"THE DISSENSION OF OTHER THINGS": THE DISPARITY BETWEEN THE SPANISH AND AMERICAN PERCEPTIONS OF AMOK

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"What is found at the historical beginning of things is not the inviolable identity of their origin; it is the dissension of other things. It is disparity."

Introduction

In Philippine popular culture, one periodically comes across references to Filipinos "running amok." Faced with the very prevalence of such allusions, especially in newspapers, it would be easy to assume that they faithfully mirror amok's actual occurrence in the Philippines; that an underlying continuity exists between the Filipino, Spanish and American perceptions of random violence in the Philippines; and that contemporary Filipino understandings of amok are simply the culmination of the diligent attempts of countless Spaniards, Americans and Filipinos over the centuries to discern its true nature and meaning.

In this article, I intend to unsettle these assumptions by discussing the discontinuities between the Spanish representations of random homicide and the American accounts of amok in the Philippines. I argue that an investigation of the Spanish sources reveals little relation between these depictions. Where one assumed continuity, there exists mostly disparity. For example, the sort of frequent references to amok incidents and expositions on the behavioral pattern that features

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prominently in American writing are inconspicuous in the Spanish sources. This does not mean that the latter are bereft of descriptions of forms of random homicide, engaged in by Filipinos, that to a modern reader may seem "amoklike"; such descriptions are indeed to be found in those sources. Rather, it means that the descriptions of indiscriminate violence or fits of fury that are present in the Spanish sources differ from the American references and expositions in important respects.

Once aware of these discrepancies, one is inclined to gloss over them and instead emphasize the apparent similarities between the Spanish and American accounts of arbitrary homicide. For instance, the references to amok they both contain and the Spanish descriptions of forms of random killing may, to a modern reader, appear "amok-like." Palliating such differences leads to the neglect of the very details that constitute the Spanish sources and facilitates the projection of features that are peculiar to American writing on amok—for example, the chronic confusion of amok with the *juramentado* convention, a Muslim Filipino version of *jihad*. Hence, far from downplaying these discontinuities, I highlight them in order to reveal the Spanish perceptions of amok and of indiscriminate slaughter in all their singularity.

Differences

The more prominent differences between the Spanish descriptions of random violence and American reports of amok can be briefly enumerated here. Perhaps the most obvious relates to the respective quantities of such descriptions. Although references to and commentaries on forms of random violence that identify them by the name "amok" are fairly common in American writing, they are inconspicuous in the Spanish sources. A search through the latter for such references and commentaries is both a baffling and frustrating exercise, for it uncovers few of them in precisely the genres in which they surface in American writing: journalism, ethnographies, histories, medical reports.

This point can be illustrated through a comparison of the references to and expositions on indiscriminate homicide to be found in a sample of American and Spanish sources. To take the American material first, an inspection of the *Manila Times* for the period from March 1899 to August 1918 uncovers around nineteen articles that refer in some manner to amok.⁴ Of them, only one consists of an exposition on the phenomenon;⁵ the rest are made up of reports of alleged

amok incidents. Whereas in nine of the articles the "amok-runners" are identifiable as non-Muslim Filipinos, 6 in five of them they are recognizable as Muslim Filipinos (Moros). Of the remaining five articles, in three the *pengamoks* are neither non-Muslim Filipinos nor Muslim Filipinos but a Malay and two American servicemen, 7 while in the final two the subjects are animals. 8 In addition, the newspaper ran about eight articles that depict amok and the *juramentado* convention as being conterminous. 9 Only one article that draws a distinction between the *juramentado* convention and amok seems to have appeared in the newspaper during the period in question. 10

A survey of references to amok in the *Cablenews American* for the period from February 1902 to March 1915 yields similar results, namely an overrepresentation of the Moros in such references and a significant number of articles that conflate the behavioral pattern with the *juramentado* convention. In the newspaper, the association of amok with the Muslim Filipinos is even more pronounced than it is in the *Manila Times*. Of the roughly fifteen articles in the *Cablenews American* which allude in some way to amok, ¹¹ in seven of them the "amok-runners" are clearly Muslim Filipinos, ¹² whereas in six they are American personnel stationed in the Philippines and the United States. ¹³ In only two of these articles are the assailants non-Muslim Filipinos. ¹⁴ Ironically then, for all the alleged propensity of Filipinos to succumb to the impulse to run amok, during the period in question, the *Cablenews American* apparently carried more stories of Americans than of Filipinos embarking on rampages. Moreover, like the *Manila Times*, the newspaper came out with about ten articles which identify the *juramentado* convention with amok. ¹⁵

In summary, a study of the *Manila Times* and the *Cablenews American* reveals a close connection in them between amok and the Muslim Filipinos during roughly the first two decades of this century. Of the approximately thirty-four references to the behavioral pattern published, in eleven of them the assailants are identified as non-Muslim Filipinos, while in twelve they are Muslim Filipinos—a striking figure, given that the Muslim Filipinos constituted only four percent of the population in 1900. In these articles, then, the Moros are portrayed more often than any other ethnic group in the Philippines engaging in reputed amok assaults. This affiliation between amok and the Muslim Filipinos is only strengthened by the roughly eighteen articles in both newspapers which conflate the behavioral pattern with the *juramentado* convention. Nor are these ties which bind amok and the Muslim Filipinos together confined to only the *Manila Times*

and the *Cablenews American*: they are also ubiquitous in post-1898 colonial writing on the Moros. Faced with these facts, one can conclude that in the eyes of the Americans, at least, amok and the *juramentado* convention were virtually conterminous. While all Filipinos are supposed to be equally prone to run amok, in truth it was the Muslim Filipinos who, out of all the ethnic groups in the Philippines, were held by colonials to be most susceptible to the "demoniacal impulse"¹⁷ during the first two decades of the American period. As S. E. Kane observed, "The Moro runs amuck oftener than any of the other tribes in the Islands."¹⁸ And of the Muslim Filipinos, it was the Tausugs who were held to be the most vulnerable to this strange propensity. As Brig. Gen. Samuel S. Sumner noted in 1902 in a wire to Division Headquarters, in which he broke the news of the recent attack on a soldier by two Moros in Jolo, "this amuck business seems to be confined to Jolo."¹⁹

