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ROTTEN BEEF AND STINKING FISH:  
RIZAL AND THE WRITING OF PHILIPPINE HISTORY  
*Ambeth R. Ocampo*

Antonio de Morga, lieutenant governor of the Philippines (in the late sixteenth century), described the food of the *indios* as follows:

*Their daily fare is composed of rice crushed in wooden pillars and when cooked is called morisqueta (this is the staple throughout the land); cooked fish which they have in abundance; pork, venison, mountain buffaloes which they call carabaos, beef and fish which they know is best when it has started to rot and stink (Emphasis supplied.)<sup>1</sup>*

Reading this text in the British Museum 280 years later Rizal was so incensed that he later responded in print with:

*This is another preoccupation of the Spaniards who, like any other nation, treat food to which they are not accustomed or is unknown to them with disgust. The English, for example, feels horror to see a Spaniard eating snails; to the Spaniard roast beef is repugnant and he cannot understand how Steak Tartar or raw beef can be eaten; the Chinese who have tahuri and eat shark cannot stand Roquefort cheese etc, etc. This fish Morga mentions, that cannot be known to be good until it begins to rot, all on the contrary, it is bagoong [salted and fermented fish or shrimp paste used as a sauce in Filipino cuisine] and those who have eaten it and tasted it know that it neither is nor should be rotten.<sup>2</sup>*

Rizal's sarcastic rebuttal appears, surprisingly, not in his satirical novels or his polemical tracts, but in a scholarly work -- his annotated re-edition of *Morga's Sucesos de las Islas de Filipinas*. Aside from the racial slurs to which Rizal was reacting, however, Rizal maintained mixed feelings for the Morga,

depending on its usefulness for his thesis that Spanish colonization retarded, rather than brought civilization to the Philippines and its inhabitants.

Unfortunately Rizal's Morga has been relegated in the canon, under his "minor writings,"<sup>3</sup> and remains largely unread due to the pre-eminence of his novels, *Noli me Tangere* and *El Filibusterismo*. Unlike the novels, which have been attacked and condemned regularly in the past century, the Morga remains largely ignored. It is lamentable that, despite being a classic of nationalist historical writing, Rizal's Morga is seldom read today.

That Rizal's annotations are largely disregarded today stems basically from the recent advances in historical, archeological and ethnographic research. Although many of Rizal's assertions have been validated by recent research, the fact is that his work is now dated. Moreover Rizal's annotations are secondary, and today's scholars concentrate more on the primary source, Morga, than on Rizal's notes. Few Filipinos today, even the most patriotic, would find the time and energy to read the small text of Rizal's footnotes, even if penned by the national hero.

Another factor in the relative obscurity of Rizal's annotations to Morga was censorship during the Spanish colonial period. Like *Noli me Tangere* and *El Filibusterismo*, the Rizal edition of Morga was banned in the Philippines in the late nineteenth century: therefore copies confiscated by Spanish customs in Manila and other ports of entry were destroyed. Due to the burning of one particularly large shipment of the Morga, the book attained "rare" and "out of print" status within a year of its publication. It did not see a second printing, and the few copies in circulation were left hidden and unread by frightened owners.

There is also the problem of language, which restricted the impact of the Morga to a small, educated, Spanish-reading elite in Manila. Among this already minute circle, one could count with the fingers of one hand the people who would read a historical work like Morga over the more entertaining Rizal

novels. Rizal's *Morga* was not read by the masses, although people heard a great deal about this controversial work. Rizal's *Morga*, thus unread, is almost forgotten.

This essay deals with Rizal's views on Philippine history. It attempts to place Rizal's *Morga* within the framework of his work, as well as in the larger context of Philippine historiography. Rizal's *Morga* may not have been read widely, but its significance lies in the fact that with this edition, Rizal began the task of writing the first Philippine history from the viewpoint of a Filipino.

One matter has to be clarified at the outset. Rizal is often credited with "re-writing Philippine history." The notion of "Philippine history" is ambiguous to begin with: it can mean either the history of the place or the history of the people of the place. The difference between these two histories is related to the different concepts of the Filipino and the Filipino Nation: the former did not exist until Rizal's time, and the latter did not exist until the establishment of the short-lived Philippine Republic under Aguinaldo in 1898. If Philippine history is taken to mean the history of the place, then Rizal was indeed rewriting history, because there are numerous Spanish chronicles written from the late sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries. However, if we mean the history of the Filipinos, then, being the first history and having nothing to re-write Rizal was actually writing Philippine history. The historiographical importance of this little-read scholarly work by Rizal is that it was the first historical work on the Philippines by a Filipino; it is the first history written from the point of view of the colonized not the colonizer.

Rizal seems to have been reflecting on his country's history shortly after completing *Noli me Tangere*, in late February 1887, and obviously drawing on the popular Tagalog proverb, "Ang hindi marunong lumingon sa pinanggalingan ay hindi nakakarating sa paroroonan" (he who does not know where he came from, will never reach his destination), he realized the importance of the past as a tool to understand the present and eventually confront the future. Although he wished

to embark on some historical research, he restrained himself, admitting his inadequacy in a letter to the Austrian ethnographer, Ferdinand Blumentritt, asking him to write a history of the Philippines:

*The Philippines would be grateful to you if you will write<sup>3</sup> a complete history of our country, judged from impartial criteria. I believe that you are the only one who can do it. I have the courage for this, but I do not know enough. I have not read as many books about my country and the Spanish libraries are closed to me; furthermore my time is needed for other things and everything I say will always be suspected of having been inspired by a partisan spirit, but you would be read as an impartial judge; you have no selfish interests...you do not have to amend historical truth neither for the sake of Filipinos nor the Spaniards, and you could contemplate the past in cold blood like an outside observer...I think that you are the man best equipped for this task...<sup>4</sup>*

By this time, Rizal had begun another novel, a sequel to *Noli Me Tangere*, but towards the end of June 1888, he tore up the completed chapters, changed the plot entirely, and began anew to produce a work which would influence his countrymen "to think correctly."<sup>5</sup> Then, in the middle of August 1888, resigned that Blumentritt could not be persuaded to write a history of the Philippines. Rizal set his literary labors aside, and began to work on his country's history.

Armed with a letter of introduction from the Director of the India Office library, Reinhold Rest, he applied for and was granted a reader's pass to the British Museum, where he began to consult early printed materials on the Philippines. "I'm busy," he wrote to his friend, Blumentritt, "I'm assiduously reading all the ancient [i.e.primary] sources on the history of the Philippines, and I do not think I want to leave London until I have read all the books and manuscripts that have references to the Philippines. I want to become the "Filipino Blumentritt."<sup>6</sup>

Close to August 18, 1888, Rizal was copying out, by hand, the entire first edition of Morga's *Sucesos de las Islas de Filipinas*, annotating it along the way, confident that Antonio Regidor, a wealthy countryman, in exile in London following the Cavite Mutiny of 1872, would publish the work when completed.<sup>7</sup> As an added incentive, Regidor promised Rizal that as soon as he had recovered his investment in the book, all profits would be divided equally between author and publisher. Rizal however, was a realist who accepted that scholarly books such as the Morga would not be financially rewarding. Thus he stated in a letter to Blumentritt that his aim was simply to "present a new edition to the public, above all the Filipino public...I do this solely for my country, because this work will bring me neither honor nor money."<sup>8</sup>

His fears proved correct, for he did not earn anything from the Morga. In fact, Regidor unexpectedly backed out of the venture without the courtesy of an explanation. One of Rizal's friends hinted at racism, as Regidor was of Spanish extraction. After all his work in the copying, editing, and annotation of the *Sucesos*, Rizal had a finished manuscript but no publisher. Undaunted by the initial frustration, Rizal decided to publish the Morga himself. By the end of September 1889 he had brought the manuscript to Paris, where printing costs were lower than in London, and sent a letter to Blumentritt requesting him to write an introduction to the book.<sup>9</sup>

The concrete result of four months of intense historical research in Bloomsbury was Rizal's second book with a typically long Spanish title, *Sucesos de las Islas Filipinas por el Doctor Antonio de Morga. Obra publicada en Mejico en el ano dr 1609, nue vamente sacada a luz y anotada por Jose Rizal, precedida de un prologo del prof. Fernando Blumentritt* (Events in the Philippine Islands by Dr. Antonio de Morga. A work published in Mexico in the year 1609, reprinted and annotated by Jose Rizal and preceded by an introduction by professor Ferdinand Blumentritt).

