

Imagining Independence: Jose Rizal in Southeast Asia

John Nery
Yuchengco Museum
July 16, 2011



Let's begin halfway around the world

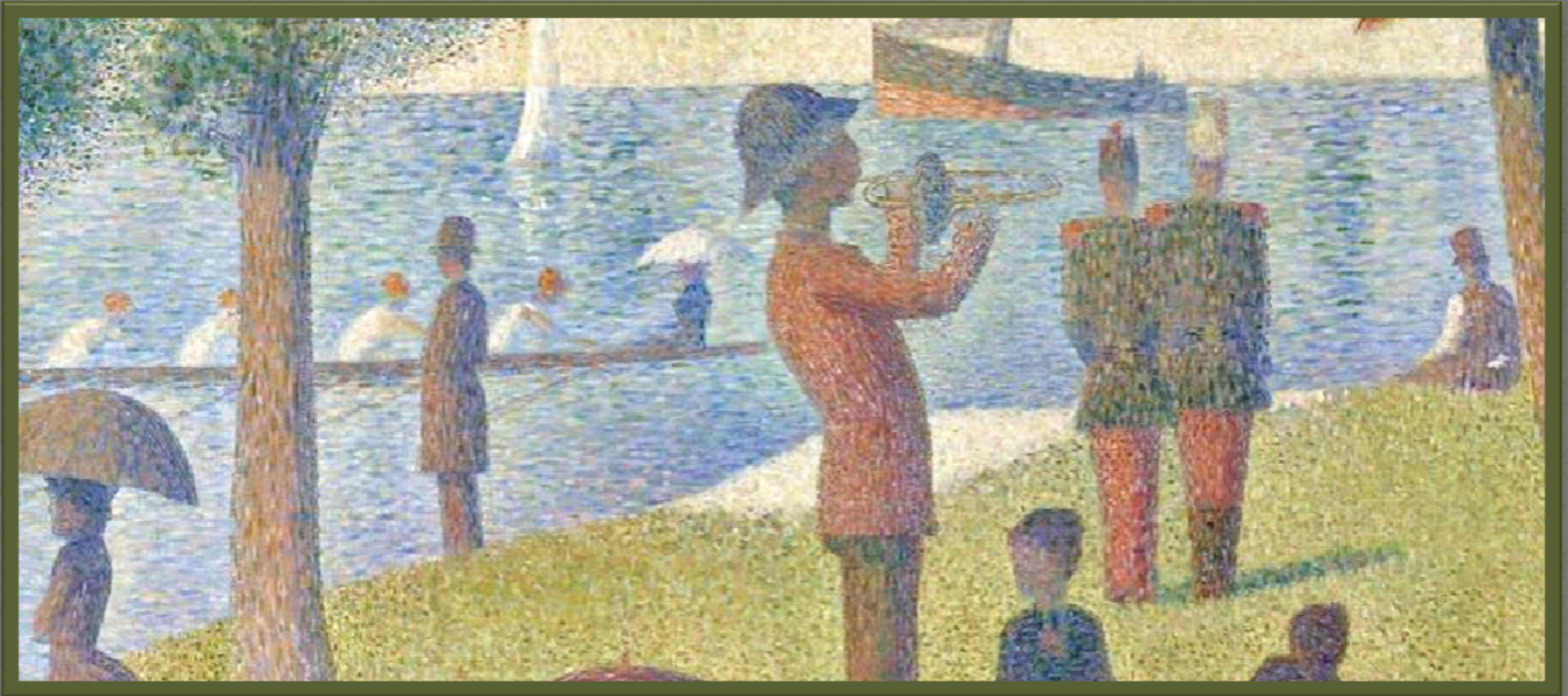
With a famous painting: Seurat's
“A Sunday Afternoon on La Grande Jatte”



Painted in Paris between 1884 and 1886



... at about the time Rizal was in the city.



Do you “see” him?

Top coat and derby hat

Rizal cuts a European figure—deliberately



It is
a “true”
image



Here, e.g.,
is an
illustration
by Laporta,
in *La
Ilustracion
Española y
Americana*
(Feb. 15,
1897)



Rizal, in
his derby
hat, is
being
conducted
to the
place of
execution



The
European
figure is
also an
image
Rizal
chose with
great care

Rizal in 1900



Black suit,
black hat:
Photo
taken by
Manuel
Arias
Rodriguez
on Dec. 30,
1896

In sum,
he crafted the image we “see”

That of a free man, a citizen in a republic
of equals

Did our neighbors “see” this image too? Or did they, when the nationalist wave swept through Southeast Asia, view him through a different prism?

