

## RESEARCH NOTES

### Perspectives on Filipino Clannishness

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In a public lecture in March 1969 I made a preliminary report on certain aspects of lowland Philippine social organization.<sup>1</sup> The data discussed at that time were from three communities, two in Marilao, Bulacan, and one in Canaman, Camarines Sur. The question raised was the extent to which the residents of those communities could be called "clannish," or kin-oriented. And it was concluded that they were much less clannish than they themselves thought.

Here I shall go over much the same ground again — for a few paragraphs at least. For I cannot discuss clannishness unless the reader knows what I understand by it, nor can this be achieved until I have explained the view of social organization which my notion of clannishness supposes. With the preliminaries over, however, we can discuss some newly analyzed data from three Marilao communities and give a new answer to the question of clannishness in the rural and semi-urban Philippines.

#### *The Social-Alliance View of Social Organization*

When we speak of clannishness in the Philippines, there is one interpretation of the term that can be ruled out at once. In the literal sense of the word, there are no native clans here, no unilineal descent groups.<sup>2</sup> The only kind of kinship structure documented to date in the archipelago is one in which children are considered equally related to the kinsmen of both

parents, the so-called bilateral kinship system that is found widespread in southeast Asia and, indeed, in Europe and the United States.

The clannishness Filipinos have in mind when they generalize about themselves seems to refer rather to a positive, favoring bias toward kinsmen — toward those related by blood, marriage, or shared participation in some ritual like baptism or matrimony. It is of this kind of clannishness I speak. However, before I describe it, permit me to explain four aspects of the social scene which play important roles in clannishness as I define it. These four components are (a) the social universe, (b) social allies, (c) voluntary action partners, and (d) patterns of recruitment. I shall discuss each in turn.

#### *The social universe*

Every individual has his own social universe — all the people known to him, however vaguely, and regardless of how they are related to him. It is characteristic of this ego-based universe that it is personally distinctive, never exactly the same for any two people. Further, it is constantly changing both in quantity, because of the addition and subtraction of members, and in quality, because of their changing relations to the central figure. For in addition to changes of address, occupation, and interest, all of which make the continuation of some relationships most improbable, social constancy is undermined

by the inexorable and often unconscious tendency of human beings to reduce their mental and emotional baggage whenever they can. There is probably a limit, for that matter, on the number of friends with whom the average person can feel and act even moderately close.<sup>3</sup>

One's universe changes in quality as well. The boy who is now your brother's gang-mate, or kabarkada, may someday be your husband, and your boss's niece may yet become your daughter-in-law. Moreover, any member of the social universe may simultaneously have various and even conflicting roles toward oneself.

But all roles, with their sets of rights and duties, are weighted by society and the individual, given more or less importance. In the abstract, at the so-called structural level, some roles demand more loyalty and promise more support than others do. A favor asked by my blood brother, for instance, should be granted more readily than the same favor requested by a third cousin. Similarly a townmate has the edge over other petitioners who live in the same province as I do, but not in my town.

To summarize, every individual has a social universe which is distinctively his own, constantly changing in size and content, its members playing various and often multiple roles in his regard. Each such role promises, in the abstract, more or less support to the central figure, and is empowered to demand in return a greater or smaller share of his loyalty and energies. One is surrounded at every moment, in other words, by people who are potentially or in fact his *allies*, people he can count on to a greater or smaller degree.

#### *Social allies*

We cannot count equally on the support of every one in our social universe. In fact we would probably hesitate to approach many people we know for even the simplest of assistance beyond such ordinary courtesies as the time of day, street directions, or a light for a cigarette. It is common experience that there are even some kinsmen who might just as well be complete strangers, for all the help we can expect from them.

This kind of selectivity I first observed and

documented in 1957, when I was living in Canaman, Camarines Sur, trying to understand the social structure of that community. It was there it first occurred to me that "relatives are important but the importance is relative" (Lynch 1957: 7; see also Lynch 1959: 49-55). For I was much impressed by the selectivity, the eclecticism, of the taga-Canaman. Not only that: I was delighted to discover that the people were well aware of this feature of their lives, and could talk about it.

