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Making an Identity Out of Diversity: Horacio de la Costa's Interpretation of a Process

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To make a living identity out of our historic diversity: that way lies our hope.

—Horacio de la Costa, SJ, “The Filipino: An Identikit” (1975?)

Fr. Horacio de la Costa was my teacher in at least one course, an introduction to Southeast Asian history. He had a sharp insight into things and expressed these without notes in an orderly, logical manner. It was a joy to take notes under him. He embodied the Jesuit ideal of sapientia et eloquentia.

The philosopher Hegel and the phenomenologists tell us that all knowledge is from a perspective, from a point in space and time. My perspective is that of an anthropologist whose discipline has pioneered in synthesizing the human and natural sciences in an effort to study “culture” from its first appearance in the earliest human societies and its manifestations in the entire range of human societies all over the world. Because anthropology highlights the value of understanding what differentiates one culture from another, it dwells on the question of identity. This is of paramount interest to me.

Of concern is the question of Filipino identity: how to define it in an inclusive manner, and how to build pride in it. The challenges are formidable. If we examine the discourse on Philippine identity carried
on by the English language texts since the 1950s, we will find out that the term “mongrel” is a recurring word, even in some of the email groups I am in. A former senator of the republic wrote me stating that our culture is “mongrel.” And we hear educated Filipinos lament that that our culture has no specific identity because supposedly our originality was wiped out by Western rule.

Also of concern is how educated Filipinos will interpret their culture vis-à-vis Southeast Asia and East Asia where we are intensifying our participation. Our neighbors have a strong consciousness of their identity. Are we going to apologize for our being different? We hear it said that mainstream Filipino culture with its overlay of Spanish and American influences does not connect with the rest of the region, and that supposedly what connects is the culture of our Moslem siblings in Mindanao. Such a supposition breeds embarrassment about ourselves vis-à-vis both Southeast Asia and East Asia. Aside from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, we are also members of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation group where Latin Americans are present. How do Filipinos explain who they are? Will we be like that representative of the Department of Tourism who spoke at the World Tourism Organization headquarters in Madrid to make a pitch for tourism in the Philippines? She spoke about the natural wonders of the Philippines but ignored the heritage that we share with Spain and Spanish America. When asked why, she replied, “Because we don’t speak Spanish in the Philippines.”

I turn to Father de la Costa, therefore, wanting to know how he deals with the mixture of diverse cultural currents in our society, how he interprets our role vis-à-vis Southeast Asia, and how he evaluates Spanish influence.

In interpreting his ideas, I acknowledge the epistemology of both Hegel ([1807] 1977) and Heidegger (1962). Hegel posits a trend in universal history, one of increasing self-awareness both on the level

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1 Chinese, Indonesians, and Thais have joined some of my cultural tours. At a tour of the Fiesta of Turumba, where men and women dance in the street while accompanying a gorgeously robed Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows to and from a beautiful baroque church, a Thai student asked me why there is so much Spanish influence in our culture. What is specifically Filipino about our customs? I answered that the highly kinetic character of our religiosity—dancing as in Obando, Ati-Atihan, and Sinulog—is truly ours. I added that Thai culture has also been heavily influenced by other cultures, for instance, the Indian.
of the self and that of society as a whole, a trend toward increasing rationality and freedom. Though, indeed, each generation has its own perspective, it adds to the store of universal knowledge to which all can have access. Thus, we now know many things that our forebears were not aware of. Less optimistic, Heidegger leads us back to the Greek word for “truth,” namely, *aletheia*. The process of seeking the truth is both an unveiling and a concealment: Yes, our minds can disclose reality, but even as we do so, we may involuntarily conceal other aspects of that reality. Hence, our disclosures will in turn be subject to critique by others; we should be aware of our limitations.

Here is an image that combines both Hegel and Heidegger: As we climb up the slope of a mountain, we gain new knowledge about the landscape we have passed through. We discover that we have been walking through a forest and that, seen from a height, the forest has definite boundaries. A meadow runs alongside it. However, even as we gain new knowledge, we may overlook valuable information to be gained by examining the bowers of trees at close range.

The materials I use in interpreting de la Costa’s ideas are his several essays compiled in three of the four volumes edited in 2002 by Roberto M. Paterno and three of his books: *The Jesuits in the Philippines, 1581–1768* (1961), *Asia and the Philippines* (1967), and *Readings in Philippine History* (1965). I shall explore three of his concerns and then make a comment. The three themes are (1) Filipino identity as hybrid, (2) the indigenous substratum of our identity as Malay, and (3) re-examining Spanish influence on our identity.

The Three Themes

Identity as Hybridity

In “The Chinese Bearing Gifts” (1974), de la Costa contrasts two ways of conceiving of cultural development. One is to peel off alien influences, as though peeling off successive layers of an onion, and to go to the core of who we are as a people. Another way is to conceive of cultural development as a process of integration, that is, of assimilating alien influences using elements from our culture. He says he prefers the second option (integration of the alien) because historically the Philippines has been an open society. He cautions against looking up to China as a model: China was, for centuries, a closed society,
a landlocked empire; this the Philippines was not. Hence his assertion: "I believe rather in acknowledging that ours is somehow a hybrid culture" ([1974] 2002, 2:60).

Today, he says in his essay "The Filipino: An Identikit" (1975?) the Philippines is in the process of becoming a nation. But this process will require consensus on two points. First, on the part of the national community, we should explicitly accept cultural pluralism. We should welcome both the Chinese and Moslem and what they have to offer. We should also accept that our indigenous culture has been enriched by contributions from other cultures. Second, the minorities should seek integration into the national community. What, then, is the Filipino today? "We must steel ourselves against the shock of finding in our part of the world a nation of Malay stock, socially structured on a basically Indonesian pattern, obviously the recipient of a large infusion of Chinese blood and attitudes, yet with a cultural heritage in part Spanish, in part Anglo-Saxon; for this nation will be ourselves" ([1975?] 2002, 2:26).

In this short essay, I focus only on the Malay and the Spanish.

