The Japanese in our Midst: An Exploratory Analysis of the Experiences of Japanese Migrants/Settlers in the Philippines

ARNOLD MOLINA AZURIN

INTRODUCTION

The numerous studies on the migration of Japanese farmers, laborers and professionals into the Philippines by Filipino, Japanese and American scholars, focus on the experiences of the diverse groups of Japanese immigrants who were induced during the American colonial regime to come to the Philippines and make a living in the then-expanding Philippine economy. Many of these migrant workers were deployed in such pioneering activities as road-building in the Cordillera, vegetable farming around Baguio and Benguet, and plantation-type production of hemp (abaca fiber) in Davao and Bicol, with others coming as retail shop-keepers and prostitutes . Eventually their presence became dominant in commercial fishing, from Lingayen Gulf in Pangasinan to Davao Gulf and Palawan's rich fishing grounds. By the onset of the Commonwealth era (mid-1930s) they began to pose stiff competition against Chinese artisans and traders in some small-scale industries as well as in retail marketing networks.

The export of Japanese labor was also pushed at the same time to the United States, Mexico, Peru, Canada and Hawaii, according to Luisa Mabunay (1979), but in this westerly spread, the Japanese government "was only indirectly involved." In contrast, the "overseas colonization" of the Philippines or *Nanyo* (southlands) was inspired in part by the "expansionist discourses within Japan," says Cynthia Luz Rivera (n.d.), adding that the "unabated influx of Japanese nationals speaks of this

systematic and effective campaign to join the colonization exodus to Davao." Lydia Yu-Jose's book *Japan Views the Philippines* (1992) cites several opinions from various Japanese advocates of this southward expansionism, although some opinion makers in Japan limited the goal to exporting labor and capital, minus the covetous wish for a subsequent territorial annexation (which was certainly the dream of the expansionist sect of Japan's military establishment).

This particular focus among previous and current researches on the politico-economic dimension of the Japanese migration to the Philippines is probably inevitable in the context of the considerable tension subsequently engendered in local host communities. And more so because of that period's volatile contentions among Philippine Commonwealth officials and business interests vis-à-vis the key power players in Japan and the United States immediately preceding the surprise attack on Pearl Harbor. I can make an educated guess that even the Filipino literary imagination today, were it to be regarded as a reflection of folk reminiscence and social history, still bears some wartime pains and passions--such as reflected in the *comfort women* issue.

Up to this day, according to the research of Shun Ohno (1992), the Japanese-Filipinos in Davao who are descendants of the prewar expatriate workers mostly from Okinawa have been squeezed by the twin tragedies of being ostracized by native Filipinos till now, and of having been dispossessed of their farm lots by the Philippine government (and by some local guerrilla officers) on suspicion of having sympathized or collaborated with the Japanese Imperial Army. Despite the fact that they were just young children during the war years, these descendants from mixed marriages of Okinawan-Japanese males and local women still bear the onus of identification with the invading army of more than half a century ago.

Aggravating their current dehumanized squalor is the longtime agony of having been neglected by the Japanese government that has regarded them as Filipinos—until they can prove otherwise through valid documents presumably left behind by their Japanese parents who were ordered to be repatriated to Japan right after the war. What further complicates their sordid condition is the fact that most of them are advanced in age and have assumed Filipino-sounding names and the surnames of their adoptive families who hid them in hill communities (precisely to camouflage their Japanese lineage soon after the death or forced repatriation of their Japanese fathers).

Thus the crucial issue to be settled by the Japanese government, with the assistance of the local government unit, is whether their nationality is Filipino or Nihonjin. What is clear is that they are either war orphans or victims of postwar traumas, theirs and those of others. What is not clear is how to restore their self-consciousness after having assumed camouflaged identities. Although they are basically the bearers of a mixed or hyphenated political identity—Japanese-Filipinos—according to some researchers like Ohno, who has been trying to persuade some Japanese government officials to help in ameliorating their plight as victims of that war launched by Japan in 1941, when they were just pre-adolescent children.

Another question that seems to remain intriguing to nationalist historians is the real extent of plain economic refugees among those migrant workers compared to those who might have come instead as vanguards and spies of Japan's empire-building strategy in the name of Greater Asia Co-prosperity Sphere.

Yet another contention for researchers to shed light on is whether today's "Japanese-Filipinos" or the descendants of those prewar migrants may be regarded eventually as an ethnic group in the context of a majority-minority dichotomy in Filipino identity.

Josefa Saniel (n.d.) had suggested this category in an essay published in 1966 by *Asian Studies* but she carefully circumscribed this ethnic tag "Japanese Minority" by a specific period " before Pearl Harbor" and a particular place "in Davao." Obviously she had not meant it to be a universalized ethnic identity—much less as a current identification of a social class in the manner used by Ohno.

Incidentally, such a personal and group label may acquire more currency in the years ahead as the children from the mixed marriages of Filipina *japayukis* and Japanese males finally come of age to decide to emigrate to the Philippines or to other countries—when their crossbreeding and cross-cultural provenance shall be more prominent both in their features and travel documents.

