THE ALIEN, THE CITIZEN, AND THE TRIUMPHANT CAPITALIST

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Abstract
This paper examines notions of the “alien” and the “citizen” or the outsider and insider based on the Chinese Filipino experience as portrayed in Charlson Ong’s novel Banyaga: The Song of War (2006). Although the Chinese have lived in the Philippine archipelago since the twelfth century, they have always been considered banyaga (alien or foreigner) by Filipino “natives.” I argue that the marginalization of the Chinese has led them to specialization in trade and commerce, which in turn has steered them, paradoxically, towards exceptionalism. As such, I correlate Ong’s banyaga with Georg Simmel’s concept of the stranger and argue that “strangeness” positions the Chinese to become the “triumphant capitalist” and “flexible citizen” as personified by the Chinese tycoon in Banyaga. Historically, the Chinese in the Philippines have been situated in the margins of society. The socio-political alienation of the Chinese in Philippine society is not only due to their race and their legal designation as aliens during various colonial and postcolonial regimes, but also from their historic role as trader, middleman, mercantilist, and capitalist. The sojourning practices and transnational connections of the Chinese have also contributed to the native’s perception of the Chinese as alien and foreign. As such, this paper also investigates how transnationalism complicates issue of citizenship, nation-making, and national formation, and how these very same transnational linkages of the Chinese have poised them to become the flexible citizens of the twenty-first century. As a counter-point to Banyaga, Ong’s earlier novel, The Embarrassment of Riches (2000), is also briefly examined in this paper. Embarrassment is a literary intervention that allows us to explore the multiple strands of national identity and the complex, even predatory, transnational processes that impact the nation-state due to increasing migration and global expansion of capitalism.

Keywords
Chinese Filipino Literature, Cultural Studies, Diaspora Studies, Migration, Philippine Literature, Transnationalism

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This paper is primarily a reading of Charlson Ong’s novel entitled *Banyaga: A Song of War* (2006) to examine the enigma of the stranger personified in the Chinese sojourner or migrant and how he segues seamlessly to become the “triumphant capitalist” in the person of the tycoon (“taipan”). As a counterpoint to the discourse on the notion of the stranger and citizen in *Banyaga*, I will also briefly examine an antagonist in Ong’s earlier novel *The Embarrassment of Riches* (2000). While we see the Chinese stranger who desires and longs to be part of the community and in some ways finds acceptance in society through economic success in *Banyaga*, we see the opposite in the Chinese rogue alien who uses his ability for flexible capital accumulation to subvert the nation in *Embarrassment*. Thus, I argue that these opposing views of the Chinese as alien or stranger portrayed by Ong in these two novels mediate, engage, and participate in the lively contemporary global discourse about the impact of migration and globalization and how these transnational processes bear on notions of identity, citizenship, and nation.

The opening chapters of *Banyaga: A Song of War* take place in Manila in the 1920s. Manila is a colonial city in the early twentieth century. Colonial rule has changed hands from the Spaniards to Americans. Colonial Manila can be considered as a twentieth-century metropolis where Asian and Western peoples, cultures, and languages converged. Indios (“natives”), Spaniards, Americans, Chinese, mestizos, and creoles live in Manila. One can hear strains of Tagalog, Spanish, English, Hokkien, and creolized versions of these languages. Horse-drawn *calesas* ply the streets alongside American-made Studebakers.

The novel begins when five young Chinese boys, aged eight to twelve, meet and swear brotherhood aboard the Chungking ship that originates from Amoy (Xiamen in Mandarin) in southern China and is en route to Manila. The poor young boys navigate the “strange land” that is Manila, overcoming hurdles that come one after the other. By the time they reach adulthood (one died in early childhood), the remaining four all excel in their respective endeavors.

“Banyaga” is a Tagalog word that variably means alien, foreigner, or stranger. It is an appropriate title for a novel that narrates the story of Chinese migrants who settled and lived in Manila for decades but are often viewed as outsiders by their host society. The fictional novel *Banyaga* can be viewed as an articulation and reconstruction of the historical struggle of Chinese to become Filipino and to move from the margins to mainstream society by participating in both the economic and political endeavors of the country. As such, this historical re-construction is viewed from the point-of-view of the Chinese. Since the novel parallels the historical trajectory of the Chinese in the Philippines from the turn of the 20th century to the early 2000s, I advocate a socio-historical reading of the novel as it traces the evolution of poor young migrants to successful tycoons and their transformation
from Chinese to Filipino or from alien to citizen as framed by historical events. Doing a historical reading of this novel in the manner of Lisa Lowe’s critical reading against the grain also means noting what has been missed or overlooked in the mainstream narration of Philippine history, which the novelist Ong fills in or highlights by writing from the perspective of those who are in the margins of history, particularly the point-of-view of Chinese migrants as personified by the five sworn brothers in the novel. As the Chinese are either invisible or vilified in the “native” or mainstream narration of history, Ong re-writes history to make the Chinese visible in various subjectivities, from coolies, artisans, artists, politicians, to merchants, traders, and tycoons.

THE CHINESE IN PHILIPPINE SOCIETY

Reading a novel about the Chinese in the Philippines socio-historically involves knowing the position of the Chinese in Philippine society. The long history of trade and cultural interaction between what we now call Chinese and Filipinos dates back to the Song dynasty (approximately 962-1279) (Chu 53-54; McCarthy 61). While the Chinese traded and interacted with the peoples of the Philippine archipelago as far back as the tenth century, they have lived in the Philippines since the twelfth century. When the Spaniards arrived in Manila in 1570, they found there a settlement of 150 Chinese. By the time the Americans arrived in Manila at the turn of the twentieth century, the time period when Ong’s novel begins, there were about 40,000 Chinese in the Philippines and about 117,000 in 1939 as the end of the American regime drew near (cited in Chu 292).

The long and rich history of the Chinese in the Philippines have been examined by noted historians and scholars, from Antonio Tan, Eufronio Alip, Charles McCarthy, Jacques Amyot, Kwok-Chu Wong, Edgar Wickberg, to Andrew Wilson, Richard Chu, Caroline Hau, Lily Rose Tope, Theresa Carino, Tina Clemente, among others. However, at the risk of oversimplifying this complex history of the Chinese in the Philippines linked to legislation are discussed below because they are relevant to the reading of Banyaga, which as the title implies, centers on the “alien-ness” and “foreignness” of the Chinese.

Historically, the Chinese in the Philippines were generally considered aliens by law. During the Spanish rule in the Philippines, the Chinese were declared aliens by royal decree and by decree of Spanish governors and were thus subjected to severe taxation, deportations, segregation, and massacres, depending on the threat they posed to ruling regimes and on the needs of the economy (Alip 35-36; Jensen 3-18). When the Americans colonized the Philippines in 1898, the colonial subjects were categorized as either “Filipino” or “non-Filipino alien,” with the Chinese regarded as
aliens (Chu 5). During the early American regime in the Philippines and at the heels of the reign of the Qing dynasty in China at the beginning of twentieth century, the Chinese in the Philippines were considered subjects of the Chinese emperor under the Qing Nationality Law of 1909 (Tan, *The Chinese in the Philippines, 1898-1935* 112; Wilson, 4). Thus, during the American period and during the early postcolonial regimes prior to the 1975 mass naturalization law, the Chinese in the Philippines were generally considered as aliens legally, with various exceptions, such as the case with Chinese mestizos born in the Philippines, for one. While mestizos did not automatically acquire Philippine citizenship, they could opt for it upon reaching the age of majority as provided for in the 1935 Constitution (Chu 5).

Aside from this legal imposition on the Chinese as aliens historically which affected how they were perceived by Philippine state and society, historians Richard T. Chu, Edgar Wickberg and Antonio Tan, among others cite other reasons why the native discriminated against the Chinese in the Philippines. I highlight four reasons for this discrimination of the Chinese which are pertinent to my context reading of a novel that focuses on the Chinese as strangers and outsiders in their host society: (1) the racial and cultural difference of the Chinese from mainstream Philippine culture; (2) their dominance in the local economy; (3) their cross-border practices, such as sojourning and migration, which defy the commonly accepted fixed or rooted basis of a group identity of the natives; (4) their linkage to two communities or nations and their straddling between two cultures, those of China and the Philippines, making their political allegiance suspect (Chu 4, 283-289, 406-407; Wickberg 175; Tan, *The Chinese in the Philippines, 1898-1935*; Tan, *The Chinese Mestizos*). Note that the latter two factors, the cross-border practices of the Chinese and their dual linkages to two communities, nations, or cultures, are inter-related.

Firstly, let me qualify my use of the term “native.” The native or indigenous peoples of the Philippines consist of highland and lowland tribes who still live in isolated mountain and lowland areas of the Philippines. They are the descendants of the original inhabitants of the Philippines who were able to resist centuries of Spanish and American colonization and in the process have retained, for the most part, their traditional customs and way of life to this day. However, for the purposes of this paper, I use “native” to refer to the more recent but long-settled population in the Philippines: the Malay “natives” of the Philippine archipelago who were called “indios” by the Spaniards during the Spanish regime and who were later known as “Filipinos” post-1898. Note that before 1898, the term “Filipinos” was used only to refer to “criollos,” the Philippine-born Spaniards (Wickberg 7, 53).

The Chinese in the Philippines are diverse, from the old timers, to the mestizos and the more recent ethnic Chinese immigrants. Because *Banyaga* is about migrants of Chinese ethnicity or heritage who later self-identified as Filipinos, I
likewise use the un-hyphenated term “Chinese Filipino” to refer to Filipinos with Chinese heritage or ancestry, in keeping with the semantic usage of Kaisa Para sa Kaunlaran (Unity for Progress), a non-profit organization actively working towards the social, economic, and political integration of the Chinese in Philippine society. Kaisa omit the hyphen, explaining that in the term “Chinese Filipino,” “Chinese” is an adjective to the noun “Filipino.”6 Novelist Ong himself uses “Chinese Filipino” to refer to those “who acknowledge their [Chinese] ethnicity but consider themselves members of the [Philippine] national polity” (C. Ong, “Bridge Too Far” xv).

