

# philippine studies

Ateneo de Manila University • Loyola Heights, Quezon City • 1108 Philippines

---

**Manuel L. Quezon, by Gopinath**

Review Author: Jose S. Arcilla, S.J.

*Philippine Studies* vol. 36, no. 4 (1988) 522–524

Copyright © Ateneo de Manila University

---

Philippine Studies is published by the Ateneo de Manila University. Contents may not be copied or sent via email or other means to multiple sites and posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's written permission. Users may download and print articles for individual, noncommercial use only. However, unless prior permission has been obtained, you may not download an entire issue of a journal, or download multiple copies of articles.

Please contact the publisher for any further use of this work at [philstudies@admu.edu.ph](mailto:philstudies@admu.edu.ph).

The last chapter contains a list of doctoral dissertations and masteral theses, in which omissions (e.g., of a number of University of the Philippines theses) seem to reflect a lack of seriousness in Quito's research work. On the whole, however, I believe that the inaccuracies, omissions, and other flaws do not diminish the significance of Dr. Quito's work. Even a serious initial work that is quite comprehensive in scope can be prone to errors, especially in the data gathering. With the limited research period of five months the interpretative aspect of the work may also suffer. The book can be improved by the updating of both data and interpretations. A second edition on the state of philosophy in the country would be most welcome.

I would like, however, to suggest first, the addition of a chapter on Filipino thinkers. After all, the list of masteral theses in the monograph includes references to thinkers like Jose Rizal, T.H. Pardo de Tavera and Apolinario Mabini. Secondly, another chapter could be added to include a list of articles and books on Filipino thought (the philosophical approach) and on Oriental and Western thought written by Filipinos. An empirical survey could be conducted through questionnaires sent to philosophy teachers in all Philippine colleges and universities, who could be asked to refer as well philosophy graduates who work in private and public institutions.

Thirdly, what is probably needed is not just a Philippine Academy of Philosophical Research (p. 55) that will cater to both the anthropological and philosophical approaches to philosophy, but a national Philosophical Society of the Philippines (PSP), with the lecturers limited to professional philosophers.

Dr. Quito has raised some serious questions about the state of philosophy in the Philippines. They are questions that deserve serious consideration if we are to become a nation of thinkers as well as doers.

*Rolando M. Gripaldo  
Department of Philosophy  
Mindanao State University*

MANUEL L. QUEZON: THE TUTELARY DEMOCRAT. By Aruna Gopinath. Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1987. xvi + 243 pages.

If we do away with partisan spirit, if cooperation rather than opposition is made the basis upon which the Government of the Philippines is to operate; if liberty is properly understood and practiced; and if the aim of government is the well-being of the people as a whole and not of a privileged class, even if it be a property-owning class, then democracy in the Philippines will endure . . . (p. 225)

The above excerpt from a speech of Quezon (unfortunately Gopinath does not cite its date) summarizes the political ideal the first president of the Philippine Commonwealth always proclaimed in public. But historians are at odds as to whether Manuel L. Quezon was sincere in his claim to provide the good life for his fellow Filipinos, or whether he was seeking to promote only his own political career and personal ambitions. Without trying to settle the debate, Gopinath's brief study in six chapters provides a brief chronology of the accomplishments—and shortcomings—of a man who realized his dream of being his country's political leader.

The book is based on a doctoral dissertation submitted to the graduate school of the University of the Philippines. The author divides the subject into five areas to show how Quezon exercised what has been described as a "dictatorship" or one-man rule, and ends with an evaluation. In the first part, titled "Battling the Odds," Gopinath shows how Quezon's political skills allowed him to supplant Osmeña as the national leader. This is followed by "The Power Base" (chap. 2), "Campaigning for Social Justice" (chap. 3), "Planning the Economy" (chap. 4), and "Defending the Realm" (chap. 5).

The essay takes as its point of departure "Quezon's system of administration and style of politics . . . very much in the tutelary democratic tradition that had [sic] come to characterize the political leadership of many of the new states of Asia and Africa" (p. vii). Enough facts are marshalled—though not exhaustively—to support the argument. The Philippines is one of the many new Asian states and, phenomenologically, the Quezon government did have the three characteristics to justify such a qualification, namely: a single dominant political party; the "reduction" of legislative powers and those of the political parties while enhancing executive power; and the "overlap of interests between the top political leadership and the bureaucracy which it controls" (pp. viii-ix).

This is where the book is disappointing. It is not enough to narrate what happened; any history manual can do this. A more detailed analysis of the causes underlying the incidents could have given the narrative flesh and bone, and revealed how it was possible for Quezon to be a "tutelary democrat." But this is missing.

Democracy is intelligent cooperation between the governed and the governors. But there is evidence that, in the first half of the present century, the Filipino people were not yet ready for the democracy imposed on them by the North Americans. When first introduced in 1903, suffrage was limited to only 2.44 percent of the population who passed the literacy and property tests in order to vote. Nor was there any improvement when the Filipinos later elected their own legislators. As Hayden put it, the first National Assembly was, for lack of a better term, a *laissez-faire* body. Instead of themselves working to draw up the necessary legislation, the great majority of the assemblymen entrusted the formulation of the laws to the Americans who happened to be in charge of important government departments and bureaus. And only when they were

properly drawn up in accepted legal style did the assemblymen sign and approve the proposed laws. In other words, as Gopinath points out, despite the existence of political parties, it was easy for an individual to impose himself on the rest of the country. Government action was initiated, supervised and executed from above, and benefited only the leadership. This could not be true democracy!

