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AN EXAMINATION OF THE IMPACT OF NATIONALISM ON JOSE RIZAL

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SENIOR THESIS

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Abstract

This study examines the aspects of national identity as the creation, or imagination, of the self as a part of larger group, garnered and spread through various sources including relations with individuals, print sources, and personal reflection. Jose Rizal, the national hero of the Philippines, often considered the “Father of Filipino Nationalism,” is the focus of this examination. Also, this study argues that the creation of a nationalistic identity in Jose Rizal was due in part to the history of the area, and the concepts and definitions available to Rizal during his lifetime.

Introduction

National identity has been a point of conflict for many historians for hundreds of years, ever since Johann Gottfried von Herder first began to study this phenomenon in the late eighteenth century. The turn in the study of history from the group as a whole to the individual brought about new questions and problems with the creation of the nation as a concept. Individual choice became the focus of the study on nationalism. The new focus, the new obsession, was the examination of why individuals would believe in the values presented from national identity without ever knowing all of the others whom they identify with. This focus has been well-examined by Benedict Anderson, whose 1983 work entitled *Imagined Communities* became the model for studies in this area. Therefore, it is necessary to examine the current ideals of nationalism alongside this work.

Anderson's work states: "In an anthropological spirit, then, I propose the following definition of the nation: it is an imagined community—and imagined as inherently limited and sovereign."¹

This definition emphasizes the creativity of the individual, and bestows the capability on the individual of creating the nation, and choosing to imagine himself or herself as having connections and commonalities with others in that group (the nation) that are not necessarily there. This can again be expanded, according to Benedict Anderson, not merely to define the nation, but to all communities, which are imagined using different methods and through different worldviews. Benedict Anderson's defining of nation as an imagined community is excellent with regards to the individual's creation of the nation as an idea, but it does not examine the effects of the acceptance of the idea of the nation on the individual's self-identity;

¹ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, (New York: Verso, 1991), 5-6.

to put it another way, of the formation of “a conception of ourselves as existing in relation to that object (the nation).”² This argument, a part of Ross Poole’s work entitled *Nation and Identity*, states that Anderson’s definition focuses on only a part of the whole effect of the nation, that it does not address the views of self-in-the-nation. This is to say, individuals, through imaginatively creating connections with one another, developed the nation but these same individuals also develop new concepts of self, which alter the world view of people to come later.

This study examines the aspects of national identity as the creation, or imagination, of the self as a part of larger group, garnered and spread through various sources including relations with individuals, print sources, and personal reflection. Jose Rizal, the national hero of the Philippines, often considered the “Father of Filipino Nationalism,” is the focus of this examination. Also, this study argues that the creation of a nationalistic identity in Jose Rizal was due in part to the history of the area, and the concepts and definitions available to Rizal during his lifetime.

Benedict Anderson, in his work, has studied the person of Jose Rizal extensively, crediting him with creating an imagined community for the Philippines through his writings in *Noli Me Tangere* and *El Filibusterismo*. Benedict Anderson also examines the effects of Rizal’s imagination on the nation in Anderson’s works, *Under Three Flags*,³ and articles such as his, “Forms of Consciousness in *Noli Me Tangere*.”⁴ The topic left decidedly unexamined by these works is the creation within Jose Rizal of a self-concept in relation to his personal ideas of

² Ross Poole, *Nation and Identity*, (New York: Routledge, 1999), 12.

³ Benedict Anderson, *Under Three Flags: Anarchism and the Anti-Colonial Imagination*, (New York: Verso, 2005)

⁴ Benedict Anderson, “Forms of Consciousness in *Noli Me Tangere*,” *Philippine Studies* 51, no. 4 (2003): 505-529.

nationalism.

Part I: Rizal's Experiences

To begin this study, it is necessary to examine how Rizal's personal experiences affected both his conception of himself, as well as his view of the world around him. In examining the development of national ideology in the life of Jose Rizal, the first element to study would be the effects of the different parts of socialization that developed his concept of self and the world: his family, his schooling, and his early travels overseas.

Family

Jose Rizal's family played a large role in creating his world-view. The early life of Jose Rizal has been examined by many authors, with connections being made to his later life through Rizal's views of his stature and attitudes and how these were later played out. Yet, to understand Jose Rizal one must examine his personal stories, the reflections of the things that were most important to him during the early part of his life, including his family, relationships, and his mentality.

In understanding the character of Jose Rizal, it is necessary to understand his beginnings. To accomplish this, it is of utmost importance to study his own reminiscences. Rizal's writings about his early childhood capture the important role that his mother played for him.

Rizal's Relationship with his Mother

His mother, Teodora Alonso y Quintos, was well-educated in many subjects, and served as the first instructor to shape Rizal's ideology. Rizal himself praises her as the source of his education, teaching him to read and instilling within him a value for education and religion.⁵

⁵ Jose Rizal, *Reminiscences and Travels of Jose Rizal*, Translated by Encarnacion Alzona, (Manila: Jose Rizal National Centennial Commission, 1961), 5-6

The bond between this mother and child was very strong, as is evidenced by the letters written by Jose Rizal to her. Rizal often wrote to her of his connection to her, even to the point of his dreams:

It is three nights now that I continually dream of you and sometimes the dream repeats itself in a single night. I would not like to be superstitious..., but I like to believe that you are thinking constantly of me and this makes my mind reproduce what goes on in yours for after all my brain is a part of yours, and this is not strange because while I am asleep here, you are awake there, etc.⁶

Rizal's dedication to his mother even went into his studies. During his time in Germany, Rizal studied alongside one Dr. Wecker in order to study eye ailments.⁷ The purpose of this, at least in part, was Rizal's own desire to cure his mother's eye problems.⁸

Rizal's Relationship with his Father

Rizal's Father, Francisco Mercado, is hardly ever mentioned in his letters, with the exception of those addressed to his parents, yet even so, Rizal hardly ever directly addresses his father. This, of course, is assuming that the correspondence left behind by Rizal and brought together in *One Hundred Letters of Jose Rizal*, is an accurate representation of his personal correspondence with his parents, it is possible that letters to his father were not included, or did not survive to be included as those to his other relatives did. The reason behind this is uncertain, although many historians have provided theories related to this point.⁹ What can be

⁶ Jose Rizal, "To his Mother. Berlin, December 25, 1886," in *One Hundred Letters of Jose Rizal to His Parents, Brother, Sisters, Relatives*, (Manila: Philippine National Historical Society, 1959), 312.

