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# **The *Pacto de Sangre* in the Late Nineteenth-Century Nationalist Emplotment of Philippine History**

The *Pacto de Sangre* (Blood Compact), despite its crucial significance in Filipino conceptions of history, is seldom interrogated in Philippine historiography. The event that happened in Bohol in 1565, involving Sikatuna and Legazpi, was narrativized in the late nineteenth century and became integral to the nationalist emplotment of the past. However, the two principal narrative strands of Marcelo del Pilar and Andres Bonifacio differed owing to divergent political projects. This article revisits the making of a founding myth of Filipino nationhood in light of scholarship on ancient blood oaths and the historical account of the encounter of Sikatuna and Legazpi.

**KEYWORDS: HISTORIOGRAPHY · BLOOD OATH · BLOOD BROTHERHOOD · NATIONALISM · MYTH MAKING**

In his classic *The Propaganda Movement: 1880–1895*, Fr. John N. Schumacher, S.J., points out that the *Pacto de Sangre*—traditionally rendered in English as the Blood Compact—was one of the “principal points emphasized” in the historical writings of the *ilustrados*, the well-educated early Filipino nationalists (Schumacher 1973, 206; 1997, 228). The *Pacto de Sangre*, he points out, was based on the “custom among the ancient Filipinos of sealing a treaty of alliance and friendship by mixing the blood taken from an incision in the arms of the two leaders entering into alliance” in an alcoholic drink that both leaders drank (ibid.). Schumacher (1973, 134n; 1997, 150n) observes that the blood oath of “Legazpi and Sicutuna . . . [was a] token of friendship and allegiance” between a conquistador and a chief who was “undoubtedly merely a local datu” but the *ilustrados* “liked to look on this pact . . . as the agreement between equals on which Spain’s rights in the Philippines were based.”<sup>1</sup>

Schumacher (1973, 206; 1997, 228) writes further, “Paterno, Rizal, Del Pilar, presented the pact as a contractual agreement between equals, by which the Filipinos had sworn loyalty to the king of Spain and simultaneously had become Spaniards in the full sense of the word.” For their part the Spaniards had to do their part in “assimilating” the Filipinos. However, “inasmuch as the Spaniards had violated their side of the contract,” the *Pacto de Sangre* was used to “signify the right of Filipinos to withdraw from the pact their ancestor had entered into” (ibid. 1973, 207; 1997, 229). Schumacher (1973, 207; 1997, 229–30) emphasizes that this understanding of Spain’s failure to abide by the agreement “between King Sicutuna and Legazpi” justified the position that “Filipinos are no longer bound by the pacto de sangre, and not subject to Spanish sovereignty”—concluding that “This, in fact, Andrés Bonifacio would do in 1896 to start the Revolution through the *Katipunan*.”

Laying out these ideas in 1973, Schumacher has provided a clear exposition of the meanings that *ilustrados* such as Marcelo del Pilar attached to the encounter of Sicutuna and Legazpi. Concomitantly Schumacher suggests that the *ilustrados* “liked to look on this pact” in a way that was inadmissible. Cesar Adib Majul (1967, 78) raised a similar point, saying that “The assertion that the Philippines came under Spanish sovereignty on account of a compact, if meant to refer to historical fact, is inaccurate” simply because “there was no such nation as the Philippines during the time the blood compact took place.” Majul (ibid.) also asserted that “Sicutuna was a local chief, and

there is no evidence that he negotiated for the whole Archipelago.” Along with Majul, Schumacher is one of the very few historians who have queried how the *Pacto de Sangre* has been regarded in Philippine historiography. These commentaries, however, have not altered the general conception of this event.

### **The *Pacto de Sangre* in Philippine History**

In school and college textbooks, the treatment of the Blood Compact has been highly variable. Whether ignored, mentioned perfunctorily, or discussed at length, the *Pacto de Sangre* has lived on in the national imagination, underwritten by a grand narrative.

Interestingly, in the second half of the twentieth century, historians seemed to awaken to its importance by giving the Blood Compact a treatment more extended than in their earlier works. For example, Gregorio Zaide (1958, 39), in *History of the Filipino People*, wrote simply, “At Limasawa, he [Legazpi] was well received by Bankaw, king of the island. At Bohol, he made a blood compact with two Filipino kings of the island—Sikatuna and Sigala.” In *The Pageant of Philippine History*, Zaide (1979, 227–35) gave a longer account, detailing the background of Legazpi and Urdaneta, describing the voyage, and explaining the context of the Blood Compact, even mentioning the village where it was supposed to have transpired.<sup>2</sup> For his part Teodoro Agoncillo (1974), in *Introduction to Filipino History*, mentioned nothing but the scarcity of food supplies in Bohol.<sup>3</sup> His example would be followed by Renato Constantino (1975), Jaime Veneracion (1987), and O. D. Corpuz (1989), who chose to be reticent about the *Pacto de Sangre*. In *History of the Filipino People* Agoncillo (1990, 74) thought it worth a quick mention: “By February 1565, Legazpi reached Cebu and contracted blood compacts with Si Katunaw and Si Gala at Bohol.”

The writers of *Tadhana* mentioned the *sandugo* (literally, unified blood) ceremony of Legazpi with Sicutuna and Sigala, as well as that of Kolambu and Magellan, but chose to emphasize the rite that transpired between Tupas and Legazpi in Cebu, explaining

Now, in the solemn ritual, native and foreigner would consecrate the friendship that eluded earlier efforts. But, though blood had blended, minds remained apart. To the Filipino, the blood compact was an agreement between equals, a pledge of eternal fraternity and alliance. In

the same instant that Tupas and Legazpi now drained their cups, it was clear on the other hand that to the Spaniard this was a ceremony between victor and vanquished foe. . . . (Marcos 1976, 45)

This interpretation has been endorsed by Zeus Salazar (2009).<sup>4</sup>

Fr. José Arcilla, S.J. (1984, 14–15), made no mention of the blood ceremony in *An Introduction to Philippine History*, a work that first appeared in 1971. In *Rizal and the Emergence of the Philippine Nation*, Arcilla (1991) began to mention the Blood Compact,<sup>5</sup> his discussion becoming florid in the book's 2003 edition, which provided the context of Legazpi's expedition and the circumstances that led to the meeting with Sikatuna, culminating in

Legazpi's request . . . to invite a chief in Bohol, Si Katuna (or Katunao), to come on board and hold a parley with Legazpi. After some hesitation, the chief showed willingness to come, provided ransom was exchanged between the two parties. The traditional rite of kasing-kasing was duly performed with Katuna's son and the day after, Katuna himself came aboard to repeat the same ceremony. They collected a few drops of blood from their arms, mixed them with wine, and drank the mixture. In their native tradition, since the same blood now flowed in their veins, they had become members of the same family, bound to observe loyalty to one another. Finally, in the king's name on 15 April, Legazpi took possession of the island of Bohol. With nothing more to do in Bohol, Legazpi decided to proceed to Cebu. (Arcilla 2003, 36–37)

