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Beyond Colonial Miseducation: Internationalism and Deweyan Pedagogy in the American-era Philippines

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Beyond Colonial Miseducation

Internationalism and Deweyan Pedagogy in the American-era Philippines

This article maps early–twentieth-century Philippine pedagogy and nationalism through an intellectual biography of educator Camilo Osias (1889–1976). It examines Osias’s thinking as informed by three theoretical movements: gradualist Philippine nationalism (“Filipinism”), nationalist internationalism, and the pragmatist philosophy of John Dewey. The synthesis of these three movements allowed Osias to sketch a pluralist, democratic, and deliberative philosophy of public engagement, which was mainstreamed through classrooms and educational institutions. Such ideas, although foreign to contemporary anti-imperial intellectuals, may serve as alternatives to inward-looking forms of nationalism.

KEYWORDS: CAMILO OSIAS, JOHN DEWEY, PRAGMATISM, INTERNATIONALISM, PEDAGOGY, FILIPINISM, NATIONALISM

In 1966 the nationalist historian Renato Constantino (1966) published his seminal “The Mis-education of the Filipino.” Constantino’s essay set a new agenda for nationalist pedagogy and became part of a movement to indigenize education in the Philippines. Along with fellow historian Teodoro Agoncillo—who wrote the influential textbook *A History of the Filipino People* (cf. Totanes 2010)—Constantino’s work defined the contours of leftwing nationalism during the Marcos dictatorship (Ileto 1998, 185–91).

In the oft-quoted and oft-reprinted essay, Constantino (1966, 36; 1970, 22; 2000, 430) contended that American-era education in the Philippines became a weapon of conquest, a “means of pacifying a people who were defending their newly-won freedom from an invader who had posed as an ally.” Because Filipinos were “trained as citizens of an American colony,” they became an “uprooted race,” unaware of their true identity and heritage. Reading American textbooks, they “started learning not only a new language but also a new way of life, alien to their traditions and yet a caricature of their model” (Constantino 1966, 37; 1970, 24; 2000, 432). Although Constantino (1966, 37; 1970, 24; 2000, 433) admitted that “the lives of Philippine heroes were taught,” he insisted that “their nationalist teachings were glossed over,” preventing the creation of a “genuinely Filipino education.” Constantino’s (1966, 38; 1970, 28; 2000, 437) reference to a “genuine” education provided the underlying logic of his essay, for “miseducation” assumed that a real national/nationalist mindset existed, with educators merely needing to peel back layers of colonial obfuscation to produce authentic Filipinos instead of “un-Filipino Filipinos.” Nationalist education, as such, simply became a means of returning to a more authentic Filipino subjectivity.

Constantino’s nationalism represented an anti-American/anti-imperial nationalist historiography that began in the 1950s and mainstreamed during the Marcos regime. Until today most of these works define much contemporary discourse among nationalist intellectuals, particularly those based in the University of the Philippines, Diliman (Claudio 2013, 50–54). Despite the influence of these works, however, historians have shown that the anti-imperial nationalist writings of scholars like Constantino, Agoncillo, and more recently Reynaldo Ileto can be cavalier with historical evidence (cf. Schumacher 1982; May 1996; Cullinane 2014; Richardson 2013), betraying an ideological glorification of a static, lower-class “Filipino” subjectivity that neglects the various complexities of state

formation.¹ For example, radical nationalist historiography, Yusuke Takagi (2014, 22) argues, has “paid sympathetic attention to rebellion or symbolic leaders of the opposition party rather than the politicians and bureaucrats within the government.”

Absent in the polemics of radical nationalists are analyses of gray areas that can only be detected through close examination of colonial-era texts and the broader processes of colonial state-formation. At no point does Constantino discuss the content of American-era education in detail, portraying it as a colonial monolith bereft of ambiguity. Moreover, in viewing Western thought as contaminating “true” national identity, Constantino neglects nationalism’s Western heritage. Nationalism, birthed within the traditions of Western liberalism and socialism (Chakrabarty 2010), has always been an Enlightenment discourse. The very attack of the West had Western antecedents.

Constantino’s critique of “American” textbooks that allegedly obscured local realities betrays the elisions in his thinking. How “American,” for instance, were these textbooks? Given the fluidity of national identity in early-twentieth-century Philippines, “American” versus “Filipino” was, in retrospect, a facile lens to understand changes within the education system. Within the first decade of the American occupation, the American colonial government itself had noted the lack of textbooks suited for Filipino students and immediately rectified this problem through the adaptation of material (Acierto 1980, 65). As early as 1902, the colonial government had “recommended the preparation of textbooks possessing local color, local ideas, local descriptions, and local illustrations” (Fresnoza 1950, 243). The nationalization of the curriculum deepened from the 1920s onward, with the basal reading material of elementary students consisting primarily of material about José Rizal and readers compiled and edited by Filipino educator, author, and politician Camilo Osias (ibid, 245). As we shall see, this material must not be regarded as a tool for “miseducation.” Rather, the educational discourse of the time reflected a form of nationalism forged as an incipient Philippines sought to legitimize itself within an international system of nation-states.

Through an engagement with Osias’s pedagogical work during and shortly after the American period, I contend that that era’s pedagogy was anchored on a nationalism broader in its political purview than Constantino’s. Osias’s work was written for a nation-in-waiting; his ideas

were syncretic, civic, future-oriented, experimental, and anchored on an internationalism that saw nation building as part of a broad, cosmopolitan ethics. At the peak of his career as an author, Osias was considered one of the first Filipino voices in basic education, and eventually as legislator he became a prominent advocate for greater state support for education.

His ideas may be foreign in the landscape of contemporary nationalist intellectuals, but they require revisiting. Obscured by the disdain of thinkers like Constantino for “colonial mentality,” the writings of Osias and other outward-looking educators of the early twentieth century may serve as antidotes to exclusionary and inward-looking forms of nationalism. They may also provide a blueprint for new forms of deliberative public engagement that prioritizes the possibilities of democracy building over the givens of nationality.

In the following pages, I examine Osias’s thought as composed of three overlapping lines of thought: first, the culturalist nationalism of the early–twentieth-century Philippine elite known as Filipinism; second, a form of late–nineteenth-century nationalist internationalism; and, third, the open-ended pragmatic philosophy of John Dewey—one of Osias’s mentors when he studied in Columbia University. These three theoretical movements propelled Osias’s thought during a career that spanned six decades and defined the pedagogy of the early–twentieth-century Philippines. The story is not just one of nationalism, but also of globalization. It is a history that examines Western influence as ideational interface and not mere contamination.

