

Guest Editor's Preface

The late twentieth century has witnessed an accelerating tempo in the global circulation not only of capital but also of persons. In this new phase of international migration, states continue to play crucial roles in determining the conditions of migration across political borders, stringent state controls over entries and exits causing actual migration flows to differ from what they would be under free market conditions. Notwithstanding the constraints imposed by the global system of states, however, the restructurings of capitalism in various parts of the world-system and the attendant technological advances have led to unprecedented numbers of people moving across the face of the earth. The velocities of spatial mobility are represented by international tourists seeking to consume culture in reinvented, commodified packages. Less transitory yet similarly peripatetic are the movements of labor migrants—comprising a wide array of skilled and semi-skilled manual, white-collar, and intellectual workers—in search of alternative lifestyles, better pay, and novel cultural experiences. Others are resettling in new places as permanent immigrants. These global

nomads—labor migrants and even those who seem to fit the conventional image of the international migrant—are contributors to an evolving transnationalism. The social, cultural and political activities and relationships they sustain, create, cultivate, or even disrupt, are no longer confined within the boundaries of one country at a time; on the contrary, these activities and relationships may simultaneously, and instantly, span two or more countries. The facticities of space and time have undergone some compression. This phenomenon undoubtedly brings new challenges to global and local social existence, reconfigures the contours of political economy and culture, raises new questions for social scientists, and demands a reformulation of bounded parochial categories of thought and units of analysis.

This volume of the *Philippine Sociological Review* offers articles that examine some aspects and ramifications of this evolving phenomenon from the specific vantage point of Filipino transnational migrants. Consonant with the character of the topics under discussion, many of the articles methodologically strive to frame and investigate research

issues in the transnational context of the Philippines and at least one other country. Substantively, while transnational migration is circumscribed by the structures of global and national capitalisms and the interstate system, the articles nevertheless seek to represent the human agency of migrants. Consequently, the simplistic notion of migrant victimization is eschewed. Other stereotypes and biases concerning transnational migrants and the migration process, particularly as these are mediated by the prism of class, gender and national sensitivities, are identified and demystified.

Two articles, by **Cecilia Tacoli** and **Hing Ai Yun**, examine familial bonds and relationships and the reproduction of the household. Providing fresh data on Filipino nationals in Rome, Tacoli discovers that, considering variations in the lifecourse path, female migrants are always more subject to familial authority but generally demonstrate stronger and more consistent commitments to households with which they maintain ties in the Philippines, compared with their male counterparts. But while females send back much larger proportions of their incomes overseas than male migrants, this pattern of behavior is not matched by a commensurate increase in power within their households in the Philippines. Tacoli argues, however, that female migrants in Rome make strategic choices that minimize transnational household conflicts as well as the marginalization that may have consequences for their eventual return to the Philippines in their older ages. Hence, they may abide by the maternal and filial expectations of their natal society but such conformity

is combined with a personal quest for change and adventure in their society of current residence. Their striving toward vertical social mobility for households in the Philippines is thus attained through horizontal geographic mobility that may represent a measured space of personal liberation. Overall, Tacoli's study shows that transnational migration neither obliterates nor magnifies, but merely highlights a new spatial dimension, to the simultaneous processes of cooperation and conflict that normally characterize families and households.

In the light of the uneven development and transition to industrial capitalism in Southeast Asia, Hing analyzes the current conjuncture in which the rational restructuring of the middle-class domestic sphere in Singapore has been "put on hold" in contrast to the more advanced rationalization of other sectors of Singapore's economy. The plentiful supply of migrant workers from the Philippines has made possible the retention of archaic, slave-like forms of domestic labor in Singapore, which have propped up customary patriarchal relations in family and society. In contrast, the departure of female migrants from the Philippines is viewed as serving to erode traditional forms of family relations. But the opportunities that have provided the space for migrant women to redesign their social roles are steeped in deprivations and unequal power relations. Hing, nonetheless, emphasizes that Filipina domestic workers have adroitly managed to carve a life for themselves which hope to match the Singapore Dream concocted by the Singapore state for its middle

class families, state strictures notwithstanding. But, precisely because waged domestic work is located in the capitalist mode, there is space for the individual structuring of the employer-worker relationship that escapes neat predictions.