Of the Malay substratum, de la Costa makes these remarks. In Asia and the Philippines (1967), written as a textbook, de la Costa says that the peoples of Southeast Asia, despite their seeming diversity, have "a basic homogeneity of racial type and social organization" (2). He identifies the peoples who form the basis for all of Southeast Asia as "Malays," whom he describes as "brown-skinned, fine-boned, moderately tall farmers and seafarers" and who "had occupied the principal river valleys and coastal plains of the entire region" (2). Hence, even the ancestors of present-day Thais, Laos, and Vietnamese are supposed to have been "Malays." He grants that, from the anthropological perspective, the term "Malay" is "incorrect but convenient" (2). The Malays came in over the mountains from South China into mainland Southeast Asia and spread all over through their boats. In this one-and-a-half-page description, he says something about their two ways of cultivating rice. In his Readings in Philippine History, also intended

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2 The first was swidden, also called slash-and-burn cultivation and kaingin or huma in the Philippines and ladang in Indonesia. Here the farmer opens a clearing in a forest by cutting trees and burning them and then, with a stick, pokes holes in the ground in order to plant seeds. The second was wet rice cultivation, where the farmer opens a paddy field in order to plant rice in pools. See Geertz (1963).
as a textbook, de la Costa dates the coming of the Malys to the first millennium before Christ.

In the second part of Asia and the Philippines, de la Costa describes the influence that four foreign traditions—the Indian, Chinese, Islamic, and Western—had on the region. Significantly, he does not treat the Indian as being more Southeast Asian than the rest. He treats all of them as having been outsiders originally.

Of the Spanish influence, de la Costa has more to say. “As for Philippine history, I suspect that one reason we think the Spanish period a period of darkness is not because the period itself is dark, but because we are all in the dark about it.” He contends that if the Filipino knew something about the prelates who defended native rights vigorously or missionaries like the Recollects in Cebu and Negros who, along with Christianity, taught us the arts of civilization, we may be less prone to “identify religion with ignorance and tyranny” ([1966] 2002, 4:180).

Two consequences follow from that assertion. First, in his Readings in Philippine History, de la Costa does not compress the Spanish period into just a few chapters. Implicitly, he does not regard the history of the Philippines under Spain as merely a history of Spain in the Philippines. The reader is given excerpts from primary sources with annotations by him. He shows thereby how the period from 1565 to 1898 is a formative period without which we cannot understand the Philippines of today. Second, he tries to give a complex and nuanced picture of the Spaniards and their behavior.

I will give but two interconnected examples from de la Costa showing the beneficial influence of Spanish colonization. I choose them because of my interest in the origin of our towns and cities and in our architectural heritage.

De la Costa points out that before the coming of the Spaniards, many Filipinos lived in dispersed settlements in the hills. In The Jesuits in the Philippines (1961, 184–85, 259, 459–60), he says that the average household raised food that did not yield a surplus, being merely sufficient for its own needs and that their planting tools were just a long knife for cutting down trees and a digging stick for poking into the earth in order to plant seeds and tubers. The missionaries realized that, given this dispersal, they would not be able to preach the Gospel and administer the sacraments effectively. It was important to bring the dispersed into nucleated settlements by teaching them the “techniques
of settled agriculture” ([1959a] 2002, 3:130). The significance of this development cannot be emphasized enough. The geographer Robert Reed (1978, 9–10) says that the dispersed settlements typical of Luzon and Visayas made it difficult for genuine urbanism to emerge. He notes that, in contrast to the rest of Southeast Asia, on the eve of Western expansion in the sixteenth century, no true cities existed in Luzon and Visayas. Manila and Cebu were “suprabarangays” (3–6).

Going back to de la Costa—and this is where his interest in showing all sides of a debate is important methodologically—he says that the encomenderos opposed the missionaries. The former were content to exact tribute from the native settlements entrusted to them; they did not want to alter their way of life. The missionaries, however, were adamant, though some of their flock fled to the uplands to continue living as before—in dispersal (de la Costa 1961, 184–85; 291).

The second example from de la Costa follows from the origins of urban settlements. Like other Spanish missionaries, the Jesuits wanted to build stone churches in place of the churches of bamboo and thatch that all too easily burned down. The popular tale circulating today is that all churches were built with forced labor. In his history of the Jesuits, de la Costa says that the Spanish government encouraged them to use forced labor for the law entitled to do so (1961, 185). Be that as it may, de la Costa alleges that the Jesuits “wisely hired workmen” and made use of the government’s contribution of fifteen hundred pesos from taxes collected (185).

In a 1959 essay on the anniversary of the Augustinian-built Santo Niño basilica in Cebu, he points out that there was a sixteenth-century law operative in Spain stating that the construction of a church should be financed by an arrangement involving three partners. The government assumed one-third of the total cost, the local magnate assumed another third, and the local community the remaining third. Was the local community indeed coerced into assuming the remaining third? De la Costa opines, “The Filipinos who say this must have a very poor opinion indeed of their own ancestor” ([1959b] 2002, 4:136). In all but a few cases, the evidence indicates that “the building of our churches was a labor of love” (4:136). Our forefathers wanted the local church

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3 Corpuz (1965, 43) is much clearer than de la Costa in pointing out what the missionaries contributed: the use of the plow with the water buffalo as draft animal.
to be the biggest, strongest, and most beautiful presence in their lives (4:136). Significantly, he draws a comparison with a similar phenomenon that occurred in medieval France. He says that between 1170 and 1270, eighty cathedrals, including Chartres, and “nearly five hundred churches of the cathedral class” sprang up all over France; and that according to an eyewitness account of the period, these were reared by the people combining their efforts (4:134), with the enthusiasm of the people of Chartres as their inspiration (4:136).

To sum up de la Costa’s interpretation of Filipino identity: There is nothing irregular about having an identity that is the product of diverse influences. The challenge for us is to continue the process of assimilating the alien into our own tradition. In relating to Southeast Asia, which was a newly invented concept in the 1950s and 1960s, he starts with the region-wide substratum which he calls “Malay” and shows how the region has been influenced by four formerly external traditions—the Indian, the Chinese, the Islamic, and the Western. He sees nothing unusual or lamentable in that the Philippines was influenced by the Western. Nor does he see Westernization as alienating us from the region. He shows the complexity of the Spanish period, avoiding the temptation to compress it into a few chapters and thereby marginalizing it. And he paints a nuanced portrait of the Spaniards—avid for gold and glory, but also aware of their obligations toward God. Because of the missionaries, a significant shift took place: Filipinos made the transition from swidden to settled agriculture, from living in small dispersed settlements to living in nucleated settlements that became towns and even cities. As these settlements became stable, stone churches arose thanks to a threefold arrangement involving the Manila government, the local magnate, and the local community. Except in a few cases, our stone churches from the Spanish period cannot be said to be the product of forced labor but rather of a community spirit. Our ancient churches constitute valuable symbols in the quest for symbols of our identity.

The Comments

My comments are threefold:

1. Because “hybridity” denotes the unnatural, let us aim for a better term to denote our identity from diversity.
2. The matrix of our hybridity is the indigenous, but it is Austronesian, not Malay.
3. Imagining the Spanish element as sheer darkness casts a shadow over our cultural fusion.

