



Between Philippine Studies and Filipino-American Studies: The Transpacific as an Area and the Transformation of Area Studies in the 21st Century



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[*Abstract*]

In this paper, I argue that while area studies in the United States has declined since the end of the Cold War, its area impulse of has emerged in other fields of inquiry, particularly Asian-American Studies. Accordingly, I explain how the collective reflections of Filipino-American scholars on empire, migration, diaspora, and identity point to the consolidation and viability of the transpacific as an area, which spans both the United States and the Philippines. Addressing several problems with this straddling—mainly as criticisms of Filipino-American Studies—I show how the transpacific serves as a bridge between Philippine Studies and Filipino-American Studies, and helps define the boundaries and overlaps between both fields of inquiry.

Keywords: Philippine Studies, Filipino-American Studies, Area Studies, Transpacific Studies, Transnationalism.

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I. The Rise and Fall of Southeast Asian Studies in the United States

Area studies as we know it today was born and institutionalized amidst the exigencies of the Cold War. The United States government, along with foundations such as that of Ford, funded area studies programs in different universities, including Cornell and Yale, through the National Defense Act of 1958. For policy-makers, area studies was essential to understanding regions of geopolitical importance to the United States, and to preventing the spread of communism. This political impetus helps explain, among other things, the United States' profound interest in agrarian issues—such as peasant unrest—in Southeast Asia. Thrust into the post-war world as a superpower and defender of the Free World, it confronted a predominantly agrarian Asia that it knew little about (Culather 2010) but wanted to develop and modernize. It was in this geopolitical context that scholars such as Harry Benda, James Scott, Clifford Geertz, and Benedict Kerkvliet—whatever their political affiliations and intentions—conducted their groundbreaking research into the Southeast Asian peasantry. In the 1960s and 1970s Philippines, the peasantry was likewise a hot-button research topic. At that time, rural discontent provided fertile ground on which communists or farmers themselves could mobilize, and the research of many intellectuals was conducted or could be marshalled, for or against these movements.

The Cold War, along with the rise of revolutionary movements across the Third World, adversely shaped the scholarship of Filipino historians across the political spectrum, from the anticolonial nationalism of Teodoro Agoncillo (1950s onward) and Reynaldo Ileto (since the 1970s) to the less radical, if not conservative historiography of Horacio de la Costa and John Schumacher. Southeast Asian Studies received additional impetus from, and reached its heyday during, the Vietnam War (Lanza 2017), but once the US forces were defeated, the field steadily declined. By 1982, a scholar had noted its “contraction [in] at least a dozen (other) universities” in the United States (May 1987: 177). Eight years later in 1990, the Association for Asian Studies (AAS) held a conference,

which featured papers noting the crisis.

The numbers of Southeast Asia scholars [in the AAS] were 713 in 1978, 710 in 1983, and 630 in 1988 (Ness 1984: 27; Association for Asian Studies 1988) these figures are alarming. There is a very thin academic base of scholars in the United States with any interest in or knowledge of Southeast Asia.....Even more alarming are the numbers of scholars who claim a specialization for specific Southeast Asian countries. (Hirschman 1992: 42–43)

For Rafael (1994: 98), the papers in the 1990 AAS conference identified the hope for Southeast Asian Studies: “indigenous scholars trained in the West but are based in the countries in the region itself.” These academics have taken a more prominent role in conducting and problematizing area studies scholarship since the 1980s. In 2007, Ariel Heryanto, an Indonesian Southeast Asianist, could write that “the last decade or so has actually witnessed a slow but progressive growth of interest and activity in locally based Southeast Asian studies” (2007: 76) and that “the number of Southeast Asian nationals in Southeast Asian studies has increased” in the same period (2007: 78). In addition, the fate of Southeast Asian Studies in the region saw a watershed with the establishment of the Consortium for Southeast Asian Studies in Asia (SEASIA) in Kyoto in October 2013, which comprises ten leading area-studies institutions in the region. The picture is far from rosy, however. As Heryanto points out, “...Southeast Asian studies...have always occupied a subordinate or inferior position within the production and consumption of this enterprise” (i.e., Southeast Asian studies), and “their modern intellectual apparatus has largely been both indebted or subordinate to the West” (2007: 78).

Even so, there is no doubting the growing presence of Southeast Asian scholars today, who continue to problematize the nature of Southeast Asian Studies both in the United States and Southeast Asia itself (Sears 2007; Chou and Houben 2006). At the same time, the decline of area studies in the United States has been undeniable. However, its regional thrust would shift to other fields of inquiry, including Asian-American Studies.

