

Research Article

Power and Communication: Preliminary Sampling of Linguistic Corpus on Filipino Patronage Culture

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Abstract

This study examines the linguistic and social construction of a small corpus of texts (words and spaces) that relate to power and patronage culture in the Philippines. This will utilize a theoretical framework combining constructivism (ritual/expressive model, symbolic interactionism, face negotiation theory) and poststructuralism (Michel Foucault's discourse and New Historicism) to trace the origins of, analyze, and interpret how said texts are utilized in living out patronage culture.

The preliminary corpus of words pertaining to kinship and those that are used in ordinary talk and conversations, familiar and familial, have been generated from everyday practical applications. Through the new historicist approach, the discussion will extend the discussion to the colonial roots of the patronage system – from the Spanish period to the present – and how the common words become part of the political and cultural norm of the patronage system.

Keywords: *Filipino patronage culture; linguistic corpus; power and communication; constructivism; poststructuralism; historicism*

Introduction

Communicating power is a commonplace occurrence in everyday Filipino life as much as it is an embattled one historically. More so, communication has always been inextricable from power. Language, as a tool of communication, becomes the signifier of a ritualized discourse that is manifested and expressed in the different platforms of social interaction. It is language that heavily arbitrates and animates power relationships used in both practical and highly formal occasions.

However, in attempting to understand this aspect of the Filipino behavior, it is not only imperative to make a massive accounting of everyday expressions that constitute power-related and patronage-related language but also to place it alongside a purportedly rich historical framework.

This paper then investigates how a patronage culture is arbitrated in everyday Filipino life and how it redounds to larger political and social issues. Moreover, in the light of the current widespread concern for misinformation and media manipulation, the paper trains its lens on Filipino patronage and political communication culture. The language of patronage may be seen as a mechanism for manipulation if irresponsibly deployed and if motivated by sectors who stand to gain by wielding power for its own sake. Moreover, since patronage politics and its language have solidified into a particular culture, these have been passed off as part of normative values. Such scenario can be problematic though because the new way of existence may have bred instead a set of falsehoods and disvalues. A citizenry deceived through a manipulative political culture is never entirely free. This form of deduction may require historicism and metanalysis but the resulting argument, which can only be substantiated by implication, is nonetheless existent.

Meanwhile, instead of projecting a historical explanation of patronage culture, which is the easier and more convenient way of pursuing the subject, the paper begins with an exposition of how the language and communication styles of Filipino patronage culture are played out in everyday life – in their most practical sense. The study enumerates

a small preliminary sample or a corpus of “power” and “patronage” vocabulary as these relate to the historical roots of kinship behavior.

However, the “language of power” that is referred to in this paper is also that which can be invoked and examined through the poststructuralist framework. This means that the paper goes beyond a mere “anthropological” accounting of terms and expressions pertaining to power. It likewise refers to the unstable textuality of power-related language as seen from competing perspectives; ranging from traditional communication theories to poststructuralism. It follows the poststructuralist framework to underpin the unstable textuality of power-related language. Moreover, it also analyzes the historicity of utterances that are unveiled.

It is hoped that these competing schools of thought will help illumine the complexity of the subject of patronage culture. The Filipino applications that are yet to be unraveled may be able to shed light also on the role of culture in the shaping of discursive practices relating to power and patronage culture.

Statement of the Problem

In view of the aforementioned, this paper sets forth to work on the following general problem statement:

How is power arbitrated in the everyday language of the Filipino?

Moreover, the following specific problem statements support the above-mentioned general problem statement:

How can a preliminary corpus of everyday linguistic expressions literally and metaphorically explain Filipino patronage culture?

How can these linguistic texts be illuminated by historical explanations or new historicism?

How can the historicity of said texts and the textuality of their history provide a communication interpretation to this purported Filipino patronage culture?

STUDY FRAMEWORK

The study presents two theoretical perspectives. One of these pertains to a behavioristic and deterministic view of power and communication or an objectivist view that de-emphasizes valuations of what is good and what is right.

It also contextualizes understanding of patronage by linking the behaviorist mode to the cultural mode. This is accomplished through postpositivism and Cultural Studies.

Postpositivism posits that reality or the research subject cannot simply be observed and explained by empirical methods like observation and experimentation. It demonstrates a sort of tolerance for the open and accommodative tendencies of qualitative and critical methods in explaining research gaps and even incongruities in tackling the research subject.

Cultural Studies posits an understanding of cultures in smaller case "c". This means that whereas once, culture has always been associated with high degree of civilization and taste, today's world has considered it a lived reality and that it could point to anything that has been shaped by its material surroundings. Even language and patronage culture could have been part of the small "cultures" that have shaped Filipino life and only contextual discourses could study such in a liberal and liberating mode.

This study's theoretical perspectives begin with constructivist communication theories like ritual/expressive model, symbolic interactionism and face negotiation theory and end with Michel Foucault's poststructuralist approach and New Historicism.

The overarching model that applies to the whole idea of patronage culture and its communication component is the ritual or expressive model, which McQuail (1994) mentions as one of the four models of communication alongside the transmission model; the communication as display and attention or publicity model; and, the encoding and decoding of media discourse or reception model.

McQuail (1994) draws largely from James Carey who posits the ritual view in reaction to what is seemingly a more dominant communication discourse in his view: the transmission model of communication. The ritual model, also called the expressive model, focuses on the “intrinsic satisfaction” of the actors in a communication situation.

