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## Building Cultural Bridges: The Philippines and Japan in the 1930s

*Lydia N. Yu-Jose*

As early as the 1920s, a number of Filipinos thought there was something admirable in Japanese culture which they could emulate, that there was something in the Japanese experience of modernization that they could learn from. However, when a Filipino now is asked about Japanese heritage in Philippine life, he thinks for several minutes and tries hard to recall what he has learned in school. More often than not, the search does not yield any answer. But when asked about Chinese, Spanish, and American contributions to Philippine culture, he can reply quickly.

The Chinese indeed, have greatly influenced Philippine culture. There is hardly a Filipino now who can say with absolute certainty that there is no Chinese blood in his veins. Many Filipinos manifest in their facial features, if not in their surnames, Chinese ancestry. Chinese influences are found in Philippine languages and food. Geographical proximity, early trade relations, and a relatively large overseas Chinese community in the Philippines are some of the factors that account for Chinese influence on Philippine society, economy, and culture.

Spanish and American influences on Philippine life are easily explained by the fact that Spain and the United States colonized the Philippines. Over three centuries of Spanish rule in the Philippines have resulted in the spread of Catholicism throughout the country. A great part of Filipino customs and festivities may be traced to the Spanish period. Numerous Spanish words and expressions are now part of the Filipino vocabulary. The Filipino dining table usually offers a mixture of Chinese and Spanish cuisine, still called by their original, or Filipinized names. The Americans ruled the Philippines for a much shorter time than Spain did, but the Americans, after more than forty years of colonization, left to the Philippines a democratic form of government and the English language.

## Japanese Occupation

American rule was interrupted by the Japanese occupation of the Philippines (1942–45). The occupation was not the first encounter between Japanese and Filipinos. Even before the colonial times, Japanese fishermen had been catching fish in Philippine waters. Japanese traders had come and gone. Japanese immigrants had settled in Davao, Manila, the Mountain Province and other parts of the country, for a period not shorter than two decades before the outbreak of World War II. In spite of this historical tie, one is hard pressed to find any Japanese mark on Philippine culture.

Why is this so? There are several explanations, all related to each other. First, the Japanese government, initially, was not interested in imparting Japanese culture to the Philippines, or to any country, for that matter. It was primarily interested in trade and investment. It was only in the 1930s, for the purpose of promoting these economic interests and justifying its actions in China, that it launched a cultural policy.

Second, the Japanese immigrants in the Philippines were not large in number (the peak was around twenty thousand in Davao, where they were most numerous). Moreover, they did not actively interact with Filipinos, much less, inter-marry. In Davao, especially, their community was self-contained.

Third, the Japanese colonizers did not have as much time as the Spaniards and the Americans had to significantly affect Philippine culture. On top of this, the Japanese cultural policy was one of negation and rejection. Japanese war slogans were clear about “cleansing” the Filipinos of the Spanish and American influences that had “corrupted” the Filipino soul. However, after rejecting these Western influences, what could take their place? The answer was not clear. Sometimes the answer was “Oriental culture,” but the specifics were lacking. At other times, the answer was “a return to the original Asian-ness of the Filipinos.” If this was the answer, then, there was no place for Japanese culture, or any culture that is not already in the Filipino.

It may be added to the above explanations, particularly to the first and the second, that Japanese economic activities in the Philippines before the war left a few legacies. For instance, the local generic term for mosquito coil, “katol,” was from a brand of mosquito coil imported from Japan. Also, *muro-ami*, a kind of fishing net used by the Japanese fishermen in the Philippines, is still being used now, although being

discouraged for not being ecologically friendly. Another one is the word *pakyaw*, still fresh in the memory of some Japanese who had lived in Davao before the war. All these, however, are not common knowledge. Even if they were, they are not significant in the lives of the Filipinos and the Japanese now.

This article will focus on two points mentioned above, namely, the Filipinos' opinion of Japanese culture, and the launching by Japan of a cultural policy towards the Philippines in the 1930s. Since it has been explained above that this policy did not have significant results, this paper is not about cultural influences, but about attempts of the two countries to establish a relationship beyond commerce, trade, and other economic activities.

