Emigration, Labor and Capital: the Filipinos and the Japanese in the First Half of the Twentieth Century

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Scope of the Paper

This paper aims to relate two directions of emigration (Filipinos to the United States and Japanese to the Philippines) to the United States economic policy in the Philippines. Majority of the Filipino laborers who emigrated to the United States during the American period took up jobs in agricultural plantations. So did the majority of the Japanese laborers who went to the Philippines. A close look at this phenomenon of outgoing and incoming farm labor may give a clue to United States policies on providing employment, building up the Philippine economy, and population redistribution.

Of the foreigners who went to the Philippines to invest and work, the paper will focus on the Japanese. This is because while the American colonial government sought to stop Chinese entry into the Philippines, it did not do the same to the Japanese. In fact, it was through its initiative that the first large group of Japanese laborers entered the country in 1903.¹

Since the reasons as to why the Filipinos and the Japanese sought employment abroad in the first half of the twentieth century have been adequately delved on in various scholarly works, this paper will not dwell on this topic.² Suffice it to say that emigrants from these two counties sought their fortunes abroad due to the following reasons: There was not enough employment opportunity in their countries of origin; beguiling promises of the recruitment agencies; image that the grass on the other side of the ocean was
greener; and apparent prosperity of relatives, friends, and acquaintances who had gone before them.

Neither will the paper discuss the details of the conditions of and the problems concerning the migrant laborers, for these have also been adequately tackled in various literature. It may suffice to recall the dominant characteristics of these two Asian emigrants. The Filipinos in the United States were concentrated in Hawaii and on the Western coast of mainland United States, especially California. They provided cheap labor. They suffered racial discrimination. They were predominantly men, and tended to be attracted and were attractive to the local women. On the other hand, the Japanese in the Philippines were most numerous in Davao, a province in Southern Philippines. In general, they had a better life than the Filipino emigrants. Since they were considered as skilled workers, they were paid better than the Filipinos – regardless of whether they really had skills. Just like the Filipinos, most of them were men, but very few of them got local wives. A number of them came with capital to invest, and rose to prominence in Philippine society.

The words emigration and immigration have to be defined before any further discussion. At present, these two words usually mean the act of going to a foreign country with the intention of becoming a permanent resident of that country. Therefore, an immigrant is a permanent resident of a foreign country, who may have or have not acquired citizenship of that country.

In the Philippine and Japanese context in the first half of the twentieth century, however, an immigrant was usually one who went to a foreign country to work, but with the intention of going back to his native land. The length of stay abroad varied from
individual to individual, but for most, it was usually from one to ten years. Of course, in the course of time, some of them continued to remain in their host countries.

Background

The sketches in the following paragraphs of the emigrating Filipinos and of foreigners emigrating to the Philippines seem to be an irrational situation. If foreigners were going to the Philippines for greener pasture, why did the Filipinos have to seek their own greener pasture out of the Philippines?

Even before they were called Filipinos, inhabitants of the Philippine Islands had emigrated to different places. It was natural to these people of an archipelago to sail to the neighboring islands in the south and the mainland Asia in the East to fish and trade. They had no notion that by doing this, they were going beyond the bounds of their legitimate territory and were entering a foreign territory.

During the Spanish colonization (1565 to 1898) Filipinos were made to join Spanish expeditions to the islands in the Pacific. Filipinos were used in the colonization of the Marianas in 1669. The galleon trade also brought many Filipino sailors across the Pacific. Some of them jumped ship, and are reported to be the first Filipinos or “Manila men” in California.³

Some of them could have ventured out into the Pacific Ocean not on a galleon, but on a ship belonging to Spain’s rival countries. For instance, there is circumstantial evidence that the first Filipino to reach Alaska came from Zamboanga, on board the Iphigenia Nubiana, a British ship that was forced to seek shelter in Zamboanga instead of Batavia, its usual port of call, to repair a broken mast. After the repairs, the Iphigenia Nubiana sailed from Zamboanga on 22 February 1788 and reached Cook Inlet on 17 June
of the same year. On board this ship was a Filipino, who was identified only by his ethnicity. When the crew went ashore to get fresh water, firewood, and catch salmon, one of them could have been this Filipino from Zamboanga.

A number of sons of elite Filipino families began to go for studies in Europe in the early 1880s. They became the nucleus abroad of the Filipinos’ clamor, initially, for reforms, and finally, for independence from Spain. In the 1890s Filipino revolutionaries could be found in Hong Kong and Japan.

