

IMAGES OF THE CHINESE IN THE PHILIPPINES*

Teresita Ang See

Introduction

When we formed the Philippine Association for Chinese Studies (PACS) in 1987, we stated that one of our objectives is to do research and studies that would, hopefully, have an impact on a greater number of people, and most importantly, on policymakers and opinionmakers. The paper I delivered on “The Chinese in the Philippines: Assets or Liabilities,” in 1989 at a conference jointly sponsored by PACS and De La Salle China Studies Program, had a positive impact on our immigration policy. Articles written by some of our PACS members (those published in the daily newspapers, especially) also had an impact on opinionmakers.

The choice of topic “Images of the Chinese in the Philippines” was prompted by an incident recounted to us by Dr. Bernardita Churchill during a PACS meeting. This was about the *Radio*

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Veritas program on Filipino-American relations in July 1989. In a discussion on the adverse effect of multinational companies, a young moderator quipped, “The adverse effect of multinational companies is small compared to the damage done if the Chinese were to gain control of our economy.”

No less than Teodoro Locsin, former presidential spokesman and now publisher of *Daily Globe*, in his column dated October 22, 1989, said:

If you want brilliant management, go to the Chinese; if you want solid investments, go to the Chinese because they have real money, unlike fake Filipino entrepreneurs who can invest only what the government lends them. If you want charity, go to the Chinese. Look at our metropolitan police forces – most of their spanking new patrol cars are gifts of the Chinese community. If you are a public official and want someone to shake down, go to Chinese. And if you are an AFP officer and want to get the matter of your retirement fixed with a good kidnapping before committing yourself fully to the national defense, turn to “C” in the telephone directory, for Chen, Cheng, and Chung.¹

This column of Locsin is a slanted tongue-in-cheek commentary. It represents a typical view of the Chinese as rich business people, docile milking cows, and convenient scapegoats. Aside from the comment in the *Radio Veritas* program that “the Chinese control the Philippine economy,” there are often accusations that the Chinese are price manipulators and hoarders, especially whenever a crisis such as rice or flour shortage occurs. These comments are prevalent; politicians, media practitioners, and consumers make them.

Economic Nature of Prejudices

Many social distance surveys² and studies on ethnic prejudices have been conducted in the past. Although they differ in measurements, they still have a common finding: the

Chinese, like the Muslims in southern Philippines, lie low on the social distance scale. In studies using semantic differences, both Weightman and Berreman³ came up with these adjectives: the Chinese are business-minded, good in mathematics, rich, industrious, thrifty, dynamic, and persevering.

As analysis of both the positive and negative images of the Chinese leads to one conclusion: all the traits mentioned are economic in nature. They reflect the supposed “business success” of the Chinese. In fact, they intensify the myth that all Chinese are business people – or some say it more bluntly – the Chinese are all “economic animals.” But let us examine the facts first – how true is this belief? Are the Chinese all in business and are they all good in business? Are all Chinese rich and successful? Why are the Chinese predominantly in business? How did the myth of Chinese control come about in the first place?

Allow me to cite some little-known facts to refute this myth that all Chinese are rich:

- Out of the reportedly close to 80,000 Filipino workers in Taiwan, 60 percent are of Chinese descent. The young Chinese Filipinos, like many other overseas Filipino workers, go abroad too in search of greener pastures. Many of them, in fact, are factory workers like their Filipino brothers.
- In one of the more prominent Chinese high schools in Metro Manila, Grace Christian High School, a young boy of 15 committed suicide because of poverty. The father was bedridden, and his mother eked out a living in the buy-and-sell business. The boy did not have money to pay his tuition for the second semester; he did not have money for his *parol* project in Practical Arts; he did not have money for school supplies; and often, he went hungry because he was ashamed to take out his *baon* of rice and fish in front of his classmates.
- The same thing happened to a 60-year-old Chinese

who hanged himself upon losing his job and being told by his landlord that the apartment he was staying in had been sold and he had to move. If he had been 65 years old or more, he would have qualified to live in the old folks' home located, of all places, inside the Chinese cemetery. An old folks' home for women is located in Malinta, Bulacan.

- There are Chinese who live in informal settlements illegally like their poor Filipino brothers. In Chinatown, there are many ladies of the night who are of Chinese descent, forced into the oldest profession, again, because of economic circumstances.

