

PRODUCING RIZAL:
NEGOTIATING MODERNITY AMONG THE FILIPINO DIASPORA
IN HAWAII

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Chapter 1

Introduction: Rizal as a Site of Contestation

On December 30, 2012, as the first rays of dawn broke over the city of Manila, a grand funeral procession was slowly making its way towards the Luneta, where a dignified bronze-and-granite monument of Filipino national hero, Jose Rizal, stood. Accompanying the funeral urn were several stately-looking gentlemen clad in white military-*esque* uniforms that were decorated with a burgundy and yellow sash worn over the shoulder (see Photo 1.1). These guards of honor were members of the Council of Elders and the Supreme Council of the International Order of the Knights of Rizal, a civic and patriotic fraternity first established in honor of Rizal in 1911. The procession meanwhile, was a reenactment of the transfer of Rizal's remains from Binondo to Luneta a hundred years ago.¹

As the convoy arrived at the Luneta, it greeted a large crowd of Filipinos who had gathered to commemorate the 116th death anniversary of the Filipino martyr. The assembly comprised illustrious dignitaries from Filipino society, including Philippine Vice President Jejomar Binay Jr., Defense Secretary Voltaire Gazmin, Foreign Secretary Albert del Rosario, as well as Manila Mayor Alfredo Lim. As the Philippine Armed Force Band struck up the opening bars of the *Pambansang Awit* (National Anthem), Benigno Aquino III, President of the Republic, Dr. Maria Serena Diokno, chair of the National Historical Commission of the Philippines, and Jessie Deloosa, Chief General of

¹ NHCP, "116th Anniversary of the Martyrdom of Dr. Jose Rizal, *The 150th Celebration*, January 24, 2013 <<http://myrizal150.com/2013/01/116th-anniversary-of-the-martyrdom-of-dr-jose-rizal/>> Accessed May 10, 2014.

the Philippine Armed Forces, proceeded to the base of the monument. Two soldiers followed, carrying a large wreath to be placed on the grave. As President Aquino raised his hand in a salute, a moment of gravity descended upon the crowd as twenty one gunshots rang out in memory of Rizal. This annual commemoration ended with the observance of the flag-raising ceremony, the red, blue and yellow colors of the Filipino flag billowing merrily in the wind as it was hoisted up the Independence flagpole.²

Later in the day, after the original crowd had dispersed, a very different group of Filipinos assembled in front of the monument. Unlike the distinguished personalities of the previous crowd, the group was unremarkable in its composition of ordinary townsfolk. Dressed in all-white – the ladies were garbed in the traditional *Maria Clara*, while the gentlemen wore the *Barong Tagalog*, the hundred or so members of the *Banal Na Angkan* (Holy Family) conducted a remembrance service in honor of Rizal (see Photo 1.2). Unlike the elaborate state-organized proceedings that had taken place earlier in the morning, the commemoration of Rizal's death by this religious sect was a simple affair. Members lined up in neat rows in front of the Rizal monument singing songs of veneration and offering up prayers that honored the Philippine hero.³ After all, the *Banal Na Angkan* believes that Rizal was the reincarnation of Jesus Christ, the *hari ng universo* (king of the universe) who will finally redeem the Philippines from its centuries of oppression.

² "Nation observes 116th Rizal Day," *Philippine Inquirer*, December 31, 2012, <<http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/332615/nation-observes-116th-rizal-day>> Accessed May 10, 2014.

³ Mario Guittap, "116th Death Anniversary of Dr. Jose Rizal," Uploaded January 6, 2013, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3gidWIqMdLs>> Accessed May 10, 2014. This account was corroborated by photographs and the author's personal correspondence with members of the *Banal Na Angkan*.



Photo 1.1. The Knights of Rizal at the reenactment of the transfer of Rizal's remains in Manila on Rizal Day 2012. (Nino Jesus Orbeta, *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, December 31, 2012 <<http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/332557/rizal-planted-seed-of-revolution-bonifacio-watered-it>> Accessed May 12, 2014.)



Photo 1.2. The *Banal Na Angkan* honoring Rizal at the Luneta in Manila on Rizal Day 2012 (Reproduced with permission)

But who exactly was Rizal? Born in 1861 to a middle-class family in Calamba, Laguna, the Philippines, Rizal grew up in the waning years of Spanish colonial rule,

where the rampant abuses of the Spanish friars and officials towards the native people were fast pushing intolerable limits. When he was twenty-one, Rizal moved to the metropole in Madrid to pursue his medical studies. It was during this time in Europe that he published a number of writings about the Philippines, including the 1887 novel *Noli Me Tangere* and its 1891 sequel *El Filibusterismo*. These books, which were originally written in Spanish, provided scathing critiques of the Spanish friars' hypocrisy. They were quickly banned in the Philippines by the Spanish, but nevertheless found their way into the hands of the people, who immediately recognized the story of oppression that Rizal was telling. As the revolution against Spanish colonial rule gathered momentum on the island of Luzon, the writings of Rizal rapidly gained prominence, and on December 30, 1896, Rizal was executed by the Spanish on charges of rebellion, sedition, and conspiracy. His execution catapulted him to instant martyrdom and two years later, President Emilio Aguinaldo (of the short-lived First Philippine Republic) memorialized his death by formally instituting December 30 as Rizal Day.

The commemorative events highlighted above illustrate a few of the ways Rizal is celebrated as the foremost symbol of the Philippines. While Rizal's contributions to and eventual martyrdom for the cause of the Philippine nation are uniformly recognized by a variety of actors, the meanings invested in his figure are not homogenous. The Philippine state tends to present a civic image of Rizal that is understood and interpreted within the ambit of Western modernity: Rizal is exalted for his high level of Western education, for his various accomplishments in the Sciences and Humanities, and for his cosmopolitan disposition and endeavors. Meanwhile, the *Banal Na Angkan*, a Rizalista sect, is more likely to depict Rizal in a manner that contradicts notions of Western rationality and

science: Rizal was the reincarnation of Jesus Christ, and though shot dead by the Spanish, would return to earth again to save the Filipino people from their sufferings. Instead of emphasizing his external accomplishments, the Rizalistas concentrate on Rizal's humility and his beautiful *loob* (inner-being) as qualities to be emulated. Nonetheless, any disparity in representation does not negate the manner in which divergent meanings may feed into, and strengthen the signifying value of symbols.⁴ Rizal is one such example of how symbols are able to maintain a hegemonic hold over the popular imagination, all the while serving as a site of competing representations that simultaneously overlap with and contradict one another. He works as a powerful symbol in spite of, and *precisely* because he has been imbued with a multiplicity of significations. This thesis thus takes the following question as its starting point: How and why did Rizal come to dominate the symbolic landscape of the Philippines?

Given Rizal's uncontested preeminence as a national symbol within Filipino society, it is unsurprising that numerous Filipino scholars (and non-scholars) such as Renato Constantino, Ambeth Ocampo, and Floro Quibuyen have written about him.⁵ However, much of the scholarly project until now seem to revolve around resolving the ambiguities prevalent in his writings and character – was Rizal a reformer or a revolutionary? Was his true desire the assimilation of the Philippines into Mother Spain or an absolute and total independence for the Philippine nation? Did he completely

⁴ Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney, "Introduction", *Kamikaze, Cherry Blossoms, and Nationalisms: The Militarization of Aesthetics in Japanese History* (Chicago, Ill; London: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 1-23. Kosaru Yoshino, "Introduction", *Consuming Ethnicity and Nationalism* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1999), 2.

⁵ For example, see Renato Constantino, *Veneration Without Understanding* (Erehwon, 1969), Ambeth R. Ocampo, *Rizal Without the Overcoat* (Pasig, Metro Manila: Anvil Publishing, 1990), Floro C. Quibuyen, "Rizal and the Revolution," *A Nation Aborted: Rizal, American Hegemony and Philippine Nationalism* (Quezon City: Ateneo De Manila University Press, 1999),

renounce the Catholic Church or did he return to the faith in his final moments before death? As Ruth Roland argues in her dissertation, the various controversies over Rizal allowed him to be appropriated by opposing factions at various polemic periods in Philippine history.⁶ As a result, it is hardly surprising that many scholars have ventured to provide *the* definite interpretation of Rizal's thoughts on certain matters concerning the Philippine nation.

Yet, amidst this deluge of writings, critical attempts to de-mystify Rizal as a nationalist figure are lacking – Rizal the Philippine hero remains very much accepted as part of the national narrative. While there have been a few Filipino academics who have tried to deconstruct and trace the trajectory of how Rizal came to be recognized as a Philippine symbol, I argue that these accounts are problematic as well. For one, the legacy of American colonialism has enmeshed representations of Rizal in anti-colonialist trappings. Rizal as a national symbol has thus been traditionally explained as an outcome of American sponsorship for its own political agenda.⁷ On the other end of the spectrum, scholars have argued that the rise of Rizal as a national symbol was due to the convenient congruence between his writings and the anti-colonialist ideology that was *already* fomenting among the people at the end of Spanish rule and into the American colonial period.⁸ In other words, an incipient Philippine nationalism had *already* emerged prior to the establishment of the Rizal symbol; Rizal's martyrdom merely consolidated such preexisting sentiments, making him a natural candidate to represent the Philippines.

⁶ Ruth Aileen Roland, "The "Rizalista Cult" in Philippine Nationalism: A Case Study of the "Uses" of a National Hero" (PhD Diss., NYU, 1969).

⁷ Renato Constantino, *Veneration Without Understanding* (Erehwon, 1969).

⁸ Ambeth R. Ocampo, "Was Jose Rizal an American-sponsored Hero?" *Rizal Without the Overcoat* (Pasig, Metro Manila: Anvil Publishing, 1990), 2-3. Floro C. Quibuyen, "Rizal and the Revolution," *A Nation Aborted: Rizal, American Hegemony and Philippine Nationalism* (Quezon City: Ateneo De Manila University Press, 1999) 42.

In my thesis, I want to step away from this limiting nationalist/anti-colonialist lens to look at how Rizal has been appropriated and re-appropriated as a symbol of the Philippines. As Reynaldo Ileto captures it so succinctly, “the memorializing of Rizal in images and writings was expected to shape his people’s consciousness and actions. [...] Only in the sense of Rizal’s ghostly presence within each citizen could the nation be recognized by itself as well as by others.”⁹ What were the discursive processes involved in the production of the Rizal symbol? How and why did Rizal become memorialized as a Philippine national symbol? More crucially, what kinds of meanings were, and still are, being invested in the “ghost of Rizal’s presence”? In asking these questions, I explore the ways that the Rizal symbol has been produced, consumed, and then further re-produced by a diversity of actors both within and outside of Filipino society. I do not restrict myself geographically to just the Philippines however; in this thesis, I turn to look at a neglected but nevertheless important demographic of Filipino society – the Filipino diaspora. I zero in on two different Filipino groups based in Hawaii in the US that adopt the Rizal symbol as the focal point for their activities: the Honolulu branch of the *Banal Na Angkan*, a religious sect which views Rizal as the supreme divine being, and the Hawaii chapter of the Knights of Rizal, a civic and patriotic fraternity that was first established to honor Rizal by propagating his teachings. In looking at these two groups, I argue that the production of the Rizal symbol was never a hegemonic undertaking by the state. Instead, it was and remains a site of contestation about what it means to be Filipino. At the same time, these two case studies highlights how the diasporic experience has shaped the way Rizal is understood by Filipinos outside of the Philippines. A

⁹ Reynaldo Ileto, “Reflections on Agoncillo’s *The Revolt of the Masses* and the Politics of History,” *Southeast Asian Studies* 49, no. 3 (December 2011), 503.

deconstruction of the Rizal symbol thus reveals differing discourses of modernity which in turn, frame the way different groups of Filipinos understand their world and the position that they occupy within it.

In the field of Philippine studies, the idea of the Rizal symbol as a site of contestation, particularly with regards to discourses of modernity, is not particularly novel. Paul-Francois Tremlett, in his study on the *Ciudad Mistica de Dios*, a rural Rizalista sect in the Philippines, takes Rizal to be a site of competing discourses about the state and modernity in the Philippines.¹⁰ He argues that the reading of Rizal by *the Ciudad Mistica de Dios* not only challenges the nationalist formulation of Rizal adopted by the Philippine state, but constitutes a rejection of modernity itself. Here, Tremlett defines modernity as “the triumph of the rational and calculating urban individual over parochialism and religion.”¹¹ As such, with the advent of modernity, gone are the days where “superstition and myth”, “the arbitrary exercise of political power,” and the “suffocating ties of locality” prevailed.¹² For the *Ciudad Mistica de Dios*, their interpretation of Rizal represents a challenge to this Western conception of modernity. Instead, their re-production of the Rizal symbol signifies a bid to return power to the Tagalog countryside, as well as the privileging of traditional communal values over individualism.

While Robert Love and Reynaldo Iletto do not focus on the Rizal symbol, they carry on with this line of inquiry by concentrating their research on religious sects based in rural Philippines. Both authors examine how traditional farmers and rural laborers

¹⁰ Paul-Francois Tremlett, “Modernity and Rural Religion in the Philippines,” *Culture and Religion* 3, no. 2 (2002), 221-234.

¹¹ *Ibid*, 222.

¹² *Ibid*.

acquire a common set of terms and symbols as the elite; yet this joint possession of a shared vocabulary does not necessarily translate to a mutual understanding.¹³ Instead, peasants are able to appropriate this shared language for “articulating their own values, ideals, and even hopes of liberation.”¹⁴ In other words, even though Filipino elites and peasants may both adopt the symbol of Rizal, this does not necessarily translate into a similar understanding of what the figure of Rizal symbolizes.

Meanwhile, Michael Gonzalez explores how peasants in two rural Rizalista sects – the *Sagrada Familia* and the Brilliant Knowledge Brotherhood -- appropriate the Rizal symbol as a means of empowerment against a civic culture dictated by the urban elites/state.¹⁵ Although he does not explicitly adopt the term ‘modernity’, Gonzalez’s research nevertheless points to differences in the way the elite-driven Filipino state and peasants perceive the history and aspirations of the Philippines. Unlike the other three authors however, his analysis does not posit a black-and-white dichotomy between the urban elites/the state and the peasants. Rather, Gonzalez shows how there is no one single narrative common to the Rizalista sects, and that civic and peasant narratives can and *do* interact with one another.

My thesis thus aims to add to this existing research by providing empirical substance to the deconstruction of a prominent Filipino symbol. It also endeavors to fill in the following gaps in the above literature on symbol-making: the paucity of studies done at the local level within an urban setting, as well as the lack of work attempted on a

¹³ Robert Love, *The Samahan of Papa God: Tradition and Conversion in a Tagalog Peasant Religious Movement* (Manila, Anvil, 2004); Reynaldo Ileto, *Pasyon and Revolution: Popular Movements in the Philippines, 1840-1910* (Quezon City, Metro Manila: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1979).

¹⁴ Ileto, “History from Below,” 12.

¹⁵ Michael Gonzalez, *The Edge of Structures: A Study of the Rizalista Religious Ideology and Filipino Culture* (MA Thesis, Sydney University, 1985).

geographical setting outside of the Philippines. While the previous studies returned agency to the rural underclass by showing how peasants are able to challenge, resist, and negotiate power relations projected by the state and its urban elites, they nevertheless adopt a misleading urban/elite-rural/peasant dichotomy. The urban is always held in diametric opposition to the rural – these terms are homogenized, as if the urban is only made up of an elite class, while the rural comprise solely of an oppressed and penurious peasantry. Earlier research also tends to take as its point of comparison the distance between the peasantry and the state, without giving heed to other social groups that fall between the two. In my thesis however, I compare two groups which are both found in an urban setting, and yet occupy contrasting positions within the social spectrum. The *Banal Na Angkan* is composed primarily of older working-class migrants, or the urban underclass, while the Knights of Rizal is made up of highly educated, middle-class male professionals. As an organization, the Knights are also closely aligned with the Philippine state. A closer examination of both organizations not only complicates the urban/rural categories, it also destabilizes the simplistic peasant-elite/state dichotomy. In fact, as I will show in this thesis, while there are indeed differences in the way in which Rizal is understood and represented among different societal groups, such discourses on Rizal also frequently overlap and intersect, thereby challenging any kind of straightforward dichotomy that pits an elite class against the masses.

These previous studies also neglect another important segment of the Filipino population, the Filipino diaspora. It is estimated that there are almost 5 million permanent overseas Filipinos across the globe, of which three-fifths of this population reside in the

United States.¹⁶ After the loosening of Filipino migration quotas under the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, Filipinos have been migrating to the United States in a continuous and steady stream. This has resulted in changes, not only in the way Filipino identity has been conceived and constructed, but also within the host societies themselves.

¹⁷ While California may boast the highest number of Filipinos in the country (followed by Hawaii),¹⁸ Hawaii has the largest Filipino population in terms of proportion -- 14.5% of its single-race residents claim Filipino ancestry, although this percentage increases significantly if we include those of mixed heritage.¹⁹ This makes Filipinos the largest ethnic group in the state. As such, besides interrogating how representations of Rizal may have changed through the passage of time, this thesis is also concerned with the additional complexities that abound among Filipinos who are displaced from the homeland.

In the first chapter, I trace the emergence of the Rizal symbol in the immediate period after the Philippine-American War. I show how Rizal was produced by both the colonized and the colonizer, and how these representations were not homogenous even within the groups themselves. Moreover, representations were seldom shaped in a singular geographical locality, as information and culture traveled back and forth between metropole and colony. The dynamics of imperialism thus led to the development of two

¹⁶ Commission on Filipinos Overseas, "Stock Estimate of Overseas Filipinos," December 2012 <<http://www.cfo.gov.ph/images/stories/pdf/StockEstimate2012.pdf>> Accessed May 12, 2014.

¹⁷ Roderick N. Labrador, *Constructing "Home" and "Homeland": Identity-Making Among Filipinos in Hawaii* (PhD Diss., UCLA, 2003).

¹⁸ California has approximately 1 million Filipinos (excluding those of mixed heritage) while Hawaii has almost 200,000 Filipinos. However, in terms of proportion, Filipinos only constitute 3% of the entire population in California. U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Census, "Profile of General Population and Housing Characteristics: 2010," *2010 Demographic Profile Data*, 2010 <http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?_afpt=table> Accessed May 12, 2014.

¹⁹ Ibid.

different key narratives among Filipinos: On the one hand, *pensionados* in the US and the political elites in the Philippines both projected notions of Western modernity onto Rizal, depicting him as a cosmopolitan, educated Filipino, able to hold his own in the civilized progressive Western world. On the other hand, working class Filipinos on the West Coast of America, along with the peasantry in the Philippines, tended to view Rizal as the “brown” Messiah who had come to sacrifice himself selflessly for the people, and who would return to earth again to save the Philippines from its oppression. Yet such discourses were never wholly disparate: Filipino elites adopted religious terminology in their representations of Rizal, while the working class utilized institutions of Western modernity for their own advantages. When the Philippines gained independence in 1946, the elite discourse on Rizal became the official discourse of the newly-minted Filipino state, as the country struggled with an embryonic nation-building project. My second chapter thus turns to the postcolonial period in the Philippines, exploring how elite discourses of the colonial period became the official discourse of the post-independence period within the framework of an emergent Filipino nation.

Having very broadly surveyed the macroscopic trends across large time intervals in Filipino history, my third and fourth chapters zoom in on the local level outside of the Filipino geo-body. Here, I present ethnographic case-studies of two local groups within the Filipino diaspora in Hawaii, probing the different ways in which the *Banal Na Angkan* and the Knights of Rizal have imbued meaning to the Rizal symbol. Through these studies, I show how narratives from previous eras in the Philippines both persist and undergo transformations across time and space.

Methodology

I first became acquainted with the Hawaii chapter of the Knights of Rizal in June of 2013, at a lecture organized by the Filipino-American Historical Society of Hawaii (FAHSOH). The extreme veneration shown towards Rizal by a fraternity made up of male academics and professionals fascinated me, and I became interested in uncovering the discursive forces at work here: how do the Knights understand the figure of Rizal? What significance does he hold for individual members of the Order, particularly in a diasporic setting outside of the Filipino geo-body? With the intention of finding out more about the group, I started attending events conducted by the Order.

A chance conversation with one of the Knights at its December 30 Rizal Day ceremony, led me to learn about the *Banal Na Angkan*. I was immediately intrigued. I had previously come across studies on Rizalista sects, however these were limited to the Philippines – I had yet to learn about any Rizalista groups outside of the Philippines. Eager to probe into this intersection between the Rizal symbol and the Filipino diaspora, I set about trying to get in contact with the *Banal Na Angkan*. From the onset, members of the group were extremely receptive to my interest in them, and they treated me with the utmost hospitality and kindness, although they were probably as curious about this Singapore *dayuhan* (foreigner) with a *pusong Pinoy* (Filipino heart) as I was about them. Throughout my interactions with them, they would attempt to make sense of my presence within the framework of their beliefs.

For the next four months – from January to April of 2014, I attended the *Banal Na Angkan*'s services on a fortnightly basis, trying to understand their beliefs and traditions. Each service was followed by lunch, and this gave me the opportunity to engage with members of the group on a personal level, as I got to learn about them as unique

individuals with their own particular experiences and personalities. Yet, conducting ethnographic research of this nature was also frequently overwhelming. Ethnography by itself highlights the tremendous complexity of human beings, and working with the *Banal Na Angkan*, I was confronted with a different worldview that I initially found difficult to make sense of. This, coupled with its religious nature, made me question at the beginning of this project if I could continue to pursue research in this area. How do I attempt to objectively analyze something as subjective and personal as one's faith, as well as dispassionately examine the myriad of complexities that underpin the human motivations behind such beliefs? Nevertheless, as I wrestled with my own anxiety and apprehension, I came to realize that my job as a researcher was neither to pass judgment nor to make proclamations about my research subject. While acknowledging the differences in our worldviews, I still possessed the ability to record as accurately as I can the things that I saw, heard and experienced during my time with the group.

At the same time, I became conscious of my positionality within the group. After all, as a researcher, I am never isolated nor detached from the object of my research. Rather, a dialogue is constantly taking place between my research subject(s) and myself, resulting in a reciprocal relationship that inevitably informs and influences the research process and results.²⁰ In this case, my identity as a non-Filipino was always very much conspicuous and at the forefront of my interactions with the group. For one, my Tagalog was insufficient to understand the sermons adequately, requiring translations from members who were comfortable with English. At the same time, there were frequent

²⁰ D. Soyini, Madison, (2nd ed.) "Introduction to Critical Ethnography: Theory and Method," *Critical Ethnography: Method, Ethics, and Performance* (LA, California: SAGE Publications, 2012), 10. Charlotte A. Davis, "Reflexivity and Ethnographic Research," *Reflexive Ethnography: A Guide to Researching Selves and Others* (London, Britain: Routledge), 12.

attempts to ascribe meaning to my presence: I was not just researching on how the Filipino diaspora understood Rizal; according to the group, I was also seeking the truth. It did not matter that I was Protestant Christian (something I had frankly disclosed to them from the start); if I could understand their doctrine, I was already in possession of the truth, which would lead me into life, and life abundant. Furthermore, one of the group's key beliefs is the idea that the Holy Spirit (*Santo Espiritu*) is able to directly communicate and minister to its followers, and as this Spirit made itself known through Nanay Serafina (the *Banal Na Angkan's* spiritual mother), my presence also came to take on special meanings for the group. As a foreigner interested in Rizal, I became an indicator that the ninth *balat* (literally translated as "skin") or body of Rizal was soon to return to earth. It also made sense that I was Singaporean, because Singapore was coincidentally, the first and last place Rizal ever visited outside of the Philippines. Later on, as the group noticed me furiously scribbling down notes during the services, the Spirit proclaimed that I was to be the scribe who would write down the teachings of the group, thereby contributing to the propagation of the *Banal Na Angkan's* beliefs. My name, Isabel, was interpreted as thus: *Isa nobela*, or, "to put into writing in a novel".²¹

In stark comparison to the *Banal Na Angkan*, my experience with the Knights of Rizal was almost unremarkable. Between October 2013 and April 2014, I conducted participant observation of three different events, six formal interviews, informal conversations with members, as well as textual analysis of publications. The difference in

²¹ Accommodating the researcher into the religious or spiritual narrative is not an uncommon phenomenon. Vicente Marasigan who did field research on the *Tres Persona Solo Dios* in 1985 related how the religious sect incorporated him into their own set of beliefs. They revealed that the Voice had directed the leaders of the community to put into writing a history of the organization in 1975, as someone would one day come to Kinabuhayan (the *Tres Persona Solo Dios* 'home base) to study their history. "Introduction," *A Banahaw Guru: Symbolic Deeds of Agapito Illustrisimo* (Quezon City, Metro Manila: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1985), 4.

research experience was glaring: Members of the Knights were often connected to my own network of friends and acquaintances, operating within the same social circles as the former. If anything, this only heightened my own consciousness of the social disparity between the *Banal Na Angkan* and the Knights of Rizal, as well as an awareness of my positionality within the two groups. It also made me acutely sensitive of my own worldview vis-à-vis the two groups. While the Knights of Rizal intrigued me because of what I viewed as their extraordinary veneration for Rizal, members of the organization ultimately inhabited a thought-world that is similar to mine. It helped as well that several of my respondents were academically trained in the fields of humanities and social science. This made my task of engaging with them admittedly easier. The *Banal Na Angkan* on the other hand, was a whole different ballgame in its own right. Although I was similarly fascinated by their worship of Rizal, members of the sect possessed a different set of belief systems that challenged my own worldview. Despite this, and perhaps precisely because of this, I found myself being more sympathetic to the *Banal Na Angkan*. Such sentiments were all very real issues that I had to be alert to when writing this thesis. It is with this context in mind that my fourth and fifth chapters on the *Banal Na Angkan* and the Knights of Rizal should be read.

Rizal in the Filipino Academic Discourse

There is certainly no dearth of books written about Jose Rizal – in fact, a cursory glance at the University of Hawaii’s library collection alone reveals at least more than fifty distinct monographs devoted exclusively to the man himself. From the titles alone, it is not difficult to come to the conclusion that such writings are primarily sycophantic and hagiographic in nature. From among Filipino academics, we have Rizal, *Asia’s First*

Apostle of Nationalism (Gregorio Zaide); Rizal, *The First Filipino* (Leon Ma. Guerrero); Rizal, *Sage, Teacher and Benefactor of Humanity* (Leopoldo Y. Yabes), and Rizal, *The Torch of the Malayan Race* (Esteban De Ocampo). There is even a booklet entitled *The National Gospel: Highlights of Rizal's Thoughts and Teachings*, a collection of essays edited by "The Spirit of 1896."

Most of such books fall into the category of biographies about Rizal and his life. However, part of this repertoire of writings also comprises scholarly attempts to fit Rizal into the Philippine national narrative. Should Filipinos see Rizal as their national symbol? Does he truly deserve his revered position among the pantheon of Philippine heroes? These are some recurring questions that Filipino academics have attempted to address in their writings on Rizal. Yet, the problem in the first place, is that such normative questions are not useful in helping us to understand Philippine nationalism and the way in which symbols are created. Rather than disputing over the validity of Rizal's role in the national narrative, a more meaningful exercise would be to look at why and how he has come to be recognized as a national symbol. Nonetheless, the prolonged persistence of such approaches demands a closer look at this phenomenon – why do Filipino scholars insist on addressing Rizal from a normative standpoint? By reviewing certain seminal works written by key Filipino scholars, I will argue that such efforts have been largely compromised by nationalistic sentiments struggling to come to terms with firstly, a colonized past, and secondly, the deep class divisions within society.²² The specter of the

²² I focus on Filipino scholars, as opposed to non-indigenous scholars, mainly because this thesis deals with Philippine nationalism and the way in which local academics contribute to the nationalist project. As such, in this section, I will employ such writings as primary data, although I do utilize these accounts in a secondary manner in later sections. Notable non-Filipino scholars who have done work in this area include Benedict Anderson, Austin Craig and Austin Coates. Their accounts are problematic in certain aspects as well, but this is beyond the scope of this thesis.

American colonial period (1898-1946) especially, has come to cast a heavy shadow on the way Philippine nationalism has been conceived. More significantly, the case of the Philippines underscores the ways in which academics themselves can become implicated and conspirators in the nationalist project.

In general, there are two main paradigms that Philippine scholars have used to address the question of whether Rizal should be recognized as a Filipino national hero and symbol. The first one involves the interpretation of Rizal's person and his writings, and is usually framed through a series of dichotomies -- reformer versus revolutionary, assimilationist versus radicalist, elites versus 'the masses'. This is most clearly seen by positioning the writings of Renato Constantino²³ (*Veneration without Understanding*, 1969), and to a lesser extent, Teodoro Agoncillo²⁴ (*Revolt of the Masses*, 1956) and Reynaldo Ileto (*Pasyon and Revolution*, 1979), against that of Floro Quibuyen (*Rizal, American Hegemony, and Philippine Nationalism*, 1999).

Agoncillo's *Revolt of the Masses*, first published in 1956, marked a significant turning point in the way Philippine history was written. Although the book did not escape a fair amount of controversy when it was first published,²⁵ it promoted a nationalist leftist tradition in the way class was increasingly used to shape the ways a national history was being written.²⁶ In the book, Agoncillo extols the role of revolutionary leader Andres

²³ Also, see Renato Constantino, *Dissent and Counter-Consciousness* (Ermita, Philippines: Erehwon, 1970); *The Philippines: A Past Revisited* (Quezon City: Tala Pub. Services, 1975); *Neocolonial Identity and Counter-Consciousness, Essays on Cultural Decolonization*, Ed. With an introduction, Istvan Meszaros (White Plains, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1978).

²⁴ See Teodoro Agoncillo, *The History of the Philippine People*, (Quezon City: R.P.Garcia Pub. Co., 1974).

²⁵ In fact, a 83-page book entitled "*The Revolt of the Masses*" was published to denigrate Agoncillo's book as being nothing more than "a communist propaganda of the most subtle and insidious type." Jose M. Hernandez and Simeon G. Del Rosarie, "*The Revolt of the Masses*" (Manila, Philippines: 1956), 11.

²⁶ Although Reynaldo Ileto is guilty of adopting a class dichotomy in looking at the Philippine Revolution in his own book *Pasyon and Revolution* (and I think, he makes no apologies for it), he has nevertheless written an interesting article "*Reflections on Agoncillo's The Revolt of the Masses and the Politics of*

Bonifacio and the *Katipunan* society in the Philippines' struggle against Western colonialism. Independence as awarded in 1946, was now credited as the culmination of hard-fought battles begun by the *Katipunan* nearly half a century ago.²⁷ More crucially, by emphasizing the plebian nature of many of these revolutionaries (including Bonifacio himself), the upper and middle classes were construed as traitors of the nation, mendicant collaborators who had placed class interest before that of the nation's. Such a framework naturally had repercussions in the way Rizal was perceived, since he certainly did not hail from an ordinary agrarian background, given his exceptional educational level and the wide-ranging extent of his travels. This bitter statement by Constantino perhaps best encapsulates the consequential reworking of Rizal as a national hero: "[Rizal] was the first Filipino but he was only a limited Filipino, the *ilustrado* Filipino who fought for national unity but feared the Revolution. [He] loved his mother country, yes, but in his own *ilustrado* way."²⁸ Caught between class lines, even Rizal's pedigree as a Filipino (the most fundamental qualification for any national hero!) was placed under suspicion. Rizal may have been the first Filipino, but he could never be a true Filipino because he was not *of the people*.

The understandings of reform and revolution were also filtered and dissected through a leftist lens: class interests mandated that the *ilustrados* could only fight for reforms, since complete revolution would entail losing their privileged status within

History" that explores the politics behind the writing of national history. He argues that national and global events happening at the time that Agoncillo was writing his book, had very real consequences in affecting the way history was treated. However, it would be fascinating to go beyond the writings of Agoncillo to examine more holistically the traditional leftist slant in Filipino academic writing. After all, not only is the Philippines one of the few remaining countries with a guerilla Communist army, the rhetoric of "Revolution" and "People Power" has emerged as strong unifying threads in the nation's historical narrative. Reynaldo C. Ileto, "Reflections on Agoncillo's *The Revolt of the Masses* and the Politics of History," *Southeast Asian Studies* 49, no.3 (Dec 2011), 496-520.

²⁷ Ibid, 500.

²⁸ Renato Constantino, *Veneration Without Understanding* (Erehwon, 1969), 8.

society. Both Agoncillo and Constantino cite the actions and writings of Rizal here: Agoncillo points to Rizal's initiation of a movement after 1892, the *La Liga Filipino*, that aimed at the study and application of reforms. The *La Liga* attracted predominantly middle-class intellectuals who thought it "inconceivable that the unlettered masses should be given the privileges of their respectable group."²⁹ Constantino, meanwhile, quotes directly from Rizal's 1896 manifesto to the Filipino people: "I have written also (and I repeat my words) that reforms, to be beneficial, must come from above. And those which come from below are irregular and uncertain."³⁰ As such, for Constantino, "[i]n [the Filipinos'] case [their] national hero was not the leader of [their] Revolution. In fact, [Rizal] repudiated that Revolution. In no uncertain terms he placed himself against Bonifacio and those Filipinos who were fighting for the country's liberty."³¹

Three decades on, Quibuyen attempts to rectify the damage caused by the Constantino-Agoncillo scholarship to Rizal's dignity as a national symbol. He takes issue with the elite-class dichotomy, pointing out that it is a false construct -- Bonifacio who had read Rizal's works could not have been "almost illiterate" and the *Katipunan* were in fact "closer to the petty-bourgeoisie than [they were to the] proletariat."³² More crucially, he spends his entire first chapter carefully close-reading Rizal's letters, writings and correspondences in a bid to salvage Rizal's reputation as an assimilationist and reformer. The same 1896 Manifesto that Constantino had alluded to as evidence for Rizal's opposition to the revolution is now meticulously scrutinized by Quibuyen, who gleefully

²⁹ Teodoro Agoncillo, "Betrayal", *The Revolt of the Masses* (Quezon City, Philippines: University of the Philippines Press, 1996), 111.

³⁰ Quoted in Constantino, *Veneration Without Understanding* (Erehwon, 1969), 2.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 1.

³² Floro C. Quibuyen, "Towards a Radical Rizal," *A Nation Aborted: Rizal, American Hegemony and Philippine Nationalism* (Quezon City: Ateneo De Manila University Press, 1999), 36-37.

points out the way in which Constantino had “cunningly omitted the first sentence -- “A peaceful struggle will always be a dream, for Spain will never learn” -- and the crucial word “But” in the line “But, under the present circumstances we do not want separation.”³³ Yet, for all of Quibuyen’s repudiations of the elite-class dichotomy, his continual use of class-based categories (e.g., the *Katipunan* as belonging to the petty-bourgeoisie) suggests that he is still writing from within the same Marxist tradition that Constantino is writing from.

While such nationalistic scholarship may contribute to the nation-building project, they do nothing to further our understanding of the discursive processes involved in the making of a symbol. Moreover, for all of Agoncillo’s and Constantino’s misgivings about Rizal being the national symbol, they do nothing to challenge the fact that Rizal *does* indeed occupy a central place in the national narrative. After all, why else would Filipino academics even bother to try and decipher the intentions and thoughts of a dead man? This thesis is not interested in trying to prove if Rizal was a reformer, or if he was a revolutionary, neither is it interested in verifying if he was an assimilationist or a radical. Rather, the goal of the thesis is to better understand representations of Rizal, and how he has come to be acknowledged as a national symbol.

The second paradigm lies closer to the kind of analysis I am trying to do in my first chapter, yet at the same time this paradigm remains woefully inadequate. Again, at one end of the spectrum is Constantino, who argues that Rizal should not be seen as a Filipino hero because he was a product of American colonialism. In his essay *Veneration without Understanding*, he shows how the American Commission made it a priority to

³³ Ibid, 18.

promote Rizal as the Philippine national hero, in their institutionalization of Rizal Day as well as the construction of the Rizal monument in Manila.³⁴ He argues that it was precisely Rizal's reformist and *ilustrado* views that made it so easy and *convenient* for the Americans to utilize him in justifying their rule.³⁵ Constantino thus implores his fellow countrymen to end this "blind adoration" of an American-sponsored hero; instead, "Rizal, the first Filipino, [should] be negated by the *true* Filipino by whom he will be remembered as a great catalyzer in the metamorphosis of the *de-colonized indio* (emphasis my own)".³⁶

In contrast, Ambeth Ocampo and Quibuyen dispute this emergence of Rizal as a national hero. Rizal did not become a Filipino hero merely because he was sponsored by the Americans. Before the Americans had even appeared on the scene, Filipinos themselves had already placed Rizal in high regard. Both Ocampo and Quibuyen underline the use of Rizal as a rallying point for the *Katipunan* during the Philippine Revolution – not only was his name used as the *Katipunan*'s password, its headquarters and meeting places featured Rizal's portrait.³⁷ Moreover, long before the Americans had instituted a Rizal Day, Emilio Aguinaldo had already declared 30th December Rizal Day in 1898.³⁸ In other words, Ocampo and Quibuyen contend that the Americans' success in promoting Rizal as a national hero was *only* because Filipinos *already* saw Rizal as a national hero.

³⁴ Constantino, *Veneration Without Understanding* (Erehwon, 1969), 3-7.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 21.

³⁷ Ambeth R. Ocampo, "Was Jose Rizal an American-sponsored Hero?" *Rizal Without the Overcoat* (Pasig, Metro Manila: Anvil Publishing, 1990), 3. Quibuyen, *A Nation Aborted: Rizal, American Hegemony and Philippine Nationalism*, 42.

³⁸ Ocampo, *Rizal Without the Overcoat*, 3.

