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The reciprocity of misfortune: the little tradition of disasters in the Philippines

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Citation

Bankoff, G., Claveria, B. A., Lozada, D., & Silva, C. (2025). The reciprocity of misfortune: the little tradition of disasters in the Philippines. *Journal Of Disaster Studies* , *2*(1), 84-119. Retrieved from https://hdl.handle.net/1887/4270908

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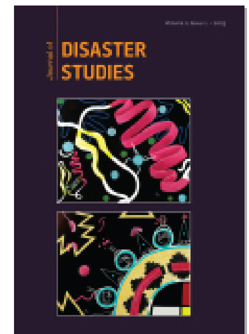

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Journal of Disaster Studies, Volume 2, Number 1, 2025, pp. 84-119 (Article)

Published by University of Pennsylvania Press

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Reciprocity of Misfortune

The Little Tradition of Disasters in the Philippines

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Abstract: *Just as there is a great and little tradition in religion and civilization, there is a great and little tradition in disaster. This article explores the origins of community resilience in rural areas of the Philippines based on local reciprocity and cooperation and how these customary practices form the basis of national disaster risk-reduction policies. The endless struggle to feed and shelter a family and contend with repeated hazards, whether natural or human-induced, promotes collective action. There is a need to cooperate with neighbors, a web of dyadic and community relationships born out of necessity that constitutes a "reciprocity of misfortune." Using the Historical Data Papers, a hitherto largely untapped source on rural history, the dynamics of this little tradition of self-help and mutual benefit are analyzed and the way its folk practices were universalized into the great tradition of community-based disaster risk management policy are explained.*

Keywords: *community-based disaster risk management, little and great traditions, resilience, Philippines*

Resumen: *Igual que hay mucha y poca tradición en la religión y la civilización, también hay mucha y poca tradición en los desastres. Este artículo explora los orígenes de la resiliencia comunitaria en áreas rurales de Filipinas, basada en la reciprocidad y la cooperación locales, y cómo estas prácticas consuetudinarias constituyen la base de las actuales políticas nacionales de*

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reducción del riesgo de desastres. La incesante lucha por alimentar y dar cobijo a una familia y, al mismo tiempo, hacer frente a repetidas amenazas, sean naturales o inducidas por el hombre, promueve la acción colectiva. Existe la necesidad de cooperar con el prójimo, una red de relaciones diádicas y comunitarias nacida de la necesidad que constituye una "reciprocidad de la desgracia". Utilizando los Historical Data Papers, una fuente hasta ahora poco explotada sobre la historia rural, se analizan las dinámicas de esta pequeña tradición de autoayuda y beneficio mutuo, y se explica el modo en que sus prácticas populares se universalizaron en la gran tradición de la política comunitaria de gestión del riesgo de desastres.

Palabras clave: *Gestión comunitaria del riesgo de desastres, pequeñas y grandes tradiciones, resiliencia, Filipinas*

초록: 종교와 문명에도 크고 작은 전통이 있듯이 재난에도 크고 작은 전통이 있다. 본 논문에서는 지역 호혜와 협력을 기반으로 한 필리핀 농촌 지역사회의 회복력의 기원과 이러한 관습이 현재 국가 차원의 재난 위험 감소 정책의 기초를 형성하는 방법을 살펴본다. 가족을 먹여 살리고 보호하는 동시에 자연적이든 인위적이든 반복되는 위험에 맞서 싸우기 위한 끊임없는 투쟁은 집단적 행동을 촉진한다. 우리에겐 이웃과 협력해야 할 필요성이 있으며, 이것이 바로 "불행의 상호성"을 구성하는 필요성에서 비롯된 역동적이고 공동체적인 관계의 그물망임을 제시한다. 본 논문은 지금까지 거의 알려지지 않은 농촌 역사 자료인 *'Historical Data Papers'*를 활용하여 이 작은 자조(自助)와 상호 이익의 전통적인 역학을 분석하고, 그러한 민간 관행이 지역 기반 재난 위험 관리 정책이라는 커다란 전통으로 보편화되는 과정을 설명한다.

키워드: 지역 사회 기반 재난 위험 관리, 크고 작은 전통, 회복력, 필리핀

Just as there is a great and little tradition in religion and civilization, there is a great and little tradition in disaster.[1] The great traditions of universalized collective heritage—Islam and Christianity or Rome and Confucianism—have counterparts in the realm of disaster. The Hyogo Framework for Action (2005) and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015) represent universalized canons on how to reduce risk and manage disaster. And just as there is a little tradition in religion and civilization fixed on localized heritage and knowledge, ensuring crucial beliefs and practices for livelihood and security, there is a little tradition in disaster rooted in reciprocity and forms of mutual benefit manifest in community-based disaster risk management (CBDRM).[2]

1 Robert Redfield, "The Social Organization of Tradition," *Far Eastern Quarterly* 15, no. 1 (1955): 13–21.

2 Øystein S. LaBianca, "Indigenous Hardiness Structures and State Formation in Jordan: Towards a History of Jordan's Resident Arab Population," in *Ethnic Encounter and*

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However, separation of the great from the little tradition is always more apparent than real. The great is only ever the upward creation from the little, its "universalization" or the authoritative restatement of material already present in the little tradition. At the same time, there is a downward dissemination from the universal to the local, from the great to the little, a process of parochialization whereby the less articulate tradition is given structure and form before being reintroduced as something new that requires external instruction and direction. The great and the little therefore form two parts of an eternal circular flow in which each repeatedly informs and transforms the other. Neither tradition is entirely complete or discrete; both are continually in flux, absorbing and adapting on the one hand, and amalgamating and syncretizing on the other.[3]

The origins of the great tradition are always rooted in the little. This is certainly the case in the Philippines, one of the most hazardous places to live on Earth. An archipelago located off mainland Southeast Asia with a land area of slightly under 30 million hectares spread across more than 7,600 islands, the country is exposed to frequent tropical storms and devastating monsoon floods. Filipinos experience up to twenty earthquakes a day, and over 80 percent of the population lives in proximity to an active volcano, one of the highest such concentrations anywhere.[4] Disasters are simply a fact of life. The ceaseless struggle to feed and shelter a family and contend with repeated natural hazards promote collective action. In the absence of an effective state presence in rural areas distant from major population centers until after World War II, there was (and still is) a need for cooperation among neighbors based on self-interest and mutual benefit. This web of dyadic and community relationships constitutes a reciprocity of misfortune.[5] It is a reciprocity by which help offered to a neighbor in a time of trouble is expected to

Culture Change, edited by Mohammed Sabour and K. S. Vikør (Bergen: Nordic Society for Middle Eastern Studies, 1997), 143–57.

3 McKim Marriott, "Little Communities in an Indigenous Civilization," in *Village India: Studies in the Little Community*, edited by McKim Marriott (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1955), 177–222.

4 CFE-DM (Center for Excellence in Disaster Management and Humanitarian Assistance), *Philippines: Disaster Management Reference Handbook* (Hickam, HI: CFE-DM, 2021), 20–21. Still the most comprehensive introduction to the geography and natural history of the archipelago is Frederick L. Wernstedt and J. E. Spencer, *The Philippine Island World: A Physical, Cultural, and Regional Geography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967).

5 On limitations to state power in rural areas during the early twentieth century, see John T. Sidel, *Capital, Coercion, and Crime: Bossism in the Philippines* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999); Greg Bankoff, "'For the Good of the Barrio': Community Associations and the State in the Rural Philippines 1935–1965," in *Beyond Empire and Nation: Decolonizing*

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be repaid when the need arises. In the context of rural life, it is often the only form of practical insurance to guard against the frequent hardships that might otherwise overwhelm a family. It provides the necessary social norms and values to ensure community cohesion and compliance in collective activities.[6] As a little tradition, however, it is not "so much a product of altruism as of necessity."[7]

In the Philippines, this little tradition based on the reciprocity of misfortune has long existed in the barrio (village).[8] It manifests in the myriad ways people face daily hardship, disaster, and death, and in the customs and associations regulating socioeconomic relationships.[9] However, unlike its great counterpart, which is enshrined in national laws and implemented by government agencies, the little tradition is less visible, and its roots are not so well documented. One of the few windows through which its origins can be glimpsed are the Historical Data Papers (HDP), a nationwide survey envisioned by President Elpidio Quirino in 1951 as a source for those wishing "to write the history of the community."[10] The data collected by this survey were an attempt to preserve a local history threatened by the widespread destruction of archives during World War II.[11] Its pages record the origins, key events, customs, and traditions of the country's municipalities and barrios. Access to this source has long been limited, and it is only with the material's

Societies in Africa and Asia, 1930s–1970s, edited by Els Bogaerts and Remco Raben (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2012), 167–88.

6 Emile Durkheim, *De la Division du Travail Social: Étude sur l'Organisation des Sociétés Supérieures* (Paris: Alcan, 1893).

7 James C. Scott, *The Moral Economy of the Peasant: Rebellion and Subsistence in Southeast Asia* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1976), 4.

8 Barrios were officially designated as *barangays* by President Ferdinand Marcos in 1974.

9 Julian Balmaceda, "Turnuhan as Practised in Various Provinces," *Philippine Agricultural Review* 20, no. 4 (1927): 381–421; Bankoff, "'For the Good of the Barrio.'"

10 "Executive Order No. 486 Providing for the Collection and Compilation of Historical Data Regarding Barrios, Towns, Cities and Provinces," *Official Gazette of the Republic of the Philippines* (1951), https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/downloads/1951/12dec/19511207-EO-0486-EQ.pdf.

11 Filipinos experienced one of the longest periods of colonial rule: 381 years between 1565 and 1946, occupied first by Spain (1565–1898), then by the United States (1899–1946), with a brief interlude by Japan (1941–45), and culminating in the terrible devastation wrought in World War II. José S. Arcilla, *An Introduction to Philippine History* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1971); Patricio N. Abinales and Donna J. Amoroso, *State and Society in the Philippines* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005).

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digitalization by the National Library of the Philippines that it has become possible to better understand the structures and dynamics at work in the barrio before 1950.

The data in the HDP are uneven, depending on the aptitude and interests of those who compiled them. They have been discredited as not following the prescribed format, as incomplete or damaged, and as generally unreliable.[12] The validity of these charges largely depends on the type of information being sought. Although the chronology may sometimes be questioned, the geographically extensive information on settlement and migration patterns, social customs and organization, interactions between communities, and local events are unparalleled. The resultant data provide detailed descriptions of some communities and somewhat sketchier ones of others.[13] Although their tone may be somewhat romanticized, as might be expected from local schoolteachers who were the primary authors of tales about their communities, this does not diminish the authenticity of the practices they describe and that have been confirmed by numerous studies.[14] To address these shortcomings, the whole archive was systematically examined and analyzed, rather than certain provinces or municipalities selected as representative samples. The methodological approach is more a prosopography, focusing on the commonplace and not the unique, the life memories of many people in rural areas rather than the accounts of a few, predominantly urban elite. As far as possible the sources have been allowed to speak for themselves, explaining practices in their own words. The HDP reveals the lost record of the barrio's little tradition across the archipelago, providing detailed insights into its history and cultural life not available from any other source.

12 Ryan A. Pawilen and Bernardo Arellano, "The Historical Data Papers and the Geographical Information System as Tools for Mapping Settlement and Migration in the Ilocos Region," *Cordillera Review* 13, nos. 1 and 2 (2002): 184–86.

13 There are currently fifty entries in the HDP database (the site is still under revision): forty-nine provinces and the city of Manila, of which thirty-one entries are from Luzon, eleven from the Visayas, and eight from Mindanao. The prominence of Luzon is partly explained by the administrative inclusion of Palawan, Mindoro, and Masbate as well as some smaller islands in this division. In terms of national population, 52.5 percent (as of 2021) live on the island of Luzon.

