

Struggles on Education Policies in Southeast Asia: Movements in Vietnam, Malay Peninsula, and Philippines

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ABSTRACT

This study presents the story of ordinary people narrating and sharing their experience of colonization. The concept of ethnosymbolism states the reason why a group of people live together for a length of time, which may result to the establishment of a strong social identity and unity, why they stood and fought for their identified homeland. The study shall employ a historical comparative approach to point out the similarities, parallels, and trends on historical and social developments in Vietnam, the Malay Peninsula, and the Philippines during the Western colonial period.

Starting from mythologies, the group of people claimed of great origins stories and further developed their culture through a continuous exchange of influences with their neighbors like the Chinese with the Vietnamese, the Arab or Islamic with the Malays, and the combination of these two with the Filipinos. Everyone in the village was educated. The Vietnamese education was based on the Chinese mandarin system, the Malays based theirs on the Arab/Islamic system and the Filipinos developed their own system of education. All of this changed with the influx of colonization that imposed a European style of education. Indigenous education was deeply influenced by western concepts resulting to the decline of its traditional form. The ordinary people, mostly peasants, were the major participants in the historical developments of their countries, but their stories are not mentioned at all. The leaders cooperated, others sided with the colonizers, some showed their rejection by continuous and various forms of uprisings throughout the colonization until these groups of people acquired independence from their colonizers. A

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class of educated indigenous people was formed and it was this group who stated the experiences of colonization in an acceptable manner. Ethnosymbolism justifies the innate desire of a group of people to the management of their homeland, the use of their resources, and its benefits for its native population. Colonization instigated the people to pursue self-determination and the management of themselves according to their cultures and traditions. This was the instinctive motivation of the native population to engage in various activities in relation to the colonizers. Therefore, there is the need that the historical narratives of a people are told from them, whatever their action is, these are perceived as something for the good of the Vietnamese, Malays, and Filipinos. The narratives of this study are from a Southeast Asian perspective.

Keywords: Ethnosymbolism, Colonization, Self-determination

Introduction

A common experience among the countries of Southeast Asia was their colonization by the Western Europeans (Pearn 1963, 124-125). Based on general narratives, there was always a dispute between the colonizers and the colonized in regards to their relationship and the use of lands (Jacoby 1961, 7). The European's claim to the lands and whatever legitimizing instrument they employed was a direct contrast to the concepts and traditions of Southeast Asia. The focus of this research is on the educational policies imposed by the French in Vietnam, the British in the Malay Peninsula and the Spaniards in the Philippines. This also analyzed the various movements that occurred in the mentioned Southeast Asian countries as a natural offshoot of these policies on education.

The Concept of Ethnosymbolism

The inhabitants of a territory interacted with their environment and in doing so; they created their myths, memories, and meaningful symbols from the ancient times (Allan 2005,4). Through mythology the community justified their claim on their historical homeland, the members of the community claim a common descent, they developed their own language, their own laws, traditions, rites, and rituals which were accepted and observed by the members of the community that made theirs different from others. Every group of people has ethical roots, common memories, myths, and values (Anbarani 2013, 61-67). The members identified themselves with these creations and they passed these on to their descendants; thus creating a continuous and

strong sense of solidarity within their respective communities (Leoussi 2007, 327).

Vietnam, the Malay Peninsula, and the Philippines all possess their own historical territory, the people claim a common descent in accordance to their myths, and fossil evidences validate the ancientness of their descent. Each has their own respective commonalities such as language, customs, beliefs and traditions. The collective actions of the people of Vietnam, the Malay Peninsula, and the Philippines were justified such that their continuous struggle throughout the European colonial years is a manifestation of their deep attachment to their historical homeland and their sense of unity, identity, and the intense desire to preserve their communities.

Historical method provides the accuracy of the reconstruction of events, but it is the historical comparative method that explains these social events, traces its causes, discusses its relevance in the modern situation, and find common trends among identified historical events (Barracough 1991, 171). In the published materials, primary data were already proven truthful and valid, therefore, the historical comparative method may now use secondary sources for analysis purposes (Barracough 1991,100). Historians like Wolf and Moore suggests that the basis of secondary materials may be used to bring out essential features of the chosen topic (Barracough 1991, 175). Comparison highlights not only that which is similar, but also explains the diversity and the complexity that leads to the statement of generalizations and conclusions (Lange 2013, 21). The focus of this study is the presentation of the collective activities of ordinary Vietnamese, the Malays, and the Filipinos. To understand the actions of the community, historians must go as far back as to the ancient times, to their myths, legends, epics, and the stories of their ancestors because these are ties to their ancient pasts, and are continuously manifested through their values, their collective expressions, and the kind of interactions with each other and towards foreign stimulus (Crossley 1993,194).

