On the Viability of Indigenous Methodologies:
Implications for Southeast Asian Studies

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[*Abstract*]

In this paper, I offer a reflection on two cases to assess in preliminary manner the viability of an indigenous methodology for Southeast Asian Studies. The first is Kaupapa Maori Research (hereafter KM) as spelt out in the much talked about book by Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*: Research and Indigenous People (Smith 1999). The second case is *Sikolohiyang Pilipino* (Filipino Psychology, SP), which began to take shape in the late 1960's and 1970's in the Philippines. Arguably these are among the most developed efforts at decolonization or indigenization of methodology. I intend to use these cases to explore the factors that made possible the flourishing and stagnating of indigenous methodologies. I shall argue that the broader context of knowledge consumption, not epistemological and methodological concerns, poses the most formidable challenge to the viability of indigenization efforts.

Keywords: Indigenous, methodology, Southeast Asian Studies, area studies, Kaupapa Maori, Sikolohiyang Pilipino

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Ⅰ. Introduction

Modern scholarship is deeply rooted in Euro-American intellectual traditions and has been profoundly involved in the West's imperial project (Said 1978). As Linda Tuhiwai Smith, a well-known Maori scholar put it rather bluntly, "scientific research is implicated in the worst excesses of colonialism" and it "remains a powerful remembered history for many of the world's colonized people" (Smith 1999: 1). This situation has elicited at least two contradictory reactions. First was to ignore or take it for granted as historically given and analytically unproblematic, for scholarship is seen from this viewpoint as above political fray. The other was to historicize the situation, emphasize the specificity of the contexts of knowledge production, and assert one's power or volition to change things. Much of scholarship in the social sciences, particularly those that subscribe to positivist approaches, are under the first category. Critical approaches, on the other hand, that draw from the critique of "Enlightenment reason" such as poststructuralism, postcolonialism, and the Latin American decoloniality movement belong to the second group. Under this latter group, a still small but growing segment consists of those who push the logic of the critique of the coloniality of knowledge to its conclusion. They aspire to develop indigenous methodologies, which refer to a set of procedures for laying claim to knowledge believed to be sensitive to the cultural characteristics of the people being studied, justified by and reflective of the worldview of those people and is responsive to their needs (Smith 1999).

Area studies such as Southeast Asian Studies have long justified their raison d'être on their supposed sensitivity to the contexts of the phenomenon, and by logical extension also of knowledge production (Bates 1997; Szanton 2004) . It is precisely such groundedness that affords them a convenient standpoint to see the hollowness of the claims to universality or calibrated generality presupposed or posited in many theoretical formulations in the social sciences. Critics have observed these theories were based mainly on American and/or European experience (H. Alatas 1972; H. Alatas 1977; S. F. Alatas 2001; Goh Beng Lan 2011). It was also from

the area studies-like academic platforms such as ethnic or countries studies (e.g. Maori studies, or Philippine Studies), where indigenous methodologies have proven to be the most fairly developed. However, the interdisciplinary or multi-disciplinary nature of Southeast Asian Studies has made it open to a very wide range of theoretical and methodological approaches. This is particularly the case after exemplary centers of area studies in the US and Europe that could have commanded following—such as Cornell University for Southeast Asian Studies—have seen their days. Their leadership role were diminished partly by budget cuts and shift in geopolitical interests, as well as the rise of other notable centers in, say, Southeast Asia, Japan, China, Korea, and Australia. Apparently the only thing that binds an area studies together now is the focus on the same area (country or region or any other entities). Devoid of any form of "methodological disciplining", it thus remains widely open to question what implications indigenization or knowledge decolonization have on area studies like Southeast Asian Studies, if there is any at all.

Before such a question may even be posed, however, a more fundamental issue needs to be addressed. Can methodology be truly indigenous and decolonized? Postcolonial scholars such as Dipesh Chakrabarty (2000) are among those who registered doubt, declaring for instance that provincializing Europe may be an impossible task for historians as it entails abrogating historical scholarship as we know it. His misgivings sprang from the fact that historical methodology and its philosophical underpinnings are deeply rooted in European traditions. Given that other social science disciplines rely on logic and methods that, like History, were European in origin or orientation, similar doubt seems to apply to the social sciences more broadly. Apparently, the fundamental challenge here lies in the extent to which indigenous aspirations can prevail given the utterly foreign frame that underpins conventional scholarship. Perhaps what is needed is a radical departure from the kind of scholarship we have long been accustomed to. But scholars are wont to avoid such a radical break. Farid Alatas (1992; 1999; 2006), for instance, has forcefully argued for a kind of indigenization that leads to or converged with a universal social science.