Osias and Filipinismo

Born in 1889 in La Union province, Camilo Osias was a bureaucrat, politician, and author. Even at the height of his political career (he had brief stints as Senate President in 1952 and 1953), he continued to regard himself as an educator. Osias’s own education was wedged between two colonial regimes. He was educated in Spanish schools, but moved to the United States for tertiary-level studies. A product of the Pensionado program, which sent promising Filipino students to the United States, Osias received his teacher’s diploma from Western Illinois State College in 1908 and his Bachelor of Arts degree from the Teachers College of Columbia University in 1910, where he was greatly influenced by the pedagogue and philosopher John Dewey.

Upon returning to the Philippines, Osias immediately became a schoolteacher. From 1915 to 1916 he served as superintendent of schools (the first Filipino to hold the position), and from 1921 to 1936 he served as the first president of the National University, which he oversaw during its years of rapid expansion from a small business college to a university of multiple colleges. It was at this time when he compiled, edited, and wrote *The Philippine Readers*—a seven-volume collection of reading excerpts for elementary school students (fig. 1). Along with Leandro Fernandez, the first Filipino to author a Philippine history textbook, Osias was part of the broader Filipinization of Philippine education (cf. Totanes 2012, 77–110)—a campaign that came in tandem with the growing independence lobby in the Philippines.

Like many bureaucrat-intellectuals of the early to mid-twentieth century (figures like Salvador P. Lopez, Carlos P. Romulo, and Salvador Araneta), Osias flitted in and out of government service and university/intellectual life. This constant movement was the norm for a generation of intellectuals who viewed serving the state as an extension of their intellectual pursuits. While still president of the National University, Osias was elected to a term in the Philippine colonial senate, serving there from 1925 to 1929. From 1929 to 1935, he was Resident Commissioner of the Philippine Islands to the United States Congress. The latter half of Osias’s career was spent in the Philippine Senate, where he was elected to two



Fig. 1. Covers of the revised edition of Books 3 and 5 of *The Philippine Readers* published by Ginn and Co. in 1932, the books measuring 14 cm. x 19 cm.

terms: one from 1947 to 1953 and another from 1961 to 1967.² Despite being in government, Osias continued to write books and articles, primarily on education and pedagogy.

As an intellectual working in the early twentieth century, Osias was part of a movement among educated elites seeking to define and mold an infant nation. The primary concern of these elites was the very notion of nationality. The early American period, as Resil Mojares (2002, 270–96; 2006, 467–505; 2013, 235–48) has shown consistently, gave birth to multiple canonical notions of “Filipino,” from the canonization of national poets to the promotion of a pantheon of national heroes. Mojares (2013, 245) writes:

More than at any other time, it was in the first decades of the twentieth century that “Filipino nationality,” the shared consciousness of *being Filipino*, was self-consciously formulated and elaborated. This seems paradoxical since this was as well the time of American colonial rule. Yet, American occupation stimulated expressions of nationality in ways symbiotic as well as oppositional. The occupation and its threat of “Anglo-Saxonization” fueled Filipino assertions of distinctness and difference. On the other hand, Filipino leaders quickly discovered there was a great deal in U.S. colonial policies (“Filipinization,” self-rule, the diffusion of “modernity”) compatible with their own aspirations. Particularly after 1907 (when the all-Filipino Philippine assembly was inaugurated), the mood for constructive “nation-building”—under U.S. colonial auspices—was dominant.

The early twentieth century saw the rise of what Mojares (2006, 495) identifies as Filipinismo or Filipinism, an ambivalent culturalist nationalism that was “congenial to leaders who invoked nationalism to distance themselves from Americans as well as deflect the radical demands of those who could not abide with U.S. rule.”³

Osias was well aware of his place in this movement, (particularly as one of its first and key exponents in the field of pedagogy) and many of his early writings in the 1920s were attempts to develop a “dynamic Filipinism.” Although Mojares (2002, 26) locates Osias within the tradition of Filipinism—comparing him to Rizal scholar Rafael Palma and journalist/librarian Teodoro Kalaw—the pedagogue does not feature prominently in Mojares’s path-breaking book on late-nineteenth-century/early-twentieth-century Filipino intellectuals.

Building on Mojares’s work, I contend that Osias was one of the most influential proponents of Filipinism. His relevance stems not only from the caliber of his thought, but also from the media he used: school textbooks. As Patricia May Jurilla (2008, 35–56) argues, Filipinos for most of the twentieth century read primarily for the purposes of study rather than entertainment or personal edification—hence the importance of textbooks as one of the few widely circulated texts. Thus, although Osias may not have been the most prominent advocate of Filipinism, he is possibly its most important popularizer.

Examining Osias in light of Filipinism is crucial to a full understanding of his political and pedagogical views. The few academic works on Osias unfortunately have refracted his ideas through the lens of American ethnic studies and, as a result, occluded his role as a domestic nation-builder. (No study has hitherto tackled Osias from the purview of domestic Philippine studies.) For Roland Sintos Coloma (2005, 20), Osias’s biography represents a “history in between” American imperialism and Filipino nationalism. Unsurprisingly his work focuses primarily on Osias’s life in the United States, viewing him as a liminal figure whose “resistance” to empire is evidenced by the hybridity of his subject-position. As I hope to show, however, the Filipino-American question was incidental to Osias and his primary goal as an advocate of Filipinism and Deweyan progressive education was to construct a civic and internationalist nationalism.

