“Nuestros salvajes filipinos”: Settler Encounters and Black Indigeneities in Mexico and the Philippines

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Abstract

In this essay I develop a relational analysis placing Asian and Latin American racial discourses into conversation. My analysis here seeks to grasp with greater clarity the discrepant ways that Blackness, Indigeneity, and Asian identities are articulated in distinctly and distantly elaborated nation-building projects through mestizaje—a Philippine mestizaje and one originating in Mexico. I move us through an analysis of both Pedro A. Paterno’s ethnological study on Indigenous Philippine Blackness, *Los Itas* (1915), and José Vasconcelos’s *La raza cósmica* (1925) as part of a global mestizo archive that is situated in the longue durée of the nineteenth century. The Aetas (or Itas), also commonly known by the Spanish term “Negritos,” are a community of phenotypically Black people that inhabit the mountainous regions of the northern Philippines in the island group known as Luzon. They have been a well-known community in

the historical and cultural construction of Filipino racial identity. I examine the ways that the Aetas offered evidence of a Blackness that was transformed into a marker indexing the retrogression and development of the "Orient." The dyad of civilization and barbarism in the Philippines pivoted on the dialectical antinomy of the Orient and Blackness. While the Philippines was not a site of and was far-removed from the transatlantic world, the physical darkness and qualitative Blackness of Indigenous peoples in the Philippines, the Indian subcontinent, and the Antipodes braid together the logics of Orientalism and Blackness in ways that are of interest to a transnational vista of race. This gesture of theoretical braiding of racial logics seemingly more germane to the Atlantic world with racial discourse in the Philippines invites questions on the ways that Blackness and Indigeneity in US-based and Latin American scholarship are treated. In the final analysis, I argue that through the comparison of these different mestizajes that the Asian political subject formation breaks from Indigeneity through the disarticulation of both Asianness and Indianness *from* Blackness. However, Blackness, as I›ll explore, counterintuitively serves as a foundational heuristic device articulating Philippine racial identity through the prism of settler-native encounter. In my view, the racial scientific basis for Philippine racial identity being rooted in a conquest narrative of Malays conquering Indigenous "Filipinos" whose primitivity is indexed by Blackness has the potential to greatly reshape Philippine and Filipinx historiographies of race. This case study, I argue, provides compelling historical paradigms for thinking creatively and in coalition across Asian American, Latinx, Black, and Indigenous community and political formations in the present.

Keywords: Ethnology, *Blackness*, Indigeneity, Mestizaje, Race, Philippines

Resumen

En este ensayo propongo un análisis relacional explorando las intersecciones entre discursos raciales asiáticos y latinoamericanos con el fin de aprender con más claridad las maneras discrepantes que ideas sobre lo negro, la indigeneidad, y la identidad asiática se articulan en proyectos nacionales construidos a través del mestizaje —un mestizaje filipino y otro desarrollado en México. Analizo un estudio etnológico llamado *Los Itas* (1915) por Pedro A. Paterno y *La raza cósmica* (1925) por José Vasconcelos sugiriendo que los dos forman parte de un archivo mestizo global que se ubica en la *longue durée* del siglo diecinueve. Los aetas o los itas, también conocidos por su nombre en español "los negritos," son una comunidad de personas fenotípicamente negras que habitan en las regiones montañosas de la isla norteña de las Filipinas, Luzón. Ellos se conocen como comunidad importante en la construcción histórico y cultural de la identidad racial filipina. Examino las maneras a través de las que los aetas evidenciaron una negritud que se trasformó en un índice de la retrogresión y el subdesarrollo del "oriente". El binario entre la civilización y la barbarie en las filipinas giraba en torno a la dialéctica entre el oriente y la negritud. Aunque las Filipinas no formaba parte del mundo atlántico, la complexión más oscura y la negritud cualitativa de los pueblos indígenas de las Filipinas, el subcontinente de la India, y en Nueva Zelanda y la Australia, conectan la lógica del orientalismo y de la negritud en una manera que ampliaría una vista transnacional de la raza. Este gesto de conexión teórica de varias lógicas raciales evidentemente más relevantes para el mundo atlántico con discurso racial en las Filipinas invita cuestionamiento sobre las maneras en que la negritud y la indigeneidad están tratadas en la investigación estadounidense y latinoamericana. Sostengo que, a través de una comparación de estos diferentes "mestizajes", el sujeto

político asiático se desarticula de la indigeneidad a través de la desarticulación de *los dos* (lo asiático y lo indígena) de lo negro. Sin embargo, la negritud, como exploraré, sirve como el dispositivo fundacional heurístico articulando la identidad racial filipina a través de una lente del encuentro entre el colonizador y el nativo. Bajo mi perspectiva, la base científica racial para la identidad racial filipina se conceptualiza a través de una narrativa de los malayos como conquistadores que conquistaron a los filipinos indígenas cuya primitividad se indica por su negritud. Entender esta conceptualización de los malayos como conquistadores tiene, según propongo aquí, el potencial de reevaluar las historiografías de la raza filipina. Este ensayo ofrece paradigmas históricos con el objetivo de repensar creativamente para el presente las fronteras y posibles colaboraciones entre formaciones políticas y comunitarias asiáticas y latinoamericanas, negras e indígenas.

Palabras clave: Etnología, *Blackness*, Indigeneidad, Mestizaje, Raza, Las Filipinas

Filipino Liberalism and "El Continente Negro"

Some of the most noted Filipino intellectuals of the late nineteenth century worked in close colloquy with German ethnologists and race scientists. This work, particularly that of Austrian-German ethnologist Ferdinand Blumentritt, significantly shaped the construction of Philippine race history as a multidisciplinary field of inquiry. As such, these intersections are an important touchstone, as I will explore, for understanding the ways that Blackness underwrote notions of a Philippine Indigenous past and mestizo intellectual engagement with it. Philippine historian Filomeno V. Aguilar has demonstrated how Blumentritt's theories were particularly influential for Filipino intellectual understandings of Philippine racial identity, history, and culture (2005). It is no surprise that European ethnological notions of race influenced Filipino thought. Intellectuals such as Juan Luna, Isabelo de los Reyes, and José Rizal, amongst many others, sought education in Europe and constituted what has come to be known as the Propaganda Movement. The work of the so-called "ilustrados" bolstered the Filipino political moment of national consciousness in the late nineteenth century (Anderson 2005, 2016; Mojares; Thomas). Significantly, these Philippine-European scholarly conversations gave the Filipino intellectual vanguard the epistemological tools to objectify and discipline Indigeneity. This was unlike American renditions of mestizaje.

