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To all our benefactors, our sincerest gratitude for supporting the conference and this publication. It will certainly be another invaluable contribution to scholarship on the ethnic Chinese community in the Philippines.

Teresita Ang See
Kaisa Para Sa Kaunlaran, Inc.

The ethnic Chinese as Filipinos – A summing up
**THE CHINESE IN LOCAL SOCIETIES:
IMPACT AND INFLUENCE**

In more ways than one, the ethnic Chinese all over the country have helped shape the community to which they belong. Undeniably, their economic role remains the most visible. But they have also served effectively as "cultural brokers," bringing with them the complexity of their civilization to simpler societies. In bustling cities, they are credited with having played a big role in the renaissance of culture and education. And in recent years; their spirit of volunteerism has gained renown.

For two days, the manifold facets of the Chinese in Mindanao, Visayas, Luzon and Metro Manila came under scrutiny in "The Ethnic Chinese as Filipinos," a conference held on November 27-28, 1997 at the University of St. La Salle in Bacolod City.

The View from Mindanao

The history of the Chinese settlement in Mindanao dates as far back as the 13th century when the traders established a "Chinatown" in Jolo even before it was Islamized, said Federico Magdalena of Mindanao State University.

It was, in fact, Chinese trade that stimulated the Sulu sultanate.

Discoveries in Butuan of Chinese junks and an extensive collection of Chinese artifacts are evidence of this flourishing trade, Magdalena said.

Fortunately for the Chinese, Islam is not anti-Chinese as it emphasizes broth-

erhood. Thus, while the Chinese initially occupied a position as aliens in a rigidly stratified ancient Muslim society, they were eventually absorbed into the community through intermarriage, later gravitated to the dominant culture of the population, finally resulting into partial or total assimilation.

For Aurora Roxas-Lim of the University of the Philippines Asian Center, the ethnic Chinese in Mindanao should also be acknowledged as “cultural brokers” who brought in the complexity of their civilization to the simpler local societies like Sitankay in Tawi-Tawi.

She stressed that the network of transport and warehousing that paved the way for the entry of silk, manufactured goods, lacquered boxes, sandalwood, and other exquisite Chinese goods to different parts of the country also ushered in significant by-products of the Chinese in their roles as “cultural brokers.” Chinese cuisine and knowledge of herbal medicine are examples of these by-products that later became part of Philippine life, according to Roxas-Lim.

The Chinese business networks, in fact, helped “hold the community together and brought dynamism in an otherwise stagnant and stale social framework,” Roxas-Lim emphasized.

Some ethnic Chinese in Mindanao, however, have gone wayward, like the young ones in Jolo, according to Hannibal Bara of Mindanao State University.

Mostly into businesses, which the natives frown upon: liquor stores, pawnshops, and nightclubs, the ethnic Chinese in Jolo have become easy targets of extortion and criticism, he said. (The general observation, however, is that majority of Chinese are in trading or buy-and-sell business. — *Ed.*)

Bara, who studied the cultural preferences of the ethnic Chinese in Jolo by interviewing 113 Chinese businessmen, said nine of every 10 prefer to be called by their non-Chinese name — either Christian, Tausug, Muslim, or a mixture of native and Chinese. Only a fourth understand and speak Chinese, and more than half sometimes perform Chinese rituals and 15 percent often perform them, he said.

It is his figures on the Chinese-language speakers and ritual performers that Roxas-Lim and Teresita Ang See of the Kaisa Para Sa Kaunlaran and Ateneo de Manila University find to be on the high side. The numbers do not jibe with findings of other studies on ethnic Chinese outside Metro Manila, said See and Roxas-Lim who surmised that Bara sampled a much older population in his study which is no longer representative of the general ethnic Chinese population.

Roxas-Lim also lamented that Bara’s research appeared to emphasize the conflict rather than the pluralistic nature of Philippine society that allows enough room for harmonious relationships.

The View from Visayas

It is the spirit of volunteerism of the ethnic Chinese in Bacolod that strikes the Negrenses, reported Violeta Lopez-Gonzaga of the University of St. La Salle and William H. Streegan of the *Negros Daily Bulletin*.

The lives of Andres Go Hee or Andres Valencia, Benjamin Lopue Sr., Msgr. John Liu, Oscar K. Anglo, Amando Dongon, Eusebio Po, Alfonso and Vic Tan, Benjamin Lo, and Roberto Kaishek Tan demonstrate how many ethnic Chinese take their social responsibility seriously. Volunteer organizations like the fire brigades of the Filipino-Chinese Chamber of Commerce and the Amity Club also do their share.

In Cebu, the Chinese families have helped fuel the renaissance in culture, education, and other aspects of Cebuano life, said Benito Lim, also of the UP Asian Center, and Tonette Pañares, curator of the Museum of Southwestern University in Cebu.