Regarding the first factor on racial and cultural difference, the cultural distance between the Chinese and the Filipino native are the basis of “othering” that we see in Ong’s Banyaga and which Chu examines historically in his book entitled Chinese and Chinese Mestizos of Manila (2010). The physical, religious, and cultural differences of the Chinese from the natives are the reasons why the Chinese are mocked, ridiculed, or looked down upon by the natives. Hence, I note with interest Ong’s preference for “banyaga” as the title and subject of his novel instead of “dayuhan,” which also means foreigner, outsider, or stranger in Tagalog. The word “dayuhan” is merely used to refer to persons (Rubino 106; Panganiban 125). On the other hand, “banyaga” not only applies to a person but all things foreign, such as language, religion, or culture. For the native, the Chinese do not only look foreign but their language, religion, culture, customs, and traditions are also foreign and perplexing, making the Chinese “inscrutable” to the native. Thus, the word “banyaga” encapsulates in a single word the comprehensive foreignness of the Chinese to the native. It is not only race that serves as the marker of difference, but also the culture that accompanies race. As noted by Edgar Wickberg, the term Sangley (or Sanglay), a term used by the Spanish colonizers to refer to the Chinese disappeared from usage and was replaced by its semantic successor, “alien” during the American regime. Alien, noted Wickberg, “does not mean any foreigner, nor even any Chinese who is not a citizen” but is a “pejorative term referring to anyone culturally Chinese, Philippine citizen or not.” Thus Wickberg concluded that this definition is cultural, not political (167). The second reason why the native discriminates against the Chinese is a matter of economics: the Chinese dominance in local economy from the pre-colonial to the colonial and post-colonial eras. While the Chinese were influential in the pre-colonial barter trading, they eventually dominated in the retail and wholesale trade during the colonial period and to the other aspects of trade and industry during contemporary times. During the American regime, one important legislation that affected the status of the Chinese in the Philippines was the Scott Law of 1902,7 a law that extended the 1882 U.S. Chinese Act indefinitely and applied it to US territories and colonies, such as the Philippines and Hawaii. The US Chinese Act restricted the entry of skilled and unskilled Chinese laborers in the US due to the competition posed by Chinese labor to white labor and to labor unions since the Chinese were willing to accept lower wages but unwilling to join
labor unions (Chu 77). With the passage of the Scott Law in the US, the American colonial government in the Philippines enacted the 1903 Chinese Registration Act/Immigration Act, which requires the Chinese to secure a certificate of residence to enter the Philippines, a measure aimed to screen and control the entry of the coolies to avoid Chinese labor from competing with native or local labor. At this time, the vision of the American colonial regime was to create a “Philippines for Filipinos” where competing Chinese labor was seen as detrimental (Purcell qtd. in Tan, *Chinese in the Philippines*, 98). With the restriction on the entry of coolies and laborers into the Philippines, merchants and other Chinese from the upper class entered the Philippines. In fact, Jacques Amyot notes that this legal imposition created a Chinese community with “higher literacy rates and cultural attainments than those found in [other parts] of Southeast Asia” (15). With the absence of Chinese laborers in the Philippines, except for those who entered illegally with fake papers and through bribery, Chinese merchants flourished in the Philippines. With American colonial policy in the Philippines favoring the mercantile class over the laboring class and with subsequent colonial legislations barring the Chinese from owning agricultural lands and from practicing other professions such as law, engineering, or medicine, the Chinese and Chinese mestizos were pushed to the mercantile trade. Thus, legal impositions contributed to the Chinese dominance in the Philippine economy, particularly in the mercantile trade. Through time, we see the historical conflation of the Chinese as merchant or capitalist and the equation of the Chinese with money. I will return to this topic for this essay since economics is central to the study of the Chinese merchant and its exceptional version, the tycoon.

On the matter of the cross-border practices of the Chinese, I highlight sojourning and migration because two of the novel’s protagonists acquire their financial or social capital through sojourning to Manila and the novel highlights the migration of the five sworn brothers. Sojourning is a form of temporary migration that has often been associated with the Chinese (Mackie xiv). Sojourners hark back to the early days of Chinese maritime trading in East and Southeast Asia and sojourning has governed the laws of supply and demand for labor and products between China and their markets. Sojourning reached its peak during the coolie trade of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century where the Chinese were contracted by foreign agents to work not only in Southeast Asia but also in the gold mines of California and the plantations of Peru (Wang 4-5; McKeown). Staying on for long periods of time in their employment abroad, the Chinese sojourners remit the wages they earn to support families back home in China. Then they return home at the end of the contract. Depending on family needs or the beckoning of economic opportunity, they are most likely to go overseas again. Historian Chu aptly notes that the Chinese merchants of turn-of-the twentieth century Manila are precursors of modern transnationalism (Chu 91-143). Their lifestyle and practices involve
sojourning, border crossing, saddling between the boundaries of China and the Philippines, both territorially and culturally, and engaging with other parts of Asia and even the Western world. Their migration networks based on family, clan, or ancestral village are comparable to today’s transnational and globalized networks.

Chinese sojourning illustrates why the Chinese, although strangers, are a familiar sight in the Philippines. Since the tenth century, the Hokkiens from the southern Fujian province have been a seafaring people. Sojourning traders and merchants traveled to barter or trade in the port cities of maritime East and Southeast Asia, from Yushu, Ryukyu, to Manila and Batavia. Early archaeological findings indicate that the early Hokkiens were canoe-builders and Fujian was in fact the shipbuilding center in the early third century. Known for their commercial acumen and environmental adaptability, they traveled to trade hubs in pursuit of business opportunity. Since they waited for the monsoon to change course for their return voyages, the Hokkiens tended to stay overseas for long periods of time (Chin 161,193; Amyot 24-25). For instance, the Chinese stranger is a familiar one in the Philippines not only because he stays for a long time, but also because he is likely to leave and return to Lu-song (Liu Sin), the name used by the Chinese to refer to Manila which is located in Luzon island. One can expect this stranger to be back in the next monsoon. As mentioned, during the Spanish regime in the Philippines, the Chinese were in fact called Sangleys (or Sanglays), which means “regularly come,” since they were itinerants who could be trusted to keep commercial contracts from one trading season to the next (Scott 190). Amyot noted the “great movement back and forth between China and the Philippines” during the Spanish period after 1850 but before the 1882 Exclusion Act: “Every year, 10,000 or 12,000 Chinese would come to Manila while 7,000 or 8,000 would go back to China, many of the latter returning after four or five months” (Philippine Commission Report qtd. in Amyot 11).

When the conditions were favorable, many Chinese sojourners, following the call of opportunity, decided not to return home. Thus, Wang Gungwu concludes that sojourning can be a prelude to eventual migration.

Many Chinese in the Philippines today descended from sojourning laborers and traders who decided to stay as illegal or legal aliens. Others acquired citizenship by marrying native women or by illegally acquiring citizenship through bribery. For many others, after long-term residency in the Philippines as aliens not vested with legal citizenship, the Chinese finally had a breakthrough in 1975. At a time when the Philippines was paving the way for diplomatic recognition of the People’s Republic of China in lieu of the Republic of China (Taiwan), mass naturalization was granted to the Chinese in the Philippines, allowing those who had been illegally staying in the country to be finally naturalized as citizens. As a result, 90% of the Chinese in
the Philippines today are Filipino citizens (C. Ong, “Bridge Too Far” x; Chu 405). Though citizenship was granted belatedly after decades of residency, the Chinese “aliens” had finally become legal citizens. But even as naturalized citizens, the Chinese are still viewed as aliens by the state. In fact, during the growing Filipino nationalism in the 1950s-1960s, the Philippine government passed legislation to nationalize the economy, curtailing access of Chinese Filipinos in retail trade and commodities trading where they had been historically successful. In the name of economic nationalism, Philippine politicians and legislators excluded the Chinese since they were considered “aliens.” One of the chapters in Banyaga is entitled “1954” to refer to the landmark year when the Retail Trade Nationalization Act was passed.  

All these sources of the native’s discrimination against the Chinese are relevant to a socio-historical reading of Ong’s novel because they trace the social and political configuration behind the literary narrative and allow an examination of the enigma of the Chinese as strangers: outsiders who are distant yet near, whose function and identity in society is primarily as merchants or traders but who later stake a claim on nation and demand the rights of a citizen. From poor sojourners, they also evolve into “triumphant capitalists” and “flexible citizens.” I use the terms “triumphant capitalist” and “flexible citizen” to refer to those who are successfully linked to local, regional or global networks of capital and thus possess mobility, whether financially, logistically, or spatially, as based on Aihwa Ong’s concept of flexible citizenship (Flexible Citizenship and Neoliberalism).

BANYAGA: THE NOVEL

Banyaga: A Song of War is an interweaving of the stories of migration of five Chinese boys from different hometown villages in China and their resistance and assimilation to the native society in Manila. The novel centers on the lives of the five sworn brothers: Ah Beng, brothers Ah Puy and Ah Kaw, and cousins Ah Sun and Ah Tin. There are various reasons for the young boys to go to Manila: For Ah Beng, he wants to find his father who sojourned to Manila but has not returned nor sent money to his family in China for some time. Ah Puy and Ah Kaw, recently orphaned, are sold by relatives to a child slave trader and coolie agent, who in turn sells them to a Chinese candlemaker in Manila. Ah Sun is sent by his family to work for his uncle, a dye maker in Manila. Ah Tin is Ah Sun’s cousin who tags along to Manila. All five hail from small hometown villages and come from poor families in China.
In Manila, the sworn brothers live either with family or adoptive parents. Ah Beng finds his father who refuses to acknowledge him but nevertheless houses him. Ah Sun lives and works with his uncle, the dyemaker. Since the dyemaker refuses to take in Ah Tin, he brings Ah Tin to work as a houseboy to a Spanish couple, who later adopts the boy and treats him as their son. Ah Puy and Ah Kaw live with the Chinese candlemaker’s family to whom they are sold, but shortly, they run away from them when the candle maker molests Ah Kaw. Ah Kaw dies in an accident while the two are fleeing. Then, Ah Puy finds his second home with a Chinese junk trader.

