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"Fucking Koreans!": Sexual Relations and Immigration in the Philippines

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Drawn by the tropical weather and pristine beaches, significantly lower cost of living, and proximity, South Koreans are now the top tourists in the Philippines. Besides the short-term tourists, more than 100,000 South Koreans have chosen to permanently reside in the Philippines, making them the largest immigrant population in the country. Recently, a tenuous relationship between these two groups has emerged marked by mutual antipathy. I have overheard many Koreans describe Filipinos as impoverished, lazy, and socially backwards. They appear to have internalized a racial hierarchy whereby they perceive their darker-skinned Asian counterparts as ranking lower on the pigmentocracy scale. Conversely, Filipinos complain incessantly that Korean immigrants and visitors alike are arrogant, rude, and provincial, refusing to learn Tagalog or appreciate, much less respect, local customs. The exclamation, "Fucking Koreans!" has become a familiar refrain by Filipinos in response to being treated as second-class citizens in their own country. This utterance also has a secondary meaning as the one area where Koreans and Filipinos commonly do interact is in the form of sexual relationships.

Key words: South Korea, Philippines, sex tourism, immigration, transnationalism

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INTRODUCTION

Since the 1990s, there has been another type of Korean Wave emerging in the Philippines in the form of a growing influx of Korean nationals. Drawn by the tropical weather and pristine beaches, significantly lower cost of living, and proximity, South Koreans are now the top tourists in the country with over a million visitors last year alone. Besides the short-term tourists who usually stay less than a week, more than 100,000 South Koreans have chosen to permanently reside in the Philippines. Typically, the Korean migrants are businessmen, students, or missionaries.

True to their reputation for hospitality, Filipinos initially welcomed their Korean guests with open arms. Koreans are bringing with them billions of dollars into the cash-strapped Philippines both through consumer spending and direct investments. In fact, South Korea accounted for $1.2 billion of the $3.5 billion in investments that entered the Philippines in 2006 and is now also the nation's biggest source of foreign direct investment (Diola, 2013). Moreover, Korean immigrants are each estimated to spend an average of $800-$1000 per month, which adds up to almost $1 billion in consumer spending each year (Diola, 2013).

In recent years, however, rifts between the two groups have become increasingly common as reports and anecdotes circulate about the visitors not always behaving as guests. As their numbers and influence have grown, so has their bad reputation. The main issue of contention appears to be the widespread perception that Koreans are not reciprocating the hospitality and good will that have been shown to them. Perhaps it is precisely because so many of the small business owners and students were marginalized in their own society that they act like kings when they come to a poorer country. For instance, in her case study of North Americans who have migrated to Boquete, Panama, Benson demonstrates how these migrants carry their locally-inflected class relations and racialized logics to the destination (Benson, 2015: 19). As evident by their refusal to eat Filipino food, learn the local language, or socialize with their neighbours, these Korean migrants and visitors alike are ambivalent or even disdainful of local customs and culture. "Migrants of privilege", as Croucher (2009) calls them, are less interested in or open to assimilation into the receiving society (Croucher, 2009: 484). Instead of embracing any of the local culture, Koreans prefer to bring Korea with them.

Indeed, a defining feature of both Korean tourists and immigrants in the Philippines is their communal exclusiveness (D. Kim, 2016: 237). Of course, these ethnic enclaves certainly are not unique. Abelmann (2009), for example, discovered similarly insulated Korean communities in the United States. The notable difference, however, is that Korean-American communities tended to be isolated due to linguistic barriers and difficulties assimilating to the mainstream society while Koreans in the Philippines voluntarily choose to isolate themselves (D. Kim, 2016: 258). Koreans prefer to only socialize and do business with other Koreans, thereby effectively ostracizing their Filipino hosts. Wherever Koreans move in large numbers, they tend to create their own ethnic enclaves. A common strategy for Koreans is to buy all of the available property in a specific cluster and subsequently designate the area as its own. Suddenly, Korean restaurants, KTV bars, grocery stores, hotels, and tour companies—all of which are easily identifiable by the distinctive Hangul script that is entirely unintelligible to the Filipino masses—appear to be practically ubiquitous in the Philippines. Significantly, all of these businesses and services cater almost exclusively to a Korean clientele.

