

Provocative Views

THE essays published here are indelibly marked by thought-provoking perspectives on the issues that confront us today. From history to culture and then to economics, our contributors bring forward ideas and perspectives that turn around previously unquestioned paradigms and modes of analysis. Here, too, can be found the beginnings of an intellectual debate on culture and political struggles.

More than a hundred years after his execution at the hands of the Spanish civil militia, the works of Jose Rizal continue to be examined for insights into the emergence and development of the Filipino nation. At the tailend of the celebration of the centennial of the Philippine Republic, Cesar Adib Majul emerged from retirement and delivered a lecture on Rizal at the University of the Philippines. Whether retired or not, Majul never fails to compel our attention to his provocative reflections, if not scholarship. In his lecture, 'Rizal in the 21st Century: The Relevance of His Ideas and Texts', Majul argues that Rizal's works have yet a message for the next millennium for Filipinos. He poses the query: As we approach the 21st century, to what extent has our country approximated Rizal's model of a

national community? For indeed, 'an independent state was not necessarily identical to the national community [Rizal] had in mind.'

Rizal, according to Majul, attributed the so-called 'indolence of the Filipinos' to what he called the lack of *sentimiento nacional* or national sentiment. This sentiment is a key concept not only for the fuller understanding of a lot of characters in *Noli me tangere* and *El filibusterismo* but also of his idea of revolution and his actions in the political arena. In elaborating the notion of national sentiment, Majul cites Rizal: 'A man in the Philippines is a mere individual, he is not a member of a nation.' Here, Majul argues, Rizal was bewailing the absence of a wider society to which a person could be loyal and inspired to work for.

Freemasonry is an international organization with a long and colorful history in Europe associated with the principles of liberty, equality, and fraternity. Many of the leaders of the Filipino reform movement and the revolution were Freemasons. Freemasonry has exerted a strong appeal to the Filipino middle class even after the 1986 Revolution. Melinda Tria Kerkvliet examines two questions: What was Masonry's role in the reform

movement and the revolution against Spain? How did it manage to flourish until today?

Mina Roces puts the focus on the role of women as patrons of the arts and culture in postwar Philippines. According to her dichotomy, men tended to be artists while women the patronesses of the arts. From a theoretical perspective, Roces argues that women's patronage stemmed from their position as support system in kinship politics. To this category belongs Imelda Marcos, the foremost patroness of culture in the country, whose patronage gave birth to the creation of such architectural edifices as the Cultural Center of the Philippines, subsidized by state largesse.

Judy Celine Ick's essay throws the spotlight on a more specific aspect of the Philippines' cultural past: Shakespearean performances during the American colonial rule. The essay configures how Americans have appropriated Shakespeare as a tool for colonial education. It then analyzes how Shakespearean performances in the peripheral areas of this colonial landscape are able to subvert the colonial gaze. The costumes in Shakespearean dramas staged in Negros Oriental, for example, are found to be a subtle expression of resistance to the cultural aspects of colonial rule. In another essay

on culture, Rolando Tolentino finds a connection between nationalist films and the experience of modernity in South Korea, Taiwan, and the Philippines. He argues that the fatherland figure in nationalist films engages past traumas and opens up a discussion of the state and civil society in the postcolonial nation.

Nimai Mehta's essay attempts to provide a post-privatization framework that would reconcile market-based supply and competition with fair and equitable outcomes associated with provision of public utilities. He explores the use of regulation as an effective instrument of taxation and argues that regulation of these utilities ought to be guided by conventional standards of fiscal fairness as is normally done for taxes and subsidies—such as the ability to pay, the benefit principle and merit good considerations. Also featured is an interesting exchange of opinions between Maria Fer Mangahas and Raul Pertierra on definitions of Filipino culture, and between Patricio Abinales and Joel Rocamora on the leftist struggle and its schisms. It is these provocative engagements with ideas that continue to give the journal its *raison d'être*.