Other historical texts that appeared in the last decade of the twentieth century gave the Blood Compact more than a passing mention. Rosario Mendoza Cortes and colleagues (2000, 30) in *The Filipino Saga: History as Social Change* wrote, "Miguel Lopez de Legazpi arrived in Cebu, ruled by Rajah Tupas, on 27 April 1565. Earlier, he had landed in Bohol, where he befriended two native chiefs, Sikatuna and Sigala, with whom he performed blood compacts, first with Sikatuna on 16 March 1565 and, a few days later, with Sigala." In a piece that appeared on the front page of the *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, Ambeth Ocampo (1999, 11) explained the Blood Compact within the frame of modern diplomacy: It was as a "treaty of peace" needed because "the Spaniards . . . were not allowed to land on Bohol." The resulting "blood compact or *sandugo* between Sikatuna and Legaspi," Ocampo (ibid.,

1) stressed, "can be seen not only as the first bond of friendship between the Philippines and Spain, but also the first international treaty between the Philippines and a foreign country" (ibid.). This "treaty" was entered into at "a time when the Spaniards went into agreements with Filipino leaders, a time in the distant past when the colonizers treated Filipino leaders as equals rather than slaves" (ibid., 11).<sup>6</sup>

In 2003, as part of the official commemoration of Philippine-Spanish Friendship Day, Virgilio Almario (2003) put out a book titled *Pacto de Sangre: Spanish Legacy in Filipinas*, which gives the blood oath a transcendental significance that verges on a postnationalist reading. As Almario (ibid., 2) contends, merging the historic event with the book of the same title, "*Pacto de Sangre* is symbolic of the cultural transfusion which transpired after Sikatuna drank the wine mixed with Legazpi's blood," but admits that, although the "Spanish blood [is] in our veins," "The transfusion, perhaps, is largely one-side." In any case, by drinking Legazpi's blood, Sikatuna wedded Filipinos to Spanish culture and civilization. For many it has been a literal transfusion: "Spanish blood now runs through the veins of many Filipinos and has become part of the Filipino genetic stock" (ibid.).

For all the variable treatment of this event in various history texts, the Pacto de Sangre appears to have become increasingly romanticized as the Spanish colonial past recedes and as various strands of Filipino nationalism mature, particularly in the wake of the centenary of the Filipinos' revolution against Spain. Undoubtedly the Blood Compact is deeply etched in the national consciousness. To many Filipinos there is a sense of Sikatuna standing tall in the face of the conquistador Legazpi, the latter compelled to abide by the indigenous custom as a way of "insuring friendly relations." From this Bohol chief is named the Order of Sikatuna, "the national order of diplomatic merit" instituted by Pres. Elpidio Quirino on 27 February 1953, through Executive Order 571, to celebrate "the first treaty (Pacto de Sangre) between the Philippines and a foreign country" (Wikipedia 2009; ICON Group 2008). As the official marker on the presumed site also declares: "Thus during this period of colonization, a bond was sealed in accordance with native practice, the first treaty of friendship and alliance between Spaniards and Filipinos." This event can be regarded as a defining moment—a founding myth—of Filipino nationhood. The event is memorialized in Napoleon Abueva's 1997 bronze sculpture of Sikatuna and Legazpi located along a shoreline of Bohol Island—called the Blood Compact Shrine<sup>7</sup>—that Filipino travelers visit in a



Fig. 1. Napoleon Abueva's *Blood Compact*, 1997

sort of pilgrimage to a holy ground of history and a touristy bow to the past. The Internet offers an abundant collection of photographs of this tableau (fig. 1) and of tourists posing with the monument in the background.

Given the salience of this event in Philippine historiography, this article revisits the Sikatuna-Legazpi encounter to probe deeper into the appropriation of this event in the context of the rise of Filipino nationalist consciousness in the late nineteenth century. Its meanings at present may be somewhat different from how it was apprehended in the late nineteenth century, but without its appropriation in that earlier period it can be argued that the Pacto de Sangre would not have resonated throughout the twentieth century and into the twenty-first. To reexamine the late nineteenth century appropriation of the Pacto de Sangre, this article focuses primarily on the writings of Marcelo del Pilar and Andres Bonifacio, who interpreted it in rather different ways.<sup>8</sup> Also discussed is Juan Luna's painting of this event. This article can be seen as a retracing of Fr. John N. Schumacher's discussion and an amplification of his provocative suggestion concerning the ilustrados' skewed perception, but this is done in the context of what we now understand as the dynamics of precolonial societies, bringing into stark relief the divergence

of the nationalist appropriation of this event from what is known about the pre-conquest practice of making blood oaths.

### The Ancient Blood Oaths

In the age prior to the European conquest, the peoples that lived on the islands that would later be known as the Philippines held lavish feasts to build and cement alliances among rulers or chiefs and their followers. The forging of an alliance in the context of preventing bloodshed or ending a feud or warfare involved a ceremony in which drops of blood from the persons entering into this relationship were mixed in an alcoholic drink, which they then drank. Laura Lee Junker (2000, 301) prefers to call this ritual a blood oath.

Given the absence of indigenous sources, the only sources concerning this manner of building alliances come from Spanish chroniclers in the sixteenth century. Thus our knowledge of it is mediated, and perhaps compromised, by the challenges of intercultural communication. At the same time, Filipinos have also been heavily influenced by the perspectives of the late nineteenth century in viewing blood swearing events. Still it is worth looking at some of these early accounts, to which regrettably I have access only in their English translation. Miguel de Loarca (1582/1975, 98) is said to have reported:

Reconciliation between those who have quarreled, whether these are individuals or the people of different villages, is brought about by drawing blood from the arms of both parties, and each tasting the blood of the other, placed in a shell, sometimes mixed with a little wine; and such friendship is not to be broken.

The Boxer's Codex (Anon. 1975, 233) puts it thus:

When they make friends with those whom they are at war or with others, some are accustomed to take a little blood from the arms or other part of the body and give it to drink to those who wish to become their friends and the others do likewise and in this way they say peace and friendship are made perfectly and that it would not break.

Taken at their face value, these renditions suggested that a key principle in the Spanish accounts was their understanding of these oaths as a means to establish "friendship" to prevent or terminate a bloody dispute between

individuals presumably within one village or across two villages. The circumstances that brought individuals or entire villages to decide to become friends after a period of enmity were not stated. But once the parties—their numbers were not specified—had decided to become friends instead of enemies, they would “taste” or partake of each other’s blood, sealing a relationship that was not to be broken.

Distilling sources on the Visayas, William Henry Scott (1994, 156) suggests the following about blood oaths:

Hostilities were suspended or avoided by *sandugo*: peace pacts in which the two parties drank a few drops of one another’s blood in a draught of wine. . . . It was a procedure by which two men, not necessarily enemies, became blood brothers, vowing to stick together through thick and thin, war and peace, and to observe mourning restriction whenever they were separated from one another.

Perhaps in response to how blood oaths have been interpreted since the rise of Filipino nationalism, Scott (ibid.) clarifies that “These peace pacts were made between two *datus*, however, not between two nations or tribes, and so were binding on other members of the community only to the extent of the pact holder’s effective authority, and in no case on other *datus*.” Scott underscores the “localized” character of blood oaths. However, he informs us that the parties to such a pact need not have been enemies, but the expectation was similar whether or not there had been prior animosity: a bond that would survive through “war and peace.” Scott raises this ritually sealed friendship to the level of blood brotherhood.