Nor was the situation true only in the first decades of American rule. By the mid-1930s, functional illiteracy remained a serious problem, despite claims to the contrary. And yet, this was the time when the Filipinos were asked to accept or repudiate through plebiscites important issues such as, for example, the Hare-Hawes-Cutting Act, to determine their future. One wonders how much the voting public really understood the meaning of total independence when the Philippines was economically underdeveloped. Of course, mesmerized by skillful *politicos*, no Filipino would have voted down the issue of self-government. And if in the process one could promote one's own political career, so much the better.

This, to me, was the real story behind Quezon's career. Scholars have already shown that when, years before the Hare-Hawes-Cutting Act or the Tydings-McDuffie Act, the decision makers in Washington evinced willingness to grant independence, Quezon backed away. And the fact that the Tydings-McDuffie Act was essentially the same as the Hare-Hawes-Cutting Act, except for a minor revision regarding military bases, makes one accept the view that the issue of Philippine independence was adroitly used by Quezon to climb to the apex of the Philippine political pyramid. As Gopinath writes, it served "Quezon's political interests to persistently call for an early date for complete and immediate independence" (p. 182).

One wishes, given the advance in Philippine historiography, that this point had been brought out. It would have explained why, as Gopinath indicates, Quezon failed to promote social justice or the economic growth of his country. Legislation was nullified by the same men in the government whom, ironically, he himself had helped install to insure his own position.

There are a number of incidents which, at least to this reviewer, should have been more fully nuanced, for example: the Unipersonalista-Colectivista conflict between Quezon and Osmena (pp. 10-11); why Governor Wood was forced to veto an unusual number of bills (p. 12); why Quezon, as hinted above, moved to reject the Hare-Hawes-Cutting Act (p. 20); the strong executive provided for in the 1935 Constitution and the centralization of the Philippine government (pp. 35-36); etc.

There are also a number of factual slips. It is doubtful, for example, whether by Quezon's time, friar-owned lands still could be said to constitute a major socioeconomic problem to the Philippine government (p. 88). Nor is it enough to say that "intergovernmental squabbling between October and December 1941 had jeopardized civil defense preparations" (p. 169). The fact is the United States itself was unprepared and was not likely to be hurried into war until the Japanese struck.

A more careful proofreading could have done away with a number of stylistic and printing errors. Among others, better reading would be: "equal to and independent of the legislative [not *legislature*] and judicial departments" (p. 28); "an [*not a*] economic cataclysm" (p. 76); "so that the kasamas, usually unlettered, would [*not will*] not be" (p. 88). And "salutatory" (p. 183) makes no sense.

It is never easy to write about a national figure, and Quezon is perhaps harder than other Filipino leaders to analyze. His personal papers are not yet available, and many aspects of his interesting and highly complex personality are still closed to the researcher. They certainly would illumine many of the controversial questions regarding his career. Certainly, the salutary influence of his wife, Doña Aurora, cannot be passed over; but there is no documentation available on the matter. Gopinath, then, deserves congratulation for having attempted to analyze the more open aspect of Quezon's life, his leadership of the Filipino people.

*Jose S. Arcilla, S.J.  
Department of History  
Ateneo de Manila University*

DIALOGUE OF LIFE AND FAITH. By Bienvenido S. Tudtud. Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 1988. xi + 189 pages.

*Dialogue of Life and Faith* bears the subtitle "Selected Writings of Bishop Bienvenido S. Tudtud." Immediately, the reader grasps the central theme of the book: interreligious dialogue as lived and articulated by Bishop "Benny" Tudtud. Yet an adequate appreciation of this work demands more extensive exploration; this is a "veritable thesaurus," truly a goldmine!

The book has many facets: it presents the experience of the local church of Marawi in Muslim-Christian dialogue; one discovers a mini-biography of Bishop Tudtud; it elucidates an ever-deepening meaning of dialogue; one finds meditations on authenticity of lifestyle; the enigmas and paradoxes of interreligious experience are narrated. All the foregoing elements are strikingly—even poetically—presented. And, what is still more convincing, the elements ring true and personally resonate with life; in a word, the book reveals the experience—in fact the *person* of Bishop Tudtud.

It is well known that Pope Paul VI vigorously promoted dialogue; his first encyclical *Ecclesiam Suam* has been called by John Paul II "the *magna carta* of dialogue." Thus, when Paul VI established the prelature (church district) of Marawi in 1976 and named Bienvenido Tudtud its bishop, the Pope himself enunciated its vision: "to offer a reconciling presence among the Muslims through dialogue of life and faith" (p. 110).

Bishop "Benny" took his commission to heart and endeavored to implement it for more than a decade until his untimely death on 26 June 1987. With unfailing