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## **What Book?**

### **An Introduction to the History of the Book and Prospects for Philippine Studies**

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## **What Book?**

### **An Introduction to the History of the Book and Prospects for Philippine Studies**

Patricia May B. Jurilla

*This essay provides a brief general history of the History of the Book, a new discipline that emerged from Social History, Bibliography, and Textual Scholarship and which has been gaining ground in Western academe. It explores the prospects for the study of the book in the Philippines by paying attention to three books published locally in the twentieth century and by raising preliminary questions for research. It seeks to introduce the History of the Book to Philippine studies.*

KEYWORDS: book, history, Philippines, social history, bibliography

On occasions when I am asked about what I am studying, my reply is met sometimes by an expression of bewilderment or amazement, more often by a deep thick silence. Then come the questions: *History of the Book?* What is History of the Book? What do you do in the History of the Book? What will you become after studying the History of the Book? Best of all, I find, is the one question usually raised with the most genuine bafflement: What book?

## **Delineating a Field of Study**

Book historians perhaps share the experience of having to deal with these typical questions about their area of study. The queries could well stem from the label “the history of the book”—an elegant and imposing term but one that is also confusing and misleading, particularly for

the nonacademic. It suggests a grand all-encompassing sweep of the human experience ("history"), while maintaining a seemingly incompatible specificity in focus ("the book"), maybe even a degree of triviality if one considers books as rather common or ordinary objects. For the academics involved in the study of books, the label apparently has not entirely sat well with them either. To begin with, as Simon Eliot (1998, 49) admits, "history of the book" is "something of a misnomer" since the discipline does not "restrict itself to the study of books alone" but actually pays special attention to any kind of text—"whether it be a book, pamphlet, newspaper, magazine, handbill, broadsheet, printed form or raffle-ticket." Nicolas Barker (1990, 10) remarks that there is something clumsy about the phrase "the book," for the abstraction that comes naturally to the French *le livre* or the German *Buchwesen* does not translate into English. Robert Darnton (2002, 9), who refers to it as "history of books," suggests that it "might even be called the social and cultural history of communication in print, if that were not so much of a mouthful." Some have called it simply "book history" or even "the study of the book." Still, there are other labels—"the new literary history" or "the new bibliography" or D. F. McKenzie's "sociology of texts"—for areas of study with activities and concerns curiously similar to that of the History of the Book.

The term originates from *l'histoire du livre*, taken from Lucien Febvre and Henri-Jean Martin's ground-breaking text *L'Apparition du livre*, published in Paris in 1958. Febvre was one of the primary figures behind the journal *Annales d'histoire économique et sociale*, founded in 1929, and the French school of social history, which promoted a new approach to history with its use of social science methods, its interest in long-term historical structures (*la longue durée*) over great events, its focus on material culture and the psychology of an age (*mentalités*) rather than on the traditional subjects of politics and war. *L'Apparition du livre* cast a new and bright light on books and, consequently, on the study of the book. It examined "the influence and practical significance of the printed book [primarily in Western Europe] during the first 300 years of its existence" (Febvre and Martin 1976, 11). Febvre and Martin (1976, 10–11) determined the book as

something more than a triumph of technical ingenuity, but . . . also one of the most potent agents at the disposal of western civilisation in bringing together the scattered ideas of representative thinkers. . . . The book created new habits of thought not only within the small circle of the learned, but as far beyond, in the intellectual life of all who used their minds.

*L'Apparition du livre* was translated into English as *The Coming of the Book: The Impact of Printing, 1450–1800*, by David Gerard in 1976.

In 1979, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change: Communications and Cultural Transformations in Early Modern Europe*, by the American historian Elizabeth L. Eisenstein, appeared.<sup>1</sup> In this monumental two-volume work, Eisenstein (1979, 2:703) defined printing as instrumental in the development of European culture and civilization, declaring that the shift from script to print culture “altered the way Western Christians viewed their sacred book and the natural world.” The printing press, according to Eisenstein, “laid the basics” for intellectual and religious movements—the Renaissance and the Reformation—and for modern science. *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change* has become one of the basic texts in the History of the Book and, as even one of its recent critics acknowledges, “still probably the most influential anglophonic interpretation of the cultural effects of printing” (Johns 1998, 10).

It is then to the field of history, to the branch of social history in particular, that the History of the Book traces its origins as a scholarly discipline. But it is rooted just as well in literary studies, growing out of the paradigm shifts in bibliography and textual criticism. Two influential works in the History of the Book must be noted here: *A Critique of Modern Textual Criticism* by Jerome J. McGann (1983) and *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts* by Donald F. McKenzie (1986).

*A Critique of Modern Textual Criticism* came in the wake of disputes on editorial theory and practice. McGann (1983, 43–44) took issue with the traditional rule of authorial intention governing the choice of copy-text for editing by maintaining that “literary works are fundamentally social rather than personal or psychological products.” He argued that literary authority is “a social nexus, not a personal possession,” thus the “fully authoritative text is . . . always one which has been socially produced” (48, 75). Appealing to textual critics “to reimagine the central

place which textual criticism occupies in literary studies" (11), he declared that

To determine the physical appearance of the critical text—indeed, to understand what is involved in such an apparently pedantic task—requires the operation of a complex structure of analysis which considers the history of the text in relation to the related histories of its production, reproduction, and reception. We are asked as well to distinguish clearly between a history of transmission and a history of production. Finally, these special historical studies must be imbedded in the broad cultural contexts which alone can explain and elucidate them. (McGann 1983, 122–23)