14 John H. Romani, "The Philippine Barrio," *Far Eastern Quarterly* 15, no. 2 (1956): 229–37; F. Landa Jocano, *Growing Up in a Philippine Barrio* (New York: Holt, Reinhart, and Winston, 1969); Brain Fegan, "The Social History of a Central Luzon Barrio," in *Philippine Social History: Global Trade and Local Transformations*, edited by Alfred McCoy and Ed. de Jesus (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1982), 91–130; Greg Bankoff, "The Dangers of Going It Alone: Social Capital and the Origins of Community Resilience in the Philippines," *Continuity and Change* 22, no. 2 (2007): 327–55.

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This article examines the reciprocity of misfortune and the various ways people helped one another by analyzing what are called "folkways." Misfortune encompasses not only the dangers posed by natural hazards or wartime contingencies but also the struggle of daily existence in rural areas. Hardship in the barrio involved navigating a range of risks, from the struggle to produce enough food for the family and enduring frequent storms and floods, to confronting catastrophic events such as earthquakes and war. Perforce people in rural areas needed to be both resilient and self-reliant, especially because there was often no state or external sources of support to depend on in any systematic or consistent way. Instead, they relied on each other to plant fields, build homes, repair buildings, care for the sick, educate children, deal with disasters, and bury their dead. It is precisely this little tradition of the barrio, adopted and adapted at the national level, that provides the conceptual framework of CBDRM on which national emergency management policies and practice in the Philippines are currently based.

The Little Tradition and Rural Life

Hardship, misfortune, and hazard take many forms in the daily lives of Filipinos. Hardship is part of living in the Philippines—the struggle to survive through demanding physical work, the need to feed, clothe and shelter one's family, and obtaining the money and goods needed to celebrate personal milestones like births, marriages, and deaths. Misfortune is ever present in the threat of accident and disease that may temporarily or permanently deprive one from earning a livelihood and is inevitable with the death of a breadwinner and/or loved one. Hazard is a "frequent life experience," a constant risk given the dynamic nature of tectonic and hydrometeorological activity that have shaped the cultures and the socioeconomic structures of society in the islands.[15] Filipinos have customarily faced these adversities by acting in concert with family, friends, and neighbors, sharing hardships, overcoming misfortunes, and mitigating hazards.[16] Assistance is offered on the understanding that it will be reciprocated when required.

Food and shelter were the constant concerns of most Filipinos laboring on the land before World War II. To make it productive, land first had to

15 Greg Bankoff, *Cultures of Disaster: Society and Natural Hazard in the Philippines* (London: Routledge, 2003); Kirby Alvarez, "A History of Earthquakes in the Luzon Island, Philippines during the 19th and 20th Centuries: Historical Seismology, Bureaucratic Responses, and Socio-cultural Interpretations of Disasters," PhD diss., University of Namur, 2019; James Francis Warren, *Typhoons: Climate, Society, and History in the Philippines* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2024).

16 Maria Carinnes Alejandria and Will Smith (eds.), *Disaster Archipelago: Locating Vulnerability and Resilience in the Philippines* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2020).

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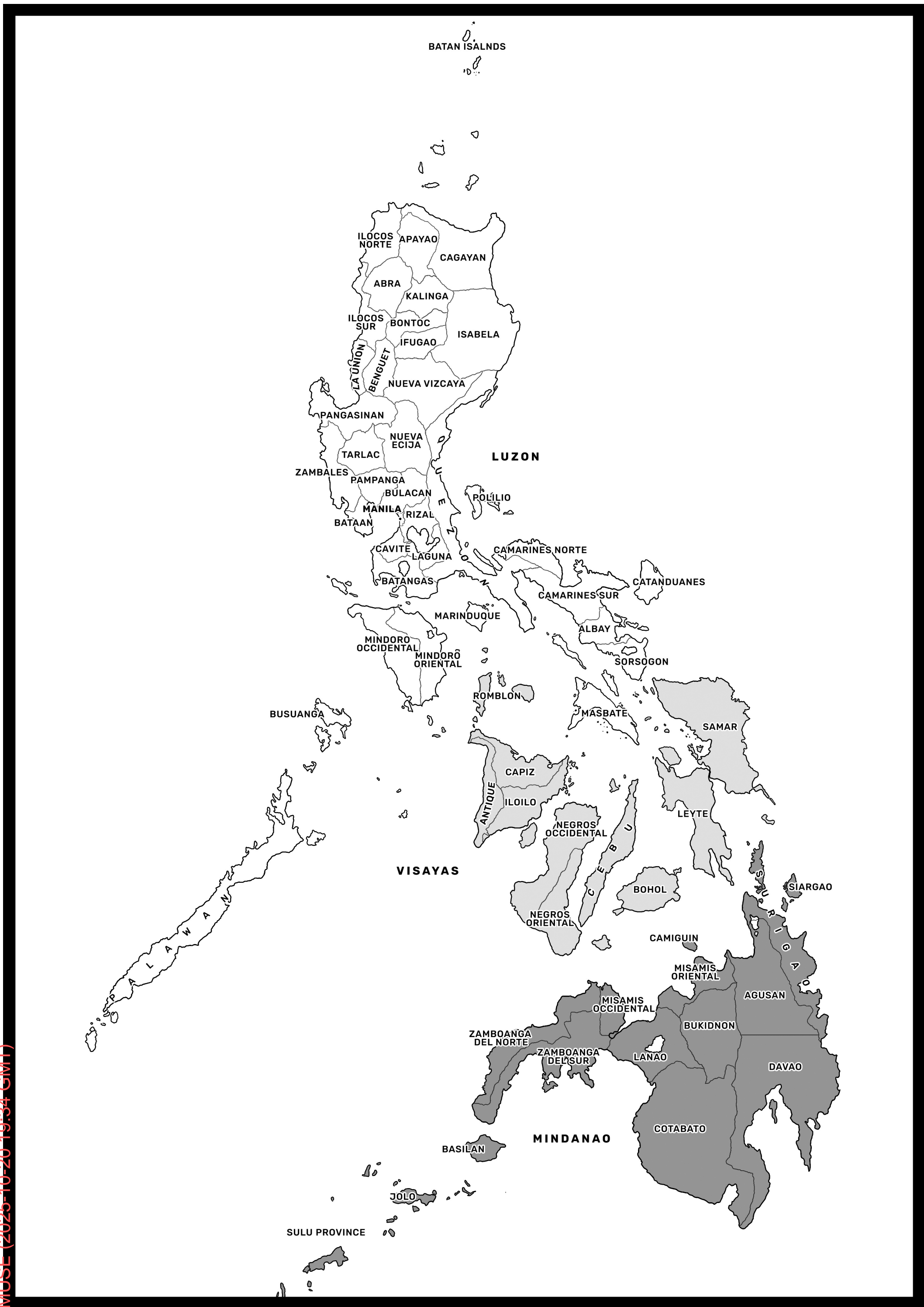

Figure 1 A map of the Philippines in 1950 depicting its provinces and its three major regions (Luzon, Visayas, Mindanao) (drawn by Maiden Ysabel Mirabueno)

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be cleared of forest.[17] While a family unit might clear swidden fields on their own, the labor needed to prepare fields for rice cultivation typically exceeded the capabilities of a single household. Trees had to be felled and their stumps removed to create polders and irrigation channels. In mountainous areas, the land might require leveling. This scale of work called for cooperation with extended family members, neighbors, or an entire community—often the same group of people. In Agusan, for example, people were summoned by simply blowing a *budyong* (conch), and "the men came ready to work."[18] In forested areas, men cooperated in felling the big trees and selling the wood as lumber.[19] In more rugged areas, people worked together to transform the ground into a rich fertile plain where "now all kinds of crops especially rice and tobacco are abundantly produced."[20] Cooperation was particularly pronounced in areas of new settlement, such as on the Central Luzon plain, where "working cooperatively was their virtue in any undertaking to make work faster and livelier."[21] The spirit of collaboration was evident in the names of some pioneer settlements. Caanamongan, a barrio in Tarlac founded in 1935, derives its name from an Ilocano word meaning togetherness, symbolizing "the people's cooperative spirit in grouping together and forming a [settlement]."[22]

Cooperation did not end with clearing the land; a farmer also required extrafamilial labor to plow, plant, and harvest the fields. Reciprocity at key moments in the agricultural cycle was a custom universally practiced across the archipelago and known by different regional designations: *pabayanihan* in Batangas, *pintakasi* in Rizal, *lusong* in Pampanga, and *bolhon* in Bohol.[23] In communities with little money to spare, hiring seasonal workers was seldom an option. Instead, when a farmer needed help with his fields, "his

17 Greg Bankoff, "One Island Too Many: Reappraising the Extent of Deforestation in the Philippines Prior to 1946," *Journal of Historical Geography* 33, no. 2 (2007): 324.

18 HDP, Agusan, Municipality of Salimbogaon, History and Cultural Life of Barrio Laperigan, 2.

19 HDP, Bohol, Municipality of Jetafe, History and Cultural Life of Barrio Catigbi-an, 80.

20 HDP, Abra, Municipality of Pilar, History and Cultural Life of Barrio Dalit, 1.

21 HDP, Nueva Ecija, Municipality of Talugtug, History and Cultural Life of Barrio Saverona, 3. On the settlement of the Central Luzon plain, see Marshall S. McLennan, *The Central Luzon Plain: Land and Society on the Inland Frontier* (Quezon City: Alemar-Phoenix, 1980).

22 HDP, Tarlac, Municipality of Santa Ignacia, History and Cultural Life of Barrio Caanamongan, 10.

23 HDP, Batangas, Poblacion of Lemery, Bambang, 5; HDP, Rizal, Municipality of Taguig, History and Cultural Life of Barrio Hagonoy, 5; HDP, Pampanga, Poblacion of San Luis, 3; HDP, Bohol, Municipality of Inabanga, History and Cultural Life of Barrio Nahud, 74.

neighbors and friends readily respond."[24] In Albay, a farmer "only let his neighbors and relations know that on a certain day, he will plant his *kaingin* [swidden field] with *palay* [unhusked rice], and on that day everybody will be there doing their shares," working together and singing "to keep themselves in high spirits and to forget fatigue."[25] Throughout the day, those working in the fields expected the owner's family to provide food and refreshments and to organize some form of entertainment in the evening.[26] They willingly toiled on the expectation that "when his turn for cleaning his field comes his neighbor will help him in payment of his previous services."[27] As demand for agricultural labor peaked at certain times of the year, farmers had to regularize a system of reciprocity. In Bohol, farmers formed associations and set up a schedule to take turns working in each other's fields.[28] Animal husbandry and fishing were also reciprocal endeavors, with livestock reared on common land and fishers sharing their catch.[29]

Working cooperatively was also a feature of building a house. The traditional *bahay kubo* was raised on posts, constructed from bamboo and wood, and thatched with *nipa* or fan palm.[30] These structures were typically not very large, mainly consisting of a single room. Erecting them was a collective endeavor. Men would go to the forest to cut timber for posts and the boards for walls and floors. Once the materials were gathered, everyone in the neighborhood offered a helping hand. "It is a custom of the people that when a certain family plans to build a house, they . . . but only pass a word to their neighbors that on a certain day they will start building."[31] Houses were constructed "without employing hired carpenters or laborers."[32] The task usually

24 HDP, Bulacan, Municipality of Bocaue, History and Cultural Life of Barrio Duhat, 64.

25 HDP, Municipality of Polangui, History and Cultural Life of Barrio Santa Cruz, 141; HDP, Bohol, Town of Lila, History and Cultural Life of Jambawan, 2; HDP, Batanes, History and Cultural Life of Town of Uyugan, 7.

26 HDP, Camarines Sur, Municipality of Baao, History and Cultural Life of Barrio Ayagan, 10; HDP, Albay, Municipality of Jovellar, History and Cultural Life of Estrella, 21–22.

