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Summary and Keywords

The origins of the Philippine nation-state can be traced to the overlapping histories of three empires that swept onto its shores: the Spanish, the North American, and the Japanese. This history makes the Philippines a kind of imperial artifact. Like all nation-states, it is an ineluctable part of a global order governed by a set of shifting power relationships. Such shifts have included not just regime change but also social revolution. The modernity of the modern Philippines is precisely the effect of the contradictory dynamic of imperialism. The Spanish, the North American, and the Japanese colonial regimes, as well as their postcolonial heir, the Republic, have sought to establish power over social life, yet found themselves undermined and overcome by the new kinds of lives they had spawned. It is precisely this dialectical movement of empires that we find starkly illuminated in the history of the Philippines.

Keywords: Philippines, colonialism, empire, Spain, United States, Japan

The origins of the modern Philippine nation-state can be traced to the overlapping histories of three empires: Spain, the United States, and Japan. This background makes the Philippines a kind of imperial artifact. Like all nation-states, it is an ineluctable part of a global order governed by a set of shifting power relationships. Such shifts have included not just regime change but also social revolution. The modernity of the modern Philippines is precisely the effect of the contradictory dynamic of imperialism. The Spanish, the North American, and the Japanese colonial regimes, as well as their postcolonial heir, the Republic, have sought to establish power over social life, yet found themselves undermined and overcome by the new kinds of lives they had spawned. It is precisely this dialectical movement of empires that we find starkly illuminated in the history of the Philippines.

To begin with, there is the name itself. The "Philippines," or what used to be known as "*las islas Filipinas*," comes from Felipe II, the heir apparent to the Habsburg throne given by one of the Spanish explorers just before they occupied the archipelago in 1565. Prior to the Spanish conquest, there was no such thing as the "Philippines." Unlike many other

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parts of Southeast Asia, the islands were never a part of any great Asian empire, nor were they awash in any of the "great traditions" of Asia.

Thanks to an accident of geography, the archipelago was at the farthest margins of the spread of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism. Embedded in local languages are a few Indian lexical items while Chinese ceramics from the T'ang and the Sung dynasties, considered valuable prestige items, have been unearthed in every major archeological site, indicating ongoing trade with the surrounding regions. Islam came only in the mid-12th century, quite late for the region and the rest of the world, by way of Arab traders and Malay missionaries. Its spread was confined to the southern tip of the archipelago and left only faint marks among the animist peoples further north, especially around Manila. As a result, there were no large supralocal settlements, centralized states, or extensive monument complexes built by slaves and ruled by God-Kings to be found in the islands. In other words, before it became known as *las islas Filipinas*, the inhabitants of the islands were *free* from the vicissitudes of empire.

What did this freedom from empire consist of? Spanish accounts of native peoples at the point of contact in the middle of the 16th century are remarkably consistent in giving us a sense of the common features of precolonial society. We can draw the following composite.¹

Precolonial Social Structure

Native societies were organized into relatively autonomous villages ruled by a chief, called a *datu*, his family, and his group of loyal warriors, called *maharlika* and *timaua* (literally freed men), respectively. They were, in turn, supported by their slaves, most of whom were debt bondsmen rather than chattel. It was not uncommon for slaves to be related to their masters, and their enslavement was differentiated into fine gradations of dependency based on their proximity to their masters' houses, the conditions of their captivity, the nature and frequency of their service, and so forth. It was highly possible for slaves to intermarry with masters and their offspring eventually to be manumitted, just as it was highly likely that slaves could accumulate enough resources to buy their own freedom and even have their own slaves (who, in turn, could have their own slaves, and so on).

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Figure 1. Precolonial elites.

Source: George Bryan Souza and Jeffrey Scott Turley, eds. and trans., *The Boxer Codex*: *Transcription and Translation of an Illustrated Late Sixteenth-Century Spanish Manuscript Concerning the Geography, History, and Ethnography of the Pacific, South-east Asia and East Asia*. Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2016.

Precolonial social hierarchy was at best tenuous and shifting, since nothing and no one outside the village guaranteed the power of the chief and his family. This meant that the chief could hang onto his position of power only if he could respond to the demands and withstand the challenges of those below him. His popularity, hence, was the basis of his power. How did he secure his popularity? By providing for his village in three interrelated ways: organizing trade relations (which entailed divisions of labor that would allow for the extraction of local goods to be exchanged with foreign merchants and other local groups); leading raiding expeditions (which entailed military skill to capture goods and slaves from other communities); and holding ritual feasts (which allowed for the redistribution of the wealth). Trading, raiding, and feasting were held together by ritual knowledge at each and every step of the way, and the charismatic chief had to be adept in all phases of the material and ritual process. Failure could lead to the *datu* being challenged and replaced by other men of prowess.