McKenzie offered a complementary perspective. In *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts*, based on a series of lectures delivered at the British Library in 1985, he challenged the traditional definition of bibliography and role of bibliographers. This role, as defined by the eminent bibliographer Sir Walter Greg in 1932, had long stood as such: "what the bibliographer is concerned with is pieces of paper or parchment covered with certain written or printed signs. With these signs he is concerned merely as arbitrary marks; their meaning is no business of his" (cited in McKenzie 1986, 9). Finding Greg's statement "no longer adequate as a definition of what bibliography is and does," McKenzie (1986, 10–13) proposed that bibliography be reconsidered as "the discipline that studies texts as recorded forms, and the processes of their transmission, including their production and reception"—or, "bibliography as the study of the sociology of texts." Crucial in McKenzie's (1986, 12–13) description is the word "texts," which allows bibliographers to extend their practice

to include all forms of texts, not merely books or Greg's signs on pieces of parchment or paper. . . . [It] accounts for non-book texts, their physical forms, textual versions, technical transmission, institutional control, their perceived meanings, and social effects. It accounts for a history of the book and, indeed, of all printed forms including all textual ephemera as a record of cultural change, whether in mass civilization or minority culture. For any history of

the book which excluded study of the social, economic, and political motivations of publishing, the reasons why texts were written and read as they were, why they were rewritten and redesigned, or allowed to die, would degenerate into a feebly digressive book list and never rise to a readable history.

What emerged from developments in social history and bibliography, from the products of French and Anglo-American scholarship was the History of the Book. The term has held as a convenient label or a useful summary for a discipline of such broad scope.<sup>2</sup> As the Institute of English Studies of the University of London, which began offering a graduate program in the area in 1995, describes it, the History of the Book

covers the study of texts on clay tablets from Sumeria and Babylonia, sherds of pottery with writing on them from Greece, papyrus rolls from Rome, manuscript books written on parchment as well as studying books printed on paper. Book historians are interested in all sorts of text, so as well as studying the First Folio of Shakespeare, their discipline can involve the study of legal documents from Babylon, voting decisions from fifth-century Athens, tax returns from Roman Egypt, graffiti from Pompeii, recipes from medieval Europe, and advertising posters from Victorian Britain. (*Course Handbook* 2002, 6)

The History of the Book is interested in the “book” as a physical object, in the materials and processes used in the manufacture of texts. For actual books, in codex form, these involve paper and binding; inscription and illumination in manuscripts; casting, setting, and inking of type in printed texts; formatting and designing of books; presses and other printing devices. But the History of the Book is just as concerned with the multiplication, distribution, and reception of texts as it is in their production. It studies relationships among authors, publishers, booksellers, librarians, and readers—as well as their histories, functions, and systems of operation.

With all it encompasses, the History of the Book is a massive subject. In 1982, seeing the new field as “so overcrowded with ancillary disciplines that one can no longer see its general contours,” Darnton (2002,

10, 11) sought to establish some order by proposing a model for study (see figure 1). In the essay "What is the History of Books?" he presented the "Communications Circuit," which traces the life cycle of printed books through author, publisher, printer, shipper, bookseller, and reader.<sup>3</sup> The circuit

runs full cycle. It transmits messages, transforming them en route, as they pass from thought to writing to printed characters and back to thought again. Book history concerns each phase of this process and the process as a whole, in all its variations over space and time and in all relations with other systems, economic, social, political, and cultural, in the surrounding environments. (Ibid., 11)

In 1986, Thomas R. Adams and Nicolas Barker (2001, 11) offered a revision of Darnton's theoretical framework in "A New Model for the Study of the Book" (figure 2). Declaring that it is the material object that is central in the communications circuit, Adams and Barker shifted the focus from people involved in the book to the book itself. The new model revised Darnton's life cycle of the book into

five events in the life of a book—publishing, manufacturing, distribution, reception, and survival—whose sequence constitutes a system of communication and can in turn precipitate other cycles. Instead of overlapping circles of influence in the centre, indicating intellectual, socio-economic, and official pressures, there are four separate zones, enlarging the scope of outside influences, on the periphery of the circle, each influencing two or more of its stages, depending on individual circumstance. (Ibid., 15)

Both Darnton's and Adams and Barker's models have served as useful maps for book historians in chartering their vast territory.

As the History of the Book was emerging in the early 1980s, Darnton (2002, 9) hailed the rapidly growing subject as "likely to win a place alongside fields like the history of science and the history of art in the canon of scholarly disciplines" and noted that it was "one of the few sectors in the human sciences where there is a mood of expansion and a flurry of fresh ideas." And, indeed, the discipline has now come into some prominence, bringing together all sorts of particularly book-

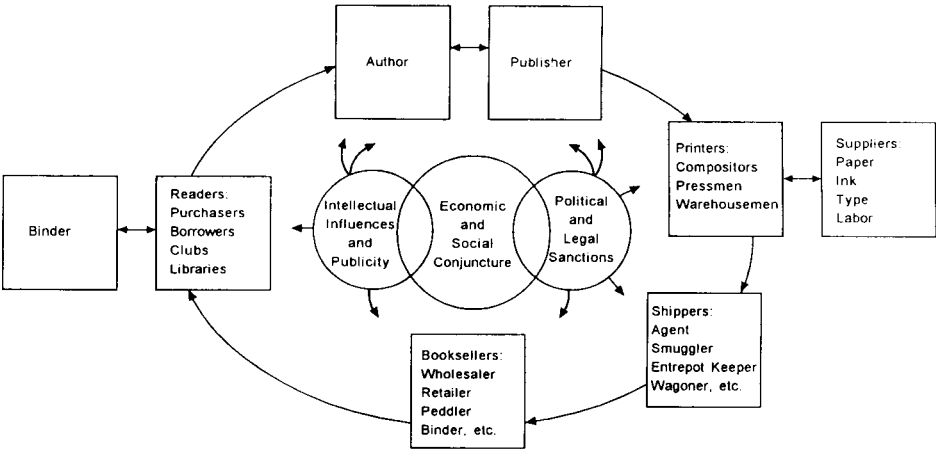


Figure 1. The communications circuit (Darnton).