Of all the people in his social universe, the taga-Canaman sees some as really on his side, and he calls them his "own people," his *sadiring tao*. These are the individuals from whom, for one reason or another, favor is reasonably and securely expected, or has actually been received on some past occasion. The original relationship between myself and a particular *sadiring tao*, or ally, might have been that of cousin, or neighbor, sibling-in-baptism, employee, townmate, or acquaintance. But by some circumstance, contrived or accidental, the two of us become involved with each other, united at least by a basic bond of trust and obligation, significant to greater or smaller degree to each of us, but acknowledged by both to exist. And when each of us is asked in turn if he considers the other to be one of his *sadiring tao*, one of us at least — less probably both of us — will answer Yes.<sup>4</sup> Allies we shall remain until some circumstance, such as conflicting loyalties, or a moving out of town, cuts or withers the relationship.

Having studied the alliance system of Canaman, I was aware of the possibility of some similar social arrangement operating in other parts of the lowland Philippines. In the latter part of 1966 we began (as part of the Ateneo-Penn State Basic Research Program) a three-year study of the poblacion and two barrios of Marilao, Bulacan. The likely presence of an alliance system similar to Canaman's first came to our attention over a year later, in the course of studying kinship categories used by the people of Marilao. When informants were asked to complete the sentence, "A *kamag-anak* is a kind of . . ." (*Ang kamaganak ay isang uri ng . . .*), a common response was *taong may kaugnayan sa akin*, "people connected to me." Investigation

of the way the terms *kaugnayan* and *kaugnáy* were used made it seem very likely that *kaugnay* was the *taga-Marilao's* way of saying *sadiring tao*.

Probing this possibility, we prepared for each of our communities — Poblacion, Tabing Ilog, and Loma de Gato — a list of household heads and their houses representing a randomly chosen 20 per cent of the heads and spouses in the community. Then we sought out the 161 informants we had regularly consulted in the past. Using the terminology they themselves had taught us, we asked them, when a name (or *palayaw*) was read, to identify the individual as *kaugnay* or not. For those identified as *kaugnay*, we asked a second question, namely, what kind of connection there was between them. Once it was clear to them who the particular individual was, respondents had no apparent difficulty in replying to these questions.

To summarize, on grounds of observation in Marilao there is every reason to believe that the *kaugnay* is the Marilao counterpart of Canaman's *sadiring tao*, described earlier. In both cases, one Bikol and the other Tagalog, there is recognized the same social category: people close to an individual, people whom he trusts and members of one's social universe, vary in number and identity with the passage of time and change of circumstance. However, they represent only a relatively small portion of the social universe, constituting at any one time one's *sadiring tao*, one's *kaugnay*, or social allies.

#### *Voluntary action partners*

Just as one's allies generally represent only a small part of a person's social universe, so the people he freely interacts with are, for the most part, a selection from his social allies. In other words, the average individual knows many people, feels close to several score of them, but deals voluntarily and meaningfully with relatively few. Those who qualify for inclusion in the final category I call the individual's voluntary action partners. Who they are can be ascertained, in part at least, by behaviorally oriented questions about the informant's transactions in certain culturally important activities, such as lending and borrowing money, giving and asking small necessities, seeking advice, and so on.

#### *Recruitment patterns*

Selection of voluntary action partners generally results from a two-stage operation in each of which recruitment criteria are invoked. The principles involved are only imperfectly understood, for one can choose for manifold antecedent considerations. To name but a few of them, there are conscious and unconscious norms, cultural expectations, personal idiosyncracies, unpredictable and possibly unique circumstances, conflicting and supporting loyalties. All and more, or perhaps only a few, of these factors will be at work in a particular case. We postpone consideration of recruitment patterns in any detail, settling for a discussion of a few of the major variables that seem to be involved.

