

GUEST EDITORIAL

DR. CLARE R. BALTAZAR: A MYTH? A LEGEND?

This issue of the Philippine Entomologist is not only a special one as customarily construed but a megaspecial one because it honors without much fanfare an icon in Philippine Entomology, Dr. Clare R. Baltazar, University Professor of the U.P. and the only entomologist as National Scientist of the Philippines. This event certainly calls for a celebration with buntings and native arches all over, throw in a band with music going around the campus, and capped with a traditional sumptuous luncheon for a fiesta. Sadly, but this is not our idea of honoring her, rather a national call for silence and deep introspection and discern for ourselves what she really represents in Philippine entomology. A myth? A legend?

A myth, she is not; but certainly a legend. And as legends go, verifiable historical facts support the claim. Any respectable entomologist worth his salt must have read all her voluminous works, and it is expected that the lesser ones are only familiar with some, nonetheless aware of the legend. If you had been fortunate enough to have taken courses under her in Zoology I and Entomology I, the rigor and the silence in the classroom is immediately felt and you know that such an ambience is a direct descendant of the no-nonsense methodology of the fabled Uichanco tradition of excellence. She was a teacher *non pariel*. Her publications, some simple ones with some pages, others are massive and extraordinary that no entomologist before her could possibly hope to do. In short, Dr. Baltazar showed a type of Filipino scholarship that is declaring independence from our colonial moorings. She was the first Filipino who did monographic works comparable on a world-class basis.

The legend about her emanates from having been a student of Uichanco which nobody could have ever survived but she did gloriously, and graduated *summa cum laude*. Thus, the legend. She served as the model of many generations of entomologists.

Earlier, a call for silence and introspection was mentioned. It behooves us, seriously, to reflect and examine if our direction in the development of entomology as a discipline is in consonance with the concept of a sustainable world life.

In our time, Dr. Baltazar did what she had to in her time. Many technologies have come forth that will radically affect our environment -- our very life. What is our stand on these issues? The current government policy is emphasis on the utilitarian or technological applications which we all know stifles scientific creativity, critical thinking and the development of basic fields of specialization. Lately, there has been a massive promotion of modern information technology. Very modern indeed, but this cultivates push-button mentality and lack of appreciation for the virtues of industry and precision in research and scientific writing. Furthermore, this trend perpetuates miseducation in the absence of a strong counterforce resulting from an intimate knowledge of the local situation.

Dr. Baltazar did her part in her time; we should do no less in our time, a challenge for us in the new millennium.

- L.C. RIMANDO