This prospect quite stunned me when in December 1996 I was surrounded by a big crowd of such couples and preschool *mestizo* children in a departure lounge at the Narita Airport in Tokyo, all eagerly awaiting to set foot in Philippine soil. Curious and having some time to kill, I went to another departure lounge, only to witness the same scene of milling Japanese-Filipino couples with their toddlers in tow. Rather,

were they Filipino-Japanese? Indeed I asked a few couples what was their preferred label for their mestizo children. "*Pareho lang naman yan* [It's all the same]" was the casual response of the Filipina mothers, reinforced by the nods and smiles of the Japanese fathers.

I have revived this happy interlude at the Narita Airport to show the stark contrast with the embittered mixed-up self-identities or ambiguity in nationality of the remaining war orphans and abandoned children of *Davaokuo*, as the Japanese colony of migrant workers used to be known with pride before the war. In March 1988, through the prodding of Ohno, the Japanese Ministry of Welfare and the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs finally conducted its first survey of Japanese-Filipinos who either lost their parents during the war or got separated from their Japanese fathers by the forced repatriation at war's end. Ohno provides a summary of that long-overdue survey: "Regarding the question on nationality, 10 percent answered 'Japanese', 57 percent answered 'Filipino' and 44 percent answered 'not clear'. The official documents attesting [to] their Japanese nationality got lost during their escape from the U.S. forces or they could not decipher their fathers' names written in Chinese characters or that they have no knowledge about their fathers' permanent whereabouts in Japan."

This self-valuation among the so-called Japanese-Filipinos (the offspring of intermarriages) reveals more of the chances of assimilation in the local comunity or a deliberate submergence of one genetic-cultural base of identity in favor of the other source of self-ascription, given the pressured circumstances they have been going through since the war ended. Only ten percent regarded themselves as "Japanese" while fifty-seven percent considered themselves "Filipinos," and forty-four percent were ambiguous about their self-ascribed nationality. Under the coercive conditions posed by the postwar anti-Japanese sentiments in Davao, it is small wonder that the majority of this Japanese-Filipino generation either regarded themselves as Filipinos or "not clear" about the status of their nationality or ethnopolitical affiliation. Interestingly, even a relatively more relaxed postwar situation such as that milieu experienced by the remaining Japanese residents in Iloilo also resulted in a laidback attitude or low profile for the prewar members of the Iloilo Japanese Association, and those who had graduated from the former Iloilo Japanese School. Of these Japanese residents in postwar Iloilo, Mabunay (1979) gives a succinct overview: "There seems to be a relatively low awareness of common attribute, much less of a common

frame, among the Japanese and Japanese-Filipinos, in the area. Apart from recent isolated occasions for the gathering and acquaintance of some of these residents, initiated by the Iloilo-Kai and the organization of Japanese war veterans, the Japanese population in Iloilo is geographically and socially dispersed."

In sum, those few remaining Japanese migrants' children (the *nisei* generation) are already in their twilight years and their grandchildren living in the Philippines have mostly chosen to identify themselves as Filipinos.

It is not difficult to comprehend such pro-assimilation traits among émigrés or their children, both in the psychological and behavioral realm, especially if a researcher reckons with the cramped demographic setup of Japan coupled with its societal disequilibrium fomented by warlords through several centuries. Japan has long been known as *dura virum nutrix* (a hard nurse of men), so notes Wendell Capili in his Master's thesis at the University of Cambridge. "Due to the open and shifting hierarchy in Japan... ultimately, wealth, not blood, was the greater recipient of position [of privilege]; and wealth could be created by (war-making) skill or fraud. It was a situation where money and contracts, not blood and status, ruled," Capili asserts. And then, with direct reference to the dire situation in the early 1900s among the common folk in Japan, he suggests that "Japanese emigrants decided to establish settlements in Davao because…[by his own sweat] a person can move up fairly quickly, certainly within a lifetime."

MIGRATION'S DEEPER TIMELINE

The sociopolitical scenario just cited could be the same historic setup and worldview that had impelled various groups from the Japanese archipelago to migrate or resettle in the *Nanyo* region since five centuries back or even much earlier. In other words, this adjacent vast area had long been a natural refuge for those raiding bands dislodged from their lairs in Japan, including samurais whose lord had lost his castle to a rival army. Too, *Nanyo* beckoned to the traders' sailboats because of the safe harbors and coastal settlements ever in wait for exotic commodities, and because of the ready availability of raw materials and foodstuff to refit the ship or refresh the crew's provisions for the next long voyage. This region, evidently underpopulated more than half a millennium back was even more congenial to Japan's landless farmers than to any group of migrants.

Hence, at this juncture of the exploration, this paper detours from the narrative of events in the past hundred years to acquire a broader vista of migration in this maritime zone through the vantage point of anthropology, ethnohistory and archaeology.

Such an expansion of the analytical lens is meant not only to open new opportunities for research but also to incorporate the fresh findings from the field which otherwise yet are cast off to the margins in social science. More important, a deeper timeline of migration and settlement building can launch for the present generation of researchers a more dynamic view of the long period of cultural and genetic transactions, that is, long before ethnic identities were made rigid in accordance with the self-assumed mandate of kingdom builders and dynastic shoguns.

To be sure, this trail of exploration will not attempt to present a complete scenario of interisland voyaging and settlement building. Rather, it shall point out certain traces that may lead other researchers to delve into. It shall as well underscore possible significant connections of isolated evidence of early interaction and reciprocity—which eventually may lead us to a better appreciation of deep-set commonalities or inter-ethnic bonds that, in turn, may provide the cultural seedbed for mutual tolerance among today's migrant groups and multicultural societies.

