

philippine studies

Ateneo de Manila University • Loyola Heights, Quezon City • 1108 Philippines

Editor's Introduction

Filomeno V. Aguilar Jr.

Philippine Studies vol. 54, no. 1 (2006): 1—2

Copyright © Ateneo de Manila University

Philippine Studies is published by the Ateneo de Manila University. Contents may not be copied or sent via email or other means to multiple sites and posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's written permission. Users may download and print articles for individual, noncommercial use only. However, unless prior permission has been obtained, you may not download an entire issue of a journal, or download multiple copies of articles.

Please contact the publisher for any further use of this work at philstudies@admu.edu.ph.

<http://www.philippinestudies.net>
Fri June 30 13:30:20 2008

Editor's Introduction

The articles in this issue of *Philippine Studies* focus on disparate themes but share common strands. The articles of David Wurfel and Rosalina Palanca-Tan deal with environmental issues, and Palanca-Tan's focus on relations between the Philippines and Japan intersects those of Helen Rivera-Yu and of Nobuhiko Fuwa and James N. Anderson. All four articles, however, can be seen as dealing substantively with the Philippine state and its relations with other entities in local and global society.

Affirming the characterization of the Philippine state as weak, Wurfel is critical of initiatives to promote "good governance" that stress technical factors but neglect broad issues of societal change. A strong state emerges from a long process of developing a political culture where, he argues, there is widespread commitment to the rule of law. In regard to mining, Wurfel sees the strengthening of the state as associated with a bureaucracy that is responsive to the demands of corporate interests and mass organizations. So far, corporations have succeeded in getting state actors on their side, while nongovernment organizations have not realized their full potential, beset as they are by a similar set of problems that hobble the state, particularly the lack of institutionalization.

State weakness as manifested in the country's political uncertainties, peace and order situation, and bureaucratic red tape, according to Palanca-Tan, makes the Philippines unattractive to Japanese investors and project proponents who seek to comply with the Kyoto Protocol's requirement to reduce the emission of greenhouse gasses by undertaking relevant projects in developing countries. If only for proximity's sake, the Philippines ought to host several of these Japanese-sponsored projects. Because the country is extremely vulnerable to the effects of global warming, argues Palanca-Tan, it must exert effort to attract these environment-enhancing projects and respond to the needs of proponents.

In recent history the Philippine state confronted some of its severest challenges during the transition from Marcos to Aquino. Yu-Rivera takes us back to that period and narrates the abduction of Wakaoji Noboyuki, head of Mitsui's Philippine operations, in November 1986; his release in May 1987 healed rifts in Philippines-Japan relations but raised questions about what actually happened. Yu-Rivera also recounts the Aquino administration's attempt sell a property in Roponggi, Tokyo, which was acquired in 1958 as part of war reparations. Meant to generate revenue, the sale had to be abandoned. Yu-Rivera reconstructs these events by using print media reports and commentaries, which she sees as in themselves effective interventions in state affairs and bilateral relations.

In response to charges of human trafficking, the Philippines and Japan in early 2005 adopted stringent controls on the migration of Filipinas who work in Japan as Overseas Performing Artists (OPAs), popularly known as entertainers. Data collected by Fuwa and Anderson from one barangay in Pangasinan refer to migrants who went to Japan prior to the new regulations. These migrations might seem autonomous, but it would be a mistake to dissociate them from the state. Indeed, as nonstate actors migrants are crucial shapers of interstate relations. Fuwa and Anderson contend that overgeneralizations have beclouded discussions of the OPA phenomenon. Contrary to prevailing stereotypes—a product of the early period of OPA migration from the 1970s to the mid-1980s—their case studies reveal a different reality.

Fuwa and Anderson alert us to see beyond the veil of common suppositions. Similarly, Wurfel informs us about Edmund Reyes who comes from a traditional political family in Marinduque but who underwent a "conversion experience" after his election to the House of Representatives in 1998. Seen as acting from a combination of altruism and self-interest, Reyes has become an environmental advocate and now epitomizes a new approach to politics. These political innovators may be small in number, but in their localities they make a difference. This change is often hidden from view by blanket generalizations about Philippine politics. Representations thus become problematic. After all the state is not a monolith but a set of relationships in which, despite the seeming preponderance of structure, individuals and groups can intervene, struggle, and create spaces to effect change.