The coming of the Spaniards dramatically transformed much of precolonial societies. Spanish conquest was relatively swift in the lowland areas but slow and never quite completed in the upland and in the predominantly Islamicized southern areas. Spanish hegemony thus remained a work in progress through 350 years. Indeed, Spanish colonization had the effect of strengthening the ranks of Muslim rulers in the southern areas of Sulu and Maguindanao. Islam was introduced by Arab and Malay traders to the southern areas of the archipelago in the 14th century. Its influence had begun to spread northward toward Manila but was contained by the arrival of the Spaniards. Seeking to resist Spanish

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incursions that threatened their way of life, Muslim rulers, now styled as sultans and rajahs, mobilized their local following, raiding Christianized settlements for slaves up and down the archipelago. By the 18th century, the sultans of Sulu succeeded in establishing vast trading and raiding networks throughout the Sulu Sea that came to be known as the Sulu Zone. Capitalizing on the interimperial antagonisms and commercial opportunities brought by the growing presence of the Dutch, Spanish, and the British, the Moros of Sulu and Maguindanao managed to accumulate ever-growing numbers of slaves with which to fend off the pressures of Spanish forces. Despite repeated Spanish assaults, the Moro peoples remained unconquered.²

However, in areas that were effectively colonized by Spain, profound changes accrued over time. $^{\rm 3}$

To grasp the magnitude of the changes wrought by Spain in the archipelago, it is useful to compare the island colony with those in the Americas. First is the relative lateness of the colonization of the Philippines, coming some two generations after the subjugation of Mexico and exactly the same year as the Spanish settlement of St. Augustine, Florida. Second, unlike the Americas, no demographic disasters accompanied the conquest of the islands. Native peoples in the Philippines had been sufficiently exposed and immunized to the various diseases that Europeans brought with them due to centuries of ongoing trade with the regions around them. Third, in contrast to the Americas, las islas Filipinas did not possess large reserves of gold and silver, nor did it become sites for large plantations until much later in the 19th century. From an economic standpoint, the islands did not offer quick riches, requiring instead yearly subsidies from the Mexican treasury. Fourth, the absence of large reserves of precious metals combined with its great distance from Spain discouraged Spaniards from migrating to this Asian colony. Indeed, at the end of 350 years of Spanish rule, less than 1 percent of the population was from the peninsula. Unlike the Americas where European settlers became the majority, in the Philippines, they made up the smallest of minorities. Far from being a settler colony, the Philippines was always an imperial outpost. Indeed, the most visible and enduring Spanish presence came in the way of the missionary priests who would exercise, as we shall see, a vast and profound influence among the people and the state.

Finally, a fifth distinction between the Philippines and the Americas was the absence of African slavery in the islands. Aside from the distance and expense of transporting Africans across the Pacific Ocean, there was really no need for them in the colony. Instead, a surplus of native labor was coerced to work for the colonial state and the Catholic Church. Indeed, the policy of forced labor was at the cornerstone of the Spanish regime. Men between the ages of 16 and 60 were required to render at least forty days of the year to work as haulers of logs and builders of ships, churches, roads, and government buildings. Native men were pressed to serve in the colonial militias and as servants to officials and priests. Only those who were members of the local elite—the former chiefs and their families—were exempt. But in exchange for this exemption, they were required to collect taxes and gather corvee labor. They were also expected to make up for any shortages. Thus did forced labor create not only a system of labor provision for the gov-

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ernment, but it also ensured the collaboration and acquiescence of the most influential members of native societies.

The question of forced labor, however, leads us to ask the following: how did a very small number of Spaniards manage to hold onto a far-flung archipelago thousands of miles from the metropole? Why weren't they simply overthrown and sent packing back across the Pacific? The answer to this question lies in the other side of conquest: conversion. Drawing from the tradition of the *Reconquista* or the Spanish Crusades from the 13th century, the Spanish king and his representatives sought not only to subjugate the bodies of native peoples. They also insisted on subsuming their souls. The Spaniards always regarded conquest as a double process. The cross was an essential companion of the sword, and the king acted as the patron of the Church in securing the conversion of native peoples to Catholicism. That the colonization of the Philippines was occurring simultaneously with the religious wars in Europe made Catholic conversion even more imperative to counter the putative dangers of Protestantism.