Luzon Island was among the early multicultural habitations in the *Nanyo* region, and not only the "innumerable Chinese of all kinds" were busy trading at the seaports, according to a letter of Friar Juan Cobo written on 13 July 1589. Among other traders were "Portuguese, Italians, Greeks, natives of Crete and of the Canary Islands, Indians from Mexico, Negroes from Guinea…also Moors from Africa."

"There are Japanese and Javanese and Bengalis and a great number of people from all other islands," Fr. Cobo wrote. But his next observation is even more pertinent than his litany of diverse races to my present hypothesis of ancient admixtures of peoples and cultures in this maritime zone. He said, "We find all sorts of blood mixtures in this land for the people blend with one another."

Apparently, Fr. Cobo was making his memoirs based in Manila with all its cosmopolitan penchant for coexistence and cultural concourse. Although eight years earlier, in northern Luzon which faced Okinawa and Japan, the event narrated later by Aduarte was about a sea battle between a Spanish fleet and a Japanese convoy. The Japanese were

"desiring to have control of the region because of the abundance of products...lacking in Japan," says Felix Keesing (*The Ethnohistory of Northern Luzon*), summarizing Aduarte's account.

From the Spanish viewpoint and motivation to dominate the region, those Japanese vessels were "prowling along the coast and pillaging it," in the words of the Spaniard Aduarte. However, without the same self-interest in the conquest, Keesing sums up the relevant chronicles of the period to emphasize this fact: "The Cagayan groups living near the coast were already accustomed to dealings with outsiders. The river mouth had apparently long served as a sheltering and trading port for both Chinese and Japanese vessels..."

Such long-time practice of homeporting along the coast of northern Luzon by various Japanese vessels also occurred along the opposite coast facing the South China Sea. The first Spanish expeditionary fleet led by Capitan Juan de Salcedo witnessed a well-established "Port of Japon" in what is now Agoo town in La Union. It was inevitable for the Spanish colonizers to view the Japanese presence in the late 1500s with alarm and enmity.

One Spanish document of that period, according to Keesing, had analyzed the Japanese intent in northern Luzon as "an attempt to impose political and commercial advantage"—which of course ran counter to the Spanish goal of conquest and colonization of the area. The Japanese had long regarded *Nanyo* as their southern gateway to China, Siam, India, and Java. Or, the southern backwaters, that is, from the vantage point of the Japanese pirates called *wako* who used the coves and islets of northern Luzon as their hideout while waiting for the traders' sailboats to approach these ambush points.

Some scholars who have written on the precolonial presence of these *wako* sea marauders consider them as the first Japanese to have come in contact with the native inhabitants or proto-Filipinos. Such is a limited view based on sparse documentation and inadequate interpretation. Some Spanish chroniclers who had early contacts with the highland tribesmen in northern Luzon (like the Apayao and Isneg as well as those Ifugao overlooking Cagayan Valley) recorded certain folk recollection of having Japanese ancestors; at least a part of their genealogy was exogamous. Keesing casts doubt on this assertion but concludes nevertheless that "sporadic unions did occur with Chinese and Japanese shipmen and settlers, especially along the coasts." But again, "sporadic"

is just another modifier expressing no more than an opinion. No doubt, a more systematic way to confirm or cast off the notion of Japanese lineage among some native northerners is to study the genetic code of concerned folk and match them with the genetic code of southerners in Japan such as those from Okinawa and Kyushu, which are closer to northern Luzon than Hokkaido –although geographic distance may not matter much in this analysis of gene pools.

About half a millennium ago there might have been more solid evidence of this cultural and genetic intercourse among Ilocanos and Cagayanons with the Japanese migrants or settlers in precolonial times. The writings of Fray Colin give us a good clue: "Persons familiar with the provinces of Ilocos and Cagayan testify that tombs have been found thereabouts of people of greater stature than the Filipinos, with their arms and jewels from China or Japan, who, presumably at the scent of gold, conquered and settled in those parts."

There is another piece of folk memory gathered by a Japanese migrant in the early 1900s. Kanegae Seitaro's reconstruction of this folk reminiscence was incorporated with his personal observations of the cultural scene around Baguio. Yu-Jose summarizes in her book *Japan Views the Philippines* Kanegae's recollection "that in Baguio, there was a legend about the descendants of the Heike clan who, according to the story, drifted to the sea after they were defeated by the Minamotos in the Battle of Genpei, finally settling in Baguio. He found it significant that many Filipinos in Baguio had Japanese-sounding names like Aquino, Quirino, Togo, and Toda. He also observed that some old tribes in Baguio had kept as family heirlooms swords and armors used by the samurai."