⁷ Jose Rizal, "To his Parents. Paris, January 1, 1886," in *One Hundred Letters of Jose Rizal to His Parents, Brother, Sisters, Relatives*, (Manila: Philippine National Historical Society, 1959), 256.

⁸ Jose Rizal, "To his Parents and Brothers. Manila, July 14, 1892." *One Hundred Letters of Jose Rizal to His Parents, Brother, Sisters, Relatives*, (Manila: Philippine National Historical Society, 1959), 385

⁹ Rizal's relations with his father are an unknown, limited by the resources available to historians today. Some have even argued so far as to say that this displays a strained relationship pointing to Oedipal conflict or

known about Rizal's father is only available through the few times where Rizal does address him. Rizal calls him, “a model of Fathers.”¹⁰ This statement, although unable to be examined in relation to the personality Francisco exhibited, is certainly founded in Francisco’s social standing. Rizal's Father was a landowner, and provided the money for the household, although Rizal would often write to his elder brother, Paciano, to request money, goods, or other needs.¹¹ Paciano, it seems, ran the hacienda, and was therefore responsible for maintaining the finances by the time that Jose Rizal left for overseas.¹² Yet, by the time that Rizal was back in the Philippines, he once more returned to seeking after his father for the needed money and goods, and showed due respect to his father in each of the two letters specifically addressed to him.¹³ Nonetheless, whether Paciano or Francisco was the economic leader of the family, Jose Rizal grew up in a family and society where masculinity was related to leadership and responsibility. This traditional approach, it will be seen, was terribly important to Rizal’s notions regarding the relationship of both his self and nation to the rest of the world.

Rizal’s Relationship with Others

Rizal did not form many close relationships with people outside of his own family. One person, Dr. Ferdinand Blumentritt, seems to have had a stronger relationship than most with Rizal. The two men sent letters to one another for over ten years, and became close allies in the

perhaps homosexuality, See Ambeth R. Ocampo, *Meaning and History: The Rizal Lectures*, (Manila: Anvil, 2001), 62-73.

¹⁰ Rizal, *Reminiscences*, 4.

¹¹ For examples, see Jose Rizal, “To his Brother Paciano. [Manila] July 27, 1880,” *One Hundred Letters of Jose Rizal*, (Manila: National Historical Society, 1959), 9, and “To his Brother Paciano. Madrid, December 30, 1882,” 53.

¹² Jose Rizal, “To his Brother Paciano. Madrid, December 30, 1882,” 53.

¹³ Jose Rizal, “To his Father. Dapitan, December 20, 1893,” *One Hundred Letters of Jose Rizal to His Parents, Brother, Sisters, Relatives*, (Manila: Philippine National Historical Society, 1959), 415 and “To his Father. Dapitan, May 9, 1894” *One Hundred Letters of Jose Rizal to His Parents, Brother, Sisters, Relatives*, (Manila: Philippine National Historical Society, 1959), 418.

goal of telling the truth about the way the Philippines should be treated. They cooperated with one another on *La Solidaridad*, a newspaper dealing with Filipino interests, as colleagues, but were also good friends, sending one another greetings on New Years, and even close enough that Rizal saw fit to send him a farewell letter before he faced the firing squad.¹⁴ His closeness to Blumentritt has even called to attention the question of what role the man truly played for Rizal. Even Rizal himself included Blumentritt as a member of his own family, placing Blumentritt's picture in an album with those of Rizal's other family members.¹⁵ Blumentritt's actions in the intellectual discourse with Rizal certainly made him a very important figure in supporting and encouraging Rizal in his arguments for the need for change in the Philippines:

I have received your letters as well as your manuscripts. They are for the Philippine youth like the admonition of an old and wise friend, for we are here fighting for our native country entirely without protection. You alone lend us strength and courage and you also admonish us when we depart from the path.¹⁶

This portion of a letter written from Rizal to Blumentritt displays Blumentritt's importance to Rizal as a place to garner intellectual arguments. This is a type of relationship not available to him elsewhere. A person close enough to be familial, yet also dedicated to the Philippines. This relationship with Blumentritt, as well as those relationships with his family provided Rizal with a groundwork for his comprehension of the world.

The role of the patriarchal family is a constant theme in Jose Rizal's ideas on nationalism. Often, in this case, the use of the patriarchal family structure as the center of nationalism is due to the concept that the family makes up the most basic unit of the society. As

¹⁴ Jose Rizal and Ferdinand Blumentritt, "Rizal, Fort Santiago, Manila, 29 December 1896," in *The Rizal-Blumentritt Correspondence*, (Manila: Jose Rizal National Centennial Commission, 1961), 539.

¹⁵ Jose Rizal and Ferdinand Blumentritt, "Rizal, Berlin, 9 December 1886," from *The Rizal-Blumentritt Correspondence*, (Manila: Jose Rizal National Centennial Commission, 1961), 29.

¹⁶ Jose Rizal and Ferdinand Blumentritt, "Rizal, Paris, 4 June 1889," from *The Rizal-Blumentritt Correspondence*, (Manila: Jose Rizal National Centennial Commission, 1961)

Rizal stated in *The Struggles of our Time*, “The national spirit begins to utter its first cries; formerly only family or tribal feeling existed.”¹⁷ This role of the family in nationalism continued in one of Rizal’s historical essays, “*The Philippines A Century Hence.*” In this essay, Rizal seeks to answer how the “mother country” of Spain can keep the Philippines. His answer to this lies in Spain’s treatment of her ‘children’ of the Philippines, who will find need to seek independence if they are continually treated poorly.¹⁸ Even in his private discourse, Rizal refers to the Philippines as a parent to children. In a letter to Blumentritt, Rizal writes about an exhibition in Madrid, where Filipinos were put on display to be examined, alongside animals and plants from the colonies of Spain. Rizal states:

But I wish all would get sick and die like poor Basalia so that they would stop suffering. That the Philippines may forget her children had been treated in that manner – exhibited and mocked.¹⁹

With this statement, Rizal specifically advances the thought that the Philippines had a specific embodiment and relationship to the inhabitants as a parent. This parental relationship allows the nation to call for loyalty, sacrifice, and love. Rizal’s acceptance of this sort of relationship, as evidenced by his letter to Blumentritt, affected his actions in response to the nation. This allowed him to have a guide for how to act, guiding him in using his prior knowledge of what qualities were needed of a son, to his treatment of the nation, also, this extended to his view of others and how they should act.

