

# Utopia and Apocalypticism

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## The Philippines a century hence

In his utopian essay, “Filipinas dentro de cien años” (*The Philippines a century hence*) Rizal sketches in a few strokes the supposed level of development of the archipelago’s pre-colonial culture and the reasons for its decline. This seemingly innocuous text starts with the maxim: “If you want to read the destiny of peoples, you have to open the book of their past”, and continues:

The past of the Philippines can be summed up as follows: Barely incorporated into the Spanish Crown, the Philippines had to support with their blood and with the efforts of their children the wars and the conquering ambitions of the Spanish people. In these struggles, in that terrible crisis of peoples when they change their government, laws, customs, traditions, religion and beliefs, the Philippines became depopulated, impoverished and backward. Since the shock of this metamorphosis, they no longer have confidence in their past, no longer believe in their present and have no promising hope for the future.<sup>1</sup>

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1 “Para leer en el destino de los pueblos, es menester abrir el libro de su pasado. El pasado de Filipinas se reduce en grandes rasgos á lo que sigue: Incorporadas apenas á la Corona Española, tuvieron que sostener con su sangre y con los esfuerzos de sus hijos las guerras y las ambiciones conquis-

Here a Filipino reduces the turbulent history of his country to the grey colour of decay. This is, of course, not a “book of the past”, but it can certainly be read as a summary of the last 300 years. The author leaves no doubt as to the cause of the decay: colonialist annexation and the violence that accompanied it, including the exploitation of Filipino manpower. To bring it to the point: The violence inflicted on the Philippines was not only physical, but also cultural, in the form of missionary work to destroy the distinctive and identity-forming traditions of the indigenous peoples. The decimation of the male population through forced Spanish military service not only disrupted the succession of generations, it also weakened the economic potential for reproduction, while the loss of lived cultural memory left the existential question of ‘where from’ and ‘where to’ unanswered.

This is a rather harsh view of the course of history that circumscribes what can be understood as a discontinuity in the process of historical development, as a radical break with the past. At first glance, Rizal seems to blame the onslaught of the intruder’s violence for the misery of the Philippine present. But this is not the case, because in the Utopia-essay he does not solely blame the colonial regime for the decline. Rather, he also laments the disunity of the Filipinos, which caused attempts at resistance to fail or not even emerge in first place. Consequently, he believes that the history of the Philippines’ decline includes not only the violence of the colonial rulers, but also the resigned self-abandonment and paralysing hopelessness of the colonised:

But for those who, disillusioned by sad experiences, saw everywhere confusion and disorder, apathy and brutalisation in the lower classes, discouragement and disunity in the higher ones, there was only one answer, and

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tadoras del pueblo español, y en estas luchas, en esa crisis terrible de los pueblos cuando cambian de gobierno, de leyes, de usos, costumbres, religión y creencias, las Filipinas se despoblaron, empobrecieron y atrasaron, sorprendidas en su metamorfosis, sin confianza ya en su pasado, sin fe aun en su presente y sin ninguna lisonjera esperanza en los venideros días.” *La Solidaridad*, Nr. 16, 30 September 1889 – Cited from José Rizal: *Escritos políticos e históricos*. Manila 1961, 136

that was to put their hands on the chains, to bow their necks, to submit to the yoke, and to accept the future with the resignation of a sick man who sees the leaves fall and foresees a long winter, among its snows he glimpses the edges of his grave. In those days, confusion was the cause of pessimism; a new generation, brought up in chains, adapted better and better to the new state of affairs.<sup>2</sup>

Comparing this lament with the end of the Indolence-essay,<sup>3</sup> it is clear that Rizal saw little hope for change in the present circumstances. The question arises as to how he intended to overcome the prevailing pessimism in favour of an optimism full of action. Before outlining his answers, I would like to take a closer look at the figure of thought that structures his Utopia-essay.