"Japanese influence could also be seen, he proudly observed, in the daily life of the Igorots: the Japanese container *tarai* called by exactly the same name by the natives; the fruit *kaki*, which had retained its Japanese name; the thatched-roof houses and the sunken hearth; the rice terraces; their skill at wood carving; and their version of the creation, which is similar to the Japanese belief that they are direct descendants of the Sun Goddess. Lastly, he observed that the Igorots and Japanese shared similar physical attributes, such as short legs, and moral traits, such as bravery and courtesy…"

Whether to agree or disagree as regard Kanegae's synthesis, I am in no position to claim either at this point. A deeper or extensive research

is called for. But as to the story of the Heike clan that settled in Baguio, the other occasion it was recounted was at a formal lecture of the Japanese Consul Kaneko Toyoji before Filipino students in 1935. It seems to me more than a legend. So I reread my copy of *Sources of Japanese Tradition* Volume 1 (1964) to find out when the Minamotos reigned in Japan and defeated their enemy clan, the Heike. The dynastic list indicates the year as the twelfth century. If my reading were correct, it was still that period when feudal lords made a career of wars and plunder and no one had yet emerged as the unifier of Japan—an unstable situation that drove vanquished clans to exile in other lands, such as *Nanyo* presumably, which the Chinese chroniclers called "Luzon." But even much earlier, from the middle of 700 A.D. till 900 A.D. the so-called "barbarians" whose ancestral homelands straddled the northeastern areas of Japan were being subjugated or evicted by the warriors of the Yamato Kingdom. The "barbarians" were actually tribal peoples called *emishi* whose language and custom differed from the imperial armies which hired other tribal armies to aid in the ethnic cleansing against the emishi. In his book *Hired Swords* (1992), Karl Friday noted that since 737 A.D., the "violent confrontations against the emishi became more frequent as the court's objective shifted from simple absorption to military conquest and subjugation." It is a matter of speculation at this point that the unsubjugated emishi crossed the sea to Nanyo. More research is needed.

There are new archaeological studies unfolding the ancient links between Luzon and Japan. Etsuko Rodriguez, in a lecture before the Archaeology Studies Program, University of the Philippines, retraced one link through the trade of unglazed jars or stoneware. National Museum archaeologist Eusebio Dizon has been pursuing the possible common provenance of the remnants of the stonewalled fortifications called *idyang* in Batanes and those similar stonewalled defense structures in Okinawa. Perhaps a researcher can enlighten us on the comparative history of the *kimona* and the *kimono*, which are both ornate formal costume for women Filipino and Japanese, respectively. What I can shed light on based on a study trip to Okinawa, Kyushu and Osaka, is that the so-called *dragon kiln* of Vigan (northern Philippines) used in baking the unglazed *burnay* jars is exactly of the same structure and dimension as those in Okinawa to the last detail, including the holes on each side to allow potters to determine the heat inside or the extent of baking. In an islet off Kyushu called Nokonoshima, a ruin of a *dragon kiln* shows only a slight variation. What this archaeological specimen

suggests to researchers is a commonality in ceramic industry in the past deserving of a deeper or earnest investigation.

In Okinawa, the writers and researchers I met consider themselves belonging more to the Austronesian world than to mainland Japan. The Okinawans also have women celebrants during their spiritual healing rituals similar to rituals practised in the Philippine Archipelago. And their dishes are closely related in taste and appearance to Ilocano or Filipino cuisine. Their ceremonial sash is made of a locally woven fabric that, at first glance, I thought to have been an Ilocano *abel*—a coarse cotton with grid patterns of bright colors.

At the Okinawa Prefectural Museum, there was a traditional wooden house structure displayed in the garden. My initial impression upon seeing it was that it was a replica of an Igorot house. But the caption described it as a typical Okinawan house of premodern period. When I was invited by the Philippine honorary consul based in Okinawa (married to a Filipino doctor who used to work in the U.S. military base in the island), she opened the pages of some old books to show me how the Okinawan villages had appeared to the first European explorers and artists. I mistook them for Ilocano villages ensconced in hills and woodlands. Others looked more like Igorot villages because the thatched roofs were more steep. So, right there and then, I speculated that if a cultural geographer were to study the commonalities of Okinawa and northern Luzon, it would be a fertile exploration of kindred beliefs, artifacts, legends and so on. Some archeologists are already gathering the material evidence of the cultural kinship in this island world of East Asia. Arts and crafts ethnographer Norma Respicio has ventured since a decade ago in the comparative study of traditional weaves in Okinawa and the Philippines.

But what has such an array of recollections and comparisons, whether from written chronicles or old oral accounts, have to do with migration or resettlement of Japanese into *Nanyo* or the Philippines?

The significance of this explanatory analysis may lie in establishing some neglected points of investigation and in determining new clues to stimulate upcoming researchers. For instance, how to evaluate the process of migration across regions with ill-defined borders in comparison with transborder movement of people already bearing visas? Next, how much of a Japanese is an Okinawan migrant to Davao? The question is more vital now than before World War II because social researchers have already bared that there was a psychological and

cultural divide between an Okinawan and a Japanese mainlander, say, from Honshu, even as both tried their luck as prewar migrant laborers in the Philippines. Ohno's study of the Davaokuo community shows that the Okinawan settler was regarded as a subordinate class of Nihonjin (Japanese) in that era.

