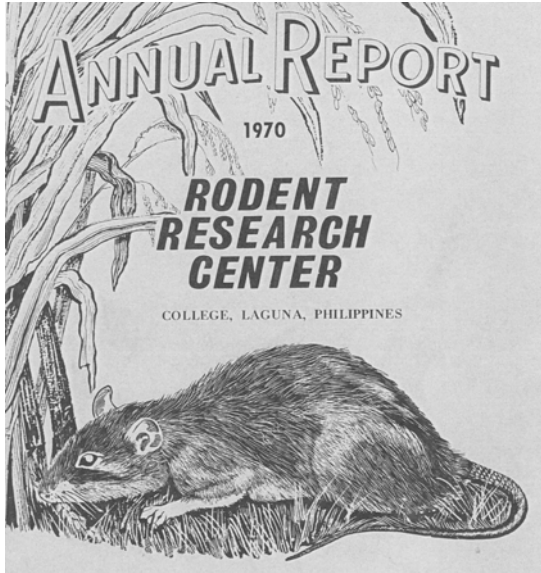




Center for Philippine Studies

School of Pacific and Asian Studies, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa



Let them eat rats! Pestilence and Politics in Postwar Philippines

By

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ABOUT THE LECTURE:

The most commonly cited most serious threat to the Philippines after World War II was the *Partido Komunista ng Pilipinas* (PKP), which purportedly planned to launch a series of “military offensives” to topple the newly-established Republic. But equally significant was the “widespread irruption of rat populations [following] a rapid expansion in the amount of land cultivated to rice.” In 1953-1954, 80 % of Mindanao’s total rice production was lost to rat infestation, a loss valued at US\$55.3 million, which “led to widespread shortages in [the] island.” Municipalities were divested of their populations as people moved to nearby provinces to escape the depredations and seek food. In Cotabato province, 200,000 people were starving and there were even reports of “several suicides...of hunger-wracked farmers going insane” in the 10 most heavily-stricken municipalities of the province. How was this infestation dealt with? Many suggested eating rats to solve the infestation as well as deal with rural hunger, but others, including the national government preferred extermination. This presentation explores these responses, their effectiveness and how they helped shaped the contours of local politics, especially in Mindanao.

ABOUT THE SPEAKER:

Dr. Patricio "Jojo" Abinales recently joined the Asian Studies Department at UH Manoa as Professor of Philippine Politics. He has previously held several academic positions most recently as Professor in the Center for Southeast Asian Studies in Kyoto University and Distinguished Fellow at the Woodrow Wilson Institute in Washington, DC. He specializes in Mindanao politics, the U.S. colonial state, and the state and society in the Philippines.

September 14, 2011, Wednesday

2:00 – 3:30 p.m. – Moore Hall 319 (Tokioka Room)

Free and open to the public. CPS Fall Reception to follow.

For more information regarding the Center for Philippine Studies, this lecture series, or disability access,
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