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On the Cultural Politics of "Chinese Immigrants" in the Philippines: Focusing on the Socio-Cultural Process of Exclusion and Inclusion*

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Abstract

This paper aims to identify the cultural and identity politics of Chinese immigrants in the Philippines, with a focus on the representations and discourses of the Chinese population that function as part of the national identity discourse. Through the socio-cultural processes of exclusion and inclusion, the descendants of Chinese immigrants who came to the Philippines in the early years have leveraged anti-Chinese sentiment as a means to define themselves as Philippine citizens. Today, the anti-Chinese sentiment is not targeted at the ethnic Chinese who acquired Filipino citizenship in 1975, but at the newcomers who immigrated to the Philippines in the 1990s and afterward. The latter, through the representations and discourses on China and Chinese companies, have experienced a process of exclusion and inclusion similar to that encountered by the ethnic Chinese in the

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past. The national identity of the Philippines and other Southeast Asian countries, as well as the U.S. and China, should be evaluated with reference to this socio-cultural process of exclusion and inclusion of immigrants. It is through this reconsideration that we will be able to gain a new cultural perspective on the hegemonic struggle between China and the U.S. and the responses of the Philippines.

Keywords: Chinese Immigrants, Philippines, Exclusion and Inclusion

I. Introduction

Although the U.S.-China trade war seems to have reached a temporary truce with Trump's resignation, the U.S. and China have not yet found a compromise that maximizes the national interests of the two countries. Besides, the apprehension brought by Russia's invasion of Ukraine leads to instability in East Asia. Under such circumstances, Southeast Asian countries adjacent to mainland China are maintaining a tough neutrality between the U.S. and China.

The reason why Southeast Asian countries remain neutral is that they inevitably rely on Chinese investment for their economic development. However, simultaneously, there are concerns that aligning with China too closely will increase security risks and reignite anti-Chinese sentiment, which could easily turn into an anti-government movement, if the public assumed that the state government was pro-China because it was composed of officials of Chinese descent.

It should be noted that there are no "Chinese immigrants" that can be defined by any particular cultural attribute, apart from "those who are identified by others as Chinese immigrants." Historically, the complexity of national identity in Southeast Asia lies in the fact that it depends on what kind of people are identified as "Chinese immigrants" and who identifies them as "Chinese immigrants." National identity is shared among those who self-identify as "non-Chinese" while evoking a sense of majority. Southeast Asian countries have defined their national identities based on socially constituted representations and discourses about the Chinese population. According to Stuart Hall, culture is "something" that people who desire to belong to a particular category or group "share" or "wish to share," which can be expressed by terms including "representation" (what is expressed) or "discourse" (what is said) (Hall, S. 2001: 15). Chinese immigrants are therefore identified as such based on sociocultural representations or discourses and not based on essentialist definitions of immigrants and indigenous

peoples.

Although the phenomenon described by the term "cultural politics" covers a wide range of issues, this paper will consider cultural politics as the political dynamics involved in cultural representations and identities, which is engaged in how people define their associations with others.

In view of this, this paper aims to identify the representations and discourses of the Chinese population in the Philippines, by clarifying what kind of interactions occur (or are alleged to occur) between those who perceive someone as "Chinese" and those who are perceived as "Chinese" by someone else. We believe that national identity has a cultural and identity politics dimension that manipulates communal ties with others through various cultural representations and discourses. It is in the representations and discourses of Chinese immigrants that we can find clues for interpreting the formation of national identities in the Philippines. In the following sections, this paper will attempt to provide a cultural-political account of the process of localization of the descendants of Chinese immigrants by marginalizing new immigrants. Besides, this article will discuss the political implications of the hegemonic struggle between China and the U.S. and the responses of the Philippines.