Through the years, the four sworn brothers, now using their hispanized Christian names, excel in their own respective endeavors. Ah Beng (known as Antonio Limpoco) inherits his father’s store, expands the store and opens more stores, marries a Chinese woman and has two sons. Ah Puy (Hilario Ong) leaves his adoptive parents’ junk trade to diversify to commodities trading at a time when rice trading is profitable and marries the Chinese junk man’s daughter with whom he has three daughters and one son. Ah Suy inherits his uncle’s dye making business, expands to textile manufacturing, and shifts to import-export business when trading becomes more profitable than manufacturing. Ah Tin becomes a successful painter but abandons his art to go into politics. He marries the daughter of his Spanish adoptive parents, is elected congressman, and even has ambitions to run for senator and president, until he is forced to flee to Malaysia when Marcos declares martial law in the Philippines. Their sworn brotherhood to one another is a valuable network and a reliable resource they fall back on as they face various hurdles as migrants in Manila. All four continue their friendship through the decades, through good times and bad, and until death parts them.

Structurally, the novel contains a total of 58 chapters, which are divided into four parts to represent distinct time periods or landmarks in Philippine history: “Part I Peace Time” (the American / pre-World War II period); “Part II Chasing the Tiger Shadows” (the war years); “Part III Ashes and Diamonds” (the post-war period up to the early Marcos years); and, “Part IV New Society” (the Marcos martial law era up to the 1986 Philippine Revolution and the Cory Aquino period). It opens with a prologue set in the present time during the inauguration of the fifth mall of 78-year old Antonio Limpoco. Then, Chapter 1 flashbacks to when Antonio (then known as 12-year old Ah Beng) and four other Chinese young boys meet aboard a ship from Amoy bound for Manila and swore brotherhood to each other. The novel ends with Chapter 58 set once again aboard a boat, with the two remaining sworn brothers, Antonio and Hilario, together with their children and grandchildren, cruising Manila Bay.
While the novel is organized along a linear historical time, the author uses flashbacks and fast-forwards. Narrated in third person omniscient, the novel’s narrator often reveals or hints at the future as it narrates the present. This play with time creates a fluid and destabilizing feel to the literary piece that is compatible with the author’s discourse on the fluid, hybrid and complex nature of Chineseness, Filipinoness, and “nation-ness” that lie at the heart of Filipino or Chinese Filipino identity.

As early as the opening chapters of Banyaga, the social divide between the Chinese and the natives is already apparent through the pejorative names they call one another. Distrust of strangers runs both ways. For the “native,” the Chinese is banyaga. To the Chinese, the Filipino native is huanna, a Hokkien term which also means foreigner or stranger, often translated as foreign barbarians (Hau, Subject of Nation 275). On the other hand, the Chinese use the Hokkien term lannang, which means “our own people,” to refer to themselves. With the novel written from the point of view of the Chinese and with the first introductory chapters setting the social divide and animosity between the huanna and the lannang, the reader anticipates that this novel will be a woeful Chinese tale of victimization and that the Chinese will be portrayed as the good guys and the Filipinos, the bad guys. But then Ong either surprises or disappoints as he sets a complex microcosm of a society in a historical time where the Chinese and Filipino live together, sometimes geographically segregated from one another, but often in social interaction with one another in daily life.

In Banyaga, Chinese and Filipinos alike play both villains and heroes to each other. Acts of treachery and betrayal as much as goodness and humanity emanate from both sides of this social divide. With this attempt at objectivity or even diplomacy, it becomes apparent that Ong’s intended reading public is Filipinos, whether “native” or of Chinese ancestry. This is consistent with his statement that Filipino Chinese literature is “literature written by Filipinos primarily for Filipinos” (C. Ong, “Bridge Too Far” iii). The microcosm he creates is a means by which a discourse on individual or group identity, citizenship, community, and nation are fleshed out through the lives of the four sworn brothers as lead characters and through the stories of over fifty minor characters and many more background characters. A seemingly tidy microcosm demarcated by an invisible but palpable line of the Filipino-Chinese binary, this literary world is disrupted and destabilized by Ong himself to illustrate the social construction and paradoxes of identity through the phenomenon of the banyaga, the stranger from China navigating a strange land which eventually becomes his or her homeland.

The subject positions of the Chinese, as portrayed in Banyaga, run the gamut from sojourners, deportees, stowaways, political exiles, to immigrants or settlers.
Whether the Chinese came to the Philippines and stayed, whether they left but will return, or stayed for good, these spatial and temporal positionalities affect notions of the stranger and their place in their new host society. This is because the natives also consider origins and residence as significant popular markers of social identity, in addition to race and culture.

Ong captures dexterously the tales and travails of the Chinese in their various subjectivities in the Philippines in his literary construction of history. In most cases, paradoxical pairings of subjectivities overlap as they relate to Chineseness or Filipinoness which in turn often interface with class and/or nation, such as: foreigner and native (Teacher Tong, who is born and raised in Manila, is deported like a foreigner); alien and citizen (Ah Beng, though an alien, acquires Filipino citizenship when he “buys” his citizenship papers); the stranger and the familiar trader (the distant junkman who is a familiar sight as he goes around town buying and selling scrap, but dissociates himself from broader concerns of society like politics); heathen and Christian (Lan Ping, who converts to Christianity but continues the Chinese practice of ancestor worship); and patriot and traitor (Hilario, a resistance fighter who fights alongside Filipino guerillas, is later accused as a treacherous rice hoarder). All these show the shifting positionality and subjectivity of the Chinese, in the eyes of both the Chinese and the native, and how the Chinese deploy adaptable and fluid identity as a “flexible” strategy to respond to crisis or opportunity.

While Cristina Pantoja Hidalgo's brief review of Banyaga in Fabulists and Chroniclers (2008) focuses on the family and nation (83-90), I highlight in my analysis the convergence of race, family, market, and nation in the Chinese Filipino experience. This is because the Chinese protagonists, while hindered by their race and ethnicity, always work in tandem with their commitments and entanglements with family, business and market, and nation. Using collaboration and resistance or cooperation and evasion, the sworn brothers' navigation of their new home often traverses the limits of the legal, the illegal, and the paralegal. While Hidalgo highlights the alienation and estrangement within the family and between family members, I focus on the political alienation of the Chinese as an ethnic group and how this socio-political alienation arises primarily from economic: from their historic role as trader, middleman, mercantilist, and capitalist in state and society. I highlight the role of the marketplace as the sworn brothers become small businessmen who navigate the intricacies of the local economy and how the market inevitably converges with the political. What happens when the distant but familiar stranger claims a stake on the community or nation and demands the rights of a citizen? Banyaga demands a place for those in the margins to be part of the story of nation. As such, Ong's Banyaga can be viewed as, in the words of Deleuze and Guattari, a “revolutionary enunciation” (“Minor Literature” 17) by mediating
and re-interpreting the mainstream version of Philippine history and claiming the rightful place of the Chinese in Philippine state and society.

“BANYAGA”: THE STRANGER, OUTSIDER

Literary writers and social scientists alike, such as Albert Camus in his fictional novel entitled *L’Étranger* (1942) and sociologist Georg Simmel in his essay “The Stranger” (1908), have explored the enigma of the familiar but distant stranger. While Mersault, Camus’ stranger, is often analyzed as someone who disengages himself from society and thwarts society to illustrate the absurdity or meaninglessness of the human condition, Ong’s *banyaga* seeks a communitarian and nationalist meaning to life but is thwarted by society. Writing about European Jews, Simmel argues that the stranger is often a merchant, a Jewish merchant. In *Banyaga*, the stranger is the Chinese merchant whose economic activity is paradoxically the cause for both his rejection and acceptance in Philippine society. Interestingly enough, the Chinese have often been dubbed as the “Jews of the East.”

The story of the merchant, trader, or entrepreneur is strong and recurrent in *Banyaga*. Three of the four sworn brothers have become successful businessmen. Antonio (Ah Beng) and Hilario (Ay Puy), the two surviving sworn brothers, become tycoons with progeny to the third generation. It is thus not surprising that the Chinese have a moneyed view of themselves. In the novel, we glimpse the Chinese’s own view of themselves in Antonio’s remarks:

> The Chinese were storeowners, merchants, bankers, makers of detergents and textiles. They made money, saved money, laundered money, loaned out money. They were respected for their money, tolerated for their money. (310)

Ong’s *banyaga* can be illuminated by Simmel’s concept of the stranger (402-408). Simmel’s stranger is not the Deleuzian nomad who comes today and goes tomorrow (Deleuze and Guattari, *Nomadology* 50-51). Rather, Simmel’s stranger is the “person who comes today and stays tomorrow” (“The Stranger” 402). More importantly, the distinguishing mark of Simmel’s stranger is that “he has not belonged to it from the beginning but he imports qualities into it, which do not and cannot stem from the group itself” (“The Stranger” 402). For instance, Manila’s Chinatown, the primary setting of *Banyaga*, illustrates the Chinese culture or lifestyle that the Chinese has imported into the Philippines.
What is even more interesting is that Simmel identifies that the stranger is usually a trader: “Throughout the history of economics, the stranger everywhere appears as the trader, or the trader as stranger” (“The Stranger” 403). Interestingly enough, the homonym of the Tagalog word “banyaga” in Sanskrit and Malay is “beniaga” which means trade or commerce (Panganiban 125). If the local economy is self-sufficient, then there is no need for the trader or middleman, explains Simmel. But a trader is needed for products that originate outside a group or outside that particular local economy. As we know, trading is an economic activity that Chinese have traditionally performed in East and Southeast Asia. As to distance, Simmel notes “strangeness means that he who is far, is actually near” (“The Stranger” 402). As a trader, the stranger is paradoxically both near and far and is inside yet outside the group. This position of proximity and distance, of being within the community but not being fully integrated into it, has been the enigma of the Chinese and the paradox of Chinese identity in the Philippines. Such is the case with Lee Tam in the novel, who one day, padlocks his store and decides to return to China, lamenting: “I am an old man. I have nowhere else to go, no education, can’t speak Tagalog or English…what’s the point of being cooped here, waiting for the huanna to loot or burn us down?” (192). Unable to assimilate in Manila and tired of the anti-Chinese sentiment that is often manifested in acts of violence, Lee Tam, the failed, un-triumphant entrepreneur, gives up and returns back to his homeland. In Lee Tam’s story, we see not only the failed entrepreneur but also a hostile or inhospitable “host” society that resists and foils the “desire” of a member of minority group to live in a land where lannang and huanna can live together peacefully.