For instance, Mexican eugenicist José Vasconcelos in the early twentieth century positioned his canonical construction of mestizaje discourse through an explicit rejection, rather than integration, of China and Chinese labor migrants, partly in concert with US immigration restrictions at the time of his writing. Orientalism was a multi-sited, hemispheric affair. Moreover, while mestizaje predicated itself on the ostensible incorporation and recuperation of a deviant *indio*, Blackness was a variable within its racial calculus that found more explicit exclusion. It is this idealization and disciplinization of Blackness in

Asia, generally, and within the Philippines, in particular, that I wish to explore in the space of this essay. In the Philippines, the ways in which Blackness informs the construction of a Filipino mestizo archive is not always as clear or instructive as in the Americas. Such lack of clarity is partly due to the broad discursive separation of Indigeneity from Blackness, which is unsurprising given the ways that mestizaje's eugenic foundation ethnologically categorized the different "races" of humankind into discrete scientific formations (*negro*, *europeo*, *mongol*, *indio*). In line with critical work in Afro-Latinx studies and studies of Afroindigeneidad, I gesture towards the development of a Filipinx critique of antiblackness and settler colonialism that is strategically positioned within a transnational mestizo archive.

Because this essay engages with Philippine genealogies of mestizaje it is important to register it through a comparative vector. In this case, the eugenic mestizaje surfaced by Vasconcelos in Mexico. The reason comparison is warranted is because it allows us to grasp with greater clarity the discrepant ways that Blackness, Indigeneity, and Asian identities are articulated in distinctly and distantly elaborated nation-building projects through a *global* and *transpacific* mestizaje. This differentiates Philippine discourses of mixed-race identity from American iterations of it while centering Asian archives of hybrid embodiment that further globalize mestizaje. My aim is that this transnational approach will materialize diverse avenues of critique of mestizaje, will center a marginal case study of the Philippines typically sidelined in Hispanophone studies, and, finally, will creatively enhance engagements with histories of Spanish colonialism. My thinking on this is that our archival and textual explorations of the "Hispanic" world ought to be as ambitious as the global reach of Spanish colonialism, which can be missed by being hyper local (without dismissing the local's importance). By doing so, I demonstrate that while Blackness in the Americas was tied explicitly to histories of transatlantic slavery thus greatly shaping the conditions against which mestizaje responded, in the Philippines

Blackness does *not* intuitively cite this political economy. Instead, "Filipino" Black people are Indigenous. As I will explore, centering a Philippine-Mexican comparative that is attentive to dynamics of race and settler colonialism expands the vistas through which and the tensions by which Afropessimism and Indigenous thought construct the racial foundations of modernity. Additionally, such a comparative framework of race using the Philippines and Mexico as examples has the potential to greatly reshape Philippine, American, and transhemispheric historiographies of racial analysis.

The ways that Blackness enters into a Filipino racial imaginary transpire constitutively *through* Indigeneity. It is a Black Indigeneity that resonates perhaps more closely with Aboriginal peoples in Australia and other parts of the Antipodes or Papua New Guinea. Nevertheless, because of the ways that the Philippines constitutes a foundational case study precipitating a critical turn in American and ethnic studies scholarship to understanding United States history as the development of an empire, there are compelling reasons to contextualize Philippine racial politics partly in relation to the Blackness and settler dynamics of the transatlantic slave trade. This is partially related to the Philippines' history as a US colony. Indeed, scholars such as Victor Román Mendoza, Noenoe K. Silva, and Cynthia Marasigan have demonstrated how domestic constructions of African American Blackness were instrumentalized by US governmentality in imperial understandings of Filipino racial embodiment. This points to the conceptual muddiness of Black and Filipino racial identification during the historical advent of US imperialism which saw more racialized "brown" groups being incorporated by and subjected to US control during a period of heightened Jim Crow segregation. Even so, we might be tempted to fundamentally distance ideas of Asian or Pacific Indigenous Blackness from the Atlantic world and African/American Blackness.

While I find reasonable arguments cautioning us against collapsing these racial formations, I call attention to the historical development of Filipino

mestizo intellectual writing in late nineteenth century Europe, indeed much of it in Germany like Rizal's famed anticlerical novel *Noli Me Tangere* (1886), *during* the immediate aftermath of the colonial partitioning of Africa. I suggest that ideas of Philippine sovereignty, independence, and political reform were enabled by the colonial despoliation of Africa by western world powers facilitated in Germany at the Berlin Conference (1884–85)—a city that resides in a country that was the "scientific home" of Rizal and in which he finished some of his most important and influential writing[1]. The liberal European environment in which Filipino mestizos self-fashioned themselves as free-thinking agents and sovereign architects of their own political destinies was itself the scene of anti-Black violence. To wit, Rizal significantly made other observations that would lead savvy readers to conclude that his understanding of colonialism was not parochially limited to the Philippines. The annihilation of Black self-determination was the "scene of subjection" that was inextricably bound up with the agentive intellectual remonstrances against or abetting Spanish colonialism in Filipino thought (Hartman).

In a weighty essay entitled "Las Filipinas dentro de cien años," a compendium whose parts are sourced from writing he published in the propagandist periodical *La solidaridad* across 1890–91, Rizal ponders what will become of the Philippines a century's hence thus charting a path for a modern independent Philippines. This significantly transpires through an entrenchment of the colonial antiblackness of the time:

> Si las Filipinas consiguen su independencia al cabo de luchas heroicas y tenaces, pueden estar seguras de que ni Inglaterra, ni Alemania, ni Francia, y menos Holanda, se atreverán á recoger lo que España no ha podido conservar. El África, dentro de algunos años, absorberá por completo la atención de los europeos, y no hay nación de los europeos, y no hay nación sensata que por ganar un puñado de islas aguerridas y pobres, descuide los inmensos territorios que le brinda el Continente Negro, vírgenes, no explotados y pocos defendidos.

