Social Anthropological Discourses in Migrant
—The case studies of the Filipinos—

Yasushi Kikuchi[†]

I. Introduction

The study of migration has been and continues to be an important area of innovation of in anthropological theory. Some have argued that the study of migrants was well established by the end of the nineteenth century in the works of Marx, Engels and Weber (Eades 1987). Unfortunately, the fact is that research only looked at the surface and was not significant in the forming the periphery of theoretical developments.

Early studies of migration to urban areas in North America by Wirth and the Chicago sociologists reflected a certain ambivalence about the results of these movements. There is theoretical inconsistency among American anthropologists like Oscar Lewis, Robert Redfield and Wirth. As the economy improved in North America after 1945, other anthropologists began to make more positive evaluations of migrant studies. At the same time, anthropologists turned their attention to the community of migrants who had come to the industrialized West in the 1950s and 1960s to work. Field research was then carried out throughout Europe in places like Germany and Scandinavia where Turkish migrant workers were accepted or encouraged to work. Most field work was more quantitative than qualitative. I researched the case of Filipino migrants in Italy using a qualitative method. This means that the focus of research is based on the acculturation of their indigenous value system. The research I conducted in Italy will be used as a case study.

II. Filipino Indigenous Kinship system

The purpose of this paper is not to analyze labor export policy. I would like to explain my hypothesis on the emergence of expatriates' new family values that are not yet appreciated by Filipino majorities. The question of national identity and how Filipino society is developed and acculturated by the country's labor export policy under the Philippine Labor Code of May 1, 1974 is described. The globalization of Filipino physical movement is typically out migration. During the Marcos regime, export of Filipino labor was encouraged by the government as the country's best strategy for economic growth. While those who had lived abroad as export laborers came back to the Philippines, some of them actually changed their lifestyles into individual oriented families, in contrast to the traditional bilateral extended family system.

[†] Professor, Gaduate School of Asia-Pacific Studies, Waseda University

As it is known, Kroaber states that there is a general absence of political organization or structure in Philippine society. He averred that no unilineal kinship form or corporate group characteristic of unilineal societies exists in the Philippines except Muslim areas. The dwelling areas of both majorities and minorities are decentralized. (Kroaber, 1919: 83)

This assertion, however, can bear refute. For this purpose, the concept of corporate group in cognatic societies (Leach, 1971) can be used to analyze the Filipino type of corporation. E.R. Leach presented this concept of corporation in cognatic societies in his study of the Sinhalese village of Pul Eliya, Sri Lanka, He explicitly stated in a theoretical manner:

But in societies which do not have unilineal descent groups, what kind of "corporation" takes the place of the lineage in providing the nexus of continuity between one generation to the next? It will be found that in the Sinhalese village of Pul Eliya it is locality rather than descent which forms the basis of corporate grouping. (Leach, 1971: 6–7)

Simultaneous with Leach's findings, one discussed a similar phenomenon of the emergence of corporate groups in the Batangan society in Mindoro (Y. Kikuchi, 1971). Murray also wrote in 1973 on the concept of a local kin group similar to a unilineal group in Central Luzon.

In discussing the possibility of the existence of a Filipino type of corporate form, four points were considered: (1) corporative understanding and recognition as reflected in Filipino social behavior, (2) corporative behavior which is based on reciprocal relationships established through the ritual kinship system (*compadrazgo* system), (3) the formation of corporate groups and (4) the emergence of informal political leadership among cultural minorities. These points of analysis are essential in explaining within Leach's conceptual framework the present type of Filipino corporate group.

For generalized Filipino social structure and behavior, Frank Lynch wrote that three basic aims motivate and influence a great deal of Filipino social behavior: social acceptance, economic security and social mobility (Lynch, 1962: 86). Social acceptance refers to the range of personal kin and solidarity within the nuclear family. Every recognized member of the kinship group possessed specific rights and obligations, and owes loyalty to the nuclear family. The worth of an individual is dictated by his social status which is determined by the member of one's followers. Besides being an advantage in the individual's daily activities, a significant number of followers who serve as subordinates, is a demonstration of one's social and political clout within the group.

