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Journey to Majayjay

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understanding. Not only is there much visual excitement in the photographs. There is much joy and exhilaration in Torres' language. In its unique way, *Jeepney* has opened up new areas of study for those who perceive in indigenous artifacts structures of meaning which bind the community.

Soledad S. Reyes

JOURNEY TO MAJAYJAY. By Paul P. de la Gironiere. Translated by E. Aguilar Cruz. Manila: National Historical Institute, 1983. 61 pages.

Journey to Majayjay is as much the journey of the mind of a man certain of the nearness of death as it may be the unified account of several actual trips from Calauang to Majayjay in Laguna, the various episodes having been spliced together to appear like a single trip.

The French original was first published in Nantes, France, in 1862. The author muses philosophically about nature's inexorable cycle of life and death, of his "constant headaches" which convinced him he was "suffering from mortal ailment" (p. 59). He died three years after the publication of his book.

Although a Frenchman, he lived many years as a gentleman farmer in Laguna, and he was no stranger to the forests and rivers he has written about with lyrical affection. It is as an account of real trips and conversations on Philippine soil with real Filipinos in mid-nineteenth century that the book acquires historical value. He reports the poignant story of a woman tortured by *tulisanes* to force her to reveal the hiding place of her treasures while the neighbors watch helplessly. Finding what they came for, they depart with all the family jewelry, excepting those "most beautiful diamonds . . . ornamenting the vestments of the Christ . . ." which they spare because of reverence! (p. 41).

Arcos, Gironiere's servant and traveling companion, was once a *tulisan* himself, and he explains why. The *indio* boy after his twelfth year "takes turns with other youths of his age as a servant of the curate's household. . ." (p. 21). At eighteen, he is charged taxes, and must render "40 days of labor every year for the maintenance of the highways . . ." (p. 23). The rich pay three pesos and are exempted, "so the work is borne entirely by the poor" (*ibid*). Plus a plethora of other monetary collections, including payment for passes in order to be allowed to leave one's town. Then follow seven years of military service after which they "return to their homes without the enjoyment of any privilege whatsoever" (*ibid*).

Also, we may not smoke tobacco or take a little coconut wine to brace us up without having to pay six times as much as the government pays us for these commodities when it takes them from us (p. 23).

As official collections pile one on top of another, as Arcos says, "it is impossible not to go into debt, and debts lead to prison" (p. 25). There is, of course, a way to keep away from the government prison house:

When we are deeply in debt, hunted by all the authorities of the town, one solution remains: partnership with a rich man by farming his land: he settles our debts, supplies working equipment, and one or two carabaos. We share the harvest half-and-half; out of our share he deducts what he has advanced; usually this share is not enough to repay him, and the difference is carried over to the following year.

The *kasamahan*, as we call this partnership, is a hellish life for the poor man, who is enslaved for the rest of his days, since the rich man invariably arranges matters so that his partner remains his debtor forever (p. 27).

To escape this desperate enslavement, the indio, like Arcos, resorts to stealing by himself alone until finally, tired of the unprofitability of his petty crimes, or perhaps becoming a fugitive from the law, he would try "another profession, that of brigand—*tulisan*" (ibid).

There is even a freshness, a very contemporary ring to the account of how the *tulisanes* of over a century ago managed to live their double lives:

By and large, *tulisanes* are unknown, except some of their chiefs; all their men are under cover and have all the appearance of living peacefully in their homes. But when there is a strike to be made they are notified by the chief's messengers (usually women) and they gather at night in a wood, and the chief leads them where he expects to make a rich haul. If he succeeds, the loot is divided and each one returns home by a different route (p. 27).

There were good times, too, even if chiefly by the grace of the parish priest, or the *gobernadorcillo* or of improvidence! There were nights of festive food, music, dance, and general merriment—especially during the harvest season.

... the rice and sugar harvests occur in the same season of the year—the improvident native, reaping the benefits at once, hastens to make use of them without thinking of tomorrow, and spends part of the year in want (p. 39).

The servant Arcos' version echoes Gironiere's observation:

... we don't know what foresight means; no sooner have we gotten hold of a peso than we hasten to spend it without even asking whether we shall have rice for the morrow. We always depend on providence, and often she fails us (p. 25).

It was a commonplace among Spaniards to explain the destitution of the indios with their supposed laziness. (Three decades after Gironiere, Rizal had to write his "Sobre la Indolencia de los Filipinos" as an *apologia*.) Confronted with the question, Arcos (whom one suspects to be Gironiere's *alter persona*) answers, ". . . the rich indio is . . . lazy; but in general the poor folk work as much as our climate permits . . ." and "we are so unfortunate that it is not surprising if now and then we seek to appropriate some of the wealth that is so badly distributed over the earth" (p. 21).

Gironiere admits that there were friars unworthy of their office, but he has much kinder words, even reverence for them, than Rizal and Marcelo del Pilar had three decades later (p. 45). He believes much of the woes of the Spanish government in the Philippines that led it to be oppressive was due to gross economic mismanagement (pp. 29-30).

Quite appropriately, to close this account of both a journey of a soul that knows his days are numbered, and of an excursion over the lovely pristine terrain of Laguna in mid-nineteenth century, he writes:

. . . I go blameless where my God, my Savior bids me, [and] must therefore face the prospect of death calmly and have no regrets over leaving this world except for the tender affections [I leave] behind.

I was still lost in these consoling thoughts which greatly lessened the pain of my violent headaches, when I was obliged to dismount. I had reached home (p. 60).

The book design is handsome, and Cruz's translation is very readable. There are occasional slips of the proofreader (e.g., "to" is missing on the eighth line on p. 9; "waterful" on p. 45 is probably "waterfall"). I have been unable to see the original French edition to check on whether those lovely graphic illustrations are original or not, or had explanatory captions—but I certainly wish they were captioned in this edition. (I think I have seen some of the illustrations in other publications.) Those who loved Gironiere's *Twenty Years in the Philippines* will find this volume a welcome addition. It certainly adds to the growing number of nineteenth century ethnography of the Philippines now available to the English reading public.

Florentino H. Hornedo