> Inglaterra tiene ya bastantes colonias en el Oriente y no se va á exponer a perder el equilibrio; no va á sacrificar su imperio de la India por el pobre Archipiélago Filipino (Rizal 46).

No doubt referencing the Berlin Conference that transpired a few years prior to the penning of these words, we can clearly observe that the African partition influenced Rizal's thinking about the future of the Philippine nation. History tells us that Rizal's execution by firing squad in 1896 will give impetus to a Philippine revolution for independence. Noteworthy is the charge of sedition for authoring the *Noli*—the very book whose anticlerical plot was shaped in a historical context in which Africa received Europe's "undivided attention." If Rizal represents one of the brightest minds of the Filipino nationalist movement (he is known as the *pambansang bayani* or Filipino national hero) then it appears that such a critical mind would have to reconcile the ways that Philippine anticlericalism meaningfully obtains through the epistemological prevarication of colonialism as a global project. That is to say, the solidification of a revolutionary and intellectual enlightenment in the Philippines constitutively forsakes solidarity with the African continent as also a site subject to colonial violence. Need the Filipino critic not concern himself with Africa?

While Rizal's essay is filled with stupendous insights on the ways that Spanish colonialism greatly inhibited free-thinking, sovereignty, and progress, it appears that national freedom is a prospect that is mortgaged on the unfreedom of others itself indexed by a propinquity to Blackness (Rizal 11, 16, 21). The "Oriente" and the "Archipiélago Filipino" will pass from repute in the proceeding century, a century which seems like it will be structured by the territorial and economic exploitation (yet again) of Africa. It seems that Rizal templates the ways that the Filipino intellectual stakes a claim for independent thought structurally within a context of liberalism that is itself the product of the reconfiguration of political economic interests in response to the end of chattel slavery. That is, Filipino intellectualism, in Rizal's iconic rendition of it,

is conditioned at least partially by a post-abolition imperialist economic order that secures the continued colonial exploitation of the African continent. This provides a compelling context for my next question: What might it mean to read Philippine mestizaje within the historical context of an approaching U.S. colonialism that itself is a byproduct of a racial state built through transatlantic slavery? What might it mean that the share of the liberal Human to which Philippine intellectualism is striving is fundamentally surfaced by the shifting parameters of Black freedom and exploitation?

I use Rizal as a departure point to aid in populating an understanding of a racialized landscape in which the historico-ethnological classification of an Indigenous Philippines is indelibly marked by its intimacies with Blackness. Rizal's writing subsists Philippine freedom on a geographic and political distance of Filipino liberal humanity from "El Continente Negro" (46). However, there are certainly more "homegrown" internal manifestations of visual Blackness that are objectified by a Filipino scientific eye—manifestations of which I center in this analysis[2]. Renditions of what I denote as a "Black Philippines" emerge as a domesticated Indigenous ideal that was foundational to Filipino mestizo redeployments of and negotiations with Hispanic liberal humanism. The domestic racial landscapes of how a Philippine liberal Human is antithetically constructed vis-à-vis Blackness is a genealogy I wish to furnish and elaborate in these pages, never losing sight of the ways that a "Black Philippines" is shaped by thoroughly and inescapably global conceptions of Blackness. Such global constructions of race necessarily require comparative detours to more familiar canons of mestizaje discourse in the Americas.

In this essay I develop a relational analysis placing the Philippines' and Mexico's racial discourses into conversation. I move us through an analysis of both Pedro A. Paterno's ethnological study *Los Itas* (1915) and José Vasconcelos's *La raza cósmica* (1925) as part of a global mestizo archive that is situated in the longue durée of the nineteenth century. In Paterno, I examine the ways

that the Black Indigenous community of the Aetas (or "Itas") offered evidence of a Blackness that was transformed into a marker indexing the retrogression of the Orient. The dyad of civilization and barbarism in the Philippines pivoted on this dialectical antinomy of the Orient and Blackness. The version of the text I examine was published in its second edition in 1915 though the citations used by Paterno throughout suggest that the bulk of the research was performed in the late nineteenth century likely prior to the Philippine Revolution (1896–98). His renderings of the historical and ethnological traces of Blackness fit within an archive of mestizo meaning making fleshing out ideologies of race in Philippine Hispanic studies. As such, it bears some of the same racialized mythologies that are endemic to more well-known and canonical constructions of mestizaje found in Vasconcelos, who, as many are no doubt familiar, conceived of the mestizo as the arrival of a new type of human that blended the extant races of Man. Both of these authors center the mestizo as an agent of rehabilitation for the *indio* who exists as an artifactual presence denied "coevality" with the modern political present (Fabian 25). Nevertheless, objectifying the *indio* delineates an object of analysis that ensures a proprietary filial relation to national History thus justifying the mestizo as the nation's scientific vanguard and steward. Where contemporaries like Vasconcelos and Paterno diverge is in their engagement with the question of Black and Asian embodiments. Vasconcelos predicates his "study" on the alleged integration of Blackness into the mestizo national body whilst explicitly rejecting the Orient as a perverse contaminant that would ruin the teleological rehabilitations of eugenic mestizaje[3]. Paterno, on the other hand, represents an Asian mestizo theorist that directly engages with the question of Blackness as a Filipino Indigenous object of inquiry. Both, however, are historical and genealogical thought partners demonstrating a conceptual linkage between Philippine and Mexican articulations of race-making on different sides of the Atlantic and Pacific worlds. This becomes problematically more apparent with

the community that is the site of Paterno's scientific scrutiny.