OUR THESIS

Rizal played a **peripheral but real** role in the first attempts to imagine independence in Southeast Asia—especially in Indonesia

News of Rizal's execution reached Batavia over two weeks late

- Only on January 16, 1897
- In *Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad* (front page)
- And in *Java Bode* (inside page)

The Java Bode story included the following detail

Rizal “married one and a half hours before his execution with an English girl from Hongkong, who had come to the doctor with her foster father, who was treated at length by the doctor for his eyes. After the death of that foster father she had stayed on with the doctor” (Muijzenberg 1998: 391).

Imagining “independence”

Three episodes

Independence
as the responsibility
of mestizo leaders

“Prachtigen patriot, dezen halfbloed”



E.F.E.
Douwes
Dekker, the
Eurasian
("Indo")
nationalist
and grand-
nephew of
Multatuli

was the first to call for Indonesian independence—in December 1912.

In May 1913 he became the first man from Southeast Asia outside the Philippines to study Rizal in depth. On May 15, he wrote an essay entitled “Rizal” in the “scholarly” journal *Het Tijdschrift*



“DD” and family in 1913—the year he was sent into exile

(borrowed from <http://indisch4ever.web-log.nl/indisch4ever/>)

One telling passage from “Rizal”

- He transforms John Foreman’s

“Deeds in Europe, almost amounting to miracles, were attributed to his genius, and became current talk among the natives when they spoke sotto voce of Rizal’s power and influence. He was looked up to as the future regenerator of his race ...”

- Into:

“Half-blood and native began to see him as the saviour, the regenerator of his Fatherland.”

In other words, DD, the son of a Dutch father and a German-Javanese mother, had managed to insert himself into Rizal's story!

- He had begun the essay by writing of Rizal:
“A courageous, magnificent patriot, this half-blood” (in Van der Veur’s translation)
- Elsewhere, he had also written:
“We really form the beginning of our own nation” (Van der Veur 1958). He meant Indos.

At this stage in DD's thinking,
he understood the fight for
independence as a struggle to
be led by *halfbloed* like him

Independence
as the ultimate gift
of self-sacrifice

Merdeka ataoe mati!



Including
restless
pemuda
chafing
under
Japanese
control
(journalist
Rosihan
Anwar is
2nd from
left)

A few months later,
Rosihan made a discovery

- “Surprisingly enough, as I read the book, I saw the poem...”
- “The situation was favorable to promote nationalism. In that context, I thought it would be good that I could disseminate this story about Jose Rizal among our younger people at that time.”

„Memperingati José Rizal”

Pada hari Sabtoe, tanggal 30 Des. moelai poekoel 8 10 malam oleh radio Djakarta akan distarkan pidato oen. toek memperingati hari wafatnja Dr. Jose R i z a l, poedjangga patriot Filipina. Pembitjara: toean *Rosihan Anwar.*

On Dec. 29, 1944, a news release about a special radio program appeared

Pada hari ini, 20 Desember 1946, orang-orang di seluruh dunia sedang merayakan ulang tahun ke-100 kelahiran John F. Kennedy, Presiden Amerika Serikat ke-35.

John F. Kennedy lahir di Boston, Massachusetts, pada tanggal 29 Mei 1917. Ia adalah seorang politikus dan diplomat Amerika Serikat. Ia menjabat sebagai Gubernur Massachusetts dari 1955 hingga 1961, dan kemudian sebagai Wakil Presiden Amerika Serikat dari 1961 hingga 1963.

Sebelum menjabat sebagai Wakil Presiden, Kennedy telah menjabat sebagai Gubernur Massachusetts selama dua periode. Ia adalah gubernur muda pertama dalam sejarah negara tersebut.

Kennedy adalah seorang pemimpin yang visioner dan berenergi. Ia membawa perubahan signifikan dalam kebijakan luar negeri dan domestik Amerika Serikat.

Salah satu pencapaian terbesar Kennedy adalah memimpin Amerika Serikat selama Perang Dunia Kedua. Ia adalah pemimpin yang berani dan berdedikasi.

Kennedy juga dikenal sebagai pemimpin yang berdedikasi dan berenergi. Ia adalah pemimpin yang visioner dan berenergi.

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Dr. J. H. H. H.

Adina, Patricia Scherbert ...

Adina Scherbert, putri dari ...
Patricia Scherbert, putri dari ...

Adina Scherbert, putri dari ...
Patricia Scherbert, putri dari ...

Adina Scherbert, putri dari ...
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Patricia Scherbert, putri dari ...

Adina Scherbert, putri dari ...
Patricia Scherbert, putri dari ...

