

REVIEW

BOOK

**Iconography of the New Empire: Race and Gender Images
and the American Colonization of the Philippines**

By Servando D. Halili Jr.

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In Servando D. Halili Jr.'s book *Iconography of the New Empire: Race and Gender Images and the American Colonization of the Philippines*, written in 2004, the author aims to interpret the diplomatic relations between the United States of America and the Philippines during the late 1800s and early twentieth century by deciphering political cartoons and caricatures found in the American editorials. His study is supposed to be an answer to Melvin Leffner's plea for a different approach and theories when studying US foreign relations. It is to challenge the traditional interpretations and gain a new perspective after using theories or approaches from cultural studies. Furthermore, Halili also agrees that there has been dissatisfaction with traditional interpretations by diplomatic historians; as such, his proposed approach is to see a connection between foreign relations and cultural studies. He dubbed his first chapter the *(Un)Holy Alliance*, where theories of cultural studies, particularly of gender and race, could be the key to the analysis of US foreign relations toward the Philippines during their Occupation. After all, he claims that such aspects are usually overlooked by both American and Philippine scholars when studying the time of the Philippines during America's colonization. As he says, "most of the social sciences and humanities, the works of [Teodoro] Agoncillo and others, despite their influences and stellar scholarship, fail to address concerns that preoccupy most scholars today. [They] are limited to the discussion of America's economic, geopolitical, and religious motivations in colonizing the Philippines a century ago" (p.3). It becomes clear that Halili's work is not only interdisciplinary but also addresses the gap between gender and race and America's colonization of the Philippines.

Halili's book is well-written and well-organized, similar to how a research paper is composed. Before diving into the analysis, the author strategically defined terms in the first chapter that will likely recur throughout the book. What he delved into is the concept of racial ideology, where policymakers create a racial ideal representation of "Other" and "Self" that fits according to the demands of time. Usually, when coining the term "Other", it is almost automatic to think of Edward Said's *Orientalism*, a racial discourse that is widely known during the European Imperial Expansion, where Western civilization defines the East civilization to be uncivilized, backward thinking, and racially inferior, whereas the West is the opposite—civilized, modern, and racially superior. However, Halili used Levi-Strauss' theory of social organization, particularly the binary structures between classes, in his analysis. Using this theory, complemented by historical context, Halili organized the chapters of his book, each of which introduces a new racial ideological representation of a targeted person or group.

His second chapter, entitled "A Witch's Caldron," Halili further identifies the reasons why American legislators created racial representations. These reasons are (1) xenophobia, (2) failure of assimilation, and finally, (3) miscegenation. These are the major factors that fueled the decision by the government to push through with the American Colonization, even though there are people who oppose this, including Senator George Frisbie Hoar (Republican), Senator John W. Daniel (Democrat), and Senator Hernando De Soto Money (Democrat). It becomes clear that "racial issues [played] a dominant role in the lives of the American middle-class and were significantly instrumental in the formulation of domestic and foreign policies" (p.29).

In the multiple racial representations of Filipinos created by American cartoonists and amplified by the American newspaper media, the usual features are black skin, an unusually big nose, and lips. The author highlights that such features were recycled and modified to meet the demands of political propaganda. It is due to the fact that in American history, "identifying the 'Other' is nothing new" (p.61), and these 'Others' were the Cubans and Puerto Ricans, and then Filipinos were added to the list. As such, the view of the Filipinos by the American general public is inferior, and that they are savages. Hence, in *Media Play* and *Fabricating an Adversary*, Halili, with ample examples of political caricature, discusses the additional elements used to complete the racial representation. From the Philippines being represented as a black naked child and abandoned, to Emilio Aguinaldo being vilified and is also racially represented as a black child who exercises the power of the United States or a savage-looking, megalomaniac child, this process of Infantilization, Negrofication, and Indianization solidifies the belief that the Philippines and its leaders are savages, backward-thinking, and does not have the capacity to lead themselves to independence.

If there is a representation of the "Other", Halili also discusses the racial representation of the "Self", which he explains that with the strong influence of

the belief that it is the White Man's Burden to civilize the "lesser-white" people to modernization or progress, the political caricatures have painted the America to be opposite of the Other—white, clothed, and an adult. With the recurring use of Uncle Sam, a symbol of the American nation that was popularized during World War I, this personification of the United States has been drawn into a position where he is the one teaching, adopting, or saving the child from his own demise. Given that the media is used as a propaganda tool for American Annexation, it is apparent that this unfair power imbalance between the two countries has given the "superior" country control of the narrative (p.76). Rather than portraying the fact that the United States is the aggressor, the Philippines was painted as such, while America is being painted as the victim, aligning itself with the concept of the White Man's Burden.

The last two chapters, "Castrating the Father" and "Muzzling Columbia," before the concluding chapter, differ from the previous chapters, as they focus more on gender, particularly on visual representation that symbolizes either masculinity or femininity. Halili draws the attention of the readers by adding new information that the "Other-group" isn't just the non-white, less civilized people, but part of the group are also members of the American society who are anti-imperialist. He identifies that this group of people who are against the Annexation are Democratic and/or women who defy the traditional gender role and are political activists, and Halili indicates that the Republican Party/Pro-Imperialist Party is aware of this opposition, pushing them to act. With the control of the media, they portrayed the opposing party as racial degenerates, the same perspective that the pro- have toward the Filipinos, and are portrayed as a white man who wears female clothing rather than a "typical" middle-aged American white male. On the "Muzzling Columbia" chapter, it also states that the media is making "an effort to restrain women's rising political influence [by using the media to] affirm gender stereotypes" (p.170). To do this, the political cartoons would place the women behind the men, symbolizing the "right" placement for them—a support for men in achieving their goals, a sign of true femininity.

Nearly 20 years after its first year of publication and 15 years after its second printing, the traditional approach still prevails in studying Philippine-US foreign relations and diplomacy. Because of what this book offers, it isn't just applicable to International Relations or Philippine Studies scholars, but also to Cultural Studies, Area Studies, and even Art Theory researchers. It offers a different perspective on the period of American Occupation. However, this material may have rushed the discussion on femininity. Out of five chapters, excluding the first and seventh chapters, four chapters are focused on masculinity, and the subject of women is rarely discussed in those. It could be possible that there is a lack of material for further research on femininity. Questions such as "How does America view Filipino women? What about pro-Imperialist American women toward Filipino women?" are not included or addressed in this book, creating an opportunity for future researchers to use the material as a primary resource for this type of research.

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