

# philippine studies

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

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## Editor's Introduction

Filomeno V. Aguilar Jr.

*Philippine Studies* vol. 56, no. 2 (2008): 121–122

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# Editor's Introduction

**T**he articles in this issue revolve around history and social memories. Significantly the authors rely explicitly or implicitly on comparison in heuristic, descriptive, and analytical ways, thereby generating new questions and fresh insights.

Rommel A. Curaming's study is built squarely on the comparative method. He seeks to understand two history-writing projects in Indonesia and the Philippines in the 1970s: *Sejarah Nasional Indonesia* and *Tadhana*. Rather than dismissing them as mere instances of powerholders' cooptation of historians, he seizes the opportunity to investigate the relationship between rulers and the state, on the one hand, and historians and intellectuals, on the other hand. His article lays out the context for the analysis of this relationship, particularly as shaped by the contrasting histories of nationalism, state formation, and the history profession in the two countries. In the period under study, Curaming highlights for instance the relative strength of as well as the competing historiographies among Filipino historians in contrast to the relative weakness of and unitary vision among Indonesian historians—with the paradoxical result that weakness and minimal dissension, rather than strength and vibrant debate, proved resilient to political manipulation. The publication of the full results of Curaming's study is to be awaited.

Comparative units can be discrete but they can be interrelated as well. Although the interconnections cannot be traced extensively in a short article, Roderick G. Galam's literary analysis considers two novels as a set. Both were written in the Ilokano language and serialized in the same weekly magazine nearly a decade apart. The first novel, *Saksi ti Kaunggan* (Innermost Witness) by Juan S. P. Hidalgo Jr., appeared in 1986–1987. Written in the wake

of Ferdinand Marcos's downfall, *Saksi* is a bold ultranationalist interpretation of events as "a written script" planned by the imperialist United States to remove a ruler it could no longer control. Moreover, *Saksi* transforms Marcos's downfall into his redemption and asserts his view of history—*Tadhana*—as preeminent. The second novel, *Dagiti Bin-i ti Kimat* (The Seeds of Lightning) by Clesencio B. Rambaud, which appeared in 1995, attempts to question Marcos's legacy, and is seen by Galam as a response to Hidalgo—with the caveat that Rambaud's critique of militarization is ambivalent. However, in the context of Ilokano literature, the absence of adulation for Marcos in *Bin-i* indexes his "diminished and diminishing status" among the younger generation. Galam alerts us to the complexities of the narrative memory of Marcos, and the personal challenges Ilokano creative writers must contend with if they are to depart from a loyalist stance.

Social memories differ not only between generations but also even within the same cohort, as Josephine Quimbo shows for eight elderly informants who had lived through the Japanese occupation of Los Baños, Laguna. A comparison of how these informants schematically reconstruct the past indicates that affect-laden memories, related for example to the gruesome death of kin or torture in the hands of the enemy, are richly textured (unlike those of informants without analogous experiences), and the act of remembering—sometimes incoherent—reawakens the emotional intensity of the experience even after more than half a century has passed. Memories also appear to be structured by gender roles and role reversals, such as those related to the search for food and acting as a young courier for guerillas.

Pilar Cabañas examines the notebook sketches that Fernando Zóbel made in 1953 during what she believes to be the artist's first trip to Japan. Her study tacitly compares those sketches with Zóbel's paintings and with a similar set of notebook sketches made during a trip to Japan in 1956. Cabañas considers the 1953 sketches as akin to a diary that memorializes the shock of exoticism at a time when Zóbel, caught between his Spanish heritage, American education, and Philippine upbringing, was intensely grappling with his personal and artistic identity. Cabañas sees in Zóbel's initial apprehension of everyday life in Japan and its originary culture a searching for what is Filipino. The search for identity is also inherently relational and comparative.