

NORIZAN Kadir
Universiti Sains Malaysia

REMEMBERING AND FORGETTING THE MEMORIES OF VIOLENCE: THE FILIPINOS PROTEST OVER HERO'S INTERMENT FOR MARCOS, 2016-2017

This article examines the divergence in social memory about Ferdinand Marcos' rule into two types of historical narratives following the announcement made by President Duterte in 2016 to bury the Marcos' remains in the Heroes' Cemetery or Libingan ng mga Bayani. The historical narratives were divided into two major school of thoughts which comprised the national narrative that was propagated by President Rodrigo Duterte and the opposition narrative advocated by the victims and relatives of Marcos' human rights violence. The protests and demonstrations took place from 2016 until 2017, before and after the interment of the remains through various forms and methods including street protests and internet activism. Thus, this study shows that the changing of political ideologies has changed the national narrative since the memories of violence during the Marcos' regime are gradually lost from the social memory of the society. The proponent of President Duterte and Marcos' legacy demand justice for the late President Marcos for his contributions to the country, while those who oppose President Duterte as well as the victims of Marcos' cruelty, try to revive the memory about Marcos' spate of violence. Their demands are voiced through their protests over Hero's burial for Marcos.

Keywords: *Memories Of Violence, Interment, Dictatorship, Social Memory, Historical Amnesia.*

Introduction

In a modern world, historical narrative is not merely a medium to reminisce about the event of the past, but it has been used as a way to revive and retain certain political ideologies. Therefore, history is more often perceived to be selective either in terms of selective remembering or selective forgetting. Selective memory often in historical narrative causes different interpretations and approach to analyze the history. From the typical lens of *heroes and villains, winners and losers* historical approach, this binary narrative or interpretations of history are often used by the central government as a national (mainstream) narrative to preserve their authority. This phenomenon is best described by Michael Sturmer as, "in a land without history whoever supplies memory, shapes concepts, and interprets the past, will win the future".¹

Using the case study of the Philippines, this paper illustrates that this type of dominant narrative has become a source of protest and resistance by the Filipinos who are against the entombment of the late President of the Philippines, Ferdinand Marcos in the resting place of *Libingan ng mga Bayani* (LNMB) or Heroes' Cemetery at Taguig City, Metro Manila. As the Heroes' Cemetery is specially inaugurated to honour the national heroes including deceased Philippines presidents, a controversial question emerged whether the late President Marcos could be classified and honoured as a Philippines hero since he was accused of his human rights violations and authoritarian rule especially during the period of Martial Law from 1972 to 1981.

After the eruption EDSA People Power Revolution in 1986 led by President Corazon Aquino, Ferdinand Marcos and his family fled to Hawaii until he died in 1989. After 1993, the remains were allowed to be brought back to the Philippines during the administration of President Fidel V. Ramos and kept in the mausoleum at his hometown, Ilocos Norte. The contention whether Marcos' remains should be buried in the Heroes' Cemetery had caused unprecedented massive protests by the Filipinos who opposed the Supreme Court's decision as well as President Rodrigo Duterte's partiality to the Marcos' family. Although the idea to bury the remains had already emerged since the presidency of Corazon Aquino and again during Joseph Estrada's rule², the demand was nevertheless unsuccessful due to the major opposition by the Filipinos.

The strong opposition shown through the anti-Marcos movement especially by the victims of human rights violations (Martial Law era) continued during the administration of President Duterte, but it was unable to defeat his political authority to allow the long-standing desire of the Marcos' family to bury his remains in the Heroes' Cemetery. Furthermore, Marcos' family claimed that Marcos' remains deserved to be buried in the Heroes' Cemetery as he was a World War II hero against the Japanese occupation. The status of the controversial dispute was finally arbitrated by the Supreme Court of the Philippines on 8 November 2016. The court then disclosed their decision to allow Marcos' remains to be buried at the LNMB with nine associate justice in favour of Marcos burial at LNMB while the other five associate justice including the chief justice opposed the burial at LNMB. Before the end of the 15 days appeal period, Marcos's remains were interred in a secret ceremony at LNMB on 18 November 2016 through the order of President Duterte. This precipitous interment has sparked massive nationwide protests throughout the Philippines.

In order to analyse this issue, various sources had been taken into consideration including primary sources and secondary sources such as the official historical documents, memoirs, conference papers, records from the National Archive (United Kingdom), online newspapers as well as the Philippines' Republic Act. The discussion had been divided into four main

sections. The first two sections examined the literature gap and Marcos' dictatorship during his presidential term while the last two sections thoroughly scrutinise the methods and forms of protests including the extent to which the protest managed to influence the government's decision regarding Marcos' burial as well as the historical amnesia that had been demonstrated by the Marcos supporters.