Three of the country’s tycoons — Henry Sy, John Gokongwei, and Andrew Gotianun — also trace their roots to Cebu, Pañares said.

Lim and Pañares said Chinese artifacts unearthed in Cebu showcase the early and extensive relations between the Cebuanos and the Chinese. The Chinese were also behind the once flourishing cotton industry in the province, according to Lim.

The transformation of the early immigrant Chinese to Filipino in just two generations is typified by the family of Iloilo’s illustrious son, Dominador Jabian Javellana, said Ephraim Areño of West Visayas State University in Iloilo.

Javellana’s forebear, Lim Eung or Go Cuy Co, had married a Filipina. But he, too, was a lover of Filipino culture, and raised his sons to be more Filipino than Chinese.

Lim Eung’s descendants are now businessmen, professionals and public servants whose only trace of Chineseness are their physical features, Areño said.

The View from Luzon

In Bicol, the mestizo offspring of the Chinese who intermarried with the native girls are now the leading families in the area, producing educators, politicians, and other affluent merchants, said historian Pio Andrade Jr.

A noteworthy development in recent times is the nationwide veneration of the image of the Black Nazarene of Capalonga in Camarines Norte, according to Andrade.

This, he said, is a clear evidence of religious syncretism: The image of Jesus Christ is worshipped in both Catholic rites like a nine-day mass but mixed with Chinese rituals like food offering, burning of incense, paper money, and the use of divination tablets and sticks.

The Chinese in the local history of the Bicol region also goes as far back as pre-Hispanic times. Recently, Andrade said, Chinese miners turned up an ancient Chinese burial ground that yielded pieces of celadon.

Although the harsh climate, dense tropical forest and Muslim piracy delayed the settlement of the Chinese in Bicol, Andrade noted that the Chinese had carried out some form of trade in the region.

They even tried producing silk by planting a million mulberry plants and

introducing the silk production technology in the area, but the project failed, he said.

Go Bon Juan, Kaisa executive vice president, gave valuable insights into the history of the Chinese in Pampanga. The growth or decline of the ethnic Chinese in Pampanga are closely related to the influences of the objective factors prevailing in the towns where they resided in.

Gyo Miyahara, of the Osaka University of Foreign Studies, contributed an important work of ethnography. Using Japanese sources, Miyahara's pioneering work revealed to us significant data, otherwise little known to scholars on ethnic Chinese communities.

Miyahara, who stayed in the Philippines, particularly Cebu, for sometime while doing his research, described how the Japanese colonials described or defined the "overseas Chinese" and the policies adopted by the administration regarding them. Description of Filipino-Chinese relations are also given.

He shared hitherto unknown and inaccessible Japanese anthropological studies on the overseas Chinese and the role of these people in the whole scheme of what the Japanese called the "Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere."

The View from Metro Manila

The present-day *Tsinoy* families are, no doubt, starkly different from the first-generation immigrant Chinese families.

Deanie Lyn Ocampo-Go, Kaisa vice president for Research and Publications and a faculty member of UP College of Home Economics, observed that immigrant Chinese families were tradition-bound while modern *Tsinoy* families are vastly influenced by the realities of the larger Philippine environment.

A good example, she said, is the education of daughters. In the early days, daughters were educated up to high school only because families thought that they would "just end up as housewives for other families." Nowadays, it is a matter of pride that daughters are as highly educated, if not more so, than the sons.

Likewise, preference for males to perpetuate the lineage is no longer as marked as it was in olden days, Go said. Though parents would still exhort their offspring to "go and try for another son," it is no longer a life and death issue as before.

See, of Kaisa and Ateneo, presented the latest statistics on the ethnic identity of the *Tsinoy*s, their language preferences, how their citizenship is acquired, what they consider "home," whether they prefer to stay on in the Philippines or not, their religious preferences and practice of ancestor worship.

These statistics were part of her study on the "Ethnic Chinese as Filipinos" presented at the ISEAS conference in Singapore early 1996.

Joaquin Sy, Kaisa executive secretary, discussed an episode in the history of the Chinese in the Philippine Revolution.

His paper, entitled "*Isang Munting Larawan*," looked into the relations of the Chinese revolutionaries in China with the Filipino revolutionaries at home and how they mutually supported one another in their struggle for the independence of

their nations.

Sarah Jane Tan of the Philippine-China Development Resource Center attempted to describe the population's changing perceptions of what it means to be Chinese based on a survey of literature on various studies on the Filipinos' perception of Chineseness and a Social Weather Station survey commissioned by PDRC. Tan said most of the traits ascribed to the Chinese — their businessmindedness, frugality, industry, unscrupulousness, and opportunism — are related to their positions in the Philippine economy. Happily, a number of these negative traits have faded away through time, she said.

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Some of the paper presentors in the conference did not submit their final paper, hence, although they are mentioned in the summary, they are not included in this volume. — Ed.)