philippines : Celebrating the Centennial of Independence* (Aldershot England ;;Burlington VT: Ashgate, 2002), 158.

The problem of using chronology as a framework for history is more than academic. History in general, and chronology in particular, have been exposed in indigenous studies as present in the daily lives of indigenous and colonized peoples. For this reason, it is important to encourage decolonizing Philippine historiography to be in conversation with indigenous critiques of colonial and colonizing histories. Linda Tuhiwai Smith explains how history structures social realities:

Within...social realities, questions of imperialism and the effects of colonization may seem to be merely academic; sheer physical survival is far more pressing. The problem is that constant efforts by governments, states, societies and institutions to deny the historical formations of such conditions have simultaneously denied our claims to humanity, to having a history, and to all sense of hope.¹⁹

Thus, history is profoundly complicit not only in the formation of social structures such as states, but also in the effects of these social structures, such as the widespread poverty of “cultural minorities” in the Philippines for example. Glenn Morris finds that “the process of devaluing, dispossessing, dehumanizing, and redefining indigenous peoples by the colonial-settler powers has been, and continues to be, relentless and pervasive - in religion, history, law, politics, economics, science, and popular culture.”²⁰ Reclaiming indigenous histories therefore can be a powerful way to restore a colonized people’s humanity.

Tuhiwai Smith argues that

History is mostly about power. It is the story of the powerful and how they became powerful, and then how they use their power to keep them in positions in which they can continue to dominate others...To hold alternative histories is to hold alternative

¹⁹ Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies : Research and Indigenous Peoples* (London ;;New York ;Dunedin N.Z. ;New York: Zed Books ;;University of Otago Press ;;Distributed in the USA exclusively by St. Martin’s Press, 1999), 4.

²⁰ Morris, Glenn T., “Vine Deloria, Jr., and the Development of a Decolonizing Critique of Indigenous Peoples and International Relations,” in *Native Voices: American Indian Identity & Resistance*, ed. Tinker George Grounds, Richard and Wilkins, David (Lawrence KS: University Press of Kansas, 2003), 105.

knowledges...that...can form the basis of alternative ways of doing things...the need to tell our stories remains the powerful imperative of a powerful form of resistance.²¹

For Tuhiwai Smith, one way that history is used to invisibly dominate indigenous peoples is in the use of chronology:

Chronology is important as a method because it allows events to be located at a point in time...In order to begin the chronology a time of 'discovery' has to be established. Chronology is also important for attempting to go backwards and explain how and why things happened in the past...Implicit in the notion of development is the notion of progress. This assumes that societies move forward in stages of development much as an infant grows into a fully developed adult human being. The earliest phase of human development is regarded as primitive, simple and emotional. As societies develop they become less primitive, more civilized, more rational, and their social structures become more complex and bureaucratic. History was the story of people who were regarded as *fully human*. Others who were not regarded as human (that is, capable of self-actualization) were prehistoric.²²

A chronological structure invisibly sets up history as truly beginning with colonizers as having full faculties of reason, while indigenous peoples become the object of colonization and development precisely because the seemingly innocent structure categorized them as primitive and in need of development. Setting up indigenous people's pasts as prehistoric "shorten[s] very drastically the roots of their culture or even declare[s] their existence doubtful."²³ As we will discuss later, doubting the existence of indigenous communities and individuals serve some very specific colonial and even nationalist purposes. These experiences are not unique to the indigenous peoples of the Philippines, but rather a common colonizing practice of using history and chronology – that is using conceptions of

²¹ Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 34–35.

²² *Ibid.*, 30–32.

²³ Epeli Hau'ofa, *We Are the Ocean : Selected Works* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2008), 63.

time and development together – to justify and continue the subjugation of indigenous peoples and their displacement from their ancestral places.

But the retelling of indigenous histories, including the time of colonial contact and after, does not have to be bound in the structures of chronological, master narrative-style histories. Again, it is useful to turn to indigenous scholars from Native Americas and Oceania who are reclaiming their own histories that stretch from the time before colonization all the way to imagining the future of their peoples and of their ancestral places. They are insistent that chronological histories are “a hindrance that marginalizes our peoples by relegating them to the roles of spectators and objects for transformation into good Christians, democrats, bureaucrats, commercial producers, cheap labourers, and the like.”²⁴ For Hau’ofa “the past...has no existence without reference to the present. How one reconstructs the past...is a political act.”²⁵ My own reconstructions of Philippine pasts in relation to Southeast Asia, Oceania, Native America, and Mexico is just this sort of political project. It is to trace the ideological removal of indigenous peoples in the Philippines from their own indigeneity, and subsequently, from their ancestral places. The present is a long history of coming to terms with that removal.

Rather than adopting chronological histories, it is possible to reconsider how the indigenous pasts are considered, separately from chronological histories. Time in general, and historical time in particular are conceived differently in indigenous communities and their scholarship. Clara Sue Kidwell argues that for many Native Americans, “time is a

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

function of place and space”²⁶. Vine Deloria Jr. similarly argues that “time is subservient to [place] because to have time, there must be a measurable distance to travel during which time can pass.”²⁷ Thus seasons are marked by the passing of heavenly bodies in cycles of planting, growing, and harvesting, or by the “cyclical appearances of certain flowers, birds, and marine creatures...changes in prevailing winds, and weather patterns...and set the course for cycles of human activity”²⁸. Hau’ofa continues:

Time is so subsumed under these cycles and other more discrete events that precise dating, which is a main preoccupation of mainline history, is of no importance. In the past, as it is with many people today, it was not so much *when* events occurred but rather *where, how* and in what *sequences* they occurred that was important.²⁹

Hau’ofa argues that Oceanian histories are tied not only to time measured in the cycles of nature and the human activities tied to those cycles, but also that Oceanians “cannot read [our] histories without knowing how to read our landscapes (and seascapes)”³⁰ because “oral narratives are inscribed on our landscapes” such as places where ancestors emerged or landed, burial sites, shrines, and migratory routes.³¹ If our retelling of our indigenous histories were tied more to the land and seas to which the histories are tied, it appears clearly that ideological removal must go hand in hand with physical removal. As Hau’ofa puts it,

²⁶ Kidwell, Clara Sue, “Ethnoastronomy as the Key to Human Intellectual Development and Social Organization,” in *Native Voices: American Indian Identity & Resistance*, ed. Tinker George Grounds, Richard and Wilkins, David (Lawrence KS: University Press of Kansas, 2003), 7.

²⁷ Vine Deloria Jr, Leslie Marmon Silko, and George E. Tinker, *God Is Red: A Native View of Religion, 30th Anniversary Edition*, 30 Anv (Fulcrum Publishing, 2003). p. xvii.

²⁸ Hau’ofa, *We Are the Ocean*, 67.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 68.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 73.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 72.

“we cannot therefore have our memories erased, foreshortened, or directed. With weak roots we would be easily uprooted, transplanted, grafted upon, trimmed, and transformed in any way that the global market requires.”³² Retelling our own histories using time references that make better sense of our *real* present and pasts, rather than imposed chronologies, is yet one more way to see our own histories of removal, but also is one more way of recovering our abilities to make and explain our worlds in ways that put our marginalized and erased experiences back in the center of our own lives today.

Ideological Removal through the creation of a national language

Focusing on the indigenous present and past helps to loosen today’s taken-for-granted categories of “Filipinx”, and “the Philippines” because they are not universal nor immutable categories of belonging. Rather they are physically situated, historically contingent, and colonially implicated categories of identity and appropriation of lands/waters, cultural practices, and place-based knowledges. Moreover, “Filipinx” are contested identity markers precisely because of the power relations, between the national, local, and indigenous institutions, people and their practices, implicated in what belongs in, and what is appropriated into, these identity categories.

As a post-colonial independent nation state, successive national administrations, with the help of nationalist historians, not only created and standardized a national history that reached back past colonial contact, to recast a Philippine history and created a pre-colonial Filipinx, it also went about creating a unified and homogenized national identity and

³² Ibid., 70.

territory. At the national level, the Philippine congress chose, through the recommendation of *Surian ng Wikang Pambansa*, Tagalog as the national language of the nascent Philippine nation state. Despite the name changes (from Tagalog to Pilipino to Filipino) and the iterations of its development and enrichment based on other languages in the islands, its status as the national language remains fixed, even through doubts that the institution of a national language has been successful. The Philippines has also institutionally maintained the use and importance of English since its independence by making it a national language alongside Filipino. By the time that the Philippines gained its independence from the United States in July 1946, a U.S. modeled national public education system had already been institutionalized as early as 1901 with the coming of American educators to train educated Filipinos to be American-style school teachers in the Philippines.

The imposition of Spanish and of English is intricately tied to installing colonial cosmologies into a superior position. Glenn Morris explains that

The profound importance of the subjugation of indigenous languages and systems of meaning by European ones cannot be minimized. What has occurred in this brutal process is not merely the replacement of the vocabulary set with another. In this struggle, the entire worldviews of indigenous peoples and nations, which were created and evolved over tens of millennia, were eradicated, sometimes within one generation.³³

In this respect, Philippine nationalism struggles against exactly this kind of colonial subjugation but also reifies similar processes of domination against othered Philippine languages. The nationalist logic that seeks a universal identity and correlating practices simultaneously disconnects previously autochthonous identities and practices from ancestral

³³ Morris, Glenn T., "Vine Deloria, Jr., and the Development of a Decolonizing Critique of Indigenous Peoples and International Relations," 126.

places of origin. Thus the project to install a *lingua franca* for the Philippine nation state is both a liberation and a domination project.

Not only did the Philippine state elevate the status of one colonial language and one regional language, it also simultaneously assigned all other languages to be “minority” languages. In this instance, “minority” does not refer to numbers of speakers nor to the frequency of its use. For example, Cebuano and Binisaya are both more widely spoken outside Manila, but because it was not the language around the capital, including all the attending privilege that came with being the language of the *Katipunan*, and of the Philippine Revolution, it was seen as not as “developed” as Tagalog. Although epics, poems, plays, songs, were developed and present as oral traditions in many of the other languages, the publication and translation of these into Spanish, or English and their accessibility to academic institutions justified the rationale for claiming that Tagalog was “more developed”.

San Juan explains that

writing, any text or discourse, and its meaning is deeply enmeshed with power-relations; and that the correct interpretation is often enforced by the interests that control the intellectual means of production (such as schools, mass media, printing, etc).³⁴

Thus, we can understand the choice of Tagalog, and even English, as the national languages of the Philippines as the results of specific power-relations that effectively circumscribed the propagation of any other languages within the Philippines, to the point that no other indigenous language is taught in any language department at the tertiary level in the Philippines. Although Filipinx historians today are rightly hopeful that more and more

³⁴ E. San Juan, *Only by Struggle: Reflections on Philippine Culture, Politics, and Society in a Time of Civil War* (Quezon City: Kalikasan Press, 1988), 17.

Philippine histories are being written and published in Filipino rather than English, as they “have realized that to create a truly "autonomous" history of the people they should not only foreground the people but also write in the language of the people³⁵ it persists that Philippine historiography remains in the privileged languages of the capital.

Creating a unified master Philippine historiography and creating a national language can both be justly critiqued for (1) homogenizing many peoples’ experiences into one evolutionary strand; and (2) obscuring inequalities of power and access to resources that result from the use of or the refusal to use that national history or language. The 1987 constitution of the Philippines definitively proclaimed Filipino to be the national language, and kept English as a second official language, as had been the practice since the 1937 privileging of Tagalog as the national language. To put this into practice, a bilingual education system was built around teaching in all public schools to be done in both languages, although in 1987, there was a decidedly nationalist move to encourage the instruction of arts and sciences in Filipino rather than in English. However, as late as 2003, Macapagal-Arroyo’s administration again tried to establish English as the medium of instruction for English, math and science³⁶ from second grade in elementary school, in order to encourage the competitiveness of Filipino youth in the global economy, particularly in the area of Information and Communications Technology. Bilingual and multilingual education arguments still mostly center around the propriety of using a national language to

³⁵ Francis A. Gealogo, “Demography and an Autonomous Filipino History: A Bibliographic Essay,” in *Population and History: The Demographic Origins of the Modern Philippines*, ed. Daniel Doeppers ([Madison WI]: University of Wisconsin Center for Southeast Asian Studies, 1998), 368.

³⁶ Macapagal-Arroyo’s Executive Order 210 text can be accessed at <http://elibrary.judiciary.gov.ph/index10.php?doctype=Executive+Orders&docid=a45475a11ec72b843d74959b60fd7bd645f73003691a4>

unite the nation (whether English or Filipino), and around teaching Filipino first in all areas and in secondary schools before teaching English. Indigenous languages other than Tagalog are still not prioritized, valued, or protected in the ways that Tagalog, as a language, has historically enjoyed. As Tupas also points out, arguments for the inclusion of indigenous languages other than Tagalog into the public education system raises three problems for the nationalist project that assigned Tagalog as the national language to begin with. Firstly, it would displace both Filipino and English as the medium of instruction. Secondly, it would destabilize the transmission and adoption of Filipino as the lingua franca of the islands. Lastly, it would call into question the geographic and/or political integrity of the Philippine nation state by acknowledging that present day indigenous communities have sustained a long history of non-integration into the bilingual public education system.³⁷ These three concerns illustrate that while the integrity and viability of the Philippines as a unified nation state are supposed to be taken for granted, its primacy is just as clearly contested and unstable. Thus it becomes clear that the nation-building process is still incomplete and that this process is coercive and contested.

A decolonizing lens focused on indigenous languages would seek the protection and recognition of *all* indigenous languages as vital and primary to the learning process of their speakers, rather than remain pre-occupied with the coloniality of English, to the exclusion of the coercive imposition of Filipino on to other mother tongues. As important as the process is to untangle the American and Spanish colonial legacies on the languages of the Philippines, a concomitant dominating process continues with the imposition of Tagalog

³⁷ T Tupas, "The New Challenge of the Mother Tongues: The Future of Philippine Postcolonial Language Politics," *Kritika Kultura*, no. 16 (2011): 113–116.

over other indigenous language speakers in the Philippines. That English remains a tool to access domestic as well as international economic and physical mobility³⁸ is clear to everyone involved in the national language conversations. That Filipino, Cebuano, and Ilokano essentially do the same in terms of accessing resources, is not as acknowledged. This can be demonstrated in the fact that Tagalog, Cebuano, and Ilokano native-speakers have already had a long history of moving and settling outside of their traditional language areas. For example, the most widely spoken languages (Cebuano or Binisaya and Ilokano) in Mindanao were brought there by northern settlers. Issues around the imposition of indigenous languages over each other must be contextualized by the economic, political, and physical benefits that are accessible to people with sufficient mastery of these languages.

Quite apart from the utility of mastering either of the national languages, there are other reasons, already suggested by advocates of first language and multilingual education policies in the Philippines, to keep mother tongues intact. Young argues that children's cognition is most active when it is engaged with community knowledges and practices.³⁹ While debates around the creation of national languages center the tensions between ethnicity, nationalism, and modernization⁴⁰ issues around the loss of traditional knowledges and practices and the devaluation of these knowledges and practices remain marginalized. More is at stake in the struggle to keep mother tongues relevant and intact, especially for young children who are implicitly persuaded or explicitly coerced to learn and prefer

³⁸ Catherine Young, "First Language First: Literacy Education for the Future in a Multilingual Philippine Society," *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism* 5, no. 4 (2002): 222, doi:10.1080/13670050208667757.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 225–226.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 224.

national languages. Harrison, in *When Languages Die*, argues that the erosion of human knowledge base, the forgetting of human cultural heritage, and understanding human cognition are at stake in sustaining language diversity⁴¹. Harrison's argument is all the more urgent when we understand it in the light of gender, class, race, and indigenous critiques. National languages are privileged and implicated in accessing or distributing resources along gender, class, racial, and nationality lines, and minority languages and their attendant knowledges and practices are devalued, disadvantaged and eventually disappeared. When people surrender the value of their languages, they are also risking the knowledges that were encapsulated and passed on through their languages about the lands and waters that they are simultaneously being removed from as well. As Harrison puts it, "We stand to lose the accumulated wisdom and observations of generations of people about the natural world, plants, animals, weather, soil, and so on."⁴² But we don't just stand to lose random worldviews and knowledges. Rather, the institution of national languages makes vulnerable the worldviews and knowledges of already marginalized communities. The most vulnerable communities bear disproportionate burdens of losing not only their knowledges, but thereby also the lands and waters that helped generate those knowledges. Thus ideologically removing people from their languages and their knowledges facilitates their physical removal as well.

⁴¹ K Harrison, *When Languages Die : The Extinction of the World's Languages and the Erosion of Human Knowledge* (Oxford ;New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 15–19.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 17.