Indigenist scholarship in the Philippines such as Zeus Salazar's *Pantayong Pananaw* and Virgilio Enriquez's *Sikolohiyang Pilipino* firmly believe that not only is indigenous methodology possible but it is also doable. To note, among countries in Southeast Asia, it was in the Philippines that saw perhaps the earliest, sustained engagement with the indigenization project in the social sciences (S. F. Alatas 2001; Mendoza 2007). "(O)f the countries in Asia", according to Sinha (Sinha 1997: 153), "the trend to indigenize psychology is strongest and most articulate in the Philippines". Such kind of scholarship developed in parallel with the kindred decoloniality or decolonizing intellectual movement in Latin America (Mignolo 2009; 2011), New Zealand (Smith 1999), Canada (Alfred 1999), US (Mihesuah 1996; Mihesuah 1998), and elsewhere. Since the 1960's, a worldwide movement has gradually developed, upholding the viability of indigenous worldviews and methodology. In the past decades, this effort has increasingly made their presence felt in various parts of the world as a banner of critical scholarship (Mihesuah and Wilson 2004; Semali and Kincheloe 1999). One can say, however, that this kind of scholarship remains marginal vis-a-vis the rest of the scholarly world, where what may be considered as "Western indigenous scholarship" is taken for granted as a universally acceptable kind of scholarship (Smith 1999, p. 189). Despite that, the contradictory impact of globalization—homogenizing but at the same time stimulating assertive identities and strengthening the call for diversity—keeps the platform open for a wide range of methodologies like indigenous ones.

This paper seeks to reflect on two cases to assess in preliminary manner the viability of an indigenous methodology. The first is what Linda Tuhiwai Smith calls Kaupapa Maori Research (hereafter KM) as spelt out in the much talked about book *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous People* (Smith 1999). To note, Maoris share with most people in Southeast the Polynesian or Austronesian characteristics. In journals devoted to Southeast Asia such as *Suvannabhumi*, therefore, one can say they may not be totally out of place. The second case is *Sikolohiyang Pilipino* (Filipino Psychology, SP), which began to take shape in the 1960's and 1970's in the Philippines. Arguably, these are among the most

explicitly developed efforts at decolonization or indigenization of methodology. I intend to use these cases as springboard for exploring the factors that made possible the flourishing, as well the stagnating of indigenous methodologies. I shall argue that broader context of knowledge consumption, not epistemology or methodology, poses the most formidable challenge to the viability of indigenization efforts.

Ⅱ. Kaupapa Maori research (KM)

Kaupapa Maori (KM) research is a research methodology developed by Maori scholars in New Zealand, as part of their effort to decolonize their mental world. Linda Tuhiwai Smith, a Maori who became a professor of Education at the University of Waikato in New Zealand, published in 1999 a book called *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*. A revised edition came out in 2012. It is truly remarkable for offering a comprehensive and penetrating account of the context where KM developed, as well as the principles and procedures involved in it. It is also striking for its no-holds barred critique of research in Western tradition, which regards "research as an objective, value free and scientific process for observing and making sense of human realities" (Smith 1999: 164). It also spells out clear justifications and guidelines for undertaking an indigenous methodology. In strong terms, Smith deplores the pretense to objectivity and apoliticality of scientific research. She vehemently argued that research is a deeply and inherently political undertaking, one that feeds into and is driven by the interests of the researchers and the group to which they belong, often at the expense of the researched. She declared that given its pernicious role in exploiting and subjugating indigenous people like Maoris in New Zealand, research was a one of the "dirtiest words" in many indigenous people's vocabulary (Smith, 1999: 1). The book has been translated into several languages and has generated much discussion and debates.