To now consider the Spanish material, it is a curious fact that no references to or commentaries on amok seem to appear in *El Comercio* between 1868 and 1897. Moreover, they are equally unobtrusive in *The Philippine Islands*, E. Blair and J. Robertson's magisterial 55-volume compendium of documents from the Spanish period.²⁰ Under the subject heading "Amok," its index contains only a single listing, and on consulting the document in question—Antonio Mozo's report on the later Augustinian and Dominican missions in the Philippines from 1763—one finds that the pertinent reference it contains is typically ambiguous:

They [the inhabitants of the Visayan islands] also made use of a certain root, called in the Pampanga tongue sugapa, to inflame their courage in battle; he who eats it is made beside himself, and rendered so furious that while its effect lasts he cares not for dangers, nor even hesitates to rush into the midst of pikes and swords. On many occasions, therefore, when they go out to fight with any who are hostile to them they are wont to carry this root with them, and, by eating it at the time of the attack, they enter the battle like furious wild beasts, without turning back even when their force is cut to pieces; on the other hand, even when one of them is pierced from side to side with a lance, he will raise himself by that very lance in order to strike at him who had pierced him. Sometimes, also, when they wish to revenge themselves on some more powerful man, it occurs to them to eat the said root; and, with the fury which it arouses in them, they fling themselves upon him like rabid wolves, being carried away by that rage in the presence of the person whom they meet, whoever he may be. Therefore, on account of the pernicious effects which the said root causes, the Dutch have given peremptory orders in Batavia that any person who sees another, whoever he may be, in the said fury shall without fail shoot him or [otherwise] put him to death, in order that an end may be put to the fatal accidents which are daily seen in that city, on account of the natives there being very prone to this barbarous proceeding. The Malanao and Joloan Moros are accustomed to use this plant much.²¹

At first, the above passage may read like an account of amok penned by a British colonial commentator. The renowned Malayness of the behavioral pattern seems to be alluded to by Mozo's equation of the rages of the Visayans and Moros with those of Batavia's indigenes. Further, the frenzies into which the Visayans and Moros were plunged by their consumption of the sugapa root appear to resemble the rampages of the stereotypical amok-runner. Moreover, their use of the root to "revenge themselves on some more powerful man" evokes two well-known claims in British colonial writing. The first is that Malays typically consume opium before running amok. Initially advanced by W. Schulzens, a Dutchman who visited the Indonesian archipelago in the seventeenth century, this belief was debunked by William Marsden in his The History of Sumatra in 1783, and was no longer current by the second quarter of the nineteenth century.²² The second claim in question is that Malays sometimes run amok in response to injustices perpetrated by their rulers. These two claims are intertwined in a comment made by T. J. Newbold in his 1839 account of the British settlements in the Malacca Straits. In a commentary on running amok, Newbold remarks that when a Malay's honor has been stained by a person of rank, the Malay, desperate over his inability to wipe out the stain by "shedding the blood" of his offender, frequently takes opium so as to whip himself into a fury: "Should the offender's rank be much superior, the injured party in despair has recourse to opium and the desperate Amok, slaying indiscriminately all he can lay hands on."23

However, these links between Mozo's account and standard colonial perceptions of amok are offset by the dissimilarities between them. Most obviously, Mozo himself does not refer to the fits of fury he describes by the name "amok." That was done by Blair and Robertson through their citation of his work in their index under the heading "Amok" (presumably on the basis of the likeness Mozo discerns between the rages of the Visayans and Moros and Batavia's indigenes). Moreover, the frenzies Mozo portrays do not accord with the classic colonial view of amok as a sudden, spontaneous, often inexplicable and indiscriminate homicidal act. The consumption of the sugapa root (or any other) by amokrunners, in the hope of arousing their courage before their assaults, is not remarked on by either the British after the early nineteenth century or the Americans in their respective expositions on the behavioral pattern. Such a practice would have required a degree of foresight and preparation on the part of the pengamok that would hardly have squared with the conventional portrait of him as a madman at the mercy of his passions. Lastly, in the above passage, the fury of the Visayans and Moros is shown to be occasioned by their eating of the sugapa root, whereas

in American writing the *pengamok's* delirium was ultimately held to be the result of his constitutional inability, as a Malay, to resist his impulses.

From the above, it should not be inferred that the Spanish sources are devoid of depictions of forms of random violence. A number are to be found in the Blair and Robertson collection. To a modern reader, they may well resemble the portrayals of amok contained in British and American colonial writing. Yet once again, the perceived similarities between these representations are counterbalanced by their differences. Firstly, the Spanish descriptions do not identify the arbitrary killing in question as "amok" or the individuals who engage in it as amok-runners or *pengamoks*. Instead, some of them simply and briefly attribute such violence to the acute sensitivity of the natives, their inability to forget an injury, and their consequent vengefulness. A good illustration of this depiction is provided by Francisco Ignacio Alcina, S. J., from the mid-seventeenth century:

The Visayans are characteristically patient and long-suffering; it seems even excessively so. For rarely will they appear wrathful, rarely vexed, because the passion of anger seldom overcomes them...On the other hand, they never forget injuries received, although they may be by a word, but they conserve them in their resolution with a kind of almost indelible rancour and hate. Yet they tolerate a great deal and suffer a thing for many months, and even years, if they do not find an occasion to avenge themselves; but once they find [the occasion] they take advantage of it inevitably. I have come upon these qualities which seem contradictory not in just a single case but in many. I have unravelled it philosophically thus: that that natural insensibility which they show to suffering is the cause of that ill that they preserve in order to revenge themselves...Thus, the majority of the deaths that occur among them are in cold blood.²⁴

Secondly, other descriptions—a number of those from the seventeenth century—connect this arbitrary homicide with ritual mourning, as it was practiced by such ethnic groups as the "Tagals," "Subanons," "Zambals." This connection is absent from the American literature on amok. Such killing appears to have been the final act in the mourning process of these groups. Following a person's death through violence, his relatives, in order to relieve their anger and pain, would take up arms and set out to kill their enemies and even strangers until they were appeased:

Those who died in battle were honored with much weeping, and the sacrifices offered to them, or for them, lasted quite a long time, with a great deal of feasting and drunkenness. If the deceased had died violently, whether in war or in peace, treacherously or otherwise, the period of mourning continued

and the interdiction was not lifted until his sons, brothers or male kinsfolk had slain many others, not only among the enemies and murderers but among any strangers who were not recognized as friends. They roamed about like robbers and bandits, attacking by land and sea and hunting for men, and slaying as many as they could until their fury had been satisfied. Once satisfied they celebrated a great banquet, lifted the interdiction and in time removed their signs of mourning.²⁶

The above custom is reminiscent of headhunting by Ilongots in northern Luzon until the mid-1970s. Both these conventions seem to have served the purpose of enabling their practitioners to better cope with their anguish over the death of their kin. The Ilongots headhunted because it allowed them to cope with the anger in their bereavement. According to R. Rosaldo, if one asked an older Ilongot man why he cuts off heads, he would reply that rage, born of grief, impels him to kill his fellow human beings. Specifically, the cutting off and throwing away of a head symbolized for the man the release of his fury: The act of severing and tossing away the victim's head enables him, he says, to vent and, he hopes, throw away the anger of his bereavement. Interestingly, M. Z. Rosaldo provides evidence that a probable derivative of the word amok was employed by the Ilongots to describe their assaults on their victims and, in particular, the way their pet dogs rush at meat when it is placed before them:

Once shots are fired, the raiders rush upon and struggle for their injured and dead victims in a chaos Ilongots describe with the word, 'amuluk' (probably related to the Austronesian root contained in the English expression "run amok," and used primarily for dogs who race toward meat set out before them).³⁰

Direct Spanish references to "amok"—references that identify practices or behaviors by that name—are comparatively scarce. Before examining them, however, we can address the question of whether any ethnic group (or groups) is particularly associated with amok in the Spanish sources. To better answer this question, though, we first need to consider which such group (or groups) is typically affiliated with the behavioral pattern in American writing.

In the American literature, amok is closely allied with the Muslim Filipinos because it is frequently conflated with the *parrang sabbil* or *juramentado* convention, their version of holy war. Faced with this conflation, it would be easy to suppose that it is also present, and indeed originated, in the Spanish sources. After all, the Americans, being profoundly ignorant of the Philippines and its

inhabitants, would have been heavily reliant on those sources in the initial years of their occupation. In affiliating amok with the Muslim Filipinos, through their equation of the behavioral pattern with the *juramentado* convention, the Americans were doubtless only following the lead of their Spanish predecessors. This line of reasoning seems to be behind T. M. Kiefer's assertion that it was the Spaniards who first confused amok with the juramentado convention. Rebutting the popular misconception that the juramentado or sabbil "was a person 'running amok' and was totally out of control," he claims that "with little understanding of the theology that gave rise to parrang sabbil, the Spaniards easily interpreted the juramentado's act as simple insanity of a particularly troublesome sort."31 A version of this argument also appears in an account of the juramentado convention contained in Filipino Heritage: The Making of a Nation: "Failing to understand this religious dimension (of parrang sabbil), the Spaniards and the Americans have reduced the concept into a psychological disorder, and have referred to the shahid (martyrs) as juramentados and amok, respectively."32 This argument probably originated in the American period, for a variant of it was advanced by Major Charles E. Livingston, the author of an influential monograph on Sulu, in 1915:

The Spanish made no distinction between the amok-driven murder made by personal grief, and the frenzy-driven religious fanatic, and referred to both as "Juramentado": hearing the word applied [sic] amoks, the Sulus, thru misunderstanding, took the word to use in place of amok, writing it huramintaw, and this word is used almost entirely in referring to amoks, and to shout the warning.³³

Revealingly, none of these assertions—Livingston's, Kiefer's, nor the one in *Filipino Heritage*—is supported by any evidence. This suggests that they are all based on nothing more than the common assumption that, because the Americans often equated amok with the *juramentado* convention, the Spaniards must have done so as well.

Now this assumption is not supported by the Spanish sources. A study of them shows that the Spaniards neither fused amok with the *juramentado* convention nor associated it with the Moros. If they had, examples of this fusion and association would be scattered through the standard Spanish works on Mindanao and the Sulu archipelago or in the collections of letters sent by Jesuit missionaries in the southern Philippines to their superiors in Manila.³⁴ Yet an investigation of this literature fails to uncover such examples. Nor are they to be found in the wider records. Put simply, the Spanish sources are bereft of references to Moros "running amok."

Although Kiefer is right to state that the Spaniards' understanding of the "theology that gave rise to parrang sabbil" was imperfect, he is wrong to conclude that their ignorance made them typically interpret the "juramentado's act as simple insanity of a particularly troublesome sort." The Spaniards may have been unfamiliar with the finer details of the Islamic doctrine of jihad, but they were aware that the juramentado convention was the Muslim Filipino variant of holy war. Furthermore, they were cognizant of the convention's various aspects, such as the juramentado's purpose, the ritual preparation he underwent before attacking Christians, the role of the *pandita* (learned man) in his preparation, and his method of assault. Indeed, it was their familiarity with these features that seems to have prevented the Spaniards from interpreting the juramentado's actions as plain madness. While they were conscious of the personal motives that could drive a Moro to commit ritual suicide, and regularly impugned parrang sabbil for being a travesty of the *jihad* doctrine, they did not commonly regard the *juramentado* as a lunatic. Rather, they viewed him essentially as a religious fanatic. For them he was, at worst, a troubled individual who performed ritual suicide as a glorious means of escaping from personal difficulties; a person whose profound ignorance of Islam left him vulnerable to the pernicious influence of his panditas who were bitterly opposed to Spanish rule. At best, he was a zealot willing to sacrifice himself in the defense of his religion and community. In more nuanced Spanish accounts of parrang sabbil, such as the following by B. Francia, we find no suggestion that the *juramentado*'s actions were considered to be mere madness:

