

# Book Reviews

**Remigio E. Agpalo, *Adventures in Political Science* (Diliman, Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press and College of Social Sciences and Philosophy, 1996), Revised edition, 493 pp.**

This is the revised edition of Professor Agpalo's fourth book, first published in 1992. He has journeyed far intellectually, from his birth place of Mamburao in Occidental Mindoro. His career and his achievement of numerous academic success are outlined on pages 3-17. The "map", or the objectives, of his journey apparently – but only apparently – shrunk between 1952 (when he was studying in Maine) and 1963 (in his inaugural address as president of the Philippine Political Science Association). In the former year he proposed "to study the history of all the civilizations of the world, dead, decadent, or resurgent" (p. 6). In the latter year he advocated that Filipino political scientists should "stress Philippine government and politics in their research" (p. 13). The link between the two lies in the nature of comparative government. How do we know what is special or unique about the government of a state, unless we have surveyed a number of other states' governments? To cite Rudyard Kipling, "What do they know of England, who only England know?"

The range covered by the book, both inside and outside the Philippines, is indicated by considering the contents and the foci of interest which they reveal.

The scene is set by a sketch of the author's university service, and by describing three academic "campaigns" in which he participated at the University of the Philippines, where he served longest. He defended the establishment of a Department of Religion and supported a contentious tenure proposal, transforming it into a resolution on academic freedom. In addition, for the first time, he participated in the first election of three faculty members included in the Executive Committee of the University Council, winning the highest number of votes of the members of the University Council.

The next section deals with three Filipino thinkers: the views on modernization of Jose Rizal, the national hero; the political philosophy of a thinker and practicing politician, Jose P. Laurel; and the political philosophy of the under-recognized Emilio Jacinto.

Under the heading "Philippine Sub-National Politics," Agpalo has two topics, the politics of Occidental Mindoro, where he was born and Philippine interest groups. Each is linked to one of his favorite themes. Agpalo shows that politics in the province has had many undemocratic features and indicates features, many of them associated with modernization, which may lead to change. In his piece on interest groups he is concerned specifically with their contribution to political modernization.

Two articles follow which are based partly on the analysis of Occidental Mindoro. Leadership is examined, the key term being *pangulo*, which denotes the one who plays the role of head. Making use of what he calls the "Organic-Hierarchical Paradigm", the author explains the course of Philippine politics from 1872 (GOMBURZA year) to 1972 (Martial Law proclamation) and beyond, claiming that it "... provides a powerful logic for the political modernization of the country" (p.189). In the companion article he develops the notion of leadership and institutions which will ensure that the regime will be both liberal and democratic (p. 219). It will promote sharing and caring for others. It can be seen as a *Societal Pangulo Regime*.

Two other articles are discussed, zeroing in on the leadership of Presidents Corazon C. Aquino and Ferdinand E. Marcos. With regard to Aquino, the author quickly demonstrates that the Aquino government enjoyed neither "civil legitimacy" nor "performance legitimacy" (pp. 238-241). Moreover, Aquino was called a "paradox", a kind of leader lacking a vision, as well as a strong organization (pp. 255 and 261). As regards Marcos, the author notes that, endowed with a vision and a strong organization, Marcos qualified as a *supremo* kind of a leader (pp. 256-260).

Succeeding essays deal with the Philippine legislature and executive. They are linked with the *pangulo* approach: the present form of government is a *pangulo* regime – not presidential and not parliamentary (p. 317).

A brief item follows on *Marcos vs. Manglapus* (1989), concerning a contest of an individual against the state. Here Agpalo deploys convincingly his mastery of comparative politics, notably the John Hampden English case (1638). He demonstrates his wide knowledge yet again in the succeeding article, which relates the Philippine system to a *schema* of possible models. The following essay concerns "the iron logic of modernization." It is also comparative, but focuses mainly on the martial law period in the Philippines.

The book concludes with a discussion of trends and fashions in the study and teaching of political science in the Philippines up to 1984 and an inspiring assessment of how it can contribute to the advancement of knowledge and civilization.

To summarize, these titles lead to two conclusions. The author has maintained a judicious balance between a well-informed comparative approach and digging deep in his own terrain, the Philippines. Moreover, while casting his net wide as regards fields of concentration, a special interest in modernization is discernible. Additionally, he says some things which underline the essence of politics but are not said often enough. All political systems are oligarchical (p. 351); in the strict sense, there never has been a real democracy and there never will be (p. 371). Nor is he distracted from following the argument where it logically leads by dwelling upon dramatized popular stereotypes. Cory Aquino's arousal of "people power" has no bearing on her legitimacy. Similarly, Marcos's alleged iniquities while in office – he claims – should not have affected his rights as a citizen when out of office. Most important of all, he puts to rest the most dangerous intellectual heresy of political science, about power. Power in itself, he reminds us, is neither good nor evil (p. 214).

Refreshing thoughts, like these, ensure that our journey through Professor Agpalo's pages will indeed be adventurous – and never dull.



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Alfred W. McCoy, *Closer Than Brothers: Manhood at the Philippine Military Academy* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1999), 425 pp; (Reprinted in the Philippines by Anvil Publishing , Inc.)

*Closer than Brothers* is Al McCoy's attempt at showing the evolution of the military organization in the Philippines and how this coincided with the unfolding of this country's experience in state formation, nation-building and democratization. The birth of the military organization signaled the incorporation of the Philippine society in the larger external policy concern of great powers. Domestically, it is descriptive of an incipient society's and former colony's experience at stratification and elite formation. *Closer than Brothers* mirrors the traumatic interface of the military and civil realms of the Philippines and the impact of a military conquest of the civilian domain.