Ritual communication is linked to terms that connote interaction and community (Carey, as cited in McQuail, 1994). Meanwhile, its synonymous label, the expressive model, emphasizes the intrinsic satisfaction of the sender (or receiver). It is based upon a shared understanding of the codes and meanings exchanged within a given situation.

Since patronage culture is based on kinship ties, the communication patterns are more ritualized than transmissional. There is this deep-seated desire of the sender and the receiver of message to be affiliated with a social organization, sometimes for vague reasons or for something not yet very definite to both of them. McQuail (1994) adds:

The message of ritual communication is usually latent and ambiguous, depending on associations and symbols which are not chosen by the participants but made available in the culture. Medium and message are usually hard to separate. (p.51)

Any culture of subservience operates according to codes known only to the community or immediate participants. The message is clothed in a language that befits the meaning. More often message and language are melded into one. There is no more need for elaboration; understanding comes from a long history of decoding that start from the home and ends with the community.

Another theory that governs the concepts posited in this paper is drawn from a communication theory that is built around the production of messages. It is called symbolic interactionism. This theory has been drawn largely from the work of George Herbert Mead titled *Mind, Self, and Society*. It was however his student Herbert Blumer who brought together Mead's lectures which resulted in a posthumous book publication. Blumer arranges the theory around

three core principles called meaning, language, and thought; the same ideas that govern the language of power relations, which is the object of this paper.

Reality is purported to be socially constructed. It is built upon the meanings that people assign to the things that produce human relationships. "Meaning is negotiated through the use of language; hence the term symbolic interactionism" (Griffin, 1997, p.85). Language is symbolic and when used to arbitrate power, it lends credence to its abstract nature and renders it multilayered, depending on the context in which the languaging of any exchange between the governor and the governed or the powerful and the subordinate has been uttered.

In symbolic interactionism, thought is considered as an act of taking the role of the other, as in a dyad or communicative exchange. By taking the role of the other, a person thinks of the power relations and the split-second thought processing as an opportunity to put in linguistic terms the level of negotiation that could be pursued. This is like projecting the self or what is called "the looking-glass self."

This ability of man to forge meaning and to project the self in relation to the other is contained in symbolic interactionism's claim that there is this desire of the individual to be in sync with the community or to please a "generalized other." Since this is the same concept that somehow describes power relations and patronage, symbolic interactionism may be able to explain the role of language in kinship relationship.

The language of power or patronage culture is shared uniquely among a small network of kinsfolk who knows about the value of particular utterances in their relationships. Sometimes this network becomes elaborate especially when families become minute social organizations with ties that are motivated by political and economic relationships. Meaning is particular to this group of people and this makes symbolic interactionism a compelling theory with which to analyze patronage culture.

Another theory that is of key importance in this study is drawn from a body of theories pertaining to intercultural communication. Conceptualized by Stella Ting-Toomey, the theory posits that cultures deal with the concept of face. In the Philippines, this may have its equivalent in *kahihiyang* (shame) and *delicadeza* (taste) where honor in keeping one's word or conviction is invoked over self-interest. When lost, particular groups become busy engaged in managing or in saving shame and taste.

Ting-Toomey compares high-context or collectivistic cultures from low-context or individualistic cultures in their treatment of "face" and the value they assign to it. She considers Asian countries as having high-context cultures. These cultures, according to the theory are confronted by power distance, where "there is a strong hierarchy, or sense of status, in which certain members or groups exert great influence and control over others" (Littlejohn, 2002, p. 248). It has been averred that Asian societies are more subservient and passive towards authority. They defer to age, traditions and norms in an almost automatic way.

The Philippines has been mentioned as one of the countries where power distance is generally observed. A culture of this sort looks at things in a collectivist way, doing repairs on face by looking on what the group thinks. Every member of society approves and works hard to strike a harmony with the rest of the group. Members of high status groups are direct in their communication, compared to their subordinates who carefully conduct their communication in styles that bears the "deferential" expectations of the powerful class. In this sense also, the communication patterns are not only found in verbal exchange. As Griffin (1997) says: "Meaning is embedded in the setting and the nonverbal code" (p.422).

Distance, as operationalized in this study, means both spatial distance and observance of respect for power and sometimes, simply for those who have more in wealth and name.

The ritual/expressive model and symbolic interactionism and face negotiation theories are constructivist in attitude. However, this

study's assumptions could be further enriched by the poststructuralist approach, especially by drawing from Foucault's ideas and from new historicism.

The framework below shows that the linguistic construction of communication of power is also a social construction with theories of ritual/expressive view of communication, symbolic interactionism and face negotiation theory explaining how the words, expressions and space signification are produced by these communication relationships.

Outside the triangle and surrounding it are concepts from poststructuralism, cultural studies and new historicism, which view patronage culture and its language as contextual and historically-inscribed and textualized. Michel Foucault's theory has been used to illumine this and this shall be explained in succeeding paragraphs.

