# E. ARSENIO MANUEL SEEDS THE FIELD AND ATTENDS CHICAGO, 1955-60s

**Brandon Joseph Macapagal Reilly**

1955 to the 1960s was a period of significant achievements for E. Arsenio Manuel which saw the publication of many important articles and books, including his first textualized epic. This synoptic picture of his years spent conducting fieldwork during the period also documents, his efforts to build up a scholarly infrastructure for cultural studies in the first part of the essay, focusing on his role in the creation of the Philippine Folklore Society in 1958. The second part of the essay narrates his career as a doctoral student at the University of Chicago. It explains how he came to study in Chicago, his experience of university life, and the intellectual, professional, and personal ways his final stint as a student shaped him as a scholar. This is the fourth essay in a series of six that narrates the life of anthropologist E. Arsenio Manuel (1909-2003).[1]

***Keywords****: Saddani Pagayaw, Manuvu', epics, University of Chicago, Philippine Studies Program (at Chicago), Fred Eggan, social anthropology, Richard Dorson, Folklore Institute at Indiana University*

## Fieldwork, epics, and institution-building

Interestingly for a man who was born in the provinces and, even as unschooled youth, had marveled at the events of culture he witnessed, and who had recently undertaken a prolonged study in another province of the local language, E. Arsenio Manuel had never considered that he had "gone

[1] For the first essay, please see *Aghamtao* Vol.29 (2021). The second essay will be in a forthcoming issue of *Aghamtao*. The third essay is in this volume. The fifth and sixth essays are also in this volume.

to the field" before the mid-1950s. His bona fides in anthropology now strengthened with his attainment of the MA, Manuel opted in 1956 to change that. His describes his motivations and run up to his first, fateful trip.

> "It has been a general belief among practitioners in anthropology that one does not become a full-grown anthropologist until he has lived among primitives other than his own ethnic group and studies their lifeways which should be available in print. Very demanding, this stricture. At any rate, having received my master's degree did not make me an anthropologist. Not that soon, at least. So I was very eager to go to the field. The opportunity came during the dry months of 1956. The Asian Center of the University [of the Philippines] granted me a modest sum for a general survey of the Bagobo people of Davao. With an introductory letter from one of my students, I was prepared to go. I took a plane to Davao City and from there took a jeep to Baguio barrio, where my student's father was a *datu*. I was then guided to Paggan, where Saddani Pagayaw, who became my guide-assistant for two months, was then located." (Manuel 1989:163)

This first trek up the mountains was a productive one, because it both yielded useful information and convinced Manuel of the importance of returning. And as things turned out, he would return quite often over the coming years.

In fits and starts, from roughly the mid-1950s to the late 1970s, Manuel embarked on numerous sojourns in a few places in central Mindanao for ethnographic study. As best I have been able to document, he went: for his lengthiest stays in 1958, 1960, and 1963. These he interspersed with much shorter ones in August and October 1964; December 1965; May, September, and October 1968; June and July 1969; December 1974; October 1975; December 1976; February 1977; and a final one sometime in 1979 (Manuel 1999:59-60). He reckoned that in sum, these trips amounted to three years in the field, away from teaching at the UP (Manuel n.d.:11).

During these trips to the field, he was able to interview informants, record all sorts of oral traditions, and gain a more comprehensive sense of Manuvu' culture. Thereafter he transmuted this ethnographic work into a surprising number of articles and books, many of which remain valuable

today, including his first textualized epic, *The Maiden of the Buhong Sky* (1958a), his essay "Upland Bagobo Narratives" (1961) and his survey of published epics (1963), as well as his *Agyu: The Ilianon Epic of Mindanao* (1969a, 1969b), *Manuvu' Social Organization* ([2000]1973), *Tuwaang Attends a Wedding* (1975), among numerous smaller works. His time in the field was so productive that it in fact gave him information of all sorts in excess of what he could humanly publish—even though he would live for nearly a quarter century after the completion of his last trip.

From the outset, he found his time spend in the field to be rewarding, for reasons humorous and revelatory. He recalled that his "first evening in the foothills is memorable for two things: I was given boiled rice and a bowl of monkey-meat stew; and I heard for the first time what epic singing was" (Manuel 1989:163-64). He describes that memorable meal:

> "Anything goes in fieldwork, and I relished the meat which tasted like venison and the vegetable that went with it until, digging deeper into the bowl, my fingers lifted a whole finger complete with nail. The cook did not even remove the hair from it, and so, nonchalantly, I dropped it through a slit in the floor to the ground below. The dogs, suddenly noticing the object, raved and raged over it." (Manuel 1989:164)

His encounter with epics was less dramatic, but more consequential, than it was with the monkey finger. It took place later that night.

> "After supper was over, two women, one after the other, sang an epic song. As I was extremely tired, I heard only snatches of the song and was asleep most of the time. However, the following morning the second woman dictated her son, and I took it down phonetically, though I did not know the language." (Manuel 1989:164)

Without anticipating it would happen, and lacking the proper equipment, including, crucially, an elementary knowledge of the language, Manuel had nonetheless recorded his first epic. This was in April 1956. Over the next two months, he stayed with the Manuvu' to study their culture, learn their language, and take as many notes as he could. Included in this information haul were no less that fifteen epics, which he jotted down in their entirety after writing as furiously as possible. He wrote, "There was a time when my right arm got numb and swelled because of continuous dictation" (Manuel 1989:164). The trip was a resounding success.

While the goal of fieldwork was of course to study the lifeways of particular communities, an unanticipated consequence of fieldwork was that it reshaped Manuel not only intellectually, as one would expect, but also personally and even politically. Something of this is evident in a few places in his writings. He for instance describes his encounters with his go-betweens in Mindanao with a characteristic mix of objective analysis and genuine affection.