Some light is thrown on this ancient practice by Thomas Kiefer’s (1968) study of ritual friendship among the Tausug in the late 1960s. The parties to a ritually solidified friendship became “brothers” by swearing on the Koran, a practice that could have replaced the drawing of blood and its joint partaking. Nevertheless, the basic contours of the Tausug practice appear to be very similar to what is known about the ancient blood oaths. Harkening to Scott’s portrait, Kiefer (ibid., 228) reports that Tausug who entered ritual brotherhood could either be casual friends who wanted “to cement their relationship with supernatural sanctions . . . to prevent betrayal and to increase the solidarity of the bond”; or they could be former enemies who agree to “finalize an amicable settlement between them” through someone’s intermediation. The

relationship forged in this ritual is supposed to be “permanent and intensive—an extension of those found within the family” (ibid.). Breaking the oath would invite a terrible curse that could be passed on to many generations.

Note that the parties in a blood oath could not be too far apart in terms of status position (ibid., 234). Kiefer also reports that “two headmen from adjacent or distant communities [could] swear together” and thus unite both communities in a large alliance (ibid.). However, oath taking is “basically dyadic. When a large group swears together it is not the entire group which is thought to be solidary, but only each of the various dyads within it” (ibid., 233). Given the prevalence of dyadic ties in Philippine society at present, it could well have been the situation in the precolonial age—which would have made the blood oaths involving two relatively large social groups not only localized but also reducible to a series of dyads of sworn brothers.

However, as Kiefer suggests, in a bond of former enemies there was “often some ambivalence in the relationship, which may come to the surface with any precipitating event” (ibid., 230). At the moment of swearing brotherhood, the strong motivation apparently was to have an ally in war, just as two men from distant villages would want to become sworn brothers for purposes of battle or a piracy expedition (ibid., 233). In a highly fluid social world such as that of the Tausug in the 1960s or the preconquest islands with their internecine warfare, one needed allies. The ancient blood oath was most likely a strategy of negotiating one’s way through the thickets of conflict and warfare, to ensure that one had a friend who would fight alongside him against an enemy. This norm drew from the ideal solidarity of siblingship, a paramount relationship among peoples that practiced cognatic kinship in this part of the world.

It can be argued, therefore, that the ancient blood oath was a mechanism to create by means of ritual a bond analogous to that of siblings. Siblingship was the ideal norm because siblings were believed to share a common blood substance and were reared to value unity and mutual assistance in various aspects of life, including warfare. Because blood was seen as the essence of life unique to individuals, persons created a solid tie by drinking each other’s blood after which they possessed in common the same essence of life. After the oath, their blood was seen to contain the blood of the other, thus forming a unity. If drinking milk from the breasts of the same woman could create siblingship (and human milk itself is said to be produced from blood circulating in the body), as Carsten (1995, 227–28) has shown for another part of

Southeast Asia, it is not farfetched that in the ancient blood oath the direct partaking of blood could create a bond of siblinghood that was foundational. Siblinghood as the model of blood oaths was also important because, amid sibling unity, hierarchy according to birth order existed. Allies who became blood brothers were not necessarily equal, as a chief could enter into a blood oath and become the vassal of a stronger chief in forming an alliance network.

Yet loyalty was not fully guaranteed and betrayal of a blood brother could happen, if for instance one party sided with a kinsman who had become the enemy of a ritual friend. After all siblings, even today, do have conflicts that tarnish the ideal, despite the fact that siblings strenuously avoid such an eventuality. Notwithstanding the possibility of betrayal, we may conclude that the blood ceremony was a ritual of sworn siblinghood, which was meant to create an indissoluble friendship, a dyadic bond that was part of a larger concatenation of dyads that formed an alliance network.

Viewing the blood oath in terms of sworn or blood brotherhood enables us to see that the blood oath of the ancient islanders in what would become the Philippines was akin to cultural practices found in many other societies around the world. For instance, “in the old Irish Sagas, there are traces of the old Scandinavian custom borrowed from the Vikings, of two men mingling their blood and becoming sworn brothers” (Hodges 1922, 385n). On the western islands of Scotland “the ancient islanders has ratified their leagues of friendship ‘by drinking a drop of each other’s blood’” (ibid., 390). Hodges (ibid., 389–90) argued in the 1920s that

It is now a well-established fact that covenanting by some use of the blood of the covenanters, the custom known as blood-brotherhood, has been practiced in nearly all parts of the world. Scores of examples are recorded, showing that blood-brotherhood has been known throughout the centuries, from hundreds of years before Christ among the early Scythians down to our own day among savage tribes. And the practice is found in such widely scattered regions as America, Australia, Africa, Europe, and Asia.<sup>9</sup>

In the 1910s a scholar had noted

“the notion that particularly by drinking the blood of another living being a man absorbs the nature or life into his own, one which appears

among primitive peoples in many forms”. . . . “But the most notable application of the idea is in the rite of blood brotherhood, examples of which are found all over the world. In the simplest form of this rite, two men become brothers by opening their veins and sucking one another’s blood. Thenceforth their lives are not two but one.” (Heather 1952, 158)

In Africa in the nineteenth century blood brotherhood was fairly common, especially in the Kenyan coastal region, as a mechanism by which travelers and traders of different ethnicities formed business networks that allowed strangers to be trusted and assured the safety of merchants (Herlehy 1984, 298). It was such a useful alliance that “even some of the early European travelers and colonial administrators had to become blood-brothers with local residents before they could expect an hospitable reception by host communities” (ibid., 299). The parties rubbed a piece of roasted chicken or goat on a cut made in one’s chest “so that the meat mixes with their own blood”; they then exchanged and ate the meat while declaring a vow of brotherhood (ibid.).

Were the Spanish conquistadors familiar with the blood oaths practiced in ancient Europe and in other parts of the world? Whatever the case might have been, it is interesting that, in the early Spanish accounts, the blood oath was not described in a disparaging manner. Certainly it was not condemned as a heathen practice. On the contrary, the conquistadors participated in blood oaths, much as Europeans participated in blood oaths in Kenya in the nineteenth century. Based on what can be deduced about the past, despite the linguistic divide, Spanish conquistadors entered into blood pacts with the islanders with some understanding of what the ceremony meant and evidently without any squeamishness. Their understanding must have been more than superficial. Because they figured that chiefs had circumscribed authority and they wanted to position themselves strategically in local alliance networks, as Scott (1994, 156) acutely observes, “Spanish commanders usually drew blood with more than one chief when making treaties [of friendship]—Magellan in Cebu, Saavedra in Sarangani, Legazpi in Samar, Goiti in Leyte, Rodríguez in Negros.” Scott (ibid.) notes the irony “that the blood compact between Legazpi and Si Katuna of Bohol memorialized in Juan Luna’s famous 1883 *El Pacto de Sangre* was an exception to this practice of drawing blood with more than one chief.”



## The Blood Oath of Legazpi and Sikatuna

One account of this event indicates that, when Legazpi's forces landed in Bohol in mid-March 1565, they were in dire need of provisions and their flagship needed major repairs. Initially Legazpi wondered why the islanders did not approach them to trade, so he sent "the Moro," a cooperative captive, to seek out Sikatuna, who could be found "near a river two leagues away" from where they had anchored, with assurances that Legazpi's forces meant no harm (Anon. [1990], 191). The following day the Moro returned with word that Sikatuna was skeptical because of the "trickery and injury that the Portuguese and the Moluccans had inflicted on them" a couple of years earlier (ibid.). Sikatuna reportedly made it a condition that, for the islanders to be "reassured," a Spaniard should meet him where he was "and make a blood compact with him" (ibid.). Legazpi then sent a soldier named Santiago, together with the Moro, to meet Sikatuna, who then gave them a warm reception: "He gave him food and told him to make a blood compact and sealed their friendship. Both drank the blood mixed with wine" (ibid.). With some level of trust established, Sikatuna promised he would go and see Legazpi another day.