A Better Term of Description

For twentieth-century anthropology, “culture” is a human invention made possible by language. Culture is not race. Race is a biological concept to denote a merely external, physical variation within a species. Intermarriage across races does not harm the individuals concerned for it does not violate nature. Some biological anthropologists are leery of using “race,” preferring rather to use “population-level difference” to denote variations in skin color, hair color and form, eye form, and head shape (Craig, Adler, and Anton 2013, 125). In contrast, ignoring the boundaries of species in order to procreate is generally futile because there are genetic mechanisms within the body which prevent such transgressions (106). For its part, “culture” is a system of meaning that springs up in a human group and that is manifest in beliefs, values, and practices that differentiate it from other groups. The boundaries of a culture are permeable: ideas and practices cross these boundaries in either direction. Looked at closely, diffusions, transformations, and intermingling of diverse concepts have been a regular feature of many cultures as any opening chapter of a cultural anthropology book would state (Miller 2011).

De la Costa is right in cautioning us against thinking that the Chinese model of relative cultural purity is the only model. There are other models. He uses the English word “hybrid” to denote a condition of cultural mixtures. His approach resonates. Postcolonial theorists, such as Homi Bhabha (1994, 5–6), point out that all cultures are in fact “hybrid.” Let us therefore be wary about thinking of a precolonial past as being more authentic. My favorite example is English itself. Its grammar and vocabulary are difficult for outsiders to master because over the basic Germanic grammar and vocabulary is a thick overlay of

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4 See also Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin (1995) and Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin (2000).
Latin and French words, resulting in inconsistent spelling and pronunciation. French and Spanish are also hybrid, but they have language academies that insist on consistency of spelling and grammar. 5

Unfortunately, “hybrid” itself is problematic. The current online Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2016) defines it as “an offspring of two animals or plants of different races, breeds, varieties, species, or genera.” Having parents of different races is biologically natural, but not having parents of different species or genera. The dictionary widens the meaning of “hybrid” to denote as well “a person whose background is a blend of two diverse cultures or traditions.” In contrast, the New International Webster’s Dictionary (2010) defines it as “an animal or plant of mixed parentage: A mongrel. Anything of heterogeneous origin or incongruous parts” (617). But nobody would want to be a “mongrel” with an origin in “incongruous parts.”

What other terms are there in the English language for denoting the offspring of interracial and interethnic marriages? Unfortunately, terms such as “half-caste,” “half-breed,” or “half-blood” are even worse. Being “half” denotes incompleteness and therefore inferiority. Because Filipino identity since the second half of the twentieth century has been discussed almost exclusively in the English language, Filipinos unconsciously adopt its traditional prejudice against the offspring of both interracial and intercultural fusions. All too readily, many imagine that such offspring must be like Rizal’s heroine Maria Clara, daughter of a Spanish friar and a native woman and therefore a bastard. They forget that Rizal’s hero, Crisostomo Ibarra, is the scion of a Basque great-grandfather and of his mestizo descendants, all of whom, as the novel implies, had formal marriages with native women (Rizal [1886] 1929, 61–62).

Setting aside the English language, what does one find in Spanish? The term mestizo, derived from the Latin mixtus (mixed), to denote any type of mixture, whether cultural or biological, became relatively

5 But even Chinese culture itself is hybrid. Mahayana Buddhism, its third pillar together with Confucianism and Taoism, was imported from the Aryan Indians and was criticized by Confucian scholars for promoting monastic celibacy and abandoning the duty both to propagate the family line and to care for the parents. Today, Shanghai’s main showplace is the Bund which embodies the various Western influences that converged in the city during the first four decades of the twentieth century, while Macau’s Portuguese heritage is played up to give China a bridge to the Latin American world.
neutral in the nineteenth century. The process of mixing is called *mestizaje*. Spaniards today, being of mixed origins, exhibit different skin tonalities, from white to dark olive. Remarks Alfredo Jiménez Nuñez, “The population of the Iberian peninsula has been historically *mestizo*” (1989, 61; *es historicamente mestiza*). Let us also note that Spain itself has been ethnically diverse. Originally there were the Iberians. Then came the Celts, Greeks, Phoenicians, Romans, Visigoths, Jews, Arabs, and Berbers. Spain was colonized twice, after bitter struggles, first by the Romans in the second and first centuries BC, and by the Berbers and Arabs in the eighth century. Clashes resulted, some of which have not been resolved to this day. Note the sneer by Northern Europeans in times past that “Africa begins south of the Pyrenees.” Behold the *paella*, that emblematic Spanish dish: Arab is its mixture of festive, saffron-colored rice with scraps of meat and vegetables, but very Peninsular is its sauté of garlic, onions, and tomatoes in pork lard, further flavored with sausages. Pork is, of course, forbidden by Islamic law.⁶

Very pertinent is the Mexican use of “mestizo” as a term of defiance. British and American authors of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries confused “race,” a physical attribute, with thinking and acting, which are culturally learned (Harris 1968, 96, 98–99, 130–31). Even Latin America’s social and political problems were explained biologically. Herbert Spencer, one of the founders of sociology, claimed that Latin American countries were plagued by revolutions because of their being “half-castes” (cited in Basave Benítez 1992, 92). Supposedly because the half-caste inherits characteristics from two ancestors who are physically distinct from each other, he is “not fitted” for either ancestor’s institutions. In response, during the early twentieth century, ahead of the postcolonial theorists of the late twentieth century, Mexicans—such as Jose Vasconcelos ([1925] 2005), Alfonso Reyes (Delhumeau 2010), and Octavio Paz ([1950] 1994)—developed a philosophy of *mestizaje*, by affirming the advantages of being the fusion of American Indians, Europeans, and Africans. They claimed that such unions produced a better physical stock and a more vibrant culture. Mexican artists of the twentieth century produced artworks that have become

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⁶ Benito Legarda y Fernandez, economic historian, reminded the audience when my lecture was read that the tomato originally came from Mexico and is hence another example of *mestizaje*. 
internationally acclaimed for their greatness. A running theme is the celebration of the multiple strands in Mexican identity. For instance, in 1950–56, Juan O’Gorman covered all four sides of the multi-storied Central Library of the Universidad Autónoma de México with mosaic murals depicting both the contribution of the West to Mexico from the Greeks to the Renaissance, and the contribution of indigenous Mexicans to the world. At the Plaza de las Tres Culturas in Mexico City (Aztec temple, seventeenth-century Catholic church, modern high-rises) is an inscription that commemorates the final battle of Cuauhtémoc, last emperor of the Aztecs: “On 13 August 1521, heroically defended by Cuauhtémoc, Tlatelolco fell into the hands of Hernán Cortés. It was neither a triumph nor a defeat; it was the painful birth of the mestizo people that is Mexico today.”