A short biography of Morga and an outline of the structure of his book is necessary at this point. Antonio de Morga was

born in 1559 in Seville. He graduated from the University of Salamanca in 1574 and in 1578 attained a doctorate in Canon Law. He taught briefly in Osuna, later returning to Salamanca to read Civil Law. In 1580 he joined the government service, and was appointed in 1593 to Manila as Lieutenant Governor, the second most powerful position in the colony next only to the Governor General of the Philippines. In 1598 he resigned this post to assume the office of *oidor* or judge in the *Audiencia*.

Morga's fame (or infamy depending on which account you are reading) came in 1600, when he was put in charge of the Spanish fleet against a Dutch invasion under Olivier van Noort. Although the Dutch sailed away, the Spaniards lost heavily, and according to Morga, he had jumped ship and swum ashore with nothing but the enemy standard in his hand. The Dutch account of the battle describes Morga hiding and crying in his flagship before it sank. Morga's reputation in the colony sank, like his flagship, and in 1603 he was transferred to Mexico.

A particularly malicious biographical note on Morga is provided by W.E. Retana in his three-volume *Aparato Bibliografico de In Historia General de Filipinas* (Bibliographical Apparatus for a General History of the Philippines) published in 1906. In his entry on the *Sucesos*, Retana cites a domestic scandal to comment on Morga's hard character. How briefly, Juliana, Morga's eldest daughter, was discovered in 1602 to be in love with a man of a lower social standing, a soldier from Mexico. Morga and his wife first tried to discourage the relationship by beating up Juliana, shaving her hair, and finally locking her up in the house. Yet Juliana managed to escape from her parent's house by tying bedsheets together, and lowering herself from her bedroom window to the street.

When Morga discovered that his daughter had eloped, he brought in the governor general himself to persuade Juliana from marriage. They were all unsuccessful. Juliana silenced parental opposition by threatening to commit social suicide by marrying a negro<sup>10</sup> if she was not allowed to marry her lover. Morga never spoke to his daughter again, and left her in Manila when he moved to Mexico.

From Mexico, Morga was moved to Quito in 1615 where he was president of the *Audiencia*. Again Morga found himself in trouble, and in 1625 was investigated for corruption and eventually found guilty. He escaped humiliation, and the gallows, by dying in 1636, before the case was wound up.<sup>11</sup>

Morga began his work, *Sucesos de las islas Filipinas*, it is claimed, as a way of saving face after the disaster with the Dutch invaders in Manila in 1600. Hence, it is Morga's version of the battle of Manila Bay left to history. The work consists of eight chapters:

- I. Of the first discoveries of the Eastern Islands.
- II. Of the government of Dr. Francisco de Sande
- III. Of the government of don Gonzalo Ronquillo de Pebalosa
- IV. Of the government of Dr. Santiago de Vera
- V. Of the government of Gomes Perez Dasmaringas
- VI. Of the government of don Francisco Tello
- VII. Of the government of don Pedro de Acuna
- VIII. An account of the Philippine Islands.

The first seven chapters mainly concern the political events which occurred in the colony during the terms of the first eleven governors-general in the Philippines, beginning with Miguel Lopez de Legaspi in 1565 to Pedro de Acuna who died in June 1606. For present day Filipinos chapter eight is the most interesting, because it gives a description of the pre-Hispanic Filipinos, or rather the *indios* at the Spanish contact. This same chapter was indispensable for Rizal, not only for its ethnographic value but more to help him reconstruct the pre-Hispanic Philippines which Rizal wanted to present to his countrymen.

In his preface to the Morga, Rizal states that he did not change a single word in the text, save those that required respelling in modern Spanish orthography or corrected punctuation:

*Born and raised in the ignorance of our past, like*



*most of you, without voice or authority to speak about what we did not see nor study, I considered it necessary to invoke the testimony of an illustrious Spaniard who governed the destiny of the Philippines at the beginning of her new era and witnessed the last moments of our ancient nationality. Therefore, it is the shadow of the civilization of our ancestors which the author now evokes before you. The high office, the nationality, and merits of Morga, together with the data and testimonies of his contemporaries, mostly Spanish, recommend the work to your thoughtful consideration.* <sup>12</sup>

Why did Rizal choose Morga over other Spanish chronicles? Why does he recommend Morga to his countrymen? Surely, Antonio Pigafetta's account of the Magellan expedition was more detailed, and closer to the point of first contact between the Philippines and Spain. Rizal's choice of reprinting Morga rather than other contemporary historical accounts of the Philippines was due to the following reasons: the original book was rare; Morga was a layman not a religious chronicler; Rizal felt Morga to be more "objective" than the religious writers whose accounts included many miracle stories; Morga, compared to religious chroniclers, was more sympathetic to the *indios*, and finally, Morga was not only an eyewitness but a major actor in the events he narrates.

Morga's *Sucesos* was originally published in Mexico in 1609, and was therefore rare. In his introduction, Blumentritt notes that the book is "so rare that the few libraries that have a copy guard it with the same care as they would an Inca treasure."<sup>13</sup>

In 1971, when L.S. Cummins of University College London translated, edited and annotated the latest edition of Morga for the Hakluyt Society, he listed just twenty-five extant copies of the Morga in libraries and other research institutions. It is possible that there are some unrecorded copies in private collections, but it is safe to assume that there are less than thirty extant copies of the first edition Morga.<sup>14</sup>

Ironically, Morga was disseminated 259 years after its original publication in a widely read English translation by H.E.J. Stanley, published in London by the Hakluyt Society in 1868 under the title, *The Philippine Islands, Moluccas, Siam, Cambodia, Japan and China at the close of the Sixteenth Century*,<sup>15</sup> which is misleading, since the book is basically on Spain in the Philippines, and describes, mainly, how the colony was used as a foothold in Asia from which other Spanish expeditions were launched.

The original Spanish text of 1609 had never been reprinted in full until the annotated Rizal edition came off the press of Garnier Hermanos in Paris in 1889.<sup>16</sup> After the Rizal edition there was a magnificent edition by Wenceslao Emilio Retana,<sup>17</sup> which saw print in 1909. Probably the most accurate edition, as it reproduces even the misprints of the original, it also contains a great amount of supplementary material supplied by Retana in his extensive introduction as well as copious notes. What makes Retana's edition invaluable is the primary source material, by Morga himself and other contemporaries, drawn from the Archivo General de Indias in Seville which amplify and enrich the main text. Its only drawback is that it is inaccessible to those who cannot read Spanish.

In the Philippines, Rizal's Morga was re-issued in photo-offset reproduction only in 1958, by which time few Filipinos knew or cared for books in Spanish. An English translation of Rizal's Morga was commissioned and published by the Jose Rizal National Centennial Commission in 1961, but has proven unsatisfactory compared with the most popular English edition of Morga at present that by J.S. Cummins (Hakluyt Society, 1971).