As to the supposed Chinese successes in business, consider this example. There used to be seven indigenous soft drink companies in the 1950s, all owned by Chinese Filipinos. None of them could compete with the giants like Coca-Cola and Pepsi-Cola, so one by one, they were forced out of business. The last surviving Filipino soft drink company, Cosmos, owned by the Wong family, finally had to sell out to the Concepcions just last August. Are all Chinese then successful in business? For every success story, there is also a failure which seldom gets reported because of loss of face.

Although extremely poor Chinese are really exceptions, we cannot deny the fact that there, indeed, are poor Chinese who must scrounge for daily meals. The poor Chinese are seldom heard of because, in most circumstances, they have already assimilated into Philippine society and often, their Filipino neighbors are not even aware of the family being Chinese. Others, on the other hand, have means to seek assistance from the Chinese community. The old folks' home, for instance, is managed by the Philippine Chinese Charitable Association. Many groups provide scholarships for the indigent children, and there are also free clinics where both Filipinos and Chinese can go to for free consultations and medicine.

Concentration in Business

Most of the early Chinese who went overseas to the United States, Europe, and other parts of Southeast Asia ended up as service workers (laundrymen, tailors, barbers), laborers, or agricultural workers and miners. But most of the Chinese who came to the Philippines went into business for many reasons that could fill up the pages of another lecture. Among the simpler but important reasons include:

1. The Philippine economy was still in its natural subsistence stage when the Chinese came. So, the Chinese conveniently filled the vacuum left by the Spaniards, who considered being merchants too lowly an occupation, and by the inhabitants who were still subsistence farmers at that time. As middlemen and traders, the Chinese served as the backbone of the Spanish colonial economy by providing the basic needs of the people. Had the Chinese come a few hundred years later, for instance, when the Philippine economy was in a more advanced stage of development, it would be highly doubtful that many of them would be in business.
2. As immigrants whose stay was meant to be temporary only, the Chinese were after quick returns so they could go back home sooner. Agricultural production requiring a much longer gestation period was not an option for them.
3. No Chinese could own land even during the Spanish times, hence they could not go into agriculture, unlike in other parts of Southeast Asia like the mines and plantations in Malaysia and Indonesia, which absorbed a number of Chinese immigrants.
4. The US applied the California Exclusion Act to the Philippines, allowing the entry only of Chinese merchants and their immediate families into the

country. This intensified the structure of the local Chinese as a predominantly merchant community.

5. Lack of citizenship barred the Chinese from the practice of professions, forcing most of them to flock into business.

On the other hand, back home in China, especially within the feudal rural area where most Chinese come from, the Chinese never had the opportunity to become business people, no matter how thrifty and industrious they were. This proves in another way that the Chinese are not “economic animals” by nature.

In short, the role of the Chinese in the Philippines predominantly in business was created more by historical and social forces rather than by personal choices. The so-called business ability of the Chinese is something acquired by demands of the Philippine environment and not something inherent in the Chinese make-up.

Myth of Economic Control

The myth of Chinese control of the economy came about as a result of a combination of circumstances. The Chinese business people are very visible because they are predominantly in the frontline trading business – they buy and they sell. Because of historical circumstances, trading was the only means of livelihood open to them during colonial times. Let us examine other facts to refute or explain this myth of Chinese control.

1. There are no Chinese in strategic industries such as fuel and power generation. Multinational companies own the fuel companies and fuel price increases affect prices of all other commodities. The same is true with the power company. If power shuts down, all businesses grind to a halt. This is what we can call “control.”

2. There are no Chinese in another vital industry – mass

transportation like jeepneys and buses. Mass transportation strikes can paralyze the whole country's economy. It is only lately, because of the acute shortage of mass transport vehicles, that some Chinese have entered into joint ventures with foreign companies to provide the additional buses plying our streets. Many traders and dealers of spare parts, however, are Chinese.

3. The Chinese are successful in such light industries as textile, winery, cigar and cigarettes, and such businesses as hardware, lumber, and flour trading because they are pioneers in these fields. Many used to be traders who were forced to go into manufacturing of the lines of products they used to sell because of the passage of the retail trade nationalization law barring them from retail trading.

4. The high-profile business magnates like the late Henry Sy, John Gokongwei, and the Gaisanos are all in the fast turn-over department store businesses. They need the publicity to boost their sales. They intensify the myth that all the Chinese are rich, successful business people. The rest of the Chinese are quietly doing their share in spurring this country to be the next newly industrializing country of Asia.

