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On the Human in the Filipino Landscape: History Against the Landscape

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for lending aid and comfort to the enemy in time of war, but Hoar was not fazed.

As may be evident from the brief summary of its contents, the book is primarily concerned with American history, with analyzing an example of conservative dissent and its value in American life at a turning point in the history of the United States. Nonetheless, the book is likewise of interest to the historian of the Philippines for the background it gives for the history of the resistance to the American occupation. There is no doubt that the campaign of the anti-imperialists gave encouragement to Aguinaldo and other Filipino leaders to hold out in the face of overpowering military strength, in the hope that the anti-imperialists might be able to defeat McKinley in the elections of 1900 and bring about American recognition of Philippine independence. Beisner's study makes clear, however, that not all of the anti-imperialists were, like Hoar, to be accounted friends of the Filipinos. Indeed some were certainly much less friends than some of those who had joined the advocates of expansionism out of a sincere, if rather patronizing, desire to bring progress to the Philippines. A reading of this well-written and painstakingly researched book will cast considerable light on the course of Filipino-American relations at the turn of the century.

JOHN N. SCHUMACHER

ON THE HUMAN IN THE FILIPINO LANDSCAPE

HISTORY AGAINST THE LANDSCAPE: Personal and Historical Essays about the Philippines. by Miguel A. Bernad, S.J. Manila: Solidaridad Publishing House, 1968. x, 175 pp.

Father Bernad's latest book, *History Against the Landscape*, is a collection of literate, scholarly, and human essays about the Philippines "written at various times and in varying moods over a period of about ten years." Modestly characterized by the author as "personal essays with a historical background," they are travelogue and history, record and comment, full of scholarly fact and alive with personal insight.

The first section deals with relatively slight and discrete material, previously published for popular consumption in magazines like the *Graphic*, the *Chronicle*, and the *Sunday Times Magazine*. The second section, previously published in *Solidarity*, probes into "Mindoro and its Tumultuous Past". The third section paints close-up portraits of four Philippine mountains: *Apo*, the mysterious mountain; *Manung-gal*, that claimed the life of a Philippine President; *Canlaon*,

with its "caldera" like an amphitheater; and the beautiful *Mayon*. The fourth section recounts the saga of *Pangil Bay* and the founding of Misamis. The painstaking scholarship of the book, manifest throughout, is especially striking in these last two sections, previously published in *Philippine Studies*. As may be surmised, appeal and style vary for the various audiences these essays have had; but execution is uniformly excellent.

As readers familiar with Father Bernad may now rightfully expect, his narrative moves with casual but telling effect. When he speaks of the siege of Tandag, "on the first of December 1754, on a rainy morning," the terror, the heroism, the sounds of battle come alive:

As the loud pounding at the outside gate continued, it was clear that there was now no more hope. Nothing was in store for them except slavery or death. The lieutenant ordered his wife to put on her best clothes and to wear all her jewelry: and as the main gate came crashing down and the Muslims poured into the triangular courtyard, the lieutenant, within the armory, slew his wife with a cutlass (*chafarote*). He then opened the door and went out into the courtyard and was promptly hacked to pieces by the Muslims.

In addition to the swift, spare, vivid narrative, the book bristles with remarkable scholarship. Father Bernad proves the contention that men with large horizons of mind are often the most patient and respectful of detail. He pursues minutiae with persistence, though never losing sight of the whole. He cannot climb *Canlaon* without tracing the origins of its name. Having found out that it was named after a Sicilian nobleman, Alejandro Malaspina, "one of the most remarkable men who ever sailed the seas," he goes on to discover that at least three other geographical places in the world have been named after him. To flesh out documents with atmosphere, he will go to the Ilocos to find *Maoakoakur* and *Payao* and *Tipkal*—to ascertain for himself how, at the latter place, Filipino guerrillas could harass for months American troops moving from Vigan to Laoag. The annotations to the four-part essay on Mindoro, the Island of Gold (*mina de oro*), prove the painstaking research involved in piecing together a historical whole. The account of *Mt. Apo* includes a treatise on each expedition since 1852 which tried to scale its mysterious sulfuric heights.