The theme of resistance to US empire is even more pronounced in two recently published works on *The Philippine Readers*. Revisiting his work on Osias, Coloma (2013, 323) correctly notes that the readers were platforms for the “transmission of civic values,” but inadequately concludes that they were covert critiques of empire. The nationalism of *The Philippine Readers*, Coloma avers, would allow, “through covert and hybrid modes,” the student “to utilize the master’s tools of English literacy to dismantle the master’s house of empire” (ibid.). In a similar study Malini Johar Schueller (2014, 162) deploys James Scott’s notion of a “hidden transcript” to contend that the readers, although ostensibly espousing gradualism, “contested colonial hegemony” and used “aspects of the educational apparatus to resist pacification.”⁴

Questions of colonial hybridity and resistance are no doubt relevant. Nonetheless these issues remain trapped in the binary of colonizer/colonized in postcolonial theory. Its conception of “hybridity” is one constrained by the

culture of the formal colonial power, while domestic nationalism becomes a way to “negotiate” the tensions of coloniality or to “resist” the “hegemony” of American empire.⁵ When applied to the Philippines, such an approach privileges America as an analytic unit and reduces the history of domestic nationalism to the narrative of those caught in between America and the Philippines.⁶ The concerns, however, of early–twentieth-century Philippine nationalists were broader than these binaries.⁷

Situating Osias within Filipinism allows us to sidestep the tunnel vision that bedevils American ethnic studies. Indeed elite advocates of Filipinism desired independence, but this desire was largely articulated in consonance with American colonialism and hegemony (which itself ostensibly espoused Filipinization for the elite), not as a form of resistance. The emerging generation of Filipino intellectuals envisioned a future nation, which they were already constructing as mandarins of a future nation-state. There was no need for a covert nationalism, because cultural and political elites had explicitly taken on the burden of nation building under the auspices of the colonial state (as was the general thrust of Filipinism). Osias (1927, 22) himself argued that his proindependence stance was “in accordance with America’s promise and the universal demands of Filipinos themselves.”

Both Coloma and Schueller cite Osias’s inclusion of selections about the lives and works of Filipino revolutionary leaders as evidence for the readers’ counterhegemonic content. While possibly some students might have interpreted the texts this way, neither Coloma nor Schueller provide evidence that schoolchildren understood them as such. And while alternative readings of Osias may prove politically potent, neither do Coloma nor Schueller provide us with a novel political discourse apart from a vague critical-theory-circa-early-1990s injunction toward “resistance.” We are thus left—the theoretical and actual death of the author notwithstanding—with Osias’s intentions. Understood in the context of Filipinism, Osias’s references to the heroism of revolutionary thinkers like Rizal or Apolinario Mabini were not only pleas for independence, but part of a broader process of nationalist canon-formation. Along with his contemporaries like Kalaw and Palma, Osias was constructing the pantheon of Filipino national heroes.

In this respect Filipinism was an externally oriented approach to the development of a local culture. Filipinism needed a nation to represent, requiring the construction of a new canon.⁸ Mojares’s framing of Filipinism, ignored by those espousing an American ethnic-studies

approach, prioritizes the domestic demands of a decolonizing country over a politics of ethnic identity. The latter may be relevant for understanding the contemporary politics of diasporic communities in multicultural America, but the former is a better way to understand an early–twentieth-century Filipino thinker.

Nationalist Internationalism and Experimental Nationalism

A more accurate understanding of Osias’s thought requires a vista broader than one that focuses simply on America’s domination of the Philippines. The fixation with Osias’s postcoloniality has led scholars to neglect his affinities with American traditions such as American pragmatism. More importantly, the narrow focus on empire–colony relations obscures the broader cosmopolitan and internationalist ethics in his work. Osias was not just a colonial subject, reacting to the vertical pressure of American hegemony. In many ways, rather than resisting empire, his work paralleled what was happening *in* empire.

Osias was a product of late–nineteenth-century debates—primarily Western—about the role of nationality amid major changes in geopolitics. As a political phenomenon, nationalism is driven not only by a desire to articulate a local identity relative to foreign power. The nation, which aspires for self-governance and autonomy, derives legitimacy from other nations (this is both a legal and discursive point) and thus seeks to claim a place within an international community. Paradoxically, therefore, nationalism is subtended by a form of internationalism and a concern for humanity. The “intensification” of a people’s “national spirit,” Osias (1974, 151) emphasized, was “not only for the purpose of their national existence but for the purpose of laying a foundation upon which the superstructure of a new humanity will rest.”

While orthodox Marxism views internationalism and nationalism in opposition, the current system of international governance represented by the United Nations treats nationhood as a prerequisite for participation in the international order. Historian Mark Mazower (2012, 48) traces this nationalist internationalism to the Italian politician Giuseppe Mazzini (1805–1872)—the leading counterpoint to Marx in discussions of internationalism. According to Mazower (*ibid.*), Mazzini’s vision was simple: a world “at peace because it has been transformed into an international society of democratic

nation-states.” From the nation stemmed a sense of civic obligation that could be grafted onto international institutions. This form of civic nationalist internationalism would be mainstreamed by possibly Mazzini’s most influential admirer: Woodrow Wilson. From the 1940s onward, American liberals working in the Wilsonian tradition blended Deweyan progressivism and Mazzinian-style internationalism in global peace movements and global political campaigns such as the lobby for a League of Nations (cf. Johnstone 2009).

In the field of education the internationalism of this period was most pronounced in the Columbia Teachers College, where educators, most especially John Dewey, sought to promote values of liberal pluralism among peoples and nations. John Dewey, of course, was, along with William James and Charles Sanders Pierce, one of the key figures in a philosophical movement that would come to be known as pragmatism. As we shall see, pragmatists believed in an experimental epistemology, where ideas were not validated based on a priori first principles, but through their ethical usefulness in specific contexts. The worldview of pragmatists was open and flexible, and it emphasized the necessity of plural ideas contesting each other in democratic praxis.⁹ Many of Dewey’s students in Columbia were learning this philosophy not simply as pedagogues but as citizens of decolonizing states.

The Columbia Teachers College was one of America’s first truly international educational institutions, producing teachers who would define the education policies of various countries in Latin America, Africa, and Asia (cf. Goodenow and Cowen 1986; Goodenow 1990, 1983). One notable graduate was the Mexican pedagogue and bureaucrat Moises Saenz (1888–1941), who studied with Dewey as a doctoral student in the early 1920s. As education subsecretary, Saenz sought to use education to “blend Western method [sic] with local ways to promote the social integration of Indians and mestizos into a cosmopolitan culture” (Goodenow 1990, 30). Saenz used outside culture to foster internal national unity through education.

Osias was one of the earlier graduates of the Teachers College from what is now known as the global South, studying under Dewey roughly a decade before Saenz, albeit as an undergraduate.¹⁰ In his memoirs Osias (1971, 109) recalled having the privilege “of being a student of the unforgettable Professor John Dewey,” who taught him philosophy and logic. So high was Osias’s veneration of Dewey that he saw his philosophy as one of

America’s greatest legacies. “Several nations,” he noted, had made immense contributions to the spiritual and intellectual development of mankind: “Greece, through Plato and Aristotle, gave her legacy of philosophy. The Hebrews gave ethics and religion. India and China gave gifts of men and philosophers like Buddha and Confucius. America evolved pragmatism because of James and Dewey” (Osias 1954, 151).

