

**SOCIAL GATHERING: A REFLECTION AND EXAMINATION OF THE PHILIPPINE  
CULTURE**

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**Abstract**

Literature, culture and history had been preserved to serve as a narrator of past events for the benefit of the present generation. This study is therefore a reflection and examination of the Filipino culture and symbolisms contained in the chapter "A Gathering" of the *Noli Me Tangere* written by Dr. Jose Rizal. It is the intention of this research to examine certain traditions and symbolisms of the past that are still in practice at present. Qualitative descriptive method had been used through content analysis. The data shows that certain Filipino culture and habits indicated in the book include sumptuous parties, social gatherings, generosity, being always open to the needy, concerns for attires to wear during social occasions, contempt of others, separation of males and females, kissing of the hand, hospitality, greetings of guests, not confessing, formal introduction of self and inviting popular individuals into social gatherings. Among the symbolisms used, the author observed the use of the priest, evening, group, women's act of covering the face with a fan while yawning and the sun. According to the findings, most of the Filipino culture stated are still in practice at present times although a few had slowly disappeared such as the separation of female guests from men and kissing of hands that are rarely seen to these days. It is therefore intended by this research to motivate the enrichment of civilised Filipino habits and to deviate from the socially undesirable practices.

**Keywords: Noli Me Tangere, Philippine Culture, Symbolism, Jose Rizal**

**INTRODUCTION**

Study shows that the Philippines is a very rich country when it comes to literature from the origin of the word Philippines up to its customs, traditions, beliefs, languages, and culture that are still in existence in the present generation. Literature is the life of a culture, because it is a reflection of the way people live and engage in their specific society. It reflects the culture of a race and social practices. Social practices are said to be an adequate

information to determine the culture and evolution of a certain civilization from the past to its present.

Jose Rizal is considered to be one of the most outstanding and influential Asians in history alongside Mahatma Gandhi in India and Mao Tse-tung in China (Sanchez, 1983). Sanchez (1983) stressed that the true appreciation of the transcendence of his message in his writings and his life in general has yet to be achieved. Mañebog (2013) wrote his reviews on some selected brilliant writings of Rizal believed to have awakened Filipino patriotism.

In this specific study, the focus is on one of the famous novels of Jose Rizal which is the *Noli Me Tangere*. The reflection and analysis of culture and symbolism focused on the following chapters:

Hence, it is right a time to look back at the set customs and culture in this age of defiance influenced by the massive damage left by the previous dictatorship. The customs and beliefs expressed in the past by the Filipinos are indeed attributions to the essence of the Filipino values.

#### **Statement of the Problem**

The purpose of this study was to review the *A Gathering (Pagtitipon)*, *The Dinner (Hapunan)*, *A Day Before Fiesta (Bago ang Pyesta)*, *At Dusk (Hapunan)*, and *The Breakfast (Agahan)* of the *Noli Me Tangere* by Dr. Jose Rizal and to find out the Filipino culture involved in literary expressions and symbolism. The following were the objectives of this study.

1. Identify the cultures covered in chapters 1, 26, 27, 29 of the *Noli Me Tangere* novel?
2. Discover the symbols Rizal used in the selected chapters?
3. Examine the cultural influences of the Spaniards that are still visible today?

#### **Significance of Study**

The significance of this study lies on its aim to convey the following;

- Knowledge of the Filipino culture of Spanish influence.
- Symbols contained in the novel.
- Contribution to the development of Philippine literature.