Spanish Rule

Given the conjunction of conquest and conversion, it comes as no surprise that Spanish missionaries would come to act as the most important agents of colonial rule. As in the Americas, they conducted systematic studies of native cultures and languages in order to preach in the native tongues. They designed and directed the building of churches and then rebuilt them after they burned down or were leveled by typhoons, earthquakes, and wars. Through their work of evangelization, they established the basis of a colonial public sphere around the periodic observance of rituals and feast days. Monopolizing the technological means of representation, missionaries published the first books, restricted the circulation of nonreligious publications, and governed the content and practice of primary and higher education. They also dominated colonial politics, protesting the abuses of Spanish officials while supervising local elections to protect against heretics and subversives. In baptizing, marrying, and burying the inhabitants of their parishes, missionaries came to know the most intimate details of their parishioners' lives. Through hearing confessions and dispensing penance, for example, priests came to better control the behavior of converts, policing their thoughts and acts, all in the name of ensuring their salvation. In this way, the missionary came to wield a power out of proportion to his religious and social functions. As one observer put it, one Spanish friar was worth more than 300 Spanish soldiers.

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Figure 2. Frontispiece of Padre Gaspar de San Agustin, *Conquistas de las islas Filipinas, 1565-1615,* Manila: San Agustin Museum, 1998.

Aside from Spanish friars, there was another group that made it possible for the Spaniards to hold onto the islands: the Chinese, or more precisely, non-Han southern Chinese traders from southern provinces like Fukien, Amoy, and Canton. As merchants, they occupied the lowest of social status in the Chinese empire and had long traded with the peoples of Southeast Asia. Spanish colonization brought new opportunities, as the Spaniards required trades and services that native peoples were as yet unable to perform such as carpentry, masonry, printing, and the like. Even more important, Chinese traders served as middlemen, procuring highly coveted Asian goods for American and European markets in exchange for Mexican silver. This trade came to be known as the Manila-Acapulco galleon trade. Large ships were constructed out of Philippine hardwood cut, hauled, constructed, and finally rowed by native labor. Spaniards thus profited from the conjuncture of Chinese merchants and native labor to deliver Asian products from Manila to Acapulco, then overland to Vera Cruz and finally across the Atlantic to Seville and the markets of Europe. Mexican silver circulated widely in Asia, hastening the monetization of market exchanges. Thus, Spanish colonization set the conditions for the integration of the islands into the global capitalist marketplace. This process of capitalist integration intensified in the coming centuries. Spanish policies changed in the 1830s to allow for the entrance of other European merchants into the Philippines. Providing capital and technology for the cultivation and delivery of valuable commodities such as tobacco, abacca, coffee, and sugar, European merchants worked in close association with Chinese merchants. The latter extended credit to farmers and delivered their products to the cities. Thanks to these developments, a veritable agricultural revolution took place between the 1820s and the 1850s.⁴

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This agricultural revolution touched every part of the colony and triggered a whole series of social changes. While it intensified the exploitation and poverty of peasant producers, it also generated enormous wealth for the Spanish colony. Modest fortunes accrued to provincial landowners who eventually came to constitute a new colonial middle class distinct from the old principales, or chiefs, of an earlier era. The new bourgeoisie was, for the most part, mixed race. They were the product of unions between Christianized native women and Chinese men. Spanish policy had had an explicitly racist bent, especially with regard to the Chinese. Seen as threats, the Spaniards demanded that the Chinese convert to Catholicism if they were to stay in the country. To facilitate this conversion, Chinese men (since Chinese women were rarely ever present in the islands) were encouraged to marry native women who, it was presumed, would help maintain their mates within a Christian ambit. The offspring of these marriages were called Chinese mestizos. Benefitting from the business acumen of their fathers while identifying with the Catholic faith and native cultures of their mothers, Chinese mestizos, became prominent in the colony. Almost all became educated, which, among other things, meant being literate in Spanish. Many went to universities in Manila and Europe and returned to the colony imbued with liberal ideals and anxious to assert their rights. In time, they began to challenge the social power and cultural influence of the Spanish friars who they regarded as reactionary forces blocking progress and modernity. Demanding equal recognition with Spaniards before the law, these highly educated and wealthy mestizo and indio bourgeoisie came to fashion the beginnings of a Filipino nationalist consciousness. As with the creole elites of the Americas, Filipinos felt entitled to, yet excluded from, the governing of the colony's affairs. As the first self-consciously Filipino inhabitants of the colony, they organized efforts to lobby for reforms, demand representation in the Spanish parliament, write novels, and publish newspapers protesting Spanish abuses.⁵



Figure 3. The editors of the nationalist paper, *La Solidaridad*, Madrid, 1890.

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Figure 4. Cover of Jose Rizal's novel with a scathing critique of colonial society, *Noli me tangere*, Berlin 1886.