In this article, cultural policy, strategy, or the broader concept of cultural relationship, refers to the activities and efforts willingly done by two peoples of different countries in order to gain more knowledge about each other. Knowledge may be sought for several pragmatic reasons, or for the sake of knowledge and understanding alone. Although there is a thin line between cultural propaganda and cultural policy, this article seeks to make a distinction between the two. At least for the purposes of this article, such distinction is not necessary for the Philippines, because it did not have a cultural policy or strategy towards any foreign country before World War II. It has to be done, however, for Japan. And, again, for the particular purpose of this article, Japanese cultural policy or strategy is seen as Japanese actions that seek to introduce several aspects of Japanese history and culture, while cultural propaganda is that which seeks to justify specific government policies and actions.

Thus, this article will not include Japanese cultural propaganda that tried to justify the invasion of Manchuria, or to check the Chinese boycott of Japanese goods, or to drumbeat the ideals of the Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere. But since the dividing line between the two is thin, an absolute exclusion is impossible, especially as events approach the 1940s.

### **Filipino Ambivalence Towards Japan**

There is paucity of evidence to show that there was depth and breadth of cultural interaction between Filipinos and Japanese before World War II. This may be due to inadequate research on the topic, or there was really not much cultural relationship between Filipinos and Japanese before World War II. Without assuming that all available re-

sources have been exhausted, this paper proceeds by relying on all resources that have so far been available.

Available data tend to show that Filipinos admired some aspects of Japanese culture. Some evidence also shows, however, that there were aspects of Japan that most Filipinos found hard to accept. Furthermore, there were also instances of outright rejection. There is evidence that the Filipinos, at least the knowledgeable ones, admired Japan for its military power. For instance, after the victory of Japan in the Russo-Japanese War in 1905, some eighty-eight Filipino students sent a telegram to the Japanese consul in Manila, congratulating the Japanese people for defeating the Russians (Goodman 1971, 168).

The Japanese approach to modernization was another aspect of Japan that caught the attention of some Filipinos. When the American system of sending young Filipinos to the United States for training and education did not seem to have satisfactory results, a Philippine weekly pointed to Japan's approach as a possible alternative. To quote:

When we turn to Japan, . . . we find that she sends to foreign countries, for the purpose of observation and study, mature men, those who have already achieved something and know the responsibilities of life. Usually they are specialists in the subject or matter to which they are assigned, and thus have a particular interest in it. And they are chosen with a view to the needs of Japan. . . . In this matter, probably it would pay us to learn of Japan. (*Philippines Free Press*, 13 December 1924, 16)

Still another aspect of Japanese culture that was appreciated, at least by the Filipino intellectual elite, was Japanese art. Victorio C. Edades (b. 23 December 1895), the father of modern Philippine painting, could appreciate the beauty of Japanese woodblock prints (Edades 1936, 112–14). He wrote, "The Japanese artists of the color prints understood the satisfying effect of flat painting . . . their color scheme captivates and their lyricism invites and inspires" (ibid.). Edades, who commented, "from her very smallest tea cup to her vast gardens, Japan exhibits the joy of artistic creation," had felt the pervasiveness of art in Japanese life. Regarding Japanese artisans and love of nature, Edades had judged the Japanese artist superior to his Western counterpart: "The Japanese more than any other race approach wood as a medium with reverence. They do not allow stains, shellac, or paint to corrupt the purity of wood. . . . Perhaps, it is . . . the Japanese innate and intense love of nature which makes . . . the Japanese designers, carpenters, and cabinet makers more deeply concerned with their material than their Occidental fellow craftsmen" (ibid.).

In 1937 an exhibition of paintings by Filipino and Japanese children was held in a public elementary school in Manila. It was reported that many who came to view the exhibits commented that "the Japanese children's drawings and paintings could very easily pass for works of local fine arts students. Even newspaper artists themselves who saw photographs of some of the drawings were amazed by the grasp of perspective, proportion, and balance which the young artist showed in their works" (*Graphic*, 4 March 1937, 54). Filipino exposure to Japanese art would be reinforced towards the last year of the 1930s. Japanese lecturers would come to give lectures on ikebana, noh, kabuki, as well as the philosophy behind these art forms.

Towards education and discipline in Japan, Filipinos had mixed feelings. An indication of a desire to learn from Japan could be found in a number of Filipinos who went there to study medicine, textile engineering, agriculture, and others. However, some of these students found the school regulations, like the wearing of uniform almost for any occasion, and the prohibition against visiting houses of ill repute and gambling three months before the examinations very strict. Especially stern, they felt, was the assigning of a spy among the students themselves to find out any violators, and suspension of the violators from the university (*Free Press*, 24 July 1920, 13).

