

Konferenzberichte

IX Bielefeld Colloquium on Southeast Asia: Lowland Christian Filipino Civilization

19-20 May 1989

Compared to Indonesia and even to Thailand, and in spite of the spectacular political happenings of recent years, the Philippines is understudied and relatively unknown to the academic community in Western Europe. So it may have been a good idea to start developing Philippine studies at the Sociology of Development Research Centre of the University of Bielefeld in the hope that it may become a second centre next to Amsterdam where these studies have been pursued since the late sixties.

After two years of intensive preparations, including field research and library development, the group of mostly junior Bielefeld scholars thought itself sufficiently prepared to meet with their European colleagues. So they organized the IX Bielefeld Colloquium on Southeast Asia (19-20 May 1989) as a convention of European scholars actively engaged in the study of lowland Christian Filipino society.

The organizers were successful in drawing together people from places as far apart as Berlin and Amsterdam, Bern and Copenhagen. In a lively atmosphere the various contributions were discussed and it was very rewarding to get to know each other and explain one's particular interests. It may therefore be hoped that the new generation of young scholars pursuing Philippine studies will stimulate each other in their work.

As observed above, Philippine studies are still underdeveloped in Europe. Scouting for participants identified some ten Spaniards, all of them working on the historical presence of Spain in the Philippines with none of them really focussing on the Philippine present. The few colleagues in Paris are grouped in the section *Ethnologie Comparative de l'Asie du Sud-Est* of the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique and focus on the ethnography of Palawan and the history of Mindanao.

Scattered all over Germany almost twenty senior and junior scholars appear to be working on Philippine subjects, mainly in the fields of history, public administration, contemporary politics, political and legal science,

sociology, and cultural studies. Two thirds of them participated. It was a pity that some of the better known social scientists from the Netherlands (e.g. Rutten, Wolters) were unable to attend though the Dutch did find a most stimulating representative in van den Muijzenberg.

Substantially the colloquium dealt with the analysis and interpretation of local, municipal, and national elites (Rüland, Mulder, van den Muijzenberg, Berner), the articulation of the middle stratum (Gregorio, Mulder), contemporary politics (Werning), the historical development of lowland Christian society (Dahm, Wendt, Schult), and female labour (Nørlund). In the discussion these subjects were often developed in depth by placing them in a comparative Southeast Asian perspective.

Much has to be done if Philippine studies is to evolve to international respectability. So far the European contribution is peripheral to the American-Australian-Philippine discussion, but in view of the late development of Philippine studies in general it would seem that there is plenty of scope for the study of Philippine society. It was thought that there is an urgent necessity for historical-sociological study at the local level in order to gain insight into the social dynamics of lowland Filipino society, not only at the local, but also at the macro level (Rüland, van den Muijzenberg). This type of research should be complemented by the cultural-historical studies necessary to develop in-depth understanding of lowland Christian Filipino civilization (Mulder, Wagner). All this work should preferably be undertaken with due consideration for comparable phenomena in the other societies of Southeast Asia if middle-range theoretical understanding of the region is to develop (Evers). The colloquium was certainly a very useful, albeit small step in that direction.

Niels Mulder

An den Wurzeln des modernen Japan

Meiji-Symposium in Kiel, 29.6. - 1.7.1989

Neu war der Tagungsort, neu auch das Konzept der Tagung: nach Kiel hatten das Historische Seminar der dortigen Universität und das Seminar für Sprache und Kultur Japans der Nachbaruniversität Hamburg zu einem dreitägigen wissenschaftlichen Symposium eingeladen und damit erstmals über einhun-