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# A Global Hybridity: Snakehead Influence on Identity and Migration

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**Claremont McKenna College**

**A Global Hybridity: Snakehead Influence on Fujianese  
Identity and Migration**

Submitted to  
Professor Chelsea Zi Wang  
and  
Professor Emily Chao

By  
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for  
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## **Introduction: Historic Point of Embarkation**

The southeast coastal province of China located across the strait from Taiwan, called Fujian, “has a centuries-old history of being a source of emigrants from China to destinations throughout the world.”<sup>1</sup> Emigrants traveled with the intention of seeking new opportunity for work and a better life. With 23 provinces, 4 municipalities, and 5 autonomous regions in China, there is often inquiry as to what makes Fujian so special. There is no question that this prominent coastal location was important to China’s economy as coastal trading cities. The government established special economic zones to grant Fujian and the nearby province, Guangdong, special powers in the export and import industries after the opening up of the regime under Deng Xiaoping. Aside from the progress of the open-market policy under Deng, there are many noneconomic internal motives that drove individuals to migrate from Fujian, specifically after 1978. Physical geography, familial networks, economic-based government reforms, and in some cases international motives, have influenced high rates of both legal and illegal immigrant outflow from Fujian. Since the early 1990’s, it is estimated that 95 percent of Chinese illegal aliens originate from the Fujian Province.<sup>2</sup> With the influx of Chinese culture within the Fujian province, a third space is created that consists of two cultures birthing a new identity.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Judith Banister, Christina Wu Harbaugh, and Ellen Jamison, *Population and Migration Characteristics of Fujian Province, China*. Center for International Research, (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1993), p. 15.

<sup>2</sup> Banister, et al., *Population and Migration Characteristics of Fujian Province, China*. p. 15.

<sup>3</sup> For the purposes of this report, the term “Chinese” refers to individuals of purely Chinese ethnic origin living in any part of the world.

The Fujian province, with Fuzhou serving as the capital, has a specific topography consisting of mountainous terrain, accompanied by valleys and rivers. The coastal landform faces the island province of Taiwan and is composed of peninsulas and bays facing outward towards the East China Sea. This distinct location made Fujian a natural port region for the trade of goods and humans, both legal and illegal, due to the feasibility of traveling to cities beyond the borders of the mainland. The close proximity between Fujian and the South China Seas allowed for easy access for maritime trade, pioneering the importance of fishermen and traders. Though the strategic location potentially posed disheartening to some inland farmers, due to not ideal farming conditions, a majority of Fujianese individuals adapted and turned to cultivating drought-tolerant sweet potatoes, peanuts, and other crops often seen in Fujianese dishes today. This shift in the local economy, paired with the opening of the economy under Deng Xiaoping helped form the current Fujianese culture of occupying the space of trading, being merchants, and making a living abroad.

The particular geographical environment of Fujian Province allowed individuals to generate strong familial blood networks that, in turn, influenced high rates of out migration. Often times, one can determine someone who originates from this southeast coastal region solely by their surname. For example, my original family name, *Huang* [黃], is a very common name among Fujianese in Taiwan, Hong Kong, mainland China, and America. From being isolated by mountains and ocean, the Fujianese in the rural areas have remained in the same region for generations, leading to long-term