The first juramentados of whom we have information, through legends or ancient traditions, consecrated themselves to martyrdom because of the fanaticism of their faith. Exalted in the practice of prayers, fasting and hair shirts, denying themselves all worldly enjoyments and desirous of reaching the paradise offered by Mohammed to believers, they prepared themselves for sacrifice by imposing on themselves physical mortifications, tying strong ligatures on their limbs and resolving to die on a day determined. Shaving their heads carefully, they dressed in clean white clothes (the colour of mourning amongst these Muslims) and were accompanied by their parents and relatives to the neighbourhood of the place chosen as the bloody arena of their purification. Saying goodbye to all, they then presented themselves, arrogant, brave, before the greatest possible number of armed Christians and from a distance called their attention, provoking them and looking for death and martyrdom. If in order to achieve their goals they needed to injure their enemies, they did so without defending themselves; but what was correct, proper, and the most worthy of praise and eternal reward, was to receive their enemies' bloody blows dauntlessly, disdainfully, contemptuously, arrogantly without a single complaint or lament...without diminishing their suffering until they expired.

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These mystical martyrs were followed by the warriors who were not content with dying but desired to kill: mixing religious fanaticism with political fury...they vented their anger on their victims and looked for the means of vanquishing as many of them as possible before falling. Open provocation, once discovered, would be followed by an ambush, surprise and treason. Dissimulation, cunning deceit, all methods were deemed appropriate to reach ultimate martyrdom ... 35

Most importantly, the Muslim Filipinos themselves did not normally consider the juramentado to be an amok-runner, as the latter was conventionally perceived by the Americans. The evidence relating to their vision of parrang sabbil demonstrates that the Muslim Filipinos neither referred to the convention by the name "amok" (or the term's derivatives) nor regarded its practitioners as madmen.³⁶ On the contrary, they viewed sabbils as persons whose performance of ritual suicide against the Spaniards, for whatever reason, was worthy of admiration and praise. This point was suggested by a Tausug informant of Kiefer's in the course of an interview Kiefer conducted in Jolo in the mid 1960s. First inquiring as to whether Tausugs who died in battle during the Spanish period were honored, Kiefer then asks his informant whether such men appeared insane. The man's reply is unequivocal:

[Kiefer] Were there men so brave and fearless that they seemed crazy?

[Informant] Never. Such as [sic] man was admired.³⁷

In light of the intimate association of amok with the Moros in American writing, it is surprising to discover that on the relatively few occasions the behavioral pattern is mentioned by name in the Spanish sources, it is often in association with the Manobos. 38 R. Jordana supplies an example of such a reference from 1885:

The Manobos inhabit the long and wide basin of the Agusan river, from the point at which it receives the tributary named Naan as far as its mouth. Cowardly in the extreme and at the same time vengeful; subject to fits of anger that resemble the amok of the natives of Java and Malaca, they live isolated in the forests without forming villages or camps, distinguishing themselves in this regard from the pagans of northern Luzon, who, in other ways, they strongly resemble.

However, as the above passage demonstrates, even in such references, the link between amok and the Manobos is not direct. In the passage, the Manobos are not actually described as having a tendency to run amok; nor are the "fits of anger" to which they are allegedly subject identified by the term "amok"; instead,

such fits are said to be **similar** to the amok of the natives of Java and Malacca. In other words, while amok is cited in the passage to illuminate a form of violence to which the Manobos were reputedly prone, it is not portrayed as that form of violence. Jordana's apparent ignorance of the Manobos' own name(s) for their supposed frenzies, coupled with the generality of his depiction, indicate that his knowledge of their rages was derived not from first-hand experience but from hearsay and/or other texts. This peculiar manner of describing the Manobos' fits is evident in other depictions of the subject, such as the following by J. de Lacalle from 1886:

In every respect uncivilized, they are cruel, suspicious, and pursue tenaciously the occasion to attack their neighbouring tribes. Weak by temperament, they avoid conflict in open country, preferring the trap to exterminate their enemies. When they find themselves obliged to fight they do so with an unusual fury and courage, and are satisfied only after they have torn to pieces their opponent. In those moments they surrender to raptures of fury which have led many to suppose that the Manobos suffer frequently attacks of that sudden madness that the Malays call *amok*.³⁹

Lacalle only notes that, because the "raptures of fury" of the Manobos remind "many" of amok, it was believed that they frequently suffer from the behavioral pattern. He does not actually portray them "running amok" or identify their frenzies by the term "amok." Once again, we have a reference that mentions amok only to shed light on the rages to which the Manobos were held to be susceptible.

Religion as Difference

How do we account for the disparity between the Spanish and American perceptions of amok? Why are references to and expositions on the behavioral pattern inconspicuous in the Spanish sources when they are so noticeable in American writing?

The question of the paucity of amok accounts in the Spanish sources has been briefly addressed by Leonard Andaya. In a stimulating and insightful unpublished paper on "The Amok Concept in the Southeast Asian Archipelago," he suggests that this paucity stemmed from the zeal of Spanish friars to ensure the continuance of their "program of proselytization" in the Philippines. The friars,

he correctly notes, played a key role in the establishment of Spanish control over the Islands, frequently being the only representatives of the Spanish Crown in the interior. Since reports of their negative experiences might have led the Crown to terminate their mission and withdraw them from the Philippines, the friars made a point of emphasizing the success of their efforts in their missives. This strategy, Andaya argues, led the friars to ignore the existence of amok in the Islands in their correspondence:

Because the friars were often the sole representative of the Spanish Crown in the interior, they were careful to describe the successful progress of Christianization and hence Hispanization among the Indios. To admit to the existence of amoks would have been an admission of failure in the program of proselytization. Yet they did provide descriptions of the "character" of the Indios, which included the occasional glimpse of what can only have been the amok ³⁹

Although Andaya is right to claim that references to amok are comparatively rare in the Spanish sources, his explanation for this anomaly is unconvincing for two reasons. The first is that it only addresses the dearth of references to amok in friar accounts of the Philippines. As we have seen, such references are comparatively rare in not only friar accounts but the Spanish sources in general. As well, it probably exaggerates the reluctance of the friars to comment on the hurdles they faced in the Islands and the reputed shortcomings of its inhabitants. Certainly, no such reluctance can be detected on the part of Gaspar de San Agustin, author of probably the most infamous Spanish diatribe against the Filipinos. A Revealingly, however, although in his piece San Agustin discusses the seemingly endless shortcomings of Filipinos, one of which was their excessive vengefulness, he does not refer to them "running amok" or expound on their propensity to embark on rampages.