II . The “Second Life” of Area Studies: From Area to Empire

Rafael (1994: 103) marked the potential of “indigenous scholars” including Filipino-Americans in transforming area studies, among other fields.

It is my sense, then, that to speak of "indigenous scholars,".....in the late-twentieth-century United States simultaneously raises the question of the immigrant imaginary in the configuration of area studies. For what if one were to take seriously the position of Southeast Asian scholars who, for various reasons, cannot or choose not to return to their "homes"? What are the predicaments faced by immigrant scholars once they are part of a plural diaspora? How do these predicaments differ from those of American and indigenous scholars? (Indeed, what is "American"? How secure is that term? And isn't "indigenous" always already a historical and therefore negotiated term?) How does one begin to think about the works of Southeast Asian scholars who are no longer, if they ever were, indigenous to any one place? How might their work - inescapably written in conversation with other disciplines and other areas and engaged in various projects of affiliation both within and outside the academy - play differently to "American" and "Southeast Asian" audiences? Indeed, how would such Southeast Asian scholars negotiate the difference in what counts as "scholarship....." (1994: 103).

In 1994, Southeast Asian scholars in the United States were relatively few; today, academics from the region have come to the fore in American academia. Filipino-Americans occupy various teaching positions in the country, especially in the “Big Ten” universities in the American Midwest (Manalansan and Espiritu 2016), though many are also based in the West Coast, particularly in California. Together, they have produced a venerable body of scholarship not just on Filipino immigrants in the United States but also on US-Philippines relations.

In the ensuing decades, Filipino-American scholars would discuss, through their scholarship, the issues that Rafael adumbrated. I will not, however, dwell on the complex dynamics of these matters.¹ I simply want to highlight how the work of

¹ As with any field, there has been much rethinking in area studies. New trends can

Filipino-Americans in US academia—specifically their focus on American imperialism in the Philippines—has (had) vital implications for area studies in the 21st century.

III. The emergence of Filipino-American scholars and American imperialism in the Philippines

The entry of Filipino-Americans in U.S. academia has much to do with the entangled histories of Filipino migration to the United States. In 1905, Filipino laborers worked in Hawaiian plantations; they were the first of several waves of migration there and to the mainland. Some Filipinos were sent to the United States to study as *pensionados* or came as nurses or farmworkers in the West Coast. In 1965, the relaxation of immigration quotas initiated yet another batch of immigrants, mostly doctors, nurses, and medical professionals. In the 1970s, the deteriorating Philippine economy—and the declaration of Martial Law in 1972 and its crackdown on anti-Marcos activists—gave yet another impetus to immigration to the US and elsewhere, particularly Western Asia. The Filipino-American scholars of today are the (grand)children of these immigrants. And their presence in the United States has roots in, among other factors, the civil rights movements of the 1960s—their call for social diversity and representation—and the subsequent development of Asian-American studies as an academic discipline.

The intellectual production of Filipino-American scholars is vast, but even a cursory survey will note the prominence of the issue of empire in their scholarship (Claudio 2014; Rafael 2008).

In recent years, [the] majority of scholarship on the Philippines produced in the United States has been concerned with the Philippines in the context of U.S. Empire. On the Proquest database of American dissertations, a search for titles with the word “Philippines” from the last five years will yield 91 results, and a search for titles with the words “Philippines” and “Empire” or

be seen in *Area Studies at the Crossroads: Knowledge Production after the Mobility Turn* (Mielke and Hornidge 2017) and *Comparative Area Studies: Methodological Rationales & Cross-Regional Applications* (Ahram, Köllner, Sil 2018).

“Imperialism” will yield 51 results. This means 56 % of doctoral scholarship about the Philippines in America in the last 5 years has concerned empire (Claudio 2014).

In his discussion of “the imperial turn,” Claudio discussed dissertations in the United States in their titles; other works, however, do not necessarily contain the word but are equally concerned with “imperialism”.