I don't refrain to call this way of thinking 'apocalyptic'. What does that mean? Well, in the Johannine sense, the apocalypse describes a future revelation that symbolises a new – messianically speaking – transcendent order from the downfall of an old one: the attack of the Antichrist from below calls the victorious heavenly forces of redemption into this battle, at the end of which a Golden Jerusalem rises from the world conflagration, replacing the old sinful order, and so on. The apocalyptic figure of thought is thus based on the idea that the path to freedom necessarily leads through a viper's pit, where human dignity does not count, but only what Rizal repeatedly describes as *embrutecimiento* (brutalisation). Applied to his construction of history, this means that at the lowest point of their subjugation, the Filipinos

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2 "Empero, para el que, desengañado a fuerza de tristes experiencias, veía en todas partes desconcierto y desorden, apatía y embrutecimiento en las clases inferiores, desaliento y desunión en las elevadas, sólo se presentaba una respuesta y era: tender las manos a las cadenas, baja el cuello para someterlo al yugo y aceptar el porvenir con la resignación de un enfermo que ve caer las hojas y presiente un largo invierno, entre cuyas nieves entrevé los bordes de su fosa. Entonces el desconcierto era la razón del pesimismo; pasaron nueva generación, procreada entre las cadenas, se adaptó cada vez mejor al nuevo estado de las cosas." Escritos políticos 1961, 139

3 J. Rizal: "Sobre la Indolencia de los Filipinos." Published as a series in: *La Solidaridad* 1890.

finally discovered the source of energy that fuelled their resistance to their oppressors: “So what they thought would be death turned out to be their salvation.”<sup>4</sup>

However, the apocalyptic understanding of ‘salvation’ is not reflected in this term alone and in no way corresponds to the revolutionary war advocated by the hawks. This, as Rizal is painfully aware, only leads to self-destruction and thus far from the utopian Jerusalem in whose golden centre the Filipinos are supposed to find themselves. Yet, coming to oneself requires the long breath of self-assurance, which leads to the study of one’s own history and requires – Rizal is convinced – the intellectual guidance of the *ilustrados*.

### Technical, political and moral transformation

Rizal attributes the conditions that have had a lasting effect, creatively altering the official history and thus the country’s vision of the future, to two profound spurts of development characteristic of the process of modernisation that transformed the social structures of traditional communities: The constitution of an educated bourgeois elite (forerunner of the middle class) and communication between social spaces that were geographically, ethnically and linguistically distant. Rizal’s essay mentions steam navigation and telegraphy, for example, as the most important technical requirements for the comparatively quick spread of cross-border communication. As a frequent traveller between the continents, he was familiar with both. By the early 1880s at the latest, a telegraph cable had been in operation between the British crown colony of Hong Kong – where he and his family occasionally sought refuge – and Manila. In *Noli me tangere* even the naive villagers are allowed to characterise the telegraph operator as a man who, unlike the writer, talks through wires.<sup>5</sup> And in a satirical sketch called

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4 “Entonces esto que creyeron que iba a ser la muerte fue precisamente su salvación.” *Escritos políticos* 1961, 138

5 J. Rizal: *Noli me tangere*. Berlin 1887, 200

*Por Teléfono*,<sup>6</sup> Rizal has the monks of Manila talking so loudly on the phone to their superiors in Madrid that the smacking, chewing and slurping noises of the friars at a meal in the Philippine refectory can be heard very clearly in Spain.

Rizal argues that, in the long run, the islanders' knowledge of the world has expanded, not least because of increasing economic mobility. This has encouraged the direct exchange of experiences (*cambio de impresiones*), to which the growing number of Filipinos travelling abroad has also contributed, who, faced with "modern freedoms" (*espéctaculos de las libertades modernas*), have become aware of the misery in their country and are now united in demanding change. At this point, it is worth recalling the useful work of the *demonio de las comparaciones*,<sup>7</sup> since it was the comparison of the precarious conditions in one's own country with the state of developed societies that provided the starting point of these reflections.

