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Editor's Introduction

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Editor's Introduction

We are grateful to the countless contributors, editors, readers, and supporters of *Philippine Studies*, who have allowed this quarterly to appear consistently during the past fifty years. This half-century mark is an opportune time to introduce a number of changes, which we are putting into effect with the publication of this first issue of volume 51. The assistance of our colleagues and friends based overseas has been formalized with the establishment of an International Editorial Advisory Board. We are grateful to them for agreeing to serve in this board, and to the broader network of colleagues in the Philippines and other places who assist us with submissions and the blind refereeing system. We hope readers will be pleased with the changes evident beginning with this issue, and we welcome comments to further improve the journal.

Despite their different thematic foci, the four articles in this issue share a common historical perspective and raise important methodological issues. The essay by Fr. John Schumacher, S.J., on the history of the early Filipino Catholic clergy is engaged in a meticulous debate in which conventional historical methods occupy center stage. He cautions against the anachronistic application to the past of present-day categories, foremost of which is "Filipino," a term which also encodes the nationalist sentiment that has generated a certain reading of the past that, as exemplified by others who have dealt with this topic, have born fruit in what he sees as fragile assertions. Schumacher's essay makes a strong case for drawing inferences based on the broadest possible understanding of the historical context.

The plea to be mindful of the broad context is also evident in Luis Alonso's article, which seeks to question, even debunk, conventional historiography concerning the financial dependence of the Spanish Philippines on Spanish Mexico. Alonso invites us to consider a totally

different narrative based on primary sources, scattered and unrecorded tributes, complex imperial policies, and the strategizing tactics of Manila authorities. Alonso's data on incomes and expenses follow a classificatory grid that is apparently archaic, but full of clues to many tales yet untold. The widespread belief on the Philippines as a deficit colony requiring subsidies from Mexico set the benchmark for authoritative claims of fiscal success made by American imperial authorities in the Philippines. Not surprisingly, as Vicente Angel Ybiernas contends, an annual budgetary surplus became the accepted ideal of American pro-consuls, as well as that of the Philippine Commonwealth government. Detailed data on the Commonwealth period demonstrate that techniques of public sector accounting—relying on the distinction between appropriations and expenditures—were mobilized to ensure the production of official surplus figures. Ybiernas suggests that Commonwealth bureaucrats might well have learnt these techniques from their American tutors. Dealing with a key aspect of American rule, Ybiernas's article enters an historiographic terrain seldom traversed by historians, and provides a fitting complement to the work of Alonso.

Demonstrating the pervasiveness of Indoamerican words in major Philippine languages, Paloma Albalá challenges many Filipinos' self-evident assumptions about Philippine culture and ecology. Albalá's essay punctures any self-contained image of the Philippines, or a portrait of it linked only to Asia but not to the Americas. But the reception of Náhuatl and other Indoamerican terms was mediated by the Spanish language and the *indio's* own limited understanding of the tongue that served as the transpacific bridge. This aspect of the story we do not have as yet. But we hope readers will relish the challenge posed to the matter-of-factness of many common words, and for once imagine a kindred spirit with American Indians.

Finally, a short piece by Ty Matejowsky documents the practice of spider wrestling among boys in the Philippine countryside. Symptomatic of the pursuit of *suwerte*, characteristic of Philippine society, spider wrestling serves as a low-cost introduction to the world of gambling. Expectedly, attempts to curb the practice are bound to fail, but one wonders how many environmental advocates will emerge out of boys preoccupied with miniature gladiators.