Quibuyen does not stop there, however. Taking it one step further, he retaliates against Constantino for his failure to recognize the revolutionary nature of Rizal. Quibuyen argues that such ignorance stems from the “uncritical acceptance of the American representation of Rizal as a counterrevolutionary bourgeois intellectual”, ironically turning Constantino’s criticisms of colonial pandering onto himself.³⁹ At the end of the day then, despite their fierce insistence on directly opposing viewpoints as to how the cult of Rizal developed, the two authors end up in the same anti-colonial boat.

Can one then step away from such nationalist/anti-colonial biases when analyzing the cult of Rizal? In this thesis, I attempt to do precisely that by showing how the Rizal symbol was not constructed by a single actor, or even by a single interpretation. Rather, different interpretations, which were sometimes contradictory in their understandings of modernity, emerged. In the next chapter, I begin by investigating the origins of the Rizal symbol, examining how diverse actors with different motivations and worldviews played a role in the production of the Rizal symbol.

³⁹ Quibuyen, “Rizal and the Revolution,” *A Nation Aborted: Rizal, American Hegemony and Philippine Nationalism*, 71.

Chapter 2

Producing Rizal: Interactions on the Trans-Pacific Stage during the American Colonial Era, 1898-1943

At 7:03 a.m. on 30 December 1929, a loud whistle pierced the early morning silence of Manila, followed by the punctuation of several gunshots, as the city paid its respects to Filipino patriot and martyr, Jose Rizal. By 10 a.m., an estimated crowd of 35,000 people had packed the streets to watch the Rizal Day parade. The parade itself was a grand undertaking, counting beauty queens, representatives from non-Christian tribes, as well as members of the old Revolutionary Army from among its 10,000 participants. At the same time that this was happening, a solemn ceremony was taking place at the Paco cemetery where Rizal was first buried after his execution. More than 5,000 pilgrims were crammed into the small compound of the cemetery where Gregorio Aglipay, head of the Philippine Independent Church, was conducting the memorial service.⁴⁰

At almost the same time, a similar activity was taking place across the Pacific Ocean. In Honolulu, Hawaii, a 3-day celebration commenced with the crowning of the Rizal Day queen at A'ala park downtown, followed by a parade to the capitol grounds, where speeches were made by Governor Lawrence and Mayor John S. Wilson.⁴¹ On the US Mainland, another 3-day festival was being held in San Francisco, where a parade of decorated automobiles and floats depicting the life of Rizal brought the celebrations to a

⁴⁰ "Rizal Day Hosts Father: Thousands Jam Streets, Cemetery at Huge Celebration," *Manila Daily Bulletin*, December 31, 1929.

⁴¹ "Honolulu Has Its Celebrations", *Ibid*, December 30, 1929.

close.⁴² Yet for all of its festivities and revelry, Rizal Day underscored a greater and more serious political agenda and mission. The Philippine Resident Commissioner to the United States, Camilo Osias, delivered the following speech during the Rizal Day celebrations in Chicago. Exalting the merits of Rizal, Osias ended his address with the reminder that “Rizal’s sacrificial patriotism is a perennial warning against imperialistic rule in the Philippines,” and that “the seed [he had sowed where his] blood was shed is now the tree of [Philippine] independence.”⁴³ In New York City where Rizal Day was being celebrated at the International House, Vicente G. Bunuan, director of the Philippine Press Bureau – the propaganda arm of the Philippine Independence Mission – called for Filipinos residing in foreign lands to keep the faith of Rizal, to persist in the belief that the promise of liberty would be upheld by the American people.⁴⁴ In 1929 then, thirteen years after the US signaled its commitment to grant the Philippines eventual independence through the implementation of the Jones Law and five years before the US Congress passed the Tydings-McDuffie Act creating a new Philippine Commonwealth, Rizal came to represent for the Filipino people a vision of national liberty and independence.⁴⁵

Yet, as I will show in the following sections, the ways in which this was expressed and understood were neither similar nor homogenous. Differences in historical experiences, alongside notions of modernity, interacted on a trans-Pacific stage to produce differing and sometimes contradictory understandings of the Rizal symbol. I look closely at the American colonial period in the Philippines (1898-1942), exploring

⁴² “San Francisco Celebrates.” *Ibid*, December 31, 1929.

⁴³ Camilio Osias. *Congressional Records*, 72 (Jan 7, 1930) p. 1213-1215.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, p. 1215-1217.

⁴⁵ The 1935 Tydings-McDuffie Act actually granted the Philippines self-governance and promised complete independence from the US after a period of ten years.

the ways in which the Rizal figure was both appropriated and mobilized by various groups of people, including colonizer and colonized. This analysis also pays particular attention to the dynamics of imperialism between the metropole and colony, considering how the two affected and influenced one another. By examining the ways in which the symbol of Rizal was produced, beginning with the revolutionary period under the Spanish, I hope to show that, on the one hand, it would be wrong to insist -- as the Filipino historian Renato Constantino does -- that Rizal was *merely* an American-sponsored hero employed to justify colonial rule.⁴⁶ At the same time, neither is it entirely accurate to claim, as scholar Floro Quibuyen does, that Rizal was already *universally* recognized as a revolutionary symbol of the Filipino people before the Americans came onto the scene.⁴⁷ Symbols are seldom produced and transmitted exclusively by a single hegemonic actor; rather, they are more likely to be consumed and reproduced by a myriad of actors within society. Despite their conflicting motivations, the twin promotion of the Rizal cult by the American colonial rulers and the Filipino revolutionaries worked together in a mutually reinforcing fashion to buttress a consciousness of the Rizal symbol among the Filipino public.

As American colonial rule continued in the archipelago, the Rizal symbol was further consumed and re-produced by members of Filipino society. In particular, American understandings of Rizal, rooted as they were in ideals of Western modernity, were replicated and further propagated by the local political elites and *pensionados* (government scholars sent to the United States for study). Such notions of modernity

⁴⁶ Renato Constantino, *Veneration Without Understanding* (Erehwon, 1969),

⁴⁷ Floro C. Quibuyen, "Towards a Radical Rizal," *A Nation Aborted: Rizal, American Hegemony and Philippine Nationalism* (Quezon City: Ateneo De Manila University Press, 1999), 42,

privileged rationality and scientific empiricism over what were perceived to be the superstition and parochialism of the dark ages.⁴⁸ If the former constituted a mark of civilization, the latter denoted savagism. In many ways, this elite class formed the direct descendants of the 19th century Filipino intellectuals known collectively as the *ilustrados* (“the enlightened ones”). The *ilustrados* had “associated with Europeans, attended European-style schools, entered the modern professions, became proficient in metropolitan languages, traveled widely, and avidly consumed Western culture.”⁴⁹ Because they ultimately operated within a Western paradigm of civilization and progress, they were able to convince the Americans that they were the legitimate leaders of the Filipino people. The *ilustrados* thus set the direction for future political affairs within the Philippines: Western education would become a foremost condition for participation in political activity.⁵⁰ At the turn of the 20th century, Filipino political elites received degrees mostly from universities in the West (the US in the case of the *pensionados*), or from the Dominican University of Santo Tomas (UST) in the Philippines.⁵¹ Manuel Quezon and Sergio Osmena, President and Vice-President of the Philippine Commonwealth, both graduated from the law school of UST.

Unsurprisingly then, among the Western-educated political elites and *pensionados*, Rizal came to represent a cosmopolitan, highly educated Filipino, able to hold his own in the civilized progressive Western world. Filipino elites thus worked within the

⁴⁸ Paul-Francois Tremlett, “Modernity and Rural Religion in the Philippines,” *Culture and Religion* 3, no. 2 (2002), 222.

⁴⁹ Resil B. Mojares, “The Filipino Enlightenment,” *Brains of the Nation: Pedro Paterno, T.H. Pardo de Tavera, Isabelo de los Reyes and the Production of Modern Knowledge* (Quezon City, Philippines: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2006), 500.

⁵⁰ Michael Cullinane, “‘Ilustrados’ and Filipino Elites in the Nineteenth Century,” *Ilustrado politics: Filipino Elite Responses to American Rule, 1898-1908* (Quezon City, Manila: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2003) 34-35.

⁵¹ The UST was also the oldest university in Asia, having been established in 1611 by the Spanish Dominican Order. *Ibid*, 27-29.

framework of what Americans considered “civilized” to demand Philippine independence from their colonial rulers. Yet this narrative was in no way homogenous among the Filipino populace either. Filipino workers in the metropole, alongside peasants in rural Philippines, shaped by their own specific historical circumstances, as well as their understandings of modernity, portrayed Rizal as the “brown” Messiah, the Savior who had come to sacrifice himself selflessly for the people, and who would come again to save the Philippines from oppression.

While the Americans and the Filipino elites operated at the same level of understanding, this was less true of the Filipino elites and the Filipino underclass. Not only did the Filipino underclass represent a modernity that contradicted that of the elite’s, their reliance on ‘superstition’ and ‘folk religion’ destabilized the elite’s representation of Rizal. This did not mean that the elites did not rely on religious terminology in their depictions of Rizal. On the contrary, Filipino elites regularly drew parallels between the figures of Christ and Rizal as well. Yet, the elites were also careful to keep the two spheres of religion and civic nationalism distinct, and sought to maintain the hegemony of institutionalized religion. As long as the ‘primitive and backwards tendencies’ of the masses remained invisible to an American audience, the elites tolerated it, believing that their modernizing project of education would ‘civilize’ the unschooled common *tao* (people). It was only when these contrasting narratives intersected within the public realm that the narratives of the underclass became a threat to the Filipino elites.

Rizal and the Philippine Revolution

Before examining the American colonial period, it is crucial to take a step back and understand the symbolism Rizal had acquired among Filipino revolutionaries fighting

against previous Spanish colonizers. In particular, Rizal took on a unifying role among members of the *Kataastaasan Kagalang-galang na Katipunan ng mga Anak nang Bayan* (Highest and Most Respectable Society of the Sons of the People, or *Katipunan*), which was founded in 1892 to fight against Spanish oppression. It had emerged from a factional split in the short-lived *La Liga Filipina*, a society set up in the same year by Rizal, albeit with the aim of obtaining reforms for the archipelago.⁵² While the *Liga* shied away from the use of violence, the faction within the *Liga* which eventually formed the *Katipunan* had no qualms about the possibility of taking up arms to secure the independence of the Philippines. Its constitution stated clearly that plans should be made to acquire arms, and once acquired, “all must convene and discuss feasible means to gain the redemption of [the] enslaved Motherland through the muzzles of rifles and cannons.”⁵³ Unlike the *Liga*, the *Katipunan* was an underground society, with various rules and codes of conduct to ensure that it would not be discovered by Spanish authorities. Members were responsible for recruiting as many people as possible under the cloak of secrecy. The society quickly gained strength throughout the Tagalog region of the Philippines, no doubt aided by the publication and dissemination of the society’s organ *Kalayaan* (freedom). By the beginning of 1896, the *Katipunan* numbered around 30,000 members.⁵⁴ Four years after its formation, the Spanish discovered the organization, igniting the first flames of the revolution.

The *Katipunan* was headed by a young man named Andres Bonifacio who played a major role in sparking and then sustaining the Tagalog Revolution. His keen admiration

⁵² Teodoro Agoncillo, “The Campaign for Reforms,” *The History of the Filipino People*, 156.

⁵³ *Katipunan*, Minutes of the *Katipunan* (Manila, National Heroes Commission, 1964), 7.

⁵⁴ Agoncillo, “Bonifacio and the *Katipunan*,” *The History of the Filipino People*, 185.

of Rizal led him to employ Rizal as one of the revolutionary symbols of the *Katipunan*. While Bonifacio never knew Rizal personally, he was well acquainted with the latter's writings, including Rizal's novels. Bonifacio, a self-taught voracious reader, also consumed books on the French Revolution, Eugene Sue's *The Wandering Jew*, the Bible, Hugo's *Les Miserables*, International Law, the Penal and Civil Codes and *Lives of the Presidents of the United States*.⁵⁵ His high esteem for Rizal was frequently manifested in the rituals of the *Katipunan*. Rizal was made honorary president of the society even if he had no affiliation with the *Katipunan*.⁵⁶ His name was used as the password for the society, and his portrait (see photo 2.1) was put up on the walls of the *Katipunan* headquarters.⁵⁷ This second ritual would have potent consequences in the consolidation of the cult of Rizal since, as Vicente Rafael argues, Rizal's photographic image was able to cross boundaries of class, gender, and language to represent the "as yet to be realized nation" in a way his writings never could.⁵⁸ In fact, Rizal was held in such high honor by the *Katipuneros* that right after the discovery of the *Katipunan* by the Spanish in 1896, the society decided to seek the opinion of Rizal before deciding on their next move. As related by Santiago Alvarez, a general in the *Katipunan*, there was a firm consensus that "Dr. Rizal must first be consulted about the matters discussed before any final decision and concrete action be taken."⁵⁹ Among the opinions expressed by members was one that emphasized his international presence and influence; if they could get Rizal to support

⁵⁵ Teodoro Agoncillo, "Cane and Paper Fans," *The Revolt of the Masses: The Story of Bonifacio and the Katipunan*, 71.

⁵⁶ Ambeth Ocampo, "Was Jose Rizal an American-sponsored Hero?" *Rizal without the Overcoat*, 3.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, "Militant Nationalism – 2," 53.

⁵⁸ Vicente, Rafael, "Nationalism, Imagery, and the Filipino Intelligentsia in the Nineteenth Century," *Critical Inquiry* 16 (Spring 1990), 609-610.

⁵⁹ Santiago V. Alvarez, *The Katipunan and the Revolution: Memoirs of a General* (Manila: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1992), 13.

the revolution, the *Katipunan* could surely count on “his many influential friends abroad.”⁶⁰ Later on, when the plot to execute Rizal was discovered, the *Katipunan* hatched a plan to snatch him away from the firing squad. This was eventually dropped on the advice of Rizal’s brother, Paciano, who explained that Rizal would only be amenable to the plan if no other life was at stake.

The execution of Rizal enhanced the symbolism attached to his figure by these revolutionary fighters. Elevated to the status of martyr, Rizal joined the ranks of past “defenders of freedom” such as Mariano Gomez, Jose Burgos and Jacinto Zamora, the three priests accused of supporting a rebellion against the Spanish and executed in 1872.⁶¹ Rizal’s death also added to the mystique of his figure. Enrique Romualdez claims that Bonifacio’s translation of Rizal’s last poem, “Mi Ultimo Adios,” was done in a way that accorded with the Tagalogs’ animistic beliefs of ancestral spirits: Rizal was only temporarily dead; he would soon be resurrected to aid the *Katipunan* in their struggles against the Spanish.⁶²

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid, 107. In fact, Rizal had dedicated his novel *El Filibusterismo* to the three priests, calling attention to the injustices they suffered under the hands of the Spanish. Jose Rizal, *El Filibustero*, trans. Harold Augenbraum (NY: Penguin Books, 2011).

⁶² However, this claim of returning to the Tagalog’s animistic beliefs of ancestral spirits deserves greater scrutiny, since the belief in resurrection is present within the Catholic faith as well. It is also important to note here that the author makes explicit in his thesis his “agenda” to “subvert the Western influences of the Catholic Church and “McWorld” in the Philippines to recover or unearth the indigenous aspects of Filipino culture”. This highlights another possible nationalistic re-reading of Philippine history, albeit by a member of the Filipino diaspora who is trying to reclaim his roots. Enrique Romualdez Francia, “Translating Rizal and Christ,” *Rizal as Anting-Anting: Subversion and Indigenization in Philippine Religious Folk Narratives* (MA Thesis, University of Hawaii at Manoa, 1997), 30.



Photo. 2.1 The last studio portrait of Rizal taken in Madrid, 1890, that was believed to have hung on the walls of the *Katipunan* headquarters.

In 1897 however, a series of internal disputes inside the *Katipunan* led to Bonifacio being arrested, and tried for treason. After a sham trial, he was declared guilty and promptly sentenced to death by political rival Emilio Aguinaldo. With the death of Bonifacio, Aguinaldo became the undisputed leader of the Revolution. In the same year, 1897, he signed a truce with the Spanish, in what would become known as the Biak-na-Bato Pact. Under this agreement, Aguinaldo and his men would be granted amnesty and monetary compensation in exchange for their self-exile to Hong Kong. This truce did not last very long – periodic rebellions against the Spanish persisted throughout the island of Luzon; and in early 1898 after the outbreak of the Spanish-American war, Aguinaldo founded the first Philippine Republic, to which he was declared as President. Yet the struggle for liberty was not over. In a backhanded move, the United States of America acquired the Philippines from the Spanish in the wake of its victory in the Spanish-

American war. Consequently, the revolutionary fighters needed a unifying symbol that they could continue to rally around. Since Aguinaldo had ordered the execution of Bonifacio, he could not use Bonifacio as a national symbol. Rizal, on the other hand, had been killed unjustly by the enemy, and had at his disposal a large reserve of symbolic capital.

On 25 December 1898, Aguinaldo declared 30 December to be an annual “day of national mourning” in honor of Rizal.⁶³ Compared to the later period when the Americans co-opted the Rizal Day commemorations for their own agenda, the first three celebrations of Rizal Days were very much anti-colonial in orientation. The following account of the 1901 Rizal Day perhaps exemplifies this best. According to *The Manila Times*, as the procession bearing a Rizal monument decorated with mourning wreaths passed a Spanish monastery, the sight of a number of friars at the windows brought “forth shouts and hisses of condemnation. Hats and banners were thrown into the air by the excited natives who shook their fists at the stern-faced monks, shouting: “Your power is dead! Go back to Spain; we do not want you here! Down with the frailes (*priests*) forever! The blood of the martyred Rizal is avenged! We have witnessed your humiliation.”⁶⁴

Such anti-colonial sentiments were not limited to opposition against the Spanish. Even after Aguinaldo surrendered to the Americans in 1901, remnants of the *Katipunan* continued to fight against their new colonial rulers. One such revolutionary movement was led by Artemio Ricarte, an ex-*Katipunero*, which aimed to overthrow the American

⁶³ Decreto de Emilio Aguinaldo y Famy, Presidente del Gobierno, *El Heraldo de la Revolucion*, Malolos, December 25, 1898. Cited in Ruth Aileen Roland, “The “Rizalista Cult” in Philippine Nationalism: A Case Study of the “Uses” of a National Hero” (PhD Diss., NYU, 1969).

⁶⁴ “Celebration in Honor of the Filipino Martyr Rizal: A Large Concourse of Filipinos Gathers on the Luneta – Speeches in Tagalog Delivered by Buencamino, Reyes and Others,” *Manila Times*, December 31, 1901.

colonial government, and rename the Philippines to the “Rizaline Republic”. Under this new revolutionary government, inhabitants of the Philippine Islands would no longer be called Filipinos; instead, they will be known as “Rizalines”.⁶⁵ The use of Rizal’s name then, clearly conjured up powerful feelings of anti-colonialism and nationalism as Filipinos attempted to throw off what they saw as foreign oppression and subjugation.

Despite the potency of Rizal as a revolutionary symbol, the American colonial rulers were able to appropriate the Rizal symbol as a means of justifying American governance over the islands. Rizal’s extensive writings on the need for reforms in the Philippines were repeatedly held up by the American rulers as proof of their legitimacy – who else would help to ‘educate’ and ‘civilize’ the Filipinos if not the benevolent United States? In American-ruled Philippines then, an emphasis on nationalism or ethnicity was sidelined in favor of “seemingly universalistic ideals” of civilization that were grounded in values of Western modernity.⁶⁶ The Americans were the “civilized”, coming into contact with the “uncivilized.” Nevertheless, as the next section will show, even as the colonial rulers utilized the narrative of a civilizing mission to justify American rule, a minority faction of lawmakers were able to subvert this narrative and Rizal’s role in it, to protest the expansion of American imperial tendencies.

‘Official’ Productions of Rizal under American Colonial Rule

However one may feel towards colonialism, it is clear from the evidence that the American colonial rulers played a very real part in the construction of the cult of Rizal. This is seen in two ways: the first concerned top-down policies passed by the Philippine

⁶⁵ “Constitution of the Revolutionary Government in the Rizaline Islands Which are to be Erected into a Nation with the Name of Rizaline Republic,” *Memoirs of General Artemio Ricarte*, (Manila: National Heroes Commission, 1963), 137-156.

⁶⁶ Kiichi Fujiwara, “Introduction,” Kiichi Fujiwara and Yoshiko Nagano (eds.), *The Philippines and Japan in America’s Shadow* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2011), 9.

Commission – the colonial government appointed by the American President, while the second involved rhetorical representations as communicated most frequently in official speeches and media reports.

Right from the beginning, the American-dominated Philippine Commission was very deliberate in its promotion of Rizal, emphasizing the natural desire of “all countries to perpetuate the memories of their great heroes by proper memorials.”⁶⁷ One way in which it sought to accomplish this was through the construction of Rizal monuments all over the colony. The Philippine Commission passed in 1901 an Act calling for the construction of a permanent monument for Rizal, “the Filipino patriot, scientist, and author” in Luneta, Manila, over the spot where he was executed.⁶⁸ Not long after, on February 1, 1902, a law was passed by the Philippine Commission designating 30 December a public holiday in honor of Rizal (Act No. 345). Compared to the solemn proceedings of past years, Rizal Day commemorations under the American administration took on a festive and carnival-like atmosphere. These celebrations would become more elaborate as the years went on. By 1912, Rizal Day celebrations at the Luneta had morphed into fully-fledged parades complete with bands, carriages and floats displaying pictures and busts of Rizal. Each subsequent year’s parade was also frequently touted to be the “largest” and “most elaborate” Rizal Day celebrations “in history.” Provinces outside of Manila participated in these parades, while individual businesses, educational institutions and even the local Chinese community sent

⁶⁷ Philippine Commission, *Journal of the Philippine Commission Being a Special Session March 28, 1910, to April 19, 1910 and the First Session October 17, 1910, to February 3, 1911 of the Second Philippine Legislature*, (Manila: Bureau of Printing, 1911), 94.

⁶⁸ Bureau of Insular Affairs, War Department, “Annual Report of the War Department for the Fiscal Year ended June 30, 1901, Public Laws and Resolution passed by the Philippine Commission”, *Fourth Annual Report of the Philippine Commission 1903 in Three Parts. Part 1* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1904), 409.

representatives to take part in the festivities.⁶⁹ Beauty pageants, athletic competitions, literary contests and musical programs also became the mainstays of such occasions.

One American who was particularly committed to promoting Rizal's memory was Philippine Governor Cameron Forbes (in office from 1909-1913). In 1910, during a special session of the Philippine Legislature, Forbes spoke of his trip to Dapitan, the town where the "great Filipino patriot" Rizal had been exiled to before his execution by the Spanish. During his speech addressed to the Philippine Legislature, Governor Forbes pushed for the preservation of the site where Rizal had lived, as well as the school where he taught.⁷⁰ This was later passed by the Philippine Commission as Act no. 1997 in which a sum of ten thousand pesos was appropriated to establish and maintain a national park in Dapitan in honor of Rizal. That same year, Governor Forbes also pressed for the observation of the fiftieth anniversary of the birth of Rizal, believing that "the Philippine people should observe that day in some suitable manner."⁷¹ Unsurprisingly, the fiftieth anniversary celebration of Rizal's birth was smoothly passed into law by the Philippine Assembly.

The idea that Rizal was a national hero worthy of respect and admiration was not only marketed to a domestic audience; the Americans featured Rizal prominently when representing the Philippines to a global audience as well. In 1902, the Philippine Commission decided that the creation of a "thoroughly credible exhibit" for the 1904 St.

⁶⁹ "Rizal Day Celebration: Grand Civic Parade Witnessed by Thousands – Description of the various divisions and floats – speeches on the Luneta – Races and Hippodrome Performance. Musicale at Grand Opera House," *Manila Times*, December 31, 1909.

⁷⁰ Philippine Commission, *Journal of the Philippine Commission Being a Special Session March 28, 1910, to April 19, 1910 and the First Session October 17, 1910, to February 3, 1911 of the Second Philippine Legislature*, (Manila: Bureau of Printing, 1911), 95.

⁷¹ *Ibid*, 100-101.

Louis World Fair would be a key priority of the Philippine insular government.⁷² After some consultation with Filipinos, Filipino sculptor Isabelo Tampineo was commissioned, at the rate of \$3,500, to create a Rizal monument for the Philippine section at St. Louis.⁷³

It is not difficult to infer why the American colonial rulers were so enthusiastic about the promotion of Rizal as a Philippine figure. For one, there was already a familiarity with the concept of public heroes within the American psyche. At a School Superintendents' Convention held in 1903, amidst discussions on how to adequately equip and train indigenous teachers, the American Superintendent of Bulacan province emphasized that the "walls [of classrooms] should be suitably ornamented with pictures of celebrities, and the American flag should not be used sparingly. In our school we had Rizal's portrait under the American flag, and it had a good effect, a number of the teachers thereafter decorating their rooms in like manner."⁷⁴

An even bigger reason however, was the political utility that Rizal yielded for the entrenchment of American colonial rule. William Taft (1901-1903), the second Commissioner to the Philippines chose Rizal as a model over other contenders. After all, "Aguinaldo [was] too militant, Bonifacio too radical, Mabini regenerate."⁷⁵ Moreover, as illustrated in the introduction, Rizal's writings had left considerable space for interpretation, and the Americans unabashedly milked this to their political advantage. They used Rizal to downplay the significance of Philippine independence while

⁷² Bureau of Insular Affairs, War Department, *Fourth Annual Report of the Philippine Commission 1903 in Three Parts. Part 1* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1904), 406-420.

⁷³ Isabelo Tampineo was born on November 19, 1850 in Binondo, Manila, to a family of Chinese mestizo carvers. He is most famous for his high relief carving on the door of the Santo Domingo Church in Intramuros and the decorative wood carvings in Malacanang Palace. He is also known for this use of native Filipino style in decorative as well as architectural arts.

⁷⁴ Bureau of Insular Affairs, War Department, *Fourth Annual Report of the Philippine Commission, 1903, in three parts. part 3* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1904), 890.

⁷⁵ Theodore, Friend. "Division and Coherence in Philippine Society," *Between Two Empires: The Ordeal of the Philippines, 1929-1946* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965), 15.

justifying American rule. During a special session of the American Senate in 1902, Senator Samuel Smith, a Republican from Michigan, argued that “Rizal never advocated the independence of his people from Spain; [...] his great novels were written primarily to point out to his own people their defects and teach them the salutary and necessary lesson [required for freedom].”⁷⁶ As such, until then, the Philippines would be better off under American tutelage.

This point was reiterated by Governor-General Henry Ide (1905-1906) in his inaugural speech. He spoke about how the United States’ policy in the Philippines was really to equip and educate the Filipinos so that they could finally achieve the liberties that Rizal -- “the greatest and most respect [sic] patriot ever known to them” -- was seeking after.⁷⁷ Quoting Rizal’s 1896 letter to the Filipino people, Governor Ide pointed out that the Filipinos still lacked the “proper and individual character and force that would make them worthy of [these liberties].”⁷⁸ His successor, Governor General James Smith (1906-1909) lamented the unnecessary bloodshed of Filipinos who regrettably misunderstood the intentions of America. Instead of viewing America as a conqueror, Governor Smith beseeched the Filipino people to look on America as a “guide, mentor and friend.”⁷⁹ He then described Rizal as a “poet, patriot and statesman of the Filipino race” and an exemplary model of someone who advocated for “reasonable methods of evolution” and who understood that independence did not mean everything. Smith went so far as to argue that since independence cannot guarantee happiness, Filipinos should stop wasting their time and effort in chasing after Philippine independence.

⁷⁶ Samuel Smith. *Congressional Record*, 35:8 (26 June, 1902) p. 7472.

⁷⁷ Inaugural speech of Governor General Henry C. Ide, April 2, 1906.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ Inaugural speech of Governor General James F. Smith, September 20, 1906.

At the same time however, such allusions to Rizal and his writings would only be potent if the people actually recognized him as a figure worthy of respect and honor. It was not enough to merely elevate Rizal above all other Filipinos: if Rizal was going to be a spokesperson for the American agenda, he had to be exalted even higher such that he was worthy of recognition by *even* the Americans themselves. At a speech during Rizal Day in 1907, Governor Smith asserted that

the Filipinos could no longer claim Rizal day as their own. The Americans and all true lovers of liberty everywhere had a right to the day and were entitled to join with the Filipinos in paying homage to the great martyr. The spirit of Rizal could not be confined to the Philippines, other people also lamented with the Filipinos the cutting short of a life which promised so much of usefulness, and the silencing of the voice of a beautiful poet, a profound thinker, and a noble patriot.⁸⁰

These sentiments were echoed by American judge Charles Lobingier who spoke at the 1909 Rizal Day Celebrations. Calling Rizal “*our* great patriot”, he argued that Rizal belonged to everyone, Filipino or not, who sought the welfare and development of the Filipino people.⁸¹ Rizal’s cosmopolitan character thus made him a suitable compatriot for anyone who loved progress.⁸² Put this way, the figure of Rizal took on a much larger significance and legitimacy beyond anything that a local parochial figure would ever be able to achieve. This in turn, allowed the Americans to negate the contradictions between their rhetoric of Filipino infantilism (used to justify American tutelage) and Rizal’s brilliance (despite his lower-ranked racial origins) – *Rizal was above being just a Filipino, he was also one of us.*

⁸⁰ “Filipinos and Americans unite in honoring Rizal’s memory,” *Manila Times*, December 31, 1907.

⁸¹ “Rizal Day Celebration: Grand Civic Parade Witnessed by Thousands – Description of the various divisions and floats – speeches on the Luneta – Races and Hippodrome Performance. Musicales at Grand Opera House,” *Manila Times*, December 31, 1909.

⁸² *Ibid.* Lobingier also made references to the “other great compatriot, the immortal Washington”, as well as the “sage of Philadelphia”, “the first American”, and “the Benjamin Franklin of that revolution [against the Spanish].”

Even as American imperialists used Rizal's writings to make the case for American tutelage, anti-imperialists turned such arguments around on its head, arguing that Rizal's brilliance was proof of Filipino civility and hence, competency for self-government. During the early debates on the Philippine question, Massachusetts representative George Hoar, who opposed the American acquisition of the Philippines, asked Congress if they had "read the death song of Rizal [which...] rises to the loftiest state," or if they had "read the state papers of [...] these Filipinos [...which...] compare favorably with the state papers of any nation on the earth."⁸³ The most impassioned defense of the Filipino people however, was by Wisconsin Congressman Henry Cooper, who was responsible for the passing of the 1902 Philippine Organic Act, which mandated the creation of an elected Philippine Assembly after certain conditions were met. During the 1902 Session of Congress, Cooper urged Americans to respect Filipinos, arguing that the Filipino race had proven itself "entitled to [...] the respect of mankind when it furnished to the world the character of Jose Rizal."⁸⁴ He then proceeded to read out Rizal's final poem, *Mi Ultimo Adios* (My Last Farewell), bringing his speech to a stirring finish by proclaiming,

Pirates! Barbarians! Savages! Incapable of civilization! How many of the civilized, Caucasian slanderers of [Rizal's] race, could ever be capable of thoughts like these, which on that awful night, as he sat alone amidst silence unbroken save by the rustling of the black plumes of the death angel at his side, poured from the soul of the martyred Filipino? Search the long and bloody roll of the world's martyred dead, and where -- on what soil, under what sky -- did Tyranny ever claim a nobler victim? Sir, the future is not without hope for a people which, from the midst of such an environment, has furnished to the world a character so lofty and so pure as that of Jose Rizal.⁸⁵

⁸³George Hoar. *Congressional Record*, 33:1 (9 Jan, 1900) p. 713.

⁸⁴Henry Cooper. *Appendix to the Congressional Record*, 35 (19 June, 1902) p. 470.

⁸⁵Ibid, p. 471.

Although Cooper did not completely break away from a racialized understanding of the relationship between the “Caucasian” Americans and the Filipino “race”, he did however, dismiss the charges of incivility among the latter by esteeming Rizal and his dignified personality. If the Filipino race could produce “to the world” a man such as Rizal, then surely, they could not be all that inept or hopeless. As the upholders of civilization themselves, Caucasian Americans should recognize such greatness when they see it, and give credit when credit is due.

American colonial representations of Rizal then, regardless of proclivity towards the Philippine question, had to situate him within a framework of Western modernity, worthy of respect because his personal accomplishments adhered to their ideals of civilization. Even as segments of the American political elite mobilized Rizal’s writings to justify American colonial rule in the Philippines, they ironically legitimized and secured Rizal’s standing within the Western hierarchy of progress and civilization. This in turn allowed the anti-imperialist faction to utilize Rizal for their own purposes of opposing American colonial rule in the Philippines. Yet, did this representation resonate among their Filipino subjects? How did the Filipino population understand Rizal? As I will show in the next section, elite Filipinos who were traversing between the metropole and the colony, appropriated such representations of Rizal in their struggle towards self-government and eventual independence. Weaned on a diet of Western modernity and civilization, the Filipino elites were able to operate within the same field of meanings as the Americans. This in turn, ensured that they were able to pursue their goals of independence effectively among an American audience.

Rizal the Educated Cosmopolitan

In this section, I look at two groups of Filipinos – the local political elites, as well as the government scholars (*pensionados*) who were sent to the United States to pursue a university education. Both groups constituted the *ilustrado*, the educated elite in Filipino society. Although brought up on Western concepts of civilization, this very same modernity denied them a position within the hierarchies of Western progress. After all, a shared understanding of “progress” in the manner of social Darwinism also meant that nations, or peoples, could now be ranked according to a fixed criterion determined by Western modernity.⁸⁶ Amidst this hierarchy however, the Filipinos – the “little brown brothers” – were deemed inferior, placed below the *white, civilized* races of the world.⁸⁷ The *white, civilized* Americans hence needed to fulfill their basic “responsibility to the Filipinos and to mankind for the government of the archipelago,” and tutor the Filipinos in the ways of self-governance since they were “wholly unprepared for independence.”⁸⁸ The frustration that came from the disconnect between the *ilustrados*’ identification with Western modernity and the West’s rejection of them came to form the basis of the Filipino elite’s obsession with “civilizational hierarchies, invidious comparisons, and confounded assertions of status.”⁸⁹ Rizal thus became a way for these *ilustrados* to prove their worth against standards determined by the Americans. Rizal’s cosmopolitan nature, his high degree of education within the Western academy, and his achievements in the various fields, were all repeatedly emphasized by the *ilustrados*, especially in their

⁸⁶ Andres Schmid, “The Universalizing Winds of Civilization,” *Korea Between Empires, 1895-1919* (New York, USA: Columbia University Press, 2002), 22-54.

⁸⁷ Stanley Karnow, “Little Brown Brothers”, *In Our Image: America’s Empire in the Philippines* (New York: Random House, 1989), 174.

⁸⁸ Philippine Commission, *Report of the Philippine Commission to the President, vol. 1*, (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1900), 101, 121.

⁸⁹ Filomeno V. Aguilar, Jr., “Tracing Origins: “Ilustrado” Nationalism and the Racial Science of Migration Waves,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 64, no. 3 (Aug 2005), 631.

dealings with the American elites and public. As such, the *ilustrados* worked within the framework of Western modernity, using Rizal as a way of highlighting their parity when it came to Western notions of civilization and progress.

During the early American colonial period, even as the colonial rulers promoted a cult of Rizal, the Filipino political elites were also complicit in their construction of a Rizal symbol within the colony. During a 1901 Philippine Commission proceeding, Trinidad Pardo de Tavera, president of the Federal Party, proposed that a newly merged province be named in honor of Rizal, citing the common American custom of naming important places or districts “in memory of some illustrious citizen of the country.⁹⁰” It was only fitting then, that this new province be named after “the most illustrious Filipino and the most illustrious Tagalog the Islands had ever known.⁹¹” The President of the Commission agreed to this suggestion, and on June 11, 1901, the province of Rizal was established under Act 137 of the Philippine Commission. Regional administrative units were not only christened after Rizal, several educational institutions were also named in honor of Rizal during this same time period.⁹²

Such efforts continued after the establishment of a Philippine Assembly in 1907. These included a proposal for the acquisition of books and documents written by Rizal (at a somewhat hefty expense!), the conversion of Rizal’s childhood home in Laguna into a museum, and an attempt to ban of the use of the name ‘Jose Rizal’ (along with that of

⁹⁰ Philippine Commission, *Report of the United States Philippine Commission to the Secretary of War for the Period From December 1, 1900, to October 15, 1901, Published by the Division of Insular Affairs War Department, Part 2* (Washington: Government Printing Office, December 1901), 202.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Bureau of Insular Affairs, War Department, *Fourth Annual Report of the Philippine Commission, 1903, in three parts. part 3* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1904), 255; Philippine Commission, *Report of the Philippine Commission to the Secretary of War, 1913, in one part* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1914), 247.