The article by Hing and my own contribution suggest that the presence of migrants provide a mirror of sorts by which members of the society of residence view themselves. This reflexive and refractory function of the presence of migrants is brought to the fore by Elizabeth Holt who examines the discourse on "Filipina brides" in Australia. She contends that white Australian society, in the process of converting Filipina migrants into objects of knowledge in mass media and academic discussions, stereotypes all Filipinas but portrays them in contradictory terms. The miscegenist threat that Filipinas are deemed to embody is symptomatic of the racist, nationalist, sexual and patriarchal discourses that dominate Australian society, which constitute the identities and undermine the personhood of white Australian women, aborigines, and Asian immigrants. While Filipina voices are seldom heard, what is more notable, according to Holt, is the discursive absence of white Australian men whose dreams, feelings, anxieties, and sexualities are not the objects of public scrutiny. Like their brides, these grooms are unknowable beyond the stereotypes of them as beer-swilling, divorced rednecks, mythical bushmen with young domestic slaves, lately recast as the stereotype of the violent white Australian husband. The presence of Filipina

migrants, Holt suggests, ought to compel members of the dominant Anglo-Celtic elements of Australian society to confront themselves and their iniquities.

Transnational migration thus raises profound questions about the societies where migrants reside, the cultural practices of many of these places belying the euphemisms behind such standard labels as 'host' societies, 'receiving' countries, and 'guest' workers. On the other hand, among migrants the concept of 'origin' may be confounded by earlier moves made by themselves or their households to various other countries outside the natal homeland. Even without such complicating aspect, the concept of 'home' may have multiple meanings and sites, memories of which assume their shape based on the current needs and the class, political and cultural circumstances of individual migrants. But the constructions and reconstructions of homes and homelands are part of a broader process in which migrants come to terms with their social identities in the transnational context. In particular, identities based on such macrosocietal paradigms as nation, ethnicity, and/or race may become ambivalent, partial, multiple, hybrid, and contradictory, but they may also be reinvented as primordial certainties. In addition, aspects of nation, ethnicity, and/or race may even join the range of commodified products consumed by migrants (exoticized fashions and festivals, videos, television shows, charitable causes, return visits) with the added advantage that moments of felt collective attachment become like goods purchaseable from the economic marketplace.

In the present collection of articles, questions concerning Filipino national identity in the age of transnationalism are explored in the articles by Benito Vergara, Jr. and myself. Juxtaposing the iconic Daly City in the U.S. state of California with middle-class existence in the Philippines, Vergara argues that perceptions of Filipino national belonging are intertwined with the imaginings, dreams, and anxieties of middle-class Filipinos in the Philippines and in the United States. National belonging also entails a multifaceted relationship between money and nation that posits a putative conflict between "materialism" on one hand and "nationalism" on the other; however, as Vergara shows, money does not taint the Filipinoness of emigres equally. Moreover, while middle-class Filipinos in the Philippines portray emigrants' departure as a "betrayal of the nation," Vergara contends that a paramount concern among the non-movers is the preservation of the perquisites of middle-class existence enjoyed in the homeland, particularly the ease of life made possible by the services of maids that, as Pierre Bourdieu has argued, act as an affirmation of capital. The latter point is reinforced by Tuula Heinonen's contribution which makes a similar reference to the role of maids in providing middle-class families with recreational and leisure time in the Philippines, the absence of such domestic workers provoking stress and even depression among some Filipino migrants in Canada. However, no facile caricatures of the lives of Filipino migrants can capture the heterogeneity of their experiences, and simplifications and stereotypes that gain currency largely spring from the insular and

byzantine nature of privilege in the Philippines.

What is evident is that the contemporary phase of global capitalism has led to a reallocation and resurgence—interpretable as a retrogression—of a non-modern form of domestic work. The formation of new middle classes in more industrialized societies demands old cultural validations of class, that then help in the more moderate expansion of the lower echelons of the middle classes in labor-supplying countries such as the Philippines. But the latter's middle classes evidently have suffered some deprivation in the ease with which maids are obtainable from the countryside and they themselves feel deprived of maids when they migrate to the industrialized West, even as they feel that conationals working overseas as domestic workers have tarnished the national image, as they would have it. The realm of domestic work consequently has become a new global arena of competition for the consumption of traditional services and status symbols among the middle classes of different societies. Such competition has a strong overlay of conflict over perceived images of nations, an issue which I take up in my contribution to this volume. Indeed, while Filipino objections may be couched in the language of political economy, deploring "the commodification of Filipino labor overseas," the sentiment that animates such protests springs from national pride and transnational shame.

