

AN EVALUATIVE ANALYSIS OF EIGHT PLAYS OF
ALBERTO S. FLORENTINO

A Thesis
Presented to
the Faculty of the Graduate School
University of San Carlos

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts in Literature


by
Yu Chung
June, 1973

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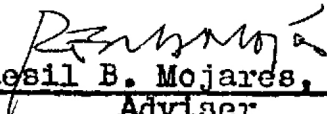
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CHAPTER I

HISTORY OF SOCIAL-PROTEST DRAMA IN THE PHILIPPINES

I. INTRODUCTION

A history of social-protest drama will necessarily have to be the history of Philippine theater itself. The reason for this lies in the fact that the criticism of the social reality has been a central element in the tradition of Philippine theater ever since its awakening into self-consciousness in the closing years of the nineteenth century.

Philippine theater, of course, has much earlier origins in the pre-Spanish proto-plays described by early foreign chronicles but these games and rituals were forms of theater only in so far as they exhibited elements of drama. They were spontaneous expressions of the native human urge for fancy, entertainment, and symbol-making. They reflected patterns and values of communal life but being tribal rather than national in inspiration they could not be properly spoken of as 'Filipino' theater.

Theater remained a popular form of entertainment and art during the Spanish period, with the flourishing of the "moro-moro" and the "zarzuela." But Spanish colonization rendered theater artificial because of various

factors: censorship, the bias against native talent, and overriding, and sometimes perverting, preoccupation with the monastic ends of religious instruction and conversion. As attention was drawn away from the naturalistic to the supernatural, from the contemporary to the otherworldly, theater became divorced from social reality.¹

It is with the advent of the vernacular theater particularly in the "zarzuela" form - that we have the start of a truly national and Filipino theater and in this we too find the confrontation with social reality that makes social protest drama very much a central part of Philippine theater itself.

II. DRAMA DURING THE SPANISH ERA: 1637-1899

From 1521 to the time of the American occupation, all christianized Filipinos were influenced almost exclusively by the arts of the conquering Spaniards. Zealous Spanish priests translated European metrical romances and religious tales into the local dialects and sponsored the presentation of mystery and morality plays. And in these plays, the friars sometimes acted the major parts while the minor cast constituted mainly of Filipinos.

¹E. San Juan, "Panitikan: A Critical Introduction to Tagalog Literature," Asian Studies, IV, 3 (December, 1966), pp. 412-429.