Beyond Filipino Kinship System

The Emergence of Quasi-Corporate Group in Cognatic Society

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I. Introduction

Today, most anthropologists are not particularly interested in studying kinship, which was a central subject of anthropological research and controversy until the middle of 1960s. As Ladislav Holy remarks (1996: 1), "if there was a subject which anthropologists could have rightly claimed to be their own, it was kinship." Rapport and Overing state (2000: 217), "the problem of handling the topic of kinship crosscultur-ally is the key to understanding the historical development of a large majority of anthropology's central analytic concepts, theories and methods." But nowadays, anthro-pologists' interests have shifted to topics such as gender, migration, refugees and development that are more practical and substantial topics. Kinship is no longer a key topic in social anthropology. However, some anthropologists continue to hold that the study of kinship is important for the analysis and understanding of holistic aspects of society. Martine Segalen indicates in her book (1986: 43–44):

> Why is kinship so important ? In present-day society, it would seem, marriage partners are found by chance at the office, at a dance or on holiday, and a house or flat by means of newspaper advertisements. In many societies, marriage, work and residence depend on the individual's place in the kinship organization and the whole of the organization of society is governed by kinship groups, whether it be in terms of economy, politics or religion. Those sociologists studying present-day families not only have an a priori assumption that the domestic group is shrinking, but also maintain that kinship has almost disappeared as a basis of relationships. It is this proposition that we wish to discuss and to refute.

Since I first became interested in socio-economic development projects in the Philippines and other developing countries like Micronesia, Honduras and Thailand, I have realized that the study of kinship requires a sophisticated technical and theoretical exaplanation. During my field research, especially in Mindoro in the 1970s, I was able to observe what happened during an O.D.A. (Official Development Assistance) project, whether I liked it or not. That O.D.A. project went in all the wrong directions, and seriously threatened to the cultural minorities. The social development projects were focused on majority groups (Christian) rather than minority groups because the per-sonal interests of local politicians influenced the O.D.A. project planning and implemen-

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tation. In addition, the development project itself did not benefit the whole community but rather only the interest group based on the bilateral extended families, not including non-kinsmen's group. In this paper, I will theoretically prove that the study of kinship is important to understanding the principle of formation of "corporate grouping with non-kinsmen," and that any socio-economic development project should be implemented broadly at the community level beyond kinship groups or areas. In general, we can observe that most developing countries will not achieve the goals of O.D.A. projects. As a social anthropologist, I assert that the reason why they can not succeed in development projects is because the solidarity of their societies is strongly based on "blood consciousness" which can prevent the development of political organization from ethno-linguistic groups. A political organization should have a formal leader able to perform as a representative of his group with the followers' consent. In this sense, Filipino folk societies are ethno-linguistic groups, not political ones. In following sections, I will formulate and analyze Filipino societies from the perspective of the fundamental kinship structure and its behavior. This analysis can tell us how the study of kinship is a useful and worthy tool for understanding the characteristics of an ethnic society.

II. Ego oriented and ancestor oriented kin concept

In assessing how social anthropology can contribute to development theory, the clearest example lies in analyzing the relationship between a community and its constituents in the implementation of development plans. Using familiar social anthropology theory, I will analyze and explain the relationship between kinship structures and the ability to form corporate organizations. To analyze non-unilineal kinship systems, a comparative analysis with unilineal form can be used to illustrate simply a cognatic form of kinship system.

The basic kinship structure in Philippine society is ego-oriented and either bilateral or cognatic kinship form. In contrast, Japan's traditional kinship structure is ancestor-centered or first son oriented kinship form.

From the point of view of principles of human relationships, I will explain these two kinship structures with reference to Japan's traditional kinship structure for the latter type and to the Philippines' kinship structure for the former type. The typical kinship structure in the Philippines is a bilateral extended kinship system, which is called as the cognatic form in kinship relations. Therefore, as shown in Chart I, in such a cognatic kinship system, an ego belongs to both the father's kinship group and the mother's. Or rather an individual is independent. The number of relationships between the individual and ascendant generations is theoretically explained by the coefficient 2 to the power of n (where n is the number of generations). However, people's remembrances of ascendant generations are very shallow in practice, usually around two or three generations.