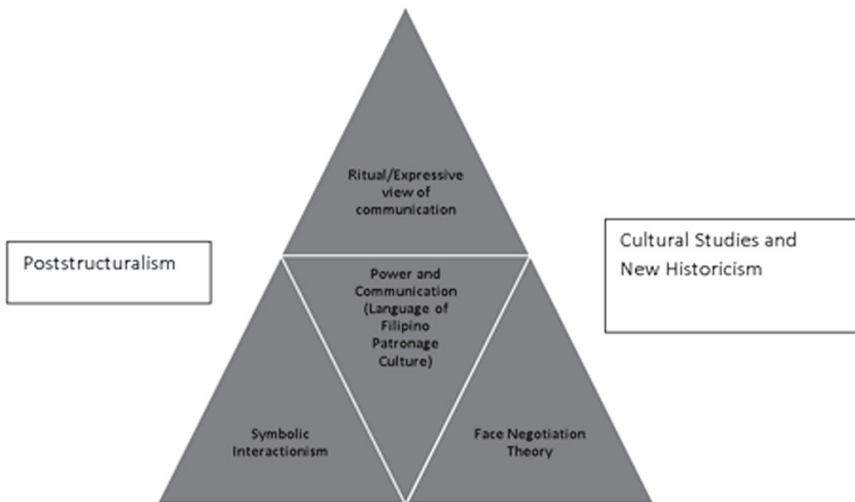


Figure 1: *Framework of the Study*

Power discourse as cultural

This paper begins its poststructuralist premise by commenting on the highly symbolic nature of communication pertaining to power relations and patronage culture. As Fornas (1995) says: "The core of

culture is symbolic communication: the dialogic flows and textures of meaningful forms" (p.134). The relationship between the governor and the governed is deeply symbolic. The utterances between them are just the surface of things, so to speak.

Clifford Geertz (in Fornas, 1995) has defined culture as "an ordered system of meaning and symbols, in terms of which social interaction takes place" (p.136), while Raymond Williams has called it a "realized signifying system" (in Fornas, 1995, p. 136). Geertz and Williams, operating from varied perspectives, seem to agree that the abstract/ linguistic nature of culture is what is at the heart of human relations. As a culture of its own, patronage culture is ritualized through a particular set of symbolic communication codes and meanings.

The discourse of power is interdisciplinary in nature. Drawing from Michel Foucault, Marta Straznicky (in Makaryk, 1993) states that power is "the action of structuring the possible field of action of others by the deployment of one or more reigning institutional codes of 'disciplines,' be they legal, educational, religious, medical or political" (p.613).

As a term, power derives from the Latin "dominus" or master. There is a connotation always that a person or institution dominates another. It is however expressed in many domains that are cultural in nature. It elicits discussion and protest at the same time. As Fornas (1995) has noted of its cultural dimension: "The spatial, material, objectivized and institutional spheres create power structures that include social actions that under certain conditions may condense into emancipatory critique and various forms of resistance" (p.59).

Power then occupies and generates speech and thought. It is a force of human decision but forged through institutional movement and ideologies. Foucault would in latter times produce a body of works that will take to heart the subject of power as linguistically and socially constructed.

Foucault's concepts are ideal in understanding language and power as he has developed fully well the idea that every period comes up with a "worldview" or a "conceptual scheme" that shapes the knowledge of

said period. That worldview leads to the construction of knowledge that results into the rise of an “episteme” or a “discursive formation.” For Foucault, people do not determine the episteme; instead “the episteme, or way of thinking, is determined...by the predominant discursive structures of the day” (Littlejohn, 2002, p.220). The humanists have taken an issue against Foucault on this because he contends that “the philosophical concept of man” has been replaced by “language.” They have also taken issue against the tendency of current studies to emphasize “the elevation of language over ‘mind’ or ‘consciousness’” (Makaryk, 1993, p.318).

The episteme may be formed through a variety of texts, including oral discourse, written texts, nonverbal language, and all possible symbolic representations of reality. People and institutions are not responsible for the episteme but rather the “conditions of discourse.” On account of these ideas, Foucault’s scholarship has been linked to language and its ability to rework social institutions. His method in excavating discursive formation is through “archeology” or the unravelling of all the aspects of the discourse structure, regardless of authorship, personalities and institutional practices that condone these.

Foucault does not privilege “abstract structuralism of episteme” but rather “the specific social rituals that determine who gets to say what to whom” (Makaryk, 1993, p. 318). This also makes Foucault’s idea connected to the concept of power in that “he believes that power is an inherent part of all discursive formation” (Littlejohn, 2002, p. 221). The discourse that is prevalent in a period shapes the formation of an episteme, and therefore a source of power itself.

In his various works, Foucault “described the array of institutional constraints and political practices that regulate different forms of discourse” (Makaryk, 1993, p. 318). Those regulations join the production of knowledge in the discourse of a particular field to the exercise of power in society as a whole. This link between power and knowledge, Foucault claimed, characterizes the “disciplinary” character of all modern political organizations.

However, Foucault does not view power negatively, but as a “creative force” because it prescribes manners and standards of conduct. Power is its own “productive force,” through which “one can know about oneself;” the “episteme of a particular society.” In *The political technology of individuals* (1988), he believes that the reason of the state, as it descends from the 18th century, has to do with policing all aspects of life including the economic aspects, justice, environment and education. Every living individual is useful only as it relates to the state.

As Foucault (1988) avers:

Since political rationality is the root of a great number of postulates, evidences of all sorts, institutions and ideas we take for granted, it is both theoretically and practically important to go on with historical criticism, this historical analysis of our political rationality, which is something different from the discussion about political theories and which is different also from divergences between different political choices. The failure of the major political theories nowadays must lead not to a nonpolitical way of thinking but to an investigation of what has been our political way of thinking during this century (p.161).