McCoy depicts in critical portions of the book, that the military cleavage in Philippine society is not as deep as perhaps the Thai's or her counterparts in Latin America's. But like its counterparts, the military bureaucracy is a viable determinant of the country's overall domestic policy. The history of the Philippine military underlines the threads of experiences common to modernizing states such as Thailand, Pakistan, Chile and the like whose domestic policies include measures of subduing an otherwise restive subsystem of society.

The central thesis in McCoy's book overshadows his style of juxtaposing two military classes, '40 and '71 in the Philippine Military Academy (PMA). The original idea of contrasting the military professionalization experiences of both classes does not have the same effective impact than what his innermost arguments seek to profess.

First, that the Philippine military organization is an enclave that breeds a portion of the national elite – describes the society's patrimonial legacy and present patrimonial development. The stratification within the military elite reverberates in a weak state framework of the Philippines state that has been unable to consolidate coercive powers against divisive factions within the society. The military as mirrored by PMA Class '71 was parochial and did not reflect the rational features of a modern western military. Instead, this branch of

the military was not a legitimate instrument of state power, one that was subordinate to and protective of civilian interests, but extended itself into the culture of opportunism and rent-seeking politics. It is a microcosm of a Philippine political system whose democratic direction since independence has been hampered by its history of elite perpetuation. *Closer than Brothers* is more than the story of a credo of fraternal loyalty within the military cleavage, but is an analysis of the country's unfortunate acquisition of 'cacique' democracy.

As an instrument of the weak state and a weak apparatus of the state itself, the Philippine military in the hands of Class '71 resorted to methods of violence, torture and sabotage in order to build a crumbling social order and to weave together an unstable nation. Using the weak state 'prism of analysis' McCoy elaborates on the lack of autonomy within the military sector and how this general lack enhanced their vulnerability to the dominant state culture of patronage under an authoritarian regime. While McCoy opts not to assess the Philippine Military Academy's record of socializing its members to the ideals of independence, the manner by which the events unfolded during the Marcos regime and the 'EDSA revolution' is an indication of the Academy's dismal failure. The author offers no explanation behind the seeming success of the PMA to mould professional soldiers and its failure afterwards. What appears crystal, however is the reality that the military enclave is porous to the domestic political developments of the society of which it is a part.

Civil-military relations in the Philippines became an unbalanced history of civilian subjugation by the military under an authoritarian regime. Its tainted reputation is born out of how authoritarianism socialized military personnel and elevated it to a status that gave it a seat in the country's elite – traditionally dominated by landlords, political and economic leaders. It is also a documentation of a vulnerable military group who volunteered to connive with an unjust administration in order to preserve personal gains. These ideas have been illumined in *Closer than Brothers* in a McCoy style of history-telling of the lives of Reform Armed Forces Movement (RAM) and members of Class '71.

How less autonomous the military organization has been depicted by McCoy through various revelations of torture victims of the Marcos' rule. The story of Class '71 revolves around the events surrounding

the birth and passage of the RAM. The revelations were not that startling only to the extent that a huge portion of documentation of torture-storytelling among victims have already antedated McCoy's. These recounting of events, however did not remove a feeling of painful reminiscence that still exists among so-called Martial Law babies — including this writer, herself. The manner by which McCoy documents the torture strategies utilized by the same RAM boys as members of the Philippine Constabulary or the Philippine Metrocom accentuates the disgust and disappointment of knowing that these same people are now in the same arena of conventional power.

*Closer than Brothers* demystifies the charisma behind Gringo Honasan — present Senator and past hero of the EDSA revolution. The hero-worship of Gringo and his celebrated participation in a forceful elite circulation (in time when the fall of socialist democracies were imminent all over the Europe) is testimony to the country's dependence on less than rational forms of leadership. McCoy's bias against Gringo and the RAM boys later became clear. His attempt to do so was done by detailing the human rights violations of Gringo and his followers. But it was a careful and sustained bias that eluded journalistic analysis of Gringo's time.

The author's documentation of the unfolding of the events in EDSA reveals the following points: Foremost, is that the RAM, while it claims to be a reformist clique within an organization wrecked with decay, is nothing but a fox in a sheep's clothing. The RAM is not driven by an ideological aspiration of military independence and civilian supremacy but by personal ambitions and ruthless quest for power. Military history as described through the lens of experiences of the class '71 indicates stories of personal jealousies, gripes and power struggle. This experience did not spare personalities with a perceived solid reputation for ardor in public service — such as Fidel V. Ramos and Rafael Iletto. What appears as petty desires for promotions have been institutionalized by the executive and the legislative branches of government. Hence, even the constitutional guarantee of civilian supremacy is self-contradicted by a presidential and congressional prerogative to shape military appointments and later on promotions.

Some of the RAM members possess a record of sadism, violent aggression, murderous streaks and psychopathic tendencies. McCoy's

attempt to reconcile these labels with performance is done with his analysis of the flimsy bases of the subsequent failed *coup d'etat* organized by Gringo and the RAM, the *Nagtahan* massacre, Gringo's Freudian slips of the tongue, the military and Enrile network of relationship and the 1998 senatorial election.

There is nothing unusual behind the premise that military classmates of the same fraternal groups and 'batch' will cultivate social networks that go beyond the organization itself. This is a phenomenon that surpasses the military organization and includes the legal and medical professions as well – in the Philippines and other cultures. *Closer than Brothers* is a telling title for a relationship among RAM members within and how this relationship sought to influence gross decisions and a frenzied desire for power among friends: it is about a special kind of relationship between the military and the presidency which may be sowed and developed into future debts of gratitude – in the government; it is about cultivating transcending relations between Enrile and Gringo Honasan in the arenas of power including inciting rebellion, arms production, electoral support and criminal absolution.