The preceding bibliographical notes not only stress the rarity of the original but also reveal that Rizal was not satisfied with the Stanley edition, which he thought contained errors of fact and interpretation which required correction. In the eighth chapter, for example, is a titillating description of the sexual habits of the pre-Hispanic *indios*. Like Magellan's chronicler,

Antonio Pigafetta,<sup>18</sup> Morga noted the use of penis rings or *sagras* by the *indios*. This short, sexually explicit, passage was not rendered into English by Stanley who was obviously constrained by his Victorian scruples. On page 304 of Stanley's Morga the offending paragraph is left in the original Spanish. In the Rizal edition everything is reproduced in full with no censorship and some annotation.<sup>19</sup>

Although he was doing his research in London, it is strange that Rizal did not contact or correspond with Stanley regarding the Morga. Rizal felt, like Blumentritt who wrote the introduction, that the annotations to Morga should be made not by a foreigner but by an *indio*.

Rizal's second consideration for the choice of Morga was that it was the only civil, as opposed to religious or ecclesiastical, history of the Philippines written during the colonial period. Chronicles by Spanish colonial officials (or non-religious) were rare, making Morga, for over two centuries, the only secular general history of the Philippines in print.<sup>20</sup>

The main complaint against religious historians was that they dealt more with church history than the history of the Philippines and its people. In an unsigned article entitled "Reflections on historical publications relating to the Philippines" which appeared in *Ilustracion Filipina* in 1860, the writer asked why:

*despite the thousands of documents, hundreds of historians and the ongoing writing of a general history of Spain, the Philippines has been ignored for three centuries. There is much to be written, but the historians of the Philippines of the old school (antiguo sistema), write volumes upon volumes which go down to very trivial details such that they fail to get readers interested in the history of the Philippines...a general history of the Philippines is demanded of the culture of the century.*<sup>21</sup>

A general history of the Philippines was an ambitious

undertaking considering the rarity of secular and, more importantly, *indio* historians. Until Rizal's edition of Morga, there was no history of the Philippines written by an *indio*, or one written from the viewpoint of the *indio*.

In 1925, the American historian, Austin Craig pointed out that as the Philippines had been a colony of Spain, the histories of the Philippines written during the colonial period were nothing but chapters in the larger history of Spain. In short, what was available was not a history of the Philippines but a history of Spain in the Philippines. This idea was acted upon by Teodoro A. Agoncillo in the 1960's, who, like Rizal, espoused the writing of Philippine history from the Filipino point-of-view is opposed to that of the foreigner. The main difference between Agoncillo and Rizal however, is that the *indios* of the nineteenth century had yet to consider themselves a nation, and could not have considered themselves Filipinos.

The third consideration for the choice of Morga was Rizal's opinion that this secular account was more objective, more trustworthy than those written by the religious missionaries which were liberally sprinkled with tales of miracles and apparitions: all the histories written by the religious before and after Morga, up to our days, abound with stories of devils, miracles, apparitions, etc. These form the bulk or the voluminous histories of the Philippines.<sup>22</sup>

Rizal's annotations fall into two categories. First are the straightforward historical annotations, where Rizal amplifies or corrects the original. Second are the annotations which though historically based, reflect his strong anti-clerical bias. The latter is something not to be expected in a scholarly work, but these notes give Rizal's edition its distinct flavor. Rizal branded religious interpretations of events as "pious lies."<sup>23</sup>

He emphasized that Morga's *Sucesos* was devoid of the characteristic *Deus ex Machina* interpretation of historical events which was popular for the friar chroniclers of the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries. Their aim was not to record history as is, but to document the achievements of their

religious orders and, more importantly, to edify their readers. Friar chronicles cannot be described as history in the modern sense, but a narrative with a moral lesson. Often these chronicles were written to encourage religious vocations or material donations for the missions in Asia.

An example of this clash in historiography can be seen in Rizal's caustic comments on the friar accounts of the Chinese uprising of 1603. He was particularly harsh on the claims that the Augustinian, Antonio Flores, who, in the words of Aduarte, a Dominican friar:

*in one night took off the bottoms of two hundred vessels, burned some bigger ones and sank others, and with two arquebuses and something more than 400 bullets, from five in the morning until six in the evening, killed more than 600 Chinese...later, he alone killed more than 3,000.<sup>24</sup>*

Not to be outdone, the Franciscans attributed the Spanish victory over the Chinese not to the gallant men who manned the cannons on the gates of Intramuros or repelled the rebels from the walls of the city, but to the founder of their order, St. Francis of Assisi, who was allegedly seen protecting Intramuros and fighting of the Chinese with a flaming sword. Due to this tale, St. Francis was proclaimed by the Archbishop of Manila, *Serafin custodio de Manila* (Seraphic Protector of Manila ), whose feast day was now celebrated annually as a holiday. The government subsidized the ceremony that accompanied this religious feast.

To challenge this account, Rizal cited contemporary accounts of the Chinese uprising written by laymen, which made no mention of the miracle of St. Francis. According to Rizal, as two other chroniclers, Morga and Argensola, were silent on St. Francis, perhaps the miracle was added only years after the event.<sup>25</sup> How elated Rizal would have been had he found out that the four hundred sworn statements about the saintly apparition given by Chinese prisoners sentenced to death for the uprising, were made after they converted to

Catholicism, were baptized and pardoned. <sup>26</sup>

Furthermore, Rizal utilized Morga to discredit the work of the Dominican chronicler Diego de Aduarte, whose *Historia de la provincial del Sancto Rosario de la orden de Predicadores en Philipinas* (History of the Province of the Holy Rosary of the Order of Preachers in the Philippines) was published in Manila in 1640 and was considered so authoritative it was often cited or repeated by later historians. In an extended footnote, spanning two pages, Rizal contrasted the work of Aduarte and Morga, admitting that although the Dominican's work was pleasant, charming, animated, and written in a picturesque style, it was marred by gaps, contradictions and distortions, unlike Morga, who was more "faithful as a chronicler of his time...if he covers up many things for political reasons...he never distorts events."<sup>27</sup>

Aduarte had later been named a bishop, and according to an adoring biographer, the friar was so holy and ascetic, he wore patched shoes and after his death, miraculously grew a beard in his coffin. Unable to resist commenting, Rizal said acidly "we have other saints with less beard and better shoes."<sup>28</sup>

Apart from their deliberate distortion of events in their propagation of a religious interpretation of Philippine history, Rizal took the friar chroniclers to task for going against their vows of poverty. In one of his annotations, Rizal estimated the wealth held by the religious corporations, particularly the Franciscans and Dominicans, who owned much property and land in the Philippines. Rizal showed that the Dominicans maintained properties even in neighboring Hong Kong.<sup>29</sup> He concluded that, "of course since the beginning, [of the colonial period] the friar missionaries had very few opportunities to suffer for religion."<sup>30</sup>

Rizal's anti-clericalism should be seen in the context of his education in the politically unstable, liberal Madrid of the late nineteenth century, where the Republicans blamed most of the social ills on priests and religious. In addition, there were Rizal's experiences of oppression in the colonial Philippines. That he

was particularly sharp on the Dominicans can be explained by the agrarian disputes his family faced in Calamba which was a Dominican hacienda.

However, Rival had a soft spot for the Jesuits, who, incidentally are not friars, under whose tutelage he received his early education.

Only after the religious consolidated their position, did they begin to spread calumnies and to debase the races of the Philippines with a view to giving themselves more importance, making themselves indispensable, and thus excusing their stupidity and ignorance with the pretended coarseness of the *indio*. There is, however, an exception, for the Jesuits who always educated and enlightened the *indios* without declaring themselves as eternal protectors, tutors, defenders, etc. etc [of the indios].<sup>31</sup>

The Jesuits, unlike the other religious orders, were spared arrest and abuse by the Filipino forces during the second phase of the Philippine Revolution that began in 1898. This can partially be explained by the fact that many leaders of the revolution were former students of the Jesuit-run Ateneo Municipal. The Jesuits did promote a progressive educational system, with its emphasis on philosophy, the humanities and the natural sciences. Despite his soft spot for the Jesuits, however, Rizal also includes the jibe in his later annotations that the Society of Jesus was fifty years behind enlightened secular opinion and science in Europe.