27 HDP, Barrio Estrella, 21.

28 HDP, Barrio Nahud, 74.

29 HDP, Albay, Municipality of Camalig, History and Cultural Life of Barrio Cotmon, 1–2; HDP, Rizal, Municipality of Navotas, History of Barrio Tañgos, 1–2. Livestock owners might "lend" female animals to those without, who would rear them, keep the first offspring for themselves, and give the next one to the owner. HDP, Batanes, Municipality of Sabtang, History and Cultural Life of Barrio Savidug, 3.

30 Fernando N. Zialcita and Martin I. Tinio, *Philippine Ancestral Houses 1810–1930* (Quezon City: GCF Books, 1992), 65–89.

31 HDP, Barrio Santa Cruz, 141.

32 HDP, Cagayan, Municipality of Peñablanca, Historical Data of Barrio Dodan, 73.

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took two to four days.[33] Naturally, the owner and his family were obliged to reciprocate when called on to do so. Cooperation was deemed essential to the survival of the barrio because it fostered "closer ties, unity and understanding in the community."[34]

The spirit of cooperation extended to the construction of the principal buildings in any community: the church and later the schoolhouse. All barrios aspired to have a church or at least a rudimentary chapel. Larger churches in the towns and more sizable municipalities were constructed from stone or brick, while chapels in the barrio were often made of wood. Churches and chapels were indisputably the most important structures in any community during the three centuries of Spanish rule. They were built by residents, but not always entirely voluntarily. Some churches may even have been seen as "a living symbol of untold hardships."[35] Accounts describe how men had to work without pay, while the local priest made women bring baskets full of sand and stone as their "donation." Still, a church's beautification was a matter of intense civic pride. The bells of the church in Tayum, Abra, had been ordered from France and paid for by donations from as far afield as Hawai'i and mainland United States.[36]

The rapid rise in population from 6.29 million in 1898 to 20.67 million in 1953 encouraged migration and the settlement of previously sparsely inhabited forested areas.[37] New barrios meant building more chapels and churches. A place of worship was deemed essential "to encourage and to rehabilitate the moral and spiritual lives of the inhabitants."[38] A suitable site was obtained, the land either donated by prominent local families or purchased with funds raised by voluntary contributions.[39] Construction was a communal effort. Barrio residents volunteered their labor, provided money to buy materials, and even supplied furnishings—benches, candlesticks, and picture frames.[40] Projects of this size might take years to complete with "rich and poor, men and women," their political differences laid aside, helping one another in raising the rafters and feeding the workers.[41] Funds were needed to purchase

33 HDP, Abra, Municipality of Villaviciosa, History and Cultural Life of Barrio Tamac, 2–3.

34 HDP, Cagayan, Tuguegarao City, Historical and Cultural Life of Barrio Libag, 2.

35 HDP, Albay, Municipality of Libog, History and Cultural Life of the Town, 11.

36 HDP, Abra, Municipality of Tayum, Bell Tower, 19.

37 "Population of Philippines from 1800 to 2020 (in millions)," Statista, https://www.statista.com/statistics/1067059/population-philippines-historical/ (accessed October 5, 2023). On land settlement, see McLennan, *The Central Luzon Plain*.

38 HDP, Romblon, Municipality of Looc, History and Cultural Life of Barrio Alcantara, 10.

39 HDP, Albay, Municipality of Bacacay, Barrio Gubat, 28.

40 HDP, Bulacan, Municipality of Hagonoy, Barrio San Jose, 69.

41 HDP, Abra, Municipality of Tayum, Church, 18.

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or commission a likeness of the patron saint; thus, the congregation of Mercedes raised ₱500 from voluntary contributions to procure an image of St. Anthony.[42] All this community largesse, however, provided opportunities for the less scrupulous to enrich themselves, like the barrio lieutenant of Bariis, a man called Graciano Marjaleno, who had the deed for land in Legaspi City made out in his name even though the funds had been raised by the community. "Led by selfish desires," he then sold the plot to Pablo Yuson, who promptly fenced off the land, causing endless strife and bad feeling in the barrio.[43]

The other principal public building in the barrio was the schoolhouse. As the new US administration placed a premium on education after 1898, the importance the community vested in the school rapidly grew.[44] Nothing stirred a community more than the construction of the barrio schoolhouse. Rudimentary municipal schooling existed during the Spanish colonial period, mainly run by the religious orders, who viewed education as an effective means of spreading Christianity.[45] These older structures were built by community labor, just as the chapels and churches had been, and, as in the latter case, there are questions about the voluntary nature of such assistance. Certainly, their construction was not always fondly remembered.[46] However, the enthusiasm with which barrios embraced education in the early twentieth century is a marked feature of the period.

People who were financially more secure often donated land for local schoolhouses. Pascual Llandelar provided a site in Daraga, Albay, "to encourage the people in the barrio, especially the young ones to get free education."[47] Similarly, Elias Casao contributed one hectare for the construction of a

42 HDP, Camarines Norte, Municipality of Mercedes, History of Mercedes, 2.

43 HDP, Albay, City of Legaspi, History and Cultural Life of Bariis, 3.

44 Carolyn I. Sobritchea, "American Colonial Education and Its Impact on the Status of Filipino Women," *Asian Studies* 28 (1990): 70–91.

45 Encarnacion Alzona, *The History of Education in the Philippines, 1565–1930* (Manila: University of the Philippines Press, 1932). The educational decree of 1863 supposedly established a complete system of primary education in rural areas, requiring two elementary schools in each municipality (one each for boys and girls) with a standardized curriculum. However, the Spanish colonial state lacked the funds to implement these provisions, and the decree had limited impact on the extent and quality of public education before 1898. See Erin P. Hardacker, "The Impact of Spain's 1863 Educational Decree on the Spread of Philippine Public Schools and Language Acquisition," *European Education* 44, no. 4 (2012): 8–30.

46 HDP, Albay, Municipality of Guinobatan, Historical Description of the Intramuros of Guinobatan, 1.

47 HDP, Albay, Municipality of Daraga, History of Barrio Tabontabon, 1.

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permanent school building in Agdangan in Quezon.[48] In barrios in Abra, families donated land: the Tacis family for the Basbasa School at Palpal in 1925, and the Tejero family for the schoolhouse at Pagpagatpat in 1949.[49] In the absence of anyone willing to give land, money was raised by voluntary contributions. Thus, the heads of families in Barrio Namantao in Albay contributed small amounts to buy a half-hectare plot in 1947. They donated the site to the barrio for a schoolhouse "where the children could drink the fountain of Education."[50]

Building the schoolhouse was likewise a collective endeavor. Barrio residents supplied the requisite materials, provided the labor, and raised funds. In Agusan, for instance, the inhabitants of Barrio Cahayagan cut the timber necessary to construct the schoolhouse and roofed it with fan palm (*Saribus rotundifolius*).[51] Similarly, the building materials to erect the school in Barrio Agtangao in Abra were donated by its residents, each family head providing one cubic meter of stone.[52] Parents of prospective pupils provided the labor and skills to build the schoolhouse, the cooperation even extending to neighboring barrios if communities agreed to share a building. Sinalang Elementary School in Abra was constructed by the combined efforts of the residents of barrios Sao-atan, Palao, Angad, and Lipcan.[53]

If a community lacked the necessary skills, carpenters were hired from outside the barrio, their labor paid for by local contributions. These sums might be substantial; for example, every family head in Cuyapo in Nueva Ecija gave five cavans of *palay* (250–300 kg) to pay for the work.[54] In Barrio San Marcos in Bulacan, the more well-to-do residents each contributed ₱20 for the school's construction.[55] In other communities, fund drives were organized to gather the money. The residents of Barrio Cosili in Abra held a popularity contest to crown a barrio queen and raised more than ₱200.[56] The Chinese were particularly active fundraisers despite the small size of their community.[57] In Baguio, a small Chinese population of fewer than 100 people

48 HDP, Quezon, Municipality of Agdangan, History of Barrio Binagbag, 9.

49 HDP, Abra, Municipality of Tayum, Public Schools, 22–23.

50 HDP, Albay, Municipality of Daraga, History of the Barrio Namantao, 2.

51 HDP, Agusan, Municipality of Carmen, History and Cultural Life of Barrio Cahayagan, 2.

52 HDP, Abra, Municipality of Bangued, History and Cultural Life of Barrio Agtangao, 3.

53 HDP, Abra, Municipality of Bangued, History and Cultural Life of Barrio Sao-atan, 3.

54 HDP, Nueva Ecija, Municipality of Cuyapo, History and Cultural Life of Barrio Nagmisahan, 4.

55 HDP, Bulacan, Town of Calumpit, History and Cultural Life of Barrio San Marcos, 50.

56 HDP, Abra, Municipality of Bangued, History and Cultural Life of Barrio Cosili, 4.

57 On the history of the Chinese community in the Philippines, see Edgar Wickberg, *The Chinese in Philippine Life, 1850–1898* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1965).

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still raised funds for a purpose-built schoolhouse in 1918, the Baguio Chinese Patriotic School. A single benefactor, Luk Po Shing, donated $6,000 for its construction.[58] Around the archipelago, as one proud schoolmaster boasted, voluntary contributions of material, labor, and money "made it possible for all children of school age to attend a school in their barrio."[59]

Reciprocity and cooperation were the sine qua non required to face the everyday hardships of rural life in the Philippines. Neither the Spanish nor the US colonial states had the compulsion or resources to alleviate local conditions, and people were largely left to their own devices to feed, clothe, shelter, and even educate themselves and their families.[60] The barrio was the only effective operational unit in most rural areas able to provide these services, and reciprocity was an efficient way of regulating their apportionment in the absence of state facilities.

The Little Tradition and Misfortune

Just as people in the barrios faced the hardships and rigors of daily rural life and the absence of state services through reciprocity and cooperation, they confronted life's misfortunes in a similar manner—as a community. As Mary Hollnsteiner observes on the practice of *utang na loob* in the Philippines, reciprocity was "designed to achieve security through inter-dependence."[61] Misfortune took many forms depending on where you lived. Earthquakes were a periodic threat in many parts of the archipelago, as were volcanic eruptions. However, the principal danger that faced most people was from wind and rain, the typhoons and floods that were a constant reminder of the baleful power of nature.[62] Even their absence posed its own peril; drought, whether

58 HDP, Benguet, Baguio City, Chapter VI Education, 4.

59 HDP, Nueva Ecija, Municipality of Cuyapo, History and Cultural Life of Barrio Patalan, 2.

60 Greg Bankoff, "Blame, Responsibility and Agency: 'Disaster Justice' and the State in the Philippines," *Environment and Planning E: Nature and Space* 1, no. 3 (2018): 363–81. While the Spanish offered little more than small amounts of money and tax reliefs to deal with major mishaps, the Americans relied heavily on the Philippine Red Cross and the military to deal with major events. See Warren, *Typhoons*, 352–73.

61 Mary R. Hollnsteiner, "Reciprocity in the Lowland Philippines," *Philippine Studies* 9, no. 3 (1961): 411.

62 Greg Bankoff, "1881, a Singularly Uneventful Year: Everyday Death, Destruction, and Disaster in the Spanish Philippines," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 54, no. 4 (2023): 783–803; James Francis Warren, "The Great Ilocos Flood of 1867," in *Droughts, Floods, and Global Climatic Anomalies in the Indian Ocean World*, edited by Philip Gooding (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), 199–229.