Sikatuna did go to the coast where Legazpi's ships had anchored but would not board the ships. He wanted Legazpi to meet him on shore but he must be "alone to make a blood compact with him and make the natives feel safe with the Spaniards" (ibid.). Legazpi demurred, explaining through the Moro interpreter that "even if he wanted to go, his people would not let him; because someone like him, serving a prince so great and as powerful as the King of Castilla, was not to go alone anywhere" (ibid., 192). Legazpi, of course, was being cautious, because he had experienced previously in Cibabao (Leyte) Island one of his men killed while in the act of making the blood ceremony (Legazpi 1903, 201). With assurances of safety and two men from the Spanish armada as escorts along with several of his own men, Sikatuna was prevailed upon to board the vessel and meet Legazpi. The Bohol chief's actions were explained repeatedly in the account as understandable "because of the past atrocities suffered here at the hands of the Portuguese" who initially offered friendship only to pillage the community: "they robbed, killed and captured many of them, a total of more than eight hundred" (Anon. [1990], 192).

Legazpi is reported to have "felt it meant so much to get these people to come to us" (ibid.). Eight days after the Spaniards had anchored the meeting of leaders finally took place.

When Si Catuna arrived at the flagship, the General [Legazpi] received him graciously with all the friendship and affection he could muster. The *principal* [Si Catuna] said that he wanted to make a blood compact with the General to seal their true friendship. And this was done, drawing from each breast two drops of blood, mixing them with wine in a silver cup, then dividing the contents into two cups equally, both drank at the same time, each of them his half of the wine-blood mixture. When this was over, the principal expressed great happiness. The General ordered that preserves and wine from Spain be brought in. The *principal* thought that this was not bad at all.

The blood ceremony, which the report states was wanted by Sikatuna, first with Santiago and then with Legazpi, was conducted without discussing any terms except the arrangements for the encounter and Sikatuna's desire for "true friendship." On board the flagship the feasting that Legazpi ordered right after the blood oath was conformable with indigenous practices of ritualized food events. Immediately following the sharing of food, according to the account, Legazpi began to explain his purposes: his monarch had wanted to extend "friendship" with all the local chiefs "of these islands" who would become the king's vassals; he was there to trade and barter, and he would pay them "very well and to their satisfaction"; he would keep discipline among his soldiers; and "he would always see to their well being and now that they had made the blood compact things would be even better from then on" (ibid.).

Legazpi reportedly took Sikatuna "for his friend and thus he loved him as if he were his own brother" (ibid.). Evidently, if this account can be trusted, Legazpi and Sikatuna would seem to have understood that they had solemnized a pact of blood brotherhood. Sikatuna reportedly said that "now that their friendship had been sealed they would come without fear" (ibid.). Nevertheless, Sikatuna was not entirely convinced: "Although this fear lingers on, he had entered into the pact of peace and amity with the General who it was hoped would keep it inviolate for as long as they did not break it. Only then could they be sure that what they shared was true friendship" (ibid., 193).

The conversation shifted to the state of the local economy. Sikatuna explained, "that year they had suffered famine on this island due to drought and that they did not have rice nor anything to eat, nor pigs or goats or chickens" (ibid.). Whether this was an extreme portrait of the situation cannot

be ascertained, but Sikatuna did say he would try to secure supplies for the Spaniards from the island's interior. Legazpi expressed regret for the Portuguese actions and he asked Sikatuna to narrate what happened "so that an account of it could be given to the King of Castilla by his vassal" (ibid.). Legazpi stressed that Spaniards were different from Portuguese, but Sikatuna explained that they could not discern the difference because Portuguese and Spaniards "had the same gestures, arms and clothes" (ibid.). Legazpi reiterated, "the natives could rest assured that the word of friendship given by his men or by other Castilians would be kept without hesitation nor deceit" (ibid.). As if to further prove his sincerity, Legazpi gave Sikatuna "four yards of linen tablecloth, a mirror, a chamber pot, knives, scissors and necklaces" and Sikatuna's men were also given necklaces—and "After this, Si Catuna left very happy" (ibid.). Sikatuna seemed pleased at the end of the meeting and, together with Sigala, subsequently assisted Legazpi and guided him to Cebu. However, Legazpi (1903, 208) later reported that, "although Çicatuna and Çigala made friendship with me, we could put no confidence in them; nor would they sell us anything, but only made promises."

Taking the account at its face value, it can be deduced that Sikatuna desired the blood oath with Legazpi to prevent violence and ransacking, which could be inflicted by an armada that was initially indistinguishable from the forces at whose hands Sikatuna's followers suffered some two years previously. Blood brotherhood appeared to be the answer, and both men seemed to have understood what their swearing of friendship meant. However, Sikatuna appeared to have entertained some skepticism, which probably dissipated when Legazpi gave gifts—not because Sikatuna was dazzled by an object like a mirror, but because Legazpi as host of the feast had treated him as an elite guest by lavishing him with valuables, as was customary in the ritualized feasting of the precolonial age (Junker 2000, 314–18). In other words, Legazpi had acted according to the decorum of the islanders in a ritualized feast, and Sikatuna's status had been affirmed at the same time that he managed to form an alliance that could protect his polity from what was perceived as the predator Portuguese.

### **Del Pilar: Assimilation and the Pacto de Sangre**

Over three centuries later, ilustrados certainly knew about the blood oath of Sikatuna and Legazpi, probably by reading the historical accounts from

that period. But their social context had changed drastically from the pre-conquest age and they seemed unable to fathom the precolonial framework of meaning, despite determined efforts to reconnect with the past as Rizal (1889/1961) exemplified in annotating Morga's *Sucesos de las Islas Filipinas*, a work that appeared in late 1889. The complex world of alliance building, blood brotherhood, status competition, and social fluidities evidently had become murky to them, and it had become difficult to appreciate Sikatuna's attempt to maneuver through a time that was unlike all they had known previously, a world that was being turned upside down by European empire builders.

Heavily influenced by European political notions, the ilustrados thought in terms of colonization, assimilation, or independence—concepts and practices that did not apply to the precolonial world. A product of their times, ilustrados like Del Pilar framed their reading of the blood oath in Bohol in 1565 as the key event that commenced the process of Spanish colonization of the country they had come to know as Filipinas. Instead of viewing the blood oath as a localized event within a set of dyadic ties, Del Pilar saw it as a country-to-country or people-to-people agreement, even when a political entity called the Philippines had not existed. Del Pilar (1898, 3) opens his tract, *La Soberanía Monacal en Filipinas* (Monastic Sovereignty in the Philippines), which first appeared in February 1889, by calling to mind the blood oath:

Tres siglos hace que la sangre de Legazpi y Sicatuna mezclada en una copa que ambos apuraron en señal de eternal amistad, solemnizó el juramento de fundir desde entonces en un solo ideal las aspiraciones de España y Filipinas.

Pero el tiempo transcurrido, sin consolidar esta fusión, han fortificado sólo el predominio de los conventos que convirtieron las islas en colonia de explotación monacal.