5. Chinese business people are not a unified homogenous group. Cut-throat competition among them is even keener than between them and the Filipinos, hence it is impossible for the Chinese to form a cartel to dominate, much less control, the economy.

These few facts hopefully can help people see the Chinese image more clearly. However, we cannot deny that the economic image of the Chinese exists and that it is the more persistent image that enters the Filipino consciousness.

The Social Image

The social image of the Chinese in the Philippines, like the

economic image, veers towards the negative side. Many of the early surveys showed that the Chinese are considered “unassimilable,” clannish, they refuse to marry Filipinos, they are a dirty and noisy people, and other similar negative impressions. The image of the Chinese as *Intsik beho* or *Intsik Tsekwa* is still the typical image we find in Philippine literature.⁴ The myth that “once a Chinese, always a Chinese,” is, unfortunately, still a prevalent one. Gregorio F. Zaide, in his *Political and Cultural History of the Philippines*, summed up the prevalent anti-Chinese sentiments this way: “The Chinese were obnoxious because they were economically dominant, strange because they were culturally alien, repulsive because they were culturally clannish, and disloyal because they were politically unreliable.”⁵

But social realities do not fit this image. Rapid changes occurred, especially among the young local-born Chinese. The accusations of “unassimilability” can easily be refuted if you looked at the present crop of Chinese-Filipino students in your universities. The socio-cultural changes that happened to them since World War II are very visible and far-reaching.

Political scientist Dr. Gerald McBeath, in his study on the “Political Integration of the Chinese in the Philippines” way back in 1969, pointed out some indicators of the socio-cultural change among the Chinese youth. Last April, I conducted a rough survey of 381 Chinese students distributed among seven schools. It is not as scientific as what McBeath did, but nevertheless, the findings showed how much changes have occurred 20 years after his 1969 study. Let me go through a few of these indicators:

Language. Language is the strongest link to one’s sinicity or Chinese heritage. It is an unfortunate reality that many young Chinese have lost the facility to speak, much less to read and write, in Chinese.

McBeath's survey of 2,490 students showed:⁶

Fluent in Mandarin	32.9%
Fluent in English	37.7%
Fluent in Filipino	59.6%

My survey showed:⁷

Fluent in Mandarin	24.40%
Fluent in English	68.24%
Fluent in Filipino	85.30%
Fluent in Hokkien	47.50%

As to the language spoken at home, McBeath's 1969 findings showed 36.9 percent speak a mixture of Chinese and Philippine language while 44.4 percent speak Chinese only at home.

My findings showed 10.5 percent, compared to McBeath's 44 percent, speak only Chinese at home; 77.94 percent speak a mixture; and 11.29 percent speak only English and Tagalog.

Actually, even if the present local-born Chinese can speak in Chinese, it is an adulterated kind of Chinese mixed with Filipino prefixes and suffixes and using Filipino syntax, spoken in Filipino accents which easily distinguishes them as Philippine Chinese.

Reading preferences. My findings showed that 1.57 percent read Chinese newspapers only (they must be among the new immigrants) while 66.67 percent read English and Tagalog papers only. Only 31.76 percent read both Chinese and English papers. I said "only" because some of the Chinese high schools have a once-a-week Chinese newspaper reading subject.

Intermarriage. My figures on intermarriage are equally interesting. Students were asked what their parents' reaction to intermarriage would be. Nine percent said their parents will be favorable, 45 percent said parents will be unfavorable, and the remaining parents will either be unconcerned (they do not care one way or another) or have reservations. When asked about

their own possibility of contracting interracial marriages, 12 percent said yes, 26 percent said no, and a high of 60 percent said maybe.

Religion. My survey showed that a high of 78 percent of the respondents are Christians. It is interesting to note that even for the old Chinese who practice Buddhism, Taoism, or folk traditions, Christianity is also accepted, and the more prevalent religion is actually a syncretic combination of Catholic, Buddhist or Taoist, and folk traditions.

Food choices. Mcbeath, in 1969, said that “the Philippine Chinese share in large part the diet of the Filipinos, especially since most families would have Filipino maids who do the cooking. Unless the Chinese wife cooks Chinese dishes, the Chinese restaurants is now the sole repository of this part of Chinese culture, and the family is raised largely on Filipino dishes.”⁸

This observation is even more applicable now. Even in the so-called Chinatown area, the traditional Chinese bakeshops churning out *hopia* and rice cakes have given away to refrigerator cakes, chiffon cakes, and the like. Within a one-kilometer radius from the heart of Chinatown, one can count at least six hamburger and fast-food chains. The young ones prefer hamburger and Coke to *siopao* and Chinese tea.