Against this background, Rizal's statement about a 'logic' in the process of history seems at first strange, especially since its regularity – he believed – was unfathomable, but governments should nevertheless adapt to this 'logic' if they did not want to react haphazardly to coincidences. I suspect that this view of historical 'logic' coincides with the motor of progress that Rizal assumed would prevail against all odds once the colonial regime came to its senses: "En suma, pues, el adelanto y el progreso moral de Filipinas es inevitable, es fatal". (*In short, the development and moral progress of the Philippines is inevitable, even fateful.*)<sup>8</sup>

Once again we are not talking about technical progress, but about what Rizal deliberately called 'moral progress', which summarises the spheres of value of practical coexistence. The catalogue of principles of action that he found in the French Declaration of Human Rights

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6 A pamphlet published in Barcelona 1889 under the pseudonym Dimas Alang.

7 'The demon of comparisons' is an image that the narrator uses in *Noli me tângere* (1887, 43), to characterise the perceptions of the novel's hero Ibarra, who has returned to the Philippines after a long period of study in Europe.

8 J. Rizal: *Escritos políticos*. Manila 1961, 164 ff.

of August 1789, which he translated into Tagalog, formed a universally valid context for moral and political progress, not least freedom of thought and speech, freedom of the press and freedom of assembly. But he gave the value, belonging to the core of civilisation and transcending all practical norms, the form of a sentence that was almost carved in stone: “La Justicia es la virtud primera de las razas civilizadas” (*Justice is the first virtue of civilised peoples.*)<sup>9</sup> This is a challenge to the European colonial powers who boasted of bringing civilisation to the ‘primitive peoples’. Rizal was one of the first to criticise the inhumane policies of a European colonial regime by referring to the French *Déclaration des droits de l’homme et du citoyen*. This is all the more remarkable because in doing so he ascribed to the *Declaration* a universal validity that transcends national interests, with which its revolutionary authors had nothing to do.

Rizal’s appeal to human rights is not merely theoretical. It encompasses both the critique of the colonial system’s injustice and the concept of moral progress. Human rights, as a comprehensive concept, extend beyond a mere collection of fundamental rights, incorporating what Amartya Sen terms the ethical claim to freedom and justice:

Human rights are ethical claims constitutively linked with the importance of human freedom, and the robustness of an argument that a particular claim can be seen as a human right has to be assessed through the scrutiny of public reasoning, involving open impartiality.<sup>10</sup>

At first glance, Rizal’s construction of Philippine colonial history as a history of decay and his belief in ‘moral progress’ do not seem to fit together. Indeed, they seem to contradict each other. After all, the decay he deplures is not least the spirit of subservience and the resulting lack of resistance among his countrymen. It is true that the causes of this kind of ‘moral decay’ – as he never tires of pointing out – lie in the oppressive power of the colonial regime. In the words of the hermit Florentino in the novel *El Filibusterismo*: “A gobierno

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9 Escritos políticos 1961, 147

10 Amartya Sen: *The Idea of Justice*. London 2009, 365 f.

inmoral corresponde un pueblo desmoralizado” (*An immoral government corresponds to a demoralised people*).<sup>11</sup> Against the backdrop of such a diagnosis, the patient’s progress towards what constitutes civility and uprightness in order to advance self-liberation seems all the more questionable.

If we take seriously the attribution of these conditions to the apocalyptic turn, what is required is not patience but the courage to make the leap from a submissive attitude to one of rebellion. This presupposes the experience of the deepest, most hopeless humiliation. There is no question that Rizal favours progress, in other words the patient *learning process*, but he by no means rules out the apocalyptic leap. He warns the Spanish government against it, encouraging it to give the colonised a voice and a vote in order to do justice to them.

