Tales for the Darangen

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Howard McKaughan, as the tributes and reminiscences in this volume undoubtedly attest, was and is a larger-than-life character, filling many different roles with a mixture of geniality, boisterous good humor, firmness, competence, and serenity. An excellent scholar and superb administrator, he was also an amazingly supportive and challenging mentor to his graduate students, of whom I had the privilege to be one.

There are half a dozen incidents in my encounters with him over the years, starting with my enrollment at the University of Hawai'i as a graduate student in 1965, that particularly stand out in my memory, and these are the focus of this short memoir.

My first encounter with Manong Howard (as a group of his graduate students with an interest in Philippine linguistics years later decided to refer to him) was in his dual roles as chairman of the Linguistics Department and dean of the Graduate Division at the University of Hawai'i. I was newly enrolled in the linguistics program, and wanted to take an advanced course in social anthropology as part of my first semester's work. "Are you a good student?" he asked. (I was the recipient of an East-West Center grant, and had majored in history—at that time, at the University of Auckland, linguistics was taught only as a component of the Māori-studies and anthropology courses. I had taken a Māori-studies course which had whetted my interest in the discipline sufficiently for me to continue reading books on structural linguistics while officially studying other subjects). I replied that I hoped so, to which he replied "And so do I," as he signed the authorization. Fortunately, our hopes were not misplaced and I acquitted myself honorably in both social anthropology and linguistics during that first semester.

A year later, I found myself invited to become a so-called junior linguist in a research-and-development program to prepare materials for teaching Micronesian languages to United States Peace Corps trainees, under the auspices of the University's Pacific and Asian Linguistics Institute (PALI). Most of this work was done off-campus, but after it was finished, Howard, as director of PALI, secured another contract, to prepare materials on a number of Philippine languages for Peace Corps and Agency for International Development field staff. This brought us into direct contact with Professor McKaughan's secretary, and at our first staff meeting we were told with his characteristic serious humor that good secretaries were much more valuable and far more difficult to find than good researchers, and if we caused her any undue anxiety, we would be the ones who would be shown the door! At that stage Howard was wearing a triple crown, as dean, PALI director, and professor of linguistics. He kept the roles quite separate by doing the administrative work at set times in separate offices, so there were no files to get mixed up or priorities to become confused. Another valuable lesson that some of us learned at this time was that if you are really good at your work and value the integrity of your organization, you won't compromise important principles just for the sake of a few extra dollars. We happened to be around when Howard had what seemed to be a particularly heated conversation with a rather bumptious

Washington bureaucrat, who wanted to dictate how a particular research project should be carried out. The burden of Howard's response was "if we're doing it, we'll do it our way, and if you can't put up with that, then go find someone else"; they couldn't, so we got the contract anyway.

My master's thesis (leading to Benton 1968, cf. 1967) had been based on some of the Micronesian work, and my PhD dissertation (Benton 1972, as well as 1971a, 1971b, 1971c) was related to this second PALI project. Around the time I began my doctoral work, the indomitable Charles Hockett, doyen of what was fast becoming known as the old school of linguistics, visited Hawai'i and gave a stirring oration in which he enjoined us to eschew the seductive ideas of Noam Chomsky and his followers who had "sold their scientific heritage for a mess of speculative pottage". Hockett's words quoted here are as I remember them; however he expressed similar sentiments in print:

> There is a positive value in disagreement—even in a lunatic fringe, which can serve to keep those in the main stream of a science from becoming too settled in their ways. In this sense Chomsky has performed a service: he has explored a particular point of view to the point of showing that it is ridiculous. Unfortunately, in the process, doubtless with no such intention, he has suborned a faulty apprenticeship for many younger linguists (and has unbalanced, at least temporarily, the work of some older ones who should know better); these newcomers have not attained the understanding of earlier work that they ought to have, and have been seduced into trading their scientific birthright for mess of philosophical pottage. (Hockett's reply in Bergsland et al. 1968:173–174)

Some of us, I think, still shared such sentiments, and would gladly have concentrated on the hitherto received wisdom in our theoretical studies, but were told by Howard that we could agree with Professor Hockett if we wanted to, but we had to learn as much as we could about the new schools of thought nonetheless: "You can't criticize from a position of ignorance!"

Partly as a result of this, while writing my dissertation based on the fieldwork I had done in the Philippines, I became fascinated with the phonological theories of Chomsky & Halle, who had just published their *Sound pattern of English* (1968). This, by the way, was a complete departure for me from my previous inclinations, which had leaned heavily towards morphology and syntax, particularly the former, and semantics (of, admittedly, a non-Bloomfieldian kind). So what was supposed to be a brief background chapter burgeoned into a semi-autonomous work of a couple of hundred pages. One memorable evening, as I was finally about to embark on the thesis proper (i.e., the morphology part), I received a phone call from Manong Howard, who had been reading the phonology section of the embryonic magnum opus. "I have an important question for you, Richard. If you were to die tonight, would you have made a contribution to knowledge with what you have written so far?" "I think so," I replied (echoing an earlier response to another question). "Well then, stop, write a brief conclusion, rename your dissertation, and hand in the full draft next week!" Thus the general grammar of Pangasinan became a treatise on phonotactics, and I actually finished my degree before becoming bankrupt! I have had cause, with varying degrees of success, to repeat Howard's sage words to some of my own graduate students over the years—and, at times, to myself!

My last vignette is the sight of Howard arriving, after his retirement, to meet some of his former students who had gathered to meet him at a restaurant in Manila. Through the chaos and fumes came the Green Hornet himself, astride a fearsome-looking motorbike clad in the full protective gear. Most of us had no idea that the motorbike was his favorite mode of transport, and none of us would have dared to ride one through Greater Manila at any hour of

the day or night, let alone in the middle of a busy weekday. We had a wonderful reunion, and stood in awe as the masked biker zoomed out of sight after our farewells.

So, to an incomparable mentor and faithful friend, may I say (mixing languages rather than metaphors): *Dios ti agngina, Manong Howard. Mabuhay! Mā te Atua koe e manaaki, e tiaki.*

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