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**Marlies S. Salazar**

## **Perspectives on Philippine Languages: Five Centuries of European Scholarship**

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The socioeconomic and political context of Hernandez's life increased his social awareness. During the Japanese occupation, he joined the Bernard Anderson guerrilla group, which operated in the Sierra Madre mountain range area. He was given a rank of major and served as a spy against the Japanese. After the war, he became vocal in his anti-collaborator stance. He was dismayed by how Filipinos participated in hoarding, profiteering, and black-market activities during the occupation years. However, US intervention in the collaboration issue, as well as in the economics and politics of the newly independent Philippine nation-state, led him to develop anti-American sentiments (186–87). Furthermore, his desire to turn his literary ideas into reality resulted in his participation in progressive organizations, especially labor groups. In 1947 he was elected president of the Congress of Labor Organizations (CLO). As president he strengthened the CLO through organizational affiliations, educational training of members, and mass demonstrations. From this point onwards, Hernandez's continuing radicalization was clearly reflected in his political activities and social involvement.

In *Ka Amado*, Reyes analyzes Philippine society through the prism of Hernandez's biography. He also uses the geography of Tondo and Hagonoy and explores the relationship between people and their environment to gain a deeper understanding of sociohistorical conditions. *Ka Amado*, therefore, is a "total history" presented through Hernandez's literature.

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MARLIES S. SALAZAR

## **Perspectives on Philippine Languages: Five Centuries of European Scholarship**

Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2012. 333 pages.

Marlies Salazar's *Perspectives on Philippine Languages* condenses the history of European scholarship on culture and language by gathering archival documents from the sixteenth up to the second half of the twentieth century

from scholars aside from those of Spanish and English descent. Its range covers a wide variety of works, from dictionaries to prayer books and botanical taxonomies, in a variety of translations that includes almost all major continental European languages. The documents that Salazar consulted—including those in advanced stages of deterioration, such as books with missing pages, pages worn out, letters that are about to fade, books on the verge of disappearing in dust—reveal the broad temporal scope of her work and the strong archival research that served as its basis. With her rigorous study of linguistics and history, Salazar illuminates the Philippines—at the height of Eurocentrism—as a significant object of study. Yet at the heart of her optimism is a chronology that reinstates the Philippines as a mere recipient of European enlightenment, and the Philippine languages as short shrifts in Western scholarship.

Embracing such breadth of history is always difficult. Salazar organizes her historical timeline by rendering each century from the fifteenth until the twentieth century as chapters of the book, marking key events in the fields of linguistics and Philippine history under each historical period. However, this ambitious scope also forces her to simplify historical content. For example, she only provides summaries of the contributions to language scholarship of key scholars or reduces a historical period into a list of sorts.

Salazar also tends to get caught in a deluge of archival facts to the detriment of historical analysis. For instance, right from the opening chapter, “Age of Discovery,” Salazar describes the early phase in the Westerners’ contact with Philippine societies as the moment they finally “get [to have a] feel for the languages and culture of the Philippines” (1). Their “feel” for the languages transpired through the lives and works of missionaries sent to the Philippine islands. The goal of these missionaries was to introduce Catholicism to the natives as part of their expansion in the Far East, necessitating a strong language education among the community dwellers as well as for themselves. These missionaries barely taught Spanish to the locals, while they also learned the local languages, which became part of the early European linguistic scholarship on the Philippines. However, as Salazar fleshes out the details of this burgeoning scholarship by contextualizing it against the backdrop of the advent of Spanish colonialism, the historical narrative is eclipsed as the discussion leaps into the Age of Enlightenment—from the Spanish-colonial Philippines to the rise of the European “encyclopedists” (14–16). The chronological gap prevents Salazar

from giving a full assessment of the Spanish-colonial interest in Philippine languages because of the lack of historical continuity that links the islands to the eighteenth-century drive of the imperial centers to amass encyclopedic knowledge from different countries. Salazar's very methodology reveals analytical challenges and needs to be problematized because the disciplinary concerns of linguistics are themselves historically complicit in the colonial project.