- *The American Colonial State in the Philippines: Global Perspectives* edited by Julian Go (2005)
- *The Star-Entangled Banner: One Hundred Years of America in the Philippines* by Sharon Delmendo (2004)
- *Empire of Care: Nursing and Migration in Filipino-American History* by Catherine Ceniza Choy (2003)
- *Dead Stars: American and Literary Perspectives on the American Colonization of the Philippines* by Jennifer McMahan (2011)
- *The Third Asiatic Invasion: Empire and Migration in Filipino America* by Rick Baldoz (2011)
- *Body Parts of Empire: Visual Abjection, Filipino Images, and the American Archive* by Nerissa Balce (2016)
- *American Tropics: Articulating Filipino-America* by Allan Punzalan Isaac (2006)
- *Puro Arte: Filipinos on the Stages of Empire* by Lucy Mae San Pablo Burns (2012)
- *Legitimizing Empire: Filipino American and U.S. Puerto Rican Cultural Critique* by Faye Caronan (2015)
- *Islanders in the Empire: Filipino and Puerto Rican Laborers in Hawai'i* by Joanna Poblete (2014)
- *Metroimperial Intimacies: Fantasy, Racial-Sexual Governance and the Philippines in U.S. Imperialism, 1899-1913* (2015) by Victor Roman Mendoza

Apart from empire and US-Philippines relations, Filipino-American scholars have written about the Filipino-American

experience in the United States, dealing with questions of racism, identity, and assimilation; a few address contemporary relations between the United States and the Philippines.

- *Migrant Returns: Manila, Development, and Transnational Connectivity* by Eric Pido (2017)
- *Home Bound: Filipino American Lives Across Cultures, Communities and Countries* by Yen Le Espiritu (2003)
- *Transpacific Femininities: The Making of the Modern Filipina* by Denise Cruz (2012)
- *Between Homeland and the Diaspora: The Politics of Theorizing Filipino and Filipino American Identities* by Susannah Lily Mendoza (2002).
- *Creating Masculinity in Los Angeles's Little Manila: Working-Class Filipinos and Popular Culture, 1920s-1950s* by Linda Espana-Maram (2006)
- *Practicing 'Enlightened Capitalism': 'Fil-Am' Heroes, NGO Activism, and the Reconstitution of Class Difference in the Philippines* by Faith Kares (2014)
- *Locating Filipino Americans: Ethnicity and the Cultural Politics of Space* by Enrique Bonus (2000)
- *Global Divas: Filipino Gay Men in the Diaspora* by Martin Manalansan (2003)
- *Imagining the Filipino American Diaspora: Transnational Relations, Identities, and Communities* by Jonathan Okamura (1998)

Filipino-American scholarship on American imperialism in the Philippines and Filipino migration are part of a scholarly recovery of empire in American historiography. Oscar Campomanes (Tiongson Jr and Campomanes 2008: 32) speaks of “multiple effacements of U.S. imperialism across U.S. historiography, U.S. culture studies.” Campomanes adds that several scholars have noted this elision. Edward Said, for instance, “once castigated US humanist scholars for their readiness to talk about all kinds of imperialisms and postcolonialities except that of, or associated with, the United States” (2008: 33). The two Gulf Wars (1991 and 2003), and the War on

Terror, have been factors as well (Rafael 2008, 479).

And if empire has been obscured in American historiography, the focus on diaspora and migration among Filipino-American scholars attempts to redress the invisibility of Filipinos in US history, and their relative marginalization even within Asian-American Studies. “The history and politics of the self-invisibility of U.S. imperialism had everything to do with the conspicuous invisibilization.... of the Philippines, Filipinos, Filipino-Americans...” (Tiongson Jr and Campomanes 2008: 33). Their scholarship attempts to voice and resurface their presence in (Asian-)American history and society. Indeed, this very assertion affirms the connection between identity and belonging to and in a multiracial United States. “[T]he discovery of or engagement with the Philippines (including through “exposure trips” and “immersions” organized by universities) is ultimately an avenue to assert an ethnic identity in a pluralistic and multiethnic US” (Aguilar 2015: 452).

This recovery of empire parallels a call within American historiography for a transnational American Studies.

[C]ontemporary American studies scholars cannot ignore the fact that the United States is itself a transnational circuit of physical, economic, and cultural exchanges whose dominion extends to regions that cannot be contained within the nation’s geographical territory. Nor can they simply refuse to recognize the complex networks interconnecting regions (like the newly industrialized South), multinational corporations (like Google and General Electric), diasporic sites (such as Aztlan and Chinatown), and subnational formations (for example, the ecology and women’s rights movements) within the territorial United States to processes that extend beyond its boundaries. While the twentieth century was a time when the nation and the idea of national culture predominated, the twenty-first century is marked by crossnational linkages and transnational processes (Shue and Pease 2015: 2).

