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The Hills of Sampaloc, by Legarda

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quarantined, and stigmatized collectivity. San Juan properly acknowledges that the Filipino diasporic consciousness is a peculiar species for it is not pre-occupied with returning to the roots of its existence where shared histories and monuments of its past are recollected and exalted. This peculiar diasporic consciousness, San Juan observes, "is tied to a symbolic homeland indexed by kinship or particularistic traditions that it tries to transplant abroad in diverse localities" (380). San Juan's concern here is how to see the possibility of enabling the infinitude of the Filipino diaspora-in-the-making in the context of its specific historical contingencies and in relation to the abiding principle of national liberation being waged in the homeland. In other words, how the aspirations of the geo-political Philippines can meet with the aspirations of the Philippines of the mind, variously conceived and speckled around the globe, in the absolute horizon of a transformative and emancipative theory and practice for all—the enduring theories-practices of struggle, sympathy, and solidarity: *pakikibaka*, *pakikiramay*, at *pakikipagkapwa-tao*. San Juan concedes, however, that these idioms of love and liberation may just be addressing a slowly vanishing audience, his book "a wayward apostrophe to a vanished dreamworld—a liberated homeland, a phantasmagoric refuge—evoking the utopias and archaic golden myths and legends" (381). But one can say equally that San Juan is actually making a dialogue with an unconscious majority. The mass that will inhabit the singing spheres of the possible: the spaces of not what will be but those of what must be, justly. Ultimately San Juan and his labor are neither for America nor for the Philippines, but rather, they are for the impending present of the possible.

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The Hills of Sampaloc: The Opening Actions of the Philippine-American War February 4–5, 1899. By Benito J. Legarda, Jr. Makati City: The Bookmark, Inc. 2001. 202 pages.

The author has a clear primary purpose in writing this book: to correct the mistaken impression, fostered and disseminated for a century, that the first shot of the Philippine-American War was fired on the San Juan Bridge. It was not.

"Both the Filipino and American official reports agree that the first shot was fired by the Americans, and that it happened between Blockhouse 7 (on the Manila City boundary) and Barrio Santol ("In the jurisdiction of Sampaloc"), on the connecting road that is now Calle Sosiego."

This is the fact and the truth, and to prove it Dr. Legarda has brought together all possible documentary textual and pictorial evidence in this slim but important volume.

It provides the historian, the teacher, the student and the reader of history with a rare, close look at a small war. The reader sits, so to speak, at ringside, and, as at a tennis match, watches the players gather, prepare, mobilize, trade hostilities, seek reinforcements when necessary, and finally clash. It is indeed a small war, a tense moment in the saga of Philippine-American history, but a significant one.

Dr. Legarda's lucid text (edited by Ina Bulatao) presents every facet of the conflict, illustrated with small but clear, excellent maps and photographs. One is glad that photography had come of age, and was used to document a war. The photos are not generally action shots, of course, because photo journalism as defined today was still many years away. But the photographs of a Telegraph Station near Manila; of Macabebe Scouts; of Binondo bridge, shops and an *estero*; of the Officers of the First Colorado Infantry; of Soldiers Arresting Chinese in Manila; of Igorots on the March; of a Field Hospital; and portraits of Emilio Aguinaldo, Apolinario Mabini, Gen. Frederick Funston and Major Richard W. Young and the like give the start of the Philippine-American War flesh and heft.

The fifteen short chapters start after a Prologue: "On the eastern fringes of the city of Manila, north of the Pasig River, the ground rises gently to form a low, uneven ridge running on a general north-south axis. On its eastern flank, the ridge descends to the valley of the San Juan River, narrow but deep. At the end of the nineteenth century, the area was agricultural, covered with rice fields. The land was owned by a prominent family [Tuason].

"North of the pipeline was the small village of Santol, where the cultivators of the rice fields probably dwelt. South of it, on slightly higher ground, were more substantial residences. . . . The district was called Santa Mesa, and was referred to in some American military reports as Sampaloc Hill or Cemetery Hill.

"It was in Santa Mesa, on February 3, 1899 at 8:41 P.M. that the first spark of a deadly and destructive war was struck. And it was from Balic-Balic that the first American attack was launched at 8:10 A.M. the following day" (p. 2).

The last chapter (16) asks: Who Was to Blame? Commentary comes from officials on both sides, from Emilio Aguinaldo and Apolinario Mabini, from the press, from American officials and soldiers, and includes many testimonies of the bravery and loyalty of the undermanned, under-equipped Filipinos, who "fought pluckily," were "brave and skilled warriors" "not lacking in courage," who showed remarkable stoicism and desperate bravery.

Among the reports of drunkenness and insults on both sides, of looting by the victors, of total puzzlement among the vanquished, there is as well Senator R. F. Pettigrew's April 7, 1899 letter to Colonel Alfred S. Frost, Commander of the South Dakota Volunteers: "I wish you could have won this glory in a better cause. I cannot help but feel that it is infamous for us to try to deprive these people of their liberty, and that if they want a government of their own they should be allowed to have it" (p. 136)

Dr. Benito Legarda, the author, confesses to a personal stake in the Sampaloc Hills war—he lives in the area. His involvement, however, is that of the historian (B.S. Social Sciences, Georgetown University), economist (Ph.D. Economics, Harvard University), writer (*After the Galleons: Foreign Trade, Economic Change and Entrepreneurship in the Nineteenth-Century Philippines*, 1999), teacher and Filipino.

He cares about this first explosive Philippine-American moment that still echoes in the intercultural relations of the two countries. Just wanting to set the record straight about the Philippine-American War beginning not on San Juan Bridge, but in Balic-Balic, Santa Mesa, in the Sampaloc Hills, he has marshalled valuable material from archives in South Dakota, Utah, Colorado, Nebraska, Maryland, and Manila, to write what he modestly calls “no more than a simple neighborhood chronicle.”

Would that more Filipinos would care about their neighborhoods with the same purpose and intensity, and bring to the reader more stories about the great and little wars fought daily in this and in any other country.

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