

Preface

José Rizal (1861–1896), the celebrated Filipino intellectual, is well-known in Southeast Asia but less so in Europe. It is regrettable that his work, which includes novels, political essays and poems, is not better known. His contributions to Spanish literature and beyond are significant and worth reading in the original language. What is more, he was one of the few who spoke out against colonialism during the heyday of European imperialism. Unfortunately, the Spanish Crown responded to his actions with a trial considered scandalous by many, and – even more scandalous – with a death sentence.

The texts in my collection draw from and expand upon the themes explored in my biography, *José Rizals Kampf um Leben und Tod*, which was first published in 2021 (and was updated in a second edition in 2025). Writing my readings in English seems appropriate to me, particularly after meeting the representatives of a Filipino cultural delegation in Heidelberg in October 2024. It would be fair to say that knowledge of German, which Rizal spoke and wrote admirably well, is not as widely spoken or written in the Philippines as it could be and this at times stands in the way of a true engagement in his ideas.

English, on the other hand, serves as an official language in the Philippines and hence offers itself as a viable bridge of communication. I believe it is important to engage in dialogue with the country that celebrates Rizal as a national hero. As a foreigner I perceive the hero cult with a certain distance and sometimes with bewilderment. However, it is precisely the gulf between these points of view that could po-

tentially contribute to a broader understanding of the subject, which, if carried out in a common language, could perhaps produce some inspiring cross-border interpretations.

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D. H.