The Aetas (or Itas), known also by the problematic Spanish term "Negritos," are a community of phenotypically Black people that inhabit the mountainous regions of the northern Philippines in the island group known as Luzon. Also known as the "Agta" or the "Dumagat," these are collective terms referring to several Indigenous peoples that have historically resided in the Philippines. Despite their generally imagined physical "racial" difference from other racial groups in Southeast Asia, their languages are definitively part of the Austronesian language family. They have been well-known in the historical and cultural construction of Filipino racial identity. While the Philippines was not a site of and was far-removed from the transatlantic world, the physical darkness and qualitative Blackness of Indigenous peoples in the Philippines, the Indian sub-continent, and the Antipodes braid together the logics of Orientalism and Blackness in ways that are of interest to a transnational vista of race—what critic Denise Ferreira da Silva would call a "global idea of race" (2007). This gesture of theoretical braiding of racial logics seemingly more germane to the Atlantic world with racial discourse in the Philippines invites questions on the ways that Blackness and Indigeneity in US-based and Latin American scholarship are treated. Of theoretical concern in North American scholarship on these matters are the ways in which Afropessimist philosophy, settler colonial studies, and Indigenous studies have been elaborated as conceptually antagonistic. To paraphrase a question posed by Cornel West partly illustrating the tensions of immensurability in these debates: which is the more original sin? Transatlantic slavery or Indigenous genocide? (Taylor 2019)

Through an analysis of Paterno's anthropology I argue that Black embodiment was transformed into a marker indexing the retrogression or backwardness of the Orient vis-à-vis Europe. We know this because of the ways that European ethnology shaped the Filipino science of race. Moreover, I contend that Black Indigeneity was a discursive platform putting into relief

the modern progressive trajectories for the Philippines whose successful future orientations would be scaffolded by its *distance from* Blackness as a matter of civilizational development and evolution. I suggest that we think about Asian Indigeneity in this case as an "aberration in Black" whereby the assertion of an Asian rationalism modernizes the Asian *indio* through the domestication of Blackness as an object of scientific, ethnological study (Ferguson).

In the final analysis, I argue that the Asian political subject formation breaks from Indigeneity through the disarticulation of *both* Asianness and Indianness from Blackness. More specifically, Malay Asianness could be scripted with European historiographies of conquest through the scientific indigenization of Blackness. If Black peoples autochthonous to the Philippines preceded Malay Filipino arrival then the latter constitutes advanced and civilized settlement. Blackness serves as foundational heuristic device articulating Philippine racial identity through the prism of settler-native encounter. Therefore, my analysis of Paterno's text is situated very intentionally in particular debates in Black and Indigenous thought in the North American context which has more aptly treated these analytical intersections. In the next section I sketch out the contours of these debates briefly before moving on to an intertextual analysis of *Los Itas* and *La raza cósmica.*

Afropessimism and settler coloniality

In thinking about the ways that the lines between Blackness and Indigeneity are blurred in Philippine understandings of the Itas, it becomes necessary to address the incommensurability between settler colonial studies and Afropessimism in diagnosing the foundational character of racial capitalism as has been established in various debates. Settler colonial studies and Indigenous theory have both engaged with the ways that the initial moment of settlement in the Americas (and other settler colonial sites like the Antipodes, Oceania, and South Africa) is an ongoing structure influencing the

contemporary moment rather than a singular event with a delimited temporal duration (Kauanui, Wolfe). Native genocide, displacement, and enslavement of Indigenous peoples in the Americas were the foundational episodes in the formation of global racial capitalism and exploitation. Latin American and Caribbean studies scholars like Aníbal Quijano and Sylvia Wynter have both expressed the ways that slavery irrevocably positioned Blackness as the most subordinate racialized labor and philosophical basis for European rationality and wealth generation. On the other hand, all non-native peoples derive some benefit from the structures that emerged from these histories as settlers. Settler of color studies, including analyses of Asian settler colonialism, have come to understand the unique and problematic role that non-white settlers have in advancing the continued dissolution of native sovereignty (Saranillio, Hu Pegues). This, for some Indigenous and settler colonial studies scholars, may indeed include the Black descendants of slaves. Patrick Wolfe has designated even Black people's presence in the settler colony as also contributing to the annihilation of native alternatives thus furthering the white supremacist project of settler dominance irrespective of histories of their arrival (Wolfe). Despite the realities of coerced, involuntary, even violent removal to the settler colonies, the continued presence of non-native settlers on Indigenous lands structurally contravenes native sovereignty, or so the arguments go.

On the other hand, Afropessimist philosophy has demonstrated the ways that the category of the liberal Human, born in colonial and enlightenment philosophical thought, required the negative screen of Blackness from which the parameters of liberalism could be shorn up. That is to say, Blackness *per se* constituted the negative ontology upon which the very notion of the Human as a rights-bearing, free-thinking, self-determining subject was articulated (Wilderson). Therefore, the notion of sovereignty itself is irrevocably shaped by these liberal propositions given the interweaving of settler colonial processes with chattel slavery. Thus, all non-Black persons partly and inescapably

measure their access to the liberal franchise of rational humanism as a function of its historical denial to Black slaves who were reduced from personhood to property. Some colonial histories bear this out in the Americas in which the debt peonage and slavery enacted to extract Indigenous labor (in the *encomienda* system) shifted to more wholly impact Black bodies instead. Indian slave labor was replaced by the Black slave labor transported via the Middle Passage. Therefore, relative Indigenous freedom and social mobility were predicated on Black dispossession and dehumanization. Quijano describes this value hierachization in his notion of "coloniality of power" in which Blackness was at the bottom of the hierarchy with Indigenous, mestizos, and whites sharing more of the economic benefits of wage labor. In the North American context, historians like Tiya Miles have confirmed that citizens of the Cherokee nation were indeed slaveholders (2005). As one can surmise, this seems to place settler colonial and Indigenous thought in an antagonistic relation to Afropessimist theory. These schools of thought offer compelling, robust, and truthful appraisals of the workings of race and racism in global affairs.

I am, like many other thinkers, skeptical of the schism between these (ostensibly) competing frameworks. Scholars like Iyko Day, Tiffany Lethabo King, and, in earlier work, Cheryl Harris have deemphasized this antinomy thus attempting to reconcile studies of settler colonialism and Afropessimism to demonstrate how anti-Blackness and Indigenous dispossession worked in tandem. Dedicating energy to understanding the history of race through only one framework limits a more holistic portrait of the ways that slavery and native genocide were both instruments violently leveraged in order to augment white property and power. These arguments are relevant to the notions and constructions of Black Indigenousness in the Philippines because they notably point to the ways that the philosophical separation of antiblackness, Indigeneity, and settler colonialism impoverish our understanding of the ways some bodies and histories inhabit the pivotal intersections between them.