Ideological Removal through the creation of national minorities (ethnic/cultural)

Part of nation building projects is defining the nation – defining the privileged group identities that access and gate-keep the nation’s wealth and resources – and designating religious, ethnic/cultural, and linguistic minorities that cannot easily access those same resources. The nascent nation state benefits from this designation process in two ways: firstly to make difference visible within the national body and secondly to assign value based on those differences. It sets up one normative “majority” whose power is contingent on its hegemonic – unquestioned and invisible – status, and an unassimilated group of “minorities” whose difference is marked culturally and/or ethnically by resistance and marginalization. Setting up a “majority” and several “minorities” also invests the state with uniting *and* administrative power as the arbiter of disputes resulting from the competition for resources based on the values assigned to different groups within the national body, but always tipping the scales in favor of the “majority”. As the state is set up to be the definer of difference and the arbiter of disputes, it is able to set up systems of resource distribution based on difference and use its military and political power to enforce any decision resulting from its arbitration.

Physical marginalization – displacement and occupation

“Minoritization” as Rodil explains in the Philippine nationalist context is an inherited technology from colonial administration that continues to (1) allow for the dispossession of indigenous “minorities” and their removal from their ancestral lands and

waters, and (2) enforce the state as the arbiter of disputes over land claims⁴³. For Rodil, minoritization of Muslims in Mindanao, Sulu, and Palawan, have resulted in ethnic groups being displaced spatially in favor of ethnic “majority” groups that cooperate with taking possession of those spaces by forming settler communities. Settlers taking possession (whether through land grants, purchasing, or otherwise) of traditional and ancestral lands makes indigenous communities become minorities, numerically speaking. Additionally, this displacement is enforced by the state’s military – first the Spanish, followed by the U.S. military, and finally by the Philippine military that is now supported by the U.S., including civilian para-military groups. In this way, settler colonialism is currently alive and well in the Philippines as settler communities and foreign corporations continue to encroach on traditional and ancestral lands and waters, and the Philippine military and para-military groups continue cycles of terrorizing minoritized communities and enforcing settler law and order.

Historical marginalization – histories of resistance lead to being written out of national history

Following another thread, Scott finds that “cultural minorities” are defined by a common history of resistance against colonization both from Spain and from the United States⁴⁴. That continuing resistance, according to Scott, is characterized by retaining their cultural practices rather than assimilating into the “majority culture”⁴⁵ of their “colonized

⁴³ B Rodil and Alternate Forum for Research in Mindanao., *The Minoritization of the Indigenous Communities of Mindanao and the Sulu Archipelago*, Rev. Philippine ed. (Davao City Philippines: Alternate Forum for Research in Mindanao, 2004), 16.

⁴⁴ William Scott, *Cracks in the Parchment Curtain and Other Essays in Philippine History*, Emended ed. (Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1985), 28–29.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 29.

brothers”. Phrases such as “*isang lahi, isang bansa, isang tadhana*” (“one race, one nation, one destiny”) were used to build a “national consciousness” that simultaneously meant to highlight the primacy of the “majority” and gesture towards the “other” – the minority of that majority; and to obscure the reasons why the so-called minority had a “different” culture than the majority. In other words, minoritization obscures histories of power that explain why minorities practice different dances, eat different food, have different rituals, and histories that reveal *why* they are not the majority. At once minorities are seen as different, without acknowledging their long and deep history of resistance, often armed, against assimilation into the Christianized and secular Philippine nation.

Historical marginalization decontextualizes indigenous communities’ struggles by reducing them into “cultural minorities” that are simultaneously ahistorical, apolitical, and ready for appropriation and consumption. Scott critiques nationalist histories as sites where ethnic and cultural diversity are strategically re-cast into unequal power relations making specific ethnic groups normative and marginalizing others based on their history of cooperation with, or resistance against, Spanish and American colonial rule. Whereas in the beginning of Spanish colonization, difference was primarily used to mark between Filipinx and Spaniards, the diversity of ethnic groups later became important to distinguish the “allies” who became the *indios* from the “enemies” of the colonial rulers who remained “savages” and “pirates” (often *moros*) who lived outside the “civilized” rules of church and state laws. Whereas the displacement for ethnic minorities are physical and spatial in Rodil’s analysis, for Scott minoritization means historical marginalization, displacing place-

based ethnic communities into a pre-historic past that cannot connect with the present and are written out of the future of the Philippine nation state.

For example the Beyer Wave Migration Theory argues that Philippine human technological and cultural advancement were the result of waves of migration originating from East Asia, rather than developing within the peoples of Southeast Asia and Oceania. Although later theories have disputed this uni-directionality of technological and cultural development, theories like these set the expectation that indigenous peoples cannot be the source of technological and cultural development. Beyer argues that for technology and culture to flourish, indigenous peoples must have been infused with culture and technology from the outside. Beyer's theory argues that history really begins for indigenous peoples when they come in contact with "more advanced" cultures and technology (and the people who bring them) from the outside. The historical stage is set for indigenous cultures to be cast in pre-historic survival stories and the arrival of outsiders who are seen as more evolved since they are cast as the beginning of dynamic development and history.

Bankoff and Weekley observe a religious component to this historical marginalization during Expo Pilipino, when both Muslim and other non-Christianized indigenous Filipinxs "have a place in Philippine history, but it is one in the 'past' - the 'ancient', even 'mythical' or 'mystic' past - and as such they presumably do not figure in the national present, let alone its future."⁴⁶ They further note that what was recognized during the Expo Pilipino as "national history...that began in 1521 appeared to be exclusively

⁴⁶ Bankoff and Weekley, *Post-Colonial National Identity in the Philippines*, 155.

Christian”⁴⁷ as the history of Muslim and non-Christian indigenous Filipinxs were classified as ancient, mythical, natural, and thus pre-historical. The Expo Pilipino exhibit begs the question – if ethnic and cultural minorities belong in a Philippine prehistoric past, how could they possibly be in the present and therefore in our future?

Historical minoritization collapses histories of resistance into quaint cultural differences. Historical minoritization also erases Muslim and indigenous Filipinxs from present communities continuing to resist displacement. If the only surviving indigenous peoples in the Philippines are in their shrinking ancestral territories, both of these aspects of historical minoritization make it difficult for Filipinxs to reclaim our power and authority to truly practice our indigenous sovereignty over our lands and waters, our histories, and knowledges, and therefore our futures. And it makes “non-indigenous” Filipinxs – that is, Christianized Filipinxs – a displaced and mobile settler population. Since we are no longer indigenous to these islands, we become outside actors to surviving indigenous peoples defending their ancestral territories and their abilities to practice their traditional knowledges.

As a counter to this marginalization, Vicente Diaz in *Repositioning the Missionary*, argues to “unsettle...the big ideas about history, culture, politics, and analyses themselves” by using “Native articulations...that tactically invert and then displace canonical narratives.”⁴⁸ Rather than re-telling the Beyer’s Wave Migration Theory that history is the

⁴⁷ Ibid. 155

⁴⁸ Vicente Diaz, *Repositioning the Missionary : Rewriting the Histories of Colonialism, Native Catholicism, and Indigeneity in Guam* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press ;Center for Pacific Islands Studies School of Pacific and Asian Studies University of Hawai’i Mānoa, 2010). p.23

story of indigenous peoples being acted upon by outsiders, Diaz argues for articulations that center how indigenous peoples acted on the colonizers' categories and practices. By centering indigenous actions and perspectives, Diaz re-places indigenous Chamorro communities in Guam's longer and deeper history as fully aware and self-determining agents in the conversion process. In this sense, Chamorro converts to Catholicism determined the values attached to conversion and Catholicism for themselves, rather than simply accepting the state and the church's differentiation and arbitration. Chamorro converts also used their conversions to re-make their own social and political order, even as we remember that "those who did embrace Catholicism did so under a range of political and social forces, coercive and noncoercive, in ways that force us to remember that the benefits, opportunities, and costs of conversion to Catholicism were not always the same for everybody."⁴⁹

As a resurgent interest in indigenous Filipinx practices and histories both across the Filipinx diaspora *and* in the Philippines shows, students and scholars today are eagerly searching for, documenting, and reclaiming our indigenous heritages, as more than superstition and backwards practices. After several generations of assimilation into mainstream "westernized" culture that led to historical marginalization, there is a current proliferation of books, articles, blogs, and conferences about traditional (ie. indigenous) artifacts, languages, knowledges, and practices that are consumed and transformed not only in the Philippines but also in the diaspora. We are benefitting from the decolonizing and de-colonial scholarship of indigenous scholars from the Americas, Oceania, South Asia, and

⁴⁹ Ibid., 20.

Africa, who are also working to untangle and discern the lasting effects of colonization on the survival and flourishing of our peoples and on our futures. Where we had previously seen and experienced “superstitious” healing practices and “traditional” planting and gardening knowledges, we are re-asserting and defending the logic, beauty, and complexity of our indigenous heritages that have managed to survive despite all oppressive efforts to erase them. In this recent interest, there are some possibilities that we will begin to articulate how Filipinxs made and re-made our own social order and social practices in the process of claiming a national history and national identity, and how we make spaces for the continuing survival of our pre-colonial knowledges and practices.

*Political Marginalization – lawlessness and law enforcement – “they have different laws”
“they are outside our laws” “law enforcement is our best tool with those who cannot/will not follow our laws”*

Creating minorities also sets them up to be politically marginalized, it sets them up to be actors outside the political structure of power, unable and/or unwilling to participate in national self governance, and therefore subject to coercive and often violent law enforcement. The political minoritization of indigenous and Muslim communities in the Philippines is evident from the erosion of women’s traditional political power to the establishment of autonomous regions of the Cordilleras and Muslim Mindanao. According to Vergara’s analysis, a significant pre-requisite to Filipinx self-governance was the creation of a Philippine nation – one that was united, homogenized (linguistically, ethnically, and politically) and one that accepted Christian conversion.⁵⁰ This would form the majority of

⁵⁰ Vergara, *Displaying Filipinos*, 49.

the self-governing Filipino nation, and those who refused conversion (the *infidels* or “wild” tribes) would be recognized as cultural and ethnic minorities subject to (a) national civilian law (like all other Filipinos) as well as (b) military administrative rule. From 1898 when the United States purchased the Philippines from Spain, until 1901, the Philippines was under military rule. In 1901 the Insular Government of the Philippines was created and administered the colony through the Bureau of Insular Affairs, while the “unassimilated” *Moros* of Mindanao were ruled separately by military command whereas a civilian government based in Manila administered the Christianized Filipinos. Whereas the US census of 1903 was carried out by civilians for Christian Filipinos, it was carried out with the collaboration of U.S. military personnel, particularly in Mindanao and the Cordilleras, acting out this political marginalization early in Philippine nationalist history. This separation between the national political body and its minorities continues today in the paradox of the creation of the two possible autonomous regions: the Cordillera Administrative Region (which had refused through a voter plebiscite both in 1990 and 1998 to become an autonomous region despite the constitutional provisions for it); and the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao that was legislated and enacted in 1998. Designed as a mechanism to encourage the autonomous self-governance of Muslim minorities under a largely Hispanicized and Christianized majority, the ARMM also paradoxically serves to administratively separate Muslim majority regions from the rest of Mindanao, and further subject Muslim Filipinos to the Christianized and Hispanicized national government. Also, by setting up a plebiscite by province, many of which have been settled by non-Muslim Filipinos, the results were to be expected: that a majority of settler

Filipinx elected that their province and/or city NOT to be included in the ARMM, and that a majority of Muslim Filipinx, because of their dispersal and minoritization in their own provinces and cities, were unsuccessful in “joining” the ARMM.

Lastly, at the political margins of the national body, Muslims and indigenous peoples and their communities have historically been targeted for violent law enforcement tactics. From the unsuccessful raids by Spanish – ruled communities through the (sanitized) “pacification” campaigns waged by the US colonial administration, through the violent repression experienced by Muslim communities during Martial Law (aided by the paramilitaries), to today’s present day anti-terrorism trainings by US soldiers in Mindanao, Muslim Filipinx, have been continuously portrayed as recalcitrant political minorities who deserve sometimes violent, and constant vigilance from law enforcement agents and institutions in order to extend protection from the law to non-Muslim Filipinx settler communities in Mindanao.

CHAPTER 2: IMPACTS OF MIGRATION AND DISPLACEMENT

“There is no chemical solution to a spiritual problem” -- hand painted sign at
Lummi Reservation.

REMOVAL IS A SPIRITUAL PROBLEM, DISCONNECTION IS A SYMPTOM OF THAT SPIRITUAL PROBLEM

When I first found the language for describing disconnection as a root problem for displaced Filipinx workers, I thought I had hit upon the root problem. But as I wrote about displacement some more, and as I began to understand migration and labor policy as removal policies (along the same continuum as the relocation policies for Native Americans in the US), I also began to suspect that removal is actually the root problem, and that the resulting disconnection is simply a symptom of that removal. I wanted to frame Filipinx migration within the context of a long history of removal policies, because disconnection is an incomplete tally of the harms resulting from removal. If this were true, then re-connection would always only be a partial restoration/restitution from those harms, but the policies of removal would continue and stay unexamined. Feelings of re-connection will not interrupt the compulsive international movement of Filipinx in search of stable livelihoods. Changing or adapting to the removal policies by getting re-connected doesn't eliminate the other impacts of physical and (what I argued in a previous chapter) ideological removal.

Initially, I also understood removal as a colonial policy that impacted the spiritual lives and meaning-making systems/epistemologies of Filipinx peoples as indigenous islander peoples. In the United States, many Native scholars and community health workers have spoken and written about the spiritual, psychological, mental, and physical harms caused by removal and displacement on Native peoples. Many have argued for the restoration of their traditional places as a necessary beginning to healing processes and programs for Native peoples. Increasing numbers of new healing centers are now based on these arguments. My interviewees' life stories indicated (a) how they and their families became displaced from their original/ancestral places; (b) what removal and displacement did to their sense of connection and meaning-making systems (spirituality?) (c) what survived out of any traditional beliefs and practices they and their families had; and (d) how did the beliefs and practices survive.

Scholars and elders have made it clear that removal policies and the physical removal of indigenous peoples hurt indigenous people. Physical removal installs trauma that, unhealed, continues and gets passed down to later generations. One of the many manifestations of that trauma is the disconnection from (a) other people; (b) one's places; (c) one's languages; (d) worldviews & meaning making systems; (e) one's rightful place and

relationship with the earth; (f) food ways; (g) histories, myths, and stories. Another manifestation is that our ancestral places become robbed of its “natural” protectors. This means that places establish a mutual and reciprocal relationship with the plants, animals (including humans), and all other life forms in that place. When those relationships are broken, disrupted, damaged, or otherwise tampered with, it leaves ancestral places vulnerable to physical extraction policies that lead to depletion, damage, and environmental collapse. This is becoming increasingly clear in the struggles of indigenous peoples across the planet, to protect their ancestral lands and waterways from extraction, pollution, and collapse.

CONNECTION

A crucial component of belonging to our place, and to our people is our connection. Connection is how we come to know our world. Connection is built into our life experience as humans. We all start our lives closely connected to our mother whose body nourishes us and protects us in a mutual close relationship until our birth. All but one of the women I interviewed are mothers and spoke of their continuing connection with their children. They shared how migration and displacement altered their relationships and how

part of the work of re-connection was re-negotiating those relationships to account for their displacement and absence.

Outside the womb, as we soak in the particularities of the places where we grow up, we build connection early in our lives with the places where we grow up. Through the stories that our people share with us, we learn about our ancestral places – how our elders experienced these places and how they were significant to our people. We also gradually learn our place in that world - the constellation of relationships we are meant to step and grow into as integral parts of our ancestral ecosystems.

Connection is also how we allow others to know us. Our senses connect us with our people and our places, they are how we learn for ourselves how our people and places look, sound, smell, feel, and even taste. Before we are able to speak words, we communicate our connection through all our senses, particularly by looking at each other, by our sounds we make, and by our skin. We allow others to know us through their senses. We rely on our connection to our world in order to accurately perceive it. If we are disconnected from our world, our ability to accurately perceive it in the present, diminishes. And our ability to accurately perceive threats to our places and our peoples also diminishes. Subsequently our ability to protect both our places and our peoples diminishes.

Connection and Solidarity – As humans our orientation towards each other and the world grows out of and through our relationships. Our orientation to each other, before disconnection and loneliness take hold of our minds, is to be vastly interested in each other’s well being, and to be deeply committed to making sure things go well for each other. This relationship grows through the nurturing of our connection both with people, and with our world around us. Earlier I had described the first relationship between us and our mother as mutual. I also described the relationship between the natural world and its first peoples as mutual. These relationships or connections form the “ground” for mutuality, reciprocity, and thus, solidarity. Without solidarity, without mutuality and reciprocity, we cannot defend our ancestral ecosystems, or indeed each other. We can stand for others to the extent that we can base that “standing for” others on some sort of connection or relationship. And a disruption of that connection is also the disruption of mutuality, reciprocity, and solidarity.

DISPLACEMENT STORIES

Life histories are the stories we tell ourselves and other people about our lives. In life histories we tell stories that we’ve heard our families tell over and over again, until they become “family stories” - that tell something about our individual lives that fit an outward facing narrative. Family stories make visible something individual and particular to our

personal and individual experience. The family oral history in this project served to confirm some of those visiblized stories about our families, as told by different women in the family. And it also gave the opportunity to see changes, variations, and corrections to the visible family stories. I particularly saw this in the stories about the new family village that a family matriarch nurtured after her initial displacement from her ancestral place. There was a coherence to the stories that gave the family history of the family village a public story dimension, that didn't come across in the narratives of the other interviewees' displacement stories.

