

philippine studies: historical and ethnographic viewpoints

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Editor's Introduction

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Editor's Introduction

In line with this journal's mandate to be accessible to nonspecialists, we are grateful to Frederick C. Delfin for translating the technicalities of genetics into a presentation comprehensible to the general reader. Delfin's synthesis of studies in this highly specialized field revisits the deeply entrenched but widely debated migration waves theory. It offers an alternative origins story that situates the peopling of these islands within the larger context of the Asia-Pacific, its early inhabitants having been part of a southern coastal movement that traversed South Asia into Southeast Asia and the Pacific. Some of these early groups found niches and became relatively isolated, while others had contact with subsequent migrations that occurred at different times. Delfin emphasizes that the later Austronesian expansion that ensued from Taiwan was a major demographic event that profoundly altered not only Philippine genetics but linguistics as well, resulting in the replacement of non-Austronesian tongues by Austronesian languages.

Over the centuries, an indeterminate number of population movements into the islands and between and within these islands have resulted in a highly complex Philippine genetic landscape. The contemporary populations in lowland regional centers across the country evince a homogenizing of the genetic pool. Some ethnic groups, however, register great heterogeneity, even though outsiders lump them under convenient but erroneous and often pejorative labels. Groups that are dispersed throughout the islands but collectively designated "Negrito" are genetically distinct from each other. Even on the island of Mindoro, "Mangyan" as an appellation for the different but proximate groups melts in the face of the genetic distinctiveness of, say, the Hanunuo from the Buhid—buttressed by each group's norms of endogamy. Given these complexities, Delfin argues against any facile notion of a "Filipino race" (*lahing Pilipino*).

Allied to historical genetics, historical linguistics is also a highly technical field, which Maria Kristina S. Gallego utilizes to portray early Philippine social organization. Gallego takes the position that a "mother" or protolanguage can be recreated on the basis of which the putative speech community's

kinship practices can be derived. Although not yet harmonized with the latest data from genetics, Proto-Philippines is taken as descended from Proto-Austronesian and Proto-Malayo-Polynesian. Its kinship terminologies confirm the practice of bilateral kinship along with sibling markers based on relative age, the parallel treatment of relations formed by marital and blood ties, and matrilineal residence. Despite the absence of strict genealogies in bilateral kinship, Gallego posits that (a) descent groups existed to deal with land ownership issues, and (b) achieved as well as ascribed leadership coexisted. Scholars from other disciplines need to weigh in on these assertions.

Although risks can be gauged through technical and expert assessments, risks can also be understood in nonspecialist ways through an analysis of discourses and embodied emotions. This latter approach Hedda Ransan-Cooper employs to explain decisions by informants whether or not they would leave their rural villages in Albay, a net out-migration province where environmental hazards are ever present. Many believe that environmental conditions are worsening, yet they cope with risks through hard work, through being “used to” life’s exigencies and developing one’s coping abilities, and through reliance on good luck (*suwerte*). These discourses, focused on the individual, are not without ambiguities and tensions, especially amid challenges to communal risk-sharing practices. Given fluidity, contingency, and rising aspirations, mobility decisions implicate hope, trust, and intimacy in relationships—vital components in a multifactorial decision-making framework.

Experts can constitute a technocracy, a governance system that prizes technical solutions to political problems. Specialized knowledge becomes the overriding principle for organizing political power. Ferdinand Marcos relied on technocrats, a penchant that Teresa S. Encarnacion Tadem traces to the pre-martial law period in the 1960s when, under US influence, this practice began to spread in Southeast Asia. Tadem narrates the recruitment of economic and financial experts into government positions based on their preference for what the International Monetary Fund (IMF) advocated: export-oriented industrialization (EOI) as against import-substitution industrialization (ISI). However, rather than act as neutral technicians, these experts engaged in political stratagems to overcome opposing elite interests, positioning them into key roles under martial law and ushering the country out of protectionism.

We trust the general reader will find the scholarship in this issue accessible, interesting, and useful.

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