The Philippines as Home

SETTLERS AND SOJOURNERS IN THE COUNTRY

EDITED BY
MARUJA M.B. ASIS
THE PHILIPPINES AS HOME
Settlers and Sojourners in the Country

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Preface and Acknowledgments

The papers in this volume were presented in two forums sponsored by the Philippine Migration Research Network (PMRN) in 2000 - at PMRN's Fourth General Assembly on 4 February and at the panel on "Transnational Communities in the Philippines," Sixth International Philippine Studies Conference on 11 July.

Through this publication, PMRN hopes to broaden the discussion of migration issues by exploring a lesser-known angle of the country's migration experience, i.e., the Philippines as a destination or a host society. The country as home to foreigners is as much a historical and contemporary reality as having been or being a country of emigration. However, the magnitude and diversity of international migration from the Philippines in recent times have obscured the fact that the country has received various types of foreigners who had come to its shores.

In the last 100 years, the time frame considered by the papers, the experiences of the foreigners who have come to the Philippines offer varying glimpses of the country as home: as a place of settlement for those who have come to stay or as refuge, a place to study, or as a vacation destination for those who have come as transients. As materials about immigrants and other foreigners in the Philippines, the papers also provide sketches of the individual and collective experiences of immigrants as they deal with legal classifications, questions of identities, community life, and integration or its alternatives. There could be many more angles on these themes and as many experiences and perspectives by different groups, which hopefully future research would focus on.
A profile of the foreign nationals legally residing and/or working in the Philippines is described in Jorge V. Tigno's, "A Preliminary Study of Foreign Nationals in the Philippines: Strangers in Our Midst?" Recent data on five groups of foreigners were collated: permanent resident aliens, foreign workers, foreign retirees, foreign students, and tourists. Official data on foreigners are collected by different government agencies which deal with specific groups, each of which seems to operate independently of each other. Thus, obtaining a "simple" estimate of foreign nationals did not turn out to be an easy task. The paper identifies the limitations of available data, the need for coordination among the different agencies, and the need to review the system of data collection, processing, retrieval and accessibility. Indeed, the paper confirms that the foreign presence in the Philippines is a small proportion of the country's population. However, the situation may change in the future. Among others, globalization has resulted in greater population mobility, and the Philippines is likely to be increasingly affected by international migration, not just as a country of origin but also as transit or destination country. Prospects of more immigration inflows presage possibilities that bode opportunities as well as risks for the Philippines. The use of the country, for example, as an unknowing host, a transit point, or as a destination for criminal activities such as trafficking in persons, particularly women and children, calls for more rigor in data collection for monitoring purposes. Tigno also suggests that with greater internationalization in general, and more immigration inflows in particular, the Philippines may have to consider citizenship issues - and further down the line, integration issues.

Two papers deal with the Philippine Chinese, the largest group of foreigners who have settled in the country. Among all foreign settlers, the Chinese perhaps come close to the idea of "hyphenated Filipinos." The various references to the Chinese population in the country - Philippine Chinese, Filipino-Chinese, Chinese-Filipinos, Chinoys (Tsinoys) - are an indication not only of their long presence but also their shared history in the country's national life. Richard T. Chu observes that among the overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia, the Philippine Chinese have had a peculiar experience, having gone through three colonial regimes and being influenced by the nationalist movements in China and the Philippines. In his paper, "Catholic,
Sangley, Mestizo, Spaniard, Filipino: Negotiating "Chinese" Identities at the Turn-of-the-Twentieth Century Manila," Chu examines the interesting question of "Chinese" identities (rather than the traditional presumption of a single, homogeneous "Chinese" identity) beyond the ethno-legal classifications imposed by the Spanish and American administrations (and the Catholic Church as well) at the turn of the 20th century. Using archival materials on marriage and inheritance cases, Chu discusses the testaments drawn up by nine Chinese and mestizos (ca. 1895-1902) to show how the Chinese and their families navigated between the identities and laws imposed by the colonial regimes on the one hand, and their cultural background on the other. One theme that emerged from the different cases was the role of individual agency which resulted in fluid, ambiguous and multiple identities. Chu's questions and suggestions for further research are worth looking into.

Chen Yande's paper, "A Study of the Philippine Chinese in Cebu City: Then and Now," offers a view of the Philippine Chinese in a regional milieu. His paper discusses the origins of the Cebu Chinese, their changing composition, the factors which contributed to their changing orientation from sojourners to settlers, and the roles that they played in Cebu society from the Spanish times to the present. Particularly after the Second World War, the Cebu Chinese have made significant contributions to the local economy, some of which had national importance. The Cebu Chinese, for example, built the shipping industry in Cebu, whose contributions extend to the national level. Comparing the Cebu Chinese with other Philippine Chinese, Chen observed that the position of the Cebu Chinese is unique in several respects. Perhaps the most notable is the lack of tension or strain in their relationship with the local population. This is an aspect that needs further examination as it could provide some suggestions on pathways to ethnic relations in the Philippines.

