HUAQIAO: OVERSEAS CHINESE WORKERS: THEIR STORY OF STRUGGLES AND TRIUMPHS IN PHILIPPINE SOCIETY (1898-1929)

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Abstract - The term Overseas Filipino Workers have become popular in the 1990's due to the influx of Filipino workers to different parts of the world specifically Hongkong, Singapore, the Middle East, the United States of America and some countries in Europe. These Filipinos, composed of domestic helpers, nurses, teachers or other skill-related jobs have tried their luck overseas to provide better future for their families. But before this phenomenon happened, Philippines, have become a refuge for other nationalities (Chinese) for economic opportunities. The Chinese are not new to the Philippines. Even before the coming of the colonizers in the Philippines, they were already present in the Philippine economy doing some trading with the locals along with the Arabs and the Japanese. During the Spanish period these Chinese suffered different forms of discrimination and were ostracized in the society. Some laws were made as a form of restriction for them to obtain citizenship or petition a family member in China to migrate in the Philippines to live with them. The objectives of my paper is to present the push factors that forced these Chinese to leave China. Second, to analyze the pull factors of the specific areas (cities) in the Philippines which attracted them to settle in the island. Third, how much of their "Chineseness" have they retained to themselves while trying to fit in to the Philippine society. Lastly, the paper will try to discover the unique "Filipino-Chinese" culture and how they developed certain cities in the Philippines as what we call now as "China Town" communities.

Index terms - Chinese, Overseas, Workers, Society

"China is a sleeping giant. Let her sleep, for when she wakes, she will move the world."

- **Napoleon Bonaparte**

For over 200 years, Bonaparte's words have remarkably come into being especially these days when China's billionaire population appears on the rise. The rags-to-riches stories of the Chinese have not only permeated and exclusive to the Philippines but also in other countries. Interesting to note that the Chinese have historically and culturally proven their resilience to withstand various struggles that have come to their way.Part of overcoming challenges pertains to how China builds relationship with other nations. In particular, the Philippine-Chinese appears as one of the best references to cite. The lasting relation of the two can be traced back through history. In fact, even before the coming of the Spaniards in 1521, the Chinese existed in the archipelago as merchants. Significantly, Evangelista (2002) asserted that Chinese records of tribute missions in the Philippines have existed since 11th century A.D. With a more transparent basis, Pancho (1986) posited that most of the Chinese who opted to settle in the Philippines came from the provinces of Fujian and Guangdong in Southern China during the Ming dynasty from the year 1368 to 1644.

When Spain finally decided to colonize the Philippines in 1565, the Chinese saw this as an opportunity to engage in trading specifically during the Galleon Trade that started in the same year until 1815. Because of the highly urbane economy of the Philippines due to the Galleon Trade, most Chinese got attracted to migrating and finally settling in the island, while the Spaniards viewed them as a source of revenue to fund the colony. In the late 1840s, Spain allowed the Chinese to use opium in the island because of two prime reasons: First, it pertains to an aim of not offending them and risking the chance for a trading agreement. Second, it refers to how the colonial government receives help from the opium through the tax collected from it. Complementarily to this claim, from the year 1896 to1897, the Chinese had paid 576,000 for opium contracts (Wickberg, 2000). Aside from the tax collected from the use of opium, the Coolie brokerage business, which entailed a contract-based para-slavery, became a lucrative source of revenue for the colonial government. With these circumstances, Kuhn (2008) claimed that the Chinese became the Spaniards' "bread and butter," and they functioned as the "backbone" of the colonial economy. At the start of the 18th century, a new breed of Chinese appeared on the island. Having stayed in the colony for a long time, these Chinese settlers had found and married female indios or the natives in the island, whom in the latter time would produce their offspring called the Chinese-Indio or the Half-Castes or Mestizos. These new breeds of Chinese would eventually take the opportunity and use their parents' privileges to obtain a Western-type of education either in the colony, namely Ateneo Municipal, University of Santo Tomas, or in Europe. Wickberg (1964) called them a "special kind of Filipinos" as they embodied hybridity of cultural characteristics, became lovers of pretension, turned as passionate devotees of Spanish Catholicism, thereby making them looked more Spanish than the real Spanish, more Catholic than the real Catholics. Further, during the late 19th century, the Chinese-