II. Inclusion and Exclusion of Ethnic Chinese in the Philippines

In the Philippines, while prejudicial images of "Chinese descent" have been widely circulated through the media, there have also been a number of arguments pointing out the fallacies in the representations and discourses of "Chinese descent" (Amyot, 1973; Felix, 1966; Garcia, 1976; Lim, 1976; Tan-Gatue, 1955). What these discrepancies in representation and discourse suggest is that each person has different criteria for defining who "Chinese immigrants" are. In Southeast Asian

countries, including the Philippines, it can be observed that Chinese immigrants who arrived in the early stages often play a major role in the formation of nationalism by fueling anti-Chinese sentiment in a given nation. The Chineseness and non-Chineseness of those who are labeled as being of "Chinese descent" is intersubjectively constructed from time to time.

Currently, there are 28,705 citizens of China (PRC) and 1,538 Taiwanese nationals residing in the Philippines. Additionally, about 1.36% of the total population, or about 1.41 million, are ethnically Chinese Filipinos (Overseas Chinese Economic Yearbook Editorial Committee, 2012). Besides them, the rather large majority of Filipinos are believed to have at least partial Chinese ancestry. The total population of the Philippines at this time in 2010 was 92,097,978 (National Statistics Office, 2010).

Judging from their time of arrival, "Chinese" immigrants and descendants can be further classified into three groups, namely Chinese mestizos, Mainstream Chinese and then New Immigrants.

Chinese mestizos are those whose ancestors had migrated from China before the mid-19th century, but whose maternal ancestry can be traced back to a local prominent family. By the end of the nineteenth century, those known by the historical Spanish term "mestizo de sangley" came to dominate the economy of the archipelago as the colonial middle class, and it is noteworthy that they eventually represented "Filipino" nationalism. Apolinario Mabini, Emilio Aguinaldo and other Filipino revolutionaries were all mestizos.

The mestizos flourished in the latter half of the 19th century, during which there was also an influx of new immigrants from Fujian to the Philippines. These new immigrants became economic rivals to the mestizos. The years 1850 and 1902 were critical for both mestizos and new immigrants. ln 1850, the Governor General of Manila lifted the ban on Chinese immigration. Meanwhile, 1902 was the year of the

introduction of the U.S. Chinese Exclusion Act in the U.S. colony of the Philippines.[1] Some of the new immigrants who arrived before 1902, when the U.S. Chinese Exclusion Act was introduced to the Philippines, had acquired Philippine citizenship from the beginning and joined the mestizos' group as a part of the political and economic elite of the American-ruled Philippines. However, not all of the Chinese immigrants who came to the Philippines between 1850 and 1902 were assimilated into the mestizo group. A significant portion of them joined the immigrants who came after 1902 and formed an ethnic Chinese group who called themselves "lan lang" (咱人). Most of them kept their relationship with their hometowns in southern Fujian, which allowed them to continue to bring family members and relatives to the Philippines even after the introduction of the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1902 through the reuse of registration documents and other means. The number of immigrants from Fujian continued to increase, reaching a peak in the 1920s (Omohundro, 1981: 18).

It was not until the Marcos administration introduced a mass naturalization scheme in 1975 that the majority of them acquired Filipino citizenship. This provided an alternative way of acquiring citizenship, other than inheriting their mother's nationality as undocumented children of a Chinese father.

Regarding anti-Chinese sentiments, the status of Chinese immigrants during the U.S. rule was generally stable and they did not face severe antagonism. Chinese immigrants and their descendants were at a disadvantage in terms of their non-Filipino citizenship, but they were able to enjoy the status of cosmopolitans.

This changed drastically after the Japanese Occupation. The Japanese military regime of 1942-1945 granted overseas Chinese the

[1] In the U.S., a series of anti-Asian immigration acts were enacted since the 1880s to limit the number of Asian immigrants. However, since the Philippines was a U.S. colony, its citizens were privileged to be U.S. nationals and exceptionally allowed to travel freely to the U.S.

privilege to operate commerce as an integral part of the Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere. However, at the same time, they were seen as an obstacle to the economic activities of the indigenous people of the islands (Miyahara, 2003). While some parts of the Chinese population cooperated with the puppet regime, others allied with the Filipinos and joined the anti-Japanese guerrilla struggle. These different responses of Chinese residents to the Japanese military regime may have contributed to the division of the ethnic Chinese during the Cold War.

