The Depiction of Indigenous Filipinos in the Novels *Po-on* and *Samboangan*

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ABSTRACT

The development of the Philippine novel parallels the evolution of the Philippine nation. This shared perspective by literary historians Resil Mojares, Benedict Anderson, and Caroline Hau asserts that the novel had reflected patterns of indigenous Filipinos' ways at different periods in Philippine history.

These literary and historico-political realities also reveal the marginalization of certain groups within the "imagined community" of the Philippines. As shown in key studies on Philippine novels, the indigenous Filipinos' social milieu was inscribed in the geopolitical mainstream of the country's body politic.

This research, therefore, explores how indigenous Filipinos were shown in two historical novels set during the Spanish era; particularly the "Bagos" of the Cordilleras in *Po-on* by F. Sionil Jose, and the "Subanons" of the Zamboanga Peninsula in *Samboangan* by Antonio Enriquez. However, this exploration is limited only to unearthing the depictions and will not compare the literary merits of the two novels. Furthermore, this study seeks to illustrate how these depictions within the novels' respective historical contexts contribute to a more in-depth understanding of indigenous Filipinos' reaction to Spanish rule.

Keywords: Bagos, Subanons, Po-on, Samboangan, Cordillera, Zamboanga, Philippine novel

The Novel and the Nation

Some authors have already examined the intersections and similarities in the birth and development of the novel and the nation. For instance, Benedict Anderson had pointed out in his book Imagined Communities (2003) that nations evolved from the old empires of Europe as the latter gradually dissolved in the 19th century. In a separate manner, the

European colonies in the Americas and Southeast Asia evolved into nations. The development of the "nation" as a living socio-political construct is also similar to the 19th and 20th centuries' proliferation of printing presses and the then new genre of the novel (Anderson 2003, 37–46; 147). Meanwhile, Homi Bhabha described the nation's formation as a given "system of cultural signification" and at the same time, the nation as an ambivalent, temporal figure (1990, n.p.) He then problematized the effects of the nation's "ambivalent figurity" on narratives that "signify a sense of nationness" manifesting both a sense of belonging to a specific nation and a sense of excluding other groups (Bhabha 1990, n.p.)

In the Philippines, Resil Mojares (1983) expounded on the development of the novel, beginning from the late 19th century literary medium that since then had evolved into a commercial medium by the 1940s. Using the formalist mode, Mojares (1983) also argued that the Philippine novel had immediate antecedents in the chronicles and the narratives written by some lay and church people, while also recognizing the tenuous ties between the novel and earlier narratives that date back to the pre-Hispanic period. Meanwhile, utilizing Marxist theories, Hau (2009) had examined the depiction of the novel, mainly of the postwar Philippine nation. She argues that there is a "long-standing affinity" linking nationalism and literature, thanks to a "common fund of ideas," but also adds that the Philippine state also utilizes literature to socialize the youth of its values (Hau 2009, 6). However, like the nation, the novel had excluded some sectors of that body-politic. When one runs through the novels included by Mojares in his history of the genre, one can see that novels were primarily written by authors who grew up in Westernized and relatively accessible parts of the country. If there is an exclusion or marginalization, it mainly refers to the linguistic type, where the vernacular authors do not have the same level of access to elite readership status such as those writings in Spanish, in English and arguably in Filipino as well (Mojares 1983). In addition, Hau is notable in fleshing out the literary depiction or even the "othering" of the Chinese as a specific economic and ethnic community in colonial and postwar republican Philippines. This was done by juxtaposing the depiction of Chinese in two short stories against the chapter in Jose Rizal's El Filibusterismo on the Chinese merchant Quiroga (Hau 2000 [2009], 133–76). Apart from the Chinese, Hau also analyzed how the state and radical leftists had used literature to either promote an ideal behavior of individuals or to critique the existing status quo (2000 [2009], 15–47 and 214–42). A more recent critique had tackled alternative imaginations of the past, especially contentious pasts during the Martial Law and even how gender had been discussed into the national narrative in some novels written in contemporary times (Galam 2008).