¹⁷ Jose Rizal, “How the Philippines is Governed,” from *Political and Historical Writings*, (Manila: National Historical Institute, 1976), 289.

¹⁸ Jose Rizal, “The Philippines a Century Hence,” from *Political and Historical Writings*, (Manila: National Historical Institute, 1976), 130-163.

¹⁹ Jose Rizal, Ferdinand Blumentritt. “Rizal, Geneva, 6 June 1887,” *Rizal-Blumentritt Correspondence*, (Manila: Jose Rizal National Centennial Commission, 1961), 96.

Women and Nationalism

Rizal's respect for his mother and sisters and the love he had for them also influenced his writings on the nation. In Rizal's *Message to the Young Women of Malolos*, Rizal creates his national view of the Filipino woman. The development in this letter is one in which the personality and beliefs of Jose Rizal's life are mixed with the ideals of nationalism that he espouses.

Rizal speaks in the beginning of the letter about his decision of how to portray the women in *the Noli*. He creates, in this letter, his ideals for the perfect Filipino woman. Yet, even Rizal realized in his search that, "though I recalled one by one all the young women I have known since childhood, only a few conformed to the ideal I longed for."²⁰ The Filipino women did not match up to the ideal held by Rizal, although it seems that these qualities were made in reference to his own mother.

Rizal's nationalistic identity shines through in the very beginning of the letter. The letter itself is addressed, "To My Countrywomen."²¹ His excuse for having the right to write this letter, is that these women are all connected to him through being of the same nation, and, perhaps even more importantly, of the same actions. He saw women as possessing the key qualities of courage, goodness, humility, knowledge, and piety. In letters to his mother, Rizal acknowledges that his mother possesses each of these qualities. In a letter on December 11, 1884, Rizal calls his mother, "the most pious woman of my town."²² In his reminiscences, Jose

²⁰ Rizal, "Message to the Young Women of Malolos," from *Political and Historical Writings*, (Manila: National Historical Institute, 1976), 56

²¹ *Ibid*, 56.

²² Rizal, "To his [Mother. Madrid, 1885]," in *One Hundred Letters of Jose Rizal*, (Manila: National Historical Society, 1959), 226

Rizal acknowledges the vast impact his mother had on his education²³, a quality Jose Rizal wishes for every mother.²⁴

While these qualities are positive, it is important to ask what makes Jose Rizal feel the need to place gender roles in his writings. From his previous experiences with his mother and sisters, Jose Rizal has had exposure to well-educated, kind women that he could base his ideal on. But, Rizal, as a part of his creation of an imagined community, through including these concepts, has taken both his experiences of Filipino family and, likely, foreign ideas of nationalism, which often used the idea of gender roles, such as those espoused by Goethe, as a part of the dialogue of defining the nation, and combined them.

Indeed, as shall be examined later, foreign ideas had a great impact on Rizal's nationalism. The family, also used by other founders of nationalism, was expanded to take on a new meaning. The family, the smallest social group and economic unit, was associated with certain positive concepts, including dedication and love. These values were given by national philosophers to the nation as a whole through comparing it to the family. This was not a modern concept; for example, the Christian faith takes the idea of family, and the associated values, and expands this relating to God as a father, and the people as brothers and sisters. The fact that the Christian tradition was prevalent in the Philippines during the time of Rizal means that the expansion of the concept family to apply to whole groups of individuals was already in place. Rizal simply used this pre-existing concept as a part of his call to nationalism, though in this case replacing God with the Philippines as the parent. The idea of using this value for nationalistic purposes is not a novel concept for Rizal either. Nationalist movements had already arisen in the colonizing countries, the effects of which could be seen daily by the people

²³ Rizal, *Reminiscences*, 5.

²⁴ Rizal, "Message to the Young Women of Malolos," *Political and Historical Writings*, 58.

of the colonies through newspapers and governmental relations.

The Filipinos saw the effects of nationalism over and over again. The spread of liberalism, whose doctrine in Europe was one in which the values of freedom and individual rights which, during this time period was closely associated with the development of nationalism, brought about new ideas concerning freedom and capitalism. The transfer of the concepts of liberalism from Spain to the Philippines, Renato Constantino, one of the foremost scholars on the history of the Philippines, argued, was related to the new economic order of the Philippines.²⁵ The development of capitalism in Spain meant that the Spanish view of the world as a whole was changing. This change in viewpoint affected the colony, entering the towns, and the new obsession with trade and information systems caused this to spread quickly, creating more commonalities with the dissent prevalent in Spain itself.²⁶

The foundations of liberal movements in Spain created a path for the Filipinos to also take. In order to gain rights and freedom, they needed to adopt their own nationalistic identity as the Spanish had done. The only solution presented to the people was to become a modern country, which meant copying the colonizing countries of Europe and the solutions that the Europeans had found in processes by which to unify a population.

Education

Education is a topic consistently brought forth by Jose Rizal as a part of how to improve the lives of the people of the Philippines.

Even previous to his introduction to formal schooling, Jose Rizal was given the best

²⁵ Renato Constantino, *A History of the Philippines: From the Spanish Colonization to the Second World War*, (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975), 128-129.

