

JOSÉ RIZAL: THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE NATIONAL VIEW OF HISTORY AND NATIONAL CONSCIOUSNESS IN THE PHILIPPINES

SETSUHO IKEHATA

The rewriting of the history of the Philippines from the standpoint of the Filipinos is today one of the major subjects of research in the history of that country. A perspective on Philippine history from the standpoint of the Filipino people themselves and free from the bias of the colonialists, was first attempted in the era of the Propaganda Movement, 1882-1896. In this paper, I should like to probe into the process of the formation of the historical view of the Filipino people taken by the greatest thinker of the Propaganda Movement era, José Rizal, and into the notion of the national solidarity of the people of the Philippines (i. e., their national consciousness), which that historical view heightened.

INTRODUCTION

Today, throughout Southeast Asia, there reverberate loud cries for the restructuring and rewriting of national histories. They are cries to "rewrite our own history from the perspective of independent peoples" in place of the "histories of the colonies" penned by the colonialists and of the national histories colored by colonial ideology. The Philippines, with which I deal in this paper, are no exception. There, for almost two decades debate over the description of the national history, and especially of the history of the revolution around which the national history centers, has raged back and forth in the academic and journalistic worlds. The debate has developed over and revolves around two points: 1) how to evaluate the periods of colonial rule by Spain, America and Japan; and 2) who really bore the burden in the history of the liberation of the Filipino people—that is, what stratum of people.

The first point encompasses quite complex problems deriving from two facts. On the one hand, under a Spanish administration of fully three hundred years, in which Church and State were united, the greater part of the islands was pervaded by Catholicism, and even today the Catholic Church and Catholic religious groups constitute the major force in the worlds of religion, thought, scholarship, and education. On the other hand, as a result of the forty odd years of American administration, English remains as the official language and the language of higher education, and even today large numbers of intellectuals are produced who have been reared in American culture and with an American education. The evaluation of the various colonial eras is

complicated, therefore, because research and writing on the history of the Filipino people (which includes a total colonial period of nearly four hundred years) must be carried forward in an academic and educational world in which systems of thought inherited from colonial rule possess great influence.

The second point of the debate has concentrated on the continuing research of Teodoro A. Agoncillo which treats the Philippine revolution as "the revolt of the masses."¹ The identification of a particular stratum as the standard-bearer of the revolution, the central event of Philippine national history, is not simply a historical problem but is also one closely connected to the similar problem of singling out a stratum as standard-bearer for both the present age of the building of a national society and the future as well. Consequently, the debate on this point has assumed the character of a class confrontation within the nation and, to a greater extent than the conflict over the first point, has tended to develop as a political issue. However, this second point of the debate, like the first, is by no means unrelated to surviving colonialist ideology. Colonialist ideology not only survives in today's Philippine society but reborn in a new version, has been transformed into a philosophy that supports a given social class.²

Looking back on the research on Philippine national history by Filipinos, it seems clear that these works, from the very beginning, had to come to a confrontation with colonialist ideology. Or rather, to put it more precisely, it was in order to reveal the fallaciousness and illegitimacy of the colonialist ideology that research by Filipinos on their own national history was first undertaken. And the beginnings of that research took place in the period of the Propaganda Movement³ that preceded the Philippine Revolution. Ever since that time, the rewriting of Philippine history from the standpoint of the Filipino people has been a task of major importance for the Filipinos but one difficult to accomplish.

In this paper I should like, therefore, to try to trace the research in Philippine national history carried out by José Rizal in the Propaganda

¹ Teodoro A. Agoncillo, *The Revolt of the Masses: The Story of Bonifacio and the Katipunan*, Quezon City, University of the Philippines, 1956; and, *Malolos: The Crisis of the Philippines*, Quezon City, University of the Philippines, 1960 and so forth.

² The debate on the rewriting of Philippine national history as well as the ideological background of the debate, are treated in my article "Philippine minzoku-shi no shutai-teki kosei," *Ajia kenkyū*, XIV-3, 31-55.

³ The period of the Reform Movement that preceded the Philippine Revolution is generally referred to in Philippine history as the era of the Propaganda Movement. Scholarly interpretations as to the beginning and end of this period differ, but here, following T. A. Agoncillo, it refers to the period from 1882 to 1896 (See Teodoro A. Agoncillo, *The Revolt of the Masses*, pp. 22-23). The Propaganda Movement developed with the Filipino students studying in Europe in those days as its core. These students, by pen and tongue, exposed the evils of Spanish administration, and demanded freedom and equality for the Filipinos. However, this movement, which was composed of intellectuals and confined itself to reform activities within the framework of the Spanish regime, differed drastically from the later revolutionary movement of the masses.

Movement period, and to shed light on the construction of the first national history done from the perspective of the Filipino people and on the national consciousness that developed through that history.

I

José Rizal, one of the major ideologues of the Propaganda Movement, turned to the study of his national history with two principal objectives in mind. The first was to reveal the evils of the colonial rule that enveloped Philippine society of the period and to find a solution for that evil in the future. The second was to reveal to the inhabitants of the Philippines, gasping under the oppression of the colonialists, the history of their pre-conquest past, of which the colonialists had kept them in darkness, and to summon in them pride in their traditional culture and a sense of solidarity as a nation. The results of Rizal's studies appeared in his commentary on Antonio de Morga's *Sucesos de las Islas Filipinas* (Historical Events of the Philippine Islands) (Mexico, 1609), and such articles as "Filipinas dentro de cien años" (The Philippines a Century Hence), and "Sobre la indolencia de los Filipinos" (The Indolence of the Filipinos).