If the rarity of amok accounts in the Spanish sources cannot be convincingly ascribed to the friars' prudence, neither can it be attributed to the Spaniards' unawareness of the term "amok" (or its derivatives) and the form(s) of violence it denoted in the Philippines. Given that they were in the Islands for almost 350 years, it is hardly likely that the Spaniards would have remained ignorant of such matters throughout their stay. An insight into both the Spanish and Tagalog understandings of the behavioral pattern is provided by Pedro Serrano Laktaw in his *Diccionario Tagalog-Hispano* (1914). In it, Laktaw provides a range of Spanish definitions for a likely derivative of "amok," the Tagalog word "pamuok":

Pamouk; pagpapamuok. Stabbing. m. / Fight; struggle; battle; war. f. / Scuffle; argument, brawl. f. (of knives or blades).—Mamuok. To cut, slash. a. / To

wage war; to attack, to combat; to fight. a. / To fight, struggle. n.— *Magpamuokan*. To fight each other with knives, to slash at each other; to fight each other. r. (mutually). V. **Mamuok**.⁴¹

Although Laktaw's *Diccionario* appeared during the American period, his definitions of "pamuok" do not appear to have been influenced by American perceptions of amok, for his definitions are quite dissimilar from those perceptions. To start with, the term he explains is not "amok" but "pamuok." Secondly, he neither conflates "pamuok" with the juramentado convention nor associates it with the Muslim Filipinos. Thirdly, his interpretation of "pamuok" does not agree with the then popular colonial view of amok as a "culture-specific syndrome, wherein an individual unpredictably and without warning manifests mass, indiscriminate, homicidal behavior that is authored with suicidal intent." Instead, for Laktaw the term and its derivatives only signify general acts of violence, especially those involving the use of knives or blades. Interestingly, the generality of Laktaw's definitions of "pamuok" is also characteristic of the interpretations of "amok" to be found in several British colonial dictionaries, such as the following from Frank Swettenham and Hugh Clifford's A Dictionary of the Malay Language:

Amok, to attack, to attack with fury, to make a charge, to assault furiously, to engage in furious conflict, to battle, to attack with desperate fury, to make an onslaught with the object of ruthless and indiscriminate slaughter, to run *amok*, to dash against, to rush against; an attack, an assault, a charge.⁴³

If "pamuok" is a derivative of "amok," then Laktaw's definitions of the former term may well capture the traditional Tagalog and Spanish understandings of amok.

The disparities between the Spanish and American perceptions of amok were due, I suggest, not to Spanish prudence nor to an ignorance of the term and its signified, but to the diverse criteria the Spaniards and Americans employed in constructing identities for themselves and the Filipinos. These criteria were, in turn, the products of their respective discursive orders in the Philippines. For most of their stay in the Islands, the Spaniards, unlike their British contemporaries in the Malay archipelago and their American successors, did not distinguish themselves from their subjects primarily in terms of 'race.' Rather, they did so by the yardstick of religion. The axis of the binary opposition in terms of which they generally defined themselves and the Filipinos was not 'racial' but religious.⁴⁴ This was the case because their discursive order was essentially a premodern one

that explained and structured "relations between people," if not "the nature of the material world," through religion. This context ensured that their representations of their subjects were similarly organized in religious terms. ⁴⁵ Thus in 1857, Emilio Bernaldez, in his history of the Muslim-Christian conflict in the southern Philippines, was still grouping the inhabitants of the Philippines under the headings of *Idolatras* (idolaters), *Infieles* (unbelievers) and *Indios* (Indians). ⁴⁶ As late as 1881, it could still be proposed in the Manila newspaper *El Comercio* that an increase in the number of evangelists operating in Mindanao would be the best means of extending Spanish control over the island. ⁴⁷ As David P. Barrows, the first chief of the Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes, noted in his report in 1902, the "Spanish classification of the peoples of the Philippines was ecclesiastical in form, dividing the inhabitants of the archipelago into Christians, heathen (*infieles*), and Mohammedans (Moros)." ⁴⁸

Because the Spaniards mostly did not perceive the differences between themselves and the Filipinos to be 'racial' differences, they did not ascribe the Filipinos with traits—such as a tendency to run amok—which served to distinguish them as a "biologically distinct entity, as a 'race' apart ..."49 In contrast, the Americans did make much of that reputed tendency because they were modernists who, regarding the dissimilarities between themselves and the Filipinos to be 'racial' in nature, treated that tendency as perhaps the most striking marker of the Filipinos' 'racial' difference. David T. Goldberg's comment on the close ties between modernity and the concept of race is apposite here: "... racial definition and its attendant forms of racist articulation emerge only with the institution of modernity, and they transform in relation to the principal formative developments in modernity's self-understanding and expression."50 Following the British lead, the Americans seized on the reputed propensity of the Malays to run amok and employed it in their racialization of the Filipinos. In attributing that famous propensity to the Filipinos, the Americans were able to identify them as a collectivity, as members of the Malay 'race.' As well, since that propensity had long been regarded in colonial circles as the most dramatic manifestation of "the Malay's" barbarism, the Americans were able to label the Filipinos as savages, lacking in reason and self-control.

