Journal of Asia Pacific Studies (2018) Volume 4 No 4, 469-491

"F^@king Koreans!": Sexual Relations and Immigration in the Philippines

Sam Pack [1] Kenyon College (Gambier OH, USA)

Abstract: *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 picture postcard beaches, significantly lower cost of living, trademark Philippine hospitality, and proximity, South Koreans are now the top tourists in the country with over a million visitors in 2016 alone. 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*

[1] **Mailing Address:** Kenyon College, Department of Anthropology, 101 Ward Street, Palme House 106, Gambier, OH 43022, USA
Email: pack@kenyon.edu

SAM PACK is an Associate Professor and Chair of the Department of Anthropology at Kenyon College. His research interests address the relationship between media and culture and specifically focus on an anthropological approach to the production and reception of television, film, photographs, and new media. Dr. Pack has authored almost 50 articles published in a wide variety of peer-reviewed journals and edited volumes. He served as a Visiting Professor in the Department of Behavioral Sciences at De La Salle University, Manila in 2013 and 2014 and as a Visiting Professor in the Department of Social Anthropology at the University of Philippines, Baguio in 2016.

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, "F^@king 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)

1. 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 picture postcard beaches, significantly lower cost of living, trademark Philippine hospitality, 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 spirit, 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. In Baguio, there are complaints about illegal business transactions and unethical practices. Some resorts in Boracay have banned Korean tourists because they leave the rooms in shambles after their stay. At least half a dozen country clubs throughout the country have excluded Koreans from obtaining membership because of their obnoxious and boorish behavior. 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. So many Korean migrants and visitors alike are ambivalent or even disdainful of local customs and culture. For instance, they refuse to eat Filipino food, learn the local language, or socialize with their neighbors.

Instead of embracing any of the local culture, Koreans prefer to bring Korea with them. One characteristic feature of both Korean tourists and immigrants in the Philippines is their desire to stick together. Koreans tend 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. All of a sudden, 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, a tenuous relationship exists 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. 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, "f^@king 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 or obtaining household services and government permits, they and their countrymen eschew mixing on a personal level with the locals. 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 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 (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 (Santos, 2017). All of the negative publicity associated with these crimes are 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.

This research project is the logical next step in this ongoing longitudinal research by examining how the current wave of Korean migration to the Philippines is very much the product of globalization and transnationalism. I was curious about the extent to which each mode of social cultural adaptation— integration, assimilation, isolation, and marginality—applied to the Korean context.

My specific objectives were:

1. To gauge attitudes and perceptions about South Korea and Korean immigrants and visitors by Filipinos;
2. To gauge attitude and perceptions about the Philippines and Filipinos by Korean immigrants and visitors;
3. To explore the dynamics of the frequent romantic relationships between Korean men and Filipina women and the progeny that sometimes result (referred to as "Kopinos");
4. To examine the growing backlash against the "Korean invasion";
5. To predict future implications and make corresponding prescriptions for the maturing of Philippine-Korean relations.

2. Methods

Six months of research in the Philippines focused on the sociopolitical 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 (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 a month in Manila, I conducted ethnographic research in other areas of the country with sizable Korean populations such as Angeles City, Baguio, Cebu, Dumaguete, Bacolod, and Iloilo.
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 falls. 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. 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.
In the interests of full disclosure, it should also be pointed out that I am of Korean descent myself and fluent in the Korean language, which is invaluable not only in terms of communication but also cultural understanding. More importantly, because of their provincial nature, Korean immigrants and visitors are much more likely to share their candid feelings with a fellow countryman in their native tongue.

Overall, my research progressed as I had anticipated with one notable and significant exception: 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, are a different breed not only in the way they talk but how they carry themselves. My mother would refer to these people as chon-saram or country bumpkins. It quickly became evident to me that, by and large, the majority of these

Koreans are second-class citizens who, unable to succeed in their own country, immigrated to the Philippines in search of a consolation prize.