In these writings, Rizal fundamentally rejected the history of the Philippine islands as portrayed by the colonialists. Instead, he provided a new view of Philippine history—that which I have called here the historical view of the Filipino people. Through his research on Philippine history in which he took such a point of view, Rizal was able both to foresee the inevitability of national independence for the inhabitants of the Philippines as well as to foster among them the development of the idea of solidarity as a nation, that is to say, their national consciousness.

Rizal's commencement of full scale research on Philippine history dates from the beginning of his second period of life in Europe, in London from June of 1888. In London, Rizal paid daily visits to the British Museum, transcribing and making comments on the aforementioned work of Antonio de Morga. His commentary was published in Paris in 1890. Prior to its publication, however, works by Filipino intellectuals such as Pedro A. Paterno, Pardo de Tavera, Isabelo de los Reyes y Florentino on Philippine pre-Spanish history, folklore, customs, and languages had already been published.⁴ None of these works was a systematic study oriented toward composing a Filipino national history by Filipinos, as was the case with Rizal which I detail below. However, one can gather from the extent of these scholarly writings that

⁴ Pedro Alejandro Paterno, *La Antigua civilización tagalog* (The Ancient Tagalog Civilization), Madrid, 1887; Pardo de Tavera, *El Sanscrito en la lengua tagalog* (The Sanscrit in the Tagalog Language), Paris, 1887; Isabelo de los Reyes y Florentino, *Filipinas: artículos varios... sobre etnografía, historia y costumbres del país...* (The Philippines: various articles... on ethnography, history and customs of the country...), Manila, 1887; *Las Visayas en la época de la conquista...* (The Visayas in the Period of the Conquest...), Iloilo, 1887; *El folklore Filipino...* (The Philippine Folklore...), Manila, 1889; *Historia de Filipinas...* (History of the Philippines...), Manila, 1889, Vol. 1, etc.

during the Propaganda Movement period there was exceedingly great interest among Filipino intellectuals including Rizal in the Philippines' indigenous and pre-Spanish cultures.

In 1882, Rizal left Manila's highest seat of learning, the Universidad de Santo Tomás, to study abroad at the Universidad Central de Madrid. There he joined the Propaganda Movement. He majored in medicine for the first two of his three years at the university and in philosophy during the third year. Thereafter he left Spain to live first in France and then in Germany, seeking, while engaged in his medical practice, to absorb the culture of various parts of Europe. The major awakening of his interest in Philippine national culture and history took place during his stay in Germany. In Heidelberg, where he spent the first part of his stay in Germany, Rizal heard about the prominent Austrian student of the Philippines, Dr. Fernando Blumentritt, and he wrote that scholar in July of 1886, seeking to make his acquaintance. After the opening of his correspondence with Blumentritt, Rizal's linguistic, ethnological, and historical knowledge of the Filipino people increased rapidly. By November 1886 he had already moved to Berlin where he visited the Royal Library and the German Museum, etc., and came across many rare works concerned with the Philippines. Among these were Antonio de Morga, *Sucesos de las Islas Filipinas*, of which he had been told by Blumentritt⁵ and Dr. Francisco Combes, S. J., *Historia de las Islas de Mindanao, Jolo y sus adyacentes...* (History of the Islands of Mindanao, Jolo and their adjacent...), (Madrid, 1667). In addition, through Dr. Blumentritt's introduction, Rizal became acquainted with such prominent European ethnologists, linguistic and geographers as Drs. Jagor, Meyer, Virchow, and Wecker of Germany, Dr. Kern of Holland, Dr. Rost of England, etc., and was also accepted as a member of Berlin's Ethnographic Society, Anthropological Society, and Geographical Society.⁶ Thereby, he came in contact with historical and ethnological materials and scholarly works based on those materials, that had heretofore been inaccessible to him. And thanks to that contact, Rizal became aware that the history of the Filipino people and the indigenous culture of the Philippines had hitherto been unjustly disdained and glossed over by the Spaniards.

It was at this time that Rizal came to feel strongly the necessity of rewriting the Philippine history that the bias of the colonialists had left unmentioned.⁷ However Rizal at the time did not yet possess sufficient accumulated scholarly knowledge to meet that necessity nor did he have sufficient time. He appealed, therefore, to Blumentritt, whom he revered, to take

⁵ See letter from Blumentritt to Rizal, November 14, 1886, in *Escritos de José Rizal* (Writings of José Rizal), Manila, Comisión Nacional del Centenario de José Rizal, 1961, Vol. 2 (book 2, part 1^a), pp. 23-24. All of the letters to and from Rizal, and the works of Rizal, used below in this paper are from those collected in this work.

⁶ See the correspondence between Rizal and Blumentritt from November 1886 through February 1890, in *Escritos*, Vol. 2 (book 2, part 1^a).