Therefore, I position this article in alignment with this work to build towards a rapprochement between Black and Indigenous thought through the, perhaps, unexpected case study of *negro-indigeneidad* in the Philippines. While I find reasonable the arguments for why we ought not collapse racial formations with distinct historical trajectories, I agree with scholars like Eve Tuck and Wayne Yang who discuss flexibility between the often reified "settler-native-slave" dynamic. Bennett Brazelton has pushed this further arguing that these distinctions can often do more harm than good in that "these still reflect essential… categories for describing the antagonisms of settler colonialism" thus erasing the experience of Black Indigeneities or the profound intersections between Blackness and Indigeneity (2021). The Philippines' racial landscape and history provide a compelling case study to interrogate some of these intersections.

Given the ways that the conceptual racial distinctions between Black and Filipinx embodiment were muddied during the beginning of the US's imperial century, this would lend credence to a healthy amount of suspicion for Afropessimism's contention that *nothing* is analogous to or fungible with the negativity represented by Blackness. While we should be specific and clear in our contextualization and resist collapsing diverse racial experiences into each other, such a hard line does not always align with the historical and visual record. The incorporation of Filipinos was viewed by US imperial machinations as the assimilation of a barbaric, uninstructed group of "indios." As Chickasaw theorist Jodi Byrd has argued about the idea of "Indianness," it is unsurprising that the US would use both conceptual tools from previous and ongoing epochs of racial violence as the frameworks through which to apprehend their "little brown brothers." These ideas, as she has claimed, involve the perpetual, recursive, and mimetic repetition of the idea of the Indian, which transformed colonized groups into natives over and over again as itself a process integral to the colonial project writ large (2011). This reiteration, nevertheless, can also

significantly manifest through Afropessimistic ideas of Black negativity while also propagating settler colonialism as the ideal form of governmentality. In the following section, I pivot to an intertextual analysis to advance aspects of these debates into global contexts outside of settler North America. My objective is to excavate epistemological intimacies between the Philippines and Mexico that demonstrate that, despite the historically and culturally distinct contexts that they represent, they productively mirror each other in crucial ways that aid us in asking better questions of how we interrogate the global character and encounters of race. As I will argue in the following section, Blackness took on an explicitly Indigenous character in the Philippines and was thus reified for its ethnological value. In so doing, Blackness becomes an absolutely crucial component in inextricably characterizing Philippine racial history as settler colonial. By contextualizing Philippine discourses of mestizaje with the canonical renditions of it imagined by Vasconcelos in Mexico, we can take inventory of the complex global character of mestizaje and the ways it utilizes Blackness, Indianness, *and* Asianness in its fabrication of ideal hybrid human embodiments. Such a critical inventory will also more capaciously account for the diverse and expansive ways colonized subjects navigated Spanish colonialism whose principle archives of encounter are oftentimes hemispherically locked in place.

Black Indigeneity and the Canon of Mestizaje

Under US colonial governance, the Filipino body encountered a broad, wide-ranging visual and discursive grammar through which it came to be known. Because of this ambivalence, the Filipino body is itself a helpful heuristic through which to ask questions about global projects of racialization. In the Philippines, these colonial appraisals formed an epistemological backbone for the ways that Filipino embodiment came to be classified and understood for modern colonial projects at the turn of the twentieth century. In US cultural

studies of imperialism, for instance, the Filipino *negritos* alongside "igorots" were featured in ethnological dioramas in the 1904 St. Louis World's Fair offering a cultural representation of the backwardness of the Philippines and the desperate need for US intervention and uplift (Kramer). Paterno and Vasconcelos stage similar fanciful settler imperial fantasies in their ethnological writings. However, as will be made clearer as we proceed, their constructions and evaluations of Blackness, Indigeneity, and the Orient reflect their differing geographic and epistemological locations on distinct sides of the Atlantic and Pacific worlds. Yet facilitating a conversation between them maps out the contours of their assumptions and biases with more efficacy and comparative precision.

In Paterno's case, Polynesia and Oceania are not only scientific projects of white settler colonialism but also are shaped into objects of analysis for the mestizo Filipino scientific eye. Here this objectification materializes through the ethnological referent of Blackness as a "Filipino" object of scientific scrutiny while also being scientifically differentiated from the Filipino body per se. We know this because of the pains that Paterno goes through in differentiating the different kinds of Blackness in his study and argues that there ought not be an equivocation between Filipino Itas, on the one hand, and Papuans, Aboriginals, and Africans, on the other. Instead, he observes "negrito-malayos" or "negrito-indonesios" as a distinct branch of global Blackness. However, this scientific recognition of Asian Black difference is belied by the embrace of German ethnological wave migration theory notably elaborated by German-Austrian anthropologist Ferdinand Blumentritt. Following the close textual grain of Blumentritt's work, aforementioned historian Filomeno Aguilar captures language that starkly resonates with that which is used by Paterno suggesting close intellectual colloquy and collaboration. Aguilar observes that "in Blumentritt's schema, 'invading Malayans' composed the second migration wave. They came from the south and gradually moved north, settling initially

along the coasts and displacing Negritos [who arrived earlier]" (613–14). Looping back to Rizal's thinking which I referenced earlier, Aguilar further contends that "Ethnological science, Rizal was confident, affirmed the ancient civilization of Tagalog and other 'Indios Filipinos'" (618).