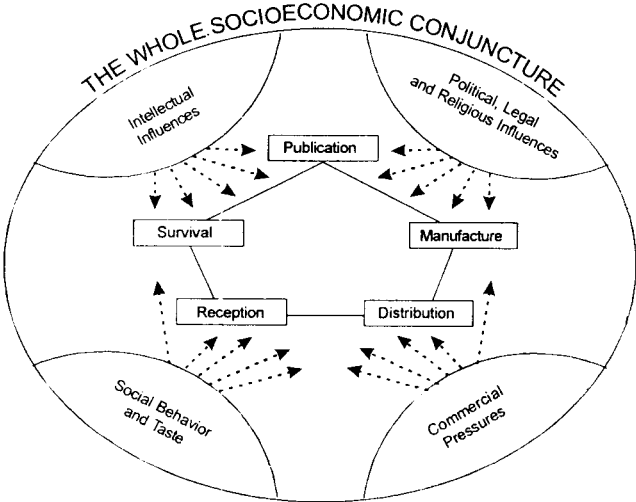


Figure 2. A new model for the study of the book (Adams and Barker).



ish individuals—historians, bibliographers, literary critics, sociologists, librarians, publishers, book collectors, readers—and establishing its own journals, conferences, lecture circuits, research centers, and degree programs. There are centers for the book and ongoing national book research projects in England, Scotland, Ireland, Germany, France, the Netherlands, the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. Book-studies programs have long existed at four German universities (Mainz, Münster, Munich, and Erlangen) and at the University of Leiden in the Netherlands. New graduate programs have been relatively recently established at the Universities of London, Toronto, Wisconsin, South Carolina, and at Drew University. The recent publication in affordable paperback editions of the anthologies *The Book Encompassed: Studies in Twentieth-Century Bibliography* (1998), *A Potencie of Life: Books in Society* (2001), and *The Book History Reader* (2002), each bringing together basic texts and big names, also seems an indication that the discipline has become established on its own, with an increasing academic, perhaps even broader, audience.

The growth of the History of the Book, however, has not been altogether smooth and easy. Many disputes between historians and bibliographers have arisen from efforts in the name or the spirit of the History of the Book. These contentions seem to do mainly with the blurring of the traditional boundaries between disciplines and differences in methodology as far as books are concerned, for while the History of the Book aligns itself with the Annales School of Social History, it is also inherently connected to bibliography and literary studies—and book history programs do find themselves tucked in the corners of English departments. Still, there are other ripples, both outside and inside the study of books, which have affected its development. Social history itself has had its own legitimacy issues, “often thought of in the past as being more trivial than either constitutional, political or military history” (Briggs 1999, vii–viii). The Annales School also has had its share of criticism—for instance, that some of its “occasional pieces do not always avoid the vices of lower journalism” (Kirsop 1979, 423). As for bibliography, it, too, has its own colorful history of “terminological and disciplinary confusion” (Greetham 1994, 1). Then, there are many subjects within the History

of the Book itself, each seeking attention and recognition in its own right, such as the study of paper or bookbinding research.

Yet all the commotion has not dampened the spirit of the scholars nor has it hampered the growth of the discipline. On the contrary, the disputes have been regarded as "a sign of the maturity of the field and as an indication of its vitality" (Tanselle 1998, 34). Even the issue of the discipline's classification has been taken as an asset rather than a liability. According to Adams and Barker (2000, 7),

If ever there was a subject (in the modern academic jargon) "inter-disciplinary," it is the study of books, since they are the most important and (next to coins) most numerous of human artifacts; they are vital witnesses to the progress of civilization. The subject is important enough to be recognized as something that stands by itself. Like many "new" areas of study, for example anthropology, it does not fit into a conventional academic framework. It does not apply a specific discipline (such as history or physics) to all events, but all disciplines to specific events, in this case books.

Today, the excitement about the novelty of the History of the Book may have waned, but the mood of expansion and flurry of fresh ideas have not. There are resounding calls for cooperative scholarship, further studies on all kinds of texts in all historical and contemporary forms, new attention to areas and details previously ignored or taken for granted, and new academic programs. There are still unresolved issues and differences among those involved in the study of books, but these seem less important than their shared interests and the common drive to fully explore the vast ground mapped out before them.

### **Prospects for Philippine Studies**

In the Philippines, the History of the Book is still largely unexplored territory—if not an altogether alien concept. The basic texts on the subject, for instance, have not found their way into the reading lists of university courses; to begin with, they are not even available in local libraries or bookstores. However, the ground for the study of the book is not fallow, for much valuable work on Philippine printing and

publishing has already been done. An early effort is José Toribio Medina's *La imprenta en Manila desde sus orígenes hasta 1810*, published in Chile in 1896, the "first complete bibliography compiled on Philippine printing" (Medina 1971, 6). Medina provided an account of the printing press in Manila from its origins until 1810 along with a copiously annotated list of 420 publications arranged in chronological order. He subsequently published a second volume, *La imprenta en Manila desde sus orígenes hasta 1810: Adiciones y ampliaciones* (Chile, 1904), which extended his list to 565 items.<sup>4</sup> His earlier work was also expanded on by Wenceslao Emilio Retana in *La imprenta en Filipinas: Adiciones y observaciones á La Imprenta en Manila de D. J. T. Medina* (Madrid, 1897) and by Angél Perez and Cecilio Güemes in *Adiciones y continuación de "La imprenta en Manila" de D. J. T. Medina [ó] rarezas y curiosidades bibliográficas filipinas de las bibliotecas de esta capital* (Manila, 1904). Then, there is Retana's indispensable body of work on Philippine printing history. Among them are *Aparato bibliográfico de la historia general de Filipinas deducido de la colección que posee en Barcelona la Compañía General de Tabacos de dichas islas* (Madrid, 1906; reprinted in Manila, 1964), a three-volume catalogue of books on and printed in the Philippines, with 4,623 entries, based on the collection of the Compañía General de Tabacos (Tabacalera) in Barcelona and with an introductory essay on Philippine bibliography;<sup>5</sup> *Tablas cronológicas y alfabéticas de imprentas e impresores de Filipinas (1593–1898)* (Madrid, 1908), a listing of printing presses and printers in the Philippines during the Spanish colonial period; and *Orígenes de la imprenta en Filipinas* (Madrid, 1911), a historical, bibliographical, and typographical investigation of books printed in the Philippines from 1593 to 1640. Another important contribution to Philippine printing and publishing history is Trinidad H. Pardo de Tavera's *Biblioteca Filipina*, an annotated list of publications produced in and on the Philippines, based on his personal collection, with 2,850 entries. It was published together with the United States Library of Congress's *Bibliography of the Philippine Islands* (Washington, D.C., 1903; reprinted in Manila, 1994).

