

Tomas D. Andres

**UNDERSTANDING
FILIPINO VALUES**

*A Management
Approach*


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PREFACE

Understanding Filipino Values acquaints the reader with the Filipino value systems and Philippine business management problems, trends, and issues as they affect and relate to productivity and organizational effectiveness. Emphasis is placed on the process of value clarification and redirection to equip the reader with the skill in choosing those values with which to make decisions and strategies to effect productivity and organizational effectiveness. Filipino value concepts, principles, techniques, systems, and approaches are applied to the problems most commonly met in business management and organizational development.

This book encourages the reader to become more sensitive to and concerned with Filipino values, enabling him to restructure and reorient these values intelligently for business management effectivity and productivity. The reader's ability to think critically on current and emerging issues and problems affecting productivity and organizational effectiveness on the basis of a fully understood Filipino value system is further developed.

This book is intended for individual reading as well as to serve as text in Administrative Processes and Organizational Behavior, Human Behavior in Organization, Organizational Development, Humanities, Philosophy, Business Ethics, and Character Education courses.

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Ateneo de Manila University
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find no difficulty in accepting it since it signifies simply that the Filipino mind has some set of teachings and principles which guide him to salvation. If we understand it in the second sense, a problem poses itself only theoretically. The solution to this difficulty consists in offering that religion or revelation an influence over the Filipino philosophy of values.

The Filipino Philosophy of Values: A Hybrid

The Filipino people have a reputation for being cultural hybrids. This is most evident in our art, cities, behavior, fashions among women, business and government practices.

The Filipino philosophy of values must be founded on life and experience. To be scientific, it must be constructed "from below," not derived "from above." The ideal goal of a philosophy of values as a science is an objectively justified set of principles which is fundamental enough to hold for all particular situations.

Culturally, the population of the Philippines reflects the great variety of external influences which have impinged upon and blended with the original Malay culture: Arabian, Chinese, Indo-Chinese, Hindu-Indonesian, Spanish-Catholic, and American-Protestant. However, the cultural matrix of the modern Filipino was already there at the time of the Spanish *conquista* in the middle of the 16th century and may well have been there a thousand years before that. Cultural traits have been borrowed somehow, but combined in such a way that the result is distinctly "Filipino." The basic temperament, the lifestyle, the outlook that make up the culture of the Filipino today were already there four centuries ago.¹ Thus, we cannot underevaluate the strength of the traditional features of Filipino behavior and belief. The lineal village, the strong family unit, the kinship relationships extended through marriage and leadership, the authority vested on family heads and elders were all existent even before the Western contact.

Historically, the Philippines has drunk from the fount of three physical and cultural worlds—the Asian, the Pacific, and the Occidental. The Filipino traditional culture moreover is a synthesis of three mainstreams—the Malay which in itself is a hybrid, the Chinese Mind, and the Indian Art. The structure of communal life, native and imported ceramic art, behavioral patterns, beliefs, and values are evidences of this.

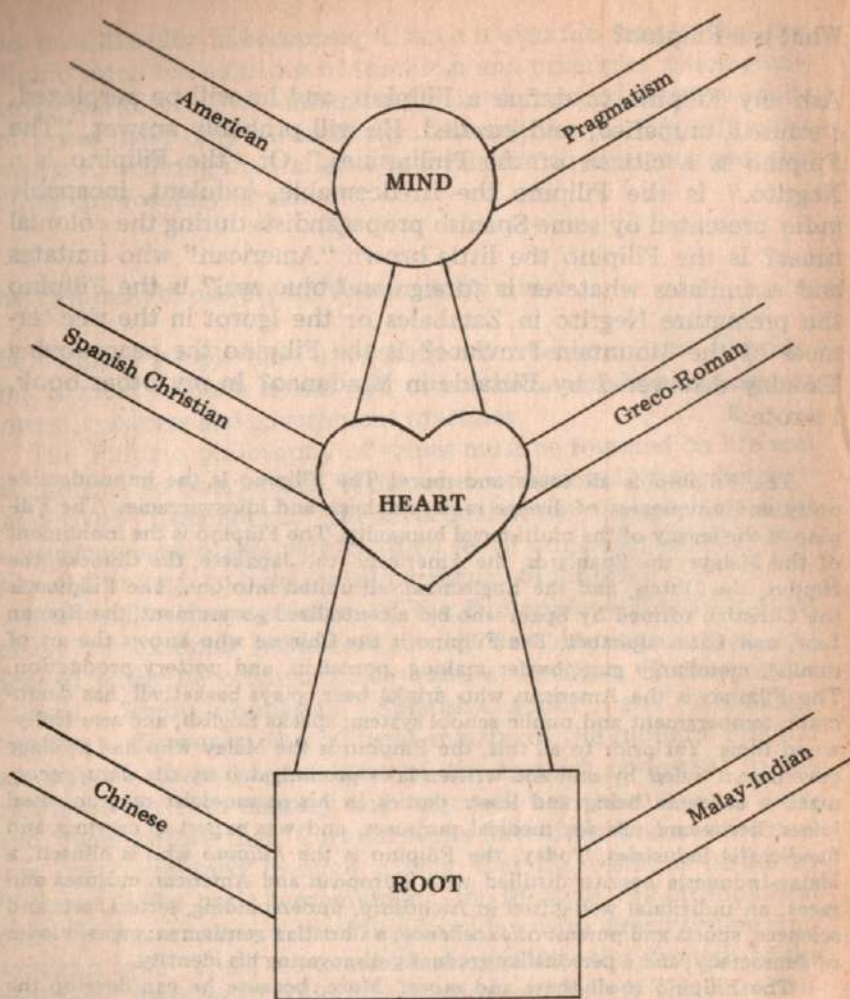
What is a Filipino?

