

The Padrino System in Philippine Politics and Society

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Abstract

Padrino is a creolized term that has its origin in the Spanish conquistadores that have evolved with their arrival into the Philippine islands. Their language coupled with the early island settler's concept of a headman or chieftain and followers brought about this system of camaraderie and reciprocal relationship. Using the interpretive analysis method, the paper posits that essentially, the *padrino system* is a reciprocal relationship between the patron and client. The Padrino who acts as the sponsor during the baptism of the child has simply cascaded into the non-religious. The same also has numerous negative scenarios due to the advent of modernity and the influence of foreign observers and Western models. However, as historians, ethnologists, and cultural experts would argue, it was originally beautiful in terms of meaning. Colonial history simply took away from it its essential elements which now need rekindling, remodeling, and revitalizing to alter the country's socio-political and cultural landscapes. The paper, finally, seeks to re-examine the concept of *Utang na loob* in this attempt to rehabilitate the original meaning and value of the Padrino system.

Keywords: *Padrino system*, Filipino Politics, Filipino Society, Filipino Practice, Culture and Values

Introduction

Good relationships are necessary among men and women in society. It is part of the dynamics in a community whereby people try to maintain a desirable image for them to appreciate each other. Filipinos adhere to the idea of extended family as it is one of their admirable characteristics. They do not only focus on the family's immediate members but can extend as far as the fourth or fifth degree of relationship either by affinity or consanguinity. This concept can sometimes, if not most of the time, reach even those with whom they are not related.

To maintain this bond of relationship, Filipinos are fond of social gatherings on an occasional and regular basis. Whether in politics or everyday life, it is manifested during religious and non-religious festivities. Such gatherings are venues for relatives and non-relatives to reacquaint themselves and strengthen the bond that they have or used to have. Groupism is common among Filipinos and this is manifested in the kinship and *barkada*¹ they hold so dear.² Filipinos have the natural tendency to gather and celebrate not just among close family members but even among relatives and friends, especially in the instance of *magkababayan*.³⁴ Ideally, nothing is wrong with these social acquaintances because man, as a social animal, needs to be in a society to live normally.

The closeness that Filipinos possess is admirable and exemplary. However, the intimacy and extensiveness of these people can sometimes be a leverage to commit misdemeanors. *Padrino System* is a conglomeration of moral responsibilities whereby human persons bound by it are expected of reciprocities.⁵ The *padrino system* in the Philippines has been criticized as a source of circumventing laws, policies, standards, and regulations, from a political vantage point. It is the relationship that matters more than what is legally and

¹ This term indicates close friends or company of a person.

² Felipe Landa Jocano, *Filipino Value System* (Quezon City: Punlad Research House, 2008), 9.

³ Tomas D. Andres, *Understanding Filipino Values* (Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1981), 24.

⁴ The term means countrymen or townmates.

⁵ Pak Nung Wong D. Phil, "The Art of Governing the Self and Others in the Christian Philippines," *Journal of International and Global Studies*, 1, no. 2 (2010), 114. <https://digitalcommons.lindenwood.edu/jigs/vol1/iss2/6>

morally sought. Blood is thicker than water they say, and this reality threatens the presumed goodness of the *padrino system*. The late former Senator Miriam Defensor Santiago sponsored Senate Bill 2616 otherwise known as the Anti-Political Recommendations Act. She intended to reshape the hiring of candidates for government positions and curb the system of *palakasan* (power-relation).⁶

This paper is an attempt to investigate the realities in Philippine politics and society that concern the application of the *padrino system*. It is good to have relatives and friends and to have a great number of them. But how far can a relationship with a relative or friend go? Can one have an extensive number of relatives and friends without sacrificing established laws, policies, and standards in public office? This paper responds to the following objectives: Firstly, to understand the concept of the *padrino system* as a cultural tradition; Second, to expose the negative implications of this practice in Filipino society; and third, to justify and elaborate that this system is beneficial when practiced in an appropriate context.

