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## Editor's Introduction (Philippine Studies, Vol. 65 No. 4)

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# philippine studies: historical and ethnographic viewpoints

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## Editor's Introduction

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# Editor's Introduction

**H**egemony necessitates building consent among the ruled through noncoercive means, with rulers deploying seemingly benign institutions to help perpetuate the status quo and convince the ruled to accept existing inequalities. However, the instrumentalization of education in the service of power is never straightforward. By poring over fifteen history textbooks used in Philippine secondary schools from 1905 to 2000 and employing qualitative content analysis, Rommel Curaming shows that government-approved instructional materials convey an inconsistent articulation of Philippine nationalism. Amid the state's various iterations in the twentieth century, these textbooks reflect the plurality of social forces that compete within the state to influence textbook writing and knowledge production in general. Focusing on notions of belonging to the Philippine nation, the origins of its peoples, its national self-image, and the concept of heroism, Curaming reveals biases—most notably in the unfair treatment of ethnolinguistic and religious minorities—and ambiguities, such as in the glorification of foreign influences that are pervasive even in the “most nationalistic” texts and in the equivocal depiction of José Rizal, the country's foremost nationalist. The article also points out that the idea of Rizal as a US-sponsored hero is not supported by data. Curaming pushes us to further interrogate the notion of knowledge production as a critical ideological state appendage and of textbooks as mirrors of social dynamics.

The nexus linking state apparatuses and knowledge production also takes a surprising turn in Rene Escalante's study on the *Cuerpo de Vigilancia de Manila* (Surveillance Corps of Manila). Established in 1895, the *Cuerpo* stood as a late colonial institution for the Spanish rulers to quell dissent through intelligence gathering. It kept dossiers on persons of interest and monitored suspicious activities in the period of an anticolonial revolution. The original intention behind its existence was to maintain the stability of the colonial state by rendering the colonized more visible in the colonial records. Legibility, in the form of data that could be turned into actionable

information, reduced the elusiveness of antistate forces. Over a century later these documents, which have been made available for public use only recently, are now a treasure trove of primary sources for historical research. Escalante's foray into the *Cuerpo de Vigilancia* papers therefore tells a story of reversal and paradox. Historians can now use the archival remnants of colonial intelligence work to improve the understanding of the past, including the anticolonial movements the *Cuerpo* had sought to counteract. Although he cautions us about the inherent colonial bias and inaccuracies in the *Cuerpo's* documents, Escalante demonstrates their historical value by presenting important nuggets of information that corroborate and add details to what is already known about, for example, Andrés Bonifacio, the *Katipunan*, and the Philippine Revolution.

Legibility in aid of furthering hegemony is, of course, not limited to the colonial context. In the process of coming to terms with its withdrawal from formal sovereignty over the Philippines, the US military employed various methods of surveillance and ideological tools to assure neocolonial dominance over a fledgling Philippine nation-state. Stephanie Fajardo's article on illicit Filipina–GI relations in the postwar period shows the dynamics between coercive and ideological tools of power. Whereas forms of coercion (e.g., raids and roundups) and supervision (e.g., forced testing for venereal diseases, regulation of prostitution through what Fajardo terms the “bar system”) policed the US military's preferred racial order, social mores—as expressed in films and editorial cartoons in the US and in the Philippines—sought to keep Filipinas “in their place.” What the US empire regarded as the potentially diseased body of Filipinas had to be subjected to scrutiny by US and local actors. Intimate details then became part of official knowledge to protect the vitality of the American soldier, which literally and figuratively embodied the viability of empire. Nonetheless, Fajardo refuses to paint a simplistic dichotomy between Americans and Filipinos: legibility required the participation of local partners in the surveillance and suppression of Filipinas; and in the process, African American soldiers also became victims of racist misrepresentation by both the US military and Philippine popular media.

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