The state and its maintenance is the object of that reason and since certain concepts between the level of the state and the individual contradict, the investigation of state reason and its manifestations could only be understood through historical criticism. It is for this reason that this study has been led to new historicism as an approach to understand the language of power. The concept of power relations in every century changes and on account of this *raison d'être*, Foucault advises a historical analysis of power and its languaging as means to build strong scholarships around the concept (Makaryk, 1993).

As homage too to Foucault’s methodology, this paper hopes to accomplish the method of historical analysis in explaining common or everyday usage of a corpus of words related to power and patronage politics that would be unveiled in this study. However, only a sampling could be produced due to the voluminous and unbounded nature of everyday talk.

Meanwhile, new historicism both as a theory and method of criticism, posits the historicity of texts, which means that every utterance is

historical in context and has a wide-ranging ideological bent. Also, the theory posits the textuality of history, which means that we can know the past through its texts and therefore even history or what is perceived as the objective retelling of the past could be compromised by its textuality; the writings of history being themselves linguistically constructed.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHOD OF ANALYSIS

Since New Historicism pays “attention to the economic and historical concerns of culture” (Makaryk, 1993, p.124), it is able to understand the deep structure behind language and spatial arrangements. It is able to provide the contexts to utterances that could be drawn from the historical conditions of specific features of cultural production and their overtly and ostensible political and economic explanations such as those that have surrounded patronage culture in the Philippines.

New Historicism’s origins in the body of discourse built around Renaissance literary artists by twenty-first century scholars have made it initially a Western critique of the past bearing some residues of Marxist interpretation and materialist history. But it seems this could benefit studies of this nature where language is historicized and textualized.

For the outline of textual analysis, every utterance pertaining to patronage culture will be approached through meta-analysis of Filipino utterances/words already examined by other scholars such as Jocano, Lacson, etc.. Also, a historicist understanding of patronage culture may also be accomplished through the methodologies of poststructuralism and deconstruction. This requires a contextual overview of the usage of words, expressions and appropriation of space through an appreciation of their intertextuality and unlimited dependence on the purely linguistic or present-day connotations.

For the types and sources of data, a sampling of *Tagalog* everyday expressions relating to power relations have been excavated. These expressions or texts pertaining to power and their utterance would

inform the analysis. Also, secondary data from available histories will be uncovered and a historical reading of the sources of utterance would be taken up.

The modes of observation have been carried out by gathering a sample of common/everyday expressions pertaining to patronage culture. Also, secondary research (historical literature) or old and new historicism have been utilized in undertaking a textual analysis of the said corpus of expressions.

There is a perceived implication of reading theory from data/ observations. Possible understanding of Filipino communication behavior in relation to power politics without the prejudice of looking at patronage as simple “negative” but as a template for examining more deeply the Filipino compulsive predisposition to equate social position with identity – be it arising from things pre-colonially “immanent,” colonially constructed and postcolonially negotiated. In the end, this more scientific-deterministic look at patronage and its expressions should be able to cohere, if not enlighten, cultural analysis of such; though the latter may be operating from a different lens or paradigm.

DISCUSSION

Language: Signifier of power politics in Filipino life

Power relations are expressed in the most commonplace aspects of everyday life of the Filipinos; ranging from the home to the workplace. It also presents itself through cultural symbols and everyday talk/speech. It is found in institutions – family, state, academe, church. It is enshrined in the ideologies of these institutions that subsequently harden and are shaped into ideological state apparatuses like the school, church, media and other social formations.

The types of communication occasions that have been cited in this study are those official/formal and non-official/informal ones. Alternate categories include social and personal occasions. Oftentimes, there

is a blurring of distinction between and among such communication occasions.

Official occasions are formalized through public office or work setting. The lines between the superior and subordinate are clearly drawn. Non-official occasions are characterized by informal use of communication and are played out in everyday social settings like community meetings, casual acquaintances and ritualized kinship activities like baptisms, weddings and other social events.

For the purpose of this study, the phrase power relations is used interchangeably with patronage culture.

Understanding the language of Filipino patronage culture necessitates an understanding of the Filipino concept of social organization and kinship system. F. Landa Jocano (1989) defines social organization as "the cognitive model people use to define the arrangements and logic of their activities"(p.1). Because of its abstract nature, Filipinos remind themselves of this arrangement everyday as they get on with their family and work activities. In dealing with kinship, Jocano draws from Leach (1971; in Jocano, 1989) who defines the operative word as the "structured system of relationships in which individuals are bound one to another by complex interlocking and ramifying ties" (p.2). Without the twin understanding of social organization and kinship, any study of patronage culture would not be informed and complete. It is "through kinship that much of the local authority, many rights and obligations, and modes of relationship are expressed, defined, ordered, and systematized"(Jocano, 1989, p.2).

To anthropologists like Jocano, kinship in the Philippines are consanguineal, affinal, and ritual in nature. Consanguineal kinship, which is through bloodline and descent, spills over to affinal ties and this expands the network of relationships. Affinal kinship refers to that beyond family or with a community external to immediate. Ritual kinship, meanwhile, is also called *compadrazgo* (*compadre* system).

Kinship is bilateral. This means that "relationship with the kinsmen of the father and the mother on either side are reckoned with no marked

structural distinction placed on either side, such as exists on unilineal societies" (p.4). The existence of siblings and the ego of the persons involved serve to bind seemingly unrelated groups of both sides of parental lineage.