When I was studying the emergence of corporate grouping, especially in societies lacking in unilineal descent groups, I came across Edmund Leach's work on Pul Eliya (1971) in which he presented his concept of "corporation" in cognatic society in an explicit and theoretical manner. He stated:
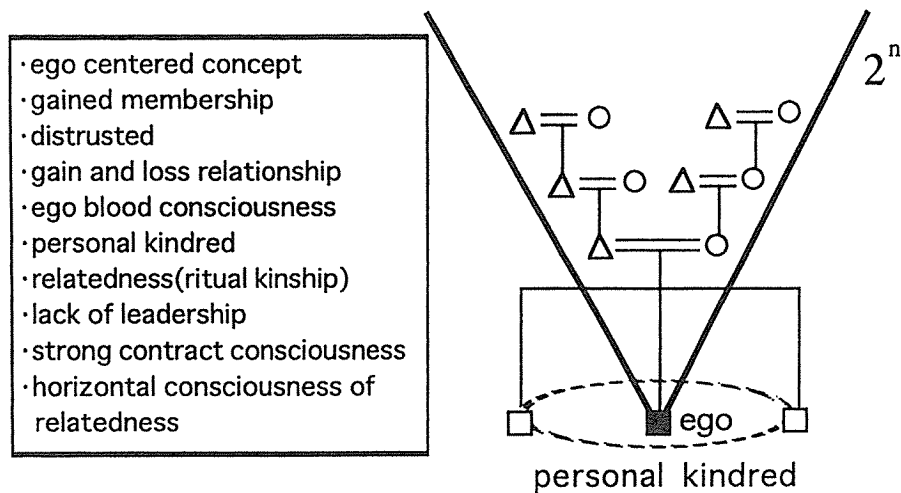
Chart I. The Genealogical Model of a Bilateral Kinship System, multiancestors oriented kin concept

......A number of far reaching generations have been derived from Radcliffe-Brown's theoretical argument and the fieldwork which resulted from it. The generations stand up well in most lineage societies. Which do not conform to the unilineal pattern to which Radcliffe-Brown attach so much importance ?

For example, it has been argued, very cogently, that in societies with a lineage structure the continuity of the society as a whole rests in the continuity of the system of lineages, each of which is a "corporation," the span of which is independent of the individual lives of its individual members. But in societies which do not have unilineal descent groups, what kind of "corporation" takes the place of the lineage in providing the nexus of community between one generation and the next ?......sited Fortes theory (1953: 30)...It will be found that in Sinhalese village of Pul Aliya it is locality rather than descent which forms the basis of corporate grouping (1971: 6–7).

And in the same way, Murry, Jr. presented his concept of "local kin group:"

...local kin groups are the superfamilial units within all important day-to-day, face to face interaction occurs. Moreover, since the children born to family households belonging to such a local kin group tend at marriage to remain in group, the local kin group persists over time. In this it is somewhat like a unilineal group (1973: 29).

In general, most anthropologists view the existence of corporate groups to be negative in a cognatic society like the Philippines up to today. This is particularly true among anthropologists who are known to adhere to the functionalism found in the Radcliff-Brown theory (1952). His theory of "corporate group" is based on the concept of "lineage" developed by Leach and Murry, Jr., which emphasizes the importance of locality rather than descent. S. Muratake and I have asserted the view that "the formation of corporate group" does exist in the Philippines on the analytical basis of "group-oriented kin concept" (1968). Furthermore these two concepts support my theory that corporate group, through kinship, social behavior and the indigenous value

system, can strength the solidarity of the group. Another anthropologist who studied ethnic bilateral descent group was Dozier in 1967. In his work, he associated the Kalinga bilateral descent group with rice fields and irrigation in Lubuagan, which has a high population density. Dozier replaced Eggan's (1960) and Lambrecht's concept (1953) of bilateral descent group with quasi-corporate groups which consist of the descendants of certain prominent ancestors, founding fathers and impotant living individuals. Unlike unilineal organization such as the clan, the bilateral descent group does not strictly prescribe affiliation or membership only through a single parent (1967: 20) Furthermore, Dozier concretely discussed the pyramidal structure of the bilateral descent group, at the apex of which is the prominent person. Unlike unilineal organizations, bilateral descent groups do not form continuous discrete units especially with the emergence of new prestigious individuals who become the foci of new bilateral descent groups (1967: 20-21)