I tend to see the two views as complementary possibilities, one linked to the author’s ideal, the other to the threat of rebellion. Neither active opposition to oppression nor learning for a better future make each other superfluous. In this respect, what Rizal writes in the Utopia-essay – as in other of his political writings – should not be misunderstood as a literary finger exercise. It is rather part of the rhetorical and appealing commitment he shared with his *ilustrado* comrades. Let us not forget: The idea of a ‘moral progress’ goes hand in hand with political progress in terms of justice and free self-determination. Rizal returned to this point repeatedly when he demanded that the Philippines be represented in the Spanish parliament, the Cortes, as stipulated in the Constitution. Although he was unsuccessful, the idea of giving the Philippines a voice in Madrid, guaranteed by the Constitution, was the right one, as it should have led to the recognition of the Philippines as a serious political player in the interest of self-determination. The Constitution of Cádiz of 1812 had once guaranteed such a right, but it lost its validity in the period of political regression that followed shortly afterwards, and so – despite some attempts to restore it – it remained a denial.

However, thanks to their authority in political, cultural and anti-racist matters, as well as their command of Spanish (and other lan-

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11 El Filibusterismo 1891, 283

guages), the *propagandistas* saw themselves in the role of a leading elite – something they sometimes argued about. This was especially true for Rizal himself, who was firmly convinced that a peaceful and prosperous political “transformation” of the Philippines into a province on an equal footing with the Spanish nation could only come from the Filipino upper class (*clases superiores*). A revolution from below, on the other hand, would lead to ruin. Preventing this was the challenge that Rizal set himself by using the power of language at his disposal to transfer the ‘leap’ I spoke of to the literary public sphere and to consciously face up to the danger threatening him. In Rizal’s opinion, the external conditions for the “transformation” from above were, as indicated, better than ever.

## The spirit of nation

Indeed, he claimed, the “national spirit” – a phantom that had emerged from the womb of collective misfortune – was rearing its head in the Philippines:

Today there is a factor that did not exist before: The spirit of the nation has been awakened, and the same misfortune and the same degradation have united all the inhabitants of the islands. There is a large enlightened class within and outside the archipelago, a class that has been created and is growing thanks to the clumsiness of certain rulers, who have forced the inhabitants to emigrate, to be enlightened abroad, and which is being maintained and fought for thanks to the excitement and the system of scouting that has been set up. This class, whose numbers are constantly increasing, is in constant contact with the rest of the islands, and if today it is only the brain of the country, in a few years it will form its entire nervous system and will manifest its existence in all its actions.<sup>12</sup>

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12 “Hoy existe un factor que no había antes; se ha despertado el espíritu de la nación, y una misma desgracia y un mismo rebajamiento han unido a todos los habitantes de las Islas. Se cuenta con una numerosa clase ilustrada dentro y fuera del Archipiélago, clase creada y aumentada cada vez más y más por las torpezas de ciertos gobernantes, obligando a los habitantes a

The reasons for the awakening of the ‘national spirit’ therefore did not lie in the inner strength of the coexisting, here and there perhaps cooperating peoples of the archipelago, but in the force imposed on them from outside. This is reminiscent of Herder’s thesis that, as a rule, it was the “Right of the strongest” (*Recht des Stärkeren*) that subjugated particular, self-reliant communities to a unifying form of rule, thereby levelling out the dividing differences.<sup>13</sup>

On the other hand, Rizal’s anatomical metaphor of the “brain of the country” impressively visualises the claim to leadership of the ‘upper classes’, i.e. an educated elite, in the struggle for recognition, a claim that was certainly justified in view of the anarchy, caused by the arbitrary violence of monasticism (*frailocracia*). For the “brains” – as the text suggests – now had the opportunity to attack the illegitimate colonial power at home from the outside, even from Spain, in whose relatively liberal metropolises the *ilustrado* circles had gained a foothold. What appeared in print there had to be disseminated in the Philippines as a Contrebande, a communication campaign that was particularly close to Rizal’s heart and inspired him to develop a versatile variety of strategies.