Methodology

This study utilized the interpretive analysis method. Several books, journal articles, and other texts were used to acquire insights that discuss the *padrino system*. The interpretive method is founded on our philosophical assumptions about particular beliefs or principles. This concept is comprehensively studied in the article by Pak Nung Wong D. Phil written in 2010. The study was conducted in Cagayan Valley, Philippines. The discussion of this system is further reinforced by several books written by well-known experts on ethnology, history, sociology, and culture like Felipe Landa Jocano, Teodoro Agoncillo, Vitaliano Gorospe, and Tomas Andres. The ideas of these authors corroborated with each other which enabled the sound discussion as to the notion and bright side of the *padrino system*. To highlight the negative connotations and actual scenarios of the *Padrino system*,

⁶ This term occurs when a person resorts to persons in authority to secure a contract, job, or favor in an office while curbing usual procedures and legal parameters. See Lorraine Kay P. Villaluz, "Weaving New Beginnings in Philippine Bureaucracy: A Closer Look on Senate Bill 2616 (Anti-Political Recommendations Act)," *International Journal of Social Science and Humanity*, 5, no. 1 (January 2015), 83.

several journal articles were referenced to substantiate this research work.

The Notion of Padrino System

The term *padrino* is a Spanish word that means patron in English. The *Padrino system* is the harmonious relationship between two entities who have reciprocal obligations to each other. In terms of its meaning, it is the close relationship between a patron (godfather or godmother) and a client (godson or goddaughter) forged through a catholic celebration like mass or baptism.⁷ The evolution of the term came about with the arrival of the Spaniards into the Philippines. However, the relationship formed by this practice has its pre-Spanish beginnings. The early settlers in the Philippines already had organizations composed of a headman and his followers. On the one hand, the head man possesses powers and directs his followers on various concerns benefiting his circle. The chieftain ensures the material welfare of his followers. On the other hand, followers serve the chieftain during planting season and in times of war. Rival clans sometimes disagree, leading to war with another clan. A moral order is formed within the group and each follower is duty-bound to fulfill the directives of the head man out of respect and reciprocity.⁸

With the arrival of the Spanish conquistadores, new systems and beliefs were introduced to the natives. These new ideas paved their way into the old system creating a creolized system or practice.⁹ Religious ceremonies like weddings create a type of relationship between a godparent and godchildren. Analogously, the prior relationship between a chieftain with his followers was superseded by a new one under Catholicism. The new system creates an interpersonal relationship involved in the ceremony who are bound to obey and reciprocate just like what a patron and client do, and a chieftain and followers do.¹⁰

The *Padrino system* is founded on two important concepts: gratitude and revenge. *Utang na loob* or debt of gratitude is a

⁷ Pak Nung Wong D. Phil, "The Art of Governing the Self and Others in the Christian Philippines, 114.

⁸ Teodoro A. Agoncillo, *History of the Filipino People* (Quezon City: R. P. Garcia Publishing Co. 1990), 40-41.

⁹ Pak Nung Wong D. Phil, "The Art of Governing the Self and Others in the Christian Philippines," 115.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

reciprocal sense of obligation.¹¹ It is the fundamental basis of interpersonal trust where a recipient of help is deemed obligated to return the favor to the person who helped him.¹² Otherwise, it can be perceived to be an immoral gesture. The magnitude of indebtedness becomes more intense depending on the amount or gravity of the help extended.¹³ The help extended and the indebtedness that is established become the foundation of a long-term relationship between the patron and client. In the event in which this moral obligation is violated, the person who broke the code is branded as *walang utang na loob* or ungrateful, and revenge becomes the remedy for the aggrieved party.

The guidelines in the reciprocal moral exchange of favors, so much so that when favors are not granted, it could result in moral or even physical sanctions. Parties who violated are either maligned though gossip (*chismis*) to other people or subjected to intrigue (*intriga*).¹⁴ Worse is when the aggrieved party resorts to violence to exact revenge on the other party. This situation is not however evident only among Filipinos but could also transpire among other races or groups of people. Besides, anyone who is not reciprocated of the goodness he shared, will eventually feel terrible.¹⁵

“In the Cagayan Valley, patronage is seen to be a moral practice that informs the ways one should properly behave as a ‘good person’ (*tao na mabait*); it dictates that individuals should reciprocate (provide mutual help to one another) and act with compassion, honor, and dignity.”¹⁶ This is the ideal conception and actualization of patronage or *padrino*. Originally, this practice was a beautiful display of relationship within the groups of the early island settlers of this country, and the proper and dignified reciprocation of favors.