Like Saenz, Osias was dedicated to the Deweyan principle of pluralism in education, also seeking to construct a cosmopolitan nationalism through pedagogy. Any process of nationalization, he believed, should be in dialogue with the world. Upon assuming the presidency of the National University in 1921 (roughly the same time *The Philippine Readers* were first seeing print), Osias (1974, 151) argued that the “nationalization” of education should neither be “exclusivist” nor “anti-foreign.” “It does not,” he emphasized, “mean a discarding of subject matter and method of education which is not distinctly local” (ibid.). Over the decades Osias emphasized that a nationalist education should be outward looking—a remarkably consistent theme in his thought that he returned to continually in his decades-long career.

Writing for the *Philippine Economy Review* in 1959, he described Meiji-era education in Japan affectionately. The Japanese government of the time, he noted, “sought learning from all sources” (Osias 1959, 9). From the Germans they learned vocational and technical training; from the Chinese they revisited Buddhism and Confucianism; from the French they learned how to centralize the education system; and from the Americans and British they learned new teaching methods. No doubt thinking of his own work, Osias (ibid.) noted that the first Japanese school reader was translated from an American one.

Almost fifty years after his readers saw print, Osias remained committed to his original vision. In a 1967 speech entitled “Education: An Instrument of National Goals,” he looked back on his career as an educator, returning to familiar themes like internationalism, nationalism, and civic virtue. Speaking before fellow pedagogues at the Philippine Women’s University, he emphasized the inherent cosmopolitanism of Filipino culture, citing the various European, American, and Asian influences on Filipino identity. The Philippines, Osias (1967, 13) noted, was “one country that has received the impacts of the greatest cultural streams, the best streams of civilizations in the world.”¹¹

Osias's internationalism dovetailed with his Filipinism. Looking and building the Filipino identity from within, he thought, would naturally lead one to see the world outside. No work better encapsulated this overarching worldview than the 1940 tome *The Filipino Way of Life: The Pluralized Philosophy*. Consistent with the logic of Filipinism, the work sought "to formulate a philosophy and adopt a way of life that serves as a guide to the citizen and the nation—a philosophy that gives cohesion to individual and collective endeavor and makes life purposeful and meaningful" (Osias 1940, x).

Although it was a broad philosophical treatise, Osias wrote the work primarily for Filipino teachers in training. In the sense that he saw his philosophical musings as inherently tied to a system of pedagogy, Osias harkened back to a Filipino intellectual tradition shared with Rizal and folklorist Isabelo de los Reyes.¹² Like these earlier thinkers, he connected the modernity of the nation with the modernity of a progressive education system. "The function of education," he explained, "lies close to all the springs of human action—springs which have a very direct relation to individual and national life and progress" (ibid., xii).

Osias, however, did not only harken to the education ideals of Rizal and De los Reyes concerning national modernity and education. In fusing a pedagogical manual with a philosophical treatise, he also articulated the Deweyan view of pedagogy as philosophy in practice. Dewey thought that one should teach philosophy "via pedagogy" (quoted in Menand 2001, 319) because "The school is the one form of social life which is abstracted & under control—which is directly experimental" (ibid., 320). Thus, "if philosophy is ever to be an experimental science, the construction of a school is its starting point" (ibid.). As a Deweyan, Osias shared the view that a philosophy book and an educational manual were one and the same.

Osias's work brought nineteenth-century Philippine nationalism in conversation with twentieth-century American thought. Despite having resonances with the work of earlier Filipino intellectuals, *The Filipino Way of Life* evidences a generational departure. It is a lucid, urbane, and worldly text. But it is also a distinctly Americanized text. Osias's work represented a shift from the works of older Spanish-trained intellectuals—its sparse, transparent, and structured English prose serving as a contrast to the florid and unstructured Castilian of someone like fellow Ilocano De los Reyes. Like Salvador P. Lopez's (another Ilocano) acclaimed collection of essays *Literature and Society* (1941), *The Filipino Way of Life* is not only a

testament to Osias's mastery of American English but also his command of the American essay's stylistic conventions.

Although less touted than Lopez's work, *The Filipino Way of Life* received a rapturous review from *Pacific Affairs*, then the official journal of the elite Wilsonian think-tank, The Institute of Pacific Relations. Although the review is an endorsement from the American policy elite, the journal's Wilsonian outlook highlighted that Osias's work was most resonant with the liberal, anti-imperialist segment of American foreign policy thinkers. Comparing Osias to Rizal and Kalaw, the reviewer Warren D. Smith (1940, 494) proclaimed that Osias was "a distinguished representative of the Malay, or Brown subdivision of the Mongolian race." Smith (ibid., 495) correctly identified the liberal democratic ethos informing the book, extolling Osias's aversion toward "the greatest curse of our time, Chauvinistic Nationalism." Crucially the review also noted how Osias had been "profoundly influenced by such American philosophers and educators as William James and John Dewey" (ibid.).

The book's debt to Dewey, James, and American pragmatic philosophy in general was not explicitly foregrounded, but a reader like Smith would have noted how it suffused various elements of the text. Consider the theme of "dynamic Filipinism" that, Coloma (2004, 104) correctly notes, "formed the foundation of Osias's educational and political praxis." Despite acknowledging the centrality of dynamic Filipinism in Osias's thought, Coloma fails to locate the concept within the intellectual traditions with which Osias was in dialogue. We have already noted the specific meaning of the term "Filipinism" in early-twentieth-century Philippines as the dominant form of elite nationalist canon-formation. The addition of the word "dynamic," however, introduced a pragmatist twist to the concept.

At the turn of the century (roughly the time Osias studied under Dewey), Dewey's main concern was the creation of dynamic school curricula that would complement the dynamic nature of the child (Burnett 1980, vi). In particular, Dewey (1980, 10) sought to teach the subject of history as "moving, dynamic . . . not as an accumulation of effects . . . but as a forceful, acting thing." Realizing this complexity, the student would be able to regard the reason in "fluid terms," adjusting his or her ethical and material aims to "the needs of the situation" (ibid., 105). This approach to history represented the core pragmatist principle of ethics as experimental and provisional. Prior to Foucault and French poststructuralism, Dewey and

other pragmatists had already argued that history neither establishes stable norms nor identities, but serves as a vast canvass for contingent ethical and political experiments. “The price of temporalization” for Dewey, as Richard Rorty (1997, 23) explains, “is contingency.” This contingency demands the jettisoning of a priori principles in favor of plural ideas negotiated through democratic practice.¹³

Taken from this perspective, “dynamic Filipinism” was a pragmatist’s attempt to forge a fluid, contingent, deliberative, and inclusive national identity. This pragmatism allowed Osias to collapse various binaries like past/present and inside/outside. In the nationalist cosmology of *The Filipino Way of Life*, various pasts informed a present-in-the-making, and the inside of a nation was so intertwined with the outside such as to blur the difference.