Literature Review

Before this issue could be further discussed, it is essential to highlight a few studies pertaining to this topic despite the lack of academic discussions on the issue thus far. A study by Lisandro E. Claudio (2010), "Memories of the Anti-Marcos Movement: the Left and the Mnemonic Dynamics of the Post-Authoritarian Philippines"³ illustrated the dynamics of historical memory in connection to the Marcos rule. This was accomplished by using the *Bantayog ng mga Bayani*, a memorial centre in Manila dedicated to the memory of individuals who resisted the dictatorship of the late President Marcos as a case study. The political situations in the Philippines post-1986, especially regarding the left political party, were also examined. The dilemma centered on the best way to commemorate the concept of the Left movements since there were many different interpretations of the Left movements as well as numerous contentions to exclude the contributions of the communist party that played a dominant role during People Power Revolution. The divergence in historical interpretations continues, and they became more apparent recently as the question no longer revolved around the heroes who contributed to the downfall of Marcos (the antagonist) but whether Marcos could be considered as one of the Philippines' heroes.

A linguist, Monje (2017) in her article entitled "*Hindi Bayani/Not A Hero*": The Linguistic Landscape of Protest in Manila" thoroughly discussed the linguistic landscape during the protest by analysing the patterns and forms of linguistic diversities as displayed on mobile posters, placards, banners, texts on bodies, t-shirts, umbrellas, and rocks.⁴ Her study shows that the language used in the protest signs were not normally used in Manila such as Ilocano, "Taglish", and "gayspeak". Many protestors also creatively expressed their oppositions by using humour and sarcasm and were able to find their voices within the transient space of the protests. Although there was a conference discussing *The Remains of a Dictatorship: An International Conference on the Philippines Under Marcos* organized by Philippines Studies: Historical and Ethnographic Viewpoints and Ateneo de Manila University on August 2017, none of the papers specifically discussed the protests except for a brief three-pages summary by Jocelyn Martin entitled "Moving on or Repressing Memory? A Memory Studies Analysis of the Marcos' Burial at the *Libingan ng mga Bayani*."

Martin claimed that the Marcos' burial at LNMB was a case of "multiple forgetting" and given that, this article will precisely expound the discourse on the concept of hero and Marcos' dictatorship. It will also examine how both elements have developed into the social memories of the Filipinos so much so that many had forgotten the memory of violence (historical amnesia) while some fractions of the Filipino population had stood firm to revive the memories of solidarity through loud and massive protests throughout the Philippines.

Remembering and Forgetting the Memories of Violence: The Philippines Under Marcos' Authoritarian, 1965-1986

The violence during Marcos' dictatorship was one of the most disruptive periods in the Philippines history. The aftermath of his long-standing rule also contributed to the long-term effects on Philippines' development particularly in the economic and political aspects. Ferdinand Marcos was elected the President of the Philippines in 1965 after he succeeded the earlier president, Diosdado Macapagal. As a president who served the longest presidential term, from 1965 until 1986, his rule marked the most depressing phase throughout the Philippines history.

Famous for his dictatorship that became the source of opposition by the Filipinos, there were many important events that occurred during Marcos' presidential term including the most impactful years of Martial Law from 1972 until 1981. The Martial Law or Proclamation No. 1081 was announced to the public on 23 September 1972 due to the threat of the communists led by the new Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP). The CPP was alleged to have planned to seize the state power and overthrow the duly constituted government caused political turmoil as a result of Marcos' authoritarian rule. The political unrest was worsened by the increased conflict between certain elements of the Christian and Muslim population of Mindanao and Sulu, in particular between the Christian "*Ilagas*" and the Muslim "*Barracudas*".⁵ Following the government policy to promote and encourage Christians to encroach on Muslim lands, the Muslims retaliated by organizing a long struggle to defy the central government and claim their rights as Philippines' citizen. Through his proclamation of Martial Law, Marcos officially enforced his ultimate and absolute power as enacted in the following statement:

“WHEREAS, in cases of invasion, insurrection or rebellion or imminent danger thereof, I, as President of the Philippines, have, under the Constitution, three courses of action open to me, namely: (a) call out the armed forces to suppress the present lawless violence; (b) suspend the privilege of the writ of habeas corpus to make the arrest and apprehension of these lawless elements easier and more

effective; or (c) place the Philippines or any part thereof under martial law”.⁶

The depression during the Martial Law had caused the Philippines government to borrow an extensive amount of money from international monetary institutions which caused the country's total overseas loans to rise from US\$2.6 billion in 1975 to US\$26 billion by 1984.⁷ This caused the Philippines society to be in dire economic straits as explained by M. D. Litonjua:

“More than a quarter of the workforce was unemployed or underemployed, real per capita income had fallen drastically, and about sixty percent of all families were living below the poverty line... The Philippines had become Asia's basket case, second only to Bangladesh”.⁸

This tumultuous period of Martial Law was resurrected in the memories of protestors such as Arturo Garcia, the leader of protestors in Los Angeles, America. He claimed that “the Philippines during Martial Law, was in shambles. It was marred by poverty and our foreign debt ballooned to how many billions of dollars”.⁹ During the period of Martial Law, about 70,000 people were incarcerated, 34,000 to 35,000 people were tortured and 3,240 to 3257 people were killed.¹⁰ Marcos was also alleged of stealing about \$US10 billion (\$13billion) from the state.¹¹