The Filipino kinship group assumes an ego-centered bilateral form devoid of an established social or political leader to whom all members pay loyalty. This bilateral extended family is based on the consanguineal principle of blood consciousness and characterized by a recognition of relationships on both parental sides. Mutual relationships among members of the same kinship group are maintained even beyond the locality.

This concept of the Filipino kinship system is typified by the human relationships in Philippine majority societies, e.g., the Filipino society. Within these majority societies, specifically among the Tagalogs, the kinship group is an almost perfect institution which provides individual social security. The group also creates social possibilities for the individual in relation to the other kinship groups or societies. In other words, the combined effect of those two types of social behavior (*i.e.*, social acceptance and possibility) allows members to compromise in the maintenance of smooth interpersonal relationships (Lynch, 1970: 10). A member of a group formed on the basis of the consanguineal principle, therefore, must adjust well in dealing with kinsmen, and make psychological investments in view of reaping future social, political, religious and economic benefits.

Such an indigenous cognatic kinship system as mentioned above, I defined as an uncrystallized society that has not yet evolved into an integral body in political life. However, the smallest cell (kin ties) has the potential to occasionally create a corporate organization as an interest group. The members of the group then start to realize that the corporate unit or group can make them more stable financially.

III. Case studies in Italy

Here I would like to show an example of the emergency of the new type of Filipinos who have experienced living abroad especially in Italy and Japan. For the Philippines, what may have seemed, at first, like an imminent restriction of Philippine migrant laborers to Europe following its unification, has in fact turned out to be contrary to their anxieties. Since 1974, under the Marcos administration, the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration has pursued an active policy in encouraging export of contract laborers. As President Marcos stated, "export of labor is the best policy for national economic growth." How national policy contended with national demand shall now be examined in chronological sequence. Surprisingly, the Philippines' greatest labor export destination to Europe is not her former colonial master Spain, but rather Italy (refer to table 1). Labor exports to Italy average about 500 people per month. One reason for this is Italy's vicinity to the Vatican, home of Roman Catholicism. An Italian scholar offers "skin complexion" as another reason besides Roman Catholicism. Comparatively, fair-skinned Filipinos and Italians differ little in skin complexion, which makes it a point in favor to find a job or work there. Furthermore, with Italians, there are none of the psychological disadvantages felt when with Spaniards, the latter being their past colonizer. These and the fact that Italian's labor code makes it relatively easy to obtain working visas make it a popular choice among Filipino immigrant workers. At present, migrant labor policy in the EU is not yet unified, but in the coming years, a more conservative and restrictive policy seems likely. As the EU's future policies may result in the possible restriction of foreign laborers, this could further increase the influx of Filipino migrant workers to Italy.

When we observe Filipino expatriates, our immediate concern is the emergence of new Filipino expatriates who bring home with them foreign values. A drastic change in Filipino family values has been observed since the mid-1980s. As a dominant factor for this, they have learned and experienced the rationality and functionality of the nuclear family and the central role of the individual in social behavior. Expectedly, complica-

tions in dealing with family and relatives arise upon homecoming. Thus, we see weakening signs of the extended cognatic kinship system unique to the Philippines, especially in the metropolitan or industrialized areas. For some of them, such kin-centered values and concepts are superseded by the concept of a nation or society. For many Filipino expatriates, living abroad gives them an opportunity to cultivate patriotism and to evaluate their mother country from an objective perspective. At the same time, socio-economic development will change the social and kinship values because industrialization strongly enhances social mobility which means increasing the numbers in the nuclear family. On the other hand, whether they like or not, socioeconomic activity is globalized dramatically, even domestically.

Among domestic young Filipinos and overseas workers with experiences can gradually observe and feel the changing values through the global communication system. This indicates the depth and motivation of Filipino social behavior, which is quite important to the creation of a national identity as Filipinos, instead of an ego-oriented kin concept. They have become more concerned about their own family than their kin (extended family). What this means is that the scope of kinship consciousness is tending towards being restricted to members of the nuclear family. Expatriates have learned that individual ability is very important in industrial societies for social mobility and they have also experienced, and found enjoyable, liberation from the compelling influence of extended families. In turn, such attitudes will change their kinship and social behaviors, and value system. The scale of identities will then expand to the community and national levels, up from the level of extended families. The Philippine labor export policy is gradually making Filipinos globalized. For certain, such a change in values shall be continued over the next few decades.

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