> "How these poor people received and helped me in their customary way, creating tender memories which I would like to return not only the clothings (unused and second hand), tools, seeds, medicines, powdered milk and so on received as assistance locally and from USA (from schools) which I gave away to the needy and the sick. I wish I had the means to go back and say to these people who are still around [my last trip was in 1979] to say: 'Hello, how are you? I have not forgotten you'." (Manuel 1999:2)

Elsewhere Manuel writes of how he,

> "…saw the actual conditions of several minority peoples—the Jangan, the Matigsalug, Manuvu' and Ilianon. He sympathized with them and made efforts to bring relief food and tools to them with the assistance of the Asia Foundation, the WHO organization which extended powdered milk; and a couple of schools in USA, through their class groups to donate seeds of plants and vegetables; and from my own family and friends, secondhand clothing and blankets which were all distributed to these peoples, especially the Manuvu' who received the largest share." (Manuel n.d.:11)

Manuel was thus sincere in his efforts to document the aspects of their life that were (for them) unremarkably mundane but that he described, grandiosely, as "culture." He was kind in his interactions, and as a two-time farmer in his own right he was less out-of-place with them than the generally urbane Jesuit, Protestant, or secular academic anthropologists who visited them before and after. And above all he was grateful for all that they had given him, reflected in part by the fact that he credited Saddani Pagayaw as something of a co-author of his first and third published epics (Manuel 1958a, Manuel 1975).

Of greater consequence was that Manuel's efforts to improve their material conditions were not confined to simple acts of charity. When he saw that the upland communities' interests were threatened by the

Philippine government, private businesses, or other interests, he made use of his position and access to communication channels to advocate for their behalf. His efforts in this realm seem very important for Manuel personally. Writing in the third person, he describes two cases in some detail.

> "His most unforgettable experience is his fight for the native rights to their ancestral lands. Sometime in the Summer of 1956, during his first trip [to upland Mindanao], the wife of the governor got a concession to put up a ranch somewhere in the vicinity of Dallag village. The villagers came to his place in Lumut village and reported that their village was being fenced, half of it, and included in that prospective ranch. He could not but help these people and so he wrote a pleading letter to the *capataz* [foreman] of the governor's wife's ranchmen to remove the barbed wire fence, otherwise he would see the governor himself and the Bureau of Forestry branch chief. Within forty-eight hours, the barbed-wire fence and posts were removed." (n.d.:12)

And the second,

> "One big case that Mr. Manuel pursued was the land grant allocated to the Mindanao Institute of Technology consisting of a total area of 7,200 hectares in Malivatuan, North Cotabato, signed in a proclamation by President Carlos P. Garcia on July 24, 1957. It took more than a year before the non-literate natives learned of the executive fiat depriving them of a great portion of their ancestral lands. Mr. Manuel wrote petition after petition to Pres. Garcia's successors in Malakanyang, Manila, but did not succeed in revoking or changing that proclamation." (n.d.:12).

His efforts to advocate for indigenous peoples in the upland areas against the government or private companies mark one of the few instances in his life where he actually put to use his training in law (pers. comm. Corazon Manuel 2020). There are several other instances of Manuel's activism across the decades, most of which he did not however record. Nonetheless, he kept up his engagement throughout. As part of his efforts, he also penned the occasional academic article to raise awareness (see items #120 and #139 in Manuel 1984:239, 241). Fieldwork not only fueled his scholarship, then, it also transformed him into a legal petitioner for indigenous peoples' rights.

In examining the interactions between Manuel and his informants, one wonders how the latter perceived things. Unfortunately this information is difficult to come by. In a few, furtive places in his writings he describes something about the thoughts, activities, and personalities of his informants themselves—cultural handlers like Saddani Pagayaw, community notables, and of course the various singers of tales and storytellers themselves. It is thus possible to glimpse something of their perspectives through their interactions with the anthropologist, although their voices are faint. What can be said about them, again if Manuel's writings serve as an accurate guide, is that they by and large seem to have been generally willing, even eager participants in relating the things they knew for the Manila-based anthropologist. To an extent as well, most seem to have enjoyed their encounters with him. Manuel's greatest challenge came in simply finding informants who possessed the information he sought, for instance oral stories of one or another sort. 'Ethnographic refusal'[2] does not seem to have significantly hampered his efforts.

At the same time, he did encounter more typical, conventional problems. These included external impediments such as the lack of time to go to the field and the lack of funding at all stages of the process. One measure of Manuel's indefatigability can be seen in how he surmounted technological issues. As he describes the clunky process of tape-recording oral traditions for instance,

> "All of the songs were recorded in the field using a German make of a tape-recorder trade-marked 'Butoba', which was a heavy one lent to us by [ethnomusicologist] Dr. Jose Maceda of the UP College of Music. The type was battery-run, and we transported it over hills, mountains and cliffs including two automobile batteries on the shoulders of *cargadores* [hired carriers] to assure ourselves of power supply. We used 600 feet Scotch Magnetic Tape No. 111-6. After tape-recording in the evening, we requested the singer to dictate his song the following day, and this was done using a portable typewriter. By this time or during our second trip I was somewhat familiar with the sound system of the Manuvu' language and I just typed the dictation or recitation

[2][Ethnographic refusal is "a method whereby researchers and research participants *together* decide not to make particular information available for use within the academy" (Zahara 2016)].

> in the best way I could phonetically. We did this anticipating the problems that could arise from transcribing or running the tapes. During the taping of the first epic song (this was in Sa:ysay village), our Butoba recorder developed trouble, a roaring noise after some minutes of recording work. Our machine also generated heat and I had to stop the singing. After five or so minutes, we had the singing continued but after sometime the roaring sound became a disturbance in the replay. This problem continued to bother us during the entire period of our fieldwork, exhausting us during the evening until the wee hours of the following morning." (Manuel 1999:15-16)

Next came the tedious work of verifying the recording, transcribing that which had not been transcribed, translating, and annotating it. This he did (just for his folklore research) some fifty or so times over the course of several decades alongside the daily work of teaching, researching, and publishing on other topics, not to mention devoting time to having a family and social life. Ah, the joys of anthropological research!