On Philippine incunabulum, our early and now very rare books printed in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Edwin Wolf II's *Doctrina Christiana: The First Book Printed in the Philippines, Manila, 1593*

(Washington, D.C., 1947) is a seminal work. It features a bibliographical history of the Spanish-Tagalog book printed by the Dominicans, the *Doctrina Christiana, en lengua española y tagala*, and a facsimile of the text based on the only surviving copy now part of the Lessing J. Rosenwald Collection of the U.S. Library of Congress. Another influential work on rare Philippine books is P. Van Der Loon's essay "The Manila Incunabula and Early Hokkien Studies" in *Asia Major: A British Journal of Far Eastern Studies* (1966; reprinted by the Philippine Historical Commission, Manila), a survey of printing in Manila between 1593 and 1607. Van Der Loon examined six books in his study: *Hsin-k'o seng-shih Kao-mu Hsien chaun Wu-chi t'ien-chu cheng-chiao chen-chuan shih-lu* ((1593);<sup>6</sup> *Doctrina Christiana, en lengua española y tagala* (1593); *Doctrina christiana en letra y lengua china* (c.1605); *Ordinationes generales provinciae Sanctissimi Rosarii Philippinarum* (1604); *Memorial de la vida christiana en lengua china* (1606); and *Simbolo de la Fe, en lengua y letra China* (1607).

Many other books, articles, and items relating to printing and publishing history have since been produced. Worth final mention here are two recent and important works, *Impreso: Philippine Imprints 1593–1811* (Manila, 1993) by Regalado Trota Jose and *History of Books and Libraries in the Philippines 1521–1900* (Manila, 1996) by Vicente S. Hernández. Jose's *Impreso* provides an exhaustive list of books printed in the country from 1593 to 1811, with thorough bibliographical information for each entry, including the present location of extant copies. Hernández's *History of Books and Libraries* studies the sources and events pertaining to Philippine library history; it offers a chronological list of references to the printing of books and the establishment of libraries taken from a wide range of primary and secondary sources.

The studies on printing and publishing so far, from Medina and Retana to Jose and Hernández, being mainly descriptive and bibliographic, tell the story of the book in the Philippines. What begs to be done is the task of *reading into* this story—into the physical aspect of the book itself and the developments in its production throughout the years as well as into its role in shaping our culture and history, or to situate history in the book and the book in history. The Philippine experience certainly lends itself to such a reading considering the monumental role played in the development of our nation and the

sacred place held in our national consciousness by two particular books, Jose Rizal's *Noli me tangere* and *El Filibusterismo*.

The History of the Book is a particularly exciting, if not intimidating, area for Philippine scholars. The terrain to cover is immense, the journey quite lonely at this early point. An enormous amount of archival and bibliographical work remains to be done—such as the creation of bibliographies, construction of databases, assembly of records—on all aspects of printing and publishing throughout history. Then, there are seemingly endless questions, not only to answer but, more immediately, to formulate and to articulate. There is much to uncover about the book in our culture and history, many gaps to fill and links to establish. The topics for study are nearly limitless, and each research project is certainly necessary if not potentially ground breaking in Philippine scholarship. This is the very challenge and perhaps the reward of doing book history on (and in) the Philippines.

The History of the Book has much to offer Philippine studies. For one, the discipline would serve a very practical purpose: the survival of our texts. Our books have an almost ephemeral quality to them due to the elements to which they are subjected—wars, fires, floods, the humid tropical climate, termites—not to mention the generally small sizes of print runs and the cheap materials and processes used in manufacture. Involved as it is in the chronicling of printing and publishing, the study of the book would warrant that, at least, records of our texts survive even if the actual objects do not. Furthermore, the attention given to books by the discipline could well lead to the reprinting of valuable but long forgotten or lost texts thus securing their survival. Then, the History of the Book would also be useful to introductory courses on research, literature, and communication (English or Filipino) in both undergraduate and graduate levels. It offers an excellent opportunity for developing skills in research, using both primary and secondary materials, and in analysis. Given the massive scope of the discipline, it opens up for students all sorts of topics for their research projects and could lead them to paying closer attention to our writers, our literature, our history. It could also have them producing more interesting and useful works than yet another essay on Shakespeare or Hemingway, yet another paper on contraception or abortion.<sup>7</sup> Ultimately, and more

important, the History of the Book would contribute to our knowledge of Philippine literature, culture, and history by establishing facts, enhancing details, and expanding ideas. It offers the scholar another dimension to the study of the Philippines, a unique and concrete experience in the understanding and appreciation of our heritage, for the book “serves as a *speculum mundi*, a mirror that discloses the world” (Rosenblum 1995, 1). The History of the Book allows the scholar to hold this mirror in hand and up close to see, engage in, and learn from what it discloses.