Ask any Filipino to define a Filipino, and he will be perplexed, confused, stupefied, and puzzled. He will probably answer, "The Filipino is a citizen of the Philippines." Or "the Filipino is a Negrito." Is the Filipino the irredeemable, indolent, incapable *indio* presented by some Spanish propagandists during the colonial times? Is the Filipino the little brown "American" who imitates and assimilates whatever is foreign and blue zeal? Is the Filipino the premature Negrito in Zambales or the Igorot in the rice terraces of the Mountain Province? Is the Filipino the peace-loving Tasaday discovered by Elizalde in Mindanao? In my other book, I wrote:²

The Filipino is all these and more! The Filipino is the imponderable unity and uniqueness of diverse races, richness, and idiosyncracies. The Filipino is the legacy of the multi-racial humanity. The Filipino is the monument of the Malays, the Spaniards, the Americans, the Japanese, the Chinese, the Hindus, the Dutch, and the Englishman all united into one. The Filipino is the Christian formed by Spain who has a centralized government, the Roman Law, and Latin alphabet. The Filipino is the Chinese who knows the art of mining, metallurgy gun-powder making, porcelain, and pottery production. The Filipino is the American who drinks beer, plays basketball, has democratic temperament and public school system, speaks English, and sees Hollywood films. Yet prior to all this, the Filipino is the Malay who had a village government ruled by oral and written laws promulgated by the datu, recognized a supreme being and lesser deities in his animo-deist religion, used juices, herbs and oils for medical purposes, and was expert in carvings and handicrafts industries. Today, the Filipino is the *Filipino* who is himself, a Malay-Indonesia negrito distilled with European and American cultures and races; an individual well-gifted in friendship, understanding, letters, arts and sciences, sports and pursuit of excellence; a Christian gentleman; an avid lover of democracy; and a personality gradually discovering his identity.

The Filipino is all these and *more!* More, because he can develop the talents and innate qualities and he can surpass the legacies of his ancestors and predecessors. But he can never renounce the European and American cultural and racial legacies in him. They are in his flesh and blood. They are a part of his being. To renounce them means to renounce a part of his own identity and personality. The Filipino is Asian but he is also European. The Filipino is Oriental but he is also Occidental. He cannot be entirely eastern; he is also western.

If we are to dissect the Filipino, it will turn out like this:



The Roots of the Filipino

The Malay

The roots of the Filipino are Malay and Chinese. The Malay temper is the main component of Filipino culture. To understand the Malay is to understand the Filipino. He is himself a hybrid of the Indian, Persian, Arab, Thai, and mainly, the Chinese of the Chou period. Carmen Guerrero-Nakpil writes:³

The premier Malay characteristic is a certain likeableness that most Westerners describe as charm, which is in turn really a compound of the old-fashioned virtues, like faith, hope and charity. The Malay is as trusting as a child, naturally tolerant, forbearing and kind. He laughs a good deal, not the least frequently at himself, and is convinced that tomorrow, if the fates will it, everything will be better. His frequent insolvency is due to an overweening generosity, and if he is usually unwilling to press a point, it is out of a certain largeness of heart. He is brave almost to the point of recklessness and, of course, he is nothing if not eloquent.

Readiness to adjust to a new situation and desire to be above all nice are the two strongest strains in the Malay character. This pliability had been demonstrated, all through the thousand years of the Malay recorded history: long migrations, painful colonizations, warm weather, and starchy diet. He has always been willing to accept any new concept or a new master and reconcile it to his old customs and live with it happily.

The Malay has borrowed the divinity of kings from the Assyrian-Babylonian and secularism and humanism from the modern west. His religion is a mixture of Hinduism, Islam, and Christianity.