Substitute “half-breed” or even “hybrid” for “mestizo” and the inscription sounds ludicrous. Today, in some translations of Spanish texts into English, the term “mestizo” is wisely retained. Richard Chu, in writing about Chinese mestizos, uses the term “mestizo” even though his book is in English.

Over the past twenty-five years, Mexican thinkers, like Jaime Olvedo, Claudia Paulina Machuca, and Rodrigo de la Torre Yarza, two historians and one anthropologist, have highlighted a fourth element—the Filipino contribution—thus affirming identity in and through cultural diversity.

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7 “El 13 de Agosto, 1521, heroicamente defendido por Cuauhtémoc, cayó Tlatelolco en poder de Hernán Cortés. No fue triunfo ni derrota, fue el doloroso nacimiento del pueblo mestizo que es el México de hoy.”

8 True, within recent years “híbrido” has been used even in Spanish language writings as in Nestor García Canclini’s (2010) much acclaimed book. The problem is that the dictionary of the Real Academia Española (1956) defines “híbrido” as any plant or animal “procreado por dos individuos de distinta especie” (76; procreated by two individuals of different species), therefore implicitly unnatural.

9 As indicated by the very title: Chinese and Chinese Mestizos of Manila: Family, Identity, and Culture, 1860s–1930s (Leiden; Brill, 2010).

10 Jaime Olvedo, a historian from the Universidad Autónoma de Guadalajara, made a speech at a conference convoked by Atty. Jesús González Gortazar at Barra de Navidad, Jalisco, “México y la Cuenca del Pacífico” (Mexico and the Pacific Basin) in 1993(?) where he affirmed that Mexican identity had hitherto rested on three pillars—the Amerindian, European, and the African and that it was time to acknowledge a fourth: the Filipino. He based his claim on migration by Filipinos to the Pacific Coast during the Galleon Trade and their contributions such as coconut wine-making (tuba), cockfighting with bladed spurs, an abundance of Tagalog words in Mexican Spanish.
Was de la Costa aware of this philosophy of racial and cultural fusion that was flowering in Mexico during his own lifetime in the 1920s until the 1970s? Most likely not, for Mexico after the social revolution of 1910 was vehemently anticiercated and imposed severe restrictions on the Catholic Church (Tuck 1982, 30, 34–35). Meanwhile, despite his better judgment, in some of his texts, he occasionally uses the English terms “half-breed” and “half-caste” as alternative terms, as in these examples: “the Aeta-Malay half castes: the first mestizos in a land whose history would be shaped largely by mestizos” (1965, 2); “the morenos or half-breeds” (1961, 364).11 Our cultural reality is Spanish-influenced because, despite prejudice and conflict, our society has long recognized interracial marriages when solemnized before legitimate authority, but our present linguistic framework is English whose concepts disfigure this reality—hence, our anguish about our identity.

Lest I be misunderstood, I am not advocating a return to using Spanish over English, nor am I advocating the use of “mestizo.” Formerly, “mestizo” in the Philippines just meant a mixture. Indeed, often enough it referred to the offspring of a Chinese father and a native mother. Hence, the famous nineteenth-century “mestizo district” of Vigan, home to the Singsongs, Syquia, Quemas, Ichons, is locally called Kasanglayan (meaning, “the place of the Sangley or Chinese”). Today, with the disappearance of Spanish, “mestizo” has misleadingly come to mean someone who looks Caucasian.12 Given this development, I advocate our paying attention to the scholarship on mestizaje in Latin American countries, particularly Mexico, and examining how

Machuca (2009) writes of the “indios chinos” on the Pacific Coast, so called not because they were all Chinese, but because they differed from the indios of the Americas. Many of these were, in fact, indios Filipinos who brought the art of making tuba (coconut wine), which is now one of the icons of Mexican states on the Pacific. Rodrigo de la Torre Yarza, an anthropologist from the Colegio de Oaxaca, traveled extensively around the Philippines in April–May, 2015, visiting places connected with the Galleon Trade (1565–1815). In April, 2015, he gave a lecture at the Ateneo de Manila where he spoke about the many contributions of Filipinos to Mexico like the devotion to the Santo Niño de Cebú in a town on the Pacific Coast.

11 “Moreno” literally means “brown-skinned.” Since brown can range from light coffee to dark, in this context, it refers to mestizo.

12 However, the issue is not closed. To my great surprise, I found out that in Kalinga province, which was not hispanized, the term “mestizo” is applied to the offspring of parents from two different Kalinga “tribes,” in actual fact, from two different villages.
scholars there have dealt with their own cultural reality. An example would be Basave Benitez (1992). We should also develop terms in both English and in our vernaculars that can reflect in a positive way our Filipino reality.

Austronesian, Not Malay

There are three points to be made here:

1. To understand any society, we must begin with the indigenous matrix.
2. Our indigenous matrix is Austronesian.
3. Our Austronesian matrix connects us to two other matrices in Southeast Asia, the Austro-Asiatic and the Tai-Kadai.

To understand ourselves, we must start with our indigenous matrix. By “indigenous,” I exclude the Islamic. In Malaysia and Indonesia, only those who are neither Christian nor Moslem are orang asli (Nicholas 2012; indigenous people). After all, Islam itself was originally an outside religion. In any society, the indigenous tradition precedes historical time. By “historical time,” I mean the story of a society that is recorded in written documents. At the same time, the indigenous tradition runs alongside historical narratives because it is embodied in the lives of the members of a social group, for its main vehicle is language. Educated Filipinos think themselves cut off from their indigenous past, but they are mistaken. Like our ancestors four thousand years ago, we continue to reckon descent in our kinship system bilaterally, that is, both sons and daughters may inherit property from either parent, administer this property, and transmit this to their descendants. In contrast, the Chinese and particular Indian systems have been patrilineal until fairly recently. Another example is this: Some buildings at the Ateneo are said to be haunted. Our indigenous past lives on in our fear of ancestral spirits even on campus.

The indigenous matrix can be studied using archaeology, linguistics, physical anthropology, and cultural anthropology, all of which constitute the four fields of anthropology in the American system. Unfortunately, in de la Costa’s two books (1965; 1967), the indigenous past is treated in only a few pages. Meanwhile, he ignores the continuing narratives of indigenous peoples in the Cordillera, the Sierra Madre of Luzon, Mindoro, Palawan, and the hinterland of Mindanao,
as recorded in ethnographies done during the twentieth century. True, technically speaking, history as a science focuses on written documents. The fact remains, however, that a book on Philippine history is taken by the public as the central narrative of the Philippine story. By de-emphasizing the indigenous matrix, we unwittingly cause Filipinos to feel alienated from this heritage. History and anthropology should jointly interpret our past.