⁷ See, for example, his letter to Blumentritt, *ibid.*, Vol. 2, pp. 63-65.

on the task of rewriting Philippine history which he himself was unable to perform :

The Philippines should be grateful to you if you would write a complete history of our country from an impartial point of view. I believe that you are the only one who could do it. I have the courage for it but I don't know enough. I have not read many books about my country and Spanish libraries are closed to me. Moreover, I need my time for other things and everything that I would say would always be suspicious for being inspired by a partisan spirit; but you will be regarded as an impartial judge. You have no selfish interests. As you have very well said, Austria has no colonies, does not covet our country, and so you don't have to alter historical truth either for the Filipinos or the Spaniards, and you can look upon the past as calmly as any foreign observer. You profess the Catholic religion, but you don't have an iota of fanaticism. And you don't have to see the country personally; the historian contemplates the past. I believe that you are the best qualified for the task.⁸

In the meantime, Rizal, during his stay in Germany, while continuing to increase his knowledge of Filipino history, language, and culture, also published the first and greatest novel of the Propaganda Movement, *Noli Me Tángere*,⁹ in February of 1887 in Berlin. He had begun this novel in 1884 while still a student at the Universidad Central de Madrid. In it, he painted a vivid portrait of the circumstances of the administration of the Philippines, seeking thereby to awaken the Spanish authorities and the Filipinos themselves to the true facts of colonial administration. Hence while the novel was written in the form of a tale of the tragic love of the principal characters, Cristomo Ibarra and Maria Clara, what Rizal is really depicting is the cancer of Philippine society that no one before him had dared to portray. The friars who, in the pious name of religion, mocked and ridiculed the people and extorted heavy taxes from them, are portrayed with special vigor.

Conjecture here on the relationship between this novel and Rizal's study of the history of the Filipino people draws our attention to the following points. Rizal seems to have considered two lines of action for reforming the situation of the Philippines as he himself portrayed it. He does not, of course, state these in concrete terms in the novel but they can be gleaned from its overall contents. First, he proposed to enlighten the Filipino masses, who had been kept in ignorance by the colonial powers and especially the friars, through scientific education liberated from the ideology of the religious orders, and to awaken the masses to an awareness of themselves as thinking human beings. Second he proposed that since the unhappiness borne by the entire Filipino people would not be resolved where individuals were isolated from one another, it would be necessary to propagate "the idea of what is called a fatherland" in which all would join hands. Thus Rizal sights along two

⁸ Letter from Rizal to Blumentritt, April 13, 1887, *ibid.*, Vol. 2, p. 132. The English translation is from the English edition published by the José Rizal National Centennial Commission.

⁹ According to Rizal's letter of March 5, 1887, to Felix Resurrección Hidalgo, "Noli Me Tángere," words taken from the Gospel of St. Luke, mean "touch me not."

lines: enlightenment of the masses, and the development of love for the fatherland. And Rizal took it upon himself as one of the chosen intellectuals among the people of the Philippines to put these two lines into action. Herein would seem to lie one important reason why Rizal hereafter spent so much energy and attention on research in the history of the Filipino people freed from the bias of the colonial powers.

Rizal's historical studies of the Filipino people which began in earnest with his transcription of and commentary upon Morga's work appear, as we have seen above, to have had as their first aim the exposure of the falseness of the colonial ideology that enveloped the Philippines of the times. But there is, in addition to this aim, a further point that must be taken into account. That is what he came to realize through Kalamba incident which led to his being compelled to flee to Europe the second time.¹⁰ As a result of this incident, Rizal, having lost faith in Spain and being acutely aware of the limits of a reform movement that hoped for the goodwill of Spain, perceived more clearly the position of the Filipinos as an oppressed people and, with sensitive perception of the problem of how the situation in the Philippines should be reformed, turned to research on the history of his people.

Immediately after his arrival in London in June of 1888, he wrote, in a letter to his comrade of the Reform Movement, Mariano Ponce, of his ardor to study for the sake of overthrowing the enemy.

With regard to the newspaper, I appreciate very much your wish, but I am already more or less engaged to manage one. Now I am devoting myself day and night to certain studies, for I should not want to manage any periodical without possessing some knowledge about the country, its history, its government, because it seems to me that we shall have to fight a great deal and it would be desirable to fight and defeat the enemy. For this purpose I am making use of the very rich library of the British Museum the like of which cannot be found anywhere else. For this reason I am going to remain here for a long time yet.¹¹

Here we find no longer the romantic nostalgia for things Filipino and the

¹⁰ Toward the end of 1887, the Spanish government office, in order to determine whether the collection of rents of the estates of the religious orders balanced against the amount of their taxes, demanded a report from the *gobernadorcillo* (municipal head) of Rizal's home town of Kalamba, an estate of the Dominican Order. Believing this to be the first step in the reform of the colonial administration, Rizal took pen in hand and in a letter signed by more than fifty of the townspeople appealed to the office that despite the fact the harvests increased yearly, the townspeople were being increasingly impoverished by rises in the rents that far exceeded the crop increases. Incensed by this, the Dominican Order took the affair to court, demanding that the tenants be evicted from the estate on the grounds of having made a fraudulent report. The townspeople carried their fight on the matter as far as the Royal Audencia, but lost the case in the end. The homes of the tenants were burnt to the ground by troops sent by the government office and they were forcibly evicted from their lands. Twenty-five of the principal townspeople, including Rizal's father and three sisters, were condemned to exile.