My piece starts by looking at the interests of Filipino ruling classes and elite groups which, I argue, have fostered a binary map in which the Philippines

has been framed and defined in relation to a singular Other, the United States. Based on the proposition that national consciousness requires a tableau of other nations, I argue that the long-regnant binarism has had a profound impact in curtailing a serialized and plural worldview within which Filipino nationalism could have flourished. The global dispersion of Filipino labor migrants commencing in the late 1960s and early 1970s, however, has yielded the unintended consequence of a reserialized Filipino national imagination for both the sojourners and non-sojourners. International labor migration has been pivotal to the edification of the nation, held as distinct from the state and its project of economic growth. Comparing labor migration to a ritual journey of achievement (hence going beyond a narrow economism), I also argue that experiences in the international workplace reinforce the Filipinoness of ordinary contract workers and lead to inversions of customary hierarchies in the Philippines. Labor migrants are crafting a project of popular nationalism beyond the control of elites. Also unable to twist the national image to their advantage are the Filipino white-collar professional workers who find themselves lumped with domestic workers in countries of employment such as Singapore, prompting many such professionals who have absorbed the racist discourse of the employing society to experience shame and, in a display of ambiguous identities, to dissociate themselves from their manual-working conationals. Social stratification permeates the Filipino diaspora—even as labor migration constitutes multinational sites of submission and resistance.

Overseas contract workers do challenge the hegemony of Philippine elites, and—in the aftermath, of Flor Contemplacion's execution in March 1995—their call for a reorientation of the state bureaucracy and its foreign offices has been heeded. As **Joaquin Gonzalez III** argues in his article, earlier legislations dealing with overseas labor migration have been economically instrumentalist in their preoccupations. State strategies favoring labor migrants unequivocally finally came at the high price of a controversial legal case, a diplomatic row, and frayed transnational nerves. Gonzalez discusses the quick passage of the "Migrant Workers and Overseas Filipinos Act of 1995" and some problems in its implementation. Nonetheless, with passage of this law, state officials have embarked on fresh bilateral and multilateral negotiations on the protection and welfare of overseas contract workers, and Philippine missions overseas have undergone some important changes. The fulfilment of their mandate, Gonzalez argues, can benefit from assistance extended by international nongovernmental organizations. But the protection of citizens beyond the state's territorial jurisdiction is hindered by the reluctance of many countries of employment to accede to international labor conventions. Thus, while the politics of labor migration in the Philippines has been globalized and deterritorialized, it meets real limits in the (re)nationalized politics of countries of employment as sovereign states.

An analogous conclusion is arrived at by **Edgard Rodriguez** who argues that government efforts to regulate

emigration from the Philippines appear constrained by the nature of emigration, which is primarily driven by external factors, given that wage rates in overseas countries of employment remain significantly higher than those in the Philippines. International labor markets have indeed fostered a shift from settlement-oriented to temporary labor migration. Given these exogenous factors, Rodriguez recommends the removal of punitive measures (such as bans on emigration) and their replacement by more supportive policies which recognize the limits of state intervention. He is, nonetheless, emphatic about the benefits of international migration which results in clear improvements in the welfare of individual migrants as well as in those of the non-migrant population, who benefit from such economic outcomes as remittances, foregone consumption, and the alleviation of unemployment rates. But emigration entails social costs as well, which can be expressed in terms of output losses, loss of skilled labor, and increased income inequality. Other social costs are harder to evaluate, but Rodriguez provides benchmark figures aimed at assessing the magnitude of, for example, the problem of broken families. Overall, the net result of emigration is positive for its largest reference group: the non-migrant population. Thus, any government policy on migrants should be determined by its effects on non-migrants. Rodriguez's article substantiates the transnational interconnections in the economic strategies of individuals, households, and states.

A further issue concerning state strategies is discussed by **Cristina Szanton Blanc**, one of the pioneer investigators of transnationalism, who traces the origins of the "*balikbayan*" program in the early 1970s and its metamorphosis into the primary source of foreign exchange for the Philippine government a few years later. The program, however, was an official appropriation of an initially spontaneous and uncoordinated movement by Filipino migrants to the United States after its relaxation of entry rules in 1965. With the diversification of the migratory streams to other countries, the boundaries between the *balikbayan* program and the migration of overseas contract workers (OCWs) have become hazy. In any event, many services and privileges are on offer to returnees, unquestionably in view of the economic benefits that accrue to the state. Through the multifaceted *balikbayan* practices, Szanton Blanc argues that the Philippine state seeks to reincorporate migrants back to its fold regardless of their citizenships. The whole question of citizenship and its relation to Filipinoness has acquired heightened salience in view of the "Presidential Awards for Outstanding Overseas Filipinos and Organizations" initiated in 1991 which recognize 'Filipinos', defined in terms of developmental pragmatics, economic expediency, national honor, and essentialized traits such as eating *adobo*. But the reincorporation of emigrants, including former citizens, raises complex questions about formal political membership and national belonging, rights of