Drawing on Blumentritt's and likely other similar work, Paterno advances a method of "la moderna ciencia folklórica" which, in his mind, refines the classificatory schema through which Blackness is identified. Moreover, it also substantiates the marked corporal difference of Filipino racial embodiment from it. He suggests a Filipino scientific folklore that blends the "descubrimientos de la Antropología y la Etnografía, hacen creer que los primeros pobladores del Archipiélago filipino han debido ser los Itas (de *Itim*, palabra tagala que significa negro), llamados técnicamente Negritos" (6). This is an observation that coheres with Blumentritt's findings in *Versuch einer Ethnographie der Philippinen* [An Attempt at Writing a Philippine Ethnography] originally published in 1882 (Aguilar 606). As the very first inhabitants of the Philippines, Paterno dubs them "nuestros salvajes filipinos" simultaneously indicating Ita integration in Philippine renditions of national history *and* an epistemic possession of them as ethnological curiosities. This proprietary relationship distances them from a modern scientifically advanced Philippines. This coheres neatly with Maile Arvin's critique of the ways that settler colonialism and scientific discovery collude in their appropriation and possession of Indigenous bodies through anthropometric scrutiny. Blackness in the Philippines connotes something primordial, ancient, and *before* the modern Filipino and yet is a *Philippine* Black body that is subjected to scientific analysis, a modern object attesting to Filipino scientific ingenuity, *and* an artifact the analysis of which demonstrated how Filipino intellectuals "relied on the world of science to construct history and define an identity" (Aguilar 607). Blackness is definitively established as antecedent to the Malay race who, according to wave migration theory, arrived after the Itas. That this Blackness anthropologically existed in the regions of

Southeast Asia, the Antipodes, and parts of Pacific Oceania establishes that Black and Asian racialization transpired constitutively and in relation to one another. Blackness becomes a marker of the retrogression of the Orient vis-à-vis Europeans whose methods of scientific knowledge production are embedded in the production of a Black Orient and the proliferation of distinct racial types that permeate it. Such a Black Orient becomes a platform discursively putting into relief modern progressive trajectories for Asia whose successful future orientations, particularly in the case of Paterno's Philippines, would be indexed by their distance *from* Asian Pacific and Indigenous Blackness.

This temporal distancing becomes evident in Paterno's framing of what he calls "History" where Blackness is an artifactual presence relegated to ethnological object of inquiry. This framing of "History" works only if the "Itas" can be configured as an unchanging community ossified in time. And ossification is not a rhetorical flourish in that Paterno indeed suggests that they were "fósiles en las rocas" whose study offered a systematic *paleographic* ethnology of Philippine history. Ironically, they are considered "pueblos estacionarios" despite their history of migration and movement. But the immobile Black "fossil" of Philippine historiography is not a metaphorical move that is contradicted by Paterno's avowal of their initial movement to the archipelago. This is not an insignificant contradiction. The ways that Paterno conceives of migratory movements are characterized stridently via histories of conquest. Europeans and Malays are both cast as invaders of the Philippines thus painting Filipino history with the brushstrokes of conquest. This is further confirmed by Paterno's direct citation of North American histories of white-settler colonialism in which "igorrotes, guinanes y tinguianes" possess "carácteres étnicos [que] recuerdan las tribus de América." In similarity to the ways that Indigenous peoples in the Americas are positioned as present-day artifacts, it is crucial for Paterno's racial description of Philippine history that "la raza Ita [haya] permanecido estacionaria [por] mucho tiempo" and that

they remain "en el estado de naturaleza" (85, 3).

Paterno's nineteenth century text foreshadows similar developmentalist logics that will appear in Mexico during the apogee of when eugenic ideology influences state-building. In 1925 Mexican politician and ethnologist José Vasconcelos published his eugenic and foundational book of essays *La raza cósmica* or *The Cosmic Race*. Written during the height of the development of the race science of eugenics, *La raza cósmica* similarly drew upon and reflected the Progressivist discourses of the time—societal and personal betterment through reform and rehabilitation. True to the time, Vasconcelos expresses his disidentification with the separationist tendency of Aryan nationalism opting for an ostensibly integrationist approach that would racially unify humanity during an interwar period that was marked by uncertainty and political discord. He harbored criticism on two fronts. The first was, similar to Cuban patriot José Martí, a deep suspicion of the United States. What is more particular to Vasconcelos was his message of "Hispanic" racial unity against a US segregationist policy adopted to cultivate and protect the white race from degeneracy; that is, the impurities supposedly introduced into the bloodline by people of color. There was something about Hispanism or "hispanidad" that allowed for the fruitful and propitious mixture of human types that Anglo colonialism precluded. Perhaps surprisingly, the second front of Vasconcelos's critique was highlighting the great limitations of Latin American independence in the nineteenth century because it resulted in the founding of separate nation-states, which he condescendingly calls "nacioncitas" [little nations] whose political concerns are only ever parochial (11). Latin American countries, he argues, prioritize "glorias balkánicas" [balkanistic glory] and are as such competitive in orientation rather than unified under a shared Hispanic culture—a cooperative spirit that he argues is racially manifest in the figure of the mestizo (11). His essay attempts to shed light on the divergent paths of North America and Latin America in ways that are productive for contextualizing the position of the Philippines as

part of, though not completely reducible to, an American experience of race.

Vasconcelos makes it clear that "predominio blanco será también temporal" [white dominance is temporary] because the four "races" of "el negro, el indio, el mongol, y el blanco" will or *should* teleologically result in a hybrid race that will help humanity achieve the heights reached by great ancient civilizations (4). And to be clear, what counts as ancient for Vasconcelos is even well before Western antiquity. Even Greco-Roman civilization's greatness was the product of fragmentation of an even older and wiser civilization, that of the famed and mythic "Atlántida" or Atlantis. As you can see, Vasconcelos's racial framework relied on potent and fantastical myth-making. However, this is not to say that US American imaginaries of race were no less mythical, inventive, and specious. The race of "Atlántida" was the "cuna" or cradle of all humanity including "los pueblos de Europa y el Oriente… que hace millares de años floreci[eron] en el continente desaparecido y en parte de lo que hoy es América"—a grand and glorious origin to which Vasconcelos claimed mestizaje would allow humanity to return (1). Like many state-building treatises in Latin America, the future greatness of the republic was mortgaged on an extended preservation of a native past.

In an indigenist move, he claims that the "red" or "rojo" race was what made up Atlantis's genetic population and thus was the direct predecessor of the Olmec, Aztec, and Mayan civilizations. To be perfectly clear, a compelling way to understand Vasconcelos's aim is as a recuperation of "[el] misterio de los hombres rojos" as the alpha or origin of civilizational grandeur to which Latin America and the world should ideally aspire (2). Rather than associate the Indigenous as being easy to subjugate and lacking in technological advancement, Vasconcelos analeptically reframes a primitive past as descending from a grand civilization at the apex of human achievement that the "balkanistic" posturing of nationalism and Anglo-American segregationist colonialism contravene. However, in the same vein as conquistadores like

Columbus and colonial reformists like Bartolomé de las Casas, Vasconcelos sought to uplift the "indio" subordinating Indigenous peoples to the rule of more "modern," "civilized" subjects.