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¹¹ *Ibid.* 62.

¹² *Ibid.*, 114

¹³ Sheldon Ives G. Agaton, “Vantage Points of Utang na Loob,” 63.

¹⁴ Pak Nung Wong D. Phil, “The Art of Governing the Self and Others in the Christian Philippines, 114.

¹⁵ Sheldon Ives G. Agaton, “Vantage Points of Utang na Loob,” 68.

¹⁶ Pak Nung Wong D. Phil, “The Art of Governing the Self and Others in the Christian Philippines, 114.

What used to be a beautiful portrayal of the *Padrino system* among Filipinos eventually suffered enormous setbacks through the passage of time. Just like some other Filipino values, the *padrino system* experienced some misuse and abuse in its usage. The downside of it is primarily attributed to the inroads of civilization particularly politics and modernization.¹⁷ What used to be a person who is *mabuting makisama* (good companion) or 'easy to get along with' due to tactfulness, dignity, and honesty, has been altered with the notion that the person is *mabuting makisama* because he turns a blind eye to misdemeanors. After all, the person involved is a family member, relative, or friend. Even the concept of familism has been corrupted by the idea of nepotism in modern formal organizations.¹⁸ Many people today adhere to the patronage system to address the unemployment of a family member, relative, or friend despite wanting or lacking qualifications. It could also be a form of rewarding a person because of his political patronage of a certain politician he helped during an election or other similar activities. For Professor Jocano nepotism is a product of modernization and not of traditional culture.¹⁹

The bureaucracy and private entities are susceptible to the abuses brought about by the wrong practice of the *padrino system*. Today, the degree of difficulty for one to get employment with the government is challenging. An applicant needs to meet all the qualifications sought by any office or agency of the government. Wanting of or lacking qualifications may result in an outright rejection during the preliminary screening alone. Examinations are given to applicants to measure their knowledge and skills that could ensure that they probably are the best for the vacant positions. Panel interviews will follow to measure the comprehension and communication skills of the applicant. This part will require composure to survive. The hiring process could culminate with a one-on-one interview with the head of the agency where ideally, the most qualified applicant is given the vacant position.

Such an idealistic procedure is susceptible to abuse when the wrong application of the *padrino system* is employed. Every

¹⁷ Teodoro A. Agoncillo, *History of the Filipino People* (Quezon City: R. P. Garcia Publishing Co. 1990), 14.

¹⁸ Felipe Landa Jocano, *Filipino Value Syatem* (Quezon City: Punlad Research House, 2008), 65.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

government agency has a performance appraisal of its own. This mode can give the office a clear grasp and knowledge of who their applicants are as to their knowledge, comprehension, and skills among others. But this instrument can be superseded by the wrong elements of *padrino system*.²⁰ The head of an agency may receive a call from a politician to hire an applicant who is at the bottom of the shortlist, or even who is not on the shortlist. This situation defeats the essence and true meaning of the performance appraisal system.²¹ In another instance, the head of the agency may opt to hire his *kababayan* (townmate) who could be lackluster in qualification. This scenario could end up factions within the agency which may hamper the smooth flow of operations in the office. Generally, employees do not question the choice of the appointing officer if proper procedure was employed, and the applicant who secured the vacant position was the best among the best. However, doubts, jealousy, and grief come in when the manner of hiring is questionable. The Civil Service Commission of the Philippines has tried to formulate qualification standards and performance tests but the essential problem of hiring qualified and effective employees seems to be incorrigible.²²

Some positions are, however, under presidential prerogatives. As such, these posts could again undermine standards set by the Civil Service Commission.²³ As a presidential prerogative, outside influences from his inner circle and party mates could again influence his choice of a better if not the best man for the position. The police force is an integral part of the government. Without this agency, there will be difficulty in imposing or executing the law. That is basically the reason why there should be police power in the government. Besides, police power is an inherent power of the state. What if the police

²⁰ Mc Christian Julius Macaranas II and Amber Alonzo, "Research gate Tension, Coping & Communication in the Workplace: How the Older Cohorts Deal with the Young Bloods' Promotion," (January 2014), 5. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/307535590_Tension_Coping_Communication_in_the_Workplace_How_the_Older_Cohorts_Deal_with_the_Young_Bloods'_Promotion

²¹ Mc Christian Julius Macaranas II and Amber Alonzo, "Research gate Tension, Coping & Communication," 5.