While this paradoxical position of proximity and distance situates the Chinese like Lee Tam in the margins of society, it is also one of the reasons for the success of many Chinese as trader, mercantilist, or capitalist in the Philippines and Southeast Asia. As observed by Eric Tagliacozzo and Norman Parmer, while the Chinese stranger is at once alien and uncomfortable in any given local society and tends to shun politics, he is also able to use his alien status to further economic and even occasionally political ends associated with trade (Tagliacozzo 432; Parmer 46-47). In Banyaga, Ong Han Kee, the junk trader, may well be a classic example of someone who just minds his own business, literally. He focuses solely on his trade and detaches himself from the broader concerns of society, like politics, to stay out of trouble that may jeopardize his business. He withdraws from the rice trade and focuses on the junk trade because: “Rice is life, rice is death… with rice you’re trading with your life all the time” (209). Fresh from the war during which people fought and killed for rice, he deems rice trading a dangerous business because one can get caught up in political entanglements. True enough, Hilario later gets in trouble with the authorities as a rice trader.
As Simmel notes: “Dispersed peoples, crowded into more or less closed cultural circles, can hardly put down roots or find a free position in production. They are therefore dependent on intermediate trade [italics mine] which is more elastic than primary production” (Simmel, *Philosophy of Money* 225; Karakalli 317). Denied political and economic rights affixed to citizenship, the Chinese are not allowed to own land or property under varying laws, particularly the 1935 Constitution. Analyzing the impact of the provisions of the 1935 Constitution during the Philippine Commonwealth period on the Chinese, Charles McCarthy notes that the Chinese “cannot acquire and own land on which to build a home of their own (or, if they would like to be landhold farmers, land on which to cultivate crops) or land on which to build factories if they want to set up or expand job-creative industrial plants.” Neither can they take the civil service examinations to be able to practice professions. Thus, the Chinese tended to engage in the circulation of goods, rather than in production or in the professional occupations. With other options closed, the Chinese were pushed to become traders or merchants. They found a niche in trade or the circulation of goods. While retail and wholesale trade has its own set of legal restrictions, this specialization in the circulation of goods made the Chinese into successful merchants.

However, capitalist success has made the Chinese vulnerable to various forms of marginalization or victimization. In the novel, the Chinese is consistently vulnerable to extortion, such as the Customs man who solicits a bribe from Ah Sun’s uncle for clearing Ah Sun’s alien certificate. Later on, the state intruded in Ah Sun’s textile manufacturing business when a Marcos crony and a military official become his “silent investors” (255).

In Antonio’s introspection about Chinese identity quoted earlier, we see that the Chinese’s own view of one’s self is to be a person of business. Can the Chinese be other than merchant or trader? Antonio opines that being other than what the Chinese has always been or known to be is going against the grain. His speculative comments and questions below indicate that the Chinese contest their own view of themselves, opening up the possibility of formulation and re-formulation of Chineseness:

Yes, they (the Chinese) are certainly businessmen. Perhaps they could be doctors but certainly not artists, not poets or writers. What would they write anyway? What would they paint? Another people’s history? Another people’s pain? Who would listen? Who would care? (310)

The otherness and alienation of the Chinese in Philippine society is poignantly articulated when Antonio identifies the Chinese place or position in Philippine history: as “another people’s history” and “another people’s pain.” The passage
above is a moving evocation of the alienation of the Chinese whose story, pain, and struggle are separate from the history of the Filipino people. Thus, if Antonio were a writer or artist, who will listen to his story or appreciate his art in his host country?

The alienation of the Chinese is then not a matter of ethnicity but also of class. Because the Chinese belongs to the moneyed or mercantile class, the alienation of the Chinese originates from what Hau calls “alienating capital.” Because the Chinese excelled in business and has been associated with wealth and capital, the myth of “Chinese money” is fortified by a history which constructs the Chinese as what Hau calls an “Alien Nation”: a state within a state that performs an economic function. Through varying methods and motivations, Hau claims that key actors and agents in Philippine history, from the colonizers to Filipinos alike, have contributed to carving the Chinese niche in the realm of business and the economy: the merchant niche (“Alien Nation”). Also, ownership of a business or capital is alienating, both to those who own capital and to those who do not, because capital is a marker of class and affluence. Daniel Chirot identified the source of resentment towards the Chinese in Southeast Asia in a straightforward manner: because the Chinese are “successful outsiders” and “occupy lucrative economic positions that are coveted by aspiring members of the majority” (6). Thus, the Chinese are considered usurpers of what are considered inalienable rights of the Filipino.

If we were to consider the notion of the Chinese as “moneyed” as a mere historical construct, we see that just like everyone else, the Chinese has to earn a living, often working hard to do so, a point well-taken and dramatized in R. Kwan Laurel's Ongpin Stories (2008), collection of short stories about Philippine Chinese and Chinese Filipinos “before they were stereotyped as wealthy businessmen.” Running a business is a consuming process, as every business owner can attest. While Antonio imagines “he’d become an artist himself—a musician, perhaps a flute player, a composer, or a writer of martial-arts novels,” he must “make a living in this foreign land” (310).

Through Fernando’s character in Banyaga, Ong breaks the myth of the Chinese about themselves. Fernando, one of the sworn brothers, becomes a painter and is posthumously acclaimed. Through fictional rendering, Ong opens the door for the Chinese man to step out of the box and become someone else other than a man of business. In what seems to be an authorial ploy to negate the patriarchy that often characterizes Chinese families and businesses, Ong also depicts women as successful entrepreneurs in the novel, particularly Hilario’s wife and three daughters. Belinda, who later becomes the wife of Antonio, flees China for the Philippines to escape an arranged marriage. Later on, she becomes a member of the guerilla unit in the Philippines who fights the Japanese in the 1940s. Through Belinda and
other women characters in *Banyaga*, Ong opens the door for the Chinese woman to become other than wife, mother, mistress, prostitute, or a complicit partner to patriarchy.

While the novel affirms that the Chinese tends to shun politics through the character of the junk trader, Ong likewise negates it as the sworn brothers not only become *inevitably* entangled with the politics of the times, particularly during the war period, but also *voluntarily* seek to be involved in a Philippine nationalist project and to go beyond the concerns of profit and profiteering. At the behest of Fernando, the sworn brothers initiate a political movement to bring about change in the corrupt Marcos regime. Fernando claims that the Chinese themselves need to change to bring about authentic change in a corrupt society. So, Fernando invokes them to stop unethical business practices: “No more pay-offs, no more bribes. No more contraband. Let’s pay our proper dues... I want to do the right thing now...It is no longer about money (226, 227)”. He beckons his sworn brothers to jumpstart this project by talking to their Chinese-Filipino chambers of commerce where they are members. That the sworn brothers chose the name Magdiwang for this movement is significant. Magdiwang is the name of the political faction of real-life revolutionary Andres Bonifacio, whose mass-based movement called the Katipunan spearheaded the revolution against Spain in 1896. This invocation of a nationalist project in the 1890s by the sworn brothers in the 1970s asserts that the Chinese are also Filipinos capable of patriotic or nationalist fervor strong enough to desire and implement a concrete program of change for the Philippine nation, one that in fact demands their own conversion into ethical or rectified Chinese.

**TRAITORS AND PATRIOTS, ALIENS AND CITIZENS**

Despite the patriotic fervor of the sworn brothers in *Banyaga*, the native still distrusts them. The native’s distrust may be explained by the cross-border political linkages of the sworn brothers, which the former fears could subvert the national project. In the novel, the sworn brothers are members not only of their family and clan associations in Manila and China-Manila hometown associations but also of various political organizations affiliated with China, such as the Kuomintang (115), the Overseas Chinese Patriotic League (83), and Gi Yong Tong, an organization of overseas Chinese youth (85), among others. They are also members of Chinese chambers of commerce that maintain close relations with China. They interface closely with the Chinese Consulate in Manila. With the kind of company the Chinese keep, the political allegiance of the Chinese is viewed as suspect by the Filipino natives: Are they loyal to China or the Philippines? For instance, Tong is
the teacher in a Chinese school. Born and raised in Manila, he is a devout China nationalist. An example of Tong’s rhetoric of Chinese nationalism, in conversation with the young Ah Puy, runs as follows:

This is why our president (Sun-Yat Sen)... led the overthrow of the Manchu dynasty to set up a republic in Nanjing. This is why we must continue to fight the warlords who want to break our country into pieces. This is why you must study hard and learn and make yourself strong and make good money. So that one day, when the time is right, when your country calls, you can go back to help build a new nation, a great nation, once again. (29)

As a political officer of the Kuomintang Party in Manila, Tong supports a Nationalist China (83). We can read Tong’s pro-China nationalist rhetoric in the context of the inextricability of the plight of the Chinese community in the Philippines with the political climate in China: a “great” China translates to a strong Chinese community in the Philippines; a strong China means it can support the Chinese in the Philippines and that China will be able protect them from drastic or capricious will of the Philippine state. However, Tong’s loyalty to the Philippines is in question because his loyalty to a Chinese cause is translated as disloyalty to the Philippines.

