

FOREWORD

It is common in some circles in Filipino historical scholarship to view the rise of Philippine nationalism, and consequently the outbreak of the struggle for national political independence in 1896, in terms of what is usually known as the "catastrophic theory". The latter became popular and gained widespread currency among European historians particularly during the nineteenth century. Its most famous supporter was the Swiss historian, Jacob Burkhardt, who wrote about the Italian Renaissance as though it were a flower suddenly blossoming in the middle of an arid land, or an object appearing out of the blue from nowhere without warning. From the Burkhardtian perspective, the efflorescence of Italian culture was unheralded and had no antecedents; it was an abrupt break from the so-called Dark Ages, described by Renaissance men as intellectually barren and culturally puerile.

In a similar vein, some Filipino historians view the emergence of a historical phenomenon like nationalism in the Philippines, culminating in the events which resulted in the collapse of Castilian rule at the end of the 1800's, as though it were indeed a flower bursting forth amid the Saharan wasteland, without roots in the preceding centuries, or using other words to that effect. A fixed date is even given by these historians for the exact emergence of nationalism, disregarding the principle of historical causation.

Needless to say, the "catastrophic theory" is unacceptable as a framework within which Philippine nationalism and how it originated, may be looked into. The beginnings of Philippine nationalism can be understood only by delving deeper into the colonial history of the country. It would be unhistorical and unscholarly to deny to this portion of our history the proper scholarly attention it duly deserves.

A sparkling work dealing with one of the antecedents of Philippine nationalism during the colonial era is Dr. David Routledge's *Diego Silang and the Origins of Philippine Nationalism*. Dr. Routledge, a distinguished New Zealand historian impelled by his desire to shed more light on the nature of social movements, discusses the anatomy of the Diego Silang rebellion within the context of the social, economic, and political conditions in the Ilocos region during the eighteenth century,

and from the standpoint of today's theories regarding agrarian uprisings and other types of revolts. Based on copious notes and heavy archival documentation, the author successfully develops his major thesis that the Diego Silang movement was more nationalist than agrarian, and therefore logically preceded the 1896 revolution by over a hundred years.

Dr. Routledge's success in demonstrating the validity of his main assertion is in itself a significant achievement requiring already a thorough revision of the traditional view concerning the emergence of Filipino nationalism. Instead of saying Filipino nationalism emerged only in the late nineteenth century, it is now more appropriate to say it came into its own in the last quarter of the nineteenth century only because of the contribution of antecedent events like the Silang rebellion in the eighteenth century. These events constituted a continuum in which Philippine nationalism developed fully.

Dr. Routledge's opus points to the compelling need to undertake greater research along the same lines regarding the other movements which occurred elsewhere in the Philippines either before or after the Silang uprising. This calls for increased emphasis on the study of the local history of extra-Manila, nay, extra-Luzon, areas in order to drastically rewrite Philippine history and evaluate better the impact of successive colonial rules on the Filipino nation.

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