After the independence of the Philippines in 1946, the newly established government aggressively enforced economic nationalism and anti-communist policies that substantially targeted overseas Chinese, including even those with ROC passports. The economic nationalism policy prohibited foreign residents from engaging in certain industries, aiming to weaken the economic influence of the overseas Chinese, who were allegedly monopolizing between 80% and 90% of the islands' economy.

As for the suppression of communists, there were "roundups" throughout the nation from 1950 to 1953. In particular, during the "Roundup of Overseas Chinese Communists" on December 27, 1952, under the leadership of the former Secretary of Defense Magsaysay, 309 overseas Chinese were arrested in Manila, Cebu, Iloilo, Legazpi, Tabaco, Tarlac, Sambales, and other cities from December 27–31 (Hsiao, 1995: 235). The arrests included the chairman of the Cebu branch of the Chinese Nationalist Party, leaders of anti-communist and anti-Soviet organizations, and wealthy overseas Chinese (The Republic Daily, 1952.12.27), indicating that the roundup was in reality anti-Chinese aggression in the name of anti-communist policies.

The precarious position of the overseas Chinese was brought to an end by mass naturalization in 1975. The mass naturalization allowed almost all overseas Chinese to acquire Philippine citizenship through a simplified procedure.

Six months later, diplomatic relations were established between the Philippines and the People's Republic of China (PRC), while diplomatic relations with the Republic of China (ROC) were severed. While the establishment of diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China may have given momentum to pro-China groups, mass naturalization could be understood as a measure designed to minimize the influence of the People's Republic of China on local Chinese residents. It is important to note that there were not only diplomatic considerations at play, but also the economic development agenda that linked the Chinese immigrants and their descendants, who had been hit hard by economic nationalism in the 1950s and 1960s. To foster newly emerged industrial entrepreneurs who would contribute to the industrialization scheme of the Marcos regime, these Chinese capitalists, now as naturalized Filipino citizens, formed a new political support base for President Marcos.

This series of initiatives toward the domestic Chinese population was ingeniously calculated to have both diplomatic and domestic political benefits. In the Philippines, the nationalism of the 1950s and 1960s sought to create a Filipino nation by excluding overseas Chinese, while the series of agendas of the 1970s created a multi-ethnic nation that included Chinese descendants.

The transition from the Marcos to the Corazon Aquino administration in 1986 provided an opportunity for Chinese descendants to be visible as a part of Philippine citizens. Kaisa para sa Kaunlaran, founded in 1987, argued that national unity was possible only if the cultural differences between the Chinese and Filipinos were appreciated (Ang-See, 1994: 146).[2]

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[2] There were also Chinese residents who participated in the revolution. For example, with the outbreak of the Philippine Revolution in 1896, Jose Ignacio Pawa (劉亨賻) led 3,000 members of the Heaven and Earth Association to join the revolutionary army of Emilio Aguinaldo. According to one source, Pawa's wife in the Philippines, Antonia Hamel, was Aguinardo's cousin, and in 1989 a monument to "Chinese who

The presence of Chinese residents on the front stage of Philippine society has also triggered various negative reactions against them. In the 1980s, there were several anti-Chinese protests, especially in the rice-producing areas of Central Luzon, when the price of rice skyrocketed due to shortages. In the 1990s, there were frequent cases of extortion and commercial kidnapping targeting Chinese residents, but as more and more Chinese descendants became involved in national and local politics, the anti-Chinese sentiment turned informal.

In the 1990s, ethnic Chinese, who are now Philippine citizens, began to host new immigrants from China. Most of the new immigrants in the 1990s, as far as the author knows, came from Fujian, often via Hong Kong, as in the case of traditional immigration (later, immigration from Fujian became more direct). Contrary to the gender distribution of old immigrants that was primarily male, the gender composition of new immigrants is mostly female. In my field research in Jinjiang, Manila and Cebu, I found that there are many young salesclerks from Jinjiang, Fujian Province working as salesclerks in Chinatown shopping centers and looking for entrepreneurial opportunities in the Philippines. In some cases, young female teachers from Jinjiang emigrate to Manila.

