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IMMATERIAL CULTURE: "IDOLATRY" IN THE LOWLAND PHILIPPINES[1]

Fenella Cannell

"If ever there was a place where the schoolmaster's art has been thrown sharply into contrast with education in the true meaning, it is here in the Philippine Islands under the Spanish government. For the Spanish occupants of the islands, whether civil or ecclesiastical, never sought to draw out what there is in the native, but to put that into him which, like the embalming fluid in a corpse, would preserve him from corruption, indeed, but would never make him master either of knowledge or of himself."[2]

INTRODUCTION

In this paper, I want to make two interlinked suggestions. Firstly, I shall argue for a reinterpretation of the material on the early American period in the Philippines, placing *religious* ideas at the heart of an understanding of colonial policy. Secondly, and particularly because both idolatry and the image of a sort of imperfectly realized commodity fetish are central to this analysis, I shall consider the relationship between my argument and William Pietz's intelligent and influential account of the difference between these concepts.

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[2] Report of the educational inspector for the Cebu area, quoted in *Tales of American Teachers in the Philippines,* ed. Geronima T. Pecson and Mary Racelis Hollnsteiner (Manila: Carmelo and Bauermann, 1959), p. 123.

One context for these suggestions is a wider project, on which I have written and am in the process of writing elsewhere, that Christianity functions in several ways as the 'repressed' of anthropology, and of social science generally. That is, that while anthropology founded its professional identity on a claim to secularism, Judeo-Christian theological ideas in fact continue to shape its theoretical preconceptions. It is the reluctance to confront this possibility which partly explains anthropology's general tardiness in producing ethnographies of the various Christian parts of the world which do full justice to their particularities, or which make the fact of their Christianity analytically central.[3]

This is not the place in which to elaborate further on these more general arguments. However, this brief indication may serve to orient the central material of the present paper. In looking at public policy and colonial discourse in the American Philippines, I shall be seeking to demonstrate how pervasive was the influence of what one might call a "naturalized Protestantism" in the creation of categories through which Americans—even Americans of diverse political and religious backgrounds—viewed the Filipino people. Yet even the very best recent accounts of Philippine public life of this period either fail to focus on this religious language in colonialism, or treat it as a matter relevant only to missionary history narrowly defined.

The picture that emerges from the Philippine evidence, I shall argue, has a further claim on our attention because it does not fit easily with the approaches to Christian colonialisms using the work of William Pietz on the fetish, which have become widely popular in anthropological accounts. In fact, as we shall see, the misfit between Pietz's fetish and the Philippine "idol" may suggest an inherent limitation in Pietz's arguments.[4]

In order to develop these points, however, it is necessary to supply some brief historical background.

From invasion in 1897 until Philippine independence in 1946, the Americans had to justify their acquisition both in the Islands and to the large anti-imperialist faction at home. This was done primarily through a defining project, that of providing English-language American-style education throughout the Philippines. In theory, this education was to be universal, at least to the end of primary level, and free, but in fact it was never truly either. Nonetheless both the idea and the flawed reality of the great educational experiment have dominated Filipino and American perceptions of the colonial relationship ever since.

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[3] For a fuller development of these themes, and qualifications of these general statements, see Fenella Cannell, "Introduction: The Anthropology of Christianity," in *The Anthropology of Christianity* ed. Fenella Cannell (Duke University Press, forthcoming). For key writings by other anthropologists with related critiques, see Marshall Sahlins, "The Sadness of Sweetness: The Native Anthropology of Western Cosmology," *Current Anthropology* 37,3 (1996): 395-428; and Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion; Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993); and by a theologian, see John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason* (Oxford: Blackwells, 1990).

[4] For some of Pietz's fascinating and scholarly essays, see William Pietz, "The problem of the fetish, I," *Res* 9 (Spring 1985): 5-17; "The problem of the fetish, II: The origin of the fetish," *Res* 13 (Spring 1987): 23-45, "The problem of the fetish, IIIa: Bosman's Guinea and the enlightenment theory of fetishism" *Res* 16 (Autumn 1988): 104-123; and "The spirit of civilization: blood sacrifice and monetary debt," *Res* 28 (Autumn 1995): 23-38. For a range of essays exploring Pietz's ideas, see ed. Patricia Spyer, ed., *Border Fetishisms: Material Objects in Unstable Spaces* (New York and London: Routledge, 1998).

Although unusually ambitious and democratic in its claims, the American educational project was not dissimilar to those of many European colonial regimes, in setting out to re-create its subjects as citizens of the modern world. Glenn Anthony May's book, *Social Engineering in the Philippines,*[5] provides a clear account of the rapid shifts in curriculum which were determined by changes in leadership in the Bureau of Education. Under the intelligent, liberal David Barrows, policy was genuinely idealistic, premised on creating a society of literate, civic-minded, and independent Philippine small-holders. Under Director Frank L. Crone, however, policy forged a tighter link between education and colonial production, while the phrase "industrial education" took on a literal and somewhat ominous meaning. This model, then the *dernier cri* of fashionable theory, valued the shaping of children through the discipline of manual work, at least as highly as the acquisition of any academic skills,[6] especially when the products of this work could be sold for a profit through the educational institution.

May's work has recently been placed in a new context by Paul Kramer.[7] Kramer provides an outstanding account of the ways in which the rationale of the unfolding educational policy was driven by its relationship with the emerging discipline of ethnology, as it had been coopted to serve the new colonial administration. What Kramer calls the "pragmatic empire" was to be based on information about local peoples and conditions. The government's information agents included (initially) the occupying military and (later) school teachers, but above all ethnologists, drafted from the United States, from universities, and from the ethnological museums such as the Smithsonian, the Field Museum of Chicago, and the American Museum of Natural History, which were primarily concerned with the collection of "primitive" artifacts.

The connection between education and ethnology was in part institutional; many key figures in the Philippines were, like David Barrows, trained in both fields. When the Bureau of non-Christian Tribes, the center of the ethnological enterprise, fell out of favor with the new and more hard-nosed administration of 1909, much of its work was shunted into the Bureau of Education. The ideological connections were, however, even more fundamental. Kramer demonstrates that American policy was shaped by the adoption of a variant of Morgan's thesis of the evolution of societies, usually referred to as "progressivism."[8] This theory espouses the idea of the reality of "races," and claims that some are at preferential stages of development, while others lag behind. It differs from pessimistic popular Social Darwinism, however, in arguing that exposure to favorable examples can cause more "retarded" peoples to develop and "progress."[9]

[5] Glenn Anthony May, *Social Engineering in the Philippines: The Aims, Execution and Impact of American Colonial Policy, 1900-1913* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1980).

[6] Proponents of industrial education continued to require basic numeracy, literacy, and spoken English, but mainly because these were thought to be necessary for business efficiency.

[7] Paul A. Kramer, "The Pragmatic Empire: US Anthropology and Colonial Politics in the Occupied Philippines, 1898-1916" (PhD dissertation, Princeton University, 1998).

[8] Kramer, "Pragmatic Empire," p. 38.

[9] This at least is the more liberal version of the theory, and that which was most often publicly avowed, although as Kramer shows, a number of leading figures took a more negative approach and argued that certain Filipino "races" were advancing slowly or not at all.

American colonial education then became the arena in which the drama of Filipino "progress" would be played out. This theory proved sufficiently elastic to contain most of the warring variants of educational syllabus and policy through the period 1899–1935 and beyond.[10]

American educational and colonial policy at this period is usually explained in terms of political constraints and motivations. Kramer has shown the part played by the government's adoption of the modern "science" of ethnological knowledge. However, I shall argue that *religious* ideas, in the form of the American Protestant thought of the period, were equally important, and that both policy and "science" relied at a deeper level on Protestant notions of the nature of human interiority, intentionality, and meaning, and of the proper relations between soul, body, and inanimate matter. These ideas were so implicated in "secular" policy making that it becomes redundant to make a distinction between the two.

Immaterial Culture

When I first arrived in Bicol, Southern Luzon, in 1988, it was still commonplace to assume that the lowland Philippines had little to offer anthropologists or anyone else interested in "culture." Accounting for and contesting this perception became the organizing theme of the dissertation and monograph which I eventually wrote on my Bicol fieldwork. I argued there and elsewhere[11] that the misperception of the lowlands as "without culture" resulted from the particular definition of "culture" that emerged from the American colonial period, and was perpetuated by social science both within the Philippines and outside it. This view privileged ideas of "culture" as large-scale ritual and/or the deliberate maintenance of unchanging social practices through time. In so doing, it declined to examine the places where much that is most significant in lowland social life is situated, in the subtleties of talk about shifting relationships between persons, spirits, and deities.[12]

In particular, the legacy of American colonialism was to associate the highlands with the notion of "tradition," and the lowlands with the notion of "imitation" or "mimicry." Lowlanders were portrayed as lacking autonomous traditions of their

[10] My own reading of the Bureau of Education's reports through to 1930 shows considerable continuities in language and ideology coupled with frequent but superficial changes in curriculum and educational theory. My field research in Bicol primary and high schools suggests certain powerful continuities in actual classroom practice, often determined by a severely inadequate provision of resources, despite the awareness and best efforts of local school teachers. There are also notable continuities in the content of many commonly used textbooks. See also Niels Mulder "Philippine textbooks and the national self-image," *Philippine Studies* 38 (1990): 84-102. To my knowledge, however, there is at present no historical study of policy changes post-1916 which matches Kramer's analysis in its depth, and such observations are therefore provisional.