Manuel was able to translate his research from the field into published work with surprising speed. In 1958, he published *The Maiden of the Buhong Sky: A Complete Song from the Bagobo Folk Epic Tuwaang*, his next book-length work and his first major contribution to folklore studies. It was not of course the first epic-type Filipino oral tradition to have been recorded; that distinction belongs instead to either Gerardo Blanco or Isabelo de los Reyes, one of whom (it is unclear which) recorded what became titled "*Vida de Lam-ang*" in 1889 (de los Reyes 1889, 1890), or to whoever recorded the Bikolano epic *Handiong*, which appeared in print in the first volume of Wenceslao E. Retana's *Archivo del bibliófilo filipino* in 1895 (de los Reyes 1889:235-97, Retana 1895:323-80). Scholars of varying sorts and motivations followed their efforts during the American period. Of these, some published their epics at the time (e.g. Laubach 1930), others would later on (e.g. Barton 1955, Lambrecht 1967), and others not at all (Beyer 1912). Manuel's Tuwaang recording was however the first in the Philippines that made use of the more typical form and format of transcribed an epic that, with some variation, has become the convention today.

*The Maiden of the Buhong Sky* centers on a story about the Manuvu' hero Tuwaang and his adventures, battles, and betel chewing as he tries to

gain the companionship of the titular love interest, who is described (in Manuel 1958a:23) as,

> Rising from the east
> But more radiant than
> The rays of the rising sun
> Because this could be darkened
> And hence the light dimmed
> Covered up however faintly
> By small clouds.
> We cannot compare the sun
> To the maiden of the Kuaman.

Manuel transcribed this tale and re-presented it through the Roman and International Phonetic alphabets. He formatted it into lines and assembled those as stanzas. Parallel with these was a line-by-line translation into English. The text itself is freighted with numerable footnotes that explain the meanings of the more obscure words, aspects of the performance not representable in print, and provide cultural background. Manuel opens the epic with an introductory section that outlines something about the broader culture from which the epic was recorded, generic features of the epic itself, and the process through which Manuel and his coauthor and go-between Saddani Pagayaw transformed a vocal chant into a printed book. It was the most careful, sophisticated, indeed scholarly, presentation of a Filipino epic up to its time. One reviewer correctly noted the "arduous task" of completing the work and said that, "Manuel is to be congratulated for seeing this task through to the publication of what is a competent and usefully organized contribution to Philippine ethnology and folklore studies" (Frake 1959).

In between the publication of his first recorded epic and his second one in 1969 (*Agyu*: *The Ilianon Epic of Mindanao*), Manuel continued to pursue a range of scholarly questions across multiple disciplines. "Tayabas Tagalog *Awit* Fragments from Quezon Province" (1958b) put to print the *awit* recordings Manuel collected while he and his family rusticated in Central Luzon during the occupation. As he did with *Maiden of the Buhong Sky*, Manuel provides in this study something of the relevant history and cultural information readers would require to make sense of the oral traditions, a careful transcription, and preliminary analysis; additionally, he supplies musical notation, so that we might know how the *awit* were sung—a first instance of this practice in his corpus. In much the same vein he recorded and published essays on

Manuvu' oral traditions, "Upland Bagobo Narratives" (1961) and "Bagobo Riddles" (1962).

Probably the most important work of the time was his "Survey of Philippine Epics" (1963), which in fact constituted the first survey of the field ever to be written. In addition to providing the first complete list of Filipino epics to have been collected up to that point, this lengthy bio-bibliography of his most beloved folklore genre was the most serious, substantial, and methodologically rigorous study of Philippine oral traditions studies in a more general sense in the field's century-long history— a significant contribution to knowledge. A synonymous attempt to map out the known world was his *Philippine Folklore Bibliography* (1965), which was also a first of its kind. Last but not least was an essay he contributed to F. Landa Jocano's *Filipino Cultural Heritage* (1966) in which he attempted to theorize the earliest history of distinctly Filipino languages. The title was quintessential Manuel: "Pre-Proto-Philippinesian: The Structural Elements of Stems and Words in some Philippine Languages" (1966). Building on themes from his earlier *Chinese Elements in the Tagalog Language*, this essay attempted to trace—or perhaps, project backward in time—aspects of language that were quintessentially "Filipino," as opposed to Austronesian in origin. In the decade bookended by his epic recordings, Manuel kept himself quite busy.

This was also a time when he sought to build institutions that would further the mission of documenting and studying Filipino culture. The need to do so was urgent, as few such institutes, academies, or other such organizations existed, even by the late 1950s, to promote cultural research. With the notable exception of the generation of anthropologists and folklorists who arrived in the early years of American colonialism in the Philippines, scholars of Philippine culture seldom received meaningful institutional funding or support for their work. Such had been the case even during Spanish times, where many of the major ethnographies—say the *Boxer Codex* (Donoso et al. 2016), Antonio de Morga's *Sucesos de las Islas Filipinas* (1890), Francisco Alzina's *Historia* (Yepes 1998, 1996b, 1996a)—were written by individuals who had a personal, even idiosyncratic interest in the subject rather than any larger entity's mandate that they do so. The long history of Philippine studies was still, by the 1950s, what it had been throughout most of the previous centuries: underfunded in the best of circumstances.

Towards the end of building institutions that might support oral traditions research, and of more generally bringing together other like-minded people of a similar academic bent, Manuel labored for some years to build the Philippine Folklore Society (PFS). Although a few interested colleagues had had serious discussion about founding the PFS as early as 1949, the organization did not formally come into being until 1958. The stated reasons for the delay were many: because its members had difficulty in simply finding the time to come together, because they worried that the burdens of work would fall upon their shoulders alone, and because of the (unfortunately historic) lack of governmental support—even in the seemingly new era of the Diosdado Macapagal administration (1961-65) which only really rhetorically expressed its support for articulations of the national culture (Baluyut 2012). Manuel describes the early back and forth succinctly. "There was much vacillation indeed. The idea to form a folklore organization therefore remained just an idea kept from year to year" (Manuel 1985:41). Nonetheless after these delays, the PFS finally became realized the very year Manuel published his first epic. Its principal aims were outlined in the second article of its constitution (the first simply codified the organization's name). They were:

1. To collect, record, preserve, archive, study, and publish folklore materials from all ethnic and/or regional areas and occupational groups in the Philippines;
2. To promote folklore scholarship;
3. To help folklorists in projects or researches in the completion and publication of their works;
4. To work for the establishment of a national folklore archives and similar organizations in provincial areas;
5. To arouse public interest in folklore through the use of the mass media, research and educational institutions and all other available means; and,
6. To cooperate with groups or societies established in other lands with similar aims (Manuel 1985:39).