Spanish authorities balked at any and all cries for reform. In the wake of the loss of their American empire in the 1820s, they saw any stirrings from colonial subjects as plots to overthrow the regime. Taking a hard line, they accused Filipino nationalists of subversion, imprisoning, exiling, and executing all those calling for change. Confronted with Spanish repression, Filipinos were radicalized and eventually began working for independence. By 1896, right in the midst of the Cuban revolution two oceans away, Filipino nationalists began to engage in exactly what the Spaniards feared the most: an armed overthrow of the colonial regime.⁶

The Philippine Revolution of 1896 was, of course, inconceivable without the Spanish colonization of the islands in 1565. The dramatic transformations wrought by the empire had, as it did in the Americas, given rise to conditions that would eventually lead to its overthrow. Perhaps such is the fate of all empires: that the very means for consolidating and prolonging their hold would also set forth the process of their own undoing. Unable to sustain a two-front war in Havana and Manila, the Spanish empire was on the verge of collapsing by 1898. It took the United States to deliver the final blow.

United States Invasion and Occupation

Two generations removed from the Civil War and barely a decade and a half after the last Indian Wars in the West, the United States declared war against Spain in April 1898 for ostensibly humanitarian reasons: to rescue suffering Cuban revolutionaries from the barbarism of their Hispanic oppressors. Interestingly enough, the first shot of that war occurred not in the Caribbean but in the South China Sea. On May 1, 1898, Commodore George Dewey's forces steamed into Manila Bay from a base in Hong Kong and promptly

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demolished the leaking wooden ships of the Spanish forces without suffering a single casualty. As he waited for ground reinforcements, Dewey let the Filipino revolutionaries, led by Emilio Aguinaldo, finish off the Spaniards. So successful were the Filipinos that they decided to proclaim independence in June of 1898 and were on the verge of capturing Manila in August of the same year. Meanwhile, the war in Cuba concluded swiftly. Puerto Rico offered no resistance and, in fact, welcomed the Americans, while Hawaii, whose monarchy had been overthrown five years earlier, was annexed by the white planter oligarchy.

The Philippines, however, was an entirely different matter. President William McKinley had declared the policy of the United States toward the Philippines to be one of "benevolent assimilation," seeking, he claimed, to Christianize and educate the Filipinos after centuries of captivity by Catholic Spain. War and occupation were thus meant to liberate, not subjugate the Filipinos. Taking on the white man's burden, Americans were to wait upon the needs and wants of their captives, described in Kipling's famous poem as "half devil and half-child." They were to teach them the arts of civilization to enable them to assume the responsibilities of self-government. Such a goal called for a long period of colonial apprenticeship and discipline that would require the United States to occupy the islands till such a time when they, and they alone, could decide when their Filipino wards were ready to rule themselves. Conceived as an open-ended tutelary relationship, the American colonization of the Philippines cast white Americans as innately superior yet exceptionally benevolent masters of a wild collection of tribes of dark, brown, and mixed raced people yet to be tamed and pacified into a people who recognized their place in the new imperial order.

Filipinos, of course, had other ideas. Having just overthrown one colonial master, they were not ready to suffer the pretentions of another one. Dug into trenches just outside of Manila, they waited to claim their final victory against Spain. The American troops, however, forced the Filipinos to vacate their positions and prevented them from taking the city. Earlier, the Spaniards and Americans had agreed to stage a "mock battle" of Manila to save Spanish face and keep Filipinos out of the city, thereby making it seem that the Spaniards lost to fellow whites, not to an accursed collection of natives and half-breeds. Furious at this deception, the Filipinos withdrew to a town north of Manila. There, they convened a constitutional convention, inaugurating the First Philippine Republic, organizing a congress that drew up laws and sent out ambassadors to secure international recognition of the new nation.

But such efforts proved futile. Unwilling to recognize the new Philippine Republic, US forces continued to harass Filipino troops and by February of 1899, a full-blown war erupted between the two. Confronted by the vastly superior fire power of the Americans, the Filipinos resorted to guerilla warfare. Rather than see it as a tactical necessity, the Americans saw the Filipino insurgency as further proof of their racial inferiority, referring to Filipino fighters as "injuns" and "niggers" for rising in defense of their country. The Filipino-American war, the first of many that Americans would fight in Asia, soon degenerated into a cruel war of extermination. American troops burned villages to deprive guerillas

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of support, herding inhabitants into concentration camps. They executed prisoners and any males suspected of being an insurgent as young as ten years old. They routinely engaged in torture, especially in the water cure, and as with all armies of occupation, raped, pillaged, and plundered their way across the archipelago. As many as 4,000 Americans were killed, mostly from disease and wounds, while over 250,000 Filipinos, or close to one-sixth of the population of the largest island, Luzon, perished during the war. Declared officially over in 1902, insurgencies intermittently erupted as late as the 1930s.⁷



Figure 5. Mass grave for Filipinos killed by US forces, *c*.1900. Wikimedia Commons.