Admittedly, there is evidence that the Spaniards' premodern discursive order in the Philippines was gradually being displaced by a modern one in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. This shift would have been the result of the advancing secularization of their culture and the "growth, and increasing hegemony, of science" among them with its emphasis on the idea of race.⁵¹ That this change was underway is indicated by the growing emphasis the Spaniards

placed during the period on 'race' as a standard of difference. In their publications from the epoch, the Spaniards increasingly define the Filipinos in 'racial' terms and display a greater familiarity with "forms of racist articulation" 52—for instance, the discourses of craniometry and physical anthropology that were then in vogue in Europe and the United States. By the mid-1880s the Fernandez Museum in Manila, according to Jose de Lacalle y Sanchez, possessed a "magnificent collection of skulls [twenty-one in all], collected in Mindanao by the late-lamented physician of the navy, D. Agustin Domech."53 In 1889, the first "congress of Filipinologists" was held in Paris; made up of "notable orientalists" from France, England, Holland, Germany and Spain, the congress elected as its president the Austrian professor Dr. Ferdinand Blumentritt.⁵⁴ Around the mid-1890s the Dominican fathers at the University of Santo Tomas set up the institution's first ethnological installation. 55 Revealingly, as we have seen, it is precisely in writing from this period—the works of Jordana, de Lacalle, and Francia and Parrado that the majority of amok accounts to be found in the Spanish sources appear. However, although these developments show that a transformation was indeed occurring in the late nineteenth century in the Spaniards' representations of their subjects, this transformation was still in its initial stages. Proof of this were the repeated complaints of budding Spanish ethnologists over the lack of Spanish anthropological studies of the Filipinos, such as the following by Francisco Javier de Moya y Jimenez:

The Philippine islands, where magnificent examples of diverse races are to be found in all their purity, offer immense horizons for the curious investigation of the naturalist; but unfortunately, in this field of observation...no-one or few have penetrated, with the exception of the missionaries, who are the only ones that have dominated the language and penetrated the secrets of nature.

Due to the paucity of such studies, Spanish commentators found themselves in the invidious position of having to rely on the writing of foreigners—visiting travellers and naturalists—for information about their own subjects. Benito Francia and Julian Gonzalez Parrado admitted as much in 1898:

In modern times, the most accurate information we have concerning anthropology we owe to the foreign naturalists who, at the expense of their governments or on their own account, have undertaken journeys of inspection into the interior, recording their observations in luminous reports not lacking in exaggerations or errors, the effect perhaps of their wish to be original or of the circumstances in which they gathered their impressions.⁵⁶

Had the Spaniards remained in the Philippines, their shift from a premodern to a modern conception of personhood would have presumably run its course. As it was, the American defeat of their outdated navy in the Battle of Manila Bay, in the same year that Francia and Parrado's work was published in Havana, abruptly put an end to this transformation.

Conclusion

The analysis of the Spanish and American perceptions of random violence in the Philippines shows that, contrary to received opinion, the Spaniards neither fused amok with the *juramentado* convention nor closely associated it with the Muslim Filipinos. Indeed, their understanding of the subject seems to have been decidedly at odds with those of their British contemporaries in Malaya and their American successors. Although the Spanish corpus does contain descriptions of forms of indiscriminate violence that to a modern reader may appear amok-like, such descriptions differ significantly from the references to and commentaries on amok that feature in Euro-British and Euro-American colonial writing.

The discrepancies between the Spanish cognition of arbitrary homicide and the British and American understandings of amok seem to have been due to the diverse criteria they employed in constructing identities for themselves and their subjects. Whereas the British and Americans differentiated themselves from their subjects primarily by the standard of 'race,' the Spaniards, for most of their time in the Philippines, structured relations between people through religion. Consequently, it was mainly in terms of religion that they organized their representations of the various ethnic groups in the Islands. Since Islam has traditionally been viewed by Christians as the "negation of Christianity," 57 the Muslim Filipinos' faith made them, out of all the ethnic groups in the Philippines, the quintessence for the Spaniards of the Other, and their alleged negative traits served to mirror for the Spaniards their own positive attributes. Because the Spaniards already held their fundamental dissimilarity from the Muslim Filipinos to be religious in nature, it was unnecessary for them to attribute their ancient foes with additional 'racial' characteristics, such as a tendency to run amok, that served as markers of difference. It was probably for this reason that the Spaniards, unlike the Americans, did not habitually ascribe the Moros with such a tendency and treat it as a sign of their 'racial' inferiority. In contrast, because the Americans, being modernists, distinguished themselves and the Filipinos essentially by the yardstick of 'race,' they exploited the alleged propensity of the Filipinos to run

amok to identify them as an inferior 'racial' type and attribute them with certain negative characteristics, such as irrationality and impulsiveness. The Americans' regular ascription to the Filipinos of such a tendency thus played an important role in defining them as a 'race' that lacked the attributes—"self-control, calmness, deliberation, judgment and stability" necessary for self-rule.

Notes

¹Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," in *Language*, *Counter-Memory*, *Practice*, ed. Donald Bouchard (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), 142.

²These days the term "amok" is frequently used by English speakers to denote acts of frenzied maniacal behavior. In this article though, I take it to mean the type of sudden and random violence, allegedly peculiar to Malays, that is a leitmotif in nineteenth and early twentieth century British colonial writing on the Malay archipelago. J. C. Spores provides a good description of this behavior: "Historically, amok represents a behavioral constellation unique to the Malay context and distinguishable from similar patterns occurring in other cultures. It is a culture-specific syndrome, wherein an individual unpredictably and without warning manifests mass, indiscriminate, homicidal behavior that is authored with suicidal intent." John C. Spores, *Running Amok: An Historical Inquiry* (Ohio University Monographs in International Studies, Southeast Asian Series No. 82, Athens: Ohio University Center for International Studies, 1988), 6.

3"Juramentado," meaning one who has sworn an oath, was the name given by the Spaniards in the final quarter of the nineteenth century to Muslim Filipinos who engaged in a form of parrang sabbil, the Malay variant of jihad or holy war. The juramentado convention of colonial fame was essentially a form of ritual suicide resorted to by Moro men who, individually or in small groups, would visit a settlement largely made up of Christians and attempt to kill as many of them as possible before being slain. The first Muslim Filipinos to resort to the convention against the Spaniards were apparently the Tausug of Jolo, who did so

following Governor-General Jose Malcampo's successful military campaign on the island in 1876. After their entry into Moroland in 1899, the Americans, following the Spaniards' lead, employed the term "juramentado" to denote both the convention and its practitioners.