The so-called ethnic Chinese who obtained Philippine nationality under the Marcos regime attempted to identify themselves as Philippine citizens by emphasizing the different cultural affiliations between themselves and the new immigrants who came to the Philippines in the 1990s.

The following section will discuss the "privilege of being born and raised in a certain place," which underlies the historical process of inclusion and exclusion, in connection with the ambiguity of the concept of "native."

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participated in the Philippine Revolution" was set up at the Aquinardo Memorial Hall in Kawit by the Philippines Descendants Youth Union (Zhou & Zheng, 1993: 129–145). In the 1990s, the Association began to reevaluate the "the role of Chinese mestizos (mixed-race people) in the Philippine Revolution" (Go & Ang-See, 1987).

III. Cultural Politics of Philippine Identity

The manipulation of nativity is deeply involved in the formation of the Filipino nation and nationalism through the exclusion of "Chinese immigrants." This article will discuss how the notion of "native" has been institutionalized in the history of exclusion and inclusion of the Chinese in the Philippines.

Notably after the Bourbon Reforms of the mid-18th century, Spain, the colonial ruler of the Philippine Islands, made a distinction between Spaniards born on the Iberian Peninsula, Spaniards born in the Americas, and Spaniards born in the Philippine Islands. Spaniards born in the Philippine Islands were considered distant from European civilization, unlike Spaniards born in the Iberian Peninsula. Underlying this distinction is the Enlightenment view of race, which assumes that human beings are influenced by the place of their birth. Colonial powers considered Europeans born in Southeast Asia and the local population to be in a "backward" state, not being exposed to European Christian civilization. These European-centric human classifications provided a basis for colonial powers to justify their rule and enabled them to divide and rule the local population.

This distinction was also applied to the tax categories in the Spanish-ruled Philippines: "Chinese," "Chinese mestizos," and "indios" (Wickberg, 1964: 63). The Bourbon Reforms banned the arrival and residence of non-Catholic Chinese. Although converted Chinese were allowed to come to the islands, there were restrictions on their travel and residence. In contrast, the "Chinese mestizos" born in the Philippine Islands were distinguished from non-Catholic Chinese born in China as civilized Christians and allowed more freedom to live and travel within the islands (Fenner, 1985). As a colonial middle class, they enjoyed the rights to managing real estate, receiving a Spanish-style education, sending their children abroad to study. However, they and the Spanish colonial authorities gradually came into conflict over

economic interests in the Philippine Islands, and by the end of the 19th century a number of Chinese mestizos were involved in the anti-colonial movement and in the Philippine Revolution erupted in 1896.

The nineteenth-century concept of "indigeneity" reversed this European dominance, asserting that the owners of the land should be the natives in that place. The core of the new concentric circles was not the indigenous peoples, who had been in the outermost circle, but the colonial middle class such as Chinese mestizos. The colonial middle class, which had been privileged by colonial rulers and had accumulated cultural and social capital, albeit to a limited extent, maintained its superiority and privilege over indigenous peoples paradoxically due to their own non-indigenous nature.

A fundamental contradiction commonly found in Southeast Asian countries therefore also occurred in the Philippines, namely that the descendants of immigrants became the primary actors in the nationalism. In order to overcome this contradiction, the Chinese mestizos sought to define themselves as native by excluding Chinese newcomers as non-native.

It is the ambivalence of the "descendants of immigrants" that made this manipulation of representation possible. The descendants of immigrants are "native" to a given place in the sense that they were born and raised in that place, but they are not "native" to that place in the sense that they are descendants of someone who was born and raised elsewhere. The former allowed the Chinese descendants to acquire their status as flag-bearers of nationalism.

This type of earlier Chinese integration into the nation can be found at various stages in the history of Chinese immigrants to Southeast Asia. During the dynastic transition from the end of the Song to the Ming, a large number of exiles were said to have headed for Southeast Asia (Fújiànshěng dìfāngzhì biānzuǎn wěiyuánhuì, 1992: 8). Fugitive soldiers from the Yuan expedition to Southeast Asia, for instance, were recruited

by local chiefs as bureaucrats and aristocrats. Descendants of these bureaucrats and aristocrats later ensured their own indigeneity by labeling the newly arrived immigrants as non-natives in the age of nationalism. A similar pattern that the past Chinese immigrants exclude newcomers, after themselves being integrated into the local community, can also be observed in the Philippine history for multiple times.