For such careful historical spadework characteristic of the best monograph work, already splendid achievement in itself, Father Bernad deserves the gratitude of other historians who may cover this same ground after him. However, perhaps because of the intrinsic limitation of the discrete material, he does not go into larger historical

interpretation. Whether the reader manages, at the anticipated guidance of Father Bernad, to "see beyond the physical features of the landscape into the human factors affected by it" (as the Foreword suggests) seems more a matter of the reader's own synthetic grasp. The groundwork is there, the labyrinth fully explored, but the thread withheld. One waits for the explicit statement that will fuse the parts into an interpreted whole; one gets only brief, prismatic flashes of the author's insight. True, they are brilliant with the colors of his own particular vision, but they are fragments. In this respect, this reviewer wishes that Father Bernad were less prone to understatement.

Worthy of mention, too, is the frequent attempt to relate local to transcendental experience. The Old Man of *Nasugbu* recalls Falstaff; *Mayon*, "immaterial like a disembodied triangle," recalls Edna St. Vincent Millay's "Euclid alone has looked on Beauty bare"; and Gerard Manley Hopkins must support a plea to treat the Visayan language with respect.

Several of these attempts will strike some readers as far-fetched. But, even so, they point the way to what is perhaps the real significance of this book. For more important than its short comings and more important than even its virtues, is the particular spirit in which this book was written.

That spirit might be called love and pride of place. In Father Bernad's vision, all human experience is one. Nothing is of dubious value; each contributes its own being to the whole. The Philippines does not exist in isolation, it has its own unique contribution to the experience of man. It is this spirit, this attitude, which suffuses the book with relevance.

Because of it, the belief of the simple folk of the *Bukidnon* highlands that the body of a baptized person will not be harmed even in death, because God takes care of it, is recorded. The traditional serenade on the Eve of All Soul's Day in *Pinamalayan* town, the practice of *Pangangalulua*, is given its meed of respect. The coffin bearers who would not accept payment for their services upon learning it was the corpse of a priest they had been carrying on their shoulders, reflect a national reverence for the cloth. And the compassionate eye of the author does not fail to note the deep disappointment his unthinking refusal causes an old woman of the mountains who has just offered him three chicken eggs—"all her substance."

In this book, the humanist and nationalist vision merges with that of the Christian seer. Human values, nurtured and refined by a cultural tradition, find full meaning in religion. The Holy Sacrifice

of the Mass caps the ascent of *Apo* and *Canlaon* and *Manung-gal*. Baptism offers comfort for the parents of a baby who dies because it takes four hours to traverse 63 kilometers of horrible road between *Don Carlos* and *Malaybalay*. And the *Bukidnon* Christians' funeral chant of the Apostles' Creed becomes vigorous affirmation of belief in eternal life.

This book then is more than history. It is testament: to the essential value of every human experience; to the beauty of one's country; to the culture of one's people. Without so saying in explicit terms, Father Bernad in effect says that each is worthy of personal experiencing, each is worthy of the scholar's scrutiny, each is worthy of place in the sum of human experience.

In these our hurried and harassed times, when material and numerable achievement seems to be the ideal of most, it is refreshing to come across a man who is not too busy to discover his own country. For Father Bernad does not merely talk about the landscape; he has walked it. The force of his witness is not in his statements; it is in his example. The gentle Francis of Assisi did not merely preach the need to perceive Christ in one's brother; he went and embraced the leper. For words have their force, but personal commitment speaks simply and startlingly.

There will be those who will regret that Father Bernad does not turn his remarkable talent more profitably to matters "of greater consequence" than, for example, to climbing mountains. To these there is no rational rejoinder, except perhaps to point out to them that which all men intuit and instinctively understand: that one cannot really love that for which one has no time. In the words of that wise and wonderful fairy-tale for adults by Saint-Exupéry, *The Little Prince*, "One only understands the things that one tames. [Alas,] men have no more time to understand anything."

Perhaps, to understand our history and our landscape, it is only necessary to put on the wonder-windowed eyes of childhood again.

In this sense, Father Bernad is more than a "trained historian and stylist with a keen eye and a strong command of English," as one American reviewer has written of him. "The interpreter of his country to many lands" that Australian Ambassador Alfred Stirling makes him out, he is essentially a humanist, in love with his country and his people. He shows us by example how to look at ourselves and our heritage: with compassion, with pride, with Christian vision, carefully, without haste.