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## BOOK REVIEWS

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### A Glimpse Into Manila's Social History

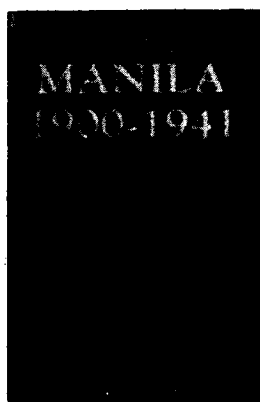
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Ricardo T. Jose

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Manila 1900-1941: Social Change in a Late  
Colonial Metropolis

by Daniel F. Doeppers. Ateneo de Manila University Press. 1984.  
194 pp.



Pre-World War II Manila generally brings back to mind idyllic concepts such as "peacetime", prosperity and low prices. Many from that generation harken back to those times when the standard of public schools was high, when a high school graduate could gain fair employment, when a few centavos would you buy a meal and leave you change. Writers still write nostalgically of those faraway gay years, and thus the idea that pre-war Manila was one of the best times to have lived is carried on.

Less savory facts, though, tend to mar the memories of those who enjoyed that life. Strikes and labor disputes; fluctuation of wages and social injustice were present then, as they are now. Pre-war Manila was thus not the truly idyllic city that had been celebrated in the past.

In the light of these contrasting views, several questions may be asked. Who enjoyed the prosperity of Manila then? Who paid for it? How was this seeming prosperity created? These, and many other related questions are raised in Daniel F. Doeppers' book, *Manila, 1900-1941*.

Doeppers, who was in the Philippines recently, is professor of geography at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and specializes in the study of urban phenomena in Southeast Asia, with special attention to the Philippines and especially Manila. In researching for this book, Doeppers utilized a variety of source material - interviews, census reports, city directories, newspapers and a myriad of other published and unpublished, official and unofficial material. The conclusions Doeppers reaches are, in the end, seemingly self-obvious, but see print and substantiation here for the first time.

Doeppers introduces the book as dealing with "the set of processes and careers which produced and changed the structure of Filipino society in Manila during the period from the

turn of the century to 1941. It concerns Manila as a set of employment structures and as a stratified society." This sets the tone of the book: it is not one that deals with individuals, but one that attempts to understand the social dynamics of Manila.

The first forty years of this century saw two great periods of social dynamism in Manila. The first period, which started with the turn of the century and ended in 1920, was spurred by an increase in jobs. This increase in jobs was the result of an expanding colonial bureaucracy which involved more Filipinos as Filipinization set in, and also through the introduction of new modes of technology - the *tranvia* (electric street-car), printing presses, etc. Since these jobs required available manpower, men and women with high school diplomas or less were taken in; social movement and change was thus facilitated. As, however, the positions were filled up, competition began for the remaining openings. Improvement of health and sanitation as well as migration into Manila increased the number of individuals competing for jobs, while the creation of new job openings declined. By 1920, requirements for white-collar jobs became stiffer - generally, higher educational backgrounds. Lower-income families could not afford these, and thus had less access to social mobility; the white-collar occupations and higher-income jobs thus were limited again to the upper class.

The second period of social dynamism in Manila occurred in the late 1930s, as the Commonwealth government took over. However, this was but short-lived as the war cut it short.

Availability of jobs and provisions for social mobility depended on several other factors as well. The overall economic order, dependent on exports, rose and fell in accordance with demands of the world market. This affected the strength of the peso, and hence the buying power of wages. During periods of high foreign demand, a movement from the civil servants sector to private business would be discernible; with the advent of the Great Depression in 1929, a movement away from business into more stable occupations occurred. If mobility was not possible, and buying power remained low, then strikes would result, as they did in the cigar business in 1934. This and other strikes of the period helped raise class consciousness, which manifested itself in the creation of unions and mutual aid societies.

Doeppers examines other aspects of factors affecting social mobility - the overall economic system and its relation with urban employment; education, migration, political policies and economic crises. Doeppers also studies career patterns, composition of social groups and the creation of new classes.

What is particularly notable in Doeppers' analysis is the method he uses. Doeppers buttresses his conclusion with data statistics, in graphs and tables; his analytical methodology includes linkage analysis - "assessing mobility by tracing successive cohorts of anonymous individuals over time" - which appears to be the first time this technique has been applied to an Asian city. To the uninitiated, the graphs and tables will prove difficult to grasp at first, but they provide concrete substance to the conclusions.

The quantitative approach is new in its application to social history here, and Doeppers' study acknowledges the

problem in using quantification in the Philippine setting: the lack of data! Many of the graphs are incomplete, owing to the absence of figures; in other tables, the variance of available data becomes a problem.