In a subtle way, McCoy raises the question behind what appears to be a lack of convergence in the political culture of the Filipinos. This is reflected in the Filipino's passionate concern for human rights yet side by side this is an indubitable support for the heroes of EDSA – the members of the military elite whose human rights records, for a while, eluded critical analysis. The author establishes a link between what appears to be a frail collective historical memory among Filipinos in general and the shower of popular support for the RAM boys in 1986. This discord in political culture seems to be embedded among masses, who without discrimination install their leaders with doubtful track records in the halls of power.

'Impunity' is the concept used by McCoy to elucidate a political reality that perhaps becomes common among societies where power is less than dispersed and where plurality remains confined solely in the political sphere. A phenomenon of impunity takes place when culprits and violators of the norms of society and the rules imposed by the state go unpunished and are instead rewarded either by media mileage or political power. For McCoy, the election of Gregorio Honasan as senator

is a representation of this societal perversion. Yet it is not its sole manifestation. McCoy's portrayal of the country's former president, former chief of staff and hero of the EDSA revolution, Fidel V. Ramos fits a similar mould of the personality he seeks to describe as driven by political ambitions.

In the larger societal arena, impunity manifests itself when violators of human rights and corrupt public officials are co-opted as wielders of political power by any kind of administration – including the Aquino administration. It persists when violators and culprits occupy seats of power in the political and private spheres of interests. In the 1998 senatorial elections, the designation of Gringo Honasan as one of the duly elected members of Congress resonates with what McCoy considers as collective trauma or collective forgetfulness of the Filipino society in general. The Estrada Administration repeats history by incorporating cronies condemned during the Marcos regime into his government.

*Closer than Brothers* is a metaphor for an institutionalized preference for social and kin-based networks, cronies and friends in running government and distributing economic spoils. It is a subtle yet a strong criticism against the kind of governance that the Philippines has long wanted to avoid but has fallen into just the same. It is the kind of society that the Aquino government wanted to create but failed by her own class-based weaknesses; or the kind of administration the Ramos government sought to build but without success. Today, it is the very same dilemma that the present administration has planted seeds of it. It is a parody of the systemic illness of this society. *Closer than Brothers*, is a scholarly material that may be subversive to some, a fount of learning for others. It privileges historical writing that says it does not pay to forget. ♣

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**Isagani Cruz and Cynthia Cruz-Datu, *Res Gestae: A Brief History of the Supreme Court From Arellano to Narvasa* (Manila, Philippines: Rex Bookstore, 2000), 266 pp.**

The Supreme Court has always been an institution shrouded in mystery. Of the three institutions representing the three branches of government, the Supreme Court is the least known. Perhaps, this is because of the very nature of its functions which encourages “confidentiality” rather than “transparency”. As a matter of fact, this characteristic also distinguishes the Supreme Court from the other lower courts.

The latest book of former Supreme Court Justice Cruz and his daughter Cynthia Cruz-Datu tries to remove some of the mysteries surrounding the Supreme Court and pulls it down from its imaginary fortress to its rightful place among the ordinary citizens who cannot avoid but to look up to it as an institution founded upon the “bedrock of justice”.

The book itself is not merely another reference to be placed among the shelves reserved for history books. It is more than a historical account of the Supreme Court. While the book places the Supreme Court in the proper perspective in relation to the significant moments and developments of our history by citing the relevant and significant cases which the Supreme Court had rendered from its founding in 1901 until the present, its contents are more than mere lessons in history. It also informs the readers of the activities within the supposedly sacred institution and offers insights about the personalities of members, thus opening a window through which the reader can take a peek inside the chamber where important decisions affecting the life and future of the nation are being made.

The preface itself is intriguing. It immediately gives us an insight regarding the desire of the Supreme Court to protect itself from any writings which might degrade it and pierce the veil separating it from the rest of society. The author hints on attempts to censor the book by the very institution which on several occasions had led in protecting the freedom of speech. It wanted the author to “tone down” his language, especially pertaining to the Supreme Court’s apparent sycophancy towards the Marcos dictatorship and other matters tending to show

that the institution is far from being infallible. Fortunately, the author once again showed his courage and strength in resisting the pressures “from above”. As a reply to those who wanted him to revise his work, he said:

You have known me for quite a while and understand my feelings about censorship. I hope you will convince your colleagues on the Court that my reluctance to accept all their suggestions does not bespeak an insolent attitude but only a fealty to the liberty of the human mind. Ironically, I who was most insistent on its observance when I was on the Court, seem to be the object now of its denial (p. v).

Hence, we now have a book which according to its author, tries to humanize the Supreme Court as an institution composed of infallible men who, though slightly higher than their fellowmen, share their foibles and failings.

The book is divided into eleven chapters. Each chapter discusses the Supreme Court’s most significant and relevant decisions during important stages in our country’s history and the factors, both legal and otherwise, which led to these decisions. Chapters I-V deal with a Supreme Court still under the control of a colonial power, the attempts at Filipinizing it, and its early decisions. These chapters show a Judiciary with its umbilical cord still attached to the “mother country” since its decisions were still revisable by the United States’ Supreme Court. The composition itself was distinctly American since most of the Justices appointed were US citizens. The first Filipino Chief Justice, Cayetano Arellano, was unabashedly pro-American. He once testified that Filipinos are not yet ready for self-government (p.54). Moreover, the decisions rendered during this period showed a clear deference to the US administration and a Supreme Court all too willing to bend to the will of those holding the reins of government, a preview of the kind of Supreme Court the Philippines will have for the years to come.