The book in itself has a story to tell. As a physical object, it reveals technological, artistic, and economic conditions of the particular period in time when it came to being; as a text, it reflects the intellectual, cultural, and social currents of its age. The book speaks volumes. Let me try to show you this—and the fascinating prospects offered by the History of the Book—by displaying a few random examples: a textbook, a collection of poetry, and a coffee-table book published during different periods in the twentieth century. I do not mean to engage in a comprehensive examination of texts and contexts here but rather seek only to raise observations and questions, to speculate on what the books can tell us. In considering my examples, I pay some special attention to their paratextual features. Paratexts, as defined by Gerard Genette, are verbal productions adorning, reinforcing, and accompanying the text—titles, signs of authorship, dedications, epigraphs, prefaces, notes, epilogues, and the like. They surround and extend the text “precisely in order to *present* it, in the usual sense of this verb but also in the strongest sense: to *make present*, to ensure the text’s presence in the world, its ‘reception’ and consumption in the form . . . of a book” (Genette 1997, 1). As essential and modifiable devices in enabling texts to become books, paratexts are particularly revealing of contexts, the currents of the age in which the book is created and to which perhaps the book contributes to create.<sup>8</sup>

### The Textbook

*Ang Aklat ng Tagalog: Kaunaunahang Aklat na Dalawang Wika na Sumusuysoy sa Pilolohia at Panitikang Tagalog / The Pioneer Bilingual Text-book on Tagalog Philology and Literature*, by Jose Sevilla and Paul R. Verzosa,

was published by Imprenta y Librerías de J. Martínez in 1923. It is a slim and light volume of 108 pages, measuring around 8 x 5 ½ inches, bound in glossy paper and printed on book paper. Its cover features a striking illustration of three persons behind a beaming sun: an old man seated in repose, dressed in a toga with a staff resting on his shoulder and a large book beside him with the heading "Historia"; a woman who appears to be frowning, in a position midway between sitting down and standing up, with a veil in one hand either being placed on or removed from her head and with some writing instrument in the other hand; then the central figure, a younger woman standing majestically between them, crowned with laurel leaves and clutching a stalk of a plant (figure 3). The title appears on the upper left-hand corner, written in curly Roman letters and in ancient Tagalog script; the price of the book is indicated in bold type on the bottom right-hand side: "PISO BAWAT SIPI" (one peso per copy).

While it claims to be bilingual, with the body of the text set in double columns (left side Tagalog, right side English), *Ang Aklat ng Tagalog* (The Book of Tagalog) is actually trilingual. It includes a preface by Manuel Artigas y Cuevas in Spanish. The publisher's imprint and his declaration "Establecidas el año 1902," which appear in the title pages, are in Spanish as well (figure 4).

The table of contents appears at the end of the text. The page beside it bears an advertisement for the tonic Hemaltona Arambulo and other medicinal products of Botica Insular y Laboratorio Insular de Primo Arambulo (see figure 5). The back cover is also used as advertising space: for the course offerings, general announcements, and contact information of the University of Manila (figure 6).

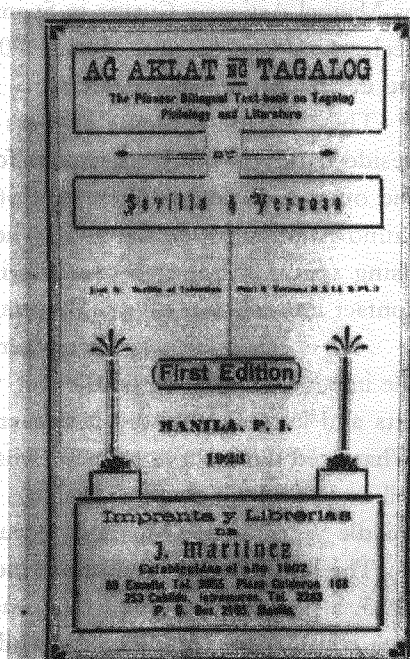
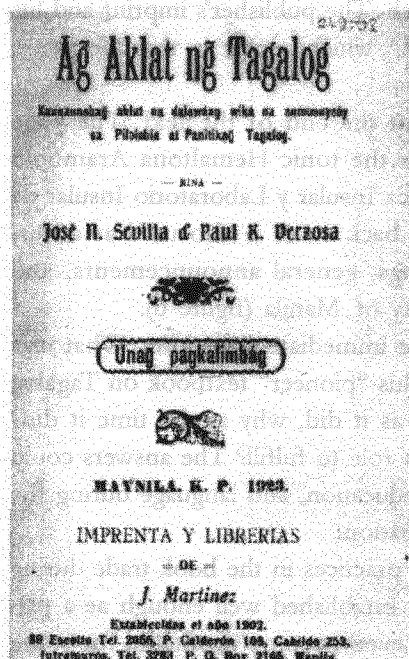
*Ang Aklat ng Tagalog* raises some immediate questions: What was the impetus behind the creation of this "pioneer" textbook on Tagalog arts and letters? Why did it appear as it did, why at the time it did? What need did it serve to meet, what role to fulfill? The answers could tell us something about publishing, education, and language during the middle years of the American occupation.

The book could tell us about the practices in the book trade during 1923, a period when publishing was established well enough as a private commercial enterprise and had even become profitable for some



Figure 3 (*left*). Front cover of *Ang Aklat ng Tagalog* by Jose N. Sevilla and Paul R. Verzosa (Manila: J. Martinez, 1923). This particular copy is from the collection of the School of Oriental and African Studies Library in London. Part of the cover is concealed with the hinge (*left*) side of the book, as well as its spine, taken up by the endpapers of the protective hardback binding.