4"Tales of the Malayan Coast," 8 July 1899; "Mad Bull Runs Amuck," 6 December 1899; "Native Runs Amuck With A Bolo," 22 May 1900; "Ladrones Run Amuck In Panay," 5 June 1900; "Another Native Creates Havoc," 13 April 1902; "Ran Amuck," 7 September 1902; "Gored By Carabao," 27 April 1903; "Fearful Tale of Amok from North Borneo," 26 March 1905; "Fierce Moro," 28 March 1905; "Soldier Ran Amok," 2 May 1905; "Scout Ran Amok," 16 May 1905; "Murder At Jolo," 14 May 1907; "Maharajah Runs Amuck," 30 January 1908; "Runs Amuck With Bolo; 2 Are Slashed," 8 September 1910; "Shot Down As He Ran Amuck," 2 January 1913; "Kills His Man, Flees With Rifle," 5 April 1914; "Madman Runs Wild In Plaza," 30 November 1917; "Moro Seized Soldier's Gun," 12 December 1917; "Life Term For Filipino Killer," 20 January 1918.

5"Tales of the Malayan Coast."

⁶"Native Runs Amuck With A Bolo"; "Ladrones Run Amuck In Panay"; "Another Native Creates Havoc"; "Ran Amuck"; "Scout Ran Amok"; "Runs Amuck With Bolo; 2 Are Slashed"; "Madman Runs Wild In Plaza"; "Life Term For Filipino Killer".

⁷"Tales of the Malayan Coast"; "Soldier Ran Amok"; "Shot Down As He Ran Amuck".

8"Mad Bull Runs Amuck"; "Gored By Carabao".

⁹"Must Be Wiped Out," 30 May 1902; "Some Difficulties Among Moros," 5 November 1902; "Row With Jolo Moros," 31 March 1903; "The Late Juramentado Who Ran Amuck In The City of Jolo"; "Juramentado Terrorizes The Escolta"; "All's Not Well In Jolo Today," 15 July 1915; "Philippine Problem," 12 April 1916; "Mad Moro On Cooley's Trail," 5 April 1918.

¹⁰"Customs Of The Moros," 13 June 1911.

¹¹"Special Policeman Run A Muck In La Serrana," 20 April 1902; "Ran Amuck In Approved Fashion"; "Private Hahn Runs Amuck And Is Killed By A Guard," 23 July 1902; "Yacane Fiends," 5 March 1904; "Wagon Master Runs

Amuck," 1 May 1904; "Pala Is Killed," 19 May 1905; "Survivor of Dajo Fight," 28 April 1906; "Mindanao Making Over," 31 August 1907; "Soldier Shoots Down Six of His Comrades," 12 May 1908; "Aged But Untamed Still," 12 September 1908; "Maniac Murders Fellow Prisoner in Davao Jail," 27 July 1910; "Moros Of Palawan Amuck," 19 October 1911; "Lieut. Bullington Gets Dismissal," 11 July 1912; "Pershing Leads The Advance On Renegade Moros On Mt. Bagsak," 12 June 1913; "Negroes Run Amok And Kill Thirteen Including Sheriff," 30 September 1913.

¹²"Ran Amuck In Approved Fashion"; "Yacane Fiends"; "Pala Is Killed"; "Mindanao Making Over"; "Moros Of Palawan Amuck"; "Pershing Leads The Advance On Renegade Moros On Mt. Bagsak"; "Survivor Of Dajo Fight".

¹³"Special Policeman Run A Muck In La Serrana"; "Private Hahn Runs Amuck And Is Killed By A Guard"; "Wagon Master Runs Amuck"; "Soldier Shoots Down Six Of His Comrades"; "Lieut. Bullington Gets Dismissal"; "Negroes Run Amok And Kill Thirteen Including Sheriff."

¹⁴"Aged But Untamed Still"; "Maniac Murders Fellow Prisoner in Davao Jail".

15"Two Moros Ran Amuck In Jolo And Were Killed"; "Moro Runs Amock," 3 May 1904; "Landor Writes On Philippines," 23 July 1904; "Survivor of Dajo Fight"; "In Jolo," 7 February 1907; "Wounded By Moro Amuck," 8 May 1907; "Mali-Mali' Like Juramentado," 28 September 1910; "Juramentados of Moroland Confuse Jihad Injunction," 11 November 1911; "General Arolas Let Gunboats Go Juramentado", 15 December 1911; "Polygamy, Root of Moro Trouble In Philippines," 19 July 1914.

¹⁶Peter Gordon Gowing, *Mandate in Moroland: The American Government of Muslim Filipinos 1899-1920* (Quezon City: Philippine Center for Advanced Studies, 1977), 9.

¹⁷"Correspondence," *The Straits Times*, 25 September 1849.

¹³Samuel E. Kane, *Thirty Years With The Philippine Head-Hunters* (London: Jarrods, 1934), 101.

¹⁹"Two Moros Ran Amuck In Jolo And Were Killed," Cablenews American, 2 November 1902.

²⁰Emma Blair and James Robertson, eds., *The Philippine Islands*, *1493-1898*, 55 vols. (Cleveland: Arthur H. Clark, 1903-1909).

²¹*Ibid.*, 120-122.

²²H. B. M. Murphy, "History and the Evolution of Syndromes: The Striking Case of Latah and Amok," in *Psychopathology: Contributions from the Social, Behavioral and Biological Sciences*, ed. M. Hammer *et al.*(New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1972), 34; William Marsden, *The History of Sumatra* (1783; reprint, with an introduction by John Bastin, Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1966), 278.

²³T. J. Newbold, *Political and Statistical Account of the British Settlements in the Straits of Malacca* (1839; reprint, with an introduction by C. M. Turnbull, Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1971), 186.

²⁴The Muñoz Text of Alcina's *History of the Bisayan Islands* (1668): Part 1, Book 3. Translated by Paul Lietz, Dept. of Anthropology, University of Chicago. Unpublished typed manuscript, 341-342. For another example, see Francisco Javier de Moya y Jimenez, *Las Islas Filipinas en 1882* (Madrid: Establecimiento tipografico de El Correo, a cargo de F. Fernandez, 1883), 327-8.