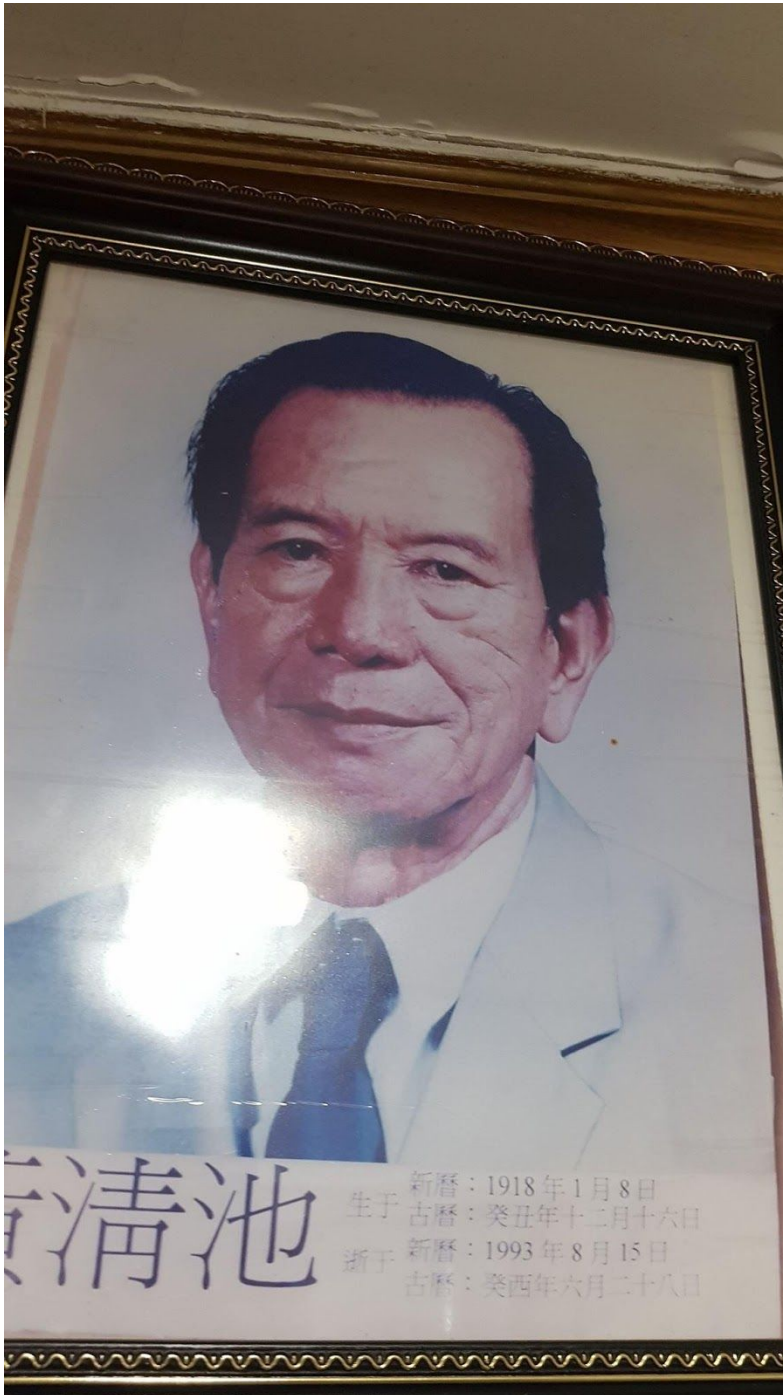
reproduction and descendants honoring the same ancestors. This strong sense of family and clans have dominated the social scene in Fujian, valuing the presence of blood connections and blood ties as an internal motive to emigrate. The temple (Figure 1.1) in my family's hometown in Fujian has a picture of my grandfather (Figure 1.2). Individuals relating their native places in Southern Fujian (Minnan), "considering the connections between the trade and migration involving Fujianese within China" often drifted towards close relatives, clans, folks, friends, or other forms of blood networks. Although immigrants are a common phenomenon in the history of Chinese social development, Fujian's immigration history is particularly distinctive.<sup>4</sup> Due to economic incentives, geographic location, and strong blood networks, Fujianese individuals were bred to migrate and establish their own paths throughout the diaspora. American writer and investigative journalist, Patrick Keefe, touches on this theme of "chain migration" in his novel, *The Snakehead*, with regards to Fujianese migration where "the family was regarded as an economic unit, and the first pioneers to leave the village generally did so with the aim of establishing a beachhead on a foreign shore and eventually sending for the family."<sup>5</sup> Through a combination of distinctive geographic location and traditional devotion to familial ties, Fujian has become a global hub that produces the highest rates of out-migration in the world.

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<sup>4</sup> Lucille Cha, *The Butcher, the Baker, and the Carpenter: Sojourners in the Spanish Philippines and Their Impact on Southern Fujian*, *Journal of Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 2006, p. 510.

<sup>5</sup> Patrick R. Keefe, *The Snakehead: An Epic Tale of the Chinatown Underworld and the American Dream*, (New York, 2009): p. 29.