The use of chopsticks has also vanished even in Chinese restaurants. Chinese restaurants used to place chopsticks on the table, and one would request spoons and forks if necessary. Now, it is the other way around because even most Chinese would find the use of chopsticks cumbersome. In manners of dressing and the observance of traditions, the Chinese are indistinguishable from their Filipino peers. In life rituals such as birth, marriage, and death, the Filipino customs prevail. For instance, several years ago, to avoid traffic congestion

on November 1 (All Souls' Day), the Chinese leaders tried to encourage the Chinese to visit their dead on the traditional Chinese Qingming Festival (Festival of the Dead), which falls in March or April, but the Chinese still persisted in visiting the cemetery on November 1 like they were used to.

Socio-Cultural Integration

Another indicator of socio-cultural integration is seen in the fact that more and more young Chinese have native Filipinos as their close personal friends. Likewise, more and more of them are joining Filipino civic organizations like jaycees, rotary clubs, lions clubs instead of joining purely Chinese organizations concerned only with narrow interests of the Chinese community. Professional organizations nowadays are also teeming with active Chinese members and officers. Among them are the Writers Association of the Philippines, Philippine Medical Society, university student councils, Filipino business people's groups, and others.

In fact, quite a number of young Chinese Filipinos have successfully integrated themselves with the Filipino social milieu. Since many of their close personal friends are Filipinos, they would tend to dismiss or ignore the existence of a "Chinese problem" or perhaps, they are no longer aware of the possibility of any strains in relations between Filipinos and Chinese.

Moreover, since 1975, when easy access to citizenship was provided through a decree of former President Ferdinand Marcos, many young Chinese became Filipino citizens, and more and more of them are moving out of the traditional business fields and going into the professions. Without citizenship, they could not practice the professions, so most of them flocked to business courses. Now, scanning through the roster of professional board examination topnotchers, we see

many single syllable surnames. Young Chinese are shining in new fields in the arts and sciences: law, literature, journalism, art, music, mass communications, Philippine studies, and social work. These courses and/or careers are chosen only by people who have wholeheartedly accepted their being Filipino and the fact that their lives will be lived in the Philippines. One will not choose to take up social work, for instance, or mass communications, if one does not have a sense of belonging to Philippine society.

With these changing realities, the image of the Chinese also changes accordingly. While there has been a lot of negative publicity about the Chinese, increasingly there have also been a number of positive commentaries. Willie Esposito, now the imprimatur of television Channel 9, once wrote a story in *Philippine Star*, "It's time we loved our Chinese."⁹ *Manila Chronicle's* editor-in-chief on leave, Amando Doronila, wrote a guest column for the Chinese-Filipino digest *Tulay*, "The Chinese in and around us."¹⁰ He admitted to me that he used to be very anti-Chinese before, but now that he has met more Chinese, he knows better. The *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, in its editorial during Chinese New Year last February, greeted the Chinese "Kung Si Fat Choi" but considered the Chinese as Filipinos, a cultural minority that is an integral part of Philippine society.¹¹

In consonance with these changes, even the image of the Filipinos in the minds of the Chinese also changed. Among the older generation Chinese, most of the personal contacts they have with Filipinos are with their workers, employees, maids at home, corrupt policemen and firemen, Bureau of Internal Revenue and city hall inspectors who harass them regularly, and politicians who befriend or lambast them depending on personal convenience and purpose. Hence, the image of the Filipino in their consciousness is also negative. Now, with the younger generation Chinese having personal Filipino friends in school, at work, and their neighborhood, a deeper and more

intimate relationship is formed which gives rise to a generally positive image of the Filipinos in their minds.

Image Consciousness

Should the Chinese be concerned about their image? Should they be bothered by the fact that the prevalent image of the Chinese in the Philippines is still a negative one? In Rodolfo Bulatao's 1973 study on ethnic prejudices against Muslims and Chinese in five Philippine cities, the findings from 2,000 respondents interviewed showed that only six percent think that the integration of the Chinese should be given high priority while 54 percent said it should be given no priority at all.¹² This led Bulatao to suggest that:

Many ethnic cleavages may indeed be of less urgency in modern and modernizing societies. Still nonrational elements in ethnic identities have a such a capacity for creating trouble and dissension and for upsetting the stability of societies that it would appear shortsighted to assign them to a category of transitional phenomena.¹³

This warning, especially on the unwitting or deliberate mobilization of latent hostilities, cannot be ignored and there have been increasing signs that the ethnic Chinese can be utilized to divert attention on more pressing national issues as what had happened countless times in the past.