Quite similar to the dislike that the Filipinos felt towards the regimented student life in Japan, was the tendency among Filipinos to shy away from a non-democratic political system. In 1935, a graduate student wrote a thesis comparing the Philippine and Japanese constitutions (Lim, *Constitution of Japan*). The Japanese constitution suffered in comparison, although the student did not state strongly his finding and conclusion. Reading between the lines, he found (and rightly so), the Japanese constitution as authoritarian, with the subjects having more obligations than rights. The Filipinos had learned from their American tutors the values of democracy, and they were not willing to give up the rights, privileges and freedom guaranteed by this system of government.

By 1939, when Japanese students who would visit the Philippines would show contempt for American democracy and appreciation of their authoritarian constitution that was leaning more towards totalitarianism, antagonism of the Filipinos to totalitarianism would become more pronounced. Filipinos exhibited either an inability to understand Japan, or a rejection of the non-Christian culture.

In anticipation of Philippine independence and the writing of a constitution for the independent Philippines, some professors in the University of the Philippines could have thought they had to find out about the constitution of Japan, the only Asian country that had achieved equal status with the West (Yu-Jose 1999a, 73). Upon the request of the University of the Philippines, the Japanese Ministry of Education sent Matsunami Nichirô (1867–1945), a professor of maritime and commercial law at the Imperial University, for a three-month stint in the Philippines.

Matsunami delivered lectures on Japanese and Philippine political systems, Japan's commercial and trade policy, and Japan's stand on Philippine independence. Matsunami realized in the course of discussion with his Filipino audience that they could not understand the concept of a god-emperor. They could understand the concept of the Holy Spirit, but not that of a god-emperor.

Another instance that showed that the Catholic faith of the Filipinos was, before World War II, a hindrance to an easier access to Japanese culture was the misunderstanding about an attempt to introduce *bushidô* to the Philippines.

Bushidô was a particular element in Japanese culture that a number of Filipino leaders and intellectuals had read about and quite admired. Jorge Bocobo, a Filipino educator, thought that Filipinos could learn social discipline and national loyalty from bushidô (Goodman 1987, 56–70). Paul Verzosa, a prolific and versatile writer of the time, told his Filipino audience:

You must understand that Japan is unconquerable because she has a mighty spirit of endurance, patience, and sagacity which her people have inherited from their great knights of chivalry known in history as the wonderful samurais.

...

The samurais of Japan perpetuated their virtues of chivalry and their courage of a fighter, their nobility of conduct, and their doggedness for sacrifice, and their valor of civism because from childhood to old age they were trained to a mathematical precision in the arts and science of this remarkable code of human conduct, known internationally—the Bushido. (Verzosa 1940, 5–6)

Verzosa's speech contained an explanation of the meaning and essence of bushidô, acknowledging Nitobe Inazô, author of *Bushidô, The Soul of Japan*, as the source of his information.

However, knowledge and appreciation of the role of bushidô in Japan's national development did not develop into a stronger conviction of its suitability to the Philippines. On the contrary, a mere passing reference to it by Manuel L. Quezon, the president of the Philippine Commonwealth, invited sarcastic and skeptical comments.

On 19 August 1938, Quezon delivered a speech at the Jose Rizal Memorial Field. The occasion was his sixtieth birthday anniversary. The audience consisted of teachers and students in public and private schools, colleges and universities. In this speech, Quezon lamented what he perceived were the negative characteristics of the Filipinos of his day. He said, "The Filipino of today is soft, easy-going." Continuing, he listed the traits that he would like to see developed in the Filipino: "morally strong, virile, hard-working, refined, enterprising, persevering, public-spirited" (*Messages* 1939, 146-57).

Bushidô was mentioned twice in this speech. The first mention was about how bushidô came about. Quezon said, "social and political conflicts have been the crucible in which the dynamic faculties and virtues of man have been tempered and fused. Chivalry and the *Bushido*, as well as the industrial revolution and the advancement of science and art, are the offspring of death-struggles of man against man or of man against nature."

The second mention of bushidô was in the context of what to do in order to regenerate the Filipino: "To insure the accomplishment of this task of national spiritual reconstruction, we shall formulate and adopt a social code—a code of ethics and personal conduct—a written *Bushido*—that can be explained in the schools, preached from the pulpits, and taught in the streets and plazas, and in the remotest corners of our land" (*ibid.*).