What are the implications of the symbolic inclusion and exclusion of Chinese immigrants for public opinion about China and for the U.S.-China hegemony struggle? In the next section, we will examine anti-Chinese sentiments in the Philippines today.

IV. Recent Development: The Issue of Newcomers

Through the socio-cultural processes of exclusion and inclusion, the descendants of Chinese immigrants who came to the Philippines in the early years have leveraged anti-Chinese sentiment as a means to define themselves as Philippine citizens. Recently, the anti-Chinese sentiment has been directed not at the ethnic Chinese who acquired Filipino citizenship in 1975, but at the newcomers who immigrated to the Philippines in the 1990s and afterward. The latter, through the representations and discourses on China and Chinese companies, experience a process of exclusion and inclusion similar to that experienced by the ethnic Chinese in the past. Conversely, the relationship between China and the Philippines are manipulated through the exclusion and inclusion of these newcomers. In the following, we will illustrate how the representations and discourses on China and Chinese companies influence the relationship between the Philippines and China socially and culturally.

In addition to the territorial disputes in the island group variously called the Nansha, Kalayaan or Spratly Islands by competing claimants, we find anti-Chinese discourses regarding the National Power Grid scandal, the Fugo Island issue, and the casino issue, among others.

According to field observations by the author's research assistant, a large number of Chinese nationals are already engaged in commercial activities in the Nansha Islands. Such commercial activities create local employment. However, after such activities drew public attention, they became a tool for political disputes among politicians as a national security issue.

The scandal of the National Power Grid Corporation of the Philippines (NGCP) is that the State Grid Corporation of China (SGCC) acquired a 40% stake in NGCP, through the mediation of Henry Sy, Jr., one of the Philippines' leading ethnic Chinese entrepreneurs. China's State Grid Corporation acquired this major stake in 2009, but the issue has only recently been uncovered. Speculation that "the grid was currently 'under the full control' of the Chinese government, which has the 'full capability to disrupt national power systems,'" has heightened anti-Chinese sentiment (Carpio, 2019).

The Fugo island issue is triggered by speculation that the resort development project on the island by a Chinese company must be, in fact, intended to build a Chinese naval base. Since Fugo Island was close to Taiwan and once owned by Tan Yu, an ethnic Chinese and owner of Asia World, the Chinese government was suspected to be involved (Pascual, 2020).

The casino issue is the most significant scandal both for China and the Philippines. When Duterte took office in 2016, in tandem with the One Belt, One Road initiative, he launched the issuance of licenses to Chinese-owned companies including casinos, and the number of such licenses skyrocketed. As a result, many young Chinese entered the country to participate in online casino programming and customer service.

By 2018, more than 300,000 new Chinese immigrants, including engineers and receptionists, had arrived in the Philippines.[3] This influx

[3] With regard to Casino issues, see Morales (2022), Ang-See (2018), and Domingo (2019).

of new immigrants was a result of growing inequality and difficulty in finding employment for the well educated in China, and their hopes of finding a quick fortune in the Philippines.

Online gambling has brought economic benefits to the Philippines, but it has also caused several problems. For China, online casinos have brought about unfavorable outcomes such as an increase in the number of gambling addicts and the trafficking of virtual currencies. In addition, some Chinese technicians and customer service representatives have been brought to the Philippines by agents who deceived them as to the situation, and have been either forced to work in confinement or made to engage in illegal activities rather than the legitimate jobs they were promised. For this reason, the Chinese government has asked the Philippine government not to issue casino licenses. Very recently, the Philippine government decided to shut down 175 online casinos operated by Chinese nationals, in response to the high incidence of various criminal acts by Chinese nationals against Chinese nationals (Strangio, 2022).