After an initial review, this author had noticed that compared to other issues and sectors in Philippine literature, not much has been written about indigenous peoples (IPs) either in novels, in critiques of such texts, or in Philippine literature in general. In a sense, they are marginalized in both literature and in literary studies. However, the few that can be cited so far, including Cordillera literature, are interesting and substantial. The most recent is by Galam (2008, 95; 226) whose gender analysis of Iloko novels and poems that were published in the contemporary period had revealed varying depictions of the Tingguians. On the other hand, in a survey on the "*pusong*" characters of Tagalog dramatic genres, Tiongson (2001, 314) mentioned how a love-struck Ita showed his love to the woman he adored, while in Francisco Balagtas' *sainete* titled *La India Elegante y El Negrito Amante,* Tiongson also described the said Ita character, Kapitan Toming:

> *as having the characteristics of a pusong who comes from the lower classes, and aims at edification and entertainment.* (2001, 314)

However, Tiongson did not correlate Kapitan Toming's identity as an Ita with his "*pusong*" traits, thereby signifying that in the Tagalog imagination, he was deemed to be like them but within the lower ranks of their society. Meanwhile, it is interesting to note that Isabelo delos Reyes wrote what can be perceived as a short story titled "Isio." He narrated that the main character, Isio, went up to the land of the Igorrotes to spread his ideals after having fled from the pressures of being a *gobernadorcillo* in the lowlands, presumably in the Ilocos (Delos Reyes 1889 [1994], 615). Isio then lit some firecrackers to announce his arrival in the territory of the Igorrotes. The latter welcomed him and his companion after being convinced by the fugitive *gobernadorcillo* that they were only the two of them sojourning into the area (Delos Reyes 1889 [1994], 615; 617).

Unlike in Philippine literature, the indigenes were also crucial to the conceptualization of the national literature and even the concept of a national community in Brazil and Mexico, respectively. The formation of a Brazilian national literature had already involved imagining its indigenous peoples. Such conceptualization had been started by novelist Jose de Alencar (Fitz 2015, 43–44), whose notable and early work, *O Guarani,* had touched upon the romance between a male Indian and a white woman (ibid.). What is remarkable in the novel is that although it hewed to the conventions of the time to pair a white female with an Indian male, it steered differently in characterizing the main Indian protagonist as feminine and as agile in character, and not the masculine, warrior type (ibid.). The romanticizing of the indigene was also noticeable among Mexicans, who trace their national genealogies to the Aztecs, Mayans, Toltecs,

and Zapotecs (Anderson 2003, 154). In fact, in an early Mexican novel, *El Periquillo Sarniento* ("The Itching Parrot"), that was written by Jose Joaquin Fernandez de Lizardi, the Mexican's "national imagination" of Indians and Negroes were included among the people who the protagonist interacts with (ibid., 30).

It is hoped that this paper will provide some inputs on gaps by focusing on the depiction of main characters. Characters in historical novels, while not necessarily having exact counterparts in the historic past, can still reflect how certain groups are perceived by a writer. What makes the issue more challenging is that the authors of the novels for analysis are outsiders to the indigenous groups. Therefore, their depiction in their works may not be able to fully grasp the inner nuances of the IPs' culture in their portrayals and worse, may even hold biases against them. This writer's analysis will take off from Homi Bhabha's problematizing of the nation and the narrative and then include the problem of characterizing the indigenes in novels. Given the broadness of the scope covered by novels and the diversity of IPs in the Philippines, the researcher had placed limits on the study made on the IPs' depiction in Antonio Enriquez' *Samboangan* and Francisco Sionil Jose's *Po-on.*

The Subanons: A Brief Background

The Subanons are the main indigenous peoples of the Zamboanga Peninsula and nearby Misamis Occidental. The Subanons possess a rich oral tradition, most notably three epics: *Sandayo, Ag Tobig sa Keboklagan,* and *Guman sa Dumalinao.* Their name means "people of the river," reflecting the Austronesian tradition of inhabiting along or beside bodies of water. The Subanons also consider Mount Malindang in Misamis Occidental as a sacred mountain, which is another manifestation of a belief among Southeast Asians in the importance of a sacral mountain. The Subanons also had oral traditions that depicted their resistance to invasions. One good example is shown in the epic *Guman sa Dumalinao,* where a young woman possessing magical powers leads the Subanons' defense against unidentified invaders and is later helped by young man (Eugenio 2001, 463–67). Yet on different occasions, epic heroes Taake and Sandayo also fought in lands far away from the Zamboanga Peninsula: Keboklogan and Gwalo Leyo.

