

# philippine studies

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## **Coates: Rizal: Philippine Nationalist and Martyr**

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Before dealing with the appendix it would be fair to say how easy it is to read this book. It would seem that the book was primarily written for school teachers, guidance staff and administrators. It carries none of the jargon used in long clinical diagnoses identifying emotionally disturbed children. The style is lucid and at times one or two of the puns, intentional or otherwise, border on the jocund.

The appendix contains parts of a California kit entitled "A Process for In-School Screening of Children with Emotional Handicap", based upon information easily elicited from the classroom; with proper application, the screening processes can easily be interpreted to a layman. The screening ranges from Kindergarten to Grade 12.

The main 'instruments' used are 1) Behavior Rating of Pupils—by teachers, 2) Class Pictures—a peer rating, 3) A Picture Game—a self rating, 4) A Screening—combination of the previous scores, 5) A Class Play—a peer rating, 6) Thinking About Yourself, 7) Screening, 8) Student Survey, 9) A Self Test, and 10) A Final Screening. Rating scales, instructions, and work sheets are also given.

The kit is just the sort of thing that the field has been waiting for—not a diagnostic instrument but a straight-forward method to screen-out emotionally handicapped children. Such a process—requiring little psychological 'know-how', but rather conscientiousness and prudence, — could be a teacher's Baedeker.

A 'Preventive Program', based upon Bower's tools, could forestall a 'Curative Program'.

DENNIS BRAMMER

## ON RIZAL'S ROLE IN PHILIPPINE NATIONALISM

RIZAL: PHILIPPINE NATIONALIST AND MARTYR, by Austin Coates. London: Oxford University Press, 1968. xxxii, 378 pp.

The place of Jose Rizal in the formation of Filipino nationalism is secure. His propaganda activity in Europe, crystallized in his two novels, *Noli Me Tangere* and *El Filibusterismo* earned him the wrath of the Spanish government in Manila and the respect of his fellow-countrymen. Mr. Coates' biography of Rizal has laudably attempted to assess Rizal's role in the Propaganda Movement and his influence on the development of nationalism. The author has given us an

extremely readable biography. One moves almost effortlessly through the main periods of Rizal's eventful life. Some of Coates' insights into the actions of the national here are truly perceptive and throw light on the motivation and events of Rizal's short life.

However, the book is marred by an abundance of errors of fact. On the very first page of the text we are told that "gold" from Mexico financed the colonial government. The galleons from Acapulco, of course, brought Mexican and Peruvian silver. On the same page we are informed that Chinese from Manila traded by junk with their native land. Chinese from the mainland did this; Manila Chinese were either retailers, craftsmen, or, in the nineteenth century, middlemen. Unless the "Rice Basket" of the Philippines has a hole in it, it is still in Pampanga-Nueva Ecija-Tarlac, not in Calamba (p. 7). Coates continually refers to the College of San Jose as Dominican-run (p. 23 and *passim*). Neither the Secular Clergy nor especially Fr. Burgos would agree. The law ordering the change of surnames was authorized by Governor Claveria in 1849, not as Coates has it (p. 6, note 1). The ports of Iloilo, Sual and Cebu were first opened in 1855, not 1834 (p. 24). The author could not find any document on the Cavite Mutiny. Apparently he did not look in the National Archives, Manila, which has two fat bundles on the 1872 uprising, nor in the Archdiocesan Archives of Manila, nor in the *Servicio Histórico Militar*, Madrid, all of which have a good sprinkling of documents on the subject. And so on. One can only conclude that Mr. Coates is not familiar with the essential facts of Philippine history, or the reader assigned the task of reviewing the manuscript was equally uninformed.

The book is poorly footnoted. At times the sources of statements and ideas are given, at other times not. So one does not know whether the thought is Rizal's or Coates'. When one does succeed in tracing down a source, one is surprised at the liberty with which the author uses it. For example, no source is given for the important statement that Trinidad Rizal did not attend a Mass for her deceased brother in the Jesuit Church. The only source for this could be the interviews with Trinidad Rizal, printed in Jesus Maria Cavanna's *Rizal's Unfading Glory* (Manila, 1952), pp. 141, 158-162, a book cited by Coates in another place. But one is surprised when one compares Trinidad Rizal's statement with Coates' account.

If the author did not use as his source the statements of Trinidad Rizal printed in Cavanna then he should have pointed out that her statements differ considerably from his own version, which he then should have justified. There are numerous other instances where Coates completely disregards evidence contradicting his own version. Such evidence should at least be noted, if he was aware of its existence.

Another example of Coates' curious use of sources occurs in his treatment of the "Retraction." Coates believes that the Jesuit, Vicente Balaguer, fabricated the retraction because he may have been "sub-consciously irked by Rizal's possession of the talent he himself longed for" (p. 344). Obtaining a retraction would place him a notch or two above Rizal. In support of this Coates does not produce any documentary evidence, but an elaborate and highly imaginative reconstruction of events the night before Rizal's execution. In order to perpetrate his fraud Balaguer is said to have rushed to the Jesuit superior, Pío Pi, with the unsigned retraction document, hoping that Pi would overlook the fact that it was unsigned and carry it to the Archbishop, thinking that Balaguer made a mistake in the confusion and would later give him the signed version. Before the Jesuit Superior or the Archbishop realizes what has really happened, Balaguer spreads the false tale that Rizal has retracted. The key point here, therefore, is whether Pi recognized the retraction as unsigned. Coates says that he did recognize the document as unsigned and Pi was careful later only to admit that he received the document. Pi, says Coates, "does not say whether Rizal had signed it" (p. 329). Either Mr. Coates does not know how to read Spanish or he has deliberately misread the facts, since Pío Pi states quite clearly in his sworn statement of April 7, 1917, that Balaguer gave to him the signed holograph of the retraction.

Mr. Coates dismisses the alleged retraction of 1935 as a forgery, probably perpetrated by Ramon Roque.

Whether Rizal actually retracted as claimed is beyond the capacity of the present reviewer to decide. Coates' treatment however, is highly questionable. It is not based on any documentary sources and a number of statements in his reconstruction are false. Perhaps if Mr. Coates has seen the accounts of the last night, December 29-30, which are preserved in the Jesuit Archives of Barcelona (San Cugat del Valles) or the letters in the Jesuit Archives of Manila (Loyola House of Studies, Ateneo de Manila University), his account might have been considerably revised.

Mr. Coates has a facile pen and he could have given us a magnificent study of Rizal. Unfortunately, his knowledge of Philippine history is extremely limited, his methodology is questionable, and his documentary sources few. Apparently he has relied heavily on the standard biographies of Leon Maria Guerrero, *The First Filipino*, and Rafael Palma, *The Pride of the Malay Race*, but nowhere are these authors cited in the text. He also relies heavily on his imagination, an excellent instrument for the novelist, but not for the historian.