It was precisely the war's viciousness and brutality that served as the immediate backdrop for American colonial policy. Anxious to depoliticize and demilitarize the issue of Filipino independence, Americans sought to encourage Filipino collaboration, widening Filipino participation in the colonial administration. This included extending colonial control to two areas where the Spaniards had chronically failed: the Moro areas of the south and the Cordillera mountains in the North. The United States reorganized these two areas into "special provinces" subject to military rather than civilian rule until 1913. Among the Muslims, the United States confronted periodic uprisings but managed to coopt their rulers by promising not to interfere in the practice of Islam and providing payments for the eventual manumission of slaves. By 1903, other Filipinos, especially former rebel commanders, were enticed into serve in municipal governments; by 1907, they began to participate in an all-Filipino colonial legislature and had limited rights to shape the budget; by 1916, a process of rapid "Filipinization" mandated the replacement of many Americans in the colonial civil service with qualified Filipinos; and by 1935, a Commonwealth was created with a Filipino chief executive and a new constitution to prepare the colony for independence within ten years.

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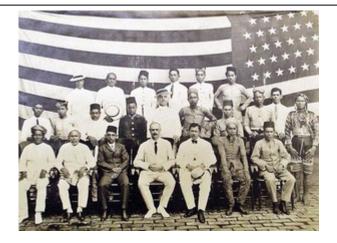


Figure 6. Governor General William Burton Harrison with local Moro leaders, Mindanao, *c*.1915. Wikime-dia Commons.

At the same time, colonial tutelage entailed establishing a far-flung network of public schools to democratize and secularize education. American English was designated as the medium of instruction to overcome and repress the staggering linguistic diversity of the archipelago. American soldiers were initially appointed as teachers in the midst of war, then by 1901 were replaced by an army of American schoolteachers, called "Thomasites" (named after the army transport ship they came on, the USS Thomas).



Figure 7. American school teacher Mary Cole in the Visayas, 1900. Wikimedia Commons.

By the 1920s, as with all other facets of the colonial state, public schools were rapidly Filipinized, as Filipino teachers now came to teach Filipino students under the watchful eye of an American director of public schools. Such efforts at colonial counterinsurgency was replicated in the areas of public health, prisons, and penal colonies, the colonial military, and higher education with the establishment of the nation's premier public university, the University of the Philippines, in 1908. Even the Catholic Church was subject to colonial reform. Irish-American archbishops replaced Spanish friars—the target of much Filipino nationalist ire—with other European clergy, such as Germans, French, and, of course, Irish. New private parochial schools were established while older Spanish Catholic schools

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were Americanized to mollify the conservative Catholic Filipinos uneasy about secular and coeducational public schools. Along with the University of the Philippines, these colonial parochial schools were to become the incubators of a new generation of Filipino elites whose descendants still rule the country today.

Colonial tutelage and pacification were, despite the pronouncements of benevolent assimilation, far from altruistic. The American colonization of the Philippines was part of a much larger, late nineteenth-century push to expand opportunities for American business while securing military bases and thus gaining a foothold on the China trade. Soon after the war, a series of military bases were set up in the sites of older Spanish installations. At the same time, Americans sought to generate profits by opening up the Philippines to free trade. By 1909, Philippine agricultural products were allowed duty-free entry into the vast US market. Free trade had the effect of enriching the landowning Filipino elite. But it also made the Philippine economy profoundly dependent on the United States, vulnerable to its many booms and busts. Additionally, it had the long-term effect of discouraging crop and market diversification and the development of manufacturing industries. And by generating the fortunes of Filipino elites, free trade provided them with the money to buy their way into the colonial government. The origins of Filipino political dynasties lie here. Landowner-politicians became heavily invested in the duty-free access of agricultural products to the American market and used the levers of the colonial state to sustain their economic power. Thus, American colonial democracy produced an undemocratic Filipino oligarchy.⁸

This free flow of agricultural products to the United States was paralleled by the rising tide of Filipino migrant labor into the United States, especially Hawaii, Alaska, and the West Coast. Filipinos began coming to the United States as early as 1901, initially recruited, as with colonial militias of other empires, to serve as stewards in the US Navy. By 1903, the United States also initiated a scholarship program that allowed a small number of the sons and daughters of local elites to study in America and return to occupy positions in the colonial bureaucracy. Additionally, till about 1909, non-Christian natives from the upland and Southern regions were regularly put on display in various world expositions from St. Louis to Portland to Seattle, barnstorming afterward with circus acts before returning to their villages. But starting in 1905 and increasingly by the 1920s, American agricultural producers began recruiting Filipino workers in response to acute labor shortages. It was a labor shortage that was in large part the result of a series of Asian exclusion laws that kept Chinese and Japanese workers from entering the United States. Since the Philippines were a US territory, Filipino workers were exempt from these racist labor bans. Traveling as American nationals, that is, as kind of second-class citizens, they could freely enter and leave the United States in search of work that they otherwise could not find at home. But once in the United States, migrant workers—overwhelmingly male, young, and single-confronted a growing white nativist backlash that intensified through the 1930s.