Ironically, by the time PFS published these articles for the occasion of its fifth national congress in 1985, nearly three decades since its inception, it had already achieved a number of these goals. Members such as Manuel, Juan R. Francisco, Leopoldo Yabes, Armando J. Malay, Paula Carolina S. Malay, Damiana Eugenio, Maximo Ramos, Resil Mojares, and others, had by that point succeeded in authoring the greatest sustained campaign of

oral traditions collection, research, and analysis in Philippines history. Both the breadth and quality of the PFS's work from the 1950s to the early 1980s surpassed that of the burst of similar work earlier in the century, undertaken then mostly by Americans. Thus the promises of Articles 1-3 had been fulfilled (Manuel 1985:47-48). So too had that of Article 5, as many members had sought to popularize folklore research outside of the classroom, conference, or other sort of academic setting, most notably by writing about their work in popular magazines.

The PFS was less successful with its aim listed in Article 6, as the organization never ended up partnering with any similar scholarly body for a conference or coauthoring a binational folklore volume say. And, most distressingly for folklorist, anthropologist, and historian alike, the PFS's efforts to establish a national folklore archive—something Manuel himself floated at least as early as the 1950s—never materialized. Instead, the more typical custom was that individual members would hold onto their own scholarly notes, unpublished materials and more; that is, rather than contribute to existing archives or culture collections at the places where they worked, for instance the UP, they created their own repositories in their homes, which would then survive, wither or be thrown away, or be sold off based simply on what those scholars or their families did with them. The organization's inability to build a centralized, national archive demonstrates something about its fundamental character, the thing that suffused it with energy while it existed yet at the same time showed that it might not forever: that it was a loose collective of capable individuals who operated in their own particular times and space. Not long after Manuel published the volume that lays out the PFS's documentary history in 1985, the efforts of its then-aging core members began to dwindle, which presaged its eventual senescence and anticlimactic fizzling out at some unpronounced point thereafter.

In the decade following the publication of the first volume of the *Dictionary of Philippine Biography (DPB)* in 1955, Manuel had accomplished a number of useful feats that were not only considerable in their own right but that would additionally lay the groundwork for sustained production of the sorts of scholarship to which he devoted himself. Much work remained to be done. Many of the major achievements of the Philippine Folklore Society were for instance two decades in the future, including even some of Manuel's. Others however would come into being quite soon after in the subsequent years.

**Professor into student: at the University of Chicago in the 1960s**

There are many reasons—intellectual, professional, personal—to seek to earn a doctorate in anthropology, as in any field. In the very institution where Manuel earned his first graduate degree, and later taught for decades, the Department of Anthropology at the University of the Philippines, Diliman, potential applicants are informed nowadays that, "The doctoral program is designed to ensure the solid foundation and grounding in the field of anthropology" (2022). While this is undoubtedly true, it was perhaps not so for Manuel himself following his promotion to Assistant Professor in 1955. By that point, he had already taught in the department for some time, contributed works to the field, and could be already counted as among the small number of experts in the field of Philippine anthropology. He therefore lacked neither the "solid foundation" nor "grounding" in the field that a earning a doctorate would provide. There is nothing to indicate that he could not live his life out doing what he had been doing all along. Why then did he pursue a PhD in anthropology, as he ended up doing? What need did it fulfill? More to the point, the need for an accomplished academic like Manuel to earn a doctorate was not even apparent to the anthropologist himself. As he concedes, "It never occurred to me after World War II to continue my education abroad" (Manuel 1989:165). There is a direct comparison here with his thinking about seeking to earn an MA in earlier years: it was not something that happened until Beyer ventured the possibility. Something like that would have to trigger his decision to return to graduate school a second time.

In addition to being one of the elite and historic institutions of higher education in the US, the University of Chicago offered particular promise for Manuel because of its Philippine Studies Program, founded in 1953 by Fred Eggan [together with Evett D. Hester]. In the nearly three decades the program operated until Eggan's retirement in 1977, it transformed the University of Chicago into a major center of Philippines research, oversaw many research projects of import to those beyond the field, and trained the first, professional generation of Filipino anthropologists. "Some received their PhDs. there and others came for a year of study, among them Alfredo Pacyaya, E. Arsenio Manuel, F. Landa Jocano, Alfred Evangelista, and William Henry Scott," (University of Chicago Library 2009). Political scientist Belinda A. Aquino described the program as a "breakthrough" for Philippine studies (Aquino 2000:2). This it undoubtedly was, but since no scholar has yet examined its role in the sociology of knowledge, it is

difficult to assess precisely how. In any event, the University of Chicago Philippine Studies Program was clearly the place for Manuel to earn a PhD in his time if he endeavored to work from the top of the field.

The story of Manuel's journey to the PhD began when Eggan made a visit to the UP, in part because he was seeking to recruit up-and-coming Filipino academics for the novel Philippine Studies Program. He came across Manuel's book *Chinese Elements in the Tagalog Language* and wanted to meet its author. They had productive conversations, and before long, Eggan encouraged Manuel to apply to the program. Eggan also approached Beyer about dispatching Manuel to Chicago. In response, Beyer, "simply shrugged his shoulders and ignored" Eggan, who then returned home without any assurance Manuel would apply (Manuel 1989:165). Some time later, Eggan made a second trip to the UP to proposition Beyer and nudge Manuel again. Beyer responded that, "if there was a place to study anthropology in the world, this was it, meaning the Philippine setting" (Manuel 1989:165). His answer clarified the stakes: if Manuel was to make it to strive to study at Chicago, he would only be able to do so by sidestepping his mentor in the process.