Aside from bilaterality, Jocano mentions also generation, seniority, and age as factors to consider in apprehending Filipino kinship ties. As mentioned, consanguineal kinships expand the web of relationships. Words like *ama* (father), *ina* (mother), *kapatid* (sibling) should not only be taken to mean as like *ama ng samahan* (head of the group), *ina ng samahan* (mother of the organization), *kapatid sa pananampalataya* (brother in faith) or *anak-anakan* (a surrogate child). These cluster of phrases point to referents that are beyond family and could be coming from community relationships, work relationships, church organizations or even political affinities.

One could trace the clear role of communication in Filipino kinship not only in terms of a signifying system but also through symbolic communication. This is more pronounced in the ritual kinship or what is called *compadrazgo* (compadre system). This is formalized between kin or non-kin when one of the principal actors stands as sponsor for the *buhus na tubig* (prebaptismal rite), *binyag* (formal baptism), *kumpil* (confirmation), and *kasal* (marriage) (Jocano, 1989, p. 8).

Because *compadrazgo* is ritualized, communication and languaging are found in words like *ninong* (godfather), *ninang* (godmother), *kumpadre* (in-law/male), *kumadre* (in-law/female), and *inaanak* (godchild). These words extend to other words and signification like *kasama* (companion), *kabagang* (close friend), *kaanak* (relative), *ka-brod* (fraternal brother) or *Sis* (fraternal sister).

Sometimes, the consanguineal and affinal natures of ritual kinship spill over the workplace when these very same concepts are used to gain a place in a work setting with words like *padrino* (patron), *backer* (backer), *manok* (protégé), *bata* (child) or *tauhan* (trusted subordinate) becoming operative. Other ways of seeing are possible too through the semiotics of space or the workplace or the existing hierarchy in any given institution.

For Mathews (1994), *compadrazgo* is a form of “culture as performance” because baptism and the role of children are viewed as means for wider “social participation as well as for economic position” (p.47). Baptism as event is a means to connect to an affinal network while reliving a kind of ritual that is intended to ensure either political or economic relations. While this set-up is socialized in nature, the looming shadow of power and patronage alignment is implanted at what is a seemingly innocent event of baptism and wedding rites.

When one has a *ninong* or *ninang* who is influential, one could be secured of a good place in work or in any corporate setting. If one is an *inaanak* of an influential person, it is as if one is secured of economic stability. That kind of obligation is not formalized but somehow it is part of a sort of unwritten code. The one invested with favor is equally obligated to be loyal or to nurture a debt of gratitude. The idea of *bawi* (recompense) comes into play.

Mathews (1994) links the *compadrazgo* to the ritualized value it generates. It is power, economics and security rolled into one:

Kinship is always part of the social order. If one calculates the number of godparents created by the number of children one has, it is easy to realize how the *compadrazgo* system gives expression to the desire of Filipinos to enjoy wide-ranging kin bonds with those whom they may now or one day carry on the business of life. Utilitarianism aside, however, such bonding and web of kinship also gives one a sense of belonging and social location (p.48).

In spite of the power and influence that scholars ascribe to ritual kinship, it is also seen as fragile and impermanent. It could be extinguished based on the circumstance of friendship that binds concerned parties. It could be based on some flimsy grounds of “using” one another’s influence. It could also be well-meant but could also fall apart when the bonds are not sustained and communication lines are cut out or are left out in the cold. Truly, communication is that which glues the bond together and its being symbolic leads to some unwritten codes or unspoken expectations written in the wind that may be perceived to be more binding than formalized agreements. Jocano (1998) further articulates:

As a social unit, *compadrazgo* is structurally amorphous. While it is established ideally on the basis of mutual organization between the contractors, that is those who initiate its formation have agreed explicitly and formally to become ritual kin, the articulation of the relationship in actual situation is dependent upon whether or not the parties concerned cooperate with one another. There is no clear-cut jural authority created with the establishment of the bond. (p.45)

Kinship and its intricate web of relationship is not only culturally determined as far as Filipino culture is concerned, it is also historically conscripted. While there is nothing more comforting than being assured that children are taken cared for even outside the home and that friendships have been strengthened by the rituals of baptism, confirmation and weddings; there is, as Mathews above has stated, a more pragmatic reason to this ritual. There is this desire to be close to power as possible and it is the kind of power whose signification and value are known only to the people concerned.

Historical explanation of the language of Filipino patronage culture

The language of everyday kinship culture that somehow resonates with a sense of power relations and patronage system are played out in national politics through the media. This has colonial origins though and to this day has become a sort of postcolonial challenge. In retrospect, patronage culture is a continuing story of struggle, an embattled aspect of colonial memory and is contested less in the field of dominant mass mediated cultures as much as in the open and promising realms of countercultures.

From the perspective of Cultural Studies, the paper investigates how patronage culture is arbitrated in everyday Filipino life and redounds to larger political and social issues. It finds expression in art forms and other non-official texts of normative culture or alternative spheres of life. Contemporary uses of said expressions are met with particular connotations of “prestige, endearment and awe” (Lacson, 2009).

Prestige exists only in the mind. Common folk look up to those who are wealthy and influential in their community. The person does

not have to be upright (a manifestation of Filipino moral hypocrisy) because everything is a matter of perception. Public opinion could be shaped either by local gossip or mere background reputation (*"mga tinitingalang pamilya"*/prominent families).

Endearment resides in the heart. Some people are endearing to their community because they are perceived to be charming and likeable. What both the holder of the gaze and the apprehender are not aware about is that everything about endearment is akin to prestige and based on perception or public opinion. People thought they like people because their social climbing aspirations and the value they place on status make them predisposed to nurture that feeling.

