

The Peasants' Notion of Peace: *Kinabuhi sa Kinaiyahan ug Gugma sa Isig ka Tawo*

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Abstract

Peasants occupy the lowest stratum in many societies. They are often marginalized whose voices are left neglected. In the Philippines, peasants comprise a large chunk of its population. They are construed as vulnerable to rebellious peasant movements since in many Philippine countryside, one can easily see the reality of the violent contrast between the wealthy few and the poverty stricken masses. This reality served as main causes for periodic peasant revolts during the Spanish period as well as the Hukbalahap rebellion during the Second World War until the late 1940s until the early 1950s.¹ Yet, in a farming community in Baybay, Leyte, peasants manifest just the opposite. They live peaceful lives. This paper explores how peasants understand the notion of peace as they live their lives as tillers of the land. Using the method of ethnography, this study aims to investigate how the peasant farmers understand peace in relation to their lives as directly influenced by the behavior of the natural environment as well

¹ Adam Augustyn, Patricia Bauer, and Brian Duignan, eds., "Hukbalahap Rebellion," Encyclopaedia Britannica, accessed October 2, 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/event/Hukbalahap-Rebellion>.

as examines into the aspect of how the farmers construe peace in relation to the aspect on how they relate with others as members of the same coconut farming community. This study then concludes that peasant farmers understand peace as a result of a reciprocated action between them and the natural environment. This study also concludes that said understanding of peace are aligned with the notion of justice which has something to do with the humanity of laws and with the totality of the existential relationship of man with his fellowmen.

Keywords: Inter-personal relations, farming community, care for nature.

Introduction

Philippine history has manifested that a number of revolutionary activities in the country are participated by a number of peasants. From the independence movements of the Spanish colonial period up to the Japanese occupation of the Philippines, peasants are mostly involved. This fact is mentioned by the Filipino historian Reynaldo Ileto in his book *Pasyon and the Revolution*² where peasants rise against the Spanish colonizers as inspired by *Pasyon* as well as the emergence of the Hukbalahap in the 1940s which all started as a peasant dissident movement who raised arms against their landlords and evolved into a revolutionary movement against the Japanese fascists.³ The peasants comprise a large chunk of the population of the Philippine society. They are often marginalized and seldom given the chance to air their voices and feelings. The Ateneo de Manila University Institute of Social Order agrees to this claim since the institute construe peasants as those that belong to the marginalized sectors of Philippine society who need to be liberated from the existing unjust social structures in the Society.⁴ One of the reasons for

² Reynaldo Ileto, *Pasyon and Revolution: Popular Movements in the Philippines, 1840-1910* (Quezon City, Philippines: Ateneo De Manila University Press, 1979).

³ Quennie Anne Palafox, "Soldiers of the Masses: The Nationalistic Struggle of Hukbalahap," National Historical Commission of the Philippines (Republic of the Philippines, September 6, 2012), <http://nhcp.gov.ph/>

⁴ This definition of "marginalized people" is given by the Ateneo de Manila University Institute of Social Order as discernible in the Ateneo de Manila University website.

this is that peasants are construed to occupy the lower stratum of social classes construed to be existing in the Philippines. With this, it is quite discernible that Filipino notions of peasants are, more often than not, similar to the long-held definition of the said term. This long held definition of peasant is mentioned by Carlos P. Romulo in one of his writings, "I Am A Filipino", as referring to a group of Filipinos who render hard labor to the land they are tilling and who have always been the recipient of the losing end of the bargain. This understanding of the word peasants also finds semblance in Schuren's definition of the term.⁵ According to Shuren⁶, for a long time 'peasants' were defined as rural cultivators whose most important means of livelihood was subsistence agriculture (understood as production for self-consumption). Their activities were seen as centered on the rural village/community, which was perceived as a relatively homogeneous universe with a distinct culture. Thus, peasants and peasant communities were representative of a specific socio-cultural type. Looking at Shuren's definition, many farming communities in the country are representative of the said definition. Filipino peasant farmers live in rural communities surrounded by their farms from which they earn their livelihood. Filipino peasants are tillers of the land, and hence, their lives are, more often than not, dependent on the generosity and bounty of the natural environment.

In one of the countryside of the province of Leyte lies a coconut farming community whose definition of being peasants corresponds almost perfectly to the traditional peasant definition of a person who owns or rents a small piece of land grows crops, raise animals, has low income and not very well educated.⁷ This community refers to the coconut farming community in the highlands of Barangay Kambonggan in the City of Baybay. These peasant farmers are generally dependent on coconut farming related activities. Yet, there is one thing in common among these peasant farmers. Most of them do not own the lands they are tilling or working on. Worst, some of them are not even tenants of lands where they have security of tenure over their labor to the farm they are tilling. Many of them are hired

⁵ This definition of Filipino peasant is taken from Carlos P. Romulo's classic speech "I Am a Filipino" derived from the website of Malacañang Palace Presidential Museum.