¹¹ Letter to Mariano Ponce, October 12, 1888, in *Escritos*, Vol. 2, (book 3, part 1^a), p. 222. The English follows the translation of the National Heroes Commission.

tradition past found during his stay in Germany; the figure of Rizal the intellectual about to turn to reforming the *status quo* with the lessons of science as his weapons has distinctly emerged.¹² The scientific approach found in his research on the national history and his position of attempting to apprehend that history not as fragmentary knowledge of particular times and individual incidents but as a coherent whole extending from before the conquest to the present, seem to have developed in such a manner.

This is also clearly manifested in the formation of the Association International des Philippinistes¹³ which took as its objective "[the study of] the Philippines from the historic and scientific point of view." In order to attain this objective, Rizal intended to gather individuals concerned with Philippine problems, and to convene an international conference during the period of the international exposition set in Paris in the summer of 1889. And at the same time he hoped that through the influence of such an international conference the Philippine reform movement would make some progress, however slight. As it turned out, the conference never materialized, but according to a plan of the proceedings which Rizal sent Blumentritt, it had been decided that the following four themes would be discussed.¹⁴

- I. The Philippines before the arrival of the Spaniards (to 1521)
- II. From the arrival of the Spaniards to the loss of Philippine autonomy and her incorporation in the Spanish nation (1521-1808)
- III. From the incorporation of the Philippines in the Spanish nation to the Cavite Mutiny (1808-1872)
- IV. Linguistic

The fact that these four topics were planned as the themes of the international conference attests more clearly than anything else to the fact that Rizal was attempting to apprehend the history of the Filipino nation systematically and as a coherent whole. Such was the manner in which Rizal's posture toward the study of the national history developed.

¹² Another illustration of this figure of Rizal is to be found in his Letter to the Filipinos at Barcelona (Los Amigos de Barcelona), early in the year of 1889, (Comienzos del año 1889), in *Escritos*, Vol. 2, pp. 275-276.

¹³ It is unclear when this association was formed and what sorts of activities it actually engaged in. The earliest reference to the association in *Escritos de José Rizal* is found in Rizal's letter of January 14, 1889 to Blumentritt, in which he states that "We have formed an Association International des Filipinistas." In the correspondence between Rizal and Blumentritt thereafter, the two exchanged opinions as to the activities and membership of the association. But on October 20, 1889, Rizal wrote Blumentritt that "[The association] is in a latent state until I have finished my Morga," and not single reference to the association appears thereafter. Consequently, it would seem that the association probably went out of existence.

¹⁴ See Letter to Blumentritt, January 14, 1889, in *Escritos*, Vol. 2, (book 2, part 2^a), pp. 423-439. In this letter, Rizal asked Blumentritt to take the post of President of the Association.

II

Rizal's commentary on Antonio de Morga's *Sucesos de las Islas Filipinas* which was begun in June of 1888, was finally finished and ready for publication in Paris by the end of the following year.¹⁵ Antonio de Morga held the highest post in the Spanish government office in Manila from the end of the sixteenth century through the beginning of the seventeenth. *Sucesos de las Islas Filipinas* records the history of the Spanish invasion and conquest from the expedition of Magallanes to Morga's own times, relations between the Philippines and the various states of Asia, the facts about the administration of the inhabitants, and the various traditional institutions, folkways, and religions of the people. It was known among the intellectuals as the most reliable of the records of the early conquerors. Chapter Eight, a "Narrative of the Philippine Islands and their natives, their antiquity, customs and Government, both during their gentility (non-conversion) and after the Spaniards had conquered them; and other peculiarities," was, due to the richness and relative accuracy of its contents, considered one of the best documents for learning about pre-conquest Filipino society. It seems likely that Rizal decided to reprint¹⁶ and annotate this work because he too considered it to be the material best suited to his purpose of rewriting Philippine history.

In his preface to the book, entitled "To the Filipinos," Rizal stated his purpose in publishing the book as follows. The quotation is a rather long one, but in it we are able to perceive clearly the reason why Rizal decided to publish the book, or in other words, the reason why he took up the historical study of the Filipino people.

In the *Noli me tângere* I began the sketch of the present state of our Native Land. The effect that my attempt produced pointed out to me, before proceeding to unfold the other successive pictures before your eyes, the necessity of first making known to you the past in order that you may be able to judge better the present and to measure the road traversed during three centuries. Born and reared in the ignorance of our Yesterday, like almost all of you, without voice of authority to speak about what we did not see or studied, I considered it necessary to invoke the testimony of an illustrious Spaniard who governed the destinies of the Philippines in the beginning of her new era and witnessed the last moments of our ancient nationality. It is then the shadow of the civilization of our ancestors which the author is now evoking before you. I transmit faithfully to you his words, without changing or mutilating them, . . . If the book succeeds to awaken your consciousness of our past, already effaced from

¹⁵ Rizal informed Mariano Ponce in a letter dated November 11, 1889, that the work could be expected to be out within some weeks as the correction of the proof was finished. He also wrote to Baldomero Roxas on December 28, 1889, that he had sent four copies of the work to Lipa on that day. But the colophon of the published edition of the work is dated 1890.