Three years ago, on July 5, 1986, a day after American Independence Day, the usual anti-American, anti-bases rally was held. But at the same time, an anti-Chinese mass rally was also held in Angeles City, Pampanga, where the biggest American military base was located. They were protesting against pressing economic issues: shortage of lumber, high cost of basic commodities, and other similar problems. And, of course, they found the Chinese convenient scapegoats and

put the blame on them. They distributed handbills and pasted protest posters all over the city, stating that instead of driving the Americans out, the Chinese should be the ones driven away because of the high cost of goods they sold. What was intriguing was the fact that all the posters and handbills were printed on good quality paper, not mimeographed (as was the usual practice). The huge streamers they hung on the streets were also very professionally executed. The association which spearheaded the rally was such a small association of furniture makers and the instigator was actually someone who could not buy lumber for his furniture-making business because he had outstanding accounts with just about everybody around. You may call us paranoid, but we later found out that the leaders were in Hawaii a few months after the rally.

This incident, together with escalating undercurrents of ethnic tensions, shows an urgency to have something done. Ethnic tensions exist mainly because the Chinese are considered a separate people, they are not integrated, and they are apart from the mainstream. These apparently deep-seated anti-Chinese prejudices existed since colonial times. In fact, they sprouted largely because of our colonial experiences.

Spanish Anti-Chinese Prejudices

In the more than a thousand years before Spanish rule that the Chinese were trading with native Filipinos, there were no accounts of racial conflicts. However, during the first 200 years of Spanish rule in the Philippines, “sullen suspicious and mutual hostility characterized Sino-Spanish relations, exploding periodically into the bloody massacres and mass expulsions.” Such massacres took place in 1603, 1639, 1662, 1762, and 1820.¹⁴ John Crawford observed that the lot of the Chinese under the Spanish colonial government was much worse than

the Chinese in the Dutch East Indies and the restrictions and disabilities placed on them were unknown in the colonial possessions of other European nations.¹⁵

Measures were adopted which placed them at a heavy disadvantage compared with the Spaniards and *Indios*. Ordinances were promulgated, which made trading extremely difficult, subjected them to extortionate taxation, limited their freedom of travel and their place of residence, denied them fair a trial as those granted to Europeans, and closed certain occupations to them.¹⁶ The underlying motives were predominantly economic in nature: jealousy and fear of competition in commercial fields.¹⁷ Aside from economic motives, early Catholic priests, in their eagerness to convert the people to their belief, did not hesitate to raise doubts against the Chinese for having a religion different from that of the Catholics.¹⁸

A combination of historical, psychological, and sociological reasons made the Chinese – in the eyes of the Spaniards – the easiest of possible scapegoats. The virulence of anti-Chinese campaigns in the last quarter of the 19th century can be attributed to the frustrations of the Spaniards in the face of threatening Filipino nationalism. The Chinese became the scapegoat for a social system which had not satisfied the needs of the masses.

In a classic application of the western dictum of divide-and-rule, the Chinese were separated from the natives through residential restrictions in the *Parian*. The colonial authorities sought to cultivate hatred between the Chinese and the Filipinos. For instance, no Chinese may act as a godfather to the child of a native, “so that the he may not be united to a native by spiritual bond of *compradazgo*.”¹⁹ Likewise, the Spanish authorities deliberately encouraged the dominant native Filipino population to vent their frustrations, hostilities, and

hatred against the Chinese as a way of diverting attention away from their own misrule.

The roots of these Spanish anti-Chinese prejudices clung tenaciously to future generations of Filipinos down to the present. The Filipinos developed the Spanish prejudices against the Chinese and learned from example to despise them. Even the Chinese mestizos exhibited this hatred. As Wickberg noted, “the Christianization of the Filipino and, in turn, the Filipinization of the Chinese mestizo developed in both certain sense of cultural superiority that made them look down and despise the Chinese.”²⁰

American Divide-and-Rule Policy

The American regime proved no better. While the Spaniards separated the Chinese from the Filipinos physically through the *Parian*, the Americans separated the Chinese psychologically by allowing the community to exist as a separate self-sufficient enclave. Again, applying the colonial policy of divide-and-rule, the Americans encouraged the Chinese to put up their own hospitals, their own schools, and their own trade and social organizations. The long-term effect of this policy was even more insidious than the legacy of the Spanish policies.

