

# **philippine studies: historical and ethnographic viewpoints**

Ateneo de Manila University · Loyola Heights, Quezon City · 1108 Philippines

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## **Editor's Introduction**

Filomeno V. Aguilar Jr.

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# Editor's Introduction

**T**he disparate topics of articles in this issue are bound by a common concern for power relations and their associated conflicts over spaces, resources, and representations. Michael D. Pante revisits the horse-drawn carriages that served as the most popular means of transportation in American-occupied Manila before the advent of motorized transport in the 1930s. He emphasizes the gamut of representations to which the rig drivers or *cocheros* were subjected. It is not easy to reconstruct the narrative of these *cocheros* as an occupational category for the sources tend to speak either glowingly or disparagingly, the latter particularly when the carriages did not disappear despite the spread of motorized transport. Pante states that for now the best that can be done is analyze those representations. Nevertheless, this article provides empirical data on the socioeconomic conditions of *cocheros* as a group, which locate them in Manila's social structure. The discussion is also highly suggestive of the multiple meanings of a piece of urban space called a road and the extent to which rules govern or do not govern the human competition over the traversal and temporary use of this space. The article offers a window to social relations between state and society and among members of a highly stratified society that resonate with contemporary Metro Manila.

In analyzing a procession ritual in Catanduanes, Ramon Felipe A. Sarmiento retells the narrative of contestation (that begins in the early 1900s) over an object of piety, a stone that was quickly transported from its place in the indigenous spirit-world to that of Marian devotion. Two groups representing popular piety and the institutional church have engaged in a long-running tussle over the possession of this object and the appropriate expression of devotion and the attendant regulations. The procession ritual that emerged, Sarmiento argues, sought to efface its constructed nature and imprint unity and connectedness upon the

path, now a paved road, that links a far-flung village that claims the stone as its own to the parish center that seeks to impose its hegemony. Across this ritual space the oppositional relationship between center and periphery is smoothed out. However, as Sarmiento points out, the procession has also served as the arena for the persistent contestation between village and center. Ritual encapsulates this social tension even as it mediates this conflict.

Resources in the uplands have been both highly valued and highly contested, and the exploitation and depletion of the forest reserve suggest the often wilful flouting of state rules, even as upland peasants jostle for a share of the resources dominated by large corporate entities. Commercial loggers did not reforest the areas they harvested, and left behind access roads that made it easier for the landless to trek to residual forests and convert denuded land into farms. The government's final recourse was to ban the export of log and timber in the late 1980s. To restore the forest cover, the state has sought to mobilize upland dwellers in Community-Based Forest Management (CBFM) schemes since the 1970s. Junggho Suh argues that these strategies have not been successful because these have not ensured food on the family plate and, like the rest of the forestry sector, have not been linked institutionally to the demand for timber from other industries. Developing CBFM's connections to other economic sectors is the task of policy.

The article by Resto S. Cruz I returns to the theme of our previous two issues: overseas migration. Cruz advocates an approach he calls postfeminization that goes beyond the quantitative calculation of the number of men and women who find their routes to overseas work, but rather delves into a critical analysis of notions of masculinity and femininity in various discursive terrains. Both men and women migrants have been represented in contradictory ways, which emanate from migration's tensions with gender and kinship ideals that, in turn, are intertwined with class and status hierarchies and anxieties and the place of the Philippines in the global political economy. Cruz argues that sticking to the current discourse on feminization unwittingly replicates middle-class and state constructs, which must be replaced by critical histories and anthropologies of gender and kinship. Representation is itself the battleground of representations.

Filomeno V. Aguilar Jr.  
Ateneo de Manila University