Figure 1.1



© Wilson Valdez Photography

Figure 1.2



© Wilson Valdez Photography

The largest number of Fujian immigrants are Fuzhou people, particularly from Changle.<sup>6</sup> This trend was not uncommon throughout history, ranging as far back as “the thirteenth century [when] Marco Polo visited the port of Fuzhou and remarked on the great quantities of its chief exports.”<sup>7</sup> Because Fujian is located in the southeast region of China, far from the political and economic center, there is a spatial divide among the neighboring provinces. Being one of “China’s smaller provinces, [Fujian], a mountainous sliver of coast far from the official influence of Beijing and directly across the strait from Taiwan, has always been one of China’s most outward-looking regions, home to seafarers and traders, smugglers and explorers: a historic point of embarkation.”<sup>8</sup> Isolation from mainland China paired with the enhanced exposure to the outside world as well as Fujian’s specific topography created a physical political divide that allowed the Fujianese to have such a distinctive experience. Fujian Province has become known as “the breeding ground for outward migration, secret societies, as well as for people traveling abroad.”<sup>9</sup> The post-Mao economic programs as well as the formation of special economic zones have further emphasized coastal development in China.<sup>10</sup> The Chinese government, under the reign of Deng Xiaoping, implemented the post-Mao reform and opening policy in 1978 where many individuals seized the opportunity to thrive abroad. From there, Fujian was established as a special economic zone and further blossomed to reach its

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<sup>6</sup> Patrick R. Keefe, “Snakeheads and Smuggling: The Dynamics of Illegal Chinese Immigration,” *World Policy Journal*, Vol. 26, No. 1 (2009): p. 33.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, p. 27

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, p. 27.

<sup>9</sup> Cindy Yik-yi Chu, “Human Trafficking and Smuggling in China,” *Journal of Contemporary China*, (2011): p. 44.

<sup>10</sup> Jennifer Bolz, “Chinese Organized Crime and Illegal Alien Trafficking: Humans as a Commodity.” *Asian Affairs: An American Review*, vol. 22, no. 3, (1995): p 149.

potential as an economic threat. This new open market economy incentivized driven individuals not averse to migration to seize the opportunity of moving to another environment for work. As a result of these reforms in the 1980s, the Fujianese working male population adopted the title of being “temporary residents” wherever they traveled to.<sup>11</sup> These temporary residents, typically workers, students, or family members, further contributed to the reputation of Fujianese high migration rates. Students from Fujian would travel elsewhere with the goal of “establishing a beachhead on foreign shore” to be a resource for their family to later migrate comfortably. This rising trend of expanding familial blood networks on a global scale, further strengthened the growing reputation that Fujian acquired of being a “hotbed of trafficking and smuggling in China... moving West both legally and illegally,” maintaining Fujian’s “commonly acknowledged emigration history, and this developing coastal province has a concentration of China’s ‘human snakes’, namely trafficked and smuggled persons.”<sup>12</sup> The economic reforms and changes in regulations gearing towards a market economy in China further influenced the large flow of Fujianese individuals in search of opportunity to work elsewhere. This trend encouraged individuals to utilize their network of illegal or legal practices, ranging from human trafficking or banking systems.<sup>13</sup> This time period of opening market reform accompanied by the growing trends of out migration, led to the birth and widespread growth of the snakehead industry.

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<sup>11</sup> Banister, *Population and Migration Characteristics of Fujian Province, China*, p. 14.

<sup>12</sup> Chu, “Human Trafficking and Smuggling in China,” p. 43.

<sup>13</sup> Keefe, “Snakeheads and Smuggling,” p. 41.

Fujian's commonly acknowledged emigration history can also be attributed to the social pressure of "going abroad, to earn money and send it back home, and then to become rich among Fujianese peers. There has been pressure from families and society to earn enough overseas, to return, and then to become bosses at home."<sup>14</sup> This goes hand in hand with the rising trend of students going abroad and having to extend their achievements to their families back home in Fujian. Although the high rates of out migration lead one to assume that there might be negative incentives involved urging individuals to want to leave Fujian, but the economy of this special economic zone at the time was not poor. "According to a 2000 *Newsweek* article, smuggled Fujianese were 'seldom poor and desperate', but they simply followed the tradition of being 'eager to get rich.'"<sup>15</sup> Typically, those who could afford to go abroad or send their children abroad to study were the wealthier families that had long resided in Fujian. As a result, rapid development tended to bypass farmers and peasants, not reaping the direct benefits caused by the increase in maritime trade in Fujian. As the increasing inflation decreased their real incomes, a large amount of Chinese turned towards organized crime for a more stable income.<sup>16</sup> These hard working farmers and peasants applied their work ethic to their occupations abroad. Throughout the Fujianese diaspora, migrants and workers earned the reputation of being hard working and economically driven.

