

A STUDY OF THE MORO-MORO ELEMENTS IN FIVE PLAYS  
BY VIVENCIO ROSALES, A BOHOLANO PLAYWRIGHT

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A Thesis

Presented to

the Faculty of the Graduate School  
University of San Carlos

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In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Arts in Literature

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by

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March, 1975

APPROVAL SHEET

This thesis entitled A STUDY OF THE MORO-MORO ELEMENTS IN FIVE PLAYS BY VIVENCIO ROSALES, a BOHOLANO PLAYWRIGHT, prepared and submitted by Primitiva Salera Veloso in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Literature has been examined and is recommended for acceptance and approval for ORAL EXAMINATION.

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A DEDICATION

to

my husband

and children -

Jing

Betty

Poy

Jun

Baby

Ray

Ging

Nonoy

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## CHAPTER I

### THE MORO-MORO : ITS HISTORY AND STANDARD CHARACTERISTICS

During a period of intense nationalism, such as the one that the Philippines is passing through at the moment, it is natural and even healthy that a search be made in every direction to discover what we can, with pride, point at as being Filipino.

Similar explorations in many countries past and present have been made in the arts, where the ideals, the thoughts, and the aspirations of the race remain preserved.

The arts in the Philippines are also the object of the search for this element that can be called Filipino. Even the rules of our art competitions direct the judges to reserve so many points of their final score for "Filipino expression." Sometimes the use of Philippine materials may not be a guarantee in the identification of "Filipino" expression. Looking into the primitive works of the past then can give us a better perspective in this problem. In the process, we have of course to accept the fact that anything we will find will bear the mark of a more or less strong foreign influence. We can,



however, identify these influences and mentally withdraw them to arrive at our result. Or we can judge as to how these elements are creatively adapted to local conditions and sensibilities to arrive at an understanding of the Filipino. The first of these approaches is clearly simplistic; it is the second which offers the scholar with the most fruitful, albeit difficult, approach at defining what is Filipino culture.<sup>1</sup>

#### A. THE HISTORY OF THE MORO-MORO

##### THE BIRTH AND THE RISE OF THE MORO-MORO

One of the arts we can look back to with some pride is the moro-moro. The moro-moro is our heritage from our Spanish and native forefathers.

We have to mention in passing that all the conquests of Spain had a very marked element, as important, if not more so, than the economic element. Spain conquered the Philippines, not only to increase her wealth but also to bring Christianity to the heathen peoples of this part of the world.

When Mexico was discovered and Cortes conquered the proud city of Tenochtitlan, it was imbued in the minds of the conquerors to work into the souls of the

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<sup>1</sup>For a more adequate discussion of this problem, see H. de la Costa, "History and Philippine Culture," The Background of Nationalism and Other Essays (Manila: Solidaridad Publishing House, 1965), pp. 23-30.

natives the conqueror's religion. And the arts served the Spaniards as handmaiden for the achievement of this purpose. The friars taught the Indians the old traditional dances. The Indian warriors in turn used these dances to mimic Moors and Christians fighting to capture Granada.<sup>2</sup>

Sometime in 1530, the dances which the Indians called "Moros y Cristianos" were no longer limited to Indian crowds but were open to huge appreciative audiences.

Since the second half of the sixteenth century, the "Moros y Cristianos" has been as Mexican as any of the other Mexican dances.

In 1564, Legaspi and Fray Urdaneta, both Spaniards by birth, led the expedition from Puerto de la Navidad to the Philippines. The friars that came with the expedition were the Augustinian convents of Mexico. The expedition was really a Mexican expedition despite the nationality of the leaders. A good many of those who joined it were mestizos and some were even of pure Indian stock.

The Spaniards were of the belief that making the natives of the conquered lands follow their pattern

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<sup>2</sup>Rafael Bernal. "The Moro-moro: A Possibility for Folkloric Theater," Comment, Vol. 15, 1962, p.115.