Although Koreans now constitute the largest immigrant population in the Philippines, there is a tenuous relationship between these two groups marked by mutual antipathy. I have overheard many Koreans describe Filipinos as impoverished, lazy, and socially backwards. They appear to have internalized a racial hierarchy whereby they perceive their darker-skinned Asian counterparts as ranking lower on the pigmentocracy scale.[1] Conversely, Filipinos complain incessantly that Korean immigrants and visitors

1 In contrast, Green (2017) found that Western migrants and retirees in the popular tourist destination of Ubud, Bali, Indonesia often attempted to downplay the virtues of white agency and privilege (Green, 2017: 177). Similarly, in her case study of US and Canadian residents of Boquete, Panama, Benson

alike are arrogant, rude, and provincial, refusing to learn Tagalog or appreciate, much less respect, local customs. The exclamation, "fucking Koreans!" has become a familiar refrain by Filipinos in response to being treated as second-class citizens in their own country.

I have observed very little in the way of cross-cultural exchange between Koreans and Filipinos. The majority of Koreans interviewed admitted, without exception, that beyond the necessities of learning English, obtaining household services and government permits, they and their countrymen eschew mixing on a personal level with the locals. The fact that the only Filipinos with whom they come into regular contact are employees in subservient positions magnifies their feelings of superiority and separation (D. Kim, 2016: 255). Likewise, very few of my Filipino informants reported having any Korean friends or even acquaintances.

Relations between Koreans and Filipinos are also being shaped and tempered by the growing perception (rooted in reality) that Koreans are being deliberately targeted as victims of crime. In fact, a recent article in the *Wall Street Journal* identified the Philippines as the "most dangerous place to be a Korean" (Ekin, 2014). According to the South Korean Foreign Ministry, 780[2] crimes were perpetrated against Koreans in 2013, up from 628 the previous year (Ekin, 2014). Since then, almost 50 Koreans have been killed in the Philippines (S. Kim, 2016). Most recently, a Korean businessman named Jee Ick Joo was kidnapped and murdered. This crime was particularly brazen because Jee was strangled to death by officers inside Camp Crame, the national police headquarters (Fonbuena, 2017). All of the negative publicity associated with these crimes is scaring away some potential Korean tourists and investors (Palatino, 2014). My own mother constantly worries about my safety in the Philippines despite my best efforts to convince her to the contrary.

METHODS

Six months of research in the Philippines focused on the socio-political drivers of the Korean migration to the Philippines. In contrast to the earlier Korean diasporas to Latin America, Western Europe, Middle East, and North America that were driven by political oppression and/or economic hardship, the present migration of Koreans to the Philippines is being driven more by South Korea's increasing prosperity. After consulting the academic literature on Philippine-Korean relations, I conducted an ethnographic study of various Korean communities throughout the country.

The obvious place to begin was Metro Manila, which is home to the largest Korean population in the Philippines. The most well-known "Koreatown" in the city is located in Makati's Barangay Poblacion. In addition, I established contacts with Korean business owners in the Kalayaan Plaza Building in Quezon City and Korean residents of exclusive gated communities in Pananaque City and Muntinlupa City. There are a number of prominent community organizations that cater to the growing Korean population, most notably the United Korean Community Association in the Philippines

(2013) noticed that these affluent migrants utilized their positions of privilege to subvert their negative impact by becoming involved in local charitable work and philanthropic giving (Benson, 2013: 327).