**Manila 1900 - 1941** is a first in local scholarship in its scientific analysis of Manila society and social change, and for that it must be commended. While Doeppers acknowledges the tentativeness of some of his conclusion owing to lack of data, he has laid the groundwork for further study.

One may find, however, one fault in the study. As a dissertation or a thesis, it is excellent; as a book, however, it

makes for very difficult reading. The language is, in many cases, highly technical (with an insufficient glossary!); to the general reader it will be almost impossible to follow. The graphs are also sometimes difficult to follow, as the axes' labels are not simple. Figure 13, for example, plots "percent aged 15-24" versus "percent illiterate" in showing the major occupations of 1939. Would it not have been simpler to have graphed age versus literacy instead?

Of course, the study as published is not aimed at the general reader; but with the timeliness of his analysis, Doeppers could have simplified portions so his conclusions could reach a larger, interested audience.

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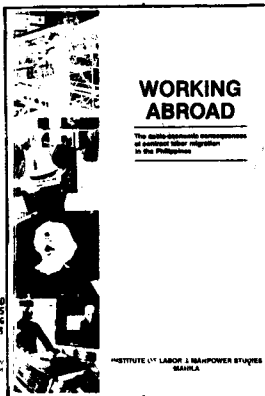
## The Need For A Critical Approach In Government Research

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Maximillan Millora

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**Working Abroad: The Socio-economic Consequences  
of Contract Labor Migration in the Philippines**  
by the Institute of Labor and Manpower Studies, Ministry  
of Labor and Employment. 1984. 302 pp.



Research is an integral component of policy-making. Especially for government, research provides for the empirical bases - the feasibility, the viability and the implications - of its major undertakings. As such, it is always crucial that government programs be based on and adapted to the findings of research. But as data can never stand alone, the research study should not be empirical for empiricism's sake. Rather, data-evaluation should operate within a framework of a holistic and root-seeking analysis. Indeed, as an integral part of government programs, research should not be regarded as external to the subjects of the research and policy formulation.

**Working Abroad: The Socio-economic Consequences of Contract Labor Migration in the Philippines** is one research study which fails to meet these criteria. A "technical report" of the Ministry of Labor and Employment (MOLE)'s research arm, the Institute of Labor and Manpower Services (ILMS), this study, conducted in 1982-1983, is nevertheless a pioneering attempt by government and its agency to "draw up a comprehensive set of empirical evidences on the sending economy". The study of temporary labor migration was made to further investigate and to control labor migration through policy formulation and recommendation.

As a product of 17-month long research, the study reveals wide-ranging and detailed information regarding the general conditions of the Overseas Contract Workers (OCWs) before their departure up to the time of their return to the Philippines. There is a demographic and socio-economic profile of OCWs; data on their work history; descriptions of the process of overseas job search; evaluation of overseas working conditions and job satisfaction; identification of the personal difficulties experienced by the OCWs as well as of those related to them; data on the nature of remittances, consumption, saving, asset accumulation and business investments; an assessment of present attitudes to overseas work, as well as their opinions on the services rendered by the MOLE.

Commendable up to this stage is the initial effort towards a more rational program for implementation. And yet, despite the mass and maze of data, the research is not really able to explain the phenomenon of overseas labor migration. The research merely describes it as it manifests itself now, accepting overseas labor at its face value.

If the research promises to be comprehensive, then more basic questions should have been answered, such as: What gave rise to labor outmigration as a whole? What is the real cause of unemployment and balance of payments (BOP) deficits which the export of Filipino manpower is said to be a solution to? Why does the government have to assiduously promote labor outmigration? In the end, who benefits and loses most from the present arrangement? All these would become clear once research departs from the limited, confining, and reactionary perspective of positivist research which is the framework of this current study.

The current labor migration is a phenomenon that is better understood within the framework of world capitalism where the close interaction between capital and labor is inextricable. Capitalism, which thrives on capital, accumulation and expansion, seeks the cheapest and most productive labor in order to gain the greatest profit. Thus, capital goes where there is cheap and productive labor or instead demands for it. On the international plane, one prerequisite to capitalism is the high mobility of capital and labor among countries. This is facilitated by their government's tolerant or promotional policies. Capital-rich countries invest in or demand labor from labor-surplus economies, which are usually the underdeveloped Third World Countries (TWCs), the Philippines included. These countries, whose governments operate within the parameters of western-oriented, neo-classical economy, more than welcome the opportunity to employ its labor force abroad in its attempt to gain foreign capital in order to im-