While the emergence of white European colonialism was part of the racial fragmentation that Vasconcelos's speculative project sought to ameliorate, he makes it clear that colonialism "ha puesto las bases materiales y morales para la unión de todos los hombres en una quinta raza universal, fruto de las anteriores y superación de todo lo pasado" (4). Despite Vasconcelos's grandiose gestures, it is clear from the outset that different races in his calculus take on very different and unequal functions. While mestizaje is meant to correct perceived defects into a more perfect being that is the "superación de todo lo pasado," some races possess defects that resist rehabilitation. Despite the vociferous criticisms of US American white separatism, the white colonial Europeans' violence is minimized because their ingenuity and global reach have constructed the "bridge" necessary for composite humanity to be realized. Nevertheless, in a stunning contrast between the racial orders of North America and Latin America he argues that the more ethical path to human union, in a literal and figurative sense, will be found through a commitment to mestizo nation-building. Commenting on the segregationist violence of Anglo-Americanism he writes that instead of white America exploring the obvious virtues of "la mezcla de razas desímiles… cometieron el pecado de destruir estas razas, en tanto que nosotros las asimilamos…" (14). He is likely referring to the genocide of millions of Indigenous peoples during the period of British imperial and later US American colonial conquest.

Like Vasconcelos, colonialism becomes a benchmark for and agent initiating modern development for Paterno. Whereas it might make more sense to understand Vasconcelos as part of an intellectual cadre of mestizos making sense of the detritus of Spanish colonialism in Indigenous dispossession and slavery, Paterno goes one step further. Rather than rehabilitation of

a potentially damaging colonial past retrofitting it as one of the "bases materiales y morales" for a robust Latin American future, Paterno essentially writes the Philippines into the role of colonial invader. This is completely in alignment with Blumentritt's "scientific" conclusions of the Malays' migratory history to the Philippines. These observations about the conquest history of the Philippines are bound up with speculation about the origins of the Itas and positioning of Blackness in the racial history of the archipelago:

> Ahora ocurre preguntar: ¿de dónde han venido los *Itas*? ¿Cuál es su origen? Para esta cuestión, tan difícil de resolver con exactitud y precisión en el estado actual de las ciencias, invitamos á nuestros lectores á dejar las costas y riberas, en que la vista limitada no se puede extender más allá de los valles, pululando y predominando en ellas las razas de *los últimos invasores del Archipiélago: los europeos y los malayos*... (9–10).

He continues by asking the fields of Philippine ethnology to refine its methods of inquiry to essentially think outside the box: "elevemos nuestros estudios... á buen seguro que los ojos se extenderán á más dilatados y vírgenes campos." In such "virginal fields" he locates habitants of the islands which offer distinguishing characteristics to those that are of central focus of his study, namely the "Itas." As I have alluded, he suggests that the "*igorrotes, guianaanes* y *tinguianes*" are tribal communities whose "carácteres étnicos recuerdan las tribus de América" (10). This is a significant observation as it places the development of the field of Philippine ethnological analysis as cultivated by Paterno alongside similar settler colonial expansions in North America—which is likely the place he references here though it is possible that his observation encapsulates a more hemispheric understanding of the Americas. These tribal communities, in his view, are distinct and less ancient than the Itas and thus require a different epistemological roadmap to account for them. Unfortunately, they signify an even lower level of civilization than American

and Philippine "tribus." The "virginal" or underexplored territory to which he affixes his vista is where "encontrarémos á las razas de baja estatura, cabello lanoso y muy crespo, piel de color negro cobrizo, de pantorilla muy delgada, de escaso prognatismo y ancho de órbitas, es decir, á nuestros *Itas*" (10). Their study is significant for Paterno because they represent the observation "de pasadas edades… de primitivas sociedades; estudiando su modo de ser, propio de las primeras evoluciones sociales, evoquemos los siglos á que corresponden, ocho ó nueve mil años atrás, á los siglos de las primeras civilizaciones… puesto que los *Negritos* son de la raza *negra*…" (10). Blackness must exist within a lower stratum beholden to Malay civilization and colonialism.

Black "Ita" existence as ancestral inhabitants of the Philippines actually constructs the archipelago as a site of *settlement* for Filipino Malays thus mimicking the settler colonial histories of the Americas, which he references. Indeed, the Malayan civilization is configured as peoples who migrated to the Philippines as outsiders like Europeans did implicating an advancement in social and political organization that would lead them to invade. Invaders are modern and are historical agents of movement and progress. Black Indigenousness is stationary, static, and passive to which invasion happens. This replicates and affixes Philippine racial history to a Euro-American framework of conquest. It is difficult to disarticulate Paterno's alignment with European conquest narratives from the authoring of this study in Spanish wherein we can reasonably conclude an expansion of a Philippine scientific acumen through a Hispanic humanism. This expansion requires a separation of Malayan tribes through ponderous metaphors of discovery and surveying "virgin fields," "á elevadas montañas," and "á más grandes y hermosos horizontes" from the prehistoric and pre-evolutionary "Negritos" who are simply part of the landscape to which true Filipinos *as settlers* lay claim. The similarities to Vasconcelos are striking in his recuperation of the "rojo" races and their civilizational grandeur. Paterno, rather than a fanciful reclamation of antecedent advancement

located in Atlantis, suggests an equally mythic positioning of Black atavism vis-à-vis Malay Asians. These ethnological renditions of Asian migration resonate extensively with characterizations of Asian mobility and immigration histories to the Americas.