¹⁶ Lord Henry E. J. Stanley's English translation of *Sucesos de las Islas Filipinas* had already been published by the Hakluyt Society of London and this had been reprinted in 1888 by Just Zaragoza. (See the preface to Rizal's edition of *Sucesos de las Islas Filipinas*).

your memory, and to rectify what has been falsified and slandered, then I have not worked in vain, and with this as a basis, however small it may be, we shall be able to study the future.¹⁷

Rizal followed up his portrayal of the *status quo* in *Noli Me Tángere* by trying to answer the needs of the people and so publishing this commentary. In it he tried to resuscitate the pre-conquest past that had been erased from the memory of the inhabitants of the Philippines and thereby to rekindle their confidence in their traditional past, in addition to attempting to establish a basis for judging whether the three hundred years of Spanish rule deserved to be thanked or cursed.

It would appear that the descriptive contents of Morga's work as well as Rizal's notes did serve to meet these objectives adequately. Rizal's notes were carefully executed and based on the records of many conquerors and mariners such as Pigafetta, Chirino, and others, as well as on existing mores, customs, and languages of the Philippines. His annotations on Chapter Eight are particularly exhaustive. Through his commentary, Rizal strove to establish that the pre-conquest past was one of which the Filipinos could be proud; that their forebears were hard-working men of outstanding abilities and high moral standards; and that this rich heritage had been destroyed and lost in the course of the conquest. The publication of this book was the first work responding to Rizal's long-felt need for a history of the Filipino people that was free of colonial ideology. With the book's publication, the previous "history of the Philippine Islands" approach, which legitimized the disparagement of pre-conquest culture and interpreted the Spanish Conquest as a spiritual and moral blessing, was severely challenged. In learning of the pre-conquest Philippine society revealed in the book, people gained a criterion for reevaluating the three hundred years of Spanish rule as well as the present state of the Philippines. The publication of Rizal's commentary on Morga became the basis for the rewriting of Philippine history.

But the commentary on Morga performed still another historical role. Through it was revealed the fact that, prior to the Spanish conquest, there had already existed in the Philippines a common culture in which the inhabitants of the Philippines could take pride. This enabled the people's self-confidence in their pre-conquest past to be rekindled. Here, Rizal, who had spoken in *Noli Me Tángere* of the need to propagate love for the fatherland, was able to invest his previously vaguely-stated notion of a fatherland, with an objective component, namely a common traditional culture. Thus an important basis for creating a sense of national solidarity among the inhabitants of the Philippines was established, and the first step in the development of their national consciousness was taken.

On the basis of his commentary on Morga, and around the time of its publication, Rizal also published a number of his most important treatises, which deserve to be called historic. The first of these was his "Massage to

¹⁷ *Escrítos*, Vol. 6, pp. v-vi. The English follows the English edition of the José Rizal National Centennial Commission.

the Young Women of Malolos" (Sa Mga Kababayang Dalaga Sa Malolos)¹⁸ written in February of 1889, in Tagalog, in response to the request of the women of the town of Malolos in Bulacan. It is noteworthy that in this message Rizal did not address himself to Philippine history in particular, but rather emphasized two points concerning his hopes for the women of the Philippines thereafter: he wished them to become 1) human beings who, rather than blindly obeying the deceitful teachings of the friars, thought rationally for themselves and discerned truth; and 2) mothers who taught their children reverence for patriotism.

The monastic forces in the Philippines not only held administrative and judicial powers over the inhabitants, but also disseminated, with the authority of religion, the ideology they had fashioned in order to preserve the colonial regime. The view of Philippine history held by the Spanish people, too, had been fashioned and disseminated by the monastic forces as such an ideology of colonial rule. Consequently, Rizal's incisive criticism in the "Message" of the religious orders' policy of keeping the Philippine inhabitants in ignorance and darkness, has the same objective as his commentary on Morga, namely, to clarify the facts of the history of the Filipino people.

III

Following this "Message" a treatise entitled "Filipinas dentro de cien años" was published in four installments in *La Solidaridad*, the organ of the Propaganda Movement, from September 1889 to February 1890.¹⁹ Here, Rizal, who had mounted the first challenge to the colonialists' view of Philippine history in his commentary on Morga, took up himself the task of systematically developing the scientific and impartial history of the Philippines that he had been advocating. In this treatise Rizal presented a systemized view of the Filipino people from the past to the future, a perspective gained from his work on Morga. The contents of the article are quite rough, but it manifests a perspective explaining Philippine history from the standpoint of the inhabitants of the islands. His view of the national history has, here, finally developed a systematic image of the history of his people. I should like now to introduce the substance of that article in some detail.

The article is divided into four parts. In the first, Rizal deals with what ought perhaps to be called the spiritual history of the Filipinos under the Spanish regime. Here Rizal interprets the conquest by Spain and the course of colonization as a process in which the Filipinos came to lose their legitimate culture (or "national spirit" which he apparently takes as an interchangeable term). And he takes the spiritual awakening of the people that began in his own times as a revival of confidence in the traditional culture. This first part of the article evaluates "the road traversed during three centuries" from a viewpoint diametrically opposed to that of the old history of the Philippine Islands approach. He depicts that road not as the process of civilization of

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, Vol. 7, pp. 55-65.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, Vol. 7, pp. 136-165.

the Filipinos by Catholicism but as the process of the decline of the Filipino national spirit. And the efforts of the recently awakened intellectuals he takes as portending rescue from this decline and fall.

Part Two, which is premised upon the analysis in Part One and is regarded as the core of the article, investigates the possibilities latent in the Philippine *status quo* in order to forecast the future of the country as his method of uncovering these possibilities, Rizal engages in a comparative examination of the political situation (*Situación política*)—in other words, the strained relations between rulers and ruled—of the present and that of three hundred years previous, i. e., at the beginning of Spanish rule.

