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Philippine History in a Capsule

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Book Reviews

PHILIPPINE HISTORY IN A CAPSULE

AN INTRODUCTION TO PHILIPPINE HISTORY. By Jose S. Arcilla, S.J.
Manila: Ateneo Publications Office, 1971. vii, 137 pp.

It is not easy to write a brief summary of Philippine history. The past four hundred years have been not only tumultuous but also multi-directional in development. There are so many threads sticking out in every direction—political, social, economic, cultural, religious—that it is difficult to gather them together into a readable coherent narrative.

That is what Father Arcilla has succeeded in doing: his slender volume of 137 pages has gathered the threads together and woven them into a coherent summary. It is a readable book, for it is written in the simple conversational style that marks the truly educated scholar.

This book does not pretend to be a profound analysis of the Philippine experience. It is rather a brief statement of some of the main events and factors of that experience. What a multitude of items are included in Philippine history! Items as incongruous as the Philippine Revolution and the NCAA games! as diverse as the problem of the native clergy and the growth of the sugar industry; as contrary in direction as the Hispanization of Philippine culture and its subsequent Americanization.

They are all here, briefly stated. Scholars may quarrel with the perspective of this book; or they may disagree with the interpretation of this or that detail. This reviewer laments the lack of an index. A bibliography might also have been added—although that is a very difficult thing to give in summary form.

But this book is intended for beginners—those who know little or nothing about Philippine history (whose number—alas—is legion). For such beginners (native or foreign) this book is highly recommended.

MIGUEL A. BERNAD