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. (In contrast, Filipinos freely and candidly expressed their feelings about Koreans.) In spite of my best efforts, I was not able to overcome these hurdles. Nevertheless, I accumulated a mountain of data during my three months of research in the Philippines. For the past year, I have been analyzing the data by coding all of my field notes and transcribing all of the interviews. Here are my main findings.

3. Results

MIGRATING DOWN

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. The resulting bifurcation between the "haves" and "have-nots," as well as the perceived sense of arrogance and entitlement often exhibited by Korean nationals, are responsible for much of the hostility between the two groups.

The usual migration pattern consists of people moving from poorer places and countries to richer and more developed ones. 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). They are coming to the Philippines to establish or expand their businesses, learn English, enroll 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. 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). The Korean students 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)

(Miralao, 2007). Salary levels in Korea are determined in part by the TOEIC scores of employees.

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. Hence, 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 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 expensive as to if they are in Korea.

Likewise, 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 Min Hee, and 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 a 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 none of the Korean students reported spending most 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

A Japanese, a Korean, and a Filipino were on a plane. All of a sudden, the plane's engine gave up on them.

"We're too heavy!" the Japanese told the other two.
"We have to throw some stuff away!" the Korean yelled.
The Japanese threw away a bunch of gadgets with major brands like Sony, Yamaha, and Nintendo.
"Why did you do that?" the Filipino asked.
"We have a lot of those in Japan," the Japanese replied.
They were still too heavy.
The Korean threw away his possessions with brands like Samsung, Hyundai, and LG.
"Why did you do that?" the Filipino asked.
"We have a lot of those in Korea," the Korean answered.
The plane was still too heavy and was about to crash.
Finally, the Filipino grabbed the Korean and threw him out of the plane.
"WHY DID YOU DO THAT?!?!?" the Japanese asked.
"We have too many of those in the Philippines!" the Filipino replied.

During my time in the Philippines, I have heard this joke (or some variation thereof) at least a dozen times by various Filipinos. Indeed, it is a popular and oft-told joke whose humor masks deeply rooted resentments. Revealingly, these individuals shared this joke with me not after learning that I am Korean but after realizing that I would not be offended by it. The latter was because I expressed empathy with their sentiments of anger and frustration about the rapidly encroaching "Korean invasion" of the Philippines.

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 neighborhoods 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 neighborhoods, university districts, and commercial areas (Gomez 2011). 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 neighborhoods, 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 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 accommodations 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) (1996). 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 area many instances wherein the Filipinos always follow what they think is cool or a lot of people is 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.*

SEX TOURISM

The one area where Koreans and Filipinos commonly do interact is in the form of sexual relationships. Korean men, in particular, are drawn to the Philippines because of easy access to a virtually unlimited supply of young, attractive, and eager women. Very recently, the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) arrested nine South Korean nationals for operating a large-scale sex tourism syndicate in Cebu (Bajenting, 2017). 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, clients pre-selected their Filipina sex partners from photographs posted on the Internet (Yasay et al, 2017). For their part, the Filipinas, all between the ages of 19 and 21, were paid 2000 pesos a day (Kwon, 2017).

Many Filipinas are drawn to Korean men for their reputation as being tall, fair-skinned, clad in colorful 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. As he explains:

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

His goal is help educate them so 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 sympathetic towards the Korean fathers who are often demonized in media depictions as 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:

> *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." 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 heartbreaking 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. 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).

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).

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 de facto 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. Judy Gayas, 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, Judy 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 Judy 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.

4. 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). 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 behaviors are exchanged and mutual familiarity gradually increases.

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 counterflows of people (both of Koreans to the Philippines and Filipino workers to Korea) (Miralao, 2007). 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 Chinese 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.