Furthermore, through an anthropological prism, migration or the transborder movement of people such as that of the Heike clan (cited here just for the sake of having a showcase) when visas were not needed because borders were not so defined and guarded may be better appreciated as simple relocalization, or better yet, resettlement. Adaptive mechanisms in the people's survival kit would be relatively non-coercive, and invariably, their interaction with neighboring communities would be more reciprocal than not. Hence, ethnic distinctions might steadily melt away into shared legacies with vague origins. But again if the new settlers were surrounded by headhunters relentlessly going after their skulls, then they would resettle elsewhere, if they survived a massacre. In short, such a resettlement scheme or seeking new sanctuaries would not lead to a replacement of the native or indigenous inhabitants. Rather, it would likely result in intermingling of cultural traits and mutual accomodation, if not assimilation.

Concerning the necessary distinction between migration of distinct race groups and the dispersal of culture: Precisely because their epic narrators ignore this distinction, Thailand, Malaysia and the Philippines have funny tales of prehistoric migration of their mythical progenitors replacing the aboriginals. One migration story in Thailand is that the Thai ancestors made a long trek from the Altai Mountains of China. Since there is no convincing explanation, it would seem that this tale is merely based on the letters "tai" in Altai. But many Thai scholars today trace their origins to the Dai people, so how does "Altai" figure in this puzzle of primordial migrants? One Malaysian version of their ancestors' migration is that Saribas in Sumatra was the point of origin. This effectively casts off the indigenous *orang asli* as apart from Malay ancestry. Likewise, Filipinos presume their ancestral lineage as traceable to Indonesian migrants, then to Malay migrants, but the aboriginal Ayta is not a part of their family tree. In contrast, some Igorots believe they partly descended from Japanese migrants. The single-origin migration hypothesis of the Thais, the Malays, etc. is actually a reflection of the politicized notion of belonging to a single pure race that replaced the indigenous inhabitants, which is more impossible than any myth. It is

actually a case of mistaking the encompassing cultural forest for the various family trees. Such migration tales are reinforced by colonial-era concepts of racial superiority of dominant groups who discriminate against other ethnic communities—and such mythologized racist "migration" is to be expelled from the purview of this essay.

Highly relevant to such unilinear and monocultural migration of primordial ancestors is the usually ignored fact that the wide spread of cultural influences and practices does not necessarily involve a big number of migrating people. Only a few agents may suffice to effect the cultural transactions—via trade, religious conversion plus occasional intermarriages. This process is often historically realized not through the replacement or displacement of the native inhabitants by a wave of migrants but through an initial exchange of goodwill plus some ritual goods—and made easier and more felicitous if the native chiefs accepted the visiting bearers of the new cultural package as members of the ruling clans, through the expediency of blood compact and similar rites.

After the cultural detour from the main sociopolitical issues surrounding the experiences of Japanese settlers and migrants in the Philippines, it is urgent to take note of two insights arising from some studies done on the Japanese migrants in Baguio, Davao and Iloilo:

1. Accelerated migration of people across well-defined territorial limits may in the short term lead to the formation of exclusive colonies so as to sustain the cultural, psychological and genealogical links with the home country. But in the long run, directly depending on the twists and turns of sociopolitical events, the immigrants may slide toward assimilation within the larger society. This ethnopolitical switch in orientation and self-esteem usually heightens with succeeding generations of the migrants' offspring.
2. In a very specific frame, current researchers may cautiously proceed with more sensitivity in regarding the Okinawan immigrant as one and the same as the Japanese immigrant coming from Japan's cosmopolitan mainland. The Okinawan then migrating to Davao in the first and second decades of the 1900s had a different ethnic makeup and self-valuation from the mainland Japanese, especially the professionals in corporate offices established in Davao.

VARIOUS PLACES, DIVERSE FATES

Most researchers in this specific field (and period) of emigration-centered modus operandi in easing sociopolitical distress in Japan are in agreement that the migrant laborers originating in Okinawa

comprised the largest bloc of expatriates who responded to the recruiters' call to seek new roots in Davao's abaca plantation then being developed by erstwhile American soldiers and pioneer firms. But on account of their marginal ethnic status under the emergent social hierarchy in Japan largely based on new wealth and good connections with or access to the power pyramid, those lowly Okinawan émigrés were discriminated persistently by the Japanese who emigrated from the "mainland." Such derogatory prejudice heaped on the marginalized farmers by the presumably true-blue Nihonjin from Japan's cosmopolitan areas were consistently experienced by the former, whether way before, during, or right after WW II. In fact, from Ohno's research findings, up to this day their descendants are still suffering from this ethnicity-based debasement of their sociopolitical status or group identity, on top of the ostracism directed at them by Davao's postwar populace.

This class discrimination and disharmony rooted in racial inequity have been vividly documented by the various researches (done by Hayase Shinzo, Yu-Jose, among others) that have dug up the chronicles, official memoranda, and memoirs of the protagonists and victims. For instance, the analysis of Cynthia Luz Rivera on the categories of women immigrants reflect a similar downward social valuation. On top of the ladder were the *mainstream women* who were located within the corporate and government infrastructure of Davaokuo originated from the Japanese mainland, and constituted the majority of the population of housewives, professional women, nurses, teachers…(then came) the *marginal women* who were engaged in small business or worked in retail trade and service establishments (such as those) store clerks, maids, barbers, beauticians, dressmakers, embroiders, waitresses, and prostitutes, and (followed by) the *unclassified women*, the majority of Okinawan origin and workers in plantations."