⁶ U Shuren, "Re-Conceptualizing the Post-Peasantry: Household Strategies in Mexican Ejidos," *European Review of Latin American and Caribbean Studies*, 2003, pp. 47-62.

⁷ Cf. Cambridge Dictionary (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University

laborers. When they climb coconut trees in the process of preparing copra once in every quarter, non-tenants receive only a fee of five pesos per coconut tree climbed or they receive a compensation of five pesos (when the buying price of copra is low) or eight to ten pesos (when the buying price of the copra is high) per kilo of copra meat if they are the ones working the whole process.⁸

Looking at the essence of their status as coconut farmers, they are peasants in the strictest sense of the word. In fact, the Kambonggan coconut farmers fit Shanin's (1971) recognition of a peasant which refers to an agricultural laborer who does not own a his farm, a rural craftsman holding little or no land at all as well as a peasant-worker in modern industrial communities. This view of the essence of being peasants is very much present with how the coconut farmers in Barangay Kambonggan live and work. With regards to their involvement in society, these peasants are more concerned with how they deal with others and how to make ends meet at the end of the day as they live their lives rather than being involved in popular peasant activities like participating in revolutionary activities. After all, the present situation in the outskirts of the City of Baybay in the province of Leyte where Barangay Kambonggan is situated is generally peaceful. Hence, discontent may not be strongly felt among these coconut peasant farmers for many, if not most, of them strive to live peaceful and quiet lives.⁹

With the things mentioned above, said peasant farmers are generally peaceful individuals and seem generally contented with their lives. Many of them hang out together after a day's work, drink tuba (coconut wine) and share stories that they find amusing and enjoyable. These kinds of peasants do not belong to what Frantz Fanon refer to as revolutionary individuals that have nothing to lose and everything to gain where they are starving and exploited and have discovered that violence pays.¹⁰ Yet, peasants should not be generally labeled as revolutionary even if a number of them are. Nevertheless, the Kambonggan peasant farmers are generally peaceful as their barangay records manifest violent activities involving them are more

⁸ Guiraldo C. Fernandez, "Integration of Ethnolinguistic Peace Perspectives for Peace Education in the Introductory Philosophy Course for K to 12 Senior High School" (dissertation, University of San Carlos, 2017).

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ A Hamza, "Peasants and the Revolution," *Socialist Register* 2 (1965): pp. 241-276.

of an exception rather than a rule. This study then looks into how the peasant farmers of Barangay Kambonggan, Baybay City, Leyte construe the notion of peace. Hence, this study strives to understand the notion of peace among the peasant farmers of Barangay kambonggan, Baybay, Leyte. In specifically addressing this matter, this study focuses on asking the question of how the peasant farmers understand peace in relation to their lives as directly influenced by the behavior of the natural environment. Not only that, this study also investigates into the aspect of how the farmers construe peace in relation to the aspect on how they relate with others as members of the same coconut farming community. With the two questions at hand, this study hopes to come up with a holistic view of peace from the lens the marginalized - a people who are generally construed as tillers of the land.

Methodology

This study uses the qualitative research method ethnography. This research aligned itself with Creswell's understanding of ethnography in which the farmer peasants' notions of peace were construed by delving into the meaning of behavior, language, and aspects of how they live, relate, and interact with each other in their respective communities.¹¹ For this reason, this study shaped its inquiry in line with the paradigm of social constructivism. It was from this purview that respondents understood the world in which they live, and in the process, built up meanings out of their individual experiences as they interacted with others.¹² In this connection, this study then employed the framework of Virgilio Enriquez¹³ to bring out the stories and social consciousness of the peasants on their perspective of peace. After all, a methodology based on culture would naturally draw out a notion of peace that is also based on culture itself. Enriquez calls this "*makapilipinong pananaliksik* (Filipino method of doing ethnography)." The "*makapilipinong pananaliksik*" allows a

¹¹ John Cresswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*, 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publication, 2007).