Awe can be more vague and mystifying. It may not be felt on a local level by community people because it is based more on "absence" than on presence. It could be ascribed more towards any feeling towards national figures who are too popular or almost mythical like folk heroes and artists. But then again, this is also based on perception.

People look for padrinos based on prestige, endearment and awe and somehow these are flawed categories that are hardly reliable in the absence of "pure" intentions that go beyond the self-serving motivations.

There is perhaps no other word that has both personal and nationally denotative and connotative meanings than the word padrino. It is easy to say that the concepts of ego and bawi (Lacson, 2009) are motivations for the padrino system. However, the historical roots of the said words may also be informative.

It was perhaps Benedict Anderson (2004) who best articulated a historical view of the patronage culture in the Philippines, substituting the word padrino with cacique. The story began with the land. In the 16th century, the Spanish conquistadores have been complicit, upon the approval of Philip II, with the parceling out of lands to the different religious orders. Agricultural lands were in the hands of the clergy and so the first haciendas were established and managed as

commercial ventures at the onset of the Spanish era. This is a historicist understanding of the language of Filipino patronage culture.

The words that form the language in the Spanish era were *padrino*, *cacique*, *kasama* (tenants), *takipan* (equivalent), *tersiohan* (one-thirds share) (Arguilla, 1940). These have uses in present-day national life and politics.

Kasama means a subordinate or a tenant who does not own lands and survives only by being given a share of the harvest. *Takipan* is when the amount of work given by a tenant has been paid by another fifty percent more – as his share in the profit. *Tersiohan* is one-third of the effort paid. The same terms of payment apply to debts incurred by the tenants from the landowner prior to harvest.

These terms are not formally defined in literatures. There are informal significations of the economic relationship existing between landowner and tenant and this is agreed upon without the required formalities most of the time. These economic measures are spilling over the cultural relationship where the *cacique* may provide any form of protection to a client in exchange of something, be it material in nature or in the form of loyalty and debt of gratitude.

Space is another concept associated with linguistic and semiotic codes that have been used to communicate power related concepts like empire, colonial rule and hierarchy. During the Spanish period, imperial “space” is arbitrated to set the boundaries between the governors and the governed. Spanish colonial history began with the story of conquest, when Ferdinand Magellan “crossed the ocean seas” in the name of Isabella of Spain. During the period of colonization, the Laws of the Indies were implemented to plan the layout of each town: the public domain (the townscape of the town hall, plaza, cathedral) and private domain (a small replica of the public domain in the neighborhood, in the home in a highly personalistic manner).

To study power discourse, one could look at space as communication and as power. Also, one could look through texts that may be observed both empirically and subjectively. Power discourse connotes locale,

distance, is “nonneutral” and easily gives in to a sense of hierarchy. Power distance is psychological distance as defined under Face Negotiation Theory developed by Ting-Toomey. In some cultures, “there is a strong hierarchy” or “sense of status.” Cultures “accept the unequal distribution of power as normal.” Examples are Malaysia, certain Latin American cultures, the Philippines, and Arab countries. This is also an issue of how we value “honor” and “face.”

Verbal and spatial communication as power have also been a set of well played-out constructs during the Spanish era. Such constructs were articulated officially in the Laws of the Indies. This was through the Spanish town or pueblo. During the American period, the public school became the central place which promised liberation and therefore power. However, during the Japanese period, space was seized from America and the locals for Asian co-prosperity sphere. Moreover, during the post-Independence period, the concept of space has transformed anew and has been associated with public domain. Filipinos now have recovered the space that once was deprived them by the Spanish empire.

When the Americans came, the religious orders were dispossessed of the so-called “friar lands”. By this time, the Sangleys of Christianized Chinese have maneuvered themselves into the mainstream. Anderson (2004) offers: “Into the vacuum created by the explosions came the mestizos, who took over much of local trade, and began, following the friars’ example, to move into small-scale latifundism” (p.196). The mestizos, so to speak, became the next wielder of power in the age of American imperialism.

The economic connotation of caciquism seeped through and influenced the political connotation of padrino system. A willed merger of money and power became part of pre-war and post-independence politics. The 20th century *hacenderos* (landowners/feudal lords) who were the ones who cuddled the padrino system became the economic powers-that-be and kingmakers at the same time. All they needed to do were to tap into the Filipinos memory and experience of concepts of kinship ties in order to make this political culture endure. Anderson (2004) further elaborates:

One final feature of the American political system is worth emphasizing: the huge proliferation of provincial and local elective offices – in the absence of an autocratic territorial bureaucracy. From very early on mestizo caciques understood that these offices, in the right hands, could consolidate their local political fiefdoms. Not expectedly, the right hands were those of family and friends. Brothers, uncles, and cousins for senior posts, sons and nephew from junior ones. Here is the origin of the “political dynasties”- among them the Aquinos and Cojuangcos – which make Filipino politics so spectacularly different from those of any other country in Southeast Asia. (p.203).

From the time of the Commonwealth until the period of post-Independence, certain words have joined our consciousness. Words like party leader, constituents, party loyalty, bailiwick, stronghold, political machinery, dynasty, Marcos country, Aquino country, have been resonating with echoes from the time of hacienda economy. Words like *cacique*, *kasama*, *tenants*, *takipan*, *tersiohan*, bespeak the patronage culture between landowner and tenant. Now the arena has shifted from land to politics, but the same power relationship dynamics remains.

