

REVIEW

A Bayanihan Society through the Sociologist's Colored Glasses, by Isabel S. Panopio and Adelisa A. Raymundo (Manila, University of the East, 1973), 150 pages, ₱10.00.

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July 1, 1974

It is very likely that everyone who is an instructor of students in the basic course in sociology has, at one time or another, encountered the "concept problem." By this is meant the difficulty of making the fundamental concepts of sociology meaningful to students in terms of familiar things *in their own environment*. At last, two sociologists have taken the initiative to grapple with this instructional problem in a way that is refreshingly new and stimulating. The result is this slim paperback.

The lengthy title may mislead you into thinking that this is a wordy book. On the contrary, the volume is, to use the authors' own word, a "pictorial." In other words, this book presents a series of pictures which are intended to give the beginning student in sociology some specific material to help him or her to better envision, comprehend, and apply the basic concepts of the field. The format reminds one of the style made popular by the now-defunct *Life* magazine. There is a maximum of illustrations and a minimum of explanatory text. For those who are insistent upon hard-core, factual data, however, the authors have included several tables containing population data, some bar charts, and three

maps. However, it is evident that the old dictum, "A picture is worth a thousand words," has prevailed as the guiding principle of this work.

The range and variety of illustrations used in the book are in themselves a testimony to the initiative and perseverance which the authors have brought to their task. A careful perusal of the contents provides the reader with a veritable survey of life in the Philippines today as it is lived by the majority of the people — rural or urban, young or old, of high or lowly station. A reader who is unfamiliar with the society and culture of the Philippines may wonder at some of the selections as, for example, the numerous pictures of family groups and family activities. However, one must bear in mind that this book is prepared by Filipino authors for Filipino students striving to learn about sociology within the context of their own life experiences. The crucial role of the family in the Philippine society has been well-documented by social scientists in various fields, and hence this feature of the book becomes a great asset in communicating with its intended readers.

Producing a book is never easy, but the reader may feel that such a "pictorial" is a much less troublesome undertaking than a regular text. Yet, the truth is quite the opposite. The authors faced great difficulties in searching out illustrations that could really convey, in an unequivocal manner, exactly the concepts intended. Anyone who is familiar with the principles concerning the perception and interpretation of such stimuli as photographs will readily appreciate the obstacles that the authors faced in this regard.

Another difficulty that the authors had to

cope with is the oft-repeated complaint of students and others, "Yes, but what is the use of studying sociology? It seems so irrelevant." In the beginning and ending of the book, three benefits to be derived from the study of sociology are cited: enlarging one's understanding of human behavior, providing useful information, and serving as an aid in guiding desirable social change. I doubt that most of us could do much better in providing acceptable answers to young college freshmen and sophomores.

Social change is an evident emphasis throughout the book. Since the Philippines has been undergoing a great deal of dramatic social change during the last 75 years, this emphasis is certainly well placed. It also posed a problem for the authors in that their work had to be timely enough to be appealing to the students, and yet general enough that it would not be outdated in a year or two. The authors seem to have managed this dilemma in competent fashion by including a number of references to contemporary changes and then focusing upon such prominent, long-range, historical trends in Philippine society as urbanization, population change, and economic development in rural and urban areas.

In these days of energy crises, world-wide inflation, and general uncertainties regarding the funds available for research and publishing, it would seem to require an extraordinary effort to place a book of even average materials and workmanship into the hands of the purchaser at a reasonable price. There is always the chronic

dilemma of balancing printing costs against sales price and possible volume of sales. In this respect the authors have come up with a result that seems to be satisfactory all around. The book has been designed and published with good craftsmanship, and the price is reasonable. In terms of legibility, some points should be noted. The pictures are clear enough in most cases (although there is always room for improvement), and the text is generally well printed. However, the larger tables of population data did not come out so clearly, partly because the print size was greatly reduced. This is not a critical drawback, though, because these tables are more in the nature of an appendix to the other material.

In general, then, this reviewer regards the book with favor. It seems well designed to do what it is intended to do. Moreover, since it is the first of its kind, one can not compare it to a previous similar effort. As a pioneering enterprise that shows a fresh approach and promises to be an extremely useful tool for presenting the basic concepts of sociology to students, this paperback is strongly commended.

Note

Professors Panopio and Raymundo are staff members of the department of sociology, University of the East. Dr. Collier is professor of sociology at the Kauai Community College, Hawaii. He was formerly an assistant professor of sociology, University of the Philippines.