These individual stories of displacement went back at least 3 generations. Anita told the story of her grandmother's family being originally from Antique using the word "*tumandok*" meaning indigenous in her grandmother's language (Karay-a). When I asked her if it meant Native or Indigenous, she explained that it meant "you're from there - you were born there, you grew up there, your family is all there. you're from there." This is from the same section of her interview where she thought about it a little bit and reconsidered, remembering stories about how her grandmother's family had a history of crossing between islands. She referred to it as "*tabok tabok*" crossing the water multiple times between Antique and Batangas, as if the crossing was easily done like hopping between islands, just

by virtue of how often it had happened in the past. To explain further what she meant, she gave the example of her own experience where she was separated from her mother where she and her mother ended up crossing (separately) multiple times between Negros and Antique, beginning when she was 9 years old.

What she highlighted and what seemed significant was that first, it was customary to cross between islands (they had done it for generations) but they knew where they were from, and second, that she noticed the difficulty of separation from her mom, describing it as becoming accustomed to a hard life because of these early and frequent separations starting after her dad died. She didn't observe a similar discomfort or loneliness by her mother, saying her mother was accustomed to criss-crossing the waters and the islands.

According to Anita, being removed from her mother and the rest of her family after her father's and then grandmother's deaths (within a few months of each other) was foundational to her ability to survive. This was the first time she used the phrase I quoted earlier "dili baya lalim ning mabulag sa ginikanan", meaning "it's no small thing to be separated from your parents". Her narrative centers not only that initial separation but the loneliness in her separation. She made sure to add that it was unlike the initial trip that her mother and father made, along with her mother's siblings, to Negros from Antique, where

she described their move as a gathering - one by one they came, sought each other out, and stuck together. Anita noted that when she was sent back to Antique, she was sent alone. Her uncle (because he loved her very much) took her with him, right before her mother left for Manila taking with her Anita's youngest sibling. The rest of them were left in Bayawan, Negros with family members, but without a parent. Anita also made sure to explain her motivation for bringing her family with her to California by prefacing that her children are unaccustomed to a "hard life". By "hard life" she meant being separated from her. She had even brought her oldest daughter, Tess, who by that time was a young adult and after about a year of living in California Tess decided she needed to permanently go home (pauli).

Movement between islands was easy and common for her mother. Anita didn't describe it as removal from their original places, except for a vague wondering if her grandmother's ancestors originally came from Batangas, or if they just crossed there a lot. She did describe her grandmother's move to Bayawan as a more permanent move, and one that hinted that their family faced a more precarious life after that move. Her family tried to regain some stability by returning to Antique, but for her mother, that stability didn't return. Her mother's next move was to Manila, and this time was explicitly for work, so her mother could support them after Anita's father's death. Anita described it again as easy for her

mother. But it left a lasting imprint on Anita, one that marked her life as difficult. And Anita made sure that her children didn't have to experience that difficulty with her. Anita avoided that difficulty not by preserving her family's connection with Bayawan and staying in place with her children, but instead by preserving their physical connection with each other and bringing them with her in her pursuit of long term stability.

Anita's mother's displacement story continues with migrating to the United States as a bride for an older white American man who was looking for companionship. This marriage was facilitated by Anita's mother's cousin, who herself was marrying a friend of the groom. The two weddings happened at the same time, and Anita's mother and her cousin emigrated to the US together as brides. Five years later Anita's mother became eligible to be a US citizen, and after that, she petitioned for Anita to come to the US to join her.

When I asked Anita what it was like for her once she immigrated to the US, she ruefully shared that initially, she wished she hadn't come. She wished her mother had not petitioned for her, because the adjustment was so harsh. She described her position working for her city government in the Philippines had been secure enough. But the lure of the United States proved to be so tempting that she couldn't turn it down, "*america na gud na!*", meaning so many Filipinxs have wanted that opportunity, how could she turn it down!?! She

didn't want to seem ungrateful or wasteful of the opportunity that others could only dream of. So she decided to come and didn't dream that it would be as hard and lonely as it turned out to be, to move here to do caregiving work.

Another recent immigrant, Natalia's, displacement story, on the other hand, is told from the context of social upheaval. Multiple conflicts structured her own displacement as a young adult, after her grandmother, Lola Dalia, had struggled to keep her in one place, along with many of her cousins during their entire youth. Natalia's mother, Sonya, explained Lola Dalia's clear attempt to recreate her ancestral place, Kabankalan in Negros, even choosing the site for the family village that bore their family name in Mindanao, because it reminded Lola Dalia of Kabankalan. Natalia left for college as martial law was declared, and armed fighting was breaking out in Mindanao. After that she got married and never quite made it back again to live at the family village. She later moved to Iloilo for work, where she also started her family and raised her sons. After her husband died, she moved to the US, leaving her two grown sons back in Iloilo, Philippines.

Surrounded by the class privilege of a grandmother who could buy land, Natalia shared fond memories of her family village as a place where her Lola Dalia intended the extended family (at the time 3 generations - today there are 5) to connect. It was a place

where she, along with her cousins and siblings in the same generation experienced a childhood and got to learn about the surrounding place, even though they understood that was not their ancestral place. Lola Dalia had 10 children, 7 of whom chose to stay in the family village and raise their children together. There were several mini-generations of cousins who grew up, and Natalia was around the middle of these mini-generations. Natalia related a sort of natural break in their connections, leaving for college (a given in her family, though not for everyone in the extended family). After leaving for college, most of the cousins didn't return for their whole adulthood, and only sometimes brought their families back to the village. Natalia described the relationships after as the siblings and cousins getting scattered across many places. She does assert though that the relationships, having been formed over years of connection, persist in the present.

When asked to share detailed descriptions of ancestral places, both Anita and Natalia could describe first hand accounts of their encounters with their places. In Anita's case, I could detect some notes of embarrassment and judgement of her grandmother's ancestral place - that it was backward because of how undeveloped it was. The lack of development and integration into the market economies and the lack of businesses in rural Antique seemed to seal it for Anita - she didn't consider it a place to come home to. It was

slightly different with Natalia where she considered it home, and is considering returning there after retirement, but that it wasn't a place to return to until then. For both Anita and Natalia, the notion of returning to ancestral places wasn't something they expressed with me. The connection they missed was not to their ancestral places but rather to the people they were there with.

MANONG GENERATION

By contrast, the life histories of three other interviewees contained rough sketches of where their parents came from in the Philippines. These interviewees are the first generation born and raised in the United States by their immigrant Filipinx parents. In all three cases, their fathers came to the US as part of the "Manong" generation around the 1920s. All three came from the Visayas also, just like Anita and Natalia. The three displacement stories all center around their fathers as young men trying to earn more money to help support their families. All three shared that although their fathers' families had "small pieces of land" their families couldn't survive on just cultivating the land. They were aided by labor recruiters in the Visayas, one in particular was recruited to work in the sugarcane plantations in Hawaii. One interviewee, Yumi, described her dad as the one designated by the family to go overseas and work and send money home, because his father

believed he was the one least likely to “forget” his family in the Philippines - that he was the most likely one to stay connected. The other two interviewees (Alon and Ningning) mentioned that they were farmers and fisher folk, that they came to work in agriculture, as they were recruited by the labor agencies. But they didn’t mention much about the connections between their parents and their family back in the Philippines. Their parents’ displacement stories didn’t go further than that generation, so there’s no data to know if they were internally displaced before they came to the US. Eventually all three ended up in California’s central coast, where the interviewees currently lived when I interviewed them.

Both Yumi and Alon’s fathers were young men when they migrated to the US for work, and although neither Yumi nor Alon indicated that their fathers intended to stay in the US for good, they also didn’t sound like they had plans to go home after a set amount of time. Return didn’t seem like an immediate option for any of my interviewees. Yumi’s father returned 27 years later because he wanted to follow custom to meet people’s daughters, and arrange to marry. On the other hand, Alon and Ningning’s fathers married in California.

PHYSICAL PROXIMITY

Anita and Natalia both reconfigured their family relationships to account for a long, possibly permanent separation. Both accounted for profound changes in family

relationships to change as well as maintain connection, and avoid disconnection. Even though Anita was partly raised by her uncle after her father's death and in her mother's absence, she had decided that she would not leave her oldest daughter Tess with family members. She understood that the best way to avoid disconnection was to stay in close proximity. Although this effectively preserved physical connection, it ultimately didn't work for Tess as she ended up wanting to go home to the Philippines, to build a future she was envisioning, apparently one that was not the one Anita had in mind for her. Not only did Tess say that she missed her friends, she also saw no future for her in the US, in low wage work reserved for immigrants of color. Although Anita clearly articulated later in the interview that the work was difficult and lower status than the one she had back in the Philippines, she shared that she spent a lot of time considering and trying to build a future ("*kaugmaon*") for her two younger children. She also ruefully noted that Tess's idea of a future for herself was different from Anita's idea for Tess.

In a similar way, Natalia said the reason she came to the US was for a work opportunity to support her two grown sons. After her husband died of cancer in the Philippines, she became the sole breadwinner and had decided that earning in US dollars doing diplomatic work would give her higher earnings than anything she would be qualified

to do in the Philippines. Also, because her sons were already grown, she didn't feel tied to making a living in any particular location in the Philippines and therefore was open to the idea of moving to the US, to be in closer proximity with her sister who was living as a single parent in Los Angeles. She traded close proximity with her sons (who anyway wanted to move out and live on their own) for a higher earning and the opportunity to be closer to her siblings.

The first generations who were born/raised in the US also shared stories they inherited from their families about how their parents' families reconfigured and understood their family connections. Yumi related that her father was "chosen" to be the one to migrate because her grandfather considered him to be the one most likely to remember his family, the most likely to accept and honor a financial family commitment. Their family fished the river and "mortgaged their property" to finance her father's trip. Yumi's grandfather understood the real possibilities of disconnection, and in their family's case it meant their family would suffer a financial hardship if that disconnection ever became complete - that is, if Yumi's father were to "forget" his family and "disappear" in the US, not only would his family not be able to pay back their debt and they would lose their property, but they would also suffer in additional financial ways. Yumi's grandfather and their family staked their past

(their land) and their future (“kaugmaon”) on her father’s strength of connection with his family. Their faith proved to be right, Yumi’s father did send much of his earnings home to support his family.

Alon related a story about his father migrating to exchange his labor for wages. Before coming to the US, he worked with his family on their land, farming and occasionally fishing because “they lived right next to the ocean”. He contextualized that Alon’s father was born in 1900, providing the context that “he grew up when things were really bad in the Philippines” right after the Spanish American war, where the Philippines was bought by the US from Spain. It got worse as he grew up and by 1922 or 1923, he had decided that he would go with the labor recruitment agencies that were recruiting young men to work in the sugarcane fields in Hawai’i. He finally gained passage in 1925 where he, along with some of his relatives, worked in Hawai’i before deciding again to move forward to California in 1927. He finally made his way to Stockton CA, following relatives he knew also landed there earlier. After arriving in Stockton, he found out that his cousins had moved to Ventura, so three years later, Alon’s father moved to Ventura, CA to find his cousins. Arriving in Ventura, he worked in “lemon orchards and whatever agricultural work” he could find,

following agricultural work in CA, along with most other Filipinx workers at the time. He, like the manongs of his generation, lived in a primarily male community.

Alon didn't mention his father planning to return, or even his ongoing relationships with family still in the Philippines. Instead, he related that his father was committed to finding and re-establishing his relationships with his cousins who had left earlier than him. The very next story from Alon involved his father meeting and then courting his mother. Because of anti-miscegenation laws, Filipinx manongs were not allowed to marry white women. They pursued romantic relationships with Mexican and Native women as well as other women of color in the areas where they lived and/or worked. Alon's father's forward orientation was geared not towards his remittances of his earnings for his family in the Philippines, but rather his future with his cousins who preceded him, and with Alon's mother, a Chumash young woman.

RECONFIGURING FAMILIES

Anita, Natalia, and Yumi all related stories of how families were reconfigured as a result of displacement. Anita wanted to keep Tess with her rather than leave her in the Philippines, to keep the nuclear family unit intact. But Tess disagreed and instead asserted her own analysis that her future was not in the US as a low wage worker, far away from her

friends, family, and her connections. Instead she insisted on going home (nipauli), choosing to have her connections rather than the opportunity to earn an income in US dollars, which conventionally meant earning a higher income.

Anita had experienced family reconfigurations at previous instances of displacement. She had initially described her mother as leaving the matter of making money up to her father (and she related this to her father having Chinese heritage). But after her father's death, not only did her mom have to become the main breadwinner, in itself an example of the reconfiguring of family roles, but that reconfiguring also marked the first instance that Anita remembers that habitual crossing becoming a painful and difficult one. Another layer of reconfigured relationship was that her uncle (whom she made a point to acknowledge "loved her very much") took her back to Antique since she would have to live without her mother. She doesn't pick up the thread of her mom's whereabouts after her "leaving for Manila", until she shares in a completely separate part of her story that prior to petitioning for Anita, her mother lived in Colorado, and had arranged to marry a white American man. Anita explained that's how her mother was able to petition for Anita. The time period between her mom leaving for Manila and her mom petitioning for her was a noticeable omission in Anita's life history.

A third reconfiguration in Anita's family roles was that her oldest sister, even though it was a financial struggle, had sent money home for Anita to attend college at Silliman University in Dumaguete. We both understood (Anita didn't have to explain) that the financial role borne by her sister would have belonged to her mother, had her mother been there. Anita explained that she didn't want to put that kind of responsibility and role on Tess, so she decided to migrate with all her children, rather than remitting money and having Tess handle the family's finances and logistics in the Philippines. Anita let go of Tess only when Tess insisted that she didn't see a future for herself as a low wage worker in the US.

Natalia, on the other hand, explicitly deputized her older son, Diego, to take care of her younger son, Laum. Although initially tasked primarily with the financial and logistic responsibility for the brothers' household (especially given that he had recently come of age as a young adult male), Diego's relationship with Natalia as well as with Laum had to be reconfigured. Laum had come out to Natalia as being of a third gender (neither male nor female), and was asserting iyang independence, despite NOT having come of age yet as a young adult. Laum was threatening to move to Manila and cut off all contact with Natalia and Diego, if Natalia forbade niya to be out as a 3rd gender person. Despite her worry and initial disagreement with Laum's intentions to move to the capital city, Natalia begged

(gihangyo si) Diego to please take a leave from his work and take the time to help Laum find a safe place to live, and to generally help sa iya to be set up (iplastar or to place or settle or re-locate) in Manila. After Diego reassured Natalia that he would love and look after Laum, Natalia described that the heaviness in her heart lifted and she felt so light inside.

Yumi's dad's role in the family was reconfigured when he assumed a breadwinner role that was assigned to him by his father. Yumi related it as a conscious and public (that is, spoken out loud and passed down to the subsequent generations) designation or responsibility, including the clear implication of the hurt and hardship that would ensue if Yumi's grandfather had been wrong. The language Yumi used to describe the role reconfiguration was even related to connection - she remembered and shared that her father was the one that the family had decided would be the least likely to "forget" the family once he made it across to Hawai'i and later to the mainland US. He was deemed to be the one who would be able to stay connected despite the separation and the distance.

KAUGMAON

Kaugmaon means future. Anita's daughter Tess staked her future on her connection and on rejecting displacement for herself. Yumi's dad was designated as the memory-keeper of the family's needs and their connection with him. Their literal survival in the real-time

future (including payments and redeeming their land that had been hawked in exchange for his passage on a ship to Hawai'i) depended on his ability to remember them and their connection.

Meanwhile, the stories that both Alon and Ningning shared about their fathers' displacement were centered around escaping poverty at the time, and the grinding work to make ends meet. This was around the early 1900s immediately after the US-Philippine War of 1899, which claimed the lives of over a quarter of a million Filipinx people.

PHYSICAL PROXIMITY

Each of the people I interviewed experienced a disruption to their physical connection with their families. Natalia left both of her sons in the Philippines, choosing not to uproot them. Anita was the only one who brought her children and spouse with her as she moved. In the end, Tess made the decision (against Anita's wishes) that she would give up her physical connection with both her siblings, as well as both her parents. Anita explained that she accepted it because Tess had reached an age of adulthood that required Anita to accept this unwelcome change to their physical proximity.

The three fathers left their birth families as young men and didn't form their own families until they had been in the United States for a while. Whereas the women spoke at

length about their experiences of the deep disturbance on their relationships and the loneliness of being apart from their children, the women who were born in the US, and whose stories they shared were their father's not their mother's, didn't share as much about their father's feelings of disconnection and loneliness.

GENERATIONAL REMOVAL

Yumi's dad, Alon's dad, Natalia, and Anita entered the United States because another relative had encouraged them to emigrate to the US. Yumi's dad was encouraged by his uncles. Alon's dad was encouraged by his cousins. Natalia was encouraged by her sister. And Anita was petitioned for by her birth mother. In other words, each of them became part of another generation of people who left their homelands. In Natalia's and Anita's cases their mothers and grandmothers had already experienced leaving their homelands. Between Yumi's, Alon's and Ningning's dads, and Natalia's and Anita's grandmothers, their young adulthood span about a generation and a half between them. All of them had survived both the end of Spanish colonization and the beginning of American colonization of the Philippines. One thing I particularly noticed was that the beginning of American colonization introduced another level of ecosystem destruction and internal displacement that forced young adults in the mid to late 1910s to the late 1920s to leave their homelands.

