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## **The Athletic Crusade: Sport and Colonialism in the Philippines**

In recent years several historians have examined the nature and role of sport in the colonization and acculturation process. These studies, however, have largely focused on the British Empire. As a latecomer to imperial conquest, the United States has drawn little attention in this regard. More than a decade ago, Jan Beran published an insightful article on the introduction of American sports into the Philippines, the first American colony.

She concluded that the process of acculturation and Americanization was a relatively beneficial one. More recent studies of imperialism, colonialism, and acculturation suggest that the process was more complex. This study reexamines the case through the framework of hegemony theory to take into account not only the American initiatives regarding sport, but the Filipino reactions to and uses of it to construct alternative meanings and hence, alternative conclusions.

The analysis employs more recent secondary works, as well as a host of primary sources and archival records that recorded both American bureaucrats', administrators', and teachers' impressions and those of their Filipino students in relation to the role of sports in the acculturation process. The treaty that ended the Spanish-American War of 1898 ceded the Philippines to the United States; yet it faced another war, termed an "insurrection," with the already established Filipino independence movement. Occupying American troops introduced American forms of education and sport as a means of reeducation even before civil authorities took command. Under the civil commission that administered and governed the archipelago, and closely allied with the YMCA, the role of sports in the Americanization process even surpassed the extensive and comprehensive efforts of the progressive reformers in the United States. Furthermore, Protestant missionaries, determined to rescue the already Christian, but Catholic Filipinos from themselves, invoked sports as a tool of conversion.

American administrators and ex-patriots soon organized political, legal, educational, cultural, and athletic institutions relatively unburdened by the scope of criticism and modeled on their particular racial and social class biases. The English language and competitive sport intended to instill a common bond, patriotism, and American values in the multitude of subject tribes that inhabited the Philippines. The transplantation of America to the islands, guised in the benevolence of "the white man's burden," proved less plausible as racial, cultural, and nationalistic factors resisted and impeded the process. Filipinos adapted American sport forms to their own needs and values. American segregationist practices in the construction and uses of athletic facilities belied the rhetoric of equality and opportunity that further

alienated the subordinate colonials. For them, sport also became a means for retaliation and refutation of Social Darwinian beliefs.