[11] Fenella Cannell, "Catholicism, Spirit Mediumship, and the Ideal of Beauty in Bicolano Community, Philippines" (PhD dissertation, University of London, 1991); Fenella Cannell, "The Imitation of Christ in Bicol," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute (N.S.)* I (1995): 377-94; Fenella Cannell, "The Power of Appearances: Beauty, Mimicry, and Transformation in Bicol," in *Discrepant Histories: Translocal Essays on Filipino Cultures,* ed. Vicente L. Rafael (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, and Manila: Anvil Publishing, 1995), pp. 223-258; Fenella Cannell, *Power and Intimacy in the Christian Philippines* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999; and Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2000).

[12] See especially Cannell, *Power and Intimacy,* pp. 1, 29, 182, 203, 216, 223, 226, 251.

own, and as mechanically repeating those of others, especially those of their colonizers.

This claim in fact predates the American occupation, and was anticipated by nineteenth-century European travelers and commentators in the islands.[13] The Spanish traveler Guerra, witnessing a *commedia* (Spanish-language folk-theater) in Bicol in 1856, complained that:

> The actors walked on, chattering their parts, which not one of them understood, and moving their arms up and down . . . Their countenances were entirely devoid of expression and they spoke like automatons.[14]

Nor were complaints confined to Americans; the English traveler Mrs. Campell Dauncey was equally bored and depressed by Filipino provincial entertainments and, although often poking acerbic fun at the American colonial enterprise, was often inclined to agree that: "There is nothing in these Filipinos you see."[15]

Nevertheless, it was the Americans who gave impetus and permanence to the idea of lowland cultural vacuity. Under the Bureau (later Division) of Non-Christian Tribes, ethnographers, sometimes accompanied by their adventurous wives, began the work of recording data on the upland peoples and collecting their material culture.

In the highlands, "custom," "culture," and "tradition" are some of the primary categories through which local life is evoked. In these wild areas of the Northern Cordillera among the head-hunting "tribes," anthropologist's wife Mabel Cook Cole felt she had almost attained her dream; "to live unhampered by the rules of modern society,"[16] and instead become part of "the story of the ancestors . . . whose customs must be followed always."[17]

By contrast, in the plains, Cole was as enervated as she was invigorated in the highlands, chafed at her temporary role as school teacher, and longed for the "wild country."[18] She was far from alone in preferring upland society. In the lowlands, as other lady writers of the period tell us, one might be very kindly received, but:

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[13] I argue that in fact there *is* something 'real' to be perceived here—that is, that lowland culture places rather little value on ideas of unchangingness compared to other cultures, and positively values so-called imitation, giving it a very different significance from that assigned it in the West. My aim here is to explore the other side of the equation—what factors were at work in the creation of the American illusion in particular.

[14] Guerra, quoted in Feodor Jagor, *Travels in the Philippines* (Reisen in der Philippinnen) (Manila: Filipiniana Book Guild, 1965), p. 75. The Spanish edition was published as *Viajes por Filipinas, traducios del aleman por S. Vidal Y Soler* (Madrid: Imprenta de Arbau y C.a. Impresores de Camara de S.M., 1875).

[15] Mrs. Campbell Dauncey, *An Englishwoman in the Philippines* (London: Murray, 1906), pp. 57, 78.

[16] Mabel Cook Cole, *Savage Gentlemen* (New York: D. Van Norstrand Company, Inc. ,1929), p. 3.

[17] Ibid., p. 36.

[18] Ibid., p.148. See, for example, the writings of Albert Jenk's wife on the couple's sojourn with the Bontoc, Maud Huntley Jenks, *Death Stalks the Philippine Wilds: Letters of Maud Huntley Jenks, Selected and Edited by Carmen Nelson Richards, Forward by Albert Ernest Jenks* (Minneapolis, MN: Land Press, 1951)

"Civilization and the civilized life are a bit slow . . . and the wild tribes and Moors are certainly more picturesque than the Europeanized overclad natives of Manila."[19]

As Renato Rosaldo has commented in a different context, "full citizenship and culture appear to be inversely related . . . Full citizens lack culture, and those most culturally endowed lack full citizenship . . . In the Philippines, 'cultural minorities' have culture, and lowlanders do not."[20] Mabel Cole and her husband were never in any doubt that with the Tinguian they were in the presence of a "culture"; although American anthropology at this period was still deeply divided over the question of racial evolution versus cultural relativism,[21] the *de facto* identification of a "primitive culture" was something on which there would probably have been wide agreement. A "culture" meant a small-scale society whose individual and collective actions were directed by rules, but rules based on principles not considered "rational" in modern society, especially by non-monotheistic religions, kinship regulations, or (as with the ancestor-worshipping Tinguian) the two combined. Such cultures persisted through time by the inheritance and transmission of these rules and the sanctions that accompanied them.

According to the theory of racial "progression," primitive cultures would change when brought into contact with modern influences, allowing the capacities of their populations to develop and adapt. By this same logic, lowlanders should have figured simply as the formerly "primitive" people who had ceded their "culture" to the Spanish and had been advancing and developing since the 1600s.

In practice, however, American commentators and their successors have tended to write as though highland Filipino groups were not simply at an earlier stage of development than their lowland counterparts, but were actually possessed of a different interior moral quality. Highland groups were seen as the bearers of a certain form of *authenticity* evidenced by their adherence to their own forms of social rules, and by their reluctance to alter them. Stereotypically, they were seen as honest; as ruthless enemies, therefore, but true friends once won over to the American side; lowlanders were characterized as slippery, evasive, and lacking in individuality, autonomy, and vitality.[22] Lowlanders were reportedly persons of little or no authenticity, as evidenced by their permeability to change, and by their willingness to abandon their own social rules and to imitate those of others. Inducing "progress" in others was not in fact sufficient; what was required was a demonstration that such transformative acts were genuine, involving the sacrifice of a profound commitment to one model of social life, and its replacement by an equally profound commitment to the new one being offered.

Rosaldo is certainly correct that lowland Filipino societies were never really accorded the status of "cultures" by the Americans. It is true that there was an initial attempt, in the 1903 Philippine Census, to classify *all* Filipinos as "tribes," dividing

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[19] Edith Moses, *Unofficial Letters of an Official's Wife* (New York: D. Appleton, 1908), p. 147.

[20] Renato Rosaldo, *Culture and Truth: The Remaking of Social Analysis* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989), pp. 198-9.

[21] See Aldona Jonaitis, *From the Land of the Totem Poles: The Northwest Coast Indian Art Collection at the American Museum of Natural History* (New York: The Museum; Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1988).

[22] Stereotypically lowlanders are servants, uplanders are heroes, enemies, friends, primitives. See also, Vicente L. Rafael, *White Love and Other Events in Filipino History* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2000), pp. 52ff.

them into the "Christian" and the "non-Christian,"[23] but although there were occasional references to "Christian tribes" in later public documents, the label never gained much currency or much grip on the collective imagination.

On the other hand, and especially in the first decades of colonial rule, Americans were equally reluctant to think of the lowlands as either a "nation" or a "civilization." Lip-service was occasionally paid to the notion that some kind of "cultured" state (but not "culture" itself) had obtained in Spanish times, but these courtesies were never translated into a real recognition of the attainments of the Philippines prior to the arrival of the Americans, or to its inhabitants' claims to be citizens in Rosaldo's sense. The reasons for this were politically over-determined. Both the brutalities of the American occupation, and the anti-imperialist debate at home, raised doubts that needed to be appeased. Neither the civil nor the military arm of the Philippines administration was eager to consider seriously the claims of the defeated Philippine government that it had administered an independent nation-state equal to its conqueror, or Philippine arguments in favor of the right to self-rule. Thus when Dean C. Worcester, Secretary of the Interior from 1901-03,[24] mused in his review of the first thirteen years of American rule, "Was independence promised? . . . Did we destroy a republic?" he was emboldened to answer himself with a resounding "no," confident that most of his readership would agree.[25]

The Filipino lowland elite (*ilustrados*) who had led the revolution were generally Spanish-trained and Spanish speaking. It was therefore convenient to the occupying American regime to belittle the culture they had acquired, and this and the wish to contrast the acts of the former colonizer unfavorably with their own certainly reinforced the widespread and profound anti-Hispanicism that marks American writing of this period. Although some were more violent in the denunciations than others,[26] even liberal commentators such as James Le Roy (secretary to Taft) were not entirely free of these attitudes, which also extended to other formerly Spanish American dominions.[27]

Such political considerations, however, do not provide a complete explanation of American hostility to things Spanish. It was equally generated out of the essentially Protestant logic of American social thinking itself. It is to this religiously determined aspect of American-Filipino relations that I shall now turn.