#### **Theoretical Background**

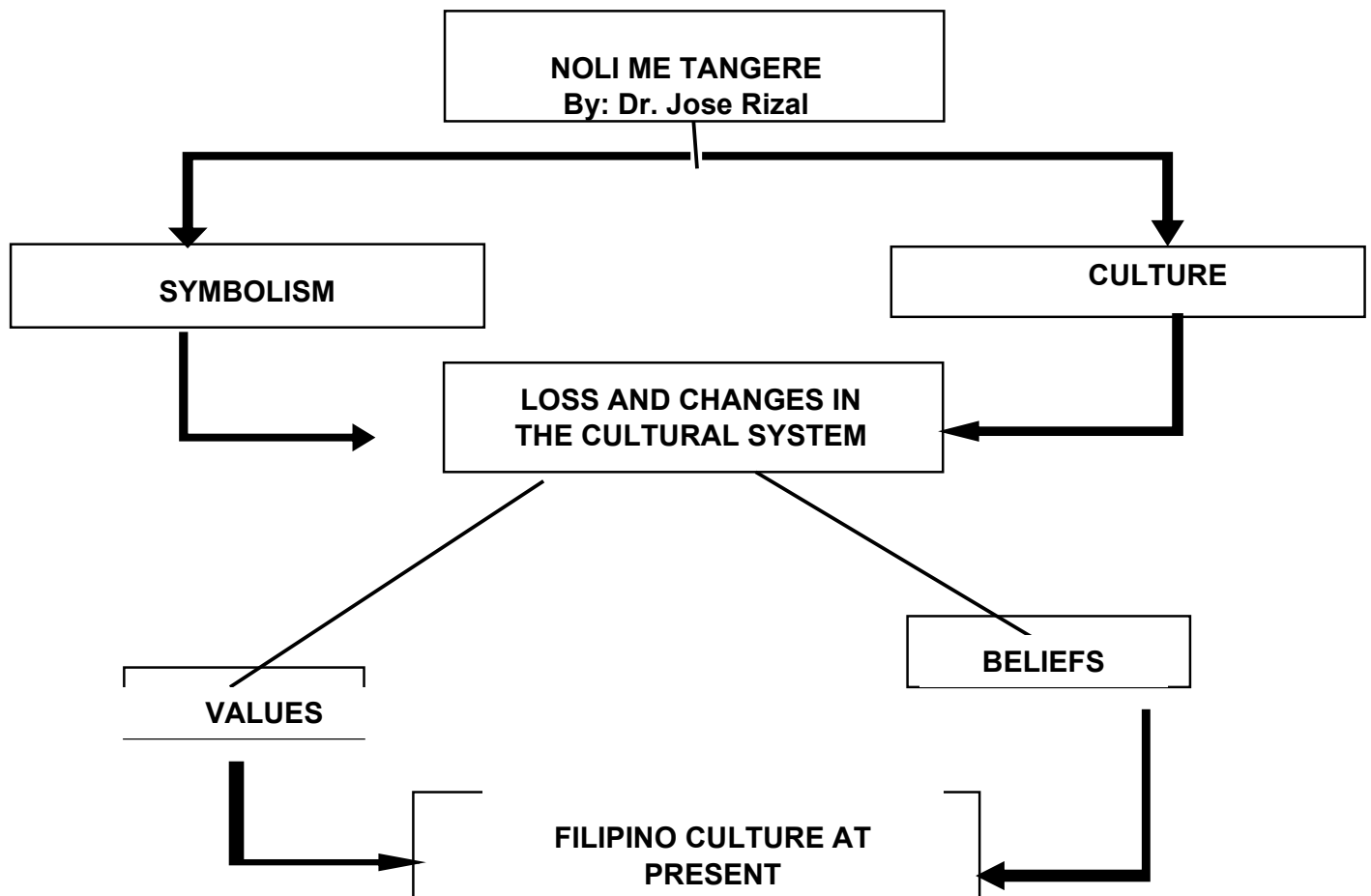
In a man's daily adventure through the course of life, continuously he discovers, learns and evolves. He comes to a reason as to how things started and why are things happening at his present existence. It is a factual reality that every human activity has its

roots and even our culture has its own source that we are still gradually discovering and unfolding.

Human tendencies and needs are changing and we cannot be satisfied with just what we have today, this is the hierarchy of necessity, a theory in psychology presented by Abraham Maslow in his 1943 publication 'A theory of Human Motivation'. Maslow's theory has an impact on the study of human customs and it is a significant knowledge to be gained not only by the scholars but of the common population as well.

If we look at the Socialization Theory, one reflects that with the help of socialization or interaction, an individual gains knowledge, skills, and attributes that contribute to effective participation in his or her own group or society. Socialization occurs through interaction and communication with others such as family, school, friends, community, and the media.

Studying history plays a major role in the lives of citizens. It contributes to their formation as a society. It also contributes to their self-recognition and to the shaping of nationalism (Ozkirimli, 2003). Thus based on Ethno symbolism Theory, myths, memories, traditions, and symbols of ethnic heritage empower nationalism. Likewise, it reinforces the discovery and interpretation of the past through modern intelligence (Ozkirimli, 2003).



## **Figure 1: Research Scheme**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **Research design**

This study used descriptive methods through content analysis to assess culture and symbolism in the selected chapters of the *Noli Me Tangere*.

#### **Local Studies**

This study aims to incorporate and integrate the analysis of Filipino culture and symbolism in the selected chapters of the *Noli Me Tangere* : A Gathering (Pagtitipon), The Dinner (Hapunan), A Day Before Fiesta (Bago ang Pyesta), At Dusk (Hapunan), and The Breakfast (Agahan)

#### **Data Analysis**

Content analysis is used to examine the culture and symbolism contained in the selected chapter of the *Noli Me Tangere*. Extensive readings from various authors had been done to describe and analyse the indicated culture and symbolisms used to describe the status of the Filipinos during the Spanish period.

### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**Table 1: Culture Contained in Selected Chapters of the *Noli Me Tangere***

| <b>Culture Described in Chapter 1: A Gathering; Chapter 3: The Dinner; Chapter 26: Day Before Fiesta; Chapter 27: At Dusk; and Chapter 29: The Breakfast</b> |   |
|--|---|
| <b>BELIEFS/TRADITION</b>   | <b>VALUES/TRAITS</b>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sumptuous parties during fiesta</li></ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Turning ones back during conversation</li></ul>                             |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The use of expensive cutleries during significant occasions</li></ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Attending gatherings without invitation</li></ul>                           |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Setting up home accessories during parties</li></ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Being in authority/superior</li></ul>                                       |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Celebrating mass during fiesta</li></ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Excessive concern for what attire to wear during social occasions</li></ul> |