So persist is the inequity and injustice to this day. More than half a century after the dissolution of the *Davaokuo* Japanese colonization project utilizing the migration of workers (mostly Okinawans) as its motive power, the descendants of those migrants have yet to receive any relief or restitution as war victims or orphans. Could this stark case of neglect be another form of ethnic discrimination or deprivation?

Future researchers, I do hope, may enlighten us whether it is or it isn't so. Meanwhile the ethnic discrimination suffered by the Okinawan migrant/settlers has been vividly and painfully memorialized in some

Okinawan museums and shrines dedicated to the remembrance of the exploitation and oppression suffered by the victims and their orphans, aggravated by the racist barbarity of imperialist lust for conquest and cultural dominance. At the Peace Museum in Okinawa, what is mainly on display are the diaries, letters and personal documents of the Okinawa émigrés attesting to the brutality of the invasion and occupation of the *Nanyo* region carried out by the Japanese imperial army. One wall exhibit gives the pride of place to an enhanced reproduction of a soldier's oath to the Emperor to never surrender, followed by torn-out pages of war diaries and letters detailing the sacrifices and agonies imposed upon the fighting force, including some of those pre-war Okinawan migrants who were impelled to abandon their families and farms to support Japan's aggressive annexation of the Philippines and most of Southeast Asia.

Another memorial hall devoted (at the time I visited it in January 1997) to invigorating the memory and sentiment of the present and future generations concerning the dehumanizing violence of that war was the Sakima Museum, an art-oriented institution. The floor-to-ceiling murals were entirely graphic renditions of the violent madness and treachery unleashed by the Japanese imperial army against hapless Okinawan civilians then hiding in caves and woodlands. One grim portrayal showed some soldiers bayoneting the children and shooting the elderly while other soldiers were grabbing the remaining food provisions secretly stored in the cavernous hideout.

To me, this public memorialization of such acts of cruelty has been auspicious because it confirms the hindsight of various scholars regarding the fact that the victims of Japan's empire-building misadventure includes the Okinawans, this marginalized sub-species of Japanese-ness. This painful irony has also been enshrined in a gigantic boulder perched on a concrete pedestal in the well-landscaped park around the Peace Museum. On one face of the rough-hewn rock is engraved the name DAVAO, all caps but austere, perfect for its purpose as a huge gravestone. The inscription at the base of this memorial reminds the visitor about those numerous pre-war Okinawan migrants who had resettled in once peaceful Davaokuo but whose lives were sacrificed in pursuit of the imperialist drive to dominate the resources and cultures across the Asian region.

Why were they induced to migrate and re-establish their roots in far-flung southern Philippines by building a pioneers' colony—with

the coordination of the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs—but only to be treated at wartime as sacrificial pawns? Hayase's overview included in the book *The Philippines Under Japan* (1999) provides a basic motif embedded on ethnic divide and denigration: "Before the war the Okinawa-born Japanese were known as *otro Japon* or "other Japanese." One of the reasons for the use of such a term was that the Okinawa-born Japanese tended to intermarry with Filipinas, including the Bagobo women, more than the mainland Japanese. Marrying a Filipina was, in Davao Japanese society, considered humiliating. The mestizos born of such marriages, were discriminated against from the day they were born..."

Could this not be another way of saying that from the day they were born they were distinctly destined by the racism and imperialism of that period to be the Chosen Ones to serve as cannon fodder, food providers, and human shields for an advancing and then retreating army?

Yet it should be noted that at the onset of the Japanese invasion, the Japanese-Okinawans, known to be a congenial, if not a timid group, took the lead in persecuting their Filipino neighbors who refused to bow or follow orders of the advancing army. The sudden shift in attitude and behavior among the *otro Japon* is traced by Hayase's analysis to the desire of the pre-war underdog "to prove themselves (as equals, not the *otro*) by behaving in such a way as not to shame or encumber the Japanese community in any way," more so, at the time of ascendance of the conquering spirit impelling the *Banzai* of Japanese-imperialist forces across Asia. There is a tragic irony in this experience of the Okinawan émigrés in Davaokuo in swiftly calibrating their identity and collective vested interest to suit the demands of the then advancing army made up of their own compatriots. They could have assumed a more humanitarian role of maintaining the bridge to a more cordial relationship between the Filipino communities and the Japanese occupation forces, thus concludes Hayase.

But which, in my view, is highly speculative and very unlikely to have been elicited by the circumstances as a real option at that time—because in the volatile sociodynamics of a war regime, with its daily life-and-death confrontations, the old sense of mutuality in the community would soon be ruptured by the constant suspicion and fear, followed by acts of opportunism and treachery, if only to save one's skin or put a morsel of food in one's belly.

Besides, it is highly plausible as it was then imperative that the wartime transformation of the *otro Japon*, from meekness to arrogance, was a consequence, direct or indirect, of the steady stimulation and pressure aimed at this group by the dominant Japanese who had been pressing these underclass migrants to become "fine citizens" of the expanding imperial dominion. Documentation for this process of a probable sociopolitical conditioning is sufficiently gleaned and scrutinized by Yu-Jose upon which further research can be pursued, particularly on the issue of whether the well-coordinated emigration to southern Philippines and the emergence of Davaokuo was a pre-conceived strategy aligned with the preparations for Japanese invasion and annexation of the *Nanyo* region. From my own vantage point, it does appear to be a unique project, very different from the other sites and sociodynamics of Japanese migration/relocation into the Philippines. In such other places (and in various epochs) that had served as magnets for adventurous Japanese émigrés there had been no deliberate attempt to create such a tightly knit colony as Davaokuo that eventually served as the hub of economic dominance and political influences within a vast area. Theodore Friend's book *Between Two Empires* (1969) provides relevant insights into the social engineering that had formed Davao as a ready staging post for the Japanese expansionist strategy.