Another more recent work, *Transnational Crossroads*

...interrogates “America” as a placeless place that does not neatly index the mainland territory of the United States but instead

corresponds to the larger geopolitical boundaries of the Americas and the American Pacific.....[the book] foregrounds the cultural contact and political alliances that have shaped the newly defined force field of America and examines how this region is profoundly affected by a long history of colonialism and imperialism. (Fojas and Guevarra 2012: 3)

American scholars themselves have accordingly taken to studying America's transnational excursions anew, including its imperial venture in the Philippines, focusing this time on culture and social history and their implications for colonial power (previous work by Americans on the Philippines centered on high politics and economics). Warwick Anderson's *Colonial Pathologies: American Tropical Medicine, Race, and Hygiene in the Philippines* (2008) discusses the workings of American imperial power via the public health system; Michael Salman's *The Embarrassment of Slavery: Controversies over Bondage and Nationalism in the American Colonial Philippines* (2001) unpacks how slavery rhetoric figured and underpinned the US occupation of the Philippines; Paul Kramer's *The Blood of Government: Race, Empire, the United States and the Philippines* (2006) exposes how race affected, and was affected by imperial governance; *Making Moros: Imperial Historicism and American Military Rule in the Philippines' Muslim South* (2013) by Michael Hawkins looks at American governance in that part of the archipelago; and *Colonial Crucible: Empire in the Making of the Modern American State* (2009) illustrates the adverse ways in which American imperialism shaped the development of domestic politics in the US itself.

Furthermore, the proliferation of studies on the American empire has in turn paralleled the rise of transnational, even global historiography since the 1990s (see Iriye 2013: 1–18). Even European, Spanish and Latin American scholars are turning towards the Pacific, with works such as *The Age of Trade: The Manila Galleons and the Dawn of the Global Economy* by Arturo Giraldez (2015) and *Spain, China, Japan in Manila, 1571-1644: Local Comparison and Global Connections* by Brigit Tremml-Werner (2015). In 2014, the *Pacific Historical Review* released a special issue, "Conversations on Transpacific History" (Kurashige, Hsu, Yaguchi 2014: 183–184) that

sought to study identities that involve “Chinese diaspora and maritime networks, Southeast Asian studies, Pacific Islander studies, Asian American studies, and the historical fields of U.S. immigration and ethnicity, U.S. race relations, the U.S. early national era, and modern Japan.”

IV. From area to empire and back

American imperialism in the Philippines implies a “space” that transcends the geographical boundaries of both the United States and its former Southeast Asian colony. That area spans yet brings together both core and periphery. This area may be called the transpacific/transnational, and points to a common ground of, and an arena of dialogue and interdisciplinary exchange between, Philippine Studies and Filipino-American scholarship. In reconstituting the transpacific/transnational² as an area covering two disciplines, I give a different twist to Claudio’s (2014) observation regarding area studies and (Filipino-)American historiography.

The imperial turn also coincided with a decline of Southeast Asian Studies programs in the United States. The increased interest in places like the Middle East and China diverted funds away from Southeast Asian studies.... This would have two implications. First, students studying the Philippines now had fewer funds to conduct long-term research in the Philippines, limiting their knowledge of domestic concerns.... Second, the decline of Southeast Asian studies has made it easier for Philippinists to converse with American Studies.

Claudio is correct to point out the inverse relationship between the imperial turn and area studies in the United States.

² In using “transpacific/transnational,” I consider ‘transpacific’ as a specimen of the transnational, which generally pertains to movements and processes to and from national boundaries, which, in this case, concerns those of the Philippines and the United States. Thus, to examine Filipino migration to the U.S, or to look at American empire in the Philippines involves an optic that traverses the Pacific, and posits the Philippines and the United States as part of the Pacific Rim. Discussing the Pacific as an area-bigger than traditional regions like, say, Southeast Asia-has some parallels in the new Mediterranean Studies (Watkins 2013).

However, I argue that the regional impulse of area studies shifted to, or at least emerged within, Filipino-American scholarship and its concern for empire and US-Philippines relations. While area studies as an academic program did decline, its area impulse thrives in Asian-American Studies departments or in ethnicity departments, the institutional bases from which much Filipino-American scholarship has been conducted. While scholars in these fields are not trained as, or see themselves as area studies specialists, they have produced much work that could well be construed as, or dovetails at least with Philippine Studies, especially when it concerns the American colonial period. For instance, Catherine Choy's *Empire of Care* (2003) deals with the history of Filipino nurse migration to the United States. But parts of her work still discuss the role of the American colonial government in developing nursing as a profession in the Philippines. The overlap is hardly surprising since the early American colonial period was a time when U.S. imperialism clashed, colluded, and mutually influenced Filipino nationalism, resistance, culture, and society.