Political loyalty is not just a matter between the Chinese and the Filipino “native.” It is also a matter between the Chinese and the Chinese. Because this scene in the novel is set in the 1950s, it reflects the carryover from the infighting between the Nationalists and Communists in China during the pre-and post-Japanese war period and the resulting struggle between the two parties for leadership in the Chinese community in the Philippines. Tong’s politics make him vulnerable to schemes of both his personal enemies and the Philippine state. As a result, Tong is deported when his personal enemy, a Chinese, reports him to Philippine state authorities as a Communist despite Tong’s Kuomintang sympathies (206). Tong’s betrayal may also be read in light of the intersecting interests of nationalism and capitalism. The Overseas Times, of which Tong is the new editor, cuts into the profits of the competing Tang Shan Daily, which is owned by Lao Bun So, also a Kuomintang officer and a representative of the Philippine Chinese in the Nationalist Parliament in Taiwan (206). Tong’s editorials expose the gambling and prostitution businesses of Lao and his corrupt practices. Hence, capitalist interests and interpersonal rivalries are caught in the rhetoric and guise of nationalism and played out in the political arena among the Chinese themselves.

The question of patriotism and national loyalty is played even more starkly between the Chinese and Filipino “natives.” During the war, Hilario is a member of Squadron 48, a Chinese guerilla group. This squadron aligned with the native Huk
movement to join forces to fight the common enemy. A real-life Chinese guerilla group, the Wha Chi Squadron 48, which grew into a 1,000-strong squadron, is extracted from its overlooked and marginal place in history and embedded in a literary production as if to counter the image of Lim Ah Hong, the traitor and infidel, who looms large in mainstream Philippine history. Through the literary use of Wha Chi Squadron 48, we are able to re-imagine the Chinese alien as patriot and nationalist. Chinese and natives fought side by side as Filipinos for the country's liberation against the common enemy, the Japanese. Every year, this historic collaboration is celebrated by both the Chinese and native Filipino communities in a province north of Manila (Del Mundo).

Despite the fact that Hilario fought side-by-side with Filipinos during the war, he is still viewed as a manipulative alien or traitor by his Filipino childhood friend, Paulo. To demonstrate, I highlight a scene from the novel’s Chapter 33 titled “Rice,” which takes place sometime in the 1950s during the post-war reconstruction period. It is a confrontation between Hilario and Paulo, a Chinese and a “native,” respectively, who grew up together. Hilario, the adoptive son of the junkman, is now engaged in the profitable commodities trading. Paulo, the son of a Filipino employee of the junkman, is now a lawyer who works at the City Hall as the special counsel to the mayor of Manila. Paulo accuses Hilario of hoarding rice:

Paulo: Hoarding is a serious charge, Mr. Ong. We don’t like hoarders in this city. We don’t like aliens profiting from starving Filipinos.

Hilario: These are bullshit charges, Paulo….I had very little rice in my warehouse; those sacks were spoken for. It was mostly sugarcane that was looted.

Paulo: Not according to witnesses.

Hilario: What witnesses?

Paulo: They are under police custody but should these charges be brought to court I assure you that their testimony will be rock solid.

Hilario: My warehouse guard was nearly killed by that mob. I lost my stock. I want justice. I am a citizen... [italics mine]

Paulo: Don’t you be waving your citizenship at me. I know which judge you bribed for those papers. You people have no conscience! I hope you have made enough money to pay your way out of hell when your time comes but don’t think you can throw your stinking money at me! (212)
If we were to read Chapter 33 simply on the personal and familial level, this reading will likely bring up aspects of the past personal relationship between the two men that probably drives Paulo’s antagonism towards Hilario, such as when Hilario chose to marry a Chinese woman instead of Paulo’s sister. However, doing a socio-historical reading may bring out other sources of antagonism. Underlying these accusations by the native, which are unfounded, is his resentment of Chinese money, the alienating capital. Paulo’s antagonism against Hilario could also be attributed to what Neferti Tadiar calls “capital associated with the Chinese alien that cannot accrue to the Filipino” (243). Chapter 33 seems to echo this observation as the native decries the role of Chinese as power brokers. How can aliens be the power brokers, who even control the price and distribution of rice, the staple food of the Filipinos so salient to their very survival? That the alien possesses assets that the native does not own is thus alienating to the latter.

This confrontation between Hilario and Paulo also brings up broader implications of citizenship. In the above exchange, Hilario evokes and demands his rights as citizen against arbitrary criminal charges. Unlike Antonio whose citizenship papers were “bought,” Hilario applied legally to be a naturalized Filipino citizen.

Citizenship can be analyzed in two dimensions: legal and cultural. Simply put, legal or juridical citizenship refers to one’s rights, privileges, and duties as evidenced by a birth certificate, naturalization document, or passport that indicates one’s affiliation with a nation-state. The basis of granting citizenship is primarily governed by either the principle of the bloodline or parentage (jus sanguinis), country of birth (jus solis), or a combination thereof. While the specific citizenship criteria through the course of colonial and post-colonial history in the Philippines took various juridical twists and turns, simply put, one becomes a citizen if the requirements of either residency, parentage, age, location of birth, or financial status are met. Although a mere piece of paper, the citizenship document determines one’s fate or agency. Because Hilario has become a naturalized Filipino citizen, he can claim his rights as a citizen against arbitrary charges by a city official. On the other hand, the absence of a citizenship document can be problematic. Earlier in the novel, Hilario, to preserve the Philippine citizenship of his Chinese bride who was baptized Catholic and thus acquired citizenship, holds his wedding at the Chinese Consulate since his naturalization papers are still pending. Ernesto, Ah Sun’s uncle, figures that it would be better if his children were declared illegitimate to spare them from the law’s ire since he is still an illegal alien. Scenes of actual deportation or fear of being deported runs throughout the novel. In the novel, the Chinese navigate the threat of deportation through legal, illegal, or paralegal means, either by using bribery to get fake citizenship papers or using the “paper son” forged documentation employed by the Chinese in the US. Through deportation, the state is able to use citizenship as a tool of exclusion premised on a bordered territoriality.
By investing or divesting citizenship, the state is able to mark the insider from the outsider.

While legal citizenship could be a matter of a document, cultural citizenship, on the other hand, is an abstract and more contentious terrain. It means being part of the “cultural imaginary” of a community or nation. It refers to the “cultural meanings of belonging” and the “desire for recognition as a full member of the group” (Rosaldo 3). Cultural citizenship is self-bested or bestowed (or denied) by others in a group. Since I have earlier discussed how cultural citizenship has been denied to the Chinese by the native, I will now discuss self-identification or the self-bestowing aspect of cultural citizenship: How or when did the Chinese sworn brothers start identifying themselves as Filipino? When did the alien think of oneself as part of the Filipino cultural or national imaginary? While there is no exact formula on how this transformation occurs, the entanglements of the sworn brothers with family, market, and community are key considerations in the formulation of their identity affiliation with the Philippines. However, if there is one singular event in *Banyaga* that is pivotal in the shift in the sense of national identity from Chinese to Filipino for our young Chinese immigrants, it seems to be the war period: the Japanese occupation of Manila. As we now know, Ah Puy joins the Huks, the underground Filipino guerilla movement against the Japanese. While he hopes that the Filipino guerilla movement succeeds, Ah Beng plays the tightrope of selling Japanese products in his store while providing food and supplies to the underground Filipino guerillas. Ah Tin turns extremist, almost anarchic, in his opposition to the enemy that he throws a grenade at Japanese officials in the Chinese opera theater even when there are many innocent civilians present. Boklan, who later becomes Antonio's wife, is a guerilla leader during the war and does not hesitate to shoot a fellow Chinese who is collaborating with the enemy.

While these characters start out with merely having anti-Japanese sentiment because Japan is the enemy of China, the war transforms them. In the process of merely fighting for home, the territorial site of where they and their families presently reside, the war experience shifts what Hau calls a “sense of home” to a wider social identity of community or nation. In the case of Ah Puy who has fought side by side with the Filipino guerillas, he has experienced bonding with the Filipino community. Taught and politicized by Teacher Tong in his youth to be ready to fight for China when he grows up, Ah Puy, who initially fights for China through his anti-Japanese journalism in a Chinese newspaper, finds himself fighting for the Philippines in the end. For Ah Puy, “home” has indeed become his “homeland.”

As Chinese migrants in the Philippines, the sworn brothers straddle two homes, two cultures, two communities or nations. A rooted, fixed, and territorial notion of migrant or diasporic identity has long been contested. As such, recent discourse
has shifted from a nation-based identity to a transnational notion of belonging (Vertovec; Vertovec and Cohen). While the call to view identity as fluid, shifting, and not defined by territoriality is not new, I highlight how a literary work like *Banyaga* is able to convey, without openly rallying for it, a freer notion of group identification or belonging. By seeing how the sworn brothers negotiate their Chineseness and/or Filipinoness, we get a sense of the state of being commonly experienced by migrants who are linked to two or more nations: the state of being neither “here nor there.”

For the first generation Chinese immigrants in the Philippines like the sworn brothers portrayed in *Banyaga*, while China recedes from memory through the years, the connection to the old country is never completely severed as it is still held by the fragile threads of nostalgia. Reminiscing, Antonio, now a successful tycoon, remarks that while he has never returned to his ancestral village in China, he feels “an aching for his old hometown which he had never visited since leaving as a ten-year old boy” (326). On the other hand, Samuel, who is sick and dying of cancer, visits his hometown in China even if he no longer has any family living there. As if to denote the healing powers of the homeland to one’s psyche or spirit even if it has become distant or absent, Samuel, back in Manila, is reinvigorated and healed of his physical illness. These fictive narratives of grappling with one’s sense of national belongingness indicate that the Chinese Filipino’s connection to China is not really severed and that one’s sense of home or sense of country can point in both directions: towards China and the Philippines. They indicate that one’s sense of home cannot and should not be demarcated territorially and that one can have a dual sense of cultural citizenship.