Thus, in the first half of the twentieth century, which closely corresponds to the period of American colonization of the Philippines, a perusal of just one weekly, The Philippines Free Press, would reveal news items about Filipinos abroad. There would be news about the Filipino students and exiles in Japan. There would be an item about how Rizal Day was commemorated by some one hundred Filipinos in the Malay Peninsula. A news item described the Filipino community in Shanghai, and how the Filipino ladies there disliked being called “mango ladies.” Some of these Filipinos were of Chinese descent who had Anglicized their names as McCain for Macain, Johnson for Dionson. Many were musicians, and still others were employees in American firms. There was an account of the “proud” Filipinos in Burma: a general contractor who used to work in the British colonial government, a newspaper mogul, a government scholar, a former member of the Burma Volunteer Corps in World War I, and the oldest Filipino resident of Mergui, located in the Bay of Bengal along the northwestern shore of the Malay Peninsula.

H. Otley Beyer, an active anthropologist in the Philippines during the American period, estimated the number of Filipinos in foreign countries in the late 1920s: 60,000 in China and Hong Kong, 45,000 in Hawaii, Guam and other Pacific Islands, 20,000 in
Indo-China and Siam, 15,000 in Japan and Korea, 12,000 in the Dutch East Indies, 6,000
in the Malay Peninsula, 4,000 in Spain, 3,500 in South America, 1,200 in the Indian
Empire including Ceylon and Burma, 1,000 in England, 500 in France, and 1,800 in other
countries.\(^8\)

As Filipinos sought education and jobs abroad, there was a counter flow of people
of other countries going to the Philippines mostly for business and employment. The total
population of the Philippines in 1938 was 16,000,303. Of these, 166,654, or around 1%
were foreigners. There were 29,057 Japanese, 117,487 Chinese, 8,709 Americans, 4,627
Spaniards, 1,149 Germans, 1,053 citizens of Great Britain, 197, French, 237 Russians,
197 Dutch, and 3,941 citizens of other countries.\(^9\)

In 1938 among the corporations and associations who declared from more than
2,000 to 106,473 hectares of real property for taxation were Americans, Spaniards,
Japanese, Chinese, Swiss, and English. The Germans, Russians, Australians, French,
Italians, and others reported from 7 to 578 hectares.\(^10\)

Among the individuals whose assessed value of real property ranged from more
than 7 million to more than 40 million pesos were the Chinese, Spaniards, Americans,
and Japanese. The assessed value of real property reported by the English, Germans,
Swedes, Syrians, French, Greeks, and Turks ranged from 2,339,350 pesos to 139,330
pesos.\(^11\)

Francis Burton Harrison, Governor General of the Philippines from 1913 to 1921,
observed:

In the Philippines there is no such public sentiment [e.g., contempt for
foreigners, as was present in the United States]. Twenty different Europeans,
Asiatic, or American nations are represented there by their nationals, who mingle
actively in society, and engage in peaceful rivalry in business. … There is much mixture of blood in the Philippines, as there is in America, but that has not brought about among the Filipinos, as it has among our own people, any feeling of race antagonism. … There is no opposition to foreigners as such in the Philippines; whatever anti-national feeling may be observed is traceable to specific grievances or occurrences.¹²

FILIPINO EMIGRATION TO THE UNITED STATES:
BEGINNING AND DEVELOPMENT

The first Filipinos to systematically go to the United States were students and laborers. The status of the Philippines as a colony of the United States gave impetus to this emigration.

The Philippine Commission, the effective government of the Philippines from 1903 to 1912, and composed of Americans and Filipinos, reported in 1903. “It is recognized by the more intelligent persons in the different parts of the archipelago that the quickest way for Filipino youth to acquire the English language and to arrive at an understanding of Western civilization as it exists in America is to live among Americans in the United States and be taught in American schools.”¹³

Acting on this perceived need to give the Filipino youth a Western education, the Commission inaugurated a plan of sending to the United States boys and girls of high school age “for the purpose of enabling them to become teachers, lawyers, doctors, and engineers, on condition that for five years after their return they shall be subject to call by the Government for public service.”¹⁴ One hundred boys were sent in October 1903. Most of them came from the provinces and were selected by the division school superintendent.