2 These included 678 cases of theft, 12 robberies, 12 assaults, 9 kidnappings, and 13 murders.

(UKCAP) in Makati and the Korean Cultural Center in the Philippines (KCCP) in Fort Bonafacio. South Koreans living in Manila have also established their own private school for their community's children called the Korean International School Philippines in Taguig City. Some of the less fortunate progeny abandoned by their Korean fathers are cared for and provided educational opportunities at the Kopino Foundation in Quezon City. I interviewed the founder, Cedric Son, and met with some of the 12 children living there.

In addition to Manila, I conducted over 100 interviews in other areas of the country with sizable Korean populations such as Baguio, Angeles City, Cebu, Dumaguete, Bacolod, and Iloilo.[3] In keeping with my anthropological training and previous fieldwork experiences, I utilized the standard ethnographic techniques of participant observation, surveys, focus groups, and semi-structured interviews to collect my data. Field sites included coffee shops, restaurants, and shopping malls. I located informants by randomly approaching individuals sitting alone or in pairs in public spaces. Additional respondents were recruited through snowball sampling in which some of these informants recommended their friends and/or family members to participate. Some of my Filipino informants were steered to me by my students at De La Salle University in Manila while others were located through my own personal network that has evolved after visiting the country for over a decade. I organized my research design in the form of an inverted triangle, proceeding from the broad to the increasingly narrow. Therefore, the responses from the surveys helped me identify members to invite for the focus groups, from which I selected the most engaging individuals for one-on-one interviews. It should also be pointed out that I am of Korean descent myself and possess conversational competency in the Korean language. Nevertheless, I found it exceedingly difficult to approach and communicate with Korean migrants in the Philippines. Although my Korean is not completely fluent, it is certainly adequate for the purposes of basic communication. Beyond linguistic competency, the more pressing issue was cultural incompatibility. Simply put, these are not the types of Koreans that I am accustomed to.

Please allow me to explain. My parents were part of the "great migration" of Koreans who immigrated to the United States in the mid-1970s. This wave of immigrants was among the best and brightest, and they made the difficult decision to leave their motherland in search of a better life for themselves and their children. Growing up in the Korean-American community in Los Angeles, I thought every Korean man graduated from Seoul National University and every Korean woman graduated from Ewha Woman's University (the top institutions of higher learning in the country)—as my parents had as well as the parents of all my Korean-American friends.

The Koreans that I encountered in the Philippines, however, differed noticeably not only in the way they talk but how they carry themselves. It quickly became evident to me that, by and large, the majority of these Koreans immigrated to the Philippines because they were unable to succeed in their home country. By contrast, virtually all of the Filipinos in my personal network are middle class and studied at the top local universities. Yet, ironically, these Korean migrants often discriminate against Filipinos for being economically and culturally inferior. According to Dohye Kim, Koreans view

3 The distribution of interviews follows: Manila (40), Angeles (14), Baguio (17), Cebu (16), Dumaguete (13), Bacolod (4), and Iloilo (8).

"countries like the Philippines as victims of capitalism as opposed to their own position as victors" (D. Kim, 2016: 239).

Even when I was able to secure an interview, most Korean respondents were reluctant or simply unwilling to share their honest feelings about Filipinos and the Philippines in general. My Filipino informants, on the other hand, freely and candidly expressed their feelings about Koreans. This was the opposite experience for Kim, who found his fellow Korean informants to be straightforward but detected self-censorship among his Filipino informants (D. Kim, 2006: 242). I attribute this discrepancy to our differences with regard to positionality; as a Korean-American researcher, my informants viewed me as being more closely aligned with the latter part of my hyphenated identity.