In narrating the historical events of Southeast Asia, the story is always about the activities of the colonizers and the few wealthy leaders who benefitted from colonization. The activities of majority of the indigenous population are barely mentioned, in most cases, these are absent in historical narratives (Roff 1967, vii). The story of the ordinary people must also be presented as the major actors of the historical events, not merely as recipients of colonial laws or followers of the national leaders or those who were out to cause “disturbances” to the government, the *vagamundos*, the *remontados*, the

ladrones, the *bandidos* (Dery 2006, iv-v). Colonization highlighted the differences of the Southeast Asians, but in using comparative historical analysis, this opens the opportunity to present the parallel developments of the different groups of people side by side. The colonized population can draw solidarity from each other since they were faced with the same colonial experiences (Burton 2016, 48). Hopefully, this study is a step towards cultivating a deeper sense of understanding among the Southeast Asian people. This study presents the view of the ordinary Vietnamese, Malays, and Filipinos because there is a need that histories must be presented by the colonized, ordinary people, and those who comprise the majority of the population. It must be the Southeast Asians who write their own histories, they are the ones to narrate their own histories (Kartodirdjo 1963, 22-30).

Preconquest Vietnam, the Malay Peninsula, and the Philippines

As part of the need for Southeast Asians writing their own historical narrative, the origins of these narratives go back to the very ancient times.

Mythological beginnings. Common in Vietnam, the Malay Peninsula, and the Philippines are the mythological narratives. Vietnam traced its origins to kingdoms of very long time ago when the dragon king, Lac Long travelled all over his kingdom to help his people live in peace, order, and to return to cultivating rice (Karnow 1983, 99). In one of his travels, he saw the beautiful Au Co, an immortal. They lived together and she gave birth to a hundred sons. However, Lac Long longed for his kingdom in the sea, taking fifty of his sons, and returned to his home in the seas while Au Co remained in the mountains.

For the Malays, the people always looked back at the grandeur of Malacca in 1300. At this time, most places of Malaysia were still forested and their basic means of livelihood was gathering food products that were sold to traders. Malacca became a major trading post because of its location along the Strait of Malacca (Andaya 1982, 44).

While in the Philippines, folk tales abound everywhere and one of the most famous narratives was the breaking of a bamboo from which came a man and a woman who were the parents of the Philippine human race (Eugenio 1996, 63). Though these mythological narratives have popular acceptance, there are archaeological proofs that validate these ancient narratives.

Archaeological evidences. In northern Vietnam, there are evidences that rice had been cultivated, a period that is labelled as the Dong Son culture

which is believed to be as old as 800 BC. The outstanding feature of this period is the production of more than two hundred bronze kettledrums (Le 2011, 128). Trade with neighboring countries led to the development of Malacca, a coastal city by the Strait of Malacca. The infusion and exchange of merchandise from China, India, Southeast Asian countries, and Africa made Malacca a prominent port. For Malaysia, this was the phase in their history that they looked back at with a proud heart due to the achievements of the city (Hooker 2003, 58-72).

The Philippines have so many ethnic groups; therefore, mythologies are also in that number. However, there are excavations that prove the ancient history of the Philippines. The most prominent is the excavations of the Tabon Cave (Fox 1970). This yielded human fossils, skullcap, and mandible, hence the term Tabon Cave Man. There were several secondary burial potteries that were found. A very unusual find were the anthropomorphic jars found in Maitum Cave in South Cotabato (Eusebio 1983). A definite proof of the preconquest literacy is the Laguna Copper Plate (Postma 1991).

These archaeological findings are valid proofs of the existence of human beings in Vietnam, the Malay Peninsula, and the Philippines and their interaction with their environment, thus creating their own cultures, traditions, rituals, rites, and symbols.