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Virgilio Enriquez, *Pagbabagong Dangal: Indigenous Psychology and Cultural Empowerment* (Quezon City, Philippines: Akademya ng Kultura at Sikolohiyang Pilipino, 1994).

researcher to enter into the hearts and minds of farmers through unstructured conversations between the researcher and the research partners themselves. This is done through “*pagtanongtanong*” or “*pagpangotana*” in Sinugbuanon (asking questions) in an environment of food sharing (kaon-kaon) with the family and/or the community. To carry this out, the use of the respondents’ language has utmost significance. After all, to be able to understand a people is to understand their way of life, their beliefs, and values as shown in their language and the way they live in society.¹⁴ Hence, in the conduct of the research, the researcher uses the vernacular in the several sessions of focus group discussion (FGD) sessions.

In expounding this, Sikolohiyang Pilipino, a book edited by Pe-Pua, enumerated Enriquez’s eight steps which are described as follows: 1.) *Pakikitungo* (transactions/civility with; level of amenities), 2.) *Pakikisalamuha* (Interaction with), 3.) *Pakikilahok* (Joining/participation with), 4.) *Pakikibagay* (In consonance with/in accordance with; level of conforming), 5.) *Pakikisama* (Being along with; level of adjusting), 6.) *Pakikipagpalagayang loob* (Being in rapport/understanding/acceptance with; level of mutual trust), 7.) *Pakikisangkot* (Level of active involvement), and 8.) *Pakikiisa* (Being-one with; level of fusion, oneness and full trust).¹⁵ Since some of the farmers are people whom the researcher has known for the past five years, this study will only apply five of the eight steps from which Enriquez suggests in his model. After the preliminary data were gathered from the respondents, a preliminary validation of data was conducted to correct whatever information, words, or concepts had been missed during the first session of “*pagtanong-tanong*” or “*pagpangutana*”. In the process, partial findings made by the researcher were presented to the respondents in order for them to verify whether or not the researcher had really captured the essence of the respondents’ views in their entirety through their responses in the interview and focus group discussion sessions. Since the respondents of this study are partners of the researcher in attaining the objectives, the final draft was presented to the respondents for their appraisal.

¹⁴ C. Paz, *Ginhawa Kapalaran Dalamhati: Essays on Well Being, Opportunity/Destiny, and Aguish.* (Quezon City, Philippines: University of the Philippines Press, 2008).

¹⁵ R. Pe-Pua, ed., *Sikolohiyang Pilipino* (Quezon City, Philippines: University of the Philippines Press, 2011).

After the data were gathered from at least three sessions of focus group discussions and personal interviews or until such time that the interviews and focus group discussions reaches the saturation point, they were treated properly by grouping them according to classifications. There were around 9 respondents in this study whose age very much vary from one another. All of them are males since the coconut farmers in Barangay Kambonggan are all males. In the interpretation of data, this study utilized the method introduced by Corbin and Strauss.¹⁶ Since the aim of this study was to identify peasant's notions of peace, such words were identified, categorized, and written on colored cards. This process of card-color coding that assigned farmers' different words for peace into a specific color followed Corbin and Strauss's¹⁷ method of analysis by naming and categorizing phenomena through close examination of data. In the course of this process, data were broken down into discrete parts, closely examined, compared for differences and similarities, and followed by the raising of questions about the phenomena as reflected in the data.¹⁸ With this process, farmers' understanding of peace were questioned or explored which led to new knowledge and discovery. Hence, from the many words for peace generated from respondents, this study had come up with two major peace concepts. These concepts were classified after careful analysis of data derived from the responses of research partners themselves. They were *kinabuhi sa kinaiyahan* (life in relation to the Environment), *gugma sa isig ka tawo* (love for fellowmen).

Results and Discussions

The farmers' concept of kinabuhi sa kinaiyahan (life with the natural environment) as expressed in the term pagbulig sa panahon

¹⁶ J. Corbin and A. Strauss, *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*, 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publication, 2008).

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

Peace can be defined from a variety of ways. It can refer to a society or a relationship that is operating harmoniously and without violent conflict, the absence of hostility, the existence of healthy or newly healed interpersonal or international relationships, safety in matters of social or economic welfare or the acknowledgment of equality, and fairness in political relationships. In international relations, peacetime is the absence of any war or conflict. For the peasant farmers of Barangay Kambonggan, Baybay, Leyte, their understanding of peace, is in one way or another, not greatly influenced by the occurrence of conflicts and wars. Yet, the notion of peace according to the peasant farmers of Barangay Kambonggan has something to do with their lives as closely dependent on the behavior of the natural environment. In the vernacular, this is what the peasant farmers refer to as *Kinabuhi sa Kinaiyahan* (life with the natural environment). As tillers of the land they are constantly hoping that the natural environment favors their endeavors otherwise their efforts would be put in vain since their lives are constantly confronted with the behavior of the natural environment. For the peasant farmers, they have to be in harmony rather than to acquire mastery over the natural environment. If the peasant farmers are in harmony with nature, they find no cause for conflict with the natural environment since their acts are guided with the principle of looking after the wellbeing of the natural environment. Hence, the peasant farmers are one with the assumption that their lives would be better off and peaceful if Mother Nature's behavior towards them are favorable and that the natural environment would give them the right conditions for them to be effective in their work which would lead to a bountiful harvest. The peasant farmers refer to this as *Pagbulig sa Panahon* (favorable weather conditions). *Pagbulig* means to cooperate¹⁹ in Baybayanon-Sinugbuanon while *panahon* simply means weather condition. *Pagbulig sa panahon*, then, in Baybayanon-Sinugbuanon language means favorable weather conditions that nature gives to farmers. It entails the occurrence of the right climate that enable farmers' crops to grow healthy and coconut trees to bear much fruits. As Felisisimo Aldiano, one of the peasant farmer respondents, has it:

Ang pagbulig sa panahon mahulagwaysa maayong pagtubo ug maayo sa mga pananom. Igoigo nga panahaon nga pabor sa

¹⁹ P A Ortega, "Visayan Cebuano - English Dictionary," in Visayan Cebuano - English Dictionary (Cebu City, Philippines: Ropredave Book Supply, 2014).

*among pag uma. Walay bagyo ug uban nga kasamok sa kinaiyahan ug sa among panginabuhi isip mga mag uuma.*²⁰

(Mother Nature's support for farmers' endeavors can be described through the healthy growth of their plants. A well-balanced weather that suit farmers' means of making a living. It connotes the absence of storms and other forms of weather disturbance that could bring trouble to farmers' lives in relation to their work).

The other words that peasant farmers use to refer to peace are "*igoigo nga panahon*" (right weather conditions). *Igoigo* is the vernacular for exact, substantial, fair, or moderate²¹ while *panahon* could also mean weather conditions. Therefore, *Igoigo nga panahon* entails a well-balanced climate that suits crop cultivation and production best, and hence, give farmers the opportunity to earn more. This enables them to secure their basic necessities as well as afford some of the little luxuries that life offers. With this, there is a sense of peace in the lives of farmers since they no longer have to worry about food for the family because of the abundance of harvest that comes as a result of favorable weather conditions and a taste of luxury because of the surplus of their harvest. This gives them additional spending opportunities and an ambience of worry-free homes even if it is only temporary in nature. According to Danilo Gonato, a farmer research respondent:

Sa pananom, kung sobrang huwaw, mangadaot ang mga produkto sa pananom. Sa parte sa lubi, mo gagmay ang mga bunga niini. Kung sobra ang kainit sa panahon, mangangamatay ang mga utanon nga tanom ug mangadot ang mga lagutmon sama sa camote ug balanghoy. Sa huwaw, mangalaya ang mga tanom ug di mutubo ang mga otanon. Kung sobra ang uwan, di pud maayo sa uban mga pananom sama sa utanon kay mangalata man sila. Osahay mabanlas ang mga pananom sa sobra nga uwan. Sa miaging baynte ka tuig, daghan kaayo ang bunga sa mga lubi kay di man kaayo init ang ting huwaw ug panagsa ra mubonok ang uwan. Karon, ginagmay na lang kaayo ang bunga sa mga lubi kay kung ting

²⁰ Felisisimo Aldiano is one of the peasant-farmer respondents in this study.

²¹ Ibid.

huwaw, init kaayo ang panahon. Unya kung ting uwan, bunok pud kaayo ang owan. Maayo unta kung igo ug igo lang ang panahon kay nindot ug tubo sa mga pananom, di mangamatay ang mga lagutmon, ug daghan ang bunga sa mga lubi. Sa ingon niini, mas dagko ang among kita ug di na mi maproblema sa pagkaon ug makasinati mi ug gamay ka kaharohay sa kinabuhi bisan kahibaw mi nga dili siya permanente. Ang rason niini mao nga di na man mi ma problema sa adlaw adlaw namo nga kunsomo kay daghan man ang abot sa among mga tanom nga maghatag namo ug kasigorohan nga naa jud mi makaon, kwarta nga ika gasto sa among panginahanglan sa panimalay, ug maka sigoro mi nga di magotman ang among pamilya.²²