Three centuries have passed since the blood of Legazpi and Sicatuna blended in a cup that both men consumed in a sign of eternal friendship; they celebrated their oath, from then on, to unite into a single ideal the aspirations of Spain and the Philippines.

But the time that has passed, without strengthening that unity, has only fortified the predominance of the monasteries, which have converted the islands into a colony for monastic exploitation.

Reading his present into the past, Del Pilar saw Sikatuna as standing for all of the Philippines, as if the Bohol chief was the duly nominated authority. For his part, Legazpi (rather than Santiago) represented all of Spain, not just the monarch he served at that time. Revealing an essentially Western point of view, Del Pilar conceived the blood oath of Sikatuna and Legazpi as a permanent political treaty: a Blood Compact. The tacit assumption was that both parties entered into the contract in good faith, that it was valid, but continuing respect for it was contingent upon Spain's fulfillment of its part. There seemed no doubt that the Philippines abided by its part of the agreement.

Del Pilar interpreted the blood oath as the pivotal event that established a lasting partnership between Spain and the Philippines.<sup>10</sup> It defined the ideal. The mingling of the blood of two individuals was seen as signifying concomitantly the fusing of the aspirations of two countries. Those aspirations, Del Pilar asserted in his writings, did not include the power and dominance of the friars, as well as their pride and prejudice, which were also implied in the word *soberanía*.

In an article that appeared in *La Solidaridad* on 30 September 1889, Del Pilar specified what those aspirations were as he saw them. By this time leading the Propaganda Movement's campaign for assimilation, a central plank of which was representation in the Cortes, Del Pilar advanced the position that the assimilation of the Philippines in the Spanish body politic constituted the shared aspiration in the Blood Compact. Del Pilar (1889/1996, 380) argued against racist ideas that reduced "the Filipino race" to an inherent position of inferiority because of the Filipino's "anthropological conditions" (*condición antropológica*). On the contrary, he asserted assimilation as Spain's imperial responsibility:

Por de pronto la anexión de Filipinas á España se verificó bajo el compromiso de honor por parte de esta de asimilar á los isleños á las condiciones de España; los diferentes juramentos, que representantes de esta noble é hidalga nación sellaron con el *pacto de sangre*, han caracterizado de un modo especial la colonización española, de modo

que aconsejar la repulsión del *asimilismo* filipino es sencillamente aspirar al perjurio de España.

España no puede, no ha de ser perjura; desde sus leyes primitivas hasta la más modernas consagran el principio de asimilación para Filipinas. . . . (ibid.)

The annexation of the Philippines to Spain was effected under the honorable obligation on the part of the latter to assimilate the islanders to the conditions of Spain. The different oaths, which representatives of this noble and illustrious nation sealed with the *pacto de sangre*, have given Spanish colonization a special character, such that to advise the rejection of the *assimilation* of the Filipino is simply to desire the perjury of Spain.

Spain cannot and should not perjure itself. From its primitive laws to the most modern, all are consecrated to the principle of assimilation for the Philippines. . . .

The Pacto de Sangre was depicted as giving Spanish colonialism a distinctive character, which the French would later call *mission civilisatrice*. It was Spain's "honorable obligation" to assimilate Filipinos, in other words, to civilize and uplift the natives Spain had colonized. In its invasion of the Philippines, the United States would call upon its so-called manifest destiny and extend to its new subject people the rewards of "benevolent assimilation." Del Pilar probably would not have realized the full implications of what he propounded as the meaning of the Pacto de Sangre, but the U.S. invasion did end the *soberanía* monacal. He insisted the Blood Compact was a legal contract, a treaty that justified Spain's colonization of the Philippines. In his mind the blood oath of Sikatuna and Legazpi was a negotiated contractual exchange: Spain could annex the Philippines and in return the Philippines was to be assimilated. This legal contract was honored mostly in the breach because of friar hegemony, but it was time, Del Pilar asserted, to call Spain to account, lest Spain perjure itself.

### **Luna: Ambivalence in *El Pacto de Sangre***

The use of the word "pacto" and its usual English translation as "compact" has reinforced the interpretation of the blood oath as a legal treaty. Schumacher

(1973, 206; 1997, 228) suggests that the ilustrados “presented the pact as a contractual agreement between equals.” But how equal or unequal were the parties to such a supposed treaty? Even as Del Pilar, as well as Juan Luna, thought of the blood oath in Bohol as a pacto, there was ambivalence about whether the two parties could be deemed more or less at par. After all, if they were relatively equal, why would there be a need to assimilate the islanders? The position of the Philippines as “annexed territory” in need of redemptive assimilation indicated it was in a subordinate position, even as Del Pilar argued Filipinos should not be regarded as racially inferior.

The ambivalence of the ilustrados’ interpretation of the blood oath of Sikatuna and Legazpi is registered in Juan Luna’s painting *El Pacto de Sangre* (fig. 2), completed in Europe in 1885, which he executed, along with another painting (*Miguel Lopez de Legaspi*), in return for the scholarship he received from the Ayuntamiento de Manila (*Kulay Diwa* 2009). This ambivalence is manifested in divergent readings to which the painting—exhibited in Malacañang since the early twentieth century—has given rise.

Floro Quibuyen (1999, 188) sees the painting as encoding the basic superiority of Spain. He argues that the focus is on Legazpi, while Sikatuna is rendered faceless, the only islander in the scene dominated by Spanish conquistadors.

There is a striking imbalance in this Rembrandt-style painting: On the lower left edge is seated local chieftain Sikatuna, poised against six Spaniards, who fill up four-fifths of the whole canvas. Five of the Spaniards are standing tall, two of them wearing armor. Note the disparity in the visual representation of the two protagonists: Light falls on Legazpi who faces us, the viewers, whereas Sikatuna’s back is turned to us, as he sits oblique to the table. The play of light and shadow on Legazpi’s face creates a dramatic, imposing aura. (ibid.)

Quibuyen points out that Sikatuna is seemingly “pushed out of the frame by Legazpi and his retinue” (ibid.). Moreover, he observes that “Legazpi seems relaxed, [but] Sikatuna evinces tension as he holds on to his kris (native sword)” (ibid.).

In contrast to Quibuyen’s interpretation, Paul Zafaralla (1986) has offered a nuanced but quintessentially twentieth-century nationalist reading of Luna’s painting. Zafaralla (ibid., 54) claims that “The pictorial and



Fig. 2. Juan Luna’s *El Pacto de Sangre*, 1885  
Source: Cover of Almarino 2003

analytical sweep of the canvas with its assertion of the Filipino role in a new world of discovery transformed the historical event into a major cultural document.” He (ibid., 55) notes that Luna’s painting is “asymmetrically designed” but the “visual imbalance” is

solved . . . by bringing Sikatuna close to the viewer. . . . For while Sikatuna leans alone, his closeness to the viewer, his large build and downward thrust, are enhanced by the arrangement of the heads which form a diagonal line swooping down Sikatuna’s helmet. This is further reinforced by the figures themselves whose eyes are cast toward the Bohol chieftain.

Zafaralla (ibid.) argues that Luna “employed a compositional trick in bringing about the focal point” such that Sikatuna has “primacy in the composition.” He adds, “The contrast in orientation (the Spaniards are frontally oriented; Sikatuna is not) invests Sikatuna with an aura of mystery and the power to make the native viewer identify with him readily” (ibid.).