Under the liberal policy of the Americans, the Chinese prospered. Economic growth of this ethnic group was unprecedented. However, having a separate existence from the mainstream, the economic prosperity of the Chinese became the source of envy and hostility, which sporadically broke out into the racial riots such as in 1919 and 1924.

During the Commonwealth Period, Philippine nationalism was not confined to the political aspiration of winning independence but also to economic aspects. Economic nationalism

was translated into a policy of de-alienization, of increasing Filipino participation in and control of economic activity. This desire is reflected in the Constitution itself which reserved the development of natural resources and operation of public utilities to Filipinos. Other legislations that aimed to eliminate alien participation would include the nationalization of the public market stalls.

Post-War Economic Nationalism

Aggressive economic nationalism was the rule after independence in 1946. Legislative measures were adopted such as the nationalization of retail trade, rice and corn industries, enterprises like banking, and the practice of professions like engineering, architecture, chemistry, pharmacy, dentistry, optometry, accounting, law, nursing, and medicine. As teachers, they were barred from teaching history, sociology, and political science. Above all was the adoption of the Filipino First Policy of 1961.

All the above measures stemmed again from the economic motive – the Filipino desire to have greater participation in the nation's economic activities. There is nothing wrong with this desire, but history has shown us that hostility and prejudice against the Chinese are not the right ways to achieve this desire.

The Chinese, up to now, are still considered convenient scapegoats for the economic ills the Philippines suffers from. Sporadically, newspapers, radio, and television would banner headlines screaming against supposed Chinese control of the economy. As pointed out earlier, the root of the problem is that the Chinese have not been accepted yet as an integral part of Philippine society.

For instance, accusations that doubt their loyalty due to

their ethnicity are hurled against people like John Gokongwei and Henry Sy. What many people do not know is that these two high-profile retail kings are *persona non-grata* among the older leaders of the Chinese community because they are considered to have “forgotten their Chineseness and Chinese obligations.” The Chinese are complaining that these two business magnates do not participate in any of the Chinese community-centered activities. They do not contribute to their hometown or family associations, or do they participate in any of these associations’ activities, and yet, many Filipinos consider them Chinese and not part of the Filipino business community.

This is an unfortunate situation not only because ethnic tensions of any kind are counterproductive but, most importantly, because the potentials of the Chinese minority cannot be harnessed fully. Since the early days of Spanish colonial rule, the local Chinese economy has been an integral part of the native economy and cannot be isolated from it. Chinese capital and Chinese business are part of the domestic economy. Most of the profits the Chinese earn are plowed back into the Philippines and not repatriated to mother companies abroad. Most Filipinos cannot accept this fact and continue to perceive the Chinese as an alien minority instead of one of the cultural minorities of the country despite the fact that they have been living here for generations and will continue living here for a few more.

Integration and Acceptance

The key to changing the image of the Chinese in the Philippines lies in integration – in being a part of the mainstream. Filipinos would not begrudge the Chinese their success if they were accepted as part of Philippine society because their success

would also be the Filipinos' success; the benefits of the economic growth in the Chinese sector redound fully to Philippine society and vice versa.

Economic realities cannot be changed. Most of the Chinese belong to the middle class and are comparatively better off than the average Filipinos. We cannot change this reality just because we want to change our image. This is a fact that we all should be proud of and be happy about because at least, the Chinese are not a burden to society but instead are partners in bearing the burdens of society. Focusing on their business successes and their fortunes is a useless exercise. What is important is to realize how the Chinese, as a sector, have been using the economic influence they wield for the betterment of our economy.

That the Chinese are here to stay is another reality that cannot be changed and should not be changed. Ethnic Chinese in the country number around 800,000 and 90 percent of these are Chinese who were born in this country and have known no other home except the Philippines. To these Chinese Filipinos, China is the country of their ancestors; it is a China that they learned from their textbooks or from stories of their elders. They view events in China with a sense of detachment that shocks their elders and puzzles other Filipinos.