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Filipino Migrant Workers in the United States

Targeted for their dark skin and peripatetic ways, Filipino migrants were seen as dangerous threats to the integrity of white society. Denied decent housing, workers were forced to live in dilapidated camps and cramped apartments, mostly in Chinatown districts. Such living conditions were regarded by whites as the natural outcome of their cultural backwardness and moral depravity rather than the result of segregation. Filipinos were accused of being disease carriers poised to contaminate healthy white families with their smelly food and terrible hygiene. Worse, they were seen to be sexual predators given their predilection for white women. Due to the relative absence of Filipino women, Filipino men, after a week of backbreaking work, often frequented taxi hall dance clubs and met up with lower-class ethnic whites. The site of well-dressed brown men dancing with and escorting young white women triggered paroxysms of racial paranoia among whites. Accusing Filipino men of stealing their jobs and their women, American nativists launched both legal and extralegal campaigns to rid the country of these workers. They viewed the Filipino presence as nothing short of a "third Asiatic invasion" and the continuation of the Filipino-American war. In the eyes of white nativists, Filipinos used their charm to lure white women, with whom they would produce mixed race children. Fueled by eugenicist notions of the time, nativists feared that racial mixing would bring about a degenerate population, spelling the end of the white race as such. For whites, Filipinos were nothing less than an existential threat.



Figure 8. Filipinos with white women in local dance hall, Stockton, CA, 1930s. FANHS (Filipino American National Historical Society), Stockton.

Haunted by visions of a racial apocalypse, American nativists sought various measures to exclude Filipinos from the United States. They tried to pass antimiscegenation laws, with some success in California but not in Washington State. They made it illegal for Filipinos to purchase property, denied them marriage licenses, excluded them from public facilities, and so forth. Filipinos responded by fighting back in courts and going to states like Washington and New Mexico to get married. Whites, out of desperation, resorted to violent attacks such as bombing migrant camps, harassing and beating up Filipinos, rioting to close taxi dance halls, and so on. Unable to definitively segregate or expel Filipinos because of their legal status as American nationals, nativists, along with a coalition of white labor unions and agricultural producers from the South, lobbied Congress to give the Filipinos what they had always wanted: independence. As an independent and sovereign nation, Filipino citizens would lose their status as nationals. They would become aliens and as such be subject to the exclusionary provisions of the racist immigration law of 1924. In

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other words, by granting them their freedom, Americans would be free of the dangerous Filipinos. Such lobbying efforts came to a head in 1934 with the passage of the Tyding-McDuffie law. It established the Philippine Commonwealth as a transitional government, headed for the first time by a Filipino president, the Spanish mestizo Manuel L. Quezon, that would set the stage for a republic within a period of ten years. However, it also immediately put into effect tight restrictions on the entry of Filipinos into the United States, setting a maximum limit of fifty immigrants per year while encouraging the repatriation of Filipinos back to their country. The Philippine Independence Act thus amounted to yet another Asian exclusion law.⁹

True to its imperial vocation, Americans felt every right to occupy the Philippines, even as they sought to restrict the Filipinos' right to come to America. American power, however, came to a precipitous end on December 8, 1941 when the Japanese invaded the colony. The very same planes that had bombed Pearl Harbor swooped down on Manila on their return to destroy the meager defenses set up by the combined American and Filipino forces under the leadership of General Douglas MacArthur. By the spring of 1942, Bataan and Corregidor had fallen, and with them the last shreds of the US colonial regime. As they had in the Dutch East Indies and British Malaya, Japanese forces rounded up white residents and interned them at various camps, the biggest of which was the campus of the University of Santo Tomas. Unlike the Spaniards and the Americans before them, the Japanese Military Administration did not seek to convert their colonized subjects into another religion or assimilate them into what they thought was their superior civilization. Instead, they sought to subsume the Philippines as an economic and military appendage of the so-called East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, an empire that would cover much of Asia and the Pacific Islands.

Japanese Colonization of the Philippines

Nonetheless, the Japanese were confronted with a similar task as their Euro-American predecessors: the need to secure the acquiescence of the people while suppressing any and all forms of resistance. To this extent, they prevailed upon the majority of Filipino elites, many of whom enjoyed positions in the Commonwealth government, to collaborate with the new colonial regime. They also coerced ordinary people to provide them with food, services, and, as in other occupied territories, young women and girls to serve as sex slaves or "comfort women" for their troops.