Chinese influences. The three countries experienced widespread Chinese influences that became deeply rooted in their culture since preconquest times. Vietnam was a province of China from the Han dynasty; it was the Chinese who imparted to the Vietnamese population the form of government, the system of writing, court ethics, Confucian customs and traditions, Mandarin system of education and civil service examinations (McAlister 1971, 32). These traditions existed even during the French colonization, especially the civil service examination as the basis for the government recruitment until 1918 (Woodside 1976, 3). The Malays and Filipinos had constant and active trade with the Chinese, an area that they referred to as *Nan Yang* or the Southern Ocean (Andaya 1982, 12-13). Chinese words are found in various Philippine languages like *ate*, *kuya*, *pancit*, *siomai*, and others (Halili 2010, 45-46).

Chinese influences are dominant in the Vietnamese, Malaysian, and Filipino cultures and though these were brought to Southeast Asia through trade and migration, these have become an integral part of the Southeast Asian culture.

Evidences like human remains, potteries, stone tools, axes, and other artifacts are proofs of ancient habitation dating back to half a million years or the time of human habitation found in the caves of Vietnam, Malaysia, and the Philippines. Using stone tools, they learned to fall trees, clear lands, cultivated rice, and made boats for river and sea travel (Nguyen 2007, 13-15). Hides and skins were processed, they practiced mining, made jewelries, and other implements. There was travel along the islands, the coastal areas and even outwards towards the seas (Pearn 1963, 5.) Though Vietnam, the Malay Peninsula, and the Philippines are geographically distant, they developed cultures that were separate, unique and independent of each other.

In Vietnam, the Emperor, who lived in Hue, handled political concerns, he was detached from majority of the ordinary people who were mostly peasants living in villages (Pham 1985, 24). In the Malay Peninsula, society was divided into two classes and people acquired theirs according to birth. One was the aristocratic class or the ruling class (*orang kaya* or the rich man) and the rest of the population (Roff 1967, 4). The ruler of a village was called *Yang di Partuan* (he who is made lord, or he was called a sultan). He was the symbol of peace, unity, integrity, and he was answerable only to the Almighty, therefore, he was a benevolent ruler who must take care of the welfare of his people (Roff 1967, 4).

The people in the villages, kampong, and the barangay produced Rice. Agriculture was the way of life of the Southeast Asian peasants, to complement rice, they were allowed to keep livestock like buffalo, chicken, and goats, and they planted vegetables, fruits, and other edibles (Kratoska 1982, 115-146). The cultural and social set up of the communities ensured that their needs were met (Drabble 2000, 11). Peasants had rights to their lands because he and his family occupied and cultivated them.

In ancient Philippines, a village was called *barangay* and was headed by a *Datu*. In Muslim areas, the head of their government was called *Sultan* but it was the *Datu* who assigned plots of land to the people. The peasants cultivated the lands, and they paid taxes (Molina 1960, 15).

In every village, they had at least an elder who took it upon himself or herself to handle the education of the younger generation. In Vietnam, a retired Mandarin taught children who were willing to undertake education. Mandarin refers to the language of instruction used by the Chinese and Vietnamese. It also refers to the Chinese and Vietnamese scholars and to the system of writing used in education, a system that was based on Confucian

classics. Those who desired to work for the government had to pass the civil service examinations given nationwide which was also based on the Confucian classics. Those who passed worked for the Imperial government in the national and local levels (Marr 1971, 77).

In every *kampong* there was a *pondok* or a school in a hut. The young Malay students were taught in the Malay language but wrote the words in Arabic characters. The students were taught by religious Muslims from Arabian or Indian countries or elder Malays who studied Islam, they were called *ulama* or religious teachers. The focus of Malay education was the Islamic doctrines, thus a *pondok* was found near, around, or within the compound of a mosque, the worship areas of Muslims (Andaya 1982, 232).

In the Philippines, there were systems of writing according to the ethnic groups of people. They were taught oral traditions like songs, epics, sayings, and proverbs. There was a system of calculation, weights, and measurement which were passed on to succeeding generations (Agoncillo 1980, 51-59).