Chapters VI–VII describe a Supreme Court during the time when the country was once again invaded by a colonial power, the Japanese, and the years which came afterwards. The most significant portion of these two chapters, from the point of view of those interested in how the Supreme Court fulfills its mandated function as a third co-equal branch of government, is its cavalier attitude of deciding not to act on

cases which its members deem to be "political in nature". This can be illustrated in one case cited in the book which quoted the Supreme Court, thus:

Let us not be overly influenced by the plea that for every wrong there is a remedy, and that the Judiciary should stand ready to afford relief. There are undoubtedly many wrongs the judicature may not correct, for instance, those involving political questions (*Vera vs. Avelino*, 77 Phil. 191).

In sum, these two chapters emphasize the roles played by the Supreme Court in determining the political future of the country. It has always played a role in politics, even in those instances when it decided to hide behind the political question doctrine. In such instances, the Supreme Court, through its deafening silence, served to legitimize the acts which it conveniently sought to justify by invoking the "wisdom" of the other two branches of government.

Chapter VIII is entitled "The Marcos Courts". The choice of title alone is intriguing for it connotes a judiciary bereft of any independence from the clutches of the dictator. This chapter discusses how the Supreme Court slowly lost its credibility before the eyes of the public because of its shameless display of servility to the dictatorship, the imperious First Lady, the Solicitor General, the Presidential Legal Adviser and even the military (p 174). It was a time when the government, particularly the executive, could do no wrong, when even its most patently illegal acts were upheld on the ground of practicability and political convenience. A classic example is the case of *Javellana vs. Executive Secretary* (50 SCRA 33) where the validity of the ratification of the 1973 Constitution was questioned. According to the Supreme Court, while the 1973 Constitution was not validly ratified, "there is no further judicial obstacle to the new Constitution being considered in force and effect." Thus, through the judicial fiat of the Justices of the Supreme Court who penned this and other so-called "Ratification" cases, the doors welcoming the dark period of Martial Law were left wide open. Attempting to close it were some members of the Supreme Court who had the courage but not the number to stop the onslaught of tyranny.

Chapters IX-XI focus on a Supreme Court trying to regain the integrity and independence which it had lost during the Martial Law

period. It began with the attempt to reorganize itself and the rest of the agencies of the government so that the final vestiges of the Marcos' iron hand rule could be removed. The attempt is praiseworthy, albeit, the result was far from being successful. This can be seen from a discussion of the case of Marcos vs. Sandiganbayan, where once again, the individual members of the Supreme Court were given the opportunity to show their undying loyalty and fealty to the Marcoses (p.261).

The chapters noted the changes introduced in the 1987 Constitution which aimed to strengthen the Judiciary and increase its autonomy and independence in the hope of preventing a repeat of the past when it was used for the convenience of the dictator to legitimize his rule. Among the changes was the creation and formation of the Judicial and Bar Council which nominates appointees to the judiciary. This is an attempt at de-politicizing the judiciary and maintaining its independence from the political branches. Another change is the new definition of judicial power, which now includes the "power to determine whether or not there has been grave abuse of discretion amounting to lack or excess of jurisdiction on the part of any branch or instrumentality of the government" (p. 214). The author notes that this may or may not constrict the political question doctrine, depending on the activism of the Court. It is clear, however, that this was inserted in the traditional definition of judicial power in order to preempt any attempt on the part of the Supreme Court at shrinking away from its mandated duty of adjudicating cases and ruling in favor of what is lawful and just, no matter who the adverse party may be.

The new Constitution also requires the Courts to decide cases for definite periods of time in the attempt at curtailing delays and clearing the over clogged dockets. These periods had been given a mandatory character, as opposed to the past when these were merely permissive.

Aside from these changes, the chapters tried to put a human face on the members of the post-EDSA Supreme Court. It described Justice Paras as the source of merriment because of his droll humor and familiarity with show business. Justice Sarmiento was described as a walking encyclopedia and Justice Herrera had the distinction of being described as schoolteacher before whom one should always be proper. Chief Justice Fernan, on the other hand, was characterized as being more of a politician than a scholar and was said to lack the intellectual

leadership of Chief Justice Teehankee. The styles of leadership of these two Chief Justices were also compared. It was said that Chief Justice Ferman, being a contemporary of the other Justices was more of a *pares* than *primus* and was less tense than during the time of Chief Justice Teehankee who was regarded more as a teacher by the much younger justices who often felt a little trepidation every time the former would walk inside the conference room with ponencias in hand for critical evaluation.

These chapters also discussed some changes in the personalities and attitudes of the individual members of the Supreme Court. The writer notes that in no time in the institution's history has its members been courteous with one another. In fact, he states that "The new Court was to be distinguished from previous Courts by the general lack of discord among its members" (p.216).

The Aquino and Ramos Administrations saw a Supreme Court which did not always agree with the positions of the executive. Numerous cases were cited wherein the Supreme Court rebuffed and reversed major policies of the governments. Among these were the sensational Roponggi, Manila Hotel, Pirma and Deregulation cases. The book ended with the start of the Estrada administration and the accomplishments made by the Supreme Court under the leadership of Chief Justice Narvasa.