Life under occupation was brutal and dangerous. People lived in a state of constant terror as Japanese troops routinely rounded up men thought capable of giving aid or joining the guerilla resistance, imprisoning and torturing them on a regular basis. Failure to defer to Japanese soldiers brought a sharp slap across the face—a source of deep humiliation to Filipinos—while arbitrary arrests often brought summary executions. In a state of war, the economy collapsed. Food became scarce and unemployment widespread, forcing many to live by their wits, engaging in shady rackets or in the black market. Hyperinflation was the order of the day as the Occupation currency proved virtually worthless. Only

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those with a connection to the Japanese managed to live well, incurring the resentment of their neighbors and friends.



Figure 9. The Japanese occupation of Manila, 1942. Wikimedia Commons.

Given the extreme hardships under Japanese rule, it was small wonder that guerilla resistance intensified all over the archipelago. Two major guerilla groups emerged: those allied with the American colonial military, the United States Armed Forces in the Far East (USAFFE); and those with the militant peasant and labor unions loosely allied with the Communist Party of the Philippines, which called themselves the Huks, short for the *Hukbong Laban sa mga Hapon*, or Anti-Japanese Army. These guerilla forces unfailingly pressured the Japanese, harassing and ambushing them, while adjudicating local conflicts and punishing collaborators. In many towns, the guerillas set up shadow governments, providing services and food, gathering information, smuggling supplies, even issuing their own currency, all the while paving the way for the American counterattack.

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Figure 10. Poster calling for Filipino resistance against the Japanese.

In the face of reluctant collaboration from Filipino elites and widespread resistance from guerillas, the Japanese colonial administration sought to institute a "cultural policy" to persuade Filipinos that occupation in fact amounted to liberation from Western rule. In cities and towns where schools could be reopened, the Japanese required students to learn Nippongo and encouraged the teaching of literature in the vernacular languages to counter the influence of English. They published magazines, sponsored literary contests, and produced movies extolling the virtues of Japanese civilization while reminding Filipinos of the violence of the Filipino-American war. These efforts at persuasion culminated with the granting of Philippine independence in 1943. Seeking to outmaneuver the Americans, Tokyo orchestrated the formation of the Second Philippine Republic, installing the Chinese mestizo, Jose P. Laurel, formerly a justice of the Supreme Court, as president. With a skeptical population looking on, the Japanese and their Filipino collaborators staged an elaborate parade in Manila in an effort to align Japanese imperialism with Filipino nationalism under the rubric of "Asia for Asians."¹⁰

What set apart the Japanese Occupation from the Spanish and the American was less its violence—all empires use unremitting force to impose their rule—but its brevity. Lasting only three years, the Japanese empire in the Philippines left a trail of death and destruction from which it would take the country years to recover. In the final frenzy of retreat, the Japanese torched and killed everything that moved in Manila as the Americans advanced, leaving behind a city in utter ruins. If Manila is the unappealing aesthetic patchwork that it is today, it is in part due to the destruction wrought by the combined fury of the Japanese retreat and the American advance. Finally, the Japanese occupation left an important legacy: by provoking fierce guerilla resistance, it also paved the way for the radicalization of these groups in the postwar era. While the guerilla forces allied with the USAFFE received recognition and backpay, those who were part of the Huks were accused of being communists and were refused recognition. They were harassed and, in

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some cases, imprisoned, forcing many to return to the hills to wage an uprising known as the Huk Rebellion. Adding insult to injury, General Douglas MacArthur, from his perch as the proconsul of American-occupied Japan, summarily pardoned all those who had collaborated with the Japanese, especially the Filipino elites, guaranteeing the restoration of the colonial oligarchy and causing even greater resentment among those who fought throughout the occupation.



Figure 11. The destruction of Manila, 1945. Wikimedia Commons.

Hence, within a year after becoming independent, the new Republic, still mired in the ashes of World War II, faced a veritable civil war. Caught up in the emergent cold war, the United States provided massive military aid to the Philippine armed forces to crush the rebellion. In a preview of Vietnam and Iran, the Americans also deployed the newly formed CIA to engineer the election of future Philippine presidents who would be able to deal with similar insurgencies. The postwar destruction wrought by the Japanese provided not only the conditions for the Huk rebellion; it also paved the way for the return and refinement of American imperial rule in the way of reconstruction, foreign aid, the expansion of military bases, and the arming and training of the Philippine military to fight various local insurgencies. Japanese defeat thus set the conditions for American imperial restoration in the Philippines as well as in much of the Asia-Pacific region. The Republic of the Philippines as it emerged from centuries of colonial rule became a hybrid thing: formally sovereign, yet practically a neocolony of the United States. To this day, especially in the face of contemporary Chinese pressures over its territorial waters and islands, it continues to be tied to the geopolitical designs and interests of the United States even if its political and cultural developments have moved in other directions.¹¹

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Figure 12. Philippine independence, Luneta Park, Manila, July 4, 1946.