(During times when there is drought, farm products are destroyed. In relation to coconuts, its fruits become small. Excessive heat eventually destroys farm crops like vegetables, and root crops such as sweet potato and cassava. Drought kills plants and prevents vegetables to grow. If there is too much rain, still it is not good for the crops since it would also destroy them. With excessive rains, crops are sometimes washed away. For the past twenty years, coconut trees used to have bountiful fruits since the heat of the sun was just tolerable even during summer. Not only that, rainfalls were not also excessive when they come. At present, there is a decrease on the yield of coconut fruits since during summer, the weather is very hot and during rainy season, large amounts of downpours also come. It would be much better if weather conditions would be just right for the plants since it would enable crops to grow, prevent them from being destroyed by excessive heat and too much rainfall, and the coconut trees would yield much fruit. With this, we would have greater chances to have greater income that allows us to enjoy the little luxuries of life even if we know that it is only temporary. The reason for this is that, with good harvest, we would no longer think of our daily sustenance as a problem since it is already taken care of by the quantity of the yield of our crops. With this, we can assure that our families will not get hungry).

²² Danilo Gonato is one of the peasant-farmer respondents in this study.

The words *mamusaw ang bunga sa lubi ug mga pananom* also means peace to farmers. This means a plentiful harvest which naturally gives happiness to the majority, if not all, of the peasant farmers. As Aurelio Matugas states:

*Ang pagpamusaw sa pagbunga sa mga lubi ug pananom nagkahulogan nga daghan ang mga koprasonon ug anihunon. Kung daghan ang bunga, nagkahulogan kini nga daghan ang paabuton nga abot nga mahimo nga magamit namo sa pagpalit sa among mga panginahanglanon.*²³

(When the coconut trees and other crops would start to manifest that they would bear much fruit, it clearly means that the potential for a bountiful harvest is great. If fruits are abundant in coconut trees and crops, it means that there is much to expect from the harvest. It connotes greater income which farmers could use to buy their basic needs).

For the peasant farmers, *mamusaw ang bunga sa lubi ug pananom* give them a sense of hope for better days to come. With abundant fruits in coconut trees and crops, there is already a promise of a good harvest. A good harvest would give peasant farmers a sense of peace since it would enable them to support their families and also enjoy the comforts in life once in a while. With *mamusaw ang bunga sa lubi ug mga pananom* present, the farmers would feel that Mother Nature has blessed them and their work which leads them to the attainment of inner peace. As Diosdado Lebante, one of the respondents, puts it: "*Hayag na ang kalinaw sa among kinauhi sa mga umaabot nga adlaw kung naa na tima-elhan nga naa na sa'y bunga ang mga luni para sa sunod nga ting copras*". (It is already clear that the days to come in our lives will already be peaceful since there are already signs/manifestations there will be coconut fruits for harvest in the next harvest season). However, there is one thing that could destroy the farmers' sense of peace brought by *mamusaw ang mga bunga sa lubi ug mga pananom*. This is referred to as the occurrence of *bagyo* or storms that destroy farmers' crops and properties. Hence, the absence of storms or *walay bagyo* would cement the farmers' possession of peace.

²³ Aurelio Matugas is a peasant-farmer respondent in this study.

The word *walay* in Baybayanon-Sinugbuanon means “no” and “having none”, while the word *bagyo* means a disturbance of the atmosphere accompanied by rains, lightning, and winds.²⁴ Hence, *walay bagyo* means the absence of typhoons or cyclones. According to the research partners, there is peace when there are no typhoons since typhoons could damage the coconut trees which many, if not all, of the research partners depend on as a means of making a living. Not only that, typhoons also destroy their other crops like sweet potatoes, cassava, yam, their vegetable gardens which serve as an alternative source of income, and the banana plants which also serve as an alternative source of food for many of the farmers. When there are typhoons, life would be hard for the farmers since it connotes the destruction of crops which eradicates the potential for farmers to earn, not to mention the damage to properties that any given typhoon brings.

Moreover, *walay bagyo* also connotes the essence of peace since it brings an atmosphere of prosperity. Hence, peace, in one way or another has something to do with what nature brings to farmers. Typhoons are part of nature’s way of unleashing its fury. In the town of Baybay, in the province of Leyte, typhoons are not those that are least expected considering that Leyte is one of the country’s frequent typhoon paths. Just very recently, in November 2013, Typhoon Yolanda ravaged Leyte that it affected the lives of the farmers of Barangay Kambong-gan since many of the coconut trees in the area were destroyed during the catastrophe. Their other crops were also damaged which made life more difficult, most especially, after Typhoon Yolanda. What kept the farmers during those times were the relief goods delivered to them by the local government unit and non-government organizations. In this sense, the farmers’ basic need to food was taken care of by government and non-government actors, and hence, enabled the farmers not to be stressed about survival in those challenging times.