There was no logical or humane reason for Beyer to work so hard to stifle Manuel in his treatment of Eggan, whom Beyer "was able to keep at a distance, for the latter was in earnest trying to recruit Filipinos who wanted anthropology for a career" (Manuel 1989:165). One surmises that these machinations of academic malpractice were designed to undermine any and all perceived challenges to his authority; if he could not have the last word in Philippine anthropology, he wished that no one would. In a letter to Eggan, Manuel describes the lengths to which the mentor went to undermine him:

> "I am also dubious that my wife can hold on to her job while I am away because it so happens that H.O.B. [H. Otley Beyer] has a say in the matter and it so happens that H.O.B. does not want me to study abroad (he did not endorse my application papers at all and so I had to hunt for somebody else; about which incident D.V. Hart must have written you already). So the old man appears to be an obstacle for a long time now, since you were here last in fact. But I must get out of this rut, everyone at least says so. How to go about it is the problem. Another angle of the quandary I am in is this—H.O.B. does not approve of Chicago as the right place to go as it is spoiling people on acculturation and village studies,

> etc. (This is just between us, however). I do not care much for what he says, but since he has a control on the position my wife is filling at the moment, a personal opinion might mean something. I do not know whether you can offer any solution." (Manuel 1955c)

Manuel was no doubt correct regarding Beyer's view that Chicago anthropologists pursued "illegitimate" approaches (cf. Lynch 1967:6), and that this was one factor. But the problem of Beyer's extreme, even vindictive, form of gatekeeping went deeper than differences of approach to the discipline.

Manuel decided to escape from "the rut". One critical actor, obscured in the available written sources, was Manuel's wife Magdalena. Seeing that a few of his contemporaries at the UP were heading to Chicago, she was the individual who most persistently urged the reluctant anthropologist to apply, which he eventually did (Manuel 2020) and was his greatest source of encouragement and support throughout. At her urging, combined with Eggan's persistence, and then Manuel's stealthy maneuvering, the parties worked diligently behind the scenes at their respective universities. By 1960,

> "Dr. Eggan and officials of my home university talked matters over and decided to bypass Professor Beyer altogether. Not until the last day when I was about to board my plane did Professor Beyer come to know about my departure for Chicago." (Manuel 1989:165)

After much heartache and stress at his place of employment, he was on his way to becoming one of the first Filipino academics to earn a doctoral degree. Uniquely in the history of graduate careers, the most difficult part of earning a doctorate for Manuel was not completing coursework or other program requirements, navigating disagreements with advisors, or the Olympian task of writing a dissertation, but simply finding a way to attend the program for which he was being recruited. Before setting foot in Chicago, he had already passed his postgraduate school's hardest test.

Once he arrived, he found the Philippine Studies Program to be as intellectually enriching as promised. As he says, he took as many courses in archaeology, social anthropology, and linguistics "as were considered fundamental" with the assistance of his adviser, Dr. Fred Eggan (Manuel 1989:165). Manuel used the occasion of this graduate career to fortify his knowledge of social anthropology in particular, which he considered "a weak spot in my local training" (1989:165). His pursuit of this subfield

culminated in his dissertation project, which he later published as *Manuvu Social Organization* (1973). Completing his course of study transformed Manuel into one of the most highly qualified, trained, and pedigreed Philippine anthropologists in the Philippines and indeed in the world (Manuel 1978).

On a personal level, Manuel found that while the classes were useful, he truly valued his interactions with his professors, with many of whom he formed lasting relationships. He was particularly grateful to undertake study with "some of the stalwarts during that time" such as Eggan and Middle East archaeologist Robert John Braidwood (see Watson 2006), as well as "other up-and-coming younger people" in the department whom he did not name (Manuel 1989:165). One wonders how pursuing the degree in anthropology led him to rethink his tutelage under Beyer among others back home. Of lesser significance, but greater amusement, were his analyses of his professors' apparel. Serious and workmanlike by general disposition, Manuel occasionally expressed his sense of humor. He delighted in realizing that Braidwood's sports coat with patched elbows was a sign of the professor's wealth. And he, "could not help myself giggling inwardly" whenever he saw the rubber shoes of another professor (Manuel 1989:165).

His experience of student life at Chicago was unassuming. Far away from family and friends, he lived a frugal bachelor's life. He boarded in student housing, economized on spending, and, when not splurging on books (continuing the canny habit he began in his high school days in Manila) he sent whatever spare stipendiary money he had home. His thriftiness in fact propelled him to author one of his most obscure works, a composition that, in the words of Amy Besa and Romy Dorotan (2006) formed "an expression of cultural passion and pride": his *lugaw*. He describes his comfort food that was,

> "Filipino but individual, i.e., an invention. I always bought chicken wings (I laughed to myself when I saw parts of the chicken classified in the grocery, reminding me of home and my mother-in-law buying live chickens from the market), potatoes, greens including chili, and chicken liver (almost forgetting this), mixing all of these to cook *arroz caldo* (the preparation at home was just boiling rice and chicken together with ginger and pepper). I did this every evening, for it was the easiest to prepare; besides, I had enough left over for breakfast the following day (Manuel 1989:165-66).

Setting aside the indisputability of its delectability, Manuel's description of his culinary concoction usefully documents not only something common to Filipino tastes – vital for global epicureanism as they are – but also his embrace of parsimony. The protein in the dish, the chicken wing (an extremity that barely helps the animal fly, if at all) was, in the United States before the 1970s, a cut of fowl one purchased out of economic inevitability rather than gastronomic desire. The bone-rich, meat-poor piece of chicken that so incensed Padre Damaso in Rizal's *Noli Me Tángere* when served (Rizal 2006:20), was, during those years, far from the delicacy it has become today (Trillin 1980). Scholar and penny-pincher that he was, Manuel did the best he could, boiled it in rice with other aromatics, and enjoyed it twice a day.

Manuel found life outside of the university to have its particular charms. He was pleasantly surprised to find out that local families were interested in meeting with graduate students like himself. "On the bulletin boards or trunks of trees were posted warm notices: 'Our family would be pleased to entertain any Filipino student, call us and we will pick you up from your residence'" (Manuel 1989:166). Families interested in Filipino culture, as told to them by its native interpreters, were offering to house, feed, and pay for the mere company and thoughts of individuals like Manuel for a weekend. It was an ideal arrangement for both parties. For sharing stories of the homeland, he was often paid as much as $25, equivalent to roughly ₱10,596 or $218 USD today.[3] These mostly informal visits took place on Saturday nights. The following mornings he would eat breakfast and attend church with the families before heading home. Such occasions were a welcome break from the rigors and monotonies of study.