Some who had the resources to buy new land in “pacified” areas of Panay, Negros, and Mindanao, bought land there and “started over”. Others who did not, pooled what resources their families could find, including using land they could access, as collateral for loans to pay for their passage on ships to the US. Of course their hope was to redeem the land in a few years using the remittances they sent home to their families. Natalia’s and Anita’s mothers’ work (achieved through their own displacement) made it possible to stave off emigration for their daughters.

ECONOMICS/FINANCIALS

Most people who look into emigration stories are likely familiar with the trope of Filipinx people emigrating to the US because of economic need. The stories passed down from their fathers to Alon, Ningning, and Yumi are examples of this. Getting here, even though they were young single men, they dutifully sent money home to their families who had essentially helped to send them to the US, for economic survival reasons. They kept only what they needed for themselves and “sent the rest home”. Anita related that her mother said she had left the Philippines because of poverty as well. Anita’s mother came to the US as a bride. Her cousin (Anita’s aunt) was about to marry an older American man (who was “looking for companionship) she had met as a “pen pal”. The older man had a

friend who wanted to find a similar Filipina woman to marry, and asked Anita's mother if she was interested. After she married (and later divorced her husband), Anita's mother petitioned for her, but Anita expressed that after being in the US for a few years, she wished her mother had not petitioned for her.

When they arrived in the US, they all found their relatives immediately, and stayed close to them once they were here, until they established themselves. Each of them defined becoming "established" here as having steady enough income to support themselves minimally here, and send enough back to their families in the Philippines. Alon's dad followed his cousins around the central coast of California in the circuits of migrant agricultural work, in pursuit of a steady income. Often, like in Alon's, Yumi's, Natalia's, and Anita's cases, this meant they entered the same kind of work that their relatives were engaged in. Alon's, Ningning's, and Yumi's fathers all became agricultural workers which meant joining the same farmworker crews that their families were a part of. Alon's dad found that he could make more money in construction and doing manual labor related to construction, which took him out of farmwork and made it so he journeyed south as far as Oxnard in order to find construction work. According to Alon, there were plenty of other

Filipinxs also working in construction, enough for there to be a community of them who would socialize after work.

Natalia's sister (who worked in clerical and administrative work) was the one who sponsored Anita's petition as a family member. Anita's first jobs were also clerical and administrative. She was aiming to be able to move over to working in the social services field eventually. Natalia took a job that paid more, but was "steps below" her job when she lived in the Philippines. Natalia, because her spouse was already deceased, and both of her sons were grown, wasn't under so much pressure to send all her income back to her family left in the Philippines. She did still send money but the story of "keeping the minimum for herself and sending the rest home" wasn't as prevalent for her. Natalia describes her immigration status in the US as TNT (*tago ng tago*). She started out on a work visa, which she overstayed, and at the time of the interview, did not have a legal immigration status. Her hiding because of her TNT status causes additional stress to her.

Anita works part time as a caregiver. Because caregiving doesn't pay enough, she also works two other part time jobs, both in retail: one at Costco and the other one at KMart. She described her work situation in the Philippines, prior to emigrating to the US, as stable, secure, at a fairly high level position working for the city government. . She added that she

could look forward to a retirement because of it. She felt that she and her family were already stable and secure in the Philippines, and that their move to the US was driven more by feeling like it would be a wasted opportunity. So many Filipinx people want and hope for the opportunity to come to the US, especially legally petitioned for by a US citizen, she couldn't turn it down. Not to mention, her mother had gone through the extensive and taxing process of filing a petition for her. She weighed the decision carefully. After a few years of working in the US, she regretted her decision to move, but felt like she had to stay because not only would it be disruptive to her younger children to move again, but also because she felt like after having made her decision, she needed to stick with it, regardless of how difficult it was.

One of the most difficult aspects about being in the US was how hard the work was, and what a heavy toll it took on her and her husband physically. They both worked as caregivers. She described that it was disgusting/gross/revolting/sickening that the work was so difficult and exhausting. But she also stressed the need to be patient. She considered herself accustomed to hardship, and therefore she could sacrifice in the short term, for the long term improvement of her children's future. She took on several jobs so she could make

ends meet, even though it was exhausting. And she was hoping this would bring a brighter future for her younger children.

Each of the people who migrated (the fathers of Yumi, Ningning, and Alon, as well as Natalia and Anita) maintained at least two households internationally. Alon's, Ningning's, and Yumi's dads maintained their own households here in the US, with the minimum amount of resources they needed to survive. Anita, because her children were here with her (with the exception of Tess who had gone home after "trying out" life in the US for a few months), still sent money home to Tess but kept a big portion of it for her and her husband's and her younger children's needs. This was in addition to the income that her husband also made in caregiving.

Each of the women shared that they came from families who were entrepreneurial, and described their relatives as "knowing how to hustle". Natalia shared about her grandmother who ran a gambling hustle at her house and how her grandmother outsmarted even her grandfather's attempts to surveille her. She shared a family story of how her grandmother was so good at the gambling hustle that she even had assigned some of the villagers to be posted as lookouts, in case Natalia's grandfather came home unexpectedly. One time that he did (trying to catch Natalia's grandmother in the act), the lookouts sent

word quickly, so that by the time Natalia's grandfather got back to the house, her grandmother had transformed the gambling hall into a "community party", and everyone else from the village acted as if they had been invited to the festivities. Natalia explained it that her grandmother had the entrepreneurial spirit because of her Chinese ancestry.

Ningning shared a story about gambling halls when she was growing up, and she also attributed the entrepreneurial spirit to her Chinese ancestry. Anita attributed her dad with being a good entrepreneur because of his Chinese ancestry.

Another thread running through the narratives was the resourcefulness of Filipina women when they are faced with both sexism and the prospect of economic hardships or straight up poverty.

In addition to disrupting relationships, working to the point of exhaustion in low wage jobs and barely surviving on their wages, there were other losses that Natalia and Anita explained. One was the loss of language. The other was the profound loneliness. Both women understood these as a loss of connection.

LANGUAGE

Natalia and Anita were both immigrants and grew up speaking an indigenous language other than Filipino. Natalia grew up listening to Hiligaynon and Anita grew up

listening to Karay-a. Although Natalia and Anita both grew up listening to and speaking a place-bound (ie. an indigenous) language, they both also speak Binisaya which is a language spoken in common by different islanders from the Visayas. Outside of their homes and extended family circles, they spoke Binisaya. Natalia and Anita's interviews were in Binisaya - one of their first languages. As part of school, they also learned Filipino and English (both national languages in the Philippines). As college students and graduates, they were expected to be fluent not only in Filipino, but also in English. However, even though all three of us are fluent in English, I let them know they can speak in Binisaya, Filipino, or English, depending on what they preferred. And they both specifically said they would prefer to speak in Binisaya because (a) they didn't get to speak it a lot in the US, outside of their families; and (b) they both shared that they could express themselves better in Binisaya, since some concepts and feelings could be expressed with Binisaya for which there was no direct translation, or term in English. They both expressed the sentiment that speaking English all day was painful ("*maka nose-bleed*"), and that coming home to their families after a heavy day of work was a relief to get to switch back into Binisaya.

Yumi and Alon's fathers, and both Ningning's parents were immigrants too. They all spoke Binisaya and Filipino, as well as English. Yumi, Alon, and Ningning grew up

listening to and understanding Binisaya, but spoke English out of their home. They all identified pressures to assimilate into white US culture as the main reason that their parents did not pass their indigenous languages on to them. All three of them said they could still understand it (though not as well as they used to as children), but all three preferred to do their interviews in English because by the time I interviewed them, they felt that they had already “lost” their languages and could most effectively communicate their thoughts, feelings, and memories in English. All three also spoke about the importance of reclaiming and relearning Binisaya but had found it difficult throughout their lives to learn it, partly because of the unwillingness of their parents to teach them. Their each mentioned how their parents felt that in order for them to “fit in” with American society and be “Americanized”, it would be necessary for them not to speak Binisaya outside of their homes.

In general, each person I interviewed faced the possibility of disconnection from their languages as part of their disconnection from their places. Natalia’s grandmother’s indigenous ancestral language was Hiligaynon. As her grandmother (Lola Dalia) left her homeland in Kabankalan and settled in Butuan (in Mindanao), she continued to use Hiligaynon with her children and grandchildren, so Natalia grew up hearing and speaking Hiligaynon. However, Lola Dalia also spoke Spanish, and spoke of it as the language used

by “educated people”, meaning she understood the class implications of being conversant in Spanish. Lola Dalia carried this on into Natalia’s mom’s generation, insisting that everyone learn Spanish, Hiligaynon, and Binisaya. Although Natalia spoke about Butuanon and other indigenous languages spoken by her classmates, Lola Dalia only insisted on the grandchildren learning Spanish (as part of their education), Hiligaynon (so they could understand her), and Binisaya (so they could talk to people at school). There was no instruction around learning Butuanon or any other indigenous languages from the people on whose homelands they were now living in Butuan. Natalia mentioned learning some Butuanon words and phrases from her schoolmates and neighbor friends, but there was no access to learning it at school nor any incentive at home to learn it. As an adult, Natalia’s work life brought her back to Panay island, nearby to her Lola Dalia’s homelands, and very squarely in the area where Hiligaynon is still spoken widely. Therefore as an adult, not only was she already conversant in Hiligaynon, but she was actually able to return to daily use of it, and since her children were born during that time, they also grew up learning Hiligaynon. English was part of Natalia’s life as a language she was required to learn and use in school. It was also part of her children’s lives in the same way.

In Anita's interview she talked about language in two separate parts: one when talking about the indigenous language around her when she was growing up (Karay-a). She talked about it with a tone that suggests embarrassment coming from an awareness that indigenous languages are not "supposed to be" valued and are something to be embarrassed about. She even started to whisper and talk under her breath as she described her neighbors who (embarrassingly!) still spoke Karay-a proudly.

Yumi mentioned that her parents continued to use their language with each other. Without having taught their children the language, it grew to become a way that her parents could discuss things in front of their children, without the children knowing what their parents were talking about. In other words, when their parents were speaking it with each other, it became a signal that the children were not supposed to be participants in the conversation. Yumi referred to it as the "secret language" of the adults. Both Yumi and Ningning talked about trying to understand these conversations, but often not being able to. Yumi and Ningning described their own grasp of their parents' language by saying "I can understand some, but I can't speak it". They also both said that they felt like they couldn't make themselves understood when they were speaking their parents' language. Eventually they stopped trying to speak their parents' language.

However, this feeling of being misunderstood or of not being able to communicate in their parents' indigenous languages made them feel like they also couldn't communicate well in English, with other people (especially adults) who only spoke English - particularly their white teachers and classmates. They shared that one of the oppressions that was aimed at them as young Filipinas in US schools was that of language oppression - that they initially spoke English with their parents' accents and that they worked hard to lose their parents' accents and worked hard to acquire the US American English accent. At school they learned to speak with an American accent, and at home and in their Filipinx communities, they didn't feel the pressure to assimilate in that particular way.

Similarly, Yumi and Ningning also both shared that their parents felt like they couldn't make themselves understood in English. Because of this, both Yumi and Ningning were often asked to "translate" between their parents and English speaking adults with authority, which primarily included their teachers, and medical professionals from community health clinics and doctor's offices. They did this work, even though their parents spoke English, because their parents wanted to make sure (a) they were being understood correctly by teachers and medical professionals, (b) they were getting complete information

from the teachers and medical professionals, and (c) that no one was going to mistreat them on the basis of not being first language English speakers.

STRAINING FOR CONNECTION

In addition to these physical, economic/financial, and communication based dislocations, Natalia and Anita also talked about the “unbearable” loneliness and deep isolation that came out of their displacement. While Yumi, Ningning, and Alon couldn’t share this side of their fathers’ displacement/migration stories, there were some indications that similar experiences and feelings of loneliness and isolation were there, because some of the behaviors were similar. In this sense, there was an imprint of *kamingaw* as expressed by Natalia and Anita, that can be inferred from the actions of Yumi, Ningning, and Alon’s dads.

Natalia explained how she asked her older son Diego to take over the role of being the main adult for her younger son Dahon in her stead. She tried to stay in contact with both of them over email as well as over the phone. When Dahon was in crisis, Natalia again invoked this role and asked Diego to set up Dahon in a new city, and make sure he was situated well there.

Anita experienced a similar need when her oldest daughter Tess opted to return to the Philippines rather than stay with Anita in California. Because of Tess’s age (she was over

18), Anita felt that she couldn't exercise her parental role and require Tess to stay in the US. Instead, Anita decided to show her respect for Tess's newly acquired adult status and follow her decision to return to the Philippines. She stays in contact with her over the phone and electronic communications.

Although her children could have spoken English or Filipino at home, Anita insisted that at home they would speak Binisaya because that respect for our ways is just like the respect for elders".

KAMINGAW

"Dili bayâ lalim ang kamingaw, Tar" -- Anita & Natalia

I expected to hear about the emotional aspects of becoming migrants and immigrants. Natalia and Anita used this exact phrase "*dili baya lalim ang kamingaw*" - "the loneliness is no small thing". They talked about *kamingaw* as something like a hurt that needed some attention, and simultaneously as a hurt that they tried not to pay attention to. They talked about it as if they were expecting it to be easier but it didn't turn out that way, that they expected to be able to handle their loneliness and found that they struggled with it.

I wanted to know how they dealt with that loneliness and how they related it to their displacement (or indeed if they even considered their migration to be a displacement).

I learned that Natalia dealt with it at first by staying in her room for days, crying until she could fall asleep again, and not eating or wanting to see her sister, whom she lived with.

Later she dealt with it by emailing her children a lot, and by going to church. “*Kamingaw*” marked the transition at the moment of displacement. It noted the physical separation by the emotional and spiritual manifestation of grief. The onset of this un-wellness began at the moment of leaving. Although the balance was already tenuous before moving, for Natalia this meant she was looking for some distance when she decided to move, she at least had the notion that she was home and that as difficult as it was, having lost her husband, she was still “in the right place”. When she moved, she describes feeling completely off-balance, enough that eating, working, and sleeping were all disturbed. Her relationships were also disturbed and off balance. She had moved in with her sister (Sonya) whom she grew up with, but the rhythms of Sonya’s life were foreign to her, marked with so much isolation. It was an isolation that was noted by her mom. Natalia talked about being accustomed to a rhythm that included her two sons’ presences and absences - when they left and came back from school, how their times at home coincided. She noticed how in Los Angeles, she could go the whole day without seeing others in the house.

When I asked her about a place that she considered “her place”, she talked at length about how good it was that her grandmother had decided to gather all her grandchildren into one spot and rename it after their family. She talked about how Lola Dalia had fostered camaraderie between the cousins that stayed strong and intact until the last of them graduated from high school. She described her groups of cousins as “batches” - that they grew up in groups of 4-6 cousins and there were about 5 “batches” of cousins, with the youngest of the batches being more connected with the next oldest generation of nieces and nephews. She said that they grew up without much conflict but then proceeded to tell the story of the one conflict she remembered, when an older brother destroyed a “balay balay” that they had worked so hard to build and decorate. An older cousin had gotten really upset with her older brother for doing that. But other than that, there was no conflict that she could remember. She attributed their closeness to Lola Dalia’s decision to raise all the young people (her grandchildren) in the same village, with each other, completely connected with each other’s daily lives. Not only did she note that they knew each other’s daily routines but that growing up together also gave allowed them to witness changes in each other over time. The “batches” reference seemed significant because it described the oldest batch’s presence as the succeeding batches grew up, and the younger ones witnessing the

older batches move into adulthood. It seemed important for Natalia to be clear about their presence in each other's lives as they transitioned into different phases of life as they grew older - from childhood into adolescence - into adulthood. Eventually they were separated in their young adult lives by their decision to attend college. For Natalia, the "disintegration" of their cousins' constant presence over years and generations didn't occur until their displacement as they left their family village into different colleges in different parts of the country. In this sense Natalia's sense of connection comprised of both her connection to the place (from her rich description of the physical attributes of her hometown) and her close connection with her cousins. When I asked her if trying to connect with her present place in LA was helpful, going to the saltwater or being around plants, she said no, it didn't help because it was so different. There was so little that was the same. She kept saying "lahi gyud" - the place was completely different - this place was not her home, even though it's where she lives now. What she would described was not only the physical place but her relationships with her neighbors, her co-workers, and even with her sister (who had become accustomed to the isolation and difference). She said "no one eats together, or leaves work together - it's completely different here".