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[23] Rafael, *White Love*, p.25.

[24] And subsequently head of the Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes, entrepreneur, and publicist of racial-pessimist theories.

[25] Dean C. Worcester, *The Philippines Past and Present*, vol. 1 (London: Mills and Boon Limited. 1914), pp. 19-66.

[26] Kramer notes the hostile split between the remaining military forces and the incoming civilian administration in the early 1900s; two clubs were formed as a result in Manila. That patronized by the civilians under Taft encouraged association with (educated, elite) Filipinos, admitted them to their clubs, and pursued a policy of *"delicadeza"* aimed to win over the *ilustrados* to American rule. The military club refused admittance to Filipinos and deplored all association with them. See Kramer, "Pragmatic Empire," p.97.

[27] James Alfred Le Roy, *The Americans in the Philippines: A History of the Conquest and First Years of Occupation, with an Introductory Account of the Spanish Rule* (Boston, New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1914). On similar phenomena in other spheres of American dominion, including Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, and Cuba, see Julian Go, "Chains of Empire, Projects of State: Political Education and US Colonial Rule in Puerto Rico and the Philippines," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 42,2, (2000): 333-62.

During the era in question, the status of the lowland Philippines became a kind of categorical lacuna within American discourse. The "pragmatic empire" may consciously have demanded that societies should adapt to their environments, but "adaptability" was only valued in individuals or social groups understood to be capable also of refusing to adapt. The failure to recognize the lowlands as either "culture" or "civilization" would eventually short-circuit the colonial project of transformation, since it was never clear what the lowlanders "were" before they were turned by the Americans into "something else." As we shall now see, the intense distaste the Americans felt for the lowlanders' presumed mutability was something to which they gave the provisional name of "idolatry"—although whether lowlanders were even proper idolaters was a matter for doubt.

IDOLATRIES

The colonial endeavor was nominally committed to freedom of religion. Nonetheless, it was very comfortable with the considerable Protestant missionary effort that rapidly began to be directed at the islands.[28] Indeed, both the civil authorities and the missionary churches were often inclined to speak as though the "Christianization" of the Philippines was a task to be achieved from scratch.[29] As Mrs. Campbell Dauncey put it:

> It occurs to me you may imagine we have savages here when I speak of missionaries, but that is not the case . . . for these good people are here—oh such a lot of them!—to convert the Filipinos from Roman Catholicism.[30]

As Kenton Clymer's informative study has shown, American Protestant missionaries were divided; some claimed outright that the Philippines was a "heathen country," that Roman Catholics "worship idols," and the religion "consisted 'of adoration of wooden and stone images.'"[31] Others, in Clymer's view the majority, gave Catholicism some credit for the introduction of Christian teaching,[32] while continuing to feel a grave suspicion of the religion based on the belief that it made no connection "between religion and moral behavior"[33] and the conviction that Catholic priests in the provinces were both corrupt and implacably

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[28] Kenton J. Clymer in *Protestant Missionaries in the Philippines 1898-1916: An Inquiry into the American Colonial Mentality* (Urbana, IL: University of the Illinois Press, 1986), pp. 3-13, gives the following list, in chronological order, of arrival in the Philippines: YMCA and army chaplains, American (and British) Foreign Bible Societies, Methodists, Presbyterians, Episcopalians, Baptists, United Brethren in Christ, Disciples of Christ, and Seventh Day Adventists. Of these, the Methodists were the largest mission, claiming 45,000 members by 1916.

[29] See also the notorious "little brown brother" speech made by President William McKinley, quoted in David Steinberg, *The Philippines, A Singular and Plural Place* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1982), p. 43.

[30] Campbell Dauncey, *Englishwoman in the Philippines*, pp. 107-08. She continues on that page: "This is really a work of supererogation, for . . . this religion with its mysteries and pomp, appeals to them and suits their dispositions . . . "

[31] Adventist missionary, Herbert Damon, quoted in Clymer, *Philippine Missionaries*, p. 95.

[32] Clymer, *Protestant Missionaries*, p. 96.

[33] Ibid., p. 189.

hostile to the new arrivals. In addition, even those most sympathetic to Catholicism admitted that it "verged uncomfortably close to polytheism" and that the central teaching of monotheism was "'fogged' by the 'dingy and gaudy'" images of saints whose presence was more real to Filipinos than the persons they were made to represent.'"[34] Indeed, given the multiplicity of examples he presents, Clymer seems if anything slightly to understate the missionary association between Catholics and idolatry.

Protestant missionaries largely shared the culture of the colonial civil service. They were certainly familiar with the "scientific" theories of racial progression which Kramer has outlined, and applied them to the Philippine situation, blaming the Spanish for having provided an unfavorable environment for Filipino development.[35] They also associated closely with administrators and school teachers, generally having a high opinion of the government leaders, especially those who, like David Barrows (a Congregationalist), were observant Christians.[36] Neither Kramer nor Clymer, however, points out that the opposite was also true; whether members of the Philippines administration, and other Americans in the islands, happened to be regular churchgoers or not, their thinking was deeply shaped by its participation in a distinctively Protestant culture.

Arguments about "idolatry" could indeed divide the American institution itself, as the interesting case of the Episcopalians shows.[37] Even Governor Cameron W. Forbes, an intimate friend of the head of the Episcopalian church, was shocked on attending a service conducted by this friend, "to see the mummery indulged in by Bishop Brent,"[38] while lower-ranking Americans with High-Church leanings, or school teachers who were actually Roman Catholic, were immediately suspect.

More pervasively implicit was the effect which American assumptions concerning Catholic idolatry had on the perception and understanding of lowland society. Both sympathetic and hostile accounts of even of the most public and formal aspects of Catholic ritual were surprisingly unfocused. Even the observant Maud Huntley Jenks, after the most painstaking discussions of Ifugao religious practices, grants us only the vaguest and most perfunctory account of church ceremonial as she passes through the lowlands:[39]

> Today has been a feast day here—some kind of church day . . . A rather impressive sight was the altar with its images and lighted candles . . . I feel as if I have had a peep back into the Middle Ages today. It's all as it used to be then—fiesta days, religious processions, and a religious life of form! . . . it makes

[34] Baptist missionary Forshee, quoted in ibid., p. 95.

[35] Ibid., pp. 65 and 87.

[36] Ibid., p. 185.

[37] Ibid., pp. 105-7, and James J. Halsema, *Bishop Brent's Baguio School: The First 75 Years* (Baguio: Brent School, 1988).

[38] Quoted in Clymer, *Protestant Missionaries*, p. 107.

[39] Accounts of lowland spirit mediumship and shamanism, moreover, were non-existent, except where these featured as part of the continuing resistance to the American occupation. School teachers and civilian visitors seem never to have noticed the rich variety of healing activity that characterizes Philippine neighborhoods in all parts of the country.

> my wonderful University classes on medieval European history . . . in Madison, Wisconsin, live again as in my student days.[40]

Many other authors, unable to tell whether any of the numerous processions were solemn or celebratory in character, agreed with Jenks's reference to Medievalism. "The scene" of one Ilokano fiesta mass, according to the teacher William Freer, another sympathetic witness of lowland life, "recalled the middle ages,"[41] for the endless carrying about of the saints' images and the frequent, spasmodic ringing of bells and playing of music conveyed nothing but a senseless "confusion and discord" to the American ear.

Not everyone found this time-travel impressive. Sterner characters like Edwin A. Schell, a lecturer from a religious college in Buffalo, New York, commented that one of the few failures of American policy in the islands was the continued absence in 1913 of "the tall, white angel of the Protestant Sabbath."[42] In any case, the idea that the religious activity of the lowlands was just a kind of arbitrary mock-Medieval milling-about seems to have inclined most writers to give only the most fragmentary accounts of it.

The notion that lowland religion was, because Catholic, idolatrous, seemed at one level too obvious to require explicit statement. Authors who mentioned public worship at all, mentioned the saints that featured in all Filipino processions. "Every town in the Philippines, no matter how poor, has a number of images,"[43] some of which seemed quite striking. "The Jaro church," as one informant from Iloilo tells us,

> has a wax figure of the Savior and this figure is dressed for various festivals in various ways: sometimes in evening dress, with white shirt, diamond stud, rings on the fingers, patent leather shoes and a derby hat. . . According to the Spanish calendar in my possession, there is a festival for every day of the year.[44]

Observation of the eccentric costume of the saint could lead easily into a more direct attack on the "vanity" of his worshippers, who, like the image, appeared to have an unsuitable taste for fancy headgear. "I never knew" the author continues:

> " . . . that there could be so many kinds of derby as I saw on the heads of these natives. It was said that a ship-load of them was brought over once, and they so charmed the male population that from that time on they all aspired to own a derby, no matter how ancient its appearance. . . And no matter if they did not have a shirt for their back."[45]

[40] Jenks, *Death Stalks the Philippine Wilds*, p. 147.