MIGRATING DOWN

Most of the existing literature on migration focuses on the movement of people from less developed countries to more developed ones, motivated by hopes for a better life, greater opportunities, and greener pastures abroad (Croucher, 2009: 468). In most multi-ethnic societies, there is usually one group that constitutes the majority, dominating and discriminating against other minority groups. Competition for scarce resources leads inevitably to a system of ethnic stratification whereby the majority group monopolizes power and social resources while minority groups are excluded from societal opportunity structures. For the Korean diaspora in the Philippines, however, this top-down model is inverted such that the Korean immigrants and visitors are socially and economically superior to their local hosts. In a similar vein, Croucher's (2009) case study of Americans who choose to live in Mexico explores the implications of reversing the lens to focus on migration from an economically and politically powerful sending state to a less powerful receiving one (Croucher, 2009: 465).

Today's influx of Koreans to the Philippines represents a break from the earlier Korean diasporas that were driven by political oppression and persecutions and/or by economic hardships and difficulties; in contrast, the present migration of Koreans to the Philippines is being driven by Korea's increasing prosperity (Miralao, 2007: 25). However, there is a stark contrast between the perception of "rich Koreans" that is fuelled by K-Pop and the all-too-common reality of second-class citizens who lost or never found financial stability in their homeland. They are coming to the Philippines to establish or expand their businesses, learn English, enrol in university, or establish churches and other services that cater to the Korean communities that have sprouted in different areas of the country.

For their part, members of the host culture are very perplexed at this anomaly. Filipinos repeatedly expressed confusion and bewilderment at why "rich" Koreans would want to trade the comforts and conveniences of the First World for the interminable drawbacks and discomforts of the Third World. The locals wonder why these Koreans, who are perceived to be able to afford migration directly to other industrialized countries, choose instead to settle in the Philippines.

Korean migrants to the Philippines generally fall into one of three categories: businessmen, students, and missionaries. For the first constituency, the advance of Korean companies in the Philippines intensified economic cooperation between the two countries that triggered the first wave of Korean migration. A second wave spawned economic refugees who fled their homeland after the 1997 Asian financial crisis when

they lost their entire fortunes. Relocating to the Philippines offered them a second chance as well as the opportunity to escape from the judgmental gaze of kin and neighbours (D. Kim, 2016: 253). These economic migrants have established small businesses such as restaurants, grocery stories, KTV bars, Internet cafes, and travel and tour companies—all of which cater exclusively to Koreans.

The arrival of Korean students has similarly been spurred by South Korea's increasing prosperity. Not only has its astounding economic progress raised family incomes, it has also expanded the ranks of the Korean middle class who can now afford to send children and family members to learn English or attend university in foreign countries such as the Philippines (Yoon, 2006: 14). The Korean students interviewed for this project unanimously emphasized that learning English is mandatory since applying for a well-paying job in Korea requires them to pass the Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC). Salary levels in Korea are determined in part by the TOEIC scores of employees (Miralao, 2007: 32).

Also contrary to popular perceptions, my Korean interviewees consistently emphasized that "not all Koreans are rich" and, thus, capable of sending their children directly to the US or Canada to study. Further, their cultural and social positions are less secure due to the lack of linguistic skills and separation from their families (Kim and Thang, 2016: 53). The Philippines has become a viable alternative for middle-class citizens who aspire to keep their children competitive by having them learn English, but within their limited means. Elvira Mirano, a 34-year-old civil engineer in Dumaguete, recognized the factors that appealed to Koreans:

> *One is the cost of living. I think it is because of the cost of living there in Korea that led them to the Philippines. Two is education. Koreans cannot afford education there since the tuitions fees are so high. Three, we Filipinos are said to be one of the people who are good in English. They want to learn English and learning English here is easy and not as expensive as they are in Korea.*

The educational system in South Korea is hyper-competitive; indeed, it is widely believed that one's educational pedigree determines their future quality of life. The students who come to the Philippines to attend university are, without exception, those that could not gain entry into a "respectable" university in South Korea. Unlike some of their richer classmates whose parents possess the financial means to send them to the United States, Europe, or Australia to study, their financial constraints mandate a less expensive alternative. While I was a visiting professor at De La Salle University (DLSU) in Manila, one of the top universities in the country, my colleagues often bemoaned the poor study habits of their Korean students, who preferred to spend their nights drinking and carousing instead.