The life of a graduate student boarder was more often lonely for Manuel. Tiring of the solitude, he sought a change of scenery in the spring of 1962. Luckily, he chanced upon a fraternity house that had a free room. There he boarded with an international student from Japan. Without naming the student, Manuel describes the pleasant relationship they formed. "Life became livelier this time, with someone to talk to and waste some time with; we exchanged news and snacks, sometimes went to the canteen together" (Manuel 1989:166). Living in a fraternity house had its other sides too.

[3] Figures calculated from saving.org and google.com.

> "One such occurrence happened during the open house. There were a lot of activities in the basement, a mixing of students: dancing, drinking, eating, hugging, and everything else. As the open house went deep into the night partners slept together, enjoying the night." (Manuel 1989:166)

Ever the consummate anthropologist, Manuel chose to become a detached observer rather than join in the quintessential college ritual.

That summer, he sought and found more tranquil accommodations. Ironically, they placed him in the company of a more volatile roommate. On paper, his new housemate was a perfect fit for Manuel. A PhD candidate himself, the unnamed individual had completed "fieldwork in the Philippines and had all the data, a trunkful, on a fishing village in Bohol" (Manuel 1989:166). However, this roommate was a "habitual drinker." He once took Manuel to a bar, presumably in a run-down area of town, where the African American patrons caused him fear. (Unmindful and unconcerned about racial disparities in the US, what little Manuel thought about Blacks seems to have been negative. While in the dorms he for instance demeaned the speech of the African American woman who served as the residential housekeeper, noting that "she slurred her words, and it appeared to me she spoke a different English" [Manuel 1989:165]). The new roommate could become dangerous to himself. "He scared me often because when tipsy or drunk, he would juggle with our kitchen knives. He hurt himself once and I didn't have any bandages in the home to help him" (Manuel 1989:166). At other times, their interactions were good. The roommate was a good cook, pleasant to speak with, and sociable in a way that Manuel was not, and Manuel enjoyed meeting the people to whom he introduced him.

Manuel's most lasting experience as a doctoral student came neither from classes he took nor the student life he lived, but from a conference he attended: the Third Conference on Oriental-Western Literary and Cultural Relations in June 1962. None other than the titan of folklore studies Richard Dorson invited him to the convocation. Dorson (1916-81) was perhaps the chief figure of American folklore. He helped to grow and popularize the field in the US in the middle of the twentieth century. From his post at Indiana University (b. 1957), he made Bloomington into a mecca for folklorists the world over. Yet the invite came to Manuel as a surprise, in part because he did not even know who Dorson was. Eggan urged him to accept, which he did. Manuel then read up on the inviter. Based on what he understood to be the man's interests, Manuel began to

draft a paper for the occasion of the conference on the history of epics in the Philippines. Later, when he prepared that conference paper for publication, after greatly expanding it, it in fact became one of Manuel's major works.

Manuel published "A Survey of Philippine Folk Epics" in *Asian Folklore Studies*, a year after presenting it at the conference, in 1963. As its title indicates, the purpose of the essay was to give an overview of all the oral epics across the Philippines that had been recorded up to that time. To provide such an overview was a more difficult task than might seem. First, while a few folklore enthusiasts in the Philippines had used the word "epic" to describe lengthy oral recordings before (e.g. Beyer 1912, Laubach 1930a and 1930b, Yabes 1935), none of them had ever attempted to describe its generic features. Another problem was that the term "epic" had been applied overly widely, to a variety of written and oral material, not all of which would necessarily qualify as such once uniform criteria was set out. Lastly, many of those who had recorded lengthy oral traditions in the past had not assigned their recordings a type or, in some cases, even a title. José Castaño never named the tradition he recorded "Handiong," though it came to be called such (Retana 1895), Isabelo de los Reyes described the "*Vida de Lam-ang*" as an "ancient popular Ilocano poem" and not an "epic," and so on (de los Reyes 1890: 235).

Thus Manuel had to devise a definition that examined general features among works that themselves seldom, if ever, described their contents as "epics." It was into these unsettled waters that he ventured. The results for his careful, lengthy study are remarkable. According to Manuel's analysis, what separated the epic from other species of oral traditions was:

> "Essentially, the Philippine folk epics are (a) a narrative of sustained length, (b) based on oral tradition, (c) revolving around supernatural events or heroic deeds, (d) in the form of verse, (e) which is either chanted or sung, (f) with a certain seriousness of purpose, for they embody or validate the beliefs, customs, ideals, or life-values of the people." (Manuel 1963:69)

With this new definition in hand, he waded through the mass of materials and deemed a number of recordings labeled "epics" to qualify as such while others he disqualified. He reckoned that some nineteen epics in total had been recorded up to that point. He spends most of the essay working through these matters. Later on, he proffers a few suggestive

points on the analysis of epics, about matters such as the dating of epics, their reliability as historical documents, and possible avenues for further research. In short, his "survey" accomplishes far more in formal terms than compiling a list of one sort of oral traditions. These are among the reasons the landmark work formed the lead essay in the recent volume of his collected works compiled by the Komisyon sa Wikang Filipino (2019).

Manuel's presentation at the conference impressed Dorson, who subsequently offered the anthropologist a visiting assistant professorship through the Folklore Institute at Indiana University. There, for a brief time, Manuel taught a course on "Philippine Folklore" and, for extra income, another in "Philippine Archaeology." He says nothing about his experience with the students, faculty, and others he interacted with while undertaking this brief teaching stint in Bloomington. What he remembers with fondness was the natural beauty that surrounded the campus.

> "I wish to visit Indiana at Bloomington again, for of all the campuses I have come to know in the USA, Bloomington is the most alluring—wide rolling greens and giant trees, aside from its expert faculty and collections (e.g. it has the best collection of folk songs and folk music from all over the world). Nearby are small lakes and a village where unknown painters exhibit and sell their productions in their own quarters or cottages; the huge pumpkins (I called them squash) and fruits along the roads on the farms are memorable images." (Manuel 1989:166)

Towards the end of his visiting professorship, Dorson suggested to Manuel that he write a book on "The Folktales of the Philippines," to which he happily acceded. Soon after he began to draft the larger work. Along the way, Manuel, as well as folklorist Hazel Wrigglesworth, provided contributions from the Philippines to Dorson's general volume *Folktales Told Around the World* (1975) that was designed in part to be an introductory volume to the larger series of national folklore books. Presumably Manuel's submissions were part of the larger work he was then writing. But it would require some time. When Dorson asked him how long the manuscript would take, Manuel quipped that, "he should not expect me to write it in a decade or two, and he [Dorson] broke into laughter" (Manuel 1989:166).