Forty were sent in 1904, 38 in 1905. In addition to these students whose education was at the expense of the Insular Government, a few were sent by their parents, or
through scholarship provided by civic-minded organizations and private individuals. These students, both private and *pensionados*, as those on government scholarship were called, were enrolled in the following courses: music, textiles, painting, photo-engraving, architecture, lithography, coast and geodetic survey, domestic science, medicine, law, business, letters, agriculture, teaching, and engineering. In the succeeding years, the Insular Government would grant scholarships to some private students who were already in the United States.

By fiscal year 1912, 211 pensionados had been appointed. In the same year, the University of the Philippines was established, and since Filipinos could get their college education here in most fields, the sending of Filipinos to the United States for undergraduate work was eventually stopped. Professionals were instead sent for further training or graduate work. Parents who could afford it, of course continued to send their children for high school education in the United States.

Between 1920 and 1925, it was estimated that there were 2,000 Filipino students in the United States; 1,500 by 1930. In 1930-31, only 34 out of 905 students received full or partial support from family, friends, or the government. The great majority, about 95%, had to work to pay their way through school. In 1932-33, there were 673 students enrolled in 116 schools in 34 states of the U.S.A. A little less than half of them were in schools in California.

It may be assumed that most of the pensionados went back to the Philippines after completion of their studies, but it is difficult to make the same assumption in the case of those who went on their own. Nevertheless, the total number of Filipino students who went to the United States was not that big as to cause alarm in the United States, or to
adversely affect the intellectual human resource of the Philippines. There was no “brain
drain” in the first half of the twentieth century in the Philippines. “Brain drain” would
begin only in the 1960s.

However, the students who went to the United States, especially those who went
back and assumed high government posts in the Philippines, could have reinforced the
inclination of Filipinos to look up to the United States as the land of justice, equality, and
golden opportunities. These were the images of the United States that had been created by
the American teachers, American-educated Filipino teachers, and textbooks used in the
schools established by the American colonial government.19

Laborers were the other class of Filipinos who emigrated to the United States. The
need for laborers in the sugar cane plantations of Hawaii was the initial impetus to this
emigration.

On 19 June 1901 the United States Secretary of War received a letter from
William Haywood, attorney of the Hawaiian Sugar Planters’ Association (HSPA). The
letter explained that sugar production was the chief industry of Hawaii, and that the
production of 300,000 tons at the time of writing could have been largely increased, were
it not for want of the necessary labor.20

The Secretary of War consulted the Philippine Commission. The Civil Governor
(concurrent president of the Philippine Commission) William Howard Taft wrote to the
Secretary of War that “it is not in accordance with theories which prevail in the United
States that restriction should be placed upon the right of our people to go freely from one
portion of the country to another, and to engage in any lawful occupation in any part of
the country, and this irrespective of the question of whether they go from one section to
another individually or in larger bodies.” Taft added that the Commission was of the opinion that even though there was no oversupply of labor in the Philippines, it would be unwise to enact laws that would restrict the right of the Filipinos to go to Hawaii or elsewhere for the purposes of labor. Furthermore, the difficulties of transporting Filipinos to a place unknown to them were of concern.

The response of Taft unveiled an American dilemma in the Philippines with regards to the matter. The United States had promised to prepare the Filipinos for independence and to establish liberal democracy, which included freedom of movement and the individual’s right to decide on where to live and seek employment. On the other hand, there was a need to keep the labor force in the Philippines for the country’s development. There was indeed lack of skilled labor in the Philippines, but the Philippine Commission was afraid to publicize this fact. In 1904, it reported, “there is no doubt that the iteration and reiteration of the deficiency in the supply of [skilled] labor in the Philippine Islands have had the effect of frightening American investors of capital from coming into the islands.”

How could the Filipino laborers be made to stay in the Philippines without violating their right to move freely in “pursuit of happiness,” to borrow the words of the American Declaration of Independence? How could the conflicting interest of the United States (development of the sugar industry of Hawaii) and the interest of the Philippines (development of its economy) be equally served?

It took the Philippine Commission five years to make a decision. On 23 July 1906, it passed a resolution authorizing the Secretary of Commerce and Police to sign an agreement with the representative of the HSPA for the procurement of Filipino labor. It
also authorized the Governor General to, from time to time, grant permits for ships designated by the HSPA, to land at port or places, for the purpose of taking or returning the laborers. The resolution also mentioned that the laborers should be assured their return to the Philippines upon completion of their contracts, should they desire.23

In other words, the United States colonial government had decided to prioritize the need of the sugar planters in Hawaii. The least it could do for the prospective Filipino emigrants was to take measures to protect them.

On the other hand, the decision could not be criticized in terms of consistency with the principles of liberal democracy. In fact, it was in accord with the desire of organized labor in the Philippines.