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El Niño–induced or simply from too few typhoons, might lead to crop failure and famine.[63]

The effect of these hazards on a community could be devastating. The inhabitants of Barrio Pudoc in the municipality of Tayum were struck by a typhoon in 1908. First came the wind; trees and houses were flattened. Next came the rain; waters rose so high that people were stranded in the cornfields and were unable to get to safety. Then came the flood; there was water as far as the eye could see, "from the tower of Tayum to the tower of La Paz raged strong currents as on a continuous sea." Survivors lashed themselves to the tops of tamarind trees (*Pithecellobium dulce*). The surrounding barrios were cut off from supplies of food until evening, and it was not until the following afternoon that the bodies of the dead were retrieved. The flood was so severe that it altered the course of the Abra River and turned previously fertile cornfields into "a plane [*sic*] of stones."[64] Entire regions were devastated by such events.[65] Typhoon Trix slammed into southern Luzon on October 22, 1952, and left nearly 1,000 dead and 500,000 homeless. In Albay, 90 percent of the houses in Barrio Buenavista were destroyed, 60 percent of the abaca was flattened, all the coconut trees were stripped of their fruit, the rice fields were flooded, and the ripening grain was destroyed. Three young girls also drowned.[66]

In the face of such onslaughts, barrio buildings were in constant need of repair. High winds flattened nippa and wooden structures, while those constructed from more permanent materials were unroofed or otherwise damaged. Once again, the community responded as a collective to these repeated depredations; family, friends, and neighbors helped each other rebuild homes and restore common property. Harvey E. Hostetter noted in his 1911 report on local associations that it was customary among communities to construct special houses "which might be occupied by anyone whose residence would be destroyed by a typhoon."[67] In Ilocos Norte, an eyewitness describes how in the aftermath of a typhoon that leveled most of the dwellings in the settlement,

63 James Francis Warren, "Typhoons and Droughts: Food Shortages and Famine in the Philippines since the Seventeenth Century," *International Review of Environmental History* 4, no. 2 (2018): 27–44; Theresa Ventura, "A Drought so Extraordinary: The 1911 ENSO and Disaster Nationalism in the American Colonial Philippines," in *Droughts, Floods, and Global Climatic Anomalies in the Indian Ocean World*, edited by Philip Gooding (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), 345–76. Typhoons may be responsible for up to 50 percent of annual rainfall in the Philippines depending on the region. Gerry Bagtasa, "Contribution of Tropical Cyclones to Rainfall in the Philippines," *Journal of Climate* 30, no. 10 (2017): 3625.

64 HDP, Abra, Municipality of Tayum, VIII Important Events, 13.

65 Warren, *Typhoons*, 257–303, 354–58.

66 HDP, Albay, Municipality of Jovellar, History and Cultural Life of Barrio Buenavista, 29.

67 Balmaceda, "Turnuhan as Practised in Various Provinces," 387.

"the destroyed houses . . . were rebuilt quickly as soon as the storm was over because the owners could help each other by turn in spite of their lack of funds."[68]

Buildings that acted as the hub of community life—the church and later the schoolhouse—required constant maintenance and repair from the depredations of both physical and human nature. On Romblon, the residents of Barrio Alcantara, who had labored long and hard "to construct a very presentable church," witnessed its destruction by a typhoon before the building was even finished. Undeterred, they began again.[69] Schoolhouses were more susceptible to high winds, as many of the initial buildings were converted private dwellings or were constructed from the same light materials as the surrounding houses. A typhoon wrecked the school in Barrio Causwagan Norte on Bohol in 1949, and its inhabitants built a new one. The next year, another typhoon destroyed the new building and it, too, was rebuilt.[70] Education was seen as being for "the good of the community as a whole" as much as for children's futures, and people's cooperation was regarded as "unquestionable," repeatedly rebuilding the schoolhouse even "though many times destroyed by typhoons."[71] Nature, however, did sometimes prove the stronger. In Legazpi City, the barrio schoolhouse in San Francisco was leveled by Typhoon Trix in 1952 only five years after its construction. Trix was one of the strongest typhoons to hit the region, and many residents later decided to move elsewhere in search of a better life.[72]

Typhoons were not the only agent of destruction to damage or destroy buildings in a barrio. Constructed from wood and other organic materials, these structures were prey to *anay*, the most destructive of which was the Philippine milk termite (*Coptotermes vastator*). Widely distributed throughout the archipelago, termites caused significant structural damage to buildings.[73] Termites left the chapel of Sta. Ines "old and weak," and voluntary contributions were required to rehabilitate it.[74] A combination of *anay* and damp were held responsible for the need to replace the rafters of Tayum's church in 1933 only twenty years after a new roof had been laid.[75] Schools were equally vulnerable to these pests, which could cause significant damage within weeks. The walls and posts of the Barrio Janosa schoolhouse in Rizal

68 Ibid., 401.

69 HDP, Barrio Alcantara, 10.

70 HDF, Bohol, Municipality of San Jacinto, Historical and Cultural Life of Barrio Causwagan Norte, 33.

71 HDP, Albay, Municipality of Daraga, Barrio Kinawitan, 2.

72 HDF, Albay, City of Legaspi, History and Cultural Life of Barrio San Francisco, 333–34.

73 Menandro N. Acda, "Economically Important Termites (*Isoptera*) of the Philippines and Their Control," *Sociobiology* 43, no. 2 (2004): 159–68.

74 HDP, Bulacan, Municipality of Bulacan, Barrio Sta. Ines, 31.

75 HDP, Abra, Municipality of Tayum, Church, 18.

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were attacked by termites during one long vacation, necessitating substantial community funds for repairs.[76]

World War II left its toll on countless barrios throughout the Philippines. Guerrilla warfare and the fierce resistance of Japanese troops to US forces in 1944–45 left many communities devastated, especially on Luzon, while the bombing campaign of the US Air Force completed the destruction.[77] Paco Church was reduced to "a roofless, pock-marked enclosure" by Japanese marines, who used the building as a redoubt during the Battle of Manila in February–March 1945.[78] It was repaired with the ₱120,000 raised by parishioners after the war.[79] Many rural schools were badly damaged or set alight by Japanese soldiers or the local paramilitaries that supported them. In Abra, for example, the schoolhouse in Barrio Sao-atan was seen as "a good hiding place for guerrillas" and was pulled down. It was still awaiting rehabilitation in 1953.[80] In Camarines Norte, parents had already rebuilt the schoolhouse in Masalongsalong set on fire by Japanese soldiers.[81]

Misfortune, whether from natural causes or human actions, destroyed houses and cost lives. Perhaps nowhere is the little tradition more apparent and more personal than in the reciprocity surrounding death. "In contrast to the Western structure," observes Hope Sabanpan-Yu, "death in the Philippines is primarily a matter of community—death creates community."[82] Assisting others in times of grief expresses a community's compassion or *damayan*.[83] Across

76 HDF, Rizal, Municipality of Antipolo, Historical Data on Janosa, 4–5.

77 Teodoro A. Agoncillo, *The Fateful Years: Japan's Adventure in the Philippines, 1941–45,* 2 vols. (Quezon City: R. P. Garcia, 1965). Greg Bankoff, Marie Beatrice D. Gulinao, David Lozada III, Camille Silva, "When 'Lives were as Cheap as Chickens:' Dark Histories of the Barrio during the Japanese Occupation of the Philippines, 1942-1945," *Journal of Military History* 88, No.4 (2025): forthcoming.

78 Richard Connaughton, "The War in the Pacific: The Liberation of Manila 1945—A Philippine Perspective," in *The World Reshaped*, edited by Richard Cobbold (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1996), 46–56; Russell W. Glenn, "Urban Disaster Wrought by Man: The Battle for Manila, 1945," *Journal of Strategic Security* 16, no. 3 (2023): 17–29.

79 HDP, Manila, Paco, History and Cultural Life of Paco, 5.

80 HDP, Barrio Sao-atan, 3.

81 HDP, Camarines Norte, Municipality of Mercedes, Historical and Cultural Life of Barrio Masalongsalong, 28.

82 Hope Sabanpan-Yu, "The Practice of Waking the Dead in the Philippines," *Philippine Quarterly of Culture and Society* 37, no. 4 (2009): 233.

83 Teresita V. Barrameda and Arlen Sandino V. Barrameda, "Rebuilding Communities and Lives: The Role of Damayan and Bayanihan in Disaster Resiliency," *Philippine Journal of Social Development* 3 (2011): 132–51. See also the discussion of damayan and related terms in Vicente C. Rafael, *Motherless Tongues: The Insurgency of Language and Wars of Translation* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2016), 37-42.

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the islands, people of different ethnicities shared a common set of customs surrounding death and its rituals. Death was very much a communal affair, one that involved not just family and friends but neighbors and the entire barrio.[84] In the words of one local writer, "the sorrows or misfortune suffered by one person or family become the concern of the whole neighborhood."[85]

News of a death spread "like fire" through a community, announced by the church bell or sounding a *bayog* (hollow log).[86] People immediately went to the home of the bereaved family to offer their condolences. Some stayed overnight, keeping vigil over the body to prevent the *aswang* (the evil spirit of folklore) from stealing the corpse.[87] The funeral rites lasted for nine days, every family in the barrio sending a representative, and culminated in a lavish feast to which everyone was "free to dine and join the merriment."[88] Among communities in the Cordillera Central, the dead person was seated on a chair amid the merrymakers, who came to pay their respects and drink copious amounts of *basi* (fermented sugarcane juice), remaining in this state for up to five days if the person had been of note or "until he is swelling and with bad odor."[89]

Expressions of *damayan* took more practical forms with mourners bringing gifts (in kind or money), helping prepare the body for burial, or serving visitors during the funeral rites. Those who could do so gave money; money was needed to fund the feasting—the vigil suppers, drinks, and smokes in the home of the deceased, to buy candles and flowers, to hire a band for the funeral procession, to pay for the priest and the burial.[90] A plate or small box was placed beside the corpse where people left their donations.[91] Most contributions were small, maybe only a few centavos, varying according to a visitor's circumstances and relationship to the deceased.[92] Relatives donated generously, though everybody was expected to leave something.[93]

84 Hollnsteiner, "Reciprocity in the Lowland Philippines," 389–91.

85 HDP, Batangas, Municipality of Bauan, History and Cultural Life of Bauan Poblacion, 31.

86 HDP, Camarines Norte, Vinzons District, Town of Talisay, Traditions and Customs, 2; HDP, Bohol, Municipality of Baclayon, History and Cultural Life of Barrio Tanday, 21.

87 HDP, Davao, Town of Baganga, Folkways, 44.

88 HDP, Pangasinan, Municipality of Malasiqui, History of Barrio Polong, 4; HDP, Bohol, Town of Carmen, Folkways 10.

89 HDP, Abra, Municipal District of Baay, Folkways, 8.

90 HDP, Bulacan, Municipality of Bulacan, History and Cultural Life of Barrio Tibig, 13; HDP, Bohol, Municipality of Inabanga, History and Cultural Life of Barrio Lutao, 69.

91 HDP, Batangas, History and Cultural Life of the Town of Malvar, 10.

92 HDP, Batangas, Municipality of Balayan, History and Cultural Life of Pook, 26; HDP, Bohol, Municipality of Inabanga, History and Cultural Life of Barrio Ilihan, 49; HDP, Batangas, Municipality of Bauan, Bauan Poblacion, 30.

93 HDP, Rizal, Municipality of Cardona, History of Barrios Balibago and Tuna, 10.

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In some communities, a set amount was customary. Each family head in Barrio Canguha on Bohol contributed twenty centavos when someone died, while in Nueva Ecija the *teniente* (village head) in Cuyapo would collect fifty centavos or more from everyone in the barrio.[94] In other communities, the donations were more substantial. In Barrio Deparo, for example, "people and neighbors who visit the dead give a voluntary contribution, the least of which is one peso."[95] One cynical commentator wryly notes how "a person who gave twenty centavos would eat one peso worth of food in the house of the deceased."[96]

Those who had no money to spare gave food or volunteered their services to take care of the many visitors who might stay for as long as a week.[97] People contributed food according to what was needed and their own circumstances: rice, vegetables, fish, chickens, and pigs to feed the many sympathizers; cooked sweets, cakes, *tuba* (palm wine), cigars, and cigarettes to help the mourners pass the time; and candles and fuel to light the long night hours of vigil.[98] Other community members assisted in the household duties, making the funeral arrangements, or undertaking farm chores.[99] No one in the bereaved family worked during the nine nights of mourning but stayed indoors, letting the neighbors "do everything, the cooking, the entertaining and the serving."[100] Women attended to the kitchen, feeding the many visitors and decorating the house. They made wreaths and washed and dressed the deceased's body.[101] They also prayed.[102] Men repaired the house and slaughtered the animals to feed the visitors.[103] They also dug the grave.[104] Most

94 HDP, Bohol, Town of Calape, History and Cultural Life of Barrio Canguha, 121; HDP, Nueva Ecija, Municipality of Cuyapo, History and Cultural Life of Bambanaba, 4.