V. The transpacific/transnational as an area: objections

As with most scholarly endeavors, straddling two separate fields—Philippine Studies and Filipino-American Studies—is by no means unproblematic, and will obviously elicit concerns and criticisms, if not outright rejection from each camp. Allow me to anticipate and address several issues. The following section engages with critiques of Filipino-American scholarship, which pertain to the integrity of, and boundaries between, Philippine Studies (as area studies) and Filipino-American Studies.

First, area studies scholars themselves are said to be threatened by the new, transnational American Studies. For instance, Rowe writes of an

enormous institutional resistance of scholars trained in area studies, still committed to their specializations, and in some areas, notably "East Asian," "South Asian," "Middle Eastern," and "Latin American," benefiting, rather than suffering, from the collapse of "Southeast Asian

Studies" and "Soviet Studies." Area Studies are alive and well, defending their territories with the determination of scholars whose very existences depend on this fight and have at their command an impressive arsenal of "common-sense" arguments opposing coalitions with "new" American Studies, Postcolonial Studies, Cultural Studies, and virtually any version of "postmodernism" and its assorted complements, "cosmopolitanism" and "post- or neo-Marxism (Rowe 2011: 18).

Such an objection echoes that of Latin American area specialists, who object that a transnational American studies is "simply the next stage of US imperialism stretching from the Monroe doctrine through the Spanish-American war to the Pan-Americanism of the Cold War era" (Rowe 2011: 19). This critique echoes similar claims in the Philippines: that studies of US Empire in the country does not comprise Philippine Studies, but American Studies, which focus more on American activities in the archipelago. This argument has had many advocates, including the late nationalist historian, Teodoro Agoncillo (1958), who once remarked that Philippine history before 1872 was not the history of the Filipinos but of the Spaniards. Some strains of nationalist historiography often insist that Philippine history be told from the viewpoint and interests of Filipinos, who were its rightful agents (Patajo-Legasto 2008).

This insistence forms the basis of several criticisms of Filipino-American scholarship on American imperialism in the Philippines. Most of the criticisms come from the vantage point of Philippine Studies.

..... the imperial turn may mirror some aspects of orientalism in that it distances the study of a people away from those people.....The imperial turn privileges America not through the exoneration of its crimes, but through foregrounding America as a privileged analytic lens. This is an epistemic empire as opposed to a political one.... (Claudio 2014).

Also, the "frameworks" of Asian-American Studies, as applied to Filipino immigration to the US, are "United States-centric" (Tiongson Jr and Campomanes 2008: 216, n8). Aguilar (2015)

likewise cautions against this privileging, which risks imposing the Filipino-American experience on other diasporic communities in, say, Western Asia. This bias dovetails with a relative neglect of sources in Philippine languages.

Much of the recent work on the American empire share with previous scholarship a common shortcoming. This has to do with the failure to engage vernacular source materials and the alternative views of empire, nation, and everyday life that these contain.... The widely known works by Reynaldo Ileto, Milagros Guerrero, Resil Mojares, Bienvenido Lumbera, Soledad Reyes, and others testify to the great richness of vernacular sources and literature in delineating the varied response of colonized subjects. With rare exceptions, American scholarship, unlike British, French, or Dutch scholarship on empire, seems unable to invest the time and cultivate the sensibility required to develop a degree of fluency in the languages of the colonial periphery.... (Rafael 2008: 484).

The focus of Filipino-American scholarship on diaspora studies has elicited some caveats and concerns, if not criticisms. One pertains to the fluidity and heterogeneity of the Filipino diaspora, which is "constituted through internal differences (immigrant from second-generation Filipino gay men; middle-class from working-class Filipinos in Los Angeles; migrant workers abroad from their children and domestic servants in the Philippines), through external differences (bakla from African, Asian, and white American gay men; Filipina from Latina and African American domestic workers)..." (Ponce 2008: 94). One also notes of Aguilar's (2015) problematizing of the Filipino diaspora as a diaspora.

The problems with diaspora are shared by others outside Filipino-American scholarship, who likewise point to the imprecise scope and lack of clear definitions of the term.

When do ethnic communities become diasporas? Are the criteria for such a distinction inherent in the object under study or in the eye of the beholder? Are (im)migrant communities ethnic when placed within a national frame and diasporic when seen from a transnational perspective? Who defines diasporas as diasporas and to what purpose?Are diasporas harbingers of a coming reorganization

of society, alternatives to the nation-state, and agents of its necessary dissolution? The precise meaning of the term in this connection will not be easy to determine.... Are diasporas communities in exile or in a process of spatial and/or temporal transition? Do migrants eventually become immigrants, and members of diasporas hyphenated citizens? There are evidently great differences within diasporas as well as between them.... (Ickstadt 2007: 7–8).