An editorial of a pro-labor newspaper expressed approval of sending of Filipino laborers to Hawaii. It cited two advantages that could be gained from this endeavor, namely, the Filipinos could obtain knowledge about advanced agriculture, and the laborers could improve their economic conditions.24 In another editorial, it conceded that the sending of laborers to Hawaii might in the end, be detrimental to Philippine economy, but the laborers could not be stopped from going because it was natural for people to seek improvement of their plight.25

By 1910 the HSPA reported that 2,097 Filipino laborers had been recruited and sent to work in the sugar cane fields of Hawaii.26

Unemployment was particularly acute in densely populated areas, while in some sparsely populated areas, shortage of laborers was experienced. In order to re-distribute the population, Act Number 2254 was approved in March 1913.27 Its objectives were (1) to make a just and proper redistribution of population, (2) to encourage the possession of
small land holdings among the greatest number of people by means of homesteads, and to (3) increase the production of foodstuffs such as rice, corn, and other cereals.

But, the agents of the HSPA in Manila, Cebu, and Iloilo, three of the densely populated places, were aggressive and unscrupulous in recruiting laborers. As a countermeasure, the Director of Labor advised the superintendents of the Bureau of Labor to explain clearly to the Filipino laborers that it was their duty to think twice before going to Hawaii; and that there was a great demand for labor in the Philippines.28

The Director mentioned the agricultural colonies established by the government in 1913. He enjoined the superintendents to “impress upon the minds of these laborers the great advantages offered by the Government, by virtue of Act numbered 2254, and that they do not need to go outside of the Philippine Islands, the fertile agricultural fields of Cotabato and the immense valley of Cagayan-Luzon, where the Government has recently established agricultural colonies, are waiting for laborers to till their soil. . . .29

Evidently, such exhortation did not work. By 1915 the HSPA had sent over 19,000 Filipino laborers to Hawaii.30

In 1915, the Philippine Commission passed Act Number 2486.31 This act imposed an annual tax of P6, 000 upon every person or agency engaged in recruiting laborers in the Philippines for work abroad, in addition to another tax of P500 for every province in which such person or agency operated. The Bureau of Labor was authorized to supervise and intervene in the operation of holders of licenses under the act. Hiring of minors below 15 years was prohibited, and minors below 18 could only be recruited upon the written consent of their parents or guardians. Furthermore, the act authorized the appointment of a commissioner or commissioners for assignment outside the Philippines to look after the
interests of Filipino laborers abroad. Obviously, this was a legalistic response to the
problems faced by the migrant laborers. The HSPA continued to operate, paying taxes to
the provinces of Cebu, Negros Oriental, Ilocos Sur, Ilocos Norte, Romblon, Capiz, La
Union, and Manila. From the time it obtained its license under the act, up to December
31, which was a period of less than a year, it recruited 1,741 laborers.32

Meanwhile, the homestead system became more and more impractical in terms of
trying to stem the outward flow of Filipino labor. In 1918 Act Number 2727 was
passed.33 Through this act, the Bureau of Labor was given the power to supervise inter-
island migration, to recruit home seekers in densely populated provinces, and to help
them settle in provinces sparsely populated, especially Mindanao.

The qualifications for homesteaders were difficult. These were (1) to be between
18 and 50 years old, or head of a family, (2) to possess and bring with him agricultural
implements such as a plow and a spade, (3) to posses an amount of P250 in cash, a
carabao or its equivalent in cash. The last requisite did not apply to graduates of
agricultural schools and was applied liberally to those home seekers who would emigrate
to places where they had relatives, or near any hacienda where they could work part of the
time.34 Very few workers had 250 pesos in cash, nor a carabao.

The procedure of applying was daunting for an ordinary laborer. His good moral
character and experience in farm work had to be attested to by the municipal president or
any counselor. His good health and capacity to work had to be verified by a private or
public physician. The application had to be sworn to before a notary public.35 An ordinary
laborer would be disheartened by such bureaucratic procedure.
A home seeker, together with the members of his family, was to be provided with free transportation from his hometown to his destination including free subsistence and quarters pending the departure of the steamers. This was not attractive enough, for the HSPA also provided free transportation, plus transportation for the return of the worker to his hometown upon completion of the contract. An added incentive for someone who would go abroad was the prospect of being able to come back to his hometown. A homesteader, on the other hand, had to settle permanently in the homestead.