It was the complete package: A feature, an original poem, a photo, and the translation (with notes).

RIKAL: PAHLAWAN KEMERDEKAAN FILIPINA
Scorang geni Melajoe

PADA hari ini, 30 Desember 1896 empat puluh delapan tahun jang laloe dindatoe soedoot Asia Timoor, di Filipina, djiwa moerni seorang peetera bangsa Melajoe jang mendiami Filipina toe dipadankan dengan lalim oleh Pemerintah Sepanyol.

Jose Rizal Y. Mercado, namanja Sepanyol totaui djiwanja tetap Melajoe (Timoor); Jose Rizal seorang pahlawan Filipina jg. menoeontoe kemerdekaan bangsa dan noesanja daripada permdjadjahan pemerintah Sepanyol jang kedjam didalam abad ke 19 Maschi. Sedjak ia sadar, bahwa bangsanja mendjadi binatang perasan dan boedak belian sadja, maka dengan tidak gentar akan kekoesaan Sepanyol dan kaem k'erikaninja (mondita?) ia menentang pemerintahan itoe dengan terang-terangan. Ialah seorang Filipina jang berani berboeat demikian. Ialah sebenarja poentjak dari beberapa pemberontakan-pemberontakan besar-ketjil jang djoemlahnja koerang lebih seratoes banjaknja antara tahoen 1573 sampai 1872, dari moelal Sepanyol memerintah sampai pemberontakan Kawite.

A story on two levels: interest in PH (with MacArthur's return), and appeal to Malay kinship.

Adios, Patria Adorada. . . .

*Selamat tinggal, Tanah koepoedja
Daerah pilihan, soerja Selatan....*

*Alangkah nikmatnja tidoer, abadi
dalam pangkoean dikau, o Tanah mera-
wan hati.*

Note line 2,
especially the
words
“Daerah ...
Selatan.”

“Daerah ... Selatan”

- Was the bureaucratic Japanese term for occupied Indonesia, meaning “southern regions”
- To the reader then, the phrase conflates the Philippines of Rizal’s poem with occupied Indonesia

Aside from Rizal's poem welcoming martyrdom, there were other quotes from him about the useful death

Nederlands Instituut
voor
Oorlogsdokumentatie
NETHERLANDS INSTITUTE FOR WAR DOCUMENTATION

Publicatie: Merdeka: suara rakyat Republik Indonesia
Datum: 20 mei 1946
Pagina: 1

Buku-buku ini adalah koleksi dari para penulis yang telah meninggal dunia. Mereka telah meninggalkan dunia ini dengan meninggalkan karya-karya mereka yang akan tetap hidup dan berguna bagi masyarakat.

JOSE RIZAL

No. 196 SENIN
20 MEI

Merdeka

SOEARA RAKJAT REPOEBLIK INDONESIA

TH. REP. 1, 1946
18 DA'ACHIR 1946

Dianggap sebagai salah satu dari buku-buku yang paling penting dalam sejarah Indonesia. Buku ini akan menjadi salah satu dari buku-buku yang paling penting dalam sejarah Indonesia.