In sum, the book is a good read for those interested in learning more about the working of the Supreme Court, the highest Court of the land. However, one may ask, why *Res Gestae* as a title. The author did not really explain why but perhaps the reason may be inferred from the definition of *Res Gestae* as an exception to the hearsay rule under the Rules of Court. The author may have chosen this as a title in order to emphasize his desire for the readers to consider his work not only as the notes and observations of a disinterested and impartial historian, but rather as the accounts of a person who was once a part of the institution and of whom the same institution will always be a part. ♣

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Mina Roces, *Women, Power, and Kinship Politics: Female Power in Post-War Philippines* (Manila: Anvil Publishing Inc., 2000), 214 pp.

Women's empowerment has become an important subject of discourse in political and gender studies. *Women, Power, and Kinship Politics* by Mina Roces belongs to this type of discourse. The book argues that women's power can be understood and maximized in the context of kinship dynamics. If kinship politics means the utilization of political power for the benefit of the kinship group, then women exercise "unofficial power" in his system. Acting mainly as the kinship group's support system, women become strong by using their unofficial positions as wives, mother, and even mistresses of politicians.

Roces cited the way Imelda Marcos utilized her power as First Lady during the authoritarian years. Imelda, according to her, is an exemplar in the way she maximized her unofficial power. She built infrastructures, hospitals and houses, asked donations for civic projects, and performed diplomatic duties in the name of the state (she visited Fidel Castro, Mao Ze-dong, Ghadaffi, King Hassan of Morocco, Presidents Richard Nixon, Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan, and Premier Aleksei Kosygin of Soviet Union). This immense use of unofficial power earned Imelda an equal status with her husband prompting observers to describe the authoritarian regime as a "conjugal dictatorship."

Aside from Imelda, wives, mothers, sisters, daughters, and mistresses of men with official power also show that they have unofficial power although they use it not as immense as she does. They can effectively lobby in behalf of their constituents and they can pressure financiers to donate to charitable institutions like Philippine Red Cross, Girl Scouts of the Philippines, Boys Town and various disaster relief agencies. Tapping donations for these institutions allow these women to meet people who can be fund-raisers and voters of their male kin. Roces cited the role of the Congressional Ladies Club and the Senate Ladies in raising funds using activities like beauty contests and fashion modeling. In the case of Rosemarie "Baby" Arenas, the alleged mistress of former President Fidel Ramos, she was perceived to be more "malakas" than the First Lady because of her capacity to raise major

campaign funds for Ramos' 1992 presidential campaign. This in turn allowed her excessive influence in business ventures and government appointments.

The author acknowledges that Filipino women could also utilize official power. However, she argued that although women with official power are "equal" theoretically to their male colleagues, they are still considered as "different." According to Roces, women politicians are a minority in a culture where official power is still considered a male domain. On the one hand, the author also discussed the role of women in radical politics. She posited that militant women and women's groups like GABRIELA and MAKIBAKA are marginalized from top leadership positions. Likewise, the militant nuns like Sr. Mary John Mananzan and Sr. Christine Tan also stay in the periphery of leadership positions because of the church's teaching of male hierarchy. She argued that although these women are "progressive", their organizations are not gendered.

From these arguments Roces concluded that women are confronted with complex choices: to be powerful but not officially recognized, officially powerful but marginalized, morally powerful but subservient to male hierarchy through vows of obedience or a political activists with neither official nor unofficial power. Based on her accounts, those who used unofficial power were more successful in influencing government. Although she does not endorse kinship politics nor unofficial power since the latter is prone to misuse (take into account Imelda Marcos and Rosemarie Arenas), she believes that women must use this potential than ignore it. The challenge therefore is "to grapple with the contradictions and rework these methods towards women empowerment in the future."

The arguments of the book are relatively new as far as the literatures on women are concerned. Whereas previous works discuss women empowerment in terms of suffrage and official power, this book argues for the use of unofficial power. This challenge enriches the discourse on women and power. Moreover, the author's criticism of the books on kinship politics opens points for discussion. For instance, Roces' criticism of the *Anarchy of Families* (Mc Coy, 1993) and *Boss: 5 Case Studies of Local Politics in the Philippines* (Rocamora, ed., 1995)

as androcentric widened the perspectives that we have on local politics. She posited that although these works acknowledge the kinship characteristic of Philippine politics, these neglect the roles of women “for there are no women warlords, no women bosses, nor any women goons.” These books, according to Roces are limited in their parameters of what constitutes bossism and warlordism, otherwise, they could have included Imelda Marcos.

Amidst its strengths, the book has shortcomings. First of all, it failed to situate the role of poverty-ridden women. They are not considered as unofficially nor officially powerful nor are they included in her categories namely, militant nuns, “inang bayan” or political activists. Does this mean that poor women do not have power in a kinship-based politics? Based on the extant literatures on traditional, patronage and kinship politics, poor women have significant capacities to ask favors from the patron, boss or government officials. In recent times, these women, when coalesced into a pressure group (not necessarily militant), can in fact influence decisions and policies of the government. Second, the book did not provide a clear-cut definition of empowerment vis a vis “empowering women.” This accounts for difficulty in operationalization and measurability.

*Women, Power, and Kinship Politics*, amidst its shortcomings, is an important inclusion to the works on women and politics. Its simple language allows for easy understanding and its anecdotes increase the readers’ knowledge of female power across history. ❀

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**Floro C. Quibuyen, *A Nation Aborted: Rizal, American Hegemony, and Philippine Nationalism* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University, 1999), 344 pp.**

In the opening statement of his book *A Nation Aborted*, Floro Quibuyen reminds the readers that “this is yet another book on Rizal



Quibuyen reminds the readers that “this is yet another book on Rizal and Philippine nationalism.” He invites them “to recover a lost history and vision, to reread Rizal, rethink his project, and revision Philippine nationalism.”

