

philippine studies: historical and ethnographic viewpoints

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

Editor's Introduction

Filomeno V. Aguilar, Jr.

Philippine Studies: Historical and Ethnographic Viewpoints
vol. 63 nos. 1 (2015): 1–2

Copyright © Ateneo de Manila University

Philippine Studies: Historical and Ethnographic Viewpoints is published by the Ateneo de Manila University. Contents may not be copied or sent via email or other means to multiple sites and posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's written permission. Users may download and print articles for individual, noncommercial use only. However, unless prior permission has been obtained, you may not download an entire issue of a journal, or download multiple copies of articles.

Please contact the publisher for any further use of this work at philstudies.soss@ateneo.edu.

<http://www.philippinestudies.net>

Editor's Introduction

In dealing with disparate issues, situations, and events at different points in Philippine history, the authors in this issue invariably seek to rescue and recover something that had long been dismissed as unimportant or irrelevant. Academics are often dismissive of supposedly irrational behavior, but Mark Dizon illuminates *sumpong* in the animist context and its value in explaining events. Scholars have brushed off many Japanese writings on the Philippines during the Second World War as wrongheaded elements of Japanese wartime ideology, but Takamichi Serizawa argues that these writings were influenced by American colonial discourse that are central in Philippine historiography. In both English- and Japanese-language writings from the 1900s to 1940s, the role of Filipinos in the development of Davao and its abaca industry was eclipsed by the focus on the Japanese, but Lydia Yu Jose and Patricia Dacudao demonstrate the Filipino settlers' share in transforming Davao. The American colonial authorities' cavalier attitude toward hunger made them blame Filipinos for their ill health, but Theresa Ventura contends that American views and actions were deeply flawed.

Dizon's ambitious project retrieves *sumpong* from historical oblivion by relying on extant dictionaries and the actual usages of the term by the eighteenth-century Franciscan missionary Bernardo de Santa Rosa, who spent twenty years in eastern Central Luzon and became much acquainted with the Aeta and the Ilongot. Although the word *sumpong* was not found in the Aeta and Ilongot lexicon, Santa Rosa used the term to describe aspects of their behavior. Based on these sources, Dizon finds that *sumpong* was related to some sort of encounter, which was intelligible within the frame of indigenous spirit beliefs. The *sumpong* that led one to abandon an elderly person to death, hunt heads, change one's mind, convert to Catholicism, or apostatize were related to emotions of fear, anger, and grief that the Aeta and Ilongot felt in response to their spirit world.

Convinced that the tropics were inherently fertile and devoid of ecological challenges, American colonials, Ventura argues, were blind to the hunger of the people, a situation exacerbated by the US military takeover of the Philippines. When made aware of the starvation, Americans pointed to the Filipinos' poor

and irrational choice of food, especially their rice-based diet. However, labor unrests, crop failures following Taal Volcano's eruption in 1911, and José Albert's identification of infantile beriberi compelled state officials to take action. The technical solutions pursued included campaigns to promote corn production and consumption as well as vitamin B supplementation, which medicalized food but, according to Ventura, did not solve hunger and the inequalities of power behind it.

Serizawa explains that the discourse of Japanese solidarity with the Philippines during the Second World War has been seen as part of Japanese wartime ideology or propaganda and thus ignored by Japanese scholars. But Serizawa's examination of the writings of "forgotten" Japanese authors shows their appropriation of elements of American imperial discourse. For them the Philippines was Japan's burden and needed to be assimilated benevolently and civilized and modernized under the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere. Ultimately, the Japanese ideological dilemma between "getting out of Asia" (*datsua*) or "being prosperous with Asia" (*kōa*) had negligible effect on Japanese wartime writings on the Philippines.

Jose and Dacudao explain the invisibility of Filipinos in the contemporaneous writings on Davao and its abaca industry. Because the Japanese presence there was in response to the official campaign to work overseas for their own and Japan's economic benefit, Japanese texts understandably focused solely on the Japanese. When the "Davao Problem" arose in the 1930s, the Japanese justified their presence by harping on their indispensable role in developing abaca, while in Manila Filipinos inordinately emphasized Japanese dominance even as the Americans defended the Japanese. Filipinos by and large saw no need to write about their Davao experiences, which created a lacuna in the literature.

This is Lydia Yu Jose's last published article, for she passed away on 3 August 2014. Fittingly this issue carries an obituary written by Ricardo Jose, her husband.

In a research note, Patricio Abinales documents the irreverent and hilarious ditties sung by communist cadres in the 1970s and 1980s, which were frowned upon by the guardians of party culture. Like other contributors in this issue, Abinales rescues this aspect of Philippine communist history from collective forgetting and helps us imagine the unauthorized laughter.

Filomeno V. Aguilar Jr.
Ateneo de Manila University