²⁶ Reynaldo C. Ileto, *Filipinos and their Revolution: Event, Discourse, and Historiography*, (Manila: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1998), 86-87.

education possible. His mother, an intelligent, well-educated woman was his first teacher, providing the support that Rizal needed to remain ahead of the rest of his class. He was given a tutor for Latin, and learned some of both the Latin and Spanish languages before attending a formal school. After having moved in with his Aunt and Uncle, Rizal began his formal education, continuing his study in learning the Latin language. Passing the entrance examination, Rizal began to study at the Ateneo Municipal, a Jesuit run school, and later attended the University of the Philippines.²⁷ It was during this time that his mother expressed a growing concern for the problems with her son's education, this being her belief that it put him in danger from the Spanish rulers.²⁸ Perhaps also, she understood the growth of patriotism and the effect it would later have in her son's life.²⁹

Renato Constantino describes the period of time leading up to and including when Rizal was born in his book, *A History of the Philippines* as a time of widespread unrest. The hacienda system had been put into effect in the Philippines near the end of the eighteenth century, causing a large shift in overall land ownership. Also, the rise of the haciendas changed the types of crops grown from foodstuffs, such as rice, to export crops. The dedication to export crops caused a growth in the need for markets, as fewer and fewer people were able to be self-sufficient. Thus, in ever increasing amounts, the Filipinos began to ask for changes.³⁰ These changes included the creation of a new education system, initiated in 1863, which created some of the first opportunities for Filipinos to achieve higher education. Hence, the novelty of what Rizal experiences. Rizal is among the first Filipinos able to take advantage of the availability of

²⁷ Rizal, *Reminiscences*, 6-20.

²⁸ Jose Rizal and Ferdinand Blumentritt, "Rizal, London, 8 November 1888," in the *Rizal-Blumentritt Correspondence*, (Manila: Jose Rizal National Centennial Commission, 1961), 210.

²⁹ Rizal, *Reminiscences*, 21.

³⁰ Constantino, *A History of the Philippines*, 129-145

the higher education directly resulting from the change in educational systems. The creation of this educational system, along with the rise in liberal ideology in Spain and its influx to the Philippines, created an environment in which Rizal was able to be taught, and have the opportunity to interact with the ideas which were predominant in the western countries. This education, then, was extremely influential in shaping his character.

In a poem entitled “Education Gives Luster to the Motherland,” written by Rizal when he was sixteen years old, Rizal calls for the promise that education holds for the glory of the Philippines as a whole nation:

Man’s placid repose and earthly life
 To education he dedicates
 Because of her, art and science are born
 That, with a beautiful crown, decorate
 Man; and as from the high mount above
 The pure rivulet flows, undulates,
 So education beyond measure
 Gives the Country tranquility secure.³¹

This part of the poem displays the value of education to Rizal. Education was Rizal’s dedication, and his application of the values of the liberalism that he learned caused him to desire the education of other Filipinos. To quote a later section of the poem, “Such is one by wise education steered/ He holds the Country’s reins unconquered.”³² Rizal believed that education resulted in the freedom of one’s own country and actions. It is the application of these liberal values in Rizal’s own life that ultimately sculpted his actions and brought forth his adamant cry for the education of the entire Philippines.

Yet, Rizal’s education did not end with his classroom experiences. He was consistently

³¹ Jose Rizal, “Education Gives Luster to the Motherland.” From *Rizal’s Poems*, (Manila: Jose Rizal National Centennial Commission, 1962), 12.

³² *Ibid.* 14.

attempting to learn more about the world from whatever source he could find. For example, during his stay in France during the summer of 1883, he described his usual day as:

One or two hours in the gymnasium and in fencing, three or four in the library, the rest I use up in writing and visiting friends.³³

As can be seen, Rizal's day was centered on the idea of learning, mostly focused on both medical studies and studies of histories, including those of the Philippines.³⁴

It was during these travels that Rizal was brought to the conclusion that education in the Philippines was vastly inferior to education in European countries. Rizal did not simply believe that this was simply true for education dealing with the world as a whole, but even the education about the Philippines itself. As evidence of this, when Rizal was visiting Germany, he found it necessary to comment on the studies done by German scholars, and collected in German libraries, on the Philippines, and that these collections were the largest amount that he had seen, even more than was available within the Philippines itself.³⁵

Rizal's travels overseas greatly influenced his ability to formulate a national identity. During the beginning of his travels, Rizal often met with other travelers from different parts of the world. This served as a conglomeration of cultures interacting. It is both interesting and informative to look at Rizal's reactions to these travelers.

During his first trip out of the Philippines, Rizal found himself in the company of a group of Europeans, giving him a clear chance to learn about the real views of the average people he met. On this trip, he found that the men spoke negatively about the Philippines and

³³ Jose Rizal, "To his Parents and Brothers. Paris, May 16, 1889 in *One Hundred Letters of Jose Rizal*, (Manila: National Historical Society, 1959), 367.

³⁴ Rizal, *Rizal-Blumentritt Correspondence*, 71.

³⁵ Jose Rizal and Ferdinand Blumentritt, "Rizal, Berlin, 13 April 1887," in the *Rizal-Blumentritt Correspondence*, (Manila: Jose Rizal National Centennial Commission, 1961), 71.

that the women did similarly.³⁶

These sorts of reactions and questions point to the existence of outside forces on the shaping of Filipino nationalism. Already the Filipinos were considered a group, separate from the rest of the world. The obsession of the populace with the nationality of Jose Rizal was a sign of this. These were people already thinking in nationalistic terms. And these nationalistic terms were again expressed in a manner which altered the way they viewed Jose Rizal. Already, there were stereotypes in existence about the Filipinos; already this group of people was segregated from the other nationalities. Fairly or unfairly, Jose Rizal was considered a part of a nation.

National competition grew fierce during the nineteenth century. Competition existed between countries such as Germany, England, France, and Spain. Each of these countries had their own small empire and the segregation between the people of different regions spun into nationalism.³⁷ The nationalistic identities, by the latter half of the nineteenth century were well-developed and entrenched in European society. Thus, when Jose Rizal grew up, he was in a time-place in which this nationalistic spirit was already being transferred to the colonies, who found themselves having to deal with the increasing divisions due to the groupings that depicted them as being “Other.”³⁸

A comparison of German national identity and the identity created by Rizal

Rizal's ideas of Filipino nationalism are best understood in relation to the nationalism that he saw in the countries he visited, the influence of which he stated in a letter to Blumentritt

³⁶ Rizal, *Reminiscences*, 50.