Without exception, all of the Korean students that I interviewed identified the more relaxed educational and cultural milieu in the Philippines as offering a soothing antidote to the strict and high-pressure education system of their motherland. For instance, Lee Myung Ho, an 18-year-old psychology major at DLSU, stated:

> *Actually, I don't want to study in Korea because their educational system is, like, pushing the students to study. They sharpen their students' thoughts in the same way, so everybody thinks in the same*

way. There are no creative things. In Korea, they decide our ways, how to study, or what will I study. But here, I could choose myself. In the Philippines, I'm more free. In Korea, I was just like a machine, because I have to follow the rules and schedules. Every day, it was same daily life. But in the Philippines, I can make my schedule myself. I can show my opinion.

Kim Hyun Ahn, the 20-year-old President of DLSU's Korean Student Association, concurred:

In Korea, students are so competitive and study so hard. They only sleep for 3 to 4 hours. But in the Philippines, it is good that students are more free, but they are not competitive. Korean students, like in my age, are so competitive and don't have enough time to sleep, rest, or have free time, but as of what I see, most Filipino students are not that competitive and spend their time not only for studying, but also resting and having their "own time".

Kim Gi Yang, a 19-year-old political science and business management student, elaborated on the perceived differences between Koreans and Filipinos:

Koreans are always in a hurry, but Filipinos are always late. I want them to follow each other, so that both won't be either in a hurry or be late. Also, most Koreans care a lot about their appearance, clothes and makeup, but most Filipinos seem to not care about it that much.

Perhaps these differences explain why these Korean students reported spending the majority of their time with fellow Koreans. Although several claimed to have "some" Filipino friends, they admitted that these relationships were mostly superficial and limited to exchanging pleasantries.

KOREANIZATION

After almost four centuries of virtually uninterrupted subjugation, Filipinos have inculcated what they themselves refer to as a "colonial mentality" such that anything foreign is, by definition, superior. Filipinos have embraced foreigners, especially because many bring cash and long-term investments. At the most impersonal level, there is economic gain for Filipinos, specifically in lower-income neighbourhoods where the surge in direct cash transactions has an immediate impact on the poverty of residents.

"Koreanization" has been observed in at least three distinct kinds of urban spaces: residential neighbourhoods, university districts, and commercial areas (Gomez, 2011: 51). Korean establishments are readily identifiable by the signage in Hangul script that is unintelligible to locals, thereby functioning as a de facto "No Trespassing" sign. Once Koreans start moving into neighbourhoods, their presence becomes immediately—and indelibly—palpable and visible.

A similar intrusion occurs near the nation's top universities, where Korean students occupy several floors of high-rise apartment buildings. At DLSU, several state-of-the-

art condominium complexes[4] that cater mostly to Korean students have been recently constructed directly adjacent to the campus. The monthly rent at these properties is significantly higher than other accommodation in the area, which serves as a form of economic apartheid by bifurcating the haves from the have-nots. The commercial spaces on the ground floors, such as restaurants and coffee shops, also predictably target a virtually exclusive Korean clientele.

The sudden influx of Korean immigrants to the Philippines has coincided with other kinds of transmissions as well. The anthropologist, Arjun Appadurai, has identified five dimensions of global cultural flow: ethnoscapes (the movement of people), ideoscapes (the movement of political ideas), finanscapes (the movement of money), technoscapes (the movement of technology), and mediascapes (the movement of media) (Appadurai, 1996: 49). The suffix "-scape" is intended to demonstrate that these dimensions are not fixed in that they cross national boundaries. All of these "scapes" apply to the Korean influences in the Philippines, but the migration of people has magnified the impact of ideologies (and counter-ideologies) and mass media. Indeed, these are mutually constitutive. As Athena de la Cruz, a 26-year-old call center worker from Cebu, explains:

> *It's because a huge part of the Philippines is into the so-called "Korean invasion" to the point that they really idolize Korean idols and they end up dressing and looking like the idol. Korea has also become the fashion trendsetter for some reason. There are many instances wherein the Filipinos always follow what they think is cool or a lot of people are wearing it, so Filipinos would end up buying a lot of Korean look-a-like clothes so they could just be in the "in" group.*

These perceptions of Koreans as "fashion trendsetters" are rooted in their mass mediated representations. Thus, "Koreanization" is not only limited to the physical space occupied by Koreans but also to the profound cultural effect that Korean popular culture has had on Filipinos.

SEX TOURISM

The one area where Koreans and Filipinos commonly do interact is in the form of sexual relationships. The Philippines has an ignominious history and seedy reputation as a global sex tourism destination. Like their counterparts from other countries, Korean men are drawn to the Philippines because of easy access to a virtually unlimited supply of young, attractive, and eager women. Recently, the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) arrested nine South Korean nationals for operating a large-scale sex tourism syndicate in Cebu (Bajenting, 2017).[5] Besides playing golf in a tropical country for cheap prices, these "19 hole" tour packages invariably include "nightlife" in the daily itinerary (Koo, 2017). For a fee equivalent to 250,000 pesos ($5,000 USD),

4 These include Archer's Place, SMDS Green Residences, and D'University Place Residences. The monthly rent for these units are significantly higher than others, such as EGI Taft Towers, in the vicinity.

5 A local news reporter broadcast the interrogation on Facebook, and the names and ages of the suspects were released to the media (Koo, 2017).

clients pre-selected their Filipina sex partners from photographs posted on the Internet (Yasay, Pulgo, Mendoza, 2017). For their part, the Filipinas, all between the ages of 19 and 21, were paid 2000 pesos ($40 USD) a day (Kwon, 2017). Many Filipinas are drawn to Korean men for their reputation as being tall, fair-skinned, clad in colourful clothing, and always equipped with the latest and most expensive gadgets. With the immense popularity of K-Pop and Koreanovelas, Filipinas have become lulled into yearning for their very own Korean Prince Charming. I have coined the term "Koreaphiles" to refer to a specific constituency of young Filipinas who have developed something of an obsession with all things Korean. Distinctive traits include: an ardent devotion to Korean products such as fashion and cosmetics, food, and exported media; the ability to read, write, and speak some of the Korean language; and the desire to have a Korean boyfriend or husband and eventually move to South Korea permanently. Unfortunately, the nature of these relationships is almost always temporary and the promise of "happily ever after" invariably remains unfulfilled.

These short-term romantic relationships between Korean men and Filipina women sometimes have long-term consequences. Because the Philippines is a staunchly Catholic country, birth control is frowned upon by the church. Moreover, many Korean men prefer not to wear condoms because of decreased sensation during intercourse. As a result, the past two decades have witnessed a surge of progeny who are referred to as "Kopinos," which is short for Korean-Filipinos.

Sadly, these children are often abandoned by their Korean fathers, many of whom are already married with children in Korea. Cedric Son, a Korean national who immigrated to the Philippines in 1998, founded the Kopino Foundation in 2006 to help some of these abandoned children.[6] As he explains:

> *We want to provide the Kopino children with quality education, shelter and make them feel that they're loved. You see, these children mean so much to me, they are like my children. We are a family together.*

The foundation's goal is help educate these mixed-race children that they grow up to become productive members of society, thereby reflecting positively on Koreans as a whole. By "productive," he is specifically referring to learning English, which he believes is the key to success.