**FLEXIBLE CITIZENS AND TRIUMPHANT CAPITALISTS**

While cultural citizenship is about one’s sense of belonging to a community or nation and legal citizenship is about legal and political rights, flexible citizenship is solidly grounded on economics. The term “flexible citizenship” has been used to modify the traditional concept of legal citizenship in the light of late capitalism and increasing globalization where one’s choice of citizenship has become economically driven. Aihwa Ong’s paradigm of “flexible citizenship” is helpful in framing the lives of the paupers-turned-tycoons with their overseas investments and business ventures and their highly mobile children and grandchildren in *Banyaga*. Flexible citizenship refers to the “cultural logics of capital accumulation, travel, and displacement that induce subjects to respond fluidly and opportunistically [italics mine] to changing political-economic conditions in their quest to accumulate capital and social prestige in the global arena” (A. Ong, *Neoliberalism* 8-9). It is
akin to a nomadic pursuit of opportunity and security characterized by “spatial mobility” and “operational flexibility” that harks back to the centuries-old Chinese tradition of sojourning and going overseas in pursuit of opportunity or fortune already discussed at the beginning of this paper.

Thus, Asian elites tend to own multiple passports to be able to pursue business leads opportunistically and as a matter of convenience and security in these times of economic globalization and political crises. This elitist neoliberal making of global citizens, which seems to be privileged by Aihwa Ong, is critiqued by Jodi Melamed (Melamed 137-138). The latter remarked that the dispensing of “privilege or stigma” merely shifts from race to class (i.e. haves or have-nots) under Ong’s notion of differentiated flexible citizenship because a person’s value is dependent on one’s position in the neoliberal capitalist circuit. As such, the state assigns certain rights and privileges to citizens depending on one’s marketable skills and flexible capital accumulation. However, Ong simply demonstrates how global capitalism has created mutations in citizenship and sovereignty which aliens, citizens, and governments alike tap to compete in the global economy. She brings up the reality that the wealthy entrepreneur, not the unskilled laborer or domestic maid, is favored by nation-states as part of the new governmentality where one’s worth is determined by market value or how steeped one is in the transnational capitalist enterprise (A. Ong, Neoliberalism). For instance, seven Chinese Filipino taipans with successful domestic and transnational business operations, are now positioned at the top of the Forbes Magazine list of the “Philippines’ 50 Richest” for 2013 and many more Chinese business men and women cited further down the list (Santos). Because of the economic success of the Chinese and their economic contribution to Philippines economy, the Chinese place in Philippine nation is being recalibrated. Thus, the Chinese can be vested with the stamp of approval by state and society based on their net worth or capitalist success.

From the narrative sketch of the novel at the start of this paper, let me flesh out more thoroughly the character of Antonio Limpoco in Banyaga to illustrate the making of the triumphant capitalist whose economic success has made him influential in society and acceptable to nation. Antonio (earlier known as Ah Beng) is the son of Lim Hua, who years before migrated to Manila and started a store in Binondo. Lim Hua is a sojourner who in the end decides to stay in Manila for good. He has been in Manila for five years when Ah Beng follows suit, together with his mother and younger sister, since his father no longer keeps in touch with his family in China. Lim Hua, who is known to have Chinese and native mistresses in Manila, refuses to acknowledge his family from China who has just arrived in Manila. Much of Ah Beng’s story in the novel is about his struggle to gain his father’s recognition. When his father is killed during the Japanese occupation of Manila, Ah Beng inherits his father’s store.
Ah Beng’s story, including how he transforms his father’s store into a chain of stores and malls, is the centerpiece of the novel. In sum, Antonio’s mercantile or capitalist success can be attributed to: (1) his upbringing by a strong-willed mother steeped in traditional Chinese values and his feisty character, toughened by his rough relationship with his father; (2) his difficult life during the war, during which he manages to keep the store operational through sheer guts and creative resourcefulness; (3) his network of alliances, from clan associations in Manila, home village associations in China, to the Filipino-Chinese Chamber of Commerce and the Chinese Consulate in Manila, among others; (5) his timely “flexible strategies” of switching identities, i.e. changing his citizenship from Chinese to Filipino through bribery before the Chinese were banned from the retail trade in the 1950s, his conversion to Christianity, and acquisition of a Hispanized Christian name (6) his ability for flexible accumulation of capital through diverse investments in several companies in East Asia; (6) his affiliation with a sworn brotherhood which proves to be a powerful connection as his sworn brothers also have gained success in the field of business and politics; (7) and most importantly, his inheritance from his father: the corner store. All these factors, which either emanate from or relate to his straddling of two cultures, that of China and the Philippines, position Antonio to be the established and respected mall tycoon that he becomes in the 2000s. Above all, Antonio’s success comes from a hard lifetime work. At 78, he is still actively involved in managing the business and his clan.

Through Antonio, Charles Ong brings to life the iconography of the tycoon or taipan. The taipan can be viewed as the embodiment of the flexible citizen and the triumphant capitalist. Listen, for instance, to Antonio as he dispenses advice to Hilario during a political crisis in the Philippines when a leading opposition leader and fearless Marcos critic has just been assassinated and rumors are flying that Marcos is dying of illness:

“We have to prepare for the worst so if you have money abroad keep it there, if you have foreign currency hold on to it, if you can get your hands on some, get it. I have credit lines with the banks, if you need a loan we’ll get you one. (307)”

In addition to Antonio’s ability to engage in “flexible strategies” like switching identity by changing citizenship, religion, and personal name in response to opportunity or crisis, the above scene with Hilario shows Antonio’s skill for flexible accumulation of capital and his operational ability to access funds anytime, whenever needed. Antonio is reminiscent of real-life Henry Sy Sr. (1924-), who was born in Amoy and migrated to the Philippines. When Sy was twelve, his father owned a small corner-store in Manila. In 1958, Sy himself opened ShoeMart (SM), a small shoe store, selling rejected and overrun shoes. Then, he branched off to selling apparel. ShoeMart later on evolved into what is now known as SM department store.
There are now 42 SM department stores and malls in the Philippines. Known as the mall tycoon for being the developer of a chain of supermalls in the Philippines, he is the richest man in the Philippines with a net worth of close to $13 billion and ranks 116th in the Forbes annual list of world’s billionaires for 2013 (Philippine Inquirer, 1 Aug. 2013; Forbes Magazine, July 2014; Forbes Magazine, 2 Sept. 2014).

The fictional lives of the sworn brothers Antonio, Hilario, and Samuel portray the familiar role of Chinese in the Philippines: the entrepreneur or businessman. In a classic pauper-to-tycoon evolution, they emerged triumphant. From nothing or from something very small, like a junk business or the corner sari-sari store, they are able to transform a simple, modest means of livelihood to highly profitable or big-time business empires.

Antonio’s children and grandchildren, who, like Antonio, have a head start with financial and social capital due to their father’s business and social status, personify elite cosmopolitanism and mobility. Ensconced in the wealth secured for them through the hard work of their parents or grandparents and through their own entrepreneurial or creative abilities, they have the privilege of being “flexible citizens.” They are able to travel anywhere in Asia, Europe, or the Americas. Money is no object; neither is a passport or visa. Their business pursuits are linked to global capitalism particularly to other Asian metropoles, like Taiwan, Seoul, and Hong Kong. Stephanie, Antonio’s daughter, starts an undergarments business that requires traveling to other parts of Asia for material sourcing or marketing, benefiting from the tiger economies of the region. Richard, Antonio’s grandson, is a conductor who travels and performs in Beijing, Manila, and New York. Agnes, Antonio’s wife, assists in the undergarments business owned and managed by her daughters, Stephanie and Celina. When Celina leaves for Europe, Agnes takes over Celina’s function of checking out new designs in various Asian cities and coming out with new lines to introduce in Manila. Antonio, aside from being the mall tycoon in the Philippines, has joint manufacturing ventures in Japan and owns shares in various Taiwan businesses.

However, all is not well for everyone. While Ong reinforces the iconography of the Chinese tycoon in the novel, he negates it as well by equally dramatizing the plight of the un-triumphant Chinese entrepreneur. In Chapter 29 titled “1954,” as mentioned earlier, we see the pitiful image of the failed entrepreneur in Lee Tam as a result of a passage of the Retail Nationalization Act of 1954 that prohibited aliens from engaging in the retail trade, where the Chinese excelled, as part of the nationalization of the Philippine economy. The chronological positioning of this event in the novel’s midpoint is critical because it is a time when the Chinese are just rebuilding their lives and businesses after the war. Lee Tam decides to close his hardware store at the heels of the passage of this law when the Filipino press is
getting strident about what they perceive as Chinese domination of the economy and the fear of looting of Chinese businesses is in the air (190, 192). While legally speaking, someone like Lee Tam can continue his business despite the passage of the nationalization law because he has a pre-existing retail business (Ali 152-153), the strong anti-Chinese sentiment and anti-Chinese violence frustrates and incapacitates Lee Tam.

The mobility of elite cosmopolitans from the families of Antonio and Hilario portrayed by Ong in the latter part of the novel is in sharp contrast to the many immobile Chinese stuck at the Customs House he writes about in his opening chapter. With fake papers, these Chinese migrants are not allowed entry to Manila. Without money for return passage, they cannot go back to China and are detained in the Customs House in Manila, living in the liminal spaces of the state. Through these scenes in the novel, the reader can conclude that indeed Chinese identity and subjectivity are diverse, and often defined by class.

**ALIENS AND CITIZENS IN THE 21ST CENTURY**

If a literary novel helps us make sense of our literal world, then from the confines of the fictional world of *Banyaga*, a literary text that engages with the ongoing discourse on transnationalism, I now address in broader context the relevance of the notion of the stranger in the real and literal world. In light of these ever intensifying economic and cultural globalization processes of the 21st century, what is the relevance of the *banyaga*? The matter of the Chinese as “alien” does not have the same negative political charge as before. Social scientists have noted the trend towards greater flexibility manifested as “portable patriotism,” or “citizenship without daily presence” (Fritz; Vertovec). This type of flexible citizenship allows citizens to pursue careers, businesses, and personal endeavors opportunistically anywhere in the world without giving up their rights and privileges of citizenship and without being judged as un-patriotic for being territorially absent.