Let us go to the second point. De la Costa is correct in locating the Philippines vis-à-vis Asia, specifically Southeast Asia. The Philippines cannot be understood without reference to its location and its neighbors. Unfortunately, his interpretation is vitiated by his use of the term “Malays” to characterize not only our ancestors before the arrival of the Europeans but also the ancestors of other Southeast Asians, like the Thais, Cambodians, and Vietnamese, before the coming of Chinese, Indian, and Islamic influences. De la Costa is aware that anthropologists are critical of this term, and excuses himself by saying that the term is “convenient.”

My objection would be that, though convenient, the expression “Malay” is incorrect whether in reference to us Filipinos or to other Southeast Asians. In Malaysia today, one prevailing view is that the term “Malay” should be applied only to Moslems. Hence, it cannot be applied to the orang asli, that is, indigenous, animist peoples unless they first convert to Islam. In Indonisia, the “Malay” as the name of an ethnic group is applied only to those who come from the Riau Archipelago and northeastern Sumatra and not to other Indonesian ethnic groups. Why then insist on using “Malay” to identify ourselves?

De la Costa relied on texts in wide use in the 1920s until the 1950s on the origins of the peoples of the Philippines, such as those of Conrado Benitez, educator (1926; repr., 1940; rev. ed., 1954), and Orley Beyer, first director of the National Museum of the Philippines (Beyer and de Veyra 1952), who proposed that in between the arrival of the Negritos and that of the Europeans, several waves of migrants sailed to these islands from the south and southeast—from Indonesia.

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13 This assertion is based on the usual answer by acquaintances who are Sundanese, Central Javanese, Eastern Javanese, Moluccan, to the question “How would you define yourself? As Malay?” Milner (2004, 841), in his overview of Malays in Southeast Asia, says that Malays form a “significant minority” in Indonesia, definitely not the majority. So much for the claim that we are all Malays.
and from the Malay peninsula. The basis for Beyer’s claim—whether archaeological, or linguistic, or physiological—was not clear in his writing. In turn, Beyer and Benitez were influenced by the notion prevalent in nineteenth-century Western scholarship that the Malays constituted a race, and that the inhabitants of the East Indies, whether island or mainland, could be called Malay because of the use of Malay as the East Indies’ lingua franca. The term “Southeast Asia” did not yet exist before 1945, before the close of World War II. Benitez and Beyer formulated these ideas in the 1900s to the 1940s. Meanwhile, during the same period, linguists and anthropologists were coining a new word “Austronesian,” which, in scientific circles, is now the accepted term for our linguistic family.

“Austronesian,” as developed by linguists and scholars during the twentieth century, refers to what was once the most widely diffused family of languages in the world before the global diffusion of European languages. “Austronesian” refers to the languages of the uplands of Taiwan, all of the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, Micronesia, Polynesia, some of the upland peoples of Vietnam like the Jarai, and the Malagache of Madagascar by Africa. Austronesian languages spread all over the Pacific and across the Indian Ocean because of their speakers’ prowess in exploring uncharted waters. Unfortunately, readable syntheses on the origins of the Austronesians would only begin to appear since the 1980s, that is, after the death of de la Costa. Examples are the foundational studies by Peter Bellwood (1985), Gilbert Meacham (1984–85), and Wilhelm Solheim (2006).

On the basis of comparative linguistics and aided by archaeological discoveries, scholars (Bellwood 1985; Bellwood, Fox, and Tyron 1995) theorized that the Austronesian family had begun with settlers in Taiwan around five thousand years ago, whose origins were in what is now Southern China. Taking to their boats, around four thousand years ago they sailed southward to the Philippines, Malaysia, and Indonesia in small but steady streams over a millennium. They came as members of small villages each independent of the other. There were no empires yet in the region. Sometime in the first millennium after Christ, some sailed westward from Malaysia and Indonesia to inhabit Madagascar just off Africa, while in the millennium before Christ others sailed in the opposite direction, eastward from the Philippines and Eastern Indonesia toward Micronesia and eventually all of Polynesia. Zeus Salazar (1998, 262) called attention to the Philippine-East
Indonesian corridor from which the first migrations eastward over the Pacific began. Recently, studies by Frederick Delfin (2015), a physical anthropologist, using DNA analyses of collected tissues from all over the Philippines, adopted the Bellwood hypothesis that the direction of migration was from north to south, not from south and southwest going north. His studies also indicate that there is no biological basis for speaking of two waves of Indonesian migrants and of three waves of Malay migrants. Thousands of years after the Negritos, came waves of Austronesian-speaking migrants who settled along the coasts, in the valleys, and eventually on the foothills.¹⁴

Who are these Austronesians? Why should we be familiar with them? More than being our ancestors, the Austronesians are we present-day Filipinos. Our daily languages are Austronesian. Our languages therefore carry the most basic concepts of our ancestral culture such as its kinship system and spirit beliefs mentioned above. Some characteristics of the Austronesians are the following: Austronesian languages tend to repeat words for a variety of reasons, one of them for emphasis (e.g., “Ang bait-bait niya”). Prefixes, suffixes, infixes abound, allowing a key word flexibility (e.g., *sayaw* [dance] changes sense depending on its prefix, suffix, or infix: *mananayaw* [dancer], *sumayaw* [he/she dances], *sayawin* [he/she dances it], *sinayaw* [he/she danced it], *sayawawan* [dance event], *nakasayaw* [dance partner], *napasayaw* [involuntarily danced], *pasayaw-sayaw* [dance in a joking manner], *nagsisayaw* [they dance], *makasayaw* [to be able to dance], *isayaw* [to dance with a partner], *isinayaw* [he/she danced it emphatically], etc.). Moreover, the sea has been important in Austronesian culture. Indeed, the outrigger boat appears to have emerged in the area covering the southern Philippines and the Moluccas, according to the linguistic scholar Jesus Hernandez (2015). Because of the outrigger and its highly adjustable

¹⁴ So preponderant have the Austronesians been that the Negritos, the earlier inhabitants of Island Southeast Asia, eventually lost their languages. Though from another racial stock, all Negritos, be they Ati, Aeta, or Agta, are today Austronesian speakers. Nonetheless, I would like to emphasize that the Negritos, who represent our pre-Austronesian heritage and who have been here for at least 40,000 years (Delfin 2015), should be hailed for their achievements, for instance in ethnobotany (Fox 1952). In Aklan, it was impressive to hear Aklanos, who would not consider themselves Ati in physique or in culture, explicitly affirm the Ati contribution by singing unto their cupped hands.
lateen sail, Austronesians sailed against the trade winds of the equator and peopled the South Pacific, from Micronesia to Hawaii all the way down to New Zealand and Easter Island (Finney 1988).

