

# Philippine Studies: Historical and Ethnographic Viewpoints

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## Editor's Introduction

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# Editor's Introduction

The first two articles of this issue were initially presented at “Contacts and Continuities: 500 Years of Asian–Iberian Encounters,” an international conference held from June to July 2021 and organized by the School of Humanities, Ateneo de Manila University, in cooperation with Centro de Humanidades, Universidade NOVA de Lisboa, and the National Historical Commission of the Philippines. The journal wishes to thank Dr. Nikki Carsi-Cruz for the opportunity to publish these papers.

Far from being an abstract notion, Asian–Iberian encounters left behind tangible and lasting traces, such as colonial fortifications in Manila and Macao. Pedro Luengo’s “Forts in Between: The Defense of Manila and Macao during the Iberian Union” studies such structures that were built during the Iberian Union (1580–1640) and puts a spotlight on the importance of local expertise in their construction. Doing so aids us in interrogating the traditional unidirectional conception of technological diffusion during the colonial era, which supposedly moved from the West to the East. Luengo lets the “early modern silences” (360) in archival documents provide clues about the occluded role of Asian design and workmanship in fortifications that ostensibly display European ingenuity. He avers, “All these structures created an interesting scenario, mediating between the most recent European innovations on fortification and Asian traditions” (360). There was a constant flow of scientific information among the different stakeholders, and it is lamentable how very little is said about the contributions of Chinese or Philippine actors in this dynamic.

The metropole–colony axis typically used as an analytical frame in historical writing is rendered inadequate in Luengo’s article due to the complex network that linked Spain, Portugal, mainland China, Macao, and the Philippines during the period under study. The same goes with Aitor Anduaga’s work, “Merchant Networks, Microspaces, and the Circulation of Ideas: Liberalism in the Wake of the Royal Company of the Philippines.” The study focuses on how eighteenth-century Bourbon Reforms contributed to the rise of opium trading networks in East Asia and the impact of what the author calls “microspaces of liberalism” on the spread of a new economic

paradigm in the Philippines. These microspaces took the form of both material and immaterial objects, such as books and businesses, through which employees of the Royal Company of the Philippines were able to “promote free-trade ideals that would eventually erode the old order of chartered companies” (366). Anduaga alerts us to the significance of non-European trade circuits, especially the company’s intra-Asian network, in the reconfiguration of the Philippine economy from the late eighteenth to the nineteenth century.

Ian Christopher B. Alfonso views the Philippine Revolution from a new angle, that is, from the perspective of the people of Macabebe, whose infamy in Philippine historiography persists to this day due to how they have been stereotyped as traitors to the country. In “The Philippine Revolution in Macabebe, Pampanga, and Its Aftermath,” the author reviews primary sources on the said historical period to reveal the complicated relations that linked the town with the Spanish colonial government and Emilio Aguinaldo’s army. Thus, Alfonso rejects the simplistic characterization of the townspeople as those who betrayed the Philippine nation and even reveals the heavy-handed actions of personalities typically regarded as heroes in the Filipino pantheon—actions that stoked resentment among the Macabebe toward Aguinaldo’s anticolonial efforts.

Jose Monfred C. Sy addresses a timely issue through an essay that bridges not just past and present but also the historical and the political. The author relates his experiences as a volunteer teacher in one of the so-called Lumad schools, which were nongovernment learning institutions that the indigenous communities helped establish and run from 1998 to 2019 to address the high incidence of illiteracy among their youth. Sy not only demonstrates the pedagogical value of these schools on the pupils but also asserts that the emergence of these institutions cannot be analyzed apart from the decades-long Lumad social movement, which has suffered from numerous attacks, including cases of murder of students and teachers in recent years, forcing many of them to lead the life of a *bakwit* (evacuee). In the end, the Lumad’s plight should not be seen as merely an effect of an internal strife created by conflicts within the Philippine nation-state but as a manifestation of oppressive global structures that turn indigenous peoples into collateral damage as transnational mining and agro-industrial companies expand, in the name of profit, into the Lumad’s *yutang kabilin* (ancestral domain) in Mindanao.

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