Keboklogan is said to be in Cotabato, while Gwalo Leyo is presumed to be in Lanao. Meanwhile, in the coastal areas of the Zamboanga Peninsula, the Subanons had mixed with the Visayan settlers and, earlier, with the Moro groups. This admixture of Subanons and Moros is called Kalibugan, a name that is derived from the term "libog," which means "mixed." The Kalibugan mainly reside

in the coastal areas of southern Zamboanga Peninsula. Predominantly animists, the Subanons were gradually converted to Christianity during the Spanish period, mostly in coastal areas; among their proselytizers were the Jesuits who had fanned out from Dapitan and Zamboanga to preach among the scattered Subanons throughout the Zamboanga peninsula (Christie 1909, 19). However, there may have been a return to traditional ways among the Subanons when the Spanish garrison withdrew from Zamboanga in 1662. When the Americans came, the Christian Missionary Alliance converted Subanons living in Zamboanga and even established a headquarters in Tetuan (now part of Zamboanga City) (Tan 2002, 266).

Going to the specific geographical milieu, this researcher recognizes Zamboanga City as being known for possessing the largest body of Chavacano culture and language in the Philippines. The presence of a Hispanic-based culture was an end result of three centuries of being the bastion of Spain's presence in the conquered parts of Mindanao. Founded formally in 1635, the Zamboanga garrison served as a jumping board for expeditions by the Spaniards against the sultanates of Sulu and Maguindanao and other groups that had conducted damaging raids against coastal settlements in the rest of Spanish Philippines.

At the time of the founding of the garrison, the indigenous groups that were met by the Spaniards were the Lutaos; some of them, led by Alonso Macombon were auxiliaries of the Spaniards in suppressing the Sumuroy uprising in 1649, which first erupted in eastern Visayas. However, Subanons were also learned to have resided in the environs. With the establishment of the Spanish garrison in what is known as Cagang-Cagang, the non-natives of the region also arrived as auxiliaries of the Spaniards. In particular, Pampango troops helped man the garrison, one of the several outposts in and outside the colony created by the Spaniards to secure the colony from Dutch, English, and Moro attacks.

However, due to the threat posed by Koxinga in 1662, Spanish authorities in Manila ordered the pullout of garrisons in Zamboanga and the Moluccas. The consequence of such withdrawal was that the non-Muslim groups of Zamboanga either reverted to their traditional beliefs or moved to Dapitan, in the north of the Zamboanga Peninsula, to continue practicing their newfound faith. It was not until 1718 (1719 in other references) when the Spaniards, on orders from Governor General Fernando Bustamante, returned to the area, and more than 140 years later, the Jesuits resumed their missionary work in Zamboanga. From then on, Hispanic grip over the area never loosened until the literal last days of 1898. In fact, it was from Zamboanga that some of the last Spaniards set sail to their home country with the Philippine islands lost from their control.

The Novel's Author: **Antonio Enriquez**

The late Antonio Enriquez was known for his novels and short stories that tackle the tenuous relationships between the various peoples in Mindanao, such as *The White Horse of Ali* and *Spots on their Wings*. A more recent novel was *Subanons*, which depicted how the implementation of martial law in the Zamboanga region had torn apart Subanon communities as they got caught in the fighting between the government, the MNLF, and the New People's Army. Though described as a Zamboanga Chavacano, Enriquez mainly wrote in English, as evidenced by the works of fiction cited above. Yet a reading of his works revealed that he had incorporated a Zamboangueño texture in the language and the narrative. Chavacano and Spanish phrases were included in the dialogue and narrative of *Samboangan* in such a way as to make it distinct from other works in the Philippines that were written in English.