With his coursework completed by 1962, Manuel had now to undertake fieldwork and complete his dissertation. These were admittedly no small tasks but one imagines they were comparatively easier for the

UP professor who had already accomplished both things on more than one occasion. He and his family were happy when he returned to Manila in February 1963. Magdalena was less pleased, however, when she learned that he would soon have to leave to undertake fieldwork in central Mindanao to complete the research for his dissertation. This he did in various stints over the next years and wrote his dissertation on Manuvu' social organization. Following its completion, he was awarded the PhD degree in 1969.

*Manuvu' Social Organization* appeared in 1973. It explained in systematic detail various aspects of Manuvu' society such as forms of kinship, social structure, law, and political order. It was the first comprehensive ethnography on an upland people from Mindanao to appear in the post-independence period. It surpasses the earlier anthropologies of the Lumad, the Zomian Southern Philippines (e.g. Cole 1913; Cole 1915a; 1915b; Cole 1922), and stands shoulder-to-shoulder alongside more recent works (cf. Schlegel 1970; Schlegel 1979, Edgerton 2008; among which, Paredes 2013 stands alone). The continuing importance of Manuel's work can be seen in its reissue in 2000 by the UP Press, marking a rare instance in which contemporary scholars and publishers have appreciated the value of Manuel's work.

There are clear parallels between Manuel's MA and PhD paths: both were times of intellectual growth for the anthropologist, but not perhaps dramatically so. That Manuel wrote an entire book on the subfield of social anthropology, about which he knew comparatively less before he attended Chicago, shows that his second graduate career was more formative than his first. However, his career as a doctoral student was meaningful for Manuel in essentially the same way being an MA student was. He relished making new contacts, having the time (and funding) to work on book-length projects alongside smaller ones, and more or less continued to pursue the same lines of scholarly inquiry he had after Chicago as he had before. For instance, while he certainly knew and thought more about social anthropology, he did not pursue studies in that subfield with any greater regularity after 1973.

Indeed, if we look at the scholarship he put out in the decades after, much of which centered around epics (in addition to the *DPB*), then the project he pursued as an unexpected avocation, the "Survey of Philippine Folk Epics" was the more consequential outgrowth of his time in the US. And to the extent that an institution propelled him to compose the essay, it was not the University of Chicago but Indiana University. No doubt

Chicago made Manuel into a more careful, sophisticated, and wide-ranging scholar. But in the final analysis, it did little to reroute the course of the academic life he had charted long before.

---

**Acknowledgements**

The author is grateful for the incisive and thoughtful comments on this essay provided by attendees of the Asian American Pacific Islander History Group at the Huntington Library organized by Connie Chen, Lon Kurashige, and David K. Yoo, including Alfred P. Flores, Susie Woo, and others. He is likewise appreciative for the thoughtful suggestions offered by the anonymous reviewer. He is particularly grateful to Mary Talusan Lacanlale for her careful, detailed reading and critique. Corazon Manuel, who generously provided her time and recollections about her father's life, immeasurably enriched this essay.

## References

Aquino, Belinda A. (2000). "How Philippine Studies Began." https://scholarspace.manoa.hawaii.edu/handle/10125/18018.

Baluyut, Pearlie Rose S. (2012). *Institutions and Icons of Patronage: Arts and Culture in the Philippines during the Marcos Years, 1965-1986*. Manila: University of Santo Tomas Press.

Barton, Roy Franklin. (1955). *Mythology of the Ifugaos*. [Comp. Alfred Louis Kroeber]. Philadelphia: American Folklore Society.

Besa, Amy, and Romy Dorotan. (2006). *Memories of Philippine Kitchens: Stories and Recipes from Far and Near*. New York: Stewart, Tabori & Chang.

Beyer, H. Otley, (1912). Extract from the 'Manhûdhûd' (One of the two great epics of the Ifugaos). In H. Otley Beyer and Roy F. Barton (eds.), *The History and Ethnography of the Ifugao People, Vol.9,* paper 19:1-2.

Cole, Fay-Cooper. (1922). *The Tinguian: Social, Religious, and Economic Life of a Philippine Tribe*. Chicago: Field Museum of Natural History.

Cole, Fay-Cooper. (1915a). *A Study of Tinguian Folk-Lore*. Chicago: s.n.

Cole, Fay-Cooper. (1915b). *Traditions of the Tinguian: A Study in Philippine Folk-Lore*. Chicago: Field Museum of Natural History.

Cole, Fay-Cooper. (1913). *The Wild Tribes of Davao District, Mindanao*. Chicago: Field Museum of Natural History.

De los Reyes, Isabelo. (1889, 1890). *El Folk-lore Filipino*. Manila: Tipo-Litografía de Chofré.

Department of Anthropology, University of the Philippines, Diliman. (2022). "Programs." https://anthro.upd.edu.ph/programs/.

Donoso, Isaac (transcriber and annotator), Carlos Quirino, Ma. Luisa García and Mauro Garcia (translators). (2016). *The Boxer Codex: A Modern Spanish Transcription and English Translation of 16th-century Exploration Accounts of East and Southeast Asia and the Pacific*. Quezon City: Vibal Foundation.

Dorson, Richard M. (1975). *Folktales Told Around the World*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Edgerton, Ronald K. (2008). *People of the Middle Ground: A Century of Conflict and Accommodation in Central Mindanao, 1880s-1980s*. Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press.

Frake, Charles O. (1959) Review of 'The Maiden of the Buhong Sky'. *Journal of American Folklore, 72*(286):364.

Keene, Ann T. (2020). Richard Mercer Dorson (12 March 1916–11 September 1981). *American National Biography*. https://www.anb.org/view/10.1093/anb/9780198606697.001.0001/anb-9780198606697-e-1401172.

Lambrecht, Francis. (1967). *The Hudhud of Dinulawan and Bugan at Gonhadan*. Baguio: Saint Louis University Press.

Laubach, Frank. (1930a). An Odyssey from Lanao. *Philippine Public Schools, 3*(8):359-373.