In early 1924 more restrictions were placed on the recruitment of home seekers, namely: 1) To Mindanao, only home seekers from the Visayan Islands could be assigned, and to Mindoro only from Luzon. To Mindanao could go, however, members of families of those already settled there. (2) Circular No. 87 of the Bureau of Public Works restricted the recruitment of home seekers in densely populated provinces where the development of industries, plantations, and sugar centrals was expected to need all available labor supply.

As a result of the first restriction, laborers from the Ilocos region were discouraged from migrating to Mindanao. This partly explains why near to 50% of the Filipinos in the United States came from the Ilocos in the 1920s onwards. This restriction further aggravated the demoralizing effects of the bureaucratic procedure and the unreachable requirements of the homestead system.

The more knowledgeable segment of the Philippine intelligentsia understood better the detrimental impact of the decision to allow the Filipinos to emigrate to Hawaii. They were therefore against it.
While there was a gap between the elite and the lower class’ response to the issue of sending laborers to Hawaii, the two had the same analysis of the problem. Both of them agreed that the root cause of unemployment in the Philippines was inadequate capital. The Philippines had rich natural resources. Mines were waiting to be tapped. Idle lands needed hands to open them up. Factories had to be built to make the Philippines sufficient in basic needs. All these needed labor, but without capital, laborers could not be hired.39

Another factor that complicated the problem was that much of the labor that was available was unskilled. Therefore, even if capital were available, it would be hard to obtain the necessary skilled labor. Or, the employer could hire unskilled laborers and give them on-the-job training. But this would mean a bigger investment in terms of time and money and thus, would further aggravate the problem of lack of capital.

It was not only Hawaii that needed laborers. The salmon industry too was in great need of them. Reports had appeared in the newspapers that laborers in Hawaii were being enticed by unscrupulous recruiters to leave the sugar cane fields and transfer to Alaska. Some reports were about “snatching” of laborers in Hawaii, to be brought to Alaska.

The labor contractors for the vegetable (especially asparagus), fruits and sugar beet plantations on the Pacific coast of the United States too had begun to hire Filipino laborers. A smaller number were hired to do service work in hotels, restaurants, private homes, and building maintenance in the urban areas.

It was estimated that 19,525 Filipinos proceeded to the continental United States from Hawaii during the period 1906 to 1932.40 The flow of laborers from Hawaii to California gradually dropped, and Filipinos began to go direct to the Pacific coast states,
but especially to California. They were also drawn to large urban states like Chicago and New York.

In 1927, the Governor General reported and commented: “more than 18,000 Filipinos left for the United States and insular possession during the year and less than half that number returned. This annual exodus is largely made up of able-bodied ambitious Filipinos who go abroad for the purpose of bettering their economic status. Their emigration is a serious loss to the country and one which can only be prevented by such development in the Philippine Islands as will present equal opportunities for them at home.” The 1928 report estimated the number of Filipinos in the United States to be 100,000. In the state of California alone, the estimate was around 25,000.

In 1930, the Governor General’s report went on like this: “Philippine labor should build up the Philippines rather than other countries. Opportunities must be afforded here so attractive that our labor will stay in the islands where it is badly needed. Here again the lack of economic development is a great handicap. The building of roads into the great agricultural districts of Mindanao, together with the prompt granting of land titles, should attract some of this labor there.” The same observation and recommendation were repeated in 1931 and 1932.

The Great Depression of the 1930s had a grave impact on the laborers in the United States. In view of this, it was understandable that all means, including the tactful plea to the Filipino laborers to go home and help in developing their country, rather than another country, were used. The legal means of suspending the 1930 license of the HSPA was also resorted to, due to the unstable conditions in Hawaii and California.
The elite Philippine mass media were early on of the opinion that Filipino laborers should find employment in the Philippines, and that emigration to the United States should be stopped. The pro-labor mass media were at first in favor of emigration. Since the depression years, however, they began to oppose continuation of emigration to the United States. They also criticized the performance of the Filipino labor commissioner in the United States. Accusations of malpractice by labor contractors, description of the fate of some Filipinos who succumbed to the temptation of alcoholism and gambling, and the dance halls, and complaints about lack or weak government policies to provide employment in the Philippines saw print in the newspapers.