Preconquest developments in Vietnam, the Malay Peninsula, and the Philippines have parallels and similarities. The form of governance was a kind of monarchy because the head of government and his right to rule was absolute and legitimized through the idea of a higher being who bestowed to the rulers their functions. Usually, the person was benevolent and upright because the origins and expectations of the office were mandated by their concept of a divine being. Their form of livelihood was predominantly agricultural and the primary crop was rice, and the ordinary people of the village were encouraged to raise animals and cultivate plants to supplement their needs. Education was available and was handled by the elders or religious leaders of the community, thus the values, customs and traditions of the respective villages molded the hearts, minds, and actions of the younger generations. Whatever created cultures, values and traditions were preserved and handed down through generations.

The traditions, cultures, symbols, the manner of acknowledgement, and the continuing acknowledgement of a group of people serve to unite the members of the communities. These provide a structure on how they interact with different stimulus, especially those coming from outside of their traditional community. These traditions form a sense of bond and unity of the people and a deep attachment to their homeland, a justification of their instinctive preservation of their communities (Smith 1999, 13).

Moreover, this foundation of their community is constantly modified to suit the needs of the times, thus reinforcing the sense of membership to their community (Smith 1999, 15). History has shown that in some instances, communities have shown rigidity and outright rejection to foreign influences. In the case of Vietnam, the Malay Peninsula, and the Philippines, the communities have shown openness, receptiveness, some have exhibited caution but generally, there were varying degrees of adaptation to the foreign stimulus.

Southeast Asian Colonization

The French Revolution ended feudalism, but it also formalized the owning of lands which was given personal and commercial value (Moore 1966, 10). Nobilities and wealthy individuals had the capacity to own lands while the serfs were deprived of the communal spaces which they used to avail (Perry 1983, 428). The Industrial revolution required volumes of raw materials needed to feed the growing factories so European governments had to look for steady sources of raw materials. France, the Netherlands, and Great Britain found that cash crops and unlimited bodies of cheap labor to extract the cash crops in Asia (Furnival 1956, 281-282).

Colonization of Asia was initially undertaken by the Portuguese and Spaniards, later the Dutch followed, lastly the British and French (Alweis 1969, 338-344).

Impositions of Colonial Rule

French colonial rule resulted to peace and order along the Chinese Vietnamese boarder, piratical attacks ceased, roads, bridges and forms of infrastructures were constructed and reconstructed (Godemont 1997, 30). Since the French administrators did not speak the Vietnamese language, they recruited students from the Vietnamese Catholic communities. They filled up government positions without going through the Mandarin civil service examinations, they acquired higher levels of education where French was used as a medium of instruction, and they were granted French citizenship. This situation resulted in the creation of a social class between the foreign rulers and the native Vietnamese (Woodside 1976, 9). A similar situation occurred in the Malay Peninsula. Melaka (present day Malacca) was first captured by the Portuguese in 1511, then by the Dutch, and finally, the English (Andaya 1982, 75). A British Resident was assigned to the Malay Peninsula, but the office and powers of the Malay Sultan were recognized. He was the symbol of unity in

specific geographic areas, he held court and strictly observed the social hierarchy. Rules on social relations, ceremonial rites, rituals and practices, colors and styles of dresses were observed (Triantafillou 2004, no pagination). Islam dictated the political, economic and social actions (Osborne 1979, 42). Management of government down to village level was left to the local heads, just like it was before colonization. Outwardly, the Sultan and his Malay administrators were still the legitimate rulers of the Malay Peninsula (Turnbull, 1980, 186). This set up assured the cooperation of the Malay elites with the British rulers.

Barangays that submitted to the Catholic doctrines lived closer to each other at a designated place where a dominant structure, the Catholic Church, was constructed. Acceptance of Catholicism identified the people who submitted to colonization as opposed to those who refused. Missionaries were the symbols of colonization because they were the only Spaniards in areas far from the cities (De Jesus 1980, 15). The barangays were still headed by the Datu, now called *Cabeza de barangay*. Barangays put together made up a town, headed by a *gobernadorcillo* (Corpuz 1997, 26). All lands surrounding the Church were apportioned according to the number of taxpayers while the *Cabeza de barangay* collected taxes and allowed to retain part of the tax collection. The *Cabeza de barangay* and his family made up a class called *principalia*. The peasants paid taxes to support the local leaders and support a colonial group of people. (Le Roy 1968, 98-100).