‘Apolinario Mabini’, another well-known Philippine patriot) with the exception of “associations, establishments, enterprises, publications, buildings, or purposes of a scholastic, instructive, or educational character.”⁹³ The first two proposals were readily approved, although the overzealous third request was eventually rejected by the Philippine Commission. At the annual Rizal Day celebrations, Rizal’s name was frequently invoked by Filipino speakers who advocated Philippine independence. At the 1925 celebrations, Camilio Osias, then-President of the University of the Philippines, urged Filipinos to continue the fight for freedom, saying, “People of Rizal’s isle of tears, awake! You are not free! You are not independent! You are not even autonomous!”⁹⁴ In another speech given four years later during the 1929 Rizal Day celebrations in Chicago, Osias, now Resident Commissioner from the Philippines to the United States, praised Rizal for “[dignifying] the Filipino and [all] things Philippine [...] at an epoch when the foreign rulers despised all that was native and exalted all that was foreign.”⁹⁵

However, on a broader scale, Filipino elites re-produced their representations of Rizal less for a domestic audience, than for an American audience. The *Nacionalista* Party, which ran on a platform of eventual Philippine independence, swept a majority of the seats during the first election for the Philippine Assembly in 1907. As its leaders lobbied for independence, they increasingly turned their attention to the American public. In fact, between 1919 and 1934, independence missions were regularly sent to the United States with the key aim of mobilizing American public opinion in support of Philippine

⁹³ Philippine Commission, *Journal of the Philippine Commission Being a Special Session March 28, 1910, to April 19, 1910 and the First Session October 17, 1910, to February 3, 1911 of the Second Philippine Legislature*, (Manila: Bureau of Printing, 1911), 94, 390, 457, 764, 886.

⁹⁴ “Some 50,000 Witness Parade and Hear Addresses on 29th Anniversary of Jose Rizal’s Lynching on Luneta: University President Tells of Penchant of White Races to Impose Their Will on Brown Peoples and Pleads for Independence,” *Manila Daily Bulletin*, 31 December, 1925.

⁹⁵ Camilo Osias, *Congressional Record*, 72:2 (7 January, 1930), p. 1213.

independence. Manuel Quezon, leader of the *Nacionalistas*, was convinced that the Filipinos could “get nothing from Congress without the support of American opinion, and that the only way to get this is through good publicity.”⁹⁶ In particular, the elites were concerned about the spread of unfavorable stereotypes of Filipinos in the United States. The 1904 St. Louis World Fair was one such instance where Filipinos found themselves the brunt of unflattering portrayals. Educated Filipinos who arrived at the Philippine village were shocked. The Igorot exhibit paraded near-naked natives of the “wild tribes” of the Philippines, depicting a Philippines that was primitive, tribal and almost savage. To make matters worse, the Igorot display was easily the most popular and prolific exhibit at the fair.⁹⁷ Maximo Kalaw, a Political Science Professor at the University of the Philippines and Secretary of the Philippine Mission, bemoaned the persistence of such unflattering stereotypes, relating an incident that happened at the Exposition:

A certain lady at the St. Louis Exposition saw at a ballroom a brown complex-toned man in faultless evening dress and accosted him with the inquiry, "I suppose you are Japanese, sir?" The man addressed replied, "No, madam." "Then you must be Chinese," she said. "No, I am not. I am a Filipino," he replied. "How's that?" asked the lady. "I thought they were all savages living in the woods." "Well, I'll tell you how I came here," he said. 'A month before I left the Philippines I was living in the woods, but the American Governor decided to catch as many wild men as possible, train them and send them over here. So here I am, just as you see.'" And the St. Louis lady actually believed him.⁹⁸

This anecdote illustrates perfectly how the Filipinos were being perceived by the general American public – as uncivilized savages who needed the tutelage of the white American

⁹⁶ M. Quezon to T. Kalaw, Feb 10, 1910, Reproduced in Teodoro M. Kalaw, “Chapters from an Autobiography: 1909-1916,” *Dilman Review* 2, (1954), 69

⁹⁷ Robert W. Rydell, “The Louisiana Purchase Exposition, Saint Louis, 1904,” *All the World's a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876-1916* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1984)172.

⁹⁸ Maximo M. Kalaw, “Some Facts and Fancies About the Philippines: There has been much misrepresentation in America About People and Conditions,” *The Era Leader*, 6 May, 1920.

to bring them out of their backwards and ignorance stage. Needless to say, such stereotypes perturbed the Filipino elites, who were trying to secure the promise of independence from the American government.

The independence missions thus made it a key priority to counter such derogatory images of Filipinos among the American public. This included the establishment of the Philippine Press Bureau whose aim was to disseminate propaganda that would sway public opinion towards Philippine independence. One of its first key publications was the 1921 full-scale biography of Rizal that was ever published in the United States, entitled *The Hero of the Filipinos: Jose Rizal*.⁹⁹ In 1916, Quezon defended in the American Congress the use of funds allocated to this venture, saying

We then could and would be sending books to every household in this country, written by eminent and distinguished Filipinos, especially the books of Dr. Rizal, so that the American people might know that there are intelligent and able men in the Philippine Islands. We could and would have been sending photographs to every corner of this country, not of naked Igorots, which have been freely distributed in the past, leading the American people to believe that we are all naked, uncivilized men in the Philippines Islands, but photographs of our wonderful and old churches, that speak of our Christian civilization lasting 300 years; of our schools and colleges, both during the Spanish and American regime, that would speak of our education; of our houses, that would speak of our social life.¹⁰⁰

Rizal then, was crucial to this elite independence project, because he was the very antithesis of the *savage* and *ignorant* Igorot. Instead, he was “educated abroad, [and] spent most of his life in the pursuit of his education in other European countries,” according to Edgar Weeks, Congressman from Michigan.¹⁰¹ Another Congressman from

⁹⁹ Larry Lawcock, “Filipino Students’ Independence Campaign,” *Filipino Students in the United States and the Philippine Independence Movement, 1900-1935* (PhD Diss., UC Berkeley, 1975), 255.

¹⁰⁰ Manuel Quezon. *Congressional Record* 53:7 (1 May, 1916) p. 1028.

¹⁰¹ Edgar Weeks. *Congressional Record*, 35: 1 (23 Jan, 1902) p.928.

Ohio, Clement Brumbaugh stated that “[Rizal’s] great writings on liberty and the rights of man [reminded people] of the great writings of Paine, Franklin, and Jefferson during the Revolutionary War. He was educated at the Manila University, [and] also in France, Spain, Germany, and several foreign countries.”¹⁰² Rizal was cosmopolitan, and he was also highly educated, qualities that the Americans could recognize and appreciate.

As such, Filipino leaders were frequently quick to remind their American audience that the Filipinos were no backwards and primitive people. Camilio Osias, now Resident Commissioner to the United States, made the following statement in a 1929 Rizal Day speech in Chicago: Rizal was not just a “wonderful Filipino”, he was “a wonderful man” because he “would have towered in any land.”¹⁰³ At the following year’s Rizal Day Celebrations held in New York City, Commissioner Osias drove home this point again by emphasizing that “[h]ad [Rizal] lived in a country other than the Philippines and belonged to a race other than the brown, his versatility would have equally merited universal recognition.” After all, “he demonstrated to what heights a human being may attain.” Not only was he “an oculist of renown”, with patients of “other nationalities and from countries beyond the seas”, he also possessed the technical skills of a “modern engineer”. Rizal was a great reformer, convinced of the importance of “education as a means of social reconstruction”. He dabbled in drawing, painting, and sculpture, and with his “scientific mind he enjoyed the comradeship of European scientists”. “Museums in Europe contain specimens and contributions which mutely

¹⁰² Clement Brumbaugh. *Congressional Record*, 53:1 (13 Jan, 1916) p. 7185.

¹⁰³ Camilio Osias. *Congressional Record* 72:2 (7 Jan, 1939) p. 1213.

attest to his scientific intellect,” and naturally, let it not be forgotten that Rizal was an “extraordinary polyglot” as well.¹⁰⁴

Such efforts to situate Rizal, and by default the Filipino people, within a framework of Western modernity also extended to the *pensionados*. Scattered across the United States, *pensionados* were subjected to racial discrimination because of their color.¹⁰⁵ The students thus frequently seized opportunities to present the life and works of Rizal as a way of countering such undesirable notions. After all, as Roland Guyotte and Barbara Posadas write, Rizal, “who spoke six European languages, corresponded with international scholars from several disciplines, and won distinction as surgeon and poet alike, seemed a much more appropriate symbol of the students’ identity and an increasingly important counterbalance to American tendencies that regarded the islands as a nation of tribes and savages.”¹⁰⁶ An essay written for the 1926 Rizal Day celebrations in Los Angeles by the *pensionado* Leopoldo Yabes (who would later go on to become a professor in the University of the Philippines) echoes the same rhetoric presented by Osias and the other political elites:

Surely Rizal was a very great man. He was not only the greatest man the brown race has produced but one of the greatest the world has produced. He was accomplished in many lines of human endeavor. He had traveled in every country on the globe, he had studied in several of the European countries. He was a doctor, painter, sculptor, poet, patriot, and leader.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. *Congressional Record* 74:2 (5 Jan, 1931) p. 1399.

¹⁰⁵ Larry Lawcock, “Filipino Students’ Independence Campaign,” *Filipino Students in the United States and the Philippine Independence Movement, 1900-1935* (PhD Diss., UC Berkeley, 1975), 338.

¹⁰⁶ Roland L. Guyotte and Barbara M. Posadas, “Jose Rizal and the Changing Nature of Filipino Identity in an American Setting: Filipinos in Twentieth Century Chicago,” *Revue Francaise D’Etudes Americaines* 51 (Feb 1992), 48.

¹⁰⁷ Hilario Camino Moncado, *1926 Rizal Day Organization, Breaks all the Records of any Filipino Rizal Day Celebration in America* (Los Angeles, 1927), 48.

In a 1904 report presented by William Sutherland, the Superintendent of Filipino Students in the United States, the American noted the tendency of Filipino students to participate in English-speaking forms of public entertainment at their schools. The theme of these speeches was often not far from Rizal. He cited the example of a student who gave “an interesting address before his County Teachers’ Institute on the life and death of Dr. Jose Rizal. After reading what he had prepared, having still further ideas to advance, he continued *ex tempore* for some six to eight minutes on the same theme.”¹⁰⁸ The Superintendent continued on with another example, “[o]n the night of December 30, 1903, the sixteen students located at Riverside entertained their friends with a programme rendered in Spanish and in English, commemorative of Doctor Rizal.”¹⁰⁹

At the same time, Filipino students frequently used Rizal Day celebrations as a way of increasing Rizal’s prestige. By inviting respected members of American society to these events, the figure of Rizal also acquired greater standing as an international figure. No longer were the Filipinos the only ones paying their respect to Rizal, distinguished members of American society including “professors, university presidents, churchmen and municipal and state officials” were now paying homage to the great Filipino hero by gracing such events and presenting inspirational speeches that were based upon Rizal.¹¹⁰ One specific example was the Rizal Day celebrations held by the Nebraska Filipino Club in Lincoln in 1923. With an audience of 400 people, it was an American who took to the stage and emphasized the ability of the Filipinos for self-governance vis-à-vis the Cubans

¹⁰⁸ Bureau of Insular Affairs, War Department, “Report of the Superintendent of Filipino Students in the United States Covering the Filipino Student Movement, From its Inception to June 30, 1904 (Santa Barbara, Cal. July 1, 1904),” *Fifth Annual Report of the Philippine Commission (1904) Part 3 of three parts* (Washington, Government Printing Office, 1905), 925.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰ Larry Lawcock, *Filipino Students in the United States and the Philippine Independence Movement, 1900-1935* (PhD Diss., UC Berkeley, 1975), 319.

and Mexicans.¹¹¹ Rizal was worthy of veneration, not only by the Filipinos, but also by white Americans who graced an event dedicated to the memory of this Filipino hero.

Nevertheless, while the Filipino elites utilized ideals of Western modernity in their representations of Rizal, they did not shy away from framing the Rizal symbol in religious terms. In fact, on more than one occasion, Rizal's execution was likened to the death of Jesus Christ himself on the cross. In a speech given at the Luneta during the 1907 Rizal Day celebrations, Sr. Jalandoni, a political delegate from Iloilo, stated that Jesus Christ was to Christendom what Rizal was to the Filipinos.¹¹² It was Rizal's blood that was shed at Bagumbayan that now covered the Filipino people and made them as one. In a similar vein, at the 1930 Rizal Day celebrations held at the International House in New York City, resident commissioner of the Philippines to the US, Camilo Osias, spoke of how Rizal "gladly went to his Calvary, clean and clear in his conscience."¹¹³ Because of Rizal's death, the Filipino country and people "may [now] live." Yet despite the use of such religious analogies, it is important to note that the Filipino elites never looked upon Rizal as the Messiah himself; rather, Catholicism provided for a convenient metaphor that strengthened the rhetoric used in the promotion of Rizal as a symbol of the Philippines.

In summary, among the Filipino elites, Jose Rizal was important because he projected ideals of Western modernity that were easily understood by an American audience. If the Filipino race was capable of producing such a man like Rizal, surely the Filipinos were no worse than white people! Regardless of whether it was the struggle to

¹¹¹ Ibid, 320.

¹¹² "Filipinos and Americans united in Honoring Rizal's Memory," *Manila Times*, 31 December, 1907.

¹¹³ Camilo Osias, *Congressional Record* 74, 2 (5 Jan, 1931), p. 1399.

be seen as equals within American society, or the efforts towards the securing of national independence, the Filipino elites' espousal of the larger Western discourse permitted them to frame the Rizal symbol in a way that would be instantly recognizable to the American public. Moreover, despite conflicting motives, the Filipino elite's understandings of modernity ultimately dovetailed with that of the American colonial rulers. In the next section, I will show how another group of Filipinos employed the symbol of Rizal in their attempt to subvert the power hierarchy. However, unlike the Filipino elites, such representations directly contradicted the ideals of Western modernity. This in turn, created friction with the Filipino elites, whose efforts towards Philippine independence entailed "uplifting" the lower classes from their uncivilized savagery.¹¹⁴

Rizal as the Brown Messiah

This final section looks at how the Filipino peasantry and migrant workers regarded Rizal. I will argue that these two groups of people were able to re-produce the Rizal discourse to subvert the social and racial domination they faced in the world they lived in. I will also argue that one way in which they did so was by reappropriating the symbol of Rizal as the 'Brown Christ', the Savior who would eventually return to earth to save them from colonial and local elite domination.¹¹⁵ These two groups were thus able to find solace and a degree of empowerment amidst a hostile environment.

As the 18th Century drew to a close, Filipino rural elites increasingly aligned themselves with the Spanish authorities as new economic policies adopted by the latter

¹¹⁴ Filomeno V. Aguilar, Jr., "Tracing Origins: "Ilustrado" Nationalism and the Racial Science of Migration Waves," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 64, no. 3 (Aug 2005), 631.

¹¹⁵ Although it appears that even before Rizal's execution, some of the townsfolk of Calamba already considered Rizal "the second Jesus who will liberate [the people] from misery." "Letter from M. Elejorde, a townsman of Calamba, writing to Rizal in Tagalog, sending him a little contribution from his friends," *Rizal's Correspondence with Fellow Reformists* (Manila, Philippines: National Heroes Commission, 1963), 344.

commenced a rapid commercialization of the rural economy. The former took advantage of the changing economic landscape to accumulate increasing amounts of land as private property, and in the process disenfranchising the peasants who were used to farming on communal land. Economically, socially and culturally, the distance between the peasantry and the elites increasingly widened.¹¹⁶ The arrival of the Americans did nothing to improve the situation. On the contrary, the gulf between the peasantry and the elites further expanded. Although the elites were able to quickly adapt to new Anglo-Saxon patterns, Filipino peasants struggled to make sense of this new evolutionary order that was imposed on them. Moreover, the American policy of free trade between the metropole and colony led to an increasingly unbalanced export economy and agricultural inefficiency. While the Americans were also aware of the problems of land ownership, their redistribution programs failed to assuage rising tenancy rates. Ill-equipped to adequately deal with these new (and old) challenges, the peasantry faced a future that looked bleak.¹¹⁷

In such a context, rural Philippines experienced a flourishing of Rizalista cult groups, which depict Rizal as a figure worthy of religious veneration, with some going a step further by attributing to Rizal God-like divine features.¹¹⁸ One such sect, the *Sambahang Rizal* (Rizal Church), which was established in the Central Luzon province of Nueva Ecija in 1918 by a certain Basilio Aromin, laid out as its *raison d'être* the need

¹¹⁶ David R. Sturtevant, "The Origins of Rural Society," *Popular Uprisings in the Philippines 1840-1940* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1976), 21-41.

¹¹⁷ Ibid, "The American Impact", 42-62.

¹¹⁸ For more information on Filipino folk religious traditions, see Michael Gonzalez, *The Edge of Structures: A Study of the Rizalista Religious Ideology and Filipino Culture* (MA Thesis, Sydney University, 1985); Robert Love, *The Samahan of Papa God: Tradition and Conversion in a Tagalog Peasant Religious Movement* (Manila, Anvil, 2004); Reynaldo Iletto, *Pasyon and Revolution: Popular Movements in the Philippines, 1840-1910* (Quezon City, Metro Manila: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1979); Vicente Marasigan, *A Banahaw Guru: Symbolic Deeds of Agapito Illustrisimo* (Quezon City, Metro Manila: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1985).

to honor Rizal, who was chosen by God “to redeem his race and people and who, like Christ, offered up his life in oblation to save mankind.”¹¹⁹ Rizal became the “Son of God”, and his two novels were considered to be the Bible. Another group, the *Tatlong Persona Solo Dios* (Three persons one God), which was created sometime in 1936 by Agapito Ilustrisimo, saw Rizal as the Filipino Christ, and Mary his mother as the Philippines.¹²⁰ The *Iglesia Watawat ng Lahi* (The Church of the Banner of the Race), a sect which was supposedly founded by Jose Rizal himself in 1914 in Laguna province, also believed in the divinity of Rizal. A former leader, Jose Baricanosa said the *Watawat* followed the “commands of the Holy Moses, [their] Lord Jesus Christ, and of the teachings of Dr. Jose Rizal culled from his writings.”¹²¹ Under this trinity, Moses was supposed to be the Father; Jesus Christ, the Son; and Jose Rizal the Holy Spirit. Another group, the *Bathalismo* (founded in 1936) described Rizal as

[...] the Christ of the Tagalog region. The Lord of the whole universe. King of Kings, Lord of Lords. Because the Almighty *Bathala* (God) gave unto him the Holy Writ of the Holy Spirit. Because of His great love for the children of the country, the Holy Spirit decreed that Teodora Alonso should conceive him. Thus in the seventh life he will no longer die and he shall bring about his power and shall ask for the payment of the greed of those who ignore the gratitude of the motherland who is also the mother from whom comes our very life.¹²²

One key similarity emerges when one compares these groups to each other, namely, the indigenous nature of Rizal as Christ, and the importance of maintaining one’s “Filipino-ness.” *Suprema* Isabel Suarez, the leader of *Ciudad Mistica de Dios*, a Rizalista sect based in the area around Mount Banahaw, emphasized the importance of using the

¹¹⁹ Marcelino A. Foronda, Jr, *Cults Honoring Rizal* (Manila, 1961), 5.

¹²⁰ Fernando G. Elesterio, “Ultra-nationalist Filipino Religions,” *Three Essays on Philippine Religious Culture* (Manila, Philippines: De La Salle University Press, 1989), 54.

¹²¹ Marcelino A. Foronda, Jr, *Cults Honoring Rizal*, 27.

¹²² *Ibid*, 61.

native tongue and of honoring the heroes of the *Lahing Kayumanggi* (Brown Race) as opposed to foreign personalities.¹²³ Traditional Catholic terminology and imagery were indigenized as well – the new Jerusalem was to be found in Mount Banahaw, a sacred mountain located near the Laguna province, where Rizal was born.¹²⁴ Accordingly, when the time is ripe, Rizal will return to this New Jerusalem. For the *Tatlong Persona Solo Dios*, when this happens, all the wealth that had been taken out of the country by the Spanish and the Americans will be returned to the Filipinos.¹²⁵ For the *Watawat*, this new Jerusalem would also be where the new heaven would be found, and where Jose Rizal would return for the second time to rule over all the nations of the earth.¹²⁶ Romualdez points out that the establishment of a New Jerusalem at Mount Banahaw subverts the power relations between the Filipinos and their colonial masters who had imposed upon them the worship of “a white male god brought from the west.”¹²⁷ Ferdinand Magellan was no longer the liberator who brought the Word of God to the impoverished and uncivilized Filipinos. He had become the pilgrim in search of a deeper spirituality that the Filipinos possessed, but which the Europeans lacked.¹²⁸ Such a narrative of Rizal does two things: first, by situating Rizal as the *Kristong Kyumanggi* (Brown Christ) within the language of Catholicism, these Filipinos were able to re-appropriate a foreign religion imposed upon them by the Spanish colonizers. Moreover, the re-racialization of Christ

¹²³ Enrique Romualdez Francia, “Women, Nature and Animism,” *Rizal as Anting-Anting: Subversion and Indigenization in Philippine Religious Folk Narratives*, 120.

¹²⁴ Marcelino A. Foronda, Jr, *Cults Honoring Rizal*, 28. Fernando G. Elesterio, *Three Essays on Philippine Religious Culture*, 54.

¹²⁵ Fernando G. Elesterio, *Three Essays on Philippine Religious Culture*, 54

¹²⁶ Marcelino A. Foronda, Jr, *Cults Honoring Rizal*, 28; Fernando G. Elesterio, “Cross or Flag”, *And God said: Hala! Studies in Popular Religiosity in the Philippines*, ed. Jaime A. Belita (Manila, Philippines: La Salle University Press, 1991), 108.

¹²⁷ Enrique Romualdez Francia, “Women, Nature and Animism,” *Rizal as Anting-Anting: Subversion and Indigenization in Philippine Religious Folk Narratives*, 130.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 116-117.

shifted the power balance the other way, placing the Filipinos in a position of moral and spiritual superiority. Second, for all of the economic and social oppression faced by peasants, the promised second coming of Rizal provided assurance that this adversity was but a temporary interlude.

The working class Filipino diaspora in the United States shared a narrative similar to those articulated by the oppressed peasantry in the colony. American colonization meant that Filipinos were now constituted as American nationals, although without the rights that accompanied citizenship. As migration laws were loosened, large numbers of Filipinos, lured by the promises of a better life, crossed the Pacific in large numbers beginning in 1906, to arrive in Hawaii as laborers on the sugar plantations. From Hawaii, many continued moving westward, and eventually ended up in California. Nevertheless, regardless of where Filipinos migrated to within the metropole, they were entering a racially stratified labor market where the most labor-intensive or least attractive jobs were given out to nonwhite workers.¹²⁹ Unlike the *pensionados* who were spread over the East Coast, the continuous flow of Filipinos in large numbers into California created tensions among the local population, and resulted in escalating racial discrimination against Filipino migrants. To make matters worse, Filipinos were entering the US at a time where the fear of “Yellow Peril” resulted in various racially-charged policies that sought to placate white Americans’ sense of threat against Asian immigrants. In fact, things got to a

¹²⁹ Veta R. Schlimgen. “The Empire at Home: Americans’ Racial Socioeconomic Order and the Re-Racialization of US Filipinos, 1920-1933,” *Neither Citizens Nor Aliens: Filipino “American Nationals” in the US Empire, 1900-1946* (PhD Dissertaion, University of Oregon, 2010), 146

head at the beginning of 1930 as violent riots against Filipinos broke out in Watsonville, culminating in the vicious slaughter of young Filipino men.¹³⁰

It was against this historical backdrop that the Filipino Federation of America was established first in Los Angeles in 1925 by founder Hilario Camino Moncado, and brought to Hawaii three years later. Founded as a mutual aid organization, it catered mainly to Filipino laborers by dealing with their needs and concerns, particularly those who were working on the plantations. However, in its early years, the Federation also adopted a strong Philippine nationalist stance, promoting the idea of Philippine independence in the United States. One notable example was the 1926 Rizal Day organized by the Federation in Los Angeles. While Rizal Day celebrations had already been taking place across the country for a while now, the 1926 Rizal Day was noteworthy for its public display of the Philippine flag that lined the streets of Broadway in Los Angeles (see photo 2.2). For the first time, the Philippine flag was being displayed alongside the American flag. This stood in huge contrast to the situation in the Philippines, where the display of the Philippine flag was still banned. As a participant observed,

[the 1926 Rizal Day Celebrations] was fully a success because of the presence of the great Filipino Flag side by side with the Old Glory, the great American Flag whose history has been filled with heroic deeds and noble sacrifices. The presence of that symbol of hard-earned Filipino rights and privileges; the presence of that Flag symbolic of intrepidity of the “Coming Race,” of “The Malayan race”, proved once for all that the Filipinos are a distinct people, possessing a true spirit of national consciousness [...]¹³¹

¹³⁰ For more information on the discrimination and violence faced by Filipinos in California, refer to Rick Baldoz, *The Third Asiatic Invasion: Empire and Migration in Filipino America, 1898-1946* (NY: NYU Press, 2011).

¹³¹ Hilario Camino Moncado, *1926 Rizal Day Organization, Breaks all the Records of any Filipino Rizal Day Celebration in America* (Los Angeles, 1927), 45.

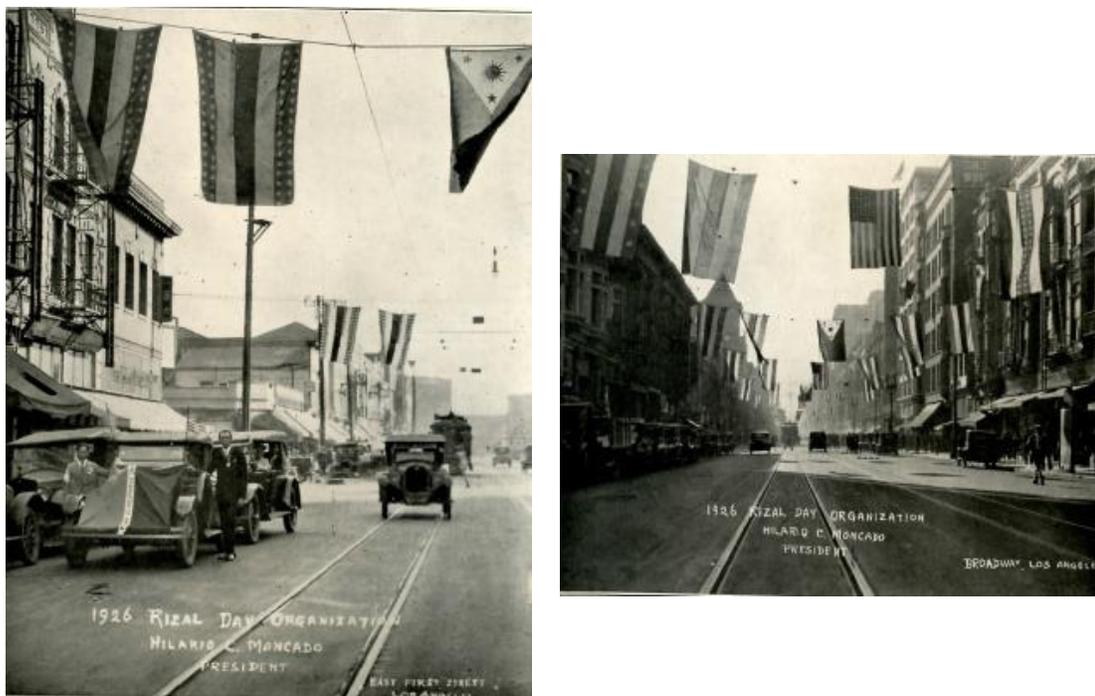


Photo 2.2. Photos of the 1926 Rizal Day Celebrations in Los Angeles, California
 (Hilario Camino Moncado, *1926 Rizal Day Organization, Breaks all the Records of any Filipino Rizal Day Celebration in America* (Los Angeles, 1927)

Nevertheless, as time went by, the Filipino Federation of America gradually evolved to become a quasi-religious organization. This was in part a deliberate effort by Lorenzo de los Reyes, Moncado's right-hand man and a Filipino mystic who had trained at Mount Banahaw before arriving in the United States.¹³² It helped as well, that the organization possessed "strong mystical symbolisms that were derived from Filipino folk beliefs and practices."¹³³ For example, the Federation heavily incorporated the number 12 into the group's discourse: the Federation had 12 objectives, it started off with 12 individuals, and it was to consist of 12 divisions which were then to be further subdivided into 12 lodges, each comprising of 12 members. The use of the number 12 then, struck a

¹³² Steffi San Buenaventura, "The "Master" and the Federation," *Nativism and Ethnicity in a Filipino-American Experience* (PhD diss., University of Hawaii at Manoa, 1990), 253-266.

¹³³ Steffi San Buenaventura, "The Master and the Federation: A Filipino-American Social Movement in California and Hawaii", *Social Processes in Hawaii*, 33 (1991), 172.

chord with these working class Filipinos. After all, Christ had 12 apostles, and Rizal who was viewed as the second Christ, had 12 disciples himself.¹³⁴ The Federation was not hesitant to exploit this association for recruitment purposes. As part of their recruitment materials, the Federation distributed an artificially-manipulated photo of Rizal surrounded by his “12 disciples”, including his fellow ilustrados as well as revolutionary heroes such as Bonifacio and Aguinaldo.¹³⁵ For many Filipinos, this conjured up memories of stories about Rizal’s unfinished mission, which would someday be completed in a foreign land.¹³⁶ The organization grew immensely in popularity and by 1931, the Federation counted more than 11,000 members on the Hawaiian Islands.¹³⁷

Hilario Moncado also came to take on a more mystical character as a spiritual leader of the Filipinos in America. Although he was initially an agricultural laborer who migrated to Hawaii before moving to California, Moncado managed to work his way to becoming an urban-based worker with a certain amount of secondary education. After forming the Federation, Moncado became exceptionally successful in creating a cult of mystery around himself – he claimed to have graduated with the spurious degrees of Doctor Philosophy of Kabala, Doctor of Philosophy of Numerology and Doctor of Philosophy of Human Nature by the time he was fourteen. Nonetheless, as the Filipino Federation branched off into becoming a fully-fledged religious sect known as the *Equi Frili Brium*, Moncado increasingly became seen by his adherents as the reincarnation of

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Steffi San Buenaventura, “The Filipino Federation of America, Inc: A Pioneering Filipino-American Organization,” *Nativism and Ethnicity in a Filipino-American Experience* (PhD diss., University of Hawaii at Manoa, 1990), 170.

¹³⁶ Ibid, 172.

¹³⁷ Steffi San Buenaventura, *Social Processes in Hawaii* 33 (1991),181. As rumors started circulating of Rizal’s reincarnation as Moncado, Moncado found it politically expedient to change his year of birth from 1895 to 1898. Steffi San Buenaventura, “The Filipino Federation of America, Inc: A Pioneering Filipino-American Organization,” *Nativism and Ethnicity in a Filipino-American Experience* (PhD diss., University of Hawaii at Manoa, 1990), 188.

Jose Rizal, who was in turn the reincarnation of Jesus Christ.¹³⁸ Moncado became associated with the “omega” in the biblical expression, “I am the beginning and the end.” If Christ was “the beginning” (alpha), Rizal the “and”, then Moncado was “the end” (omega).¹³⁹ Moncado became Rizal’s proxy, and in doing so, he represented another form of Jesus – one who “came back, took a form of a Filipino, brown not white anymore.”¹⁴⁰ After all, “the Filipino are the pride of the Malay race, because the Malay race is the coming race and the light of the world.”¹⁴¹

Yet, despite the popularity of Moncado among certain segments of the Filipino population in the metropole, he was frequently disparaged by Filipino elites in both the Philippines and America. Like the Rizalista groups in the Philippines, Moncado and his *Equi Frili Brium* organization were regarded as backwards and primordial in their promotion of certain mystical elements. To the Filipino elite, they represented a return to the superstitious past, an outright repudiation of the rational and logical empiricism that Western modernity underscored. However, beyond just this clash of modernities, Moncado’s high profile in the metropole, as well as his attempts to hijack rituals of political modernity, made him especially threatening to the Filipino elites.

In 1930, Moncado traveled to Washington D.C. in an attempt to seek an audience with then-American President Herbert Hoover to present a medal of goodwill from the Filipino Federation of America (although the veracity of an actual meeting has eluded authentication). What was certain though, was that Moncado appeared in front of the 71st American Congress while he was in D.C. At the congressional hearing of the Committee

¹³⁸ Michael Cullinane, *The Master and Juan de la Cruz: Hilario C. Moncado – Prophet, Politiko, Charlatan* (1995), 13.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Dominga Da. Ramos, *Moncado – the World Servant* (New York: Carlton Press, 1985).

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

on Insular Affairs, Moncado gave testimony against the proposed Filipino Exclusion Bill. He also took the opportunity to press for the immediate and absolute independence of the Philippines. This trip eventually became known as “Moncado’s Philippine Independence Mission.” What made things awkward for the Filipino political elites however, was that the actual Philippine Independence Mission was also present at the same hearing. Two years later, Moncado established the Modernist Party in an effort to compete for political power within the two-party system of Philippine politics. This culminated in Moncado’s bids for the office of Presidency: the first time in 1941 when the Philippines was still a Commonwealth, and the second in 1946, after the Philippines had gained independence. While he lost dismally both times, Moncado was a menace to the Filipino elite because his visibility within the public sphere undermined the very efforts of the Filipino elites themselves to present a “civilized” image of the Philippines to an American audience.¹⁴²

As early as 1930, Primo E. Quevedo, a *pensionado* embarrassed by the unflattering press Moncado seemed to be garnering for the Filipinos, published a pamphlet entitled, “Read the truth about Hilario C. Moncado, the greatest imposter the world has ever known.”¹⁴³ In the pamphlet, Quevedo attempts to expose Moncado’s various claims, including his numerous educational accolades. Quevedo also decries the misrepresentation of the Philippines by Moncado. While he desires for Philippine independence, he rejects the idea that Moncado should have anything to do with it. Rather, the Filipinos “need men like Hon. Quezon, Hon. Osmena, Hon. Rozas, Hon.

¹⁴² Steffi San Buenaventura, “The Filipino Federation of America, Inc: A Pioneering Filipino-American Organization,” *Nativism and Ethnicity in a Filipino-American Experience* (PhD diss., University of Hawaii at Manoa, 1990), 202-215.

¹⁴³ Primo E. Quevedo, *Read the Truth about Hilario C. Moncado, the Greatest Imposter the World has Ever Known* (LA, California: Primo E. Quevedo, 1930).

Oσίας, [...] men who have real intelligence, and are trustworthy and honest.”¹⁴⁴ In 1941, Joaquin Elizalde, then-Resident Commissioner to the United States, sent a letter to the Secretary of Interior, seeking the complicity of the United States government in detaining Moncado. Calling Moncado a fraud, Elizalde complained that Moncado has been “abusing [...] the credulity and religious fanaticism of many Filipino immigrants in [the US].”¹⁴⁵ Concerned that Moncado would usurp the instruments of political modernity and thereby throw a wrench in the Filipino elites’ own modernizing project, the elite hastily labeled Moncado as a mercenary fraud who profited from the simple-mindedness of the uneducated masses.

In short, compared to the Filipino elites, representations of Rizal by the underclass in the Philippines and the United States ran counter to notions of Western modernity. Using the language of religion, they inscribed Rizal with god-like features and powers. Rizal thus became the ‘brown’ Messiah, the Savior and redeemer of the people. Just as he had given his life to end Spanish oppression, he would return again to save the people from their present sufferings. At the same time, plugged into a global hierarchy where Filipinos were viewed as inferior to the white man, Rizal as the ‘brown’ Jesus Christ provided a way for members of the underclass to resist and subvert their subordinate position.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have focused on the way Rizal has been appropriated and re-appropriated as a Philippine symbol, particularly during the period of American

¹⁴⁴ Ibid, 9.

¹⁴⁵ Michael Cullinane, *The Master and Juan de la Cruz: "Hilario C. Moncado – Prophet, Politiko, Charlatan* (1995), 19.

colonialism. The case of the Rizal symbol clearly corroborates this – while the official ideology under the American colonial rulers promoted Rizal as a proponent of American tutelage, neither was this homogenous throughout the American population nor was this representation of Rizal necessarily consumed by the different segments of Philippine society the way the Americans intended for it to. On the contrary, to the revolutionary fighters, Rizal was upheld as a hero of anti-colonialism and symbol of freedom and liberty. Such a multiplicity of meanings may be difficult to detect, but this only adds to the power of the symbol. As such, even as the Americans promoted Rizal as a way of justifying their rule, the very nature of symbols themselves made it difficult to ensure that a homogenous reading of Rizal was adopted within the different segments of Philippine society.

While the elite classes worked within the same framework of Western modernity as the American colonial rulers, the peasantry and working class drew on Messianic traditions that deified Rizal. For the former, Rizal as the educated cosmopolitan was proof that the Filipinos were just as civilized as the white man. In the case of the latter, Rizal became the ‘Brown’ Christ who had sacrificed his life for the people, and who would come again to deliver them from their sufferings under the local elite, as well as under the American colonial rulers. As long as such representations remained on distinct planes of power, conflict was minimal – the political elites were able to use state institutions such as education to promote their understandings of modernity among the Filipino population. It was only when the dominance of Western modernity was openly challenged in the public sphere, as it was when Moncado attempted to co-opt modern political institutions, that there was a clash of modernities. In the next chapter, I turn to

the post-independence period after 1946, looking at how the elite discourse on Rizal eventually became the official discourse of the new Philippine nation.

Chapter 3

Reproducing 'Rizal': Emergent Philippine Nationalism and the Specter of American Neo-imperialism in post-1946 Philippines

On 9 May, 1956, a fight broke out in the Philippine House of Congress between Northern Cebu representative Ramon Duran and North Pampanga congressman Emilio P. Cortez. In a fit of anger, Durano had punched Cortez in the face, only to be rebuffed almost immediately by an unrelenting round of Cortez's fists. As tempers flared, the skirmish quickly descended into a full-blown brawl as the two Congressmen wrestled doggedly with each other, throwing the entire hall into a tizzy of excitement. It was left to the surrounding legislators and guards to douse the raucous atmosphere by attempting to pull the sparring gentlemen apart. Eventually, Durano stalked off from the legislative hall with a swollen forehead, while Cortez remained grudgingly behind, nursing two minor wounds to the lips.¹⁴⁶

Four days earlier, a similar scuffle nearly broke out at a labor-management congress in Cagayan de Oro City. Pedro Adaza, president of the Calarman labor union, and Antonio Borromeo, a delegate from management, almost came to blows as emotions ran high during the meeting. The verbal confrontation would have escalated into a full-blown fistfight if not for the mediation of conciliatory personalities among the two groups. Nevertheless, this did not prevent a bout of jeers coming Borromeo's way from disgruntled union workers.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁶ "Salons swap blows in Rizal Bill Debates," *Manila Chronicle*, May 10, 1956. Jose L. Guevara, "Two salons stage bout over Rizal: Durano and Cortez injured as House considers bill," *Manila Times*, May 10, 1956.