As a Korean himself, Mr. Son feels empathetic towards the Korean fathers who are often demonized in the South Korean media for being callous and irresponsible being callous and irresponsible. According to him, these men have no choice but to run away and abandon the child due to the tremendous social stigma in Korea associated with illegitimate children, particularly from mixed race unions: "In Korea, if you're a half-Korean blood only, they will not accept you because Koreans don't want blood of any humans except other Koreans to mix with their own blood." Culturally, fatherhood is a huge responsibility and not meeting this responsibility results in tremendous shame. Some try to visit their children in the Philippines and/or send money. However, the latter is difficult, if not impossible, because their wives monitor their expenses.

In spite of having little to no contact with their fathers, the children in the Kopino Foundation do not seem to hold a grudge. Rachelle Angelica Lee, 16, stated:

6 At the time I visited in June of 2015, there were 12 children: 4 high school students, 2 college students, and 6 elementary students.

I want to find my father again because I miss him so much. The last time he called my mom, he said "Take care of Rachelle." Since then we haven't received any texts or calls from him.

Twenty-one-year-old Jayson Santos' hopes to reconnect with his Korean father are tempered by reality:

My one and only wish is to see my father period. Because if I see my dad, all of my wishes would come true but, unfortunately, he probably has another family already.

Lorie Jean Kim, 13, is even less optimistic:

Honestly, I don't look forward to meeting Papa again because we won't understand each other. Besides, I'll just be excess baggage for him and bring trouble if his new family finds out about me.

Marjorie Fabian, 12, actually blames her Filipino mother for growing up without a father:

I've always wanted to ask her, "Why did you leave him?" If it wasn't for her, my father would have been here. She was the one who left my father. It is her fault why my life is ruined right now.

Jackie Hong, 17, understands where the blame should be placed:

Well, my mom said that my dad was very strict in his beliefs that Koreans are above others and stuff like that. When he found out about her being preggy with me, he didn't want to be responsible. He said it was bad and would bring shame upon him.

Talking with these children and hearing their heart-breaking stories left me feeling deeply ashamed of my compatriots. In Korea, it would be unthinkable for a man to shirk his parental responsibilities. Yet in the carnivalesque atmosphere of the Philippines, this is routinely done with impunity.

STEPPING STONE

The majority of Koreans who come to the Philippines are temporary migrants and have no intention of staying in the country permanently. Rather, the Philippines often serves as a "stepping stone" for Koreans who learn English en-route to their eventual migration to more industrialized countries in the West. As migrants of privilege, their circumstances might best be described as what Linda Kerber calls "statefullness" as opposed to the statelessness typical of marginalized groups (Kerber, 2006: 138, cited in Croucher, 2009: 486). After English has been learned, they move on to continue studies or find jobs back in South Korea or in North America. As this "stepping stone" economy matures, younger generations disperse into secondary enclaves farther from the core (Mylonas, 2013: 10).

Historically, the Philippines has long served as a bridge between east and west. The target destination is a western civilization, personified by countries such as the United States or Canada, which confer status as well as high paying-jobs. Until then, it is desirable to "pay your dues," as it were, in the Philippines, especially because the cost of living is lower such that middle-class Koreans can thrive there luxuriously (Gomez, 2011: 54).

There are fundamental and underlying differences in the cultures of Filipinos and Koreans that manifest in vastly divergent temperaments. Korea's rapidly developing economy was built on the determined, and often aggressive, work ethic of its citizens. Indeed, *pali-pali* (hurry, hurry) is the country's unofficial national slogan. On the country, Filipinos are renowned for their friendliness and passiveness. My Korean informants, especially those who employ Filipinos, frequently lamented their tardiness, laziness, and overall lack of ambition.

Conversely, Filipino workers often complained that their Korean supervisors are demandingly overbearing and scold them for even the slightest infraction. Shennilyn Pedroza, a 22-year-old employee at Kim's Korean Grocery Store, which is located inside Multinational village in Paranaque, describes her boss, Mr. Kim, as "strict in the sense that when he means business, it should be business. No games played. He is serious and meticulous about details." However, Shennilyn has gotten to see a softer side to him as well:

> *I consider him as a father figure too because we really learn a lot from him. He is patient with us and treats us kindly. When we commit a mistake or do something wrong, Mr. Kim just calls our manager outside, talks to him, and lets our manager do the talking to us. He never shouted at us and never fired an employee. The only thing I don't like about him is his low salary payment.*

She refused to specify how much she gets paid but admitted that it was "definitely below minimum wage."