²² Alex Brillantes Jr., *Public Administration in Southeast Asia: Thailand, Philippines, Malaysia, Hongkong, and Macau*, ed. Evan M. Berman (Boca Raton Florida: CRC Press Taylor and Francis Group, 2011), 440.

²³ *Ibid.*

agency is crippled with corrupt police officers? What if the higher positions in the police force are not impartial in fulfilling their duties because of impediments resulting from the misuse of the *padrino system*? What if the hired applicants were only taken in because they were recommended by powerful politicians, and not on the merits of the performance tests? This could result in a very critical scenario. These questions and actual police inadequacies like being politicized and corrupt have had the public disgusted and their call for internal and external cleansing continues.²⁴ The filling of higher positions in the Philippine National Police was also shrouded with elements of the *padrino system* due to ties that were created many years back with the family of the president. The patronage politics hindered the president as an appointing officer from choosing someone who truly and respectfully deserves the position because of being indebted to some high-ranking police officials several years ago.²⁵ Instead, he opted for someone to take the top post of the PNP despite several negative issues that have cloaked the police officer.

Among new applicants for the police force, the *padrino system* ranked second among the problems being encountered by the applicants.²⁶ Some applicants, no matter how qualified and physically fit give up on their dreams of becoming enforcers of the law because they lack *padrino*. Sadly, even those who are not qualified or even failed in certain exams make it to the force because of political backing. Worse, some of these applicants who have already qualified find another stumbling block. Some of them are asked for financial deals from officials of the force. As a newbie, he has already experienced his first taste of corruption which he could utilize once he becomes an official of the police force later. Some of them would bribe an official to secure a vacant spot by loaning money from loan sharks or relatives just to meet the financial demand. In this manner, the first

²⁴ Karl Hapal and Steffen Jensen, "The Morality of Corruption: A View from the Police Force in the Philippines," in *Corruption and Torture: Violent Exchange and the Policing of the Urban Poor*, eds. Steffen Jensen and Morten Koch Andersen (Langagervej 2: Aalborg University Press, 2017), 53.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Maita L. Pajarillo-Guadamor, "Qualifications and Preparedness of Police Officers in Sustaining Peace and Order: Its Implication to Quality Service," *International Journal of Advanced Research in Management and Social Science* 5, no. 2 (February 2016): 158. <https://garph.co.uk/IJARMSS/Feb2016/12.pdf>

thing they would probably do is earn back the money they have spent on bribes through crooked means.²⁷

The judicial branch of government is not exempt from the abuse and misuse of *padrino system*. Justices and judges are appointed by the president of the Philippines after meticulous scrutiny done by the Judicial and Bar Council. The JBC was created to secure the sanctity of choosing justices and justices who, according to the 1987 constitution possess integrity, probity, and many other capacities. It is the JBC that makes a shortlist of qualified justices or judges upon careful scrutiny and then submits the list to the president for the latter's action. It remains a puzzle whether the members of the JBC have already acted strictly according to what is mandated of them.²⁸ The *Padrino system* has already penetrated the system and consciousness of the people that a presidential staff will not call the JBC to write in the shortlist a candidate of his choice. The appointment could also stem from the friendship of the appointing officer with the appointed person. This is a clear case of the *Padrino system*. The process of appointment through patronage is not only evident in the judiciary nor from the office of the president of the Philippines. This phenomenon can reach the lower level of the executive department, the area of local government units, and the Congress of the Philippines of both houses. The *backer system*²⁹ or the *bata-bata system*³⁰ stems from the *padrino system* where a person can secure a contract or position in the government because he is a close ally or relative or supporter of a powerful politician.

Time and again, it is clear in all media how an appointed justice or judge becomes very loyal to the president up to the point of demeaning if not ignoring blatant actions committed by the chief executive or even his family. Filipinos are generally grateful people.

²⁷ Karl Hapal and Steffen Jensen, "The Morality of Corruption, 54.