¹⁴⁷ "Senate suspends debate on Rizal bill: Approves Laurel move for study of amendments," *Manila Chronicle*, May 6, 1956.

The source of these unbridled passions and emotions was the highly contentious and controversial Rizal bill (Senate Bill No. 438) that was originally authored by Senator Claro M. Recto and sponsored by Senator Jose P. Laurel, then-head of the committee for education, in April 1956. The bill proposed that Rizal's two novels, *Noli Me Tangere* and *El Filibusterismo*, be made "compulsory reading matters in all public and private schools, colleges and universities in the Philippines."¹⁴⁸ Moreover, these novels were to be read in their unexpurgated versions, either in English or in Filipino. This initiative divided Filipinos, and aroused immense antipathy from the Catholic hierarchy, which viewed this proposal as an affront to the Church and its beliefs.¹⁴⁹ The bishops eventually released a pastoral in response to the bill, arguing that the two works of Rizal violated the Church's Canon law because of their attacks on the dogmas and practices of Catholicism.¹⁵⁰

The two incidents cited above provided just a small glimpse into the flurry of impassioned exchanges that was happening all over the country in April and May, 1956. Durano was part of the pro-Catholic minority which strongly opposed the bill, while Cortez, along with other nationalist politicians, was its staunch advocate. At the labor-management congress in Cagayan de Oro City, the labor union had passed a resolution supporting the Rizal Bill, which management representative Borromeo resented. He accused the labor leaders of conspiring against the Church, and called them "ingrates" for

¹⁴⁸ Senator Jose Laurel, *Congressional Record, Third Congress of the Republic, Third Session, Vol. III, No. 55* (Manila: 1946), 866.

¹⁴⁹ The list of organizations which rejected the bill included the Legion of Mary, the Knights of Columbus, the Daughters of Isabela, the Catholic Action of the Philippines, and the Holy Name Society of the Philippines – organizations that were unsurprisingly closely linked to the Catholic Church. On the other end, various groups spanning provincial boards, labor organizations, educational institutions, and civic groups, including the Knights of Rizal, openly came out to voice their support of the bill.

¹⁵⁰ Senator Francisco Soc Rodrigo, *Ibid*, 940-943.

passing the resolution when it was the Ateneo fathers' generosity that provided them with a venue for the event.

The Rizal Bill passed on 12 May, 1956, after various efforts were made to appease the Catholic sector. But the debates revealed deeper underlying fissures within Filipino society just ten years after independence. While the heated exchanges appeared to center around the contradictions between religion and secularism, a closer look at the terms of the debates – how Rizal was situated and represented -- highlighted emergent claims of what it meant to be Filipino after American colonial rule. Framed against the backdrop of this past, an examination of the Rizal bill allows us to have a better understanding of the complexities inherent in the development of an official discourse on Rizal in post-1946 Philippines.

Using the Rizal bill and the debates over it as a starting point, this chapter traces how the elite-driven discourse on Rizal during the American colonial period came to constitute the official discourse in post-independence Philippines. As political elites and their intelligentsia (the *pensionados*) from an earlier era took up key positions within the public sphere, they were able to project their vision of Western modernity -- first conceptualized during the Spanish colonial period and later consolidated under American rule -- onto the embryonic Filipino state vis-à-vis the figure of Rizal. As the Philippines entered the global system of nation-states, this emphasis on modernity was further reinforced by the elite's preoccupation with a civilizational hierarchy undergirded by Western notions of progress and development. At the same time, Rizal served as a way for the elites to assert national sovereignty even as the Philippines grappled with the contradictions of American neo-imperialism.

The 1956 Rizal Bill and the Lingering Vestiges of American Imperialism in Post-Independence Philippines

Over the course of April and May 1956, fiery, embittered, and strongly worded editorials and letters debating the Rizal Bill were displayed all over Manila newspapers. Supporters of the Rizal bill engaged in an intense propaganda campaign to gain public support for the bill as well as to pressure legislators to ensure its passage into law. One such instance occurred on April 22, when 4000 veterans of the Philippine-Spanish Revolution staged an indignation rally at the Imus town plaza in the town Cavite, urging for the immediate implementation of mandatory Rizal readings in all schools.¹⁵¹ This fervor continued into May when the National Youth Movement for Rizal organized a mass rally at Plaza Miranda, in Quipo, Manila, in support of the bill (see photo 3.1). More than 3,000 people showed up in solidarity, and at one point during the evening, youth leaders burned and tore up copies of the Catholic pastoral letter condemning the bill.¹⁵²

¹⁵¹ “Hierarchy objects to Rizal Bill: says novels violate canon law,” *Manila Times*, April 22, 1956.

¹⁵² “Youth destroy hierarchy’s note in rally: Magsaysay scored for keeping silence on Rizal measure,” *Manila Times*, May 8, 1956.



Photo 3.1 Photograph from the May 8, 1956 edition of the *Manila Times* depicting a scene at the Youth Rally in support of Rizal

Opponents of the Rizal bill were not languid in expressing their antagonism towards the bill either. On May 1, the Archbishop of Iloilo City in the Visayas, Jose Ma. Cuenco, directed the clergy to dedicate the month of May to a prayer crusade for "national unity" in the midst of the crisis brought about by the proposed Rizal bill. He instructed the clergy to devote their sermons, meetings, and rallies to the condemnation of the Rizal bill, urging them to beseech the Almighty in guiding Congress in their decision regarding the bill.¹⁵³ A day later, in Magalang, Pampanga in Central Luzon, a Rizal monument was torn down from the plaza in front of the Catholic Church, an act

¹⁵³ "Cuenco Instruction," *Manila Chronicle*, May 2, 1956.

which was believed to be instigated by the town's parish priest.¹⁵⁴ Naturally, this was perceived as an insult by supporters of the bill, and an investigation was launched to pin down the offending culprit.

Given that so much of the debate happened within the public sphere, an analysis of the rhetoric used in support of and opposition to the bill reveals the battle over efforts to define what it meant to be a Filipino in post-independence Philippines. More often than not, such attempts were couched in the language and concerns of the time period, although as we will see later, some of the rhetoric has had resonance even until the present-day. In the 1950s then, as the Philippines continued to wrestle with the formidable task of nation-building, it was haunted by its specter of a colonial past and the uncertainties of a nation that was still being imagined. Debates over the Rizal Bill thus reflected such fears, aspirations and projections of an imagined community. The figure of Rizal, in turn, became a site where these contestations could be played out.

On July 4, 1946, the Stars and Stripes was lowered from the flag stand in front of the Luneta, as the Philippine flag was raised into the air, signaling the end of American rule in the archipelago and heralding a new and independent Philippine Republic. However this did not mean that American imperialism had reached its swan song.¹⁵⁵ Rather, neoimperialism, in which the US continued to exert its influence over the Philippines, persisted in the form of unequal trade agreements, unfavorable military pacts, and cultural hegemony. It was not just a matter of preserving America's empire; the

¹⁵⁴ "Rizal statue torn down in Pampanga: Measure filed as substitute to Laurel Bill," *Manila Chronicle*, May 3, 1956.

¹⁵⁵ William J. Pomeroy, "Independence, Without Freedom," *The Philippines: Colonialism, Collaboration and Resistance!* (USA: International Publishers Co., Inc., 1992), 147-182. Stanley Karnow, "Dependent Independence," *In Our Image: America's Empire in the Philippines* (NY: Random House, 1989), 323-355. Renato Constantino, *Identity and Consciousness: The Philippine Experience* (Malaya Books, 1974).

global geopolitics of that era mandated that the US maintained an interest in retaining a degree of control over its former colony. After all, the inauguration of Philippine independence in 1946 came at a time where the international stage was being set for the Cold War. As a democratic West (the US and its allies) and a communist Eastern bloc (the Soviet Union and its allies) engaged in military and political maneuverings in their bids for global dominance, the Philippines too, became caught up in the struggle for ideological hegemony. As communism spread across the Asian continent, beginning with the People's Republic of China and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in 1949, the US increasingly viewed the Philippines as its final line of defense against Asian communism. Not only was the Philippines strategically located for US military operations in the Pacific, it also provided an Asian face that legitimized the universality of American values.¹⁵⁶

As the Philippines ended its first decade of independence, such arrangements and their problematic implications for nation-building were increasingly challenged in the public sphere. Yet even as American neocolonialism was contested and disputed, it left a visible imprint on the psyche of Filipino nationalism that was to reverberate with the general population for decades to come.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁶ H. W. Brands, "Cold War in Asia: 1946-1952," *Bound to Empire: The United States and the Philippines* (NY: Oxford University Press, 1992), 227-229.

¹⁵⁷ One visible display of anti-imperialist sentiments in contemporary times happened during the last week of April, 2014, when effigies of US President Barack Obama were burnt on the streets of Manila as activists carried placards that implored Filipinos to "*Wakasan ang Dayuhang Paghahari (End Foreign Domination)*" and "Fight for National Sovereignty." This protest came in light of the signing of the US-Philippine Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement that would grant the US greater military presence in the Philippines over the next ten years. Tara Brady, "Angry Filipino protesters burn EFFIGY of Barack Obama in protests against military pact aimed at 'greater cooperation' between the two countries", *Mail Online*, 28 April 2014 <<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2614715/Obama-signs-security-deal-Philippines-aimed-greater-cooperation-angry-protesters-say-step-BACK-country.html>> Accessed 28 April, 2014.

In the early years after independence, one area that was especially sensitive was that of the economy. Two days before Philippine independence was declared, the Philippine legislature passed the Bell Act in 1946 stipulating that free trade between the US and Philippines was to continue until 1954, after which tariffs would increase by 5% annually until the full amounts were attained in 1974.¹⁵⁸ However, the unequal power relationship resulted in an inequitable agreement in which quotas were imposed on the entry of Philippine products into the American market, while American goods enjoyed free access to the Philippine market, with no imposition of import taxes whatsoever. Moreover, the Philippine peso was pegged at a fixed rate to the US dollar. The most contentious provision of the Bell Act was the “parity” clause that gave Americans equal economic rights with Filipinos, without providing any kind of reciprocal rights for Filipinos in the US. Reparations of war damages coming up to US\$620 million was made conditional on the Bill being successfully passed in Philippine legislature.¹⁵⁹ Needless to say, these clauses benefited American businessmen at the expense of the Philippines.¹⁶⁰ Devastated by the ravages of World War II (damages were estimated at nearly \$1 billion, or \$5 billion in today’s terms), the Philippine government did not possess much leverage for negotiating in this matter.¹⁶¹ This parity clause was a particularly bitter pill to swallow

¹⁵⁸ For full text of the Bell Act, refer to Commonwealth Act No. 733, *Philippine Laws, Statutes and Codes* – Chan Robles Virtual Law Library, <

http://www.chanrobles.com/commonwealthactno733.htm#U1a_RvldUWM> Accessed April 22, 2014.

¹⁵⁹ Ronald E. Dolan, “Economic Relations with the United States,” *Philippines: A Country Study*, (Washington: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1991).

¹⁶⁰ For more on American exploitation of the Philippine economy, see Vicente G. Sinco, “Alien Sovereignty in the Philippine Republic (1947),” Teodoro Agoncillo, eds, *Filipino Nationalism: 1872-1970* (Quezon City, Manila: R.P. Garcia Publishing, 1974), 293-307.

¹⁶¹ Stanley Karnow, “Dependent Independence,” *In Our Image*, (NY: Random House, 1989), 333-334.

for a newly independent nation, and unsurprisingly buttressed a nationalist rhetoric that vigorously denounced foreign involvement and domination in the Philippines.¹⁶²

In a similar manner, the unequal terms of the military bases agreement between the United States and the Philippines signed in 1947 rudely affronted the notion of Filipino independence. Manuel Roxas, then-President of the new Philippine Republic, enjoyed close ties with the United States government, and had signaled to his American counterparts his support for the presence of US bases on the islands.¹⁶³ The conditions of the agreement, however, were very much biased towards American interests, and included allowances that gave the US possession of the bases throughout the country for ninety-nine years. Over 130,000 acres of land in Angeles, Pampanga Province, was allocated for the Clark Air Force Base, while in Zambales province, Olongapo city became part of the Subic US Naval Base authority.¹⁶⁴ Moreover, the Philippines could not confer other third-party nations base rights without US approval. Under this agreement, Filipinos were also allowed to volunteer with the US navy. While senators such as Tomas Confesor were wary of the military bases agreement, suggesting that “[the Philippines was] still within the orbit of expansion of the American empire,”¹⁶⁵ political

¹⁶² Gerardo P. Sicat, “Philippine Economic Nationalism,” *The Philippine Review of Economics* XLV, no. 2 (December 2008), 8. Stephen R. Shalom, “Securing the United States-Philippine Military Bases Agreement of 1947,” *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars* 22, no. 4, (Oct.-Dec. 1990), 8.

<<http://www.wpunj.edu/dotAsset/209673.pdf>> Accessed July 18, 2013.

¹⁶³ Roxas apparently did believe in the benefits of having US bases on the islands. Some of the reasons he cited included, “enhanced security, a strong bilateral tie to the United States, and material benefits, in the form of dollar expenditures and employment.” Nick Cullather, “Factionalism and Its Advantages,” *Illusions of Influence: The Political Economy of United States-Philippines Relations, 1942-1960*, (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1994), 53-54.

¹⁶⁴ Shalom, 8.

¹⁶⁵ Senator Tomas Confesor, *Philippine Congressional Records*, 26 March, 1947, p. 219.

maneuvering by President Roxas ensured that the agreement was successfully passed in Congress.¹⁶⁶

American neo-imperialism did not stop at the economic and military domain however; it continued into the cultural terrain. Besides the preservation of the American educational system, and the adoption of English as the official language (alongside Filipino), the Philippine press was dominated by American news services. Within the realm of film and television, US programs continued to reign as the main source of entertainment that Filipinos were keenly exposed to.¹⁶⁷

Filipino First: Rizal and Filipinization in the face of American Neo-Imperialism

With this context in mind, one can understand why the rhetoric that exploded during the Rizal Bill debates was so potent and pronounced. After all, in the preceding months (and years) before the controversy broke out, debates were already raging in the Philippine Congress over policies that were perceived as neo-imperialistic and even anti-Filipino. In the economic sphere, Filipino Congressmen deliberated long and hard between gratifying a growing nationalistic predilection and subscribing to the basic tenets of a free-market economy. In 1955, a revised agreement that significantly modified the original Bell Trade Act of 1946, was passed.¹⁶⁸ Under the Laurel-Langley Agreement, not only were the parity privileges given to the US made reciprocal, the pegging of the peso to the US dollar was abolished. As Senator Laurel said to his American counterpart, “The United States cannot grant independence and at the same time deny it.”¹⁶⁹ This

¹⁶⁶ Cullather, “Fationalism and Its Advantages,” 42-71.

¹⁶⁷ Whole paragraph, Pomeroy, “Independence, Without Freedom,” 168-174.

¹⁶⁸ For a complete list of revisions, refer to The LAWPHiL Project, “Republic Act No. 1355,” <http://www.lawphil.net/statutes/repacts/ra1955/ra_1355_1955.html>, accessed 24 April, 2014.

¹⁶⁹ Quoted in H.W. Brands, “A Special Relationship: 1953-1957,” *Bound to Empire: The United States and the Philippines* (NY: Oxford University Press, 1992), 263.

position was echoed in the popular media, with a May 8, 1956 editorial in the *Manila Chronicle* commenting that

[U]nless legislation comes to [the Filipino's] aid, the Filipino importer will be fated forever to satisfy himself with the crumbs of the import trade. The lion's share will always fall in the hands of foreigners. And the people -- the consumers -- will be at the mercy of these alien traders. [...] The Filipinos simply never had a chance. And this is all the more unfortunate because it is in their own country that they have been forced to accept a secondary, and therefore unprofitable, role in trade and commerce.¹⁷⁰

Such sentiments were eventually formalized as official ideology two years later when President Carlos declared a 'Filipino First' policy that aimed to return control of the Philippine economy back into the hands of Filipinos. According to Resolution No. 204 passed on 28 August 1958, this 'Filipino First' policy encouraged Filipinos to attain a greater share of the commerce and industry in the Philippines by giving Filipino-run enterprises preference in the allocation of foreign exchange.¹⁷¹ Like the nationalist policies passed in earlier years, this piece of legislation was accompanied by its share of diabolical nationalist rhetoric as well. The assistant director of the bureau of private schools, Nemesio L Aguno Sr., made the call for "Filipinos of courage [...and...] of purpose [... to] work for the removal of inequality in the Filipino-American relationship which sacrifices [their] Filipino national dignity, political freedom and economic independence."¹⁷² 'Filipino First' thus became the battle-cry of the nation.¹⁷³

¹⁷⁰ Editorial, "A means of survival," *Manila Chronicle*, May 8, 1956.

¹⁷¹ Teodoro Agoncillo, "Filipino First Policy," *Filipino Nationalism: 1872-1970* (Quezon City: R. P. Garcia Publishing Co.: 1974), 370-372.

¹⁷² Nemesio L. Aguno Sr., "On Our Filipino First Policy," *Nationalism – Filipino First*, 2nd eds (Sampaloc, Manila, Philippines: 1960), xix.

¹⁷³ Fernando Castro, "Filipino First," *Ibid*, 10.

Beyond the economy, Philippine politicians were also angling for new negotiations on the US-Philippine base agreement.¹⁷⁴ This struck a nerve with the general population, especially after the incident of March 1956, where eight Filipino citizens extracting manganese ore from American base territory were charged with trespassing.¹⁷⁵ Once again, questions of Philippine sovereignty over the bases were brought up. That same year, Congressmen Ramon Durano and Miguel Cuenco introduced House Bill No. 5513 which mandated that the import of foreign films be limited to 150 productions annually. While this bill ultimately did not pass muster within the House, it nevertheless generated a vigorous debate surrounding the perceived dominance of Hollywood over indigenous cultural forms.¹⁷⁶

In light of this context, Rizal became a proxy for Filipinization vis-à-vis America, his “protypical, inexhaustible and exemplary Filipinism [... inspiring the] nation to remain true to itself.”¹⁷⁷ Supporters of the Rizal Bill thus saw the Bill as a way of combating the ills of neocolonialism. Juan Nabong, the executive secretary of The Spirit of 1896, a self-proclaimed patriotic group, argued that “[o]nce the books (the *Noli* and the *Fili*) are required to be taught and studied there will be no need to worry much about alien control of [Filipino] business, [and] no need to put teeth to [...] immigration and anti-dummy laws.”¹⁷⁸ This obsession with not pandering to foreign countries, particularly its ex-colonizers, was further underscored in a proposal submitted by Congressman Mario

¹⁷⁴ I.P. Soliongco, “Seriously Speaking,” *Manila Chronicle*, April 12, 1956.

¹⁷⁵ Renato Constantino, “New Insights and New Awareness,” *The Making of a Filipino (A Story of Philippine Colonial Politics)* (Quezon City, Manila: Malaya Books Inc., 1969), 242-243.

¹⁷⁶ Michael Gary Hawkins, “Film as Nation: The Problem of Philippine Movies, 1946-1983,” *Coproducing the Post-colonial: U.S.-Philippine Cinematic Relations, 1946-1986 (PhD Diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 2011)*, 124-127

¹⁷⁷ Jose Laurel, “The Filipinism of Rizal,” Sixto Y. Orosa (eds.) *Jose Rizal by Various Authors* (Evangelista, Manila: Manor Press, 1956), 52.

¹⁷⁸ Juan Nabong, “Letters to the Editor: Afraid of Rizal,” *Manila Chronicle*, April 16, 2014.

Bengzon, who called for re-naming all places in the Philippines named after “Magellan” to “Lapu Lapu”.¹⁷⁹ In his speech, Bengzon questioned why Filipinos “honored the colonizer more than the Filipino hero.”¹⁸⁰ Such rhetoric was echoed by Congressman Pedro Lopez who bemoaned the fate of his country, which has had its “sacred soil [...] trampled upon century after century by a long line of invaders,” and whose “tutelage under aliens has not ceased with the advent of their political independence.”¹⁸¹ Under this guise of nationalism, there was a strong fixation with the extirpation of colonial oppression (perceived or otherwise) and the assertion of Philippine sovereignty. Rizal’s books thus became a line of continuity connecting the first Philippine revolution against Spanish oppression, and the current struggle against neo-imperialism. The following contention expressed by a *Manila Times* reader was but one representation of such sentiments:

The reading of the Noli and the Fili would make us free from those who want us to be their perpetual slaves. It was the Noli and the Fili that made our fathers free from political and religious slavery. It is the Noli and the Fili that will now make us free from any slavery. Let us read them every day for our daily inspiration and motivation to be free citizens of our own country.¹⁸²

Rizal also became a justification for the ‘Filipino First’ policy. Amidst criticisms from the American sector about the anti-American tendencies of such legislation, Senator Jose Diokno argued that this was nothing new; after all, the Philippines’ “first economic

¹⁷⁹ Lapu-lapu was one of the *datus* (native rulers) of Mactan, an island in the Visayas. He is most famous for killing Portuguese explorer Ferdinand Magellan, who led the first Spanish expedition to the Philippines. Because of this act, Lapu-lapu is frequently regarded as the first Filipino hero.

¹⁸⁰ Ernesto O. Granada, “Behind Page One,” *Manila Chronicle*, May 12, 2014.

¹⁸¹ Jose L. Guevara, “House Bill on Rizal Revivied; Consing Group sets Meet Together,” *Manila Times*, April 27, 1956.

¹⁸² I. Panlasigui, “We, the People: Noli and Fili, Unconstitutional?” *Manila Times*, April 19, 1956.

nationalist is the [same] man [they] honor as the First Filipino – Dr. Jose Rizal.”¹⁸³ Citing examples of Rizal’s refusal to buy anything from the Chinese whom he saw as dominating the economy of his countrymen during his time, Diokno asserted that from the start, Philippine economic nationalism was not anti-American (nor inherently anti-foreign) based on selfish motives. Instead, it was founded on a basic desire for self-determination, that the “Filipinos should control the Philippines economy.”¹⁸⁴

Being Filipino, then, meant being completely free of foreign domination and influence. Other letters published in the *Manila Times* across April and May of 1956 repeatedly condemned the Rizal bill opposition as being un-Filipino in heart and soul,¹⁸⁵ slamming them as “Filipinos who do not want [the country] to be free.”¹⁸⁶ A column that ran throughout the month of May, drew on Rizal’s own characters from his novels to make a point about the problem of “un-Filipino” Filipinos. In the novel *El Filibusterismo*, a young Filipino lad almost died of gastritis after eating an entire jar of mustard to prove that he was European. The columnist, Dr. Jorge Bocobo, likened him to the contemporary Filipino who eschewed local products to American ones, calling this phenomenon one of the greatest social ills plaguing Philippine society.¹⁸⁷

Rizal and the Official Discourses of Western Modernity

It was not enough for Filipino identity to be solely based as it was on opposition to foreign domination; the “protypical, inexhaustible and exemplary Filipinism” of Rizal had to be fleshed out fully. Just as Filipino elites relied on notions of Western modernity

¹⁸³ Jose W. Diokno, “Is Philippine Nationalism Anti-American?” *The Role of Nationalism in Economic Development and Social Justice* (Manila, Philippines: Institute of Economic Studies and Social Action, Araneta University, 1968), 13-14.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid*, 15.

¹⁸⁵ Raymundo C. Banas, “We, the People, Rizal Works an Inspiration,” *Ibid*.

¹⁸⁶ I. Panlasigui, “We, the People: Rizal’s Noli and Fili,” *Manila Times*, April 22, 1956.

¹⁸⁷ Jorge Bocobo, “They Live Again,” *Manila Times*, May 8, 1956.

as a means of affirming the Philippines' capacity for independence during the American colonial era, Filipino elites continued to operate within the framework of Western modernity in the post-independence era in order to convey the idea of Filipino equality among the developed states of the Western world. Rizal then, became a projection of such aspirations.

Within a paradigm of Western modernity, several core aspects were ascribed to the Rizal figure. Firstly, intellect was prioritized over brute strength. This was especially important as it was needed as a bastion against the traditionalism of superstition, fanaticism, and ignorance, all stubborn remnants of a dark age that the unlearned masses were still subject to. In their place, Filipinos had to be taught values from the Enlightenment. This included a keen sense of rationality that was based on both logic and scientific empiricism. At the same time, the idea of progress and self-development was also very much underscored. Rizal and his multifaceted accomplishments laid testimony to the ability of the Filipino to be on par with, if not better than, the rest of the world. Finally, Western modernity shunned any type of narrow-minded chauvinism among the people. Instead, internationalism, or cosmopolitanism, was promoted, in which the *modern* Filipino would be recognized not only as a citizen of the world, but as a contributor to the advancement of civilization as well.¹⁸⁸

One aspect of Western modernity that the Filipino elites tried early on to address included the establishment of a shared (and imagined) history. This entailed a search for “an original foundation that would make rationality the *telos* of [Filipinos], and link the whole history of thought to the preservation of this rationality, to the maintenance of this

¹⁸⁸ Leopoldo Y. Yabes, “Rizal, Intellectual and Moral Leader,” *A Rizal Anthology* (Manila: National Heroes Commission, 1964), 45.

teleology and to the ever necessary return to this foundation.”¹⁸⁹ The Rizal Bill debate was thus frequently accompanied by discussions of the need to develop a documentable and verifiable history in order to booster the national consciousness. This in turn, would allow the Philippines to stake a claim among the other civilized nations of the world. As columnist I.P. Soliongco puts it, “knowledge of [Filipino] history is absolutely necessary if [Filipinos] are to be counted among the civilized.”¹⁹⁰ In the same edition of the *Manila Chronicle*, another editorial highlights the importance of the past in creating a sense of national pride.¹⁹¹ The following quote by Dean Antonio Isidro of the University of the Philippines College of Education underscores this relationship between a sense of national identity and a shared past:

The development of nationalism can be greatly strengthened when our students read the great works of Rizal. As they understand the fate of our people during the past era, the students will come to identify themselves with the great historical events that have led to the building up of our nation. Nationalism is built and strengthened by the identification of the people of their common glories and sufferings; of their achievement and defeats; and of their exultation and disappointments. By reading these works the students will develop a sense of common destiny with our past and thereby strengthen the bond of unity among our people in our historic evolution as a people.¹⁹²

In addition to his contribution to the creation of a national history, Rizal was also frequently portrayed as *the model Filipino* who was freed from the shackles of superstition and tradition. This especially touched a raw nerve as opposition to the Rizal Bill came almost exclusively from the religious sector. Although Catholicism was never rejected in its entirety, and care was taken to distinguish between the faith and the way it has been practiced in reality, the nationalists took care to emphasize that one needed to

¹⁸⁹ Michel Foucault, “Introduction,” *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (NY: Pantheon Books, 1972), 12-13.

¹⁹⁰ I.P. Soliongco, “Seriously Speaking,” *Manila Chronicle*, April 6, 1956.

¹⁹¹ “Editorial,” *Ibid.*

¹⁹² “Bill on Rizal Doomed,” *Manila Times*, April 26, 1956.

reject superstition and hackneyed expressions of blind faith in order to become a real Filipino. In a strongly worded letter to the *Manila Times*, Jorge Revilla, a member of the Knights of Rizal, argued that religious education should be discarded, for it only bred an indoctrinated population whose thoughts were controlled by opponents of “social education, economic, political and scientific studies and pursuits.”¹⁹³ Similarly, another letter-writer condemned Catholicism for sapping the “lifeblood of the people, [leaving] them weak and anemic,” as a result of an “atmosphere of ignorance, superstition and fanaticism.”¹⁹⁴ Pitted against the secular nationalists during the Rizal Bill debate, Catholicism became a target of rationality and modernity.

Such rhetoric of Western rationality was further strengthened as the Philippines entered into its second decade of independence in the 1960s. Despite attempts in the previous years to rectify some of the gross imbalances in the Philippine-American relationship, the Philippines continued to be subjugated to the United States economically, militarily, and even culturally. The Rizal symbol thus became a way of asserting Philippine parity in the relationship.

In 1955, President Ramon Magsaysay issued Executive Order No. 52, which created a 15-member Jose Rizal National Centennial Commission for the purpose of commemorating the 100th year of Rizal’s birth come 1961.¹⁹⁵ This was to be a grand affair, with various conferences, contests, publications, and events held in

¹⁹³ Jorge L. Revilla, “We, the People: Nationalism and Re-examination,” *Manila Times*, April 17, 1956.

¹⁹⁴ Pedro M. Asturias, “Letters to the Editor: I agree,” *Manila Chronicle*, May 6, 1956.

¹⁹⁵ In 1962, the Commission was converted into the Rizal Presidential Committee, although this would be replaced a year later by the National Heroes Commission. This latest incarnation of the Commission is directly supervised by the Secretary of Education, and is tasked with the publication of books about distinguished Filipino personalities. National Historical Commission of the Philippines, “NHI Through the Years,” *National Historical Commission of the Philippines*, April 1, 2013 <<http://nhcp.gov.ph/nhi-through-the-years/>>, accessed April 25, 2014.

commemoration of the Filipino hero.¹⁹⁶ Looking at the speeches and literary pieces presented in honor of Rizal, it was clear that intellect was from the start, an important factor emphasized by the official discourse. However, it was not just any kind of intellect that was privileged and desired. Rather, it was an intellect that paid homage to the truth or the scientific spirit. Leopoldo Yabes, professor of English at the University of the Philippines, wrote a prize-winning essay contending that the enemies of the Filipino people were “ignorance and superstition.”¹⁹⁷ Adopting this formula, only enlightenment and education would be able to eliminate “superstition, fanaticism, injustice, cupidity, and intolerance.” As a result, the only remedy was to turn to knowledge (education) and enlightenment, something which Rizal had discovered and highlighted from early on.

For instance, although Rizal is frequently credited as an amateur scientist of some sort in the various speeches and essays written about him, his role in the advancement of scientific knowledge and its empirical methodology was specifically underscored in two separate essays written for the 1961 Centennial celebrations. The first, entitled “Rizal, man of science”, was written by physician Dr. Sixto Orosa a former Supreme Commander of the Knights of Rizal, while the second piece was called “Rizal, the Scientist” and was written by Dr. Juan Salcedo, a former secretary of the department of health.¹⁹⁸ Both essays exalted Rizal’s accomplishments in the sciences, citing his discovery of a certain species of plant, his studies of animals, as well as his engineering of a brick-making machine among other notable achievements. The focus however,

¹⁹⁶ Esteban A. De Ocampo, *Rizal Catcheism (Knowing Rizal Better)*, (Manila, Philippines, 1956), 11.

¹⁹⁷ Leopoldo Y. Yabes, “Rizal, Intellectual and Moral Leader,” *A Rizal Anthology* (Manila: National Heroes Commission, 1964), 21.

¹⁹⁸ Juan Salcedo, “Rizal, the Scientist,” *University of the East: Rizal Centennial Lectures* (Manila, Philippines, 1961), 46-50. Sixto Orosa, “Rizal, Man of Science,” *Jose Rizal: Man and Her*, Quezon City, Philippines: Vibal Printing Company, 1963), 74-83.

centered on Rizal's scientific spirit," his unwavering commitment to seeking the truth, or the "rational [...] explanation of facts."¹⁹⁹ This rhetoric on the need for intellect was further repeated at the Jose Rizal Centennial Congress of Educators and at the International Congress on Rizal held in the same year. At the former, Vicente G. Sinco, president of the University of the Philippines, argued that the problem with Filipino oppression would be immutable, regardless of whether the people were ruled by an alien body, or if the Philippines was governed by an independent government. What was more pertinent, however, was whether the Filipino people were living in ignorance.²⁰⁰ After all, "[t]he superior intellect and the upright mind will always be recognized, whether among a colonial people or among the highly advanced nations."²⁰¹ At the International Congress, Filipino journalist and columnist Hernando J. Abaya reiterated such sentiments by saying, "Remove the superstitions from the mind implanted and cultivated by the Church – and only then shall men come to a consciousness of the causes of their intellectual and moral degradation."²⁰²

One way in which ignorance could be combated, then, was through an emphasis on self-development, or self-progress. In fact, one's love of country along with the assertion of one's national sovereignty should rightfully culminate in the pursuit of self-development,²⁰³ since necessary reforms can only be pursued when the people are ready."²⁰⁴ Rizal was thus an exemplary model of a Filipino who possessed a passion for

¹⁹⁹ Sixto Orosa, "Rizal, Man of Science," 74.

²⁰⁰ Vicente G. Sinco, "Rizal and Education," *Jose Rizal on His Centenary* (Quezon City: Office of Research Coordination, University of the Philippines, 1963), 127.

²⁰¹ Leopoldo Y. Yabes, "Rizal, Intellectual and Moral Leader," *Ibid*, 44.

²⁰² Hernando J. Abaya, "Rizal and Human Freedom," *Ibid*, 149.

²⁰³ Jose Laurel, "The Filipinism of Rizal," Sixto Y. Orosa (eds.) *Jose Rizal by Various Authors* (Evangalista, Manila: Manor Press, 1956), 54.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid*, 57.

self-development.²⁰⁵ In fact, Filipino speechwriters were more likely than not to resort to hyperbole when talking about Rizal. As they were wont to rattle off during their oratorical presentations, Rizal “was a great ophthalmologist, entomologist, anthropologist, zoologist, linguist, sculptor, poet, novelist, educator.”²⁰⁶ If that was not enough, he was also a philosopher, philologist, psychologist, sociologist, ethnologist, historian, painter, farmer, businessman, physician, surveyor and practical engineer.²⁰⁷ If Rizal could so fruitfully apply himself to all of these disciplines, Filipinos too, with the necessary hard work and diligence, could take on essentially any occupation that one could think of.

Related to this point is the idea of internationalism. This had two complementary aspects to it: one, the individual was able to garner universal recognition, and two, s/he had a cosmopolitan outlook. Rizal, then, was unequivocally upheld as the model of internationalism. In fact, there was even an international Congress on Rizal held in Manila in 1961. During the four-day proceedings, not only was there an international audience, the speakers themselves often hailed from places both near and far, including countries such as Egypt, Pakistan and Indonesia. As the “first Asian champion of world culture, universal understanding and democratic liberalism,” the Filipinos had a responsibility to bring Rizal to the consciousness of the world, “for he belongs to all ages

²⁰⁵ Ibid, 53.

²⁰⁶ Rafael Palma, “The Secret of Rizal’s Immortality,” Ibid, 69.

²⁰⁷ Sixto Orosa, “The Universality of Rizal,” *Jose Rizal: Man and Hero*, Quezon City, Philippines: Vibal Printing Company, 1963), 46.

and is among all liberty-loving people in all parts of the globe.”²⁰⁸ After all, “Rizal was more than a Filipino,” he was a “universal being.”²⁰⁹ As Dr. Orosa wrote,

“In erudition, culture and versatility, Rizal would not only compare favorably with anyone, anytime, anywhere, he would also be superior, in all those combined qualities, to any chief of state or leader of any country. Rizal devoted himself to many callings that had universal appeal or application. [...] He excelled in several occupations that find universal acceptance, and could have attained world renown had he devoted himself wholly to any of them.”²¹⁰

One way in which Rizal’s internationalism was accentuated was via comparisons with both Filipino and global figures of prominence. Filipino elites were quick to showcase their hero of yesterday, and how he was living proof to the world that Filipinos were in no way inferior to foreigners. In the person of Rizal, instead of being at the bottom of the global hierarchy, Filipinos were in fact frontrunners in certain aspects. Rizal thus “blasted the myth of natural superiority of some races over others,”²¹¹ highlighting the ways in which Filipinos were inherently equal in ability and status with the West.

At the third Rizal Lecture held in 1970, Esteban De Ocampo, supreme auditor of the Knights of Rizal, and the President of the Philippine Historical Association, spoke of how Rizal served as a inspiration for some of the greatest contemporary national revolutionists of the Asian world, including people such as Mohandas Gandhi, Tagore,

²⁰⁸ Carlos P. Garcia, “Address by His Excellency Carlos P. Garcia, President of the Philippines,” *Proceedings of the International Congress on Rizal* (Manila: Jose Rizal National Centennial Commission: 1961), 48.

²⁰⁹ Jose Y. Tuazon, “Rizal as a Universal Man,” *Ibid*, 54.

²¹⁰ Sixto Orosa, “The Universality of Rizal,” *Jose Rizal: Man and Hero*, Quezon City, Philippines: Vibal Printing Company, 1963), 46.

²¹¹ Leopoldo Y. Yabes, “Rizal, Intellectual and Moral Leader,” *Ibid*, 42.