³⁷ Germany serves as the exception, but nonetheless formulated many ideas about nationalism

³⁸ Jose Rizal and Ferdinand Blumentritt, “Rizal, London, 7 August 1888,” in the *Rizal-Blumentritt Correspondence*, (Manila: Jose Rizal National Centennial Commission, 1961), 188. In this, Rizal points out the negative stereotypes associated with Indios to Blumentritt

in regards to going back to the Philippines:

The nearer the moment of my departure approaches the more beautiful Europe seems to me! I tremble when I think of the kind of authorities, employees, laws, ideas, and treatment that I shall encounter in the Philippines. I have already become accustomed to another environment. France and Germany have given me different ideas of things!³⁹

Especially useful is an examination of the relevance of German national identity, specifically that which was espoused by Johann von Herder and Johann Gottlieb Fichte, which became entrenched in the mentality of scholars, such as Johann Wolfgang von Goethe⁴⁰, to Rizal's beliefs. Rizal's extensive reading of Goethe brought him into contact with the works of these other national philosophers. A connection between Rizal and the national identity supported by these German philosophers shows how in the beginning Filipino nationalism was created due to the options available to the people due to the time and place.

Herder's belief in the existence of nations stemmed from the similarities that certain peoples shared. His belief was that the creation of 'Germany' and 'Germanness' came from nature, and were imprinted on the genetics of the people in that nation.⁴¹ He states that this is displayed through the original places in which people develop, which causes them choose between different lifestyles, thereby choosing different moral values, and developing in different ways. The main unit he designates as a part of the nation is the family, from which the rest of the nation spreads out. The way this character arose, Herder believes, was through the family features, climate, way of life, education, language, and the history of specific peoples. This, he claims, is the main problem that Germany faces. It is a loose collection of many

³⁹ Jose Rizal and Ferdinand Blumentritt, "Rizal, Geneva, 10 June 1887," in the *Rizal-Blumentritt Correspondence*, (Manila: Jose Rizal National Centennial Commission, 1961), 100.

⁴⁰ Alain Finkielkraut. "Universality and National Identity." *The Unesco Courier* v. 42 (June 1989), 30-33.

⁴¹ Johann Gottfried von Herder, *Materials for the Philosophy of the History of Mankind, 1784 from Modern History Sourcebook*. <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1784herder-mankind.html> (accessed 30 January, 2008).

different nations. He claims that if Germany should be able to unite itself as a single, strong entity, it would need to go back to what he terms as the “leading strings of her own culture”⁴² By this, Germany would be going back to a more savage sort of area, less intellectual, but infinitely better and more meaningful to Herder.

Fichte describes the Germans as “the primordial stock of the new culture”⁴³, implying that the Germans are an ancient group of people, whose thought and culture has leaked down through the centuries to become a part of what he defines as the German Nation. Also, he claims that being German was part of being free, defining liberty as the continuance of German ideals in the face of the ideals of other cultures.⁴⁴ As far as what makes a man a German, Fichte describes it as a threefold inheritance, of land, language, and world-view.⁴⁵ Thus, Fichte encouraged unity as inheritors of Germanness through focusing on the commonality as Germans, and connecting on this level, rather than throwing away the ideals that make a man German.⁴⁶

Friedrich Ludwig Jahn wrote a response to this more focused on the way by which Germans can regain their national character. He defines the nation as a “community of interests and mutual love.”⁴⁷ Thus, Jahn believed that the German community needed to be brought back together by realigning the ideals of the community. This he suggested through creation of a constitution, demands of the people for unity, dedication to the values of Christianity, creation

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Louis Snyder, *Documents of German History* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1958), 134.

⁴⁴ Ibid, 134.

⁴⁵ Ibid, 135.

⁴⁶ Ibid, 135.

⁴⁷ Ibid, 137.

of a national education system, and utilization of a single language.⁴⁸

Rizal shared similar viewpoints. As discussed previously, family played a large role in defining the nation, a similarity held by him and the German nationalists. Also, Rizal was affected by the belief in the race of the person determining their attitudes. When describing the Basques to his parents, Rizal describes them as:

...typically tall, manly; their face is regularly shaven, which makes it long rather than oval; small eyes, aquiline nose and their general feature indicates honesty, roughness and frank affability.⁴⁹

The discussion of racial qualities, although less pronounced in Rizal's political writings, was present and important as a method of distinguishing Filipinos from Non-Filipinos. The racial qualities of a group of people was considered a strong determinant of the "path" these people would be able to take. The study of race was a study encouraging pride in the characteristics associated with this group that was not associated with any other racial group. In Germany, there were many groups of individuals considered to be part of separate races, yet individuals such as Herder created an imaginative idea of being "German" to bring all of these groups together through the creation and study of a common past.⁵⁰ Rizal likewise desired the creation of a common past for the people of the Philippines:

In my heart I have suppressed all loves except that of my motherland; in my mind I have erased all ideas which do not signify her progress and my lips have forgotten the names of the native races in the Philippines in order not to say more than Filipinos.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Ibid, 142.

⁴⁹ Jose Rizal, "To his Parents and Brothers. Paris, June 21, 1883," in *One Hundred Letters of Jose Rizal*, (Manila: National Historical Society, 1959), 99

⁵⁰ Johann Gottfried von Herder, *Materials for the Philosophy of the History of Mankind, 1784 from Modern History Sourcebook*.

⁵¹ Jose Rizal, "Farewell to 1883," from *Political and Historical Writings*, (Manila: National Historical Institute, 1976), 9.

Rizal, in hoping to gather together the peoples of the Philippines, decided that the best method, just like the method used by the German Philosophers, was to create a new set of values from a new 'race' which was to be the ideal for all of the people of the Philippines.

The connection between the racial qualities, values, and beliefs and the development of the nation as a whole is even more obvious in looking at the importance Rizal gave to the study of history. Rizal believed that history, the knowledge, and development, of the connections of the people to their heritage, these common racial qualities, values and beliefs, was drastically important to the learning and development of individuals and the Philippines as a whole:

If I could only be a professor in my country, I would stimulate these Philippine studies which are like the *nosce te ipsum* that gives the true concept of one's self and drives nations to do great things.⁵²

Through the study of history by Filipinos, there would come an understanding of their race, and of self. This idea directly reflects that of Herder, and his passion for education is rivaled in the works of Friedrich Jahn.

Part II: Competing Views of the Philippines

Obviously, Rizal's identity as a part of the Philippines is somehow connected to the outside world, yet there is still the question of why Rizal made the choice of accepting a world-view which supported nationalism, which was decidedly based on European ideas. To understand this process, it is important to examine the ideologies available to the Filipinos during Rizal's lifetime.