Earlier generations of Indian immigrants also came with the intention to stay for a few years, but later changes in their homeland (especially when Sindh became part of Pakistan) rendered the Philippines a more attractive alternative. Anita Raina Thapan's paper, "Tradition, Change and Identity: Sindhi Immigrants in Manila," focuses on one of two major groups of Indian immigrants (the other
are the Punjabis) who have made the Philippines their home. Compared with the Chinese, the Sindhis are smaller in number and are not as widely distributed in other parts of the country. Drawing on data from key informant interviews, a survey, and participant-observation, Thapan discusses elements of tradition and change in the lives of Sindhi immigrants in Manila. Their continuing involvement in business (most of which are one-person or one-family organizations) and their tendency to live in “kinship neighborhoods” (i.e., the tendency to live in areas where other Sindhis are located) limit their interactions among themselves and make for a close-knit family and community life. Still, some degree of acculturation may have taken place, particularly among the younger generation. Some may have become Filipino nationals or they may speak Filipino, but when it comes to issues such as marriage, choice of occupation, or identity, their choices and the core of their self-identification are still Sindhi. The greater access of Filipino Sindhis to Indian cinema and religious movements - which had been greatly facilitated by globalization - on the one hand, and possibilities for more interaction with the local population on the other, imply possibilities for changing identities for younger and future generations of Filipino Sindhis.

Polina E. Ilieva’s paper, “The Refugee Camp in Tubabao: The First Philippine Experience in International Humanitarian Assistance,” talks about the tiempo Russo (Russian period), 1949-1953, when the island of Tubabao in Samar became a temporary home for the “White Russians” who fled the communist regime in their homeland. The Philippines had just gained independence at the time, and despite the fact that it was recovering from the destruction of World War II, it offered a place where Russian refugees can live while awaiting resettlement in other countries. The Philippines initially agreed to host the refugees for four months, but because of delays in the resettlement process, their stay was extended until 1953. Some 5,500 White Russians lived in Tubabao during the camp’s existence before they moved on to start a new life in other countries. Interviews with former refugees and Tubabao residents during the tiempo Russo suggest a cordial relationship between the refugees and the local people. This episode would be reprised in the 1980s when the Philippines hosted a larger contingent of refugees. Hundreds of thousands of Indochinese refugees came to the Philippines before they were resettled elsewhere. At a time when resettlement is becoming less of an option, the Philippines has also
showed another alternative - local integration - through the establishment of Vietville in Puerto Princesa, Palawan in April 1997. The Philippines also became the first Southeast Asian country to adopt a national refugee status determination procedure (10 April 1998).

The final paper in this volume, "International Migration and the Nation-State in Asia" by Stephen Castles tackles the issue of managing ethnic diversity in selected countries of immigration in the region. The different conditions that shaped the nation-state in Western societies and in Asia is a thoughtful starting point in considering how Asian countries will deal with the growing internationalization or multi-ethnic character of their societies. The traditional responses of exclusion or cultural assimilation had given way to a third approach: "The trend is now towards citizenship and full membership of society, without prior cultural assimilation. In some cases (Australia, Canada, USA, Sweden, etc.) this has led to multiculturalism as a model for national identity and citizenship. In other cases (France, Germany) such developments are less explicit" (p. 189). Thus far, the Asian experience with immigration suggests that it is not different from the Western experience in this respect. As Castles has noted, the scale of irregular migration in the region, despite stringent policies on keeping migration temporary, indicates the difficulty in keeping migrants out. If Asian countries cannot preclude migration, how would they deal with immigrants in their midst? Will Western experiences with exclusion, cultural assimilation, and multiculturalism provide some blueprint or will Asian countries come up with something different? The answers are far from evident, but the question cannot be ignored or postponed indefinitely.

Particularly for the Philippines, the question may be farfetched at this point, being mainly a country of emigration. Even then, the Philippines will have to anticipate a society of increasing cultural diversity in light of greater population mobility and globalization. When overseas Filipino workers, for example, return from abroad, they carry back with them experiences and perspectives gained from another culture. Furthermore, continuing ties with overseas Filipinos are another conduit of possible social and cultural transformations, including expanding or changing notions of who is a Filipino and what it means to be a Filipino. It will be instructive to explore the extent to which the country’s experience of large-scale migration influences or will
influence how the Philippines treats the immigrants and foreigners in its midst. We trust that this modest publication will serve as an invitation for further research on the contours and possible futures of a culturally diverse Philippine society.

On behalf of the Philippine Migration Research Network, I wish to thank all the contributors to this volume for their cooperation, graciousness and shared commitment in seeing this project through, Jorge V. Tigno provided suggestions and comments on the papers and the conceptualization of the book. Thanks also to the Philippine Migration Research Network Secretariat for valuable support, especially Claire T. Nuyda, who handled countless details in preparing this book. Grateful acknowledgment is also made to Edward Elgar Publishing Ltd. for permission to reprint Stephen Castles’ article, “International Migration and the Nation-State in Asia,” and to The Museum of Russian Culture in San Francisco for permission for the use of photographs of the Tubabao Refugee Camp.

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Stephen Castles is currently Director of the Refugees Studies Centre at Oxford University. An internationally renowned scholar, Dr. Castles has authored/edited numerous articles and books on migration-related topics. His two most recent publications are Citizenship and Migration, with Alistair Davidson (Macmillan Press, London, 2000) and Ethnicity and Globalisation (Sage, London, 2000). Before joining Oxford University, Dr. Castles was Director of the Centre for Asia Pacific Social Transformation Studies at the University of Wollongong. He spearheaded the formation of the Asia Pacific Migration Research Network.

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