Nehru, as well as Sun Yat-Sen.²¹² Meanwhile, Jose Hernandez, then-vice-President of Capitol City Colleges in Quezon City, complimented Rizal for writing in the language and style of the West such that the “Occident and the rest of the civilized world might know that the Philippines was a priceless boon to its people and that the Filipinos were sentient human beings immersed” in centuries of oppression by a “decadent empire.”²¹³ Hernandez made a distinction between Rizal and other distinguished poets like Li Po, Firdausi (also spelt Ferdowsi) and Omar Khayyam, who, according to Hernandez, all wrote in their own language for their own people. Rizal however, was a cosmopolitan, truly universal in his outlook and contributions. Yabes also praised Rizal for his internationalism, although he does this by comparing Rizal to the other figures in the pantheon of Filipino heroes:

[...] Rizal was not a patriot of the class of Bonifacio, Aguinaldo, Mabini, Jacinto, and Luna, for while these were nationalists first and foremost and very little else, Rizal, by the very reason of his broad cultural background, could not be exclusively a nationalist. He was both a nationalist and internationalist, his nationalism springing from a deep love of a country which he felt was suffering from misgovernment and his internationalism springing from a faith in the unity of mankind which he acquired from his studies in science and in the humanities. [...] He was as much a universal man as Leonardo, Goethe, and Einstein; as many faceted a genius as they were, with only the pigmentation of his skin perhaps preventing him from world recognition.²¹⁴

Rizal was thus “not only the first Asian to become a citizen of the world; he was also among the first world citizen to earn the unqualified praise of men from far and near.”²¹⁵

²¹² Esteban A. De Ocampo, “Rizal, Pioneer Asian Nationalist and Freedom-Fighter,” *The Second Rizal Lectures (Manila: National Historical Commission, 1970)*, 36.

²¹³ Jose MA. Hernandez, “Rizal’s Poetry and Drama,” *Rizal as An Internationalist: Papers Read at a Symposium sponsored by the UNESCO National Commission of the Philippines* (Manila: UNESCO National Commission of the Philippines, 1961), 24.

²¹⁴ Leopoldo Y. Yabes, “Rizal, Nationalist and Internationalist,” *Ibid*, 78-82.

²¹⁵ Sixto Orosa, “The Universality of Rizal,” *Jose Rizal: Man and Hero*, Quezon City, Philippines: Vibal Printing Company, 1963), 52.

The official discourse in the early period of post-independence Philippines came to represent Rizal as the global Filipino: one who was freed from the shackles of ignorance caused by hackneyed traditions and fanatical superstition, one who had received the enlightenment of Western rationality and education, and one who maintained a scientific and empirical mind. If its population would become more modern, the Philippines will be able to take its place among the civilized nations of the world, becoming truly international.

As it was in the pre-independence era, Filipino proponents of Western modernity utilized the language of the Catholic Church in their promotion of civic nationalism and its values. Rizal's books were frequently equated to the Bible, to be used as the Filipinos' "pure and undefiled fountain of inspiration."²¹⁶ Rizal himself was also likened to the figure of Jesus Christ. As the nationalist Senator Claro Recto put it, "[One] cannot separate Rizal from his books in the same way that [...] Jesus [cannot be] without the gospel. There can be no true Filipinism without the works of Rizal."²¹⁷ Even as Catholic superstition was debunked in favor of a civic nationalism, the latter had to remain couched in a Christian language that was familiar to the people. There is perhaps some sense of irony here, in that for all of nationalism's modernity, it has to continue relying on religious terminology to operate successfully. In the Philippines then, even as the elites were careful to keep the religious and civic spheres distinct, they continued to return to the language of Catholicism to promote the figure of Rizal among Filipino society.

²¹⁶ A. Del Rosario, "We, the People: Rizal and South America in the School Curriculum," *Manila Times*, April 21, 1956.

²¹⁷ "Bill on Rizal Doomed," *Manila Times*, April 26, 1956.

The Intellectual Left Strikes Back

As the Philippines continued its struggle against American neo-imperialism in the 1960s, intellectuals increasingly started to challenge the predominant discourse surrounding Rizal and his role in the creation of the Philippine nation. Part of this had to do with an alternative conception of Philippine nationalism that was slowly emerging. Instead of placing modernity at the core of Philippine nationalism, the notion of “revolution” and in particular, the idea of an “unfinished revolution” gained traction. This was in part because of President Diosdado Macapagal, who popularized the phrase when he ran for office in the 1961 elections.²¹⁸ Although Macapagal probably chose the slogan for reasons of political expediency,²¹⁹ his choice of a catchphrase reflected a larger trend that was occurring in the 1960s -- the rise of student activism and Leftist politics. As students and intellectuals grappled with the deeply entrenched problems of social justice in the country, class as an analytical framework increasingly came to dominate understandings of societal dynamics.

The seeds of antipathy against Rizal were perhaps first sowed in 1956, when the University of the Philippines historian Teodoro Agoncillo published his book *The Revolt of the Masses: the Story of Bonifacio and the Katipunan*.²²⁰ This was essentially a populist interpretation of Philippine colonial history, where class struggle took center stage in the framing of history. Andres Bonifacio, *supremo* (President) of the *Katipunan*, was portrayed as the champion of the marginalized poor, while Rizal, with his comfortable middle-class upbringing, was a member of the *ilustrado* who was alienated

²¹⁸ Reynaldo Ilet, “The “Unfinished Revolution” in Political Discourse,” *Filipinos and Their Revolution*, 181.

²¹⁹ *Ibid*, 182.

²²⁰ *Ibid*, 185. Ambeth Ocampo, “Memory and Amnesia: Rizal on the Eve of His Centenary,” *The Rizal Lectures* (Pasig City, Philippines: 2001) 10-11.

from the masses. The parallel narrative of Rizal as a cosmopolitan, highly-educated intellectual, ironically now became a hindrance to the promotion of Rizal as the national hero for intellectuals like Agoncillo. Another anti-colonial historian, Renato Constantino, wrote the essay *Veneration Without Understanding*, arguing that Rizal would never be a true Filipino because he was not of the common *tao*.²²¹ Andres Bonifacio, the revolutionary fighter, was the true hero of the Philippines. Rizal, on the other hand, was too caught up with his class interests to ever be able to effectively lead the country in breaking away from the oppressive rule of the Spanish.

As the rhetoric of revolution gathered momentum among students and intellectuals alike, the narrative of an “unfinished revolution” was quickly co-opted into the official discourse. This was done in two ways: the first highlighted the destructive nature of revolutions, while the second restricted the scope of revolutionary action to one that was strictly exclusive to the intellect, concerned with ideas and knowledge. Not only would a class struggle destabilize the rule of the political elite, many of whom belonged to the upper classes, the Philippine government was also wary of rekindling the flames of peasant and revolutionary movements. While the Huk rebellion – a primarily peasant movement – had been finally subdued in the late 1950s after a long drawn-out battle with the Philippine government, there were still scattered bands of revolutionaries in Central Luzon.²²² At the 1961 Jose Rizal Centennial, several speakers and distinguished individuals tapped onto the rhetoric of “revolution” and Rizal’s role in it. Agoncillo, who had written the “offending” *Revolt of the Masses*, nevertheless played the role of

²²¹ Renato Constantino, *Veneration Without Understanding* (Erehwon, 1969), 8.

²²² Benedict Kerkvliet, “The Rise and Fall,” *The Huk Rebellion: A Study of Peasant Revolt in the Philippines* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1982), 247-248.

nationalist academic through and through when he defended Rizal during a speech held on September 26, 1961 as part of the Rizal Centennial Celebrations. In a talk entitled “Rizal and the Philippine Revolution,” Agoncillo asserted that “Rizal was not against revolution per se, but against one that has no direction, one that is disorderly and, therefore, would only result in useless bloodshed.”²²³ Such sentiments were repeated by Bernabe Africa, a professor of political science at the University of the Philippines, during his commentary on Jose Rizal’s role in political affairs at the 1961 International Congress on Rizal. Directly comparing Rizal with Bonifacio, Africa declared that Rizal was “not a revolutionist of the radical type.” Instead, it was his writings that were revolutionary and which “had the effect of arousing the people against Spain.” Most significantly, Africa drew a distinction between an armed revolution and an intellectual revolution, pegging Rizal to the second category.²²⁴ As such, Rizal was also the more practical and cunning one, because he knew that the revolutionary movement had little chance of succeeding at that particular time in history.²²⁵ Claro Recto reaffirmed this narrative, calling Rizal the realist and Bonifacio the idealist. For him, Rizal knew of the consequences and tried to avoid the inevitable tragedy, whereas Bonifacio ignored the unripe circumstances and lurched the *Katipunan* into a revolution that was bound to fail.²²⁶

More interesting perhaps, was former University of the Philippines lecturer Jose M. Sison’s treatise on Rizal the “Subversive” (Sison later on founded the Communist

²²³ Teodoro Agoncillo, “Rizal and the Revolution,” *Jose Rizal on His Centenary* (Quezon City: Office of Research Coordination, University of the Philippines, 1963), 101.

²²⁴ Bernabe Africa, *Proceedings of the International Congress on Rizal* (Manila: Jose Rizal National Centennial Commission: 1961), 184.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*

²²⁶ Claro M. Recto, “Rizal the Realist and Bonifacio the Idealist,” Petronilo Bn Daroy and Dolores S. Feria, eds., *Rizal: Contrary Essays* (Quezon City: Guro Books, 1968), 58.

Party of the Philippines in 1968). Unlike his colleague Constantino, Sison did not condemn Rizal for his bourgeois background; instead, he praised Rizal for being “a leading representative of the enlightened stratum of “left wing” of the middle class.” After all, he argued, Rizal recognized that the liberties of individuals could only be attained when the nation as a whole could be uplifted from authoritarianism and anti-liberalism. In the eyes of Sison, Rizal was a “progressive and a radical of his own time.”²²⁷

While the counter-narrative of Rizal initiated by Left-wing intellectuals in the 1960s continues to perpetuate until today,²²⁸ we should note that such discourses of class have in fact, remained strictly within the confines of the intellectual class. If we look at those who fall into the so-called category of the ‘working-class’ or even the term ‘peasants’, class barely registered in the way they interpreted Rizal. As we have seen in the previous chapter, these ‘masses’ were not averse to drawing on the Rizal figure as a way of expressing their hope and desire for liberation. Even in the period after independence, labor unions used Rizal as a way of seeking social justice. In 1956, during the Rizal bill debacle, strikers from the University of Santo Tomas (UST) signed a resolution in support of the legislation. They did not see Rizal as an elite *mestizo* who only cared about his middle-class interests; rather, they were able to commiserate with his attempts to “secure reforms widely advertising the social abuses” committed by the Spanish friars. Just as Rizal had sought to expose the misdeeds of the friars, workers at

²²⁷ Jose M. Sison, “Rizal the “Subversive,”” *Ibid*, 18.

²²⁸ For example, see Gil C. Cabacungan Jr., “Bonifacio pushed as National Hero,” *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, Nov 30, 2013 < <http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/537375/house-bill-seeks-to-declare-bonifacio-national-hero>> Accessed December 1, 2013. Manuel F. Almario, “Rizal planted seed of revolution; Bonifacio watered it,” *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, December 31, 2012. < <http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/332557/rizal-planted-seed-of-revolution-bonifacio-watered-it>> Accessed May 3, 2014.

UST saw a parallel with his life as they tried to bring to light social injustices that were being “committed by certain Dominican friars acting as employers.”²²⁹

Conclusion

In 1998, the Philippines observed its centennial celebrations of independence since the end of the First Philippine Revolution against the Spanish in 1898. In honor of this event, conferences and other events were held, both in the Philippines, and overseas. In Jakarta, an International Conference on the Philippine Revolution and the First Asian Republic was held from 28 to 30 August 1997. At a particular talk held during the event, writer Carmen Guerrero Nakpil, who was then a member of the Manila Historical Commission, spoke of the indigenous elites during the Spanish colonial times. Drawing upon the same themes that have been circulating throughout Philippine contemporary history, she praised these elites, including Rizal, for their dedication to “self-improvement in the name of patriotism.”²³⁰ Nakpil described them as

[...] not so much mimetists and imitators as men of courage and ingenuity who were responding to the challenge posed by colonialism and meant, by their adoption of European learning and customs, to prove that they were equal, if not better, than their white rulers and tormentors. [...] Their mind-set was rationality, the desire for change, the scientific spirit and temperament, the supremacy of reason. This mind-set clashed against the obscurantism of the religious and autocratic atmosphere.²³¹

In just a few sentences, Nakpil managed to neatly sum up the official discourse on Rizal. Yet it is striking that such a narrative has not changed since the Philippines first obtained independence more than fifty years ago. Even in the present time, the

²²⁹ “Labor groups support poassage: Recto winds up Senate debates; amendments due Labor endorsement,” *Manila Chronicle*, May 4, 1956.

²³⁰ Carmen Guerrero Nakpil, “Culture of the Indigenous Elite,” Elmer A. Ordonez (eds.) *Toward the First Asian Republic* (Manila, Philippines: Philippine Centennial Commission, 1998), 59.

²³¹ *Ibid.*

circumstances surrounding the Philippines appear to remain constant -- accusations of American imperialism remain rampant,²³² and poverty and underdevelopment continues to be one of the main problems facing the Philippines.

At the same time however, even as the official discourse has persisted, local interpretations of the Rizal symbol continue on until today. As we will see in the next chapter, such representations of Rizal are not necessarily congruent with the one presented in the official narrative. Moreover, when taken outside of the Philippine geobody, the Rizal symbol takes on a life of its own that incorporates the additional complexities facing the Filipino diaspora. Given that slightly more than 10% of the Filipino population resides outside of the Philippines (with the numbers increasing every year), it is crucial to examine the ways in which the diasporic experience shapes Filipinos' understandings of their world. I thus now turn from the Philippine state to two very different Filipino diasporic groups in Hawaii: the *Banal Na Angkan*, a Rizalista sect, which operates outside of this framework of Western modernity, and the Knights of Rizal, a civic and patriotic fraternity which interprets Rizal within the framework of this official discourse. In the next chapter, I focus on the *Banal Na Angkan*, showing how the diasporic experience influences the way in which Rizal is understood and represented.

²³² For example, see Randy David, "Accommodating America," *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, May 4, 2014 <<http://opinion.inquirer.net/74179/accommodating-america>> Accessed May 4, 2014. Simone Orendain, "In Philippines, Obama Visit Stirs Critics of Plan to Boost US Troops," *Voice of America*, April 25, 2014, <<http://www.voanews.com/content/in-philippines-obama-visit-stirs-critics-of-plan-to-boost-us-troops/1900954.html>> Accessed May 4, 2014. Rod Kapunan, "Reducing us to a Vassal State," *Manila Standard Today*, May 3, 2014 <<http://manilastandardtoday.com/2014/05/03/reducing-us-to-a-vassal-state/>> Accessed May 4, 2014.

Chapter 4

Consuming Rizal: The Banal Na Angkan in Hawai'i

Tucked in the heart of a residential area off Kamehameha Highway is a nondescript house that turns into a Filipino temple every Sunday. Each week at approximately nine in the morning, around twenty people show up at the house. For the next two hours or so, the group spends their time in song, prayer, and meditation. This is followed by a sermon, delivered by an older lady who exudes a greater amount of intensity than her advanced age would suggest. There is almost nothing extraordinary about this scene, save for the fact that the women, dressed in a simplified version of the *Maria Clara* dress, and the men, clad in a *barong tagalong*, are worshipping in front of an altar decorated with the Philippine flag and photographs of the Philippine national hero – Jose Rizal. The *Banal Na Angkan*, as this group is known, is a nationalist religious sect that believes in the divinity of Rizal: Rizal is God, and it is through him that the Filipino people would be saved. This chapter is an attempt to tell their story.

In the first half of this chapter, I describe the organization - its history, beliefs, rituals, and demographic profile. The second part of the chapter examines how the Filipino diasporic experience in Hawaii has shaped the way in which Rizal has come to be represented by an urban underclass. In particular, I show how such representations depart from that of the official discourse on Rizal as presented in the previous chapter. I also compare this narrative with those of earlier Rizalista groups in rural Philippines, paying attention to the ways in which the two differ. At the same time, I show how the

Banal Na Angkan's narrative encompasses an ideal of modernity that rejects the version of Western modernity promoted by the official discourse on Rizal.

Banal Na Angkan Katipunan “KKK” Kataastaasan Kagalanggalan Katipunan History

The *Banal Na Angkan Katipunan* “KKK” *Kataastaasan Kagalanggalan Katipunan* (the Supreme and Most Honored Society), or the *Banal Na Angkan* as it is known in short, is a religious sect founded sometime during the American colonial period of the Philippines. Members see themselves as the children and grandchildren (*mga anak at apo*) of the *Katipunan* – their namesake and the revolutionary society that fought against the Spanish during the Philippine Revolution against Spanish colonial rule. However, it traces its legacy to two other Rizalista groups – the *Sagrada Familia*, as well as the *Tres Persona Solo Dios* (or the *Samahan ng Tatlong Persona Solo Dios*).

Ignacio Coronado, or *Apo Asiong* as he is also known, first founded the *Sagrada Familia* in Rizal's hometown of Calamba, Laguna, sometime around the end of the Spanish colonial period.²³³ Coronado was said to be very rich, and owned numerous tracts of land all over Luzon.²³⁴ On December 3, 1894, he received the land title (Titulo 4136) from a certain Don Mariano San Pedro y Esteban to 173,000 hectares of land stretching over the present-day provinces of Nueva Ecija, Bulacan, Rizal, Laguna, Quezon and parts of Metro Manila.²³⁵ Because of the significant land size, the Americans allegedly sought to get their hands on the title after the annexation of the Philippines

²³³ The exact date of founding is not known, but according to Michael Gonzalez, the *Sagrada* is said to have had its origins in the *Guardia de Honor* (1880-1919) and the *Santa Iglesia* (1910-1914). “The *Sagrada Familia*,” *The Edge of Structures: A Study of the Rizalista Religious Ideology and Filipino Culture* (MA Thesis, Sydney University, 1985), 62.

²³⁴ *Ibid*, 66.

²³⁵ However, the validity of this land title has been questioned and rejected. The LAWPHiL Project, Arellano Law Foundation. Philippine Laws and Jurisprudence Databank. http://www.lawphil.net/judjuris/juri1996/dec1996/gr_103727_1996.html (Accessed 20 Mar, 2014)

during the Philippine-American war. They pursued Coronado, who was forced to flee for his life by hiding in mountain caves. During this time, Coronado managed to make his way to Mount Banahaw, a mystical mountain located between the provinces of Quezon and Laguna that is frequently revered and worshipped by locals.²³⁶ When he came out of the mountain, Coronado emerged as Agapito Ilustre (or Agapito Ilustrisimo) who would later go on to found the *Tres Persona Solo Dios* in 1935.²³⁷

However, as relayed to me by members of the *Banal Na Angkan*, Ignacio Coronado also took on the alias of Jose M. Ramos. Ramos, or *Ama* (Father), as he is sometimes referred to by the group, can be said to be the true founder of the *Banal Na Angkan* through *mysterious* means. One of his first undertakings was to change the original Spanish name of the *Sagrada Familia* into the Tagalog *Banal Na Angkan*. This was largely a symbolic move to assert the indigenous nature of the group. What is less clear though, is whether the *Banal Na Angkan* is simply a continuation of the *Sagrada*, or if it is a distinct group that branched off from its parent organization. As of the early 1990s, the *Sagrada Familia* was still in existence. From Michael Gonzalez's account of the group, there appears to be considerable divergences between the rituals and beliefs of the two groups, leading one to believe that the two groups have deviated significantly to

²³⁶ Teresita B. Obusan, "The Mt. Banahaw Prayer: Amang Makapangyarihan," *Philippine Studies* 37 (1989), 71.

²³⁷ Members of the *Tres Persona Solo Dios* unsurprisingly, have a different account of Ilustre's origins. According to them, Ilustre, was born sometime around the 1900s in Limutan, Cebu, where he was a leader in the *Pulahang*, a militant religious sect that fought against the American colonialists. After a deep inner experience, Ilustre renounced his previous lifestyle of violence, turning instead to the preaching of prayer and good works. He also came to acquire powers that were akin to those of shamans. For more information on the *Tatlong Persona Solo Dios*, see Teresita B. Obusan, "Tatlong Persona Solo Dios: A Study of a Filipino Folk Religion," *And God said: Hala!* (Manila, Philippines: De La Salle University Press, 1991), 67-95; Teresita B. Obusan, "The Mt. Banahaw Prayer: Amang Makapangyarihan," *Philippine Studies* 37 (1989), 71-80; and, Vicente Marasigan, *A Banahaw Guru: Symbolic Deeds of Agapito Ilustrisimo* (Quezon City, Metro Manila: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1985).

warrant being treated as two distinct and separate groups.²³⁸ When I asked *Nanay Serafina* about the differences between the *Banal Na Angkan*, the *Tres Persona Solo Dios*, and the *Sagrada Familia*, she simply explained it as a case of Ramos having different disciples who then diverged from one another in their teachings and ritual practices as they established their own sects after his passing.

The Banal Na Angkan in Honolulu

Currently, the *Banal Na Angkan* can be found in four main locations across two countries: Sarrat (a town in Ilocos Norte in Northern Luzon) and Manila in the Philippines, and Kauai and Honolulu in Hawai'i,²³⁹ the US. At the time of this writing however, only the Sarrat and Manila branches have physical temples where weekly services are conducted. In Honolulu, Sunday services are held in a member's house. One of the greatest desires of the Hawaii group then, has been to procure funds sufficient to acquire a temple that they can call their own.

It is estimated that the *Banal Na Angkan* has over two hundred members in the Philippines. In Honolulu alone, there are about thirty-five to forty members, although attendance at the weekly services seems to hover between twenty to twenty-five people. This number swells during special occasions such as Rizal Day and Easter Sunday, when many of its members take time off work to attend the services. Like many other Filipinos in Hawaii, members hail primarily from the Ilocos region, and are first-generation

²³⁸ For example, one of the rituals that is at the core of the *Sagrada Familia* is known as the *ganap* (which means "done" or "completed"), which is observed on Wednesdays, Sundays, and on important anniversaries. During the *ganap*, the leader of the sect (in 1985, this was still Ate Gloria) may go into trance where the persona of past leaders "takes over" her/his body. At the same time, the *ganap* features a flag-kissing ceremony along with ritual dancing. The *Sagrada Familia* also relies on Biblical passages for their *mensahe* (messages). These aspects were not observed during my time with the *Banal Na Angkan*.

²³⁹ Members in the Hawaiian Islands can be found on Maui and Lanai as well, but these only constitute a smattering of people – it is estimated that there are no more than ten members on Maui, and another five members on Lanai. On important occasions, such as Rizal's birth and death anniversary, members from the other islands make their way to Oahu to be part of the *Banal Na Angkan* proceedings.

migrants to the United States. They also appear to be related one way or another through familial ties,²⁴⁰ which is not surprising since individuals usually petition for their family members to come to the U.S. once they receive permanent residency of some kind. Within the group, females outnumber males – there are three women for every man. While the majority of the members are middle-aged, there are also a couple of elderly women who habitually show up at the services. Occasionally, a few younger people (usually the children of existing members) will join the services.

For the most part, members come from working class backgrounds, and it was not uncommon for individuals to relate to me their stories of poverty and hardship in the Philippines. Generally, members in Honolulu tend to work in service-related occupations, such as salespersons, customer service representatives and care workers. This is despite the fact that some members do possess college degrees from the Philippines, including professional degrees in Engineering, Accountancy, and Business Administration. However, due to the difficulties involved in passing the accreditation tests in the US (either because of the language barrier, or disparities in standards), as well as perceptions of Philippine college degrees as being of inferior quality, these members chose not to practice their professions, turning instead to jobs that are regarded as low paying and less prestigious.

Currently, the *Banal Na Angkan* is led by *Nanay* Serafina Baloran, who is the spiritual head of the entire religious sect. As the spiritual head, *Nanay* Serafina often determines the flow of the weekly services. Not only does she decide on the songs to be sung, she also administers the teachings of the Spirit. As the highest spiritual authority in

²⁴⁰ This is especially due to the nature of immigration laws in the US, where individuals can petition for their family members to join them from the Philippines.

the entire sect, *Nanay* Serafina possesses a higher plane of spirituality, which bestows upon her certain supernatural powers. These include the ability to heal illnesses, the discernment to read a person's thoughts and intentions, as well as a heightened consciousness of the Holy Spirit's voice. Although each branch in the different localities also has a President and Secretary who handle the more mundane aspects involved in the running of any organization, they defer to *Nanay* Serafina on matters concerning the spiritual and the divine. The President serves as the liaison with the outside community, and coordinates the logistics for each meeting. The Secretary, meanwhile, is in charge of recording the happenings of each meeting, including taking note of the members present. Whenever there is any kind of monetary collection, for example, a fundraiser to help members in financial straits, the Secretary takes charge of the collection. Other than these three defined roles, the organizational structure is rather loose.

When one first meets *Nanay* Serafina, there is nothing ostentatious or even extraordinary about her. Although, at eighty-two years of age, she is still surprisingly limber despite having suffered from a stroke,²⁴¹ and possesses a full head of dark hair that trails all the way down to her waist. A woman of relatively small stature, she feels like she could be your Filipina *lola* (grandmother) as she reaches out to embrace you in a greeting. However, this unassuming appearance belies her commanding aura of authority when she preaches under the influence of the Holy Spirit. In those moments, one quickly forgets her age, and is transfixed by the animated woman standing in front of the room. A

²⁴¹ *Nanay* Serafina related the story to me of how she recovered the use of her legs despite suffering from a stroke that effectively rendered her crippled. While lying down one day, she heard the voice of the Spirit telling her to get up and walk. "But I cannot!" She told the Voice. But the Voice only urged her again to get up and walk. Deciding to trust in the Spirit, *Nanay* Serafina sat up and unsteadily placed one foot in front of her. "Now, the other foot." She heard the Spirit again. Shakily, she found herself standing up on two feet. "Now, take a step forward." *Nanay* Serafina obeyed. "And another." Soon, *Nanay* Serafina was walking across the room without any aid or help. "Thank you *Ama!*"

strong, unrelenting tenor transforms her voice, and vigorous gestures punctuate her every sentence.

Nanay Serafina was originally born in Sarrat, Ilocos Norte in 1932. She moved to Manila, where she first met Jose M. Ramos sometime in the 1950s. This first meeting with Ramos was marked by the resurrection of her son who had been dead for an entire day. From that time onwards, *Nanay* Serafina decided to follow Ramos. Because of her sincerity, *Nanay* quickly became one of Ramos' most trusted disciples. When Ramos felt that his time on earth was coming to an end, he chose seven officers as potential successors to his legacy, out of which one would eventually inherit his mantle. *Nanay* Serafina was one of the seven people. As part of a test, Ramos requested each candidate to compose a song for him, but out of the seven, only *Nanay* Serafina was able to convey the essence of what Ramos was looking for. In this way, *Nanay* Serafina became the legitimate successor to Ramos. Moreover, *Nanay* Serafina stood out because of her commitment to the cause, and her willingness to sacrifice for *Ama*. As her daughter shared with me, the early years of her childhood were difficult, because her mom was frequently sent on missions to other provinces where she could minister and proselytize to other Filipinos.²⁴² As a result, the children were not able to see their mother as much as they would have liked. Her move to Hawaii was made possible by her son, who had been able to take up US citizenship by joining the US navy. In 1988, *Nanay* Serafina was sent to Kauai after receiving a divine calling from *Ama* to lead an existing group of *Banal Na*

²⁴² One of her earliest mission was to go to Ilocos Norte where she set up a branch of the *Banal Na Angkan* in Sarrat. *Nanay* Serafina was able to attract followers as she went about healing people. In fact, *Nanay* Serafina had healed a barangay captain named Regino Gano. Grateful, he gave a piece of land for use as the organization's temple. Till today, this building is still in use. Gano's son, who also served as barangay captain after his father, later became the President of the *Banal Na Angkan* in Sarrat. During the later portion of her time in Sarrat, *Nanay* Serafina trained new leaders with the ability to lead the group after she leaves.

Angkan members who were lacking instruction. She lived in Kauai for a while, as she focused on training members to take over the group when she leaves. In 2004, *Nanay Serafina* moved to Honolulu, where there was already an established group of *Banal Na Angkan* members living on the island. These members had crossed the Pacific through family ties, marriage and/or employment with the US navy. However, without a spiritual guide to lead them, the group was struggling. Since then, *Nanay Serafina* has been based in Honolulu. Because of the transnational nature of the group, recordings of her preachings are often made and sent to the branches in Kauai and the Philippines. Throughout her lifetime then, *Nanay Serafina* remained faithful and obedient to *Ama's* calling. When I asked her if she would like to return to the Philippines, she indicated that she would like very much to do so. Yet ultimately, it is not her decision, but *Ama's* decision.

Akin to *Nanay Serafina's* experience, many of the members of the *Banal Na Angkan* had initially joined the organization because they had experienced some sort of a miracle in their life. The President of the organization, Ponciano Balicao, narrated to me the story of how he became part of the *Banal Na Angkan*. When he got married, his wife was already a member of the *Banal Na Angkan*. However, Ponciano was still a practicing Protestant Christian at that time. During the course of their marriage, this difference in religious beliefs never became a sticking point, although he would always ask his wife to pray for him whenever he ran into challenges in his life. The turning point came when his wife fell perilously sick. Desperate, he promised to follow *Amang Rizal* if his wife recovered. *Nanay Serafina* interceded for him, and the wife survived a dangerous surgery. Nevertheless, this was not the only blessing he credits to Rizal. As Ponciano earnestly

explained to me, despite coming from a poor family, *Amang* Rizal consistently provided him with opportunities for promotions at work, thereby allowing him to adequately provide for his family. His wife shares a similar story. Despite her parents' desire for a son, her mother was unable to conceive after giving birth to her sister and her. This barrenness lasted for ten years, until they visited *Nanay* Serafina, who gave them *holy* water to drink. Her mother became pregnant, and her younger brother – the miracle baby -- was born. Needless to say, these are just two of the many personal stories that make up the members of the *Banal Na Angkan* who faithfully show up at the house in Kalihi each week.

Beliefs

Like the *Sagrada Familia* and the *Tres Persona Solo Dios*, the key tenet of the *Banal Na Angkan* is the maxim: Pro-God, pro-country and pro-people. Similar to other patriotic religious groups in the Philippines such as the *Iglesia Watawat ng Lahi* and the *Bathalismo (Inang Mahiwaga)*, the *Banal Na Angkan* asserts a belief in Rizal's divinity. Although many of the symbolisms and doctrine are drawn from the traditional Catholic faith, there are striking differences as well, chief of all the belief that Rizal is ultimately divine, and is in fact, the reincarnation of Jesus Christ. This conviction is backed up by seemingly uncanny similarities and resemblances between the two figures.

Beginning with the birth of Rizal, just as Jesus was conceived through the Holy Spirit, Rizal's birth was very much shrouded in mystery as well. As an infant, he was placed in a basket and brought by three Marias to the doorstep of the house Teodora Alonso had been living in. Teodora was pregnant at that time with a girl, but had suffered a miscarriage when she fell down a flight of stairs. According to a *mysterious* old man

who appeared before Teodora and her husband Francisco Protasio Mercado [sic], Rizal was to be the replacement for her dead daughter. Moreover, the couple was to name him Jobe Rexal – a name members informed me could be found in the Bible.²⁴³ When the baby was baptized by the Spanish friars however, because of the transliteration into the Spanish language, Jobe Rexal became ‘Jose Rizal.’ This account of Rizal’s birth thus provides an alternative explanation as to why Rizal did not take on his father’s last name – Mercado – but instead, came to be known by Rizal.²⁴⁴ Moreover, just as Joseph and Mary had been entrusted to take care and raise Jesus “until he was ready to fulfill his mission as was prophesized in the Old Testament to save man from sin”, Teodora and Francisco were instructed to “raise and send [Rizal] to school to prepare him for his mission to liberate the Philippines from Slavery”.

As Rizal came into adulthood, other similarities began manifesting as well. Jesus had twelve disciples, of which Judas Iscariot was to eventually betray him, leading to his crucifixion on the cross. In a similar manner, Rizal had 14 disciples consisting of the various *ilustrados* and revolutionaries who were involved in the movement for Philippine freedom. These fourteen include Gen. Miguel Malvar, Juan Luna, Gen. Antonio Luna, Andres Bonifacio, Graciano Lopez Jaena, Jose Ma. Basa, Pedro Paterno, Antonio Regidor, Marcelo del Pilar, Emilio Jacinto, Mariano Ponce, Jose Burgos, Apolinario Mabini, and Clemente Jose Zulueta. Emilio Aguinaldo, a one-time *Katipunan* general and

²⁴³ *Nanay* Serafina believes that this story was personally related to her by Rizal’s mother, although this is somewhat suspect since Teodora Alonso had passed away in 1911 and *Nanay* was only born in 1932. This story is also found in the beliefs of the *Iglesia Watawat ng Lahi*; see Prospero Reyes Covar, “The Iglesia Watawat ng Lahi – Historio-Religious World View,” *The Iglesia Watawat ng Lahi: An Anthropological Study of a Social Movement in the Philippines* (PhD diss., University of Arizona, 1975), 78-79.

²⁴⁴ The prevailing explanation for this name change was because Rizal’s older brother Paciano, had been under Spanish surveillance for his subversive activities. Just before Rizal enrolled at the prestigious Ateneo de Manila University, Paciano had persuaded him to adopt Rizal as his last name to prevent Rizal from getting any unwanted attention.

President of the first Philippine Republic, is viewed as the Judas of the Philippine Revolution, a traitor to the cause of freedom for the Philippines.

Even in death, Jesus and Rizal shared commonalities. It is thought that Jesus was crucified when he was around thirty-three years of age. Similarly, Rizal was thirty-five when he was executed. More crucially, when the disciples came to wash Jesus' body after three days, the body had disappeared. Jesus had been resurrected from the dead. In the same way, the *Banal Na Angkan* believed that after Rizal's execution, the body went missing. The only thing that was left in the grave was a banana stem. It is thought that Rizal went to China from the Philippines, echoing a belief held by other Rizalista groups such as the *Bathalismo* and the *Iglesia Watawat ng Lahi*.²⁴⁵

In terms of their teachings, Jesus "preached righteousness" and Rizal "advocated patriotism." At the core of their doctrine however, was the dogma of non-violent reforms. At the same time, just as the orthodox Christianity bases its doctrine on two books – the Old Testament and the New Testament -- Rizal had produced two books that were to serve as the 'gospel' of the Philippines – the *Noli Me Tangere* as well as *El Filibusterismo*. However, while Rizal's novels are compared to the Bible, they are not actually used during the services of the *Banal Na Angkan*. In fact, members of the group repeatedly highlighted how they differ from the orthodox Catholic faith by their rejection of the Bible. To them, the Bible has lost its relevance in this contemporary period. The Bible was a thing of the past, the Old and New Testaments no longer germane to the current era. Rather, there will be a Young Testament that will be written for the spirit of

²⁴⁵ Marcelino A. Foronda, "Rizal's Place in the Cults in His Honor," *Cults Honoring Rizal*. (Manila: R. P. Garcia Publishing Company, 1961), 36. Prospero Reyes Covar, "The Iglesia Watawat ng Lahi – Historio-Religious World View," 84-85.

the current times, and accomplished by the new generation. More pertinently, because of the extraneousness of the Bible, the group relies on the Holy Spirit for guidance. From the very beginning, *Nanay* Serafina was clear that this was something that distinguished them (as the true faith) from the orthodox Catholic Church. Because they hear directly from the Spirit, the group was able to receive the truth as it pertained to contemporary times, rather than relying on a bunch of obsolete teachings that has lost significance in the current age. This is also one reason why the *Banal Na Angkan* repeatedly stresses that they are the true Rizalistas. Nevertheless, although there is no fixed doctrinal book, the *Banal Na Angkan* still possesses the Ten Commandments, albeit in a somewhat different version from the list presented in the Bible:

The Ten Commandments of Dr. Jose Rizal that he gave *mysteriously* to Supreme Andres Bonifacio are as follows (translated from the Tagalog by Ponciano Balicao):

1. Love God above all
2. Love the God of your race, that takes care of you forever
3. Love every person as yourself
4. You must fulfill the teachings of the heroes of your race
5. Love the country above all, in order to know your parents, to know your name, and to know your symbol (Philippine flag)
6. You must fulfill the teachings of Dr. Jose Rizal, Andres Bonifacio, and all others who sacrificed their lives for the country, so you will become successful
7. You must remember in your heart, that you have your own country, and own culture, and not a servant
8. You must fulfill all regulations that you have been told to do by this organization, and don't forget in yourself, that there's one God that is always watching you
9. You must fix/organize all what you are doing in your whole life [sic]
10. You must fulfill with urgency, the good bits of your heart, and remember that there is a God that always know all what you are doing. Also respect all religions or organizations, and any person, likewise they respect you too [sic]

Compared to the conventional Ten Commandments found in the Bible, Rizal's Ten Commandments as maintained by the *Banal Na Angkan* hold the Philippine nation as a sacred entity, with an emphasis on one's love for one's country (the Philippines). More pertinently, this love of country is reflected in one's identity (as Filipino). For example, the fifth Commandment dictates that one is only able to know one's parents, one's name and one's symbol if one has love for the Philippines. In addition, the seventh Commandment hints that without one's own country and culture, one can only function as servants in bondage to other nations and culture.

The *Banal Na Angkan* emphasizes other key differences that distinguish them from the orthodox Catholic faith. The Holy Trinity for example, no longer consists of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Rather, it is made up of Jehovah (God), Jesus (the Son), and Jose (*Ama*) (see appendix 2). These three figures are in turn bound together by the Holy Spirit. After attending the *Banal Na Angkan's* meetings a couple of times, it was further revealed to me that Jose Rizal is in actual fact, Jesus' father. This was extrapolated from a naming convention in the Philippines where Jose is the Filipinized version of Joseph – the name of Jesus' father from the Bible. As one member quoted to me, "Jesus said, whoever sees me, sees my father. And who is Jesus' father? Joseph, or Jose in the Philippines!" For the *Banal Na Angkan*, nothing is a coincidence, least of all, this translation of names.

