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Book Reviews

Filomeno V. Aguilar, Jr. *Migration Revolution: Philippine Nationhood and Class Relations in a Globalized Age.* Kyoto, Singapore: Kyoto University Press, NUS Press. 293 pp.

Migration Revolution compiles articles written between 1993 and 2010, but which were revised and updated for republication. Spanning seventeen years, the articles covered a significant period in the author's academic career, which had taken him to New York, Australia, Singapore, Madrid, and Kyoto. But *Migration Revolution* is not simply about the life's work of an excellent scholar; it is, more importantly, a looking-back that allows us to grasp the various effects of migration on Philippine society. This is arguably the first of its kind in Philippine migration research.

Like its well-travelled author, *Migration Revolution* treads plenty of ground: Filipino seafarers of the Spanish era; Philippine class structure; migration, identity, and citizenship in modern Southeast Asia; (trans)nationalism among Filipino migrants, and their experiences and perceptions of the Filipino nation; and dual citizenship and overseas voting rights for Filipinos abroad. What emerges from these wide-ranging explorations is a picture of migration's impact on Philippine foreign policy, socioeconomic structure, and Filipinos' sense of nationhood.

Intentionally or not, the publication of *Migration Revolution* comes exactly forty years after the Marcos government initiated the large-scale labour migration of its citizens. Studies on Filipino migrants have abounded since, and it's time that we get a clearer sense of how migration altered Philippine society.

Multidisciplinary in scope and approach, the book provides up-and-coming researchers a useful survey of the issues and scholarly literature on migration. But veteran academics will also find sharp insights and nuanced analyses in these chapters, several of which stand out. In Chapter 2, Aguilar argues that class analysis should no longer be confined to physical boundaries; rather, it should recognise that migration has introduced transnational components – such as remittances – that affected class structure and contributed to the upward social mobility of migrants and their families.

In Chapter 4, Aguilar goes against the grain of some studies on migration. Adapting Victor Turner's study of the pilgrimage in ancient Southeast Asian cultures, he highlights the agency and subjectivity of migrants, who, he argues, were not passive victims of macro-structural forces like economic trends and state

policies. Acting on the forces that acted on them, (some) migrants were empowered, and found their selves transformed.

The longest, most engaging sections of the book are Chapters 3 and 5. In the former, Aguilar discusses the perception of 'shame' among Filipino migrants, who were subjected to job discrimination and deplorable working conditions. 'Shame' also came to the fore in the wake of a Filipina domestic worker's execution (for murder) in Singapore in March 1995; the media coverage of the event and its aftermath brought into sharp relief the reality that many Filipinos in Singapore were domestic workers; a fact that Filipinos in white-collar jobs felt ashamed of. Analysing these events, Aguilar uncovers class-based cleavages in how Filipino migrants imagined and related to the nation. In Chapter 5, he demolishes simplistic, *a priori* formulations that would link migration and the (trans)nation. Scholars who work on these issues will find his discussions useful starting points.

Aguilar marshals a wealth of theoretical and empirical insights: statistics, interviews, archival documents, and various research on Filipino migrants in Italy, Japan, Australia, Singapore, the Middle East, and the United States. However, no book can be exhaustive, even one as wide-ranging as *Migration Revolution*. For instance, while it mentions the role of the Philippine state in labour migration and of remittances in local development, these topics are not extensively discussed. This is no shortcoming; scholars looking for sustained explorations of these issues can consult the extensive bibliography. The website of the Scalabrini Migration Centre[1] is a good place to start. The works of Guevera (2010) and Rodriguez (2010) analyse the brokering of Filipino workers in greater detail.

The word 'revolution' conjures images of violent upheavals and radical transformations. But Aguilar disabuses us of the notion, writing that revolutions need not be violent or political. Perhaps this shying away from the political partly explains why the book does not say much about migrants' political activities (other than the overseas voting and the issue of dual citizenship). There is also little discussion of diaspora-to-development initiatives (investments and remittances used to promote economic development) and diasporic philanthropy. The omission is lamentable, since these phenomena are arguably equally part of the migration revolution. Such topics may simply lie outside the author's research interests. Or could it be that the revolutionary potential of overseas Filipinos has been non-existent? After all, as Aguilar observes, there is no internal link between migration and political action, let alone a full-blown revolution. At any rate, is it not plausible to argue (or hope) that in the future, the changes charted in the book will be seen to contain the seeds of revolutionary transformation, one that will overturn age-old political and economic problems of Philippine society?

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[1] http://www.smc.org.ph/

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Mark Baildon, Loh Kah Seng, Ivy Maria Lim, Gül İnanç, and Junaidah Jaffar (eds.). *Controversial History in Asian Contexts.* New York: Routledge, 2014. 282 pp.

Controversial History Education in Asian Contexts deftly explores the role of controversial histories within and across multiple epistemological paradigms. Woven throughout the volume are the recurring themes of teachers' curricular instructional decision making and curriculum gatekeeping, as well as the influence of contextual milieus. In short, what the editors' call the "centrality of context", and the inherent limitations of nomothetic generalisability, play pivotal roles in deciding the extent to which controversial history is used, the purported goals and aims of its use, and the limitations of external prescriptions of what should be done. Cutting across all cases within this volume is the overarching goal of developing an informed and active citizenry, which is a social education rendering of history and its utility. History has value within education only insofar as it "presents phases of social life and growth. It must be controlled by reference to social life" (Dewey 1897: 79). As such, controversial history education holds a rich potential for servicing the mandates of citizenship education.

In the first chapter of the volume, Stuart Foster emphasises how history taught in schools undermines controversial history instruction because it tends to be "insular and nationalistic" (p. 22). In a related piece, Helen Ting's chapter concerning textbooks in Malaysia asks what constitutes a "national history" (p. 42) and interrogates the role of ethnic politics in the writing and rewriting of history textbooks. Ting points to the struggle of historical texts in Malaysia to delineate identity and popular memory. In another chapter Khatera Khamsi and Paul Morris address Singaporean textbook narratives as they relate to the Japanese occupation, suggesting that the "Singapore Story", as an iterative form of national history informed by the government, has been advanced as historical truth.

The potent role of political influence is further mined in Jean-Louis Margolin's exploration of Japanese history textbooks. A revival of revisionism in Japan suggests increased pressure for authors of textbooks to be politically cautious and to engage in self-censorship, thereby undermining the exposure of controversial histories to students. The fear of exaggeration or, alternatively, understatement results in mainstream textbooks that are "essentially colourless, poorly

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