Establishment and Conflict: *Samboangan*

The novel *Samboangan: A Cult of War* tackles a sensitive yet crucial aspect of Philippine history: the campaigns by the Spaniards and their *indio* allies to conquer the sultanates and smaller polities of the Moros. The novel's main plot revolves around the attempt by Governor Sebastian Torres to subjugate the Moro warrior Jainal, and sultans Matingka and Hasim, together with *sultana* Soraida the Witch. Published in 2006, *Samboangan* is divided into four books and is further subdivided into chapters. Its narrative begins with the establishment of the Samboangan garrison on the mudflats of Cagang-Cagang and then traces the arrival of Spanish forces there. The novel subsequently recounts the attacks of warriors from sultanates against the natives who had sided with the Hispanic conquistadors or had come under the influence of Catholic missionaries**.** The Spanish garrison's complement eventually reached a point where it had 1,000 Spaniards, 3,500 Voluntarios, 750 Lutaos, and 250 new Subanon and Lutao recruits (Enriquez 2006, 213). The wars between both sides were brutal and prolonged. Both the Spaniards and their *indio* allies and Moros were capturing prisoners from each other and also causing destruction to each other's territory (Majul 1973 [1999], 121–85; 233–89). Mirroring the actual "Moro Wars" that occurred, especially in the 17th and 18th centuries, the novel depicts the brutalities both sides had inflicted on each other: the slaughter and capture of civilians, the rape of women, and the brutal hand-to-hand combat in the field and in some besieged *kutah* or fort.

In this aspect, one can wonder how the Subanons had dealt with being caught in between two antagonizing sides. The novel hints that

they cast their lot with the Spaniards even as they had previous political ties with some of the Moro overlords. Santiago and Epfel Tabunaway were *datus* and sons of the Subanon princess Sigbe, whose husband was Sultan Hashim (Enriquez 2006, 135). Later on, the Tabunaway siblings converted to Catholicism, along with their mother. Santiago and Epfel became heads of the Samboangan Voluntarios, a force composed of converted Lutaos, Subanons, Tagalogs, Visayans, and Pampangos who helped fight the warriors of the Moro sultanates. Sigbe herself eventually converted to Catholicism and had prayed to the Virgin Mary for the protection of her sons as they were about to embark on a new expedition against the sultan Hashim. However, the Tabunaway brothers had remembered their mother's admonition "not to touch the hair of their father, Sultan Hasim, or any of his children by the sultana" (ibid., 238).

Santiago and Epfel first appeared in the narrative in the expedition that hunted down Jainal the Pirate. During a maritime confrontation, the two sides fought a close quarter battle, which culminated with Epfel throwing an axe against Jainal, his half-brother, and fatally hitting him under the right armpit. Epfel had remembered what his mother had told him about his half-brother's weak spot: not being protected by an amulet. Such was the surprise of the attack, because soldiers and warriors ceased fighting for a moment:

> The fighting stopped abruptly, sabes tu what I mean. Christian soldiers and Moro pirates were rooted where they stood, astonished and stupefied, on their vessels' decks. (ibid., 76)

The battle was a major victory for the Spaniards and their Subanon allies, and a major setback for the Moros, with Jainal's forces having lost their war vessels and 300 dead. However, this defeat will lead to a bloody reprisal from Jainal's brother, Sultan Matingka.

The Subanons would later on reappear in the rest of the novel, as vanguards of attacks against the kutahs of the Moros. For instance, during the Spaniards and Samboangan Voluntarios' assault on the stronghold of Sultan Matingka (dated in the novel's chronology as 6 May 1602), it is Santiago and Epfel who lead the attack against the strongly defended palisade after having made it through the woods. The Spaniards are also trusting of the Tabunaways, to the extent of allowing them to lead such offensives, or be in the forefront alongside the Spanish officers (ibid. 135; 148) and letting them make tactical decisions in the battlefield.