Cognizant of the profound distrust her people had of research, Smith nevertheless insists that it ought not be abandoned or

avoided. It was far too important to be left to non-Maori researchers. She has underscored the politically transformative impact of research and urged fellow indigenous people to undertake it, the indigenous way. She argued that "(w)hen Indigenous peoples become the researchers and not merely the researched, the activity of research is transformed. Questions are framed differently, priorities are ranked differently, problems are defined differently, and people participate on different terms" (Smith, 1999: 193). By foregrounding the question of for whom or for what purpose is research done, Smith explodes the myth of neutrality or generic utility that often cloaks research activity. She is categorical in claiming that indigenous research is done by indigenous researchers for internal consumption as well as for the benefit of the indigenous community, just like scientific research is carried out for the use of the community that gave rise to and sustains it.

By methodology, it encompasses more than methods or technique of doing research. It refers to the whole set of procedures of laying claim to knowledge and, more importantly, their underlying logic and scholarly and political justifications. As an indigenous methodology, KM is rooted in the worldview or cultural lifeworld of Maoris. The specific techniques employed for data gathering as well as analysis are in line with what a particular Maori "community of interest" regards as ethical, relevant, and useful. It may be characterized as rigorous but "culturally safe" and is done by Maori researchers under the guidance of community elders (Smith 1999: 184). The privileging of Maori researchers over non-Maori counterparts results in the need for a "suitable" analytic standpoint. The supervision of elders served as a preventive measure against misuse and lack of accountability by the researchers to the researched (Bishop and Glynn 1992). What is being prioritized here is the welfare of the community over research technique. It does not mean however that rigor and being systematic are not important (Smith 1999; 187). While it sounds restrictive or controlling, and thus raises questions on the possible distorting effects on the outcome of the research, the deliberative procedures employed and collective responsibility within each interested community serve, so it is hoped, as mechanisms for the checks and balances necessary to

maintain rigor.

KM is conscious of the need to see the world from an internalist standpoint. Long used to the hegemonic knowledge imposed upon Maoris by colonizers, KM seeks to unshackle Maoris of its pernicious effects. Efforts have been expended to reinterpret concepts using the Maori worldview as a starting point. Some Maori scholars assert that KM is underpinned by epistemology and metaphysics different from those in the West. As noted by Smith, "(w)e have a different epistemological tradition which frames the way we see the world, the way we organize ourselves in it, the questions we ask and the solutions which we seek" (1999: 187-188).

As a critical and anti-colonial scholarly project (Mahuika 2015), KM draws for theoretical support from a range of critical traditions such as feminism, the decoloniality movement, and poststructuralism. In short, unlike other indigenous approaches wary of anything that comes from the Western intellectual tradition, such as, say, *Pantayong Pananaw* [For Us Perspective, see Navarro, Rodriguez-Tatel, and Villan (1997) and Salazar 2000], KM has been receptive to some Western critical theories that support or are compatible with its cause.

Key principles observed in KM research include the following. First, research is a collective and collaborative, and not an individual undertaking. Even if there is only one researcher who undertakes a particular project, she needs to tap into a network within a community to carry out research. This is clear in the concept *kaupapa* which refers to collectivist philosophy that permeate many of Maori activities, including research (Pihama et al. 2004). Second, research is undertaken for the benefit of the community; it is not done for other groups' interests, or for knowledge's own sake. Third, it is for equality and trusting relationship between the researcher and the researched. An example of this is the method called collaborative storytelling, which may be defined as an exchange of stories to create "knowledge among the participants of a research group which includes a researcher and those being researched...so that all members have the opportunity to be active in the research" [McPhillips 1992: 18 as cited in Tiakiwai (2015: 80)].

Fourth, sensitivity to the feelings and welfare of the researched takes precedence over precision or consistency of techniques. Fifth, ethics in research goes beyond the consent of the informant. Culturally defined behaviors are expected of the researcher and these include respect, face-to-face interaction, taking time to know the research participants by observing and listening not just speaking, by being generous and reciprocal in relations, avoiding impulsiveness, sharing information with the community, and humility (Smith 1999: 120). Finally, KM research is interdisciplinary. It is applicable to researches that concern Maori regardless of the fields of study.