VI. Ripostes

The criticisms against the US-centricity of Filipino-American scholarship spring from a defense of Philippine Studies, echoing the nationalist preference for the Filipino point of view in Philippine historiography. At stake are questions of “epistemic privilege” (Hau 2017: 245–89)—who gets to speak to, for, and about the Philippines and Filipinos: is it Filipinos in the Philippines, or Filipinos abroad, or Filipino-Americans?

But this nationalist-inspired criticism posits a too sharp divide between the Filipino and the Filipino-American. Are there absolutely no overlaps? Plus, doesn't it overlook the fact that even if Filipino-Americans study “what the Americans were doing in the Philippines” and ignore Filipino or vernacular sources, American activities in the Philippines are part and parcel of Filipino history? Even if they tell the story of American imperialism in the country from the perspective of Americans, their work still overlaps with the concerns of Philippine Studies. After all, Filipinos are as much the subjects and objects of historical forces. What was done to them inescapably belongs to their history, which should be studied alongside what they themselves actually did.

The relative lack of engagement with local scholarship and languages is indeed lamentable, and it would indeed thus be ideal if (Filipino-)Americans engage with vernacular sources more often. However, this may be an unfair imposition from an area-studies perspective. Is it reasonable to expect Filipino-American scholars were not trained to be area studies specialists—learning languages and engaging in sources therein—when the impetus of their scholarship arises from different social and historical contexts?

Strictly speaking, Filipino-Americans were not trained in area studies, and many of them came to American academia (the 1990s onward) at a time when that field was already in relative decline. Thus, to expect them to (also) be area studies scholars who study the Philippines would impose an area-studies approach to their scholarship, just as it would equally be an imposition if Filipino scholars based in the Philippines uncritically adopted empire as “an analytical lens.”

These criticisms point to a “cleavage between Philippine Studies in the Philippines, and Philippine Studies in the U.S” (Claudio 2014). This is a divide engendered by different social and intellectual frameworks of both fields. And the charge of the America-centric nature of Filipino-American scholarship on US empire represents an understandable wariness of Philippine Studies scholars, who fear that their Filipino-American colleagues are not doing Philippine Studies right, or are approaching the Philippines from a foreign point of view. Philippinists desire to protect the integrity of the national (the Filipino) over the (Filipino-)American. However, this alleged disciplinary intrusion and flawed perspective overlooks the fact that precisely because both fields have their own assumptions, methodologies, and frameworks, Filipino-American scholarship is *not* doing Philippine Studies, even if it concerns the country. And as much as Filipino-American academics examine American imperialism in the Philippines, they do not claim, or even pretend to be Philippinists to begin with. So, in that sense, they are not encroaching on any one’s turf. If Filipino-Americans conduct their scholarship from different perspectives or intellectual contexts, this should not be taken against them. For to do so would mean insisting, unfairly, that they practice Philippine Studies the way it is practiced by Filipinos.

Moreover, to recognize the differences between Philippine Studies and Filipino-American scholarship foregrounds the independence and autonomy of both fields. There is certainly a cleavage, but is this *ipso facto* to be lamented? Why must we assume that Philippinists in both the Philippines and the United States (if Filipino-Americans are to be considered Philippinists?) should have no cleavages? Aren’t their divergent priorities precisely an opportunity

for continuing dialogue and mutual learning? Can't they simply develop different perspectives on the Philippines, which, when put side-by-side, could deepen knowledge about the country and opening up new perspectives that transcend the division between American and Philippine views? Furthermore, they may differ from each other, but does this preclude an overlap or common ground? Why must we assume in nationalist, anticolonial vein, that Filipino and Filipino-American perspectives should be 100 percent contrary to each other?