In contrast, Japan's kinship system has tended to be patrilineal, dominated by the first son, and based on the principle of descent line. Actually, the ideal form is the lineal family of three generations traced through the first son. Under this form, the oldest son inherits and succeeds his father or father's kinship group. This model familial unit is like a clannish group (Dozoku in Japanese) with a main or axial at the center and branch families of siblings at the periphery. Families share the identity of being the descendants of the same founding father or ancestor (Y. Kikuchi, 1991: 20). Thus the relationship between father and first-born son as a successor of the axial family is depicted in the Chart II model of kinship structure. All members in a kinship group including branch families are ideally related through one blood or common ancestor. In reality there are cases where the axial family has no suitable or capable successor. In such a case, the head of the axial family can adopt a capable person as successor, most likely from outside his kinship group (branch family). When we observe this phenomenon, the existences of families consisting of those who are living together in the same house and all property, including agricultural land as well as honor, glory, as established by ascendants, are more important than the existence of people individually. This line is not solely based on consanguinity but also emphasizes the sociological "succession line," i.e., the perpetuation of the family as an entity is more important than biological
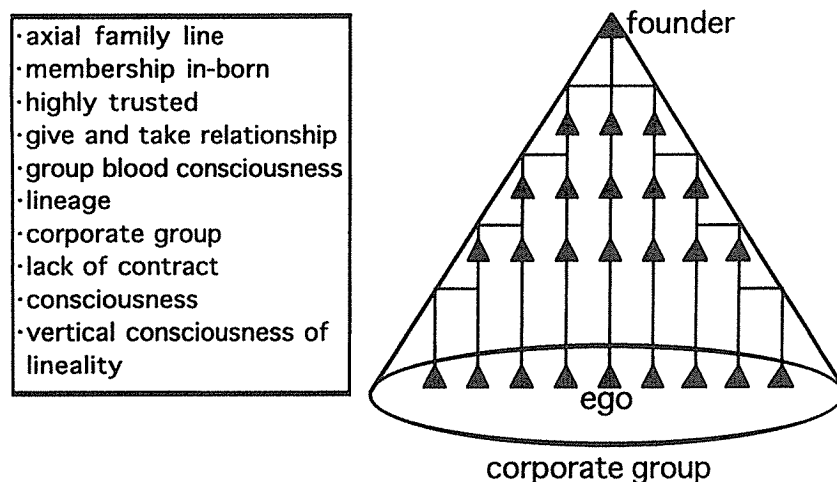

Chart II. Unilineal Kinship System, monoancestor Oriented kin concept

perpetuation; thus is created a bond to a candidate for succession (Y. Kikuchi, 1991: 20). In another words, I would argue that for the continuation of the family line, individual capability is more important and appreciated than a group- oriented concept.

As mentioned above, even if the person designated to carry on the axial family line as a successor is not related consanguineously, a suitably qualified person could be chosen as an adopted son. Compared to this attitude, the Philippine perception of kinship relationships puts a very strong emphasis on blood relationships or consciousness. Therefore there is seldom the possibility of choosing to adopt a child who is not related consanguineously. For the individual in Japan's axial family (head family), there is a very clearly delineated linear structural relationship between the head of the household (the father) and the successor, as can be seen in Chart II. However, as noted above, that single line does not necessarily mean only blood relationships. Rather, the emphasis is placed upon the sociological line. Second and third sons can separate from the head family to form their own family line as the branch family thus creating vertical relationships modeled on the parent-child relationship between the main and branch families. This kind of cognate grouping serves to stabilize give-and-take relationships of mutual support among families in the same group like lineage or clan.

In the Philippines, the order of authority among siblings depends solely on the birth order with no relation to gender. Rather than assigning authority according to gender, Filipino society treats both sexes equally.

The human relationships surrounding an individual form a cognate group founded on unilateral blood relationships, as shown in Chart II with the people within the solid line around the individual clearly being far more numerous and strongly rooted than in the kind of ego-oriented relatedness seen in Chart I. Thus in Chart II, the number of people in the group around the individual is broadly proportional to the number of generations considered. All these people in the same Dozoku are related not only consanguineously, but also sociologically and all can benefit from the assets built up by ascendants from generation to generation. In another words, they are really protected by the ancestral legacy.