|  |   |
|--|---|
| • Cock-fighting during fiesta                                    | • Being pretentious   |
| • Preparing meals every time there is a visitor                  | • Hospitality   |
| • Cracking fire during fiesta                                    | • Foreigners' dishonour of the natives                      |
| • Setting up of a decorative bamboo arc on the street            | • Generosity  |
| • Infrequent confession  | • Yielding  |
| • Separating female and male guests when seated                  | • Welcome greetings and kissing of hands of female visitors |
| • Chiming of bells   | • Boisterous actions and language                           |
| • Distribution of hot drinks to the guest                        | • Contest of opinions with visitors                         |
| • Display of valuable appliances during the fiesta               | • Formal self-introduction                                  |
| • Preparing expensive drinks                                     | • Being contemptuous of others                              |
| • Hanging of festive curtains                                    | • Mingling with visitors                                    |
| • Preoccupation of affluent citizens in preparing costly parties | • Women cover their mouth with a fan while yawning          |
| • Wearing vain attires   | • Wearing jewellery during special occasions                |
| • Distribution of "take home" leftover food                      |   |
| • Mass attendance of important persons during fiesta             |   |
| • Cleaning and clothing of holy statues during fiesta            |   |
| • Thorough house cleaning in preparation for the fiesta          |   |

It will be noted in table 1, wherein one can assess that traditions stated in chapters 1, 3, 26, 27, 29 were practices widely used during the Spanish occupation and yet are still existent and visible in our present society. However, some among the listed practices had disappeared, namely the separation of male and female visitors, the welcome act, the kissing of hands of female visitors and the formal self-introduction.

Modernization theorists from Karl Marx to Daniel Bell have argued that economic development brings pervasive cultural changes. But others, from Max Weber to Samuel Huntington, have claimed that cultural values are an enduring and autonomous influence on society.

**Table 2: Symbolisms Indicated in the Selected Chapters of the Noli Me Tangere**

| <b>Symbolisms Indicated in Chapter 26: Day Before Fiesta;<br/>Chapter 27: At Dusk and Chapter 29: The Morning</b> |  |
|---|--|
| <b>SYMBOLISM</b>  | <b>INTERPRETATION</b>  |
| • Municipal seat  | • Signifies men in authority   |
| • Not letting go of one's seat  | • Refusal to give up one's office and greed for power  |
| • A piece of a chicken's neck   | • Signifies the choking yoke that the Filipinos experienced under the Spanish rule   |
| • Chicken's wing  | • Signifies the freedom of the Filipinos from foreign rule   |
| • House of Captain Tiago  | • Signifies the Philippines  |
| • Night   | • Symbolises the dark and grave treatment that the Filipinos encountered during the Spanish occupation                             |
| • Parish Priest   | • Symbol for the high authorities in the colonial society  |
| • Red hair  | • Signifies the Filipinos' pretensions and emulsification of other cultures  |
| • Weapons   | • Symbolism for the Philippine revolution  |
| • Punishment of the heretics  | • Signifies the refusal to adhere to the religious laws  |
| • Exhumation of corpse  | • Impeachment of unjust authorities and power-greedy authorities   |
| • Epistles  | • Signifies the exposure of the unjust subordination and leadership of the Spanish colonial government via the novel of Jose Rizal |
| • Sumptuous feast   | • Symbolism for the affluent in the Philippine society   |
| • Kissing of the hand   | • Signifies respect for fellow men   |
| • Courteous reception for guests  | • Signifies the lenient acceptance of foreigners in the Philippines  |
| • Peerage   | • Signifies the difference of status between the Spaniards and the Filipinos   |
| • Indio   | • Symbolism for the contempt of the Spaniards against the Filipinos<br>• Ignorance of the Filipinos                                |
| • Sun   | • Signifies the Filipinos' hope and desire for autonomy and freedom from colonisation  |
| • Wearing of European clothing's  | • Emulsification of foreign culture  |
| • Wearing of jewellery  | • Foreign invasion of the Philippines for its raw materials and natural resources  |

The study found that the customs and culture under the Spanish occupation had not changed much at present. It is rarely lost, such as the practice of separating female and male guests. This implies that women and men are now equally viewed because of the so-called gender equality of today's generation.

The symbolisms contained in the book represent the situation that the Filipinos encountered during the Spanish occupation. It also reflects that Filipinos continue to adhere to political, religious, and social misconduct.

The study also implies that the Filipino thoughts, beliefs and practices are still confined within the Spanish colonial period which therefore asserts that Filipinos are not yet fully free from action and speech.

It had also been observed that non-tangible culture is embodied in the novel *Noli Me Tangere* and it is categorised into customs, beliefs, history and adherence to tradition.

## **CONCLUSION**

The study concludes that the Filipino way of thinking, beliefs and practices are still confined within the period of the Spanish occupation and it therefore indicates that Filipinos are not yet fully free in action, speech and deeds. Based on the results of the study, the novel *Noli Me Tangere* shows to be a legitimate reflection of the immense intangible culture that describes the Filipino people. It is therefore advised to do further studies on works written during the Spanish occupation as well as in other chapters of the novel.

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