Zafaralla (ibid.) underscores the “systematic culture clash” in Luna’s painting. “Good faith and the honor system were the qualities which Sikatuna

brought with him to the celebration of the *kasikasi* tradition: he is alone in the painting. Bad faith and deceit characterized Legazpi: he is amply protected by armed officers and men” (ibid., 55–56).<sup>11</sup>

The question, of course, in Zafaralla’s reading of Luna’s painting is this: If the atmosphere was one of deceit, why did Sikatuna proceed with the blood ceremony? Was Sikatuna’s a futile bravado?

Note that Luna’s painting was completed over three years prior to Del Pilar’s publication of his *La Soberanía Monacal*, which used the Pacto de Sangre as a watershed event in the conjoined histories of two countries. In fact, Del Pilar (1898, 3) credited Luna’s role in “rekindling the memory of the Pacto de Sangre”: *La paleta de Luna ha revivido del pacto de sangre entre Legazpi y Sicatuna*. However Del Pilar evidently set aside the unanswered questions raised by Luna’s painting: Who was really the main man in this event? Why was Sikatuna all by himself? What was the atmosphere during the Pacto de Sangre? Was there deception? These questions were not crucial for Del Pilar, who, in his political campaign on assimilation, sought to wield the Pacto de Sangre to bring Spain to a position of accountability. Nevertheless, one fundamental, though largely unarticulated, question seemed to have lingered. Amid the bravery of men like Sikatuna, why was the Philippines colonized and brought to such an abject position, as early Filipino nationalism saw the situation at that time? Bonifacio would provide the answer.

### **Bonifacio: The “Fall” in the Plot of Nationalist History**

The linear emplotment of nationalist history that the ilustrados began to conceptualize for the Philippines was evident in the linear projection to the past. Following a common primordialist strategy, they constructed the Philippines as having existed since time immemorial such that the Philippines and Spain could be conceived as entering into a political treaty in the Pacto de Sangre in 1565. The ilustrados, however, missed a crucial element in the nationalist construction of the past.

As Reynaldo Ileto (1988, 132) has shown, the stages in the standard nationalist plot begin with a Golden Age, followed by the Fall (as in the Garden of Eden), after which a Dark Age ensues. The moment of recovery begins with the Rise of Nationalist Consciousness, which eventually leads to the Birth of the Nation. Rizal did his part in envisioning the pre-Hispanic past in his annotations of Morga (1889/1961) and his essay “On the Indolence

of the Filipinos” (1890/1996), in the course of which he conceptualized a Glorious Past in which prosperity and justice reigned among “ancient Filipinos” who equaled, if not were superior to, the Spaniards (cf. Aguilar 2005). What had not been done was to enunciate the Fall.

Del Pilar’s portrayal of the Pacto de Sangre was a step toward conceiving the Fall, but it did not qualify as a “real” Fall because Sikatuna was not portrayed as committing an error of judgment (as Adam and Eve did) in contracting the pact. In Del Pilar’s narrative plot, only after the Pacto de Sangre would Spain renege on the supposed terms of the treaty, but the treaty itself was valid. However, Bonifacio built on the ilustrados’ Golden Age and finally provided an explanation for the Fall. This step he accomplished in the manifesto that is conventionally attributed to him, “Ang Dapat Mabait ng mga Tagalog” (What the Tagalog Should Know),<sup>12</sup> printed in the only issue of the Katipunan’s publication, *Kalayaan*, which began its clandestine circulation in January 1896, becoming a factor in causing a surge in the membership of the Katipunan (Ileto 1979, 82).

Bonifacio’s (1896/1963, 68) manifesto begins with a scene of a Golden Age, marked by prosperity, ease, and harmony before the coming of the Spaniards. It signified “the condition of wholeness of the pre-Spanish past” (ibid., 83).

Ytong katagalugan na pinamamahalaan ng unang panahon ng ating tunay na mga kababayan niyaong hindi pa tumutungtong sa mga lupaing ito ang mga kastila ay nabubuhay sa lubos na kasaganaan, at kaguinhawahan. Kasundo niya ang mga kapit bayan at lalung lalo na ang mga taga Japon sila’y kabilihan at kapalitan ng mga kalakal malabis ang pagyabong ng lahat ng pinagkakakitaan, kaya’t dahil dito’y mayaman ag kaasalan ng lahat, bata’t matanda sampung mga babae ay marunong sumulat ng talagang pagsulat ating mga tagalog.

This Katagalugan, which our true compatriots governed in olden times before the Kastila had set foot on this soil, was living in complete abundance and a full life (*kaguinhawahan*).<sup>13</sup> It was on good terms with nearby places (*bayan*), and especially with those from Japan; they were buying and exchanging merchandise. All means of livelihood were thriving immensely, and as a result everyone behaved with honor. Young and old, including many women, knew how to write in our own Tagalog script.

The coming of Spaniards, according to the manifesto, was purportedly to offer friendship, but their actions were full of deceit:

Dumating ang mga kastila at dumulog na nakipagkaibigan. Sa mabuti nilang hikayat na di umano, tayo'y aakain sa lalung kagalingan at lalung imumulat an gating kaisipan, ang nasabing nagsisipamahala ay ng yaring nalamuyot sa tamis ng kanilang dila sa paghibo. Gayon man sila'y ipinailalim sa talagang kaugalian ng mga tagalog na sinaksihan at pinapagtibay ng kanilang pinagkayarian sa pamamagitan ng isang panunumpa na kumuha ng kaunting dugo sa kanikanilang mga ugat, at yao'y inihalu't ininom nila kapua tanda ng tunay at lubos na pagtatapat na di mag tataksil sa pinagkayarian. Ytoy siang tinatawag na "Pacto de Sangre" ng haring Sikatuna at ni Legaspi na pinaka katawan ng hari ng España. (ibid.)

The Kastila arrived and came to offer friendship. With their forceful persuasion that they would guide us toward increased betterment and the further awakening of our minds, the said rulers happened to be seduced by the sweetness of their tempting words. Nevertheless, they [the Kastila] were placed under the genuine custom of the Tagalog. What they had agreed upon was witnessed and certified by means of an oath, by taking a little blood from their respective veins, which they mixed and drank as a sign of sincere and wholehearted pledge not to betray their agreement. This was what was called "Pacto de Sangre" of King Sikatuna and Legaspi, the representative of the King of Spain.

In Bonifacio's manifesto, the Spaniards were depicted as using their cunning to entrap, beguile, and deceive Sikatuna. Much like the serpent in Eden, and seemingly with no problems of translation, the Spaniards used sweet words that caused Sikatuna to succumb to the tempter's snare. Mesmerized, Sikatuna believed Legazpi's promises of enlightenment and prosperity. He agreed to a compact and, like eating the forbidden fruit, this act constituted the Fall. The dubious agreement was thus sealed with the Pacto de Sangre, the Spaniards cunningly submitting themselves to the indigenous practice only so they could lord it over the Filipinos.<sup>14</sup> Unlike Del Pilar's plot, in Bonifacio's narrative the betrayal occurred at the outset—in the Garden,

so to speak. Yet in the manifesto the focus was not so much Sikatuna's susceptibility to deception (which was not confronted) but the deceitfulness of the Spaniards. The narrative strategy relied on the demonization of one party in the Blood Compact. With Bonifacio's manifesto the contours of nationalist history became coherent. The events surrounding the Pacto de Sangre constituted a critical juncture in the construction of the plot of Philippine history. The manifesto also sought to complete the employment as it was meant to lead directly to the Birth of the Nation.