#### *Behavioral Definition of Kin-Orientedness*

We now have a framework within which to attempt a description in operational terms of what it means to be kin-biased, kin-oriented, or clannish. The social-alliance model that I have sketched for you allows for this kind of bias at two points: first, in the recruitment of social allies, and, second, in the recruitment of voluntary action partners. With this in mind, it is clear we can reasonably define a kin-oriented (or clannish) individual as one about whom one or more of these propositions are true.

1. Of his social allies, most are kinsmen;
2. Of his voluntary action partners, most are kinsmen;
3. The percentage of kin among his action partners is significantly greater than the percentage of kin among his social allies.

Each of these statements expresses a different kind of clannishness. The first two concern the absolute numerical superiority of kinsmen among one's social allies (Proposition 1) and action partners (Proposition 2). Of the first kind of person we can say, "The people he trusts are mostly kinsmen"; and of the second, "He deals mostly with kinsmen." The third proposition is more complicated, since it takes into account the number of kin and nonkin available to an individual as possible action partners. But our concern here is only with Proposition 1, the preponderance of kinsmen among social allies.

### *Clannishness in Marilao*

The data I discuss here we owe to the long-suffering patience of 161 randomly selected household heads residing in three communities of Marilao, Bulacan, a municipality some 35 kilometers north of the Bonifacio Monument, on the new North Superhighway. The poblacion has some 2500 people; barrio Tabing Ilog, which adjoins it, has about 1200; while the residents of barrio Loma de Gato, a good 15 minutes by dirt road and jeepney from the poblacion, number just over 1000.

### *Intercommunity comparisons*

It is striking that, despite these differences in community size, there is almost no difference in the average (median) number of kaugnay recognized by the people we interviewed. The median for the poblacion is 80 household heads; for Tabing Ilog, 76; and for Loma de Gato, 83. This seems to suggest the working of some kind of psychodynamics that limits the average number of fellow community members that will be recognized and reported as being close.

Though informants tend on the average to name the same number of kaugnay, the average percentage of kinsmen among these allies differs greatly from place to place, the trend being from a high percentage in Loma de Gato to a relatively low percentage in the poblacion. Thus of the 31 informants from Loma, half have percentages in the 97–100 range; for none of them do kinsmen represent fewer than 50 percent of their social allies, the median being 88 percent. This contrasts with 61 percent for Tabing Ilog and 46 for the poblacion. Indeed, of the 87 informants in the latter community only one-fourth identify over 70 percent of their kaugnay as kinsmen. In both Tabing Ilog and the poblacion, informants are well distributed over the percentage scale — there is ample variation in their replies — while in Loma they cluster at the top end of the scale. Briefly then, and in terms of Proposition 1, residents of Loma de Gato show a strong kin bias; those of Tabing Ilog show a less decided lean in the same direction. Poblacion people lean the other way, though they hover near the midpoint.

### *Correlations*

To be satisfied merely with measures of central tendency is to run the risk of doing “bar-graph ethnography,” a kind of story-telling that fills the pages of many anthropological monographs. It abounds in generalizations about all members of the community it describes, contrasting thereby with “normal-curve ethnography,” which is alert to the important individual and subgroup differences which are invariably present in any community.

The normal-curve ethnographer was our model, so we assumed that differences between Marilao Poblacion and its two barrios would be explained in part by variation in the proportion of different kinds of people found in each community.<sup>5</sup> The next question was what kind of people, found in large or small numbers in a community, might affect the median percentage of kinsmen among social allies. It occurred to us that the people we were looking for might be, on the one hand, “oldtimers” who had been born in their communities or moved into them in childhood, and, on the other, “newcomers” who had arrived after reaching 12 years of age. Our reasoning was simply that people who were from the community, who had their roots in it, so to speak, would be likely to have at hand a pool of kinsmen greater than that to which any newcomer would have access. We thought that the percentage of kinsmen among allies would be significantly related to the proportion that the individual’s kinsmen represented of his entire, locally present social universe.

