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Colonial Pathologies: American Tropical Medicine, Race, and Hygiene in the Philippines by Warwick Anderson

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BOOK REVIEWS

Warwick Anderson, **Colonial Pathologies: American Tropical Medicine, Race, and Hygiene in the Philippines**. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006; Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2007. x, 356 pages.

The publication of Warwick Anderson's dissertation, completed in 1992, comes quite belatedly, but the wait is finally over. *Colonial Pathologies* is a history of medical practices in the American Philippines told within the frameworks of the etiological shift toward germ theory, the American "pacification" campaign in the Philippines, and its subsequent *mission civilisatrice*.

Chapter 1 recounts how the army medical department in the U.S. military campaigns reconciled the emerging germ theory with traditional explanations of pathological causes (i.e., ecological and climatic determinism). This attempt at reconciling the new and the old notions was put to the test as soon as the American incursion to the Philippines began.

Chapter 2 deals with the origins of the colonial public health regime. Anderson recounts how the regime is indebted to the American military for a number of things, such as organizational structure, and attitudes toward the new alien environment, as well as the logic and language it utilized in engaging the pacified regions. With pacification, sanitization commenced: city and municipal districts were created and surveillance was conducted over Filipino subjects deemed to be inherent carriers of

pathogens. Obviously, military logic was most helpful during times of epidemic outbreaks when quarantine, night patrols, and stringent control of social lives were carried out in the name of public health.

Chapters 3 and 4 continue the narrative. As the American colonial regime extended its presence in the islands, it had to ward off traditional etiologies, such as the belief in the degeneration of white people under the tropical sun. To counter fears of tropical degeneration, the government placed much importance on hygiene. With this move came laboratory science, the rationale of the comfort zone of the nervous colonial masters, who, with the ascendancy of the microscope, deployed racial prejudice in scientific medical literature. Explanations of medically related topics such as immunity and proper hygiene were informed by racism, which act buttressed the belief that Filipinos were natural reservoirs for microbes. Microbes, in turn, were best detected in native excrement. The construction of toilets and the organization of institutional carnivals and clean-up weeks were thus given justification. The obsession with excrement furthered the instruction of hygiene and sanitation as tools of surveillance; toilets, carnivals, and clean-up weeks likewise served as showcases of American colonial modernity.

Chapter 5 discusses American fears of tropical neurasthenia. Neurasthenia—or “Philippinitis” in the Philippines—was initially deemed an ailment caused by white displacement from temperate regions, compounded by the strains of civilization. Interestingly, with the emergence of Freudian etiology, it takes a new turn, as a disease connected with sexual indulgence (the cause of the disease was attributed to both absence and excess in different cases). Anderson explains that Freudian explanations of nervousness might exonerate the white American male of his faults as an oppressive colonizer, but the emergence of this etiology only revealed the change in the contours of white identity vis-à-vis the Americans’ mission civilisatrice. It is suggested that by the late 1920s—when Filipinization had already begun—neurasthenia was reported not only among Americans but also among Filipino elites.

Chapter 6 discusses the Culion Leper Colony as a “laboratory of therapeutics and citizenship.” In a controlled site such as Culion, the state’s intrusion into even the most basic tenets of private life of an inmate, such as childbearing and marriage, was given legitimacy. The

chapter argues that Culion was indeed a showcase of surveillance and discipline justified by the rationale of public health and laboratory science. Yet it fails to expound on why leprosy was singled out. One wonders if other diseases could have been used. A distant cousin of leprosy, tuberculosis, was neglected by the Americans, despite the fact that more Filipinos suffered from it and it entailed a comparable regimen and behavioral reformation. Filipino complaints of American neglect of TB control are mentioned in the chapter, but one still wonders whether colonial obsession over surveillance and behavioral reform was the primary reason behind the infusion of millions of pesos into the leper colony. One might be able to infer other reasons if the construction and administration of Culion were discussed in relation to the inadequate and perfunctory campaigns against TB, particularly, sanatorium treatment during the American period.

Campaigns against intestinal parasites and malaria by the Rockefeller Foundation in the Philippines are the focus of Chapters 7 and 8, respectively. Campaigns against hookworm involved picturing Filipinos as hygienically inept compared with their American models. Campaigns against malaria involved the reintroduction of environmental intervention in lieu of the racialized measures once implemented by the health bureau.

The book's conclusion offers a brief sketch of what medical regimes emerged in the postcolonial Philippines as well as in the continental United States and elsewhere. Anderson argues that the public health regime in the American Philippines contributed, in one way or another, to the public health models and medical approaches that developed after the Second World War, as colonial bureaucrats in the Philippines later held positions in various medical organizations and public health agencies in the United States.

Anderson's arguments are all backed by adequate research conducted in several archives both in the Philippines and the United States. Most of the sources examined are colonial reports and manuscripts, scientific publications, bureau bulletins, and even personal letters by American health bureaucrats. Anderson engages with these official primary sources. The book is written with both elegance and erudition, and one easily observes Anderson's grasp of the ideas of such thinkers as Foucault, Freud, and Bhaba, among others. The merits of *Colonial Pathologies* far

outweigh the shortcomings, which include the book's continually referring to Pardo de Tavera as simply "Tavera," the misspelling of "Mindoro" as "Mondoro," and the absence of a definition of the term "iatrocratic," a word absent in dictionaries (one website claims that "iatrocracy" is Ivan Illich's word to refer to the expropriation of "health" by power, for power). All in all, *Colonial Pathologies* easily belongs to the canon of texts on the history of diseases and medicine in the Philippines, a field that has attracted an increasing number of academic enquiries.

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Paul A. Kramer, **The Blood of Government: Race, Empire, the United States, and the Philippines**. North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press; Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2006. xii, 538 pages.

From the book's central argument, found on page three, one immediately senses that *The Blood of Government: Race, Empire, the United States and the Philippines* is a book of its time. Kramer informs us that his book is about "the racial remaking of empire and the imperial remaking of race" and that it "argues for the necessity of examining metropole and colony in a single, densely interactive field in which colonial dynamics are not strictly derivative of, dependent upon, or respondent to metropolitan forces." The reference to the negotiation for power and meaning is a paean to the Foucauldian, poststructuralist position that many scholars have claimed as their theoretical beacon. Few are actually able to fully illustrate the concept of the malleability of power and meaning, but Kramer does so, with both elegance and thoroughness.

The book is an investigation of how race was configured and shaped for use both by Americans in the justification of their colonial enterprise and by Filipinos in their quest for recognition and/or autonomy. Kramer finds, as his introduction promises, an elastic concept that