Rizal did not discuss the Pacto de Sangre directly, but he alluded to the nature of contracts in the precolonial age and at the time of conquest. When Morga stated that "the contracts and negotiations of the natives were consummately illicit," Rizal's (1889/1961, 304) riposte was: "So are the contracts of all the nations and of all peoples, and so it is and was the very spirit of the contracts that the first Spaniards celebrated with the Filipino chiefs . . ." In this regard, he came close to what would become Bonifacio's reading of the Pacto de Sangre.

In the manifesto, the agreement should have been illegitimate from the start, given the circumstances in which it was purportedly reached. Nevertheless Bonifacio still asked what happened to the Spaniards' promises:

Ngayon sa lahat ng ito'y ano ang sa mga guinawa nating paggugul nakikitang kaguinhawahang ibinigay sa ating Bayan? Ano ang nakikita nating pagtupad sa kanilang kapangakuan na siang naging dahil ng ating pag gugugol! Wala kung di pawang kataksilan ang ganti sa ating mga pagpapala at mga pagtupad sa kanilang ipinangakung tayo'y lalung guiguisingin sa kagalingan ay bagkus tayong binulag, inihawa tayo sa kanilang hamak na asal, pinilit na sinira ang mahal at magandang ugali ng ating Bayan; Yminulat tayo sa isang maling pagsampalataya at isinadlak sa lubak ng kasamaan ang kapurihan ng ating Bayan; . . . (ibid.)

Now, for all this, after all the hard work we have done [for Spain], what ease have we seen bestowed upon our Bayan? Do we see anything that fulfills their promise, which was the reason for our sacrifices? Nothing but treachery is the reward for our favors and our abiding by the agreement. Instead of keeping their promise to awaken us to a better life, they have blinded us and infected us with their debased

character and forcibly destroyed the valuable and beautiful customs of our Bayan. They reared us in a false faith, and cast the dignity of our Bayan into the mire of wretchedness; . . .

The people realized only much later that the Pacto de Sangre was illicit because they had been “blinded” and could not see their condition properly. The realization of Spanish treachery and of Sikatuna falling for the “sweetness of their tempting words” at the outset came belatedly as the light of nationalism began to cast aside the Dark Age.<sup>14</sup>

Apolinario Mabini (1931, 108), in the opening remarks of his “Ordenanzas de la Revolución” (1898), also alluded to the Pacto de Sangre, stating that “Our ancestors have recognized the ancient Kings of Castile as protectors and allies” in a “pact sealed with blood” (*un pacto sellado con sangre*); it led to “perfect solidarity” but “from the moment we submitted to its dominion” the Spanish government “shamelessly violated” the agreement (cf. Majul 1960, 314). In Mabini’s view, the Blood Compact was “perfect” (a la Del Pilar) for an indeterminate period, but it was shattered (after a month?) as soon as Spain subjugated the Filipinos. This view postulated the colonial conquest as illegitimate, justifying revolution. Evidently this storyline (which seemed redundant as the country was already in the throes of revolution) did not reverberate as much as Bonifacio’s, which portrayed the Blood Compact as null and void from the very beginning and thus had a clear notion of the Fall.

Bonifacio’s narrative would resonate in Zafaralla’s (1986, 53) reading of Luna’s *El Pacto de Sangre*: “Culture clash, however, was in the cup. Sikatuna who revered the tradition poured his honor into it. Legazpi made a mockery of the rite by diluting the mixture in the cup with intentions of deceit.” The same motif would resurface in *Tadhana*, although involving Tupas rather than Sikatuna: Tupas offering “eternal fraternity and alliance,” Legazpi brimming with the impudence and treachery of a conqueror (Marcos 1976, 45).

Because of the Pacto de Sangre, which resulted in banishment from paradise, the Dark Age came upon the Philippines. Despite the falsity of the agreement, Bonifacio wanted to hold the Spaniards responsible for not abiding by their promise. The manifesto concluded that the light of truth must prevail; the Tagalog must realize the sources of their misfortune and unite, and realize that reason dictates the justness of separating from Spain. To signal the genuineness of the Katipunan siblinghood in contrast to the

counterfeit brotherhood of Sikatuna and Legazpi, the Katipunan’s membership ritual involved the neophyte signing his name with his own blood.<sup>16</sup>

While hewing to Del Pilar’s script of a nondeceptive Pacto de Sangre,<sup>17</sup> Bernadette Abrera (1994, 93, 102; cf. 1995) has interpreted the Katipunan ritual as a revival of sandugo (*binalikan at muling isinabuhay*) but in a new form (*nagbagong anyo*). In her view, the partaking of blood was bypassed because the primary relationship (*ang pangunahin nang ugnayan*) that was being established in the rite was with Inang Bayan (the Motherland) and everyone shared the same blood and all, therefore, were siblings (*Lahat ng nakipag-ugnayan sa Inang Bayan ay magiging magkakadugo at kung gayon, mga “kapatid”*) (ibid., 100), apparently with no birth order. In the pursuit of collective “kaginhawahan,” this perspective saw the Katipunan’s putatively revivalist practice as part of a “cultural revolution” (*rebolusyong cultural*) that was meant to return to Filipino roots, to restore the Golden Age. The Pacto de Sangre, in this case, has spawned a nativist quest.

## Conclusion

The late nineteenth-century views on the Pacto de Sangre of Sikatuna and Legazpi all averred that the Spaniards came to the Philippines to offer friendship, only for them to betray it. The event in Bohol in 1565 was represented in a manner that explicitly advanced a political agenda—from Del Pilar’s assimilation to Bonifacio’s revolution—in the process constructing the plot of nationalist history that would seek final realization in the revolution.

On one hand, because of Del Pilar’s specific political project, it had not been possible, it seems, to construe the Pacto de Sangre as a deception, for assimilation called upon the validity of an alleged agreement to assimilate and civilize the islanders. In the second half of the twentieth century this view has been revived and extended in two major approaches: (a) a hard “assimilationist” version found in the works of, for instance, Arcilla and Almario; and (b) a soft “equalist” version that are of two varieties: (i) the official state version embodied in the Order of Sikatuna and evident in the writings of Ocampo; and (ii) the perspective seen in the work of Abrera. On the other hand, because Bonifacio’s political project was separation from Spain by means of revolution, he could construct the Pacto de Sangre as illegitimate, which invalidated the whole of Spanish colonialism and justified revolution. Bonifacio’s plot line is echoed in commentaries such as those in *Tadhana* and of Zafaralla.

As far as can be ascertained, the late nineteenth-century constructions of the Pacto de Sangre diverged from the ancient blood oaths as well as the historical event in Bohol in 1565, in which, on the one hand, Sikatuna sought a way of dealing with a world that was changing radically because of European rivalries and the Spanish intent to colonize the islands and, on the other hand, Legazpi sought survival and a means to effect smooth conquest. The complex world of small polities, networks of rulers and vassal chiefs, status contests, internecine warfare, and dyadic blood oaths had become by the late nineteenth century inaccessible to Spain's colonial subjects, precisely because Spanish colonialism had intervened and transformed the indigenous societies. Father Schumacher had glimpsed the incongruity of the late nineteenth-century nationalist readings of the blood oath of Sikatuna and Legazpi. This article has built on that seminal insight to demonstrate the virtual absence of historical grounding—and thus the myth making—in the early Filipino nationalists' appropriations of the blood oath in Bohol. At the same time, the repackaging of the blood oath depended upon the inspiration derived from divergent political projects, which together in their diversity created and bequeathed to later generations one of the founding myths of Filipino nationhood.