Figure 4 (*below*). Title pages of *Ang Aklat ng Tagalog*, appearing in separate leaves. The Tagalog title page (*left*) precedes the English (*right*).







who engaged in it. Who were the authors, the publisher? Why were they involved in this particular text? What arrangements were made between them in the publication of *Ang Aklat ng Tagalog*? Incidentally, the authors Sevilla and Verzosa and the publisher Juan Martinez had a previous collaboration, the publication of the book *Alamat ng Ilang* in 1908. Martinez was a prominent figure in the book trade during his day, making a successful business out of printing, publishing, and selling novenas, metrical romances (*mga awit at corrido*), and Tagalog novels as well as Spanish, Tagalog, and English dictionaries and vocabularies and a few other textbooks. *Ang Aklat ng Tagalog*, as a work on literature and language, evidently fell in line with his interests. But were there special arrangements made for the publication of the material as a textbook? Was it a commissioned work, perhaps by the University of Manila? Why is there another advertisement in the book then? And why specifically of the Botica Insular? What was the connection between this business and this book, between other commercial establishments as advertisers and the book trade? Was it common practice to sell advertising space in books? Why was it practiced, to begin with? When did publishers begin such a practice; when and why did they cease such? How did it affect the price of books? Was P1 a reasonable price for *Ang Aklat ng Tagalog*? Was it typical for works of the same format (size, binding, paper, number of pages), for textbooks?

The book design of *Ang Aklat ng Tagalog*—its cover illustration, binding, typography, layout—reflects artistic styles and tastes of its day. The cover illustration is undoubtedly of allegorical significance. It is certainly attractive albeit possibly misleading, the fancy picture suggesting more of a work of literature or even a special comic book edition rather than an academic text. How does its design compare to the covers of the other books and particularly the other textbooks of its day? What impression could it have sought to make? The title pages, with curiously different designs for the Tagalog and the English, and the borders in the table of contents page display a flourish that may be considered as garish today. Was this customary or even fashionable then? If so, why? If not, what possible purpose did it serve this book? How did the embellishments contribute to the general image of the book? The location of the table of contents page at the end of

the text is another curious feature in the design of *Ang Aklat ng Tagalog*. It may be considered as a mark of our colonial experience as it is revealing of Spanish influence. Accustomed as we are now to the Anglo-American style of the table of contents appearing before the text, this location may seem odd, but the book does no more than follow the convention of books printed in Spain. Why was this convention still observed in the Philippines in 1923?

As a textbook, which students and at what level of education did *Ang Aklat ng Tagalog* seek to address? Where and how does it fit in the history of textbook publishing, of education, and of the national language in the Philippines? What does it reflect of the state of Tagalog language, literature, and criticism at the time of its publication? Aside from the subject matter and the text itself, the bilingual presentation, and the instructional purpose, details in the book—the publisher's imprint, the preface in Spanish, the Tagalog spelling, even the copy of the Botica advertisement—are telling of language use during the period of publication of *Ang Aklat ng Tagalog*.

### The Collection of Poetry

*My Lyre* is a compilation of poems by Isidoro D. Dino, a secular priest. It is a small paperback printed in book paper, measuring 4  $\frac{3}{4}$  x 7  $\frac{1}{2}$  inches, and comprising of some eighty-eight pages. On the front cover of the book is a monochromatic woodcut illustration depicting a rural landscape with a *bahay kubo*, palm trees, the sea, and a mountain most likely to be the volcano Mayon (figure 7). In the middle of the cloudy sky is a grand angel with a lyre in hand. The back cover is blank. The imprint page provides no details on the publisher, but it indicates that the text was copyrighted to the author in 1941 in Manila and had received "ecclesiastical approbation" on 19 December 1935 in Naga, Camarines Sur. The collection consists of lyrical poems—religious verses, occasional pieces, and poems for children.

As in the case of *Ang Aklat ng Tagalog*, the table of contents of *My Lyre* appears at the end of the text. This detail extends the earlier question raised: Why was this convention still observed in 1941? What could this tell us about the practice of and influences in book design

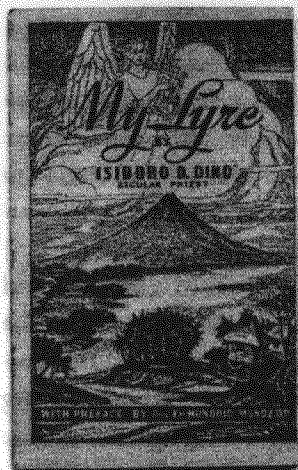


Figure 7. Front cover of *My Lyre*, by Isidoro D. Dino (1941).

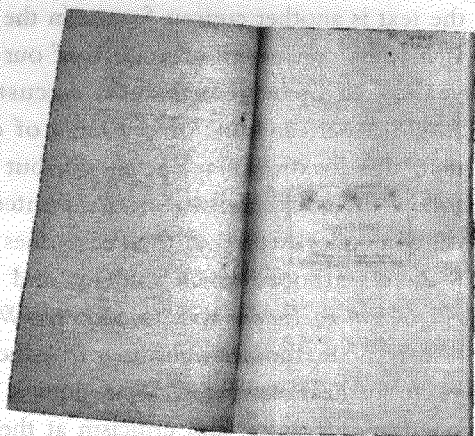


Figure 8. First page of *My Lyre*, partially stuck to the cover and bearing proof of examination on 15 June 1943 by the Office of Japanese Military Administration.

and printing at this particular period in time? How is this significant in the larger cultural perspective?

What seems to be more interesting about *My Lyre*, however, is what it could tell us about literary publishing in the Philippines. Why was the book published? While undoubtedly earnest, Dino's poetry is not of particularly remarkable literary merit. Who published his book? Was it self-published, a fairly common practice for literary efforts in the Philippines? Were printing costs underwritten or subsidized by another individual or some institution? How was the book distributed?