In conclusion, we might ask once again what the history of the Philippines teaches us about empire as such. From the colonial periphery (as we remarked, for instance, in "SPANISH RULE") comes a way of life that rests on relations of power, structures of inequality, and the persistence of inequities. But it is also productive of new life forms, novel historical agents, and ongoing social conflicts whose resolutions are always yet to come. The latter tend to put in question the legitimacy of the very forces of the former. In this way, they undermine the enforced stability and coerced consensus of any imperial arrangement. The history of the Philippines, from the first Spanish settlement to the latest contingent of visiting American military personnel, encapsulates the history of these contending forces. Janus-faced, the Philippines peers into the past of its imperial origins while looking out into the future of its postcolonial possibilities.

Primary Sources

Primary sources for the study of the modern Philippines can be found in several libraries and special collections spread all over the world. What follows is a very abbreviated list.

For the Spanish colonial period, the largest collections of documents pertaining to the Spanish colonial period can be found at the Archiveo General de las Indias in Seville. These range from royal decrees, official reports, judicial and military records, and lists of galleons to more. Manuscript sources can also be found in the libraries of religious orders —which is not surprising given the primary role of Christianization in the colonization of the archipelago. The Augustinian archives in Valladolid and the Jesuit archives outside of Barcelona have rich resources. Collections of printed materials are also found at the Biblioteca Nacional and the Museo de Naval, both in Madrid. In the United States, the most impressive collections can be found at the Ayer Collection, Newberry Library in Chicago, and at the National Archives in Washington, DC. In addition, one can also resort to the

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documents collected, edited, and translated—unevenly, in most cases—by Emma Blair and James Robertson.¹² In the Philippines, the most important libraries for doing research on this and later parts of colonial history include the National Library, the National Archives, the libraries at the Ateneo de Manila University, the University of the Philippines, the University of Santo Tomas, Lopez Memorial Museum, the Ayala Museum, and De la Salle University.

The emergence of Filipino nationalism produced an astounding amount of writing, since it was very much a discursive as much as a social phenomenon. The most accessible primary documents can be found in the bilingual edition of the premiere nationalist paper, *La Solidaridad* (Barcelona and Madrid, 1889–1895).¹³

The two most important novels ever written by a Filipino that powerfully document the complexity of colonial society are by Jose Rizal: *Noli mi tangere* and *El Filibusterismo*.¹⁴ (See also Rizal's subversive annotation of a 17th-century Spanish history of the Philippines by Antonio de Morga, *Sucesos de las islas Filipinas*.)¹⁵ And for the indispensable collection of documents relating to the revolutionary organization, the Katipunan, which led the revolt against Spain, see the texts in both the original Tagalog and Spanish with English translations and annotations in Jim Richardson, *The Light of Liberty: Documents of the Katipunan*.¹⁶

Primary sources for the US colonial period also abound. Aside from the National Archives and the Ayer Collection, there are also important resources in libraries at the University of Michigan, the Bentley Collection in Ann Arbor, the Echols Collection at Cornell University, the libraries at the University of California, Berkeley, Stanford University, Houghton Library at Harvard, and smaller collections at Yale, Indiana University, and the University of Washington. The presidential libraries of William Howard Taft in Ohio also contain furniture and other memorabilia of his time as Governor General of the Philippines.

More accessible primary sources in published form can be found in the following US government publications: Census of the Philippine Islands, 1903–1905,¹⁷ and Census of the Philippine Islands, 1918.¹⁸ The texts of various laws enacted by the colonial legislatures as well as reports on colonial projects, ranging from education to public health to prisons and trade, can be found in Reports of the Philippine Commission, 1900–1916.¹⁹ For a mammoth collection of important documents captured by the US military pertaining to the Filipino-American War, see United States National Archives.²⁰ A condensed version is also available, edited by Renato Constantino and Milagros Guerrero.²¹ In the Philippines, much of the resources relating to the US colonial period can be found in the libraries already mentioned.

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Notes:

(1.) The most useful accounts of precolonial Philippine societies are William Henry Scott, Barangay: Sixteenth Century Philippine Culture and Society (Quezon City: New Day Press, 1995) and Prehispanic Sources for the Study of Philippine History (Manila: New Day, 1989). See also Laura Lee Junker, Trading, Raiding, Feasting: The Political Economy of Philippine Chiefdoms (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2000).

(2.) The classic work on the Sulu Zone is by James Warren, *The Sulu Zone: The Dynamics of External Trade, Slavery and Ethnicity in the Transformation of a Southeast Asian Maritime State, 1768–1898* (Singapore: NUS Press, 1981). See also, by the same author, *Iranun and Balangingi: Globalization, Maritime Raiding and the Birth of Ethnicity*

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(Singapore, NUS Press, 2003). See also Cesar Adib Majul, *Muslims in the Philippines* (Quezon City: Asia Center, University of the Philippines Press, 1973).

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