Osias’s philosophy was an examination of the progression from narrow individualism to a broad, cosmopolitan ethics. He saw human progress as an expansion or pluralization of one’s ethical community, an “upward movement” from individual concerns to the recognition of the politics of “Tayo” (“we” or *datayo* in Osias’s native Ilocano) (Osias 1940, 7).¹⁴ For Filipinos the sense of *tayo* begins with the family, where individuals first experience an externally oriented ethics. From the family, one’s ethical sense should then expand to the nation and eventually to the world. Within this continuum, nationalism is a necessary “stepping stone to the development of internationalism” (ibid., 58). “If we avail ourselves of the pluralizing process,” Osias (ibid., 38) added, “internationalism will become a logical and natural evolution of the nationalistic idea expressive of a broad concept, as broad as humanity itself.” By the time he wrote *The Filipino Way of Life* he had been articulating this view for almost two decades.

In the speech delivered upon assuming the presidency of the National University, Osias (1974, 154) explained that the “age of internationalism” was a period where the world was “groping anxiously for a freer, happier, and more efficient existence.” After the Great War, the world was “war weary,” necessitating the recognition of cosmopolitan values and “international ethics.” In noting this condition Osias once again mirrored the discourse of Deweyan progressive educators who were influencing educational policy across the globe. After the war, Goodenow (1983, 44) explains, progressive educators under Dewey’s influence sought to educate youth to build a world free of prejudices that had led to the violence of the war. In *The Filipino*

Way of Life Osias revisited the link between peace and internationalism by speculating on new global systems of governance that would create international solidarity. He articulated these views after the Great War and repeated them amid the violent rise of the Third Reich. As such there was both optimism and urgency in his injunctions.

Although the idealistic dreams of Woodrow Wilson for an international order of states had receded amid the imminence of global catastrophe, an intellectual like Osias clung to the hope of future renewal through internationalism. He explained:

When it is recalled that Voltaire dreamed of a “European Diet,” that Kant advocated a “United States of Europe,” that Tennyson had a vision of the “Parliament of Man, the Federation of the World,” and that Wilson and other statesmen actually organized the “League of Nations,” there is room for optimism that the day is not far distant when Jesus’ idea of the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man will become real.

The pluralized philosophy seeks to broaden regional ideas among men and nations, and to secure a human order or a world system where individuality is conserved, where republicanism shall be the political form, and where democracy is the human way of life. When these shall have become universal, we may truly say that nations of the earth have at long last been pluralized. (Osias 1940, 269)

This perspective most clearly placed Osias within the Mazzinian/Wilsonian tradition and the broader ethics of late–nineteenth-century/early–twentieth-century cosmopolitanism. He had imbibed the hopes of a generation of Western internationalists. Consider, for instance, the similarities between Osias’s views and Bryan Turner’s (2004, 285) succinct summary of the modernist cosmopolitanism in this period: “In the past, writers like Giuseppe Mazzini argued that love of one’s own country was perfectly compatible with commitment to a commonwealth that embraced love of humanity. Indeed, a political education in the love of patria moved inevitably towards a commitment to *respublica*.” Turner proceeds to lament the ebbing of this discourse amid the ossification of inward-looking nationalisms. Osias would have agreed with Turner.

For Osias nationalist navel gazing was anathema to nation building—a view not uncommon among Filipino pedagogues of the time. Educators of the American period were no doubt enamored with American culture, but they were also worldly. They saw America’s influence as part of the broader syncretism of Philippine culture. Francisco Benitez (1927, 4)—president of the National Federation of Teachers in 1927 and Osias’s roommate at Columbia—argued that America contributed values such as “tolerance in religious and political matters” to an amalgam civilization. Far from lamenting the lack of an original Filipino identity, Benitez celebrated the nation’s mutability. In this respect, Benitez, like Osias, was also seeking a dynamic Filipinism with open-ended discursive horizons.

Educators slightly younger than Osias and Benitez held similar views. In 1949 Benigno Aldana (1949, 164), a former division superintendent of schools, phrased an Osias-inflected internationalism polemically:

Some indict the public schools with the denationalizing of the Filipino character. . . . But if this is interpreted to mean the exclusive teaching of things Philippine, then let the forum and the pulpit advocate denationalization. It would be healthy for the Filipino soul.

Nationalization does not mean the exclusion of the world’s masterpieces in literature and their replacement by cheap adaptations or cheaper local improvisations.

Aldana (ibid.) added that true nationalization should involve searching for “high-quality” Philippine literature and folklore, which could be taught alongside the “world’s great literary masterpieces.” This quote was, of course, a thinly veiled reference to Osias’s textbooks.

The educator who most closely mirrored Osias’s concerns was Florentino Cayco, one of Osias’s collaborators and his successor as president of the National University. Having obtained a Master’s in Education from Columbia in 1922 (making him a likely classmate of the Mexican Saenz), Cayco was even more explicit about his admiration for Dewey and the Teachers College. “Without a doubt,” recalls Cayco’s grandson Francisco (Cayco 2007, ix), “the influence of Columbia University’s Teachers College is evident in his thinking and philosophy.” “John Dewey,” as Cayco

(1938/2007, 77) himself noted, was “the most outstanding philosopher of contemporary civilization.”

Like Osias, Cayco (1940/2007, 155) was also wary of “chauvinistic nationalism” since it exaggerated “the value of the nation even at the expense of the happiness and progress of the people.” Cayco, however, transcended Osias’s critique of nationalism and presented it in strictly functional terms, warning against nationalism becoming “an end in itself.” “Circumscribed within proper limits,” he argued, “it could be made to function as a driving force for the attainment of democratic habits—sincerity instead of hatred, tolerance instead of bigotry, peace instead of war”(ibid.).¹⁵

The debates about de/nationalization occurred in an intellectual context shaped by Camilo Osias and other “progressive” educators of the time. Although Constantino (1966, 38; 1970, 28; 2000, 436) did not refer to Osias and his cohorts directly, probably he had Osias in mind when he argued against the education system’s emphasis on internationalism. Internationalism for Constantino was a veiled form of colonialism. He claimed that American education, secure in its sense of nation, “stresses internationalism and underplays nationalism.” Thus, “[t]he emphasis on world brotherhood” and “friendship for other nations,” bereft of a “firm foundation of nationalism,” would result in Filipinos becoming “the willing dupes of predatory foreigners” (ibid.). As we have seen, however, reducing pluralist internationalism to Americanism was a polemical simplification. The world of Camilo Osias and his peers was larger.