According to his analysis here, in the present as compared to three hundred years earlier, Spanish rule has been strengthened and the threat of external aggression has lessened, but the relations between the Filipinos and the Spanish have grown hostile and unstable in a marked degree. Three centuries before, deep-rooted territorial hostilities among the Filipinos themselves had inhibited the spread of national hostility toward the Spaniards. In addition, in those days, there was relatively little damage done by the colonial authorities to the self-respect of the Filipinos; the religious orders were on the side of the inhabitants and protested vehemently against any abuses of power by the secular rulers; and the conduct of the colonial officials was subject to stringent inspection. In the present, however, the Filipinos, through the oppression that bore equally on them all, began to be conscious of their common misfortune and their common anguish, compared to which the territorial hostilities that had once existed among them were but trifling matters. The religious orders which had once been on the inhabitants' side had themselves become abusers of power; the inspection of colonial officials (*residencia*) had disappeared; and while the obligations and taxes of the inhabitants grew heavier and heavier, they were deprived all the more of their rights and freedom. The Filipinos had now come to perceive the Spaniards as exploiters and executioners and lack of loyalty to the Spanish had become conspicuous. If such circumstances persisted, a clash between the Spaniards and the Filipinos would be inevitable.

Moreover, what was important was that the violence foreseen would be drastically different from any violence that had occurred in the preceding three hundred years. Previous violence had always been based on personal, territorial interests rather than on an overall national necessity, and hence had always failed utterly. But the violence Rizal predicts was envisioned as an uprising of the entire people. As he indicates in part One, the activities of the aroused intellectuals in the islands and abroad were bringing about a broad awakening of national spirit among the Filipinos, and their "common misfortune" and "common abasement" transcending the bounds of regionalism were beginning to link together all the people of the islands. Hence the future of the Philippines would likely be either one in which the Filipinos would, obtaining greater freedom than at present, remain under Spanish rule; or else one in which they would declare independence at the cost of their

own bloodshed. But Rizal marked the end of Part Two with a remark that, given that no one desires such a tragic outcome as outright war, he would inquire into how a peaceful development, without loss to either country of its rights, interests, or prestige might be achieved with the Philippines remaining under the Spanish flag.

Thus, in Part Three, Rizal follows up his remark at the end of Part Two, and singles out the following reforms as necessary for maintaining the Philippines in peace under the Spanish flag: 1) the recognition of freedom of the press; 2) the seating of Filipino representatives in the Spanish Cortes; 3) recruitment to government posts by competitive examinations in which Filipinos have the opportunity to participate, etc.

In Part Four, Rizal takes a world historical view in his consideration, and asserts the inevitability of the independence of the colonial areas on the grounds that there has been no instance in history of one people's having permanently governed another. In the case of the Philippines, he says:

... , that if her people are not assimilated by the Spanish nation, if the rulers do not take possession of the spirit of her inhabitants, if equitable laws and sincere and liberal reforms do not make them forget that they belong to distinct races, or if both people do not fuse to form one homogenous social and political mass, which is not troubled by opposing tendencies and antagonistic feelings and interests, the Philippines one day will declare herself inevitably and unmistakably independent.²⁰

Rizal did not think that these negative conditions would materialize in the future; hence, it would seem that he is advocating the various reforms outlined in Part Three as the reforms of a transitional period that would contribute to the peaceful, steady progress of the acquisition of independence.

Continuing his analysis, Rizal proceeds to conjecture as to whether, were the Philippines to declare independence, she might not once more fall into the hands of another of the great powers. Here, while concluding that the various European powers and Japan have their hands full with ruling the colonies they already possess and hence pose no threat to the Philippines, he points out that America, having a deep interest in the Pacific and not having taken part in the partitioning of Africa, poses a real threat indeed.

"Filipinas dentro de cien años" is no mere outline without substance. A perusal of the article leaves us amazed at Rizal's superb powers of analysis and ability to foresee the future. However, in addition, what really deserves our primary attention is that the image of Philippine history portrayed here—the first which can properly be called an historical view of the *Filipino people*—differs completely in viewpoint and content from that of the hitherto dominant approach to the history of the Philippine Islands which discussed at great length the course of conversion to Catholicism, the struggles between the colonial officials and the religious orders and between the archbishops and the orders, the foreign expeditions of the colonial government, and the war with the Moros, etc. In "Filipinas dentro de cien años," the three

²⁰ *Ibid.*, Vol. 7, p. 158. All of the English translations from volume 7 cited hereinafter follow the translations of the National Heroes Commission.

hundred years of the Spanish regime are grasped, evaluated and rewritten, not from the side of the colonialists, but from that of the Filipinos. Here too the future of the Philippines is foreseen not in terms of the possibilities hoped for by the colonialists, but in terms of those which might be realized by actions on the part of the Filipinos themselves.