Rizal was born under a system of governance which allocated power to the landed elites, also known as the *principalia*, as the secular leaders of the local government, and granted even larger amounts of power to the local priest. The structure of the city previous to Rizal's birth is

⁵² Jose Rizal, from *The Rizal-Blumentritt Correspondence*, (Manila: Jose Rizal National Centennial Commission, 1961), 71-72.

aptly explained by the Von Thunen model. This model states that there will be a central city, where the activities will be organized around. This city is separated from most other areas. The individuals will place themselves spatially around this central city with poorer individuals on the outside, where land is best used for large-scale farming. This means, those individuals in the central city are the ones with the most education, and the ones with both power and wealth. It is from this central city where ideas are exchanged, and must then be passed on to the people in the countryside.

The cities of the Philippines consisted of a center, this being the church where the priest resides and works. From there, the more wealthy landowners dwell in a circular area around the hub of the church. The rest of the people congregated in slightly increasing distances from the church center.⁵³ This sort of setup places the locus of power at the very center of the town. The most influential people in changing society were at the center, and it was there, at the economic and social hub, that interactions between the different ideologies occurred, and from there the culture flowed outward, along the transportation routes, and through the barrios. This acted as the primary method of socialization and shifts in ideology previous to the birth of Jose Rizal.

This system of governance was challenged in the middle of the nineteenth century by the influx of liberalism and other concepts of the Enlightenment. Both Renato Constantino and Teodoro Agoncillo, historians of the Philippines, refer to this event, signified by the creation and retraction of a Spanish constitution in 1812, as the impetus for reforms in the local governance of the Philippines, especially in challenging the system which put in place Spanish priests instead of priests from the Philippines.⁵⁴ This movement, though, spread in much the way that

⁵³ Iletto, *Filipinos and their Revolution*, 79-81.

⁵⁴ Constantino, *History of the Philippines*, 135.

Von Thunen's model would predict. The priests themselves were the ones who were most affected, and the spread of the ideas of Filipinization of the church were slow, moving outwards from these city centers. Yet, it is also important to note how Rizal thought reform would occur in the church system of the Philippines:

The people, of defective or scanty education, without any idea or exact knowledge of their religion, naturally judge things according to their education and ability and are many times deceived by the surface or appearance rather than by their fundamental merit.⁵⁵

Through education, the Filipinos would come to realize the truths available in their own religion. Through becoming educated, which includes educating their own friars, knowledge of the truth would spread from individual to individual, and the ignorance that is so detrimental would slowly fade away. The slow spread of information from single individuals in the center of the community would continually be the method for changes in the Philippines, including when Jose Rizal's *Noli Me Tangere* begins circulating.

Thus, the slow change within the towns and the large changes in governmental regulation and ideology would have affected the way Jose Rizal viewed the townships. By the time Jose Rizal begins writing, there has been time for *illustrados*, those people who understood and adopted the ideals of liberalism, to come into existence, thereby starting the diffusion of these ideals to the Filipinos. In this way, Rizal was faced with a choice of accepting the liberal thoughts that were prevalent in the higher levels of education and whether to follow after the fulfillment of the ideals of equality or ignore the problems. It is unlikely that Rizal would have had the opportunity that he did, should he not have been exposed to the liberal school of thought.

The reason behind Rizal's lack of acceptance of feigning ignorance is in part due to the

⁵⁵ Jose Rizal, "The Religiosity of the Filipino People," from *Rizal Y Alonso—Miscellaneous Writings*, (Manila: National Heroes Commission 1964), 99.

prevalence of problems with the defining of the Filipinos, mostly by the friars and educated Spaniards. The problems in discussion of the Filipinos as indolent came out in the wake of the writings of one Dr. Sancianco through his writing entitled, *Progreso de Filipinas*. This work contributed to conversation on the topic among scholars and, even more importantly, among friars and governmental authorities. Rizal, too, discussed this topic in his letter entitled, “The Indolence of the Filipinos.” Rizal discusses how the identification as indolent has become so much a part of the mentality of Filipinos that, “The Filipinos who can stand beside the most active men of the world will doubtless not challenge this admission.”⁵⁶ Yet, Rizal also discusses within this document the tendency towards laziness that comes from being in a climate like the Philippines, as well as looking at the history of the Philippines before colonization for proof of indolence as being due to colonization. Criticism rose due to Rizal’s ideas, and in his letters with Blumentritt, Rizal examines this issue. In a letter written on October 12, 1888 from London, Rizal mentions that he has been studying the sources on the history of the Philippines. And he has this to say about the issues that arise with claims of racial hatred in his books:

Who among Filipinos and Spaniards wrote the first insulting books? Who started slandering? Who was the first to compare people to animals? Who tried first to humiliate an obedient people? And that occurred when the weak could not answer nor were they allowed to do so—those very same weak people who gave their money, their blood, and their obedience to their slanderers.⁵⁷

This writing seems to sum up the ideals of Jose Rizal in regards to the problem of identity in the Philippines. Rizal made the choice which was available to him, having read the opinions others gave of his country, attacking the virtues exhibited by not only Rizal, but everyone else of native descent, Rizal chose to give his own opinion in his defense. The opening of education,

⁵⁶ Jose Rizal, “The Indolence of the Filipinos,” *Political and Historical Writings*, (Manila: National Historical Institute, 1976), 227-265.

⁵⁷ Jose Rizal and Ferdinand Blumentritt, “Rizal, London, 12 October 1888,” from *The Rizal-Blumentritt Correspondence*, (Manila: Jose Rizal National Centennial Commission, 1961), 203.

and Rizal's ability to travel, both affected Rizal's ability to come to the defense of Filipinos.

Part III: Government and its Affect on Rizal

Finally, Rizal's personal experiences with the government were part of the deciding factor in his nationalistic beliefs. Multiple encounters with the government of the Philippines led Rizal to his decision to publish what he believed was true and best for the Philippines as a whole.

In 1872, when Rizal was eleven years old, the Cavite mutiny displayed the corruption within the Spanish government. The uprising of overtaxed naval workers, consisting of a single fort, was put down within a day, but the reactions to this uprising would shape the way many Filipinos viewed their government. One of the workers implicated three Filipino friars, Mariano Gomez, Jose Burgos, and Jacinto Zamora in being a part of the cause of the uprising. These Filipino friars were large supporters of seeing the Filipinization of the clergy, and were therefore considered enemies of the Spanish friars that held power. The accusation presented by one of the mutineers allowed the Spanish government enough reason to arrest and execute the three friars. These executions had resounding effects on Jose Rizal's life. His own brother had been living with one of the friars, and was thereafter banned from receiving a higher education, and Jose Rizal took on the name of Rizal, instead of Mercado, his original name.⁵⁸ This issue took on special significance for Rizal.