Indios became influential figures in the development of the Filipino nationalism. Dr. Jose P. Rizal, also known as the Greatest Man of the Brown Race, served as one of the most prominent Filipinos with Chinese ancestry. Proving this claim, Craig (1909) found out that Rizal's father, Francisco Mercado, came from Amoy District in China before Mercado settled in Calamba, Laguna, the Philippines. Concerning the interactions between the natives and the Insulares, the Chinese mestizos rallied for equal rights between the Filipinos and the Spaniards, and later, they would look for the Philippine independence from Spain. Citing these circumstances happening in society, it indeed affirmed what Kuhn claimed that the shaping of the Chinese became depended on the character of the states that ruled them (2008). The period between 1898 and 1901 remained a challenging time for the Chinese in the island. Like their role during the Spanish occupation in the Philippines, Emilio Aguinaldo's administration saw the Chinese as a potential source of revenue to fund his newly founded government. Not only that Chinese served as a "milking cow," but also, they had been harassed as depicted during the cases of Filipino when "harassing" became a widespread activity. Despite this grave situation, many Chinese voluntarily funded the Filipino revolution against Spain. Ramon Ongpin, Luis Yangco, Mariano Limjap, and TelesforoChuidian, to name a few, became those who financed the revolution (See, 2014). Among the Filipino-Chinese, one notable person during the revolutionary period appeared in the name of Jose Ignacio Paua. His gifts of having amiable traits, repairing weaponry, and embodying integrity influenced Aguinaldo to assigned him as contributions collector. With his ability, he collected a tremendous amount of money from the Chinese in various parts of the country to support the revolution during the Filipino-American War. Noting these contributions, Pua made his way to be hailed as a symbol of the Filipino-Chinese friendship. The preceding part of the 20th century introduced the world to a new breed of Chinese who would be coming to the Philippines through the "kin-based" migration network. In comparison to the Spaniards, the Americans used their new policies in the colony to hinder the Chinese to either stay or even conduct business in the country. Concerning citizenship, the Americans defined Filipino citizens through the Philippine Act, which the Congress passed in July 1902. Section 4 states explicitly that:

All inhabitants of the Philippine Islands continuing to reside therein, who were Spanish subjects on the eleventh day of April 1899, and then resided on the said Islands, and their children born subsequent to it, shall be deemed and held to be citizens of the Philippine Islands. It should be noted that during the Spanish period, the Spaniards seemed relaxed about the citizenship status of the Chinese, thereby making the latter not obliged to apply for citizenship or become a Spanish subject. The Schurman Commission in 1899 posited that the problem of Chinese immigration as affecting commerce and business pertained to as "serious and [it] demands consideration." Two influential figures in the names of Mr. Neil MacLeod, a representative of the London Times, and Mr. Gabriel Garcia Ageo blamed the presence of the Chinese in the Philippines which resulted in a pressing economic condition of the Philippines. Therefore, the Schurman Commission, through the reports they received, restricted the influx of more Chinese coming to the Philippines. Supporting the policy, the commission set up provisions that included the following measures: (1) Levying of heavy duties on opium; (2) Imposing heavy duties on Chinese goods; and, (3) Preventing the Chinese from engaging in agriculture. It should be remembered still that during the American period, there was just less than one percent of the Chinese population in the country. Acknowledging the significance of the policy, including the pressures of giving the Filipinos much importance that they deserved, the general culture during the American colonization in the Philippines resonated their slogan "The Philippines for the Filipinos" (M'Culloch, 1909). What a fortunate circumstance that happened in the country likewise referred to the commencement of the American period when the Filipinos equated love for the country while being anti-foreign (See, 2014).

Aside from the uncertainty of the citizenship status of the Chinese in the Philippines, In September 26, 1898, U.S. Army General Elwell Otis issued military order stating that "all Chinese except former residents who left the islands between the 31st of December 1895 and September 1898, including those who belong in the exempted class would be refused to enter the Philippines" (Wong, 1999). The Philippine Commission of 1902, however, recognized the need for Chinese workers especially in the field of construction. Citing Lieutenant J. H. Rice, he commented that: "The Chinese are superior to the Filipinos in skill, ability, and steadiness." In addition to this comment in favor of the Chinese, Mr. J. F. Norton, the Chief Engineer of the American government in the Philippines, suggested that the railroad lines construction would only be possible if they would import foreign laborers, specifically, the Chinese. Surprisingly, William Howard Taft (describe who Taft is) also shared the same sentiments. M' Culloch (1909) mentioned that the name that would come to mind would be the Chinese coolies, who, "In manufacturing and mechanical pursuits, the Chinaman is generally conceded to be a more efficient workman than the Filipino" (1909).