Thus the independence of the Filipino nation is forecast in terms of the inevitable trend of world history. But Rizal continues as ever to search for peaceful means to achieve independence and considers violent revolution a last resort to be employed only when there remain no other alternatives. "Filipinas dentro de cien años" not only served as the first milestone in the development of the historical view of the Filipino people but also was of the highest significance for the development of the national consciousness of the Filipinos as well. As we have already seen in his commentary on Morga Rizal established, as an objective basis for the sense of solidarity of the inhabitants of the Philippines, the existence of their common culture in the pre-Spanish era. However, in this article, with heightened perception he clarifies the opportunity for the autonomous development of the sense of national solidarity in the mind of the people. In Part One he describes the circumstances in which the people, reacting against the oppression of the colonialists, finally began to awaken spiritually, as follows:

The spirit of the people didn't allow itself to be thus intimidated and though it had been awakened in a few hearts only, its flame, however, *was* spreading surely and fiercely thanks to the abuses and stupid tricks of certain classes to destroy noble and generous sentiments.²¹

When he refers here to the people's spiritual awakening he refers to national spirit. And this national spirit was the sense of solidarity created by the realization of a common misfortune and a common abasement. In Part Two, Rizal states that

Today there is a factor which did not exist before. The national spirit (el espíritu de la nación) has awakened, and a common misfortune and a common abasement has united all the inhabitants of the islands.²²

Philippine independence he foresees as an unavoidable consequence of the burgeoning of this national spirit. In other words, Rizal equates national consciousness with the self-developed sense of solidarity as an oppressed people. He thus develops national consciousness from a concept based on a common past to a concept rejecting colonial rule.

IV

Finally, I should like to touch on another representative and historical work of Rizal, *Sobre la Indolencia de los Filipinos*.²³ Here Rizal places under

²¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. 7, p. 138.

²² *Ibid.*, Vol. 7, p. 145.

²³ Carried in installments in *La Solidaridad* on July 17, July 31, August 15, August 31, and September 15, 1890. *Ibid.*, Vol. 7, pp. 227-261.

historical scrutiny the contention that the "Filipinos are indolent," which was one of the major views of the colonialists. The colonialists had identified the indolence of the Filipinos as the cause of the stagnancy and backwardness of Philippine society. Rizal rebutted this with the following argument. Due to the difference in climates, it is of course impossible to expect from the Filipinos the same degree of diligence as that found in European societies. But the Filipinos' indolent attitude toward life to be seen today is not something with which they were born but rather the result of three hundred years of colonial rule which stifled their will to work and entrepreneurial drive, forcing a stagnant and backward life on them. As is clear in the records of the conquerors, the pre-conquest inhabitants of the Philippines burned with a passion for work. That this has disappeared today is the result of the following colonial policies: 1) the prohibition of dealings with other Asian countries except China; 2) the decline in coastal trade by the pirates; 3) restraints on the freedom of agricultural and business activities; 4) the decrease in the rewards of labor due to the exploitation by the *encomenderos*;²⁴ 5) the monopoly of trade and profit by the Alcaldes Mayores;²⁵ 6) the lazy manner and gambling that the Spaniards brought with them; 7) various religious rituals; 8) the attitude that everything is to be resolved by the will of God; 9) the government's cool indifference toward the promotion of agriculture and trade; 10) the closure of Spanish markets to Philippine goods; 11) the confiscation of good land by the religious orders; 12) the treatment of the Filipinos in a manner demeaning to their intelligence; 13) the lack of education in the proper sense of the word; 14) the deprivation of the Filipinos' self-respect and the loss therefore of their moral stamina, etc.

Rizal, in painstakingly identifying those colonial policies that had driven the Filipinos to a life of resigned indolence, mounted a trenchant counter-attack on the notion that the backwardness and stagnancy of Philippine society was the inherent fate of the Philippines. The backwardness and the stagnancy were really the results of colonial rule. Hence, throughout his article, the suggestion is that in order to overcome these difficulties, it is necessary to overcome colonial rule itself. Rizal, however, did not one-sidedly lay the blame for these evils on the Spaniards, but placed it as well on the Filipinos who had tacitly accepted Spanish misrule. In his view, that such misrule was permitted to operate without hindrance was due to the Philippine inhabitants' lack of a national sentiment around which to rally against it.

Moreover, the lack of national sentiment (*sentimiento nacional*) breeds another evil which is the scarcity of any opposition to the measures that are prejudicial to the

²⁴ In the early period of the Spanish colonization of the Philippines, the Spanish king entrusted (*encomendar*) a given number of inhabitants of the conquered areas to the charge of each of those conquerors and colonizers who took part in and made outstanding contributions to the conquest, pacification, or in battle. At the same time, he granted them the rights of levying tribute and enforced labor on the inhabitants. Those who were granted these powers were called *Ecomendero*.

²⁵ Governmental head of a Province.

people and the absence of any initiative that will redound to their welfare. A man in the Philippines is only an individual; he is not a member of a nation. He is deprived of the right of association and therefore he is weak and inert.²⁶

In order for the Filipinos to overcome the stagnancy and backwardness that had been forced upon them, and to promote their own welfare, it would be necessary for them to rally in resistance to the colonial policies at fault. So long as the Filipinos remained isolated individuals, they would be weak and incapable of liberation from their stagnant lives.

In this article, Rizal's concept of national consciousness has made a noteworthy advance. National consciousness has here come to be emphasized as the spirit of a common struggle seeking the promotion of a common welfare. This is a concept one step removed from the national consciousness he stressed in "Filipinas dentro de cien años," i. e., the awareness of a common misfortune and a common abasement. In being conceived as the spirit of a common struggle aimed at a common objective, Rizal's concept of national consciousness comes for the first time to possess an orientation toward the future and toward the power of autonomous action, and establishes itself as a concept rejecting colonial rule. But Rizal did not believe that this national consciousness of a struggle against the colonial policies had as yet spread among the Filipinos. It was something that had only just begun to be felt among a small number of people, something that really had to be made to penetrate widely hereafter.