KM has flourished in New Zealand and has had a significant impact on the research landscape, particularly on the development of theory (Pihama 2015), research training (Fabish n.d) and ethics of research (Hudson and Russell 2009). Interestingly, Tolich has noted the "emergence and dominance of the Mäori-centred research paradigm (which) is leaving Pakeha (settler) researchers out in the cold" (2002: n.p.). KM is probably unique for attaining such a level of development, given the enormous constraints imposed by political institutions and modern, Western-oriented scholarship, in practically every facet of life, in every nook and cranny of the world. Many other indigenous methodologies the world over are underdeveloped and marginalized (Allwood and Berry 2006). How did this happen owed much to the situation in New Zealand where the notable advances in the recognition of indigenous rights were made possible by dominant groups' respect for the Treaty of Waitangi Act 1975. It reinstituted the legal authority of the original treaty signed in 1840 and established the Waitangi Tribunal. It looked into claims of breach of the treaty, particularly on the question of protection that the Crown was supposed to provide the Maoris, as well as the recognition of their right to self-determination. Through the Tribunal, the government has acceded to various claims and provided reparations, ample funding, and other forms of support to the Maori communities (Belgrave et al. 2005).

Another was the proactive measures undertaken by Maori communities to recover, revitalize, and promote Maori culture, as they undertake capacity-building projects and develop a strong ethnic identity. Efforts include the preservation and promotion of

Maori language, education using Kaupapa Maori pedagogies, and research training on KM research methodology (Pihama et al. 2004). As assertion of their identity and desire for self-determination, more and more Maoris were trained to carry out various tasks for the smooth functioning of daily community affairs, including research and teaching.

Demography also helped. Maoris are a significant minority in New Zealand, comprising of about 15% of the country's almost 5 million population. Unlike other indigenous groups in other countries that are often proportionately smaller, number appears to matter here. The government support proved crucial in developing and promoting Maori-centric initiatives, like KM research. Through government funding, centers for Maori studies have been established in a number of cities all throughout the country. In other words, the broader political, demographic, and academic contexts in New Zealand appeared conducive to the flourishing of an indigenous methodology. This is something that can hardly be said of indigenous approaches in many other parts of the world, like the Philippines. In the next section, an indigenous approach to psychology called *Sikolohiyang Pilipino*, shall be examined to see the importance of the broader contexts in enhancing or limiting the viability of an indigenous methodology.

Ⅲ. Sikolohiyang Pilipino (SP)

Sikohiyang Pilipino (SP) or Filipino Psychology is a school of thought and methodology that developed in the Philippines since the 1970's under the leadership of Virgilio Enriquez. Enriquez started his career as lecturer at the University of the Philippines at Diliman (UP-D) in the 1960's. He did postgraduate studies in social psychology at the Northwestern University in Illinois. Upon completion, he returned to the country in 1971 and set off what proved to be an illustrious academic career developing indigenous psychology until his premature death due to an illness in 1994. The main features of this school have been clearly and comprehensively expounded and debated elsewhere (Church and Katigbak 2002;

Enriquez 1989; Enriquez 1992; Mendoza 2007; Pe-Pua 1982; Pe-Pua and Protacio-Marcelino 2000; Sta Maria 2000), so I shall not devote a lengthy description of it here. It suffices to limit coverage to the key features which are relevant to the points I wish to develop in this essay.

Rogelio Pe-Pua and Elizabeth Protacio-Marcelino, two of the prime movers of SP, describe it succinctly in the following words:

> Sikolohiyang Pilipino (Filipino psychology) refers to the psychology born out of the experience, thought and orientation of the Filipinos, based on the full use of Filipino culture and language. The approach is one of "indigenization from within" whereby the theoretical framework and methodology emerge from the experiences of the people from the indigenous culture. It is based on assessing historical and socio-cultural realities, understanding the local language, unraveling Filipino characteristics, and explaining them through the eyes of the native Filipino. Among the outcomes are: a body of knowledge including indigenous concepts, development of indigenous research methods and indigenous personality testing, new directions in teaching psychology, and an active participation in organisations among Filipino psychologists and social scientists, both in the Philippines and overseas (Pe-Pua and Protacio-Marcelino 2000: 1).