Unlike the orthodox Christian faith where a belief in Jesus is said to be sufficient for one's salvation, the *Banal Na Angkan* believes that this is not enough. Jesus may be the way, but he is not the truth and the life. Instead, one has to believe in Rizal as well, for it is through Rizal that one may obtain truth, and thereby gain life. If Jesus is the

Alpha (the beginning), then Rizal is the Omega (the end). For the *Banal Na Angkan* then, the cross represents death, but the Filipino flag, for which Rizal gave his life for, represents life. As we will see later, the flag plays an important symbolic role in the rituals of the group.

Another important tenet of the *Banal Na Angkan* is the idea of reincarnation, specifically the belief that Rizal is the reincarnation of Jesus Christ. Rizal himself would be reincarnated a total of nine times. Currently, there have already been eight incarnations, or eight *mga balat* of Rizal, with Coronado being the seventh *balat* and Jose M. Ramos, the eighth. Not only does the *mysterious* M initial in Ramos' name stand for Mercado, Ramos was also said to possess *mysterious* powers. According to Nanay Serafina, when Ramos was a young man, he met a disabled old man who worked as a pushcart vendor selling food and other knick-knacks at a train station in Manila. This particular individual knew everything about Ramos, and was able to tell him things about himself that were not immediately apparent. Ramos decided to drop everything and follow the old man as his disciple. It was at this time that miracles started happening around him, and he gained powers that allowed him to discern everything about a person, even if he had only met him/her for the first time. More pertinently perhaps, Ramos had the ability to heal illnesses and resurrect people from the dead. Yet, despite possessing such power, older members of the group who had met Ramos related to me how he was an unassuming figure who became increasingly frail as he got older. He was a paralytic

towards the end of his life, but this physical vulnerability only made his spiritual prowess even more impressive.²⁴⁶

In tune with the millennial tradition, the group is awaiting for the ninth and final *balat* of Rizal to appear. When this happens, the world will finally obtain true freedom from the sufferings that it currently experiences. During my time with them, members remarked several times, on “the signs of the times”, be it in terms of the moral degeneration of the current generation, or the various natural disasters wrecking havoc across the globe. When the final incarnation of Rizal appears then, a new world will be established where there will be no more suffering. The Philippines, in addition, will be established as the Promised Land, the land from which milk and honey will flow. In this perfect vision of the world, only forty-one countries will be left.

Sunday Services

Every Sunday morning, members of the *Banal Na Angkan* gather in a member’s house in Kalihi, an area near downtown Honolulu that is traditionally known for its large Filipino migrant population.²⁴⁷ When one enters the house, one’s visual senses are immediately drawn to the two large Filipino flags draped vertically on one side of the wall (see photo 4.1). In front of the flags is the altar, upon which smaller flags of the

²⁴⁶ During one of the services, one of the oldest members of the group came up to me and earnestly related her experience with Ramos. She had been living in Ilocos Norte when Jose M. Ramos and *Nanay* Serafina “found” her. This elderly lady narrated how Ramos was able to pierce through her soul with his words, to divulge her deepest secrets, her past, and her future. She told me of how she had cried upon listening to Jose M. Ramos, and how she had felt cleansed of her sins. It was from that moment that she realized the flaws in Catholicism in proclaiming to be the true religion. Putting aside Catholicism, she placed her faith in Ramos and joined the *Banal Na Angkan*.

²⁴⁷ The house used for services stands as a testimony to *Ama*. *Nanay* Serafina’s niece had moved to Hawaii from the Philippines due to marital ties. However, after her divorce, she underwent a series of painful challenges in her life, including health and financial woes. Yet at each roadblock, *Ama* was able to work a miracle. This usually took the form of a well-timed opportunity. Eventually, she was able to purchase a house in Kalihi, and consecrate it as a temporary temple of the *Banal Na Angkan*.

Philippines and interestingly, the United States, stand.²⁴⁸ There are also pictures of Rizal, Ramos and Jesus placed upon the altar. In true local fashion, leis hang around the pictures of Jose Rizal and Jesus. Two white candles are placed in front of the pictures, and are kept burning throughout the service. Other items of notable interest include a large framed print of what members term the ‘First Breakfast’ – a title that is meant to parallel the Last Supper of Jesus Christ and his disciples (see photo 4.2.). In this print, Jose Rizal is at the center of the frame, standing over a table at which the fourteen *ilustrados* or *pambansang bayani* are sitting around. This photograph is treated as a historical piece of fact by the group, although it states at the bottom of the print that it is a “thoughtful interpretation” executed by a Mel Bicierro from Manila. A second smaller print meanwhile, has Jose Rizal and his fourteen disciples posing in two neat rows, with Rizal and Bonifacio sitting at the center of this group (see photo 4.3). What is interesting is that this print is based on a composite portrait of “illustrious Filipinos” (*Filipinos ilustres*) drawn by Guillermo Tolentino (1890-1976), a fine arts student at the University of the Philippines in 1911 (See photo 4.4). According to Resil Mojares, Tolentino’s print was widely circulated among the Filipino public after being picked up for publication in *Litwayway*, a popular Tagalog magazine, and eventually became the “best-known gallery of Filipino heroes.”²⁴⁹ However, there are a number of differences between the original print and the *Banal Na Angkan*’s print. For one, the latter has draperies drawn up to reveal the rising sun with beams of rays radiating outwards. The left-side is the Filipino flag, while the American flag hangs over the right side. At the same time, the *Banal Na*

²⁴⁸ The United States flag is not present at the altars in the Philippine temples.

²⁴⁹ Resil B. Mojares, “Guillermo Tolentino’s Grupo de Filipinos Ilustres and the Making of a National Pantheon, *Philippine Studies* 58, nos. 1 & 2 (2010): 170.

Angkan's print includes Graciano Lopez Jaena, Emilio Jacinto, and Mariano Ponce in its line-up, who are noticeably missing from the original print.²⁵⁰ When I asked the members about the origins of the two prints, I was told that they were gifts.



Photo 4.1. Photograph of the *Banal Na Angkan's* altar in Honolulu (Author's own)

²⁵⁰ Mojares postulates that this is because Tolentino limited himself to posthumous figures at the time of the drawing.



Photo 4.2. Photograph of the Print of the “First Breakfast” (Author’s own)



Photo 4.3 Photograph of a print showing the fourteen *pambansang bayani* with Rizal (Author’s own)



Photo 4.4 Guillermo Tolentino's *grupo de Filipino ilustres* (1911)



Photo 4.5. Photograph showing a typical Sunday service (Author's own)

During the service, members wear the traditional Filipino national costume – a simplified version of the *Maria Clara* dress for the women and the *Barong Tagalog* for the men -- in an all-white ensemble as a representation of purity. In addition, the women cover their heads with a white veil in an act of modesty (see photo 4.5). Generally, the structure of the service is rather loose, although there is a basic flow of activities that occur. There is no fixed starting time, but members typically stream into the house around nine in the morning. The atmosphere is casual and relaxed, with members sitting around the living room and chatting with one another. When a sizeable number of people have settled down, *Nanay* Serafina may launch into an *awit* (song), upon which the

members join in. This *awit* is not fixed and differs according to the prompting of the Spirit. After one or two *awit* has been sung, *Nanay* announces that service has begun. From here, one of the more senior members takes over by leading the group in a prayer esteeming the Holy Trinity. Calling for members to prepare their spirits and hearts, the right hand is first raised perpendicular to one's body, before being placed over the heart.

There are three staple *awit* that are sung at each service. Each song is imbued with symbolism. For example, the first song "*Bagong Bayan*" (New Nation) is meant to invoke the spirit, akin to the act of knocking on the door of God. Lyrics include phrases such as "*Ikaw si Amang Rizal*" (You are Father Rizal), "*Doktor Rizal, Hari ng Pilipinas*" (Doctor Rizal, king of the Philippines), and "*Mabuhay ang ating Doktor Jose Rizal*" (Long Live our Doctor Jose Rizal). The second song "*Mahal Na Bandila*" (Beloved Flag), is likened to God's response to the people as he asks them who they are and what they are seeking after. The third and final song "*Pambansang Awit*" (National Anthem), is a reply to the previous question by introducing the seeker. It is important to note here that while the *Pambansang Awit* shares the same melody as the conventional Philippine national anthem, its lyrics have been changed to suit the *Banal Na Angkan*'s sensibilities and beliefs. These songs and prayers are all found in a book that resembles a traditional hymnal book. The lyrics and prayers are believed to be divinely inspired, and are thought to be retrieved from mysterious writings found on grass blades.

Following the ritual singing, the group kneels down for its Sunday prayers. This continues on with a fourth song, "*Trisagio*", after which, another prayer "*Ama Namin*" (Our Father) is chanted in unison. This is repeated with another song-prayer set. At this point, the song switches to "*Incenso*" where Rizal is again exalted as the king of the

Philippines and God of the universe in order to bless the incense. Similar to the Catholic Church, a thurible is used. The bearer – one of the more senior members -- scoops incense powder from the “boat” into the burning charcoal inside the censer, which releases the incense. The person administering the incense first kneels directly in front of the altar. With the help of another member, the two of them burn pieces of papers inscribed with the names of loved ones who have passed on. This is an act of intercession, as members plea for God to forgive the sins of those stuck in purgatory. The smoke that rises from the burning censer thus represents the prayers of the living. During one of these sessions, *Nanay* Serafina’s son related how he had received visions of dead people thanking the worshippers for their prayers and moving on into the afterlife.

Another important function of this incense burning relates to the way incense cleanses the souls of the living and protects members from any evil spirits. After the strips of papers with the names on them are burned, the bearer of the thurible walks along the rows of the faithful, dispensing the incense around. This act is juxtaposed against the way it is carried out in the Catholic Church. Members told me proudly that everyone is allowed to participate in the burning of incense, unlike the Catholic Church where only the priests are allowed to partake in the burning of incense. As they reasoned, it is not the priests who are able to justify you; after all, it is you and you alone who will stand before God the judge at the end of your life.

A time of quiet prayer follows the burning of incense. A prayer “*Panalangin pangsarili*” (Personal Prayer) is muttered under one’s breath before the group takes a quiet moment to self-reflect and meditate. When this is completed, everyone takes a seat on the floor. It is at this point that *Nanay* Serafina begins her teachings. Sometimes, she

goes through the moral ways members should live their lives; at other times, she may explicate certain doctrinal tenets. Every so often though, *Nanay* Serafina makes prophecies during this time. When this happens, she becomes surprisingly animated and her voice becomes louder and bolder. According to members, when the Spirit is speaking through *Nanay*, her voice changes – sometimes it may be harsh like a man’s, and at other times it may be child-like and innocent.

In fact, two months before I had started researching about the *Banal Na Angkan*, a terrible typhoon – typhoon Haiyan -- had ravaged the provinces of the Visayas. According to members of the group, the Spirit had warned them prior to the disaster that something terrible was coming the way of the Philippines, and to stock up for an emergency. Of course, since the bulk of the group was located in Luzon, members were not directly affected by Typhoon Haiyan, but for the believer, this was another confirmation of the authenticity and power of the Spirit. While all members are technically able to hear from the Spirit directly, *Nanay* Serafina’s greater spirituality allows her to hear from the Spirit more easily. During my time with the group, it was not uncommon for the Spirit to make itself known to me through *Nanay* as well. This usually involved some kind of advice for my life, or a proclamation about my role in the group.²⁵¹ What is important to note however, is that *Nanay* Serafina believes that she is never teaching from her own abilities -- everything is inspired or guided by the Holy Spirit.

When *Nanay* Serafina finishes her teaching, a few of the senior members shares their reflections with the group. Unlike the intense atmosphere surrounding *Nanay*’s

²⁵¹ For example, during my second visit, *Nanay* Serafina told me that I would be successful as long as I remained humble. As I will show in a later section, this emphasis on humility is an important aspect of understanding the sect. Another time, *Nanay* Serafina warned me to be careful – someone whom I considered to be a friend would turn out to be an enemy.

preaching, this period is usually more measured and impassive. This marks the end of the formal part of the service, and members are now free to move around and begin the preparations for lunch.

Analysis

The study of Rizalista religious organizations is not new. In its earliest incarnation, writers such as Marcelino A. Foronda frequently dismissed such groups as “fanatical,” “bizarre,” and “backward.”²⁵² There appeared to be no rhyme or reason to the doctrine preached by its leaders, and members were often illiterate and uneducated. It was easy therefore, to postulate the common *tao* (masses) as being unwitting (and perhaps, even, eager) victims of opportunistic charlatans who exploited the masses’ “subconscious” desire for identification with “one of their race, one who would embody all the aspirations, and hopes of the Filipino people”.²⁵³ Fanaticism therefore, replaced rationality, and gullibility was amplified by the simple-minded nature of the common *tao*.

Subsequent writers such as David Sturtevant continued to explore what had by now become more popularly known as “folk tradition.” Rather than viewing such activities as a “potpourri of various religious, political, and [...] patriotic beliefs”,²⁵⁴ these academics tended to view Rizalista organizations as an inevitable by-product of cultural alienation produced by the lopsided effects of modernity. Peripheral groups within society who were further marginalized by the unrelenting tide of modernity struggled to cope with the increasing tensions between tradition and modernity. Rizalista traditions

²⁵² Vincent Cullen describes Rizalista cults as “enemies of progress”. “Bukidnon Animism and Christianity,” A. de Guzman and E. P. Achico, Eds., *Bukidnon Politics and Religion*, (Quezon City: Institute of Philippine Culture, 1973), 12.

²⁵³ Marcelino A. Foronda Jr., “Findings and Conclusion,” *Cults Honoring Rizal* (Manila: R. P. Garcia Publishing Company, 1961), 39.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 41.

provided people with a means of resolving this conflict. Although this approach afforded more agency to groups on the frontier of society, it nevertheless employed an evolutionary perspective that rendered such “folk traditions” as aberrations within the larger sphere of social movements. Scholars continued to privilege grand ideologies such as Communism and Socialism as the rational modes of resistance.

With the passing of time however, scholars such as Reynaldo Ileto and Robert Love increasingly came to view such groups and traditions on their own terms.²⁵⁵ No longer were Rizalista groups held up against Western paradigms of modernity, to be measured and understood against a framework alien to the local context, and therefore, ineffective in its analysis. Instead, scholars tried as best as they could to apply “thick descriptive” methods, attempting to describe not only the behavior and actions of such groups, but to understand the context by which such activities were taking place as well.

In his book, *Pasyon and Revolution*, Ileto examines popular movements that occurred in the Philippines between 1840 and 1910, arguing that peasant groups were able to employ a popular religious text, the *Pasyon* (or the Passion of the Christ) – ironically introduced by the Spanish colonial rulers -- as a way of framing and subverting the oppressive conditions they were living under. Yet such a rendering of the text could only be made meaningful vis-à-vis certain Tagalog concepts that do not necessarily find an equivalent when translated across cultures and languages. For example, power was not based on the accumulation of wealth and education. Rather, it was important that individuals had a “beautiful *loob* (inner-being)” that was commensurate with the external

²⁵⁵ Michael Gonzalez, *The Edge of Structures: A Study of the Rizalista Religious Ideology and Filipino Culture* (MA Thesis, Sydney University, 1985); Robert Love, *The Samahan of Papa God: Tradition and Conversion in a Tagalog Peasant Religious Movement* (Manila, Anvil, 2004)

(*labas*) manifestation of power.²⁵⁶ When one's *loob* and *labas* is misaligned, one's position within society may be questioned and even challenged. Another concept at the heart of the masses' worldview is that of *kalayaan*. While it is often translated as 'independence' or 'liberty', it is not synonymous with political sovereignty as it is frequently understood within the paradigm of Western modernity. Rather, the *kalayaan* that these peasant groups were fighting for signified "a condition of brotherhood, equality, contentment and material abundance."²⁵⁷

In a similar manner, Love provides an in-depth and detailed ethnography of the *Samahan* (Association) of Papa God, a small peasant religious sect founded in the town of Majayjay in Laguna. In the *Samahan*, it is believed that followers are able to obtain access to *Papa God*, be it for advice or healing, through a medium. Here, Love is ever conscious of the power disparity between the larger institutions such as the town church and the small religious sects outside of the officially recognized establishment, including the *samahan*. However, this does not mean that the *samahan* is entirely hopeless. Instead, by investigating the social lens that these peasants use in negotiating their world, one can understand how members of the *samahan* are able to subvert the traditional power relations that they are enmeshed in. Like Iletto, Love draws upon indigenous cultural concepts such as *kalooban* (inner self), *panahon* (age, time) and *kapangyarihan* (power) to explain this contestation. The current *panahon* is characterized by individuals who seek power via means of wealth and education. However, this is not true *kapangyarihan* – it is merely brute strength or force achieved by human means (*lakas*). *Kapangyarihan*

²⁵⁶ Reynaldo Iletto, "History from below," *Pasyon and Revolution: Popular Movements in the Philippines, 1840-1910* (Quezon City, Philippines: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1989), 15.

²⁵⁷ Iletto, "The Republic and the Spirit of 1896," *Ibid*, 117.

can only be obtained when the seeker possesses the proper *kalooban*. This incongruence between society's power holders and their *kalooban* thus results in the chaotic tumultuous world that the *samahan* lives in. Yet this very proliferation of *palakasan* (power of men, power-brokers) is a sign that the new *panahon* is soon to come, when the true *kapangyarihan* will be finally redeemed. In this way, members of the *samahan* are able to derive a sense of hope despite their disenfranchisement in their own society.²⁵⁸

Ileto and Love both set a cultural context in which we can better understand how marginalized groups within Filipino society may interpret the existing social order in which they live. Following this academic tradition, I attempt to represent the world of the *Banal Na Angkan* as its members see it. More importantly, I am interested in the ways in which the Honolulu branch of the *Banal Na Angkan* understands and represents the Rizal symbol within the context of their beliefs and worldview. While the analysis of Rizalista sects is not entirely new, what I hope to contribute to this existing literature involves an additional dimension of power relations that has yet to be studied in depth – the broadening of our demographics to look at the Filipino diaspora. Why has Rizalista religions appeared outside of the Philippines, particularly in Hawaii, in the US? Or, in the case of the *Banal Na Angkan*, why did *Ama send Nanay Serafina* to the Hawaiian Islands in 1988?

While Rizalista groups in the Philippines and the *Banal Na Angkan* in Honolulu both face marginalization as members of the working class, the *Banal Na Angkan* has to deal with an additional layer of power hierarchy that is not necessarily present among Filipinos living in the Philippine homeland. Physically displaced and removed from the

²⁵⁸ Love, “*Kapangyarihan: God’s Power and Man’s Power*,” 213-236.

Philippine geo-body, members of the *Banal Na Angkan* are confronted with a transnational power hierarchy that stratifies the highly globalized world of today. For example, the international capitalist economy has created a distinct occupational niche of Filipino *global* labor who occupies low-status jobs, such as domestic workers, care givers, and construction workers. This feeds into an international perception of Filipinos as a servile and inferior group of people, resulting in discrimination and biases – a sentiment that was shared rather ruefully by members of the *Banal Na Angkan*. It is this attempt to cope with the frequently discordant experiences of being part of the Filipino working class in America that I am interested in exploring.

In this section, I examine how the Filipino diasporic experience in Hawaii shapes this representation of Rizal, and how this narrative in turn, converges and diverges with those of earlier Rizalista groups in the Philippines during American colonial rule. At the same time, I look at how the *Banal Na Angkan*'s narrative of Rizal intersects with the official discourse, and how ultimately, the former constitutes a rejection of Western modernity as imbued in the latter.

As in the case with Rizalista groups in the Philippines, Rizal acquires a Messianic role for the *Banal Na Angkan* in Hawaii. Although life may be hard in the present, members of the *Banal Na Angkan* are patiently awaiting the day when their Savior and redeemer Rizal will return to earth again to deliver the people from their sufferings. Just as the Jews believe that they are God's chosen people and that Israel is their Promised Land, the *Banal Na Angkan* believes that the Filipinos are Rizal's chosen people and that the Philippines is itself the *Promised Land*. Given such rhetoric, the Philippines ceases to be a backwater and poverty-stricken country. Instead, it becomes "the land of milk and

honey”. According to this belief, the Philippines’ dependency on richer countries of the world for financial aid is deceiving, for it possesses an immense amount of wealth in reality – an amount so tremendous that it has to be concealed from the unscrupulous greed of other nations. When the ninth *balat* of Rizal finally returns to earth, and the world is cleansed of its transgression, this wealth would be distributed to all the peoples of the earth.

With this premise in mind, the submissive relationship that the Philippines has historically and contemporaneously been subjected to by foreign countries finds a logical explanation: the Philippines’ hidden wealth is the precise reason why other countries throughout history have tried to dominate the Philippines. The stories of Ferdinand Magellan’s expedition to the Philippines, and the American Occupation of the Philippines are thus recast in a different light. Magellan had travelled to the Philippines looking for the gold. However, he was unable to find it. The Americans later discovered this secret of the Philippines, and hence, fought to acquire the Philippines during the Spanish-American war. In this way, the global pecking order is overturned in favor of the Philippines: the Philippines was not subjugated because it was weak; instead, its hidden wealth attracted the envy of strong nations all over to world, who sought to find a way to access that prosperity.²⁵⁹

²⁵⁹ One interesting tangent related to this point concerns a connection members made with regards to previous Filipino president Ferdinand Marcos. Marcos ruled the Philippines from 1972 to 1986, overseeing a regime that many have described as being despotic and corrupt. Marcos and his First Lady Imelda were accused of plundering the nation’s treasury, thereby robbing the Philippines blind. In fact, there is still a legal battle seeking to recover these ill-gotten wealth from the Marcos family. The immense unpopularity of the Marcoses resulted in a mass uprising popularly known as the People Power Revolution in February 1986, and Marcos was forced to flee to Hawaii with Imelda. When the couple landed in Honolulu International Airport however, they were welcomed by throngs of Filipinos – most of whom, if not all, were Ilocanos. In fact, some of the *Banal Na Angkan* members who were already in Hawaii back in 1986 were among that same gathering of Filipinos who went to the airport to greet their hero. Despite his lack of popularity among the rest of the Filipino population, Marcos enjoyed (and until today, continues to enjoy)

Beyond Rizal's representation as the Filipino Messiah however, the *Banal Na Angkan*'s narrative begins to deviate from that of the local Rizalista organizations in the Philippines. Compared to the Rizalista groups in the Philippines during the American colonial period, the *Banal Na Angkan* in Hawaii stakes a more prominent role for the United States within their overarching narrative. (Even within the *Banal Na Angkan* itself, one is unable to find the same level of reverence for the U.S. among its branches in the Philippines. It is only in Hawaii that the American flag is displayed on the altar.) This comparison is especially salient because it highlights differences across time and space. For one, the Philippines is no longer a colony of the U.S.; it is now its own sovereign nation. Filipino migrants to the U.S. thus arrive not as U.S. nationals as they did during the American colonial period, but as aliens to be incorporated into the larger U.S. citizenry. Yet at the same time, legacies of American colonialism continue to linger. The 1947 Military Bases agreement between the Philippines and the U.S. allowed Filipinos such as the *Banal Na Angkan*'s President Ponciano Balicao, as well as *Nanay* Serafina's son, Felicisimo Baloran to join the U.S. Navy.²⁶⁰ This in turn paved the way for them to bring their families over to the U.S. For a religious sect that views Rizal as the Filipino

much favor among Ilocanos because of the improvements he made to this impoverished province through the channeling of funds and infrastructural projects. When I tried to probe deeper into the heart of the Ilocanos' admiration for Marcos, I got a nonplussed answer – "We could see the improvements around us, unlike now!" Without any prompting from me, members would defend charges of corruption against Marcos. According to them, accusations of Marcos absconding with his illegitimate wealth are simply ridiculous, since this money was given to Marcos for safekeeping. As one member related, "People always see Marcos as the bad guy, but he was just doing what he had been dictated to by the Holy Spirit." The tables are thereby turned on Marcos' detractors; their real intention is not to uncover the corruption of the Marcoses, but rather, to steal the hidden wealth of the Philippines. At the same time, within the doctrinal beliefs of the *Banal Na Angkan*, Marcos is a modern-day Lazarus who would rise again from the dead.

This connection between Marcos and the *Banal Na Angkan* is said to have started back when Marcos was the President. At that time, *Nanay* Serafina had healed the sick wife of his Vice-President, marking the beginning of her acquaintance with both Ferdinand and Imelda, who would visit her occasionally in Ilocos. When the former President and First Lady landed in Honolulu after the 1986 People Power Revolution, *Nanay* Serafina visited them with a couple of other members from the *Banal Na Angkan*.

²⁶⁰ This agreement was terminated in 1992 when the military bases agreement between the two countries ended.

Savior who sacrificed his life for the Philippine nation, there is an uncomfortable contradiction involved in reconciling one's worship of Rizal with the decision to leave the Philippines for the U.S. in search of a better life.

As such, in explaining the Holy Trinity, one analogy used by members is that of *Inang Pilipinas*, *Amang Amerikano* and *kaming anak*. The Filipino children are the products of Mother Philippines and Father America. This relationship is reinforced by the displays on the altar. Although the two large Philippine flags hanging on the wall immediately capture the viewer's attention, there are four smaller American flags displayed on the table as well. In the photographs of Jose Rizal with the fourteen *ilustrados*, it is both the Philippine flag and American flag that provide the backdrop. When I tried to inquire more as to why America was given so prominent a spot within the rhetoric of the *Banal Na Angkan*, members replied that America fought for Philippines' liberty because they had a "blood compact" with the latter. Initially I was confused, because the reverence shown towards the United States seemed out of character for a nationalistic Filipino group. However, the longer I thought about it and the more I observed the activities of the group, I realized I was going about it wrongly. The *Banal Na Angkan* did not view America as their Savior, but rather as co-partners who *knew* the secret of the Philippines' wealth. This was why, despite my persistent questioning, the members did not view their reverence for the United States as something abhorrent or aberrant. America was not superior to the Philippines; rather, it was precisely because it recognized the true wealth that the Philippines possessed, that it decided to fight for the Philippines. In this way, members justify their physical displacement away from the *Inang Bayan* (motherland) and even their participation in American civic rituals (such as

joining the U.S. navy) by making America a co-conspirator in the broader scheme of things.

At the more localized level, members of the *Banal Na Angkan* are also frequently at the receiving end of a power hierarchy that manifests itself in the everyday lives of individuals. For members who work in the service industry where they have to interact with American customers, their Filipino accents often subject them to hurtful remarks. As one member related, “When they hear your [Filipino] accent, they ask to be transferred to an American representative.” As working class members of the Filipino Diaspora, the Biblical rhetoric of the wandering Jews and the Promised Land provides a way for the *Banal Na Angkan* to understand their position within the current world order. More than once, the President of the organization wondered out loud as to why it is that Filipinos are scattered all over the world, working in positions akin to servants. He cited the high incidence of Filipinos working as domestic workers in Hong Kong and Singapore as one such example. The President went on to draw parallels between the Filipino diaspora and the Jews, who wandered around in the wilderness, without a homeland, despised and oppressed by the peoples of the world. Like the Jews, the Filipinos (or in this case, the Filipino diaspora) are waiting for their Promised Land, a promise that would come to pass when their Messiah, Jose Rizal (or his reincarnation) returns to this earth. And like the Jews, the Filipinos are a chosen people. As the chosen people, no one should be able to subjugate the Filipinos, with the exception of God. If we return to the Ten Commandments that Rizal allegedly gave the Filipinos, it dictates that Filipinos are not to be submissive and servile to other nations. Instead, Filipinos should be proud of their country and culture. After all, Rizal in his first incarnation during the Spanish colonial

period came to set the Filipinos free “from [their] bondage as servants” (see appendix 2). In his final form, Rizal would give the Filipinos the ultimate freedom from foreign oppression. The Philippines will finally be a “*Bayang Malaya*” (free country).

In relation to this idea of being a chosen people, a strong emphasis is placed on being Filipino as well. According to members of the group, just because God had made man in his image, it makes sense that different “races” or *mga lahi*, would have different Gods. Rizal is the Filipino god because Filipinos were made in God’s image. In this same way, Allah is the god of the Middle East, and Buddha the god of the Chinese people. It does not matter if these are historically inaccurate since what we are concerned with is ultimately the perception that each “race” or each ethnic group needs to have a god who is unique to them, and who belonged to them. Nevertheless, when I asked them if I could become a Rizalista despite not being made in Rizal’s image (i.e. I am not Filipino), the answer was always an unqualified yes, since what was more important was that I had a *pusong Pinoy*. Yet having a *pusong Pinoy* did not necessarily entail possessing a given set of qualities and characteristics. For members of the *Banal Na Angkan*, it simply appeared to be the recognition and affirmation of the Philippines.

One term that repeatedly came up during my interactions with the members was the phrase “*Perlas ng Silangan*”, or Pearl of the Orient, a description of the Philippines that was first popularized by a Spanish friar, and used by Rizal in his famed poem *Mi Ultimo Adios*. To members of the *Banal Na Angkan*, this term represents the pride that they possess in their homeland, a place so magnificent and splendid that even foreigners would be able to recognize it. An increase in the appreciation of Rizal and the Philippines by non-Filipinos is thus a sign that Rizal is soon to return. This is similar to the orthodox

Christian belief – that Jesus would return to earth when all of mankind has heard about him. As such, my interest in the *Banal Na Angkan* and in Rizal was a sign that Rizal was returning to this world soon. Japanese couples marrying (or having their wedding photographs taken) in front of the Rizal monument in the Luneta was another indication. Foreigners speaking Tagalog on television was yet further confirmation that Rizal was soon to return. This phenomenon of “*mga dayuhan*” coming to recognize the truth of Rizal had been previously predicted by *Ama Ramos*. In other words, it did not matter if Filipinos are lowly on the social ladder within a global framework right now. In the end, Filipinos are the chosen people, destined to be redeemed when the “brown” Messiah returns, at which point, the other nations and peoples will come to realize the truth about the Philippines.

What is interesting at this point is how this narrative of Rizal intersects that of the official discourse. As highlighted in the earlier chapter, an important aspect of the official representation of Rizal lies in the universal recognition and admiration he is able to garner from people all over the globe. The *Banal Na Angkan* underscores this international aspect of Rizal as well. However, while the official discourse attributes Rizal’s global recognition to his excellence in his various pursuits, particularly in terms of his contributions to the advancement of education and knowledge, the *Banal Na Angkan* views this simply as a result of Rizal’s beautiful *loob* (inner being). For the *Banal Na Angkan*, it does not matter that Rizal encapsulated ideals of Western modernity in his embracing of Western rationality and his emphasis on scientific empiricism. It is not important either that Rizal was highly educated or that he possessed much social capital through his numerous connections with distinguished personalities both within the

Philippines and abroad. Rather, such notions of Western modernity are rejected in favor of an emphasis on possessing the right *loob*. *Totoong Kapangyarihan*, or true power, is only possible in the presence of humility and a selfless spirit. For the disenfranchised members of the *Banal Na Angkan* who lack the social capital, wealth, and education to wield power within their societies, such a narrative provides them with a way of confronting their own position within this power hierarchy.

During my time with the *Banal Na Angkan*, members shared with me stories extolling the virtue of humility. Often, these were in relation to individuals who are traditionally esteemed within society by certain yardsticks. *Nanay* Serafina related to me one such story that happened at a Rizal Day commemorative event at the Luneta when Ramos was still alive. At that time, there happened to be an attorney in the group who went up onto the stage to talk to the people about the *Banal Na Angkan*'s doctrine. In spite of all his education and profession, he was unable to effectively articulate the beliefs of the group. As such, Ramos asked *Nanay* Serafina to go up to the podium and speak instead. At this point, *Nanay* Serafina compared herself to the attorney – *Nanay* only had a second grade education, whereas the attorney was both highly educated and well regarded in society. Yet when *Nanay* went up to speak, she was able to cogently teach the people about the Philippines and about Rizal – not from her own strength or ability, but because the spirit was able to work through her. Although “illiterate”, she gained eloquence through the spirit. When the attorney saw this, he threw off his necktie and stomped off in a huff.

At the same time, power had to be used for the right intentions; the use of power for selfish or improper means had consequences. Throughout my time with the group,

Nanay Serafina shared with me various anecdotes to drive home this point. For a start, the *Banal Na Angkan* believed that Rizal imparted his power to four different individuals. However, one of these four misused his power, abusing it for his own selfish gains. As a result, he died. This served as a warning to those hankering after power: that even as power is bestowed, it can be taken away swiftly if it is not used for what it was originally intended for. In the same way, although *Nanay* had the ability to act as a medium by channeling the spirits of the dead, she decided to stop using this power after an incident where a recipient misused this power. According to the story, a man had come to *Nanay* seeking her assistance in the location of lost wealth. When *Nanay* managed to locate the gold with the help of the spirit of a dead relative, greed overtook the man and he began using the money for immoral things. Consequently, the gold crumbled into clay and ashes. Since then, *Nanay* has stopped acting as a medium. Another time, a lady tried to publish the song book used during services with the intention of raking up profit. Because of her nefarious motivations, she ended up dying mysteriously and the printing press responsible for the publication of the book was burnt down.

In a world where one is frequently measured by benchmarks of wealth, education, and social capital, members of the *Banal Na Angkan* are often on the losing end, marginalized and even looked down upon at times by society. Yet these outer trappings (*labas*) of wealth, education, and social capital, do not mean anything if the individual exercise such power for their own selfish means, or if they lack genuine humility. In other words, one can only acquire *totoong kapangyarihan* (true power) when one possesses the right *loob* (inner being). According to this world view, powerful individuals

who lack humility and benevolence may not always emerge as the winner. Instead, it is the meek, with their beautiful *loob*, who will inherit the earth.

Conclusion

The *Banal Na Angkan* provides us with an example of how representations of Rizal among the underclass may converge and diverge through time and space. In particular, as members of the Filipino diasporic community, the *Banal Na Angkan* has to deal with an additional layer of power hierarchy that is absent among rural Rizalista groups in the Philippines. As such, beyond recognizing Rizal as the Messiah who would come to save the people from their sufferings, the Honolulu *Banal Na Angkan* also reproduces the narrative of the ‘wandering Jews’ in order to better reconcile their feelings of alienation within their new host societies. At the same time, this narrative shifts the locus of the Philippines to the diaspora itself, as the latter sacrifices for the homeland. After all, for a Rizalista organization, it is significant that the spiritual leader was sent by God, not to Mount Banahaw in the Philippines, where the spiritual core of the movement has traditionally laid, but to Hawaii in the United States.

The narrative of the Honolulu *Banal Na Angkan* also signals a rejection of Western modernity as expressed by the official discourse on Rizal. Wealth, education, and social capital are all rendered obsolete, as it is the presence of a beautiful *loob*, characterized by humility and selflessness, that gives an individual -- in this case Rizal -- true power. As such, even as the diasporic experience complicates representations of Rizal among the Filipino underclass, these narratives continue to share a common understanding of an alternative modernity that deviates from that of the official discourse.

In the next chapter, I turn to look at a very different kind of Rizalist group in Hawaii – the Knights of Rizal, Hawaii chapter. Unlike the *Banal Na Angkan*, the Knights of Rizal is a strictly civic and secular group. Their demographic profile differs greatly as well, for the Knights comprise mainly of middle-age, middle-class men with higher university degrees occupying professional and executive positions. Chapter four will thus explore differences in these representations of the Rizal figure, showing how representations of the Rizal symbol are not homogeneous among the Filipino diaspora either.

Chapter 5

Becoming Rizal: The Knights of Rizal in Hawaii

My fascination with the Knights of Rizal began one June evening at the house of one of the members of the Hawaii chapter in the affluent neighborhood of Kahala (although I was unaware of it at that time). I had turned up for a lecture on Jose Rizal organized by the Filipino-American Historical Society of Hawaii (FAHSOH), and the speaker was Jose David Lapuz, a Political Science Professor who taught at the University of Santo Tomas and the Polytechnic University of the Philippines. Professor Lapuz cut a very regal figure in his three-piece suit, something I could not stop marveling at, given the muggy heat of the Hawaiian summer. However, it was his lofty admiration for Rizal that left an indelible impression on me. I could not help but wonder: what exactly was it about Rizal that brought out such veneration from an established academic trained to be cynical and critical of state-sponsored projects? As the evening progressed, I became acquainted with a male fraternity known as the Order of the Knights of Rizal, a group that was founded to commemorate the birth and death of Rizal. The idea of a men's fraternity (especially one which christened its members knights!) made up of academics and other distinguished personalities piqued my curiosity. Taking my cue from there, I decided to start looking into this Rizal symbol as it was understood by the members of the Knights of Rizal in Hawaii. I was determined to find out why and how did the Rizal symbol become so salient for this group of predominantly middle-aged and middle-class men.

In this chapter, I first present a brief overview of the Knights of Rizal in the Philippines before homing in more specifically on the chapter in Hawaii. Although there has not been anything substantial written on the Order within the academic circle, save for a short exposition in Ruth Roland's doctoral dissertation on Rizal,²⁶¹ I am confined by both the scope and limits of this thesis to focus my primary research primarily on the Hawaii chapter of the Knights of Rizal. As such, the overview of the Order relies for the most part on secondary resources as well as the few publicly accessible primary documents issued by the Order itself. My research on the Hawaii chapter of the Knights of Rizal is founded primarily on participant-observations, chapter publications, as well as interviews conducted with individual members of the Order. My six interviewees from the Knights of Rizal cut across distinct demographic groups, including first-generation migrants who moved to Hawaii in childhood or adulthood, as well as second-generation migrants who do not speak any Filipino language.