The Subanons are also depicted to be ferocious fighters and was made manifest in the scene of the offensive that was taken against Matingka. As Enriquez writes:

> The Samboangan Voluntarios under the command of Nor Epfel and Santiago Tongab joined with the Spanish and Indio troops… they assaulted and burnt the villages and fortifications behind the sultan's pueblo-stronghold…The Subanons and Lutaos of Samboangan returned to their primeval selves, before Christianity taught them to kill with muskets and cannons instead of the kampilan and kris long knives, shouting and screaming savagely. (ibid., 148)

At the same time, they can be firm under tremendous pressure in the battlefield. An unnamed Subanon member of the Voluntarios was described this way when the forces were still pursuing a very elusive Matingka:

> Among the first Samboangan Voluntarios to reach the hillside was a Subanon Voluntario, not known for any skill but for his coolness and detached mode in anything he did. Calmly, without bustle or fuss, he raised his musket and with the mouth of the barrel a mere two feet away from Datu Radawi's chest, fired at the fearless datu. (ibid., 175)

In Philippine history during the Spanish period, a number of native Filipinos led the attacks against stiff opposition by other natives. One good example will be the Cagayano Mateo Cabal himself who led expeditions against the Ilongots, Isinays, and other groups in northeastern Luzon and even defeated an uprising by some Kalingas led by Lagutao (Scott 1974 [2006], 159). Cabal himself maintained a force of 300 soldiers and 2,000 auxiliaries, all of whom were armed with weapons (ibid.). Historical and literary examples have also shown the crucial role of native allies in reducing opposition to Spanish expansion of their rule. The Lutaos' Alonso Macombon, who assisted in the suppression of the rebellion led by Juan Sumuroy in eastern Visayas, was among those mentioned. However, these events and persons are yet to be portrayed in literary works, since the likes of Antonio Enriquez have been limited to more commonly chronicled events, like the "Moro Wars."

F. Sionil Jose and the "Rosales Novels"

Francisco Sionil Jose's *Po-on* chronologically forms the first of the five Rosales novels, but it was not written immediately when the saga was being created. *Po-on* came out only in the 1980s and is the last to come out of the press. Essentially, the Rosales novels trace the vicissitudes of a young Ilokano man (Eustaqio Salvador, later on Eustaquio Samson) and his family, their flight from Cabugawan, Ilocos Sur, and migration to what is now eastern Pangasinan. The novels examine the continuing

inequities, whether in tenancy or even in city life, which some of the Samsons and other characters had endured. The *Rosales Saga*, as the books are also called collectively, culminates in *Mass,* the story of Pepe Samson's activism in a Tondo urban poor slum in the days leading to the proclamation of Martial Law. *Po-on* is similar to the migration of Ilokanos from their home region to what was then the lush wilderness of what is now eastern Pangasinan. Their migration had brought social and environmental changes in the said areas (McLennan [1982] 2001, 63; 80), some details of which were also depicted in *Po-on.*

Furthermore, the Rosales novels had inscribed the nation into their narratives; however, when set side by side to Rizal's *Noli Me Tangere* and *El Filibusterismo*, the Rosales novels paled in comparison (Mojares 2001, 216–17). This is because while Rizal used the novel when it was a relatively new literary genre in the Philippines and the sense of Philippine nationalism was still ascending, Jose started to write the Rosales novels when the genre has long been used (ibid., 217). Furthermore, there was a sense of disillusionment with the form of the Philippine nation-state as it appeared after the Second World War, what with the continued dominance of the political elite (ibid., 211). I agree with Mojares' assessment of F. Sionil Jose's novel *Po-on* that it is broader in form and chronology. This observation may be due to Sionil Jose's more honed writing style in his last released book as compared to the early ones.