JULIUS

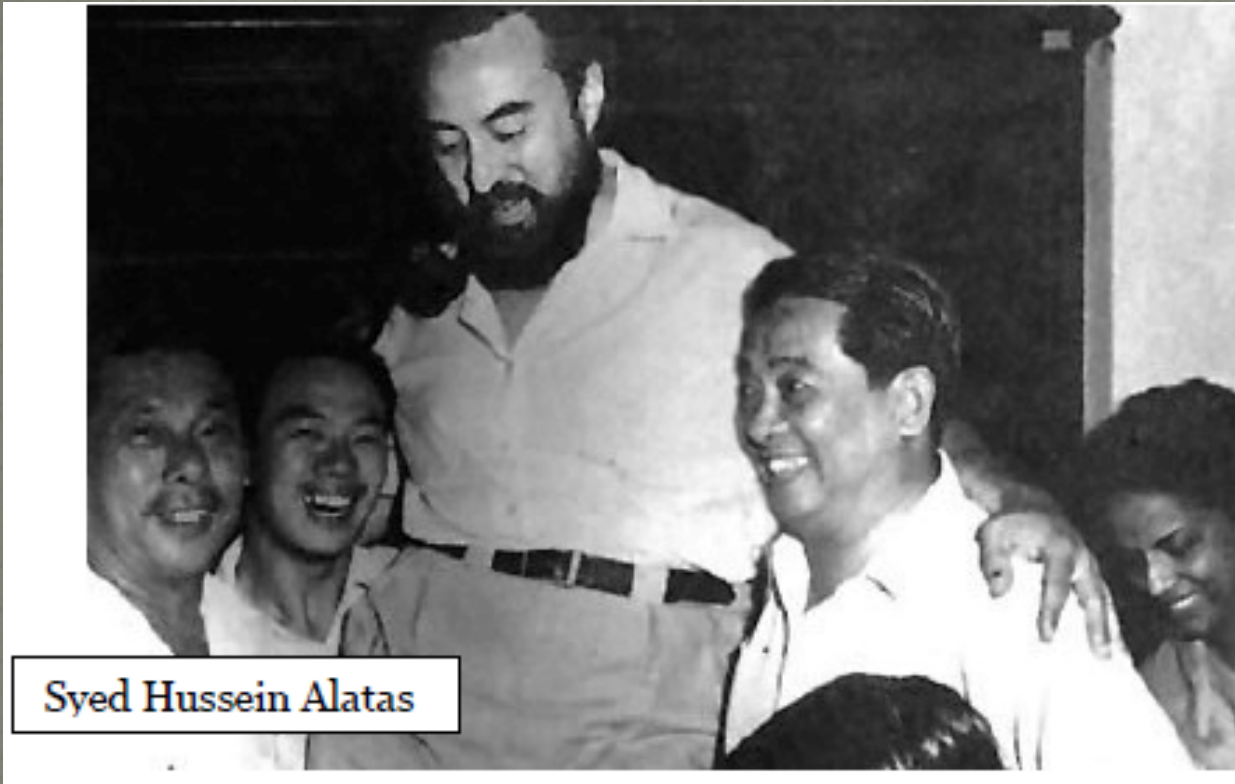
Saja hendak menondjoeakkan pada mereka
jang tidak mengakoei patriotisme kita, bahwa
kita insaf bagaimana kita haroes mati oen-
toek kewndjiban dan pendirian. Apakah
artinja mati, bagi seseorang djika mati itoe
oentoek tanah air dan oentoek mereka jang
dikasihinja?

JOSE RIZAL.

“I also want to show those who deny our patriotism that we know how to die doing our duty and for our convictions. What does death matter if one dies for what one loves ...” (*Merdeka*, May 20, 1946)

Independence
as the necessary reclaiming
of history

Killing the myth of the “lazy native”



Syed Hussein Alatas

A
Malaysian
giant
The
towering
intellectual
Syed
Hussein
Alatas

In 1977, he wrote a classic text in Asian sociology—*The Myth of the Lazy Native*—inspired by (and a chapter of which was dedicated to) Rizal

In other works

he had already written about Rizal

- “Jose Rizal (1861-96), the well-known Filipino patriot and martyr, was a leading intellectual in his time in addition to being a physician, poet and novelist. One of his most interesting works is his study of the indolence of the Filipinos ... Rizal was one of the few Asian intellectuals of his period who spent time and energy discussing his problems in a genuine and relevant manner” (Alatas 1977a: 11)

In *Myth*, he zeroes in on Rizal's idea

- “The important thing to note is his recourse to these methods of exploitation to explain the most important single factor generating what he called indolence, notably the lack of motivation to work” (Alatas 1977b: 103)

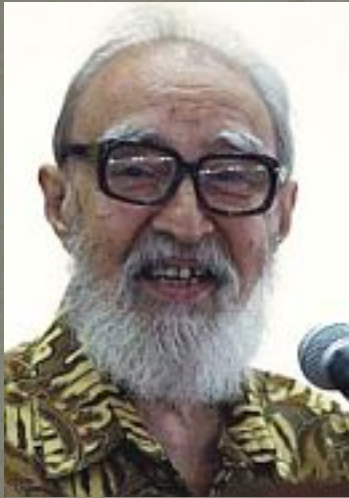
But he also improved on Rizal

- “More than anything else the theme of the indolence of the Filipinos was brought into prominence as an outcome of the ideological conflict between the Spanish friars and native Filipino priests ... As the dominant group in the Philippines up to the time when Rizal wrote were the Spanish friars, their ideas became prevalent” (Alatas 1997b: 110)

For Alatas, Rizal was a true Asian pioneer,
who showed how *our* history can be
reclaimed

The Alatas tradition

- Syed Hussein Alatas
 - Chandra Muzaffar
 - Sharuddin Maaruf
 - Farish A. Noor
 - Syed Farid Alatas



Thank you. And thanks too to the gallant men and women of the Yuchengco Museum, especially curator Jeannie Javelosa and Elma!

jnery@inquirer.com.ph
joserizal150@gmail.com

johnnery.wordpress.com