Moreover, the Jesuits maintained a good reputation regarding their vows of poverty and chastity simply because the Order was suppressed by the Pope in the eighteenth century. The Spanish King ordered the expulsion of the Jesuits and the confiscation of their property in all Spanish dominions; therefore the Jesuits had been absent from the Philippines from 1768 until they were allowed to return in 1859. Upon their return, the other religious orders that had taken over their property now refused to yield both physical and ecclesiastical jurisdiction. Thus the Jesuits

were sent to establish missions in the southern, predominantly Muslim, island of Mindanao. A twist of history made them lose an opportunity to become a wealthy land-owning religious corporation despised by *indios*.

The fourth consideration in Rizal's choice of the Morga was that it appeared more sympathetic, at least in parts, to the *indios*, in contrast to the friar accounts, many of which were biased or downright racist in tone and interpretation. In a letter to Blumentritt, on September 17, 1888, shortly before embarking on his annotations, Rizal expressed his preference for Morga:

*The Morga is an excellent book; it can be said that Morga is a modern learned explorer (modern sabio explorador). He has nothing of the superficiality and exaggeration so typical of present day Spaniard; he writes very simply, but in reading him there is much between the lines because he was governor-general in the Philippines and after, head (Alcalde) of the Inquisition.<sup>32</sup>*

The fifth and last consideration was that Morga was an eyewitness, and therefore a primary source, on the Philippines and its people at the point of first contact with Spain. Rizal spoke highly of Morga's integrity as a colonial official, which may have been true of his term of office in Manila but according to more recent editions, by Retana (1909) and Cummins (1971), his scruples seem to have deteriorated as he advanced in age and career.

Rizal's often humorless rebuttals of biased Spanish accounts of his country and his people emphasized, on one level, the need for an *indio* interpretation of history, while on another recreating the glories of the lost pre-Hispanic Philippines. Rizal argued that the pre-Hispanic Filipinos had their own culture before 1521, thus were not saved from barbarism and did not require "civilization" or a new religion from Spain. Rizal insists that the flourishing pre-Hispanic Philippine civilization, obliterated by Spain and the friars, could



have developed on its own into something great. Rizal emphasizes that the pre-Hispanic civilization had metallurgy, a ship-building industry, trade contacts with China, and even a system of writing and accompanying literature, all ruined by Spanish colonization. Rizal comments that the Philippines of his time was no better than the pre-Hispanic Philippines: if Spain had not come, or had the left the Philippines to its own devices, everyone would be better off.

This interpretation of history makes Rizal both a boon and a bane to Philippine nationalism: he made historical assertions necessary for his time and purposes, but Filipinos a century later educated on the same viewpoint refuse to see Rizal's work in the context of recent scholarship. Most of Rizal's historical assertions have been validated by recent research; however there are flaws in his reconstruction of pre-Hispanic Philippine civilization. Three examples central to Rizal's arguments will suffice to prove his influence.

Generations of Filipino schoolchildren from the American colonial period to the present have been raised to accept that the pre-Hispanic Filipinos had a system of writing and an accompanying written literature which was destroyed by the missionaries who saw these as "works of the devil." Second is the view that the pre-Hispanic Filipinos had an advanced knowledge of metallurgy, the evidence being the fine cannons made by an *indio* named Panday Pira. Third was the existence of a pre-Hispanic shipbuilding industry. All these, it is said, were systematically ruined by the Spanish. Filipino historians today have to reconsider the assertions made by Rizal a century ago in the light of current archaeological and anthropological research. In Morga's fourth chapter, for example, on the term of Governor Santiago de Vera, there is a reference to a foundry run by an *indio* from Pampanga named Panday Pira:

*[de Vera] built the stone fortress of Our Lady of the Way, inside the city of Manila on the land side, and for its defense, he had set up a foundry for the making of artillery under the hands of an old indio called Pandapira, a native of the province of*

*Pampanga. I-Te and his sons served in this line of work until their deaths many years later.*<sup>33</sup>

The word "panday" in Java and Borneo means "metalworker" or "iron-smith." How Pandapira became a "cannon-maker" can only be traced to Rizal. Although Morga made only a passing reference to this *indio* artillery-maker, Rizal elaborated in his annotation, stressing that:

*That is, an indio who already knew how to found cannons even before the arrival of the Spaniards, hence the epithet "old." In this difficult branch of metallurgy, as in others, the present-day Filipinos or the new indios are very much behind the old indios.*<sup>34</sup>

In the next chapter, the fifth, on the term of Governor General Gomez Perez Dasmarinas, there is another reference by Morga to the foundry:

*[Perez-Dasmarinas] established a foundry for artillery in Manila where, owing to the lack of expert or master founders, few large pieces were made.*<sup>35</sup>

Rizal now takes the opportunity to point out, in a footnote, that the indigenous foundry run by Panday Pira disappeared after the Spanish settled in Manila, conquered from the *indios*. "This demonstrates that, when the *indio* Pandapira died, there were no Spaniards who know how to do what he did, nor were his children as skilled as their father."<sup>36</sup>

Today Panday Pira, the cannon-founder, joins the Pantheon of Heroes and other "great" Filipinos who are immortalized in school textbooks, despite historical and archeological evidence to the contrary. In Retana's edition of Morga, his lengthy footnotes on Pandapira contain transcriptions of sixteenth century archival documents from Seville which refute Rizal's assertions that cannon-making was a flourishing indigenous industry. The documents from the colonial government in Manila requesting higher authorities in Mexico to send cannon-makers show that the Filipinos were unable to forge the thick European-style cannons.

A letter from Governor Vera on June 26, 1587 to the Viceroy in Mexico gives an account of his artillery and requests more. "I cannot find anyone who knows how to found cannons because those provided are by *indios* who cannot make large cannons. I request Your Excellency to send from New Spain founders and officers to manufacture cannons."<sup>37</sup>

"This is to say," Retana continues, "that the natives did not know how to found large cannons. The 26 large pieces alluded to by de Vera could very well come from the Spanish ships or those well made by Robles, the Spanish master founder. If Panday Pira and his sons were indeed such experts at making large cannons there would be no reason for de Vera's request."<sup>38</sup>

Robles, he notes elsewhere, died before 1587: thus his arrival in the Philippines could be dated to about 1575-1576. Retana takes Filipino historians—above all Rizal—to task for trying to claim too much from so little, by insisting that cannon-making was a flourishing indigenous industry. The documents he cites prove otherwise.

Retana has more to say. He cites an ethnographic article by Blumentritt (whose opinion was held in high esteem by Rizal and other Filipino writers) which stated that the pre-Hispanic foundry the Spaniards encountered in Manila was run by a Portuguese cannon-maker! It is odd that Rizal, who read practically every word Blumentritt had written on the Philippines, overlooked an important line in *Filipinas en tiempo de la Conquista*,<sup>39</sup> which states that the Portuguese taught the Tagalogs the founding of cannons. Blumentritt slates further that cannons were brought to the Philippines by Portuguese adventurers and deserters, challenging the opinion of other scholars who maintained that this "indigenous" industry could trace its provenance to Borneo.