Moreover, this group functions as an autonomous supra-generational community. Therefore the right of membership is innate (inborn) and the individual's rights and obligations in respect to his group are clear. Therefore, the "family" (Ie in Japanese) plays an important role as a symbol of inheritance from ancestors, thereby strengthening the sense of solidarity and the bond among Dozoku members as well as making the succession line about more than the genetic relations. In other words, Ie is the corporate residential unit in the case of agriculture or other similar enterprises, which means that Ie is a managing body or a social group constructed on the basis of an established frame of residence and often of management organization. The existence of this family is superimposed with reverence for forefathers, leading to the formation of a group based on trust. In another words, branch families are protected under the supervision of an axial family in Dozoku. In that sense, a society with a Japanese-style kinship structure can be called "a society with a high level of mutual trust."

On the other hand, the bilateral society of the Philippines cannot enjoy the supra-generational protection afforded in Japan by the assets and family name built up by ascendant generations. An individual in a bilateral society must look for people with

whom they can build the mutual support relationships they need to survive in their own generation. Therefore the first thing individuals must do is to solidify the fluid, rootless family relationships that surround them. These family relationships are called "personal kindred relationships" and are the only human relationships upon which the individual can depend. However, in life within a society, relationships with non-relatives are also necessary for social-beings. For example, the Compadrazgo system of formal family relationships springs from the religious relationship between godparents and godchildren who are baptized into the Catholic Church. The relationships of interdependence between the godparents and the parents of the baptized children supplement social and economical reciprocal relationships, and form just like exclusive club organizations which increase the relationships among "club" members. This creates a social mechanism for broadening the network of interdependent relationships which exists around an individual. These quasi-kinship relationships could be called contractual human relationships.

To put it another way, in a cognatic society such as the Philippines, it is quite difficult to have close trust relationships with non-blood relationship without a formal contractual relationship. In general, people in non-kinship relationships are looked on with suspicion. Kinship organizations in cognatic systems lack autonomy as groups and it is difficult for people in kinship relationships to form communities and create rigid membership rights. Therefore I refer to this kind of society as an "uncrystallized society." Thus in kinship structures in bilateral societies, individuals build on the main axis of their ego-oriented relatedness with kindred as they seek to expand, as far as possible, their quasi-kinship relationships based on contracts or trust in response to an individual's social ability. Furthermore, they would like to become leaders, if leadership is open to all. Conversely, it would be true to say that this shows a lack of leadership. Then this kind of society can be termed "a society of distrust."

Human relationships in cognatic societies, as seen in the Philippines, are built on a foundation of person-to-person relationships working on the principle of interest relationships. Individuals use various methods to create pseudo-relatives, but this is clearly done in order to create relationships of interdependence. As mentioned above, this kind of personal structural principle leads people in cognatic societies into relationships that value people as they really are and rationalize the theory of interest relationships between two parties. When we consider kinship relationships against the background of this kind of informal human relationship, people are protecting themselves for the future when they give priority to the family relationships. Looking at human relationships at the social level, the emphasis is always placed on face-to-face personal relationships. Personal structural principles, namely interest relationships between two parties, will always be given priority over public structural principles.

When one considers the modernization of Philippine society, it is highly important to have a grasp of this kind of cultural foundation. Based on the above comparison of kinship structures, I believe this comparison shows that the question of whether or not developing societies in developing countries can move forward depends on whether or not their members have the courage to move beyond blood ties in search of further progress. To put it another way, their level of awareness must extend beyond the level of bilateral extended family to reach the levels of community groupings incorporating

with non-blood relationships, and beyond to the national level. This progress is one precondition for "modernization." In order to transcend blood relationships and reap the benefits of social dimensions they will have to become people within organizational structures and form a community. If that is to happen, society and the government will have to enable people to receive from others the kind of support and protection they could previously only count on from relatives. Therefore the government and other political and social groups must do more than they did in the past to serve as the protectors of the people. This will demand a greater level of maturity in the bureaucratic system. In the next section, I will present a case study for creating a Filipino type of a corporate group beyond kinship ties that may be the sociological dawn in Philippine anthropology.

III. Case Studies of Social Transformations—the emergence of corporate group

This research was conducted in 1998 and 1999.

Area: Balikatan Magkakapitgbahay Association, 506 households, in Tagig, Rizal.