Laubach, Frank. (1930b). An Odyssey from Lanao. *Philippine Public Schools, 3*(9):459-468

Lynch, Frank. (1967). Henry Otley Beyer 1883-1966. *Philippine Studies 15*(1):3-8.

Manuel, Corazon A. (2020). Interview with Corazon Manuel by Brandon J. Macapagal Reilly. San Jose, California.

Manuel, E. Arsenio. (2000[1973]). *Manuvu' Social Organization*. Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press.

Manuel, E. Arsenio. (1999). *Harvests of Songs: Constituting the Manuvu' Tuwaang Epic Cycle.* Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press.

Manuel, E. Arsenio. (1989). "E. Arsenio Manuel, 1909-." *Contemporary Authors Autobiography Series*, *Vol. 9*. Detroit: Gale Research.

Manuel, E. Arsenio. (1984). A Checklist of the Writings of E. Arsenio Manuel, 1933-1983. *Philippine Humanities Review*, *1*(3-4):195-247.

Manuel, E. Arsenio. (1978). H. Otley Beyer (1883-1966): Anthropologist. In Cymbeline R. Villamin (ed.), *Biographies of Early Scientists in the Philippines: Electronic Version of Scientists in the Philippines, Vols. 1-2*. Manila: National Science Development Board. Unpaginated.

Manuel, E. Arsenio. (1975). *Tuwaang attends a Wedding: The Second Song of the Manuvu' Ethnoepic Tuwaang*. Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press.

Manuel, E. Arsenio. (1969a) Agyu: The Ilianon Epic of Mindanao. *Unitas, 42*:1-104.

Manuel, E. Arsenio. (1969b). *Agyu: The Ilianon Epic of Mindanao*. Manila: University of Santo Tomas.

Manuel, E. Arsenio. (1966). Pre-Proto-Philippinesian: the Structural Elements of Words in some Philippine Languages. In F. Lando Jocano (ed.), *Filipino Cultural Heritage*. Manila: Philippine Women's College.

Manuel, E. Arsenio. (1965). *Philippine Folklore Bibliography*. Quezon City: Philippine Folklore Society.

Manuel, E. Arsenio. (1963). A Survey of Folk Epics. *Asian Folklore Studies, 22*:1-86.

Manuel, E. Arsenio. (1962). Bagobo Riddles. *Folklore Studies, 21*:123-85.

Manuel, E. Arsenio. (1961). Upland Bagobo Narratives. *Philippine Social Sciences and Humanities Review, 26*(4):431-552.

Manuel, E. Arsenio. (1958a). *The Maiden of the Buhong Sky: A Complete Song from the Bagobo Folk Epic Tuwaang*. Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press.

Manuel, E. Arsenio. (1958b). Tayabas Tagalog Awit Fragments from Quezon Province. *Folklore Studies, 17*:55-100.

Manuel, E. Arsenio. (1955c). Letter to Fred Eggan. University of Chicago. Philippine Studies Program. Records, Box 13, Folder 12. Chicago: Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

Manuel, E. Arsenio. (n.d.). Unpublished notes. Quezon City: Special Collections, University of the Philippines Main Library.

Morga, Antonio de. (1890[1609]). *Sucesos de las islas Filipinas*, annotated by Jose Rizal. Paris: Garnier Hermanos.

Paredes, Oona. (2013). *A Mountain of Difference The Lumad in Early Colonial Mindanao*. Ithaca: Southeast Asia Program Publications, Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University.

Retana, Wenceslao E. (1895). *Archivo del bibliófilo filipino, Vol. 1.* Manila: Viuda de M. Minuesa de los Rios.

Rizal, Jose. (2006[1887]). *Noli Me Tángere*. [Trans. Harold Augenbraum]. New York: Penguin.

Schlegel, Stuart A. (1979). *Tiruray Subsistence: From Shifting Cultivation to Plow Agriculture*. Manila: Ateneo de Manila University Press.

Schlegel, Stuart A. (1970). *Tiruray Justice: Traditional Tiruray Law and Morality*. Los Angles: University of California Press.

Trillin, Calvin. (1980). An Attempt to Compile a Short History of the Buffalo Chicken Wing. *New Yorker*. https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/1980/08/25/an-attempt-to-compile-a-short-history-of-the-buffalo-chicken-wing.

Watson, Patty Jo. (2006). *Robert John Braidwood, 1907-2003*. Washington, D.C.: National Academy of Sciences.

Yabes, Leopoldo Y. (1935). *The Ilocano Epic. A Critical Study of the "Life of Lam-ang", ancient Ilocano Popular Poem, with a Translation of the Poem into English Prose*. Manila: Carmelo & Bauermann, Inc.

Yepes, Victoria. (ed.). (1998[1668]). *Historia sobrenatural de las Islas Bisayas: Segunda parte de la Historia de las Islas e Indios Bisayas del Padre Alzina, Manila (1668-1670).* Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas.

Yepes, Victoria. (ed.). (1996b[1668]). *Historia Natural de las Islas Bisayas del Padre Alzina*. Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas.

Yepes, Victoria. (ed.). (1996a[1668]). *Una Etnografía de los Indios Bisayas del Siglo XVII del Padre Alzina*. Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas.

Zahara, Alex. (8/8/2016). Ethnographic Refusal: A How to Guide. *Discard Studies.* https://discardstudies.com/2016/08/08/ethnographic-refusal-a-how-to-guide/#:~:text=Ethnographic%20refusal%20is%20a%20practice,issues%20on%20their%20own%20terms.

---

***Brandon Joseph Macapagal Reilly*** *is Associate Professor in History at Santa Monica College. He researches gender, anticolonialism, literature, and the cultural histories of the Philippines and Guåhan. His work has appeared in* Critical Ethnic Studies Journal, Intersections: Gender and Sexuality in Asia and the Pacific*, and* Mindanao Forum*. His forthcoming publications include* Tinipong Tinig ng Kababaihan: Priestesses to Presidents *(co-edited with Nenita Pambid Domingo, University of the Philippines Press). He is current treasurer of the Filipino Cultural School. More about him can be found on his personal website: brandonjreilly.com.*

Email: reilly_brandon@smc.edu