At the outset, Quibuyen expressed his long-felt unease about the prevailing orthodoxy on Rizal and Philippine nationalism by lamenting that it rests on fundamental theoretical, as well as historiographic errors, which spring from an essentializing and dichotomizing mind-set. He critiqued this orthodoxy in chapters 1 and 2.

Such orthodoxy, Quibuyen continues, frames Rizal and Philippine nationalism in terms of a set of dichotomies: Ibarra versus Elias, Rizal versus Bonifacio, ilustrados versus masses, Reform versus Revolution. These dichotomies consist of the following propositions:

1. In Rizal’s novels, Ibarra represented Rizal and Elias; Bonifacio and the failure of Simoun signified Rizal’s anti-revolutionary stance;
2. Being an ilustrado, with a bourgeois consciousness, Rizal’s goal, in direct contrast to that of Bonifacio, was the assimilation of the Philippines into the Spanish nation;
3. The Reform Movement only served to delay the inevitable Revolution, which was betrayed by the characteristically opportunistic ilustrados;
4. Rizal became the national hero largely through American sponsorship (pp. 1-2).

The eminent historian, Teodoro Agoncillo is credited for having posited a fundamental dichotomy between Reform and Revolution, and between the two classes that carried each movement – the reformists were middle class intellectuals called ilustrados, and the “true” revolutionaries were the masses (p. 12). On the other hand, Renato Constantino went one step further by crediting the articulate and educated ilustrados with providing the “inarticulate” masses with a coherent political theory, the ideology of European liberalism (p. 13).

Quibuyen made use of Setuso Ikehata’s heralding of Reynaldo

Agoncillo-Constantino paradigm. Using Iletto's framework, Ikehata critiques Constantino's logic as a "modernist fallacy". Constantino could not conceive of "ideology" or "theory" except in its "Western European modern rationalized" sense. Quibuyen strongly averred that one discursive practice of contemporary historians in positing a dichotomy... is seriously flawed and needs to be rethought. The basic flaw, according to him, is that when one dichotomizes, one also homogenizes – each is a corollary of the other. Practically, all scholars take for granted the fundamental conflict between ilustrado and masses – as if there were no ideological struggles within each of the classes (p. 15).

Quibuyen successfully debunked the long-held notion that Rizal, as an ilustrado reformer, "repudiated the Revolution and placed himself against Bonifacio and those Filipinos who were fighting for the country's liberty". This, he effectively did by relating all relevant facts – Rizal's works and political acts, his correspondence with his countrymen and family, testimonies and diaries of people who have known him personally – around the trajectory of Rizal's life-history. One very important thesis that he developed and proved was that the Liga and the Katipunan are not politically and ideologically poles apart; that the former's impact on Bonifacio's Katipunan was fundamental.

In Chapter 2, Quibuyen further refuted the idea that Rizal was for assimilation, and that, true to his bourgeois character, he repudiated the revolution. By citing the contradictory positions taken by Gregorio Zaide and E. Arsenio Manuel, he was again successfully able to argue the fact that indeed Rizal was in favor of the revolution. By citing Pio Valenzuela's testimony at the time he was interviewed by Zaide, Quibuyen has been able to convincingly argue that between the previous prison testimonies of the Katipunero doctor and his more recent statements (1931) given during the interview, the latter proved to be the more unassailable evidence.

Quibuyen's persistent rebuttal of long and commonly held notions about Rizal and Philippine nationalism has been made more manifest in Chapter 3 where he controverted Anderson's claim that the concept of Filipino people did not exist in Rizal's time. He accomplished this by citing three texts written by Rizal namely: "Sobre la indolencia de

los Filipinos”, “Filipinas dentro de cien años”, and “El Filibusterismo”, particularly the chapter entitled “The Friar and the Filipino”. The researcher strongly negated Anderson’s pronouncement that “Filipinos” and “Filipinas” in the *Noli* and *Fili* refer only to “pure blood’ Spanish creoles” by declaring it as flatly wrong! Citing as proof Rizal’s letter to Blumentritt (June 1887), Quibuyen asserted that Rizal was applying the term Filipino to all the inhabitants of the Philippines, not just to the expatriate community and that to him, Filipino signified the nation-in-the-making.

In chapter IV, Quibuyen explored the meaning of Rizal’s intellectual work, which was motivated by the pressing need to understand and find a solution to the colonial problem. To interpret Rizal’s work, he considered two things: firstly, how his ideas were formulated in a context of debate as well as collaboration with fellow ilustrados and sympathetic European orientalist like Blumentritt; and secondly, how his vision and nationalist project articulated the thoughts and feelings of the native population, the masses, who had their own sacred tradition. In the process a master narrative was created and a historic bloc was formed that constituted the counterhegemonic movement in the nineteenth century (p. 102). In essence, he was able to approach this through a fusion of biography and history, cautiously avoiding the fallacy of “dichotomizing and essentializing practices of a benighted orthodoxy.”

Chapter V was exhaustively spent in analyzing and interpreting Rizal’s annotation of Morga’s *Sucesos de las Islas Filipinas*. He meticulously examined Rizal’s painstaking effort at supplying footnotes to this pioneering work. These footnotes, according to Quibuyen, constitute a prolegomena to a radical historical critique and indictment of colonial rule, the beginning of a systematic comparative study of the past and the present that draws out the immediate and long-term impact of colonialism (p. 138). Rizal, according to this author, was the first Filipino to construct a national view of history by first deconstructing colonial history, and his agenda is historically broader and more politically radical for two reasons. First, he makes a stronger claim for viewing national identity from an Asian-Pacific perspective, not only in emphasizing the cultural, historical, and trade links of the Philippines to her Southeast Asian neighbors, but also in acknowledging the Malay peninsula as the original homeland of the Filipinos. Second,

Rizal was virtually the first among his compatriots to subject Spanish colonialism to a rigorously radical critique.