Just like KM, SP explicitly aspires for a methodology and practice of psychology that asserts identity, consciousness, and self-determination for communities or the whole nation. It adopts a slightly emic approach wherein “accounts, descriptions, and analyses (are) expressed in terms of the conceptual schemes and categories regarded as meaningful and appropriate by the native members of the culture whose beliefs and behaviors are being studied” (Lett 1990: 130). Also like KM, SP explicitly re-orients the purpose of research to what is useful or relevant to the community, the actual common people, rather than what is important to the elites or the scholarly class. It thus seeks to avoid what Bourdieu regards as “scholastic fallacy”, a tendency to believe that the academic or scholarly viewpoint yields an authoritative representation or understanding of practice, or what actual people really think or do on the ground (Bourdieu 1990).

In terms of methods, SP is also similar to KM in adopting cross-indigenous methods, multi-language, and any other appropriate technique that prove suitable to the contexts of research. It does not totally reject the common techniques suggested in standard research methods textbooks such as interview, focus group, participant observation, etc. but strongly emphasize the need to be self-reflexive in using them and to modify these techniques to suit the specific local contexts. Pe-Pua and Protacio-Marcelino (2000) list an array of techniques deemed sensitive and responsive to the character of Filipinos which SP proponents have developed: *pagtatanong-tanong* (improvised informal, unstructured interview), *pakikipagkuwentuhan* (story telling or informal conversations), *ginabayang talakayan* (guided discussion), *nakikiugaling pagmamasid* (participant observation), *pakikisama* (getting along with), *pagdalaw-dalaw* (visiting), and *panununluyan* (homestay or joining a household).

Many of these are not fundamentally dissimilar to standard techniques but were often adjusted significantly to accommodate local contexts and characteristics common or appropriate to Filipinos. One noteworthy approach, for its impact on the community of Filipino psychologists in the 1970's was "*pakapa-kapa*". It refers to "an approach characterized by groping, searching and probing into an unsystematized mass of social and cultural data to obtain order, meaning and directions for research" (Torres, 1982: 171 as quoted in Pe-Pua and Protacio-Marcelino, 2000: 59).

In application, rather than emphasizing, say, industrial or clinical psychology, SP seeks to develop livelihood psychology, health psychology, and rural psychology, which arguably were more suitable and useful for a greater number of "real" people. Rather than dismissing folk healing or folk medicine as unscientific, SP wishes to promote understanding of health-related concerns among common Filipinos, many of whom are in the rural areas. In short, anything that will help Filipinos understand themselves better, and promote their sense of identity and psychological well-being was within the domain of SP (Pe-Pua and Protacio-Marcelino, 2000: 52-53).

SP also emphasizes conceptualization as a fundamental starting

point of analysis. The supposed key Filipino values such as hiya, kapwa, loob, etc. were re-conceptualized to reflect a supposedly more accurate interpretation based on the contexts in the Philippines and the prevailing culture among people.

In many fundamental and procedural matters, SP and KM are largely similar. They may be easily mistaken as two adjacent branches of the same tree. One area where they differ, probably in degree more than in kind, is in the attitude towards the idea of universal social science. Despite the foundational role of cultural particularity in the two approaches, SP is more emphatic in subscribing to the idea of universal social science. SP is not regarded as incommensurable to Western psychology, but complementary to it. From this viewpoint, all psychologies, including Western psychology, are indigenous to their originary places and are meant to serve as a piece in a huge jigsaw puzzle (F. Alatas 2006). They are all essential to the long-term goal of establishing a universal social science. For its part, KM appears unconcerned about being part or being accepted by "universal" social science. Being very clear about what KM research was for—that is, for the welfare of the Maori community—and having started off with a suspicious attitude towards research or scholarship in general, proponents of KM do not seem to aspire as much as those in SP for acceptance in the "universal" community of scholars, whatever that means.

The contextual differences in the development of the two schools may have to do with this situation. SP was a project driven more by scholars who happened to have activist aspirations. KM was dominated by activists who happened to be scholars. It must be noted that the demarcation line between scholars and activists cannot be exaggerated as many situations force the blurring of such a line. But here, such distinction serves a heuristic purpose: to underscore the importance of the difference in aspiration among scholars. There are other possible interpretations, but I hazard a guess that scholarly training, values, and interests of SP proponents seem to have made it difficult for them to abandon the need for acceptance by peers in the psychology scholarly community. Unlike KM scholars, they did not have a favorable broader political or institutional support on their side. As for advocates of KM, what

seems to prevail was community interests. Academic recognition was by no means ignored as unimportant, but mainly as part of the whole repertoire of tools or opportunities that contribute to the Maori community's struggle for self-determination.