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<sup>14</sup> Chu, "Human Trafficking and Smuggling in China," p. 44.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid," p. 43.

<sup>16</sup> Bolz, "Chinese Organized Crime and Illegal Alien Trafficking," p. 153.

The rising presence of Fujianese throughout the Chinese diaspora created a specific niche of driven individuals seeking opportunity elsewhere. Because of the change in laws and regulations during the mid-1980s under Deng Xiaoping, the rush of individuals yearning to go abroad ran high, specifically among students and workers. This new commodification of Fujianese overseas travelers to fill the void of students and workers allowed for the birth of a new identity throughout the diaspora. This specific niche created a new “third space,” a term coined by Homi Bhabha that describes the emerging gray area that these Fujianese travelers adopted, forming their hybridized identities overseas. This “third space” intersects and overlaps multiple spheres of cultural identity, combatting maintaining the authenticity of representing their home nation, while navigating a new culture. Edgar Wickberg argues “that immigration and settlement stimulate a need to redefine oneself and one’s family in ways that will adapt to the new environment yet be consistent with one’s values, if possible.”<sup>17</sup> Reiterating the strong familial kinship tradition, those family members left behind in Fujian later set off to reunite with their blood networks who had fled to study or find work. Identifying as a student or as a worker were the requirements that led to exclusion of those who did not fall under the category, “there was a clear demand to leave by people who did not fit into either of those two categories. It was under these circumstances that ‘snake people’ or ‘snakehead’ (*she tou*) smugglers began to emerge and the tidal wave of emigration began

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<sup>17</sup> Edgar Wickberg, “Global Chinese Migrants and Performing Chineseness,” *Journal of Chinese Overseas*, vol. 3, no. 2, (2007): p. 178.

to swell.”<sup>18</sup> This new formation of the “snakehead” as an untraditional occupation arose from the emerging demand for Fujianese migrants around the world, whether that be legally or illegally. Tracing Deng Xiaoping’s legislation changes that sparkplugged a major wave of both legal and illegal emigration from China in the 1980’s allowed for the reputation of having the largest immigrant rates to be formed. This combination of economically driven individuals and crafty snakeheads resulted in “more than half of Asia’s forty billionaires of Chinese ancestry in the year 2000 ha[ving] roots in Fujian Province. What the Fujianese did best, it sometimes seems, was leave.”<sup>19</sup> As a result this trend of out migration and assimilation into new cultures allowed for Fujianese migrants to progressively form new identities in foreign spheres. This thesis will be covering several topics regarding Fujianese immigration and approaches to the “third space,” ranging from the historical incentives during the 1980’s and birth of “snakeheads,” to the Fujianese migrants in the Philippines, and finally, the complex nature of transcultural hybridity that has resulted from globalization.

In 1594,<sup>20</sup> one of the world’s first Chinatown establishments arose in the Philippine capital, Manila, and marked the beginning of a new tradition of familial networks and native place associations which sprouted from working men who branched out to find work in foreign lands. Since this establishment of the Chinatown in the central

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<sup>18</sup> Zai Liang, “Demography of Illicit Emigration from China: A Sending Country’s Perspective.” *Sociological Forum*, vol. 16, no. 4, (2001): p. 681.

<sup>19</sup> Keefe, “The Snakehead,” p. 29.

