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## Editor's Introduction (Philippine Studies, Vol. 69 No. 1)

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# Philippine Studies: Historical and Ethnographic Viewpoints

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## Editor's Introduction

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# Editor's Introduction

The Mangyan Patag in Mindoro, also known as Hanunoo Mangyan, have been studied by several anthropologists since the 1950s. They include Harold Conklin, Masaru Miyamoto, Robert Kasberg, and Antoon Postma. To this list we add Elisabeth Luquin, who, based on ethnographic research in the early 1990s, elucidates Mangyan Patag cosmology through the lens of Louis Dumont's theoretical framework, in which all elements of a culture are interpreted in relation to their place within a hierarchically structured conceptual whole.

For the Mangyan Patag reality is populated by living human beings as well as a host of unseen beings, who were all once flesh-and-blood humans except for the evil *labāng*. The spirits of dead people attain the status of an ancestor (*āpu*) after a period of being nourished by humans, particularly ritual officiants, suggesting a continuing relationship. Ancestors who form a pair, a couple, who are in a relationship with humans are the *dāniw*; they enable the officiant to see the whole, including the unseen. The intervention of the *dāniw* results in healing and the continuation of society. However, ancestors who are in odd numbers in a relationship with humans are called *hiri'*; they enable the officiant to kill an opponent. As benevolent spiritual agencies, the *dāniw* encode ordered wholes composed of balanced dualities—duality being the basic nature of beings, male and female forming a unity. In contrast, as malevolent spiritual agencies, the *hiri'* consist of unstable singularities, emblematic of incompleteness. The absence of duality is a threat to society. The relationship to oneself is problematic. Understandably, the *hiri'* ritual, which is performed secretly for oneself in relation to an odd-numbered ancestor, is prohibited because it is believed to lead to misfortune. Nonetheless, as Luquin argues, the coercive power of the *hiri'* is subordinated to the authority of *dāniw* ancestors.

Also looking at a small cultural community, the mathematicians Ma. Louise Antonette N. De Las Peñas, Agnes D. Garciano, and Debbie Marie Verzosa demonstrate that Batak basketry patterns evince a sophisticated knowledge of algebraic and geometric principles even if the weavers have no

formal training in mathematics. The makers of these highly stylized works use bamboo strips, some blackened while others are not, to form any of over thirty decorative patterns, each one with a name. The basic geometric figures are black and white triangles with which the Batak are able to weave other geometric shapes such as angles and diamonds. The design patterns are highly symmetrical and contain algebraic structures. Weaving a basket with a specific design requires envisioning in the mind the finished product and planning the concrete steps to take. However, the authors note that basket weaving is facing a decline, as the Batak confront the realities of depopulation and a younger generation with minimal interest in the craft.

Jely A. Galang narrates a social history of the Chinese in the Philippines that focuses on the *cargadores* (stevedores and transporters), who formed an important part of daily life in nineteenth-century Manila. Galang surveys the different types of work they performed, how they formed labor gangs in dealing with employers, their working conditions in the context of colonial state regulations, their miserable living conditions, and their leisure activities. The Tagalog stigmatized them as pigs, but their own Chinese headmen exploited them by syphoning off their meager wages through the headmen's own businesses that sold liquor to these workers and operated opium, gambling, and prostitution dens these workers patronized. This intraethnic exploitation was quite remarkable.

Although Rizal's *El filibusterismo* provides an unflattering portrait of science education in the Spanish Philippines, Philip Vergel Ay-ad and I argue that the Escuela Náutica de Manila offered credible science education. The school opened in 1820 as Philippine maritime trade grew and the need for pilots increased. As a way of assessing the quality of education it offered, we look closely at three episodes that yield some favorable evidence: the earthquake in 1863; the planned closure of the school in the late 1880s; and the advent of American colonial rule in the early 1900s. Although it was a predominantly Creole institution, it graduated two famous alumni: Pascual Ledesma and Juan Luna. Two hundred years later, despite the many twists and turns in its institutional history, this nautical school survives today as the Philippine Merchant Marine Academy. As an emblem of the country's strength in seafaring, this institution deserves its rightful place in Philippine historiography.

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