In this area, 506 houses are currently benefiting from the DAEP (Depressed Area Electrification Project) electrification project. These households were originally connected to electricity illegally. In other words, they were stealing electricity, using temporary meters with a high unit price of Ps4 per kilowatt-hour. With the implementation of the DAEP project they have been paying Ps3.5 or less for their electricity. Similar to other squatter areas, squatter houses in this area were frequently torn down until the early 1990s, forcing the squatters to relocate repeatedly. The news that it was possible to acquire legal land ownership in the area through government projects drew in more people. The use of gas lamps due to the shortage of electricity caused numerous small fires. At present, gas lamps are no longer used and well water is constantly available, preventing the incidence of new fires.

Since 1997 the residents have petitioned MERALCO to remove the stigma of squatting from their name, but the electrification works were proceeding slowly. The greatest problem was that, at that time, the individual owners of most of the land in the community would not accept the placement of utility poles on their land. Furthermore, most residents suffered from financial problems. The financial burden on the community as a whole amounted to Ps360,000; but that has now decreased to a total of Ps 100,000.

In the end the landowners agreed, under pressure from city councilors, to sell an area of 100 square meters of their land for the installation of transmission lines. The government paid the landowners Ps10,000 per square meter. In order to qualify for the DAEP project, the area had to provide road access and land for the electricity transmission utility poles. The community plans to pay off the debt over 25 years, with each resident household paying around Ps190/ month. At present, the average household uses electricity for fluorescent lamps (two or three lamps of around 20 watts), a television, one or two fans and a karaoke system, for which they pay electricity bills of around Ps300 per month. A household with a refrigerator and a washing machine would pay around Ps700 per month.

In the center of the community, there is a basketball court, which is the national sport. It also serves as a recreation area and open-air meeting area. The group of women

(housewives) formed the core of this association and their group spirit has had a positive impact on this electrification project. The women had a better grasp of the state of the community compared to the men who went out to work during the day.

They also had some income from side jobs, which had the effect of bringing them some social awareness. The women, who had some financial strength, were very interested in labor saving in their household chores, increasing income from their side jobs (sewing and trading in sundries) and using electrical appliances, played an important role in motivating the men to form community-level groups.

Nearly all residents had jobs, with very few people unemployed. The incidence of crime fell after electrification, and the use of television reduced the noise coming from children playing. Most people came to spend more time indoors in the evenings. As far as we could see, the proportion of pregnant women was not high. Increased entertainment, centered on television, was expected to bring a rapid reduction in the birth rate, but the leader, Mr. A was concerned that the birth rate might increase again in two or three years due to the influx of pornographic videos. The use of videos for entertainment is in fashion, with most households having bought a VCR. The diversification of entertainment has reduced the incidence of fights between the men, and many respondents said alcoholism and drug abuse had also been reduced. These phenomena have led to a revival of public order in the community. Entertainment for the men consists of weekend drinking parties and group Karaoke. Family ties are very close. The community leaders usually have many compadres and commadres. They find meaning in their lives through their families and friends. They say that electrification has made their lives much happier. Before, they lived in gloomy darkness, in an unhygienic and hazardous situation. Immoral people benefited from the darkness. Some residents said that before the project, the lack of electricity made them feel helpless. Clearly, without light and electricity, they felt they had lost some of their humanity, and an important portion of their lives. They were also deprived of hope and the will to work.

The men hold a wide range of jobs, such as electricians, factory workers, builders, plumbers, wholesalers, dockers, stevedores and security guards. The women work as factory workers or leave to work overseas as sharecroppers or seamstresses. Average income per household is Ps6,000. The lowest pay for a skilled worker is Ps250/day, while that for a factory or unskilled worker is Ps180. Most income is spent on food and it is difficult to spare money for anything else.

The main ethnic groups are Visayans, Bicolanos, Ilocanos and Cavitenos. The Visayans and the Bicolanos are the most peaceable to other groups. As noted above, the news that legal land rights could be obtained was passed to blood relatives, and also to compadres and commadres, who scrambled to move into the area.