In contrast, during the Spanish colonial regime, there was a limited enclave for Japanese migrants who either sought work in Manila or sanctuary from the deadly persecution against Christian converts waged by Hideyoshi in the 1600s. Plaza Dilao which was adjacent to the Ermita area had been reserved for the Japanese settlers. It was vigilantly supervised by the Spanish authorities precisely because they were suspicious of Hideyoshi's expansionist ambitions, including those of the succeeding shogunates. A century later, the remnants of this Japanese community were observed by a European visitor to Manila to be already straining on the leash, as it were, under the watchful guardianship of the Spaniards. As cited by Mabunay quoting from Le Gentil's *A Voyage to the Indian Seas*, "there were sixty or seventy mestizo Japanese Christians who demanded repatriation to Japan and left the same year."

Mabunay's insight that such a "departure seems to signify the end of the Japanese immigrant colony in the Philippines" may not be accurate, flawed as it is by having constricted her vista only to Manila.

The migration of Japanese across several centuries had been taking place elsewhere around northern Luzon where they had even established a distinct gateway called "Port of Japon" by the Spaniards during their first expedition in the 1570s to the Ilocos and Cagayan regions. The overview of Josefa Saniel expressed in her book *Japan and the Philippines* (1963) may be more instructive to future researchers in the sense that it highlights instead the process of assimilation as the plausible fate experienced by earlier Japanese migrants, and refugees from the internal wars in Japan. "Likewise assimilated were a few Japanese castaways who drifted to the Philippines at various times between 1660 and 1830…," Saniel asserts. This is congruent with Keesing's ethnohistorical hindsight on northern Luzon to the effect that intermarriages with the natives did occur "involving Japanese shipmen and settlers," especially along the coasts. It is the practice of intermarriages with natives linked to the process of assimilation that can really explain why certain tribal groups in Luzon trace certain roots of their family trees to Japanese ancestors—for there was a long time when Japanese migration to the Philippines required no documents whatsoever and the settlers usually melted away into the landscape and native lifestyle.

CONCLUDING RETROSPECTS AND RESEARCH PROSPECTS

This paper's overview has deliberately stretched the timeline of Japanese migration/resettlement into *Nanyo* (southern archipelago) farther back to at least five or six centuries. The first reason for doing so is to expand the vista of future researchers in this field. Another is to eschew the intense "spotlighting" of previous and current researches on the sociopolitical milieu of the 19th century when the annexation of *Nanyo* was not only talked about by the Japanese intellectuals and politicians but was also being regarded by a sector of the Japanese military echelon as a logical step along with the Japanese armed incursions in continental Asia, such as in Korea, Taiwan, and China. The analytical context for this issue of southward expansionist urge may as well consider the letter sent by Hideyoshi Toyotomi to the Spanish colonial authorities back in the 1600s whereby he demanded the recognition of Japanese suzerainty over the *Nanyo* region. Such official expression of intent in taking possession of, or governing, the area should clarify the context of the abiding animosity between the Japanese naval and trading fleets and the Spanish armada. Certain historical studies, while constricting the view of Japanese emigration to the Philippines only to that epoch when Spanish dominion was

starting to collapse in *Las Islas Filipinas* up to the Pacific War, quite easily reflect the prejudice and vested interest of the Spanish conquistadors and chroniclers whenever they call the Japanese arrivals as "pirates." Likewise when they overfocus on the *wako* interlopers who were the distinct seafaring bands then engaged in preying on traders' sailboats and coastal settlements.

In contrast to such jaundiced viewpoint, William Henry Scott's historical book *Barangay* (1994) tries to highlight some necessary distinction when he looks back, for example, to that "instance when a Dominican friar was captured by Japanese 'pirates' upon returning from Manila." By enclosing the derogatory tag in quotation marks, he disinfects his own hindsight against the self-serving Spanish label and worldview vis-à-vis rival fleets that had already established settlements and homeports for their ships in northern Luzon prior to the Spanish colonization. Indeed as cited earlier, the first exploratory voyage of the Spanish conquistadors in the late 1500s around Northern Luzon, led by Capitan Juan de Salcedo, duly noted that the coast of Agoo (in present-day La Union province) had been established distinctly as a "Port of Japon."

While historians have habitually given this documented fact a mere passing glance, current researchers may do better by delving into the semiotic significance of such a "Port of Japon" especially in the context of premodern-era migration of the Japanese into the Philippines. After all, Colin, the friar and an early observer of the initial Spanish *entradas* underscored the presence of old tombs whose grave goods and furnishings for the Afterlife were believed to have come from Japan or China—if the natives' belief and reminiscence were given some credence. Moreover, I have mentioned in my own book *Reinventing the Filipino Sense of Being and Becoming* (1995) certain accounts of an Italian merchant, Francesco Carletti, who sailed from Manila to Japan in the late 1500s. While still in Manila, he wrote: "All the other things not produced in these islands are brought in from abroad. From Japan comes flour, which is used in making the bread consumed by the Spaniards, and many other goods brought in for sale by the Japanese ships."