95 HDP, Rizal, Municipality of Caloocan, Barrio Deparo, 51.

96 HDP, Cebu, vol. 36, Municipality of Ronda, Folkways, 10.

97 HDP, Quezon, Municipality of Sampaloc, Bataan, 4.

98 HDP, Bohol, Town of Calape, Historical and Cultural Life of Barrio Tinibgan, 327; HDP, Bohol, Municipality of Valencia, History and Cultural Life of Barrio Danao, 2; HDP, Bulacan, Municipality of San Rafael, History and Cultural Life of Barrio Maginao, 63; HDP, Pangasinan, Town of Mangaldan, History and Cultural Life of Barrio Bantayan, 44.

99 HDP, Cebu, vol. 35, Municipality of Badian, History and Cultural Life of Barrio Basan, 2.

100 HDP, Bulacan, Municipality of Baliuag, History of San Roque, 101.

101 HDP, Quezon, Municipality of Mauban, History and Cultural Life of Barrio Cagbalete I, 6; HDP, Laguna, Municipality of Nagcarlan, History of Paule, part II, 2.

102 HDP, Albay, Municipality of Libon, History and Cultural Life of Barrio San Antonio, 4.

103 HDP, Camarines Sur, Municipality of Canaman, History and Cultural Life of Barrio San Francisco, 2.

104 HDP, Laguna, City of Calamba, History and Cultural Life of Barrio Laguerta, 60.

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important of all, they made the coffin (*kabaong*).[105] Carpenters had some status in a village at such times, volunteering their services, "working even as far as the next day just to rush-up and finish the coffin."[106] They were not paid for this work; if the family was poor, they might pool their resources and provide the timber needed to make the coffin.[107] Even children ran errands or assisted the elderly.[108]

Death was more than a family concern. All the barrio inhabitants accompanied the coffin to the cemetery, chatting and laughing "not solemn and sad as in other places of the civilized world."[109] Death was seen as a community misfortune and assistance as "proof" of cooperation and neighborliness.[110] Similar practices were followed in villages across the archipelago. It was known as *saranay* in Ilocos Sur, *ambag* in Bulacan, *pakandila* in Batangas, *abuloy* in Quezon, and *limos* in Albay—terms variously meaning to render help and show sympathy, love, and cooperation.[111] In a sense, community members had little choice and were morally compelled to offer visible signs of emotional and practical support. Not to do so "would appear that he who does not pay a visit is not a good neighbor."[112]

The rituals and practices surrounding death were a vital means of cementing community adhesion. Even poor people, "who could hardly buy or eat three square meals a day," might expect to receive assistance from neighbors at this time.[113] As in life, however, so in death: assistance was not completely free of obligation or an expectation of reciprocity. The nine days of mourning were followed by a lavish meal for the mourners. Everyone in the barrio, "friends and enemies alike," were free to dine and join in the singing,

105 It was customary even for the poor to be interred in a wooden coffin by the mid-twentieth century. HDP, Albay, City of Legaspi, History and Cultural Life of Imalnod, 3; HDP, Nueva Ecija, Municipality of Guimba, History and Cultural Life of Barrio Guiset, 7.

106 HDP, Batangas, Municipality of Malvar, Collection and Compilation of Historical Data of San Pedro, 84; HDP, Nueva Ecija, Municipality of Guimba, History and Cultural Life of Barrio San Jorge, 4.

107 HDP, Albay, City of Legaspi, History and Cultural Life of Imalnod, 3; HDP, Nueva Ecija, Municipality of Guimba, History and Cultural Life of Barrio Guiset, 7.

108 HDP, Barrio San Francisco, 2.

109 HDP, Antique, Municipality of Caluya, Historical Data of Sibay, 4.

110 HDP, Barrio Dalit, 3.

111 HDP, Ilocos Sur, Municipality of Santa, Barrio Tubuculan, 2; HDP, Bulacan, Town of Norzagaray, History and Cultural Life of Barrio Bayabas, 29; HDP, Batangas, Municipality of Balayan, History and Cultural Life of the People in Dao, 44; HDP, Albay, Town of Malinao, History and Cultural Life of Barrio Jonop, 55.

112 HDP, Rizal, Town of Pililla and the Barrios of Quisao and Malaya, 10.

113 HDP, Bulacan, Town of Guiguinto, B Historical Data of Pulong-Gubat 1952–1953, 49.

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speechmaking, and merrymaking.[114] Pigs were butchered, and plenty of *tuba* was served.[115] Such largesse cost the bereaved family a great deal of money, to which the gifts and donations given by the visitors contributed but was often insufficient to cover the full amount. All too often, as one commentator notes, "the host spends more than what his pocketbook can afford and after the feast the family has nothing to eat."[116]

Often the expectation of reciprocity was more explicitly stated. A family member was tasked to sit beside the plate and list each contributor's monetary donations in a notebook, or a book was laid open on a table in which visitors wrote down their names, addresses, and the sums given.[117] Great effort was taken to record the exact amount "so that when their turn comes to contribute, they will know the amount they will reciprocate (not a centavo more not a centavo less)."[118] It was important to know the size of the debt owed and to whom, and this served "as a record for them to do the same."[119] Nor were contributions always voluntary. In some barrios, the inhabitants were forced to make a donation. Those who refused were made to carry the coffin to the cemetery, it being the duty of the head of the barrio to punish anyone who proved reluctant.[120] In other places, it was a practice agreed on by "a group of men in the neighborhood" that everyone should give a fixed amount of money and help with the burial arrangements.[121]

On the island of Bohol, death practices coalesced over time into more institutionalized arrangements. Associations were established with the sole purpose of rendering assistance to bereaved families when someone died. Membership in one or more of these mutual benefit associations ensured that a family had the required assistance, so that "death and burial [did] not always impose [a] heavy financial burden on the bereaved family." Associations varied between those that solely provided financial aid and those that made funeral arrangements.[122] Services were available only to members who

114 HDP, Camarines Sur, Municipality of Goa, Folkways, 20.

115 HDP, Bohol, Municipality of Jagna, History and Cultural Life of Barrio Malbog, 157.

116 HDP, Camarines Norte, Municipality of Mercedes, Historical and Cultural Life of Barrio Lanot, 2.

117 HDP, Cavite, Town of Indang, History and Cultural Life of Barrio Buna Lejos, 124; HDP, Bulacan, Municipality of Hagonoy, History and Cultural Life of San Miguel, 22.

118 HDP, Tarlac, Municipality of Gerona, History and Cultural Life of the Town of Gerona, 14.

119 HDP, Bulacan, Municipality of Baliuag, History and Cultural Life of Barrio Sabang, 87.

120 HDP, Antique, Municipality of Culasi, History and Cultural Life of Barrio Aras-asan, 4.

121 HDP, Bohol, Town of Calape, Historical and Cultural Life of Barrio Sampoangon, 265.

122 HDP, Bohol, History and Cultural Life of the Town of Calape, Death and Burial, 23–24.

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had paid dues.[123] This form of "primitive . . . neighborhood cooperation" was still very much part of the social fabric of barrios in the 1950s.[124] Known about the island by different names, they were commonly referred to as *dayong*, the word's etymology signifying assistance, particularly "to help in carrying," undoubtedly an allusion to those who bore the body of the deceased on its way to the cemetery.[125]

Usually only the head of family was a member of the *dayong*. These men attended the nightly devotions for the dead, saw that supper was served after prayers, provided food for mourners at the funeral, arranged the burial plot in the cemetery, and performed the myriad small jobs needed before a person was interred. If he was a carpenter, he made the coffin.[126] Contributions were set according to the articles of agreement made by members of the association and usually included a quantity of rice or corn, perhaps a *ganta* (about 2.8 kg), *tuba*, and various amounts of cash ranging from twenty centavos to one peso.[127] Fuel might be included and even water where it was scarce.[128]

Each *dayong* had its own constitution and by-laws administered by a headman (*kabo*) and sometimes a secretary-treasurer.[129] Special committees organized workloads, assigning chores on a rotational basis and ensuring that tasks were equitably distributed.[130] It was the *kabo*'s responsibility "to see to it that everything is done thoroughly before the members disband."[131] Food was prepared by both men and women away from the home of the deceased.[132]

123 HDP, Bohol, Poblacion of Antequera, History and Cultural Life of Barrio Bantolinao, 4.

124 HDP, Bohol, History and Cultural Life of Dimiao, Folkways and Customs, 8.

125 Peter Urich and Marilyn Edgecombe, "Bohol's Indigenous Social Institutions: A Development Perspective," *Philippine Quarterly of Culture and Society* 27, nos. 3/4 (1999): 183; HDP, Bohol, Town and Barrios of Balilihan, Death and Burial, 6; HDP, Bohol, Town of Lila, History and Cultural Life of Barrio Tiguis, 6.

126 HDP, Bohol, Town of Carmen, History and Cultural Life of Barrio Buenos Aires, 45; HDP, Bohol, Town of Lila, Historical and Cultural Life of Barrio Nagsulay, 5.

127 HDP, Bohol, Town of Carmen, Historical and Cultural Life of Barrio La Victoria, 106; HDP, Bohol, Town of Sevilla, Historical and Cultural Life of Barrio Lagtangan, 2; HDP, Barrio Nagsulay, 5.

128 HDP, Bohol, History and Cultural Life of the Town and Barrios of Loon, Tontonan, 216.

129 HDP, Bohol, Town of [Sagbayan] Borja, History and Cultural Life of Barrio Sagbayan Sur, 5.

130 HDP, Bohol, Municipality of Candijay, Barrio of Tambongan, Collection and Compilation of Historical Data of Sitio Cadapdapan, 6.

131 HDP, Town of Balilihan, 6.

132 HDP, Bohol, Municipality of Valencia, Historical and Cultural Life of the Town of Valencia, 9.

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Members without specific charges attended to the many visitors who came to call on the bereaved family.[133] Anyone who broke the *dayong*'s rules and failed to pay their contribution was fined and might even be expelled from the association. Defaulters were forced to appear before a specially convened committee who decided on the severity of the punishment.[134]

Every barrio had one association, most had two, and some had more.[135] For example, there were three associations in Barrio Nagsulay.[136] Associations often served different purposes. In Barrio Tiguis, one of the two associations was called a *bubu* and dealt solely in financial aid and food contributions to the bereaved family, while the other, the *dayong*, handled arrangements for interring the body.[137] A dual structure seems to have been common, depending on the settlement's size, as each association required a minimum of thirty to forty members to remain financially viable.[138] The extent of such practices is unclear, as associations in other provinces are rarely mentioned in the HDP. For example, Laguna had an association called Buklod ng Kabataan (literally, "Youth Bonding Together") which served a similar purpose but only for orphans.[139]

Misfortune, particularly death, was considered to bring out the best in people: "little grudges are forgotten, feuds are patched up and old wounds heal," causing "the barrio residents [to] move and act as one man."[140] Even in destruction and death, reciprocity still lay at the heart of community dynamics, providing the only reliable form of social security for the people in the barrio. Reciprocity guaranteed public buildings damaged by natural or human agency were repaired, residents contributing equally only because all did. It was reciprocity that ensured assistance to the bereaved on the expectation that the exact measure of help might be repaid in turn. The more

133 HDP, Bohol, History and Cultural Life of the Town and Barrios of Loon, Barrio Badbad Oriental, 9.

134 HDP, Bohol, Municipality of Antequera, History and Cultural Life of Barrio Bitaugan, 2; HDP, Barrio Tanday, 21.

135 HDP, Bohol, Town of Lila, History and Cultural Life of Barrio Lomanoy, 4.

136 HDP, Barrio Nagsulay, 5.

137 HDP, Barrio Tiguis, 6.

138 HDP, Barrio Nagsulay, 5–6.

139 HDP, Laguna, Municipality of Bay, Historical and Cultural Life of Sitios Masaya and Mainit, 3. The same name, Buklod Ng Kabataan, is currently used by a nongovernmental organization based in Banaba on the outskirts of Manila that helps disaster-affected communities deal with risks by their own means. See https://burnerswithoutborders.org/projects/buklod-ng-kabataan-youth-bonding-together.