The Philippine Readers

Having traced consistent themes in Osias’s pedagogical thinking, we may now focus on what many consider to be his most significant contribution to Philippine education: the seven-volume *The Philippine Readers*, which served as basic reading materials for generations of Filipinos during and immediately after the American occupation.

The Boston-based Ginn and Co. published the first three volumes (for grades 5, 6, and 7) of the readers in 1919. In 1922 it released Books 2 and 3, while Book 4 was published two years later. A final volume for the first grade saw print in 1927. The Osias Readers, as they came to be called, were consistently reprinted until 1959.¹⁶ Filipino schoolteachers initially used the intermediate readers as supplementary materials, but the readers became

prescribed textbooks when six volumes became available in 1924. Naturally the textbooks sold well; the colonial government of the Philippine Islands ordered so many copies that the readers accounted for 34 percent of Ginn's foreign sales and 85 percent of sales in the Philippines (Totanes 2012, 103). Parayno (1997, 19) notes that, during the American period, "No Filipino child went through seven years of elementary education without having read the series from Grade 1 to Grade 7." There is, as yet, scant research on when and why the readers went out of print, but I surmise that the books died of natural causes amid the nationalization of textbook publishing that occurred from the 1950s onward (cf. Buhain 1998, 77).¹⁷

Given their colonial provenance, it is easy to dismiss the relevance of these textbooks. Constantino (1975, 314) himself sympathetically recalled how the anti-American Sakdal revolutionaries of the 1930s had condemned the readers for their "glorification of American culture."¹⁸ Some years ago writer and poet Reinerio Alba (2003) celebrated the readers for being "the first textbooks authored by a Filipino," but dismissed their content as "having hardly any relevance to the lives of young readers at the time."

Alba's assessment, reflecting the broader nationalist focus on neocolonialism, fails to define relevance and merely assumes that foreign content cannot be made to dialogue with local realities. The dismissive tone, moreover, shows how quickly nationalist thinking glosses over the nuances of a text. However, as Isabel Martin (2004, 130) explains, the readers were crucial to the development of a Filipino writing tradition in English because they allowed for the broadening and Filipinizing of the literary canon in the Philippines, opening the door for Filipino writers in English.

Debates about nationalist relevance notwithstanding, the readers were superb books. Writing about his education in the 1920s, pioneering sociolinguist Bonifacio P. Sibayan (1991, 290) recalled:

The Philippine Readers became a classic and were known by generations of Filipinos as Osias Readers. I have since been convinced that one reason the Osias Readers became a classic was the fact that the stories were so interesting that we read them over and over again. This cannot be said of the contents (based on so-called 'word counts') of most readers that replaced them.

Unencumbered by the nativist demand to Filipinize everything and to be critical of Western sources, Osias introduced the student to classics from across the globe along with local material (figs. 2 and 3). In volume 4, Osias (1922) juxtaposed various Filipino folktales (presumably adapted by Osias himself) with selections from sources as vast as Greek mythology, the Arabian Nights, the Bible, Rabindranath Tagore, and Benjamin Franklin. Osias explained the logic of his selections in the introduction to the volume, claiming to have met the demand to nationalize education through "the inclusion of native folktales" and biographies of Filipino patriots. However, he eschewed content that made for "race feeling, petty sectionalism, or narrow nationalism," adding "This is an age of internationalism, and it will not do to deny our future citizens the privilege of adjusting themselves to modern conditions. Hence much of the book is devoted to folktales and legends of people the world over, biographies of heroes of other lands, and poems and selections that inculcate ethical lessons" (ibid., v).

We have already noted the context wherein Osias used the term "age of internationalism" to signal a departure from the jingoism that led to the First World War. The trauma of the war, however, did not lead Osias to jettison nationalism. Instead, he sought to reconceive it as a bearer of international values. Looking within one's nation, one would find traces of other cultures, highlighting the inherent pluralism of national identities. More importantly, one could find in various nationalisms the seeds of a civic religion that would foster active citizenship. The key in this quest is comparison, as comparison establishes a basis for nationalist imagination (Anderson 1998, 2).

Simply because of their eclecticism, all seven volumes are comparative. It is, however, in the seventh reader that Osias explicitly challenges students to synthesize their learning through the active comparison of national traditions. The main theme of Book 7 is heroism, and in his introduction Osias (1932c, iii) tells pupils that they "will learn of great characters of all times and countries, and our own heroes." The book's narratives of heroism are based on historical and mythological tales from across the globe, which Osias uses to tease out universal civic virtues.

In one chapter Osias creatively makes students read a folktale from the Muslim trading archipelago of Sulu together with the Greek story of Theseus and the Minotaur (ibid., 315). Since both stories are about self-sacrifice for the peace of one's community, Osias uses them as tools to reflect

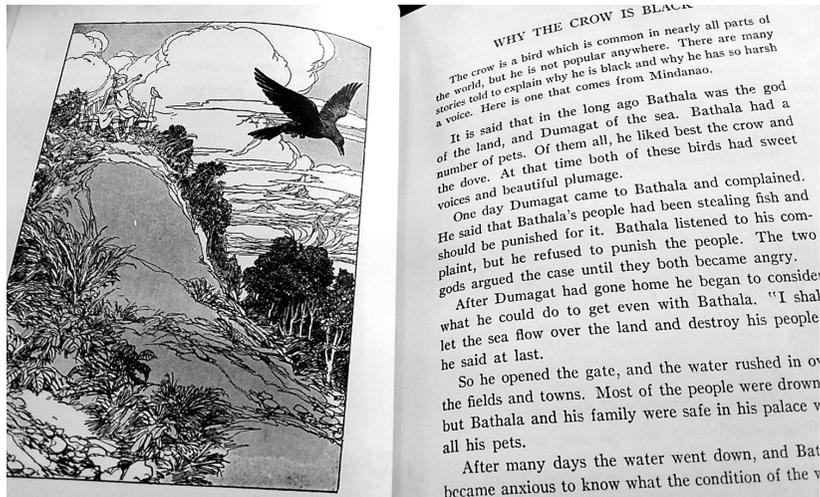


Fig. 2. Illustration for "Why the Crow is Black," labeled as a Filipino folktale from Mindanao, Book 6
Source: Osias 1932b, viii-1

on the relationship between sacrifice and patriotism, asking the reader to compare the dedication of a datu from Mindanao with that of a Greek king. In another fascinating chapter Osias asks pupils to read a Swedish patriotic hymn (earlier readers had already introduced snippets of Swedish history) alongside the Philippine Hymn (the eventual national anthem). In the guide questions that follow, he asks the simple question: "How is this Swedish patriotic hymn like your own Philippine Hymn?" (ibid., 314).