However, flexible citizenship can also become a “citizenship of convenience,” with the nation-state merely regarded as a source of rights where citizens live with or without political engagement. As Steven Vertovec notes, for many migrants, homeland has become the source of identity while the new host country is the source of rights (Vertovec, *Transnationalism* 88). More and more people now reside in countries where they are not citizens, preferring to reside there as aliens, hence the phenomenon of “citizenship without daily presence.” “Portable patriotism” is at play, for instance, when an immigration lawyer in Toronto custom-fits his clients with whatever citizenships will help them navigate global markets (Fritz). It is also at work
when a retired top American official for the US Environmental Protection Agency ran for president of Lithuania and won, with his fellow Chicagoans able to vote for him (Fritz). Francoise Lionnet notes that there are Third World cosmopolitans and flexible citizens “who possess the wherewithal to float [italics mine] about national determinations of economy, politics, and culture” (Lionnet 13). As the meaning and concept of citizenship has become diluted and watered down, a second or even a third passport has “become not just a link to a homeland but also a glorified travel visa, a license to do business, a stake in the second economy, and an escape hatch, even a status symbol” (Fritz qtd. in Vertovec, Transnationalism 92). There has been a growing tension between the concept of nation as a geographic space where citizens still live together and the view of the nation as a mere imagined community existing socially. Due to presence of increasing numbers of diasporic populations in many parts of the world, viewing nation as transnational public space in social rather than in geographical or territorial terms is another point of view from which to examine nation (Fritz).

State officials of ruling regimes tend to advocate a form of nationality and citizenship that is well-defined and self-contained territorially because it is orderly and less messy administratively. They prefer citizens “to be born, live, work, pay taxes, draw benefits and die in the same place, travel on one passport only, and bequeath only one nationality to offspring” as a way to make citizenship the “glue keeping individual and state together” (“Multiple Citizenship”). With over 200 million people who now live and work outside their countries of birth, opening up the old notion of one-person, one-state legal citizenship and widening the imaginary of cultural citizenship, assumes currency and salience. In the Philippine experience, this constricted notion of citizenship that underpins public policy has led to the marginalization of a minority group.

Banyaga mediates by gesturing towards a re-examination of the old notion of one-person, one-nation legal citizenship. Ong’s novel is a fictive intervention of history to open and challenge the rigidity of the territorial and bordered notions of nation and Filipino identity that made possible the marginalization of a minority group in Philippine society. A more fluid view of nation and citizenship will allow Chinese Filipinos more room to navigate and maneuver their Chinese Filipino identity while maintaining dual or multiple national and transnational linkages.

While dual or multiple citizenship has long existed, it has gained currency in the light of transnationalism and globalization. In 2008, the Migration Policy Institute revealed that almost half the world’s countries allow dual nationality or dual citizenship in some form (“Multiple Citizenship”). In 2003, the Philippines itself passed Republic Act 9189 which allows dual citizenship. By inviting Filipinos abroad who have already become citizens of countries of their current residence to
become citizens of their homeland, the Philippines is in a way “nationalizing,” so to speak, the diasporic Filipinos in an attempt to suture them legally into Philippine nation-state. China, through its nationality law of 1909 has long “nationalized” the overseas Chinese by implementing the bloodline rule to citizenship, a convenient way of being a citizen of China even if one is absent from the nation-state. Under this ruling, many Chinese residents in the Philippines opted for their Chinese or Chinese mestizo children to retain their Chinese citizenship. While dual citizenship would have been the perfect solution to the troubling Chinese dual national linkages that stir questions of loyalty and political allegiance in the Philippines, China’s Nationality Law of 1980 does not allow dual citizenship. If a Chinese takes a foreign citizenship, he automatically loses his Chinese citizenship (“People’s Republic of China”). The equation of political allegiance to singular citizenship underpins China’s preference for exclusive legal citizenship.

With heightened migration and diasporic movements as a response to global capitalism, the likelihood that the person next to you is a stranger is high. Since many citizens around the world are no longer residing in their countries of birth or citizenship, strangers in nation-states are increasing. These strangers may come as refugees, political exiles, legal and illegal migrants, or modern-day sojourners and flexible citizens. Since the transnational or cross-cultural encounter is likely to be characterized by contact with the “other” and with difference, how do we incorporate strangers into our midst? Adopting a cosmopolitan stance, while utopian, is instructive. Cosmopolitanism is premised on universalist values, not on ethnicity, race, sex, gender, or national affiliations. As Ulrich Beck notes: “In a borderless society of strangers, the distinction between locals and strangers, locals and cosmopolitans, friends and enemies, civilization and barbarism, the West and the rest is abolished” (Fine 135-136). Kwame Appiah likewise argues that differences are abolished if we premise our relationships on the basis of our humanity, not on race, class, nationalism, ethnicity and all those bordered and territorialized axes of identity. He queries: “What do we owe strangers by virtue of our humanity?” While he agrees that “the foreignness of foreigners, the strangeness of strangers” is real, we have been encouraged to exaggerate their significance. While it is normal, he argues, that we care for those dearest and nearest to us or with whom we share a common identity, be it familial, ethnic, national or religious, these affiliations get their “psychological energy” from the fact that it creates an in-group and an out-group. If we premise our relationships on the basis of our shared humanity, he argues that there is no out-group to generate the binding energy that every in-group needs (Appiah xxi).

So, Ong surprises or disappoints the reader when after setting up the racist tone of the novel by opening it with the pejorative name calling of the Chinese and Filipinos towards one another and by starting the novel with a scene where a
native Customs officer solicits a bribe from a Chinaman at the Customs house, he also reveals fine moments of humanity when the Chinese and the Filipinos alike, total strangers to one another, cross the often hostile huanna-lannang divide to commiserate or help each other. Even the huanna agents of the state respect the sanctity of the Chinese enclave and cease their tax collection or policing when a Chinese is in despair or undergoing a personal tragedy, such as when Ah Beng is mourning the death of his sister: “To this day, the lannang say that wild birds and pigeons gathered about the mourners as the boy [Ah Beng] played his flute, that some of the old folk wept while the huanna tax collector and police all went away upon hearing the music” (21). Felipe, a huanna, helps a wealthy Chinese businessman who was being assaulted and robbed by a Filipino gang when the former could have profited by collaborating with the gang. Instead, Felipe disperses the gang and brings home the helpless Chinese man. Sebastian, a huanna employee of the Chinese junk man, rushes to persuade Lan Ping, Antonio’s mother, who is most distrustful of the huanna, to evacuate Manila when it is being bombed during the liberation of Manila by the Americans. In turn, Lan Ping finally welcomes the huanna woman whom his grandson married and her mixed race granddaughter.

While we witness these cosmopolitan moments in the novel, Ong portrays just as many instances of the Chinese suffering from the hands of the Chinese, from their own kind, from their own people, giving a different spin to “lannang” (our own people) and the “othering” that this type of name-calling creates. A Chinese molests Ah Kaw. A Chinese is the mastermind of the kidnapping of Antonio’s grandson. A Chinese snitched on Hilario that led to him being falsely accused of hoarding. A Chinese betrays Teacher Tong so the latter will be deported. A Chinese gang extorts bribes from Chinese businesses. That the Chinese alien can be a threat to his own people and just as well to the native “other” is further explored in Ong’s earlier novel The Embarrassment of Riches (2000).21

Thus, I conclude with an ominous note by bringing up the potential dangers of the Chinese self-declared alien in Embarrassment. I have earlier discussed the plight of the alien or foreigner who is marginalized, denied political rights, and who seeks to be part of the community or nation. But what happens if the foreigner is a self-declared or self-bestowed alien who does not desire to be part of the cultural or national imaginary and who disregards whether one is huanna or lannang? In Embarrassment, Ong imagines and creates a nation-state called the Victorianas located in the Pacific, not far away from the Philippines. In the recent election, Victorianas has elected a Chinese woman president, the heiress to her father’s mall empire, and who maintains her presidential offices at Megalomalla, a huge, self-contained, and self-sufficient mall complex.
However, the new Chinese government in Victorianas is threatened by various machinations of power and capital, from powerful individual businessmen to political parties and religious groups. Corollary to the concept of flexible citizenship is the weakening of state power due to inroads made by capital, migration, and cultural inflows that infringe on state sovereignty (A. Ong, *Neoliberalism* 5-7). Carried to the extreme, there are dangers to a weak state. Just as the state can exercise its sovereignty to advance its political goals, unscrupulous individuals can violate state sovereignty to advance their personal interests. While *Banyaga* merely alludes to Chinese border-crossing activities like the smuggling of laborers, prostitutes, and opium, *Embarrassment*, on the other hand, dramatizes a state besieged by a more complex and sophisticated form of predatory transnational capitalism. Alfonso Ong, a wealthy and powerful Victoriano tycoon buys an island called Burias in the Victorianas. He purchases the island for one million American dollars from a crony of the deposed dictator. He transforms the island into a prototype of 21st century city. It is a tropical paradise with all the modern amenities, from a hotel and golf course to an animal reserve, where rare species threatened by extinction are given a natural habitat. Burias can be viewed as a fictional re-crafting of a state-within-the state discussed earlier although an ominous one because it is beyond the reach of the state’s discipline and policing. Alfonso, referred to as the “yellow god,” is wealthy, powerful, and untouchable, the epitome of capital accumulation. It is said that whoever has Ong’s political backing wins a presidential election. Ong is also accused of relocating indigenous tribes to his island to give way for companies to mine the ancestral lands, quarry the mountains, and log the forests. Later in the novel, it is also revealed that Ong maintains armed troops to protect his various business operations. He has his own pier where shipments of various “commodities,” from products to people, are received. He smuggles in prostitutes and illegal aliens, including prisoners from China, to work in the island, even commissioning a Chinese military officer from mainland China to oversee his business in weapons and armaments. Seemingly untouched by and unmoored from nation, the concept of “alienating capital” assumes a new dimension as Alfonso alienates and isolates himself from the rest. He isolates himself from the nation territorially by living on his own island subject only to his own rules, and detaches himself culturally from Victorianas, bringing himself closer to China. He revels in Chinese mythology, cuisine, mahjong and other facets of Chinese lifestyle and populates his island with Chinese people from mainland China and Taiwan.