VII. The transnational/transpacific as common ground

The transnational/transpacific serves as a common ground where the concerns of Philippine Studies and Filipino-American Studies overlap, and where interactions between Philippine and (Filipino-)American history can be explored. The relationship of both fields with each other can be described with a Venn Diagram. For example, the work of Catherine Choy on Filipino nurses in the United States straddles the two disciplines. On the one hand, it examines the development of nursing in the Philippines and unpacks the experiences of nurses in the U.S. on the other. Similarly, Denise Cruz's *Transpacific Femininities: The Making of the Modern Filipina* shows how the Philippines' (neo)colonial relationship with the United States helped defined and constructed the gender norms in the (neo)colony. In the meantime, Philippine Studies itself has undergone a transnational turn (Nolasco 2016), which looks Philippine history and society as part of an area-empire, region, etc-larger than the nation-state. For instance, *Patricio Abinales' Making Mindanao Cotabato and Davao in the Formation of the Philippine Nation-State* (2000) looks at, among other things, the role of the American colonial regime, and US domestic affairs, in shaping Philippine politics. Migration studies have also been part of the transnational turn, examining the forged connections between the Philippines and Filipino migrants' destination countries, as well as the impact of migration on Filipino identity and society (Aguilar 2014).

The transnational/transpacific by no means implies one-way

traffic or an imposition from the United States to the Philippines. A two-, even three-way exchange between and among regions is only fitting; McCoy and Scarano (2009: 3) write that “innovations in discrete areas of American colonial governance—from police and prisons to education and environmental management—migrated homeward to influence U.S. state formation in the early decades of the twentieth century”. In this respect, Philippine Studies and Filipino-American Studies—as constitutive of the transnational/transpacific—resembles the notion of a “common culture,” which refers not just to a culture shared by all, but one that everyone has a hand in constructing (Eagleton 2000). With its collaboration of various areas of inquiry, it is also akin to the ideal of Walter D. Mignolo’s “border thinking,” which

.... brings different kinds of knowledge and actors together in order to displace European modern epistemologies. Critical border thinking engages us in two processes long advocated by pan-African decolonial thinkers: that of ‘decolonizing the mind’ (Fanon 1952/1993; Nkrumah 1970; wa Thiong’o 1986) and of “moving the centre” from its assumed location in the West to a multiplicity of locations in cultural spheres around the world (Amoo-Adare 2017: 277).

Framed this way, the transnational/transpacific does not entail the loss of the autonomy of Philippine Studies and Filipino-American Studies. It can be conceived in ways that are more inclusive yet respectful of independence, the traditional lines of inquiry, and the methodological preferences of each field. A transpacific history covers “... the study of Chinese diaspora and maritime networks, Southeast Asian studies, Pacific Islander studies, Asian American studies, and the historical fields of U.S. immigration and ethnicity, U.S. race relations, the U.S. early national era, and modern Japan” (Kurashige, Hsu, Yaguchi 2014: 183–184). These topics are independent fields of inquiry, and by themselves do not always have a “trans” component. Clearly, however, that does not preclude their inclusion in a transnational/transpacific inquiry. In the same way, why can’t a transpacific/transnational history cover the American imperial bureaucracy and Filipino peasant revolts? Each field can stand alone, and not all studies therein have to have

a transnational dimension to be part of transnational/transpacific history.

Furthermore, the transnational/transpacific need not entail a totalizing impulse that unites all fields of inquiry under Philippine Studies and Filipino-American Studies, a stance unlike that by Kurashige, Hsu, and Yaguchi (2014: 183-184), who write, “While recent historical studies of transnational processes, persons, and events within and across the Pacific Ocean have proliferated, they have yet to cohere as part of a single scholarly field”. The issue editors continue, “instead, they stand as hybrid studies bridging two or more conventional fields, including histories of the American West, US immigration and ethnicity, US diplomatic and international relations, Asian American studies, East Asian studies, and Pacific Islander studies”. But there is no reason to suppose, and it is unfair to expect, that transpacific historiography—given all its diversity—should cohere “as part of a single scholarly field.” For instance, a transpacific history may cover, say, a study of Filipino-American struggles for identity in the United States, and a monograph examining the identity of Filipinos residing in the Philippine nation-state. But their being part of one field—transpacific/transnational—need not mean that both studies have to cohere. They can be compared for sure, but that is another matter altogether. As it is, the two studies maintain their autonomy and independence from each other without ceasing to be part of a larger scholarly enterprise. Indeed, *Pinoy Capital: The Filipino Nation in Daly City* (Vergara 2005), which talks about the lives of Filipinos in Daly City in California, is classified mainly as Asian-American Studies while, say, *Authentic but Not Exotic: Essays on Filipino Identity* (Zialcita 2005) falls under Philippine Studies. Both have little to do with each other, but they are both part of an area that is the transpacific/transnational. This belongingness is akin to the relationship between Southeast Asian Studies, and the country studies it consists of. Southeast Asian Studies exists as a field of inquiry, but not at the expense of, say, Philippine Studies, Thai Studies, Indonesian Studies, and so on. Individual country studies can stand alone without ceasing to be part of Southeast Asian Studies.