Colonization of Vietnam, the Malay Peninsula, and the Philippines was made more efficient and enduring by the recruitment and collaboration of the native ruling class. This was done by allowing the traditional practices to continue. Their offices provided the maintenance of the traditional ways beneficial to the western colonizers. For the maximum exploitation of the natural resources, cheap labor of the Vietnamese and Filipinos were used while for the Malay Peninsula, the British Resident used migrant Chinese and Indian labors. This colonial experience added to the bank of shared memories, the observance of common traditions and hopes reinforced by their sense of cultural identity and attempts to maintain the community's unity. These elements ensured the continuous survival of a group of people as they related to other groups of people, for instance, the European colonizers.

From Asian Education to Western Education

The educational systems created and developed by the people of Vietnam, the Malay Peninsula, and the Philippines safeguarded and preserved their

symbols, values, traditions and cultures that molded the people who identified with their creations. The core values of the Vietnamese were based on Chinese education which was based on Confucianism and these are:

- The creation of harmony in one's family and community,
- The practice of moderation in daily life, respect towards ancestors, parents, and elders, and
- a deep sense of duty, a honor, hard work and loyalty to one's family (Dinh Ngoc Lam 2007, 39).

With the arrival of the French missionaries, Catholicism was gradually introduced and was accepted by a few Vietnamese. They established mission schools and parochial schools. It was the graduates of the early Catholic schools who learned to speak, read, and write the French language. They served as interpreters for the French administrators, they occupied government positions without going through the Mandarin examination (Woodside 1976, 86). They used and popularized a Romanized, simplified script called *quoc nu*. Eventually this replaced Mandarin writing and in 1918, civil service examinations ceased. Tertiary institutions were established to provide French educated workers for government positions, commercial and industrial establishments. They were needed for positions like clerks, technicians, and skilled laborers (Jacoby 1961, 40). Tertiary institutions were the following:

- In 1901, the Medical College was opened trained Vietnamese health officers.
- The Hanoi College of Agriculture taught native technicians on modern techniques of agriculture.
- University of Indochina was opened in 1908 while the University of Hanoi was opened in 1918 (Nguyen 2007, 152).
- Tonkin Free School in Hanoi, established in 1907 (Woodside 1976, 41).
- Tuyen Quang, Practical School of Agriculture, trained Vietnamese students using the Vietnamese language. Their graduates worked as agricultural technicians in their villages (Pham 1985, 18).

In rural areas, public schools were offered, but funds were very low and teachers capable of handling the French language and courses were also few. In 1925, only nine out of a hundred Vietnamese students finished elementary school (Pham 1985, 140). The secondary level was offered only in the cities, such that many students in the provinces were unable to pursue secondary

education. Although the number of students in the tertiary level annually increased from 1922 to 1930, the last data was in 1942, the number of students that received a French education was less than one percent of the entire native Vietnamese population (McAlister 1971, 74).

Like those of the Vietnamese, the imposition of an English based education in the Malay Peninsula started with the efforts of the Christian missionaries (Andaya 1982, 151). Anglican missionaries opened the first missionary school with English as the medium of instruction (Turnbull 1980, 192). The objective was to train aristocratic Malay boys towards the English way of life and prepared them for work in the English colonial government (Roff 1967, 100). Sons of the aristocratic families were trained to work in an English environment; they spoke the English language, wore the latest English fashion, and engaged in British sports (Andaya 1982, 152).

- The earliest and most enduring was the Central School in Taipin, 1883,
- Victoria's Institution, 1883, and
- Malay College in Kuala Kangsar, 1905 (Turnbull 1980, 192).

The British colonial government opened a second type of school that was the vernacular schools. This was opened for the sons of Malay peasants and everyone else who wanted to attain formal education. Vernacular education aimed to equip Malays the skills for agriculture, fishing, and other changes that the person may be exposed to but not to disrupt the traditional Malay way of life. They were taught industrial and vocational courses and other skills for a subordinate position in a society like discipline and submission to authority (Andaya 1982, 228). The courses were taught in the Malay language, the students wore *baju* and *sarong*, Koran and Islam were studied (Andaya). The Sultan Idris Training College, founded in 1922, a teacher training institution. The graduates were expected to return to their village and teach in the primary and secondary vernacular schools (Roff 1967, 143).

