

# Introduction: Changing Perspectives on the Philippines and Southeast Asia

MINDFUL OF THE SCHOLARLY IMPERATIVE to advance knowledge production, the editors of *Asian Studies: Journal of Critical Perspectives on Asia* are pleased to publish an issue that is comprised of papers that contribute to current debates. One calls for scholarly engagement; another interrogates the limits of Indianization of Southeast Asia. The third adopts a rather unusual theoretical framework to shed light on disasters. Wrapping up the line-up is an article looking at little-explored events in the Philippines during World War II.

In the lead article, Professor Pasuk Phongpaichit charts her intellectual development as a scholar and reflects on the urgent, political role that academics should play. She exhorts them to “be engaged. Be sensitive to the time and place. Be prepared to explore new avenues and multidisciplinary researchers. Maintain the optimism that change for the better is possible. Never be discouraged. Your innovative ideas, writing, and agitation--as well as your courage--have never been so much in demand as they are right now.” This clarion call is raised amidst the ongoing corporatization of universities and their decline as bastions of critique (Eagleton 2015).

MCM Santamaria critiques the idea that *pangalay*, a Southern Philippine dance, derives from Sanskrit. Although he deals directly with the Philippines, Santamaria’s article impinges on a wider debate on the Indianization of Southeast Asia, showing its limits and painting a different picture of the Philippines’ cultural ties with India. His work is a contribution to and now part of a little-known yet no less valuable body of research on India-Philippines cultural relations.

In their article, Gerardo Lanuza and Jed Martin Tingson mobilize a the political philosophy of Giorgio Agamben to examine the Philippine government’s role in mitigating the destruction of Tacloban City wrought

by Typhoon Yolanda in November 2013. They use a political philosophy that originates in a tradition comparatively little known in Anglo-American thinking. Their article goes beyond traditional analysis of disasters and comes up with an intriguing reading of state (mis)management of disasters.

Completing the article line-up is Rolando Esteban's examination of cannibalism by Japanese soldiers in Bukidnon from 1945 to 1947. The novelty of this piece is two-fold. First, few works on World War II historiography deal with this matter, an event that occurred in the mountains of a Philippine province in the island of Mindanao. Second, it also contributes to the literature on war crimes and examines its subject matter from an anthropological perspective. The paper offers an overview on cannibalism research, and presents a meticulous reading of primary sources to patiently reconstruct events after the War.

The rest of the issue feature essays that offer modest contributions that advance debate and raise awareness. One commentary deals with the resonance of the US-Dutch conflict in the early 20th century for contemporary maritime and territorial disputes; and another explains the importance of an Indonesian novelist. Completing the issue are the works of a Davao-based and Palanca-Award-winning poet, poems on Palestine, and travel narratives that uncover the complexities of cross-cultural interaction and comparison.

Janus Isaac NOLASCO and Patricia Camille VILLA

### Reference

Eagleton, Terry. 2015. "The Slow Death of the University." *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 6 April. <http://chronicle.com/article/The-Slow-Death-of-the/228991/>