By looking closely at the rhetoric used by the Hawaii chapter of the Knights of Rizal, as well as examining the background of members, I argue that the official discourse of Rizal as presented in the third chapter has been largely replicated here, albeit with certain nuances specific to a diasporic community based in Hawaii. This chapter thus continues along the vein of my previous chapter by carefully probing the local consumption and reproduction of the official Rizal discourse outside of the Philippine geo-body. When placed side by side with the *Banal Na Angkan* however, the differences in discourses about modernity highlight the contentious nature of the *Rizal* symbol that exists even among the Filipino diaspora.

²⁶¹ Ruth Aileen Roland, "Introduction," *The "Rizalista Cult" in Philippine Nationalism: A Case Study of the "Uses" of a National Hero* (PhD Diss., NYU, 1969), 12-16.

The Order of the Knights of Rizal

History, Organizational Structure, and Demographics of the Order

The Knights of Rizal (or the *Orden de Caballeros de Rizal*, as it was first called in Spanish) was founded as a patriotic civic organization on December 30, 1911, in the Philippines, when Colonel Antonio C. Torres, along with nine other men, got together with the intention of commemorating the death of Rizal. Torres became the first Commander of the Knights, but he also served as the first Filipino Chief of Police of Manila, as well as President of the Manila Municipal Board during the American colonial period.²⁶² The other founding members of the Order included Martin P. de Veyra, a government *pensionado* who studied at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology²⁶³ before returning to the Philippines to work for the Philippine Assembly,²⁶⁴ Jose A. del Barrio, an employee of the Bureau of Internal Revenue,²⁶⁵ and Jose S. Galvez, a lawyer and stage actor who also served as the President of the Talca, a dramatic guild.²⁶⁶ From its inception, the Knights of Rizal's main activity revolved around the organization of the Rizal Day celebrations in Manila.²⁶⁷ Torres himself served as the chairman of the parade committee for the Manila celebrations under the auspices of the American insular government on numerous occasions.²⁶⁸ During those parades, the Order would ride on

²⁶² "Entire Philippines Will Honor Memory of Rizal Tomorrow," *Manila Daily Bulletin*, December 28, 1931.

²⁶³ Marie E. Oroso, *The Pensionado Story*

<<http://www.oroso.org/The%20Philippine%20Pensionado%20Story3.pdf>> Accessed May 5, 2014.

²⁶⁴ The Government of the Philippine Islands, Bureau of Civil Service, July 1, 1914, *Official Roster of Officers and Employees in the Civil Service of the Philippine Islands*,

<[file:///C:/Users/Isabel%20Chew/Downloads/Official%20Roster%20of%20Officers%20and%20Employee s%20in%20the%20Civil-.pdf](file:///C:/Users/Isabel%20Chew/Downloads/Official%20Roster%20of%20Officers%20and%20Employees%20in%20the%20Civil-.pdf)> Accessed 5 May, 2014, p. 10.

²⁶⁵ Bureau of Civil Service, *Official Roster of Officers and Employees in the Civil Service of the Philippine Islands*, (Bureau of Printing: 1908), 57.

²⁶⁶ Retrato, The Photo Archive of the Filipinas Heritage Library, 2008.

<<http://www.retrato.com.ph/photodtl.asp?id=PP00156>> Accessed 5 May, 2014.

²⁶⁷ "37th Anniversary of the Death of Jose Rizal will be observed throughout the Philippines Today," *Manila Daily Bulletin*, December 30, 1933.

²⁶⁸ "Entire Philippines Will Honor Memory of Rizal Tomorrow," *Manila Daily Bulletin*, December 28, 1931.

horseback down the streets of Manila in an attempt to emulate the “knights of old known for their chivalry and exemplary life.”²⁶⁹

In 1916, the Knights of Rizal registered itself as a private non-stock corporation so as to provide for greater formality and structural continuity as an organization. In its listing, the Order cited the following as its key purposes:

1. To develop the most perfect union among the Filipinos in revering the memory of Dr. Jose Rizal
2. To promote among the associated knights the spirit of patriotism and Rizalian chivalry
3. To study and spread the teaching of Dr. Jose Rizal and keep ever alive his consecrated memory and to make effective his exemplary and exalted principles; and
4. To organize the annual festivities in honor of Dr. Jose Rizal²⁷⁰

The Order took a step further in 1951 by filing a bill with the Philippine Congress that would allow it to accomplish its objectives better by securing a legislative charter. The bill (Senate bill no. 265) was sponsored by Senators Enrique Magalona, Lorenzo Sumulong, Eseteban Abada, Emiliano Tria Tirona, Camilo Osias, Geronima Pecson, Jose Avelino, and Ramon Torres, and was passed in Congress on May 15, 1951. A month later, President Elpidio Quirino signed it into law as Republic Act 646. The rationale for passing the bill was encapsulated in the explanatory note attached to the bill:

The bill if enacted into law will also serve as a historical monuments to Rizal; it will constitute an official recognition by the Republic of the Philippines of the inestimable value to the nation of his teachings and examples and of the wisdom and necessity of inculcating them in the minds and hearts of our people so they may strive to follow and practice them. The authors and proponents of this bill believe that if the purposes thereof are faithfully and effectively carried out, social discipline, civic virtues, and love of justice will be fostered, promoted, and enhanced in this country, and that the Knights of Rizal as chartered entity is the most convenient

²⁶⁹ Order the Knights of Rizal, Malaya Chapter, Chicago, Illinois, “Order of the Knights of Rizal,” 2014, <<http://knightsofrizal.org/>> Accessed 4 May 2014.

²⁷⁰ Order of the Knights of Rizal, “R.A. 646,” *Knights of Rizal* 2014, <<http://knightsofrizal.org.ph/ra-646/>> Accessed May 7, 2014.

instrumentality by which this desirable ends can be attained: Let Rizal's life and martyrdom influence and guide the destiny of the nation. Let this and future generations live the Rizal way.²⁷¹

Under the Act, the Knights of Rizal was now rendered a public corporation with greater legal powers to carry out and fulfill its core aims of propagating the teachings of Rizal. This included the ability to sue and be sued, to acquire property, to solicit and receive public contributions, to have offices in the city of Manila, and to enact by-laws among its members, as long as these rules are not contradictory to those of the Philippines. In terms of organizational leadership, the act also dictated that the general administration and direction of the Order be undertaken by a Supreme Council composed of nine members based in Manila.²⁷² This consists of a Supreme Commander, a Deputy Supreme Commander, a Supreme Chancellor, a Supreme Pursuivant, a Supreme Exchequer, a Supreme Archivist, and three Supreme Trustees. This organizational structure is replicated across chapters which answer to the Supreme Council in Manila through a unitary chain of command. Chapters in the Philippines and overseas are grouped into eighteen different areas over which an Area Commander oversees its affairs. The Area Commander acts as a liaison and administrator between the local chapter, area, as well as the Supreme Council.²⁷³ In this way, the Order is able to function effectively as a centralized hierarchical system (see diagram 5.1).

²⁷¹ Order of the Knights of Rizal, "History of the Order of the Knights of Rizal," *Knights of Rizal* 2014 <<http://knightsofrizal.org.ph/history/>> Accessed May 7, 2014.

²⁷² Order of the Knights of Rizal, "R.A. 646," *Knights of Rizal* 2014, <<http://knightsofrizal.org.ph/ra-646/>> Accessed May 7, 2014.

²⁷³ Order of the Knights of Rizal, 2nd ed., *Order of the Knights of Rizal Manual* 1993 <<http://azkorinc.com/kor-manual.pdf>> Accessed May 4, 2014, 11-13.

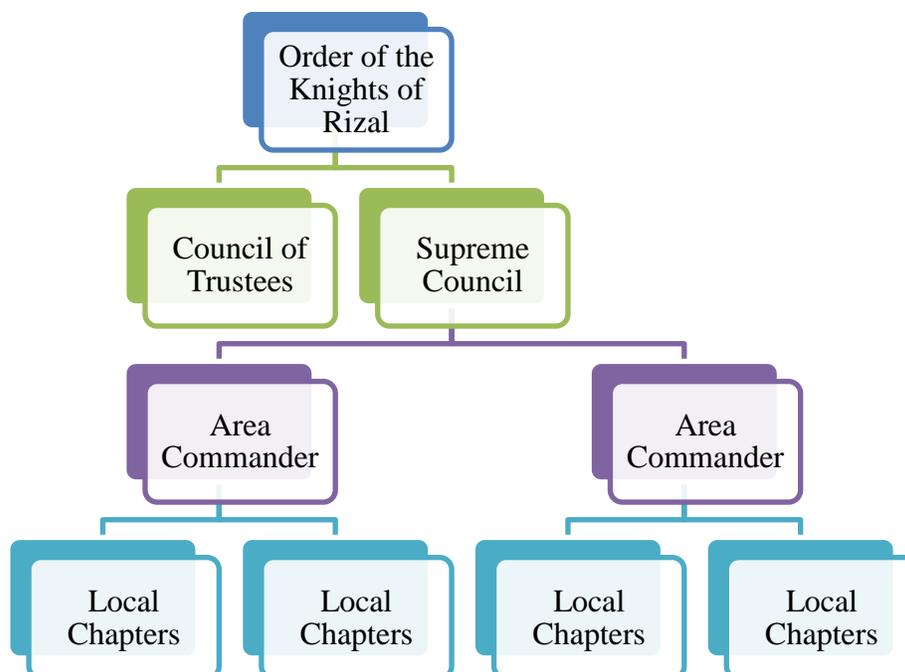


Diagram 5.1. Hierarchical Structure of the Order of the Knights of Rizal

The Order also states that it is a “cultural, non-sectarian, non-partisan, and non-racial” organization with membership in the Order open to all who are interested; the only criteria being that the candidate is “of good moral character and reputation,” and “who [is] in sympathy with the purposes of the Knights of Rizal.”²⁷⁴ The moral cachet of the group is taken seriously – anyone found falsely representing himself as a member of the Knights of Rizal is liable to be sentenced to imprisonment of not more than six months and/or a fine not exceeding five hundred pesos by the Philippine state. To join the fraternity then, interested applicants first complete a written application form. They are also expected to have received the sponsorship of at least two active members of the Order before they can have their application presented in front of the Supreme Council. A

²⁷⁴ Order of the Knights of Rizal, “R.A. 646,” *Knights of Rizal* 2014, <<http://knightsofrizal.org.ph/ra-646/>> Accessed May 7, 2014.

unanimous vote is required for the candidate to be formally accepted into the organization.²⁷⁵

Once admitted into the degree of membership, the candidate is now known as a Knight of Rizal (KR). However, there are four other ranks, or degrees of membership, that one may aspire towards. The second degree of membership is known as the Knight Officer of Rizal (KOR). One needs to have served in the Order for a period of at least six months and be favorably recommended by a Special Committee created by the chapter concerned in order to qualify for this degree. Typically, one becomes eligible for the third degree or Knight Commander of Rizal (KCR) after having been awarded KOR. This degree is bestowed upon individuals who have been elected either as a member of the Supreme Council, or as chapter Commanders in the different localities outside of Manila. However, a person who has not attained any one of the above specifications may still be able to receive the title of the KCR if he has distinguished himself; either by meritorious service to the Order, or if he has “written a book of general acceptance on Rizal.” The fourth degree is known as the Knight Grand Officer of Rizal (KGOR). This individual should have made some kind of outstanding contribution to the Philippines or to the Order. Finally, the highest degree within the Order is the fifth degree, or the Knight Grand Cross of Rizal (KGCOR). Again, this is conferred upon an individual who has performed an exceptional achievement for the Philippines or for the Order. This is usually reserved for the Supreme Commander of the Order.²⁷⁶ The President of the Philippines, Benigno “Noynoy” Aquino is the latest individual to be knighted as Knight Grand Cross of Rizal. He was knighted at the 2011 International Assembly and Conference on Rizal.

²⁷⁵ Order of the Knights of Rizal, 2nd ed., *Order of the Knights of Rizal Manual* 1993 <<http://azkorinc.com/kor-manual.pdf>> Accessed May 4, 2014, 7-8.

²⁷⁶ Whole paragraph, *Ibid*, 7-9.

While a complete profile of the group and its various chapters around the world is not available, former Supreme Commanders of the Knights of Rizal since its founding in 1911 constitute an illustrious who's who of Filipino personalities. In particular, the list is dominated by distinguished individuals within the fields of law, governance, and education. The Order counts at least three Associate Justices -- Jose Ma. Paredes, Justo P. Torres, Jr., and Condrado M. Vasquez, and two Chief Justices -- Claudio Teehankee and Hilario G. Davide Jr, among its slate of former Supreme Commanders. Davide himself would have another distinguished posting as the Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Philippines to the United Nations in New York. He was not the only diplomat among the former ranks of Supreme Commanders however; Jose S. Laurel III, son of former President Jose Laurel, was also appointed as the Philippines' ambassador to Japan during the Second World War.

Within national politics, Jose Lina Jr. was elected into the Senate from 1987 to 1992, and went on to serve as Governor of Laguna during the years 1992 to 2001. Elias Lopez of Davao City was also voted into Congress, and is widely recognized as having been the main proponent for the establishment of a University of the Philippines (UP) campus in the Southern region. In the area of education, several past Supreme Commanders emerge as leading figures as well. Teodoro Evangelista and Santiago F. de la Cruz both served as Presidents of the Far Eastern University in Manila and the University of the East respectively, while Jesus E. Perpnan was appointed as the Director of the Bureau of Private schools in the 1960s. Other leaders such as Virgilio R. Esguerra and Hemenegildo B. Reyes were faculty members at the University of Rizal and the University of the Philippines, respectively. Other past members of the Knights of Rizal

also included former Philippine Presidents such as Carlos Garcia, Diosdado Macapagal, and Fidel Ramos.²⁷⁷

The Knights of Rizal does not only consist of Filipino men however, since membership is open to all regardless of nationality and ethnicity. Two of the more notable non-Filipino members of the Order include the last two governor-generals of the Philippines -- Theodore Roosevelt Jr., who served from 1932 to 1933, and Frank Murphy, who completed his term from 1933 to 1935. On December 30, 1932, Roosevelt Jr. was knighted by Senate President Manuel Quezon, himself an honorary knight, at the foot of the Rizal monument at Luneta.²⁷⁸ At the initiation ceremony, Quezon praised Roosevelt for the rapport he has built with the Filipino people since taking over the position of governor-general in the Philippines. Not only was Roosevelt “a sincere friend” of the Philippines, he also possessed the very same qualities “idealized” by Rizal himself. In an address given by the assistant director of the National Library Eulogio Rodriguez that same day, Rodriguez lauded Roosevelt’s father, Theodore Roosevelt Sr., for giving the Philippines the American democracy it enjoys today, especially since democracy was one of Rizal’s visions for the Philippines that he had worked so hard for.²⁷⁹ Two years later, Governor-General Murphy was inducted into the Order in the same manner, in front of the Rizal monument at the Luneta on Rizal Day. This time however, he was initiated by

²⁷⁷ “Dr Aquino Receives Knights of Rizal Award for Peace,” *Hawaii-Filipino Chronicle* <<http://efilipinochronicle.com/headlines/106252011.html>> Accessed May 14, 2014.

²⁷⁸ “Address of Roosevelt is Climax of Day’s Ceremonies in Honor of Jose Rizal, Philippine Martyr,” *Manila Daily Bulletin*, December 31, 1932.

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

Rodriguez, who commended Murphy for following a Rizalian philosophy and way of life, beseeching the latter to continue upholding the virtues of Rizal.²⁸⁰

In 1933, there were accordingly 30 members in the Knights of Rizal, a decline from a high of 80 members from previous years.²⁸¹ While no reason was stated for this decrease in membership, the Knights enjoyed a much-needed boost in membership in the 1950s, supposedly because of the renewed interest in Rizal from the heated debates over the 1956 proposed Rizal bill. According to Gabriel Fabella, a former Congressman from Romblon and the former head of the History department at the University of Philippines, the Rizal Law stimulated greater interest in a “closer and more thorough study of Rizal’s life and works than ever before.”²⁸² This increase in public interest was complemented by the able leadership of then-Commander and Dean of the College of Business Administration at the University of the East, Santiago de la Cruz, who worked to treble membership numbers under his watch. At the time that he assumed the leadership, there were only three chapters in the Philippines. De la Cruz exerted much time and effort in inaugurating new chapters in the provinces outside of Manila. As a result, the number of chapters soared to sixty-two chapters by 1961, including twenty abroad, fifteen in the continental United States, and one each in Guam, Hawaii, Japan, Hong Kong and Indonesia.²⁸³ The efforts of the Jose Rizal Centennial Commission, which was first established in 1955 to organize the 1961 Centennial celebrations of Rizal’s birth, helped

²⁸⁰ “Rizal Day is celebrated in Full Splendor: Murphy initiated as member of order of KOR: Serious Thought: Recent Political Movements Make Observation Significant,” *Manila Daily Bulletin*, December 31, 1934.

²⁸¹ “Rizal Day to be celebrated: Speakers Requested to Leave Politics out of orations,” *Manila Daily Bulletin*, December 29, 1933.

²⁸² Gabriel F. Fabella, “Teaching Rizal in Schools,” *Historical Bulletin* V, no. 1-4, 1961 (Manila, Philippines: Philippine Historical Association), 211.

²⁸³ Vicente Albano Pacis, “Preface,” *University of the East Rizal Centennial Lectures* (Manila, Philippines, 1961) iii. The number of overseas chapters is disputed. Also, the Hawaii chapter was not established until 1972.

as well in raising the profile of the Knights. By 1966, the number of chapters within the Philippines had increased to eighty-three, with a total of 2,883 members both in the Philippines and abroad.²⁸⁴ As of 1993, the Order has a hundred and eighty chapters spread throughout the Philippines, with another forty-eight chapters established in foreign countries.²⁸⁵ A more recent estimate in 2011 placed the number of members worldwide at 10,000.²⁸⁶

Rituals and Rites

One important aspect of the Knights of Rizal is the core rituals or rites that members participate in. As Ruth Roland points out, the Knights of Rizal was influenced by Freemasonry, a possible outcome of the preponderance of Freemasons in the nationalist movement in the late 19th century.²⁸⁷ As such, traces of Masonic practices may be found within the Order, particularly with regards to its rites and rituals. One such ritual is that of the initiation ceremony.

At the beginning of the initiation ceremony, candidates are first brought outside of the ceremonial hall to be blindfolded. Back inside the hall, the pursuivant proceeds to read out the names of the candidates and their respective sponsors, following which, the candidates are brought into the hall holding a candle in their right hand (see Photo 5.1). At this point the commander explains the significance of the blindfold, likening it to the “political darkness in which [the Filipino] people lived at the time [that] Rizal was

²⁸⁴ Cited in Ruth Aileen Roland, “Introduction,” *The “Rizalista Cult” in Philippine Nationalism: A Case Study of the “Uses” of a National Hero* (PhD Diss., NYU, 1969), 14. There is a discrepancy in the number of overseas chapters here. While Pecis gives it as 20, the Annual Report of the Supreme Council, Knights of Rizal, only records five overseas chapters, including San Francisco, Baltimore, Washington D.C., Hong Kong and Tokyo.

²⁸⁵ Order of the Knights of Rizal, 2nd ed., *Order of the Knights of Rizal Manual* 1993 <<http://azkorinc.com/kor-manual.pdf>> Accessed May 4, 2014, 2.

²⁸⁶ “Dr Aquino Receives Knights of Rizal Award for Peace,” *Hawaii-Filipino Chronicle* <<http://efilipinochronicle.com/headlines/106252011.html>> Accessed May 14, 2014.

²⁸⁷ Ruth Aileen Roland, “Introduction,” 13.

marched to the field of Bagumbayan, on the fateful morning of December 30.” Candidates are asked to “pause and mediate on the sublime sacrifice that won for [the Philippines] the vibrant spirit of nationalism” before the blindfolds are taken off. Several questions are then asked of the candidates. These include the following:

1. Have you studied the teachings on patriotism and love of country of our hero, Dr. Jose Rizal?
2. Do you promise to conduct to the best of your ability your life as a good man in accordance with the principles and idealism of Rizal?
3. Are you willing to assume your share of the responsibility, to propagate and uphold the doctrines of patriotism taught by Rizal?
4. Do you pledge to abide willingly by the Order’s rules and regulations; and by the orders of the duly constituted officers?
5. Do you voluntarily pledge to do all these without mental reservation?

Should the candidates answer in the affirmative, an oath is taken where the candidate pledges his commitment to Rizal’s teachings, and to the motto of the Knights of Rizal – “Non Omnis Moriar” (Not everything in me will die). He also vows to work for a perfect union among members of his community, and to provide assistance to the Order in the propagation of their goals and advancement of their welfare. Finally, he pledges to uphold justice and moral integrity in his doings and interactions with his fellow man, promising to obey the by-laws of the Order and its rules and regulations. When the oath-taking is complete, the commander dubs the new Knight with the sword (see Photo 5.2), and the new Knights are now introduced to the Assembly as Knights of Rizal.²⁸⁸

²⁸⁸ Order of the Knights of Rizal, 2nd ed., *Order of the Knights of Rizal Manual* 1993 <<http://azkorinc.com/kor-manual.pdf>> Accessed May 4, 2014, 48-49.



Photo 5.1. New initiates being led into the ceremonial hall, Philippine Consulate in Honolulu, October 19, 2013 (Photo taken by author)



Photo 5.2. New initiates being dubbed 'Knights of Rizal' by the chapter Commander, Philippine Consulate in Honolulu, October 19, 2013 (Photo taken by author)

In addition to the initiation ceremony, there is also the elevation ceremony where Knights are promoted to the second degree with the rank of Knight Officer of Rizal. This entails the recitation of a pledge to propagate the ideals and teachings of Rizal. The

second line however, also includes a commitment to “urge and inspire [...] fellow countrymen, especially the “Fair Hope of the Fatherland,” to emulate Rizal in his patriotic ideals and endeavors, so that the Philippines may become a great and happy nation, respected and admired by all peoples, giving substance and reality to the dream of the National Hero.” A similar procedure is conducted in the case of the exaltation ceremony as well, where a Knight is promoted to Knight Commander of Rizal. However, one difference here is that the candidate takes his oath on the two novels of the Hero – the *Noli Me Tangere* and *El Filibusterismo*, as opposed to simply placing his right hand on his left breast (see Photo 5.3). The rituals for the fourth and fifth degrees are similar to the elevation ceremony; however, by virtue of the distinguished status of the candidate receiving the award, some time is usually set aside to allow the recipient to give an address to the assembly.



Photo 5.3. Exaltation Ceremony where the new Knight Commander of Rizal takes his oath on the two books of Rizal, Max's of Manila Dillingham in Honolulu, April 21, 2014 (Photo taken by author)

Activities of the Order

Besides the organization of celebrations and ceremonies marking the birth and death of Rizal, the Knights of Rizal also engage in other activities that venerate and honor the national hero. One important aspect of this includes the furthering of the public's recognition and knowledge of Rizal. A key means of achieving this is through the publication of various writings that aim to further knowledge and understanding of Rizal and his writings. Some of such titles that have been produced by the Order over the years include *Jose Rizal by Various Authors*, *Assertive Rizalism as a Measure of Self-Defense*, and *Rizal*. These publications are usually concise biographies of Rizal, or collections of essays about Rizal written by distinguished Filipino personalities including Senators such

as Quintin Paredes, Jose P. Laurel, and Rafael Palma, prolific historian Gregorio Zaide, acclaimed journalist Nick Joaquin, and Chief Justice Querube C. Makalintal. Besides just publications however, the Knights also frequently organize seminars, lectures, and conferences revolving around Rizal and his ideas. The scale of these events vary: some are organized by the local chapters for their immediate community, others cut across regional and even national borders.

The main activity of the Knights however, revolves around the annual International Assembly and Conference on Rizal. This is supplemented by regional conferences held once every two years for chapters based outside of the Philippines. At the 2011 International Assembly and Conference on Rizal held in Manila, for example, the theme was “The New Rizals: Emerging Leaders Innovating Across Sectors and Beyond Borders.”²⁸⁹ Typically, the first day of the conference is marked by brief reports presented by oversea and local regional commanders, with awards and degrees being conferred upon any distinguished recipients. Following this, the second and third days are given to lectures, workshops, and forums centered around Rizal and his thoughts. Cultural activities may also be featured. At the 2011 conference, a musical entitled “Uso Pa Ba Si Rizal?” was performed, and historical tours of the city were offered.

A key demographic target that the Knights are trying to reach with its various projects is the youth. One such prominent project is the establishment of the National Rizal Youth Leadership Institute (NRYLI) in 1962. The NRYLI’s task was to organize the annual four-day leadership training in a camp in Baguio City, north of Manila. Since its inception, the Institute claims it graduated thousands of government officials,

²⁸⁹ Order of the Knights of Rizal, *2011 International Assembly and Conference on Rizal*, February 5, 2011 <<http://knightsofrizal.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/Program-KOR-Feb.2011-2nd-revised.pdf>> Accessed May 2, 2014.

community and civic leaders, as well as educators from all over the Philippines. In 2012, the theme was “*Buhayin si Rizal sa Bawat Batang Pilipino* (Relive Rizal in Every Young Filipino),” and its goals included arousing potential “Rizals” from among the ‘slumbering’ youths, inspiring them to work towards social reforms that would help alleviate the various injustices and inequalities in the Philippines. Another incidental objective of the program though, was to encourage the inauguration of new chapters of the *Kabataang Pangarap ni Rizal* (KAPARIZ) – the official youth arm of the Order -- in schools around the country.²⁹⁰

Besides the Youth Leadership Institute, the Knights of Rizal is also active in the organization of various oratorical and essay contests targeted at high school and college students. The regional contest held under the auspices of the NRYLI in Baguio City in 2010 is one such example. This included a Rizal history and quiz contest, an oratory and on-the-spot essay-writing contest based on the theme of “The New Rizals: Emerging Leaders Innovating Across Sectors,” an extemporaneous speaking contest, an on-the-spot painting contest, and a dance contest.²⁹¹ By encouraging participation through the draw of cash prizes as well as the mere prestige involved in winning such competitions, the Knights aim to propagate further knowledge of the national hero through such efforts.

Knights of Rizal – The Hawaii Chapter

The Knights of Rizal – Hawaii chapter was first established in Honolulu on October 14, 1971. However, its roots can be traced further back to January 7, 1959, when the Philippine Consul-General to Hawaii, Juan C. Dionisio, appointed Roland Sagum as

²⁹⁰ For more information, see Kabataang Pangarap ni Rizal, June 2011 <<http://ghel13.wix.com/kabataang-pangarap-ni-rizal>> Accessed May 7, 2014.

²⁹¹ Order of the Knights of Rizal, *Rizal Youth Leadership Institute Conferences: 2010 Regional Contest Rules Competition* <<http://xa.yimg.com/kq/groups/15500067/339149919/name/contests>> Accessed May 7, 2014.

the General Chairman to head a statewide fundraising drive to enact a Rizal shrine in commemoration of Rizal's birth Centennial. Sagum was then a lieutenant with the Honolulu Police Department and the first President of the United Filipino Council of Hawaii.²⁹² As a result of his involvement with the Rizal Centennial Celebrations, Sagum became acquainted with the Knights of Rizal during a U.S. Army Friendship Mission to the Philippines. However, it was not until 1971 when Juan F. Nakpil, Supreme Trustee of the Knights of Rizal, requested then-Consul-General Trinidad Alconcel to invite community leaders to form a Hawaii chapter of the Knights of Rizal. According to the by-laws of the Order, in order for a chapter to be set up, there has to be at least five individuals of "good moral character and reputation" who have sought the approval of the Supreme Council by way of a written petition.²⁹³ Once established, the new chapter pays membership dues in addition to the submission of an annual report of updates to the headquarters in Manila. At its first meeting in Hawaii, twenty-one leaders showed up, and Sagum was elected as the first commander of the Hawaii chapter of the Order, a position he was to hold for thirteen years. After his tenure, succeeding commanders were typically in office for a much shorter span of two to three years.²⁹⁴

While I was not able to recover any original documents tracing back to its founding, I managed to interview one of the founding members, former City and County

²⁹² The establishment of the United Filipino Council of Hawaii (UFCH) came just as Hawaii was preparing for American statehood. The then-Consul-General of the Philippines, Juan C. Dionisio wanted to organize an island-wide association that would "work vigorously for the advancement of the Filipinos in the 50th state in all lines of endeavor so that they can better integrate themselves into the community as a whole." His efforts thus culminated in a state-wide convention in Honolulu in June 1959 where the UFCH was first promulgated. Jon Okamura, "Filipino Organizations: A History," *The Filipinos in Hawaii: the First 75 years* (Hawaii, USA: Hawaii Filipino News, 1981), 75.
<http://efilarchives.org/pdf/filipinosinhawaii75/filipinosinhawaii75_3.pdf> Accessed May 15, 2014.

²⁹³ This was later updated to nine or more persons of legal age, in the Knights of Rizal Manual published in 1993.

²⁹⁴ Clement Bautista. 2002. Exhibition on Jose Rizal. Accessed January 26, 2014.

of Honolulu director of finance Sir Geminiano “Toy” Arre.²⁹⁵ According to Sir Toy, he was roped into joining the Knights of Rizal because his brother-in-law so happened to be Trinidad Alconcel, the Consul-General who had been tasked with the organization of the Hawaii chapter. As Sir Toy related, that was how he initially got involved in the different Filipino organizations in those days – a friend or acquaintance (in this case, a family member) would invite him to attend a community event, and from there, he would meet other members of the community, who in turn, connected him to an even wider community. With the Knights of Rizal, Sir Toy became its first archivist, and would go on to serve as its commander between the years 1996-1999.

While the impetus for setting up a chapter of the Order in Hawaii may have come from the Supreme Council in the Philippines itself, one of the reasons why the Order managed to continue appears to be related to its social function as a gathering of Filipino men. The present director of the Office of Multicultural Student Affairs at the University of Hawaii at Manoa, Sir Clement Bautista, whose late father Sir Mario Bautista -- a respected physician within the community -- was one of the founding members as well as its second commander (1984-1986), recounts how the early incarnation of the chapter provided an avenue for men within the community to get together. In fact, most of the founding members were either men like Sir Mario, good friends of the consul-general, or like Sir Toy, connected by familial ties to the consul-general himself. However, there is also the occasional non-Filipino who is more detached from the social relationships that characterizes recruitment. Such members are usually people who have a keen interest in the Philippines and view the Knights of Rizal as a way for them to learn more about Rizal

²⁹⁵ In this chapter, I use the honorific ‘Sir’ to indicate that a person is a member of the Knights of Rizal. This also reflects the way members of the Knights address one another in real life.

and the Philippines. For example, one of the founding members of the chapter included Sir Keith Snyder. Sir Keith was born in Nebraska but moved to Hawaii in 1963 where he worked in various capacities at the University of Hawaii, before retiring as Vice Chancellor of Administration in 1980. In 1971, he was invited by Sir Toy (who was his subordinate at the university at that time) to join the Order. According to Sir Toy, Sir Keith had a special interest in the Philippines because his father had been a member of the American forces who captured Emilio Aguinaldo, the first President of the first Philippine Republic. Other non-Filipino members who have joined the Order include two other anthropologists from the University of Hawaii, both of whom were interested in Philippine history and affairs as well.

After the chapter was established in 1971, its main projects have typically revolved around the annual commemoration of Rizal Day as well as Rizal's birthday celebrations. This usually takes the form of a talk/presentation on Rizal followed by a luncheon. Besides these two events however, the chapter commander has the discretion to decide on the direction he wishes to take the group. As such, the vibrancy of the chapter's activities also tend to ebb and flow with changes in commanders. In more recent years however, some of the more notable projects include the initiation of the Rizal Youth Leadership Institute (RYLI) in 2010.²⁹⁶ This one-day event aimed to introduce Rizal to Filipino youth by promoting his principles and ideals. At the same time, as its name implies, this workshop was intended to serve as a venue for youth leadership training as

²⁹⁶ The Rizal Youth Leadership Institute was held in conjunction with the Leeward Community College, where Sir Raymund Liongson, former commander of the chapter, serves on faculty. LCC also has the highest proportion of Filipino students among the University of Hawaii system.

well.²⁹⁷ Held at Leeward Community College, the RYLI was attended by 25 youth participants and 16 members of the Order. There were two short talks by guest speakers – Retired Circuit Court Judge Reynaldo Grauly and former Director of the Center for Philippine Studies at the University of Hawaii Dr. Belinda Aquino – as well as workshops, and youth participant presentations. The first workshop began with an introduction to Rizal and his ideals, while the second one focused on discussions of leadership. The last workshop comprised of a community building simulation, in which participants were challenged to apply the Rizalian ideals and leadership skills they had learnt previously.²⁹⁸

Another key highlight in the chapter’s recent history was the organization of the 4th USA Regional Assembly and Conference, held in Honolulu from September 1 to 3 of 2012. Not only did the event gather fellow Knights from the U.S. region, the current Supreme Commander and successful businessman Sir Reghis Romero II, also graced this event. In addition, numerous other distinguished personalities gave presentations on Rizal and his life. From this conference, the chapter was able to publish a book on the various proceedings.

Besides these two larger projects, other smaller projects that have been conducted over the years include the erection of the Rizal statue at FilCom, the passing of a City Council resolution naming part of College Walk as Dr. Jose P. Rizal Square, the roving Rizal exhibit, the Alay kay Rizal Dramafest at the University of Hawaii, and the Annual

²⁹⁷ Raymund Liongson, “2010 RYLI @KOR-Hawaii Chapter,” July 13, 2010
<https://groups.google.com/forum/#!msg/kor-world/236Z58tOUhE/QXLsQ_Sn1_8J> Accessed May 15, 2014.

²⁹⁸ Rizal Youth Leadership Institution, July 17, 2010
<<https://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&pid=forums&srcid=MTcyNDcyNjcxNTY1MDQ0MzM3NjJlBMTM5NzMyODQzMjkwOTY2MjM1NzcBa1ZYRzh4b1VVVUFKATUBAXYy>> Accessed May 15, 2014.

Dr. Jose P. Rizal Award for Peace and Social Justice (established in 2011).²⁹⁹ Beyond events that focus primarily on Rizal however, the chapter has also engaged in community projects whenever deemed necessary. For instance, when Typhoon Haiyan hit the Philippines in November of 2013, the chapter organized fundraising efforts to raise money for the affected victims in the Visayan region of the Philippines. The Order also collaborates with other community organizations in the celebration of Philippine Independence Day, the annual Filipino Fiestas and Parades, U.S. census drive, and various other community forums.³⁰⁰

Currently, it is estimated that there are about twenty to twenty-five active members within the chapter. If one takes the inactive members into consideration, this number increases to around forty. Through the years, membership has consistently hovered around these numbers. Like other overseas chapters, members are for the most part first-generation Filipino migrants, although there are the odd foreigner and second-generation Filipino American among the mix as well. Members are also mostly middle-aged; however, in contemporary times there is a concerted effort being made to recruit new members from the younger demographics. As such, one can now find a sprinkling of Knights who are currently in their twenties and thirties.

In comparison to the *Banal Na Angkan*, members of the Knights of Rizal chapter belong primarily to the middle-class. While some of them claim a well-to-do background from back in the Philippines, others with more modest beginnings are nevertheless well-positioned in their current careers to advance further in the social ladder. They often

²⁹⁹ Serafin Colmenares, Jr., “Knights of Rizal Hold Award Gala, Installs New Officers,” June 29, 2013, *Hawaii Filipino Chronicle* <http://thefilipinochronicle.com/hfchronicle%20Headline-2_06292013.html> Accessed May 15, 2014.

³⁰⁰ Serafin Colmenares Jr., “Rizal: His Relevance Today,” June 16, 2012, *Hawaii Filipino Chronicle*, 10 <http://thefilipinochronicle.com/HFCRE_06162012.pdf> Accessed May 15, 2014.

enjoy the community's respect as well. Members come from a range of professions, including faculty members and administrators in educational institutions, managerial and directorial positions in government bureaus and departments, as well as Chief Executive Officers and senior executives in business and private corporations. Moreover, members typically possess at least a bachelor's degree, with a good proportion of members having a graduate degree of some sort. In fact, among the five most recent five commanders, four of them possessed higher degrees, including two of whom had obtained their PhDs.

At the same time, many of the members of the chapter occupy leadership positions within both the local and Filipino community in Hawaii. To cite some examples, Sir Serafin "Jun" Colmenares, a past chapter Commander and the current Area Commander for Western USA, serves as the executive director and past President of the Congress of Visayan Organizations.³⁰¹ He has also taken on various leadership positions with organizations such as the Filipino Community Center (FilCom) and the Filipino Coalition for Solidarity.³⁰² Sir Raymund Liongson, also a past chapter Commander, used to be on the board of directors at FilCom and the Hawaii Plantation Village.³⁰³ Sir Ryan Fernandez and Sir Randy Cortez, two of the younger members of the chapter both served as President and Chairman of the Board with the Honolulu Filipino Junior Chamber of Commerce. Sir Toy himself was the first ever non-Japanese President of the Honolulu

³⁰¹ The Congress of Visayan Organizations (COVO) is the statewide umbrella of about twenty affiliated Visayan organizations in Hawaii. The COVO was founded in 1985 and aims to organize and unify the Visayan organizations in Hawaii, to promote the Visayan language and culture, and finally, to facilitate the educational, social, and economic advancement of Visayans within the local community.

