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**Nick Deocampo, Cine**

Review Author: Arminda Vallejo Santiago

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## BOOK REVIEWS

Nick Deocampo. **Cine: Spanish Influences on Early Cinema in the Philippines.** Manila: The National Commission for Culture and the Arts, 2003. 450 pages.

*Cine: Spanish Influences on Early Cinema in the Philippines* by noted independent filmmaker Nick Deocampo is the first in a projected series of books on the first 100 years of cinema in the Philippines. The books seek to fill the gaps in the historiography of Philippine cinema—a task of great importance especially since film is one of the country's most popular forms of cultural expression and is one of its national pastimes. The need to do so is sounded by Bienvenido Lumbera, noted cultural historian and writer, who, in the foreword for this book, states, "An art form without a memory is an art form that is doomed to remain in its infancy" (p. ix). From the looks of it, Deocampo's first work in the series is a historical milestone that addresses this scholarly gap, which has for the longest time effected a disturbing sense of historical limbo.

Deocampo is no stranger to writing history. His first publication *Short Film: Emergence of a New Philippine Cinema* (1985) is a landmark work. It was published at a time when young and energetic filmmakers at the Mowelfund Film Institute and the University of the Philippines, including Deocampo, were exploring new narrative and thematic landscapes through film. Deocampo defined the *short film* by tracing its history as a genre and by compiling in one book what little had been written about it. Even at this early phase of his filmmaking career,

Deocampo had recognized the importance of writing history and defining an arena where cultural and artistic expression could be at its richest.

In *Cine*, Deocampo focuses on three aspects in the development of a medium, an understanding of which is vital to a holistic appreciation of the history of cinema in the Philippines. These are the issues surrounding its colonial origins, its indigenization and nationalist aspirations, and the means by which it has been accepted by the Filipino people as a pre-eminent cultural form.

The cinema is a foreign technology that came to the Philippines at the close of the nineteenth century, toward the end of Spain's 400-year rule, and at the dawn of the American occupation. Deocampo begins his narrative by "clearing a site of memory," where he argues that cinema may have been the last major cultural legacy the Philippines derived from its Spanish colonizer and not one that was brought in by the Americans (as is widely presumed). He then proceeds to discuss Spanish influences (indeed, the Spanish hegemony) in early cinema, questions of identity, and the value of *anuncios* (advertisements) as material evidence of how cinema was introduced to the country.

Specifically, the first chapter deals with the concept of language as a force of hegemony and cinema's arrival as an apparatus and as a form of public entertainment. The second chapter gives an account of the conditions at the time of the Philippine Revolution and its effects on cinema's development in the country. The third chapter focuses on the influences of other art forms (like the *zarzuela* or musical play) on the cinema, a process which Deocampo describes as "the delicate transition from stage to screen" (p. 107). Chapter four discusses the cultural shifts that cinema underwent as the Philippines was handed over from Spain to the United States. Chapter five deals with the impact of Spanish culture on the native, chiefly Tagalog, cinema. In this last chapter, he also provides a framework for approaching Hispanic influences on the emergent Tagalog cinema, namely, the study of language, the material culture, aesthetics, viewership, and ideology. An extensive appendix lists the films "shown in the country since cinema's first exhibition in 1897 until 1936" (p. 372), derived from *anuncios* in old newspapers.

As such, *Cine: Spanish Influences on Early Cinema in the Philippines* is a laudable effort and a significant contribution to the body of knowledge relating to Philippine cinema in particular, and to Asian cinema in general. Every film and media student, filmmaker, film aficionado, film scholar, teacher, and media professional must have this book. Using a

cultural deterministic approach, Deocampo successfully provides a "thick description" of early Philippine cinema, clearing a site of memory and creating a new space for discussions of Philippine cinema. What gives *Cine* its greatest value is the volume of textual and photographic research that is unparalleled in local histories of Philippine cinema, and the author's concern in addressing a glaring historical gap. This brings to mind what noted historian Renato Constantino once said: "A people's history must rediscover the past in order to make it reusable. . . . such a history must deal with the past with a view to explaining the present. It must therefore be not only descriptive but also analytical." That is precisely what Deocampo has accomplished.

ARMINDA VALLEJO SANTIAGO  
U. P. Film Institute  
University of the Philippines

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Jorge Ma. Cui-Perales. **Qudarat: Lord of the Pulangi**. Manila: University of Santo Tomas Publishing House, 2001. 214 pages.

A legend during his time and 332 years after his death, Mindanao hero Qudarat is the subject of a novel, a slim volume by Jorge Ma. Cui-Perales published after the author died in 1997 in Vancouver, Canada. Also known as Kudrat and Corralat, Qudarat was the son of the *Kaptan Laut* (Admiral) Bwisan, a great-grandson of Sharif Kabunsuan, and the man responsible for the spread of Islam in Mindanao. Qudarat was Sultan over practically the whole of Mindanao (except for Dapitan, Butuan, Cagayan de Oro, and the Caraga). He ruled with his *kampilan*, diplomacy and, above all, Islam, in what Cesar Majul (in *Muslims in the Philippines*) calls an "ideological force" to resist the conquest and proselytizing of the Spanish colonizers.

Cui-Perales makes Qudarat larger than life. He cloths Qudarat's birth in mythic proportions by telling us that he was born on the night the Makaturing mountain erupted amid "great flashes of lightning and fearful peals of thunder" (p. 4). During this birthing, the island shook "like an animal in pain" (p. 4), causing the Pulangi river to overflow.