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expatriarse, a ilustrarse en el extranjero, y se mantiene y lucha gracias a las excitaciones y al sistema de ojeo emprendido. Esta clase, cuyo número aumenta progresivamente, está e comunicacion constante con el resto de las Islas, y si hoy no forma más que el cerebro des país, dentro de algunos anos formará todo su sistema nervioso y manifestará su existencia en todos sus actos.” Escritos políticos 1961, 145

13 On 26 May 1890, Rizal wrote a long letter to Blumentritt from Brussels, stating, among other things: “Ich habe auch Herder’s Sämmtliche Werke, die ich für Nichts gekauft habe. Hast du Herder gern, so schicke ich Dir die 38 Bände.” (*I also have Herder’s Sämmtliche Werke, which I bought for nothing. If you like Herder, I will send you the 38 volumes.* – The term “Nationalgeist” probably found its way into political discourse through Friedrich Karl von Moser’s treatise *Von dem Teutschen Nationalgeist* published in 1765/66.

## Renewal and invention in historiopoetic narration

Rizal wrote not only for his (few) Spanish-speaking compatriots, but also for and against the representatives, opportunists and fellow travellers of the colonial regime; this is also true of his fiction. Here, however, in the political essay addressed to friends and enemies, he appears in the stature of a knowledgeable person who not only knows what he is talking about, but who can also be credited with a capacity of judgement. He quotes Thomas More's *Utopia* and adds that the process of civilisation has long since left the state of affairs described there behind. He quotes verbatim from Machiavelli's *Il Principe* – from the Italian original – the famous statement in Chapter 11 that it is in the nature of man to enter into obligations on the basis of reciprocity, and adds that this is probably true, and yet pure sentimentalism (*sentimentalismo puro*), since hard-core needs and interests always prevail on the battlefield of politics. And he indirectly quotes Thomas Jefferson's paean to 'good government' (*buen gobierno*), except that he ironically reverses it and applies it to the oppressive policies of the colonial power. As if that were not enough, he compares the Philippines to Sancho Panza, who is allowed to play governor on the island of Barataria in the second part of *Don Quixote*, but is forced to starve by his personal physician for supposedly hygienic reasons and resigns from his government post in utter despair. In Rizal's parable, the delicious food that Sancho is only too happy to enjoy corresponds to the reforms that Madrid pretends to offer the Filipinos but never fully enacts.

I am not suggesting that Rizal subjected his writing to a consciously calculated rhetorical strategy. Nothing in his work is calculated in the sense of a one-sided or dogmatic dissent. On the contrary, the author is moving in the field of controversy with great freedom and, as already mentioned, likes to spice his speech with irony and sharp satire. Nevertheless, he writes in an appealing way and therefore in a way that is aimed at the addressee. But it also has the authoritarian air of someone who combines great self-confidence with the conviction that his words can make a difference, even if the result means suffering for the author and his family. He was determined to lead his compatriots in their fight for recognition, and he was prepared to face the con-

sequences of his writing as a partisan. In his letters, he wrote like a good Protestant that he would do it again, and apologised to his family.

As the French reform-socialist Jean Jaurès wrote about Rizal around 1900, it was a “cruel irony” of history when the USA destroyed the literary partisan’s message of liberation in one fell swoop.<sup>14</sup> Much could certainly be said here about this fatality and its consequences for the image of Rizal in Philippine politics of remembrance. But I would now like to finally turn to the question of which past Rizal considered worth telling in order to strengthen that “national spirit” in his countrymen, the tender seedlings of which he saw sprouting here and there. The colonial period, as it coincided with the history of decline, was out of the question, especially since – as he noted in the Utopia-essay – it had largely erased the traces of their own cultural traditions (*gobierno, leyes, usos, costumbres, religión y creencias*).