Since there were no sources for the creation of teaching materials, the students of the Sultan Idris Training College, under the guidance of school administrators, gathered Malay sources and used these in the production of teaching materials. In this manner, Malay students were molded in the Malay traditions and literatures. They developed a deep love and respect for their language and heritage, they developed a sense of loyalty geared towards the concept of a singular, Malay nation (Triantafillou 1980, 31).

In the Philippines, as instructed by the King of Spain, each Order was assigned provinces to evangelize in Luzon, namely, Tondo, Zambales, Pampanga, Bulacan, Cavite, Laguna, Batangas and Mindoro (Phelan 1959, 49-50). The local chieftains were identified and their sons were boarded with the parish priest for a few years. They underwent intensive training in Catholic doctrines and practices (Phelan 1959, 58). They were given instructions for religious purposes like their participation during masses, recitation of novenas, prayers and other religious activities. The Orders established *beaterios*, *colegios*, and universities (Halili 2010, 77-79). The Education Decree of 1863 introduced state regulated education, primary education was compulsory and free, although Catholic doctrine was still the heart of Philippine education. It mandated the establishment of a school for boys and a school for girls in every town with the Spanish language as the medium of instruction although all religious activities used the Latin language. A Normal school was established and managed by the Jesuits (Molina 1960, 199-201). This law allowed the native population to enter tertiary education (Halili 2010, 107). Fear and obedience were instilled in native converts, thus Catholicism effectively controlled the minds, hearts, and actions of the native population and made colonization possible for a few Spaniards who were assigned to the islands.

Vietnam, Malaysia, and the Philippines had very ancient forms of education that were developed according to the needs of the population. Colonization brought their systems of education and imposed their language in the implementation of the basic education. Mission schools introduced the western form of education to Southeast Asia. Initially, education was not part of the government policies, but in the long run, the government stepped in and established schools that accepted the native population. The objective of western education in Southeast Asia was the creation of a class of native population who were sympathetic to the Europeans, these were students from the nobility class, the sympathizers of colonization. The native script was replaced by a Romanized form, graduates of these western educational institutions worked for the colonial government, commercial and industrial institutions.

Participation of the People

The Vietnamese movements on the arrival of French colonizers were varied, but generally, it was in various forms of resistance and cooperation. At the start of colonization, heads of villages and others loyal to the Vietnamese Emperor refused to surrender, they refused to recognize the French installed emperor (Christie 1998, 27). When the capital surrendered, many Mandarins

escaped and outright refused to cooperate with the French. They issued decrees in the name of the Vietnamese Emperor, they called for resistance against the foreigners and encouraged the people to rise in arms against the invaders. It was mostly the peasants who heeded the call. Their opposition was fierce, their instinct to resist foreign invasion justified their actions. Every village had a leader sympathetic to actions against the colonizer but sadly, there was no organized, national plan during these years (Truong 1967, 27). The peasants and the scholars did not support the incumbent emperor, but they fought for the concept of an ideal Confucian Emperor. According to the teachings of Confucianism, through their actions, they must prove to the people that they were worthy of the title, “Emperor” (Marr 1971, 32). Peasants from all regions of Vietnam unceasingly fought against the French from 1887 to 1913 (Woodside 1976, 29). The peasants lost their lands and the promise of acquiring lands provided a strong motivation for the Vietnamese’ resistance. The peasants attacked the Vietnamese Catholics, burned their villages, destroyed their properties, and were branded as traitors (Pham Ngoc Mien 1969, 56). The French seized the Vietnamese lands, imposed taxes on them, on their produce and even on the native crafts made by the peasants. The lands that the Vietnamese peasants cleared were also taken from them and sold to the Europeans. Every step of the agricultural process was monetized, so they lost their money. To pay for their obligations, they borrowed from creditors with high rates. The peasants fell very deep into the trap of unending debts without any means of extracting themselves and their family from the vicious cycle. (Nguyen 2007, 171-172).

There were Mandarins who preferred to surrender their seals of office and left the palace (Marr 1971, 46). Some returned to their villages and taught the children in the Mandarin manner. Others indulged in writing verses expounding their abhorrence for their fellow Mandarins who chose to collaborate with the Europeans (Truong 1967, 22). The French or their emissary approached those who were held in high esteem, but they refused these people entrance to their homes. Some even abandoned their houses (Pham Ngoc Mien 1969, 37). Others wrote verses and taught the villagers about patriotism, some travelled and preached their ideas. These scholars provided a voice reflecting the sentiments of the dissatisfied peasants, they provided leadership to the local resistance (Marr 1971, 52-53). By contrast, some educated elites preferred to cooperate with the foreigners and lived peacefully with colonization. By 1900, resistance has weakened because their leaders were betrayed and executed (Pham Ngoc Mien 1969, 47-51).