The *Commonwealth Advocate*, a monthly, criticized the allusion to the samurai code as a "jarring note . . . in one of the most eloquent and effective speeches the President ever delivered" (*Philippine Magazine*, September 1938, 415).

The *Philippine Magazine*, another monthly, commented that "it is obvious from the general tenor of the President's address that he has in mind something more of the nature of the "New Life" movement of Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek, than *Bushido*. The reference to 'the Way of the Warrior' might be stricken out without changing—in fact only strengthening—its message" (*ibid.*).

The *Philippines Free Press* published a lengthy article that sought to explain the meaning of bushidô. The writer, like Verzosa, also relied

heavily on Nitobe Inazô's *Bushidô, The Soul of Japan*, for information. The article, which misquoted Quezon as having said that he "would strive to enforce the principles of bushidô" (Quezon actually said he "would strive to enforce it," "it" referring to a social code) concluded that adopting bushidô to Philippine life would be a formidable job (*Free Press*, 3 September 1938, 2-3, 49-50).

A sarcastic reaction to Quezon's speech was published in *The Philippine Commonwealth* (1938, August: 5) a Catholic monthly. Entitled "100 Bushidos," it appeared as a letter to the editor, and is quoted below.

Dear Editor,

Please place for me an order for 100 BUSHIDO-S with Malacañan. Hurray for the Bushido! Our President has found out, on his 60<sup>th</sup> birthday, that the Bushido is what we need.

Not the Catechism, oh no! . . .

Hurray for the Bushido! The Bushido! The Bushido alone will do!  
Hopefully yours, in Bushido,

F.W.

The same issue of the Catholic monthly where this letter appeared carried an editorial cartoon depicting the Philippine Commonwealth standing on a foundation with four layers. Religion was the base supporting all the three layers. On top of religion was morality, followed by individual integrity and education. The cartoon was entitled "No Need of a Bushido."

The editorial essay criticized Quezon for his speech. It said that the president wanted to force the Filipino into a Japanese mould. This could not make the Filipino become like his ancestors. It suggested that instead of teaching bushidô, the Ten Commandments and the Sermon on the Mount should be taught in all schools (*ibid.*).

A subsequent issue of this Catholic monthly reported that the preparation of this code of ethics was not going on smoothly. "All the virtues contained in the Bushido, such as integrity, honesty and the rest, are already incorporated in our character building courses. All except the injunction on suicide as an act of honor," was one explanation as to why no action had been done on Quezon's recommendation to write a code of ethics (*Philippine Commonwealth*, 22 September 1938, 1). The news item, in a mocking manner, added that religion was not considered as good enough, for its compulsory teaching in public schools was against the Constitution of the Philippines.

The Catholic Church, obviously, was still resentful over the decision of the Constitutional Convention not to make the teaching of religion

compulsory in the public schools. The Constitution, ratified in 1935, merely allowed voluntary attendance in religious instructions in the public schools.

Did Quezon mean to make bushidô the model of a national code of ethics for Filipinos? Quezon could have just mentioned bushidô to make an analogy to a code of ethics, not unlike when one says “a magna carta” of labor. It is easy to misinterpret a speech delivered in a public place, but if one reads it carefully, he would get its message more accurately. The message was simply this: The Filipinos then were not as great as their forefathers who fought in the Philippine revolution. These freedom fighters possessed sterling characteristics such as bravery and patriotism because they lived in crucial times. The Filipinos then need not wait for another emergency, for in them could be developed the noble traits that seemed to have disappeared, through a social code of ethics to be taught in all schools.

*The Philippine Commonwealth* reported: “To correct ‘certain erroneous impressions’ concerning the study and discussion in public school classes of President Quezon’s birthday speech . . . , Director Celedonio Salvador of the Bureau of Education yesterday made it clear that the official bulletin containing his recommendation to division superintendents in the matter “was not intended to introduce the Bushido into the public school curriculum, as misinterpreted in some quarters” (*Philippine Commonwealth*, 8 December 1938, 1).

A year passed, and an ethical code had yet to be written. Pending the formulation of such a code, President Quezon issued Executive Order Number 217, directing the Secretary of Public Instruction to require all schools to teach certain civic and ethical principles (*Messages* 1941, 991–92).