The longer development trajectory of SP appears to diverge as well from KM. Whereas KM continues to be on the ascendance, SP appears to have stagnated and to be on the decline, which follows the trajectory of other attempts at indigenizing Psychology (Jahoda 2016). After the death of Enriquez in 1994, the movement lost a key prime mover and main source of intellectual inspiration. Critics came out and new projects dwindled. It was also overtaken by other culturally-sensitive approaches to psychology such as cross-cultural psychology and cultural psychology [Jahoda (2006; Sta Maria 2000)]. KM, on the hand, continues to expand to other areas of scholarly endeavor including social theory, history, agriculture, health, and genetics. The institutional support made possible by favorable majority-minority relations in New Zealand helped ensure the continuing vitality of KM. The absence of such support in the Philippines put SP in a precarious foundation. When the founder passed on, the movement reeled. Also, the profound roots of KM in political activism—the fight for equality and self-determination—lent the movement a deeper and larger reservoir of motivation. On the other hand, as a mainly scholarly undertaking, SP proved vulnerable to the faddish impulses within the academia. As newer and perhaps more interesting approaches emerged, scholars pulled away from the older ones, such as SP.

Ⅳ. Points to Ponder

KM and SP are among the most developed efforts to indigenize the social sciences. Given the paramount dominance of Western social sciences, the development and flourishing of indigenous approaches like KM and SP seems at all truly remarkable. One can easily imagine the risks proponents took and the tenacity they sustained to pull this project off. The similarity in the ideas, content and approaches between KM and SP, against the contrasting trajectory of

their developments, affords us a chance to see the importance of the broader academic-political contexts in assessing the viability of an indigenous approach. Aside from the contrasting position between KM and SP vis-à-vis dominant institutions in their respective countries noted above, the intensity of anti-colonial sentiment also seems to matter. For Maoris, it was easier to see colonization in black and white, evil vs good terms. For Filipinos, their experience with and responses to colonization have been deeply ambivalent. Much bigger in number, and being under two colonial masters that provided two different colonial "flavors", Filipino nationalism and anti-colonialism are fragmented by various fault lines. Thus, while there were Filipino scholars and activists who favor and support indigenous approaches like SP, there were also many others comfortable with, and even actively supportive of, conventional Western-oriented social sciences. SP did not manage to have a critical mass of supporters necessary to sustain a counter-hegemonic scholarly-political project unlike KM.

Indigenous methodologies like SP and KM highlight the pragmatic character of knowledge. The questions, "Knowledge for what and for whom?" are foregrounded rather than elided, and both SP and KM were categorical about the interests that drive their scholarship. Many scholars find such honesty unsettling. They question their apparent lack of concern for impartiality or objectivity, which, they believe, research is supposed to be about. If political interests should drive scholarship, why do research at all? Others, however, welcome the explicit admission of political interests in scholarship as refreshing and empowering.

The indigenization movement in the social sciences and area studies do share some similar roots in recognition of the situational nature of knowledge production. While area studies have evolved as to become even looser in disciplinal and methodological orientations (Huotari, Rüland, and Schlehe 2014; Mohammed Halib and Huxley 1996) and observers have talked about crises in area studies (Burgess 2004; Jackson 2003; Rutland 2001), area studies were originally conceived as a corrective to the disciplinal parochialism and pretentious universalism of Western social sciences, just like the indigenization movements. The very notion of an area worthy of