Through their unceasing uprisings, it was the peasants who showed their intense love for their historic homeland, for their fellow Vietnamese, they struggled to uphold their cultures, traditions and customs. The peasant uprisings across Vietnam were expressions of their grievances and their means of coping with the changes imposed by colonization because it was the peasants who experienced the misery and poverty resulting from the destruction of the villages and the loss of their livelihood (Woodside 1976, 206).

By 1900, Vietnamese tertiary students had little knowledge of Confucian teachings except for those on which they grew up with in their families. They were more knowledgeable about the French philosophies, sciences, history, the French language and literature (McAlister 1971, 39). These students later opened publishing houses, pursued discussions on the commercial, industrial situation of Vietnam, they demanded for science-based education. Demands for reforms on taxation, finance, management of Vietnamese natural resources, government administration and concept of freedom were routinely discussed (Drukker 1976, 25). Meetings were held in cafes in major cities like Hue, Hanoi and Saigon. They were later arrested and their activities labelled undesirable (Pham Ngoc Mien 1969, 82). There were those who were labelled as collaborators, there was a group of disgruntled government employees who called for equal opportunities and treatment between races (Truong 1984, 27). Aside from demanding for self-determination, reforms in trade and commerce, they started a movement whose objective was to return to Confucianism. They discussed Confucian philosophies and translated books on Confucianism to *quoc ngu* characters (Woodside 1976, 3). While some accepted the opportunities and benefits of colonization, there were Vietnamese students who feared the idea of losing their country. They desired the revival of the native Vietnamese traditions and cultures, the integration of Catholicism, Confucianism, and Buddhism (Woodside 1976, 6). Then after World War I, there was a clamor for equal opportunities for the people in Vietnam and the recognition of civil rights between the colonizers and the colonized but whatever were the demands, the realization did not materialize because the French government refused in a violent manner (Truong 1984, 29).

The Malays, on a different note, channeled their efforts less on uprisings and more on literary works. Simple love stories, poems, articles, essays in different genre were published. From 1900-1940, there were more than forty newspapers in Malay language (Harper 1999, 32). Through these, readers realized that they had common experiences. The discussion of love in the lonely hearts column eventually turned to discussions of different kinds of

love, particularly the love for their homeland (Harper 1999, 30). The feeling of having the least opportunities in their own homeland, Malays verbalized their struggle for equal opportunities and shares in the resources of Malaysia side by side with foreigners like the Chinese and Indians (Emerson 1964, 35). There were a few violent uprisings like the anti-British uprising in 1875-1876 in Perak, the Pahang War of 1891-1895, the Kelantan uprising of 1915 and the Kreta Ayer riot of 1927 (Harper 1999, 21). The *Kesatuan Melayu Muda* (KMM) was established, an organization of the young Malays whose objective was to free Malaysia from colonization and provide equal opportunities for the Malays (Andaya 1982, 249).

In the Philippines, there were wealthy native Filipinos and Chinese mestizos who benefitted with the opening of ports in Manila and other provinces. Their children were sent to Manila for tertiary education while others went to other places in Asia and Europe to further their studies in the tertiary level. These Filipino students desired to bring economic development to their homeland, they verbalized the desire of the ordinary Filipinos to express themselves freely. In their works, these students narrated the situation of the islands to a Spanish audience (Schumacher 1991, 28). However, it was the majority of the Filipinos who suffered and bore the oppressive policies of colonization, the ordinary Filipinos unceasingly continued their courageous fight (Agoncillo 1974, 12).

Colonization is a story of exploitation and intense and unwavering struggle of the ordinary people as they fought to hold on to their cultures and identity. The continuous uprisings by the majority the people in the provinces in the Philippines were a manifestation of their desire to ease the burden of colonization.