We first tried out this idea by dividing our informants into two groups, newcomers and oldtimers. The results were promising: among newcomers the intercommunity differences disappeared — all had relatively low percentages of kinsmen among their allies; among the oldtimers, however, the differences remained.<sup>6</sup> We had not yet found why oldtimers from Tabing Ilog and Loma de Gato were more kin-oriented than their opposite numbers from the poblacion.

In the search for significantly correlated variables we concentrated on Tabing Ilog and the poblacion, since the relative lack of variation in percentage of kinsmen made the Loma data useless for this purpose. Three interrelated variables

eventually emerged as significant; namely, (a) the informant's years of residence in the poblacion, Tabing Ilog, or Loma de Gato; (b) whether one, both, or neither of the informant's parents had been born in his community; and (c) the number of kinsmen, neighbors, and other recognized and recalled interactors the informant had mentioned who were currently residing in the community. All of these variables are correlated significantly (at the 0.05 or 0.01 level) with the percentage of kinsmen among the informant's social allies. Further, when the third listed variable is restricted to kinsmen, the likelihood is great that its correlation with the dependent variable will become even more significant.

### Conclusion

Every worthwhile bit of evidence we have points to the fact that one of the biggest reasons behind clannishness, as defined by Proposition 1, is simply the *relative availability of kinsmen*. The higher their percentage among the local population, the higher their representation in the informant's social universe; the more of them that have a place there, the greater the number that will tend to appear among the kaugnay. Since this list is limited in number, tending to average about 80, any increase in the number of kinsmen contained in it will mean a rise in the percentage they represent of the whole.

This is of course not the end of the investigation; it is only the beginning, and a small beginning at that. But what makes this kind of study especially gratifying is the knowledge that any contribution we can make to the understanding and management of clannishness is well worth the effort. For it will assist this nation of ours in the continuing process of modernization in which it is so totally engaged.

### Notes

This article is the slightly revised version of a paper presented at the National Convention of the Philippine Sociological Society, December 6, 1969, at the Ateneo de Manila Law School Auditorium, Manila. The research on which the paper is based has been a continuing interest of the author since 1956. Grants which have helped support the overall study have come from

the Ford Foundation's Foreign Area Training Fellowship Program (1956-58) and from the Ateneo-Penn State Basic Research Program (1966-69). The latter program was financed in part by the United States Office of Naval Research, with the Pennsylvania State University as prime contractor (Nonr-656[37]).

The author, who is a professor of anthropology (on research leave), Ateneo de Manila, specified that his paper should appear, not among the articles, but with the explicitly more tentative "Research Notes."

1. Lecture delivered March 5, 1969, at the San Miguel Auditorium, Makati. This was the ninth presentation in a series entitled "The Foundations and Character of Filipino Society" sponsored by the Research Foundation in Philippine Anthropology and Archaeology, Inc. The lecture, entitled "The anatomy of clannishness," is unpublished.

2. Among the Chinese, of course, there are such patrilineal groups. Further, patrilineality (more correctly, patrilocality plus virilocality) functions as an organizing principle of Tasaday bands. Tasaday kinship terms are nonetheless bilateral, as elsewhere in the native Philippines (Fernandez and Lynch 1972: 286-87).

3. As will be seen below, social allies tend to average about 80 in number, regardless of community size.

4. In Marilao, reciprocity of recognized kaugnay relationships is the exception rather than the rule. The range of community averages for such relationships is 12-20 percent; no individual ever has more than 52 percent of them.

5. For a similar approach, see Frank Lynch, Susan M. Bennett, and Linda D. Nelson (1966).

6. The difference between the poblacion (median percentage category, 50-59) and Tabing Ilog (80-89) was significant at the 0.01 level; between the poblacion and Loma de Gato (90-100), at the 0.001 level. The Tabing Ilog - Loma de Gato difference was not statistically significant.

### References

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