140 HDP, Nueva Ecija, Municipality of Guimba, History and Cultural Life of Sta. Ana, 9.

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institutionalized manifestation of reciprocity in Bohol, the *dayong*, was representative of developments in rural areas throughout the Philippines that were gathering momentum during the first half of the twentieth century.[141]

The Little Tradition and Community Associations

Institutionalized forms of reciprocity became more pronounced during US rule (1899–1946). The inordinate emphasis placed by the new colonial administration on building schools and providing teachers was more than matched by parents' desire to educate their children.[142] Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) soon became the most dynamic organizations in the barrios after their creation in 1926, dedicated to a much wider range of activities than simply education.[143] Along with the later public school–sponsored *purok* system, these barrio organizations demonstrate more institutionalized forms of community reciprocity- a reciprocity that was evident in coordinated programs of self-improvement and economic development.

The PTA focused on raising funds, materials, and labor through voluntary contributions for the school's construction, maintenance, and repair. As the school came to rival and even supplant the church as the center of community life, the scope and range of the PTA's activities began to expand. Much as earlier barrio organizations had cloaked their undertakings in a religious guise under Spanish rule, its residents now sought official sanction for their activities through the PTA given the emphasis US authorities placed on education.[144] In this way, schools in the Philippines provided extra-educational services similar to those offered on the *ejidos* (collective farms),

141 Another example of institutionalized reciprocity is the *zangjera* or cooperative irrigation society in the Ilocos area of northwestern Luzon. These centuries-old associations provided reliable supplies of water to farmers. Membership was determined by the hydraulic engineering necessary to distribute water and included landowners and tenants. People contributed their labor to maintain a network of dams and canals in return for water. Henry Lewis, *Ilocano Rice Farmers: A Comparative Study of Two Philippine Barrios* (Honolulu: University of Hawaiʻi Press, 1971), 128–30.

142 Isauro Gabaldón, a member of the Philippine Assembly (1907–12), devised the law to construct modern public schools in 1907. Designed by US architect William E. Parsons, the so-called Gabaldon school buildings were inspired by local architectural forms and are now protected under Republic Act no. 11194 (2019). Ken Enriquez, "How Gabaldon Paved Way for Effective Learning," *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, February 16, 2019, https://business.inquirer.net/265168/how-gabaldon-paved-way-for-effective-learning.

143 Generoso Rivera and Robert McMillan, *The Rural Philippines* (Manila: Office for Information, Mutual Security Agency, 1952), 167.

144 Bankoff, "'For the Good of the Barrio,'" 167–88.

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established in Mexico after the revolution of 1910–17.[145] The barrio school became a powerful symbol of community cooperation and endeavor, as well as an important agent of rural development.

The PTA played a crucial role in building the school: initiating the project, raising funds for materials, arranging the labor for construction, and liaising with the relevant municipal and national agencies. The schoolhouse was often a local matter, instigated without government aid or assistance. For example, the six-room *barong-barong* (makeshift) schoolhouse in Barrio Daculangbolo in Camarines Norte was constructed by the local PTA with "no aid . . . given by the government."[146] Likewise, the schoolhouses in Barrio Guinbirayan on Romblon and in Barrio Taal in Bulacan were "built through the wholehearted cooperation of the teachers and the parents of the community."[147] It was understood that after World War II the government was "not as yet in a financial position to provide all the necessities of the people." Civic organizations were needed to "help in solving problems confronting the community."[148]

Land and materials were frequently donated by PTA members. The site of Barrio Abiera's schoolhouse in Antique, constructed in 1938, was donated by Catalino Manalo, president of the local PTA.[149] The Baay Barrio School, boasting the largest home economics building in the Labo district of Camarines Norte, was established by the president of the PTA, Ricardo de la Torre, and some other parents.[150] It was the PTA that often showed the initiative and provided the coordination to build a school. In Cagayan, the PTA in Barrio Maguirig obtained the materials needed to construct the schoolhouse by soliciting donations from every head of family, two of which donated the land. Through its offices, carpenters were hired, and the building was completed in May 1947.[151] Even when the school was partly funded by the municipal government, it was left to the

145 *Ejido* schools raised funds from cultivating communal fields to introduce new plants for growing in backyard vegetable gardens and to provide communities with collective washing facilities, libraries, adult education courses, and sport activities. Henrik Infield, *Co-operative Communities at Work* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1947), 88.

146 HDP, Camarines Norte, Historical Data of Daet, Daculangbolo, 2.

147 HDP, Romblon, Municipality of Santa Fe, History and Cultural Life of Barrio Guinbirayan, 3; HDP, Bulacan, Municipality of Bocaue, Taal, 38.

148 HDP, Cagayan, Historical Data Regarding the Town of Iguig and its Barrios, Malabbac, 45.

149 HDP, Antique, Municipality of Culasi, History and Cultural Life of Barrio Abiera, 2.

150 HDP, Camarines Norte, Municipality of Labo, History and Cultural Life of Barrio Baay, 2.

151 HDP, Cagayan, Municipality of Solana, Historical and Cultural Life of Barrio Cabaruan and Maguirig, 16.

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PTA to raise the remaining funds.[152] Once built, the PTA worked tirelessly to improve the original *barong-barong* structure, expanding the number of classrooms and acquiring additional land for a playground. The PTA also raised the money to buy desks, install glass windows, and purchase equipment like sewing machines.[153]

The PTAs were primarily responsible for repairing schools damaged by frequent typhoons and rebuilding those destroyed during World War II. Lightly built schools were constantly at risk from high winds. In October 1952, Typhoon Trix ravaged school buildings over an extensive area of Luzon, from Batangas to Camarines Norte.[154] It was usually the PTA that saw to repairs. After a strong typhoon in April 1947 destroyed the schoolhouse in Barrio Ugac, the PTA organized the construction of a three-room structure as a temporary replacement.[155] Sometimes, however, the damage exceeded the resources of the local PTA. In November 1951, Typhoon Wanda devastated school buildings across southern Luzon and the Visayas. In Barrio Tugdan on Romblon, Wanda left countless people homeless, flattened crops, spoiled rice granaries, and demolished two of the village's three school buildings. With no other options, classes had to be held in private homes, causing a significant drop in attendance. Undeterred, residents formed the Tugdan Barrio Community Improvement Organization, including all the barrio family heads as members, to restore the school buildings.[156] Many schools were damaged or destroyed during World War II. Once again, the local PTA was instrumental in their postwar rehabilitation or replacement.[157] John Romani and M. Ladd Thomas estimated that barrio PTAs were responsible for rebuilding 50–60 percent of all the schools they visited in the early 1950s.[158]

Sometimes, too, a teacher's salary had to be met by the PTA. The salaries of both teachers in a new school opened in August 1947 in Barrio Mandazo in Camarines Norte were initially paid for by the PTA.[159] Only after the school-

152 HDP, Bulacan, History and Cultural Life of the Town of Plaridel, Barrio Lumang Bayan, 46.

153 HDP, Batangas, Municipality of Bauan, History and Cultural Life of Colvo, 103; HDP, Bulacan, Town of Meycauayan, History and Cultural Life of Malhacan, 86; HDP, Bulacan, Municipality of Pulilan, Loñgos, 23.

154 HDP, Barrio Colvo, 102–3; HDP, Camarines Norte, Municipality of Labo, History and Cultural Life of Barrio Talobatib, 2.

155 HDP, Cagayan, Town of Iguig, History and Culture of Barrio Ugac, 59.

156 HDP, Romblon, Municipality of Looc, History and Cultural Life of Barrio Tugdan, 92.

157 HDP, Romblon, Town of Badajoz, History and Cultural Life of Barrio Concepcion, 25.

158 John Romani, and M. Ladd Thomas, *A Survey of Local Government in the Philippines* (Manila: Institute of Public Administration, University of the Philippines, 1954), 133.

159 HDP, Camarines Norte, Municipality of Basud, Historical Data Regarding the Barrio of Mandazo, 1–2.

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house had been erected through the voluntary work and cooperation of the community did the national government dispatch teachers, first one then a second in the following year.[160] Nor were government salaries always sufficient to support a teacher. The salary paid to teachers in the Barrio School of As-is in Batangas "was not enough for them to meet their daily expenses." The head teacher appealed to the PTA for help. Barrio parents contributed fifty centavos a month for each of their children attending school, bringing the assistant teacher's wage up to ₱55 a month.[161]

The PTA was a formal organization, with a permanent structure of officeholders dedicated to improving the school and the community in general. The number of officers was three or four, depending on the size of the barrio. Multiple officers were needed due to the numerous activities the PTA engaged in and the significant amounts of money they managed, particularly as student populations grew.[162] By 1952, Barrio Mandazo had no fewer than 13 teachers, and the school in Barrio Loñgos had 675 pupils.[163] The activities of some PTAs became so complex that it was sometimes necessary to appoint an auditor to ensure the organization's financial probity.[164] PTA office evidently conferred a degree of status in the community and was much sought after. Among the officeholders of Barrio Isca's PTA in Cagayan, for instance, was the local police chief, while in Rizal, the PTA president in Barrio Tonsuya was a municipal councilor of Malabon.[165]

The popularity of PTA office lay in the range of activities the organization engaged in outside of the school. The PTA was an important agent of rural development, dedicated to bettering people's quality of life. In Barrio Isca, the PTA set up a social reading center in the school building, where "people spend their leisure times in group meetings, and reading newspapers, magazines and stories."[166] Other barrios established similar community centers, stocked with newspapers, magazines, and books. In Barrio San Carlos, the center was equipped with a radio set and hosted nightly programs for amateur singers.[167] The schoolhouse was also the focus of community pro-

160 HDP, Agusan, Municipality of Salimbogaon, History and Cultural Life of La Caridad Barrio, 2.

161 HDP, Batangas, Municipality of Bauan, History and Cultural Life of As-is, 64.

162 HDP, Cagayan, District of Gonzaga, Historical Data of Barrio Casitan, 1; HDP, Barrio Cabaruan and Maguirig, 16.

163 HDP, Barrio Mandazo, 1–2; HDP, Loñgos, 23.

164 HDP, Cagayan, District of Gonzaga, Historical Data Barrio Ipil, 1.

165 HDP, Cagayan, District of Gonzaga, Historical Data Barrio Isca, 1; HDP, Rizal, Municipality of Malabon, History and Cultural Life of Barrio Tonsuya, 6.