Charlson Ong’s literary mediation allows us to view the fictive character of Alfonso to stretch the limits of flexible citizenship, expose the predatory nature of global capitalism, and project the extensive power of capital to infringe upon individual rights and state sovereignty and to thus unravel the already fragile, tenuous nation-state. The novelistic imagining of this state-within-a-state makes palpable the power that lies in capital accumulation that can lead to unbridled,
dangerous terrains: the subversion of the nation-state. This rendering of the post-national world bring up the dangers of intensified global capitalism that could turn the flexible citizen into a “rogue alien” as a response to opportunity and the beckoning of profit and power.

CONCLUSION

In closing, Banyaga: The Song of War can be viewed as a fictional reconstruction of the socio-political history of the Chinese in the Philippines and their navigation in a new homeland as alien and citizen, outsider and insider, national and transnational. It is also a persuasive literary discourse on race and racism, alienation, citizenship, and nationalism, which lie at the crux of Chinese Filipino identity. More than anything else, the novel is a literary mediation on the usual approach of viewing the story and history of the nation from the perspective of the dominant group. The re-narrativization of history in the novel from the point of view of those in the margins of society allows us to see what is overlooked, omitted, or embellished in the mainstream version of Philippine history. Viewed from the perspective of the historically marginalized or minoritized, the novel allows us to explore the paradoxical connection between marginalization and exceptionalism in the Chinese Filipino experience, particularly among Chinese merchants, traders, and tycoons. Despite many obstacles encountered by the Chinese through the centuries, the Chinese Filipinos, as portrayed by the sworn brothers and their progeny in the novel, have indeed triumphed. Their historical transformation is a phenomenal tale of what I call the “majoritization of a minority” through acquisition of financial and economic power, which is inevitably tied to political clout. Hau observed that the Chinese place in the Philippine nation and in the national imaginary is now being reconfigured due to their mercantile or capitalist success and their phenomenal contribution to Philippine economy: “Chinese affluence has revalued the Chinese before the eyes of nation” ("Nation, Region, and Family"; The Chinese Question 247-253).

Finally, while the specter of “alien” persists, the Chinese Filipinos have become power brokers and nation-makers in the Philippines. But as Embarrassment reveals, capital can infringe on individual rights and state sovereignty due to heightened globalization in this century where the “alien” once again haunts the citizen, particularly the flexible citizen. Armed with huge capital and passports, the flexible Chinese citizen can be viewed as an alien again but this time one who has the ability to “float” over nation-states and violate human rights and state sovereignty for profit or power. The imagination of the nation-state as an entity besieged by
the transnational capitalist ventures of aliens and citizens alike in *Embarrassment* reveals the rich but sometimes dangerous possibilities of flexible citizenship.

Charlson Ong’s opposing views of the “alien,” one who claims a stake on community or nation, and the other who repudiates it, help to unravel the enigma of the Chinese *banyaga* in the Philippines and have timely relevance in the ongoing global discourse about the onslaught of increasing migration and global expansion of capitalism.
Notes

1. This paper is a modified version of my graduate thesis. My gratitude to my thesis committee: Mariam B. Lam (chair), Hendrik MJ Maier, Weihsin Gui, and Yenna Wu at the University of California, Riverside. I have also benefited from the valuable comments made by Caroline S. Hau and Richard T. Chu on a preliminary paper that later evolved into my MA thesis. I thank Prof. Maier for his mentorship and my two anonymous readers for their valuable input and constructive comments. However, any errors in this paper are mine and mine alone.

2. Lowe’s notion of reading against the grain seems to be similar to Edward Said’s contrapuntal reading elaborated in Said’s *Culture and Imperialism* (1994).

3. The 1909 Qing Nationality Law declared that all Chinese everywhere were subjects of the Chinese emperor.

4. Chinese mestizos are those who descended from intermarriages between Chinese men and local women who tend to identify themselves with the “indios.”

5. Historians E. P. Pattanne and William H. Scott consider the Negritos as the aboriginal people of the Philippines. Scott notes that the Spanish colonizers did not consider the Negritos as *indios* (“natives”). Because of the short stature and dark skin of Negritos, they were considered a different race from the indios who later became known as Filipinos. The Spaniards also considered the Chinese as another race. This illustrates that racialization, which is still operational or apparent in present day Philippine society, has its origins in colonialism.

6. See Kaisa Para sa Kaunlaran website. Also, a broad range of terminology used to refer to the Chinese in the Philippines in varying stages of history depending on birth, blood, ancestry, race or ethnicity is discussed in Hau, *The Chinese Question* 7-14.


8. Wang notes a subtle difference between coolies and sojourners: coolies belong to the labor or working class while sojourners are a trading class.

9. By transnationalism, I refer to the processes by which migrants create and maintain multiple social relations that link together their countries of origin and settlement, hence the terms “migrant transnationalism” and “transmigrants” (Basch, et al, 7). Due to the increasing number and prominence of the overseas Chinese and the rise of the tiger economies of East and Southeast Asia in
the late 1990s, Aihwa Ong and Donald Nonini identified a specific strand of transnationalism: “Chinese transnationalism.” Chinese transnationalism is a culturally distinctive domain within the strategies of capital accumulation that emerged at a time when trans-Pacific trade surpassed trans-Atlantic trade, shifting the focus of international trade to the Asia-Pacific region, ushering what is known as the Pacific Century (4,11).

10. Eufronio Alip notes that early Chinese records referred to names such as “Liu Sin” and “Luzon” to refer to an island near China (5). W.H. Scott notes that “Lusong,” which means to come down from the heights, was the name the Chinese and Malays used to refer to the Manila area (190).

11. These anti-Chinese laws passed were the 1954 Retail Trade Nationalization Act (Republic Act 1180) and the 1961 Corn and Rice Industry Nationalization Act (Republic Act 3018) (Hau, 135-137 “Alien Nation”).

12. Alternate spelling of lannang is lan-lang; for huanna, hoan-a (See Chu 2-3).

13. See Tan, The Chinese in the Philippines, 1898-1935, 29-30. In McCarthy, the Philippine Chinese were also compared with Polish Jews (120-128). Also see Chu, where he cites a testimony by a British merchant Edwin Warner to the U.S. Philippine Commission 1899-1900, reporting that the Chinese is “the Jew of the East, and any money he makes is at once remitted to China” (284-285). For a detailed comparative study of the Jews and Chinese as outsiders in Europe and Southeast Asia, respectively, see Daniel Chirot and Anthony Reid’s The Essential Outsiders: Chinese and Jews in the Modern Transformation of Southeast Asia and Europe.

14. In Theodore Gauthier Pigeaud’s notes on Rakawi Prapanca’s Nagarakertagama in the 14th Century: A Study in Cultural History –The Nagarakertagama (1960), the Malay word “banyaga,” which means merchant, is spelled exactly as the Tagalog “banyaga” (Vol. 5, 411). W.H. Scott also notes “banyaga” originally meant “trader who goes from town to town” but later came to mean “foreigner” (Scott 196).


17. For more of the rivalry between Chinese Nationalists and the Communists for dominance and leadership among the Chinese community in Philippines during the post-Japanese war period, see “The Aftermath of the War” in Antonio Tan’s The Chinese in the Philippines During the Japanese Occupation 1941-1945 (1981).


19. In 1574, Lim Ah Hong, a Chinese pirate, attacked the Philippines. He almost succeeded in dislodging the Spanish colonizers from the Philippines. The opportune arrival of Spanish reinforcements prevented the Chinese adventurer from capturing Manila. Lim came well prepared with a formidable fleet of war junks, soldiers, sailors, women and artisans on board to form the nucleus of a Chinese community. This Chinese attack made the Spanish aware of the Chinese threat to their power in the Philippine archipelago. From then on, the historical figure of Lim Ah Hong has become a caricature in the Philippine national imaginary: the Chinese as infidel, foreigner, and traitor. Further, the historical accounts of Chinese collaboration with the colonials, whether Spanish, Americans, or Japanese, for profit’s sake and to advance their economic gain, has made the native doubt or question the integrity of the Chinese and their loyalty to Philippine nation (see Jensen 5).

20. The following details the twists and turns in Philippine citizenship laws and the Chinese citizenship law based on blood line:

   In 1917, the Philippine Supreme Court adopted the territorial or *jus soli* principle, which means anyone born in the Philippines, becomes a Filipino citizen automatically. Hence, offsprings of Chinese nationals can acquire Filipino citizenship even though their parents remained Chinese under the law. Offsprings of Chinese nationals can acquire Filipino citizenship even if their parents remained legally Chinese, creating a situation in which parents and children in the same family could have different citizenship. In 1920, the Philippine Legislature enacted the first naturalization law that provides for the naturalization of those “native” to the Philippines who are not Filipino citizens.

   By 1935, the Constitution reversed the 1917 Philippine Supreme Court ruling so that Chinese mestizos born in the Philippines did not automatically acquire Philippine citizenship but could opt for it upon reaching the age of majority. Those born in the Philippines of Chinese parentage but left the Philippines for China could no longer claim Filipino citizenship on their return. Likewise,
Chinese mestizos who left the Philippines for China could only reclaim their Filipino citizenship if their mothers were Filipino citizens and if they, upon reaching the age of majority, elect Philippine citizenship.

On the other hand, with the principle of *jus sanguinis* being adopted by the Chinese government, many Chinese residents in the Philippines opted for their Chinese or Chinese mestizo children to retain their Chinese citizenship. See Chu 345-346; Jensen 162-165.

21. For a detailed analysis of Ong’s *The Embarrassment of Riches* in the context of ethnicity, family, nation and region, see Caroline Hau’s *The Chinese Question* (2014).
Works Cited