Chapter VI which constitutes the most vital part of his treatise is devoted to a philosophical analysis of Rizal's concept of the Filipino nation. Here, Quibuyen explained with great clarity the concept of national sentiment by defining it in terms of referring to the cohesive bonds, primarily cultural and moral, uniting a people into a national community in which the common good is protected and promoted. Indeed, the national sentiment is a revolutionary spirit (p. 177). He further explained that the purpose of forming a national community is to ensure that no tyrannies and despotisms emerge or, if they already exist, to resist and oppose them. It is the existence of a national community that will prevent any government policy or measure that is inimical to the common welfare from being carried out. The national community is thus a moral community (p. 178). It is in this chapter that the ethical or moral dimension of national sentiment was given great emphasis.

In the succeeding chapters (VII and VIII) there was extensive discussion of Rizal's responses to the critiques penned by Isabelo de los Reyes and Vicente Barrantes, the "officially" recognized Spanish authority on the Philippines. Rizal's responses, especially to the latter, only manifested his sense of distaste for the Barrantes display of ignorance and racism about the Filipino culture. "Rizal wryly observes that Barrantes did not care to verify his assertions by checking available historical documents... because his purpose was to slander a people and in order to slander them, knowledge is unnecessary." (p. 196). Quibuyen averred that Rizal developed his argument that indolence is the effect and not the cause of backwardness by contrasting the colonized Filipinos with precolonial indigenes. In the succeeding pages of this chapter, he was able to convincingly explain the factors (emanating from government) that have led to the so-called indolence of the Filipinos. The next chapter is replete with a lot of interpretations about the "Pasyon" of Filipino Nationalism by establishing analogies between Rizal's works and the basic tripartite plot of the Pasyon epic, namely Paradies – Paradise Lost (the Fall) – and Paradise Regained (Redemption).

Chapter IX involves a vivid narrative on the reasons for the failure of the revolution, dating back from the establishment of the Liga Filipina and the emergent Katipunan that derived its inspiration (and even membership) from the former. A very significant point that was raised here concerns the fact that the Americans, after quashing the revolution, forthwith enacted laws, such as, the sedition law and the brigandage act, criminalizing any overt display of nationalism, and branding revolutionaries who refused to surrender, like Gen. Macario Sakay, an original Katipunan member, as common criminals (p. 256). Quibuyen was straightforward enough in saying that Aguinaldo's wishful thinking and mendicant attitude toward America did not change even after he had been jolted into a painful awareness of American imperialist designs over the Philippines (p. 262).

The final chapter entitled "Remaking Philippine History" recounted how the Americans were able to successfully "fabricate" an "official culture" in the Philippines by using Rizal as a tool for their hegemonic designs. Quibuyen emphatically declared that "it was a stroke of genius on the part of the American regime to have seized the symbol of Rizal to further their own colonial agenda.

In sum, after having read this monumental work of Quibuyen, I could declare with much confidence that my changed perspective on Rizal and his place in Philippine History was facilitated by the powerful way Quibuyen has utilized both narration and argumentation in advancing his thoughts and ideas. The greatest strength of this book lies in its having presented all the possible documents and studies about Rizal and how each of these bodies of work has been able to stand the test of accuracy, validity, and simple logic. The author's unique style of carefully weaving the seemingly loose threads or arguments and hypotheses into one cohesive fabric of theory, albeit at times demolishing the common myths and fallacies about Rizal, would surely create huge impact and leave an indelible imprint in the Philippine history and historiography. One mark of Quibuyen's scholarship is to persistently subject to questioning some commonly held though misleading notions about Rizal's role in developing the concepts of nationhood, national sentiment, and nationalism. If we are to continuously assert our integrity as a people and our respect as a race in the community of nations, we need more of the likes of Quibuyen, who by the power of their

philosophical analysis would help regain our pride and reassert our distinctive role in helping forge a nation.

To be sure, there are some defects in the way he argued certain points. For instance, his tendency to be literary in his style and his frequent references to the same work of Rizal (*Filipinas dentro de cien años* and *Indolence of the Filipinos*) may be construed by some readers as indication of paucity of vital works that could otherwise have added more cogency and meat to his arguments. By constantly pointing to some models or frameworks by foreign authors, he may be committing the same errors that have been committed by historians and historiographers who preceded him.

Indeed, this piece of work is worth the hard reading that went into it. One can truly appreciate his history and the heroic efforts of his compatriots with the erudite dissertation of this notable scholar. ❀

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**Kristina Gaerlan, (ed.) *Transitions to Democracy in East and Southeast Asia* (Quezon City: Institute for Popular Democracy, 1999), 260 pp.**

The book is as much a work to understand the long and winding road to East and Southeast Asia's transitions to democracy, as it is an attempt to forward an advocacy to influence these processes. Written in the aftermath of the 1997 Asian financial crisis, the six studies comprising this volume belong to the literature on democracy and development which presents a challenge to the parsimonious, yet insufficient, modernization approaches and their variants. The contributors, who, in one way or another, are involved in popular movements, focus less on the relationship of development and democracy than on the complex interplay of states, civil societies and social movements. The book is an output of the democratization research project of the Asia Democratization Consortium, which

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consists of the Institute for Popular Democracy (Philippines), Focus for the Global South (Thailand), and Asian Regional Exchange for New Alternatives (ARENA) and the Transnational Institute (Netherlands).