The fame of dictatorship associated with Marcos throughout his administration was also due to his foreign policy; his claim on Sabah used various means including warlike methods. The policy to claim Sabah began since the administration of President Macapagal in 1962.¹² However, it escalated during Marcos' era as he made unprecedented and concealed plans to attack Sabah and eventually this led to another crime and violence known as Jabidah Massacre or Corregidor incidents in 1968.¹³ The secret mission to attack Sabah was done through a planned military exercise, also known as “Merdeka Operation” after the failure of the Philippines to claim Sabah before the formation of Malaysia.¹⁴ Most of the trainees were recruited from the Sulu region and did not have higher education background.¹⁵ This operation was discovered by the Malaysian government after the “mutiny” involving the camp trainees due to their discontentment over unpaid wages of about 50 pesos as promised by the Philippines military.¹⁶ Following the opposition, many of the trainees were murdered by the Philippine troops. However, one of the trainees named Jibin Arula managed to escape from the island and sought refuge from Governor Delfin Montano of the Cavite Region which was an opponent to the Philippine administration.¹⁷

Compared to other massacres in the Southern Philippines, the Jabidah Massacre incident remained as the most tragic event in the collective memory

of the Muslim community in the Philippines.¹⁸ It eventually became a turning point for the establishment of a separatist movement that fought for the independence of the Bangsamoro which is known as Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF).¹⁹ Marcos sturdy policy to claim Sabah was also brought to the “gloomy” relations between the Philippines and the United States of America especially when America was reluctant to support his claim on Sabah and even favoured Malaysia.²⁰ President Marcos also called on the US Ambassador G. Mennen Williams to seek a clarification on the statement by the United States Government to recognize Sabah as part of Malaysia.²¹ The Philippines and Malaysia’s relations were only gradually normalized in 1977 when Marcos dropped his claim to Sabah and began a serious commitment towards economic cooperation.²²

Marcos’ presidency was also marked by extravagant corruption and many other issues related to human right violations. His term as a president was also marred by obsessive deception during the elections of which Brillantes observed as: “newspapers, radio and television broadcasts carried reports of numerous elections irregularities, including massive vote-buying, ballot box stuffing, and cheating”.²³ Greg Bankoff, on the other hand, described the phenomenon as:

“The Marcos’ dictatorship, it was claimed, had committed crimes against the Filipino people - colossal plunder, gross human rights abuses, widespread acts of terrorism, brutal salvaging and indiscriminate hamlet-ing’ - that could not be forgiven without public repentance, restitution and the administration of justice”.²⁴

Marcos’ misconduct during his rule, was even worse with his wife’s opulent and lavish lifestyle marked by a vast amount of money she spent to fulfil her lavish spending including her possession of thousands of shoes. Marcos’ legacies, however, never come to an end after his death as his family’s dynasty continues to groom influential politicians representing their hometown province of Ilocos Norte besides other forms of “soft power” which remain up to present day including architectural legacy as displayed through monumental edifices purposely built to perpetuate his power.²⁵ Nevertheless, Marcos’ legacies of authoritarianism never stay unchallenged as the social memory on Marcos’ violence remains in the heart of Filipinos. This sentiment eventually led to the protest over the Hero’s interment for Marcos.

Meaning of Heroes and Protest on Marcos Burial at LNMB

Is Marcos a hero? A question that has become very controversial especially during the protests over Marcos entombment at LNMB. For the victims of Marcos’ dictatorship during the Martial Law, Marcos is no more than a traitor.

On the contrary, his avid supporters proudly claim that he is a Filipino national hero. In order to examine the divergence of thoughts between these two groups, it would be appropriate to examine the earlier guidelines defining the Philippines National Heroes. It was not until 1993 that the Philippines Government created the National Heroes Committee to study, evaluate and recommend Filipino national personages/heroes in due recognition of their sterling character and remarkable achievements for the country.²⁶

There are at least six criteria that define national heroes. Among others, heroes are those who have a concept of nation and thereafter aspire and struggle for the nation's freedom; heroes are those who define and contribute to a system or life of freedom and order for a nation; heroes are those who contribute to the quality of life and destiny of a nation. The last criterion, which is very much related to the discourse on Marcos' status, stated that "the choice of a hero involves not only the recounting of an episode or events in history but of the entire process that made this particular person as a hero".²⁷

The status of Ferdinand Marcos, whether he was a Philippines' hero or otherwise was one of the conspicuous discourses that appeared during the protests over the Heroes' burial for Marcos. From the government's perspectives, as stated by President Duterte, "my decision will allow his burial in Libingan ng mga Bayani because he was a great president and he was a hero... He had the idealism, the vision for this country".²⁸ While President Duterte lionizing the late President Marcos and proudly called him as a "hero", Loretta Rosales one of the Marcos' henchmen victims who recalled her hardest time being tortured, also responded, "now they want to make him as a hero. Doing so would betray Mr Marcos' victims, and whitewash the past". This social evaluation lacks self-introspection as correctly propounded by Shaharuddin Maaruf in his compelling book *Concept of A Hero in Malay Society* as he stated, "they feel it is a question of finding and installing heroes in a detached manner, little realizing their values, ideals and humanity are very much bound with the process".²⁹

