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## **The Philippines through European Lenses: Late 19th Century Photographs from the Meerkamp van Embden Collection by Otto van den Muijzenberg**

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they made use of indigenous medicines, such as green bananas for diarrhea and the bark of the *dita* tree (*Alstonia scholaris*) for malarial fever (39). Lindholm also continued his activities as a Presbyterian missionary by holding church meetings, officiating at weddings, and teaching Sunday school. That this was still a paramount concern despite the ongoing war reveals Lindholm's dedication to his calling.

The account is also interesting because it reveals a complex Filipino community organization despite the absence of a formal working government. In this situation, it was apparent that most of the large landowners were also recognized as lay leaders of the Presbyterian church in the area. They were also heavily involved in the war effort because they assembled, fed, and supported the local guerrillas; Filipino USAFFE soldiers, both those who had surrendered and those who had not; and even the Silliman ROTC (36). In fact, it was the Presbyterian lay leader Enrique Malahay who led the local bolo battalion of about 100 men (35). These same individuals or their families sheltered, fed, aided, and protected the American missionaries.

The narrative is also peopled with diverse and interesting characters, such as the former bandit-turned-guerrilla known only as "Wild Eye" (161); Mr. Ericido, who owned and ran a cockpit in the mountains (60); and even Edith and Edilberto Tiempo, who brought pies to the missionaries (105). There is also Melchor Siao, the former Silliman student-turned-itinerant peddler, who could be relied upon to bring anything from rice to thimbles, ink, and needles to the mountains (92). There are also the two household helpers of the Lindholms, known only as Foni and Dulia. Although often mentioned peripherally by Lindholm, these two obtained food, cared for the children, helped the family move around, and often bridged the gap between the Americans and the local community. There are also countless nameless Filipinos, such as the "orphan lad" who dug sweet potatoes, grew onions, and kept hens for Lindholm (122); the many *cargadores* (porters) and guides who helped them travel; and even the Pakwan Drama Cavalcade that staged plays and musicals for the missionaries (48).

Lindholm's writing, however, is sometimes confusing since he does not supply enough facts and specific data. Interestingly, Clara Lindholm contributes one chapter of the narrative (Chapter 11: "Clara Experiences Battle and Battle Fatigue"). Her writing is much better because she provides more data and specific facts that make it easier to follow the story. Whereas Paul Lindholm simply writes that his family was evacuated by submarine, Clara

notes, for example, that it was the USS *Creville* under the command of Lt. Cmdr. Francis D. Walker Jr. (113), among other details that she reveals. Lindholm also quotes letters, directives, and other sources but does not supply sufficient footnotes or a bibliography. This lack is understandable since the narrative is a personal one. Nonetheless, because this book is supposed to be a new edition and it had been edited and verified, there should have been better citation of references.

All in all, *Shadows from the Rising Sun* is not only a good story for general readers but it is also a document that can be useful for researchers and scholars who study the Japanese period, the Presbyterian mission, childhood experiences during the war, and the complex social relations in Negros and the rest of Philippines society. In telling the contemporary reader of his war-time experiences in the mountains of Negros, Lindholm also suggests that there are still so many narratives that have yet to be unearthed: those of the Filipino church members, guerrillas, ordinary townsfolk, and even those of the nameless, voiceless "orphan lad" who provided food for the Lindholms.

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OTTO VAN DEN MUIJZENBERG

### **The Philippines through European Lenses: Late 19th Century Photographs from the Meerkamp van Embden Collection**

Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2008. 357 pages.

Eureka! The author must have exclaimed thus when he stumbled upon the never-before-seen photographs from the collection of P. K. A. Meerkamp van Embden. Meerkamp was a Dutch businessman who arrived in the Philippines in 1889, along with many other Europeans, to venture into the lucrative tobacco business after the Spanish government ended its monopoly of the cash crop. Meerkamp stayed until 1927, or about four decades, working as both private planter and honorary consul of the Netherlands. Some of the photos were taken by Meerkamp himself, others by his friends; and the rest he collected from that era. The collection varies from family to

landscape photos. Because of Meerkamp's persistence in labeling the photographs, indicating when and where they were taken, the author was saved the trouble of sorting and verifying the more than one thousand photos in the collection. Perhaps this accidental tourist-planter-diplomat actually intended to promote the country as the collection was a way "to combat the many wrong ideas prevalent in the Netherlands with regards to the Philippine archipelago . . . [and] to give a somewhat elaborate idea about this rich and remarkable colony . . ." (3).