being studied presupposed a particularity that deserves to be uncovered or highlighted, which is precisely what the indigenization movements do in their effort to develop an internalist epistemology. The highly interdisciplinary approach of KM that cuts not only through language, arts, literature, education, philosophy, and history, but also health and agriculture, offers a pathway to envisioning the future when the indigenous approaches to a truly interdisciplinary area studies become possible. It so happened that area studies, both classical (and Orientalist) and modern, have been hijacked and enlisted to serve in the state-sponsored political projects such as colonization, imperialism, the Cold War, and neo-colonialism. As such, it has been used as a tool of powerful countries to facilitate control of countries that are objects of area studies. But as the gravity shifted, seeing Southeast Asian Studies increasingly becoming the domain of the Southeast Asian themselves, with more and more scholars from the region studying other countries in the region, the platform is set for internalist approaches to be developed, including indigenous methodologies. If Southeast Asian scholars wish to wrest the driver's seat from foreign scholars in Southeast Asian Studies, as Goh Beng Lan (2010; 2011) suggested, then one way this may be done is via the indigenization route. Southeast Asia as a region is wealthy in cultural resources necessary for indigenization.

As already noted, efforts at the indigenization of the social sciences in the region have gone the farthest in the Philippines. SP is duly recognized internationally for its theoretical and methodological sophistication, as well as its practical application (Allwood and Berry 2006; Baker 2012; Sinha 1997). Not only in Psychology did indigenization went far enough, but also in history, anthropology, and Araling Pilipino or Philippine Studies (Bautista 2000; Covar 1991; Navarro & Lagbao-Bolante 2007; Rodriguez-Tatel, 2015). The Philippines, in other words, offers to other Southeast Asian countries ample experience that illustrate the promises and pitfalls of indigenization.

A major challenge to the indigenization effort is the increasingly interconnected world made possible by the almost incessant flow across borders of information, ideas, goods and people. Geographic space that used to be relatively stable, conveniently contained as

they were by national boundaries, has been made fluid by the advances in information, transportation, and communication technologies (Appadurai 1996; van Schendel 2002). Under this situation, it has increasingly become precarious to talk about the notion of culture that is more or less stable (Steedly 1999). If culture has become more fragmented and fluid, what kind of indigeneity might be left to serve as a platform for the indigenization effort? Critics of SP and other indigenization projects in the Philippines often raised this vexing question.

Observers noted, however, that the increasingly encompassing and intensifying globalizing processes have not necessarily resulted in the homogenization of the world (Kellner 2002). There are aspects or areas of global interactions that generated the strengthening of local, national, or regional dynamics and identities, partly as a response to the threat of homogenization (Appadurai 1996; 2000). The case of KM may be a good example of this. Rather than be intimidated by the vastly superior presence of Western scholarship and identities in New Zealand and beyond, Maoris have strengthened their assertion for self-determination. The increasing and expanding scope of activism in the past few decades among indigenous communities in various parts of the world, and the solidarities they built across the globe, appear to be energized by the so-called threat of globalization. Against this background, it is premature to proclaim the end of the indigenous approaches to scholarship. Things might have just started for them.

The final point I wish to reflect on is whether indigenization is the answer if the need is to address the question of unequal power relations. Some scholars tend to conflate indigenization with decolonization. For them, to indigenize is to decolonize. Indigenization is the specific means to decolonize (example is Smith 1999). There are those who even nudge us to "Always Indigenize!" (Finlay 2000). For others, however, they are not one and the same. They worry that the focus on indigenization might distract attention away from what is actually needed, to decolonize (Hill 2012). What this refers to has to do with the altered nature of colonization. With the rise of the neoliberal, global economic order, the power-inequality that operates in colonial relations is no longer between one country or

one civilization over another. Sharp inequalities exist within nations such that the Third World conditions coexist side by side with First World environment, both in developed and developing countries. As Macedo aptly noted, "no longer can it be argued that the colonized experience is the domain of Third World contexts only" as "we are experiencing a rapid Third Worldization of North America" and "First World opulence in the oligarchies in many Third World nations" (Macedo 1999, xii). The point is, the complex economic order has also made power relations between actors, institutions, interest groups, and countries very complicated, such that colonial relations ceased to be just between nations or civilizations, but more so between various smaller entities within and between ethnicity, class, gender, intellect, etc. Therefore, to indigenize might help address certain power-inequality issues but not all power deficit issues. It could even provide a smokescreen that inadvertently hides or merely changes the contours, but not the substance, of inequality, If one dominant group is replaced by another, which also acts as dominant, the logic of inequality is retained and thus no real decolonization has been effected. Indigenization, in short, is an important step, but it may not be sufficient.

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