References:

Appadurai, A. (1996). *Modernity at large: Cultural dimensions of globalization.* Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

Bajenting, J. O. (2017, March 4). Koreans "selling" sex tours in Mactan. *SunStar Cebu*. Retrieved from http://www.sunstar.com.ph/cebu/localnews/2017/03/05/koreans-selling-sex-tours-mactan-529194

Dinnie, K. (2009). Repositioning the Korea brand to a global audience: Challenges, pitfalls, and current strategy. *Korea Economic Institute* 4(9): 1-7.

Diola, C. (2013, October 16). Why Koreans tour and stay in the Philippines. *The Philippine Star*. Retrieved from http://www.philstar.com/travel-and-tourism/2013/10/16/1245934/why-koreans-tour-and-stay-philippines

Ekin, A. (2014, September 16). Most dangerous place to be a Korean? The Philippines. *The Wall Street Journal*. Retrieved from http://blogs.wsj.com/korearealtime/2014/09/16/most-dangerous-place-to-be-a-korean-the-philippines/

Fonbuena, C. (2017, January 22). Murder inside Camp Crame: A tangled tale of crime. *Rappler*. Retrieved from http://www.rappler.com/nation/159140-korean-businessman-murder-pnp-tangled-tale-crime

Gomez, J. (2011). The Korean diaspora in Philippine cities—amalgamation or invasion? *Transcultural Cities,* February 11-13: 49-59.

Kim, S. (2016, March 7). A dangerous place for Koreans. *Korea Joongang Daily*. Retrieved from http://mengnews.joins.com/view.aspx?aId=3015861

Kim, S. (2014, April 10) Philippines turns into death trap for Koreans. *The Korea Times*. Retrieved from http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/nation/2014/04/116_155142.html

Koo, S. (2017, March 7) South Korean men busted and shamed for buying sex in the Philippines. *Korean Expose*. Retrieved from https://koreaexpose.com/south-korean-men-sex-arrest-philippines/

Kwon, S. (2017, March 7). 9 Koreans nabbed on Philippines sex tour. *The Chosun Ilbo*. Retrieved from http://english.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2017/03/07/2017030701584.html

Miralao, V. (2007). Understanding the Korean Diaspora in the Philippines. In *Exploring*
Transnational Communities in the Philippines edited by V. Miralao and L.P.
Makil. Quezon City: Philippine Migration Research Network.

Mylonas, H. (2013). The politics of diaspora management in the republic of Korea. *The Asian Institute for Policy Studies,* 81: 1-12.

Palatino, M. (2014, September 3). Koreans alarmed by rising crime in the Philippines. *The Diplomat*. Retrieved from http://thediplomat.com/2014/09/koreans-alarmed-by-rising-crime-in-the-philippines/

Quismundo, T. (2013, April 20). Koreans keen on investing in the Philippines, says diplomat. *Philippine Daily Inquirer*. Retrieved from http://business.inquirer.net/117749/koreans-keen-on-investing-in-ph-says-diplomat

Santos, V. (2017, January 23). Murder in the cathedral. *Rappler*. Retrieved from http://www.rappler.com/thought-leaders/159201-newspoint-korean-murder-camp-crame

Van den Brock, M. (2010, April 27). Korean invasion in the Philippines. *Business Trends Asia*. Retrieved from http://businesstrendsasia.blogspot.com/2010/04/korean-invasion-in-philippines.html

Waga, B. (2013, December 19). South Korea top PH tourist arrivals this year. *Kicker Daily News*. Retrieved from http://kickerdaily.com/posts/2013/12/south-koreans-ph-top-tourist-arrivals-this-year/

Yasay, D., Pulgo, I., and Mendoza, N. (2017, March 6). Sex tourism: Seven Koreans charged. *Cebu Daily News*. Retrieved from http://cebudailynews.inquirer.net/125164/sex-tourism-seven-koreans-charged

Yi, W. (2014, September 11). Philippines most dangerous for Korean tourists, expats. *The Korea Times*. Retrieved from

http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/nation/2014/09/116_164392.html

Yoon, I. (2006). Understanding the Korean diaspora from comparative perspectives. *Asia Culture Forum*, 1-21.