My personal copy of *My Lyre* provides interesting and enlightening details. For one, it bears evidence of poor production quality. The illustration on the cover is not set properly, positioned too much to the left, too close to the fore-edge of the book. The binding is so badly done that the first leaf is partially glued to the cover and the book cannot be fully opened (figure 8). The cover and pages are yellow with age, a mark of the acidic content of the paper used. But particularly notable about my copy is the faint green stamp on the first page. It shows two rows of Japanese characters, the date "JUN 15 1943" in the center, and the declaration in English: "EXAMINED by Office of Japanese Military Administration." This detail tells us much. It is an

evidence of censorship. As such, it raises questions—why, how, who, what then—not only on the practice during the Japanese occupation but also extending to the history of censorship and the exercise of colonial power throughout our history. The stamp also indicates that the copy had not been bought in 1943, two years after its publication, thus it became subject to examination. In fact, it remained unsold for sixty-one years. I bought it brand-new in September 2003 at the 24th Manila International Book Fair in SM Megamall. I found the book in the bargain section, along with around five other copies of the same title, in the stall of an Intramuros bookseller and souvenir shop. It was priced at P20, under a five-for-P100.00 promotion for the bargain items—all literary books, all long out of print, all brand new.

While *My Lyre* may have little to contribute to the wealth of Philippine literature, it does serve some purpose as an artifact in the history of literary publishing. How does it fit in such history? What does it reflect of the practices, conditions, and products of Philippine literary publishing during its day and in general? What does it (along with the other bargain books from the book fair) tell of distribution and sales of, and the market for literature?

### The Coffee-table Book

*The World of 1896*, edited by Lorna Kalaw-Tirol and published by Bookmark in Makati City in 1998 is a coffee-table book, determined as such by its format. It is a handsome and imposing volume—hardbound with a glossy dust-jacket; measuring 10 ¼ x 12 ¼ inches and weighing around four pounds (1.86 kg); comprised of 274 pages in matte coated paper; with 402 photographs, five main essays and twenty short essays. As coffee-table books go, the volume is expensive, priced at P1,680.00. The imprint page indicates that the book was “published in part through a generous grant” from the Pilipino Telephone Corporation (PILTEL). The copyright holders are PILTEL, the Ateneo de Manila University, and the publisher Bookmark.

*The World of 1896* came in the wake of an academic conference of the same name held at Ateneo de Manila University on 25–26 October 1996. The event was a multidisciplinary colloquium aimed at recreating,



Figure 9. Dust-jacket (front) of *The World of 1896*, edited by Lorna Kalaw-Tirol (Makati: Bookmark, Inc., 1998).

remembering, and understanding the life of the Filipinos at the end of the nineteenth century. It was a commemoration of the Philippine Revolution as well as an early celebration of the Philippine centennial in 1998. According to the Ateneo's Fr. Jose M. Cruz, S.J., "Some of those who participated in the conference and others who heard about it suggested that the conference could reach a wider audience if this were turned into a book" (1998, xiii). PILTEL subsidized the publication of the book just as it financed the holding of the conference.

*The World of 1896* tells us something not only about the late-nineteenth century but about the late-twentieth century as well, about printing and publishing in particular. The physical aspect of the book does provide a striking contrast to my earlier examples, and it reflects the developments in printing technology. The use of color photographs, for instance, would have been extremely costly at the time of the printing of *My Lyre* and impossible at the time of *Ang Aklat ng Tagalog*. Aside from the inclusion of photographs in the text, it is also interesting to note that the dust-jacket design of *The World of 1896* uses photographs rather than a drawing (fig. 9). What could this reveal of contemporary styles, tastes, and methods in book design? What is the role of photographs, or illustrations previously, not only in book covers but as texts in books as well?

High-end, or coffee-table, books, such as *The World of 1896*, tell much about the business of book production in the Philippines since their printing involves, more than other types of books, a reliance on imported materials—specifically, high-quality paper and ink. What does it entail to produce high-end books like *The World of 1896*? What do the costs of production—in particular, the duties on imported materials—reveal? What is the connection of corporate institutions, like PILTEL in this case, and coffee-table, or high-end, books? What is the history of coffee-table book publication in the Philippines? How does it fit in the general history of book publishing?

While the publication of *The World of 1896* aimed to reach a wider audience than the conference, such an audience would have nonetheless been a limited one given the high price of the volume. A recent development, however, may have extended the limits of this audience. Bookmark began closing their retail stores in 2003 and put their stock on sale, radically slashing their prices. Initially, they offered the sale by invitation only to their special customers, but they eventually offered the same prices to the general public at the Book Fair in Megamall. I bought my copy of *The World of 1896* at the Bookmark warehouse for P500.00—still more expensive than a typical trade book in book paper but nevertheless dirt cheap for a glossy coffee-table book. This marked-down price is significant as an indication not so much of the extension of the book's audience but of the present state of the book trade. Bookmark has been one of the key players in the Philippine book industry, founded in 1946 and establishing itself through the years as an important bookseller-stationer-publisher with a special commitment to the promotion of Philippine arts and letters. The scaling down of their business highlights the serious difficulties in and challenges of engaging in the book trade, particularly in the publication and sale of trade books.<sup>9</sup> This situation, of course, has much to do with the present economic crisis plaguing the country. It is worth asking, what are the difficulties in and challenges of engaging in the book trade in otherwise "normal" times or in general?

Finally, *The World of 1896* also tells of the multifunctional nature of the book. It stands as a text, a collection of essays and photographs; an extension or some sort of souvenir of an event (the conference);

and a decorative object or even perhaps a status symbol, as coffee-table books go. It could serve as reference material, as a gift, as a paper-weight, or doorstop. *The World of 1896* could lead us to inquire about what the book means to Filipinos, what it has stood for, what purposes or causes it has served.