What I find significant here is the importance she placed in the meaning of her relationships within that place. In Alviola Village, she talked most about her relationships with her brother and cousin, and the significance of her brother destroying the playhouse that she and her cousins had created and decorated, and how her older cousin really fixed the place up for her and her female cousins - going as far as planting bamboo and building the play house. She talked about her relationship with her female cousins and how they understood the hierarchy of coolness with the set of playhouse decorations and kitchen/cooking toys. She said having the tea set was the pinnacle of coolness. When Natalia talked about her family's house, her demeanor changed. She looked pleased and her face and body were relaxed, not worried at all about her current situation in LA. In LA she talked not about the beach or the trees or the plants, but about the distance and how far apart everyone seemed. She observed repeatedly that there seemed to be no closeness between people. When she talked about "*kamingaw*" she talked specifically about missing her children walking through the doors when she had gotten home immediately before them.

Anita on the other hand had brought her husband and her two youngest children, but had left her oldest daughter who was in high school at the time. She said she worried and called Tess (her daughter) a lot to check on her, and eventually decided to bring her to

the US to “ease her mind”. She worried that Tess was too isolated even though she was with her extended family. Anita talked about not wanting to go to work, but doing it because it was the only thing that took her mind off her “*kamingaw*”. I had met Anita because our children went to the same school and when she first invited me over, she said she had only met one other person who spoke our language and was relieved to find another mother like her who had grown up in the same city. We talked about the city we both grew up in. And then she said “*dili baya lalim and kamingaw*” - meaning it had been really hard on her and on her family to have moved to Goleta. She had initially moved to Orange County with her family into her sister’s household, but had found work in Goleta so left the family there and moved to Goleta.

What made Anita notice isolation and separation was her *kamingaw* for her oldest daughter, Tess, who had chosen to stay in the Philippines because she said she had more to look forward to if she went to school in the Philippines than if she had immigrated with her parents and worked instead. Tess thought there wasn’t a future for her in the US, like there was for her younger siblings who were still in elementary school. Neither she nor her parents could afford college here, not even nursing training, but they could in the Philippines. Tess was still planning on migrating as a migrant worker but not before she

finished nursing school, in the only country she and her parents could afford to do it. Anita thought that for her three younger children, they could go to school here and move more seamlessly into higher education here. She said despite being lonely, she didn't want to join the Filipinx-American (Fil-Am) organization in Santa Barbara, but was so pleased that we had met. She said all she ever did was work - seemingly for 24 hours. She said it was tiring - all the way to the bone. She actually used the term *luod* meaning gross and sickening. She persisted because it allowed her to get her mind off her *kamingaw*.

Kamingaw is often translated as loneliness. In my interpretation "*kamingaw*" is more than "loneliness". But their phrase "*dili baya lalim ang kamingaw*" says it's more than just missing people or homesickness. It says they were surprised that it was deeper than they expected. *Kamingaw* also denotes a deeper sense of disconnection and longing, for that person or relationship with that person. When Natalia's mom emphatically said she could never survive in LA, and decided to go back home to the Philippines after trying out living in LA for 2 months, she said "*mingaw ra kaayo*" - "the loneliness would be too much".

When my grandmother told me, after having been gone for twelve years from the village she raised me in, "*gimingaw ko kanimo*" she meant "I've missed you" and "you've been away too long" and "it's been lonely without you". Her next question was "do you remember our

place in Balingasag? and do you remember the special name I had for you?” We both understood how devastating that hurt was, to get and stay separated from the place and the people that we belonged to before; and to feel the need to turn away from that hurt but still face the excruciating reality that we can’t go home. yet. As I listened to Natalia and Anita, all three of us understood that they were also referring to these deeper ways they have had to face their reality of separation and disconnection from their family, from their places where they belonged to, and the possibility that they may not ever get to return.

I felt like I understood what they meant. I moved a lot while I was growing up. For me *kamingaw* is the feeling of having been deeply connected, losing access to that connection, and missing our place where we belonged, and longing for it to be restored. And *kamingaw* is, at the same time as hoping to be restored or replaced with my people and my place, a reluctant understanding and acceptance that I wasn’t going to get to “go home”. At least, not for a long while. *Kamingaw* is the profound understanding and acceptance of absence.

Although *kamingaw* is the feeling that we identify as present, the most significant thing it points to is actually an absence that doesn’t get filled until we are re-connected. As Filipinx in diaspora, we are a people who have survived through, and continue to make life

despite, removal policies and their post-colonial legacies. We notice and mark our connections by noticing the present and the current connections we have grown, as well as by the emptiness that our broken or suspended connections have left imprinted on us, most noticeably in our longing for it back. Our loneliness is imprinted in the determined and melancholy ways we build connection in our present places with present people, and it covers over the unbearable losses we carry that drive us towards building connections in our present day lives. We struggle to maintain connection with our people and places from our homelands, and we determinedly build connection with people and the places where we settle. We strive to forget that loneliness, to notice it only in passing, because the loss is almost ungrievable even when most of the time we know it is the saltwater that we swim in all day long.

Through Natalia's and Anita's stories, I realized that the biggest dislocation (hurt) in the Filipinx diaspora is the thorough assault on our connection. Establishing and nurturing a connection with place, earth/creatures, and people is an indigenous epistemological practice. In many cases, it is the basis of indigenous spiritual connection. In this sense, reconnection is a healing practice - restoring connection (making relationship right) is an indigenous religious activity that restores our proper place with earth (our place)

and creatures, plants, and people (our relatives). Restoring relationships is central to many religious traditions, so much so that there are rituals centered on restoring (setting right) relationships. Filipinas in diaspora use spiritual and religious practices to make this reconciliation possible.

Anita and Natalia noticed their disconnection/dislocation from their primary relationships with family and place, and after being initially overwhelmed and staying isolated in their bedrooms or workplaces, they figured out ways to re-connect both with their families and places back home and with their current communities and places. And the first indication of their disconnection that plunged them into overwhelming grieving was that feeling of “*kamingaw*”.

COLONIZATION, REMOVAL POLICIES, AND POVERTY

Yumi’s, Alon’s, and Ningning’s fathers initially thought they were migrating to the United States. As young men, they were expected to work in the US agricultural industry temporarily and that eventually they would get to return home. I say this because in the beginning of the out-migration of Filipinxs, poverty was not understood as a permanent state. Poverty in the Philippines was created directly out of colonial wars, colonization, and removal policies. The Manongs generation were impoverished when their parents’ small

land holdings for their subsistence, or the ecosystems supporting their lands (like rivers, seas, and coral reefs) were either destroyed in the colonial wars and subsequent “pacification” of the islands, or these were enclosed and handed over as private property to churches, the state, colonial administrators, local elites or corporation. The disruption of ecosystems and the shift from subsistence economies into commodities economies to supply Spain or the Church or the American colonial infrastructure with timber, food, water, land, labor and skills, plunged Filipinx into poverty. This destruction of the natural economy marked the beginning of the dependence of Filipinx households on a colonial global trade system that traps them as suppliers of “raw materials” a subservient economic position that is permanently impoverished, as long as that economic system is the primary one in use.

Migration was presented to an impoverished people as “pathways” to escape from poverty. Labor recruiters aggressively recruited impoverished and displaced/removed indigenous peoples with promises of wealth, easier work, and luxurious lifestyles. If “*kamingaw*” is the ghostly imprint of displacement - the thing that we can tell is there only because of the hollow-ness or emptiness - or feeling of disconnection, the possibility of accumulating wealth and income generated from migration to wealthier economies is touted as the reason that can both justify and fill the loneliness that migration wreaks on Filipinx

migrant workers. Nothing else is really considered “worth” the pain of displacement - but the possibility of “a better life” for our families is sold to us as an acceptable exchange.

Displacement and the lure of wealth made possible by migrating, obscures the reality that a life without poverty had already been achieved, and had been intentionally destroyed. In addition to loneliness, migration also brings other ways of disconnection from our history, our languages, our people, and our places. Migration requires migrants to learn languages like English, Chinese, or Arabic. In the case of Filipinx migrants, we are “in demand” because English is already one of our national languages, making our people conversant in the dominating language in today’s global capitalist economy. One way our country subsidizes the corporations and societies that hire Filipinx workers is by using our taxes to fund our public education system that makes it so Filipinx meet English language standards as migrant workers, and as brides. In this way, migration, like education, serves as a pathway for “forgetting” traditional practices and knowledges, and prioritizing a new epistemology that values wealth over connection.

Natalia and Anita were not surprised by how hard it was to leave their places and people, they expected to be lonely. Rather they took on the risks and possibilities of intense loneliness for the sake of making sure their families were financially more secure than they

themselves were growing up. Immigration continues this promise of financial security to migrant women. Migration requires our physical removal from our ancestral places, and makes it look like it was our choice. For Natalia and Anita, displacement started domestically - where they either left their own ancestral places to earn more money, and they facilitated the displacement of other women who moved to take over the reproductive/ domestic labor that they left behind.

Most accounts of migrant Filipinas (like many other migrant workers) talk about the search for a better future for their children. Seventy years later, the desire to immigrate is solidly installed on many Filipinx, as indicative of achieving wealth, and higher class status. By the time that Natalia and Anita immigrated to the US, it was a given that this was their golden opportunity. Anita's extended family had applied for the immigration "lottery" and when their application was chosen/approved she found that while she wasn't so excited about leaving her homeland, she decided to move because this was supposed to be the dream - to get to immigrate to the US. Despite her hesitation and misgivings about giving up her dreams, and despite the fact that she didn't want to be separated from her oldest daughter, she decided to move because she thought that it might make a difference for her two younger children. On arrival here, she found that moving was traumatic for her younger

children. She also found that she would be working in low wage entry-level jobs in the retail industry. She knew she had much more complex skills than what she was being asked to do, but the structural barriers (including racism, classism, and sexism) for her to acquire and hold on to a similar position in local government were so insurmountable to her, that she didn't try for any work in that line. She told stories of how her family found her jobs for her or recommended jobs that were "more along the lines she could get".

Migrant workers and immigrants traffic in futures. On the one hand they bear physical separation from, and emotional/spiritual longing for, their people and places and on another hand they also hope and work for a different future than the grinding poverty they see in their present. One of the things that most migrant workers invest their earnings in the Philippines is land. There is a certain knowing that if they own land, they will never be hungry again; if they own land, they will never again risk homelessness. So they buy plots of land and build homes on them. They encourage their families to grow their own food, and become self-sustaining. Sometimes once they acquire land, migrant workers also save and build local enterprises in their hometowns, not necessarily to come home right away, but so they can build a future other than poverty and the continuing prospect of generational migration.

“There is no chemical solution to a spiritual problem”

- hand painted sign at Lummi.

I learned from my mentor and teacher, Dr. Ines Talamantez, that indigenous religious traditions are about connection and relationship not just to the divine but also to each other and to our environment. Displacement is a spiritual problem. Indigenous religious traditions are built around our “placement” (and everything else’s placement) in our universe. By removing people from their places, human systems (colonization, imperialism, nationalism) created spiritual dislocations and trauma for indigenous people. These spiritual problems include the disruption of all our significant relationships. We are told as displaced indigenous people that the solution to our displacement is economic development but there is no financial solution to this spiritual problem. The solutions must also be spiritual - the restoration of all our significant relationships. Even if those relationships are not constellated in their original constellations, they still need to be restored. Our “poverty” or “lack of development” is not the result of our original relationship constellations. They are not the result of our indigenous lifeways. Rather, they are the result of displacement of our people who protect our natural ecosystems. They are the result of the disruption of our food,

medicinal, physical, intellectual placement in our “natural” environment/places. Economic development as a solution to our poverty is a “false solution”, if it doesn’t address these original disruptions. “Re-placement” (ie. immigration) policies and attempts are, at best, only partial solutions to this spiritual dislocation.

the skin i’m in

Doing the best we can
That is Grace

Break my heart open
One more time

Roots across geographies
Escape roots
What do you hold as sacred?
How far would you go
To protect what you love

I woulda never thought
Of my love as a cage
But if it ever were
I would want you to be free

Stop wanting what isn’t mine to want

Where to find courage
In your shaking hands

Stop wanting what isn’t mine to want

Where to find courage
In your shaking hands

If you're going to swim, make sure you don't drown in the shallow end

I rose out of the saltwater
To find no place for me
No home to take me in
Just the dream of missing
Home

CHAPTER 3: ASSIMILATION & SOLIDARITY

“di nakû ka pugson”

“I won’t force you”

Natalia

-

Biodiversity & Difference

One of my favorite activities growing up was going on long walks with my grandfather. He would sometimes pick “weeds” on the edges of sidewalks or in the gaps between fences and bring them home to eat that evening. Or I liked it even better when he would pick the weeds and then after picking off the edible leaves, actually grow the weeds on purpose in some corner of the yard. Intentionally, my grandfather would introduce biodiversity to any planted area, including even what many people would consider “weeds”. He would say plants need each other, including the weeds - they depend on each other to get the nutrients they need from the soil and some plants (many of them “weeds”) are good at replacing nutrients that many of the plants were “thirsty” for. Mary Douglas says that dirt is only dirty when it is in a sphere where it doesn’t belong, or where it isn’t expected. My grandfather would say weeds are only “weeds” when they grow where they were not wanted or expected.

Contrary to the “green revolution” of the 1960s and 1970s when large petrochemical corporations pushed “high-yielding” varieties of staple crops like rice, wheat, and corn, it’s now commonly held knowledge that monocrop agriculture strips the soil of nutrients and the application of fertilizers and herbicides killed off micro-organisms in the soil, including all the beneficial and necessary ones for healthy soil. The industrial model of agriculture sought (and sometimes succeeded) to eliminate all biodiversity in a given biome except for the crop

to be harvested and commodified. Agroecologists like Silvia Ribeiro⁵¹ and Vandana Shiva⁵² describe this process of industrialized monocropping agriculture as deliberate application of force on the earth against its natural impulse towards and design for biodiversity. They describe the underlying problem that makes monoculture possible as an extractive and exploitative relationship with the soil that eventually leaves the earth barren and sterile.

A similar logic is in operation under colonial and neo-colonial economies. Under colonization, the existing diversity in peoples and their relationships and articulations of those relationships defy strict categorization. Two tribes can co-exist on the same island and have different languages, observe different customs, create and maintain different institutions, live with and from their ecosystems in different ways, and pass down different cosmologies to their young people. Philippine experiences of colonization under the Spaniards and the Americans show that colonizers have no tolerance for our diversity. Our diverse experiences and lifeways⁵³ were forced out of our ancestors and they were made to assimilate into the new “high-yielding” lifeways (now distinctly separated as governable slices of our lives - political, economic, religious, social, etc) that each colonizing nation thought was desirable to introduce and proliferate on our homelands.

⁵¹ Ribeiro, Silvia. “From Biodiversity Offsets to Ecosystem Engineering: New Threats to Communities and Territories”. Posted on December 8, 2016, Bulletin 227. <https://wrm.org.uy/articles-from-the-wrm-bulletin/section1/from-biodiversity-offsets-to-ecosystem-engineering-new-threats-to-communities-and-territories/>

⁵² Shiva, Vandana. *Monocultures of the Mind: Perspectives on Biodiversity and Biotechnology*. (Penang, Malaysia: Third World Network, 1997)

⁵³ When I’m using the term “lifeways” here, I’m referring not only to what most people refer to in popular culture as lifestyles. I’m referring to a more all-encompassing ways-of-living which includes our relationships with both human and non-human life, beings, and our entire environment. In other words it refers to our economies (what has been called natural or ecosystem-based ways-of-staying-alive), our institutions, our practices, and our knowledge systems.

In the Philippines, our place- and ecosystem-based economies were forcibly replaced by monoculture economies to supply Europe and the United States with lumber, sugar, pineapples, and bananas. And when European and US economies grew from these crops, they also turned to impoverished countries like ours for our people whom they treated like monocrops as well. Spaniards started out extracting teak and mahogany from our forests turning 25% of our forests into bald mountain⁵⁴ to build their galleon trading and local colonial defense fleet. In those fleets they transported traded products from China (silk, porcelain, ivory) and much later on, sugarcane to the “new world” and then gold and silver from the Americas on to Europe. The United States wanted the same timber and sugarcane, and added pineapples and bananas. Eventually, the United States also “harvested” our people to serve in industries where they couldn’t find enough low wage workers. What started out as mostly male migration into Hawai’ian plantations for sugarcane and pineapple and the Californian agricultural migration circuit has transitioned into a feminized migration flow, into the lowest wage work in the caring industry, that is now, in this pandemic, one of the most direly needed work.

The replacement of biodiversity by monocropping that was achieved by forcing petrochemical fertilizers and herbicides into the soil, is also achieved on the Filipinx people through the installation of a US public education system designed to eliminate the natural diversity of languages, customs, and cosmologies in the people as our great grandparents’ generations were prepared for removal and enticed to emigrate and make migration into a perpetual state for our people for every generation to come. Today between 10 and 20

⁵⁴ Federico Davila, “Human Ecology and Food Systems: Insights from the Philippines,” *Human Ecology Review*, Vol 24, Iss 1, (2018): 11

percent of Filipinxs are outside of the Philippines on any given day, working as temporary workers across the world in fields as diverse as healthcare, teaching, agriculture, construction, fishing, and domestic work.

Flattening out of Difference

Indios y Moros

A significant part of the colonial project was to mark colonized people and their places as completely foreign, and thus unintelligible, to the colonizers; and because of that unintelligibility, simultaneously “all the same” to the colonizers. This is why colonizers can describe colonized peoples and places as “hordes” that are mutually unintelligible and undifferentiated. It was noteworthy when a few colonizers were able to distinguish between different indigenous peoples and able to distinguish their languages, and customs; their and primary rivers and mountains. People can and did get lost because they are not conversant with the people and their landmarks in their ancestral places.

