

# Philippine Studies: Historical and Ethnographic Viewpoints

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## Editor's Introduction

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# Editor's Introduction

Feelings are a significant part of human experience, yet historical studies that focus on them are rare. The lead article of this issue guides readers in this unfamiliar territory, as it charts how the emotional state of the *ilustrados* (enlightened ones) related to their campaign for reforms and the creation of a nation while living away from home. It views these propagandists as comprising an “emotional community,” which found itself caught in between the sentimental longing for the homeland and the individualist rationality expected of supposedly modern men.

Based on an extensive reading of the *ilustrados*' letters to families and friends, Rhodalyn C. Wani-Obias's “Homesickness and the Filipino Nation: The Emotional Experience of Propagandists, 1889–1895” is more than just an exposition on the melancholy that characterized their migrant lives. It enumerates the words that they used in their correspondences to express despondence—from *pighati* (melancholy) to *panimdim* (sorrow)—and analyzes each with the aid of dictionaries from the Spanish colonial period to give contextual depth to how Filipinos such as José Rizal and Marcelo del Pilar articulated their blues during this crucial historical juncture. Interestingly, there was no exact term at that time to denote homesickness, with the word *pangungulila* not appearing in dictionaries as late as 1860, although it surfaces in an 1889 dictionary as an entry carrying the meaning of loneliness.

The weight of indigenous words in articulating a native worldview is also demonstrated in Shi Yang's essay on the Alangan-Mangyan's color categories and symbolisms. Grounded on the author's fieldwork, this article shows how the Alangan-Mangyan's three basic color terms—*maksēngēn* (black), *mabuksi* (white), and *malimbaēn* (red)—are imbued with meanings that are inextricably tied to their understanding of their forest environment and swidden agriculture, as well as of their bodily health and cosmology. Hence, this tripartite schema correlates to their

notions of vitality and abundance, of disease and death. It also forms a significant part of some of their rituals and ceremonies wherein “they utilize items, objects, and utensils of specific colors, and publicly recite the names of these colors for everyone to hear” (536). Thus, color for the Alangan-Mangyan is not a mute physical attribute but something that can also be performed.

*Kapwa* (fellow-being), a Tagalog term that for many scholars represents an important aspect of the native worldview that differentiates it from the supposed individualism of Western society, is interrogated in Jeizelle Solitario’s piece, which traces the formation of a so-called Filipino servant subjectivity. “Revisiting *Kapwa*: Filipino Ethics, Subjectivity, and Self-Formation” examines how this concept and the ethics it engenders relate to colonialism, Christianity, and neoliberalism at various historical stages and contribute to both the demonstration of native agency and the creation of a subjugated people. Solitario contends that ostensibly positive notions involved in *pakikipagkapwa* (relating with *kapwa*) such as “*kagandahang-loob* (goodness), *utang na loob* (debt of gratitude), and *hiya* (shame or sense of propriety) are among such techniques that aid in this double formation” (543).

The value of the vernacular is at the analytical center of Maria Vanessa E. Gabunada’s study of Cebuano literature translation projects in the past half-century. While Gabunada notes how the increasing number of publications that allow Filipino- and English-speaking audiences access to Cebuano literature is a manifestation of the growing interest in and promotion of regional literature, she also sees in the publication cycle of these projects crucial weaknesses that characterize the production of such works. By addressing the limitations of Norbert Bachleitner’s communication circuit framework and adapting it for translation studies, her article argues that the very act of translation in the studied projects “reveals and amplifies the unequal power dynamics of Philippine literary publishing” (565). This asymmetry is largely an offshoot of the Manila-centricity of the publishing industry in the country, as well as of the editorial policies and economic strategies of the national institutions and publishers that mediate between the translated text and the reading public.

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