Lastly, transnational studies have also been criticized precisely because it blurs disciplinary boundaries. One scholar writes, “as much as I accept the relevance of transnational studies, I have yet difficulties imagining such a field in terms of teaching and research—how it can be organized, intellectually and structurally; how its scope can be defined and delimited; and how it can be taught in its social and cultural diversity....” (Ickstadt 2007: 7–8).

These are legitimate points, but it is strange to read these remarks, especially since area studies itself has always been hospitable to, and even more conducive to, the interaction and cross-pollination of various disciplines. It has always been interdisciplinary. It is true that a reconstitution of the transpacific/transnational as an area risks expanding and blurring the boundaries between and among Philippine Studies and Filipino-American Studies. But this particular confounding need not be seen as a flaw, for the transpacific/transnational works as an area precisely because of their inclusive and broad applicability across all regions and nations. The confusion, confounding, and conflation that inhere between and among these areas of inquiry are less a drawback than an opportunity for interdisciplinary dialogue and exchange, a model of openness, and the *raison d’être* that made area studies possible and desirable. The very fact that scholars contest the boundaries and relationships among different fields of inquiry is part of the transnational enterprise, not an impediment thereto. It is a strength, rather than a weakness. In this respect, I take inspiration from Campomanes (Tiongson Jr and Campomanes 2008: 42), who discusses the complexities and nuances of terms such as Filipino and Filipino-Americans and remarks that “I prefer to work from this confounding... rather than insist on particularity and disarticulation...”

VIII. Moving on

In bringing together Philippine Studies and Filipino-American Studies and their parallels with transnational/transpacific historiography, I follow the lead of recent academic work that has likewise broached the possibilities of diaspora and/or transnational

studies for area studies. Aguilar (2015: 451) writes that “although possibly anathema to ‘Filipino studies’ - as it could restore preeminence to area studies - scholars of diaspora stress that the homeland, whether empirical or imaginary, is crucial in constituting the basis of collective identity”. Heinz Ickstadt speaks of “American Studies as Area Studies as Transnational Studies? A European Perspective” (2007). Even some Filipino-American scholars have recognized the intersections among their field, transnational studies, and area studies. Surveying works on Asian-American history, Espiritu (2008: 181) notes that “...there is a new and developing transnational history that can be read from an area studies as well as an ethnic studies approach, and in many cases even from a comparative colonialism standpoint.”

What’s next for Philippine Studies and Filipino-American Studies? Like a couple about to divorce, each field can simply go its separate ways. Given their differences, both will continue on their respective trajectories and break new ground. But these differences do not preclude dialogue as a part of transnational-transpacific studies; they can enrich their respective contributions thereto. They each have something more to bring to the table, as it were. This dialogue can simply involve reading or juxtaposing each other’s works, though practitioners of both fields need not do this themselves. But in this exchange, both fields learn from and fill gaps in each other’s work, despite their different research agendas and intellectual contexts, and push the boundaries of scholarship further. Indeed, the work of Filipino-Americans has shed additional light on the American colonial period in the Philippines. And what if these studies are then placed side-by-side with Filipino perspectives? Will we find overlapping concerns as well as contrary viewpoints?

This dialogue and juxtaposition also point to a mutual imbrication of perspectives. And their differences conceal an underlying similarity or affinity even so. Such linkages are already evident in more recent scholarship, including those for the early American colonial period, where the opposition between the Filipino and American collapses. Contrary to nationalist scholarship in the Philippines, the line between the two is not always clear-cut. Philippine history from 1898–1946 was as much about conflict and

collaboration between Filipinos and Americans. There was rejection of, and resistance to, the American imperial project, but there was also—for better or worse—mutual influence. Emblematic of this hybrid thinking is a remark by Oscar Campomanes (Tiongson Jr and Campomanes 2008: 42), for whom the term, Filipino American, is a “redundancy.” “To be Filipino,” he said, “is to be American.” It is from this kind of paradox that the transnational/transpacific as an area takes off.

IX. Conclusion

I have argued that the intersections between Philippine Studies and Filipino-American Studies points to the viability of the transnational/transpacific as an area that spans the United States and the Philippines (if not Southeast Asia) and incorporates many disciplinary areas of inquiry. I anticipated and addressed several objections and criticisms to this reconstitution, and I argued that the breaking down of boundaries is less of a problem and impediment than an opportunity for interdisciplinary dialogue that has always been the *raison d'être* of area studies.

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