Weaving the intersections between the history of linguistics and colonialism in the Philippines, Salazar struggles at the verity of such an ambitious undertaking by simply limiting everything as a "contextualization" of the schools of thought instead of engaging and launching a critique of each one of them (1). In the second chapter, "The Rise of Historical Comparative Linguistics," at the tail end of the eighteenth century, she illustrates the influence of Wilhelm von Humboldt's scholarship by probing into his work *On the Kawi Language on the Island of Java*. This work articulates how Philippine languages like Tagalog are outside the range of Indian influence in Southeast Asia and how Tagalog exhibits similarities to Malayo-Polynesian languages. In Humboldt's assessment, Tagalog is also the language that has a "richest grammatical development" (49). Thus Salazar's strategy is to nominate a representative figure for the broad period of the late eighteenth century.

In the third chapter, "The Nineteenth Century—An Age of Intensified Contacts with The Philippines," Salazar's historical compass shifts from nominating a representative linguist to presenting a thick description of the Philippines as a significant site in which a more profound understanding of language scholarship had emerged by the time Europe and Southeast Asia became closer to one another by way of the Suez Canal (87). However, in the fourth chapter, "Austronesian Linguistics and Their Influence in the Philippines," she returns to more disciplinary concerns, such as Austronesian Linguistics, by citing Cecilio Lopez, Otto Scheerer, and Herman Costenoble, who were at the forefront in reconstructing a "Proto-Philippine language" (185).

Salazar traces the reception of Philippine languages and cultures among European scholars, yet the historical narrative gets lost in the matrix of connections that she attempts to map out. Although she demonstrates a fidelity to the method of historical linguistics, an impasse is unraveled in

Salazar's narrative when it is understood within the context of an era in which most linguists are looking for a "proto-language." Salazar misrecognizes that such a framework is historically bereft of any will to designate the Philippines at the center and locate the country as a starting point from which to expand the language families for Tagalog, Visaya, and others that otherwise are treated as just a membrane in the wide tree model of historical linguistics.

Salazar concludes with "Developments in Linguistics in Europe," in which she laments that most Europeans have lost interest in studying Tagalog or other Philippine languages. Surely, she doffs her hat to the foundational figures like Vladimir Makarenko for observing the language situation of the Philippines in the 1930s (205), and Nicole Revel for reclaiming the epics, especially those from Palawan, and rescuing them from eventual disappearance. However, Salazar also deplores the turn to specialization on "theories" and insists that the legacy of European linguists was brought about by their "pure scientific curiosity" (223–24). She argues that linguistics could not have evolved into its present state without resting on the "shoulders of giants such as Wilhem von Humboldt, Bopp, Kern, Blumentritt, Brandsetter, Dempwolff, and Cecilio Lopez"—ending the list with a Filipino who has been hailed as the Father of Philippine linguistics (223)—and the contemporary Philippines' share would be the works of Reynaldo Ileta, Vicente Rafael, and Doreen Fernandez (224). However, in linking the Philippines to the contributions of Europeans, Salazar insinuates that Tagalog's linguistic dominance has prevailed because scholarship on Philippine linguistics has been largely limited to this language to the detriment of other regional languages. With these assessments, Salazar encourages Filipinos to pursue what Europeans have started and check the archival treasures in European libraries.

Salazar's work holds great promise for it brims with facts, archival data, and historical references that have become seemingly irrelevant at present. However, the sheer breadth of her topic is just too much to handle, as seen in her difficulty in distilling specific historical insights from such a voluminous body of information. Her enthusiasm in reclaiming the archive of European scholarship on Philippine languages and cultures, though laudable, is also tricky as it binds her to a scholarship that functions as a colonial instrument and freezes a language's social character amid the obsession for a protolanguage. Defying, rather than sustaining, the same

colonial frame of historical linguistics is necessary. Negating the colonial practices in historical linguistics will allow the Philippines to be visible beyond the binaries between the Occident and the Orient, toward a revision of histories.

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