These civic and ethical virtues were faith in divine Providence, love of country, filial piety, honor, truthfulness and honesty, venerating the memory of Filipino heroes, self-reliance. All of these traits had been valued by Filipinos—although not necessarily practiced by all — since early times. Others were respect for the constitution; paying taxes willingly; safeguarding the purity of suffrage; frugality; industry; avoiding procrastination; contributing to the welfare of the community; buying goods made in the Philippines; and conserving the nation’s patrimony. These were exhortations that the commonwealth had to make in order to get support for the programs of the Commonwealth. These traits were not in conflict with the spirit of bushidô, but were not necessarily inspired by it.

This incidence of much ado about twice mentioning bushidô in a speech of a little less than 4,000 words illustrates a cultural gap between Filipinos and Japanese. For example, a student leader admitted: "I am still in a quandary, whether the so-called "Bushido" or the spirit of chivalry is still in existence in Japan. I had read enough about this, but still I am a Missourian" (*Philippines-Japan* 1939, 35).

The above evidences, although or, because they were few, show that Filipinos and Japanese had only superficial cultural interaction in the 1930s. Nevertheless, they demonstrate that Filipinos had some amount of exposure to Japanese culture and that there was an expectation among them that there was something that the Philippines could learn from Japan. They pursued this hope with hesitation because of the perceived authoritarianism of the Japanese political system, and the difference in their religions.

### A Weak Cultural Bridge

I am not aware of any attempt on the part of Japan to learn anything from the Philippines, although many Japanese did observe conditions in the Philippines. Reports, diaries, travelogues, essays were written by them. These works contained descriptions of Philippine society (like the high status of the Filipino woman), economy (such as the rich natural resources), education (that the Filipinos were the most educated of the Southeast-Asians), politics (that the Americans had taught them democratic rule), and Filipino traits (hospitality, alleged indolence, etc.) But not a single Japanese writer had suggested that something could be learned from the Philippines.

From the Japanese point of view, there was nothing they could learn from the Philippines. They were only interested in the rich natural resources of the Philippines, and in establishing a closer trade relationship (see Yu-Jose 1999).

They tried to learn Spanish and Tagalog, but this was for a practical reason—if they knew these languages, they could follow developments in the Philippines better, and could further promote their economic interests. In 1909 the Ministry of Agriculture and Commerce advised the Japanese to acquire a thorough knowledge of the Filipinos' mentality, manners, customs, and habits; to learn Spanish and the local dialects; to do research on conditions in the Philippines; and to collect samples of Philippine products (*ibid.*, 20–21). When, in 1937, President Quezon approved Tagalog as the basis of the Philippine

national language, the Japanese community in the Philippines lost no time in publishing a column in the *Japan Information Bulletin* for Tagalog lessons (140). Soon afterwards, a practical and handy Tagalog conversation book, *Hiripin Tagalog-go Kaiwa*, came off the press (ibid.). Jitsuo Oki, a Japanese who had lived in the Philippines for over ten years, wrote this book of 292 pages (*Philippines-Japan* 1940, 23).

After the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1931, anti-Japanese statements became widespread in newspapers and more pronounced in the statements of government officials and politicians in the Philippines. Coupled with these, and in connection with the preparation for Philippine independence, were the plans of the Philippine government to pass laws that would restrict immigration to the Philippines, and foreign participation in the exploitation of the country's natural resources.

A number of Japanese came up with suggestions to check the passage of these restrictive laws or if passed, to see to it that the Japanese would be exempted from them. It was suggested that the Filipinos should be "educated." They should be exposed to Japanese history, art, culture, technology, and other aspects of Japan. In this way, it was opined, they would understand Japan, and welcome with open arms Japanese capital, goods, and laborers.

Some suggestions came from those who believed that the Japanese invasion of Manchuria was justified, and that criticisms of these came from those who did not understand the situation of Japan. Therefore, it was suggested, a propaganda campaign should be undertaken in order to explain Japan's "actions" in Manchuria.

In more specific terms, the Japanese Consul General in Manila, Uchiyama Kiyoshi, recommended publication of a pro-Japanese newspaper, manipulating the members of the Philippine Congress, arousing anti-American sentiments, and educating the Filipinos that they might learn that Japan "had no territorial ambitions and only desired to expand their economic interests." Uchiyama's successor, Kihara Jitarô, said; "cultural and economic strategies do not only go hand in hand, rather, cultural strategy must precede economic strategy" (Yu-Jose 1999a, 143).