In a society such as that of the Philippines with a cognatic kinship structure, women are usually treated well by men, rather than being socially discriminated against as in patrilineal societies. In this association, there are two female as well as eight male directors. They serve as the secretaries, which is not unusual. At present, the association holds the land used for the electricity distribution poles. As the MERALCO electrification project is improving the quality of their lives, the residents hope that one day they will each come to own the land they live on. The residents believe they could obtain a plot of around 700 square meters (an average of 37–42 square meters per

household), which is less than they live on now. Most of them would be very happy to own their own land, even if it was small. The loan agreement with JBIC was concluded in 1991 and implemented from 1992. The residents are united in saying that over six years the project has given them hope and happiness

III. New leadership with ethnic ambiguity

Now let us consider the emergence of new leaders. Clarifying the process by which Mr. A, who was mentioned above, came to be selected as the leader helps to illustrate the politics of depressed areas. He moved into the area in 1993 from the Antipolo area after being invited by a friend (a compadre). At that time it was still a squatter zone, but according to the information from his compadre, it was soon going to be legalized and he recalls that there was the prospect of acquiring his own land. When he moved in, there were only 300 households in the area, but by the time the decision for private land ownership was taken in 1995 the population had grown to 506 households. As noted above, the women's community leadership consisted of devising specific proposals for community development, offering their opinions to the men and pushing them to get involved in political activity. He tried not to show signs of it, but in the interview he unintentionally revealed his political ambitions. He handles people well and takes great pains to look after the residents. However, this alone is not enough to make a leader. According to sociological explanations to date, in a cognatic society, there is little prospect of political unity emerging from a mixed community comprising multiple ethnic groups lacking leadership. The Philippines is no exception. However, a close analysis of this community's case shows that the conditions are in place for the formation of a new community. The first factor is that Mr. A is of mixed blood between an Ilocano Christian father and a Magindanao Muslim mother, and is therefore able to understand multiple cultures and religions. The second factor is his duality, belonging to both a large ethnic group and to a small one. Duality means that he cannot take action that is biased towards any one of the four ethnic groups in the area, which is a popular position. Under his leadership, a sense of solidarity in a group was created and certainly the strengthening of their unity benefits these multiple ethnic groups. This kind of phenomenon is a sociological phenomenon based on principles of interest relationships that are their unique sense of values. What is remarkable is the emergence of local community with a political complexity that transcends blood relationships. Such a phenomenon has not been mentioned in any previous studies of the Philippines. If this political and familial community grouping can continue for a number of genera-tions it will certainly have an impact on the theory of social anthropology, and particularly of development anthropology. It will break down the established wisdom left by previous researchers, which held that in a cognatic society there was quite narrow possibility of forming political communities transcending blood ties because of the lack of leadership.

I have already stated that the DAEP has played an important role in building communities. It has certainly acted as a trigger to motivate the transformation of residents into political communities grouped around leaders. Through these leaders, MERALCO has been able to make the residents feel the obligation to keep paying their electricity bills on their due dates and make them aware that dishonesty and the use of

stolen electricity constitute bad behavior. MERALCO's real motives are not clear, but their treatment of leaders to support their positions has been handled superbly.

IV. Conclusion

One condition for laying the foundations for the next generation of development is the raising of community awareness that supports group principles. For progress in social development, people must have the courage to move *beyond kinship* and build social values in their place. We have seen an example of a community which is forming beyond blood ties which shows potential for future progress through this project. In considering the modernization of societies in developing countries, it is extremely important to understand these cultural foundations that are kinship structures. I believe the comparison with family structures described above shows that the question of whether or not developing societies in developing countries can move forward depends on whether or not their members have the courage to move beyond kinship in search of further progress. To put it another way, their level of awareness must escape from the level of the bilateral extended family to reach the levels of community groupings incorporating non-blood relationships, and beyond to the national level. This progress is one precondition for "modernization." In order to transcend blood relationships and gain the benefits of social dimensions they will each have to become organization men and form a community. If that is to happen, society and the government will have to enable people to receive from others the kind of support and protection they could previously only count on from relatives.

This survey clearly showed that the DAEP staff was communicating well with the communities, winning a very high level of confidence from them. The staff's community outreach activities have created a model for participatory development that is appropriate for the Philippines. This project was also suitable in the scale of the development. In the future, more small and medium development projects of this kind should be devised and detailed. Furthermore, effective methods should be devised for their implementation. There are good prospects for secondary DAEP in other countries. This has been a successful example of how to avoid the dangers of self-righteousness among bureaucrats, and development projects led by the people.

Finally, the social impact of this project on the people affected has been to promote the formation of communities as political groupings in which people who are not blood relatives pursue common interests. Although the residents were not aware of it, the DAEP played a very important role in building communities. The DAEP made a great contribution in motivating people from diverse ethnic groups to join together in forming political communities around their leaders. A new cohesive principle among the people of the Philippines can be added to the research made to date on Filipino corporate groups.

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