The Bagos in *Po-on*

The Bagos reside in the areas of northwestern Benguet, northern La Union, and southern Ilocos Sur. The late historian and folklorist Florentino Hornedo had conducted a folkloric study on the group, also collecting some oral narratives in the area in the 1980s. Unfortunately, only a handful of the findings have remained after a fire had gutted the author's home (Hornedo 2006, 567). Although W.H. Scott had written about the Cordilleras, he always referred to the groups residing there as Igorots, which, is still too broad to use for a study**.** Yet he himself is not alone in this. In the opening scene of the epic *Biag ni Lam-Ang*, there are references to "Igorots" who had been slain by the hero in his vengeance for his father's death.[2] There is a possibility that such groups were Bago Kankanaey since the setting in the epic's opening lines was in the Amburayan area. They reside in the area bounded by Amburayan, northern Benguet, southern Ilocos Sur, and northern La Union. The Bago Kankanaeys have a wealth of folk literature, such as the folk ballad "Donya Senyas" and folk stories "Dagdagimoyo" and "Gumatan," (ibid., 567; 592–603), where each had illustrated considerable Spanish influence, such as in names and in positions of certain government officials.

Po-on depicts the Bagos in chapters five to nine in the first book and chapter one of the second book. In the first book, the novel's chronological setting is when Istak (Eustaqio Salvador) was recovering from a sickness and remembering the time he and his mentor Augustinian priest, Padre Jose, had ventured to the land of the Igorots when the former was still a sacristan. The Salvadors are treading through a mountainside after having made a lengthy exodus from Cabugawan to escape the fury of the Spaniards who were out to get their patriarch's head. The narrator then describes how the Bagos were remembered by Istak when he was venturing to their land:

> The forest was hostile, with unseen threats, but every year before the rains started, he and the old priest (Padre Jose) ventured without fear…beyond to the land of the Bagos, the Igorotes, the ancient enemies of his people. He had listened, entranced to the Dal-lot and the life of Lam-ang… (Sionil Jose 1984, 70–71)

Istak himself did not fear the Bagos, even in his childhood; inversely, he was more scared of the mythical *komaw* who are said to abduct unruly Ilokano children but he knew that the people he is seeing in his hometown were Bagos, even if they wore clothes like the Christianized Ilokanos because they were "short and squat, their backs were broad (and) their legs more muscular" (ibid.). The Bagos also "chewed betel nut continuously and their teeth were blacker than those of his own people" (ibid.). In what seemed to be an authorial intervention, the narration then describes how the Bagos seemed to be one with the animals living in the mountains. They are being described as "hunters who could merge with the foliage, become one with the bush until they assumed the mystery of the forest, as well, sharing its darkness and its sensuous promise (ibid.).

The next depiction of the Bagos is in the first book's chapter six, where Istak remembers once more his journey to their territory with Padre Jose while his convoy was now making through deeper into what turned out to be a more remote area of the Bago territory. Istak remembers how the Bagos went to Cabugaw to trade their baskets and brightly woven cloth with the Ilokanos' dogs and rice (ibid.**,** 80–81). Moreover, Istak also recalls the first time he went to the Bagos' villages, when he accompanied Padre Jose and guided the priest's horses. He had feared the Bagos as "ferocious savages who chopped off the heads of the enemies and stuck them on the eaves of their houses" (ibid.**)**. Padre Jose reassured the then young sacristan that this perception had validity, but at the same time since the Bagos were to be converted, they were to be their friends. This remembrance is crucial in this stage of the narrative when the Salvadors are already crossing another mountainous area, which turned out to be also a realm of the Bagos. Istak's family had

been preparing for a Bago attack and even hid weapons in their carts. Such preparations by the Salvadors are proven true when they had been halted by a Bago warrior for crossing into their land. Having been then warned, the Salvadors responded with an apology by saying they did not see any sign that signified that indeed they were in Bago territory (ibid., 82**).** The Ilokanos repeatedly ask for forgiveness from the Bagos, but to no avail. After an uneasy silence and to their consternation, the Ilokanos then saw the grass in the area set ablaze, a signal that they were being attacked. Ba-ac, Istak's brother, advised them to run across the blazing grass and not stop, even if spears from the Bagos keep on raining on them (ibid., 83).