Retana gives the *coup de grace*:

*...in a word, in the art of metallurgy with relation to*

*the founding of cannons, the Filipinos did not retrogress, on the contrary, they gained, thanks to the training given by the Spaniards.* <sup>40</sup>

Historical evidence provided by Retana is supported by recent archeological research. Dr. Eusebio Dizon, Chief of the Archeology Division of the National Museum of the Philippines, wrote his doctoral dissertation on pre-Hispanic Philippine metal implements. His research showed that the *indios* were a metal-using people, but did not possess the metallurgical knowledge attributed to them by Rizal or the subsequent historians who drew on Rizal's work. He noted, however, that it is possible that the *indios* were capable of forging the small cannons, or *lantakas*, which are still manufactured by the Muslims in the southern island of Mindanao, although they are not used for warfare but as ornaments for interior decoration. The pre-Hispanic *indios*, as far as current archaeological data is concerned were not capable of founding the heavy European style cannons used in the sixteenth century.<sup>41</sup>

It may be argued that Rizal did not have the benefit of late twentieth century research; his work, no doubt was commendable for its time, but in his zeal to recreate the greatness of the lost pre-Hispanic Philippine civilization, he sometimes drew on imagination more than evidence. Rizal's historical annotations have to be seen in this light: they were part of a propaganda effort. Scholarly annotations to sixteenth century chronicle were used as propaganda: history was utilized as a weapon against Spain.

Another example may be necessary to demonstrate Rizal's exaggeration. Morga describes Filipino boats large enough to carry "one hundred rowers on the border (*vanda*) and thirty soldiers on top (*pelea*)," on which Rizal elaborates to mourn the extinction of the indigenous boat-making industry:

*The Filipinos... [were] celebrated and skilled navigation, but far from progressing, have become backward. Although boats are still built in the islands now, we can say that they are almost all of the*

*European model. The ships that carried one hundred rowers and thirty fighting soldiers disappeared. The country that at one time, with primitive means, built ships of around 2,000 tons, now has to resort to foreign ports like Hong Kong...for unserviceable cruisers.*<sup>42</sup>

On the same page, Rizal laments the environmental costs of Spanish boat-building, by describing the pre-Hispanic Philippine landscape as being "covered in shadows," as an abundance of trees were cut down with no thought of conservation, so that some species became extinct.<sup>43</sup>

There is no doubt that the pre-Hispanic *indios* were a seafaring people who built swift and light vessels that could traverse the length of the archipelago or cross into neighboring countries for trade. Recent archeological excavations in the southern city of Butuan in Mindanao have enlarged our understanding of pre-Hispanic Philippine boats. Some remains are as large as Morga describes, but nothing comes close to the massive 2,000 ton boats of which Rizal boasts.<sup>44</sup>

Spanish colonization is further blamed for the loss was that of the pre-Hispanic Philippine syllabary, and thus the extinction of a written literature.

Aside from a few signatures by *indios*, in their own script, on early Spanish legal documents of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, no full document written in the pre-Hispanic Philippine script has ever been found.

During the First European Philippine Studies Conference in Amsterdam in April 1991, Anton Postma presented a paper on a copper plate allegedly discovered in Laguna with an inscription that has been dated to 900 A.D. He stated, among other things, that "Philippine official history has been enlarged with the revelation of this copper "document," and called for a re-examination of historical data in the light of this find. Postma has been largely ignored, simply because the provenance of the copper plate has not been fully established. It was sold by an antique dealer to the National Museum, which has not verified

the site where it was allegedly found. The inscription on this copper plate is neither in the pre-Hispanic Philippine script, nor is it in any of the various Philippine languages. The so-called Laguna copper plate was probably imported from elsewhere in Southeast Asia. This is a further demonstration of the need to prove certain aspects of pre-Hispanic Philippine civilization. It is a vain attempt to validate Rizal's assertions on the widespread use of pre-Hispanic writing and the written literature that presumably accompanied it.

Morga observed that writing was widely in use all over the pre-Hispanic Philippines, that all *indios*, men as well as women, could read and write at least properly in their own language.<sup>45</sup> Rizal cites similar observations by the Jesuit Pedro Chirino who claims that there was universal literacy, that everyone in the late sixteenth century Philippines could read and write in their own language. Rizal uses Chirino and Morga to express his opinion on literacy in the late nineteenth century Philippines:

*Now the same thing cannot be said. The government, in print and in words, tries to procure the instruction of the Filipinos<sup>46</sup> but indeed and at bottom, it foments ignorance, placing the instruction in the hands of the friars who are accused by the Peninsular Spaniards, Insular Spaniards, and Foreigners [i.e. Europeans] of the brutalization of the country and prove themselves with their conduct and writings.<sup>47</sup>*

Using Morga, Chirino and other early chronicles that mention the pre-Hispanic Philippine syllabary, Rizal goes one step further in assuring that there was a great volume of written literature at the time the Spaniards arrived in the Philippines. However, at present, there is no extant body, not even a fragment, of this pre-Hispanic written literature. The Jesuit Chirino mentions that he burned a "book" which was condemned as the "work of the devil." From this small reference has sprung the general view that the Missionaries destroyed all pre-Hispanic "books" and manuscripts.

That all trace of pre-Hispanic writing was destroyed is highly improbable. The missionaries are blamed for a long-lost

pre-Hispanic literature which probably did not exist. As pre-Hispanic documents continue to elude scholars, recent anthropological research has yielded a wealth of oral literature, which is believed to go back to pre-Hispanic times. The Philippines has a large body of complex literature, such as that in Palawan, which has a complete cosmology and mythology; but this is an oral literature, and is only now being recorded and transcribed to be preserved in printed form.

To be fair to the much maligned early missionaries, knowledge of the pre-Hispanic syllabary was probably preserved rather than obliterated by the friars, who learned and documented the different languages and alphabets they encountered in their mission fields. They undertook numerous linguistic and grammatical studies of Philippine languages, and compiled the first dictionaries. Instead of blaming the friars for the loss of pre-Hispanic literature, nationalist historians should thank these men for preserving the syllabary they are accused of destroying.

The first book printed in the Philippines, in 1593, the *Doctrina cristiana en lengua tagala* (Christian Doctrine in the Tagalog language) is a translation of the Roman Catholic Catechism and prayers into Spanish and Tagalog, with the latter printed in both the pre-Hispanic syllabary and the Roman alphabet. Another work which used the pre-Hispanic syllabary was a further catechism printed in 1621, translated into Ilocano. Both these and other missionary studies on Philippine languages and grammars like *Arte y reglas de la tagala* by Fr. Blancas de San Jose (1610) and *Arte de la lengua iloca* by Fr. Francisco Lopez (1617) suggest that the friars documented and preserved pre-Hispanic writing.<sup>48</sup>

One of the few artifacts in the National Museum of the Philippines raised to the level of a "National Treasure" is an earthenware pot excavated at a site in Calatagan, Batangas in 1962, which has pre-Hispanic characters clearly incised around the rim. Often taken as firm evidence of the widespread use of pre-Hispanic writing, nobody has asked why only one specimen has been found to date, and more importantly why the characters

resembling the Tagalog syllabary on the Calatagan pot do not translate into anything intelligible. The National Museum has yet to release their expert deciphered text on the Calatagan pot. Are these incised characters really pre-Hispanic writing or are they simple decorative motifs? The Calatagan pot unfortunately leaves more questions than it answers.

The importance of Rizal's annotations to Morga was that he tried to use history and historical revision not just to express his personal views on the historiography, but to create a sense of national consciousness or identity. Historical revision is always met with varying degrees of opposition, and Rizal's first attempt at writing Philippine history was no exception. That the Spaniards would object was inevitable, and Rizal was prepared for this. When the Morga was officially banned in the Philippines, Rizal was not surprised. However, the first criticism of Rizal's historical work was not by a Spaniard or by one of Rizal's enemies, but by Blumentritt in the introduction to the book itself. Often overlooked, this introduction contains observations which are hidden under a mountain of praise.