Perhaps the most documented case of the curious formation the language of patronage culture in the more recent times pertains to the conjugal reign of Ferdinand and Imelda Marcos. Well-versed in Philippine history and post-Independence politics, Marcos at the beginning of his rule has set on to “mythologize the progress of history,” (Rafael, 2000, p.122) which meant appointing himself and wife Imelda as the supreme patron and patroness of change and propagating a unique language of power. As self-proclaimed originator and wielder of power, the Marcoses commissioned art works depicting them as “Malakas” and “Maganda,” the original folk heroes mythologizing the beginnings of the Filipino people. Securing the language of visual art to achieve iconic proportions, the Marcoses believed that patronage meant erasing any other form of narrative and masterminding a megamyth that revolves around their persona.

The Marcoses solidified their claim of being the Filipino people’s supreme patrons by “joining a modernizing nationalist pose to a parochial, factionalist-oriented politics” (Rafael, 2000, p.137). It was as if being indebted to the Marcoses was like being in step with the times. There was an attempt to project his reign as something more

“patronizing” than the other regimes. It seems that the core of much of Philippine political crises lies in the deep-seated malaise of the people helplessly and without reason relying on a “patron” where there is no need for that.

This has been complemented by Imelda’s love for spectacle: the Cultural Center of the Philippines, the Folk Arts Theatre, and the Film Center. Even her Philippine Heart Center for Asia seems to reek of that “spectacle,” a testament to the loving embrace and care of the metropolis’ former governor who happens to be also – albeit scandalously – the first lady of the country. As Rafael (2000) claims:

Whether on the campaign trail for Ferdinand or in her capacity as First Lady, Imelda was in unique position to rework Philippine culture into the sum of the traces left by the regime’s patronage. National culture was construed as so many gifts from above bestowed on those below. (p.138).

To say that Marcos and Imelda have read history very well is an understatement, given the overt need to capture the nation’s treasury so that they could play godparents to the Filipino people.

Other means to secure patronage politics is to control all the images pertaining to art and lifestyle “by turning state power into a series of spectacles, such as cultural center, film festivals, historical themes parks, five-star hotels, and glitzy international conferences” (Rafael, 2000, p. 138). Gerald Lico (2003) refers to this marriage of physical structure and power as the “edifice complex”.

Space is linked power discourse inasmuch as it is a form of symbolic communication. Fornas (1995) has described orders and structures as having been shaped through hierarchizing and polarizing forces working in spaces, fields or areas. The concept of structure is deeply imbued with the tradition of structuralism, but should also be possible to use in a more general sense. Whether a structure presupposes a singular centre or can be open and dynamic is a much debated issue within poststructuralist theory.

In a more subtle way, the scheme to encourage patronage though subservience and to make the poor feel that the government cares

for them, the Marcoses made the visibility of spectacle inextricable from power-related connotations. This becomes more applicable to elections where each event becomes an opportunity to buy votes and to hostage the poor into acceding to a politics of indebtedness. There was a massive “pauperization” of the poor to keep them from coming back to the supreme *ninong* and *ninang* and the election became the most dramatic platform for this. Rafael (2000) says it articulately:

Patronage implies not simply the possession of resources but, more significantly, the means with which to stimulate the desire for and circulation of such resources. In a political context ruled by a factional rather than class-based opposition, patronage becomes the most important means for projecting power. (p.138).

After the EDSA Revolution, James Fallows of *Atlantic* magazine commented how the cacique democracy and the padrino system have persisted until Cory Aquino’s presidency and have been responsible for the continuation of patronage culture to this day. He ascribes it to a failure of nationalism and “the war of every man against any man” syndrome that pays premium at “getting back” at authority at the expense of nation. Kinship has been viewed as serving a personal purpose rather than being directed at genuine brotherhood. Filipino has this predisposition to treat anyone outside of themselves as enemies. Among themselves, it would be hard to thrive and to achieve success because they are out to ruin each other. However, it seems as though the Filipinos make good outside the country. The problem lies either in the people’s lack of a sense of nation. Fallows (1987) offers:

If the problem in the Philippines does not lie in the people themselves, or, it would seem, in their choice between capitalism and socialism, what is the problem? I think it is cultural, and it should be thought of as a failure of nationalism. (p.56).

What Fallows meant by “a failure of nationalism” is the ability of a people to think of nation before self or kin, which of course may run contrary to the kin-centredness of the people. He adds: “Nationalism is valuable when it gives people a reason not to live in the world of Hobbes – when it allows them to look beyond themselves rather than pursuing their own interests to the ruination of everyone else” (1977, p.56).

This means also that a sort of postcolonial trauma persists and the Filipinos have not devised a way out of it. Patronage is something that is ritualized and mythologized. People are dazzled by patrons and patronesses and the cycle of indebtedness makes them guileless and complicit. As Rafael further says:

Patronage mystifies inequality to the point of making it seem both inescapable and morally desirable. In this way, it recasts in familiar and familial terms: one is fated to be caught in a web of inequalities the way one is fated to be part of the family. The display of patronage, as such, is meant to drain the social hierarchy of its potential for conflict. Despite the fact that historically conflicts have erupted between patrons and clients, the ideology of patronage regards conflict ideally as that which occurs only among factions (rival patrons and their respective clients, as in elections when only those which sufficient means may aspire to have purchase over others), and not between patrons and clients (pp.138-139).