While parts of some chapters represent continuities of familiar arguments (e.g. the crucial role of the middle class, strong society weak state arguments, Asian democracy debate) significant parts of each chapter are able to forward arguments and observations, which represent departures from the existing literature.

Arguing that while “we in Asia face common challenges in our advocacy for democracy, there are different priorities in different countries,” the foreword written by the veteran scholar of Asian political economy, Walden Bello has done an excellent job of situating the six case studies within the wider context of Asia’s democratization. Unfortunately, however, this section as well as the succeeding chapters, failed to explicitly forward an alternative conceptualization of democracy in view of the argument that it is insufficient to suppose democracy in terms of its procedural aspects (e.g. regular elections) only. This is unfortunate considering that in Asia while democratization could obviously mean a move away from the exclusionist culture or from the “politics of disengagement,” as dubbed by the authors of the chapter on Malaysia, that was engendered by authoritarian regimes, the struggles for democratization have taken different characters in different contexts. For example, in Thailand, Abesamis argues that democratic transition in the country is oftentimes understood as a departure from the bureaucratic polity. Changing the character of the polity is definitely not and/or just one of the many ways of how democratic struggles in other countries are framed. In fact, the succeeding chapters highlight the so-called different “priorities” of different countries. While countries such as South Korea and the Philippines are undergoing what has been called as the dual transition (simultaneous, rather than the sequencing, of political democratization and economic liberalization), some countries, primarily that of Indonesia focus on “how to manage and nurture their hard won democratic space while fixing their economic problems.” An overt conceptualization of democracy could have provided the readers with indicators against which to benchmark the progression or retrogression to democracy.



The chapters on Korea, Indonesia and Malaysia have provided excellent in-depth accounts of the response of social movements to the crisis that hit the region in July 1997. Specifically, the chapter on Malaysia forwarded the observation that the effect of the delict of Anwar Ibrahim, although initially confined within the ruling party-UMNO, proved to be a potent force in congealing a pro-democracy movement. In the chapter on Indonesia, Rocamora and Saleh recounted how the Asian crisis, unleashed the discontent of social movements leading to the transition to democracy as exemplified by the resignation of Suharto and the holding of the first election since mid-1950s. The crisis, the authors argue, has been an important force in bringing about the transition, however, "uncertain and incomplete" first by helping topple Suharto then, by radically changing the country's economic configuration. The chapter written by Guerrero about South Korea formulates the most excellent explanation of the causes of the crisis among others. While her stance vis-a-vis the mainstream neo-liberal explanation to the 1997 Asian crisis is ambivalent, she argued that the causes are rather structural. The crisis is a consequence of the pressures generated by the development model pursued by South Korea (and emulated to a varying degrees by its Asian neighbors). Unfortunately, however, she fails to connect this to the process of democratic transition. If the crisis were caused primarily by the weaknesses of the development model South Korea pursued, its implications for the state-business collusion that has been a characteristic of South Korean politics could have been an interesting area to address.

The chapter by Abao discussed how the crisis specifically the four case studies on South Korea's political movement, offer an account of the reinvigoration, if not the emergence of these forces after the crisis. Running consistently throughout the chapter is the apprehension that an inevitable repercussion of IMF's conditionalities – the further integration of Southeast Asian countries into the world economy – will result in the further suppression of economic rights. While this apprehension is warranted, it ignores the other possibility that integration into the world economy is a double-edged sword: If unaided, people who are unable to compete in market-determined mechanisms would be excluded, it could also possibly enhance political democratization. The democratization of Spain and Portugal in the early 1980s for example, was sealed by its integration with the regional grouping, the European Union.

The chapters on the so-called elite democracies namely, Philippines, Thailand and South Korea recognized that the challenge to democratization has moved beyond the procedural aspects toward the substantive one. These countries have, albeit in varying degrees, instituted processes and institutions that could be construed as indicators of a Western-type democracy. The authors argued that the challenge lies in fostering economic democratization as an indispensable complement of political democratization. In operational terms this means reducing the stark economic inequities between different classes. In these countries, the authors noted that the restorationist orientation of "new" leaders, who replaced the dictatorship, renders the new regime unable to alter the political and economic structures, which characterize the ancient regime thereby derailing the transition to genuine democracy. The authors blamed the inability to consolidate their democratic gains on the absence of an effective party system or in the case of South Korea, the absence of joint actions between the popular movement and the opposition parties. Hence, high hopes are placed on the institutionalization of an effective party system. Surprisingly, however, Igaya's discussion does not mention whether or not the Philippine party-list system is a move towards this end.

While not denying that in some Asian countries considerable progress has already been achieved in democratic transition, the authors caution the readers against unbridled optimism as regards the prospects of this process. This reminds the readers of the lesson of Samuel Huntington's "wave" analogy—democracy is not irreversible. In the Philippines, Thailand and South Korea, hopes are placed on the emergence of the fledging forces specifically the politicization of the middle class. In other countries, however, much remains to be desired. In Malaysia, the ruling party proved resilient despite the resistance to Mahathir's rule (which surprisingly comes from the class which benefited from the government's pro-Malay policies). In Indonesia, while the resignation of Suharto and the political developments that it triggered could be considered as giant steps toward transition, the balance of power between significant political forces (e.g. military, Muslims) is too precarious to provide comfort. ❀

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