

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

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## **Editor's Introduction**

Filomeno V. Aguilar, Jr.

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# Editor's Introduction

The parchment curtain, as William Henry Scott had told us, could be lifted, permitting us to discern through the opacity of Spanish documents incidental information about the inhabitants of the islands colonized by Spain. We had assumed the parchment was inevitably Spanish. Damon L. Woods, however, is of the conviction that numerous indigenous-language sources exist, which can change the way Philippine history is written. Two Tagalog texts from the seventeenth century that Woods analyzes in his article reveal, however, that they are not transparent but form parts of the tapestry of the parchment curtain. Ramon Guillermo, in a research note, grapples with a Tagalog text from the late nineteenth century. Both sets of Tagalog texts, from the early and the closing stages of Spanish rule, raise issues about authorship.

The early set of Tagalog texts consists of two petitions from the *maginoo* or leading gentlemen of Naujan in Mindoro, one from 1665, the other from 1678. Addressed to the archbishop of Manila, these petitions requested the continued presence of Jesuits in their parish, in lieu of the secular clergy. As Woods argues, the local notables were knowing participants in history, in this case, in the tussle over the control of parishes; the petitions attested to the *maginoo*'s authority, which the colonial apparatus could not ignore—hence, the survival of these documents. The petitioners' agency is in no way diminished even though Woods detects a Spanish hand behind the Tagalog petitions. In the case of the 1665 petition that person was probably the Jesuit Fr. Diego Luis de San Vitores, who, according to Fr. John Schumacher, took pains to study Tagalog and became proficient enough to use it in teaching catechism. (In 1667 San Vitores, together with Pedro Calungsod, journeyed to the Marianas, where they were martyred in 1672.)

The Katipunan documents compiled by Jim Richardson in his *Light of Liberty* (2013) contains one from January 1892 that left him perplexed. This unsigned document—which puts the establishment of the Katipunan six months earlier than the date conventionally accepted—exhibits a peculiar orthography in that it frequently, though not at all times, uses the letter “j” in place of the standard letter “h.” Guillermo speculates that the

writer was probably well versed in Chabacano, which spelled Tagalog words systematically in an orthography closer to Spanish than to the commonplace Tagalog system of spelling. Guillermo narrows the possible writer to Ladislao Diwa, who originated from a Chabacano-speaking part of Cavite province and had claimed that he founded the Katipunan.

Commenting on Guillermo's proposition, Ricardo Ma. Duran Nolasco and Francis A. Gealogo point out that Chabacano, a largely oral language, had no standard orthography. Nolasco is of the view that the writer of the 1892 Katipunan text was probably a Tagalog who was unfamiliar with the emerging orthography employed by Bonifacio, resulting in the inconsistent use of the letters "j" and "h." Gealogo stresses that most of the words that used the letter "j" were not Chabacano, and he cautions against attributing single authorship to a document as well as to an entire movement.

Focusing on the Greater America Exposition in Omaha, Nebraska, in 1899, Michael C. Hawkins confronted not a parchment curtain but a paucity of materials in narrating the first formal exhibit of Filipinos under US rule. Nonetheless Hawkins is able to argue that in Omaha, unlike later expositions, particularly the well-studied 1904 St. Louis World's Fair, there was as yet no elaborated imperial discourse which the exhibit served to corroborate: notions of primitivity and savagery had not been established in relation to the US imperial project in the Philippines. The Filipinos, who were not exoticized but whose voices are absent in this narrative, had come from the Hispanized lowlands. No one was attired in a G-string as in St. Louis five years later.

Ethnographically Nelson N. Turgo examines gender relations in a coastal village in Quezon province. Declining fish catch had compelled fishermen to shift to other means of livelihood, but a few opted not to seek jobs outside fishing. Instead they run the household while their wives busy themselves as vendors of fish caught by large commercial fishers. Evinced by oral testimonies, the role reversal has resulted in reassertion of masculine power and tensions in spousal relationships, which Turgo links to findings in other parts of the world where local economies have undergone analogous economic restructuring.

To memorialize life by the water in times past, this issue features a gallery of photographs from the 1890s to the 1950s.

Filomeno V. Aguilar Jr.  
Ateneo de Manila University