The question, therefore, is how Rizal addressed the process I term ‘historiopoetics’ in order to provide his fractured country with a history, if indeed it had one in the sense of a written record. This was, in fact, an unfeasible undertaking, given that a self-determined Philippine country with a constitution did not exist during Rizal’s lifetime. Moreover, such a geographically, ethnically, linguistically, and socially diverse entity was unlikely to be perceived as a coherent subject within a narrative framework. Yet, the quest for a self-determined future is inextricably linked to the construction and appropriation of cultural traditions embodied in historical narratives. Motto: No future without history!

The term ‘historiopoetics’ is used to describe a narrative process that encompasses both renewal and invention. The act of uncovering traditions that have been suppressed or buried can be seen as a form of renewal, as evidenced by the rediscovery of indigenous folklore traditions. Conversely, the act of invention can be viewed as a means of asserting a new beginning, one that is not contingent on existing traditions. The emergence of Filipino nationalism, for instance, can be seen as a result of this process, particularly in light of the association with

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14 J. Jaurès in Henri Turot: *Les hommes de revolution. Aguinaldo et les Philippines*. Preface par Jean Jaurès. Paris 1900, IX

the name Rizal. One advantage of historiopoetic narration is that it does not have to eschew the plot contingency that, according to Aristotle, is inherent to every historical narrative, because of the principal uncertainty in acting. The process thus exhibits characteristics of both the historical novel and representational fidelity to the names and dates selected from given documents, or sources. Furthermore, it can serve as a catalyst for a biased narrative with normative claims that appeals, in the spirit of rhetoric, to the visionary 'builders of the future'.

In the Utopia-essay Rizal envisioned himself as a pioneering figure, striving to create a new and improved society. While he acknowledged the challenges that lay ahead, he maintained a cautious optimism about the potential for positive change.:

The Philippines will most likely defend with unspeakable fervour the freedom that has cost so much blood and sacrifice. With the new people emerging from their midst, they may, remembering their past, choose the broad road of progress without hesitation.<sup>15</sup>

Unfortunately, if we look back over the hundred years from 1890 up to 1990, there is not much that would confirm Rizal's prophecy. It is true that a few years before the centenary, i.e. in 1986, Corazon Aquino's election victory ended the brutal repressive regime of Ferdinand Marcos, who had mercilessly plundered the maltreated republic during his almost 20-year dictatorship. However, the events that have transpired since Aquino's presidency, which are not part of my narrative, have little to do with utopian visions of the future.

But do we need to imagine a utopian future to make good on broken promises in the past? Utopia, especially since it always has to say 'not yet' (Ernst Bloch),<sup>16</sup> is nothing more than a hypothetical alternative to the existing. At best, it ties in with what promises a better

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15 "Muy probablemente las Filipinas defenderán con un ardor indecible la libertad comprada á costa de tanta sangre y sacrificios. Con los hombres nuevos que broten de su seno y con el recuerdo de su pasado, se dedicarán tal vez á entrar abiertamente en la ancha vía del progreso." *Escritos políticos* 1961, 163

16 Ernst Bloch: *The Principle of Hope*. Cambridge, MA, 1986

future within the framework of what is already possible today. Rizal himself gave us two examples: the abolition of slavery and of the death penalty for certain offences, such as those relevant to family law. The utopian asserts that when violence and subjugation are abolished, we have taken a step closer to freedom. The historians will not contradict; they will stand by the utopian. It are the historians who can tell the success stories and, by way of example, the struggles that were necessary to pave the way for these or similar freedoms in the world. The Angel of History is like the crayfish, the Angel of Utopia like the salamander; both share the moist element from which new life can emerge.

### **For an appropriation of precolonial Philippine history**

Writing history is one of the methods of narrative worldmaking. Rizal uses this method in his contemporary historical novels, but rarely crosses the boundaries of the literary fiction design. When he reflects on the history of his (Tagalian) homeland, he follows the raciocination of the essay or ventures into the margins of a veritable subversive commentary. He did the latter on a grand scale in the new edition of Antonio de Morga's chronicle of the first almost 40 years of Spanish colonial rule in the Philippines, published in 1609.<sup>17</sup> Morga was an Andalusian administrative lawyer and differed from the clerical authors of most chronicles written about the Archipelago in Spanish simply because of the worldly offices he held in the Philippines.