[41] William Bowed Freer, *The Philippine Experiences of an American Teacher: A Narrative of Work and Travel in the Philippine Islands* (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1906), p. 77.

[42] Edwin A. Schell, *In Ports Afar* (New York and Cincinnati: The Abingdon Press, 1914), p. 186.

[43] Freer, *Philippine Experiences*, p. 94.

[44] Emily Bronson Conger, *An Ohio Woman in the Philippines, Giving Personal Experiences and Descriptions including Incidents of Honolulu, Ports in Japan and China* (Akron, Ohio: R.H. Leighton, 1904). p. 111.

[45] Ibid., pp. 112-3.

This picture is contrasted with the devotions of the writer, a Mrs. Emily Bronson Conger, styling herself "an Ohio woman in the Philippines." Forced to wash her own laundry if she wants anything to come out a "pure white," she bends over the tub with a revolver within easy reach in case any of the natives should turn treacherous, and sings while tears roll down her face:

> Am I a soldier of the Cross?
> A follower of the Lamb?
> And shall I fear to own His cause
> Or blush to speak His name?[46]

Such trials no doubt led to Mrs. Conger's reflection on the beatings rumored to be administered to Filipinos by Spanish friars; "It may be that these people *need* to be terrorized by the priests."[47]

Mrs. Conger's unfriendly tone is admittedly at one extreme in American writing. She came to Panay in 1898 to keep house for her son, Scout, the head of a battalion of American troops engaged to massacre as many of the surrounding Filipino "insurrectionaries" as possible. Yet she is not alone in linking a contempt for the forms of Filipino religion to a fear of Filipino insurrection. The notion that all saint-worship was at least "confusion," if not downright deception and self-deception, served commentators well in finding ways to suggest that Filipino revolutionary patriotism was a form of fraud.

Freer recounts how at Pagsanjan in 1902:

> . . . the *insurrectos* had been going from hamlet to hamlet, surreptitiously exhibiting religious images for the purpose of raising money to carry on the insurrection. . . A life-size wooden statue with a dark face, attired in rich ecclesiastical robes, was placed in the corner of a room not too well lighted, and the people were invited to visit what was described as a miraculous image of the Savior . . . [a man seated in the next room made oracular statements in Tagalog] . . . and people were enjoined to work for the Americans, but give the money thus earned to the cause.[48]

What Freer called the "credulity" of the "medieval" natives, which would lead them to believe either in false gods or in false governments, is here neatly joined to the idea that their leaders are manipulative. Idolatrous religions produce idolatrous politics full of leaders who set themselves up as false gods; and religion that permits of "confusion" between the real and the false in this way is also a religion of concealment which hides a treacherous heart.

It was this logic which determined that the Filipino forces holding out against the Americans should always be referred to as "bandits" or, in two terms taken over from the Spanish insults for the politically resistant, as "insurrectionaries" (*insurrectos*) or *ladrones*. The army of President Aguinaldo was thus reduced at a stroke to the status of robber outlaws. In fact, it could be argued that it was *only* when lowland religion could be tied to a resurgent political threat that it actually

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[46] Ibid., p. 159.

[47] Ibid., p. 113. My emphasis.

[48] Freer, *Philippine Experiences*, pp. 10-11.

came into sharp focus at all for the Americans. Lowland healers using indigenous methods, for example, who were both extremely numerous and making use of a rich and subtle indigenous repertoire of religious and medical practice, merited almost no mention whatsoever in these annals. "Filipino swindler poses as the true savior," sneered one headline of the Manila Times of 1904.[49] Perhaps behind the disgust there was also a certain element of relief. At moments like this, one could feel that one had temporarily solved the problem of the "confusion" which looking at lowland society brought about. There was "something to these Filipinos" after all, and even if that "something" turned out to be treachery, one had looked it in the face, and—by dismissing it as deceitful idolatry—one could tell oneself one had stared it down.

For much of the time, however, the nature of the lowland Philippines and its religion remained opaque to American observers. Writers on lowland life could not help responding with both fascination and some horror to the Filipino treatment of the dead. In particular what caught their attention were the funerals of young children of families wealthy enough to bury them with some ceremony. "My feelings were shocked," says Freer, "upon observing that at some funerals the liveliest airs were played: upon one occasion, a funeral procession wended its way to the cemetery to the music of a popular song of which the burden is 'There'll be a hot time in the old town tonight.'"[50]

The "Ohio woman" describes, "a catafalque . . . [containing a child's body dressed in finery] covered with blue satin and trimmed with riffles of satin and lace . . . and long blue satin ribbons whose ends were held by several little girls decked out as brides"[51] as a typical assemblage.

Neither of these observers realized that the funerals of small children in the Philippines are supposed to be conducted with apparent happiness, whatever the feelings of the bereaved, since their souls are considered too young to have sinned.[52] What they were concerned with, I would argue, although they did not articulate it in this way, was a similarity they perceived between the treatment of the corpses decked out and carried through the streets, and the treatment of the saints who were carried in procession. The Americans continued to find something unaccountable about the lowland Filipinos. Not only did they worship idols, but they themselves often appeared to the American imagination as something less than fully alive and human.

With their apparent "parroting" and mimicry, and their "confusion" about real meaning, lowlanders figured either as mechanical automata—a kind of doll, as a saint may be thought of as a kind of doll—or even as uncannily animated corpses. While we might consider these images an effect of American repression of the

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[49] *Manila Times*, April 29, 1904, p.1.

[50] Freer, *Philippine Experiences*, p. 94.

[51] Conger, *Ohio Woman*, p. 145.

[52] My experience in Bicol was that dead children were certainly said to be "little angels" (*angellitos*), and modifications were made in funerals. For instance, blue coffins were used; the funerary band was asked to play cheerful music, etc. However, this was regarded by most people as a duty imposed by the church and had no impact on the profound grief people felt and expressed over infant deaths (see Cannell, *Spirit Mediums*, pp. 227ff, and Cannell, *Power and intimacy*, p. 191). Such "angel funerals" seem to be found in many parts of the Iberian Catholic world. See Nancy Schepper-Hughes, *Death without Weeping: The Violence of Everyday Life in Brazil* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and Oxford: University of California Press, 1992), pp. 271, 383, 416-23, 429-30, for a contrasting case.

recognition of the independent life of the lowlands, the Americans did not see it that way. In their view, the preceding Spanish regime had reduced its Filipino subjects to this zombie-like state, and it was now up to the Americans to put the life back into them.

"WHAT THERE IS IN THE NATIVE"

American government documents often discussed Philippine bodies in striking terms. The image of physical degeneracy, stuntedness, or deficiency, like the image of the body as living corpse, was often used to discredit lowland Filipinos. Take, for example, this characterization of the Revolutionary leader Aguinaldo, by the American journalist Halstead in 1898:

> The door from the study opened and a very slender and short young man entered with a preoccupied look that quickly became curious. An attendant said in a low voice, "General Aguinaldo." He was unexpectedly small—could weigh but little over 100 pounds—dressed in pure white, and his modesty of bearing would have become a maiden. The first feeling was a sort of faint compassion that one with such small physical resources should have to bear the weighty responsibilities resting upon him... " [53]

If we set aside the implications of effeminacy in this extract, it is fairly typical in its assumption that the relative "backwardness" of the Filipino lowlanders, their inferiority to Americans, would be evident in their bodies. It can thus be classed with, for example, the much-discussed sanitary campaigns against cholera in Manila as an effect of the popular racial theories of the day which we have already encountered.[54] Not only cholera, however, but plague, leprosy, and smallpox were to the forefront of the American mind, and victims of these diseases were regarded as essential sights which the official government visitor should take in.[55]

One might also view in this light the obsessive interest in the physical development of Filipino pupils that characterizes the literature of the Bureau of Education between 1900 and at least 1930. Against images of puny leaders and epidemic-ridden peasantries were to be placed the pictures of what American policy could accomplish through instruction in better nutrition, and through training the Filipino in sports, athletics, and (a little later in the century) the correct kind of playground games to develop the body. A typical headline of an entry in the annual

[53] Murat Halstead, *The Story of the Philippines. Natural Riches, Industrial Resources . . . Events of the War in the West with Spain, and the Conquest of Cuba and Puerto Rico* (Chicago: Our Possessions Publishing Co., 1898) p. 54.

[54] Reynaldo Ileto, "Cholera and the Origins of the American Sanitary Regime," in Rafael, ed., *Discrepant Histories*, pp. 51-82; and Warwick Anderson, "'Where every prospect pleases and only man is vile': Laboratory Medicine as Colonial Discourse," in Rafael, ed., *Discrepant Histories*, pp. 83-112.