The collection, contained in twelve albums, is an important find for many reasons. If most of the primary materials or records of colonial Dutch officials and expatriates focused mainly on Indonesia, the Meerkamp collection is a rarity as it focused on their colony's neighbor. The collection is likewise an important resource material that augments or complements many related topics—from the ethnography of the Cordilleras, economic history, Manila's urbanization, to a glimpse of expatriate life in the country. However, the book does not include all of the pictures in the collection. The author chose those photos that were taken until 1901; this cutoff date is based on what he calls the historical, technical, and personal divide. The turn of the century was more than a symbolic moment for it marked the transition from Spanish to American rule. The chosen photographs were taken at a time when photography was at its pioneering stage and considered cumbersome because of the unwieldy equipment—bulky cameras, film, glass plates, chemicals, and printing materials. In contrast, during the American period photographs were mass-produced images taken using the much lighter Kodak Brownie camera that used negative rolls. The photos taken after 1901 also tended to focus on Meerkamp's household or domestic orientation, thus having no relevance to the current book's topic.

After the introduction, the book proceeds to offer glimpses of Manila and its environs or suburbs before Meerkamp's arrival; it includes forms of recreation that were typical of the period, such as outings and picnics. Chapter 3 discusses business and leisure among Europeans in the Spanish Philippines, who interestingly were labeled by the locals simply as *mga ingles* (Englishmen) even if they were French, Dutch, or even Americans—in much the same way that whites, including Europeans, would be called collectively as *Amerikano* during the subsequent period. Europeans, mostly businessmen, consuls, including dependents, dreaded to be assigned to Manila because it was considered a hardship post. Not only was the city dirty and unsanitary,

proof of which were the deadly epidemics that plagued the city periodically, but more so because Manila was like a monastic city. There was nothing much to do in the evening, in contrast to other cities that offered more vibrant (read: mundane) forms of entertainment. Thus the expatriate in Manila had to be contented with more ascetic forms of leisure, like watching plays, water sports, and indoor activities at recreational clubs that were done mostly in the daytime. At this point the book serves as a useful complement to Gilda Cordero Fernando's work on expatriate life in her classic *Turn of the Century* (GCF Books, 1978).

*The Philippines through European Lenses* could not avoid being a travelogue as two chapters deal with Meerkamp's sojourns. Chapter 4 focuses on his travels to the Cordilleras and Cagayan to familiarize himself with the tobacco, and to a lesser extent coffee, businesses. Two expatriates who were considered specialists on the Philippines accompanied Meerkamp: his compatriot Dr. Alexander Schadenberg and the German Otto Scheerer. The former was a trained anthropologist who also ventured in the pharmacy business, forming with a partner Botica Boie, until the 1950s one of Manila's most popular drugstores. The latter was not only a planter but also a diplomat by accident, as he negotiated on behalf of Spain the release of Spanish soldiers captured by the Philippine revolutionary forces; later on, he would serve as an intermediary between the U.S. government and the Aguinaldo cabinet for the latter's surrender. Scheerer retired as a professor of linguistics at the University of the Philippines. The second of Meerkamp's trips, aboard a rickety and archaic boat aptly named the *Uranus*, took him to the Visayas and northern Mindanao to acquaint himself with abaca, then the Philippines's prime export.

In spite of the fascinating and enlightening photographs in the collection, the book is not the typical coffee-table type of book. Rather, it is more of a history book because of its scholarship, but one with a lot of photographs. In fact the book devotes a considerable portion of the text to guide the lay reader on the historiography and nuances of colonial photography. Such is the trademark of a Philippine veteran that is Otto van den Muijzenberg. He tells us that, if some of the earliest works on colonial photography in the Philippines were meant to inform the colonialists back home about their newfound possession and its exotic indigene populations, this genre shifted to interest in travel and later on to scientific pursuits. However, as the author reminds us, photographs cannot be seen as neutral, objective ways of rendering

reality—and indeed photographs during the American colonial period were used extensively for propagandistic and ideological purposes, due largely to Dean Worcester.

The book concludes with Meerkamp's involvement as a diplomat at the outbreak of the Philippine-American War. As Aguinaldo and members of his cabinet tried frantically to obtain diplomatic recognition for the young republic they had established, the author suggests that Meerkamp and company were inclined to deny such a request because they subscribed to the Western view that the Philippines was not yet ready for independence. Moreover, Meerkamp and other planters like him tended to believe that war and instability were bad for business. Unfortunately, as the author laments, Meerkamp did not take notice of Rizal and the revolution. That Meerkamp missed out on the most important event at the time could not be due solely to technical limitations. For unlike the handheld high-speed digital cameras of today, how could the cumbersome equipment of those times capture the hopes, anguish, and yearnings of the *indios* now wanting to be called Filipinos. More importantly, photographs are select images that the photographer wishes to transmit. And while photographs serve as a very potent tool for remembering, they are also a powerful weapon for “deremembering” or forgetting something or someone. For all its beauty, the collection of photos in this book as well as the original Meerkamp collection are but a reminder that photographs are, to a large extent, representations of the imaginings of those who take it.

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