In a letter to Blumentritt, Rizal defines the word "filibustero" through talking about the friars who were executed.⁵⁹ Rizal continues to use this word in his discourse, describing those ready to sacrifice themselves for the good of the country, in other words, a revolutionary. Rizal

⁵⁸ Benedict Anderson, *Under Three Flags*, 58-59

⁵⁹ Jose Rizal and Ferdinand Blumentritt, "Rizal, Berlin, 29 March 1887," from *The Rizal-Blumentritt Correspondence*, (Manila: Jose Rizal National Centennial Commission, 1961), 69

saw himself as being a part of this revolutionary spirit. This event became a part of his identity, enough so as to permeate through the years between his childhood and when he wrote *El Filibusterismo*.

In another encounter with the government in his early in his life, Rizal associates it with his experiences as outlined in his novel, the *Noli Me Tangere*:

When I was seventeen years old, they assaulted me and imprisoned me, in spite of my being wounded, and they threatened me with banishment, only because one dark night I did not take off my hat in passing in front of a lieutenant of the civil guard. I complained to the captain general, but they did not do me justice. It took two weeks for my wound to heal.⁶⁰

This encounter adds another personal experience that would push Jose Rizal to despise the government of the Philippines. Receiving such treatment makes the problems in Spanish governance Jose Rizal spoke out against a reality for him. His words against the government were not merely ideological, but came through his own experiences, and his own desire for justice.

Rizal was placed in a position that was new to the people of the Philippines. He was given a high education, which was only available to Filipinos for a short while when he began receiving it. He was able to travel to other parts of the world, giving him the opportunity to study the materials about the Philippines that were not available in the Philippines itself. He was indoctrinated with the liberalist and nationalist ideologies of the western countries. Yet, even with all of these resources at his disposal, it did not guarantee Rizal's dedication to seeing change in the Philippines. This change came through the personal events Rizal experienced. Rizal experienced his mother being on trial. Rizal experienced a beating at the hands of an officer of the law. Rizal experienced having to change his name, and having his own brother

⁶⁰ Jose Rizal and Ferdinand Blumentritt, "Rizal, Berlin, 21 March 1887," from *The Rizal-Blumentritt Correspondence*, (Manila: Jose Rizal National Centennial Commission, 1961), 62.

banned from education. Rizal did not need to think ideologically to justify his desires for the Philippines. But, Rizal did have the capability, and was fundamentally changed by his findings. This is how Rizal was able to gain the courage to sacrifice himself for the people of the Philippines; through a belief in his own correctness.

Part IV: Noli Me Tangere

The *Noli Me Tangere*, Jose Rizal's most famous work, has been examined quite thoroughly by authors seeking to write an account of how this novel created nationalistic sentiment in the Philippines. And indeed, one of the effects of the *Noli* was to create a feeling of nationalism within the people of the Philippines, and the Spanish government criticized and censured the work due to its subversive qualities. Benedict Anderson examines this novel through Rizal's creation of a sense of connection between the intended readers, those people of the Philippines, and himself, claiming that this novel, unlike any before it, created an imagined community for the Philippines.⁶¹ This aspect examines the changes created in the Philippines wonderfully, but what Benedict Anderson does not examine is the changes that *Noli Me Tangere's* imagined community made on Rizal's own life.

To understand the concept of Rizal's ability to change his own life through creating the *Noli*, we must first examine the ideas about what the *Noli* is. The *Noli* is a novel created with the express purpose of providing Rizal's personal interpretation, or imagining, of the truth about the relations between people in the Philippines, in hopes that by bringing these relations to light, the people would change.⁶² This is not a new concept, even to Rizal himself, for when Rizal was writing his reminiscences he made the following statement:

⁶¹ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 26-28.

⁶² Jose Rizal. *Noli Me Tangere*. Translated by Harold Augenbraum (New York: Penguin Books, 2006.), 3.

Turning my eyes, my memory, and my imagination towards the days past...⁶³

This statement precludes Rizal's thoughts of his own past. It shows his comprehension of how any sort of writing can involve use of memory and imagination. In his reminiscences, Rizal looked at his own past utilizing both what he has seen and his imagination; it is suitable to say that he did similarly with the present through his writing of *Noli Me Tangere*. The *Noli* is also a mixture of reality with fantasy. Within this novel, Jose Rizal imagines relationships between the friars and the public, between the public and the heroes, between the heroes and their love interests. Through these interactions, and through the narrative of the novel, Rizal creates his imagining of what is wrong with the Philippines, and what a man can do about it. In this way, Rizal begins to create his own idea of what his future should look like, and what his goals should be.

Ibarra, a character from the *Noli*, can be easily compared to Rizal himself. Although, it is certain that Rizal speaks his thoughts through different characters throughout the novel, Ibarra bears a very great resemblance to Rizal. In chapter three of the *Noli*, Ibarra makes a statement with regards to his experiences in overseas travel:

The surprising thing about these peoples, when you set aside everyone's national pride... before visiting a country I tried to study its history... In every instance I noted that a people's prosperity or misery lay in direct proportion to its freedoms or inhibitions...⁶⁴

This statement was one of the guiding principles behind Rizal's actions in the future. Rizal, who considered studies in the history of the Philippines to be of utmost importance in obtaining freedom, especially with regards to domination by the Spanish priests, consistently argued for better education for students. His arguments also betray his dream of a Filipinization of the

⁶³ Rizal, *Reminiscences*, 7.

⁶⁴ Rizal, *Noli Me Tangere*, 22.

clergy and the education of the children of the Philippines. Rizal speaks on the problems with the clergy and education together. In speaking to the women in *Message to the Young Women of Malolos*, Rizal encourages them to education, so that they will understand that “piety does not consist in prolonged kneeling, long prayers, large rosaries...”⁶⁵ In a letter to Blumentritt, Rizal also writes:

All we ask is greater attention, better education, better government employees, one or two representatives, and greater security for our persons and property.⁶⁶

Rizal’s ideal, although even he believes that it is unreachable, would be for equality in the government and the social life of Filipinos. Thus, as an unreachable goal, Rizal’s acceptance of nationalistic ideals influences him to believe that it is his duty to work so that the people of his country can benefit.