[55] Many writers even made the highly dubious claim that lowland Filipinos were so accustomed to smallpox that they were somehow indifferent to its symptoms and to the high child mortality it caused, e.g. Conger, *Ohio Woman*, p. 145.

report of the Director of Education for 1913 ran: "What basketball is doing for the girls in Zambales."[56]

Baseball teams had been a theme from the moment of colonization. From 1911 onwards, photographs of athletics competition winners in sports kit also adorned official reports. The government announced its intention to change the bodies of Filipino children through the enormous efforts made to encourage people to eat corn rather than rice. Thousands of schoolchildren were invited to take part in Corn Festivals all over the country, with their parents. In Dumaguete in 1912:

> There were six different dishes of corn prepared and sold, and probably four thousand ate of one or more of these prepared dishes. What a side show the corn-germinating box was, and how the thousands looked at the selected seed-ears! . . . A swarm of boys, some of them dressed as fat, husky clowns, wore placards "I eat corn," others, dressed as lean clowns, wore other placards, "I eat rice" . . . Rice is the Oriental food . . . But corn and corn pone, and corn cakes, like science and the English language, and the Christian faith belong to the Occidental civilization. It is suggestive of fat swine, thick beefsteaks, butter and cheese, and the introduction of corn to the Philippine Islands is naturalization, revolution and revelation.[57]

Actually, of course, corn is generally regarded as a poverty food and as far less sustaining than rice. Most Filipinos find fresh dairy produce indigestible. The passage is more indicative of passionate attachment to a threatened mode of American agricultural life, than of solutions to Filipino rural development.[58] Obviously, one could present this material in terms of familiar (over-familiar) tropes of colonial discourses of embodiment. What interests me about it, however, is something slightly different; that is, that one finds equally strongly implied here a relationship between the body and the *soul*. Take, for example, the comment of a local Protestant missionary on the value of including universal manual labor in Philippine industrial education; these "manly" exertions, he believed, were designed: " . . . to help men possessed of bodies, to create those outward conditions which will best enable them to use their bodies as instruments of the enlarged mind and soul which are the earliest gift of Christian conversion."[59]

The body, in other words, was one special part of the outward material world, and with it, formed the arena of action for the Christian soul. In popular thought, the body could also be read as an outward sign of the state of the interior man, as in this missionary account of a clerical meeting:

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[56] Quoted in Pecson and Racelis, eds., *American Teachers*, p. 191.

[57] Schell, *Ports Afar*, p. 177.

[58] John Thorn with Matt Lewis Thorn, *Serious Pig: An American Book in Search of his Roots* (New York: North Point Press, 2000). It is interesting to note that although highland populations were obviously also vulnerable to infectious diseases (and government reports documented their ailments), contemporary writing tended to stress a counter-stereotype of the highland body as muscular, fit, and admirably masculine. Only lowlanders were portrayed as physically enfeebled.

[59] Clymer, *Protestant Missionaries*, p. 84. No reference is given for the speaker, but it may be David Husband.

> They typified the whole wide-world difference between American Protestantism and Spanish Romanism . . . the missionary with his high forehead, frank blue eyes, clear-cut features, whose every line and expression betokened temperate living and high thinking, and the Bishop—well, there was a noticeable difference."[60]

Thus, the teaching of sport was not merely an effort towards physical improvement of a so-called backward race, but also an attempt to awaken the soul to action:

> The boy who has even for a season or two experienced the stirring discipline of public censure and public applause in hard athletic battles, has learned lessons which will remain with him longer than any maxim learned from books . . . [the force of athletics is] actively revolutionary, and with it come new standards, new ideals of conduct, and what is more important, new ideals of character . . . "[61]

Sport would, it was believed, develop "discipline" in persons previously lacking in it, but it would also develop that internal force of personality that was thought to have "atrophied" to such an abysmal extent under the Spaniards, or even not to be present at all; baseball was, in a sense, the American cure not just for smallpox, but for idolatry.

One sees a similar logic at work in the American obsession with retraining Filipino voices. American dismay at Spanish teaching methods is a set-piece of schoolteachers' writing. A Babel of sound is always described as characterizing the Spanish-style classroom, punctuated by the thwack of the master's stick disciplining some unfortunate child for a minor error in recitation. Pupils were set only rote-learning tasks, mostly derived from religious literature, and each pupil repeated his lessons out loud in the classroom without any regard to what his neighbors were trying to learn.[62]

The new teachers thus saw a double task for themselves. Firstly, they had to replace this "confusion" of noise with, in particular, the well modulated and tuneful group singing of "My Old Kentucky Home" or "America the Beautiful."[63] Secondly, the teacher had to extirpate—sometimes with great difficulty—the habits of reading aloud, rote learning, and anxious repetitive mimicry in his or her pupils, and substitute for them the habits of reading individually and silently, "with understanding," and speaking with comprehension, expression, and meaning.

The suppression of what was usually called "the rhetorical voice" in Filipino children speaking English, and its replacement by a voice which signaled just that cultivated interiority, that link between inward reflection and outward action, which the Americans were so anxious to create in their colonial subjects, was a theme that persisted in annual education reports well into the Commonwealth period. Indeed, I would argue that it was an instance of the drive to establish what Webb Keane has

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[60] Brown, "Report of a Visitation," quoted in Clymer, *Protestant Missionaries*, p. 73.

[61] Bureau of Education, *1921* (Manila: Bureau of Printing, 1921), p. 31.

[62] Freer, *Philippine Experiences*, pp. 112 ff.; Pecson and Racelis, *American Teachers*, p. 91.

[63] There is more to be said about the recasting of Filipino singing techniques, but no space to tell that story here.

referred to as "sincerity" in Filipinos.[64] As Rafael and others have pointed out, the relationship between words and thoughts is one which is central to all Christian theology,[65] since all Christian thinking is in some ways logocentric. Words on the page, text, are not meant to have an existence prior to words that issue from and reflect the mind and soul of the speaker. In its beginnings, the world is a thought spoken by God himself. The Catholic church has wrestled from its origins with the problem of establishing the relationship between actions and interior states, and between declarations of belief and true states of belief.[66] However, in many forms of Protestantism this issue becomes focused on the individual in a particular way, perhaps because the Christian person is now outside the regulatory structure of Catholic confession. Bauman and others have shown us how, in the case of the Quakers, for instance, religious practice becomes centered on interrogating the self about the origins of what one is prompted to say, and rejecting those impulses which do not come from the Spirit; hence the Quaker injunction, "Let your words be few."[67]

Behind the problem of establishing sincerity, according to Protestant thought, lies yet another problem. In order to be an origin of sincere speech, the self (or soul) must hold itself in some ways discrete. A person cannot be sincere if the boundary between that self and another self is constantly blurred, for in that case, who is it that we hear speaking? Even (and especially) a Christian's openness to being overshadowed by the Holy Spirit carries with it the obligation to resist other forms of blurring of the self. Many of these, within both Catholic and Protestant thinking, have been called possession.

In the Philippines, imitation does not have the sense of mere derivativeness and passivity generally given to it in the West; instead, it encompasses a series of ways of relating to power, through which the weaker party can share in the experiences and identity of the stronger. Imitation can often be a religious act as well as a political one, and devotional practices that center on identifying oneself with Christ or other holy figures are common.[68] Saints are a central focus for this kind of religious imitation.

For the American observer, however, Filipino "imitativeness" meant something very different. On the one hand, adaptability to the new regime, and the willingness to learn, was to be encouraged and should have been understood as a sign of the possibility of racial "progress." On the other hand, this "quickness" suggested a readiness to capitulate and to surrender the boundaries of the self, which produced a profound unease in the mind accustomed to Protestant ideas of personal authenticity.

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[64] Webb Keane, "Sincerity, Modernity and the Protestants," unpublished manuscript dated 2001.

[65] Vicente L. Rafael, *Contracting Colonialism: Translation and Christian Conversion in Tagalog Society under Early Spanish Rule* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988. Esp. preface and chapters 2 and 3.

[66] This is, indeed, the issue which the early Inquisition was established to address. See e.g. Pierre Schmidt *The Holy Greyhound: Guinefort, Healer of Children since the Thirteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); and Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, *Montaillou: Cathars and Catholics in a French Village, 1294-1324* (London: Scholars Press, 1978).

[67] Richard Bauman, *Let Your Words Be Few: The Symbolism of Speaking and Silence among Seventeenth-Century Quaker.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

[68] Cannell, *Power and Intimacy*, pp. 180-81.

Ironically, the American educational program itself relied on precisely these disturbing imitative abilities. The colonial authorities had a large number of schools to staff, and very few native American teachers. As much as possible, they needed to retain the existing Filipino teachers from the Spanish regime. But since the new regime despised Spanish teaching methods, the Filipino teachers needed to be re-trained. Above all, they needed to cease teaching in Spanish, and to become competent purveyors of the new English-language syllabus.