## Notes

Many thanks are due to Caroline Sy Hau and Francis Gealogo for reading earlier versions of this paper. Francis also gave me a number of very helpful leads. Needless to say, the responsibility is mine alone. The photograph of Napoleon Abueva's "Blood Compact" (fig. 1) is from the Internet, found at <http://travel.webshots.com/photo/1375962633057910031ExZGLI>, accessed on 17 May 2010. The editorial office has sought permission for use of this photo.

- 1 Throughout this article the contemporary spelling of the Bohol chief's name, Sikatuna, is used. However, the various spellings in cited extracts are retained. The same rule applies in the spelling of Legazpi's name.
- 2 "Legazpi, with the aid of the Malay pilot, explained to the two kings of Bohol, Katuna (*Sikatuna*) and Gala (*Sigala*) that the Spaniards were not Portuguese and that they had come on a mission of peace not to destroy, kill, or plunder. On learning this, the Bohol kings and their people became friendly and welcomed the Spaniards." "On March 16, 1565, Legazpi and Katuna performed a blood compact to seal their friendship in the present site of Barrio Bo-ol, Baclagon. A few days later Legazpi had a similar pact with Gala. In his report to Philip II, Legazpi described the ceremony of the blood compact in the following words: 'It is observed in the following manner: one from each party draws two or three drops of blood from his own arms or breasts and mixes them in the same cup, with water or wine. Then the mixture must be divided equally between two cups,

and neither person may depart until both cups are alike drained'" (Zaide 1979, 234–35). Curiously Zaide quoted Legazpi's description of the blood oath, which was made specifically in relation to how one Spaniard, Francesco Gomez, had "disembarked to make blood-friendship with them [the islanders of Leyte], a ceremony that is considered inviolable," but who was murdered: "While this man was about to bleed himself, one of the natives pierced his breast from one side with a lance" (Legazpi 1903, 201).

- 3 "The expedition reached Cebu in February, 1565. Later Legazpi sailed to Cibabao (Leyte) then to Samar. Here he concluded a blood compact with some of the chieftains. Early in March, he sailed to Camiguin Island, then to Butuan in Mindanaw, and then to Bohol. The scarcity of food in Bohol led Legazpi to order his men to sail for Cebu" (Agoncillo 1974, 39).
- 4 In the Pantayong Pananaw school of thought, Salazar (1997, 128–29) initially used 1565 for a new periodization of Philippine history, but subsequently moved the pivotal date to 1588 when Spain solidified its hold over the Philippines.
- 5 "At Legazpi's request, the Moro agreed to invite chief Sikatuna of Bohol to see Legazpi. The chief hesitated, but agreed to come aboard ship as long as ransom was exchanged, and the blood compact was first performed. Legazpi sent a soldier who performed the ceremony with Sikatuna's son, and the day after, Sikatuna came to the boat and performed the blood compact with Legazpi. They collected blood from their arms, and mixed it with wine in two cups which the two leaders drank simultaneously. Finally, on 15 April, Legazpi took possession of Bohol in the king's name" (Arcilla 1991, 22–24).
- 6 Ocampo (1999, 11) ended his piece with a double-edged statement that was also meant to elicit laughter: "Luna and Rizal took great pride in pre-colonial culture unlike people today who now remember Legaspi and Urdaneta as upscale Makati villages while Sikatuna had been downgraded to a Quezon City subdivision."
- 7 The Blood Compact Shrine is claimed to be located on the approximate spot where it happened, "on the side of the road between present-day Tagbilaran and Baclayon in Bohol," but Ocampo (2009) says it "has since been proven to be on the wrong side of history, because the site of the Legaspi-Sikatuna blood compact was in Loay, Bohol."
- 8 Excluded in this discussion is Pedro Paterno, but see Mojares 2006, 95–101.
- 9 Theologically the blood oath may be interpreted as prefiguring the covenant of Christ in the New Testament.
- 10 See Anon. 1891/1996 for another article in *La Solidaridad* that used the *Pacto de Sangre* as the great dividing line in history.
- 11 These ambivalences, but without the benefit of brush strokes on canvass, are reproduced in Abueva's Blood Compact, which obviously has been modeled on Luna's *El Pacto de Sangre*. As a comparison of figs. 1 and 2 shows, key aspects of the painting are found in the sculpture, such as a left-handed Sikatuna located on the left side of the frame, a right-handed Legazpi to Sikatuna's left, and a group of Spaniards to Legazpi's left, dominating the right side of the frame.
- 12 The full text of Bonifacio's manifesto can be found in Bonifacio 1896/1963; Richardson 2009; cf. Ileteo 1979, 82–88.
- 13 The root word of *kaginhawahan* (or kaginhawahan) is guinhawa or ginhawa, which connotes ease of life, satisfaction of needs, breathing, an essence of life.



- 14 In the nationalist construction of Indonesian history, one important question was “the cause of the transition from glorious past to dark present” (Reid 1979, 291). As in Bonifacio’s schema, Mohammad Ali found the answer in Dutch trickery: “our fall and humiliation as a colonized nation was a *consequence* of the trickery, cunning, and deception of the Dutch and their divide and rule policy” (cited in *ibid.*).
- 15 In her discussion of Bonifacio’s “Ang Dapat Mabatid ng mga Tagalog,” Abrera (1994, 98–99; cf. 1995) omits all mention of deception, perhaps because it would run counter to the assertion: “Mahalagang ang ating pakikipag-ugnayan sa mga Kastila ay iniugat ni Bonifacio sa *sandugo*, dahil pumapasok sa kanyang kasulatan ang pag-unawa rito ng mga Pilipino bilang ugnayan ng magkakapantay na dapat humantong sa higit na kaginhawahan para sa isa’t isa” (It is important that Bonifacio rooted our relationship with the Spaniards in *sandugo*, because the Filipinos’ understanding of it as a relationship of equals that should eventuate in the heightened *kaginhawahan* of each side enters his text) (*ibid.*, 99).
- 16 Although there is no corroborating evidence from other sources, Isabelo de los Reyes (1899/1993, 35–36) made the intriguing report that marriage rites in the Katipunan were based on the *Pacto de Sangre*: “The bride and the bridegroom took blood from their arms by means of an *incision* made before a person recognized as authority and witnesses, then the blood thus taken was mixed with wine.” The bride drank the mixture while making an oath of fidelity and invoking a curse in case she did otherwise, followed by the groom whose oath did not include fidelity but simply “to carry the burden of my family” failing which he invoked a curse (*ibid.*). Was this a vestige of the ancient blood oath? Oddly one of the terms used for blood brothers in ancient England was “wed brothers” (Heather 1952, 158). Or was this Katipunan ritual, if indeed it was practiced, an attempt to redeem the blood oath that Legazpi supposedly tarnished in the Pacto de Sangre?
- 17 See note 15.

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