³⁰² The FilCom was first established in 2002, and claims the title of being the largest Filipino Community Center outside of the Philippines. Its objectives include the perpetuation of Filipino culture and customs in Hawaii. The Filipino Coalition for Solidarity on the other hand, is an advocacy group for Filipino-American World War II veterans, immigrants and workers in the areas of discrimination, language access, domestic violence and sexual harassment.

³⁰³ The Hawaii's Plantation Village is an outdoor history museum that relates the story of life on Hawaii's sugar plantations from the mid 1800s to the mid 1900s. It showcases Hawaii's various cultures, including that the Filipino culture.

Japanese Junior Chamber of Commerce, and went on to serve as President of the FilCom, among countless other organizations.

Placed side-by-side along each other, it is evident that the Hawaii chapter of the Knights of Rizal and the *Banal Na Angkan* inhabit different spectra on the social order. As we will see in the following section, this would have implications in the way the motivations, projections, and understanding of Rizal diverge between the two groups.

Analysis

Motivations for Joining the Knights of Rizal: Social Capital, Prestige, and Cultural Experiences

Members' motivations for joining the Knights of Rizal are multi-faceted, but I have broadly summarized them as the desire for three different qualities: the accumulation of social capital via the multiplication of social connections, the exclusivity associated with joining a fraternity (in particular given its Freemasonry roots), and the engagement in a Filipino cultural experience. In all of my interviews with members of the chapter, each one of them mentioned that they were recruited by a friend, or an acquaintance who was already active in the Order. Sir Toy who was one of the founding members of the Knights, recounts how his brother-in-law, the consul-general, had rung him up one day and "somehow [he] found [himself...] a member" of the Knights of the Rizal. Sir Raymund's interest in the Order developed because he had friends within the chapter whom he had previously worked with on various community projects. Sir Clem, a second-generation Filipino, chose to continue his dad's legacy by joining the Order, although this was largely only at the prompting of Sir Toy, a close family friend.

Given the professional status of many of the members, it is unsurprising that the Order is seen as a place for networking. Sir Randy, the youngest member of the Knights

at twenty-six, indicates that among the community groups he has been involved in, he identifies most with the Filipino Junior Chamber of Commerce. However this group is also largely limited to people who are within his age range. The Knights of Rizal then, provided him with a space where he can interact with other older Filipino men, who are able to provide mentorship in terms of his professional and personal life. Similarly, Sir Clem shared with me how regional conferences organized under the auspices of the various chapters have served as an effective means of networking, particularly in an era where virtual communication is widespread. At such conferences, not only is one able to meet up with members of his own community, he also gets to interact with other members from the neighboring states or countries. Since many of these men operate in similar circles (for example, there was one year where all the Knights in the Seattle chapter were lawyers), participation in the Order can be considered a boon when it comes to sharing resources, information, and contacts across geographical localities.

Related to this first point is the idea of gaining access to an exclusive group of men. As a fraternity, the Knights of Rizal has its own rituals and rites of passage. For Sir Clem, this was an attractive pull of the organization: in comparison to the other community organizations out there, the Knights was “a select and narrow group of individuals” who may “come from different places, [and ...] who may be active in other groups, but [...] are all just men now” when they join the Knights of Rizal. As such, there is that appeal of being part of an intimate and exclusive group of men. This idea was reiterated in a discussion we had about an initiation event I had gone to in October of 2013. The initiation ceremony had been held at the Lāna‘i (porch) of the Philippine Consulate, and as a result, it was an open space where the organizers could not

effectively control certain aspects important to the ceremony, such as the lighting. At the same time, the initiation was open to the public. However, as Sir Clem relates, initiation ceremonies in the past tended to be more intimate, with only close friends and family members allowed at the ceremony. Again, when I asked Sir Randy about the Knights of Rizal ritual that had the most significance for him, he highlighted the initiation ceremony, because it meant that he was now “accepted into a special group that had a specific intention to propagate the teachings of Jose Rizal.” The exclusivity of membership stands in stark contrast to the popular nature of the *Banal Na Angkan*.

Another important point to consider is that it was not just the idea of belonging to an exclusive fraternity, or club, of men, that attracted members to the Order. It helped as well that this group of men were people who had earned the respect and esteem of society. Despite invitations to join the Order, Sir Raymund had initially expressed hesitation at joining the Knights because of his affiliation with the Student Leftist movement in the Philippines. This movement gained particular momentum in the 1960s, and the call for the “unfinished revolution” became an integral part of their slogan. With the publication of Teodoro Agoncillo’s *Revolt of the Masses*, Rizal became denigrated as a middle-class elite who could not help his alienation from the masses. Andres Bonifacio, with his allegedly plebian background, was pushed to the foreground for his militant role in the Philippine Revolution against Spain. Against this framework of class divisions, students began agitating for the recognition of Bonifacio as national hero over the reform-minded Rizal. When I interviewed him, Sir Raymund related to me about how he used to joke with his friends who were part of the Order before he became a Knight: he would tell them that he was going to set up his own fraternity; however, it would be one that

venerated Andres Bonifacio instead. Yet evidently, this did not happen -- Sir Raymund ended up joining the Knights of Rizal. During my interview with him, Sir Raymund told me about how he had changed his mind after observing the personal and professional lives of some of the Order's members. By that time he had become well-acquainted with a few of its key members, having worked with them on numerous community projects. As he explained to me, he saw that many of the members were "good people, people who were with the university, who were historians, and who were on the whole, very highly respected [by society]". As a result, he became intrigued by the organization itself, and figured that it might be helpful to actually look into the Knights of Rizal and what it did. Sir Raymund eventually ended up joining the Order, and eventually became a chapter Commander from 2011 to 2013. His views on Rizal also evolved – on the one hand, it was difficult not to, being a Knight of Rizal, and on the other hand, as Sir Raymund described it to me, he became "more mature, more open, experiencing the real world, as compared to when [he] was an idealistic student." He also acknowledged that he looks at Rizal differently now, after learning more about him through the Knights. This includes Rizal's global image, and his timelessness, two elements that would be discussed in greater detail below.

One side point to note here is the connection between Rizal and freemasonry. Within the Order, there are a couple of members who are also freemasons, including former Commanders Sir Jun, Sir Raymund, as well as Sir Ben Sanchez. For people like them, the additional association between Rizal and freemasonry was another lure of the group. Recognizing that many of the key reformers and revolutionaries during the

Philippine Revolutionary Period were masons,³⁰⁴ they were attracted by the idea of finding out more about why Rizal became a freemason. In the case of Sir Ryan, a second-generation Filipino-American born and raised on Oahu, Hawaii, he first took an interest in Rizal when he found out that Rizal was a freemason. He compares Rizal to the founding fathers of the United States, expressing his admiration for people such as Benjamin Franklin who had promoted values of the Enlightenment among the American people. The recognition of freemasons, including Rizal, as core movers and shakers of society, thus provided another impetus for certain individuals to join the organization.

On the whole though, the Knights of Rizal appeal to this group of middle-class men because of the prestige it affords. Status is always highlighted; in direct contrast to the *Banal Na Angkan*'s emphasis on humility and purity of the *loob* (inner self), "outer trappings" of status dominates the rituals of the Order. This extends from the way members are ranked (and the elaborate insignia donned by members to distinguish among ranks) to the lavish uniforms worn during activities. Such rituals feed into a middle-class longing for recognition and standing among their wider community.

Finally, another common motivation relates to the cultural (or even academic) value that Rizal possesses. Depending on their background, this value may take on varying forms for different members of the organization. For example, for somebody like Sir Ryan who grew up not speaking any kind of Filipino language, and who was not brought up in an environment where he was exposed to the Filipino culture, the Knights

³⁰⁴ Resil Mojares describes how, at the tail-end of the Spanish colonial period, Freemasonry in the Philippines represented ideas of European Enlightenment. "Masonic lodges were "schools" of Enlightenment thought, forward points of "modernity" emancipated from traditional forms of authority, resolutely civil and secular, oriented towards ideas of republicanism and constitutionalism." "The Filipino Enlightenment," *Brains of the Nation: Pedro Paterno, T.H. Pardo de Tavera, Isabelo de los Reyes and the Production of Modern Knowledge* (Quezon City, Philippines: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2006), 431-432.

of Rizal provides a way for him to connect with his “Filipino heritage.” Sir Clem is another example of a second-generation Filipino who does not speak any of the Filipino languages. Rizal’s writings on social justice resonated with him, and as a result, provided one relevant way of cultivating a “Filipino consciousness” for him.

Compared to the *Banal Na Angkan*, members of the Knights of Rizal seem to have motivations that are more practical and pragmatic even. While many of the former joined the sect because of personal spiritual experiences, the Knights are more likely to be part of the organization because it provides them access to certain kinds of capital that could aid them in their professional and social lives. At the same time, there appears to be some kind of pride or even prestige associated with being part of an exclusive fraternity like the Knights of Rizal. For some of the members then, there is a certain amount of cachet that comes from being part of a group whose members are recognized as “respectable individuals” within society.

Rizal as a Universal Figure

As shown in the second chapter, one important component of the official discourse surrounding Rizal is his perceived universalism or internationalism. In other words, Rizal possesses a quality that affords his writings and ideas a significance that transcends time and space. This particular component of Rizal is frequently cited by members of the chapter, be it during my interviews with them, or at events organized by the group. Rizal is seen as an international figure, not just in terms of his travels across the globe, but also in terms of his education, thereby contributing to the formation of an international worldview that few in his time could lay claim to. As such, even before globalization became a buzzword in our contemporary society today, “[Rizal] was

already very global.” This simultaneously made him a frontrunner in the globalization phenomenon embraced by many individuals and countries today.

As mentioned earlier, this is nothing new, especially since the official national discourse of Rizal has tended to underscore this aspect of Rizal. What I would like to suggest here however, is that there is an additional aspect of this universality that makes it so salient a feature for the diasporic community. Given that the majority of members in the chapter are first-generation migrants who only moved to Hawaii during their adult lives, Rizal provides a way of mitigating any sense of displacement they might feel. Although they may no longer be physically present in the “homeland”, Rizal who was the “First Filipino” transcended geography and time himself. Such a narrative provide them with a way of bridging the disparity in geographical locality between their adopted home and the motherland, thereby assuaging any guilt they might have in leaving the homeland to seek out a better life.

Another nuance surrounding the cooption of the official narrative lies in the tendency to project oneself onto the figure of Rizal, particularly in relation to Rizal’s travels around the world. At the 2012 Knights of Rizal Western USA Regional Conference, Sir Paul Raymund Cortes, then-Philippines Consul-General in Honolulu and fellow Knight of Rizal, addressed the question of Rizal’s relevance in today’s modern times. Directing his attention to the increasing numbers of Overseas Filipinos, Sir Paul lamented how Filipinos in Hawaii have yet to comprehend how “Rizal falls squarely into their political ideologies as overseas Filipinos.”³⁰⁵ Mary Grace Ampil-Tirona, executive director of the Commission on Filipinos Overseas, followed up on this point with her

³⁰⁵ Paul Raymund Cortes, “Rizal in the 21st Century,” Raymund Liongson and Serafin Colmenares, eds., *Jose Rizal’s legacy and Nation-Building* (Honolulu, Hawaii: Hagadone Printing, 2013), 26.

speech entitled “Building the Imagined Nation...For...With...Of...the Diaspora.” As suggested by her title, her presentation centered around the Overseas Filipino. Speaking to a group composed largely of first-generation Filipino migrants, Ampil-Tirona likened Rizal to her audience, highlighting how Rizal was “an exemplar of the Overseas Filipino and *Balibayan* (returnee),” “a temporary migrant enriched by learning, experience and exposure abroad,” and “a distinctive returnee armed with a development-oriented reintegration plan.”³⁰⁶ Like Rizal, the men in the audience were all “immersed [...] in the developed world,” who possess a desire to see the Philippines elevated to the status of a developed country.³⁰⁷

In a way, the possibility of returning to the Philippines with the skills and enrichment afforded by living abroad, usually in the more developed countries provides the potential for reconciliation between the contradictions many of these men face -- their love of country (the Philippines), and their decision to leave the Philippines for greener pastures. After all, many of them do acknowledge that the U.S. has provided them and their families opportunities that they would never have otherwise obtained in the Philippines. One member of the Knight of Rizal who has returned to the Philippines for an extended period of time is Sir Toy. After his retirement in 1999, Sir Toy returned to the Philippines for five and a half years, serving as an aide and financial advisor to the then-mayor of Manila, Lito Atienza. During my interview with him, Sir Toy mentioned how he had wanted to improve the organizational structure of the Manila City Council by applying the things he had learnt while working with the City of Honolulu. Before his retirement, Sir Toy had worked closely with Honolulu Mayor Fasi in numerous capacities,

³⁰⁶ Mary Grace Ampil-Tironia, “Building the Imagined Nation...for...with...of the Diaspora (BIND),” *Ibid*, 76.

³⁰⁷ *Ibid*, 73.

including his positions as deputy Chief Budget Officer as well as Director of Finance for the City and Country of Honolulu through the 1970s and 1980s. As such, when he returned to the Philippines as an unpaid volunteer with the city of Manila, he brought with him the expertise acquired during his time with the Honolulu City Government. During his term in the Philippines, he actually helped the City Council to increase its revenue by 300 million pesos for three consecutive years, after which corruption returned to rear its ugly head. While Sir Toy was the only one of the six whom I interviewed who had actually returned to the Philippines, other members of the Order such as Sir Jun and Sir Raymund do not rule out returning to the Philippines after retirement to contribute to the growth and development of the country. In fact, it is for this very reason that Jun took up dual citizenship when it became legal in the Philippines in 2003.

At the same time, Rizal's universality also allows members to subvert the power hierarchies that intersect both systems of the nation-state as well as the local community. Similar to members of the *Banal Na Angkan*, despite possessing an overall higher educational and social level, many of the Knights faced and continue to face discrimination as migrants among their host society. For one, some members of the Knights had to return to school in Hawaii despite receiving higher degrees from institutions in Asia and the Philippines because of the perception that a degree from a non-US university is inherently inferior. It did not help either, that it was initially difficult for some of them to find jobs corresponding to their educational level. For instance, a PhD holder in the group related to me how he had worked all sorts of odd jobs at the beginning, including working at a fast food joint, and as a newspaper deliveryman. Another PhD holder related how potential employers would tell him "Oh, you no speak

English,” and refuse to hire him. For many of these migrants then, their experience was one that was frequently fraught with prejudices and discrimination by the local community, who saw Filipinos at the bottom of the social hierarchy, particularly as Filipinos continued to migrate to Hawaii in large volumes after immigration quotas were relaxed in 1965. Rizal thus becomes a way for the Diaspora to gain recognition as members of an *international* community who are equally as capable as members of their host society. During my interview with him, Sir Raymund stressed that Rizal may have been a Filipino, but his global image makes him a model worthy of emulation not just by Filipinos themselves, but also by a global community who are able to relate to him and his ideas. This in turn is facilitated by the timeless quality of Rizal, since his ideas, although written more than a century ago, continue to be germane to many of the social problems plaguing societies today.

Similarly, the rhetoric of the Knights of Rizal also converges with the official narrative when it comes to the placement of Rizal among other global figures. During the 2013 Rizal Day Celebrations, Maui Circuit Judge Artemio Baxa was invited to give the annual address at the Philippine Consulate. There, he compared Rizal to other notable world figures including Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King, two key personalities who similarly fought against the injustices of an oppressive system. While all three of them advocated non-violent means, Judge Baxa emphasized that Rizal never resorted to civil disobedience unlike the other two leaders. He went on to compare Rizal to one of the “great men of the world” -- Abraham Lincoln -- for his role in fighting for equality among men. Although Judge Baxa is not a member of the Knights (at least, not yet), his speech left a deep resonance with certain members of the Order. When I interviewed Sir

Toy, he told me that he really appreciated Judge Baxa's comparisons of Rizal with other global figures. To Sir Toy, Judge Baxa's address only strengthened his conviction that Rizal's teachings of peace and non-violence is probably the best solution to many of the problems that the world faces today.

By placing Rizal on a pedestal along with other notable personalities, as well as highlighting his global nature, the Knights of Rizal shares a narrative that is strikingly similar to the one presented by the Filipino state. However, the additional complexities of being a Filipino Diaspora in a society where discrimination remains prevalent, also creates another dimension to this aspect of Rizal: Rizal's internationalism mitigates the alienation felt by migrants physically displaced from the homeland, as well as assuage their diminished status in a society that may not always recognize them.

Rationality and Education

Another thread that runs throughout the rhetoric on Rizal within the Hawaii chapter of the Knights of Rizal unsurprisingly coincides with a key theme present in the official narrative, that is, the idea of education as a means of uplifting oneself. There are several elements to this discourse on education, however, particularly as it relates to the Filipino diaspora in Hawaii.

As mentioned earlier on, Filipinos in Hawaii have been at the bottom of the social hierarchy. Although they currently make up the largest ethnic group on the islands, they are under-represented in education, particularly at the tertiary level. In the figure of Rizal though, the Filipino youths in Hawaii can find a role model. The Rizal Youth Leadership Institute, established in partnership with Leeward Community College under the urging of Sir Raymund, was set up precisely for this reason. As Sir Raymund explained, it is hoped that Rizal's global image and excellent performance would serve as an inspiration

to young Filipinos, “especially with the Filipino-American experience in Hawaii”

According to him, the Knights want to show that

[...] there can be excellence in Filipinos, that you don't have to be ashamed. That you could be Filipino and you could think of being a super-achiever, just like Rizal. [...] In other words, we wanted to advance an image of a Filipino, not just Rizal, an image of a Filipino who's an intellectual, who can be global, who is educated, who does not just walk into things and then let his emotions govern his action, but let reason be the guide of all his actions, of his work.

Sir Jun repeats such sentiments as well when he described Rizal as a genius, given his comprehensive and well-rounded accomplishments. When asked about Rizal's significance to him, he highlights how Rizal is an example to Filipinos of how they can achieve various things by their own efforts. Education in turn, becomes seen as an important means of self-improvement and progress.

At the same time, similar to the official narrative on Rizal, education is emphasized as a means of overcoming the burdens of ignorance and blind faith that the Philippines continues to be mired in. Education, for one, bestows upon one the gift of reason and logic. In talking about the need for equality, human and civil rights, Sir Raymund writes that “reason over blind faith – they be religious, ideological, or cultural – is our shield and weapon against biased indoctrination, paralyzing subjugation and oppressive tyranny.”³⁰⁸ Rizal's courage is challenging the powerful and influential Catholic Church is also noted. As Sir Raymund continues to explicate, Rizal exposed “the fallibility of the logic of some of [the Church's] practices and [urged] the native Filipinos to subscribe to reason and scientific thinking.”³⁰⁹ Such ignorance then, is

³⁰⁸ Serafin Colmenares, “Introduction,” *Ibid*, 3

³⁰⁹ Raymund Liongson, “Rizal's Critical Consciousness and Nation-Building,” *Ibid*, 91.

something that can only be overcome with education.³¹⁰ Here, it is clear that the Knights are advocating an education that ultimately subscribes to notions of Western modernity in its conceptions of scientific empiricism and rationality. On this point, the *Banal Na Angkan* and the Knights of Rizal are at two opposing ends: education may be the end-all for the Order, but for members of the former, it is not education per se that elevates a person; rather it is humility, both in front of God and one's fellow man. Education is thus only an outer trapping that cannot be considered *totoong kapangyarihan* (true power).

Finally, education also plays a role in the way the Knights view the debate between Andres Bonifacio and Rizal. When I asked about their views on Bonifacio, members were quick to acknowledge the controversy surrounding the perceived prioritization of Rizal over Bonifacio in the Philippines. However, while they recognize and understand the revolutionary-versus-reformer dichotomy ascribed to Bonifacio and Rizal, they do not perceive any conflict with honoring Rizal. To the Knights, Bonifacio may have been revolutionary in his actions, but ultimately those actions were premised on violence. Rizal on the other hand, was revolutionary in his ideas: he was highly educated and believed in the value of education and its effects on society. Put it in a different way, Bonifacio may have been searching for radical change, but Rizal, through his promotion of education for the people, was a proponent of lasting and enduring changes.

Conclusion

The Hawaii chapter of the Knights of Rizal is very different from the *Banal Na Angkan*. Demographically, it consists of men who have received at least a university education, many of whom have gone on to pursue post-graduate studies. At the same time,

³¹⁰ Serafin Colmenares, "Introduction," *Ibid*, 4

these men are often recognized as leaders within society, be it among the local community or the Filipino community. As such, they possess the social capital and status that members of the *Banal Na Angkan* lack. There is also a close alignment between the Filipino state and the Hawaii chapter of the Knights of Rizal. Not only was it the Filipino state -- through the person of then-Consul-General Juan C. Dionisio -- that initiated the founding of the Order in Hawaii, successive Consul-Generals have traditionally been part of the Honolulu chapter as well, providing the Order access to state institutions, such as the use of the Consulate during the various chapter events.

Consequently, a divergence in understandings of modernity between the Knights of Rizal and the *Banal Na Angkan* occurs. This in turn shapes their interpretations of the Rizal symbol, causing the two to deviate from each other. The Knights of Rizal, weaned as its members are on a diet of Western modernity, privileges the rationality and educational levels of Rizal. As members of the middle-class, acceptance into this fraternity of Knights frequently becomes a way for them to assert a certain amount of prestige among their local community. Members of the *Banal Na Angkan* on the other hand, are not interested in the “externalities” of stature. They reject Western notions of modernity, and place a premium instead, on the ideals of humility and *loob* in their representations and understandings of Rizal.

Yet at the same time, for these two groups situated within the Filipino diaspora, there are also similar nuances present in their representations of Rizal that are absent in the official narrative. Taken outside of the physical boundaries of the nation-state, the diaspora faces a different set of problems that shapes the way s/he views the world. In the case of the Filipinos in Hawaii, despite forming a significant proportion of the population,

they continue to face discrimination from other groups in society. Rizal's internationalism thus acquires an even greater potency for the diaspora. For both the Knights and the *Banal Na Angkan*, Rizal's universalism and global recognition allows them to subvert the power relations under which they are enmeshed in as members of an "inferior" group vis-à-vis their host society. Importantly, this emphasis on Rizal's cosmopolitanism shifts the locus of "Filipinism" from the physical territory of the Philippines itself to the body of the Filipino diaspora. While the Knights of Rizal draw a parallel between themselves and Rizal, the "First Filipino," the *Banal Na Angkan* likened themselves to the "wandering Jews," scattered across the world in exile until their savior and redeemer Rizal returns to earth. As such, despite the differences mentioned above, there are nonetheless certain shared experiences that members of the Knights of Rizal and *Banal Na Angkan* both possess as members of the Filipino diaspora. This in turn produces overlaps and intersections in their representations of Rizal, thereby complicating the kind of simplistic elite-mass dichotomy that has tended to underpin previous studies undertaken on this subject. Even as representations of Rizal are not homogeneous among different social groups, neither are they entirely disparate from one another.

Chapter 6

Conclusion: Rizal as an Enduring Symbol of the Philippines



Photo 6.1 A 26-foot tall Rizal monument, erected in Laguna on May 4, 2014 (Photo by Angelique Atienza, ABS-CBN News Southern Tagalog/RNG, May 4, 2014.)

On May 4, 2014, a 26-foot-tall Jose Rizal monument, claimed to be the tallest in the world, was erected in Santa Cruz, Laguna Province in the Philippines (see Photo 6.1). The statue, made out of bronze, had been commissioned in honor of the annual *Palarong Pambansa* (“National Games”). Yet monuments dedicated to the Philippine national hero are not rare; in fact, just three years earlier, another 22-foot high bronze statue was unveiled on Rizal’s 150th birth anniversary in Calamba City in Laguna where he was born. What was atypical about this latest statue at Santa Cruz however, was the way it depicted Rizal as a fencer or eskrimador (eskrima is a Filipino martial art akin to fencing). The

portrayal of Rizal as a sportsman deviated from the typical representation of Rizal as a distinguished “scholar, doctor and philanthropist.” As the governor of Laguna ER Ejercito Estregan explained, “Jose Rizal is a good athlete. He played six sports. He is an expert in fencing, arnis and firing. He was also [an] expert in boxing, jujitsu and judo.”³¹¹

While Rizal’s versatility in the sporting arena may be somewhat of a stretch, it was hardly the first time he has been exalted to such lofty heights. More than half a century ago, in a prize-winning essay from a literary contest held under the auspices of the Jose Rizal National Centennial Commission, Leopoldo Yabes, a professor of English at the University of the Philippines, listed the various disciplines Rizal was allegedly excellent at. This spanned an impressive list, ranging from the literary arts, visual arts, musical arts, languages, philosophy, anthropology, history, government, politics, psychology, sociology, political economy, anatomy, botany, pathology, physiology, zoology, physics, chemistry, geology, geography, meteorology, astronomy to mathematics.³¹² There was nothing the man could not do!

Yet, what accounts for this strength of the Rizal figure? Why has Rizal remained so salient and enduring a symbol for Filipinos? This study has shown how the symbol of Rizal was produced, consumed, and then re-produced among a Filipino public. It argues that symbols are seldom produced by a singular actor, but are often times created by a multiplicity of actors within society. Moreover, once a symbol enters the public imagination, its producers, no matter how hegemonic a grip they may possess over society, lose control over the way it may be appropriated by other segments of society –

³¹¹ Joel Locsin, “DepEd eyes steps to protect Palarong Pambansa athletes from hot weather,” *GMA News Online*, May 2, 2014 <<http://www.gmanetwork.com/news/story/359262/sports/campusports/deped-eyes-steps-to-protect-palarong-pambansa-athletes-from-hot-weather>> Accessed May 4, 2014.

³¹² Leopoldo Y. Yabes, “Rizal, Intellectual and Moral Leader, *A Rizal Anthology* (Manila: National Heroes Commission, 1964), 12-14.

even if these appropriations run counter to its original meanings. As such, symbols are hardly, if ever, homogenous in their meanings, and they frequently serve as sites of contestation over certain discourses.

In the case of the Philippines, the symbol of Rizal was initially produced by two contrasting actors at the turn of the 20th Century: the Philippine revolutionaries fighting for Filipino independence against the Spanish colonizers and the American colonial government trying to defend their occupation of the Philippines. Their use of Rizal was clearly contradictory: the revolutionaries adopted him as a symbol of the struggle for Philippine liberty, while the American imperialists tended to mobilize him in their efforts to justify American rule in the archipelago. Nevertheless, even as these representations opposed one another, the constant perpetuation of the image of Rizal within the public sphere ensured that the figure of Rizal was able to gain a symbolic dominance among the Filipino public. As the Filipino population consumed and further re-produced the Rizal symbol, two differing representations emerged: On the one hand, Filipino elites saw Rizal as the personalization of Western modernity, someone who was both educated and cosmopolitan, and who overturned the inequitable hierarchy between metropole and colony. Rizal was proof that the Filipinos were ‘civilized,’ capable of ruling themselves without the need for American tutelage. On the other hand, the underclass viewed Rizal as their Savior, a Messiah who would return to earth again to save the people from their sufferings. Imbued with a different set of values and ideals, Rizal as the Messiah offered this underclass hope, as well as the possibility of respite from their harsh living conditions. Yet, such representations of Rizal were not necessarily diametrically opposed to one another. In fact, Filipino elites regularly tapped onto religious rhetoric to

strengthen Rizal's relationship with the Philippine nation. At the same time, the underclass also utilized institutions belonging to Western modernity, such as participation in the national elections, as a means of promoting their discourse of modernity.

As the Philippines entered into a new era of independence, the embryonic Philippine state struggled to take control of the discourse on Rizal. Despite its new-found sovereignty, the Philippines' formal entry into the global system of nation-states only made its continued subjugation to the U.S. more intolerable. One way of asserting its parity vis-à-vis the U.S. then, was to draw upon the Filipino elite discourse of Rizal under American colonial rule. At the same time, the Rizal symbol became a means of nation-building. In its bid to be recognized among the global hierarchy of nation-states, the Philippine political elites promoted Rizal as the ideal Filipino, a Filipino who was both indigenous to the Philippines and international in the recognition he was able to obtain. Just like how it was during the pre-independence period, Filipino elites found it in their interests to continue borrowing analogies from the Catholic faith to consolidate the near sacred connection between the Filipino nation and Rizal.

Yet the strength of a symbol also lies in its ability to transcend time and space. Even as Filipinos started migrating abroad in large numbers (particularly to the U.S.) after independence, the Rizal symbol remained salient outside of the Philippine geo-body. The efforts of the Filipino diaspora has ensured that the Rizal figure continues to be visible, even if this merely takes the form of a monument or statue dedicated to Rizal. In Hawaii, where Filipinos constitute the largest ethnic group in the state, the Rizal symbol has acquired a larger meaning for its diasporic community. There is the *Banal Na Angkan*, a religious sect that views Rizal as the Messiah, and the Knights of Rizal, a patriotic and

civic fraternity that aims to honor Rizal by propagating his teachings and ideals. While the *Banal Na Angkan* consists primarily of working-class Filipinos, the Knights of Rizal counts among its members several distinguished and respected leaders of the Filipino community. The latter is also mainly middle-class in orientation, with its members often attaining higher education beyond the college level. A case-study of the two groups thus allows us to observe the mechanics of symbol-making at a local level, between two sets of Filipinos who inhabit very different positions on the social strata. More pertinently however, unlike previous studies that have examined the Rizal symbol solely within the confines of the Philippine geo-body, these two diasporic groups provide us with an opportunity to understand how understandings of the Rizal symbol may evolve across space.

In certain ways, the discourse of Rizal as understood by the *Banal Na Angkan* and the Knights of Rizal seem to find parallels with the narratives developed during the American colonial period. After all, the Knights share similar conceptions of Western modernity with the Filipino elite and state, including that of rationality and education. The *Banal Na Angkan* on the other hand, alienated by such a framework of modernity that marginalizes its members, rejects this version of modernity, emphasizing values such as humility and *loob*. Yet, these two groups also share the common experience of physical dislocation from a Filipino homeland, along with an additional layer of power hierarchy that underpins their inferior position in their host society. As a result, this creates overlapping spaces in their understandings of Rizal that are less pronounced within the Philippine geo-body. Not only is Rizal's international nature underscored and celebrated, the focus of the Filipino homeland is shifted away from the physical

territoriality of the geo-body, only to be relocated in the mobile bodies of the Filipino diaspora. The elite-mass dichotomy is thus complicated, not only among the societal classes among the Filipino diaspora, but also within the Philippines itself. Even though there are differences in the way Rizal is conceived and understood, it is never a clear-cut binary.

While this thesis has attempted to analyze representations of Rizal primarily through the lens of class, one could adopt other frameworks in their analysis as well. One possible area for further research revolves around the way in which Rizalist and Rizalista groups are gendered. While the *Banal Na Angkan* consists primarily of women, the Knights of Rizal is an exclusively all-male fraternity.³¹³ Previous research on Rizalista sects have suggested that the strong female leadership in such groups represent an attempt to return to the matriarchal beliefs of pre-colonial times.³¹⁴ As such, it might be noteworthy to explore the connection between modernity and gender. Race is another potential concept that could be delved in further. For instance, during the pre-independence period, the Filipino diaspora in California the US sought to highlight their “brown-ness” vis-à-vis other Asian migrants because of the “Yellow Peril” that was sweeping through the West Coast at that time. Anti-miscegenation laws within the California civil code forbid “white” people from marrying members of the “negro” and “Mongolian” races. While Filipinos with Spanish ancestry attempted to circumvent this law by claiming that they shared a “white” heritage, the predominant strategy at that time

³¹³ Although the Knights of Rizal do have an all-female auxiliary group known as the Ladies of Rizal, members are usually the spouses of the Knights. The Ladies of Rizal are also not as visible publicly, compared to the Knights of Rizal.

³¹⁴ For example, see Enrique Romualdez Francia, “Women, Nature and Animism,” *Rizal as Anting-Anting: Subversion and Indigenization in Philippine Religious Folk Narratives* (MA Thesis, University of Hawaii at Manoa, 1997), 116-127.

was to argue that Filipinos fell into the “Malay” or “brown” racial category.³¹⁵ Rizal then, was frequently emphasized as being “brown”, or “Malay.” In a similar manner, Rizal is also sometimes depicted as being of Spanish mestizo heritage. Although this is not true – Rizal being a Chinese mestizo himself – it is interesting to consider the way in which Rizal is represented racially, and what this means in terms of race and identity in the Philippines. Going beyond class then, one can also peel back the layers of rhetoric surrounding Rizal to better understand the way in which gender and class interacts on the Philippine stage,

The potency of the Rizal symbol lays in the ability of symbols to evolve away from the original meanings specified by its producers. While symbols are easily transmitted, they are also open to constant re-interpretation and appropriation by different actors within society. The multiplicity of meanings accorded to the Rizal symbol from the very beginning then, had entrenched Rizal as an immediately recognizable signifier in the public consciousness. This makes it an especially effective symbol that cuts across diverse segments of the Filipino population. As such, for the near future at least, we can expect Rizal to remain conspicuous within both the public discourse of the Filipino people. While representations of Rizal may change as historical circumstances evolve, his significance as a Philippine symbol is here to stay.

³¹⁵ For more on race and American colonialism, see Rick Baldoz, ““It is the Fight of This Nation against the Filipinos”: Redrawing Boundaries of Race and Nation,” *The Third Asiatic Invasion: Empire and Migration in Filipino America, 1898-1946* (NY: NYU Press, 2011), 71-112.

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Newspapers

Manila Daily Bulletin

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Appendix 1Untitled *awit*

Translation (Author's own)

Gisingin ang ating loob
 Oh lahi ng taga ilog
 Dugo nila ang nabuhos
 Upang ang bayan ay matubos

Let's rouse our inner beings
 This race that comes from the river
 Their blood has been shed
 For the redemption of the Nation

Sa ngalan ng katuwiran
 Sa bathala sampu sa bayan
 Ipinasasabi ng Amang Rizal
 Sa mga anak ng Bayan

In the name of righteousness
 In the name of the Creator and the
 Nation
 Father Rizal wishes to tell
 The children of the Nation

Sumikat sa silanganan
 Ang banal na kapisanan
 Ang litaw ng katipunan
 Mayaman sa katuwiran

This holy congregation
 This notable gathering
 Rich in righteousness
 Rises in the East

Mga kababayan irog
 Halina't tayo 'y pumasok
 Upang ang bayan ay matubos
 Siya nawa AMEN JESUS

Dear Countrymen
 Come, let us enter
 To redeem the Nation
 AMEN JESUS

Appendix 2

Ama po ay itulot mo

Father, may you let it be (Translated by Ponciano Balicao, with modifications by the author)

Ama po ay itulot mo
Mangyaring dalitin ko
Tanging kapangyarihan mo
Pagtubos mo po sa tao

Father, our ardent prayer
Is that you would let it be
Only your power
Is able to redeem the people

Ikaw po Jehova ang Bathala
Juta (J) ang ngalan mong puspos
Na walang nakakatarok
Ng hiwaga mo pong lubos

You Jevohah God
J (Juta) is your real name
Nothing can match
Your utter mystery

Nanaog ka po sa lupa
Sa tao ay pagka-awa
Nagkatawan tao ka nga
Nagtiis ka ng dalita

You came down to earth
Because you have mercy on your people
You became like man
You endured the agony

Nag-ngalan ka po ng Jesus
Juta (J) ang ngalan mong puspos
Nagmukhang tao kahit Bathala

Your name is Jesus
J (Juta) is your real name
You took on the appearance of man
Despite being God
In order that we might be redeemed

Upang kami ay matubos

Ngunit ikaw po ay pinatay
Yaong mga talampalasan
Ang akala'y taong tunay
Ikaw Amang walang hanggan

Yet, they killed you
Those who betrayed you
They thought you are just a man
You, everlasting Father

Muli ngang ikaw nanaog
Ditto sa mundong mabilog
Nagngalan kang Jose ng bantog
Juta (J) ang ngalan mong puspos

You came down again
To this hostile world
Your name is great, Jose
J (Juta) is your real name

Ngunit ikaw ay pinatay din
Ninyong mga lilo't taksil
Pagtubos mo po sa amin
Tutuong pagka-alipin

Yet, they killed you too
Liars and traitors
For you set us free
From bondage as servants

Jose Rizal kang pinatay
 Pagtubos sa kaalipinan
 Bayani ka nga pong tunay
 Kristo ng katagalogan

Ngunit makalilibo man
 Ang buhay mong ipapatay
 Ikaw amang walang kamatayan
 Ngayon at kalian pa man

Jehova, Jesus, at Jose
 Kayong tatlo ay iisa
 Ngala'y pinag-iba-iba
 Upang hindi makilala

Jose, Jesus, at Jehova
 Lumalang sa buong orbe
 Bathalang makalawingi
 Huwag mo po kaming iwaksi

Pinupuri kang walang tahan
 Ng iyong mga hinirang
 Aming pong inaasahan
 Buhay na walang hanggan

Gayon din upang ang Ama
 Natin hindi nakikita
 Ay patawarin naman tayo
 Ng buong puso

Sa iyo ang kaharian
 Kapangyarihan, at kaluwalhatian
 Sa lahat ng panahon

Jose Rizal, they killed you
 Who freed your people from slavery
 You are a real hero
 Jesus Christ of the Filipinos

Yet, though your life and death
 May be a mystery
 You will never die
 Now and forever

Jehovah, Jesus, and Jose
 The three of you are one
 Your names are different
 So that it will not be recognized

Jose, Jesus, and Jehovah
 Created heaven and earth
 You are a powerful God
 Please do not abandon us

We praise you endlessly
 We your chosen people
 We are hoping for
 Eternal life

So that our beloved Father
 Whom we cannot see
 Will forgive us
 Whole-heartedly

For yours is the kingdom,
 The glory, and the power
 For now and forever