<sup>20</sup> Edgar Wickberg, “The Chinese Mestizo in Philippine History.” *Journal of Southeast Asian History* 5, no. 1 (1964), p. 70.



city of Binondo, located within metro-Manila, the Chinese have remained a longstanding minority in the Philippines and “coexisted with Filipinos throughout the colonial era of Spain, United States, and Japan.”<sup>21</sup> This historical relationship between the Chinese and Filipinos has played an integral role in the formation of the Chinese-Filipino identity. Another facet that has contributed to the uniqueness of the Chinese-Filipino identity is the vast population of Fujianese in the Philippines. A large majority of Chinese immigrants that reside in the Philippines can trace their roots back to Fujian.<sup>22</sup> Tracing back to “the 1570s, Fujianese merchants had established trading posts in Manila and Nagasaki. Seed communities of Fujianese traders were established throughout Southeast Asia, and today, centuries later, vast numbers of ethnic Fujianese are scattered throughout the region.”<sup>23</sup> This distinct formation of transcultural identity has encouraged various forms of representation throughout the Fujianese diaspora. Many Chinese individuals have maintained their ethnic identity through means of their own, whether that be through maintaining traditions, retaining language, or returning back to their ancestral homes in China. For example, the first female president, “President Corazon Cojuangco Aquino, whose great grandfather was an immigrant from the southeastern part of Fujian, China, visited her ancestral home in 1988.”<sup>24</sup> Her paternal great-grandfather, Co Yu Hwan, converted to Catholicism after emigrating from Fujian and adopted the name Jose

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<sup>21</sup> Uytanlet, Juliet Lee. *The Hybrid Tsinoy: Challenges of Hybridity and Homogeneity as Sociocultural Constructs among the Chinese in the Philippines*. (Pickwick Publications, 2016): p. 4.

<sup>22</sup> Richard Chu, *The “Chinese” and the “Mestizos” of the Philippines: Towards a New Interpretation*, *Philippine Studies* Vol 50, No. 3, (2002): 327.

<sup>23</sup> Keefe, “The Snakehead,” p. 27-28.

<sup>24</sup> Chu, *The “Chinese” and the “Mestizos” of the Philippines*, p. 327.

Cojuangco.<sup>25</sup> As a prominent political figure, President Aquino embraced her Fujianese heritage and instilled nationalistic attitudes inspiring pride in identifying as Chinese-Filipino in the Philippines. Similar to my own family's background, President Aquino and many other mixed Chinese-Filipino individuals have approached the task of forming a unique in-between identity that neither confines nor defines them.

Similar to President Aquino's background, my family came across the Filipino surname, Cotangco, in an unconventional way, leaving behind the Chinese surname, *Huang*. Many Chinese-Filipino individuals share a similar experience, not only having to assimilate culturally, but also physically adapting their surnames to better fit in. Occurring after China's transition to a market economy in the 1980s, which resulted from a widespread embrace of globalization and increasing waves of immigration from Fujian, the Chinese-Filipino identity has vastly undergone changes. This particular topic of research regarding identity and cultural formation is of relevance to me because along with understanding my own culture's unique historic background, I'm also able to trace my own "third space" as a form of hybridity. Through researching my own familial history, I have been able to discover the hybridity that forms the nuances of my personal cultural identity (straddling the line between Chinese-Filipino and American culture and identity). Because my paternal grandfather emigrated from Fujian to the Philippines, living part-time with his Fujianese wife and children and splitting time with his Filipino

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<sup>25</sup> David Wurfel, "Elites of Wealth and Elites of Power. The Changing Dynamic: A Philippine Case Study," *Southeast Asian Affairs*, (1979): 235.

wife and children. He made sure to indulge my father and his six other siblings in the Philippines with Chinese culture, enrolling each child in a Chinese Christian schools. This religious assimilation allowed the transition for my grandfather and many other Chinese Filipino immigrants from Fujian to assimilate smoothly into a new culture. To illustrate the many changes in identity formation, and the navigation of new cultural spaces, I will incorporate interviews I've conducted with family members who share their Chinese-Filipino experiences throughout the diaspora. In these conversations, we discuss their relationship with cultural hybridity, identifying as Chinese-Filipino, and the "third space."