The answer to the question is no doubt obvious and superficial; both hymns celebrate the nobility of protecting one's homeland. In the other chapters Osias makes clichéd arguments about the universality of the bravery of Filipino heroes like Bonifacio, Rizal, and Mabini (this was, after all, still a textbook for basic education). But in comparing multiple versions of dedication to one's community, Osias is able to construct nationalism as both specific and universal, inward in its affect but outward in its ethics. Within the mental tapestry of the nation lies the seed of the international.

This thinking, in effect, is the same doctrine of pluralization found in *The Filipino Way of Life*. Love of country, once pluralized, leads us to see others who have loved their own countries. And upon seeing the universal ethic embedded in loving our particular nation, we move toward greater questions of citizenship and democracy. Because of this ethic Rizal, Bonifacio, and Mabini transcend their roles as heroes of the Philippines.

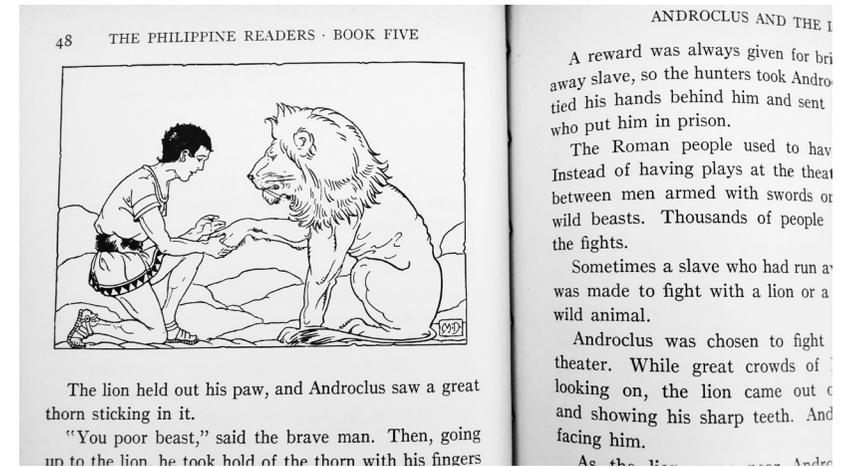


Fig. 3. Illustration for "Androclus and the Lion," Book 5
Source: Osias 1932a, 48

They instead become exemplars for all who seek models for the cosmopolitan value of loving one's community.

Osias's emphasis on folktales from various regions of the country also reveals that, as much as he wished to pluralize the nation through internationalism, he also wished to do so through a broader conception of its internal boundaries. By calling a folktale from Sulu "our own," Osias was imagining Muslim Mindanao as essential to the constitution of an "us," a move that once again distinguishes him from Constantino's generation of historians, who had written out Moro narratives from national history (cf. Abinales 2014b).

The nation that emerges is plural, both in what it sees outside its borders but also within. The readers, then, concretize for classroom usage Osias's philosophy of datayo. Understood within the pragmatist vision of pedagogy as philosophy in practice, the volumes become the incarnation of Osias's thought—test cases in nationalist canon-formation. That multiple pedagogues in various classrooms in the country used them ensured that Osias's experiments would be replicated in various laboratories.

Conclusion

Contemporary educational debates in the Philippines pit domestic nationalism against external forces such as globalization or regionalization.

Fearing for their “own” culture, nationalists once again insist on the “nationalization” of educational content, particularly via the mandatory teaching of courses in Filipino (namely Tagalog) language and culture. These debates have surfaced once again the legacy of Constantino and his generation of nationalists, with their attendant needs to purge the nation of external sources of miseducation (cf., e.g., San Juan 2014; Contreras 2014; Marasigan 2014). Except for rare exceptions that celebrate the inherent globality of Philippine culture (Abinales 2014a), none of the commentary mirrors the open and cosmopolitan politics of thinkers like Osias, Benitez, and Cayco. Indeed these names are rarely invoked. Like their contemporaries in Latin America (Goodenow 1990, 32), Deweyan Filipino educators have become easy targets for leftwing “anti-imperialists.” Perhaps the appellation of “miseducators” has stuck, and the contemporary nationalist either forgets Osias and his cohorts or tiptoes around their legacy.

This article has sought to contextualize the legacy of early–twentieth-century pedagogy as a way to partially rehabilitate it. I say partially because any form of internationalism has to contend with a contemporary global order that uses “globality” to enforce forms of political and economic domination, thus necessitating the scaling back of many “international” institutions (Bello 2006). No doubt the Philippines remains prey to foreign power and influence and is enmeshed in the dynamics of postcoloniality. And no doubt Constantino was correct to warn against neoimperialism’s capacity to coopt internationalism. That internationalism can be coopted, however, is no argument against foregrounding it in national debates. If anything, the threat of cooptation forces us to constantly rethink internationalism, doing so through a flexible dynamism reminiscent of twentieth-century pragmatism. How does a country like the Philippines challenge forms of neoimperialism without closing itself off from the world?

The answer entails transcending the pro-American/anti-American demonology that has informed not just Philippine nationalist historiography, but, ironically, Filipino-American ethnic studies also. Despite their claims of advocating “in-betweenness,” scholars like Coloma and Schueller glorify forms of anticolonialism similar to Constantino’s, while neglecting the potency of participation, emulation, and recreation. Playing a Foucauldian game of “spot the resistance” on a postcolonial text may stir the diasporic multiculturalist’s heart, but it enfeebles the domestic political actor’s hands.

The Philippines is not merely grappling with postcoloniality; it is also engaged in the process of debating forms of democratic governance, a process that requires perspectival and provisional ethics. The horizons of this project are open-ended, and what a people collectively discover must be subject to validation and testing. This process of verification will yield varying results, surfacing new questions and unsettling held beliefs. It may be challenging to those who find comfort in nationalist givens. But countries thrive on what its citizens affirm, jettison, and discover. For the nation, endlessly mutable, is an ongoing experiment.