²⁵See the following documents from Blair and Robertson's *The Philippine Islands*; Diego de Bobadilla, S. J., "Relation of the Filipinas Islands," 1640, 294-295; Francisco Colin, S. J., "Native races and their customs (from his *Labor evangelica*)," 1663, 82; Francisco Combes, S. J., "The natives of the southern islands (from his *Historia de Mindanao*, Jolo, etc.)," 1667, 167; "Relation of the Zambals," Domingo Perez, O. P., 1680, 312. See also Pedro Chirino, S. J., *Relacion de las Islas Filipinas*, ed. and trans. Ramon Echevarria (Manila: Historical Conservation Society, 1969). 328.

²⁶Chirino, *Relacion*, 328.

²⁷Renato Rosaldo, *Culture & Truth: The Remaking of Social Analysis* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989), 3.

²⁸*Ibid.*, 1.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Michelle Z. Rosaldo, *Knowledge and Passion: Ilongot Notions of Self and Social Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 145.

³¹Thomas M. Kiefer, "Two Take on the Juramentado: American Colonial Perspective," in *Filipino Heritage: The Making of a Nation* (Lahing Pilipino Publishing Inc., 1978), 1702.

³²"Tausug," Filipino Heritage, 378.

³³Major Charles E. Livingston, "Constabulary Monograph of the Province of Sulu" *Moro Ethnography*, vol. 1, 148, Paper 1 (Jolo: 1915), Otley Beyer Collection, Australian National Library.

34Emilio Bernaldez, Resena Historica De La Guerra Al Sur De Filipinas, Sostenida Por Las Armas Españolas Contra Los Piratas De Aquel Archipielago, Desde La Conquista Hasta Nuestros Dias (Madrid: Imprenta Del Memorial De Ingenieros, 1857); Pio A. de Pazos, Jolo. Relato Historico-Militar Desde Su Descubrimiento Por Los Españoles en 1578 a Nuestros Dias (Burgos: Imprenta y Estereotipia de Polo, 1879); Patricio de la Escosura, Memoria Sobre Filipinas y Jolo (Madrid: Imprenta de Manuel G. Hernandez, 1882); Miguel Espina, Apuntes Para Hacer Un Libro Sobre Jolo (Manila: Imprenta y Litografia de M. Perez, hijo, 1888); Jose Montero y Vidal, Historia de la pirateria Malayo-Mahometana en Mindanao, Jolo y Borneo (Madrid, 1888); Manuel Maria Rincon, Cinco Meses en Mindanao (Manila, 1894).

³⁵Quoted in Espina, Un Libro Sobre Jolo, 341-2.

³⁶This evidence consists of the epic ballads, known as *kissa parang sabil* or *liangkit parang sabil*, which celebrate the exploits of performers of ritual suicide. For examples of these ballads, see Kiefer, "Liangkit Parang Sabil kan Apud," in notes to *Music of the Tausug*, 2 volumes (New York: Anthology Records, 1970), 7-9; "Parang Sabil of Abdullah and Putli Isara in Spanish Times: A Tausug Ballad Sung By Indah Annura," trans. Mohammad Abdul, Rose Marie Adjawi and Ricardo Adjawi, *Sulu Studies* 2 (1973): 160-91.

³⁷Thomas M. Kiefer, *Tausug of the Philippines* (Connecticut: Hraflex Books, 1972), 125.

³⁸Ramon Jordana, *Bosquejo Geografico E Historico-Natural Del Archipielago Filipino* (Madrid: Imprenta de Moreno y Roxas, 1885), 86; Jose de Lacalle, *Tierras y Razas del Archipielago Filipino* (Manila: Establecimiento Tipografico Del Colegio De Santo Tomas, 1886), 219; Benito Francia y Ponce de Leon and Julian Gonzalez Parrado, *Mindanao* (Habana: Imp. De la Subinspeccion de Inglaterra, 1898), 135.

³⁹De Lacalle, *Tierras y Razas del Archipielago*, 218-9.

⁴⁰Leonard Andaya, "The Amok Concept in the Southeast Asian Archipelago," unpublished paper, 2.

⁴¹Gaspar de San Agustin, O.S.A., "Letter on the Filipinos," in Blair and Robertson, *Philippine Islands*, 183-295. According to Sullivan, San Agustin's essay was perhaps the "most widely disseminated Spanish portrait of the Filipino" in American colonial writing. Rodney J. Sullivan, *Exemplar of Americanism: The Philippine Career of Dean C. Worcester* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan Centre for South and Southeast Asian Studies, 1991), 54-55.

⁴²Pedro Serrano Laktaw, *Diccionario Tagalog-Hispano* (Manila, 1914), 997.

⁴³Spores, Running Amok, 7.

⁴⁴Hugh Clifford and Frank Swettenham, *A Dictionary of the Malay Language* (Perak: Government Printing Office, 1894), 12.

⁴⁵Robert Miles, Racism (London & New York: Routledge, 1989), 19.

46Ibid.

⁴⁷Emilio Bernaldez, Resena Historica, 37-8.

⁴⁸"Mindanao," El Comercio, 21 December 1881.

⁴⁹Appendix Q, "Report of the Chief of the Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes for the Year Ending August 31, 1902," in Reports of the Taft Philippine

Commission: Message from the President of the United States Transmitting a Report of the Secretary of War, Containing the Reports of the Taft Commission, its Several Acts of Legislation, and Other Important Information Relating to the Conditions and Immediate Wants of the Philippine Islands (Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1901), 679.

⁵⁰Miles, Racism, 32.

⁵¹David Theo Goldberg, Racist Culture: Philosophy and the Politics of Meaning (Oxford and Cambridge: Blackwell, 1993), 1.

⁵²Miles, *Racism*, 30-1.

⁵³Goldberg, Racist Culture, 1.

⁵⁴De Lacalle, *Tierras y Razas del Archipielago*, 214-5.

55"Congreso de Filipinologos," El Comercio, 22 April 1889.

⁵⁶"Revista de la Exposicion Regional," El Comercio, 21 February 1895.

⁵⁷Ponce de Leon and Gonzalez Parrado, *Mindanao*, 104.

⁵⁸Miles, Racism, 18.

⁵⁹"The Filipino Character," *The Manila Times*, 19 November 1901.