But is there no historical evidence that peoples from present-day Malaysia and Indonesia did venture to the Philippines during the era of the Indianized Empires (100 BC–1600). There is, of course. The text of the Pila copperplate, dated to the tenth century AD, is in Old Malay using Kawi as the script (Postma 1992). Thanks to the prestige of the Sumatra-based empire of Sri-Vijaya, which flourished in AD 650–1377 (see Wolters 1967), Old Malay became the lingua franca of traders and of the literate in Southeast Asia. William Henry Scott (1994, 195–96) has identified Malay words that entered Tagalog during the early sixteenth century when Manila became an attractive entrepôt under a ruling family allied with the princely houses of Sulu and Brunei whose second language was Malay (e.g., aral [learning], utang [debt], binibini [lady]). But there is no evidence that Philippine languages sprang from Malay in the manner that Spanish, French, and Italian sprang from Latin. As mentioned earlier, our languages in the Philippines preserve a wide variety of prefixes, infixes, and suffixes. While this linguistic trait does exist in Malay, they are quite limited. It is improbable that our complex grammar sprang from the simpler grammar of Malay. Today, there are only two prefixes that can be attached to the Malay/Indonesian word for dance, “tari.” One is “me-” as in “menari” (to dance), the other is “pe-” as in “penari” (dancer).

Let us go further. In his history of Bulacan, Jaime Veneracion (1986, 53, 59) cites references suggesting that particular families in Pampanga and Bulacan have been aware that their ancestors may have migrated from Java, Sumatra, Borneo. During the era of the Indianized empires, some groups migrated northward from parts of Indonesia and Malaysia, and they may or may not have been Malay-speaking. One reason for the migration may have been for them to escape taxation and tribute; another, to look for new land. However, this migration from south to north probably took place only around the seventh to the fourteenth centuries. By that time, the Philippine archipelago had long been populated—since at least two millennia before Christ—by Austronesian speakers.

But what term to use for the inhabitants of Island Southeast Asia? This is not yet settled. Wilhelm Solheim (2006), an archaeologist who wrote an alternative narrative about the origins of the Austronesian
speakers, uses the term “Nusantau” to characterize the island peoples of Southeast Asia and Taiwan: “nusa,” meaning “island,” “tau” meaning “people.” Zeus Salazar (1998, 262) uses the word “Nusantarian,” from the Malay word for archipelago, “nusantara.” The terms seem to me more accurate and less confusing than “Malay.” I propose that Filipino scholars participate actively in current discussions about language, culture, and identity in Southeast Asia lest we be marginalized.

We must, therefore, reword de la Costa’s definition of us as “a nation of Malay stock socially structured on a basically Indonesian pattern” into “a nation whose indigenous matrix is both pre-Austronesian and Austronesian.”

I shall now discuss a third point, albeit cursorily. De la Costa applies “Malay” even to those in Mainland Southeast Asia, to include the Vietnamese, Laot, Cambodians, Thais, and Burmese. Using the concept of “Austronesian” connects us to two other language families in Southeast Asia, both of them landlocked: the Tai-Kadai, to which Thai and Lao both belong; and the Austro-Asiatic, which includes both Vietnamese and Khmer, Paul Benedict, cited in Bellwood (1985, 113, 116) proposed in 1942 that the three languages came from one stem, as indicated by some shared rooted words. Scholars today continue his linguistic inquiry into what they call “Austro-Tai” (Lee and Clontz 2012). As for the Burmese, they belong to the Sino-Tibetan family of languages, which, for now, is unrelated to the trio above.

Nonlinguistic traits are shared across Austronesian, Austro-Asiatic, and Tai-Kadai. One of these is a bilateral descent system. Bilaterality was the norm among the Vietnamese, an Austro-Asiatic people, before the invasion in the first century BC by the Han Chinese, who imposed patrilineality (O’Harrow 1979). There are other similarities. Before Chinese colonization, the peoples of the Red River Valley of North Vietnam made huge drums of bronze, the so-called Dong-son drums, which they pounded on to imitate frog calls that invoked the rains (Holmgren 1980, 17; Le 1955, 78). Bas-reliefs on the drums depict scenes of everyday life: longhouses with either simple gable roofs or saddle-backed roofs, men in loincloth with headdresses of feathers, sometimes with the beaks of the hornbill bird, and bare-breasted women pounding rice (Bézacier 1955, 27, 29; 1972, 250-51). Such scenes we would have found down to the early half of the twentieth century among the Iban and Dyak of Borneo, or among the Cordilleras of Luzon. Among Austro-Asiatics and Austronesians, the hornbill
bird has been an important signifier of masculinity. Though de la Costa may have been aware of Paul Benedict's theory about the common ancestry of the three linguistic families, he probably did not want to confuse his readers by exposing them to the discussions being carried in his lifetime about Austronesian and its relatives.

Imagining the Spanish Element

The Spanish period is supposed to have been a long midnight, yet, even for non-churchgoing Filipinos, the most luminous social events of their annual lives are Christmas, the Good Friday procession in their hometown, and the town fiesta. Here the Filipino affirms solidarity with the family, the barkada, friends, acquaintances, and the wider community, be this the district, town, or city. These celebrations also become a venue for artistic creativity. Writing in 1947, right after the devastation of World War II, de la Costa described the enthusiasm with which Filipinos celebrated this season ([1947] 2002, 2:10–12).

All our sorrows as a people supposedly began only with the coming of Spain, yet, in the current confrontation with China over the Scarborough Shoal, we show Spanish maps, such as the 1734 map by Pedro Murillo Velarde, SJ, to establish that our territory includes Bajo de Masinloc, also called Scarborough and Panatag. In effect we are using the impact of Spanish colonization to establish our claims as a sovereign state.