Chronically short of funds, the Bureau of Education decided to allow for this transformation the period of one month. American inspectors attended schools to train and supervise the transition, and it is difficult to say who was made more anxious by the process; but it was probably the Filipino teachers, who were in danger of losing their jobs if they failed to make the grade. One American inspector, commenting on the "astonishingly good" results obtained in just a few weeks, stubs his toe, as it were, on a realization of the contradictions involved:

> This [success] results from their [lowland Filipinos'] ability to imitate closely the methods which they have seen used by their instructors. Where the young and inexperienced American would partially fail by reason of his independence and originality, the little-schooled Filipino succeeds by virtue of his faithful imitation of the ways of others, so that his ability in this respect works to the advantage of the Philippine primary schools . . . "[69]

In other words, whether the lowland Filipinos did what their new colonial government asked them to or not, they could never entirely satisfy this new master. The logic of American Protestant thought and its lack of comprehension of local meanings endlessly revived the idea that Filipinos were lacking in sincerity, in authenticity, in the kind of interiority which it compulsively sought. However much the colonial institutions produced changes in Filipino life which could be read as evidence of lowland racial progress, doubts still remained. The highland "savages" could be fitted neatly into the colonial game of "before" and "after, but the lowlanders presented the Americans with endless difficulties. The label "idolatry" was an attempt to identify what the Americans felt was wrong with the lowlanders, but even this label was not self-explanatory, and contained layers of meaning, at the core of which was the notion of a person lacking Protestant authenticity.

Important though the dominance of racial ethnology is in explaining the early American period, therefore, it does not capture everything about it. The educational experiment actually worked according to a logic approximating that of Christian conversion. The idea of transformation through "progress" could not function without a conviction of interior transformation; colonials were in very much the same kind of position of constant uncertainty as missionaries faced with the problem of deciding whether the newly baptized have truly been converted in their hearts.[70]

Moreover, the language of idolatry goes beyond a mere game of defamatory similes—fraudulent gods equal fraudulent Filipinos. One can in fact say that there was an implicit *economy* of idolatry at work here. If an idol is wood or stone to which

[69] Freer, *Philippine Experiences*, p. 112.

[70] Rafael, *Contracting Colonialism*; John N. Schumacher, S. J., *Readings in Philippine Church History* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1987), pp. 73-4.

is attributed inappropriately, almost obscenely, the qualities of the animate, then the correlate appears to be that the human beings who worship it become thereby *less* than fully alive. They come to be seen as dolls, or automata, or even (as in the quotation which heads this article) to be described as their own carefully preserved and displayed corpses.[71] And as we shall see, this economy of idolatry also placed lowland objects within particular kinds of relations.

THE IDOL VANISHES

Given this almost obsessive preoccupation with lowland "idolatry," one might have expected Americans to pay close attention to the actual saints' images which were the focus of their disapproval. In fact, as with the accounts of lowland religious practice in general, one gains only the vaguest impression of these images, and in many contexts they were ignored altogether.

This is the more striking when one considers the actual significance of saint's images in lowland life, about which I have written at length elsewhere.[72] Filipino saints are vivid presences, who also occupy in some parts of the islands an intimate and important place in family life, as they do in Bicol. Sharing in the devotion of a saint is one way in which kinship links can be either maintained or evaded over time. In these and other ways, saints seem one of the only categories of objects in Bicol which could be considered close to what Annette Weiner called "inalienable possessions."[73] In other ways, as I have hinted above, Bicol culture does not primarily constitute itself through ideas of unchangingness or through the transmission over time of objects of "cosmological" significance, and in some ways therefore poses problems for Weiner's kind of thesis.

Now, objects that captured the key religious and kinship values of a social group were precisely the one crucial category of things which Philippine ethnologists were eagerly seeking in upland "cultures." So eager were anthropologists to acquire religious artifacts, in fact, that at times they even resorted to stealing them.[74] Yet objects which had a parallel significance in lowland societies were systematically disregarded.

American colonial writing includes almost no descriptions of lowland arts and artifacts; one can find (as I mentioned earlier) a range of derogatory references to lowland theater and performance, but little or nothing on clothing, jewelry, books, or religious objects, although many distinctive, high-quality items were being produced at this time for the Filipino elite. Philippine houses are occasionally mentioned, but generally in the context of remarks about the difficulties of running a colonial household.[75] Nothing is said about the structure, arrangement, internal logic, and decoration of Filipino houses, or the significance of their various rooms. The richness

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[71] It is usual for Filipinos to display the deceased in open coffins for some nights at the wake prior to the funeral. Because of the difficulties of preserving bodies in tropical conditions, commercial embalming is now standard even for the poor. In the past, and still today for the very poor, deodorant herbs may be used: in this case, the wake is necessarily shorter.

[72] Cannell, *Power and Intimacy;* Cannell, "The Imitation of Christ."

[73] Annette B. Weiner, *Inalienable Possessions: The Paradox of Keeping-while-giving* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, Oxford: University of California Press, 1992).

[74] Jenks, *Death Stalks the Philippine Wilds.*

[75] See Rafael, *White Love,* for discussions of colonial domestic discourse.

of associations which a wealthy Filipino mansion of this period might have had for its elite inhabitants[76] or the complex ways in which various parts of even the humblest village home were associated with cooking, childbirth, death, and the entry and exit of spirits during mediumship rituals passed entirely unnoticed.

The attitude with which the selection of lowland objects for the various World's Fairs and Expositions of the period was approached is also instructive. The hastily assembled collection for the Pan-American Exposition of 1900 leant heavily on war trophies from the still-continuing hostilities.[77] The 1904 St. Louis Exposition, whose intellectually ambitious but ill-fated exhibits were assembled by the ethnologist Albert Jenks, included a greater variety of lowland objects, in part because of the display of a Luzon and a Visayan "village," as well as the real attention-getters, the "Igorrotte" villages. Little is mentioned about the lowland villages, except that they consisted of *nipa* buildings within a palisade, and obviously the press was not much interested in their contents and details.[78] Small household altars are found in every Catholic lowland home and should have featured in the Visayan houses, but if lowland saints did find their way to St. Louis, no one appears to have spared them a glance or a mention.

The other great Exposition of the period, the 1915 Panama-Pacific Exposition, was organized not by anthropologists such as Jenks, but by the then Director of Education, Frank L. Crone, who was driven by the determination to show that his new industrial education policy produced objects that could be sold on an international market. The main exhibition building devoted to the Philippines was therefore intended as a public salesroom for vast quantities of hats, lace, embroidery, mats, textiles, hardwood furniture and "artistic things like . . . lampshades," made of Capiz shell.[79] Although some of these objects were made by adults, the heart of the Philippine School's exhibit was in effect a range of goods produced by compulsory child labor for the profit of the colonial government.[80] The exhibition space itself was

[76] Fernando Nakpil Zialcita and Martin I.Timio Jr., *Philippine Ancestral House s(1810-1930)* (Quezon City: GCF Books, 1980).

[77] It also featured agricultural tools and an array of skulls meant to demonstrate Filipino physical types. Kramer, *Pragmatic Empire*, p. 80

[78] The list of objects offered for sale to American museums at the end of the Exposition included "pictures and statuary, articles of gold, silver, ivory, shell, brass, bronze and bone, silks, pineapple and hemp fiber cloth, mantillas, lace and embroidery, beadwork and fine sample of wood carving from Bilabid prison." *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, November 2, 1904, p. 5, quoted in Kramer, *Pragmatic Empire*, p. 138. Of this list, the mantillas, pineapple, and hemp cloth were almost certainly from the lowlands, and probably also some of the shell and gold objects. "Pictures and statuary" is more difficult to interpret. These could be highland artifacts of the kind which were eagerly identified as religious exotica and which were sought after by museums as totems of culture. It might mean secular elite art. Or it might imply that one or two of the religious images which are placed on household altars by every Catholic lowland family had found their way into the furnishings of the Visayan exhibit "village"; at any event, if so they went undiscussed and unappreciated.

[79] Frank Morton Todd, *The Story of the Exposition, being the official history of the international celebration held at San Francisco in 1915 to commemorate the discovery of the Pacific Ocean and the construction of the Panama Canal*, vol. 4 (New York and London: G. P. Putnam's sons, 1921), p. 378.

[80] Besides the schools products, there were brass boxes from Mindanao and a range of objects which one might think of as the beginning of the mass production of highland tribal souvenirs; "crooked knives, bolos, savage-looking head axes, spears and shields," (Todd, *Story*

also for sale; made of narra hardwood planks and shell panels, the Philippines Building was designed to demonstrate the properties of native building materials to potential constructors and investors.

Philippine objects did feature in some of the other buildings of the Exposition. The Palace of Education contained a celebration of the American schools policy and a range of schools-produced goods which was largely a recapitulation of the Philippines Building Exhibit.[81] There was a large array of Philippine agricultural products in the Foreign Farming exhibit,[82] and the famous Fine Arts Gallery included, among its 11,403 exhibits, thirty-six items from the Philippine islands, which we learn were "paintings and drawings, distinguished for the proofs they gave of the recent assimilation of European art."[83]

Nowhere, however, were there any objects which would have been recognized by Philippine lowlanders as items of beauty and value which Filipinos produced for themselves. And there were certainly no exhibits including lowland religious art of any kind, and apparently no examples of Philippine saints' images.[84]

The Philippines at the Exposition was, therefore, restrictively represented as and by its commodities, and no indicator of alternative economies of value was allowed ingress. Judged by obvious criteria, the display was a success. Yet the literature that accompanied the exhibition, and other documents from this period produced by the Bureau of Education, argued an ineradicable anxiety about these objects.

