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A Philippines Rural School: Its Cultural Dimension

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dynamics and tone that accompanied the process of this theological conversation. We can presume that the process included intensive preparation through the study of preparatory documents, addresses and discussions, sharing of insights and viewpoints, and the production of reports. But alas, what could have been an exciting, colorful discussion comes to us in a sober, unemotional, "objective" report.

Worthy of note also in the present volume are a number of previously published articles which were sent ahead of time to the participants as background papers. Notable among these are the article of Dr. James Veitch, "Is an Asian Theology Possible?", that of Dr. M.M. Thomas, "Modern Man and the New Humanity in Jesus Christ," and two from the editors themselves, Dr. Elwood and Dr. Nakpil. The background paper prepared by Dr. Elwood, "Emerging Themes in Asian Theological Thinking," is especially helpful since it is largely a summary of selected emphases in the writings of Asian Christian theologians as already found in two published works, *Asian Voices in Christian Theology* (New York: Orbis Books, 1975) and *What Asian Christians are Thinking* (Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1976).

Whatever adverse criticisms may be brought against the book stem largely from the nature of the publication — the "proceedings" of a theological conversation. Perhaps one "shortcoming" worth noting is that the Consultation tried to cover a very extensive field of concerns so that the list of topics brought up in the workshops ranged far and wide. (But then, what conversation does not regularly wander far afield?) The discussions remained rather general and not pointed enough; important issues were brought up, discussed briefly and then dropped. Precisely because the issues and questions are urgent ones, should they not be discussed with more theological depth and solid grounding in Scripture and in our traditions?

All in all, however, the strengths of the present volume far outweigh whatever criticisms may be leveled against it. The Christian communities of Asia owe a debt of gratitude to the editors for putting this book together and making the fruits of their consultation available to a wider group of Church people. To the various sectors of the Christian churches in Asia, but especially to their theologians, this book should be valuable for the exciting and forceful presentation of the theological tasks before them.

Pedro C. Sevilla, S.J.

A PHILIPPINE RURAL SCHOOL: ITS CULTURAL DIMENSION. By Priscila S. Manalang. Quezon City, University of the Philippines Press, 1977. 235 pages.

Although the title of the book might well lead the reader to anticipate a more or less radical approach to education along lines developed, perhaps,

by Paul Goodman or Ivan Illich, what will be found instead is a simple and straightforward report of the results of a case study undertaken by the author.

In easy, flowing narrative style, Dr. Manalang presents her material in the following sections: Part 1 — The Community, Part 2 — The School, and Conclusions.

The initial chapters under Part 1 describe the life style of the people amidst the setting of the study. The institutions that have played a major role in the development of this rural community culture are candidly featured.

The last chapters under Part 2 go a step beyond the basics of the rural society. The means gearing up to implications and recommendations are laid out. This section spells out the views on the school of the pupils, teachers, administrators, parents, and community leaders. These views reflect how the scope and concept of the school are embedded in the everyday living of the community.

In the Conclusions the implications and recommendations of the study are given. Just as the first two parts are, the discussion under this heading is frank and practical.

Two thoughts that the book evoked from this reviewer are: the Filipino's desire for education and the crucial role of the Philippine elementary school.

The desire for education has characterized the Filipino throughout the country's recorded history. During much of this history, however, a large portion of the Filipinos have been denied the opportunity for adequate schooling. Except for a relatively few, a satisfactory education has never been possible. But the people have continued to have faith in education, a faith of such intensity as to give cause, paradoxically, for concern. Such is the situation with the people of Ligas.

The role of the elementary school in the Philippines is crucial. It is the only educational institution 80 percent of the people attend. The elementary school in the barrio is the one, if not the chief, agency operating continuously and in close contact with barrio life. To succeed in reaching out to the lives of the Philippine rural population, then, is to do so through the barrio elementary schools. But for these schools to be truly effective, the teachers that help run them must be adequately educated and professionally equipped. The teachers of Ligas barrio school seem to fall short of these qualifications.

To the author, who in her own words in the last sentence of the last paragraph of the Preface said "... save for sporadic sallies into the field and occasional encounters with elementary and secondary teachers, I was an ivory-tower professor comfortably ensconced in academe, but inwardly afflicted with self doubt," the Philippine educational system is indebted. She has come up with a book that can claim to contain theoretically backed

up abstractions in curriculum development and teacher education drawn from a rich ground of an individual experience. *A Philippine Rural School: Its Cultural Dimension* is a commendable addition to any educator's professional book collection and to any school of education library.

Aida C. Caluag

CONTEMPORARY INDONESIAN POETRY: POEMS IN BAHASA INDONESIA AND ENGLISH. Edited and translated by Harry Aveling (Asian and Pacific Writing 5) St. Lucia, Queensland: University of Queensland Press, 1975. xxiii, 261 pages. Cloth \$10.95 / paper \$4.95.

A HEAP OF ASHES. By Ananta Toer Pramoedya. Edited and translated by Harry Aveling (Asian and Pacific Writing 6) St. Lucia, Queensland: University of Queensland Press, 1975. xxii, 193 pages. Cloth \$10.95 / paper \$4.95.

These two volumes are number five and six of the Asian and Pacific Writing series edited by Harry Aveling for the University of Queensland Press, the same series that recently published a collection of Nick Joaquin stories under the title *Tropical Gothic*. Taken together the two serve as an excellent introduction to modern Indonesian literature as both Toer's socio-historical fiction of the forties and the fifties, and the much more individualistic, private poetry of seven poets from the sixties and the seventies, are perfectly representative of their times.

Pramoedya Ananta Toer is probably the leading fiction writer of the "Generation of '45," the generation that simultaneously worked out a cultural identity and fought for political independence in the forties. This is the group that originated modern Indonesian literature, and their work was, not surprisingly, highly political. Toer was imprisoned several times by the Dutch, and then actually fought with the Nationalists against the Police Action of 1949. In the Post-Independence Era, he was a member of LEKRA, a Communist-inspired organization that aimed to bring about social education and change through the medium of mass literature.

But the movement eventually grew stale, and what had been inspiration degenerated to a restrictive line, under Sukarno's "Guided Democracy." Toer, still a powerful writer, moved a bit further to the left. In 1965 Sukarno was overthrown, the military took over, and arrested tens of thousands of suspected Communist supporters, Toer among them. Toer was and is still imprisoned in the jungle island of Buru, off the coast of Ambon in the Moluccas.

That was the end of political literature, but it had served its purpose, and perhaps even outlived its time. Strangely enough, military rule seems to have