Today, all over the country, there is much interest in affirming local heritage as a source of community pride, but certain attitudes

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15 Before turning to the Spanish contribution, let us distinguish between Spanish and Mexican. De la Costa gives the impression that all the influences we received from the Spanish empire were Spanish, most likely because during his lifetime exchanges between Filipino and Mexican scholars were very limited. Since the 1990s, however, such exchanges have multiplied. Today, we know that many things that we thought were Spanish are, in fact, Mexican, that is, a mixture of the Spanish, the American Indian, and the African. For instance, our custom of spending time with our ancestors and even sleeping by their graves on the Day of the Departed is very similar to the Mexican. In Spain, the custom is to pay a short visit to the cemetery to clean the tombstone and lay flowers. De la Costa's formulation has to be further reworded thus: “A nation whose indigenous matrix is both pre-Austronesian and Austronesian, yet with a cultural heritage in part Spanish, in part Mexican.” For purposes of brevity, I shall focus only on the Spanish contribution in general.
prevent its taking off. To cite a personal experience, in 2013 when I visited the Museo it Akean in 2013, the exhibition on Aklan history and culture skipped the near entirety of the Spanish period to focus only on the Philippine Revolution and the role of Aklan's 19 Martyrs. It was silent about how the devotion to the Santo Niño, the key icon of Aklan, became so widespread, or about how the pina cloth, Aklan's world-famous product, came about, or even the significance of the museum building, built as a school house in 1882.16 Visitors like me were told that it was called the Escuela del Rey because it was founded by King Philip II. Philip II, though, reigned in 1556–98; on the throne when the school house was built was rather King Alfonso XII, who reigned in 1874–85.

These omissions were due to attitudes about history and culture; (1) Spanish history is found nowhere in the curriculum; hence, only Philip II is known, though hardly; (2) Philippine history textbooks since the 1970s skip over much of the Spanish period as irrelevant; and (3) the achievements of Filipinos themselves during the Spanish period, other than organizing uprisings, are underplayed. The narrative of the Museo it Akean, I hope, has changed since.

Let us give another example. The claim is that stone monuments from the Spanish period must have been built with forced labor. This becomes problematic when we consider that often either the oldest or most splendid stone structure in many municipalities dates from the Spanish period. The claim removes visible bases for civic pride. The citizens of Tayabas in Quezon take pride in Malagonlong Bridge, which was constructed in 1841–50 by their ancestors to connect their mountain city with the coast. Hitherto, they had had to brave deep ravines with foaming waters to reach the sea. This tall bridge with five spans was funded by the Franciscan parish priest, Antonio Mateos (Huerta 1863, 225–8).17 A marker commemorates the bridge’s history. However, residents of the nearby barangay claim that children were kidnapped for them to be buried at the foundations. I have heard the

16 Following the 1863 Educational Decree, free instruction on the elementary level became mandatory in Philippine towns and cities (Fox 1965). In such school houses as the one that now houses the Museo were educated a province’s future leaders, some of whom would be active in the revolution.

17 Felix de Huerta reports that Mateos paid for the cost of labor (mano de obra)—most likely using the salary which was given him as a parish priest, and therefore as a government functionary. Church and state were then united.
same tale about missionaries kidnapping children to bury them under stone buildings in Ilocos. And yet the bitter irony is that the missionaries labored precisely to extirpate the indigenous practice which required that a human victim be slain to strengthen either a house or the body of a wealthy but ailing man. De la Costa says that many find it hard to believe that their ancestors may well have taken genuine pride in raising monuments that symbolized their own hometown, and that they gladly worked on these tangible projects together with the Spanish missionary. If we follow de la Costa’s interpretation, we can use these stone monuments to build up civic pride today. If we do not, civic pride loses a very vital support.

But how to interpret the Spanish period while being nationalist? There are two things requiring clarification: (1) there has always been another nationalist option, and one that is more balanced; (2) we may want to avail of anthropology’s emphasis on context (for instance, the cultural ecological context) in looking at the past.

Since the 1896 Revolution, one alternative nationalist option has been to fight Spain’s abuses while praising it for its cultural legacy. Emilio Jacinto, as the Katipunan’s ideologue, wrote in Tagalog for the newspaper Kalayaan, denouncing the inequities in the colonial order. Yet in 1897, in the middle of the armed struggle, he wrote his long eighteen-stanza poem “A la Patria,” addressed to the Motherland, in excellent Spanish. Going to the other faction, one finds Emilio Aguinaldo distinguishing between two Spains—a “dark Spain” and a “noble Spain”—in his preface to a biography of the Batangueño heroine Glicerio Marella. It was against the former that he had fought, he wrote (Zaragoza 1954). Cecilio Apostol was active as a journalist in the war against both Spain and the United States. Writing on Rizal in 1898 on the second anniversary of the martyrdom, after Spain’s power had collapsed, Apostol invokes Rizal thus: “Que si una bala destrozó tu craneo, tu idea en cambio destruyó un imperio” (1941, 75; though a bullet shattered your brain, in turn your idea felled an empire). Yet in “España imperialista,” Apostol thanks “Madre España” for conquering the world anew, but in a peaceful way, through her poetry (197–98).

18 The early missionary Francisco de Sta. Ines reports of the animist Tagalogs of Lucban, Tayabas’s neighbor, that when grievously ill, a man had a new house built to which he transferred. During the inaugural festivities, either an animal or a slave was sacrificed, and the blood smeared on those present (cited in Tormo Sanz 1971, 8).
Though Philippine independence was recognized by the United States in 1946, nationalists like Claro Mayo Recto warned that this independence was a sham. Economically, the Philippines had become dependent upon the United States because of free trade. Politically, the Philippines exercised little control over the military bases that the United States still held. The problem was cultural, argued Recto. Fascinated by the American Dream, many Filipinos imagined that their interests and those of the United States coincided, and that the United States would always rush to defend the Islands in case of attack. For Filipinos to distance themselves from the United States, Recto urged that Filipinos be rooted in the nationalist writings of their heroes—which were composed in Spanish. Nick Joaquin, who wrote solely in English, stressed the importance of valuing both the Spanish legacy and the Philippine Revolution. In his novel The Woman Who Had Two Navels (1961), the hero is an ailing general who had fought against both Spain and the United States and whose ideals cannot be appreciated by younger English-speaking Filipinos because of the linguistic gap.

Though de la Costa does not explicitly use the anti-imperialist language of Joaquin and Recto, his determination to show the complexity of Spanish behavior springs from the same intent—to keep the Filipino in touch with the achievements of his own ancestors—even under Spanish dominance. Although he grants that the Americans instituted free universal education, free trade, and democracy, he criticizes them for projecting the idea that only the American way was superior and for refusing to honor, in the schools, the excellent Filipino literature that had been written in Spanish ([n.d.] de la Costa 2002, 2:280).