For Frank L. Crone, as for the vast majority of American colonial commentators, there was little point in viewing lowland goods as potential trophies or collectibles. While highland deities and weapons might be bought by those who wished to own a piece of highland "culture," lowland objects could not appeal in this way because, as we have seen, the lowlands were not really considered to have a culture at all. An alternative approach to lowland products was therefore required.

Crone was astute enough to have realized that profit from Philippine industrial education would not be maximized by aiming at totally mechanized mass production. Instead, he aimed to catch the mood of a buying public that already preferred the "hand-made" to the machine-made, at least in items of personal apparel.[85] He therefore intended to present Philippine goods as *artisanal*, as representing time-consuming hand labor and craft authenticity, both of which could be sold for a premium. At the same time, the goods were in fact to be marketed in bulk. Crone therefore ferociously discouraged existing individual or local variations

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of the Exposition, vol. 4, p. 378), all of which items Crone planned to have mass produced. Kramer, *Pragmatic Empire*, esp. 230 ff.)

[81] Todd, *Story of the Exposition*, vol. 4, p. 39 . Explanations of American successes in improving sanitation and reducing infant mortality were included in the exhibit on public hygiene. Todd, *Story of the Exposition*, vol. 4, pp. 59-60.

[82] Ibid., p. 283. Samples of Philippine maps and printing presses were featured in the exhibit on Liberal Arts in Other Lands. Ibid., pp. 111-14)

[83] Ibid., p. 30.

[84] Philippine work was as conspicuous for the exhibits in which it did *not* appear as for those in which it did. Clearly, vernacular folk arts were not totally unappreciated by the Exposition audience; the exhibit on Wares of Foreign Lands included embroidered Balkan peasant costumes, and elaborately carved Indian furniture. Ibid., pp. 145-49. The Arts and Crafts Exhibit was an enormous display of applied arts such as jewelry, many of them submitted by the craftspeople themselves, but it was almost exclusively of American work. Ibid., p. 149).

[85] Kramer, *Pragmatic Empire*, pp. 203 ff.

in the product. What he wanted was not hats which people in lowlands crafts villages might actually make and wear, but hats with a Philippine flavor for American citizens.

This is a common situation in international commoditization. Crone however was caught in a dilemma. Looking at lowland products, he could in truth see nothing that he could identify—and sell—as that Philippine flavor, because to him all marks of local variation and intentionality in manufacture were simply meaningless twitches. He wanted to commodify lowland "culture," yet he and most of his compatriots did not really believe that lowland culture existed.[86]

Department of Education literature at this period is therefore marked by a tone of suppressed anxiety and irritation. Noting the "thousand articles made by the pupils in their prescribed school work,"[87] the pamphlet accompanying the Philippine exhibition on education comments, "There has been in the past no design or color or form of manufacture that has been to the country unique."[88] Thus Philippine products have easily been mistaken for goods from elsewhere; they have not had a distinctive profile; their hold on the world market has been a tenuous one. "Evidently," this source continues, "something must be done to bring the Philippines into its own: there must be introduced into the commercial market something distinctively Philippine in makeup and design."[89]

There must be an urgent "search for suitable motifs" by the branches of the government, who will forthwith distribute them for copying to Filipino schoolchildren. *"There must be found something Philippine"*[90]—but Filipino school children, trained in conformity to American education, are to be provided with this salable authenticity by the American colonial government

We have come full circle to the bored white ladies' infuriated cry: "There is nothing about these Filipinos, you see." Even the commodities of the educational miracle seem always to be withholding that essential element of authenticity, of difference. The lowland idol had been made to vanish from the image of the Philippine lowlands that America exported internationally, because from the American point of view it did not signify a "culture," and in that sense, it was not even a "real" idol at all. The notion of lowland "idolatry" in the sense of the collapse of distinctiveness, however, persisted even into the realm of commoditization.

[86] Or, in the alternative language available, lowland "civilization." See for example, Todd, *Story of the Exposition*, vol. 4, p. 376. "There was a civilization in the islands long before the Spanish War, and the human material was there with which to work; quick , adaptable, responsive.' This comment accompanied the token exhibition of Filipiniana (antique books) in the Philippine Building. Todd also compares the Building to a 'Philippine mansion' although in fact it is a hybridized affair more reminiscent of public school architecture. But the idea of civilization, like the idea of primitive culture, implies the idea of continuity and tradition, which the lowlands were thought to lack. The flip side of the Morgan thesis on social adaptation—to be too adaptable is not a good thing. To be adaptable is very American; but so is to be aware of your 'roots', and to hold onto to your 'identity'.

[87] Manila, Bureau of Printing (No author), *The Philippine Islands, Their Industrial and Commercial Possibilities, the Country and the People*, 16 vols., vol. 1, *The Philippine Public Schools at the Panama-Pacific Industrial Exposition; The Exhibit in the Palace of Education; Organization and Administration of the Philippine Public Schools; Facts and Figures on the Islands and their Schools* (Manila: Bureau of Printing, c. 1915).

[88] Ibid., p. 100.

[89] Ibid., p. 11

[90] My emphasis.

Perhaps for this reason, one finds photographic images of these failed lowland commodities endlessly repeated in government publications of this period; pages and pages of headless hats, necklace lace collars, handless handkerchiefs, disembodied frocks and other articles, accompanied by fervently enumerative prose—"In the 1914 Exhibition, the Bureau exhibited over 51,000 articles valued at nearly P99,000 housed in its own building erected by students of the Philippine school of arts and trades."[91]—breathes one annual report of education. One is left with the impression that these unsatisfactory articles had come to stand in the mind of the colonial bureaucrats for the limbs and identities of the unsatisfactory persons who produced them, and for the failure of either to demonstrate the required transformation from "culture" to modernity.

THE IDOL IN THE FETISH

Let me turn, at this point, to the link between lowland "idolatry" and the idea of the fetish, or more specifically, to William Pietz's influential essays on the fetish. The fetish has been given multiple contradictory meanings, but Pietz refuses to be bogged down, instead electing a radically historical approach which defines the truth of the term as the sum of its uses over time.[92] Stressing that the idea of the fetish spawned social actions and not merely phantasms, Pietz is nonetheless fastidious in drawing our attention to its historical development *as* an idea.

For Pietz, however, the "fetish" has a crucial period of development, when it becomes dominant and is used in unprecedented ways. This is the period of the encounter between West African societies and European mercantile capitalists—originally, the Portuguese, from whose language the word itself is most immediately derived.[93] In the eyes of Portuguese traders, and later Dutch, British, French, and other European colonialists, the "fetish" becomes a synoptic label for African cultures viewed as a bizarre and ultimately sinister inversion of European (i.e. capitalist) notions of value. While for "economic man" all action is governed by rational self-interest within the systematic application of the rules of monetary exchange, Africans were seen as swayed by utterly arbitrary and impulsive attributions of value to objects which simply happened across their path—a stick, a stone, or some other small thing which could be carried on the body as a form of amulet. Moreover, these "fetish" objects, imaginatively imbued with power, were not imbued with the power of anything which Europeans could recognize as a god or spirit; rather they were "irreducibly material"[94]—matter to which a power was assigned as such. So threatening an inversion did this seem that eventually Europeans came to elide the practices they named "fetishism" with war against whites and human sacrifice.[95]

The kernel of Pietz's idea appears to be this: the "fetish" is a field of phenomena and social actions, produced by radical misrecognition of incompatible ideas of value between two widely different cultures. It therefore occurs at the "border" or boundary between these cultures, specifically in the exploitative conditions of proto-

[91] Bureau of Education, *Annual Report, . . . 1914*. p. 87.

[92] Pietz, "The problem of the fetish, II," p. 23.

[93] Ibid., p. 31.

[94] Pietz, "The problem of the fetish, I," p. 7.