The Philippines, in Paterno's folkloric intervention, must be connected to the deep histories of the world thus advancing a nation-building cosmology that makes similar moves as Vasconcelos's "la raza cósmica." While I wish to avoid being reductionist, I believe that Paterno's *Los Itas* is a Filipino iteration and mestizo precedent of *La raza cósmica.* As I elaborated above, Vasconcelos also situates Latin American racial identity and his future prognostications for its eugenic blending as part of a deep historical patrimony of Indigenous identity. This resonates with Asian American and Indigenous studies scholar Juliana Hu Pegues, contributing to the study of Asian settler colonialism particularly in relation to Hawaiian studies scholarship and settler of color studies, who wrote on the ways that analyses of Asian migration to the United States has been overly preoccupied with space. Typically, this has included study of the movement of people from one place to another, community formation in specific geographic contexts, and US racial exclusion from a spatial domain in the form of immigration restriction. While Hu Pegues explores the context of Alaska, the "final frontier" of US expansion, her analyses provide further explanatory context Paterno's envisioning of Filipino history as one of colonial settlement. While in most studies of Asian America (across the Americas), Asians are usually configured as perpetually foreign presences never belonging to the normative nation-state, Alaskan Indigenous peoples were actually racially viewed as Asians. In this way, any claims to sovereign control over ancestral homelands was nullified because of ostensible Asian foreignness. Asian racialization and Indigenous dispossession worked in tandem to augment white settler property.

A similar logical dynamic is at play in Paterno's rendering of Blackness in the Philippines, which opens up Hu Pegues's brilliant framework of "space-time colonialism" to another global context. In this framework she links the Asian Americanist tendency to focus on space with Indigenous studies critiques of settler time. As I have established, one significant way that Paterno establishes the incommensurability of the "Itas" with the Philippines is through a particular "paleographic" fossilization of Philippine Blackness thus denying them coevality with the present. Meanwhile, Asian Malays are configured as settlers in modern progressive temporalities associated with conquest. Blackness, in this sense, *indigenizes* the space of the Philippines to which Malays move as settlers. They settle in space defined teleologically as the "Philippines" thus ushering in anti-Black temporalities as the mechanism by which modernity is shaped and defined. A difference from Hu Pegues is that rather than an overdetermined preoccupation with space, a grand engagement with settler temporality is significant to Paterno's analysis of Philippine history. We can see a similar dynamic of how space-time coloniality links "the forever foreign with the never modern" (13). In this instance, the Malay articulated as "invader" constitutes their identification as a "foreign" settler presence in the migratory threads that stitch together Philippine history. Meanwhile, the Black "Ita" is constructed as the "never modern" entity that is out of step with time as "fósiles en las rocas." Nevertheless, they also lack a proper or enduring stake within the Philippine nation-state which is defined through the brownness of Malay racialization. In being rejected in modern temporal designs activated by the Hispanic mestizo Filipino, Black embodiments are also rejected from the space of the Philippines which is constructed as belonging to Asian settlers rather than the "first" ancestral inhabitants of the islands, namely the "Itas" themselves.

Conclusion

In this article I have attempted to show the ways that Blackness actually took on an important ethnological Indigenous character in conceptual articulations of Philippine racial history. Blackness was characterized in ways that are consonant with Afropessimistic understandings of its negativity and antagonistic exclusion from liberal humanism. This was a rational humanism that was deployed by Filipino scientists like Paterno which he, like other ilustrados such as Rizal, used to construct a seemingly autonomous notion of Philippine history that exceeded Spanish colonial authority though ironically, in the case of the study *Los Itas*, this materialized in the Spanish language. Paterno aligned Blackness with the atavistic assumptions that lied in ethnological comparativism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This was crucial for Paterno so that Blackness could be distanced in time, rendered a "fossil," and thus a paleographic landscape on which to rationalize the depiction of Malayan civilization as the development of a settler colonial migration pattern aligned with European and Anglo-American histories of conquest. Ironically, Malayan Filipinos are rendered foreign invaders rather than autochthonous inhabitants. It is the antecedent presence of Blackness that allows for this construction of Malayans as settler conquerors rather than being Indigenous, and therefore "salvajes Filipinos." Vasconcelos, by the same token, set out to center Latin American Indigenous cultures as the apex of civilization thus staging the rehabilitative mixtures of mestizaje as a historical return to greatness. An analysis of both in tandem demonstrates that Indigenist myth-making through supposedly scientific rationality was at the heart of positioning Hispanic humanism as the instrument of political and racial advancement. While Paterno's study is stunning in its insistence on Black Indigeneity as the screen upon which to position Malays as settlers, this demonstrates in conjunction with Vasconcelos that the myth of the settler as an agent of civilization is a resonant motif that materializes in a diverse and global mestizo archive in Mexico and the Philippines.

Notes

1 "RIZAL'S LIFE IN BERLIN REMEMBERED." n.d. Accessed December 5, 2023. http://philippine-embassy.de/2017/12/22/rizals-life-in-berlin-remembered/.

2 What I mean by "visual Blackness" here highlights literal skin color that would register for the average observer as black skin, while also keeping in mind the historical, social, and colonial contexts through which "Blackness" has accrued negative associations that make an "empirical" classification of black (versus other colors) for human beings itself a specious practice. At other points in the essay, I use the term "phenotypic" blackness as a way to differentiate the darker complexions of different ethnic groups in the Philippines (as well as other Pacific renditions of black skin color) from more typically imagined "brown" skin hues of some people from Southeast Asia. These visual appraisals presuppose much: that a general observer would characterize the much darker skin tones I think about in the Philippines as "black" and thus I assume such a general observer in making these distinctions for the purpose of analysis.

3 While outside the frame of this essay, I think that it is still useful to note Vasconcelos's stunning Orientalism: "Ocurrirá algunas veces, y ha ocurrido ya, en efecto, que la competencia económica nos obligue a cerrar nuestras puertas, tal como hace el sajón, a una desmedida irrupción de orientales. Pero al proceder de esta suerte, nosotros no obedecemos más que a razones de orden económico; reconocemos que no es justo que pueblos como el chino, que bajo el santo consejo de la moral confuciana se multiplican como ratones, vengan a degradar la condición humana, justamente en los instantes en que comenzamos a comprender que la inteligencia sirve para refrenar y regular bajos instintos zoológicos... si los rechazamos es porque el hombre, a medida que progresa, se multiplica menos y siente el horror del número, por lo mismo que ha llegado a estimar la calidad" (17).

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