The casino issue has uncovered the escalating seriousness of the unemployment of college graduates in China, for which a natural solution is emigration. How Chinese immigrants are defined is crucial not only for the receiving countries, such as the Philippines, but also for China's socio-cultural identity. For China, national identity is culturally defined as the surplus population flows out of the domestic labor market and Chinese emigrants cross the national boarder. It is at this point that we can find a cultural and political interaction between Southeast Asia and China apart from the security and hegemony struggles.

V. Conclusion

This paper has identified the cultural and identity politics of Chinese immigrants in the Philippines. The question asked here is what kind of

interactions have occurred between those who identify someone as "Chinese" and those who are identified as "Chinese" by someone else, with regard to the representations and discourses of the Chinese population that function as part of national identity discourses.

The Philippines always needs a certain amount of externally connected population to revitalize its communal and national identity. The recent influx of new Chinese immigrants to the Philippines, like Filipino immigrants living abroad, is also a part of such a population. However, the borders of the modern nation-state divide the population, which is always incorporating the outside, into foreign immigrants and nationals. The socio-cultural process of the excluding the newcomers and including the old ethnic Chinese may represent a compromise between the modern nation-state system and the traditional assimilation mechanisms.

Interestingly, if we calculate the number of Chinese living in the Philippines divided by the percentage of the Chinese population in the total Philippine population, it does not change much if we consider recent new Chinese immigrants in the calculation. This suggests that the dual process of inclusion and exclusion, which has been suspended for some time due to the progress of national integration of the ethnic Chinese, is now back in function with the influx of new immigrants.

The national identity of the Philippines should be evaluated with reference to this socio-cultural process of exclusion and inclusion of immigrants. This is also the case for the national identities of other Southeast Asia countries that have historically hosted Chinese immigrants, and even more so for China and the United States. The U.S. national identity was culturally and politically shaped by the inclusion and exclusion of immigrants. In contrast, China controls the socio-cultural boundary of ethnic Chinese by defining or not defining Chinese emigrants as Chinese. In the casino problem, China seemingly takes a sensitive approach by encouraging the emigration of unemployed

college graduates, thereby excluding potential frustraters, while maintaining the socio-cultural boundaries by protecting them as "Chinese citizens." Of course, the formation of such an ethnic Chinese boundary is bargained with the socio-cultural processes of exclusion and inclusion of Chinese immigrants in host countries. The hegemonic struggle between China and the U.S. and the responses of Southeast Asia countries to it must be reconceptualized in this context of culture and identity politics.

In view of this, it is clear that the traditional definition of culture in anthropology as a particular tradition of behavior and thought that a person acquires as a member of a community is insufficient to describe the boundary permeability of the Philippine society, where constant communication with the outside can be observed. The heterogeneity introduced into the Philippine society from the outside cannot be articulated in terms of the sharing of traditions by the members of the community. To describe the formation of national identity between strictly defined categories of natives and immigrants based on certain cultural attributes could be seriously misleading with respect to anti-Chinese sentiment and the nature of national identity in Southeast Asia. It is the adherence to this traditional notion of culture that also causes some to jump to incautious conclusions on the question of why Southeast Asia countries are driven to keep a delicate balance between the U.S. and China.

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菲律賓「華人移民」的文化政治：排除與融合的社會文化過程

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摘要

本文旨在指認菲律賓華人移民的文化與認同政治，聚焦於華人作為國族認同論述之部分的再現與論述。透過排除與融合的社會文化過程，早年來至菲律賓的華人移民後代利用了反華情緒，作為定義他們自身成為菲律賓公民的方式。今日反華情緒已非針對 1975 年獲得菲律賓公民身份的華裔，而是 1990 年代及其後移民至菲律賓的新來者。透過中國與華人公司的再現與論述，這些新來者經歷了過去華裔所遇相似的排除與融合。菲律賓與其他東南亞國家、以及美國與中國的國族認同，應參照此排除與融合的社會文化過程來評估。透過此番重思，我們才能對中美間霸權競逐與菲律賓的回應，發展新的文化觀點。

關鍵字：華人移民、菲律賓、排除與融合