The discourse on Marcos' rule was heavily played in the cyberspace as well as the social media since these modern-day tools have become an effective method to disseminate ideologies and gain influence from the society without being controlled by the government. Having said that, in some cases, the state also creates restrictions for the sake of security. Besides the continuous discourse and commentaries on Marcos' administration by the Filipinos, there were also NGOs such as Social Weather Stations (SWS)³⁰ which made an initiative by conducting a survey in 2016 to 1,800 validated respondents to ask whether former President Ferdinand deserved to be buried in the Heroes' Cemetery. This survey was conducted twice initially in the first quarter 2011 and again in 2016. The survey that was conducted in 4 to 7 March 2011 involved only 1,200 respondents in Metro Manila, Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao. The result in 2011 showed that 49% answered that he was not worthy to be buried

in the Heroes' Cemetery whilst 50% of respondents were divided into 30% who agreed that Marcos should be buried with official honors" and another 20% who agreed that a private burial is sufficient.³¹ Only one percent of the voters said they did not know or abstained from making a choice. Likewise, in February 2016 survey, the results showed 50% disagreed for Marcos to be buried in Heroes' Cemetery and another 50% were split according to two opinions; some of them agreed for an official burial in Heroes' Cemetery while the rest of the voters said he only deserved a private burial. As these surveys were circumscribed to the selected respondents in a few areas, hence the results were not comprehensive and did not completely imply the actual opinion from the whole nation.

One of the main characteristics that had contributed to the construction of national historical narrative propagated by the states depended heavily on the leader who possessed political authority. With the changing of the presidents, the national narrative also changed. Under the rule of President Aquino, Ferdinand Marcos was infamous for his extraordinary corruption and violence. Thus, the state and the society regardless of religious and political differences unanimously ousted him from the country. With the changing of political ideologies brought by different presidents after the end of Aquino presidential term, the memories of violence during the Marcos' regime gradually faded from the national narrative as well as social memory. Moreover, through the widely used of a private and unstandardized history textbooks in public schools, it has created a one-sided perspective that highlights the admiration and glorification to the Marcos' regime.³²

On the flip side, the opposition group who were against the legacy of Marcos' regime became the counter-narrative to the national narrative that promotes the "other side" of Marcos' identity through his authoritarian rule. As such, the counter-narrative version highlighted by the opposition groups tried to revive the social memory of society to the cruelty and brutality of Ferdinand Marcos. In order to realize this predominant aim, they had organized various forms of protests to thwart the interment of Marcos' remains to the Heroes' Cemetery as well as to express their outburst of indignation towards the distortion of history.

Two phases of the protests took place before and after the interment. The aim of the protest before the burial was performed in the early 2016 was to prevent the burial at the Heroes' Cemetery from taking place. The second phase of protests started right after the stealthy interment of Marcos' remains at the Heroes' Cemetery on 18 November 2016. The aim of the second phase of the protests was to insist that the government and Supreme Court rule out an order for the exhumation of Marcos' remains from Heroes' Cemetery. On the one hand, Duterte made a promise that he will not rule out an order for a military crackdown on the protestors, but he would not compromise with protestors who tried to retract his decision.³³

The method adopted in the opposition group's protests was peaceful and non-violent including demonstrations or street protests, online or cyber activism, petitioning, concerts and even resignation as an ultimate form of protest. The Filipino protesters who were against the decision to bury Marcos' remains in the Heroes' Cemetery ranged from various backgrounds including the victims of Marcos' violence, torture and imprisonment, relatives or victims of Marcos' extrajudicial killings, protestors from high schools, university students, labour groups, human rights advocates and also those who were the opponents of President Duterte's administration which explained the insistence on his resignation. Some of the school students, colleges and university students involved in the protest movements were from St. Scholastica's College in Manila, DLS-CSB, and DLSU, Kalayaan College Student Organizations, University of the Philippines, Ateneo de Manila University, and Miriam College. There were also many Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), and institutions that were involved in the demonstrations including *Kabataang Artista Para sa Tunay na Kalayaan*, *Bagong Alyansang Makabayan*, and Karapatan Alliance for the Advancement of Human Rights.

The protests managed to garner massive supporters and were continuously organised since the first day of the protest. Some of the protests included the one in August 2016, where 2000 people participated in Manila, 18 November 2016 at Taft Avenue, Metro Manila, 19 November at Alice Bridge in Sorsogon City and 20 November 2016 at EDSA People Power Monument. On 25 November 2016, 20,000 martial law survivors, students, workers and other protesters amassed at Manila's Rizal Park, according to the organizer's estimate.³⁴ On 30 Nov 2016, thousands of protestors gathered at the People Power Monument in Manila to show their solidarity in opposing Marcos' burial at LNMB.³⁵ There were also protests at Legazpi City, Plaza Quezon, Daet, Camarines Norte province and in front of the Supreme Court. One of the grand protests was held on 25 November 2016 which marked as a National Day of Rage and Unity. The protests that were organized by the Campaign Against the Return of the Marcoses in Malacañang were not only assembled at Luneta Park but many other locations including Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao on the same day.