Blumentritt noted, for example, that Rizal's "observations on the conduct of the European conquerors and civilizers are in general not new to the historian. The Germans specially discussed this theme."<sup>49</sup> Nevertheless Blumentritt continued with:

*These new points of view give your notes an imperishable value, an undeniable value even for those who dream of an inaccessible superiority of race or nationality. The scholar will salute your erudite annotations with enthusiasm, the colonial politician gratitude and respect. Through these lines run a flood of serious observations equally interesting and important to historians and ministers of overseas colonies alike.<sup>50</sup>*

Then he cites two defects of Rizal's scholarship which have been condemned, and rightly so, by later historians; a historical use of hindsight, and a strong anti-clerical bias. Blumentritt, in



his glowing introduction, did not forget to state that:

*My great esteem for your notes does not impede me from confessing that, more than once, I have observed that you participate in the error of many modern historians who censure the events of past according to the concepts that correspond to contemporary ideas. This should not be so. The historian should not impute to the men of the sixteenth century the broad horizon of ideas that moves the nineteenth century. The second point with which I do not agree is some vented against Catholicism. I believe that you cannot find the origin of numerous events regrettable for Spain and for the good name of the European race in religion but in the hard behavior and abuses of many priests.<sup>51</sup>*

Hindsight and anti-clericalism are fatal defects in a purely scholarly work but, as mentioned earlier, Rizal used history as a propaganda weapon against the abuses of the colonial Spaniards. Rizal's Morga should be seen and excused in this context. The problem with Rizal is his constant ambiguity: is he trying to be a scholar or a propagandist? Hence the Morga was deemed too historical, too scholarly for propagandists, while historians and scholars found the work too biased, too much a work of propaganda to be taken seriously.

While Blumentritt's critique was undeniably tempered by his friendship for Rizal, one must remember that Rizal solicited the introduction. What finally saw print was a version approved and slightly edited by Rizal. Unfortunately, this draft introduction is not extant, but we can extrapolate from the Rizal-Blumentritt correspondence to see what Rizal found objectionable, what he wanted deleted from the introduction.

Writing from Paris on November 19, 1889, Rizal thanked Blumentritt for writing the introduction to his edition of Morga. He liked it very much, and praised it for being written "both with head and heart." Be that as it may, Rizal reacted strongly against Blumentritt's mention of "Quiopquiap" (pseudonym of

Pablo Feced, brother of ex-governor, Jose Feced y Temprado, a prolific journalist who wrote racist, anti-*indio* articles). Rizal told Blumentritt that Quiopquiap may be highly regarded in Spanish circles in Manila, but he was not worthy of attention. Rizal declared that he did not want "to soil the pages of my book" with this name. "I do not write for the Spaniards in Manila, I write for my countrymen and we all detest Quiopquiap."<sup>52</sup>

Three days later, on November 22, 1889, Rizal returned the draft of Blumentritt's introduction together with his "corrections." Even if Blumentritt had earlier authorized Rizal to edit it however he wished, out of courtesy Rizal sought Blumentritt's final approval. Apart from the deletion of the name Quiopquiap, Rizal cut out the text relating to fraternidad (fraternity) between *indios* and Spaniards. Rizal told Blumentritt that, despite his good intentions, his notion of fraternal love between Spaniards and *indios* was liable to give the wrong impression:

*You wish that the Spaniards to embrace us as brothers, but we do not ask for this by always imploring and repeating this because the result is humiliating for us. If the Spaniards do not want us as brothers, neither are we eager for their affection. We will not ask for fraternal love as if it were like alms. I am convinced that you wish too much and also wish the good of Spain; but we do not solicit the compassion of Spain, we do not want compassion, but justice...Fraternity like alms from the proud Spaniard we do not seek. I repeat, you only have the best intentions, you want to see the whole world embraced by means love and reason but I doubt if the Spaniards wish the same.<sup>53</sup>*

Despite his intense feelings, Rizal's tone remains very cordial with Blumentritt. It must be stressed here that Rizal did not take criticism well, especially if it came from racist Spaniards like Quiopquiap or Vicente Barrantes, whom Rizal answered in their propaganda paper, *La Solidaridad*. Indeed, he was surprisingly hostile to a fellow patriot in "A Reply to Mr.

Isabelo de los Reyes," which saw print in *La Solidaridad* in 1891. In this article we see all the more clearly the real motives of Rizal's scholarship.

Isabelo de los Reyes (1864-1938) was a journalist, businessman, labor leader, politician and prominent member of the schismatic *Iglesia Filipina Independiente* (Philippine Independent Church) which "canonized" Rizal. He was interested in aspects of Philippine history and culture, especially that which concerned his home province Ilocos. His fieldwork and compilations of folklore, history and customs have proven to be of great ethnographic value for present-day scholars. De los Reyes had been corresponding with European scholars with research interests in the Philippines long before Rizal came into contact with Blumentritt. De los Reyes published many books, pamphlets and articles, including: *El Folklore Filipino* (Philippine folklore) in two volumes, which was awarded a silver medal in the Philippine Exposition in Madrid in 1887. He had left a *Historia de Filipinas* unfinished, with only one volume completed; he also published *Las Islas Visayas en a epoca de la conquista* (The Visayan islands at the time of the conquest); and numerous compilations of his journalism, *articulos varios sobre etnografia, historia y costumbres de los Filipinos* (The Philippines: various articles on the ethnography, history and customs of the Filipinos); and, a two volume *Historia de Ilocos*. Some of de los Reyes's works were even translated by Blumentritt into German and published outside the Philippines.<sup>54</sup>

It is in his *Historia de Ilocos* that de los Reyes upsets Rizal. De los Reyes called attention to the discrepancy between some of Rizal's annotations to Morga *vis-à-vis* his own research. These differences of opinion were explained, according to de los Reyes, by Rizal's excessive patriotism:

*But that very laudable patriotism his, it seems to me, blinds him at times, and as a historian ought to be rigorously impartial...the optimism of the said author turns out to be passionate in some points, taking exceptions of the general rule, and vice-versa. The*

*consensus among authors who had no reason to lie in these cases ought to be taken into account. The true character of that [pre-Hispanic] civilization and what is still preserved of it in the present customs of the people...<sup>55</sup>*

Rizal was so irritated that he responded by attacking de los Reyes in the October 31, 1890 issue of *La Solidaridad*, using the sarcasm he normally reserves for racist Spaniards and friars:

*I do not know how discreet it is to raise oneself as a judge of others...[when] neither one or the other was an eyewitness or more or less an influential actor. But this, which in anyone else could be censured as vain presumption, ceases to be so in Mr. Isabelo de los Reyes who knows very well how to interpret the historians of the Philippines.<sup>56</sup>*

As de los Reyes was fond of using Philippine terms in his work, especially words in his mother tongue, Ilocano, Rizal took him to task for (mis)translating Morga's "*principales*" into its Ilocano equivalent, "agturay."

*I have read Morga about seven times and I do not remember that he had ever mentioned agturay. I do not know if Mr. de los Reyes in his laudable desire to Ilocanize the Philippines thinks it convenient to make Morga speak Ilocano. It is true that this author, in describing the customs of the Tagalogs, said that they were generally current in all the islands; but this does not mean that Ilocano customs are the ones that prevail.<sup>57</sup>*

Rizal continues the barrage by flaunting his familiarity with the primary sources in Philippine history, finding fault with de los Reyes for using "unreliable" sources, like those of the sixteenth century friar Martin de Rada who described the *indios* as assassins, thieves, highwaymen, and cowards. Rizal belittled de los Reyes's scholarship by claiming that he had used a mere

French translation of a manuscript, while he had used the original.

