

Anarchism in the Philippines

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Anarchism influenced Jose Rizal (1861–96), martyr of the Philippine Revolution, and his fellow Filipino anti-colonialist, Isabelo de los Reyes (1864–1938). One of the international contexts that shaped Rizal’s second novel, *El Filibusterismo* (1891), was the growth of anarchist activities in Spain and France, reflected in the novel as the doomed plot to set off a nitroglycerine lamp at a wedding reception with all of the colonial elite present.

Like Rizal, de los Reyes encountered anarchism in Spain: imprisoned in Montjuich after being arrested and jailed at the height of the revolution, de los Reyes met and befriended his cellmate, the anarchist Ramon Sempau. From publications he read while in prison, he understood anarchism as “the abolition of boundaries ... whether geographic or of class distinction” (Scott 1992: 14). Freed through the help of Spanish friends such as Federico Urales, he returned to Manila in 1901, bringing with him books by Proudhon, Marx, Kropotkin, and Malatesta. Shortly after, he organized print workers and successfully held strikes, infusing them with anarchosyndicalist ideas that led to the creation of the Union Obrera Democrática (UOD) in 1902.

The UOD proved to be a headache to the Americans. After the UOD staged a massive demonstration, the civil governor put them under police surveillance, branding them as “radicals, subversives and anarchists” and ordering de los Reyes’ arrest (Pomeroy 1992: 51). The UOD lingered for a while with Hermenegildo Cruz, its secretary, becoming a prominent labor organizer and publishing his notes on the anarchist geographer Elisée Reclus’ *L’Homme et la terre* (Man and the Earth) in Spanish translation. Strike leader Arturo Soriano translated Malatesta’s *Fra Contadini* (Among Peasants) into Tagalog.

International connections with anarchism continued into the twentieth century; for instance, Chinese anarchists established a cell in Manila after the May 4th movement of 1919, publishing newsletters to propagate their ideas, and in 1928 a Philippine representative was sent to Nanking as delegate to the establishment of a League of Eastern Anarchists. Nonetheless, the Philippine Left gradually moved toward a markedly Marxist and Leninist socialism and communism: a communist party was established in 1930, and in 1933 a socialist party was founded in feudal Central Luzon.

Today, anarchist groups to be found in the Philippines include the Local anarchist Network (LAN), Davao Anarchists Resistance Movement (DARM), Dumpling Press, Liberate the Clit Kolektiv (LiCK), and Youth Collective for Animal Liberation (YCAL). In particular, LAN, “a loose association of anarchists,” does not endorse any specific school of anarchism but welcomes a diversity of anarchisms. In 2001, in accord with protests against the International Monetary Fund and World Bank, they banded to form the Anti-Capitalist Convergence Philippines.

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