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by jed pensar

Editor's Note: This was taken from the book 'Manila Colonialism,' by Jed Pensar (University of the Philippines Press; 1988).

At the start of the book, I introduced the concept of colonialism. A colony was defined as a land where the people are obliged to follow the directions and decisions of alien people living away from that land.

This article will discuss colonialism using the center-periphery unit of analysis. In a colonial relationship, one region controls another region. The region that does the controlling is called the center. It usually is a place with a high concentration of political power, commerce and schools.

The region that is under control is the periphery. The center is dependent on its peripheries generally for such things as raw materials. The periphery is dependent on its center for manufactures.

Dependency refers to the relationship between center and periphery and is associated in this text to both colonialism and imperialism. Additionally, a region can be center to a periphery yet be periphery to another center as shown below:

- The USA is central to Manila.
- Manila is peripheral to the USA.
- Manila is central to the Philippine

provinces.

- The provinces are peripheral to Manila.
- The USA is central to Manila and the provinces.
- The provinces are peripheral to Manila and the USA.

Center-periphery relationships (CPR) exist all over the world and not just in the Philippines. Either nation-center or primate city will correspond to the following observations:

- Heavy concentration of industry and commerce; presence of private and state corporate headquarters; accrual of wealth; presence of the residences of those who control the mentioned.
- Presence of the highest executive, legislative and judicial bodies.
- Concentration of educational, mass media and research institutes.
- Presence of the highest military organs.
- Availability of more and higher-paying jobs.
- Enjoyment of a high standard of living.
- Presence of a dense populace single-handedly attracted to its superior living standards.
- Enjoyment of a superior cultural status.
- Destruction of ecological community.

The opposite in relation to the above would apply to the peripheral regions of the Philippines. As does the Manila government's dogma of cultural chauvinism.

Manila's laws forces everyone to learn and use the English and Tagalog languages. The long-term survival of non-Tagalog Philippine languages and ethnolinguistic groups depends on the checking of Manila's language imperialism.

One of the first things a conquering nation does is impose its religion, language and ideology on colonized peoples to make them more prone to central control. In Manila's case, it uses educational and mass media institutions as vehicles for cultural imperialism.

For that matter, Manila has successfully elevated its own Tagalog to the class of language while mislabeling other Philippine tongues as dialects. Languages and dialects are both spoken media for communication. While any two languages are mutually unintelligible, another's dialect can be understood only by one who speaks the same language. Variations of the Tagalog language exist as its Bulacan, Batangas and Marinduque dialects, to name some.

Cebuano, Ilocano, Hiligaynon and many, many others are by scientific scrutiny not dialects. They each are complete languages capable of describing any aspect of the world we live in. But something else that is not so obvious is not the language that government calls it.

The Philippine national language is this so-called "Filipino". The same is a medium of instruction in schools and is taught as a formal subject. The same is mutually intelligible with all Tagalog dialects but is not mutually intelligible with other Philippine languages. Learning "Filipino" does not mean you will understand any Philippine tongue other than

Tagalog and its dialects. According to our definition of language and dialect, is "Filipino" a Tagalog dialect? Yes.

Filipino is a Tagalog dialect.

How did Manila become so powerful? To perpetuate CPR, it needs to grow ever bigger. It relies on five agents to bleed the peripheral provinces dry of their wealth as well as of their human and natural resources.

- Members of the upper class with businesses and lands in the peripheries but who reside in the center (obvious).
- National companies based in the center (remittance of revenues).
- Trade imbalance (finished goods versus raw materials).
- Educational institutions based in the center (expenses of provinciano students).
- Central taxation system (obvious).

Just one example, center-periphery trade is essentially raw materials coming into Manila and finished goods coming out of it. Naturally, Manila corners all the value-added.

One way to avoid having a parasitic colonial center like Manila is by shifting to a confederate system of government. Having smaller regional societies allows the people to empathize more with their state and ecosystem. Furthermore, self-determination will lead to economic self-reliance.

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For all its faults, the Philippine nation-state can not be deconstructed just like that. For as long as we wave the present national cloth while singing and reciting the national song and pledge, we condemn the provincial peripheries to languish under the centralized rule of Manila.

The coercive state and the centralized despotism that marks it does not wither away by itself. To weaken it, we reject the myths it has fabricated in the name of nationalism. Remember that no capital of any nation has

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ever attempted to secede from its peripheries. It has always been the other way around. Our alternative is true decentralization.

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