Summing Up

This study presents common trends in the development of the histories of Vietnam, the Malay Peninsula, and the Philippines. They created and developed their myths, symbols, cultures and traditions acknowledged and practiced by the inhabitants of their historic homeland. They created their concepts of a leader who were generally benevolent, upright, and virtuous because the origins of their office came from their concept of a Greater Being. All these traditional ways of living in a village were interrupted by western European colonization. The French, British, and Spaniards profited from colonization while the collaboration of the native aristocratic class not only hastened colonization, it maintained the traditional social system that ensured

efficient social management of the native societies beneficial to the European colonizers. They accumulated phenomenal political, economic and social benefits from this reciprocal relationship. Moreover, colonization caused extreme poverty and misery to the majority of the ordinary population, resulting to continuous forms of resistance by the ordinary population. Forms of resistance were evasion, non-cooperation, and outright violent uprisings throughout the colonized territories.

The European colonizers initially allowed the native education to continue. Mission schools introduced western education, the European language became the medium of instruction and a Romanized system of writing replaced the native ones. Economic gains, industrialization, and the need for cheaper but more efficient government administration caused the colonizers to formally control education. Elementary, secondary, and tertiary levels were established according to western education. This was offered to the children of the aristocratic class who later pursued a western way of life. They spoke the language of the colonizers, they studied their philosophies, history, and literatures, they studied the sciences, they wore western clothes, their houses were similar to those of the Europeans and, for the Vietnamese, they were given French citizenship. The introduction of western ways through education greatly diminished traditional education. Further, the familiarization of the young children of the aristocratic class resulted to another unexpected result. Their western education enabled them to verbalize the sentiments, grievances, demands, desires for changes to something more understandable and acceptable to the educated people and to the western world.

The common activity of the ordinary people was outright rejection of the foreign colonization and brutal campaign for the subjugation of the Southeast Asian population. Friendship with the local leaders and the acknowledgement of their traditional roles in the society made colonization easier, even the cooperation of the population was assured. The traditional rulers were paid salaries, they were given benefits and other non-material recognition of their offices. Outwardly, they appeared to continue the functions of their office when in fact, the management of the government was done by the foreign colonizers but in most parts of the colonized territories, there were continuous, separate, persistent and in many instances independent manifestations of resistance throughout colonization. The adoption of the Romanize system of writing made comprehension and communication easier among the people, losing the huge barrier between the rulers and the ruled. Lastly, the loss of the villages redirected the loyalty of the native population towards a larger entity, their nation, and eventually, their country.

Colonization left indelible marks for the societies. The length of time of colonization, the intensity of the experience, the extent of its effects in all aspects of the society made this phenomenon stand out. For Vietnam, the Malay Peninsula, and the Philippines this distinguished between the Europeans and the Asians. The colonized population was the native population who had a language, traditions, cultures, beliefs and symbols opposite to the Europeans who did not have any of their way of life. Colonization heightened the differences among the Southeast Asians. In this endeavor, using published materials, this study came up with a historical narrative of the colonial period with a focus on the activities of the ordinary people. European-centered colonial literatures place a great challenge to this endeavor, but using the historical comparative analysis allowed this study to pick out common aspects and establish trends that are similar among the Vietnamese, Malays, and Filipinos. They had different colonizers and are located in separate geographic locations, but this study emphasized the shared common experiences of this defining period of their respective histories. This endeavor is small but it is a significant contribution towards the writing of Southeast Asian history based on the experiences of the colonized population using available published materials. In this manner, the awareness that Vietnam, Malaysia, and the Philippines has similarities in their colonial experiences which can be incorporated and becomes a part of the collective ethnic heritage. This shows the ability of the Vietnamese, Malays, and Filipinos to be flexible, they identify and borrow cultural items and adapt these to their own. Integration, in most instances, becomes successful that the enriched cultural heritage is passed on to the next generation. The integration of the western influences into the Asian ways provided a firm foundation towards the attainment of an independent country.

For Vietnam, Ho Chih Minh declared independence from the French on September 02, 1945. The Malays refused the suggestion of the British administration, they marched through the streets of Kuala Lumpur and declared their independence on August 31, 1957 and created the Federation of Malaysia. Philippines declared its independence from the Spaniards on June 12, 1898. These days of independence are not merely numbers, but reflect the struggles of the people, their sacrifices for their struggles to succeed, their assertion that they were the major participants in improving the condition of their life and the realization of their objectives. In pursuing this perspective, it is desired that a more realistic historical narrative may be attained.

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