²⁸ Bjorn Dressel and Tomoo Inoue, "Informal networks and judicial decisions: Insights from the Supreme Court of the Philippines, 1986–2015," *International Political Science Review* 39, no. 5 (2018): 620. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0192512118795314>

²⁹ This occurs when a person uses his influence to help an applicant secure a vacant position despite his or her qualifications. Conversely, an applicant may look for an avenue to seek a written or verbal guarantee from a person with authority like a politician to get a vacant position.

³⁰ This is a phenomenon when a person uses his connection in an office whether government or private entity to secure anything favorable to him or her.

The appointment to the magistrate can be viewed as a favor bestowed upon him by the president. It would not be a foreign idea if a newly appointed judge or justice shows unwavering allegiance to the president in forms of support to public policy, previous cases, international relations, and many others. These actions are simply returning the favor, and this is valuing *utang na loob*. Nevertheless, no matter how intense *utang na loob* is, a person is not obligated to obey when the favor asked is against the law or morality.³¹ The worst case or cases could come out from it when the appointment of these high-ranking officials in the judicial department is made to safeguard the interests of some people in their impunity to certain actions.³²

Government processes are slow in the Philippines. The bureaucratic way of working in the government has taken its toll on the system and workers as well; being slow in various aspects has become a practice. Nevertheless, the government through its agencies like the Civil Service Commission has been trying to cure the painstaking processes in the government. But the problems persist. There has to be a total concerted effort not just from the executive department, but also from Congress, and the judiciary. For instance, the procurement process is slow and the law on procurement needs to be amended as suggested by the former president Rodrigo R. Duterte. Sadly, such was never amended, and government procurement does not have a choice but to adhere to the existing law. The PhilGEPS or the Philippine Government Electronic Procurement System has several mandatory queries that hinder low-profile suppliers from registering due to fear that they cannot afford the quality demanded by the system.³³ This might lure them away from registering in the system and simply look for a *padrino* in that office, then proceed with on-site bidding opportunities. This remedy, however, will deviate from the transparent procedure of procurement and might defeat the nature of any competitive bidding. There have been numerous

³¹ Sheldon Ives G. Agaton, "Vantage Points of Utang na Loob," 63.

³² International Bar Association, "The International Bar Association Judicial Integrity Initiative: Judicial Systems and Corruption," (May 2016, 24. <https://www.ibanet.org/MediaHandler?id=F856E657-A4FC-4783-806E-6AAC6895D37F>)

³³ Hazel I. Calleja and Harley G. Peralta, "The Implementation of The Philippine Government Electronic Procurement System (Philgeps) in the Bicol Regional Offices," *Dunong: Aquinas University Professional Schools Graduate School Refereed Research Journal* (2015): 27.

projects by the government that have ultimately failed because of improper bidding procedures, and the losing end belongs to the government.

Even securing a permit or license from the government is a problem sometimes. One cannot operate his business or project when laws require that a license or permit needs to be secured first. Bureaucracy in the government is already one thing. The painstaking process of securing a permit can prompt one to utilize connections from within an office to make the process quicker. This remedy will establish *utang na loob* from those involved, and the same can be used as leverage to ask for an unusual favor in return. For instance, for a person to legally operate the harvesting and selling of timber products, an RUP or Resource Use Permit is necessary, and only the Secretary of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources is capacitated to issue one. This will force the person to proceed to the central office of the agency to secure the permit. This is a tedious endeavor considering that the Secretary has gargantuan tasks. Chances are, the person may just look for an established logger, known in such a business, who will serve as a connection to the higher authority.³⁴ While he has not yet started his business, he already incurred a large amount of money just trying to get the needed RUP. Inadequate requirements are another thing. One may opt to use his connections to get the required license or permit despite wanting or lacking in qualifications just because he has an ally from the inside of the agency. In this instance, the business is illegal but remains operational because he has a *padrino* to protect him when the reckoning of legal documents arrives from concerned authorities.