The Japanese cultural strategy vis-a-vis the Philippines had the following aims: 1) to win the hearts of the Filipinos so that they would welcome Japanese investments, goods, and immigrants; 2) to get vital information about the Philippines, 3) to promote appreciation of Japanese culture; and 4) to counteract the allegations that Japan had ag-

gressive plans towards the Philippines. There were more specific aims, such as to justify the invasion of Manchuria, to check Japanese boycott of Japanese goods, and to counteract newspaper reports about illegal land holdings of the Japanese in Davao, but these specific aims properly belong to cultural propaganda, rather than to cultural relations. This paper, therefore, will refrain from discussing the activities touching on these aspects.

### Channels of Cultural Strategy

The major channels of Philippine-Japanese cultural contacts were professorial visits, the four bi-national student conferences, and numerous educational-cum-tourism tours to Japan. The first two offered the participants a more or less equal exposure to the Philippines and Japan. However, there were more educational tours to Japan than there were to the Philippines. This is not surprising, for after all, this was Japanese, not Philippine cultural strategy. Furthermore, the primary aim of these tours was to introduce Japan to Filipinos, and gaining knowledge about the Philippines was only secondary or incidental.

One of the first Filipino professors to visit Japan in the 1930s was Vicente G. Sinco of the University of the Philippines. He went to Tokyo in 1936 to observe elementary and vocational schools of Japan. Sinco also gave lectures on the Philippine political system, economic conditions, and Filipino characteristics, at several Japanese universities. Bernabe Africa was invited to Taiwan to observe its modern agricultural technology (see Goodman 1968, 229–40). Antonio Alberto, assistant professor at the College of Engineering of the University of the Philippines, observed steel manufacturing, a glass factory, and a paint factory (*Hiripin Kyokai*, 11–13).

In 1936 Sugimori Kôjirô, a publicist and professor from Waseda University, visited the University of the Philippines. He lectured on Japanese politics, commerce and industry, education, science, religion, ethics, and philosophy (Kojiro 1937, 4). Negishi Yoshitarô of Rikkyô University visited in 1939. He gave talks on ikebana, noh, kabuki, tea ceremony, bushidô, and other topics about Japan (Goodman 1968, 235–36). Both Sugimori and Negishi gave talks and wrote about the Philippines upon their return to Japan.

The four bi-national student conferences were held from 1937 to 1940. Alternating the venue between Tokyo and Manila, the first and the third conferences were held in Tokyo, and the second and the last, in Manila. All the conferences included sightseeing and reception—tea

parties in Japan and ballroom dancing in the Philippines, most of the time.

The theme song of the student conference was "Bansai-Mabuhay," a combination of Japanese and Tagalog words for "long life." Antonino Buenaventura (b. 1904), founder of the University of the Philippines Junior Orchestra, composed it (see Samson 1976, 37–38). The lyrics follow:

And we have spoken only words of peace  
 Words of brothers and words of kin  
 For when such friendships cross the distant seas  
 This weary universe shall win.

Let's shout "Bansai"  
 Let's shout "Mabuhay"  
 For we ever shall be a happy throng.

Let's say "Bansai" and shout "Mabuhay"  
 Let us for always sing a peaceful song  
 Let's

A biographical interview with Buenaventura lists his "major works," but "Bansai-Mabuhay," is not in the list. If my surmise is correct that Buenaventura did not consider this piece important, then it is an indication of how a contemporary musician judged Philippine-Japanese cultural relations of his time. Could it be that he had forgotten all about it? Or could it be that he deliberately did not mention it to the interviewer? Such omission, whether caused by natural or circumspect amnesia, could be due to the tendency after World War II among many who had had relations with Japan in one way or another, to shy away from volunteering the information.

The topics of the first conference were the Philippine Constitution; economic development of the Philippines; the Meiji Restoration; Japanese agriculture, fisheries, industry, and foreign trade; cultural characteristics of Japan and the Philippines; student life in Japan and the Philippines; how to promote friendly relations between the Philippines and Japan; and what the students could contribute to world civilization (Goodman 1968, 85). The subsequent conferences discussed, with a few variations on emphasis, more or less similar topics.