A commentary is not a narrative, but an aid to reading and understanding that can also refer to the text of a narrative, be it historical or fictional. Rizal, however, used the commentary to correct the historical narrative of the Spanish writer de Morga and to refute its

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17 *Sucesos de las islas Filipinas por el Doctor Antonio de Morga*, obra publicada en Méjico el año de 1609, nuevamente sacada á luz y anotada por José Rizal y precedida de un prólogo del Prof. Fernando Blumentritt. Paris: Librería de Garnier Hermanos, 1890. – [English Translation:] *Historical Events of the Philippine Islands*. Published in Mexico in 1609, recently brought to light and annotated by José Rizal. Manila: Comisión Nacional del Centenario de José Rizal, 1962

claims to truth. A reliable refutation, of course, depends on factual historical sources, which in this case were not available to the commentator, therefore he had to resort to those chronicles, which were exclusively written by monks and missionaries. Rizal's annotations are no more and no less than building blocks for a polemical historiography that undermines both the authority and the credibility of the Spanish author. Above all, they were intended to remind readers that the peoples of the Philippines had a proud pre-colonial history of their own, which had been stolen from them by the foreign colonial power. In the introduction to the annotated new edition of 'Morga', dedicated "á los Filipinos", he writes:

In *Noli me tângere* I began the sketch of the present state of our country: the effect which my attempt produced made me realise, before going on to unfold before your eyes other successive pictures (*cuadros*), the necessity of first making known the past, in order to be better able to judge the present and to measure the road travelled for three centuries. Born and brought up in the ignorance of our Yesterday, like almost all of you; without voice or authority to speak of what we neither saw nor studied, I considered it necessary to invoke the testimony of an illustrious Spaniard who governed the destinies of the Philippines at the beginning of its new era and witnessed the last moments of our ancient nationhood. It is, then, the shadow of the civilization of our ancestors (*la sombra de la civilización de nuestros antepasados*) that the author will now evoke before you. [...] If the book succeeds in awakening in you an awareness of our past, which has been erased from memory, and in rectifying what has been falsified and slandered, then I will not have worked in vain, and with this basis, however small, we will all be able to devote ourselves to studying the future.<sup>18</sup>

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18 "En el *Noli me tângere* principié el bosquejo del estado actual de nuestra Patria: el efecto que mi ensayo produjo, hizome comprender, antes de proseguir desenvolviendo ante vuestros ojos otros cuadros sucesivos, la necesidad de dar primero á conocer el pasado, á fin de poder juzgar mejor el presente y medir el camino recorrido durante tres siglos. Nacido y criado en el desconocimiento de nuestro Ayer, como casi todos vosotros; sin voz ni autoridad para hablar de lo que no vimos ni estudiamos, consideré necesario invocar el testimonio de un ilustre Español que rigió los destinos de Filipinas en los

Rizal's words outline a program to create collective self-confidence. He linked the successful work for the utopian ideals of the future to a necessary precondition. This condition requires the reconstruction of pre-colonial history and the critical examination of the history of colonial oppression. If Philippine society fails or forgets to do so, it will be caught behind the broken promises not only of past centuries but also by the crimes of the dictatorships ruling in the post-colonial era.

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principios de su nueva era y presencié los últimos momentos de nuestra antigua nacionalidad. Es, pues, la sombra de la civilización de nuestros antepasados la que ahora ante vosotros evocará el autor [...]. Si el libro logra despertar en vosotros la conciencia de nuestro pasado, borrado de la memoria, y rectificar lo que se ha falseado y calumniado, entonces no habré trabajado en balde, y con esta base, por pequeña que fuese, podremos todos dedicarnos á estudiar el porvenir.” *Sucesos de las islas Filipinas 1890*, p. V f.