Worldwide protests were also organized by Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs), especially in the major cities. Among others, protests were held at the Philippines Consulate Office in Los Angeles on 7 September 2016, Chicago, New York City, San Francisco, London, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Japan.³⁶ These street protests were not only significant and tangible in the numbers of protesters and protests but had also become influential tools of solidarity as well as an eye-opener to the Philippines government that they should not make any decision which disregards the desire of the majority of the citizen.

During the protests, the protestors shed their tears, burned Marcos' pictures, carried placards and banners, displayed mock gravestones while

chanting the slogans, “Marcos is not a hero”, “Marcos is a traitor”, “Marcos Dictator, *Hindi Bayani!*”, “*Marcos Hitler Diktator tuta!*”, “*bayaning diktator noon oplan bayanihan ngayon*”, “Marcos family, shame on you!”, “Never Forget. Never Again. Martial Law”, and “Marcos dictator *magnanakaw*”. Apart from expressing their reactions through the above-mentioned ways, there was also an abundance of memories about violence during Marcos’ dictatorship being shared and reminisced by the victims and their relatives as reported in the newspapers. Such atrocious memories included the memory of Susan Quimpo, 55 years old who lost her two brothers as a result of extensive persecution by police and military. She further relived the tragic moments by saying that “I spent my entire high school visiting one military camp after another every weekend and hearing stories of torture and rape from my siblings and those incarcerated with them”.³⁷ Quimpo who also co-wrote an impressive book on her family memoir during the Marcos rule also narrated the boisterous period of the Martial law of which her family had a long struggle of resistance towards the Marcos’ regime.³⁸

Another grievous memory was shared by Felix Dalisay who was the victim of Marcos’ regime during Martial Law. He was beaten by the military on his back and head, making him permanently deaf in one ear. Nevertheless, the hardest part for him was that he lost many of his comrades who were caught and still missing.³⁹ Danny Tang, a former Marcos’ prisoner said “I was jailed when I was young. It is so hard to imagine that he will be buried in the Heroes’ Cemetery”.⁴⁰ As one who lived during Marcos’ rule and lost his husband after being captured by the military, Ojeda-Kimbrough also shared her resentment towards Marcos as she said, “to honour him (with) a hero’s burial is a big insult to what we worked for all those years. It negates all the human rights violations, the deaths, and the tortures, so to give him a hero’s burial is like saying it’s okay”.⁴¹

The act of reviving the memories of violence during Marcos’ regime continues through cyber activism. The protesters had intensively used the digital platform to channel their expressions of discontentment as well as the medium to influence the readers to support their goals. The act to influence the mass was done through personal websites and blogs as well as other forms of social media. Social media was used as a platform for digital activism to protest the interment of Marcos’ remains at *Libingan ng mga Bayani*. The stream of propaganda through this platform become very influential and overarching to catch the sympathy and attention from the mass as it was faster, wide-reaching and a more effective form of communication. Some of the social media that had been used throughout the protests were Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and WhatsApp. To uplift the soul of opposition, they used many hashtags including, #marcosburial, #marcosburialprotest, #marcosburialcases, #marcosburialsalibingannmgabayani, #marcosburial2016, #marcosburialtoday, and other similar phrases.⁴²

Another form of protest which was also used to express the indignation over the Marcos funeral at the Heroes Cemetery was established through resignation. This type of protest could be categorized as an unprecedented act, an eye-opener and one of the most extreme methods to show discontentment over the rule or order. Although the worthiness and effectiveness of resignation as a method to defy the injustice is still ambiguous, the professional career of the protesters had to be sacrificed. Weisband and Franck's (1975) in-depth analysis illustrated that each protest resignation, in fact, benefits the system and this adamant action should not be underestimated. Such startling stance was also adopted by Maria Serena I. Diokno on 29 November 2016 as she demonstrated her outrage towards the government decision to bury Marcos' remains at the Heroes' Cemetery by resigning her post as the Chairman of National Historical Commission of the Philippines (NHCP). Professor Diokno who dedicated her life as a scholar of history at the University of the Philippines Diliman also joined other street protesters at the People Power Monument in Quezon City. Her stern statement could be read as follows:

“At this moment in our history, every voice count, and I wish to place mine on the side of History: not the history that the Duterte government ignores, but the History that beckons our people to demand justice that even the highest court of the land will not bestow. The burial of Ferdinand Marcos in the Libingan ng mga Bayani is wrong; it denies our History, erases the memory of the lives lost and destroyed, mocks the collective action we took to oust the dictator and denigrates the value of our struggle for freedom. Notwithstanding the narrow view adopted by nine members of the Supreme Court, President Duterte could have taken the higher ground. But he chose not to. Worse, he justifies his ‘legalistic’ action by claiming, falsely, that ‘there’s no study, no movie, about it (Marcos’s record as leader), just the challenges and allegations of the other side’.

