



The Chivalrous Bandit

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Taong labas/tulisan, or “chivalrous bandit,” robs rich people of their money and valuables and distributes them to the poor. The term refers to a hero figure who saves the people from suffering. In the Philippines, the “chivalrous bandit” appear in folklore as people who were active during the colonial period and the turbulent period after the war appear. Aligning with this tradition, gangsters in the Philippines are considered outlaws who disregard law but are also “folk heroes,” making them an ambiguous presence in today’s society. The famous gangster Asiong Salonga from the mob district Tondo in Manila has been portrayed in many movies and has become a popular figure among the masses. The notion that law essentially exists for the elite has conversely heroized the outlaws who are unafraid of law. The supporters of current President Rodrigo Roa Duterte have continued to spread the image of him as a “chivalrous bandit” on social media as a kind of folklore, almost an urban legend, which has helped to build a large support base for him. We have yet to see whether the authoritarian leadership by this “chivalrous bandit” figure will build a strong nation, or weaken by way of ignoring the state system. While helping to save the “good citizens,” the morals of the “chivalrous bandit” also dangerously border on inciting the people to the exclusion of the “bad others.”

Reference

- 日下渉「ソーシャルメディアのつくる「例外状態」：ドゥテルテ政権下のフィリピン」見市建, 茅根由佳編著『ソーシャルメディア時代の東南アジア政治』（明石書店、2020年）

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