The Bagos are last depicted in the portion where Istak's brother Bit-tik meets with two Bago traders in Tayug, the next town after Rosales where his family had settled. Bit-tik, or Silvestre, then accompanies the traders to the mountains. After making his way through the thick forests, Bit-tik then sees the Bagos' settlement and saw an old Ilokano there, who was a migrant before joining the Bagos. The dialogue is interesting because the old man claimed to be a reincarnation of Diego Silang even though the famed Ilokano hero had been dead for 130 years or more. Apo Diego then recounts a war between the Bagos and his ancestor Ilokanos before reaching for an uneasy peace, with both sides wary of each other's intentions (ibid., 131).

The portions of the interaction between some of the characters and the Bagos are in at the end of Book One and the start of Book Two. In this portion of the narrative, the Samsons (who have since changed their surname from the original Salvadors) are trekking the hills of Ilocos Sur to La Union down to what is now eastern Pangasinan. This was after having been harassed by the Guardia Civil, only to further endure heavy rains and an attack by a snake that killed their patriarch.

Preliminary Critique

Applying in this study Homi Bhabha's sense of the ambiguity and temporality of "the nation," indeed, there were inclusions and exclusions made in the representations of some groups. The inclusion is of becoming part of a Hispanicized "Filipino" community that was still being formed in the historical time separately referred in *Samboangan* and in *Po-on*. Meanwhile, the exclusions were of othering the groups that do not fall within the ambit of that community since they were not politically part of it during the periods covered in the novels. Specifically, in *Samboangan*, the Subanons were "included" in the Hispanicized community, while the Moros were those shunned aside. Meanwhile, in *Po-on,* it is the Bagos who were being excluded, as shown in the generally derogatory remarks by the key Ilokano characters of the novel.

In *Samboangan,* Antonio Enriquez had made a sympathetic depiction of the Subanons. Coming from a Hispanic Chavacano point of view, he portrayed the main Subanon characters as brave in combat and loyal to Catholicism. The portrayals of bravery were shown in battle scenes where Santiago and Epfel lead the Voluntarios in the fight against the warriors of sultans. This is in contrast with the negative characterization of the main Moro characters in the novel. However, this portrayal also showed how these Subanon characters are still being haunted by the past when they attacked the *kutah* (fort) of their father. He shows them not merely as passive subjects but as communities who have been assaulted and can fight back. Epfel and Santiago were depicted by Antonio Enriquez as individuals imbibing the Hispano-Catholic civilization. At the same time, the novel also tackled the changes they had to undergo, starting from being Islamicized then being converted to Catholicism, and pledging loyalty to the Spaniards. Yet, old beliefs die hard; in one later scene in the novel, a Subanon soldier of the Voluntarios expresses his apprehension of what will their old deity Gulay say about the conflict they are caught up in. One can infer that Christianized Subanons and the Chavacanos were closely allied due to their common Catholic faith, as well as the sharing of a similar culture.

However, historical accounts by a number of Jesuit missionaries may deem such portrayal as too idealistic. As seen in one such account, not all Subanons became loyal allies and subjects of Spain and the Catholic Church. In fact, one of them killed Francisco Palliola, a Jesuit missionary in the 17th century, after he reportedly insisted that they attend mass (Combes as cited in Christie 1909, 21).

Another noticeable aspect is that the principal Subanon characters were named in the novel and that this signifies their importance in *Samboangan's* plot and narrative. Furthermore, they belonged to the Subanons' upper class, hence possessing considerable power and prestige. Because of their status, they were also given key military roles, proof of how they managed to ingratiate themselves to the European rulers. Going back to the historical context, the Hispanized parts of the Philippines were still in flux at the time the fictional events in *Samboangan* were happening.

