

philippine studies

Ateneo de Manila University • Loyola Heights, Quezon City • 1108 Philippines

**The Blood of Government:
Race, Empire, the United States,
and the Philippines
by Paul A. Kramer**

Review Author: Ma. Teresa Pineda Tinio

Philippine Studies vol. 55, no. 1 (2007): 148–151

Copyright © Ateneo de Manila University

Philippine Studies is published by the Ateneo de Manila University. Contents may not be copied or sent via email or other means to multiple sites and posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's written permission. Users may download and print articles for individual, noncommercial use only. However, unless prior permission has been obtained, you may not download an entire issue of a journal, or download multiple copies of articles.

Please contact the publisher for any further use of this work at philstudies@admu.edu.ph.

<http://www.philippinestudies.net>

outweigh the shortcomings, which include the book's continually referring to Pardo de Tavera as simply "Tavera," the misspelling of "Mindoro" as "Mondoro," and the absence of a definition of the term "iatrocratic," a word absent in dictionaries (one website claims that "iatrocracy" is Ivan Illich's word to refer to the expropriation of "health" by power, for power). All in all, *Colonial Pathologies* easily belongs to the canon of texts on the history of diseases and medicine in the Philippines, a field that has attracted an increasing number of academic enquiries.

AARON ROM OLIMBA MORALINA

Department of History

Ateneo de Manila University



Paul A. Kramer, **The Blood of Government: Race, Empire, the United States, and the Philippines**. North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press; Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2006. xii, 538 pages.

From the book's central argument, found on page three, one immediately senses that *The Blood of Government: Race, Empire, the United States and the Philippines* is a book of its time. Kramer informs us that his book is about "the racial remaking of empire and the imperial remaking of race" and that it "argues for the necessity of examining metropole and colony in a single, densely interactive field in which colonial dynamics are not strictly derivative of, dependent upon, or respondent to metropolitan forces." The reference to the negotiation for power and meaning is a paean to the Foucauldian, poststructuralist position that many scholars have claimed as their theoretical beacon. Few are actually able to fully illustrate the concept of the malleability of power and meaning, but Kramer does so, with both elegance and thoroughness.

The book is an investigation of how race was configured and shaped for use both by Americans in the justification of their colonial enterprise and by Filipinos in their quest for recognition and/or autonomy. Kramer finds, as his introduction promises, an elastic concept that

expands and deflates, includes and excludes, determined by religion, geography, or birthplace, depending on which specific group or person is using it and which specific historical moment it is being used. His insightful discussion of the shift in the racial politics of the American military government and the American civil government is an example of this. He discusses a 1902 article by James LeRoy condemning the race prejudice of the military government. Calling it "nigger theory," LeRoy posits that it originates from the residue of the American experience with slavery. He calls for a conciliation of and consultation with the natives. Kramer reads this shift as a new racial politics that suits new political realities. What was needed was a new justification for denying full Filipino self-government. The focus thus shifted toward more specific questions of political behavior, morality, and intelligence. In particular, Kramer tells us, American colonial officials appropriated the Spanish word "cacique" to condemn the emerging Filipino political leaders, the very leaders whom the U.S. colonial state was simultaneously recognizing. "The most consistent and begrudging of their observations were those of Filipino political agility and immorality, which claimed the elites were, as Taft put it, 'as ambitious as Satan,' and by their very nature 'deceptive, venal, corrupt, [and] exploitative'" (p. 196). Such a reading illustrates an American racial discourse of a much subtler kind, operative even today, and used to justify American military and/or economic presence in places such as Iraq.

The narrative of *The Blood of Government* tells the story, told hundreds of times over, of the birth of the Filipino nation and covers the requisite periods: the end of the Spanish colonial period, the Philippine-American war, the establishment of the American civil government, and the process of its Filipinization. The manner of telling, however, is singular in its comprehensiveness and in its use of all kinds of sources: letters, speeches, diaries, newspaper accounts, senate hearings, government reports, stories and poems, songs, travel accounts, photographs, scholarly works of the period, and current events. This breadth of source materials is delivered in a rather enjoyable manner, through interesting anecdotes, in well-oiled, flowing prose and fresh turns of phrase. Thus, the book is useful for both the beginner and the specialist. A reader who is approaching Philippine history for the first time and who

is willing to plow through the book's five hundred or so pages can rely on it as a useful introduction. The specialist, on the other hand, will be awed by the author's diligence at portraying race as an extremely complex and ever-changing concept that played a key role in Philippine and American history.

The amazing variety of sources Kramer uses and the thoroughness of his investigation are evident at every point. In Chapter 5, for example, Kramer illustrates the fear of Manila Americans of a native insurrection by discussing a speech by Maximo Kalaw given in 1912; a series of letters by a pensionado living in Washington, D.C., published in *El Renacimiento*; the differences in policies, programs, and priorities between Taft and his successor, Luke Wright; reports in *El Renacimiento*; and in *The Springfield Republican* of increased repression and corruption by the Philippine Constabulary and of reconcentration of the local population in Batangas and Cavite; accounts by Eloise Claws Parson, James LeRoy, and Jeremiah Jenks; Japan's defeat of Russia in the Russo-Japanese War and the consequent feeling of the impending triumph of the Orient over European colonizers; and a boxing match in Reno, Nevada in July, 1910, closely followed in Manila, between an African-American contender and a Caucasian contender.

The book's best and most engaging chapter is that on the Philippine-American war. It has lengthy and instructive discussions of the debates on and the portrayal of guerilla warfare as a savage war engaged in by a savage people, of the American engagement in torture and other war atrocities and of the racial rationalization for using the same. The most heartrending discussion, however, is that of the numerous personal accounts of soldiers on the field taken from letters and diaries recording their attitudes toward Filipinos and the war. The account logs the metamorphosis of a discourse that moves from a positive or neutral view of Filipinos to one that, through the course of the war, becomes seething with hatred and disdain. The very same soldiers who, when they first arrived in the Philippines, wrote back home of talented and intelligent natives would, in the course of a few months, refer to Filipinos as "rascals," "niggers," "gugos," and "savages." The accounts painfully illustrate an eager desire to shoot and hunt down Filipinos like game. They also show the cavalier attitude with which these soldiers participated in water

cure torture, the burning down of villages, and the killing of civilians. In General Jacob Smith's retaliation campaign after Balangiga, one marine wrote that he and his comrades were "hiking all the time killing all we came across," while another recalled that "we were to shoot on sight anyone over 12 years old, armed or not, to burn everything and to make the island of Samar a howling wilderness." Over the course of several pages, Kramer manages to do what all scholarship aims at—turn academic rigor into a riveting story of a lived experience. American racial hatred for Filipinos is, in these pages, made palpable and painful.

Grace and rigor are two opposite concepts that would be difficult to incorporate. Ballet dancers do it—through rigorous practice they achieve grace. Through meticulous and painstaking research, nimble prose, an engaging story, and a range of emotions, Paul Kramer has managed it too with this exemplary piece of scholarship.

MA. TERESA PINEDA TINIO
Department of English
Ateneo de Manila University