One example of this for the Spaniards was that they marked indigenous peoples of our islands as *Indios*, *Moros*, and when they assimilated into Spanish Catholicism, they became *Cristianos*. By *Indios* they meant our peoples were identifiable like the indigenous people they had earlier encountered and colonized all across first the Caribbean, then Mexico and later across the Americas. And by *Moros* they meant the Muslims they primarily met from North Africa.

Each of these misnomers the Spaniards used for any group of peoples they encountered in the Philippines described less about any of our peoples but rather each name was meant to subsume our peoples into categories with whom they had had some histories

of domination, exploitation, and extraction. Subsuming our peoples as Indios and Moros both ascribed to our peoples a place in colonizer cosmologies characterized by fierce resistance but eventual conquest. They ascribed to us an intelligibility that was false and inaccurate, more based on their needs for land and resource expropriation and labor domination, and not on our actual identities and experiences, nor our relationships with our places or each other, or even with our colonizers.

Eventually, Filipinxs were given our own category, separate from Indios and Moros. But this category of difference was created only within the framework of our islands being renamed after the Spanish King Philip, and only for Indios who accepted and assimilated into Spanish Christianity. It was an acknowledgement of our difference circumscribed by submission to the dominance of their King and assimilation into their religious cosmology.

“Natural Allies” & Dismantling Alliances through US Imperialism

In the often-quoted interview in 1903 by General James Rusling, President William McKinley tells of his reluctance to rule over the Philippines and his prayer for guidance being answered by the realization that the United States had no other honorable course of action,

“but to take them all, and to educate the Filipinxs, and uplift and civilize and Christianize them, and by God’s grace do the very best we could by them, as our fellow-men for whom Christ also died. And then I went to bed, and went to sleep, and slept soundly, and the next morning I sent for the chief engineer of the War Department (our map-maker), and I told him to put the Philippines on the map of the United States (pointing to a large map on the wall of his office), and there they are, and there they will stay while I am President!”⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Gen. James Rusling, “Interview with President McKinley”, *The Christian Advocate*, January 22, 1903, 17

After a religious revelation of the United States' manifest destiny beyond the shores of the North American continent, McKinley's first instruction is to quantify and assimilate the Philippines into the US geography and thus worldview. Coming out of the 4-year Philippine-US war (1898-1902) fought by the Philippine independence movements against US colonization, the US declared the Philippines sufficiently "pacified" to begin the census process which was the first step towards a Philippine election in 1907. Similarly, the US colonial government sought to quantify, enumerate, and eventually eliminate the diversity they initially encountered, in the service of making an intelligible unified (but still subservient) nation state.

Benito Vergara and Benedict Anderson have pointed out the illusory⁵⁶ and fictional⁵⁷ creations intended in colonial census taking. Anderson argues that the "fiction of the census is that everyone is in it, and that everyone has one - and only one - extremely clear place. No fractions."⁵⁸ and that "real innovation of the census-takers...was...not in the *construction* of ethnic-racial classifications, but rather in their systematic *quantification*."⁵⁹ The illusion Vergara points to is that "order" has been restored out of the disorder of insurrection and "pacification" achieved out of the rebellion and resistance of the indigenous people. And although this fiction is clearly visible, even to the US Taft Commission that certified to the

⁵⁶ Benito M. Vergara, *Displaying Filipinx: photography and colonialism in early 20th century Philippines* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 1995) pp 37-74

⁵⁷ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism* (New York: Verso, 1991) pp 164-185

⁵⁸ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 166

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, 168

“general and complete peace”, when they provided for an exception for “a bit of disorder”⁶⁰ continuing in Lanao, Mindanao.

The US colonial and imperial state was invested in a story of benevolence and better administration compared to the Philippine islanders’ Spanish colonial experience. Although they waged war on the Philippine independence movements, they called us “insurrectionists” and they aimed to “pacify” and order us - and they did so in a systematic, scientific exercise of collecting the census, photographs, and even to the exhibition - part zoo, part museum of indigenous Philippine islanders in the 1904 World’s Fair.

A large part of colonial experience is the imposition of a narrative that colonial subjects are supposed to be well-versed in (the story), and the simultaneous imposition of living conditions that colonial subjects endure and try to survive (the material condition), and infusing both of these is the omnipresent awareness that they don’t match and the equally omnipresent threat that calling attention to the dissonance, or worse, resisting one or both, will be dangerous and met with deadly force. There were several responses (along a continuum between complete assimilation into the story and material conditions and outright resistance and armed revolution) that Philippine islanders engaged, to varying degrees of success and punishment. Those who fought the material conditions and asserted our own stories of current events and history often engaged in the anti-colonial rebellions. Another response was assimilation into the dominant story and material conditions those entailed.

⁶⁰ Vergara, *Displaying Filipinxs*, p42

American Public Education for Assimilation

By the time the US incorporated the Philippines into the US global empire in 1898, it had already implemented boarding schools in Native America, interning at least two generations of Native young people in the almost 40 years since they started the first boarding school on the Yakama reservation in 1860. The US had also already been earnestly “pacifying” Native American tribes across the North American continent, and expropriating their territories. In these primarily military endeavors, the US deployed regiments of exclusively African American soldiers. These same regiments were also deployed in the US’s imperialist wars in Mexico, Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines. The histories of the US colonization of the Philippines is deeply intertwined and related to the racialized assimilation projects of US expansion and imperialism over Native American peoples and their homelands, as well as enslavement and subsequent assimilation of African Americans.

Adrienne Marie Francisco argued in her dissertation *From Subjects to Citizens: American Colonial Education and Philippine Nation-Making, 1900-1934* that the colonial public education system was used by the US to define not only the “proper” place of Philippine nationalism but also to determine and measure the eligibility of Philippine islanders to become citizens capable and deserving of self-government⁶¹. In addition, Roland Cintos Coloma argued in his dissertation *Empire and Education: Filipinx Schooling Under United States Rule 1900-1910* that the US public education system imposed on the Philippines served as a site for subjugating Philippine islanders and as a technology to put

⁶¹ Adrienne Marie Francisco, “From Subjects to Citizens: American Colonial Education and Philippine Nation-Making, 1900-1934” (PhD diss., University of California Berkeley, 2015)

Philippine islanders within the racialized US society even as Philippine islanders also used the public education they were forced to partake in, to articulate their resistance against colonial domination.⁶²

Philippine islanders' position in the US's racialized society was accomplished, defined, and articulated through the colonial public education system. Philippine islanders were separated from the brutal and punitive colonial educational experience of native American youth and their communities, by the adoption of what colonizers claimed were more civilized methods of education invented, claimed, and propagated to be an improvement from the Native American residential schools like the Carlisle school. However, the continuation of assimilation of Philippine islanders into the systems for expropriation of land and its transformation into private property, and the labor training for Philippine islanders to fulfill labor needs of the US, and not Philippine islander community needs, remain evident. In particular, as David Wallace Adams argues in *Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience 1876-1928*, the "values of individualism, industry, and property" were requirements for the qualification into civilization and ultimately self-government. In the absence and acquisition of these values, Native American youth were required and indeed forced to attend the residential school.⁶³ Catherine Ceniza Choy's *Empire of Care* argues that Philippine islanders were, from the beginning of US colonial rule in the Philippines, treated and trained as a cheap labor source

⁶² Roland Cintos Coloma, "Empire and Education: Filipinx Schooling Under United States Rule, 1900-1910" (PhD diss., the Ohio State University 2004)

⁶³ David Wallace Adams. *Education for Extinction*. (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1995) p15.

for US needs, in particular, nursing and healthcare needs⁶⁴. A similar attempt to transform Philippine islanders from indigenous communities living off and with the ancestral lands and waters they protected, into agricultural laborers like sharecroppers and tenant farmers, industrial workers, as well as domestic workers, was achieved by the US public education program.

At the same time, the employment of African American teachers into the US colonial public education system also sought to imbricate African Americans into the colonial and imperialist enterprise of the US. Sarah Steinbock-Pratt argues that it was in the interactions between African American teachers and Philippine islanders (students and their families) that each group also mediated and negotiated their place within the US racialized landscape.⁶⁵

Public education did more than assimilate Philippine islanders into the US global empire. It was meant to teach Philippine islanders not only how to be American (or come up to the standard of a United States citizen) but it also taught us how to be a Filipinx person - constituting a space that is not meant to be the equal of US citizenship. That is the “imagined” community we were supposed to create on our journey to be “self-governing”. US colonial administrators imagined themselves to be philanthropically creating a kinder and more humane “opportunity” for civilization than the brutal colonial practices they decried about Spain. Truth be told, our exploitation and the extraction from our ancestral

⁶⁴ Choy, Catherine Ceniza. *Empire of Care: Nursing and Migration in Filipinx American History*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003)

⁶⁵ Sarah Steinbock-Pratt. *Educating the Empire: American Teachers and Contested Colonization in the Philippines*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2019)

homelands and waters didn't stop. In fact they intensified. But our education and our "lifting up" from the "primitive", undifferentiated "cacophony" of our diversity distracted us from the intensifying extraction from our lands, waters, and from our peoples. Imposed and compulsory US public education was a crucial technology used to teach and enforce ideological removal and orient our future labors away from our ancestors and ancestral territories and towards the needs and demands of colonizer societies.

Expanding the conversation about assimilation by including analyses of the US colonial public education system allows me to foreground colonial policies that at once sought to separate us from our natural and contemporary allies - Native Americans and African Americans - who were themselves simultaneously experiencing and being subjected to similar and related systems of removal and coercion. In this sense colonization is not only an exercise in rupturing indigenous peoples' relationships with their territories, ancestors and every subsequent generation of descendants, but also it was a practice to destroy potential and possibilities for allied resistance between indigenous, enslaved, and colonized peoples, against these dominating systems of removal, coercion, and assimilation.

Equivocal Support Among African American soldiers for US imperialism

Both Willard Gatewood and John Nankivell collected documents from African American soldiers whose journeys to join the US military must be contextualized by their experience of enslavement and the ensuing centuries of racist oppression⁶⁶. These letters and

⁶⁶ Willard B. Gatewood *"Smoked Yankees" and the Struggle for Empire: Letters from Negro Soldiers, 1898-1902*. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1971) and John H Nankivell, and Quintard Taylor. *Buffalo Soldier Regiment : History of the Twenty-Fifth United States Infantry, 1869-1926*. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001)

reports they collected are voices from different African American communities whom the US military then placed in the frontlines of the US imperialist and colonial forays into Mexico, Cuba, Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippines. Two threads emerging from these collections demonstrate the immense forces unleashed by enslavement and colonization. African American soldiers balanced their precarious survival on two competing and heartbreaking threads. One was the awareness that they were part of the deadly physical effort to subjugate indigenous peoples across Turtle Island, the Caribbean, and across the Pacific Ocean too. The other was that their assimilation into US white society would depend on their cooperation with and success in the subjugation (“pacification”) of Native Americans, Native Boricuanans, other descendants of enslaved Africans in Cuba, and indigenous islanders in the Philippines. They saw the irony and dissonance clearly.

For example, a chaplain of the Ninth Cavalry wrote about the violence of racism in the US negating the moral superiority that the US claimed in its imperialist expansion, saying “the Negro of this country is freeman and yet a slave...Is America any better than Spain? Has she not subjects in her very midst who are murdered daily without a trial of judge or jury?”⁶⁷ And in 1900, Milwaukee WI’s *Weekly Advocate* published an unsigned letter from another African American soldier who wrote about the similarity between the abuse white soldiers heaped on Filipinx peoples and the abuse directed at African Americans in the US saying,

the Americans...began to apply home treatment for colored peoples: cursed them as damned niggers, steal and ravish them, rob them on the street of their small change,

⁶⁷ Gatewood, *Smoked Yankees*, p.28

take from the fruit vendors whatever suited their fancy, and kick the poor unfortunate...looted everything in sight, burning, robbing the graves⁶⁸.

Some soldiers like Rienzi Lemus shared about violence directed specifically towards Filipina women, one instance in particular where Lemus writes about the rage in a community after a white soldier raped a Filipina, and how the Filipinx community in Manila appealed “to the city for a company of colored policemen” because they thought it would lessen the threats of lynching for the accused rapist.⁶⁹ In another letter, Lemus wrote about how white American soldiers took on mistresses as “a daily example of how the army pacify and civilize the Filipinxs, by deluding the females, and returning home to be worshipped as heroes”.⁷⁰

The letters and reports written by African American soldiers show several instances where soldiers recognized the damage and oppression that US imperialism was causing to Philippine islanders, as well as some instances of African American soldiers’ resistance to that oppression. One of these examples is the defection of soldiers like David Fagen from the US military and joining the anti-colonial resistance of the Philippine revolutionaries⁷¹. Another example are the letters some African American soldiers wrote to African American owned/run newspapers reporting not only what was happening, but also recording their own disagreement with US imperialism. It was not lost on them that the overwhelmingly white US military treated Philippine islanders as despicable and inferior, as evidenced in the

⁶⁸ Gatewood, *Smoked Yankees*, p.280

⁶⁹ Gatewood, *Smoked Yankees*, p.312-13

⁷⁰ Ibid, p.314

⁷¹ Gatewood, *Smoked Yankees*, p.15

reports of white soldiers calling Philippine islanders the same derogatory racial slurs they used on Black soldiers⁷². A third example of resistance are reports from soldiers of communications from the Philippine revolutionary forces appealing to the Black regiments' sense of justice and camaraderie, to defect from the US military and instead to support the Philippine revolutionaries in our quest for independence from US colonization and military conquest⁷³. One soldier, Michael H Robinson, Jr. from Co. F of the 25th Infantry said,

we have been warned several times by insurgent leaders...saying to the colored soldier that while he is contending on the field of battle against people who are struggling for recognition and freedom, your people in America are being lynched and disenfranchised by the same.

Similarly, P.C. Pogue of Co. K, from the 25th Infantry, sent home a copy of a "placard" from the Philippine revolutionaries⁷⁴ which read,

To the Colored American Soldier: It is without honor that you are spilling your costly blood. Your masters have thrown you into the most iniquitous fight with double purpose - to make you the instrument of their ambition and also your hard work will soon make the extinction of your race. Your friends, the Filipinos, give you this good warning. You must consider your situation and your history, and take charge that the blood of ...Sam Hose [A Negro lynched in Newman, Georgia, in 1899]...proclaims vengeance."⁷⁵

⁷² Gatewood, *Smoked Yankees*, p. 245, 252

⁷³ Gatewood, *Smoked Yankees*, p. 253, 259

⁷⁴ Pogue says they were "Aggie's" pamphlets (Aguinaldo's)

⁷⁵ Gatewood, *Smoked Yankees*, p. 258-259

Not only did the Philippine revolutionaries demonstrate knowledge of US institutional racism but in particular lynchings targeting African Americans, but they also incited African American soldiers to be the authors of justice for their communities, in the face of the racist violence of white Americans.

Even though colonization breaks our connections with each other, it's also clear that different peoples experiencing the coercive forces of colonization and forced labor (from enslavement to indentured servitude to low wage work) can see and articulate the ways we are commonly subjected to coercion, violence, and the common sources of that coercion and violence. In some instances, that commonality transcends even national allegiances and moves into allyship with and support for each other. These expressions of solidarity can be read as examples of the ability to form and sustain kinship relationships that colonization and imperialism didn't successfully destroy. These expressions of solidarity also demonstrate the ability to hold shifting and often competing value systems, life experiences, and positions vis-a-vis power and privilege, a skill and a practice that was actively discouraged and eliminated in the assimilation and nation-building project undertaken by the United States.

Assimilation not Solidarity

In indigenous Philippine islander lifeways, our survival depended on intimate knowledge of, and deeply reciprocal relationships with, our ancestral territories, both lands and waters. But under the colonial administrations of both Spain and the United States our survival instead depended on our degree of assimilation into the identities, institutions,

policies, practices, and economic and knowledge systems (in other words, lifeways) that the Spanish and the US colonial administrators believed were appropriate for our people.

In the ways that displacement policies set out a uniform standard and expected effects on individuals, assimilation policies did the same. And similarly individuals and families experienced effects along a spectrum, and mediated by their gender, social class status, age, and proximity to traditional and colonial structures of authority (and thereby access to resources) and punishment (and thereby subjection to disciplinary policies resulting in the withdrawal of resources).

In Chapter 2 I argued that Philippine migration policy is a legacy of colonial removal policies. As such, the main the impacts of our displacement center around the disruption of our connections and relationships. And a significant symptom of this disruption is *kamingaw* - or profound loneliness.

While assimilation during the US colonial period came mostly in the form of the mandatory US-model of public education, assimilation during the Spanish colonial period (of over 330 years) primarily came in the form of and with content from the Roman Catholic church. Nevertheless, the messages from both periods were similar in that assimilation was billed as desirable and achievable ways to fulfill needs and address the dislocations from displacement (even as the harms were never acknowledged as such).