In *Po-on*, admittedly, there are traces of "othering" of the Bagos by F. Sionil Jose. In fact, one can say there is a degree of exoticism, as in the description: "hunters who could merge with the foliage, become one with the bush until they assumed the mystery of the forest as well, sharing its darkness and its sensuous promise" (Sionil Jose 1984, 70–71). As for the aggressive actions depicted in the novel, one might go back to Spanish explorer Alonso Martin Quirante's written impressions of the Kankanaey ("Gaganayan") after an expedition in the gold mines of Baguio:

> The Igorots are in general a very agile people, bold, well built and feared by other tribes around and since they are aware that the others always run away, even if they are many of them, they attack with only a few men, and when they kill someone, hardly has he fallen then they take his head, on which account, they make many feasts and light many fires around hilltops… (cited in Scott 1974 [2006], 44)

Considering the positioning of the author (who was born in eastern Pangasinan) and the main character as coming from the Christianized lowlands, it can be argued that the perception of the Bagos as primitive and aggressive is all but inevitable. At the same time, it must be stated that the narrator in the novel had mentioned the trading ties between the Ilokanos and the Bagos. It showed that not all actions involving the two were conflict-ridden. In fact, it illustrated the linkages between lowland and highland Filipinos that were depicted in *Biag Ni Lam-ang* and Delos Reyes' "Isio." In addition, William Henry Scott ([1982] 2001, 45) mentioned a peace pact in 1820 enacted to restore a contraband trade centering in Kayan between Igorots (including Ifugaos) and the Ilokanos of Tagudin and Bangar and was an indication of an already ongoing trade of coin, tobacco, gold, and even pots, among others.

Given these details, like in the case of Latin American novels, it can be said that the indigenous peoples in the novels studied were romanticized.

Conclusion

The novels had indeed shown the parallelism between the development of the Philippine nation-state and of Philippine literature. In the case of *Po-on* and *Samboangan,* the novels reconstructed key events in the past when indigenous, Christianized, and Muslim peoples in the Philippines either interacted or fought with each other, when the nation-state was not yet formally formed, but still in the process of creation. The two novels' depiction of certain IPs particularly exemplify Homi Bhabha's description of the nation as an ambivalent, temporal figure whose existence vary through time and may include or exclude certain groups at certain periods. Meanwhile, as literary products, novels not only feature a plot and a narrative that would entice a reader's interest or get his or her sympathy. Just as important is their depiction of specific characters. In historical novels, characterization plays an essential aspect by revealing how a certain group of people is being perceived by the writer for a particular period in our country's history. Historical novels also recreate the events in the past in a manner that may be interesting to readers but with considerable leeway for

fictive details and interpretations. However, there is a risk that such creative depiction may not accurately capture the events of the past. When not done with considerable artistic justification, the depiction may become a distortion of some aspects of Philippine history and may even unduly reinforce negative stereotypes against the IPs.

There is no truly uniform depiction of IPs, at least in the case of *Po-on* and *Samboangan*. Authorial circumstance, as well as the historical context of the narratives being written, does affect the depiction of some characters, especially those with IP backgrounds. What is noticeable is that, somehow, the authors have some knowledge of the IPs they are depicting. Yet the question still begs to be answered and it is best resolved elsewhere: whether Enriquez' sympathetic portrayal of Subanons or Francisco Sionil Jose's critical depiction of Bagos are justified historically or are mere products of their own experiences, if not their own imagination.

Recommendations

Further studies may be done on other genres or novels that mention the IPs. For instance, other students of Philippine history or literary studies can look into Antonio Enriquez' Martial Law era novel *Subanons*, specifically on the depiction of how these IPs of the Zamboanga Peninsula had coped with the restrictions and abuses during that contentious period in contemporary Philippine history. There is a need to do such study in the light of the continuing contestations over the Martial Law narrative, which arguably is still centered on the national perspective as a whole. Furthermore, there can also be a critical analysis of works by IP writers, to examine how their insider viewpoint can affect the narrative in an acculturated genre as the novel or the short story.

NOTES

1. The author had referred to the Subanon epics as included in Damiana Eugenio's anthology *The Epics*. In turn, Eugenio had relied on the translations and annotations by Virigilio Resma for *The Tale of Sandayo*, Gaudiosa Ochorotena for *Tshe Kingdom of Keboklagan*, and Esterlinda Malagar for *The Guman of Dumalinao*.
2. The author relies on the version that appeared in Damiana Eugenio's *The Epics*. In turn, Eugenio had used the version by Fr. Gerardo Blanco, who gave it to Isabelo delos Reyes for publication. English translation of the Blanco version is by Angelito Santos.

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