The peasant farmers understand the notion of peace in relation to their work that is dependent on the earth’s capacity to make their plants and crops grow and bear much fruit. They understand that for the environment to favor their work and endeavors, they have to take good care and preserve the environment

²⁴ L Streblov and R Flores, eds., in *The New Webster’s Standard Dictionary with Philippines’s Major Eight and Special Supplements Encyclopedic, International, Illustrated, and Revised Edition* (Manila, Philippines: Kimball Enterprises, 2007).

so that it would reciprocate the good things that they give to Mother Nature. This is what the farmers understand as *pagbulig sa tawo sa kinaiyahan* (human beings support and care for the environment). This expresses the need for farmers to take care of Mother Nature so that they could also reap the good things that nature gives to humankind in the very near future. After all, Mother Nature provides human kind with things that they need to survive. Yet, nature is also totally fierce and destructive when abused and unreasonably exploited.

Granting that these things are justly carried out by man and nature, the peasant farmers can enjoy peace since they have balanced things out which would eventually lead to economic satisfaction. For the simple farmer, being able to make ends meet at the end of the day is already good enough. I already makes his life peaceful and meaningful. Yet, these farmers are also aware that if the balance in nature is disturbed, the results would be catastrophic which would make life miserable for them. With peasant farmers aware of the necessity of maintaining the balance in the way they make use of the natural environment, said farmers have made the right calculations since they are aware that if Mother Nature is not given the care and respect that is due to her, it could be fierce as a wild animal and would make life miserable for the farmers.

Lastly, the peasant farmers manifest that in order for peace to be achieved, they have to observe the basic law of justice towards the natural environment. Their words and phrases to mean peace show that they have to treat the natural environment with utmost care and protection since it has also cared for them and provided them with the occasions to earn a living that have given them bountiful and peaceful lives. In many instances, the peasant farmers seemed to have followed Gabriel Marcel's notion of justice in order to attain a sense of peace. As mentioned by Dy²⁵, Marcel defines justice has to do with the humanity of laws with the totality of the existential relationship of man, his fellowmen and the natural environment. In this sense, the law that the natural environment has required of man in order for them to peacefully co-exist is very just and humane since it only requires man to give the natural environment what is due, nothing more and nothing less. After all, genuine justice has to do with interior interdependence from any subjective inclination and with respect to

²⁵ Manuel Dy, *Philosophy of Man: Selected Readings* (Makati City, Philippines: Katha Publishing Co., Inc., 2012).

the inviolability of the man. The inviolability of man makes justice the minimum of love.²⁶ This enables man to take care of the natural environment since he also knows that he is also taking care of himself and his fellowmen in the process.

The farmers' concept of gugma sa isig ka tawo as expressed in the terms pagtambayayong, pagpa-ambit and pagsinabtanay.

Another set of words that the peasant farmers construe as peace is the word "*pagtambayayong*". The peasant farmers understand the word *pagtambayayong* as the presence of the spirit of collectively helping each other to make a certain task a little bit lighter. *Pagtambayayong* takes the form of peasant farmers' willingness to help a neighbor in his or her task e.g. harvesting of coconuts, field preparation for planting, carrying or transporting copra to buying stations and other related tasks. In a sense, *pagtambayaong* is done solely not for a certain farmer's interest but for the well-being of others. Hence, *pagtambayayong* is triggered by a sense of "*gugma sa isig ka tawo* (love for fellowmen) since such act is done for others which is, more often than not, done out of love. Moreover, *pagtambayayong* also expresses the attitude of reciprocating to others what one has done to them by helping others in their work the moment they need help from neighbors. Not only that, *pagtambayayong* promotes camaraderie among farmers and develops good interpersonal relations among them. With this present, bonds among farmers are strengthened and the attitude to look after the welfare of each community member is developed. This leads to the ambience of peace in the community since *pagtambayayong* builds up the spirit of oneness among farmers. As Catalino Estopito puts it:

Naay kalinaw kungnaay pagtambayayong kay sa pagtambayayong, ang mga tawo makahiusa sa pag kab-ut ug maayo nga tumong, mag tinabangay sa mga panahon nga kinahanglan makahiusa para dali ug sayon ang buluhaton, ug makig unong sa silingan hangtod mahuman ang usa ka buluhaton. Pinaagi niini, ang tawo dili maka huna-huna sa pagbuhat ug dili maayo sa iyang isig kaingon kay naa man silay hiniusang tumong para sa ilang kaayohan.²⁷

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Catalino Estopito is a peasant-farmer respondent in this study.

