

The Lies of the 1934-1935 Constitutional Convention

The summer of 2007 in the Philippines was a date with history.

Like a detective, I did some exercise in disjunctive syllogism, the one that I taught in many convent schools, Catholic colleges and seminaries, and in graduate school. Now I can announce: I did some sleuthing regarding the proceedings of the 1934-35 Constitutional Convention.

I pored over the records kept at the Lyceum Library, the National Library, the Supreme Court Library, and the Laurel Foundation Library. I urged librarians to help me, giving them some clues to the problem I wanted to solve, pouring out my heart to that feeling that has something to do with how scholars did not do us justice by not telling us exactly what happened between the deliberations about the 'common national language provision' of the 1935 Constitution by going back to the original documents of the proceedings. Even Andrew Gonzalez, with his *Language and Nationalism*, did not seem to have gone to the original records, judging from his discussion of the matter.

So what we have got is secondary information, some commentaries of commentaries of scholars commenting on the works of others. For instance, in his treatise on the 'evolution' of the Philippines national language, he simply reports, as follows: "The clamor for a national language as a symbol of solidarity and unity received official recognition during the 1934-1935 Constitutional Convention. The committee on official language presented a proposal which went through three drafts, in essence mandating the search for a common national language based on

the existing Philippine languages.

The committee on style, under Quezon's prodding, made a substantial alteration by stipulating that the common national language be based on one language rather than on many" (Language and Nationalism, 1980: 24).

Here we see that Gonzalez never bothered to look into the proceedings. The references listed at the end of his book did not mention anything about the Convention's proceedings; he relied, as is the case of his discussion, heavily on Aruego's 1936 account of the 1935 Constitution (The Framing of the Philippine Constitution, 1936).

I have grown weary of the language struggle so what I did was to revisit the records. I first went to the National Archives and the National Library, two of the record-keepers of our memory as a people. Then I went to the Lyceum Library, to the Supreme Court, and lastly to the Laurel Foundation.

More than ten years ago, I had the good fortune of poring into the records kept in these government agencies when I was trying to understand the idea of the Philippine Revolution—or more appropriately, Philippine revolutions—from the point of view of the small man, the one who does not have the authority, the one whose desire was to love the homeland as a gentleman would love his woman. In short, I was interested with what scholars call today as "a history without authorities," if by "authorities" we mean the big names, the big actors, those who played center stage roles in the drama we call the Philippine revolution/s. I had by this time grown suspicious of the self-conceit of heroes and their paid hacks. I had by this time begun to refuse to accept that idea that 'the

revolution' was declared and finished by the Tagalog Republic.

By this time as well, I had read accounts of Ilokano katipuneros committing themselves to the cause of the revolution—in Ilokano, and with their own blood! Some of the surnames I could easily recognize including my own—surnames that were never mentioned in that 'national because nationalized'—and then eventually made 'natural' because already 'naturalized', as is the case of Tagalog as P/Filipino—accounts, in a dogmatic form, of Zaide, Agoncillo, Guerrero, and Constantino.

You look into the history books fed to the minds of the young from the grades upwards and then in the university history courses, you have the same story, a grand and master narrative of some sorts, with the predictable names and the predictable incidents, minus the mulct and the dirt and the betrayal in the social drama that became a myth for the central and mainstream view of what Philippine history is all about. Never mind that in this grand and master narrative, the rest of the peoples of the Philippines, who had since the incursion of the invaders, been staging revolts, however unsuccessful these were from the point of view of the Tagalogistic notion of 'revolutionary success.'

This is the same tragic story we see in the story of the making of Tagalog as a national language and its being rammed into our throat until today by the monolingual Filipinos who know only Tagalog and who are reading the complexities and vast possibilities of the Philippines experience—and experience that necessarily tells us, to borrow Arnold Azurin's existentialist and phenomenological phrase, that we are morally obliged to pursue our 'being and becoming.'

Here is what I found: That there was conspiracy, connivance, and collusion in the declaration of Tagalog as the basis of the national language.

As I write this, it is Thanksgiving in this land of our exile, and I have a lot to thank for-- such as this discovery of the triple cancer—the tripod of a C that continues to gnaw at our mind as a people, depriving us of that collective memory that should have been history's gift to us who try to keep on remembering.

But no, there are criminals of the Constitution, as the esteemed Vicente Albano Pacis declared for at least three times in his commentary on the national language situation, on the state of English language teaching in the country, and the ramming into our throat of the Tagalog language that, like the chameleon, continues to change color depending on the political, epistemic, and cultural ecology of the homeland.