For a moment I thought I could remain at the National Historical Commission of the Philippines and protect our history from those in and out of government who attempt to deface it. But the multitude of especially young Filipinos who have come out in defense of History and are prepared to co-author it for their generation and the future point to one clear realization: they, we all, will guard our history. Today I tendered my resignation from the National Historical Commission of the Philippines (effective 1 December 2016). I have deep gratitude and respect for my fellow workers at the Commission, who I will miss. I am saddened at leaving them. Tomorrow I will join the popular assertion of our history and look forward to more in as many public venues as possible. Never again will we allow any

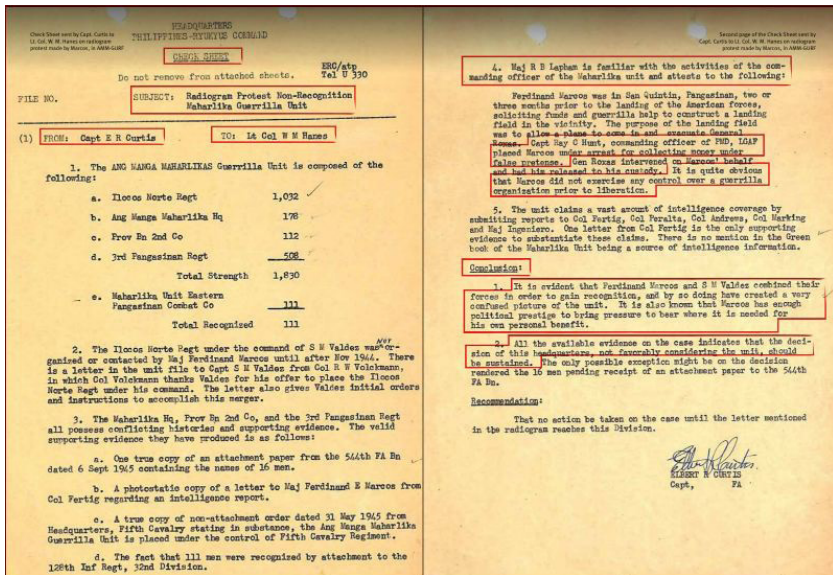
remnant of the authoritarian past to take hold of our country”.⁴³

Weisband and Franck defined a protest resigner as one who offers public criticism that is “reasonably loud, clear, and, above all, attributable”.⁴⁴ Implicitly, Diokno’s resignation too had sparked some form of historical consciousness. Her actions received coverage from the entire local newspapers in the Philippines as well as other forms of new media. Another impressive approach taken by Diokno and her NHCP team was conducting an extensive and in-depth historical analysis on “*Why Ferdinand E. Marcos Should Not Be Buried at the Libingan ng mga Bayani*”.⁴⁵ Through these 17 pages treatise, they professionally illustrated the historical attestations of Marcos’ fraudulent and bad governance throughout his years of presidency. This treatise lucidly highlighted the rebuttal of Marcos’ claims about his medals, rank and guerrilla unit with some of the compelling and thought-provoking original historical documents.

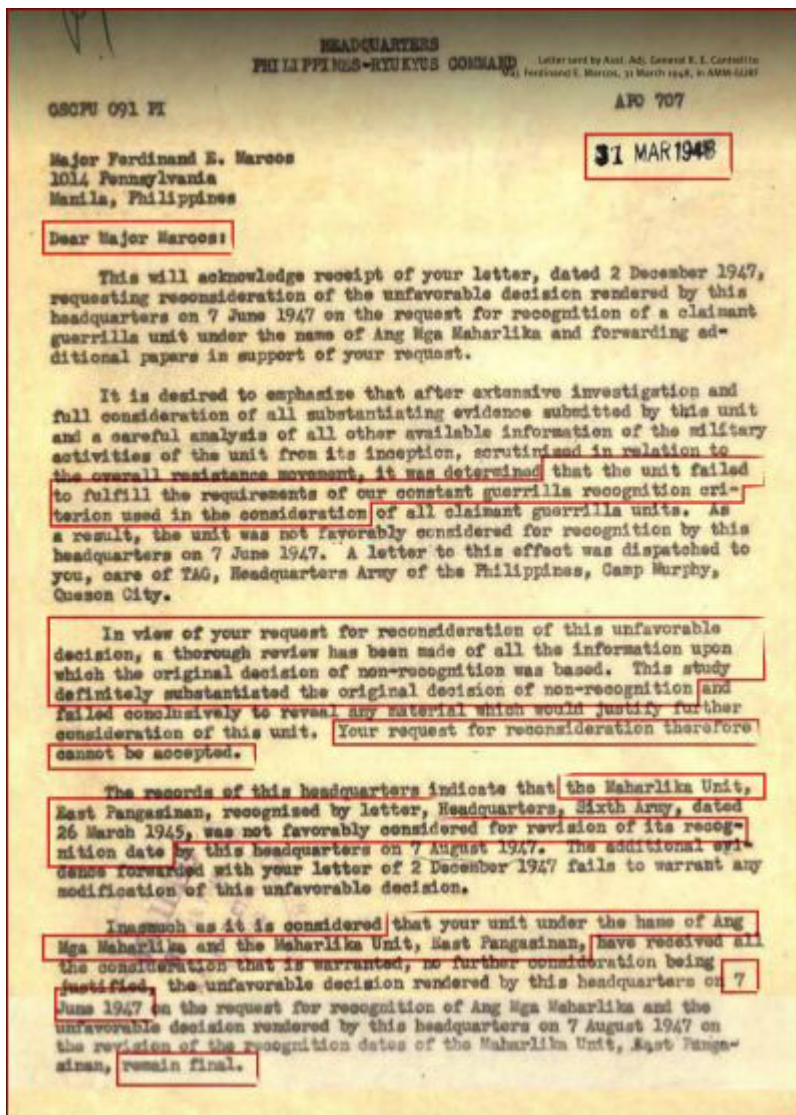
Although this treatise has been disseminating before the trial on Marcos’ burial, the Supreme Court, however, did not make any reference to this original and authoritative documents and stated that “for his alleged human rights abuses and corrupt practices, we may disregard Marcos as a President and Commander-in-Chief, but we cannot deny him the right to be acknowledged based on the other positions he held or the awards he received”.⁴⁶ The so-called positions and awards possessed by Marcos had been used for decades as a political mileage to garner support as well as to sustain his political power. On the flip side, the treatise by NHCP thoroughly testifies the fraudulence involving the positions and awards received by the late Marcos. Some of the evidence highlighted in the treatise are as follows:

“Mr. Marcos lied about receiving U.S. medals: Distinguished Service Cross, Silver Star, and Order of the Purple Heart, which he claimed as early as about 1945. Secondly, his guerrilla unit, the Ang Mga Maharlika, was never officially recognized and neither was his leadership of it. Thirdly, U.S. officials did not recognize Mr. Marcos’ rank promotion from Major in 1944 to Lt. Col. by 1947. Fourthly, some of Mr. Marcos’ actions as a soldier were officially called into question by upper echelons of the U.S. military, such as his command over the Allas Intelligence Unit (described as ‘usurpation’), his commissioning of officers (without authority), his abandonment of USAFIP-NIL presumably to build an airfield for Gen. Roxas, his collection of money for the airfield (described as ‘illegal’), and his listing of his name on the roster of different units (called a ‘malicious criminal act’).⁴⁷

A few documents used by the NHCP to testify the fact are shown below:



Picture 1: Check sheet sent by Captain Curtis to Lt. Col. W. M. Hanes on radiogram protest made by Marcos, in Ang Mga Maharlika, Guerrilla Unit (AMM-GURF).⁴⁸



Picture 2: Second page of the check sheet sent by Captain Curtis to Lt. Col. W. M. Hanes on radiogram protest made by Marcos, in AMM-GURF.⁴⁹

Although the protests garnered mass mobilisation and activism including an extreme approach taken by Diokno to resign from her post as the chairman of NHCP, the protests failed to obstruct the government's decision to bury Marcos' remains at the Heroes' Cemetery. Then the question arises on why

the protests failed? Were the protests not effective enough to thwart the government from burying Marcos' remains at Heroes' Cemetery? To answer this question, it is crucial to understand that Marcos' legacies remained intact in the memories of his avid supporters especially the top government officials who owed Marcos for his benevolence during his administration. This could be described clearly through the Filipino's cultural trait (value-system) known as "utang na loob" or debt of gratitude (soul-debt). This concept is partly different from the conventional concept of gratitude of other cultures. Filipino's "utang na loob" is a debt incurred by the inner being of a person, a soul debt, which persists and endures, even after the original debt has been paid.⁵⁰

This type of culture has become a fundamental value of Philippines' political dynasty that has sustained some of the family legacies for many decades such as Marcos' family dynasty.⁵¹ Notwithstanding the fact that memories of Marcos' violence are still retained in the hearts of the majority of the Filipinos, it cannot be denied that some of the other Filipinos especially the younger generations who "could not care less" about the historical past, also admired Marcos' legacies. This type of paradox will be further discussed in the section below.

Marcos is A Hero: The Arguments of Marcos Supporters

The secret but official ceremony to bury Marcos' remains at the Heroes' Cemetery on 18 November 2016 through 21-gun salute, and other proper protocols demonstrated that historical amnesia is too apparent despite the sober denouncement over authoritarianism and dictatorship. This kind of paradox in thinking could never help the progress of a nation nor civilization. Syed Hussein Alatas' perceptive analysis is worth pondering:

"Dengan orang-orang bebal ini datanglah nepotisme, pandangan kolot, politik parti kedaerahan, yang menentukan pemilihan dan kenaikan dalam tatatingkat kekuasaan pentadbiran... Di mana orang-orang bebal berkuasa, maka nilai-nilai merekalah yang menjadi nilai-nilai masyarakat, kesedaran mereka menjadi kesedaran masyarakat".⁵²

Those who selectively forget and selectively remembers history will have the tendency to see history from a narrow perspective. This tendency is even more conspicuous as certain political party tries to instil or propagate selected collective memories to strengthen their political power. The propagation of the one-sided collective memories gradually changed the value-system and eventually created the historical amnesia of the authoritarian regime. Although this is not the only reason that has created the historical amnesia, the younger generations with a lack of historical education are very much influenced by this

national narrative of history. The national narrative that promotes the “other side” or positive side of Marcos’ rule was, in fact, seeing the burial at the Heroes’ Cemetery as a “cure” and “healing of the nation”⁵³ as well as the best move for nationalism.