(There is peace when people bond together to help one another to make a certain task light and easy. This unites people in achieving a noble goal, the attitude to engage in mutual help among neighbors during times when it becomes necessary to come and work together so that work could be easily done, and to be one with neighbors in working on a certain task until such time that said task is finished. With this, people in the community would no longer think to do bad things to others since they have a common goal for the betterment of the community).

Looking at the peasant farmers' notion of *pagtambayayong*, it is quite discernible that what triggers such acts is a sense of solidarity and oneness among peasant farmers. This seem to manifest Martin Buber's concept of intersubjectivity of man which, as mentioned by Dy, is defined as the condition of man, a subject among other men who are also subjects, shared awareness and understanding among persons and is made possible by the awareness of the self and the other. This refers to the sphere of the interhuman which refer to the actual happenings between men, whether wholly mutual or trending to grow into mutual relations. For the participation of both partners is in principle indispensable. The sphere of the interhuman is one in which a person is confronted by the other. Buber calls this unfolding dialogical and further states that when two men converse together, each listens and each prepares to speak. For Buber, this is the true essence of dialogue where the most important thing cannot be found in either of the two persons involved but in the thing that the two of them share in the process²⁸.

Yet, if there has been the absence of dialogue among the members of the farming community, mutual help would have been difficult to attain. The essence of mutual help which is made manifest in the peasant farmers' natural tendency to collaboratively help each other in order to complete a certain task is one of their community's instruments of peace. By collaboratively helping each other through the practice of *pagtambayayong*, the peasant farmers approach their fellowmen as they are and personally make others feel that they are one with them. This is the product of dialogue for dialogue unfolds

²⁸ Buber's concept of Intersubjectivity is taken from a quote from the book of Dy, *Philosophy of Man: Selected Readings*.

what is true, good and beautiful. For the peasant farmers, the essence of *pagtambayayong* is construed as synonymous with peace since it makes them close to each other because of the presence of the essence of dialogue.

Related to *pagtambayayong* is the word *pagpa-ambit*. It is described as the act of sharing what one has with others. In a farming community where members are not materially affluent, acts of sharing naturally strengthens the bond among community members. *Pagpa-ambit's* essence is not so much on the value of the thing shared. Rather, what is more important is the peasant farmers' attitude and tendency to share what they have to a neighbor. As Lilia Silongan would put it: "*naa ang gugma ug kalinaw sa pakig-ambit sa mga grasya nga nadawat*" (there is love and peace in the act sharing of the graces one received)²⁹. Hence, it would be quite natural for the peasant farmers to think of *pagpa-ambit* as synonymous with peace since it manifests acts of giving which also translates to the essence of giving oneself to others.

A glimpse at the peasant farmers' understanding of *pagpa-ambit* (sharing what one has to others) as synonymous with peace again manifests man's penchant for Intersubjective relationship. *Pagpa-ambit* is not only an act of sharing material things but also sharing something connected to one's personhood most especially that the peasant farmers are not very much blessed with material possessions. Hence, the peasant farmers manifest that the act of giving and sharing has a higher value than the scarce materials that they possess since they are willing to share whatever limited materials they have to their fellowmen. This is the essence of *gugma sa isig ka tawo* (love for others). And with these things present, it would not be difficult to affirm that the act of sharing or *pagpa-ambit* is construed by the peasant farmers as a bit similar with the notion of peace.

With *pagtambayayong* and *pagpa-ambit* present as expressions of the concept of *gugma sa isig ka tawo*, it cannot be denied that peace is present in a given community. However, peasant farmers' experience of peace would be more complete if they possess the virtue of *pagsinabtanay*. *Pagsinabtanay* refers to acts of understanding each other among members of a community. This is also accompanied by a person's capacity for tolerance which enables him or her to buy some time to weigh things out before making a

²⁹ Lilia Silongan is a wife of a peasant-farmer and she also considered herself as a farmer. She also serves as one of the respondents in this study.

decision or an action. This brings peace to the community since each member would have the penchant to understand one another and evaluate things according to merits. With this, *pagtambayayong* and *pagpa-ambit* would be more facilitated and peace would easily be achieved. For Reynaldo Cuya:

Naa ang kalinaw kung naa ang pagsinabtanay kay kung naay pag sinabtanay sa mga tawo, dali lang kaayo nila ang pagpangita ug maka sulbad sa usa ka problema. Sa pagsinabtanay, ang tawo usab makamao ug pangita sa iyang lugar kabahin sa usa ka panghitabo. Pinaagi niini, malikayan ang kagubot nga maoy makaguba sa kalinaw³⁰.