Rizal claims he had read all the early accounts of the Philippines, cover to cover, except that of Plasencia, which was unavailable. "I never state anything on my own authority," Rizal notes. "I cite texts and when I cite them, I have them before me."<sup>58</sup>

Although de los Reyes did not have the opportunity to spend as much time as Rizal in the British Museum, he was, nonetheless, thorough in his research for *Historia de Ilocos*: he "read more than a hundred historical and non-historical works, just to cull two or three items from each of them." He supplemented archival research by utilizing "oral traditions for more recent events."<sup>59</sup> Notwithstanding this, Rizal cites Pigafetta, Chirino, Morga, Argensola, Colin, San Agustin and Aduarte, rallying all his sources against the one main source of de los Reyes, pronouncing proudly that:

*As I based my assertion on seven contemporary writers, I do not know if in this case, I shall be the exception and de los Reyes the general rule. I know that the authority of de los Reyes is worth seven times more than mine; but with my seven authors and he with his Fr. Rada, we can balance ourselves, if he does not take offense... dealing with historical facts, only the testimony of contemporaries can be authoritative, a testimony that ought to be subjected to the processes of criticism.<sup>60</sup>*

Rizal is being petulant in bragging about his familiarity with the primary sources; but significantly, this sour exchange offers an important insight into Rizal's views, especially into his Tagalog-centered view of history. Beneath this historiographical argument lies not scholarship or the reliability of sources but patriotism. History must be used for a purpose, not only to enlighten but to make his countrymen "think correctly," to see history not from the viewpoint of the Spanish chroniclers but from the *indio* point of view. Rizal concludes his tirade by washing his hands:

*Let it be put on record that this question was provoked by Mr. de los Reyes, that until now I have only spoken of him with admiration and respect, even if I do not agree with his opinions, for I have always believed that I could not raise myself to be his judge.*<sup>61</sup>

Earlier in the essay, Rizal unconsciously unveiled his view of committed scholarship: "...had we no positive proof of de los Reyes's patriotism, we would believe that by giving so much credit to Fr. Rada, he had intended to denigrate his own people."<sup>62</sup> This is an important point, because it shows that Rizal was an early exponent of "committed scholarship," to use a current term, which saw nothing wrong in driving data into a particular framework, or giving the narrative a particular bias to push home a point. Rizal, blinded by his patriotism, as de los Reyes aptly put it, forgets the true purpose of scholarship, distorting truth to suit the needs of propaganda against the Spaniards and their particular interpretation of Philippine history.

The ambiguity in Rizal becomes very clear in this little known essay against de los Reyes. Rizal was not seeking to be a scholar or historian; he was merely using history as a weapon for the propaganda movement. Juan Luna wrote to Rizal immediately after reading "*Une contestacion a I. de los Reyes*" in *La Solidaridad*, warning him that public disagreements between the propagandists was counter-productive as it was giving the Spaniards a great laugh." Luna said that de los Reyes was also his friend, but he had done wrong by refuting Rizal's annotations to Morga, "which are exaggerated by your excessive patriotism." He called for more restraint in contradicting the work of others simply because "they imagine in another manner."<sup>63</sup>

Rizal's patriotism made him over-sensitive or even intolerant of criticism. Parallel to his historical bias in favor of the *indio* was the *ilustrado* concern to project the ideal or "correct" image of the *indio*. This clearly demonstrated their leanings and, in a sense, their own racist conception of history,

reversing that of the Spaniards. De los Reyes's attempt at objectivity, or at least a measure of fairness, in his research and writing, was suspect in the eyes of his more zealous countrymen. De los Reyes once remarked that:

*Indios think it is shocking and shameful to write El Folklore Filipino because, they say, this is to publicize our own simplicity. I am an indio and an Ilocano---- why should I not say it? And when my beloved brothers learned about my modest articles on Ilocano folklore which they published in La Oceania, they rose up against me, saying I had disgraced my own people.*<sup>64</sup>

By recreating the proud pre-Hispanic civilization corrupted by Spanish colonization, Rizal's Morga had set the tone for Philippine historiography, and provided one of the base positions from which identity was to be built. Any critical remarks on the *indio*, no matter if supported by research, were not to be tolerated because this was deemed unpatriotic.

Pardo de Tavera, in *Biblioteca Filipina*, describes de los Reyes's work as "full of curious observations and can even be faulted for superficiality at times, [but] it cannot be said that de los Reyes falsified history or more or less propagated falsehood and absurdities in an attempt to glorify the ancient [i.e. pre-Hispanic] civilization of the Filipinos." Contrary to popular belief, therefore, Rizal was not the only Filipino at that time interested in the pre-Hispanic Philippine past. The important point in the scholarship of these two men is that de los Reyes represented objective scholarship and research while Rizal committed scholarship. Both expressed an interpretation of Philippine history for Filipinos and patriotism was the fulcrum which determined the degree of objectivity and propaganda in their work.

Rizal's view of Philippine historiography is expressed in his annotations to Morga's *Sucesos*, in his essay *Filipinas dentro de cien anos* (The Philippines Within a Century) and most clearly in an outline periodization of Philippinologists, hoping that it could

convene a conference of European Philippinologists in Paris during the International Exposition of 1889.

### **I. Pre-Hispanic Philippines**

Geography, Geology, Hydrography, Flora and Fauna, Government, Civilization, Literature, Earliest information about the Philippines in Europe, Bibliography, etc.

### **II. Arrival of the Spaniards to the loss of Philippine autonomy and her incorporation into the Spanish nation (1521-1808)**

Influence of Spanish civilization on the social life of the Philippines, Conversion into Catholicism, Encomiendas, War and Invasions, Immigration, Government, Commerce, Religious troubles, etc.

### **III. Incorporation of the Philippines into the Spanish nation up to the Cavite Mutiny (1808-1872)**

Government, Representation in the Spanish Cortes, *Loss of her character as a Spanish province and the declaration of her status as a colony, Reforms, Criticism, Influence of the Monastic Orders on the material progress of the Islands, the Philippines compared with other colonies, etc.*

### **IV. Linguistics**

Classification of languages spoken in the Philippines: Tagalog, Visayan, Ilocano, *l'espagnol de kusina* [literally Kitchen Spanish or the pidgin Spanish spoken in Cavite], studies on modern literature of the Tagalogs, modern literature of the Philippines religious books, etc.<sup>65</sup>

### **V. Races and Independent Regions which includes all Muslim sultanates, independent tribes, Negritos, etc.<sup>66</sup>**

The fifth part, on Race and Independent regions, was an afterthought, as seen in the correspondence between Rizal and Blumentritt. It was not in the original outline, suggesting that Rizal saw the Muslims of the Southern island of Mindanao, as well as the non-Christian, non-Hispanized *indios* of the mountains, differently from the lowland Christian *indios* of



which he was part. Note too that, as in the annotations to Morga, Rizal did not refer to non-Christian Filipinos collectively as "Filipinos," in the way that he referred to the Hispanized indios of Luzon and the Visayas.

More importantly, I have italicized some lines in the outline to stress Rizal's linear conception of history, and how he uses the arrival of Spain as the turning point, the break in Philippine history that stunted the pre-Hispanic Philippine civilization. Colonization, according to Rizal's view of history, led to the loss of both Philippine autonomy and its distinct character.

Rizal's survey and study of the Philippine past showed that all the chronicles on his country and people were written by Spaniards and thus reflected their biases. Unlike neighboring countries, Java, Burma, or Vietnam, which had an abundance of ancient, pre-colonial, written texts, the Philippines had nothing but the Spanish chronicles.

Further complicating the matter was the fact that Rizal attempted to write on the pre-Hispanic Philippines before the arrival of archaeology, and was thus left with no choice but to use Spanish written sources. In the course of his research, he constantly had to decide which sources to use for his history of the Philippines, but his patriotism largely determined his choice.

Reading through these works, Rizal was continually irritated by the racist viewpoints of Spanish historians, who often highlighted the "primitive" or "uncivilized" nature of the *indios*, *vis-a-vis* the "civilized" Spaniards, who brought both the Roman Catholic faith and Hispanization to the archipelago. Consequently Rizal gave himself the difficult task of rebutting the biased chronicles, and in so doing, brought into existence an *indio* viewpoint on the history of the Philippines.