Upon arriving at a Japanese port, Carletti also recounted: "The next day, before we could land, police officials come on board by order of the Governor of that place to search among (the effects of) all sailors, passengers and merchants for certain earthenware commonly imported from the Philippines and elsewhere in these parts, and which, by the

laws of Japan, everyone is obliged under pain of death to declare because the Emperor of Japan wishes to buy them all for himself…because they have the property of preserving from decay for one, ten and even twenty years the leaves of a plant called *cia.*"

Aside from giving us a glimpse of the regular trade and passenger travel connection between the Philippines and Japan at the time Spanish colonizers were just establishing a foothold in Luzon, Carletti's recollection is relevant as well to the insights of Saniel and Keesing cited earlier concerning the fact that through these seafaring and merchant fleets, some Japanese castaways and migrants had resettled along Luzon's coast, intermarrying with the natives or sinking their roots in underpopulated villages. Today's readers who are familiar with the terrain and water way system would find it highly plausible that it did not take more than a day for those migrants to trek from the coast to the midlands; and another day, after a restful layover, was all it took to reach the highlands inhabited by the Igorots. Hence my educated guess is that the Japanese traders and settlers of old and bound for northern Luzon had been going up and down the Ilocos-Cordillera region even before the first Spanish expeditionary force made its first sighting of the Archipelago. That is why in all likelihood a *Port of Japon* was a well-established infrastructure more than five centuries ago—to serve as the gateway for the Japanese migratory penetration across northern Luzon, from the riverine settlements and all the way to those villages in the higher range. And this overview regarding this Japanese presence up to the hinterlands makes it all the more understandable why the San Agustin friar, Angel Perez could confidently make an intimate comparison concerning the burial rites of the highland natives, with the Japanese funerary method as his intrinsic point of reference, as if to imply the prevailing presence of the Japanese in Igorotland. In his book *Igorots*, he observed: "Among these Igorots, the same as with the Japanese, there are two methods of burying their dead: interring and cremating, though this is never complete. The most common way is the former, identical to that of the Japanese, even to the size of the coffins and other details, although Igorots do not deposit the piece of umbilical cord which the Japanese so carefully preserve." He wrote this interfaced view way before the 1903 batch of Japanese workers arrived in Benguet to augment the road-building laborers in charge of carving the zig-zag Kennon Road.

Apropos of Perez's detailed observation, I shall now use this basic symbol or representation of kinship to stress a central point: there is an

umbilical cord interlinking the natives of Luzon and the old-time undocumented Japanese migrants and settlers—particularly if the process of such migration is reckoned in terms of a half-millennium, at least, although it could have started in trickles some centuries before the 1500s, as indicated by the Heike clan's presumed resettling in the Cordilleras. Even certain strands of folkloric memory among Igorot tribes reinforce the plausibility of this account, along with certain artifactual evidence.

Thus it cannot be overemphasized that such an island-hopping migration (across Kyushu Island and the Ryukus island group and Batanes) since earlier epochs has inevitably led to the intermingling of the genetic and cultural determinants mainly through crossbreeding and partly through sustained adaptive mechanisms of relocalization. In short, after that long stretch of genealogical and cultural intercourse, the resulting dynamic is assimilation, if not intercultural confluence — as in the manner of distant rivulets quietly merging into the mainstream.

Embedded in this virgin cultural terrain in research are fertile commonalities and ancestral memories demanding the analytical savvy of new researchers in ethnoarchaeology, linguistics, genetics, cultural geography and the general field of cultural studies. And not to forget the prospects of applied research as exemplified by the study of Bronwen Piludin Sagayo focused on how the Japanese descendents in Benguet were able to organize themselves into a network of vegetable-growing neighborhoods; and with the facilitating effort of a Japanese religious sister, Theresa Unno, these farmers were able to improve their lives via mutual help and a development funding assistance extended by the Japanese government.

No doubt there remains questions and contentions that historians can still grapple with. For one, why has the post-war Japanese government consigned those descendants of the *otro Japon* in Davakuo to oblivion and degradation for more than four decades after the rise and fall of the racist, imperialist war-making mindset?

How did it ever come about that the radical consciousness of leading Katipuneros (1890s) could express the hope of securing Japanese help in the fight for liberation from Spanish colonial rule? How politically viable was this response of the Katipunan leadership to the realpolitik then creeping across the region, as characterized by Josefa Saniel as "a fusion of Japanese expansionist interests and Filipino nationalist desires"?

My own favorite puzzle since I have relatives working in Japan and who are descended from the mixed marriage of a half-Japanese mother and a Filipino father: Are these Japanese-Filipino OFWs regarded as belonging to an ethnic minority within the Nihonjin society? And as a collorary, with the current interest of mestizo Hapon families in organizing locally based "Japanese-Filipino" associations (some of which are undertaking nursery schools for the third or fourth generation), is there an emerging trend to revitalize a Japanese-Filipino ethnicity within a transborder, multicultural and fluid society at large?

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