Another typical logic used by the supporters to defend their argument was also used by President Duterte; the fact that Marcos was just a “human” who made mistakes.⁵⁴ For him, “there is nothing wrong to bury Marcos’ remains at the *Libingan ng mga Bayani* as he was a former soldier and former president of the Philippines”.⁵⁵ Like the protesters who came with various slogans to condemn the burial and Marcos’ dictatorship, pro-Marcos’ supporters also rallied for “freedom of expression” and chanting their reverse slogans such as “Marcos Forever”, “The Late President Marcos Has Human Rights Too!”.⁵⁶ Marcos’ supporters also shared their memories during Marcos’ rule. Mila, one of the pro-Marcos’ supporters said, “You know, I was raised by my mother, and during that time Marcos provided a lot of support and food to the poor, like my family. We often received free milk, rice, and butter and that helped us a lot, so I’m thankful to him”.⁵⁷

As a man who had voted for Marcos and with his father being one of the members of Marcos’ cabinet, President Duterte felt a deep honour and admiration towards Marcos and believed that he should take the honour to bury Marco’s remains at the Heroes’ Cemetery. Furthermore, “as the father of this nation, it is President Duterte’s desires to begin the long overdue healing of our nation and to exorcise the ghost of enmity and bitterness that prevent us from moving forward,” as explained by General Jose Calida, the government’s lawyer during the trial in Supreme Court.⁵⁸ Another interesting note to support the stand of President Duterte was also made by Associate Justice Diosdado Peralta during the judgement as he said, “while he was not all good, he was not pure evil either. Certainly, just a human who erred like us”.⁵⁹

This stance was however perceived by the Member of the House of Representatives, Edcel Lagman as, “The burial showed that the true colours and attitude of the Marcoses have not changed. They are so used to deceiving, lying to and abusing our country”.⁶⁰ There is no doubt that the lack of consciousness on Marcos’ authoritarian rule and his continuous legacies in the social memory of the Filipinos would not harm the state economic growth, but it has a wide impact on the formation of human and social capital as propounded by Alfred W. McCoy:

“If the Philippines is to recover its full fund of “social capital” after the trauma of dictatorship, it needs to adopt some means for remembering, recording, and, ultimately, reconciliation. No nation can develop its full economic potential without a high level of social capital, and social capital cannot, as Robert Putnam teaches us, grow

in a society without a sense of justice".⁶¹

Conclusion

Eventually, on 18 November 2016, Marcos' remains were stealthily buried at the *Libingan ng mga Bayani* with full military honours as it was done in furtiveness by the Philippines government. It had, however, opened the old wounds especially for those Filipinos who used to live under Marcos' dictatorship. Although the protesters failed to thwart the government from burying Marcos' remains at the LNMB, the protesters, however, managed to show their solidarity in reviving the memories of Marcos' violence as well as to counter the national narrative propagated by President Duterte. The act of the protestors to revive the memories of violence during Marcos' regime and against the interment of Marcos' remains at LNMB was to make the population aware of and be sensitive to his crimes. It is the hope of the protesters that the crimes and violence would not be repeated by any other presidents since the citizens have shown their strong oppositions towards the cruel president. Despite the national and international mobilisation to protest the interment of Marcos' remains, it failed to change the government's decision since President Duterte had already made a promise before and after the election that he will fulfil the request of Marcos' family to bury Marcos' remains at LNMB at all costs.

On the flip side, the memories of Marcos' dictatorship acted as a tool to fortify President Duterte's political authority by having a robust political collaboration with the late Marcos' son, Bongbong Marcos. In addition, the interment of Marcos' remains at LNMB become a part of historical revisionism to whitewash Marcos' dictatorship during his presidency. Towards this end, the Philippines government under President Duterte and his supporters together with pro-Marcos supporters highlighted the "bright side" of Marcos superiority particularly with regards of his positions, awards and medals he received during his presidency. Although those positions and awards claimed by Marcos had been rebutted by the NHCP through their extensive and well-grounded evidence of the treatise, the evidence, however, strangely received no response from the government nor Supreme Court. This situation shows that the lack of historical consciousness will influence the understanding of what is good and bad governance and the fact that it is governed by permanent value (objective) and not value-free (subjective). Without that basic understanding and learning from the past, it will create an alarming situation especially to the younger generations who may no longer remember the historical past. Hence, history could repeat itself. Therefore, the all-inclusive and in-depth historiography or historical narratives played a critical role in social memory specially to portray the "experienced past" as well as to value the human experiences during the tribulation period.

Endnotes

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Biography

Norizan Binti Kadir (norizan.kadir@usm.my) Ph.D is a Senior Lecturer at the History Section, School of Distance Education, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Pulau Pinang. Her research interests includes the Philippines History (Malaysia-Philippines relations), Islamic Intellectual History in Southeast Asia and Malaysian History.

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