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Symposium

In Appreciation of Benedict R. O'G. Anderson, 1936–2015

Introduction

Filomeno V. Aguilar, Jr.

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Symposium

In Appreciation of
Benedict R. O'G. Anderson
1936–2015



In September 2015 the editorial team of *Philippine Studies: Historical and Ethnographic Viewpoints* began to contact possible contributors—from a range of academic disciplines and country specializations—to a symposium in appreciation of the scholarship of Benedict R. O’Gorman Anderson, who had been a good friend and supporter of this journal. It was intended as a present for what would have been his 80th birthday on 26 August of this year. As readers are aware, Ben Anderson passed away in Indonesia at around midnight of 12 December 2015, with the official pronouncement by a physician made very early morning of 13 December.

The symposium would have been a surprise gift, although for Christmas the plan was to inform him in the broadest terms about a forthcoming tribute. But, providentially in my view, in a long conversation I had with Ben on Tuesday, 17 November 2015, to provide feedback on a paper I was writing then, I informed him without providing details that a symposium was being planned and a small event would be held at the Ateneo de Manila University to hand him a copy of the journal. He was very pleased. If any consolation, at least he knew about the plan to honor his work.

Except for Caroline Sy Hau’s essay, all the rest were submitted after Ben had passed away. But rather than present these essays in the nature of an obituary, we present them in the original spirit of the symposium, for that was the promise that Ben received. The essays in this symposium, meant to be brief, gesture toward the originality, complexity, breadth, elegance, and uncanny perceptiveness of Ben’s writings and his method of comparative thinking. His contributions to Philippine scholarship are immense and incalculable: paradigm-changing insights and perspectives, mentorship of individual Filipino scholars, and elevation of the Philippines to a world-historical comparative plane. More than all these praises for this polymath’s intellectual brilliance, the essays reveal the depth of his humanity.

Filomeno V. Aguilar Jr.

Professor, Department of History, Ateneo de Manila University
Editor, *Philippine Studies: Historical and Ethnographic Viewpoints*
<fvaguilar@ateneo.edu>