## Chapter 1: Snakeheads as Facilitators

When discussing Fujian migration, in both legal and illegal terms, it is important to acknowledge the intricate network of collaboration involved. Stemming from an integral and ancient social practice in China, *guanxi*, or personal connection, extends to all levels of society, particularly in the business sector.<sup>26</sup> This phenomenon, specific to Chinese traditional culture is “an indigenous Chinese construct and [is] define[d] as an informal particularistic personal connection between two individuals bound by an implicit psychological contract to follow the social norm of *guanxi* such as maintaining a long-term relationship, mutual commitment, loyalty, and obligation.”<sup>27</sup> In other words, the practice of cultivating a *guanxi* network is a dynamic process of mutual reciprocity that has played an essential role in achieving social mobility in Chinese society. Forming one’s own *guanxi* network places value on the system of essential connections required to succeed in the “ancient Chinese social system and its political and moral philosophy.”<sup>28</sup> In practice, government officials utilize their *guanxi* network, relying on being well-connected to higher ranked officials in order to gain promotion.<sup>29</sup> Although the deeply embedded concept of *guanxi* has been ingrained into Chinese society since the Chinese social philosophy of Confucianism, it is important to distinguish these informal

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<sup>26</sup> Xiao-Ping Chen and Chao C. Chen, “On the Intricacies of the Chinese Guanxi: A Process Model of Guanxi Development,” *Asia Pacific Journal of Management*, (2004), Vol 21, Issue 3, p. 305.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 306

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 307.

<sup>29</sup> Sebastian Heilmann, “Governing China’s Economy,” *China’s Political System*, (Rowman & Littlefield: 2017), p 233.

relationships from corruption.<sup>30</sup> Maintaining one's *guanxi* directly corresponds with the widespread increase of government corruption in China. Albeit a sensitive topic, this top-down corruption and incorporation of these complex networks correspond with the collaborative efforts involving snakeheads.<sup>31</sup>

Originating in the 1970's, snakeheads went into business charging fees to customers via ferry to travel from Changde or Fuzhou, two major cities in the Fujian Province."<sup>32</sup> Snakeheads are defined as the Chinese individuals, predominantly originating from Fujian, that assist in the process of smuggling individuals to other countries. Clients of snakeheads aimed to migrate from Fujian and extend the diaspora globally, further opening up the market for the snakehead business to prosper. According to Patrick Radden Keefe, international labour migrants, also known as Overseas Chinese, represent the second largest diaspora on the planet, after the descendants of African slaves.<sup>33</sup> These labour migrants or Overseas Chinese were perceived through a mixed lens. Labour migrants were either seen as positive business assets, typically because they were crafty and driven individuals willing to work, or viewed negatively, impacting and contributing to the decline of local host economies. As the global demand for international labour migrants increased, the snakehead business continued to grow

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<sup>30</sup> Xiangru Yin, "An Analysis of Corruption in China: The Guanxi Network of Chinese High Level Officials and Governors," (2017), *International Development, Community, and Environment (IDCE)*. 6.

<sup>31</sup> Patrick Radden Keefe, "Snakeheads and Smuggling: The Dynamics of Illegal Chinese Immigration," *World Policy Journal*, (2009), p. 41.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34.

accordingly. These snakeheads were linked to an complicated process of professional smuggling involving Overseas Chinese on various levels. Some scholars view these individuals as illegal criminals, while others see them as “resourceful individuals, enterprising tour-guides, or nomadic figures.”<sup>34</sup> Sheldon Zhang and Ko-lin Chin (2003) conducted a cross-national study providing a factual stance on the complexities regarding the nature of the snakehead individuals. Uncovering the complicated process required to carry out the smuggling of individuals, Zhang and Chin take an optimistic approach towards the snakehead business, viewing these snakeheads as pawns in a larger business scheme that plays a part in an overall corrupt system. Through conducting face-to-face interviews, Zhang and Chin paint snakeheads in a civilized manner, alluding to the profit bearing aspect and profitability that the unique occupation provides around the world.<sup>35</sup> On the other hand, Cindy Yik-yi Chu clarifies the distinction between human smuggling and human trafficking, because she believes that both modes of migration are “serious problems which have proven difficult to resolve.”<sup>36</sup> She raises the important question of whether snakeheads and organized crime groups are advantageous or disadvantageous to the local economies. Chu contrasts Zhang and Chin’s perspective that snakeheads are particularly crafty and driven individuals, by referring to them as a global problem, detrimental to the local economies. However, Chu also introduces criticism towards the

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p. 34.

<sup>35</sup> Sheldon Zhang and Ko-lin Chin, “Characteristics of Chinese Human Smugglers: A Cross-National Study.” San Diego State: 2003, p. 1.