Finally, with the passage of the Tydings Mcduffie Law in 1934, Filipino emigration to the United States was given an annual quota of 50. Through the lobbying done by the sugar planters in Hawaii, Hawaii-bound Filipinos were exempted from this quota, if it would be necessary for the sugar planters to recruit laborers. This exemption obviously served the interest of the sugar plantation owners in Hawaii, as the first decision to allow emigration of Filipino laborers in 1906, did. In 1934, however, the interest of the Filipino emigrant workers would also be satisfied, for the depression and the return of many migrant workers made employment harder to find in the Philippines.

JAPANESE EMIGRATION TO THE PHILIPPINES:
ANSWER TO INADEQUATE SKILLED LABOR AND CAPITAL?

The American colonial government could have provided employment to Filipinos, because it undertook numerous public works projects for the development of the Philippine infrastructure. For these projects, however, skilled labor was needed, and this
could not be found in the country. A solution undertaken by the government was the recruitment of Japanese laborers.

In 1901, the American colonial government started constructing a road – later to be known as the Kennon Road -- that would link Pangasinan to Baguio. It was in this road that the first large group of Japanese workers in the Philippines was introduced.

The American colonial government undertook this road construction primarily to develop Baguio as a summer refuge for American government officials who could not bear the hot summer in Manila. A secondary reason was to exploit the gold mines in the surrounding areas. The project met two difficult problems. One was practically impossible to solve, for it involved the wrong choice of location for the road.45 The road was built on high, vertical canyons with only soft soil for their foundation. Thus, there was, and even at present, frequent landslides. The other problem was solvable. It was about inadequate, or complete lack of skilled laborers.

The lack of skilled laborers would have taken a long time to solve, had the American supervisor of the project been willing to train Filipino workers, or to wait for them to gain expertise on the job. However, the completion of the road had been long overdue, and the American colonial government wanted to see its completion soon. It decided to ask the Japanese government to allow its laborers to go to the Philippines.

The construction of the Kennon Road and the decision of the American colonial government to hire Japanese laborers direct from Japan illustrates one example of the colonial government’s approach to the problem of lack of skills among Filipinos. It was a fast solution. The road was completed. But the Filipino laborers had remained unskilled. Moreover, many of the Japanese who joined the labor force in the Kennon Road
construction were not necessarily better than the Filipinos and the Chinese who had been working on it. Their entry was a violation of the American immigration law, which allowed entry only of skilled laborers.

Speculating that they would be out of job once the Kennon Road was finished, some one hundred fifty laborers moved on to Davao. They were enticed to do so by Ôta Kysaburô. Ôta was a Japanese immigrant who used to supply Japanese foods to the Japanese laborers. He was able to save enough capital to purchase lands in Davao and became the first Japanese to establish what would become one of the biggest abaca plantations in Davao. The following year, upon the opening of the Kennon Road, another hundred and fifty went to Davao. Others went only as far as Manila, and still others opted to settle in the Mountain Province and became the core of Japanese vegetable cultivators in Trinidad Valley. Those who were satisfied with their savings went back to Japan.

The Japanese government did not judge the first experiment of sending a large group of laborers to the Philippines as successful. It did not encourage continuation of Japanese emigration to the Philippines. As a result, in the decade following the completion of the Kennon Road, very few Japanese entered the Philippines. However, after a few years of a dwindling number of Japanese emigrants to the Philippines, the numbers gradually became bigger. From the 1920s on, except for certain years, the number of Japanese emigrants to the Philippines was consistently on the rise.

This was because the Japanese government gradually relaxed its policy of discouraging emigration to the Philippines. Several factors could explain the change in policy. First, was the growing anti-Japanese sentiment in California. Second, was the Gentlemen’s Agreement of 1907, by which Japan agreed to a self-imposed restriction on
Japanese emigration to the United States. Third, was the United States Immigration Law of 1924, which practically banned the Japanese, except the relatives of those who were already immigrants in the United States, from emigrating to the United States. The crash of the stock market, followed by a worldwide depression was another factor. Moreover, in the 1930s, even Brazil and Australia imposed quotas on the Japanese who could enter these countries.

Faced with the difficulties of sending emigrants to the traditional places, such as Hawaii, the mainland United States, Brazil, and Peru, the Japanese government had to look for alternative destinations. To those who knew, the Philippines was a good alternative for several reasons. It was geographically close to Japan. Filipinos were Asian, and therefore, did not practice racial discrimination against the Japanese. Moreover, the American government officials and residents in the Philippines were hospitable to the Japanese. Another attraction was the small number of Chinese in the Philippines, as compared to the numbers in British Malaya and the Dutch East Indies. Because of this small number, the Japanese faced a minimum of business competition.