The image problem is not something we can erase overnight. We cannot just say that we Chinese want to be part of you Filipinos so you must come forward and accept us. Social acceptance, to be meaningful, must be deserved and given freely. If and when the Chinese are accepted fully as one with the Filipinos, then the image problem will disappear on its own accord. This acceptance will come, and we can do much in helping to accelerate it just as we can also do much in retarding this acceptance. Filipinos have no problem accepting the Chinese Filipinos when they shine in their particular fields.

For instance, when Jerome Khohayting won a medal in Math Olympiad held in Brunswick, Germany, our papers bannered: "Pinoy Math wizard shines in Olympiad." Basketball fans accept Atoy Co, Samboy Lim, Lim Eng Beng readily as Filipino basketball players. Filipinos rejoiced with Diane Tanlimco when she won the gold medal in bowling. Others like writer Ricky Lee, singers Jose Mari Chan and Richard Tan have no problems being accepted as Filipinos.

The rest of the Chinese Filipinos are people like them, whose hearts and minds are Filipinos who happened to trace their ancestry to China. Way back in 1970, Dr. Robert Tilman concluded in his study of the Philippine-Chinese youth: "The problems, frustrations, prejudices, follies, faults, hopes, and aspirations are about the same, whether the students be Chinese or Filipino."²¹ It is only when more Filipinos can accept this reality that the image of the Chinese in the eyes of the Filipinos will change for the better.

Philippines-China Relations and the Chinese

As to the issue about what China's role should be concerning the local Chinese in the Philippines, it is important to note that Philippines-China relations affect the local Chinese and vice versa.

For instance, on the eve of diplomatic relations with China, the Philippines allowed easy access to citizenship because it did not want a sizable number of people owing allegiance to and falling under the jurisdiction of a foreign government. This action has so far been the only time that a positive official policy towards integrating the local Chinese had been adopted. It is also the only policy that has the most far reaching and long-term effects on the local Chinese.

On the other hand, the image of the Chinese also affects Philippines-China relations. Most Filipinos make no distinction between the Philippine Chinese, mainland Chinese, Taiwanese, Hong Kong Chinese, and Singaporeans. They lump them all together as Chinese. This often creates a lot of confusion. For instance, in one university which exhibited photographs on Asian heritage, the organizers displayed the flag being used by Taiwan. When I commented on it, they said it's the same, it's also Chinese. When this same school invited me to be one of their guest speakers, they put under my name, "Representative from Taiwan." When I protested, they asked me so innocently: "Why is there any difference, you're Chinese, aren't you?" There are as many variations of Chinese, each projecting a vastly different image from the other, and each embracing widely disparate principles and beliefs from the other.

At any rate, it is heartening for us to read pronouncements from China's top hierarchy that China has not only re-affirmed its policy of considering the Chinese abroad as belonging to their countries of domicile but has even gone further in encouraging them to sink their roots into their own countries and work for the interests of these countries.

As the Chinese Filipinos cross ethnic lines and come to identify themselves more as Filipinos, their cultural traditions also gradually become part of the greater national tradition. It eventually results in mutual enrichment and enhancement of the positive elements in each culture. This healthy interchange can promote greater goodwill among people and among Filipinos and the Chinese all over the world, especially. Just as in the early days, when Chinese products were prime commodities for exchange in the international market, Chinese human elements have also become agents of change that would bring greater enrichment and development to the Filipino nation.

The successful integration of the Chinese into Philippine society will be of great benefit not just to the Philippines but to

China itself. The sense of belonging and complete identification of the local Chinese with the Philippine milieu give rise to their confidence in the nation and the much-needed impetus for them to share in the task of rebuilding the Filipino nation. With the local Chinese business people and young professionals giving their best to the development of the Philippines, greater peace and prosperity would not be far away. In this regard, a stable and prosperous Philippines would redound to the benefit of the entire Asian continent and also to China, above all.

Notes

1. Teodoro L. Locsin. "Waktoo," *Philippine Daily Globe*, October 22, 1989.
2. For an analysis of studies on anti-Chineseness, consult the article of Allen L. Tan. "A Survey of Studies on Anti-Sinoism in the Philippines," *Asian Studies*, vol. 4, no. 2, 1968, pp.198-207. The titles that the author was able to consult (not all are in Allen Tan's list) are:

Rodolfo Bulatao. "A Test of the Belief Congruence Principle in Prejudice Against Chinese in the Philippines." Unpublished M.A. Thesis. University of the Philippines, 1967.

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