



**Lydia N. Yu Jose (Editor). (2008). *The Past, Love, Money, and Much More: Philippines-Japan Relations Since the End of the Second World War*. Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press.**

The significance of Japan to the Philippines has been reflected in historical sources as one that is anchored on World War II when the former invaded the latter. A volume that has just come out, edited by Dr. Lydia Jose, seeks to move that dated mooring toward one that is more positive and celebratory but also nuanced in a contemporary and historical setting. After all, relations between the two countries actually date as far back as the 17<sup>th</sup> century. World War II might be considered a “hiccup” in the relations between the two countries. The book comprised of 11 essays by known Filipino authors and scholars, provides

a wider context for Japan's relations with the Philippines in the post-WWII context but beyond simply saying that it is unequal. It aims to confront the more profound side of Philippines-Japan relations through its contributors' discourses on culture, memory, love, and economics. It is a departure from the more shallow narrative interpretation of Japan as "the land of the yen" and anime and technology. It may be said that the volume speaks more of how Filipinos have looked at (or up to) Japan in the post-war period rather than a comprehensive rendering of the relations between the two countries from the perspectives of both Filipino and Japanese scholars.

The Philippines' modern encounter with Japan took place in the late 19th century. Japan had just won over China in 1894/1895 in a war over the control of Korea. By this time, China had become just the shadow of its former imperial self and Japan was the newcomer in the imperialist block. It also served to introduce the new industrialized Japan that, hardly a quarter century before, had been an isolated feudal empire. Japan had challenged the colonial order that had been dominated for so long by the West. Back then, Japan was admired by the anti-colonial (anti-West) movement in the Philippines against Spain (and for that matter, most other Asian peoples struggling against the yoke of colonialism). Filipino revolutionaries sought some assistance from the Japanese. However, circumstances at the time prevented Japan from providing such assistance. There were at least two attempts on the part of the Katipunan to solicit guns and ammunition from Japan. Unfortunately, the first shipment sank because of a typhoon on its way to the Philippines while the second and final shipment ended up being "borrowed" by the Nationalist Chinese. Sadly, this historical context between Japan and the Philippines has been largely forgotten.

Japan has now again caught the attention of many Filipinos. The introduction of the volume by Lydia Jose notes that Filipinos in Japan are the largest among the those coming from Southeast Asia. Japan is a major trading and investment partner of the Philippines (who isn't?).

Who can resist the cars and technological marvels that Japan now offers to the world? It is certainly hard to ignore Japan if one is still a developing country like the Philippines.

The cultural connection between the two countries has become a major pillar of the relations between Japan and the Philippines. Since the 1960s, Japan has been promoting peace and understanding by underpinning this effort with the promotion of Japanese culture. Promoting Japanese studies has been the main vehicle for promoting Japanese culture. The contributions of Lydia Jose and Tolentino speak of the establishment of cultural relations between Japan and the Philippines including the establishment of the first Japanese Studies Program at the Ateneo - the very first program of its kind in the country. Lydia opines that the Program was first offered to the University of the Philippines but its authorities refused back in the 1960s. The reader response is: Why did the UP authorities refuse this Program? If the fresh memory of the War was the reason for the state university's refusal, how come Ateneo accepted it?

In Rico Jose's chapter on memorials and commemorations of WWII in the Philippines and the role that Japan played in them, he shares that Japan only participated in a limited way in these commemorations during the early post-war years. Filipinos at the time also felt uneasy standing shoulder-to-shoulder with their "enemies" during such commemorations. However, there is little mention of the Filipino nationalists who collaborated with the Japanese during the war, and what happened to them afterwards. Why is it that the Filipino nationalists are hardly remembered such as the Makapili under Benigno Ramos and how is it possible that they have been vilified as lackeys of the Japanese imperial army?

The contribution by Ruiz describes the relatively smooth cooperative relations between Japanese and Filipino mathematicians. This is rather obvious. Mathematicians everywhere spoke the same language. Mathematicians, like all serious academics, are oriented

towards their discipline and not much elsewhere. The fact that the relations were started between the two at a relatively later time period (the late 1970s) can also explain the better quality of relations. Interestingly, the views of mathematicians about the war are not discussed.

Kunio and Bernardo, in their contribution on the history of the partnership between Japan and the Philippines through the creation of the Asian Development Bank underpin the growing economic and regional significance of Japan in the post-WWII period. However, the approach of the chapter lacks some historical detail and does not fully capture the true extent and significance of the ADB not only for Japan and the Philippines but also for the rest of Asia. Payot discusses the role played by Japanese non-governmental organizations in promoting development in the Philippines. This is certainly a dimension of relations between the two countries rarely analyzed.

The contributions of Flores, Valiente, and Santos speak to the cultural and personal ties that exist between the two countries. Valiente's narrative of how it is to be a member of a Japanese family by marriage is a refreshing counterpoint to the political narratives of other scholars. The contributions of Flores and Santos are on more contemporary movie portrayals of Japan and the war in the Philippines which have managed to be more sophisticated and in a sense more politically correct. In the previous generation (i.e., the 1960s and 1970s), the portrayal of the Japanese is much less romanticized with a specific macho Filipino guerilla hero "dissimulating" an entire platoon of Japanese soldiers with just a 45 caliber pistol - without even reloading! One wonders how more "balanced" and complete these contributions would be if the authors also considered these earlier (unpalatable) portrayals.

In the final analysis, how Japan has been perceived by Filipinos in the contemporary, post-war context is largely a function of the former's economic accomplishments and cultural resilience and the extent to which the latter has been affected by such. Judging from the

contributions, World War II has now become a distant memory that perhaps most Filipinos might wish to forget. The volume's message appears to be: It is time move on.

**JORGE V. TIGNO**  
Dept of Political Science  
UP Diliman