The United States did not enforce in the Philippines the Gentlemen’s Agreement of 1907 and the Immigration Law of 1924. It could be surmised that this was done for the interest of preserving what was left of the good relationship between the United States and Japan. Allowing the Japanese to continue emigrating to the Philippines could help salve the wound inflicted by the exclusion of the Japanese from the privilege of entering the United States. Stopping Japanese emigration to the United States, as well as to the Philippines, would have been too much of an insult for the Japanese to take.
With the Japanese government’s encouragement and the United States’ leniency, more and more Japanese emigrated to the Philippines. In 1910, there were around two thousand Japanese in the Philippines, most of whom were, in descending order, in Manila, Davao, and the Mountain Province.\(^{49}\) In Manila, most of the Japanese males were carpenters and fishermen, while most of the females were prostitutes. Majority of the Japanese in Davao and the Mountain Province, were farmhands. In 1924, there were approximately 6,800 Japanese in the Philippines. By this time, there were more Japanese in Davao (2,690) than in Manila (2,201).\(^{50}\) In 1939, there were around 29,000 Japanese, 17,888 of whom were in Davao, 4,730 in Manila, and 1,188 in the Mountain Province.\(^{51}\)

Unlike the majority of Filipinos in the United States who remained lowly stoop laborers and domestic help, many Japanese in the Philippines became prosperous landowners, entrepreneurs, and managers. While almost all Filipinos who went to the United States were laborers, many of the Japanese were investors of varied capacities. The Japanese established manufacturing industries, such as shoemaking, beer brewery, bottle and glassmaking.\(^{52}\) They had a monopoly of the fishing and canning industry. They also engaged in mining and lumbering.

Japanese prosperity and involvement in the Philippine economy were most visible in Davao. In this province, the Japanese had several abaca plantations, and did control the manufacture and export of Manila hemp.\(^{53}\) They owned lands, and employed Japanese and Filipinos.

In 1934, it was estimated that the realty holdings of the Japanese in Davao was 38,774.0366 hectares. Japanese percentage of participation in Davao industries which could be considered as considerable, were as follows: farming (25%), fishing (60%),
hemp stripping (40%), tajore making (60%), soft drinks (100%), odong manufacturing (60%), lumbering (60%), black smith (67%), carpentry (75%), furniture and cabinet making (70%), tin smith (60%), photography studios (50%), refreshment parlors (80%), ice plants (50%), sawmills (100%), firewood industry (50%), and bicycle repair shops,(74%).

It could be surmised that Japanese emigration to the Philippines partly alleviated the problems of scarcity of labor and capital in the Philippines. As to whether this contributed to the long-term development of the Philippine economy was another question.

The amount of Japanese investments in the Philippines was small, compared to that of Spain, its former colonizer, to that of the United States, its current colonizer, and to that of the Chinese, the biggest Oriental population in the Philippines. But it was not the amount that alarmed the Filipino leaders and the Americans. It was the rapid increase of Japanese population, and growth of Japanese investments that caused alarm. Considering that the Spaniards were here earlier, that the Americans had been here since 1898 and were the current colonizers, and that the Chinese had been here in big number since the Spanish period, their investments were small. On the other hand, the seemingly small amount of Japanese investment was actually big, if it would be taken into account that they had started investing in the Philippines only in the 1920s.

Several laws were passed by the Philippine Government to check Japanese emigration and participation in the Philippine economy. These laws did not immediately achieve the intended result, but the Second World War broke out, and did the job in a
quicker, although violent way. After the end of the war, all the Japanese citizens were repatriated to Japan, their property confiscated.

OBSERVATIONS AND CONCLUSION

As a result of its geography and history, Filipinos have had the long tradition of emigration. This was reinforced by the American liberal democratic tradition, which respected the individual’s rights, such as the right to reside and seek employment anywhere he wished to. Furthermore, majority of the emigrant Filipinos had wished to reside in the United States because of the image produced by the American educational system that the United States was the land of gold.

The American colonial government in the Philippines pursued inconsistent economic policies. It was hesitant to allow Filipino emigration to the United States, but did not have the political will to stop it. Several reasons could account for this. First, it was not that easy to sacrifice the interest of the sugar planters in Hawaii, for the sake of safeguarding the interest of the Filipino laborers. Second, prohibiting Filipino emigration would be pursuing a policy inconsistent with the liberal democratic belief in the freedom of the people to choose where to live and work. Unable to stop the exodus to the United States, the American colonial government undertook measures to protect the rights and welfare of the laborers in the United States. Contributing to the betterment of labor conditions abroad, this could have added to the attraction of emigration.