Since the Second World War, the Philippines through a long line of presidents has adopted various means either by law or a new Constitution to correct negative habits of corruption, patronage, bribery, and other malpractices. Agencies have also been created to curb services and practices that have long hampered and demeaned Filipinos. There were manifestations of improvements, but the roots of these societal illnesses have managed to perpetuate.³⁵ It is a hopeless case to reduce, if not eradicate these bad practices that Filipinos have

³⁴ Juan M. Pulhin and Mark Anthony M. Ramirez, "Timber Regulation and Value Chain in Community-Based Timber Enterprise and Smallholder Forestry in the Philippines," *Forests* 7, no. 152 (July 25, 2016): 8.

³⁵ Alex Brillantes Jr. "Public Administration in Southeast Asia," 447.

been exposed to. Will there be an opportunity for the *padrino system* to rekindle its original and ideal meaning?

Rethinking the Concept of Reciprocity

The relationship founded under the *padrino system* creates a strong bond between or among those bound by it. Professor Jocano talks of *kapwa* as *pamantayang pang-uugnayan* referring to a partnership or shared orientation.³⁶ As a *kapwa* (kindred, neighbor, or fellow), a person strikes a fond relationship with his fellow coupled with the obligation of reciprocal concerns. In *kapwa*, the connotation is togetherness and consciousness in reciprocally shared identities.³⁷ Humans are supposed to be co-equal in status. *Kapwa* desires harmonious relationships among human beings because each one is his *kapwa-tao* (fellow humans). It is an ethical demand and moral obligation to nourish goodwill and harmony among men.³⁸ It demands that man should behave properly in the presence of and his dealings with his *kapwa-tao*.

Kapwa as a character, emanates from it the notion of *pakikisama* which is commonly shared experiences, desires, or requests to get along with someone.³⁹ *The padrino system* as a relationship between patron and client, and further expand to other people belonging to the same circle is closely related to the notion of *pakikisama* or the genuine desire to get along with other people. This is arguably the best trait that Filipinos possess according to many foreign observers. In its original sense, *pakikisama* is an intensive signification of camaraderie founded on unselfishness and good faith.⁴⁰ There is no deceit, dishonesty, or subversion of justice attached to it. On the one hand, a person who is *mabuting makisama* possesses good manners and is endowed with virtues. He gets along well with other people and is cheerful in communal activities. On the other hand, a person who is selfish, deceitful, and deceitful is *masamang makisama*.

³⁶ Felipe Landa Jocano, *Filipino Value System* (Quezon City: Punlad Research House, 2008), 63.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 61-62.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 63.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 65.

⁴⁰ Teodoro Agoncillo, *History of the Filipino People*, 14.

Modernization has undermined the real and original notion of *pakikisama* or relationship with his fellow. The present case has turned these beautiful Filipino values into a dreaded one. A person can be considered as *marunong makisama* or knows how to get along well with other people if he allows an evil to happen because it is his family or friends who committed a bad deed. Despite the rampant cases of negative actuations in today's setting, there is still hope to rekindle the original and amiable concept of this Filipino values. There is a need for reorientation of it. If the practice is modified not just for a small group of people but to a larger group, it could transform a community or society into a blissful one.⁴¹ The modification of *pakikisama* as a positive value can eventually alter the relationship between patron and client in the *padrino system*. *The Padrino system* should not become the source of injustice and corruption but must be a beacon of justice and fairness. It has to be deconstructed for it to serve the populace to better ends.⁴² When used negatively, it becomes the source of injustice, and reversing it through deconstruction will give equal opportunity to every citizen.⁴³ For instance, the performance tests standardized by the Philippine Civil Service replicated by other government agencies will now have total relevance and efficacy since the hiring of employees will be solely based on a merit system. The merit system mirrors equal opportunity through justice and fairness.

The late senator Miriam Defensor Santiago sponsored a bill that should have become the Anti-Political Recommendations Act of 2016. On several occasions she tried to power her way through her intelligence and wit that this bill becomes a legislative act. Unfortunately, it remained a bill until her death. Had it become a law, salient provisions such as prohibiting a person from soliciting a recommendation from a politician should have been punishable by such law. Another feature will hinder a politician from intervening in the affairs of an agency while the hiring process is ongoing. For Sen. Santiago, if the bill becomes a law, it will strengthen the bureaucracy of the government and create equal opportunity for all citizens

⁴¹ Vitaliano R. Gorospe, "Christian Renewal of Filipino Values," *Philippine Studies*, 14, no. 2 (1966): 221.