Notes

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The journal office would like to thank Dhea Santos, librarian of the American Historical Collection at the Rizal Library, Ateneo de Manila University, for kind assistance in photographing copies of The Philippine Readers.

- 1 This article is part of a broader project that examines what this strain of nationalism (what I provisionally label “The Diliman Consensus”) occludes. In an earlier piece (Claudio 2013) I examine how thinking within the Diliman Consensus glorifies the “national,” while condemning the “foreign” at the expense of exonerating the local elite. In another article (Claudio 2015) I look at how simple anti-Western critiques of colonialism allow for an irresponsible neglect of totalitarian Communism’s violence. The historical context in which the Diliman Consensus emerged (the mainstreaming of Third Worldism and anticolonial Marxism) is discussed more closely in the above articles.
- 2 The two basic sources on Osias’s biography are his memoirs (Osias 1971) and a sycophantic biography (typical of the biographies of elite politicians) by Bananal (1974).
- 3 Except for Mojares, no scholar has systematically discussed Filipinism.
- 4 It should be noted that Scott’s (1990) notion of hidden transcripts was conceived in the context of subordinated and silenced groups like peasants, prisoners, and slaves. An elite intellectual like Osias, who rose within the colonial bureaucracy, was hardly rendered inarticulate by the colonial experience. In fact, it was the very engagement with the power of colonialism that gave Osias a voice.
- 5 Another reservation with critiques of empire by Western scholars (and their “Third World” allies such as Constantino) is their tendency to view colonialism as merely suppressing a local culture. However, as Pascal Bruckner (1986, 28) notes, “What was quickly forgotten was that the respect for cultural differences had long been a colonialist argument in favor of a policy toward the natives, as Durkheim argued, or for indirect administration that gave much leeway to

local practices. . . . Also quickly forgotten was that the right of people to cultural diversity had been demanded not only by anti-colonialists in their exhortations to Europe to withdraw, but also by the colonialists themselves to justify a policy of nonassimilation.”

- 6 Thus, domestic phenomena, instead of being understood on their own terms, become allegories for the multicultural struggles of ethnic minorities in America.
- 7 It is once again Mojares’s work that exposes the provincialism of a narrow focus on American empire. Mojares (2006, 495–505) explores the cosmopolitan grounding of turn-of-the-century Filipino intellectuals, who deftly navigated intellectual trends in Europe and America, while integrating local knowledge about various regions in the Philippines.
- 8 This fraught attempt at canon-formation was evident very early on in the development of a Philippine literary tradition in English (see Martin 2004). Thus the Philippine experience, with English-language education cannot be compared, for instance, to the Indian experience which was less about domestic canon-formation than about the demands of imperial governance (see Viswanathan 1989).
- 9 See Menand 2001 for a readable and entertaining intellectual history of pragmatism. See Ryan (1995, 133–53) for an outline of Dewey’s main work while teaching in Columbia.
- 10 Apart from Osias, two other notable Filipino educators attended Columbia. Osias’s classmate, Francisco Benitez finished his undergraduate studies there in 1910 and his MA in 1914 (see Manalang 1951, 81, for an account of Benitez’s early education). Florentino Cayco—founder of Arellano University—obtained an MA in 1922. In the late 1920s all three educators were frequent contributors to the *Philippine Journal of Education*, which Benitez edited from 1921 until his death in 1951. Two further lines of inquiry (which are outside the ambit of this article) may be pursued in this regard. First, research in the archives of Columbia University could be conducted to trace the connections between Filipino educators and others from the global south. Second, it may be interesting for other intellectual historians to write about the history of the *Philippine Journal of Education*. I may pursue these topics myself in the future.
- 11 This talk was given at around the time Constantino was criticizing Osias’s generation of thinkers. Apart from a new emphasis on economic independence—Osias (1967, 6–7) called it “economic democracy”—there is no evidence that Osias felt the need to allude to or refute Constantino. The new emphasis on economic independence could have been a reaction to Constantino’s and his cohort’s arguments concerning neoimperialism’s effects on the domestic economy. My suspicion, however, is that Osias had merely absorbed the broader emphasis on economic planning and import substitution that emerged from the 1950s onward. It is worth noting that Osias was a contributor to the *Philippine Economy Review* in the 1950s, sharing its pages with prominent advocates of import substitution such as Central Bank Governor Miguel Cuaderno.
- 12 Although they are intellectually from different generations, De los Reyes and Osias knew each other as they both served in the Philippine Senate in the 1920s. Osias’s love for folklore, evidenced in the *Philippine Readers*, also dovetails with De los Reyes’s thinking, as the former began his career as a folklorist.
- 13 Menand (2001, 431–32) has traced this tendency in pragmatism to the probabilistic bent of late-nineteenth-century statistical theory. Provided a larger sample size, one could grasp a more accurate mean. “Truth,” then, was also a matter of what pattern emerged based on trial and error.

- 14 In this regard, Osias’s philosophy predates Zeus Salazar’s Pantayong Pananaw school of indigenous historiography—a perspective also anchored on the concept of “tayo.” Like Osias, Salazar contrasts “kami” (an exclusive us) to “tayo” (an inclusive us). The telos of “tayo” for Salazar (1998, 92), however, is the “holy task (*banal na gawain*)” of nation-formation. Taken from Osias’s perspective, however, Salazar’s “tayo” becomes another form of “kami,” as nation-formation is only an intermediate step toward an internationalist ethics.
- 15 Cayco’s position mirrors contemporary theories on nationalism that acknowledge its instrumental benefits for political activity, while seeking to contain its violent tendencies (cf. Hobsbawm 1992; Hechter 2000).
- 16 These publication dates were compiled from the copyright pages of multiple printings of the readers from four sources: The Ambeth Ocampo collection in Kyoto University’s Center for Southeast Asian Studies, the Philippine National Library, the Library of Congress, and the Mario Feir collection.
- 17 As this article is mostly focused on intellectual trends in Philippine education, I have only introduced this very partial book history of *The Philippine Readers*. Future research, however, may wish to look at the policy decisions surrounding the books and how these affected their publication and production. Despite their relevance, there has not been a book history of *The Philippine Readers*.
- 18 See Terami-Wada 2014 for the latest scholarship on the Sakdal movement.

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