166 HDP, Barrio Isca, 1.

167 HDP, Barrio San Marcos, 45.

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grams and services, such as drives to improve sanitation and public cleanliness.[168] In Pampanga, the PTA ran a clinic attached to the schoolhouse in Barrio Dela Paz.[169]

Highway construction and maintenance was frequently managed by the PTA as some schools served multiple barrios, and roads were necessary to provide easy access for children. In any event, roads were often a community matter, undertaken for the development of the barrio. The energetic leader of Barrio Tigbe in Bulacan, Kapitan Jose Serapio, linked the village by road in one direction to the town of Norzagaray and in the other to San Jose del Monte. He knew the benefits of improved communications and that roads fostered trade, "and the people in turn cooperated with him for they believed that the construction of the road would be indispensable for them."[170] Residents in other barrios felt similarly and sometimes cooperated in building and repairing roads, especially those damaged by typhoons.[171] In Bulacan, the main road in Barrio Gubat was macadamized and others cleaned "through the communal labor of the barrio people."[172] The PTA often provided the money and labor to build these roads.[173]

The importance of the school as the nexus of local development culminated with the official adoption of community schools by the Bureau of Public Schools in 1950. The barrio school was regarded as "the only agency or institution which can be depended on for leadership in co-operative social actions for the improvement of the cultural and economic life of the people."[174] It was tasked with making changes to health and sanitation, home living and improvement, economic advancement, civic character education, and sociocultural progress. Accordingly, barrio schoolteachers organized community councils to foster better living conditions. Along with parents and community leaders, they devised programs in which pupils actively participated in analyzing local problems and initiating development projects. Community schools were successfully credited with improving cleanliness in rural homes, building sanitary outdoor toilets, increasing the number of fenced-in yards, and controlling litter by placing public garbage cans on streets.[175]

168 HDP, Bulacan, Municipality of Pulilan, Tabon, 40.

169 HDP, Pampanga, Town of San Simon, History and Cultural Life of Barrio Dela Paz, 2.

170 HDP, Bulacan, Town of Norzagaray, History of Tigbe, 36.

171 HDP, Cagayan, District of Baggao, History and Cultural Life of Barrio Awallan, 1; HDP, Bulacan, Municipality of Malolos, History and Cultural Life of Santor, 189.

172 HDP, Barrio of Gubat, 1.

173 HDP, Cagayan, District of Gonzaga, Historical Data Barrio Batañgan, 1.

174 Stuart A. Anderson, "The Community School in the Philippines," *Elementary School Journal* 58, no. 6 (1958): 338. There is some dispute as to the date on which the communityschool program began, with Pal citing 1948. Agaton P. Pal, "Rural Sociology in the Philippines," *Current Sociology* 8, no. 1 (1959): 19.

175 Anderson, "The Community School in the Philippines," 338–41.

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One of the least remembered innovations of the community schools' program was the division of the barrio into *puroks*, now the smallest official local government unit. A *purok* comprises a group of up to a hundred households in a single neighborhood.[176] A barrio was composed of between five to seven *puroks*, each with their own officeholders, depending on the settlement's population.[177] Organized through the school, the *purok* was designed to implement the community school program in the barrio. Specifically, it was charged with arranging adult literacy classes, running reading centers, promoting good citizenship and civic cooperation, improving local health conditions, and organizing proper waste disposal and drainage.[178]

Members of the *puroks* volunteered their time and labor for the good of their community. Assistances might be offered on an individual basis, such as helping a neighbor build or repair a *banca* (dugout canoe).[179] Other services were performed for the benefit of the community more generally: keeping streets clean, preventing livestock from roaming freely, and sprinkling water on roads to dampen the dust.[180] One of a *purok*'s main aims was to construct reading-*cum*-recreational centers in each barrio. Santa Clara, for example, a barrio in Batangas City, had two such centers built in this manner.[181] *Puroks* were seen as one of the "most important factors in the improvement of the whole barrio."[182] One commentator in the province of Abra noted how the *purok* "in its barely one year of existence has wrought incalculable progress in the rural areas."[183]

By the time of the 1951–53 HDP survey, the reciprocity of misfortune and the little tradition of cooperation that it begot had developed more institutionalized forms. Reciprocity and cooperation had a recognized structure manifest in prescribed associations like the PTA and the *purok*. Indeed, as in the community school program, some organizations had been partially co-opted by the state to implement its own rural development policies.[184] These more institutionalized forms were not altogether novel but were based on

176 HDP, Abra, Social Organisations and Institutions, 21.

177 HDP, Batangas, Batangas City, History and Cultural Life of Barrio Sta. Clara, 7; HDP, Davao, Town of Cateel, History and Cultural Life of Barrio San Rafael, 9; HDP, Batangas, Municipality of Nasugbu, Historical Report of Lumbangan, 115.

178 HDP, Quezon, History of the Town of Infanta, Citizenship, 6.

179 HDP, Quezon, District of Lucena, History of Barra, 4.

180 HDP, Bulacan, Municipality of Malolos, History and Cultural Life of San Gabriel, 87.

181 HDP, Barrio Sta. Clara, 7.

182 HDP, Pangasinan, Municipality of Tayug, Short Story of Barrio Libertad, 3.

183 HDP, Social Organizations and Institutions, 21.

184 Amando Doronila, *The State, Economic Transformation, and Political Change in the Philippines, 1946–1972* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1992), 45–82.

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long-held community traditions. According to the Board of National Education in 1957, they were only "giving emphasis to the culture, desirable traditions, and virtues of our people."[185] As one local narrator observed, "the purok system now being initiated by the school authorities has long been practiced by them," and he continued by comparing these modern forms of community cooperation to those "inherited from their forefathers." He mentioned the practice of *tagnawa*, whereby people help one another in the construction of a house or an irrigation dam, and *namin*, when neighbors offer money, food, and assistance to support a family when someone dies or gets married.[186]

The PTA and *purok* represent a development in the form and operation of the reciprocity of misfortune needed to face the hardship and dangers of rural life. No longer simply a dyadic contractual arrangement between people or families, reciprocity evolved a more abstract meaning of collective welfare, an understanding that help rendered by an individual to the community was premised on the expectation that all did so. This more all-encompassing form of reciprocity, with its wider geographical horizons and greater field of activities, required more formal structures. The beginnings of institutionalization first manifest in the *dayong* of Bohol becomes more standardized and more national in scope with the formation of PTAs and *puroks*, facilitating the transformation of the little tradition of the barrio into the great tradition of CBDRM policies at the national level.

The Little Tradition and the Great Tradition

James C. Scott identifies a "subsistence ethic" and a "moral economy" at work in peasant societies in Southeast Asia. It is a subsistence ethic because a peasant prioritizes achieving a minimum level of security over maximizing profits that might involve greater risk. Being a "safety-first" principle, "the tenant prefers to minimize the probability of a disaster, rather than maximize his average return."[187] It is also a moral economy in that a peasant's web of social arrangements operates in such a way that it ensures that risks are shared in a community, guaranteeing that everyone's minimal needs are met. The resulting society, Scott argues, is characterized not by equality but by equity, an innate fairness and justice that the peasant believes he is entitled to. These two qualities form an important part of the little tradition of village norms and customs precisely because they offer the peasant a means of survival in

185 Hernandez 1957, as cited in Anderson, "The Community School in the Philippines," 338.

186 HDP, Abra, Municipality of Bangued, History and Cultural Life of Barrio San Antonio, 2.

187 Scott, *Moral Economy of the Peasant*, 7.

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an uncertain world.[188] Barrio life in the Philippines was (and still is, to a certain extent) distinguished by a subsistence ethic and a moral economy. More than just providing an economic safety net, however, the little tradition has to accommodate the frequent hardships and hazards, the misfortune that daily threatens a peasant's life, home, and livelihood. It does this through reciprocity.

As the HDP shows, reciprocity was a dynamic force in many rural areas in the 1950s, as it still is in some communities today.[189] It was present in the various forms of individual or collective cooperation with which people in the barrio faced the hardships and misfortunes of everyday life, providing food and shelter for their families, building places of worship and education, and facing the vagaries of nature—the typhoons and floods.[190] It was particularly manifest in the community support offered to families at times of bereavement (*damayan*). In areas like Bohol, institutionalized forms of reciprocity had spontaneously begun to emerge without external stimuli, although older practices remained active. In the US colonial period, reciprocity took on more standardized, nationwide forms with the creation of PTAs responsible for improving local education, health, and transportation. After independence in 1946, the central government exerted a greater influence in rural areas, mobilizing the little tradition of reciprocity to facilitate state-directed community development through schools and the division of barrios into *puroks*.

McKim Marriott depicts a cyclical process of universalization and parochialization whereby the little tradition at the local level is gradually absorbed into a national or universal great tradition. In turn, the great tradition, enriched by its incorporation and adaptation of the little tradition, is disseminated back to the local, where it merges in syncretic forms with village practices. Marriott was describing Hinduism and how village religion "may be conceived as resulting from continuous processes of communication between a little, local tradition and greater traditions which have their places partly

188 Ibid., 44.

189 Barrameda and Barrameda, "Rebuilding Communities and Lives," 141–46.

190 Hollnsteiner classifies reciprocity into three types: contractual reciprocity (a voluntary agreement between equals in which the acts are equivalent), quasi-contractual reciprocity (in which the acts are of different but equal value), and *utang na loob* (an act between those of different socioeconomic status where the act cannot be repaid in equivalence and incurs a lifetime debt). Hollnsteiner, "Reciprocity in the Lowland Philippines," 388–96. Virgilio Enriquez, the father of Sikolohiyang Pilipino (Philippine psychology) dismisses such interpretations as inappropriate Western terminological constructs and regards these forms of reciprocity as expressions of gratitude and solidarity in a Filipino context. Rogelia Pe-Pua and Elizabeth Protacio-Marcelino, "Sikolohiyang Pilipino (Filipino Psychology): A Legacy of Virgilio G. Enriquez," *Asian Journal of Social Psychology* 3, no. 1 (2000): 49–71, https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-839X.00054.

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inside and partly outside the village."[191] This same process of universalization and parochialization is evident in how Filipinos face risk, between a little tradition and a great tradition, between the reciprocity of misfortune at the local level and the promotion of CBDRM at the national and even international levels.

CBDRM in the Philippines has its origins in the grassroots activism of the 1970s and the proliferation of civil society organizations (CSOs) committed to reducing vulnerability by capitalizing on local people's resources and capacities.[192] Proponents of the new approach sought an alternative to the top-down government disaster management policies outlined by PD 1566 in 1978, the first systematic attempt by a national government to take responsibility for managing disasters and their aftermaths. Though largely reactive, the decree did acknowledge the capacity of local government units to lead local disaster response.[193] In the meantime, developments in civil society led to the formation of the Citizens Disaster Response Center and network in 1984, which advocated more citizen-based and development-oriented disaster response and preparedness strategies inspired by community practices.[194] The principles on which community practice was founded were finally incorporated into national policy with the passage of a new law in 2010, RA 10121, that endorsed CBDRM as a general model to follow in disaster management.[195] Thus, over a period of approximately fifty years, the little tradition of reciprocity and cooperation in the barrio was absorbed into the great tradition of national government emergency management policy.

As a great tradition, CBDRM is distinguished from the centralized, top-down prior approach of emergency management by emphasizing local participation, prioritizing the most vulnerable, recognizing people's capacities, and promoting more resilient development strategies.[196] These aspirations

191 Marriott, "Little Communities in an Indigenous Civilization," 218.

192 Zenaida G. Delica, "Citizenry-based Disaster Preparedness in the Philippines," *Disasters* 17, no. 3 (1993): 239–47; G. Sidney Silliman and Lela G. Noble (eds.), *Organizing for Democracy NGOs, Civil Society, and the Philippine State* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1998); Emmanuel M. Luna, "Disaster Mitigation and Preparedness: The Case of NGOs in the Philippines," *Disasters* 25, no. 3 (2001): 216–26.

193 Glenn Fernandez, Noralene Uy, and Rajib Shaw, "Community-based Disaster Risk Management Experience of the Philippines," in *Community-Based Disaster Risk Reduction*, edited by Rajib Shaw (Bingley, UK: Emerald Group, 2012), 209.

194 Lorna P. Victoria, "Community-based Disaster Management in the Philippines: Making a Difference in People's Lives," *Philippine Sociological Review* 51 (2003): 66.