More important, Rizal's Morga recreated the pre-Hispanic Philippine past, which he wanted to present to his sleeping countrymen in order to awaken in them a sense of pride in their race.

*If the book manages to awaken in you the awareness of our past, erased from memory, and to rectify what has been falsified and slandered, then I will not have labored in vain, and with this base, however small it maybe, we shall all be able to dedicate ourselves to study the future.<sup>67</sup>*

The publication of Rizal's *Morga* in late 1889 clearly divided Rizal's writings into three distinct components. If the *Noli Me Tangere* dealt with the present, and *El Filibusterismo* was to deal with the future, then Rizal decided to suspend work on *El Filibusterismo* in order to dwell on the past. In his preface to the *Morga* Rizal addressed his countrymen:

*In the Noli Me Tangere I began the sketch of the present state of our motherland. The effect that my exercise produced in me was the understanding that, before proceeding to unfold before your eyes other successive pictures, it is necessary to give you first a knowledge of the past in order to enable you to judge the present better and to measure the road we have travelled during the last three centuries.<sup>68</sup>*

In his essay, *Filipinas dentro de cien anos* (The Philippines within a century) which was published in installments in *La Solidaridad* from the end of September 1889 to the beginning of February 1890, Rizal expresses the same message summarizing his work on the *Morga*, as a prelude to his reflections on the past and his predictions for the future of the Philippines. "To foretell the destiny of a nation," Rizal argues "it is necessary to open the book that tells of her past."<sup>69</sup>

It has been a century since Rizal's *Morga* appeared, but Filipinos have still to come to terms with their past. The search for a national identity goes on, and the view of history Filipinos carry is generally that bequeathed to them by the propagandists of the late nineteenth century and most articulately by Rizal in his edition of *Morga* whose effects on later Philippine historiography may not always have been constructive. In its time, Rizal's *Morga* was already considered too historical, that is too academic and scholarly to be digested and used by patriots

and propagandists; but historians and scholars believe the Morga to be too biased for their purposes. However, the significance of Rizal's view of Philippine history is that its influence is still felt and, taken in the context of Philippine historiography, it remains the key to an understanding of the reconstruction of the Philippine past as a means to forge a national identity.

### **Footnotes**

1. Rizal, *Sucesos de las islas Filipinas*, ed. W.F. Retana, (Madrid 1909), p.174
2. Rizal, *Ibid.* p. 26, note 3
3. cf. A. Craig, *Rizal's Life and Minor Writings*, (Manila 1927)
4. Rizal, *Epistolario rizalino*, ed. Teodoro Kalaw, 5 Vols. (Manila 1930), I:116
5. Rizal, *Ibid.*, II:20-21
6. Rizal, *Ibid.*, I:311
7. Rizal, *Ibid.*, II:889
8. *Ibid.*,
9. *Ibid.*, II:441
10. Retana uses the word "negro" which could mean a "colored man," as opposed to a white Spaniard or European. Perhaps it could also mean *indio* but definitely not "black" or african.
11. This biography is based on the lengthy biographical essay in Retana's Morga, and the introduction to the Cummins edition of Morga. The family scandal is condensed from Retana's *Aparato*.

12. Rizal, *Sucesos.....*, Preface
13. Blumentritt in Rizal's *Sucesos.....*, Introduction
14. Morga, *Sucesos...*, ed. J.S. Cummins, p. 37
15. The Philippines Islands, Moluccas, Siam, Cambodia, Japan and China at the close of the sixteenth century of Antonio de Morga. Translated from the Spanish with notes and a preface, and a letter from Luis Vaez de Torres, describing his voyage through the Torress Strait by the hon. Henry E.J. Stanley. London:Hakluyt Society, 1868
16. Despite the completion and initial distribution of copies of Rizal's Morga's in autumn 1889, the title page post-dated 1890.
17. *Sucesos de las islas Filipinas por el Dr. Antonio de Morga. Nueva edicion enriquecida con lose escritos ineditos del mismo autor ilustrada con numerosas notas que amplian el testo y prologada extensamente por W.E. Retana. Madrid: Libreria General de Victoriano Suarez, 1909.*
18. Antonio Pigafetta, *Magellan's Voyage*, trans. ed. R.A. Skelton. (Yale University Press, 1969).
19. Rizal, *Sucesos...*, p. 309
20. Cf.C.R. Boxer, *Historians of Asia, Aparato III*, p. 1169 (entry 2891)
21. *Ilustracion Filipina*, Vol. II No.3, July 1, 1860 pp. 149-151
22. Rizal, *Sucesos...*, p. 311, note 1
23. Rizal, *Sucesos...*, p. 190
24. Rizal, *Sucesos...*, p. 225, note 2
25. Rizal, *Sucesos...*, p. 225, note 2

26. Gonzalez Liqueste, *Repertorio historico*
27. Rizal, *Sucesos...*, p. 122-123
28. Rizal, *Sucesos...*, "...santos tenemos con menos barbas y mejores zapatos."
29. Rizal, *Sucesos...*, p. 346, note 2
30. Rizal, *Sucesos...*, p. 347, note 1
31. Rizal, *Sucesos...*, p. 329, note 2
32. Rizal, *Epistolario rizalino*, I:308
33. Rizal, *Sucesos...*, p. 23
34. Rizal, *Sucesos...*, p. 23 note 1
35. Rizal, *Sucesos...*, p. 27
36. Rizal, *Sucesos...*, p. 27 note 4
37. Retana, *Sucesos...*, p. 406
38. Retana, *Sucesos...*, p. 406
39. *Boletin de la Sociedad Geografica*, Tomo XXI. (Madrid 1886)  
p. 217
40. Retana, *Sucesos...*, pp. 418-419
41. Interview, Eusebio Dizon, National Museum, Manila, September 1991
42. Rizal, *Sucesos...*, pp. 267-268, note 1
43. Rizal, *Sucesos...*, p. 268
44. Some of these boats are presently on display in the National Museum in Manila, while others may be viewed, *in situ*, at the National Museum branch in Butuan City.
45. Rizal, *Sucesos...*, pp. 290 292
46. Rizal himself is sometimes confused in his use of "Filipinos" as in this case where the context points to

*indios.*

47. Rizal, *Sucesos...*, pp. 290-292, note 2
48. See W.E. Retana, *Los Antiguos Alfabetos de Filipinas* (Notas Bibliograficas). Madrid, 1895. Also Vol. I of *Aparato*
49. Rizal, *Sucesos...*, Introduction
50. Rizal
51. Rizal, *Sucesos...*, Prologo xii
52. Rizal, *Epistolario rizalino*, V:510
53. Rizal, *Ibid*, V:516-517
54. See the three biographical essays in W.H. Scott, *Cracks in the Parchment Curtain*, (Quezon City: New Day 1985). "Isabelo de Los Reyes, Father of Philippine Folklore," pp. 235-244; "Isabelo de Los Reyes: Provinciano and Nationalist " pp. 245-265; and "Reaction to American imperialism: Isabelo de los Reyes," pp. 285-299
55. Rizal, "Reply to de Los Reyes," *La Solidaridad* (October 31, 1890)
56. Rizal, *Ibid*
57. Rizal, *Ibid*
58. Rizal, *Ibid*
59. Qtd. Scott, *Cracks in the Parchment Curtain*, p. 246
60. *Ibid*
61. Rizal, "Reply to de los Reyes"
62. Rizal, *Ibid*
63. Luna to Rizal (Nov. 8, 1890) *Epistolario rizalino*, V:122
64. Qtd in Scott, *Cracks.....*, p. 252
65. Rizal, *Epistolario rizalino*, V:383-389, (Original in French)

66. Rizal, Epistolario rizalino, V:406
67. Rizal, Sucesos...., Preface
68. Rizal, Ibid
69. Alzona translation must be checked with the original