⁴² Jener B. Barrameda, "Applying Rawls' Political Liberalism Towards Filipino Sense of Human Flourishing," *Supang* 2, no. 2 (2010): 81.

⁴³ Jener B. Barrameda, "Applying Rawls' Political Liberalism," 82.

wanting to land a job or avail any service from the government.⁴⁴ It was just unfortunate for the senator that support from her colleagues was inept, and the bill remained a bill until today.

Furthermore, the patron who is elderly compared to the client in normal circumstances will instill in him that the relationship created under patronage is founded on good faith and unselfishness. This is likewise true on the part of the client. There should be no deceit, dishonesty, or subversion of justice in his view of his patron. Asking for favors is normal, and humans are prone to it. But asking for favors that are immoral and illicit violates all legal and moral parameters and relationships as well. Favors must be made only within the bounds of legal and moral standards. In this manner, the original conception of the *padrino system* is revitalized and given justice. *Palakasan* or *bata-bata* and the *backer system* might be reduced if not eradicated from the system of governance. The so-called negative Filipino ways are not products of Filipino values but are caused by bad public administration. It is a managerial flaw, not a cultural one.⁴⁵ Filipinos are not duty-bound to align our system values to Western models. If our traditional values do not conform to Western models, they would be rendered as valueless.⁴⁶ This is a wrong application, Filipinos only need to remodel what values they already have to fit the demands of present times.⁴⁷

The fact is the Filipino mind can still be reinvented. They are not at all corrupt and greedy. The virtues of prudence, integrity and honesty are still part of their value orientation. These values are still deeply rooted in their hearts and minds but only suppressed by centuries-old of coercion, threat, intimidation, and oppression. This can be started in classrooms, in respected families, and start talking about the strengths of these values rather than their weaknesses. The inequities and malpractices that are greatly manifest in Filipino society are just questions of managerial flaws and misconceptions and not a matter of cultural problems or damage.

⁴⁴ Lorraine Kay P. Villaluz, "Weaving New Beginnings in Philippine Bureaucracy," 84.

⁴⁵ Felipe Landa Jocano, *Work Values of Successful Filipinos* (Quezon City: Punlad Research House, 2006), 76.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

The difficulties we are encountering today are part of the birth pangs of development. Since colonial times, we have been programmed to think, believe, and feel that we are no good at anything. This programming must be reworked. We need to reprogram the Filipino subconscious mind to bring out the best in us – to highlight our strengths and pride as a people. For example, we can redefine *Pakikisama* along the principles of tactfulness, teamwork, and public relations. *Bahala* or determination amid uncertainty can be seen as a calculated risk, delegation, and empowerment. *Hiya* or shame can be used as a norm for preventing loss of face or fostering respect for other people's sensitivity. *Utang na loob* can be made the moral basis of judgment that can transform a gesture or a favor into a debt of gratitude, loyalty, commitment, social obligation, and moral duty.⁴⁸ The concept of reciprocity that was mentioned above is the deeper context of *Utang na Loob*. This moral concept does not have to be demonized when put into the proper perspective. The problem is when the whole act of extending help becomes abused and used for political motives. But when one simply is cognizant of the good of others, then *Utang na loob* is simply an acknowledgment of the generosity of others.

Conclusion

The *Padrino system* is correlated with the Filipino concepts of *kapwa* and *pakikisama*. All these three concepts have their connections with social relationships, camaraderie, and reciprocal undertakings. Originally, the *padrino system* was meant to establish a relationship between a patron (godfather or godmother) and a client (godson or goddaughter). As a Christianized practice, the patron must serve as a secondary parent to the client. In the absence of the biological parents, he takes the obligation momentarily. The client should show respect to his patron in the same manner he gives all due respect to his parents. The relationship is mutual and reciprocal. The negative ways and political implications of this practice were tainted when modernization arrived. The negative aspects of this phenomenon have affected people and the government bureaucracy prompting some foreign observers to say that the term *padrino* has

⁴⁸ Felipe Landa Jocano, *Filipino Value System*, 88.

become a part of our everyday life and our culture. However, if used in its proper context and not abused, *Utang na loob*, which is at the core of the concept, is no more than a recognition of the generosity of people.

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