Assimilation is necessary for survival. Yumi shared about how after starting school, her parents thought it best that she only communicate in English - whether replying to English or Filipinx conversations. Yumi's mother, despite the fact that her first language was Hiligaynon, only spoke in Tagalog in the Filipinx community. The pressure for assimilation

in English was so strong that neither Hiligaynon nor Tagalog were passed to Yumi, who understood this decision as one made to ensure her own survival in the US, as the first generation to be born and grow up here.

Yumi's mom didn't graduate from high school before moving to the US, but insisted on finishing once she got here. And although she was offered the opportunity to finish her GED, she instead insisted on attending high school, even though she was older than high school age by the time she had come. She argued that she was raising her children in a country she didn't know, and that it made sense for her to attend high school, so she could truly understand the life her children would lead as they went to high school here. She prevailed and actually got to attend the high school.

Alon didn't express his and his mom's assimilation into the Filipinx culture as coercive but he did explain how deeply he and his mother "learned all the old [Filipinx] ways", to the exclusion even of his mom's Chumash culture, even while they were living in her ancestral territories. Alon shared "everything we grew up learning was Filipinx." Although he doesn't explain it this way, it is fair to infer that the thorough suppression of Chumash lifeways, to the point that it was so absent, Alon didn't even know he had Chumash heritage until much later in his adult life. It gives me a perspective into how profound the force for assimilation was for Native Americans, that Filipinx culture was more acceptable to learn than it was to learn Chumash.

When I asked Natalia about her experience of assimilation, she talked about her son's experience of the intense pressure towards assimilation. She shared that her son had concluded at 18 that he was not (and had never really been) male. He explained to her (over

many emotional emails) that he believed he belonged to a “third sex”⁷⁶. Natalia expressed her deep worry that by not assimilating he would risk his survival and well being. He insisted that if she forced him to assimilate into Filipinx masculinity as expressed in the mainstream Catholic culture, that he would take his own life. He countered the intense message that his survival depended on his taking on the identity, occupation, and outward appearances of a man, by threatening to take the extraordinary measure of ending his life, to show to Natalia that the message “assimilation ensures survival” was not only false, but actually harmful to him. She said that had her son’s dad been alive at that point, he would have found it extremely difficult to counter that assimilative message. Instead, to ensure her son’s survival, she told him she would not enforce the gender binary nor masculinity and maleness to him.

Assimilation will make life easier. Ningning, Alon, Yumi, and Anita all expressed that their parents who immigrated to the US, believed that assimilation would not just ensure their survival, but actually make their lives easier as well. Alon shared about how difficult his dad’s life was as a subsistence farmer and a fisherman during the US’s “pacification” campaign in the Philippines. He explained that he decided to become a farmworker on sugarcane plantations in Hawai’i because “life was so hard” where they had lived on the outskirts of Cebu.

On the opposite end of this message, Ningning explained that both her parents used harsh punishments to ensure compliance with the goals of assimilation - whether in terms of school work or in the appearance or behavior of Ningning and her siblings. In this context,

⁷⁶ these are Natalia’s words - she said he wasn’t just gay, but that he didn’t belong in the male gender either.

the message was more like, life will get easier, the punishments (like kneeling or laying prostrate and reciting rosary while being physically punished) will be withdrawn, if she and her siblings complied with assimilative practices like not speaking out of turn, and not arguing with adults and authority figures.

For Yumi, the difficulties of growing up as a first generation immigrant included being misinterpreted because of being bicultural in a mainstream culture that was practiced as if it was the only culture (and the most important one) at play. She also shared being invisible and wanting approval and admiration, but because of racism, sexism, and classism, she grew up being treated by the non-farmworker and the white community as if something was not quite right about her. Thus she relayed that for a while, she “tried to be white...tried to be a white girl and behave like they did...friendly, outgoing, centering themselves”. She consciously decided to try her best to assimilate in the hopes that assimilation would indeed make her life easier. But she explained that it felt like a schism between who she knew she was, and who she wanted to be but knew she couldn’t become, particularly relating to beauty standards applied to women. She said she learned how to take on those qualities, but knew that they were not actually an accurate presentation of who she was. She concluded that even the most ardent attempts to assimilate did not in fact make her life easier.

Anita’s mom immigrated and married a much older white US man, and emigrated from the Philippines, in the hopes of living “an easier life” according to Anita. In fact Anita’s mom was “recruited” into marrying by her sister who had secured a marriage with a much older white US man, who then inquired if Anita’s aunt knew of another Filipina woman who was open to such a marriage.

Assimilation will create the feeling of belonging. Alon grew up feeling completely part of his Filipinx family. In part, he explained this as learning everything about being Filipinx, including cooking and all the “old” customs. Belonging to his dad’s Filipinx family was clearly important to Alon, and he had clearly spent a lot of his efforts to learn his dad’s cultural ways, including his food ways.

Yumi experienced the exclusion end of this assimilative message - by behaving according to Filipinx cultural norms instead of assimilating into US norms , Yumi felt excluded from the larger community at her school that was primarily made up of white US youth. She did explain that among the farmworker youth and among the Filipinx youth, they lifted and shored each other up, as a contradiction to the exclusion they were experiencing at school with their peers.

Assimilation will give you purpose. One of the widespread judgements that colonizers passed on indigenous Philippine islanders was that we were lazy and lacking in purpose. The evidence used by colonial administrators and observers was that we did not “work hard to build industry or agriculture”. One main purpose for the public education system was to instruct our people to be “productive” and “industrious”. Anita explained that she had secure and intellectually challenging work in the Philippines, compared to the work she could get here after immigrating - which was all very physically demanding but low-paying care work. She described the work as “luod” - that her body would feel so completely exhausted and spent that she almost didn’t feel human anymore. Yet she also expressed that even so, she was grateful that she at least had a job and had a purpose for being in the US.

Assimilation will build or restore your pride. Shame and belittling are part of the mechanisms of ideological removal, as ways to install feelings of inferiority on the targets of colonization, imperialism, and assimilation policies. Ningning experienced this aspect of assimilation negatively, in that her “failure” to assimilate into US identity and appearance caused her intense physical pain. She explained that she suffered from a congenital condition that made her skin break out in rashes. Her mother considered this “an embarrassment to the family” and treated her rashes with “salicylic acid and alcohol” which were intensely painful. She related that her sisters would hold her down during these “treatments” as a child, while she screamed in pain.

Ningning also experienced humiliation at the hands of school officials who told her and her classmates “you will learn whether you want to or not”, and who often used harsh punishments to ensure compliance with school lessons. Ningning said she “hated school” and left without finishing high school, because of the abuse she experienced at school.

Yumi expressed more directly feeling shame at coming from a farmworker and low wage background, and being keenly aware of belonging to a lower economic class than many of the young people at her school. She related a memory of her father going to a father/son baseball event dressing up in slacks and a white dress shirt (which was unusual given that her dad dressed in jeans and stained shirts for work). She noticed that all the other dads were wearing jeans and t-shirts which were clearly leisure clothes for the other parents. She related feeling intensely embarrassed that her parents “stick out” and how she wished they would “fit in” better. Her and her Latinx and Filipinx peers’ contradiction to this oppression was to lift up and cheer each other forward. She also remembered concluding

that her parents must have also experienced the shame since they didn't like to participate in any community events outside of the Filipinx community. She remembered the father/son baseball events because it was one of the only events that her parents attended outside of the Filipinx community. Yumi explained that her parents only attended "outside" activities when they were related to Yumi or her siblings.

Yumi also explained that her mother had been a "beauty queen" in a beauty pageant in her community, and that it was a great source of pride for her mother. Yumi explained that the point of pride was that in some way her mother attained the beauty ideals that had seemed so unattainable to Yumi. In her refusal to assimilate, Yumi challenged her mother saying that she would only enter the beauty pageant if she could "wear a coolie outfit" and represent her people. Of course this meant Yumi couldn't enter the beauty pageant.

Assimilation is required for independence. Yumi also explained that in school her teachers judged her as too shy and wanted her to become more "outgoing and independent". Yumi understood this to mean that her teachers didn't understand Filipinx culture where she was taught to be helpful to the teacher/leader of a class, and to be cooperative. Her cultural teachings said that this is how young people show respect for their elders. Yumi felt that this was an instance of being misunderstood and misinterpreted by her white teachers, by being encouraged to be more independent.

Furthermore, the US colonial requirement for Philippine independence was also assimilation into the identity categories and institutional practices that the US administrations (both military and civil) found to be appropriate for self-governance: unity expressed as homogeneity.

Assimilation leads to progress/development. Finally, ideological removal, as a process, instilled in us the belief that we were “inferior, backwards, and uncivilized.” Thus, the ability to assimilate was taken by the colonial administrators as indications of our readiness for advancing economically, politically, or socially. One example of this can be seen from the way that Yumi’s father was received in his home community in the Philippines when he was ready to marry and decided to go home and engage in the traditional customs of courtship. One of the qualities that elevated his status was that “he was an American boy”, exhibited by his financial stability and ability to support his wife and her family, and could exhibit progress better than a man who had not “advanced” to becoming “an American boy”.

And perhaps this can most clearly be seen in Anita’s expression “America na gud na!” where she explained that despite having a stable and economically secure life in the Philippines, when she was given the opportunity to immigrate, she took it, because it was inconceivable that such an opportunity would be wasted and turned down. Even though she found work here was much more difficult, much lower paid, and it entailed being separated from her oldest daughter, she said it was still “supposed to be” the choice that made sense. Although she did express her doubts, by saying at one point that she “wished her mother had not petitioned for her to move here”.

Assimilation acts as the seal to our removal - first we are forcibly removed. Then we are “educated” so we internalize our removal. By internalizing and learning to become “self-governing” we stay removable as a people who are prepared, responsive, and dependent on labor demands from wealthy countries. We are isolated and separated from our allies (our

place and our peers) and forced to compete for minute fractions of the resources that were taken from our homelands or that we created with our underpaid labor. In order to survive, we're supposed to fit into colonizers' ways of living and abandon our own. By then, we will have achieved the colonizer goal of becoming civilized and self-governing, and permanently or at least securely generationally removed and perpetually removable. The argument follows, after all, why would you want to go back to being backward, primitive, and vulnerable to colonization and removal?

Despite this, Philippine independence movement leaders from Aguinaldo to Roxas fully used the framework created by the US, to fight for Philippine independence that would be as meaningful as they could make it, within the confines of the colonial framework.

Assimilation promised fruitful and satisfying ways to address the loneliness, vulnerability, and poverty that were created and perpetuated by colonization and imperialism. But in reality, it provides an approximation but not actual connection. Instead assimilation is most often a vehicle for oppression and for reinforcing ideologies of inferiority (on the part of indigenous people) and superiority (on the part of settler/colonizers). On the ground, many Filipinx (not to mention allies) both in the US and in the Philippines, refuse to assimilate into the standards set by the US colonial government and imperialist program.

For example, Ningning and Alon spent much of their adult lives creating community not only in their hometown in several iterations, but also in engaging in farmworker organizing in Stockton and in Sonoma County. Before moving to Stockton, Ningning and Alon opened a restaurant that worked as a community gathering place for Filipinx on the

Central Coast of California. After retiring from their community work in Sonoma County, they returned to their home town to establish a community center that curated the history of the Filipinx community across decades, and offered a gathering place for the next generations of Filipinx youth to organize, and learn their cultures. In a similar vein, Yumi also turned to community activism as a way to establish and protect relationships and connections that continue to be assaulted by US settler colonialism and its present economy. Lastly, Alon began and continues to delve into his Chumash heritage and recover the family connections he believed had been permanently lost.

CHAPTER 4: HEALING EPISTEMOLOGIES

Prayer/Devotional

There were at least four different interpretations of “prayer” that I will discuss here. Each person who mentioned prayer as a healing tradition expounded on a theory about prayer that was different from the explanations of every other person I interviewed. Anita is Catholic and was raised Catholic. She said she used prayer as a private and intimate conversation with God. It was something she did in church but also during the week between Sundays.

Although Natalia also talked about considering her private conversations with God as prayer, she also added a more public component to prayer as a healing practice, her mother passed on a family practice of gathering the whole family around her mother and father’s bed, and they would all kneel and sing hymns, and pray together. They had set hymns they learned growing up. Natalia learned this from her mother and grandmother, and continued the tradition with her own children until she left and migrated to the US.

She also learned and passed down the belief that God was sovereign and accompanied each one who asked to be accompanied. She believed that God also had a plan for God’s people, and that as God’s people we could either surrender to God’s will, or find

ourselves again and again in the same spot until we figured out God's direction for our lives.

Natalia talked about her work as a social worker as her "calling", meaning that God was calling her to do that work. She considered her work as a way to carry out the healing that she felt she was being called to do. She advised her children that whatever else they wanted to do, to just never separate themselves from God, so that they would never get lost. She employed a family saying "indi gid madula" expressing that with God as the compass, the family (as a whole) and individuals in the family would never be lost.

Meanwhile Alon, without disrespect said that although he was raised Catholic, and his mother would take them to church, and so that's what they did, he had to tell his mother that

the church really isn't the answer for me for spiritual beliefs and understanding. There's an emptiness within me. So I gotta learn more about the Indian way. The Native cultural way. So that's how I opened up my mind to Native ways. So the spirituality part came to me in 1988 when I decided to go up to meet this spiritual woman up in Mt. Shasta and we went up there and went through a ceremony and a whole process, 3 days of understanding what she was

talking about, and it opened up me to make my spiritual connection with the Great Spirit.

Prayer for Alon didn't mean any sort of Christian conception of prayer but rather a listening to, learning from, and openness to a different conception of God as Great Spirit.

Connection

Anita had a close relationship with her children, particularly with her younger children whom I was able to observe throughout our friendship. They were comfortable being physically close with each other including hugging and snuggling. Anita described that one of the ways she would help make her children feel better if they felt bad (either physically or emotionally) was to cuddle with them and be physically affectionate with them. Everytime she would describe how she would be physically affectionate, she would double the descriptive words such as “halug halugon naku sila” (I would hug and cuddle with them) or “mag bonding-bonding sab mi” (we would also engage in bonding activities). In Binisayâ, doubling or tripling the same word means not only pluralizing the verb or the noun (as in we “cuddled a lot” and “bonded a lot”), but also making the word a little more playful and informal. This also contributes to making the word match the relaxed and playful affectionate tone that the action is seeking to convey.

Even though Natalia was far away from her sons when her younger child was going through their identification as someone belonging to a third sex identity, Natalia explained that they had long, emotionally laden emails that they wrote to each other and replied to at length. Although she missed the in-person connection, the emails helped her maintain a sense of connection with her younger child through the deeply trying time. She also used other tactics to stay in close contact with them despite the limits imposed by her tight finances. She said she openly admitted to her younger child that she was having trouble accepting the changes they were asking her to accept. She very clearly stated that she would not force them to identify in any particular way, and asked them to please just not rush her to get to the place they wanted her to get to about his change in gender identity. She argued that by being open and honest about where she was emotionally with the changes, she was hoping to keep lines of communication (and therefore connection) open with them. She also asked her older son to take her place and do what she would have done had she been able to go home, which was to set them up to live in a safe place.

Both Alon and Ningning talked about their connection with their parents and the farmworking communities in Central California. Their decisions to move to Stockton and then to Sonoma County were both driven by their desire to stay connected and be effective

organizers with their farmworker communities. And their decision to return to their hometown after decades of organizing in Sonoma County was also made to “give back to their community” once they retired. As part of “giving back to their community”, they built and maintained a Filipinx community center that also housed photographs, banners, and other historical materials they had accumulated in their decades of organizing.

Alon had also talked about feeling “an emptiness” that the Catholic Christian religion couldn’t fill, and that feeling of emptiness was a driving force for him to begin to look into his Native heritage. He was seeking a connection as a way to heal from the estrangement that his mother had found to be necessary, and had practiced which then happened to separate him from his Chumash tribe. For Alon, connection was also a healing practice that he sought to cultivate, as he got older, and as he developed more and deeper relationships with other Native folks whom he met in his organizing in Sonoma County.

Indigenous Healing Practice

The interviewees spoke about several practices they experienced growing up, or that they witnessed adults among them engaging in. They didn’t talk about them in these categories, nor in this order. All of my interviewees see themselves as able to access allopathic medicine through the US health-insurance based systems, but they didn’t always,

and their families, even as recent as their parents generation, often didn't have access to regular medical care.

Spirits

Healing practices are one way that my interviewees sort out how they learned about, and currently understand natural and supernatural connections between our physical bodies and the spirits (they learned as young people) that are all around us. Anita shared that on the season of souls, in particular the day of souls, she and her family would make offerings to spirits. It was an opportunity to connect with them, and to show them respect. She understood that we shared something with spirits - that we were in the same dimension but that most of us don't actually interact with them, unless we have a gift of sight or interaction with spirit beings. She was clear that we need to approach them with respect. She also spoke about it as a fun and playful season.

Natalia talked about the need to wash our hands (at least) in some water boiled with guava leaves after visiting a cemetery. In the Philippines, cemeteries are considered to be a place potent with spirits of people who have died. There are common stories about ghosts and spirits who hang around cemeteries and in the town Natalia lived in, many people believed that these spirits can sometimes decide to accompany those of us who are still

alive, especially if we touched things at the cemetery. Therefore, they would offer people to wash their hands in the cleansing guava-leaf boiled water. After this, the spirits would presumably not be able to follow the living people into the homes they were about to enter.