### Further Questions for Study

The questions raised by the books *Ang Aklat ng Tagalog*, *My Lyre*, and *The World of 1896* cannot be answered here nor is this the occasion to pursue the leads they offer. The conclusive answers to these questions and insights into, not only on the three books but also on every other book printed in the Philippines, will have to wait for now. In the hope that others will join me in reaching them eventually, I offer more questions, very basic and general, for the study of the book in the Philippines:

1. **What was being published?** On the form of the book, How were the books made (printing and binding methods)? What were the books made of (paper type)? What did they look like (size, shape, and others)? Why were they made the way they were, why did they look the way they did? On content, What were the subjects of the books? What was being written?
2. **Who were involved in publishing?** Who were the authors, printers, publishers, and booksellers? Why were they involved in the book trade? These questions delve into the business of books, involving matters of and motivations behind production and distribution. It also necessarily leads to studying the role of agencies that had an influence on the book trade, such as the Comisión Permanente de Censura during the Spanish colonial regime; the American administration, the Bureau of Printing, and the Library Board during the American occupation; the Japanese Military Administration during the Japanese occupation. What roles did these agencies play in the business of books? How did they affect the intellectual and cultural life in their times?
3. **For whom were the works intended?** Who bought the books? Who read them? What kinds of books did the government or the



Church want the publishers to produce, want the public to read? "What kinds of books did the public want from its printers and booksellers?" (Febvre and Martin 1976/1998, 249). How did market forces affect the publication of books?

4. **Why were books published?** "What needs did the book satisfy? What role did it assume? What causes did it serve or fail?" (Ibid., 10).

There is no better time than now to get started on finding the answers to the questions, to take on the tremendous and essential task of studying the history of *our* book.

I conclude with a final question, one unusual response I got when I mentioned that I was studying the History of the Book. "Isn't it boring?" I was asked. For the Philippine book historian, the task cut out may seem daunting at worst but hardly, definitely not, boring.

## Notes

This essay is based on a lecture delivered on 11 September 2003 for the Faculty Lecture Series of the Department of English and Comparative Literature, University of the Philippines, Diliman, Quezon City. I am grateful for the Salvador P. Lopez Professorial Chair in English, which provided me with valuable support for research.

1. An abridged and illustrated version was published as *The Printing Revolution in Early Modern Europe* by the Cambridge University Press in 1983 (reprinted 1998).

2. The recent class of graduates from the University of London's MA program in the History of the Book attests to the wide coverage and varied interests of the discipline. Among them are Mari Tomioka, who is from Japan and studying the Gutenberg Bible; Mariska Roos, from the Netherlands, interested in the history of reading, specifically nineteenth-century Dutch women readers; Sam Markham, from the United States, keen on book arts and the antiquarian book trade aside from the publication of the works of Erasmus; and myself, rather obsessed about twentieth-century publishing, in general, and Philippine literary publishing, in particular. Although my classmates and I hold such diverse backgrounds and interests, we found that we have much in common—as book historians and as friends.

3. Darnton's essay first appeared in the journal *Daedalus* in 1982 and has been much reprinted since.

4. Both works were reprinted in one volume in 1964, as part of the Reprint Series of José Toribio Medina's *Bibliographical Works*, published by N. Israel in Amsterdam.

5. The Tabacalera collection, perhaps the best library of rare Philippine books ever assembled, was acquired by the Philippine National Library in 1913. It was the foundation and centerpiece of the library's rare-book holdings. A significant part of the collection now no longer exists due to the destruction wrought by World War II.

6. Scholars refer to this volume as "*Shih-lu*" or "*Tratado*," after its title in Spanish translation, *Tratado de la Doctrina de la Santa Iglesia y de ciencias naturales*. In English, its title translates as "A printed edition of the Veritable record of the authentic tradition of the true faith in the Infinite God, by the religious master Kao-mu Hsien." Van Der Loon determined that the publication of this work antedated the Spanish-Tagalog *Doctrina Christiana* of the Dominicans thus making the *Shih-Lu* the first book printed in the Philippines.

A more recent work, Fidel Villarroel's *Pien Cheng-Chiao Chen-Chuan Shih-lu, Testimony of the True Religion: First Book Printed in the Philippines?* (Manila, 1986), examines the *Shih-lu* at length and provides a facsimile of the text. Villarroel makes no claim to settle the debate on the first printed book in the Philippines, and the issue remains open academically, with yet another book (the *Doctrina christiana, en letra y lengua china*) posited by other scholars as the first (but which Van Der Loon dates as ca. 1605). However, common knowledge maintains that the Spanish-Tagalog *Doctrina Christiana* is the earliest book—a "fact" promoted by schoolbooks, travel guides, trivia games, and television game shows.

7. I echo here writer-publisher Alberto S. Florentino (1962, 8), who, in compiling the bibliography *Midcentury Guide to Philippine Literature in English*, expressed hope that the work "may indicate to the student, graduate and undergraduate, that there are ample opportunities for research, study, and analysis of our own literature and our own writers; and that if they contemplate to write reports, term papers and theses, instead of yielding to the temptation to write on world-famous and much-written-about authors (T.S. Eliot, Robert Frost, Albert Camus), they might divert their attention and efforts to our little-known, but (to us) as important, if not more important, writers."

8. Genette (1997, 408) explains, "Being immutable, the text in itself is incapable of adapting to changes in its public in space and over time. The paratext—more flexible, more versatile, always transitory because transitive—is, as it were, an instrument of adaptation. Hence the continual modifications in the 'presentation' of the text (that is, in the text's mode of being present in the world), modifications that the author himself attends to during his lifetime and that after his death become the responsibility (discharged well or poorly) of his posthumous editors."

9. While it has withdrawn from the retail market, Bookmark remains to be an active distributor and publisher of books and audiovideo materials on Philippine history and culture.

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