The homestead system was introduced in order to redistribute population, and indirectly, solve the problem of unemployment in densely populated areas. To avail of the opportunities offered by the system, however, an applicant should have some amount of
cash and agricultural skill. These were not required of those who emigrated to the United States.

In order to form a body of skilled workers, the pensionado system was established, but this produced only workers for the offices and schools. Furthermore, the sight of the successful returnees only created among the Filipinos who could afford it, the ambition to seek higher education in the United States.

There was no lack of hands (still to be trained, it must be conceded), in the Philippines, but the Americans allowed Japanese laborers to enter. It has been hypothesized above that by doing so, the United States used the Philippines to appease the Japanese, who were greatly incensed by the Immigration Law of 1924. On the other hand, allowing the Japanese to do the work that the Filipinos, if trained, could have done, took away the urgency of improving the skills of the Filipino laborers.

In order to create opportunities for employment, industries should have been developed. Capital was needed. Very few Americans, however, invested, for they feared about the future of their money, once the Philippines became independent. The Japanese supplied part of the much needed capital, but the Japanese entrepreneurs tended to employ their fellow Japanese.

The Filipino and Japanese experiences of emigration in the first half of the twentieth century have shown a number of realities which may serve as reminders to present day leaders.

First, only a sovereign country can effectively work for the interest of its citizens. This has been seen in the capability of the Japanese government, unhampered by any sovereign power above it, to manage the emigration of its citizens. Corollary to this, a
colonial power like the United States had to balance the interest of its colony with its own interest, and more often than not, the former suffered.

On the other hand, control and management of emigration is not a simple matter of exercising sovereignty over citizens. Ideology also plays a role. Thus, it has been established that it was not easy for the United States to stop Filipino emigration, for doing so would be contrary to the democratic ideology.

Thirdly, as long as the rights of the individuals to a better life are respected, and as long as these individuals could not find the satisfaction of these rights in their own countries, these individuals would seek a better life in other countries. In conjunction to this, there would always be a place where those who feel disadvantaged could emigrate, for as long as there is inequality of development among states. The solution, therefore, is not to curtail the right to a better life and to the freedom of movement, but to decrease the economic inequalities among states.

Fourth, protecting the rights of the migrant laborers, when the reasons for their emigration could not be rooted out, is better than curtailing their freedom of movement and causing them to suffer more in their homeland.

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1 See Hayase Shinzô, *Benguet imin no kyozô to jitsuzô* [Images and Realities of the Japanese Migrant Workers in Benguet], (Tokyo: Dôbunkan, 1989).


5 “Penang Filipinos Honor Memory of Rizal,” Philippines Free Press, 14 February 1920: 2; 4. Jose Rizal was a Filipino executed by the Spaniards for his liberal and nationalistic ideas, and was honored by the Filipinos as their national hero during the American period.


10 Census of the Philippines, 1939 (Manila: Bureau of Printing, 1941), pp. 52-53.

11 Ibid.


14 RPC, 1903, Part 1, p. 60; RPC, 1911, p. 167. This was Act 854, passed on 23 August 1903, and amended by Acts Nos. 1133 and 1774.


16 RPC, 1912, p. 230.


18 Ibid.

William Haywood to the Secretary of War, 19 June 1901. United States National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 350, Box 316, hereinafter, NARA, followed by record group (abbreviated as RG) and box numbers.

William Howard Taft to the Secretary of War, 17 October 1901. NARA, RG 350, Box 316.

RPC, 1903, Part 1, p. 56. I inserted “skilled” because this was what was really meant by the report.


*Katwiran*, 12 April 1910; 14 March 1910.

RPC, 1911, p. 128.


Circular No. 31, August 4, 1914, in RG 350, Box 457.

Ibid.

RPC, 1915, p. 175.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid., p. 74.

Ibid., p. 73.

Ibid.


This could be gleaned by an editorial in *La Vanguardia*, a newspaper representing the Filipino elite, which was critical of the decision. *Katwiran* criticized this editorial as anti-labor. *Katwiran*, 9 March 1910.


Leo S. Paz, p. 5.


44 Philippine Magazine, April 1930: 685.


47 Ibid.


51 Census of the Philippines, 1939, passim.


53 See Grant K. Goodman, Davao: A Case Study in Japanese-Philippine Relations, and Lydia N. Yu-Jose, Japan views the Philippines, passim.