Nevertheless, working at the store has changed the way that Shennilyn perceives Koreans. She explained:

> *Before I worked here, I thought all Koreans were bossy, standoffish, and ill-mannered because I didn't have much interaction with them back then. But having personal encounters definitely proved my impressions wrong. Mr. Kim made me realize that it is not through race that we determine how good or how evil one may be. He made me realize that not all Koreans are bad and, just like us, they are humans capable of feeling and having emotions. Therefore, we must not judge them and accuse them of something they are not. We must respect them just like how we respect Filipinos and ourselves.*

This epiphany offers some hope for the future. As Koreans and Filipinos get to know one another, the mutual antipathy and growing hostility will gradually subside. But Koreans are the ones who have to make the first move; after all, they are the guests in a foreign country.

CONCLUSION

The Korean presence in the Philippines continues to expand, but the direction and magnitude of this expansion are still uncertain. As economic fortunes rise and fall on a personal and national level and as international forces and priorities change, so will cities and their populations (Gomez, 2011: 58). In the meantime, local interaction continues at a modest pace. Both Filipinos and Koreans freely admit that the integration of the latter into Philippine society has been slow, at best, as the latter generally do not mix with the former except on a functional basis. Nevertheless, through this perfunctory contact, ideas and behaviours are exchanged and mutual familiarity gradually increases.

All of the Korean migrants in my study came to the Philippines because they were unsuccessful in their home country, either in business or education. For them, the Philippines represented a second chance. Although they may be "migrating down" in terms of moving from a more developed country to a less developed one, they are still migrating *up* in terms of aspirations for upward social and economic mobility. Therefore, as to the question of why "rich" Koreans would want to trade the comforts and conveniences of the First World for the interminable drawbacks and discomforts of the Third World, my research demonstrates that their migration is not as one-sided as it may initially appear. For these Korean migrants, starting a new life in a foreign land often represents the best option given a lack of better options.

The Philippine-bound Korean migration appears to have developed into a "migration system" whereby the two countries are now linked not only by diplomatic agreements and investment flows, but also by the flows and counter-flows of people (both of Koreans to the Philippines and Filipino workers to Korea) (Miralao, 2007: 26). This migration stream of Koreans to the Philippines presents a new opportunity for the maturing of Korean-Philippine relations, beyond formal diplomatic ties and economic cooperation activities, to the level of more interpersonal relationships between Koreans and Filipinos that may lead to a deeper intercultural knowledge and reciprocated appreciation between the two groups.

The history of the Philippines has unequivocally demonstrated that, eventually, the newcomers will plant roots, intermarry, and germinate their influences onto the eclectic landscape. Like the Spanish, Americans, and Japanese before them, the Koreans are also in the process of making their indelible imprint on the local culture. Indeed, the Philippines is an amalgamation of disparate cultural influences that Filipinos have domesticated, internalized, and made uniquely their own. If you ask a Filipino to name the types of things that are "uniquely Pinoy," the most common responses will invariably include popular dishes such as adobo (marinated chicken or pork), lechon (whole roasted pig), and menudo (stew with pork, liver, and assorted vegetables), Catholicism (the Philippines is the third largest Catholic country in the world after only Brazil and Mexico), and the jeepney, which was named after the General Purpose (or "GP") military jeeps used by the Americans during World War II. Not coincidentally, all of these were appropriated from their former Spanish and American colonizers. Seen in this light, immigration highlights the process whereby that which was modern and strange yesterday becomes modern but familiar today and "authentically traditional (or Filipino)" tomorrow.

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