Freedom, though, was Rizal’s focus, not national pride. National pride was necessary to define who needed this freedom, but nationalism was not an ends in itself, rather, the focus was on obtaining an understanding of the world that brings about a rejection of falsehoods, and then it is a person’s duty to humanity, and even to country, to share and help others.⁶⁷

The duties of the individual, in Rizal’s mindset, relate to the knowledge the individual possesses. Rizal knew of the myriad of problems facing Philippine society, and felt the need to speak upon these problems. Nor, if we relate a passage from chapter thirty-five of the *Noli* in which a group of men are talking about the obvious problems with the actions of the friars, did Rizal have a choice:

“...while fear and restraint are synonymous. Everyone pays more attention to something

⁶⁵ Rizal, “Message to the Young Women of Malolos,” from *Political and Historical Writings*, (Manila: National Historical Institute, 1976), 57.

⁶⁶ Jose Rizal and Ferdinand Blumentritt, “Rizal, Berlin, 26 January 1887,” from *The Rizal-Blumentritt Correspondence*, (Manila: Jose Rizal National Centennial Commission, 1961), 44.

⁶⁷ Rizal, *Noli*, 55.

bad rather than to a needed good thing. Suddenly it's all fear and lack of trust. Everyone only thinks about himself, and no one about other people. That's why we're so weak!"⁶⁸

Rizal's understanding of his duties, as presented through the character of Don Filipino in his imaginative work in the *Noli*, forced him to speak against the Spanish government, to do otherwise would only be fear. The result of the nationalistic mindset that Jose Rizal took discouraged him from remaining silent.

It is once again worthwhile to point out the difficulty in discerning between Jose Rizal's national sentiment and the influence of liberalism. Both of these concepts are intertwined, resulting in similar actions. An argument is available that the ideals espoused by Jose Rizal were not of nationalistic origin, but rather originated in liberalism. Rizal's personal statement is that the desire of the people of the Philippines was not to overthrow the Spanish government, but rather that they receive equal treatment.⁶⁹ This sentiment, much akin to the sentiment of the revolutionaries of the United States during the later half of the 18th century, displays a lack of truly revolutionary ideology. It was for this reason that some authors, such as Teodoro Agoncillo⁷⁰, promoted Andres Bonifacio as a more suitable national hero, one who supported national independence through action.

Thus, Rizal can be understood as having been changed by nationalistic ideas to a sufficient degree where he supported the Filipinos as a people, but would not allow for Filipino bloodshed on its account. Except, that is, for himself.

In a letter to the Governor General of Manila, Jose Rizal wrote:

⁶⁸ Ibid, 234

⁶⁹ Jose Rizal and Ferdinand Blumentritt, "Rizal, Berlin, 26 January 1887," from *The Rizal-Blumentritt Correspondence*, (Manila: Jose Rizal National Centennial Commission, 1961), 44.

⁷⁰ See Teodoro Agoncillo, *History of the Filipino People*, (Quezon City : R.P. Garcia Pub. Co., 1973)

“For sometime now my aged parents, my relatives, friends and even individuals not known to me have been cruelly persecuted, because of me, they say. I now present myself to receive the brunt of such persecutions, to answer the charges that may be made against me, in order to end this situation which is painful to the innocents...”⁷¹

This letter shows the final step taken by Rizal, which is often considered the sacrifice he made for his country. Yet, it is important to note, Rizal felt enough connection to the populace who he did not know to include them in this letter alongside his family and friends. Rizal’s ability to have a different world-view from many Filipinos sparked the beginning of change, which Rizal deemed necessary because of that world-view. To understand this, we must only look nine years earlier, at his novel, *Noli Me Tangere*, where there is a response to Don Filipino’s argument for standing up against the friars. “Well, think about other people and not about yourself and you’ll see yourself hanged.”⁷² Rizal knew the penalties for speaking against the government, but considered the values of liberty to be more important.

Conclusion

The life and writings of Jose Rizal, as a study of national identity, provides many interesting observations. Not only was Rizal affected by other countries in developing his sense of national identity, but he was also affected by the relationships that he had. It was through these impacts that Rizal developed his identity. His association of self with the populace was in part due to the Spanish government’s and Spanish authors’ segregation and devaluation of the people who were later to be called Filipinos. When a group of people is discriminated against, especially since the creation of liberal ideology, they often find commonalities, and begin to consider themselves a group, and in the case of the Filipinos, a nation.

Labels are powerful. The labeling of the *Indios*, natives of the Philippines, by authors

⁷¹ Jose Rizal, “To the Governor General. Hongkong, June 21, [1892],” in *One Hundred Letters of Jose Rizal*, (Manila: National Historical Society, 1959), 555.

⁷² Rizal, *Noli Me Tangere*, 234.

and friars as lazy or stupid had the obvious effect of connecting these people together, of describing them as a group, even if they did not see themselves as a group. Thus, Rizal fought back against these labels with new labels for the people already grouped together.

Rizal's values and dedication to the group of *Indios* to which he also belonged helped to begin to change the way the Filipinos valued themselves.

But, in speaking of Rizal's death, it is not necessarily nationalism, but nationalistic values that call for the sacrifice of life. These values related to the humanistic school of thought, that people can do good deeds, that others are more important than self, that people are deserving of, and have, basic rights. It was these values that allowed Jose Rizal to accomplish all he did for the Philippines. The sacrifices he made in regards to the Philippines were through the values that were imbued in him through his experiences. His values for women were learned through experience with his mother and sisters. His value for education was learned through seeing the freedom in education in other countries. His value for liberty was adopted from the worldview prevalent in Europe. These values drove Rizal. Nationalism was Rizal's chosen method of associating these values with a group of people.

It is neither strange nor new during the nineteenth century to encourage self-sacrifice for the group as a whole. The concept of doing such a thing for the nation as a group is different, but whether nationalism is merely due to the larger size, as Benedict Anderson suggests,⁷³ is questionable. The main difference that Rizal made in his application of values was the sheer amount of people that he was applying these values to.

⁷³ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 6.

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