The adviser of the Filipino group that went to Japan for the first conference was impressed with Japan. Some of the Japanese characteristics that he hoped the Filipinos could emulate were honesty, discipline, and courtesy. Comparing Philippine economic development and

plan for industrialization, he believed that Japan was far more advanced. Nevertheless, this adviser believed that a Japanese-Philippine economic coalition was impossible, and that the friendly ties between Japan and the Philippines, were humiliating (Goodman 1967, 62–132; 87, 100). He might have been referring to the balance of trade between Japan and the Philippines, which was generally unfavorable to the latter.

The fourth and last Filipino-Japanese Student Conference, held in Manila in 1940, caught the attention of a Filipino journalist. He wrote two articles about it, both articles illustrated with cartoons that eloquently summarized his views of this particular conference (See Ty 1940b, 16–17, 19; 1940a, 52–54). The first cartoon depicted a bespectacled Japanese student in his university uniform and a Filipino student in Western coat. The Japanese student was sucking vital facts from a hose stuck in the Filipino student's mouth. The facts were being pumped into buckets of Japan, through a machine marked "STUDENT CONFERENCE." The second cartoon had a Filipino student behind an operating apparatus placed on a platform with the words "FILIPINO-JAPANESE STUDENT CONFERENCE." A bespectacled Japanese student, about to perform an operation on the Filipino student's heart, said to the bewildered patient: "the occidental way of life has harmed you. You need an operation like China did!"

It had been two years since the proclamation of the new order in Asia by the Japanese government on 3 November 1938. By the time the participants in the fourth conference arrived in Manila on 19 July 1940, this concept had already been expanded into the concept of the "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere," although officially proclaimed only on 1 August 1940 (see Mima 1983).

The atmosphere of the conference reflected the rising tension in East Asia. The Japanese students zealously justified the Japanese invasion of China (see Masatoshi 1941). Their zeal was met with the witty, logical, and open pro-American rebuttals of the Filipino students, who frankly proclaimed their ardent hope for the coming independence of the Philippines. The Japanese participants showed signs of exasperation over what they described as "narrow-mindedness" of the Filipino students. They (as well as the delegates to the second conference in 1938) expressed a strong contempt for democracy and a firm approval of totalitarianism.

The other channel of cultural relations was the educational trips to Japan organized by numerous individuals and organizations for Filipinos from varied walks of life—students, educators, businessmen,

politicians, etc. But the most active of the individuals was Yamanouchi Hideo, head of the Nishi Honganji Buddhist temple in Manila, who guided students and professionals to and in Japan every year from 1935 to 1940 (see Goodman 1967, 146). His tours, subsidized by several organizations, such as the Japan Tourist Bureau, included second-generation Japanese in the Philippines.

As was to be expected, participants in these educational tours saw the natural beauty of Japan. It should have created quite an impact, especially on Filipinos who had not seen spring, winter, or autumn. The shrines and temples should have seemed exotic to them, who came from a country of Western-style churches. It could have created in them, or reinforced the idea they already had or heard, that Japan was able to modernize without destroying its Asian tradition.

All the above activities, professorial visits, student conferences, and educational tours, were facilitated by semi-governmental organizations. The most involved of these organizations were the Kokusai Bunka Shinkôkai (Society for the Promotion of Cultural Relations, more popularly known as K.B.S.), founded in 1934 and the Hiripin Kyôkai (Philippine Society), founded in 1935. The sister organization of the Hiripin Kyôkai in the Philippines was the Philippine-Japan society, founded in 1937. In 1940, the Hiripin Kyôkai organized its short-lived youth chapter, the Nippi Seinen Bunka Kyôkai (Philippine-Japanese Youth Cultural Society). Only the K.B.S. and the Hiripin Kyôkai will be discussed here, for the Philippine-Japan Society and the Nippi Seinen Bunka Kyôkai did not have much time to realize their aims and plans before the outbreak of World War II (see Yu-Jose 1994a, 83–110; Yu-Jose 1994b, 125–34.).

These organizations closely coordinated their activities with the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Education, and Railways, as well as the Japan Travel Bureau. They also received the cooperation and support of several Japanese business corporations.

The K.B.S., founded in 1934, arranged orientation lectures for the students and professionals who visited Japan. It also published works on almost anything about Japan—history, etymology, literature, science, religion, ethics, education, law, politics, economics, art, industry, architecture, music, drama, national traits, customs, sports, etc. Among its publications particular to Philippines-Japan relations were *Japan Footnotes*, a memoir and travelogue of the first educational tour to Japan in 1935, *Japan-Philippine Relations*, a collection of essays on the Philippines and Japan, and a Japanese-Spanish dictionary. It also pro-

duced films about Japanese culture. Most of the publications and films of K.B.S. were donated to libraries and universities abroad. It also donated or loaned cultural pieces to foreign museums for display.

