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The Beginning and Other Asian Folktales, by Bejarano, et al.

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What the book really shows is the fact that the Philippines is still far from attaining genuine popular democracy and national independence despite important and irreversible changes in the urban-rural configuration and the decline of U.S. economic influence with the removal of the military bases. There still lies the great task of combating the global hegemony of neoliberal metaphysics manifest in postcolonial theorizing and other postmodern readings.

The author asks: "What is to be done?" San Juan posits that it is the task of the writers and intellectuals to seize the moment, together with the working masses, and forge the cultural-ideological weapon necessary for a genuine liberation.

Roberto Archie R. Carampatan, S.J.

The Beginning and Other Asian Folktales. Edited by Valorie Slaughter Bejarano, et al. CA: PAWWA, 1995.

The Beginning and Other Asian Folktales is a collection of eighteen Asian folktales edited by four Filipino-American women writers. The folktales came from China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Laos (Hmong), Malaysia, Vietnam, and the Philippines.

In the Introduction, the editors trace the sources of these stories: their "own memories, from friends and family, both young and old, and in some instances from published works." Not a few of the stories were heard from an acquaintance who also heard it from another source. Inevitably, the writing of these stories, which used to be passed on orally from one generation to the other, is not completely free from the writer's biases. Their objective is "to entertain as well as to transmit the values and wisdom of the [Asian] culture, and instill a sense of right and wrong."

Even if the book is intended for children, adult readers can also draw insights from the stories. An illustration for each story also sharpens the imagination of the reader as he goes through the story. Even the size of the type makes the collection friendly to the child. However, full-color illustrations would have made the texts more vivid.

Books like these—which build bridges across cultures separated by geography and colonialism—should be encouraged.

Roberto Archie R. Carampatan, S.J.