But what theoretical approach could we use to study both the Spanish and indigenous periods, while remaining nationalist? Often the information we get about both periods seems strange and unflattering. De la Costa does not propose a theory. Instead, he shows the complexity of a phenomenon. For instance, in their efforts to resettle parishioners around the church, the missionaries collided with encomenderos who feared that this would disrupt the accustomed ways of their followers who preferred to live in dispersal. The common view that state and the church collaborated to “hamlet” Filipinos, as the American military did in Vietnam, is simply not true. To shore up de la Costa’s approach, I would like to suggest the anthropological practice of contextualizing practices, for instance, with a cultural ecological perspective. Contextualizing past practices goes well with Hegel’s running theme, namely,
that all knowledge, whether historical or personal, unfolds in stages because what we see and know is always from a perspective.

I find a cultural ecological perspective, such as that proposed by Marvin Harris (1979), pertinent. It shows how the interplay between the dominant means of production used by a society and the existing material environment influences that society's political formation and worldview. Given the deep forests, the hilly terrain, and the scarce population, it made sense that our ancestors practiced swidden. However, swidden does not produce a surplus that can support an urban center, nor can it be practiced forever on the same piece of land without the soil hardening. In the absence of irrigation, swidden plots are abandoned after three years to enable the forest to overgrow it and transform it, within a decade, into fertile land once more. Hence, either the settlement is seminomadic rather than sedentary or, even if sedentary because the forests are luxuriant, must live in dispersal rather than in dense clusters (Geertz 1963). Familiar with anthropology, William Henry Scott, a historian who came after de la Costa, explains in detail why sixteenth-century Visayans, who lived in such lush forests, resorted to swidden (Scott 1994, 36ff). At the same time, this same cultural ecological perspective enables us to understand why the Spanish missionaries insisted on changing the style of cultivation. They came from a peninsula which had been using the plow for at least a millennium as the economic basis of their towns and cities.

What might the cultural ecological perspective reveal about "forced labor"? In precapitalist societies all over the world prior to the nineteenth century, money was scarce (Webber and Wildavsky 1986). The uniqueness of capitalism in world history, as no less than Karl Marx ([1857–58] 1973, 103) pointed out, is that it has made monetary exchange the most important form of exchange in the world economy. Previously, because of the dearth of money, the state collected taxes not only in monetary form but also in kind (e.g., farm products) and in labor services. The more technical term for taxation in the form of labor services would be "statute labor" or "corvée labor" rather than "forced labor."19 In an economy where money was limited in circulation, how else could the state construct roads, fortifications, and public buildings? We admire the temples of our Asian neighbors

19 Fukuyama (2011, 117, 180, 298, 349, 383) cites "corvée" as occurring in India under Ashoka, in imperial China, in sixteenth-century Hungary, in feudal France. All these societies were noncapitalist.
while decrying the nineteenth-century churches in our midst. But those temples relied on corvée labor.\textsuperscript{20}

While corvée labor is not wrong per se given the precapitalist economic context, de la Costa points out that the Jesuits, in fact, refused the offer to use corvée labor, preferring instead to solicit contributions. It is noteworthy that as money became increasingly available in late nineteenth-century Philippines, as indicated by the inauguration in 1851 of Banco Español-Filipino, now the Bank of the Philippine Islands, the use of corvée labor was shortened in 1880 from a month to two weeks in a year (Robles 1969, 239–42).

What, then, is dated in Fr. De la Costa’s ideas about identity, and what continues to be relevant? His use of “Malay” to define the indigenous substratum of our identity is outdated. We should be thinking of ourselves as “Austronesian-speakers.” The term highlights our cultural links with Malaysians, Indonesians, Micronesians, and Polynesians. On the other hand, de la Costa’s defense of intercultural mixing is relevant. Though we should aim for a better term than “hybridity,” de la Costa responded to a source of anxiety that continues to haunt many educated Filipinos today. De la Costa had no qualms about affirming our similarities with Malaysians and Indonesians and, in the same breath, affirming the value of our Western heritage in two forms—the Spanish and the American. Why, indeed, should we fear being different? However, fears hound educated Filipinos for another reason. They are anxious about affirming Spanish influence because, thanks to our school curricula and the media, Spaniards are supposedly monsters of greed and cruelty. By creating an alternative image of Spaniards, which some of our prominent revolutionaries shared, de la Costa shows the value of both the Spanish contribution and ultimately our own cultural identity as a fusion of influences. To reinforce his position, I proposed examining the context of any historical period.

\textsuperscript{20} This practice was abused. For instance, in predemocratic, monarchical Thailand, the heavy use of corvée led to a decline in the arts and industries. Three months of the year were given by all able-bodied men to the monarchy in the construction of “roads, canals, fortresses, pagodas” (Lasker 1950, 191).
Conclusion

Let us cite the eulogy written by three British military historians of Manila (Connaughton, Pimlott, and Anderson 1995) on the eve of World War II as being a world city. [De la Costa was then a young man]. Aside from the Chinese, Manila attracted the Japanese; aside from the Spaniard, the Scots and the Germans. But it did more. While Istanbul and Singapore bridged Asia and Europe, Manila bridged Asia, Europe, plus North America and South America. Though many cities were destroyed in Europe and Asia during World War II, Manila's destruction was particularly painful because of this singularity which made it “part of the international heritage” (14). The continuing tragedy though, according to them, is that the rest of the world is not aware of what was lost. Unfortunately, this observation is also true of many of us Filipinos.

As a step toward raising appreciation for our unique but underestimated identity, allow me to conclude with a paraphrase of de la Costa, though without his elegance:

We must steel ourselves against the shock of finding in our part of the world a nation whose matrix derives from both pre-Austronesian and Austronesian cultures, yet with cultural influences drawn from three continents: from Asia, largely the Chinese but also the Malay, the Arabic and others; from Europe, largely the Spanish but also others; from America, largely the Anglo-American and the Mexican but also others, for this nation will be ourselves.

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21 The Japanese in pre-1941 Manila were bazaar-owners, small entrepreneurs who owned shaved ice parlors, gardeners, carpenters, according to my parents and their contemporaries. A classic example of Scottish presence is Joseph McMicking, who conceptualized Makati for his in-laws the Ayulas as a suburban city with all the requisite facilities. As for the Germans, Pio Andrade Jr., who is working on a history of perfume-making in the Philippines, says that one area where the Germans left an imprint was in pharmaceuticals. They initiated the export of ylang-ylang extract to France. Examples of German family names in the islands are Boire, Zobel, Zuellig, Kraut, Hahn.

22 Other Asians who came were Christian Arabs from Lebanon (Hemady, Chabat, Yismael) and Iraq (Joseph, probably originally “Yusuf”). The French and the Irish also came, represented by the Burke-Mialhe and their well-conserved Escolta building. At the Escolta, one favorite shop down to the 1960s was La Estrella del Norte, owned by French Jews, the Lévis.
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