The Malay respect for "niceness" is remarkable in his endeavor to avoid not so much sin or crime as impropriety. Though his Catholicism or devotion to the Koran inspires him to be virtuous, what matters to him is to be nice, agreeable, and pleasant. For him, frankness is a breach of courtesy; punctuality, a sign of coarseness. He is a natural conformist, with the typical Malay personality of mercurial improvisation.

The Malay is the world's baby of nature because nature has always been bountiful to him. His love for fiesta is exorbitant. What matters is "the lovely here-and-now." A five-year socio-economic program or a two-year infrastructure program is too arduous a task for him. It is the carrot, not the stick, that motivates him best. Unemployment is not really a social problem for him because most of the unemployment is by choice. In spite all these, the Malay was once an empire builder (the Madjapahit and the Sri-Vishaya) and he may, under the right stars, become at least a confederacy again.

The Malay is frivolous. His religious rituals and ceremonies become an occasion for merry-making and enjoyment. His summit meetings and conferences are liable to dissolve into a litany of green jokes and bawdy stories about dancing girls. His highest praise is that a man is *marunong makisama* (easy to get along with).

These traits of the Malay are probably brought on by environmental condition. The Filipino is still of the stubborn Malay blood, despite the recombined evaporated "improvement." The Malay Filipino has been conditioned to expect defeat. His history consists of a series of defeats.

The Filipino has been conditioned to think *small*. *Nacionalismo* (patriotism) and *orgullo nacional* (national pride) were not made part of his vocabulary. Thus, the steadiest thing in his fluid world is his family ties—its rituals and fetishes. The family is his best social security system. He was taught to sing sad songs about his pathetic plight—"I was poorly born on top of the mountain"; "my nipa hut is very small"; "negritos of the mountain, what kind of food do you eat?"

The Chinese

The second component of the Filipino root is Chinese. Chinese traders started coming to the Philippines in the latter part of the T'ang dynasty (618-907 A.D.). Before its close, between 2000 to 3000 Chinese had established residence here. Pottery making and agricultural development came to the Philippines through the Chinese. Thus, most of the Filipino farm and household implements are Chinese; the methods used in agriculture, marketing, and the domestic milieu are Chinese.

According to Carmen Guerrero-Nakpil,⁴ about 10% of Filipino genes is Chinese. The Chinese mind, a blend of philosophy and pragmatism, has been transplanted into the Filipino psyche. Patience and perseverance, hardiness and foresight, frugality and thrift have been infused into the Filipino character by the indomitable Chinese traders and craftsmen who came and stayed; and were absorbed into the mainstream of Filipino life. The Confucian philosophy accounts for most of the values they inculcated. The Chinese ideal of *filial piety*, the emphasis on man as a *social being* and "*sageliness within and kingliness without*" ideal have been carried over into Filipino life. Thus for a Filipino, relationship between parents and children, and lateral relatives is a matter of *ethics* and *honor*. Getting along with one's neighbors is a fundamental prerequisite to prosperity, happiness, and human existence. *Sageliness* or self-improvement by cultivation of virtue, personal worth, and wisdom is evident in our national passion for education. Elaborate dress, ritual and etiquette, propriety and wealth, and class distinctions are witnesses to *kingliness*.

The Indian

The Indian elements in the Filipino lie mainly in art, manners, beliefs, and language. Through the Sri-Vishaya Empire of Sumatra and the Madjapahit Empire of Djawa, Indian cultural influences which affected the cultural development of the Filipinos flowed into the Philippines. The ancient Filipino religious beliefs are features of the Brahman religion of India. Folk beliefs such as one's friends or relatives will die if the person dreams his teeth have fallen out, are Indian. In some way, the Filipinos are really "indios."

The Heart of the Filipino

The heart of the Filipino is Spanish Christian. Christianization and social organization along Western lines leading to political unity and to the Western institution called nation were contributions of the Spaniards to the Filipinos. The religion of 80% of Filipinos is Spanish Catholicism—a religion based on folk christianity mixed with pre-Spanish superstitions and pagan beliefs. In fact, the language of the Philippine Revolution and of its leaders who were Europeanized *ilustrados* was Spanish.

Other contributions were the Spanish law and Greco-Roman culture. Many of the value judgments, or the social standards of Filipino life are Spanish in origin. The quixoticism of Filipinos—a combination of generosity and arrogance—is Spanish. *Delicadeza* is a concept that is typically Spanish. Gentility or the emphasis on appearance, reputation, privilege, and status are all Spanish. Thus, the elegance and gentility of the Filipinas who win beauty contests abroad.

The Mind of the Filipino

The mind of the Filipino is American. American influence in the Philippines actually started in 1792. It can be traced back to what is called in American history, the China Trade. Some of the American elements are the public health system, road system, mass education, English language, modern mechanics and techniques of Westernized democracy, public service and administration, presidential system, congress, and municipal government.