In addition to this, Natalia also talked about another common traditional understanding about the connection between physical illness and spiritual beings. In this understanding spirits don't necessarily wish living humans harm but sometimes in their curiosity or sometimes driven by deep feelings or longings, "touch" a living human which results in illness symptoms for the living humans. These symptoms can include pains in parts of the body that the spirit touched (often the head or stomach - but can be any other part of the body), fever, and sometimes bruises. She described the spirits as "kalag nga buhi" ("live spirits"). She also described a healer (Manong Amin) who described the condition of being touched by a spirit as "natamyaw sa kalag".

Another understanding about the relationship between live people and spirits/souls came from a story told by Yumi about her mother who used to have nightmares at night. One time Yumi woke up to her mother dreaming a nightmare and she found her father holding her sleeping mother while her mother was still in the nightmare. She asked her father why he was just holding her and not waking her up, he answered that during the nightmare, her

mother's soul was wandering out in the world and if he woke her up, he risked her soul not being able to return to her body quickly enough. So instead of waking her up and risking severing the connection between her soul and her body, he just held her gently, so he could reassure her and keep her safe, while giving her soul time to return to her body.

Ningning related a story about a younger sibling who was born to her mother when she was very young and observed that her mother had become very distraught because the baby was not breathing and didn't cry out when the baby was born. As soon as they could after the birth, her father had driven the family to the Filipinx "faith healer" in Watsonville who then proceeded to employ several tactics including prayer and plant medicine over the baby and when the healer finished, announced that the healer's helper should prepare some linugaw (thin rice porridge) to feed the baby because the baby would be hungry when it woke up. The healer instructed Ningning's mom to wrap the baby up in the same blanket they had wrapped the baby up in before, and as soon as she was done, the baby started crying. Ningning also shared that as soon as the baby ate the porridge the baby's skin coloring changed. In this story, there were no obvious explanation about the baby's spirit and the baby's body except that there was clearly a disconnection between the

two and the “faith healer” was able to re-connect them. Ningning had shared this story to explain why she believed in faith healers.

And then there are also beliefs about malevolent spirits who have expressly harmful intentions against which living humans need protection. One kind of these spirits are aswang who are spirits who prey on women, especially pregnant women. Both Anita and Natalia recounted stories from their own experience of having known women who had been preyed upon. Anita told a story about a woman up the street from where she was walking alone in an area that was known to be a place that was vulnerable to visits from aswang. A while after she had walked there, she started to throw up and developed a stomach ache. A little while after that, she developed a fever. A healer had decided that the cause was an encounter with aswang and cleansed her with ginger, after which she recovered.

Natalia also shared a similar story of an officemate of hers who was supposed to be using ginger as well to protect herself from aswang but the aswang got to her first and was able to harm the baby she was pregnant with. She suffered a miscarriage when she was already advanced in her pregnancy. Natalia shared that she applied protection to herself and her youngest child using ginger to protect from this exact harmful encounter with aswang.

Usog

According to Anita, usog exhibits the same symptoms (fever, aches, nausea and vomiting) as encounters with aswang and is equally the product of malevolent intention. The person/creature/spirit that causes this injury is considered to be a predatory spirit just like an aswang, except it's described as someone who waits or watches for the opportunity to grab or catch or snatch a person who is not fully paying attention to their surroundings, and who isn't carrying some sort of protection (like ginger).

Divination

The stories that Anita and Natalia shared demonstrate that part of Filipino indigenous healing traditions is that knowledge can come from sources that are not accessible to everyone. Just like the faith healer in Ningning's story who didn't divulge how they knew about what was wrong with the connection between the baby's body and spirit, nor about what needed to be done to restore the connection, divination is another example that there are indigenous traditional healers who have the gift of divination and who can divine otherwise invisible or inaccessible information.

Although Anita said that she didn't believe in divination, she also shared activities in which she engaged in divination. First she said she sometimes uses card decks to predict the future or to divine guidance for future action she had questions about. Secondly she also

said that whenever she would return to her hometown, she would visit someone who was a known mutagna (divinator). She related that one time she had lost some cash and after visiting the divinator, she subsequently found her money. She also explained that one of the methods that a healer could divine where in a body one had an ailment was to walk around the person with a chicken and by examining the chicken, the healer would learn where that person needed healing.

Natalia relayed a similar ability from Manong Amin who also didn't have to be told where the young person was hurt and needed healing. This was especially useful for very young people who couldn't communicate in words yet about where they were hurt. Natalia shared that Manong Amin would take the pulse in different parts of the body and from there be able to "diagnose" the site of the illness and the type of illness that needed attention.

Childbirth

Pregnancy and childbirth are still historical practices done by indigenous Filipinx traditional healers. Even though Anita gave birth in hospitals for all her children, she was also attended by a healer she called a partera who was practiced in assisting in childbirth. Natalia also shared a lot about the different healers she had experienced as having the skills

and training in helping with childbirth. She shared that she and her siblings were delivered by a hilot, her twin older sisters were delivered by midwife, who was generally someone who was more experienced in childbirth assistance, especially because delivering twins is more complicated than single births.

Natalia explained what she understood to be the ranking in experience between a kumadrona, a midwife, a nurse, and a hilot - all of whom are trained in assisting in childbirth. According to Natalia, kumadronas are the most experienced followed by midwives whose healing work is primarily connected to childbirth, then nurses who are primarily known to assist medical doctors in births (but can assist in births without the doctors present) and then the hilot who is a healer most likely to be versed in several healing practices, not only childbirth.

Hilot

Hilot refers to the practice of manual manipulation of the body, whether the bones, muscles, ligaments, or tendons. It also refers to the specialist practitioner of this healing practice, and it can also refer to a traditional healer who engages in this practice as well as other traditional healing practices . Many Filipinx translate this practice as “massage” in

English but it's not only massage. A hilot can be a bone-setter, help with births, a faith healer, a divinator, and an herbalist as well.

Anita shared that when she is so tired and her muscles are completely exhausted from her grueling work, then she looks for the help of a hilot who helps restore her body back. It didn't sound like it's a regular part of her health care, it sounded more like a resource she would turn to only in times of absolute necessity or crisis.

On the other hand, Ningning reminded Alon during their interview that Alon's uncle engaged in hilot when he was still alive. This helped Alon believe in the efficacy of hilot as a healing practice. He also shared that his uncle sometimes practiced hilot on the young people in the family, rubbing them down with alcohol as part of the hilot. He also shared that his uncle knew the pressure points that were activated using hilot. Although it wasn't clear that hilot was a regular part of Alon's health care, it seemed more regularly used, not only for crisis situations but as one of the first ways to deal with illness or pain.

Of all the people I interviewed, Natalia was the one who used hilot the most - both as a way to care for her children, and for herself as well. She related that since her children were born she had always massaged them especially after their daily baths. Her family and community also relied on Manong Amin who was the community hilot who especially took

care of the young people in their community. She related that Manong Amin was a hilot who could divinate using the body's various pulse points to determine the illness and therefore the treatment. Natalia insisted that a hilot could also assist in childbirth. She also insisted that hilot is more than a massage, including a reflexology massage. Whenever she was able to, she availed herself of a hilot, especially when she was back in her hometown. She also declared that all the women in her family believed in and regularly had hilot treatments. It was a regular part of their healthcare.

She also told a story of when a random Filipino man in LA approached her and asked her if she was a hilot, and she said she did hilot for some family and friends. She asked him how he knew and he said "he could just tell that she had the gift, and that she must be close to God as well". Natalia said she hadn't considered herself to be a hilot until that man had suggested and asked the question.

Cleansing / Releasing toxins

According to Anita and Natalia, baños, while first performed by experienced healers, can easily be taught and then practiced by ordinary people without much supervision from experienced healers. It sometimes involves water as the "cleansing" agent but doesn't require it. It does require some sort of medicinal plant or action (like guava

leaves or the action of brushing or wiping off a person). Anita shared that her husband sometimes did this with their children, and Natalia shared that she learned from her mother and grandmother how to do this with her own children.

Maghawbon

Natalia shared that she witnessed this done with her husband when he was engaged in alternative healing practices during his cancer treatment. And then she learned it from the healer so she could continue to do it from home. She said it was a method using heat and smoke, and different medicinal plant leaves that were applied to the body to remove the toxins. The plants differed depending on the illnesses and the toxins that needed to be removed from the body. In her case she said they used talisay leaves. She said that her husband felt warm and would start sweating, which indicated that the toxins were being removed.

Crying

Anita confessed that she didn't actually like to let her tears show when she was suffering or was upset. She did recognize that it was a good and a valid way to cleanse, and encouraged her family members, particularly her children, if they needed and wanted to, to release their tears. On the other hand, Natalia recounted that her first four years in the US

were filled with tears, and that she had cried like she had never allowed herself to do so before. She also described the experience as a cleansing experience. Yumi shared that as a therapist, releasing tears (as well as other indicators of emotions) was healthy, and she encouraged it.

Theories of Healing:

Rest

Both Natalia and Anita talked about after a hilot and after an intense healing session, rest was often prescribed by the healers, along with good nutrition, and sleep. Usually this also meant that baths or immersion in any body of water had to be put off until at least a day after the healing session. Most often this also means that the person must take time off work. Rest is understood to improve the chances that the illness will not worsen, and it will give time for the healing session to take full effect.

Gaba or Cause/Effect

This injury was explained as being the result of arrogance or hubris. When a person engages in boasting, disrespect (such as wasting rice) or another arrogant behavior, the universe (or spirits) take offense and conspire to restore an appropriate sense of humility to the person practicing arrogant behavior. Yumi explained it by sharing an example where a

family friend had proudly announced that their children were so proper and smart that they would never marry a “trashy” person. Of course their children then proceeded to marry exactly the sort of person whom the parent considered to be “trashy”. People used this as an opportunity to say “see, if you boast of such arrogant things, you will be “gifted” by the spirits of exactly that thing you were boasting would never happen. One way to prevent this sort of injury is to make sure to always act humble and respectful.

Appropriate levels of care/healing practice

Yumi shared that her father believed in exercising caution when approaching healing practices and to start with the least invasive practices/treatments before engaging in the more invasive ones. This was to avoid the deployment of more spiritual or healing power than was necessary because an unregulated flow of energy/power even if it was meant to heal can also cause harm.

The cause of illness is also often the medicine

This theory is related the one about ensuring to use appropriate levels of healing energy, in that its argument centers around appropriate balances of power. Yumi shared the example of her father how once dropped a bushel (35lbs) of broccoli on his foot and when

he bound it up, he included a broccoli leaf, because the cause of the injury also could release the same kind of healing energy since it is made of the same thing that caused the injury.

Opposites will release energies that can cancel each other out

This is a different theory on balance again but this time it is putting opposite energies in the same person to “balance” the harm causing one. In this example, Alon explained that his mother would use potatoes (a porous and absorbent plant) soaked in cold water to draw out a fever from the sick young person.

Herbal

Each person I interviewed shared knowledge about medicinal plants and properties and how the plants were prepared and consumed or used. Ginger in particular was mentioned by everyone as a common medicinal plant they knew about and used. Anita, Natalia, and Yumi all mentioned that they learned from their mothers about the use of ginger as a protective agent against usog and aswang encounters by focusing the attack into the ginger where it is neutralized instead of entering the body, mind, or spirit of the person being targeted. It is also used for cleansing in general where it is used in a brushing or wiping motion. As a tea, Yumi’s mom says that before the Spaniards brought coffee to the Philippines, indigenous Philippine islanders drank ginger tea.

My interviewees also mentioned the following plants as medicinal and regularly used by their mothers and other elders:

- oregano (for coughs)
- alibhon
- alugbati & paliya (for “weak blood” exhibited by looking pale and having low energy - feeling exhausted)
- talinis - the young shoots are used
- balhibuon - the shoots are steeped in hot water
- tawa tawa - the shoots are steeped in hot water and is used to treat fevers in children.
- kamunggay - pound leaves and squeeze out the juice - cleansing and stops the bleeding from wounds; boil root - abortifacient
- guava and caimito leaves - drink tea for diarrhea
- guava leaves - boil and use the water as a cleanse to wash hands with after visiting a cemetery, or for a first bath after giving birth, or for antiseptic cleansing of wounds
- onion leaves (rubbed in coconut oil) - heated on a candle flame, smushed up and rubbed on the skin as a “baño”
- yerba buena - tea

Oils (not to be ingested)

Oils were described as an agent that could activate both warming and cooling energies, and block the entry of cold and damp into our bodies. An aspect of indigenous Filipinx healing tradition is the understanding that our bodies work best when aspects, elements, and energies are balanced and in equilibrium. The balance can be achieved by either increasing one side or decreasing the other side of opposing energies. One particular manifestation of cold and damp entering our bodies is in the concept of “kabag” or “panuhut” which are instances when our bodies are warmed and cold air or immersion in cold water (or cold rain) can bring cold and dampness in. Manzanilla oil (chamomile and citronella) and are considered to be especially useful in keeping cold and damp out. The use of menthol, eucalyptus, and peppermint oils (primary ingredients in efficascent, alcamporado, tiger balm, and vicks) are also characteristic of this balance approach as they can be experienced as both warming and cooling.

Food

A lot of medicinally rich foods in the Philippines are considered to be spices and herbs here in the US. One example is tanglad (lemongrass) which is often used to flavor healing and medicinal soups. Alon and Ningning also related that his uncle gathered wild mustard

greens, wild roots, mushrooms, and watercress because they were medicinal, and delicious edible plants.

Closing

I had expected to find that each person I interviewed would be eager to talk about their places - the place they were born, where they grew up, and where they built their lives as adults. Instead, I found that only one of them was eager to talk about her places. Anita mentioned where she was from, where her mother had moved to, but only shared that it was “a small sleepy provincial village where nothing much happened” and that her life got more interesting after she moved to a small city, a 3-hour ride away. Yumi shared that her hometown where she grew up was just “a rural farming community” on California’s central coast. Ningning and Alon talked about the people they knew in the small farming town where they lived together after getting married, but they didn’t talk at all about the place itself.

Only Natalia described, for almost an hour, what her family village was like. She shared that it was very important to her grandmother that the generations following would have memories of each other *in the place* where they built those memories. Natalia described that her grandmother had chosen the site for their family village because it reminded her of her own hometown. Her grandmother had not only acquired the land (she was unsure how her grandmother had acquired it) but Natalia also remembered that her

grandmother had done a lot of work to also clear the land of its original and thick forest vegetation. Natalia remembered playing with her siblings and many cousins, lessons her family members had taught all the young people, and many memories in that village. She didn't talk about any other place she lived with that kind of detail or delight.

For some parts of her interviews, two of Natalia's immediate family members happened to be in the same room: her sister and her mother. On those occasions, they sometimes piped up with more details and additional memories. Eventually, I decided to interview her mother as well. I had also interviewed one of Natalia's cousins. What I found was surprising and striking: between the four of them, they built a fuller picture of their family relationships and the role of the women in the family, and of the relationship between their families and their family village. Because of this observation, a future direction I would like to do is to follow up Natalia's interview with collecting a family history from other members of her family. It turned out that listening to family stories from more than one member of the family made their sense of place even more complex and more richly-filled in. Listening to them tell stories together in the same room also helped me understand Natalia's sense of her own family village (the place itself) as well as her place in that family and in the village.

I would argue that Natalia's relationship with her family's place encompasses constellations of meanings that co-constitute the events that happened in the place, the people who were present *and* those who were absent (but still part of those events, because they are a part of that place) at those events, and the place itself. In other words, the family village, without the relationships between the people, their events, and the place itself - the trees, the hills, the creeks, the fields - would just be a random location, rather than her family's place. I can only begin to guess what other memories and meanings that place holds, since her family has only been in that place for 5 generations. Before that, it was ancestral territories for a whole other indigenous group that was displaced when settlers from the northern islands of the archipelago were enticed to settle in that delta region.

“Kapit sa patalim”

This is an expression in Tagalog that signifies a desperate situation can sometimes necessitate grasping at a solution that is harmful in its own right, but less deadly than the desperate situation one is trying to resolve. This is the phrase that comes to mind when thinking about the effects of displacement and migration on my interviewees' sense of belonging to a place. Staying in their ancestral places was not possible. And the option that seemed most attractive was to sign up for loneliness, extremely physically exhausting work,

and the prospect of perpetual and generational displacement, all in exchange for just enough money to send home and allowing family members the possibility of staving off further displacement.

And while they live through the generational trauma wrought by displacement, they also held on to their traditional healing practices as best they could. Often denied access to the US medical care system, and poverty being the barrier that it is to health and well-being, their traditional healing practices provide them with multiple points of contact with what the *can* still access. Although I did not include it in the findings, I also know that Alon and Ningning's children have continued to build community connections not only with their Chumash family but also with the local community in their hometown. Yumi continues with her healing work both as her career but also for her own personal journey. And Natalia has also returned to her family village several times, in preparation for permanently retiring there, once she retires.

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