195 Katrina A. Allen, "Community-based Disaster Preparedness and Climate Adaptation: Local Capacity-building in the Philippines," *Disasters* 30, no. 1 (2006): 81–101.

196 Victoria, "Community-based Disaster Preparedness," 67–68.

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echo the little tradition of reciprocity long observed by people in the barrio, "the spirit of neighborliness, and cooperation, which is seldom found in big centers of population."[197] In CBDRM, the practices by which village people have always "treat[ed] each other as relatives" were advocated by government officials and CSOs alike through newly formulated policy guidelines.[198] In some cases, barrio-based forms of cooperation have been repurposed to serve the external interests of government-directed CBDRM. The *purok*, is held up as a model representing a "traditional" method of self-organization, one capable of disseminating information and assessing risk in communities with limited access to modern forms of communication. It is lauded for its ability to raise funds through voluntary contributions and hailed as a strikingly efficient system of disaster risk reduction—empowering people to tackle the underlying problems of poverty, marginalization, political abuse, and environmental degradation—while at the same time saving a cash-strapped government money. The *purok* evokes a certain type of officially sanctioned community empowerment, so much so that it was praised by the United Nations and cited as an example to be followed worldwide.[199]

As a great tradition, however, CBDRM is not without its problems. Respecting local and Indigenous knowledge systems and directly involving at-risk communities in decision-making processes are not as straightforward as they might seem. For a start, the barrio is not a homogeneous unit but is riven by existing power dynamics, gender inequalities, and socioeconomic differences that hinder the active participation of everyone in a community.[200] The result is that barrio members without adequate capacity and resources are often left without voice in decision making and are marginalized from programs and their outcomes. Moreover, these programs are seldom community-led, despite the jargon, and in practice largely follow a top-down approach, being externally driven by CSOs, nongovernmental organizations,

197 HDP, Cavite, Town of Indang, History and Cultural Life of Barrio Calumpang Cero, 122.

198 HDP, Manila, History and Cultural Life of the People in Malate, Old Ways, 4.

199 The municipality of San Francisco on the Camotes Islands (Cebu) won the UN Sasakawa Award for Disaster Risk Reduction in 2011. Nicole Curato and Septrin John Calamba, "Surviving Disasters by Suppressing Political Storms: Participation as Knowledge Transfer in Community-based Disaster Governance," *Critical Sociology* 46, no. 2 (2020): 246.

200 Alison Mathie, Jenny Cameron, and Katherine Gibson, "Asset-based and Citizen-led Development: Using a Diffracted Power Lens to Analyze the Possibilities and Challenges," *Progress in Development Studies* 17, no. 1 (2017): 54–66; Niña A. Martinez, Osias Kit T. Kilag, and Rosemarly D. Macario, "The Impact of Organizational Culture on Leadership Strategies in Crisis Management," *Excellencia: International Multi-disciplinary Journal of Education* 1, no. 5 (2023): 454–66.

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and government.[201] Community involvement is frequently more apparent than real. Instead of local knowledge shaping development projects, plans are increasingly shaped by locally dominant groups who implement them to their own advantage or by external agencies who have their own, often project-based set of criteria for assessing success. In the case of the *purok*, Angelina Matthies argues that it has become not so much an agent of local empowerment as an institution anchored in statutory authority, one supported by penalty and clearance policies that reflect "a top-down modus operandi."[202] Even the *puroks* that won international acclaim by blending Indigenous knowledge with disaster risk reduction measures were still shown to enforce volunteerism, reinforce preexisting power relations, and suppress community voices.[203]

Despite these inherent imbalances in power, the barrio "worked" in the past—at least as a self-regulating unit able to deal effectively with the everyday hardships, misfortunes, and hazards that were not sufficient to overwhelm a community but have always been a feature of rural life in the Philippines. Troubles that might prove too much for a family were faced collectively, and the risk was shared by the community at large. However, this reciprocity was not unconditional and depended on help being repaid when required on a personal level or contributed to by all when community welfare was at stake. As the numerous case examples drawn from the HDP show, the dyadic nature of this contract was accepted and its terms understood, even if they largely remained unstated or unsanctioned.[204] And just as the practice of this little tradition of reciprocity forms the basis of CBDRM and is promoted as national law in the 1987 constitution, the little tradition's spirit of cooperation has found universal acceptance in the adoption of *bayanihan* as state ideology.[205]

201 Dewald Van Niekerk, Livhuwani David Nemakonde, Leandri Kruger, and Kylah Forbes-Genade, "Community-Based Disaster Risk Management," in *Handbook of Disaster Research*, edited by Havidán Rodríguez, William Donner, and Joseph E. Trainor (Cham, Switzerland: Springer International, 2017), 411–29.

202 Angelina Matthies, "Community-based Disaster Risk Management in the Philippines: Achievements and Challenges of the *Purok* System," *Austrian Journal of South-East Asian Studies* 10, no. 1 (2007): 107.

203 Inez Z. Ponce de Leon, "The Purok System of San Francisco, Camotes: A Communication Perspective of Community-based Haiyan Response," *International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction* 61 (2021): 1–7.

204 Incurring public shame or *hiya* provided a strong sanction to those who fail to respect claims of reciprocity, a person being described as *walang hiya* or "without shame." Hollnsteiner, "Reciprocity in the Lowland Philippines," 407.

205 Article XIII of the 1987 constitution acknowledges the right of CSOs to "reasonable participation" at all levels of social, political, and economic decision making. "The Constitution

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Like CBDRM, *bayanihan* has a universal meaning coming to stand for the selfless values that are said to characterize Filipinos of all social classes and ethnic backgrounds.[206] In debates over the nature of post-independence Filipino identity, *bayanihan* represents a resurgent national spirit, one epitomized in the paintings of Fernando Amorsolo (1892–1972) and Carlos "Botong" Francisco (1912–1969).[207] Ferdinand Marcos, whose authoritarian rule dominated the early postindependence decades, evoked the concept as part of his corporatist vision of rural life under the New Society of the 1970s.[208] Symbolic of rural cooperation is the oil painting by Botong Francisco showing a group of men carrying a thatched peasant house on poles in 1959. This iconic image, featured in pamphlets and school textbooks, was used to represent the national spirit of mutual assistance.[209] During the COVID-19 pandemic, President Rodrigo Duterte appropriated the term to justify his administration's controversial actions. The "*bayanihan* spirit" was vigorously disseminated to promote volunteerism by state-controlled agencies, such as the Philippine Information Agency and the Philippine National Volunteer Service Coordinating Agency. Even the Asian Development Bank, headquartered in Metro Manila, resorted to using the term, calling its US$5 million

of the Republic of the Philippines," *Official Gazette*, https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/constitutions/1987-constitution/ (accessed May 13, 2025).

206 The etymology of the word is believed to derive from *bayani*, a person who selflessly serves their community, or *bayan*, belonging to a locale or community with all the reciprocal obligations that entails. Its roots are older, signifying reciprocity (*pabayanihan*) and a cooperative worker bee spirit (*bayanihan*). HDP, Bambang, 5; Hollnsteiner, "Reciprocity in the Lowland Philippines," 392. See also Gertrudes R. Ang, "The Bayanihan Spirit: Dead or Alive?," *Philippine Quarterly of Culture and Society* 7, nos. 1–2 (1979): 91–93. There are many similar cognate terms in Tagalog like *kagandahang loob*, or the "shared humanity" expressed by helping people in dire distress; *pakikipagkaisa*, or being one with others; and *pakikisangkot*, or joining others to perform a collective activity.

207 Manuel D. Duldulao, *A Century of Realism in Philippine Art* (Manila: Fine Arts, 1982).

208 Ferdinand Marcos, *Tadhana: History of the Filipino People*, 3 vols. (Manila: [s.n] 1976–80). On the Marcos dictatorship, see Primitivo Mijares, *The Conjugal Dictatorship of Ferdinand and Imelda Marcos* (1976; Quezon City: Bughaw, 2017).

209 Other Southeast Asian leaders resorted to similar iconography to reinvent Indigenous traditions for political agendas, most notably President Sukarno in Indonesia. He drew on analogous traditions to cast his new state as the idealized village society writ large. The five principles of the state-sponsored national philosophy, Pancasila, embodied village norms such as *musyawarah-mufakat* (government by consensus), *gotong royong* (mutual aid), and *tolong-menolong* (reciprocity). Michael Morfit, "Pancasila: The Indonesian State Ideology According to the New Order Government," *Asian Survey* 21, no. 8 (1981): 838–51.

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rapid emergency supply of food to vulnerable households, *bayan bayanihan*, "based on the traditional Filipino Bayanihan principle of community spirit."[210]

Filipinos have long learned to cope with risk and hazard in their daily lives, facing everyday hardships and misfortunes through cooperation. They developed ways to combat dangers to their families and their communities, largely in the absence of state assistance, based on reciprocity and cooperation, relying on each other to help when the need arose. This reciprocity of misfortune forms the little tradition in the barrio, whose practices largely pass beneath historical notice. Only in a unique source such as the HDP is this often touted but taken-for-granted tradition reported, revealing how rural communities cooperated to manage risks and face hazards in the past. The material in the HDP proves that resilience is not a novel concept needing to be rediscovered after each disaster by CSOs, government officials, or international groups. Instead, resilience is an inherent, active quality in the barrio, deeply rooted in the history and culture of the various ethnolinguistic groups across the islands. Only with the mass mobilization of civil society in the People Power Revolution of 1986 have the precepts of the little tradition been more widely acknowledged and its practices absorbed and adapted into state policy as CBDRM.[211]

As the Philippines is considered one of the most vulnerable countries to climate-induced changes—the frequency and severity of typhoons, floods, droughts, and sea level rises, among others—the demand for resilient, low-cost, community-based solutions will likely intensify in the future.[212] The HDP highlight the richness and diversity of these local coping strategies, showing how they address not just "natural disasters" but the everyday hazards of how to find sufficient food, clothing, and shelter brought on by poverty,

210 "ADB Launches $5 Million Project to Provide Food Supplies to Philippine Households Hard Hit by Covid-19," Asian Development Bank, press release, April 1, 2020 https://www.adb.org/news/adb-launches-5-million-project-provide-food-supplies-philippine-households-hard-hit-covid-19; "For Poor Filipinos during the Pandemic, Bayan Bayanihan Brings Food and Hope," Asian Development Bank, May 4, 2020. https://www.adb.org/news/features/hungry-filipinos-during-pandemic-bayan-bayanihan-brings-food-and-hope. See also Greg Bankoff, "Old Ways and New Fears: Bayanihan and COVID-19," *Philippine Studies: Historical and Ethnographic Viewpoints* 68, nos. 3–4 (2020): 465–73.

211 Also known as the EDSA or Yellow Revolution, this was the culmination of a sustained campaign of civil protest that led to the overthrow of President Marcos in February 1986. David G. Timberman, "Unfinished Revolution: The Philippines in 1986," *Southeast Asian Affairs* (1987): 239–63.

212 The Philippines is considered the fourth most affected country by climate change. CFE-DM, *Philippines*, 20–21.

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social injustice, and a lack of adequate state services. Communities face a continuum of risks, ranging from the routine hardships of daily life to dealing with extreme natural events that are often disguised by artificial categorizations in official disaster reports. The daily misfortunes rural people face cannot be defined by some arbitrary definition of what constitutes a hazard. Only by sifting the overlapping and multiscalar networks of reciprocity—the little tradition at work—can the degree of community resilience be discerned. It is important to assess each community on its own merits, recognizing its singular capacities, identities, and traditions, regardless of how humble and little they are. To truly implement CBDRM at a national or international scale—the great tradition—policy must embrace both the spirit and the practice of the little tradition, going beyond formulaic statements of well-intentioned principles to better understand the dynamics behind the reciprocity of misfortune.

Acknowledgments
Research for this article was funded by an Ateneo de Manila University Research Council Standard Grant dated December 2, 2021.

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