The thing about patronage culture, as exemplified in this quote from Rafael, is that when institutionalized and perversely interpreted, it becomes a social evil that is elevated to the level of the incomprehensible or the mystifying. It becomes desirable when it becomes too familiar. The hierarchy and its ostensible politics are accepted openly without question and does not become a source of discomfort anymore. The conflict that could arise under such circumstance may not be between patron and clients but between and among the "rival" clients with specific interests. This is where people die and kill for position and favor. This is where corruption and moral decline take seed. The cycle of violence becomes an adjunct to a culture of patronage.

Loyalty is a much compromised word to the Filipinos. It is paid to someone who would grant favor rather than to a particular cause or a worthy individual. Fallows (1987) has given a telling description of the insularity of certain Filipino loyalties that are tied to a small network of family and friends and observed to the detriment of national interests:

I assume that most people in the world have the same mixture of selfish and generous motives; their culture tell them when to indulge each impulse... Individual Filipinos are at least brave, kind, and noble-spirited as individual Japanese, but their culture draws the boundaries of decent treatment much more narrowly. Filipinos pride themselves on their lifelong loyalty to family,

schoolmates, compadres, members of the same tribe, residents of the same barangay. The mutual tenderness among the people of Smoky Mountain is enough to break your heart. But when observing Filipino friendships I thought often of the Mafia families portrayed in *The Godfather*: total devotion to those within the circle, total war on those outside. Because the boundaries of decent treatment are limited to the family or the tribe, they exclude at least 90 percent of the people in the country. And because of this fragmentation – this lack of nationalism – people treat each other worse in the Philippines than in any other Asian country I have seen. (pp.56-57)

Although the morality of patronage culture is not the primary object of this paper, it touches on issues contingent to the languaging of power. Communicating power is almost on the same level as wielding power because in the same manner that it is symbolic, it is also lived and is subtle.

The language of patronage is symbolic but the interests are played out as clear as the day. There is nothing subtle with power play. Everything is a matter of survival. In Filipino kinship terms, everything becomes part of social practice and is devoid of moral reflection. This is one reason why a social ethic becomes almost always in conflict with selfish patronage cultures. The “productive force” that Foucault has been toying about may become also a destructive force in its Filipino application on both personal and national planes. Communication may either be a conduit to propagating patronage or a voice of resistance against hegemonies.

CONCLUSIONS

Political communication or patronage culture is a form of ritualized communication. Political meanings of patronage culture is shared and arbitrated through language, which contributed to its highly symbolic status. The realm of language is fleeting and abstract and serves as a reference to pin down the vocabulary and meaning-making activities of a social ritual. Meaning is shared by community members and its nuances and subtleties are formed through historical and cultural exigencies.

It is based on a system of hierarchy that is connected to the Filipinos’ postcolonial experience. This hierarchy is tied to the Filipino notion

of kinship that is both family-oriented and deeply-attuned to their immediate social circles. Although a sense of hierarchy has been part of the pre-colonial sensibility of the Filipino, this has become more defined during the period of colonization.

During the Spanish period, the dual power of state of church had a long lasting effect on the Filipino sense of hierarchy. Filipinos have imbibed a sense of inferiority as they have been taught to follow colonial authority without question. They were ordered to listen to sermons in Latin and to behave properly in church. They were asked to respect civil authorities. The images in the novels of Philippine national hero, Jose Rizal, could very well show how this power play has been demonstrated both as colonial reality and as fictional construct.

During the American period, Filipinos witnessed another sort of padrino system with the cast of characters slightly altered. Instead of clergymen, the natives paid loyalty of the local elite of the Commonwealth government. The mestizos who benefited from the favor given by the Americans gained control of the haciendas and subsequently, ownership of postwar industrial firms.

These historical events have become part of national trauma. A culture of subservience and servile tolerance allowed the padrino system to take root in the social culture. In Brazil, Paulo Freire (1970) has provided suggestions of healing colonial trauma through understanding this “pedagogy of the oppressed” where education seems complicit in making the former colonized take on the colonial styles of the former masters by using their former master-servant style in engaging social practices and cultural rituals.

Power assumes meaning within a discursive formation; in Foucauldian terms, an archeology of knowledge that explains why social practices are upheld and articulated through language and communication. Foucault in fact considers power as a productive force. It may or may not lead to social decay. It depends on how society uses power to its just ends. Communicating it is crucial in defining its cultural uses and in envisioning nation-building. If these meant creating a new idiom for a nation's being and becoming, then patronage – as in the days of

older nation-states – may find its uses politically and culturally in more positive and productive ways.

In view of the above discussion, it is also the contention of this paper that the language of Filipino patronage culture and political communication can create a culture of manipulation and misinformation if taken as a means of deploying power to favourvested interests. Conversely, if deployed to establish kinships and to strike harmony through bonds of familiarity and common goals, this can somehow be an instrument for communitarian values and social transformation.

The language of patronage culture somehow finds resistance in art forms and other non-official expressions of normative culture. This may be the subject of future investigations and could enrich the subject of power and communication. Furthermore, the subject's inclusion in mainstream research has become more comprehensible in the time of Foucault and in the light of how Filipino discourse has become multidisciplinary and dynamic of late. An analysis of Filipino patronage culture, since it developed over time through the conflation of colonial values and residual constructs that re-animate master-slave power relations, could be a form of misinformation and manipulation when played out in contemporary Filipino social world. It can be an instrument of perpetuating concepts of class categories that should have long been disabused or overhauled so they could give way to a more negotiated view of social alliances and the language that could articulate both the danger and the potential such ties could engage.

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