While the Chinese were experiencing hardships with the new colonizer in the Philippines, the Chinese government in the mainland were already doing whatever they could to protect their people not just in the Philippines but also in other countries. The Qing

government in 1909 started the following measures:
(1) Promotion of the Chinese schools abroad; and,
(2) Formation of the Chinese associations.

Surprisingly, at the turn of the 1920s, new developments in the status of the Chinese in the Philippines appeared. Not only the coolies or middleman but also a handful of Chinese went back to the country after studying abroad. One of those scholars is Dr. Albino Z. Sycip, the first Huaquio who successfully passed the Philippine Bar in 1913. This extraordinary proof of showing how competent Chinese could be reaffirmed that a Chinese could be recognizable in his field and professions other than in business. As a lawyer, Sycip rallied for the abolition of discriminatory practices and laws in the country and overseas. The latter part of the 1920s, particularly in 1927, became remarkable when Manuel Quezon, the President of the Philippine Senate then traveled to Shanghai, and to meet the Kuomintang leader Chang Kai-shek. This meeting became possible through the effort of Sycip. The political significance of this trip can be seen as an initiative of the Philippine government through Quezon, whom later on would become the president of the Philippine Commonwealth under America, to look at the present relationship of the Chinese in the Philippines, the Huaqiao, and the condition of the Filipinos overseas or Feiqiao in Shanghai. Moreover, the Nanjing visit made Quezon function as "Head of the State." It could be argued that this visit plays a crucial role, the first attempt of both countries, to strengthen their ties through a diplomatic visit. Interestingly, the visitation of Quezon was followed up by another visit made Carlos P. Romulo, who would later take the highest position at the United Nations General Assembly. The researcher argued that the success of the Manila-Shanghai relationship could be attributed to Sycip through his initiatives of uniting the Filipinos and the Chinese professionals and businesspeople through a more definite cause.

CONCLUSION

The degree of Chineseness is hard to quantify. One's loyalty and love for the country may seem difficult to measure. To cite, one can be fluent with the language or born of the Chinese parents. The others may be living and not leaving their home country, thereby considering it as the ultimate expression of their love for their country. While some may decide to migrate and find a source of living elsewhere, whichever ways an individual manifests the love for the country, or in the case of the Huaqiao, the degree of their Chineseness as how this paper puts forward, it can be influenced by external factors that compelled arrived at their decision. Like the Filipino overseas workers in other countries, economic opportunities drove the Huaqiao. Looking at their purpose of living in the Philippines, one may argue that to conduct business and not necessarily aim for citizenship and to retire in the country appears to become their primary purpose. If a Chinese would apply for one, it is to secure the status in the country, which would also enable them to conduct business in the country. Arguably, the economic success of the Chinese, not only in the Philippines but also in different parts of the world, remains one of the reasons why hostility and envy persisted against them. History revealed that this appeared not an isolated case for the Chinese. However, one should note that other races also experienced the same plight, including the Jews in Germany, the Latinos in America, and even the Filipinos in distinct parts of the world. Therefore, hostility chooses no race. It is human nature to compete with resources and source of living to survive. This phenomenon may lead to stereotypes on a group of people which may result in discrimination.

The stories of triumph of the Chinese in the Philippines becomes and remains worth emulating. Though there still subtle ways of discrimination and misconception against the Chinese in the Philippines today, some Filipino still look at the Chinese as "stingy, snob greedy, and unclean" "strict, opportunistic employers who pay low wages and discriminate against Filipino employees" (Pancho, 1986). Besides, the mentality of some Chinese families in the Philippines concerning their preferences for their children to marry another Chinese also appears as a sign of their "resentment" to some Filipinos. Thus, the feeling of distrust, not necessarily anger, comes to both ways. However, at the end of all these happenings, the Chinese have proven their worth and importance in the Philippine society. Majority of the Filipinos look at the Chinese as hardworking, prudent, and diligent. Indeed, the sleeping giant has awakened and is continuously making a mark in distinct aspects and areas of Philippine education, business and commerce, law, and politics.

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