suffrage and access to public office, and the "preposterous" taxation of income earned outside the Philippines—in addition to paying taxes to the country of employment, which encourages precisely the abandonment of Philippine citizenship. Indeed, Szanton Blanc observes that the state's conferral of "quasi-citizenship" to ex-nationals is a double-edged sword replete with contradictions.

In their respective contributions, **Tuula Heinonen** and **A. Mani** deal with contrasts, the former focusing on permanent, the latter on transitory migrants. Based on an initial study of the leisure and recreation experiences of Filipino immigrants to Canada, Heinonen finds social, cultural, and cost barriers but the migrants manage to renegotiate and reformulate recreational practices learned in the Philippines to suit the new country of residence. Because integration in Canadian society may include the maintenance of traditional forms of recreation, Heinonen is hopeful that, after the difficult task of settling in is achieved, recreational activities may redefine and even strengthen the bonds of culture and community. For the first generation of migrants, however, the frame of reference is unavoidably their natal country, even as they seek to establish a new way of life in their new country of residence. Reporting on official data and the results of a sample survey of domestic workers from the Philippines in Brunei, Mani records the increasing visibility of mainly short-term Filipino residents in Bruneian society after 1981. Only one in four Filipino nationals is found in domestic work, but they predominate in this sector, most

of them young, single women who are first entrants to the world of wage work. These women are evidently transnational strategists who cross state borders and economic sectors relying mainly upon personal networks. With their savings and experiences from a brief stay in Brunei, they move on to other destinations. Mani's research reveals that Brunei is a nodal point in the Filipino diaspora.

The last item features the text of a 1995 speech delivered by **Patricia A. Sto. Tomas** who, for some years, served as head of the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA). This document tackles four policy suggestions frequently heard from local notables. Reflecting on her years as a state official, Sto. Tomas views such recommendations as mere rhetorical devices that ignore economic realities, fail to comprehend the negative effects of overregulation, and do not understand the difficult process of forging bilateral agreements. She argues that such avowed policy concerns are really guided by the Filipino elite's feelings of shame and humiliation triggered by overseas employment. In her own succinct way, Sto. Tomas deals with some of the issues discussed in some of the earlier articles.

Needless to say, the articles in this volume do not exhaust the research questions that arise from transnationalism. Among the many unstudied areas are those that pertain to the long-term interface of Philippine cultures as practiced by migrant workers with the cultures of employing countries, such as in the socialization of children under the care of Filipina domestic workers.

Filipino religious beliefs, ranging from the institutionally approved versions of the Catholic faith and the Iglesia ni Kristo (some of whose preachers may be found at the steps of St. Peter's Basilica) to the magical and millenarian varieties (e.g., spirit possession through the Santo Niño, and the "Philippine Benevolent Missionaries Association") have also been modularized and internationalized but not studied. The sociolinguistics of the expanded creolized tongues of Filipino migrants should yield important lessons, and so should a study of the ethnicities of Filipino Muslims and Filipino Chinese overseas. In addition, more studies are needed to understand the on-going reconfiguration of family relations, role alterations, surrogate parenthood and socialization, and marital dissolutions in various transnational circumstances. Also requiring further study are the transnationalization of crime and the participation of some migrants in criminal activities and syndicates, including the illegal traffic in humans.

The global dispersion of political exiles during the Marcos years and of the Marcos associates after the ruler's downfall in 1986, as well as the relocation of key leaders of the National Democratic Front to Europe, constitute another transnational research area. The forcible resettlement of Ferdinand Marcos in Hawaii and its ramifications on various Filipino "regional" groups in that state and in the Philippines should also yield valuable insights. Various other aspects of the political and cultural consciousness and imaginaries of different Filipino groups overseas and their transnational links to the homeland, and their consequences for the collective psyche, are awaiting examination. Relative to the research questions that transnationalism raises, the present volume is evidently inadequate. It is hoped, however, that the present collection of papers—written by academics many of whom are themselves transnational migrants—may serve as a modest contribution to the study of this theme.

Filomeno V. Agutlar, Jr.

Naga City

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