The K.B.S., however, tended to pay more attention to Europe than to the Philippines. A perusal of its monthly, *Kokusai Bunka* and its English counterpart, *K.B.S. Bulletin*, will easily reveal this. During the prewar period, only one article on the Philippines appeared in *Kokusai Bunka*. It was about foreign influences on Philippine culture.

As the international situation deteriorated, professorial visits and educational tours became more difficult to arrange. They were stopped in 1940. The K.B.S. was put directly under the Information Bureau, and became an arm for wartime cultural propaganda. The K.B.S. continued to exist, although with less vigor, until in 1972, the present Japan Foundation acquired its rich library of books, and assumed its functions.

The other organization, the Hiripin Kyôkai, was more focused than the K.B.S. was, on the Philippines, but its cultural activities were combined with economic ones (Yu-Jose 1999a, 145–46).

The economic slant of the society could be gleaned from the composition of its membership. Almost all of them were presidents and officials of big Japanese corporations. Only a handful were university professors and journalists. Its publications too, were heavy on economic information. Its monthly, the *Hiripin jôhô* (Philippine Bulletin) contained articles on Philippine natural resources and economic and political conditions of the Philippines. The society published Japanese translations of the *Philippine Mining Year Book*, *Philippine Mining News*, *Industrial and Machinery Journal*, and various researches on Philippine mining, economy, and commerce.

Among its cultural activities was taking care of the needs of Filipinos studying in Japan. The usual practice was for the Filipino students to lodge at the Kokusai Gakuyûkai dormitory and to learn the Japanese language there. After the language training, the Hiripin Kyôkai assisted them in entering a college or a university for their specializations.

The social calendar of the Hiripin Kyôkai was filled with receptions—welcome parties, farewell parties, tea parties—attended by high ranking government officials, influential businessmen, as well as students. These social affairs provided opportunities for Japanese and Filipinos to meet, to cultivate friendships and business partnerships, to establish political contacts, or simply to disseminate and share information.

The Hiripin Kyôkai is still active, but its presence is hardly known to Filipinos who go to Japan for educational and cultural purposes. While before the war, it was the organization to contact when in Japan, now, many Filipino students, government officials, and even businessmen come and go without hearing about the Hiripin Kyôkai.

## Conclusion

The Philippines began trying to know more about Japan in the 1920s. Usually, the Filipino who attempted to learn about Japan was motivated by curiosity and the thought that there might be something he could learn from his Asian neighbor. He was curious, because the world had talked about this "unique." Asian country whose artistic style had influenced European paintings. Japan had been pictured in the mass media as the only independent Asian country, and the Philippines was striving for independence. Could he, perhaps, find out what enabled the Japanese to preserve their independence?

The Japanese, on the other hand, was not interested in learning about the Philippines, outside of information that concerned trade and natural resources. In the last five years of the 1930s, the Japanese government, in order to support promotion of its economic interests in the Philippines, launched a cultural policy that would attract Filipinos to Japan.

In a way, Japan's cultural policy in the 1930s answered the Filipinos' desire to go to Japan, to meet Japanese, and to know more about Japan. There was, however, no meeting of intentions. The Filipinos wanted to know and to understand, as well as to tell the Japanese about the Philippines. The Japanese, on the other hand, were more fired by the desire to make the Filipinos see Japan, and to like what they saw. The Filipinos sought confirmation of what they had heard about Japan. The Japanese sought approval of their country's achievements and policies.

Any cultural interaction between two states is a dialogue of emotion or feeling. Expressed or otherwise, the dialogue would arouse among the participants feelings—appreciation, admiration, tolerance, rejection, dislike, fear, disgust, inferiority complex, superiority complex and others—towards the other culture as well as their own culture. It could even result in one country changing the culture of the other, as China did to Japan. Japan and the Philippines experienced this cultural dialogue in the last five years of the 1930s. But World War II cut short the

interaction. Because of this, it is difficult to determine what dominant feelings were developed among the Filipinos and the Japanese. Moreover, it is not possible to know how the dialogue could have developed if the war had not interrupted it.

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