

Book Reviews

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Migration Revolution: Philippine Nationhood and Class Relations in a Globalized Age. By Filomeno V. Aguilar. Kyoto CSEAS Series on Asian Studies 11. Quezon City and Singapore: Ateneo de Manila University Press and NUS Press, 2014. xii+293 pp.

Aguilar's argument, threading through all of the essays in this collection, is that migration has transformed the Philippines' collective understanding of itself as a state, a nation and an identity. He frames this transformation as a "revolution". Moreover, one must see this reformulated sense of self as both racialized and classed, since these two axes of difference are seldom far from the conceptual categories used by either Filipinos themselves or their others. All of the essays in this volume are revised versions of publications that go back almost twenty years — the earliest from 1996 and the latest from 2012 — but none feels outdated or stale. This is because Aguilar has skillfully woven new material into each essay, and also because the original articles tackled enduring themes in insightful ways.

Aguilar's style of writing and argumentation is that of an essayist, not unlike that of his Cornell University mentor Benedict R. O'G. Anderson. While Aguilar's other writings include research drawing on archival work and ethnography (Aguilar 1998 and 2009, respectively), the empirical basis of this book is provided by an extensive reading of existing studies, close attention to contemporary news media and drawing on and interpreting personal experiences. For this reason, it would be hard to pin any particular disciplinary label on Aguilar's newest book, as it draws upon historical, sociological and anthropological traditions without necessarily conforming fully to the methodological expectations of any of them. Nevertheless, all of the essays are elegantly written and convincing.

As a scholar of Filipino migration, Aguilar writes from a unique vantage point. Born and raised in the Philippines, he completed his graduate training in the United States, before pursuing an academic career in Singapore, Australia, Japan and back in the Philippines, where he was until recently dean of social sciences at Ateneo de Manila University. Aguilar has thus lived and worked in the colonial heartland, in significant sites of contract labour migration, and in a prime destination for permanent migrants. Understanding the experience of Filipino migration requires that these varied sites be viscerally appreciated, and Aguilar is at his most compelling when providing personal insights into the everyday experiences and perspectives of migrants.

Aguilar started out as an economic and social historian, and these sensibilities are evident in the first chapter of the book, which establishes the historical lineage of out-migration from the Philippines and its effects on nascent forms of nationalism. While scholars have long cited the nineteenth-century European sojourns of elite *ilustrados* as the origins of Filipino nationalism, Aguilar shows that lower-class seafarers, known as “Manilamen” (p. 37), appeared to identify with the Philippines as their homeland from the late eighteenth century onwards — long before the nationalists of the local elite conceived of a Filipino identity.

Concepts of class and the need for an analysis centred on class are a consistent theme in Aguilar’s work. He pursues class as a process of economic value extraction in Chapter Two. Aguilar argues convincingly that global labour migration must be seen as a transnational process in which surplus value is extracted in one place, often through export-oriented production, and then wages are remitted to migrant source communities, where they in turn lead to upward class mobility. It is therefore no longer possible to see class as a national formation.

Class is, however, more than a set of economic processes, and Aguilar also pays attention to the cultural registers of class and to the intersection of class with national and racialized identities. In this respect, the oldest essay in the book is also, for me, its

highlight. Chapter Three is an updated version of his 1996 essay on transnational shame and national identity, in which Aguilar gets inside both individual and collective ways of thinking about the Philippines, the United States and the labour of migrant workers. He shows that the “shame” associated with migrant work is an elite reaction not usually shared by workers themselves. Aguilar also emphasizes that class is not just about the structures of inequality, exploitation and victimhood. It must also be placed in the context of migrant agency, and Chapter Four explores the meaning of the migration experience in the self-actualization of migrants. The latter, he notes, exercise agency and realize personal growth even as they are being exploited.

Chapter Five questions the relationship of transnationalism to the nation. Aguilar argues that ties with friends and family do not necessarily imply a wider affinity with the imagined community of a borderless nation and that migrants do not necessarily conduct their engagements with the homeland in a spirit of nationalism and nation-building. After all, “nationality” quickly becomes ethnicity and a way of belonging to a new homeland (such as the United States), and it is far from obvious who “belongs” to the original homeland. The territorial nation is thus in a contradictory relationship with its diaspora, but it is not negated by it.

To consider the meaning of nationhood and belonging necessarily requires that the boundaries and exclusions of these concepts also be considered. This is Aguilar’s task in Chapter Six, where he takes a comparative view of citizenship across Southeast Asia. While sitting slightly awkwardly in a book that otherwise focuses exclusively on the Philippines, the chapter is effective in placing the Philippines’ citizenship regime in a comparative context. Aguilar argues that citizenship regimes are becoming increasingly instrumentalist — serving either to exclude those with deep roots in a territory (Chinese minorities, for example), to welcome those seen as beneficial for the national economy (“expatriates”), or to marginalize temporary workers, whose disenfranchised presence reiterates the benefits for those who belong (and thus the legitimacy of political elites). As

always, then, the role of class is never far away. Chapter Seven, which sees dual citizenship and overseas voting — both introduced into the Philippines in 2003 — as further examples of instrumental citizenship, underlines the same point.

There are gaps, of course, in Aguilar's coverage. The roles of Web-based media have become pervasive in the last decade, but are only lightly touched upon here, and there is a great deal more to say about the senses of identity and belonging among second-generation "hyphenated" Filipinos in places like the United States and Canada. Nevertheless, Aguilar's writing stands as some of the most theoretically rich and insightful work on the implications of contemporary Filipino migrations, and these essays are necessary starting points for future explorations of such issues.

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Slow Anthropology: Negotiating Difference with the Iu Mien. By Hjørleifur Jonsson. Cornell Southeast Asia Program Publications. Cornell University, Ithaca, New York, 2014. xv+152 pp.

Slow Anthropology is many things: part ambitious statement about the take-home messages anthropology has to offer; part ethnography of the Iu Mien in Thailand, Laos and North America; and part repost to James C. Scott's *The Art of Not Being Governed* (2009). Scott's work caused ripples in Southeast Asian studies with its