[95] Pietz, "The spirit of civilization."

colonial and colonial trade. As Pietz says, the fetish has never existed as a reality within a single culture, but is an intercultural artifact.[96]

The decisiveness with which Pietz has made the distinction between the evolution of the fetish understood in this way, and related ideas frequently confused with it, including the idea of the idol, has been extremely fruitful. Yet in pursuit of this clarity, Pietz sometimes appears to overstate his own case. He provides, for example, early in the argument, a very interesting account of the category of "idolatry" in Augustine. For Pietz, this serves to stress the distinction between idol and fetish by establishing the importance of the idea of the worship of (images of) false gods as the basis of idolatry. Yet he is too interested in the detail of the account not to tell us that there is also in Augustine, as in all later writers, a secondary meaning of idolatry: that is, a meaning of the erroneous worship of the image *as material thing* and not just as the proxy of a non-existent deity. In fact, these two meanings are ambiguously elided in Augustine and remain so throughout much of the patristic writing on the topic,[97] and they produce, as Pietz notes, an associated tradition of a disdain for the material in both theological and popular usage.[98]

Similarly, Pietz provides a very interesting account of the elusive category of the *fetissio* in Portuguese medieval Catholicism as the "made thing" to which sorcery and other superstitious practices are attached. He notes that the treatment of these objects in the legal literature is ambiguous,[99] but seems progressively to become generalized from artifacts to the whole practice of witchcraft. But it seems likely that the ambiguity he tries to resolve is actually inherent in the category itself, and corresponds to Augustine's failure to designate precisely the difference between the worship of the wrong god and the "superstitious" attribution of powers to the material form itself. In other words, it could be argued, the popular mind, unlike the minds of elite theologians, did not distinguish very forcefully between the "matter" and "spirit" in the idol.[100]

While Pietz insists that the essence of the idol is that it is an image, while the essence of the fetish is its irreducible materiality, "superstitious" practices of course involve all sorts of other, less obviously image-like objects, such as prayers, amulets, charms, pieces of bead and ribbon, etc. One might therefore be forgiven at least a little jolt of surprise when Pietz asserts roundly at the close of this very interesting account that the transposition of the idea of the *fetissio* to the West African context had "almost nothing to do with" medieval Catholic meanings and practices,[101] and that the idea of the "fetish" has displaced that of the "idol".

Pietz himself comments on the fact that contemporary commentators who are the key formulators of the term "fetish" themselves often used it almost interchangeably with the term "idol."[102] This is supposedly accounted for by the fact

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[96] Pietz, "The problem of the fetish, I," p. 11.

[97] Pietz, "The problem of the fetish, II," p. 27ff.

[98] This of course all derives even more fundamentally from the claim in most mainstream Christianities (but not in all Christianities) that matter and spirit are absolutely separate, and that God is a God of spirit and not matter, who also transcends matter. On this, see also Cannell "Introduction."

[99] Pietz, "The problem of the fetish, II" p. 33

[100] Ibid., p. 36.

[101] Ibid., pp. 35-6.

[102] Ibid., p. 37.

that these writers were reaching for a familiar language to describe the unfamiliar, which may well be so; yet the fact that they did so seems worthy of a little more notice. More particularly since, at least according to Pietz's sources, objects worn as "fetishes" were explicitly compared to "gods" by some of their African users.[103]

My reading of Pietz's own evidence, then, suggests that he may have insisted too much on the almost total lack of continuity between the language of the idol and the language of the fetish in his African colonial material. This leads one inevitably to wonder why. In answer I can only propose that, for all his careful and subtle attention to the changing nuances of Christian definitions, Pietz's own argument is finally (as indeed, he says himself) a "materialist" one, and so privileges the development of capitalism over other engines of historical change. Given the key moment in colonial mercantile capitalism with which he is concerned in his analysis of Brosnan's book on Guinea, he has perhaps tilted the balance of his analysis slightly too far in favor of emphasizing a break with the past corresponding to the magnitude of these global developments.

Pietz's argument may indeed hold for many parts of the world, and may well provoke fruitful directions for the further understanding of what is, in fact, novel about the idea of the fetish at this period. But the problem with a discussion as successful as Pietz's is that it may produce a tendency to think of all intercultural colonial encounters in terms of the category of the fetish as he defines it, and/or to concentrate scholarship on instances which might feasibly replicate some of the conditions of the encounter Pietz describes.

However, if we take our cue instead from Pietz's insistence on *historical specificity*, it is in fact impossible to discount the idea of the idol when discussing the Philippines. For it is in this language, rather than in the language of the fetish, that this rethinking of "value" occurs. The Philippines was already familiar with both Western colonialists and Christianity at the time of its contact with the Americans; the term "fetishism" had acquired three hundred years' more history since the first encounters Pietz describes, and had already been inherited by Marx, who used it as an analogy to describe capitalism's misrecognition of its *own* value system.

Why was the lowland Philippines construed so overwhelmingly in the language of idolatry? In my previous, and directly ethnographic, writing on the area, I have given one kind of answer to this question. The "mimicry" which European and American observers saw, and which so dismayed them, had a very different

[103] Here we reach a difficult point; Pietz in this essay is not purporting to give an ethnography of indigenous West African ideas, but a history of European usages developed in the contact. Yet at this stage, one feels that some reading of the ethnography is almost necessary. No doubt behind the misrepresentations of the reporter, whatever practices these West African people were engaged in were products of a very different economy than that of Christian Europe. Yet since the worship of "irreducible materiality" as such existed (if I follow Pietz correctly) largely in the minds of the Europeans rather than the minds of the West Africans, one would very much like to know more about the experiences and intentions of the "fetish" wearers themselves (other than the practice of communicating with or hiding the meanings of these objects from Europeans, that is). What if any relationship between object and power was actually supposed by the users and wearers of these artifacts? Did it bear any resemblances to the focus on the split between matter and spirit so crucial to Western Christian thinking, or was it as radically different, albeit in other ways, as some Europeans feared and imagined? Obviously the historical experience of many of these West African people is not recoverable, yet reading of some contemporary ethnography might be thought provoking. As it is, we are left with only the question hanging in the air.[103]

meaning for the people who practiced it, a meaning that centered around participating in the nature and therefore the power of the thing imitated, and not on a demeaning notion of derivativeness.[104] In this paper, however, I have been attempting to look more closely at the other kind of answer which can be given—that which emphasizes what "idolatry" meant to those who deployed the label.

Beyond its convenience as an insult in an anti-Hispanic period, the term was clearly polyvalent. At one level, to call the lowland Filipinos idolaters was, like calling them "tribes," an attempt to assimilate them to the model of primitive cultures which was being more successfully applied in the highlands. But we have seen that this attempt failed; the Americans could never fully envisage the lowlands as a culture of any kind; indeed, one could argue from this point of view that they thought the lowlanders not quite "idolatrous" enough.

At another level, however, the language of idolatry persisted because it summoned up precisely those associations of confusion and *lack* of clear definition which most troubled the American interpretation of lowland society. Idols were false deities; their worshippers were those who could not tell the real from the false and who had become infected with the properties of what they worshipped. Idols were imitations of god; idolaters were those whose souls had become reduced to nothing but imitation. Idols were things masquerading as persons;[105] idolaters were persons who had degenerated so that they were lacking in genuine life and had become like a corpse—body as matter without spirit—or an inanimate object. Idolaters, above all, were those who did not exert themselves in purposive action, but allowed themselves to succumb to meaningless and almost obsessive repetitive behavior, thus (from the Protestant point of view) threatening the whole economy of proper relations between man as conscious actor and the world on which he acts.

Behind this again, perhaps, is the work that the category of idol has performed in Christian thought in general. Pietz points to the lack of clarity between the definition of idolatry as the worship of false gods and as the worship of material forms, but his argument assumes that the prior definition is the dominant one. My view would be that it is precisely the persistent ambiguity between these two aspects of idolatry which makes it as powerful a category for understanding and misunderstanding in the early twentieth century as it had been in the fourteenth.

"Industrial education" in the Philippines was undertaken with the specific objective of producing international commodities, but I have argued that these commodities were never entirely satisfactory to the American regime. Something about them remained troubling, and in attempt to solve that trouble, the Bureau of Education took to a relentless repetition of photographs and images of the objects concerned, as if insistence in itself would make them convincing. The parade of Philippine hats and other items thus took on a quasi-animated quality, which accords well with one commonly used definition of the term "fetishization."

The absent term which these objects appeared to suggest, however, was not, as in Pietz's West African examples, the attraction of an "irreducible materiality" standing for a simple inversion of capitalist rationality; it was the missing "authenticity" of the lowlands, the characteristic which made them "idolatrous." If this was a fetish, it was a fetish of idolatry, an idol in a fetish. And if, as Pietz claims,

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[104] Cannell, *Power and Intimacy*, pp. 224 ff.

[105] Persons in the sense of both body-substitute, and the claim to be inhabited by a more-than-human spirit.

one of the dominant ways in which capitalism has reflected on non-capitalist systems of value has been through the fetish, then we could equally argue[106] that one of the dominant ways in which capitalism has reflected on its own *Christian* inheritance has continued to be through the figure of the idol.[107]

Finally, if anthropologists have been somewhat reluctant to dwell on the ways in which idolatry and other Christian concepts define the colonial encounter, we should continue to recall that this is not accidental. Christian thinking has a legacy in social science thinking itself, and it may be that, like the American educationalists, in looking at Christian subjects we see something which reminds us, disconcertingly, of ourselves.

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[106] See also Simon Jarvis, "'Old Idolatry': Rethinking Ideology and Materialism," in *Between the Pysche and the Polis*, ed. Michael Rossington and Anne Whitehead (Aldershot: Ashgate Press, 2000).

[107] See Cannell, *Anthropology of Christianity*.