First, the Gonzalez account of someone's account that there were three drafts that led to the 'framing' of the national language provision of the 1935 Constitution is lacking in perspective. The technical development of all the provisions of that constitution went through four 'drafts', with the fourth draft considered as the final draft and which was approved by the delegates of the convention, to wit, the title of that Fourth Draft as appended in the 1965 Proceedings of the 1934-1935 Constitutional Convention put together by Jose P. Laurel and published by Lyceum: "Appendix K-4: Final Draft of the Constitution of the Philippines, as approved by the Constitutional Convention on February 8, 1935."

Second, here is what is found in the Laurel Proceedings, which is not found in the version published by the House of Representatives: a first, second, third, and fourth draft of the Constitution.

Third, I must take note here that there are two accounts of the convention, one kept at the Supreme Court Library, and another that is put together by Laurel and is kept at the Laurel Foundation Library. The Supreme Court version, published by the House of Representatives between 1965 and 1966, does not contain the other drafts of the Constitution but only the final fourth draft and the proceedings beginning 1934 and ending in 1935.

Fourth, in terms of 'completeness' of the records therefore, the Laurel Proceedings contains a wealth of materials that reveals to us the kind of manipulation that happened during the convention. (I will continue to expose these manipulations by presenting documentary evidences and conjectures.)

It is not therefore true to say that the crowning of Tagalog as the glorified language of the land came as a logical choice of the people as represented by their delegates. This myth has to be unravelled for what it is: a myth that contains all the contradictions to our claims to linguistic justice and cultural democracy. In some of the accounts of Pacis, first at the Daily Express and then at the Inquirer, he recalled that right after the work of the convention was completed, many people who were in the know had been clamoring for the publication of the proceedings. This was an honorable way to check of the veracity of the proceedings and of the provisions of the 1935 Constitution.

That request was never granted.

The publication of the 1934-35 ConCon Proceedings happened only 30 years after when many of the delegates were long gone, senile, or had lapses in memory and judgment. Think of the kind of reaction and

counter-reaction if these lies and manipulation were exposed as soon as the 1935 Constitution was approved.

The dishonesty of those involved was something.

The continuing linguistic injustice committed against the peoples of the Philippines at this time is an addendum to that dishonesty that became the basis for Tagalog as P/Filipino, that schizophrenic language of the center of power, commerce, education, and now media.

Think of academics schooled in this monolingual mindset, as is the case of many of the Tagalog teachers in the United States, many of them ignorant Ilokanos passing themselves off as Tagalog, or academics who cannot afford to have some intellectual breadth and depth—and resonance. One even had the temerity to say that we need to drumbeat Tagalog, a.k.a. P/Filipino as a 'global language' to, among others, avoid 'regionalism.' In cases like this, we need to pray to the anitos and ask for patience so that these linguistic idiots will come to their senses.

Fifth, let these drafts from the Laurel Proceedings tell you of the ruses that happened.

First draft: Article XIII, Sec. 2: **"A national language being necessary to strengthen the solidarity of the Nation, the National Assembly shall take steps looking to the development and adoption of a language common to all the people on the basis of the existing native languages."**

Second draft: Article XIII, Sec. 2.a: **"The National Assembly shall take steps toward the development and adoption of a common national language based on the existing native languages, and until otherwise provided by law, English and Spanish be the official languages."**

Third draft: Nothing on Article XIII. Other parts of the draft of the Constitution had provisions. We must note here that the second draft was to be 'polished' for style—but not for substance! —by the Committee on Style chaired by Claro M. Recto. We note here that in the third draft, only those provision that have revisions for stylistic reasons were to be reviewed so that these provisions could be incorporated as part of the final, fourth draft. In the case of the provision on the national language, that was not mentioned, there was nothing, and thus, logically, the second draft is deemed that which was to move to the final, fourth draft.

But, here is what we have got:

Fourth draft: Article XIII, Sec. 3: "**The National Assembly shall take steps toward the development and adoption of a common national language based on one of the existing native languages. Until otherwise provided by law, English and Spanish shall continue as official languages.**"

Now, we see a hand—or some hands.

The sleuthing continues.

A Solver Agcaoili

UH Manoa/Nov 22, 2007 Thanksgiving Day

Manuel Lino Faelnar > Defenders of the Indigenous Languages of the Archipelago

(DILA) facebook repost in November 2023