In "Como se gobiernan las Filipinas" (How the Philippines are Governed),²⁷ Rizal spoke as follows about the circumstances in which a national consciousness is lacking among the people and about the necessity of its development.

... The national spirit (el espiritu nacional) begins to utter its first cries; formerly only family or tribal feelings existed, hardly that of the country so that no stupid measure provoked any strong protest from public opinion, except in cases where relatives are more or less directly hurt. Concerning his country every Filipino thinks this way: Let her settle her affairs alone, save herself, protest struggle; I'm not going to lift a finger, I'm not the one to settle things; I've enough with my own affairs, my passions, and my whims. Let others pull out the chestnut from the fire, afterwards we shall eat it. Filipinos do not seem to know that the triumph is the child of struggle, that joy is the flower of many sufferings and privations, and that redemption presupposes martyrdom and sacrifice.²⁸

A statement to a similar effect may be found in his letter of January 7, 1891 to Father Vincent Garcia.²⁹

V

It is important to ask what influence the national view of history and the national consciousness developed by Rizal had on the subsequent liberation

²⁶ *Ibid.*, Vol. 7, p. 257.

²⁷ Published in *La Solidaridad*, No. 45 (December 15, 1890) in *Ibid.*, Vol. 7, pp. 283-290.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, Vol. 7, p. 285.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, Vol. 2, (book 3, part 2^a), pp. 601-603.

of the Filipino. First, in this regard, we must touch upon the Liga Filipina (Philippine League) which Rizal himself founded. Disappointed with the Propaganda Movement, which was safe in Europe far from the homeland, Rizal, after publishing his second novel, *El Filibusterismo*, in Ghent in September 1891, left Europe for Hong Kong. And in June of the next year, without reflecting on his own personal safety, he once again set foot on Philippine soil, where he embarked on the formation of a civic society, the Liga Filipina. The Liga, inaugurated on the night of July 3, had the following five objectives;

- 1st—To unite the whole Archipelago into one compact, vigorous, and homogeneous body.
- 2nd—Mutual protection in case of trouble and need.
- 3rd—Defense against every violence and injustice.
- 4th—Development of education, agriculture, and commerce.
- 5th—Study and implementation of reforms.³⁰

As the outstanding work of Prof. Cesar A. Majul covers the subject,³¹ I shall here omit a description of the historical character and role of the Liga, save to note that, as Prof. Majul points out, the formation of the Liga, with its aim of creating a basis for developing a national society that would ultimately replace colonial society, was the direct consequence of Rizal's development and intensification of national consciousness.

A few days after the formation of the Liga, Rizal was arrested on a charge of treason and exiled to Dapitan island. And the Liga, with the loss of its nucleus, dissolved almost immediately. However, as early as July 7 a secret revolutionally society known as Katipunan was founded by Bonifacio and several other members of the Liga, and the stage was set for a Philippine Revolution aimed at the independence of the nation. The notion of national solidarity developed by Rizal provided the intellectual support for a revolutionary movement seeking national independence. And in that revolution, Rizal's concept of national consciousness was transformed into a reality among his people.

Another of Rizal's roles was, through the national view of history he created, to have provided those who sought revolution with a firm confidence in the future. For example, in the initiation rites of the Katipunan, each neophyte was asked the following three questions: "First, what was the condition of the Philippines in early times? Second, what is the condition today? Third, what will be the condition in the future?"³² The neophyte was counselled in advance by his sponsor to reply as follows:

³⁰ From the Constitution of the Liga Filipina, *Ibid.*, Vol. 7, pp. 303-309.

³¹ Cesar A. Majul, *Mabini and the Philippine Revolution*, Quezon City, University of the Philippines, 1960, especially Chapter 4, "La Liga Filipina: Rizal, Bonifacio, and Mabini." In addition, by the same author, "A Critique of Rizal's Concept of a Filipino Nation," in Leopoldo Y. Yabes ed., *José Rizal in His Centenary*, Quezon City, University of the Philippines, 1963.

³² Teodoro A. Agoncillo, *op. cit.*, pp. 48-49.

... that the Filipinos at the coming of the Spaniards had their own civilization and political liberty, their own religion and alphabet, and had commercial and diplomatic intercourse with the nations of Asia. In a word, that the Filipinos were happy and independent. As to the second question, the neophyte answers that the so-called friar-missionaries have done nothing to civilize the Filipinos, since the interest of the friars is incompatible with the civilization of the country—they had done nothing more than teach the forms of Catholicism in its shallow trappings, blinding the Filipinos with the apparatus of magnificent religious festivals which cost them so much and benefit only the friars. The third question is answered by saying that with faith, courage, and constancy, all the brutalities and iniquities of the Spanish authorities will be remedied in time and freedom will be redeemed.³³

That each of these questions and answers is based on the view of national history created by Rizal should be clear from what has been said above.

José Rizal's career was dedicated to confronting the colonial ideology and developing a system of thought that aimed at the liberation of the nation. The creation of the historical view of Filipino people and of national consciousness that have been treated in this paper were among the central activities in that career.