(There is peace when there exists among community members the attitude to understand each other. When people have that attitude to understand others, it would be easy to come up with meaningful solutions to given problems. With a penchant to understand others, a person will know his or her place in relation to any given situation. Because of this, chaos would indubitably be prevented which is known to be the main cause for the destruction of peace).

As discernible from the peasant farmers' notions of peace as expressed in the notion of "*gugma sa isig ka tawo*" (love for fellowmen), the terms *pagtambayayong* (collaborative act of working together to achieve a certain task) and *pagpa-ambit* (sharing what one has to others) manifest inherent long-held attitudes of peasants. This behavior of the farmers of Barangay Kambonggan, Baybay City, Leyte is also apparent in Little's³¹ "The Moral Economy Debate" where it is observed that peasants have demonstrated that certain kinds of cooperation and conditional altruism (mora economy prediction) are in fact justified on grounds of rational deliberation (rational peasant prediction). This is true in circumstances where social relationships are predictable and extended over time.

Above all, the peasant farmers' notions of *gugma sa isig ka tawo* as expressed in the peasant farmers' understanding of *pagtambayayong*, *pagpa-ambit* and *pagsinabtanay* express the

³⁰ Reynaldo Cuya is one of the peasant-farmer respondents in this study.

³¹ D Little, "The Moral Economy Debate," Lecture Presented at Western Philosophy of Social Science in University of Michigan.

essence of intersubjectivity of the human person for such words seem to express the essence of love, which is, more often than not, described and defined as something sacred. The persons involved in love are unique, irreplaceable beings and as such are valuable in themselves. Any person has dignity where no money or material wealth can buy. And since love is a gift of a person of his own self to another person, their relationship is also sacred³². Hence, since the peasant farmers' relationship based on *pagtambayayong*, *pagpa-ambit* and *pagsinabtanay* are based on love, their bond as members of the same farming community is indubitably sacred.

Conclusion

This study concludes that the peasant farmers of Barangay Kambonggan, Baybay City, Leyte understand the term peace in relation to the environment and their fellowmen. As people belonging to the lower stratum of the society, said farmers have strived for peaceful lives as they relate to the natural environment since their lives are intertwined with it in relation to the nature of their work as tillers of the land. Peasant farmers construe their lives to be part of nature, and hence, they have endeavored to be in harmony with it rather than have mastery over it. For the peasant farmers, the natural environment is not merely an object that they have to determine and make use of without any sense of purpose. For them, the natural environment has human like characteristics that can also reciprocate the kind of treatment human beings give to it. The natural environment seems to follow the law of reciprocity whereby any good deeds human beings directs to it is justly and equally compensated. And since the peasant farmers has the inner tendency of taking good care for the natural environment, the natural environment has also given them occasions for abundant yields and harvests in order for the peasant farmers to live happy and peaceful lives. This is a manifestation of justice. According to Marcel, justice has always has something to do with the humanity of laws and with the totality of the existential relationship of man and the natural environment. Not only that, since the peasant farmers live in a close-knit farming community,

³² Manuel Dy, *Philosophy of Man: Selected Readings* (Makati City, Philippines: Katha Publishing Co., Inc., 2012).

they also value their relationship with their neighbors and their fellowmen. By having good inter-personal relationship with the other members of their community, they seem to arrive at a sense of inner peace and enable them to live happy and quiet lives.

Moreover, the peasants are more concerned to support each other in their community as they strive to make ends meet at the end of the day, afford the little luxuries that life has to offer and live contented, peaceful and happy lives. This contentment of in life is reinforced by the Intersubjective human practices of the peasant farmers as discernible in their notions of peace as expressed in the words *pagtambayayong* (collaborative work in order to make a task done), *pagpa-ambit* (sharing what one has to others) and *pagsinabtanay* (mutual understanding among the members of the community). This is what Martin Buber has meant by “dialogue” where a person approaches the other as he really is. The person makes the other present and unfolds what is true, good and beautiful. After all, the basic movement of dialogue is turning to the other. With dialogue, there is cooperation among the peasant farmers. And with cooperation present, there exist a sense of peace among them. Lastly, this study concludes that the peasant farmers of Barangay Kambonggan, Baybay City, Leyte, have construe peace in relation to the involvement of their lives to the natural environment (*kinabuhi sa Kinaiyahan*) as well as their love for their fellowmen (*gugma sa isig ka tawo*). To sum this up, this study concludes that not all peasants are prone to violence. Even with the fact that many, if not all, of them are not materially affluent, violence as far as the peasant farmers of Barangay Kambonggan, Baybay, Leyte are concerned have not been a viable option. In fact, many them have strived to attain certain degrees of peace that they have strived to be at peace with the natural environment as well as their fellowmen.

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