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Filipinos in Japan and Okinawa, by Yu-Jose

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ganda aimed at the local Vietnamese, it could very well have been invented for the Thomasites, for, as historian Luzviminda Francisco argues, the Philippine-American War was “the first Vietnam.” This is not an old idea but an established one. It is not dogma; it is simply the truth. A reader with a critical eye easily sees American propaganda at work in many of the selections in *Bearers*.

In the end, the “new paradigm” that Ick claims to use is not much different from the nineteenth-century concept of “manifest destiny.” It is not much different from McKinley’s 1899 pronouncement that “there was nothing left for us to do but to take them all, and to educate the Filipino, and uplift and civilize and Christianize them.” It is not much different from the perspective of the 1959 *Tales of the American Teacher in the Philippines*, where the American period is heralded for its advancement in education and democracy. It is merely given a new name: “postcolonialism.”

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Filipinos in Japan and Okinawa 1880s–1972. By Lydia N. Yu-Jose. Research Institute for the Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa, Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, 2002. 158 pages.

Philippine-Japan relations is the subject of a number of books published in recent years. Among them are *The Philippines under Japan: Occupation Policy and Reaction* (1999) by Setsuho Ikehata and Ricardo Jose, *Image and Reality: Philippine-Japan Relations towards the 21st Century* (1997) by Rolando S. dela Cruz, and *The Japanese Occupation of the Philippines: A Pictorial History* (1997) by Ricardo Jose and Lydia Yu-Jose.

The focus, however, has mostly been the Japanese presence in the Philippines. Yu-Jose’s *Filipinos in Japan and Okinawa* is the first book-length study on the lives of Filipinos in Japan, and as such, it fills a gap in scholarship on Philippine-Japan relations. A descriptive study, it presents information, much of it new, and preliminary analyses of some 90 years of Filipino presence in Japan. The general picture is substantiated and supplemented by personal accounts taken from interviews, magazine and newspaper stories, and police reports, so that the book has a place both in the scholar’s library and in the common reader’s bathroom shelf.

The first chapter describes the historical conditions that prompted the entry of Filipinos in Japan. The next chapter focuses on Filipino political exiles, among them, Artemio Ricarte and Benigno Ramos. Yu-Jose notes the ideological attraction of “pan-Asianism” for a number of these exiles, as well as the

uses some of them were put during the Japanese occupation of the Philippines. Chapter three is on Filipino entertainers and boxers. The attraction of the Japanese youth to jazz music and the attempts of their elders and the authorities to suppress it in the name of upholding traditional Japanese values are treated. The next two chapters are on the lives of Filipino students in Japan before, during, and after the Second World War. Yu-Jose notes their precarious position as unwilling agents of Japanese propaganda. A brief chapter on Filipinos in Okinawa follows. The book closes with a few observations on Philippine-Japan relations, particularly, the role of personal relationships in the building of transnational ties.

What is remarkable about Yu-Jose's book is the sheer wealth of primary data. These come in the form of police reports, government documents, interviews, and sources in Japanese hitherto unavailable to non-Japanese readers. Yu-Jose also culls from Japanese and Filipino periodicals stored in archives in the Philippines and in Japan. From these she is able not only to reconstruct a period, with all its promises and anxieties, but also, and quite felicitously, to hold a mirror up to contemporary Philippine society. We read, for instance, that the greater number of Filipino workers in Japan before the Second World War was jazz musicians. Some of them eventually married Japanese women. Apparently, nothing much has changed, as the majority of Filipino workers in Japan today are entertainers (60,000, according to one of the book's appendices). Yu-Jose observes: "It is an indication of the [Philippine] government's failure to solve the unemployment problem. It is a reflection of the Filipinos' attitude towards music and dance, and their views about employment abroad" (p. 61).

Yu-Jose appends 14 tables of statistics on Filipino presence in Japan from 1914 to the 2000. These in themselves can provide matter for investigation by other scholars. The photographs and illustrations with which she prefaces the book not only enliven the text but also tell interesting stories without words. One is an ad for the Aguinaldo Department Store in prewar Manila, which boasts—in Japanese characters—of having Nihongo-speaking sales attendants. Another shows a picture of the Karihan Luvimin, a restaurant established by Artemio Ricarte in Yokohama, the second word being a portmanteau of "Luzon," "Visayas," and "Mindanao." Some are ads put out by Japanese dance clubs and hotels featuring Filipino jazz musicians. Surely, the data Yu-Jose provides (whether graphic, statistical, oral, or documentary) are important. What is wanted now is for other scholars, if not Yu-Jose herself, to subject them to further analysis towards theories on Philippine-Japan relations.

While that is yet to be done, the common reader would be engrossed enough by the personal vignettes interspersed throughout the book. We read, for instance, that "Filipino students' social life in Japan in the 1920s and 1930s seemed to revolve around sports, activities of their organization if they had any, and Japanese women" (p. 73). Yu-Jose offers a case, one of several, that is fit for a romantic costume drama. A Filipino student falls in love with a

Japanese woman, who agrees to live with him “even without a promise of marriage.” Eventually, they have a child. He returns to the Philippines after finishing his studies, leaving her and the baby behind. She gives him a hundred yen, half of it borrowed from her brother. At first, the Filipino regularly sends money to support his son, but, hard put during the years of the Great Depression, he stops sending money. Communication between them is resumed years later, by which time mother and son are caught in the Sino-Japanese War. The Filipino father agrees to send money to have his now sixteen year-old son, whom he has not seen since he left Japan, brought to the Philippines and asks for his photograph. The story is incomplete, but what Yu-Jose manages to piece together (from primary documents stored at the Japan Ministry of Foreign Affairs) is enough to tease the imagination.

Meanwhile, Yu-Jose’s reconstruction of the lives of Artemio Ricarte and Benigno Ramos, based on data both old and fresh, are stuff for tragedies. Here are stories of the native returning, only to become unknown among, or even despised by, the people his avowed love for whom was the source of his exile—stories of idealism shattered by history’s unpredictable and unforgiving turns. Of Ricarte, Yu-Jose reports that when he addressed a group of Filipino *pensionados* (students under state scholarship) in Japan during the Japanese occupation of the Philippines, the students were “not much impressed” (p. 33). We read further: “Ricarte himself was, in the 1920s, much younger, and perhaps still full of hope that Japan would someday liberate the Philippines. But by 1944, he had witnessed cruel treatment of the Filipinos by the kempetai” (p. 34). He did not live to see his kin executed by the Japanese army nor know that what would be built to remember him by would be a simple monument in Yamashita Park.

Such “human interest” stories are touching and add life to what some readers may otherwise find “dry as dust” though certainly not dustbin scholarship. Scholarship, however, is what the book primarily is, and it is as a scholarly work that it should be commended. Yu-Jose not only provides the facts but also allows one to compare versions of the same incident and corrects with tact misconceptions created by earlier scholarship. Of course, one wishes that her treatment of the lives of Filipinos in Japan after the war were more extensive and that, instead of citing herself, she cited the sources she had used in her previous publications.

All things considered, however, *Filipinos in Japan and Okinawa* is the equivalent of Marcelino Foronda’s *Cultural Life in the Philippines during the Japanese Occupation 1942–1945* published twenty-five years ago. Until Yu-Jose comes out with a follow-up, it will be invaluable to the scholar of Philippine-Japan relations in the next twenty-five years and beyond.

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