<sup>36</sup> Cindy Yik-yi Chu, “Human Trafficking and Smuggling in China,” *Journal of Contemporary China*, 2011, p. 39.

corrupt governing system that involves and allows this illegal smuggling to occur and believes that the transnational criminal offenses and manipulation of human rights should be addressed on a global scale. The research conducted by these authors provide relevant insight to the polar position that snakeheads occupy in the rapid process of globalization.

Jennifer Bolz, a transnational trafficking expert, takes into consideration the stance that the government legislation has on these complex smuggling organizations, further questioning the validity and accountability of the corrupt systems within Chinese government. The systematic corruption is further analyzed by questioning who is to blame for the sudden rise in illegal Chinese immigration that has sparkplugged and become a phenomenon affecting the global economy. In comparison, Glenn Curtis and his colleagues (Glenn E. Curtis, LaVerle B. Berry, Seth L. Elan, Rexford A. Hudson, Nina A. Kollars, 2003) further dissect the transnational activities of ethnic Chinese criminal groups and organizations, specifically investigating individuals in snakehead groups who have assisted these illegal Chinese migrants. The purpose in bringing these authors, scholars, and researchers into my discussion is to compare the conflicting perspectives that address the complex field of human smuggling. Through analysis of various discussions regarding snakeheads and migration, albeit legal or illegal, this section hints at the emerging effects of transcultural integration and intermingling throughout the Fujianese diaspora.

### **Human Smuggling: Business is Business**

Sheldon Zhang and Ko-lin Chin (2003) provide an extensive study uncovering the inner workings of Chinese human smuggling organizations and their operations. By interviewing individuals in both the U.S. and China, their researcher concluded that human smugglers, commonly known as snakeheads, “have been able to develop extensive global networks and transport Chinese nationals to various parts of the world.”<sup>37</sup> Zhang and Chin recognize the complex process that requires multiple phases of involvement at the potential risk of imprisonment. Their study outlines the methodology “snakeheads” use through three main areas: the utilization of U.S. bordering countries such as Mexico or Canada, flying to the U.S. and gaining access through the transit points, and traveling via boat using fishing trawlers or freighters.<sup>38</sup> These difficult journeys involve multiple stages and various members to comply and participate in the human smuggling operations. Zhang and Chin conclude that there are several highly specialized roles involved in the smuggling process. This process includes: recruiters, coordinators, transporters, document vendors, corrupt public officials, guides and crew members, enforcers, and debt collectors.<sup>39</sup> Zhang and Chin dedicate a significant portion of their study to analyzing the outcome of attitudes that the general public has regarding snakeheads. Typically, the result tended to be positive due to the fact that snakeheads “saw themselves as upstanding businesspeople or even do-gooders who helped their friends and neighbors in their search for a better life.”<sup>40</sup> This approach to the social work

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<sup>37</sup> Sheldon Zhang and Ko-lin Chin, “Characteristics of Chinese Human Smugglers,” San Diego State: 2003, p. 1.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 2.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p 16.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. 18.



that snakeheads fulfill has a more optimistic approach towards this form of organized crime and human smuggling. Although the outcome does not result in direct harm towards other individuals or the economy, some snakeheads perceived their work of transporting human cargo elsewhere as a solution to solving China's various social problems (i.e. overpopulation and unemployment).<sup>41</sup> Although these individuals put their livelihood at risk, "neither the migrant party nor the smugglers directly considered transnational human smuggling to be a crime and that they would rather view it as a 'good deed.'"<sup>42</sup> Of those involved in the smuggling process, corrupt public officials and other law enforcement authorities must not be discounted. This approach to the broader implications that come along with the snakehead business of human smuggling, raises the question of morality with regards to whether the government funded roles involved in the smuggling process were aware of the systematic corruption they were contributing to. Corrupt government involvement insinuates and encourages the acceptance of human trade among the "law-abiding people, including reputed businesspeople and community leaders," that occupy a majority of Chinese society.<sup>43</sup> Snakeheads and other individuals involved in the smuggling process undoubtedly influence various levels of Chinese society. Similar to the complex practice of cultivating one's own *guanxi* network, the role of snakeheads in contributing to Chinese society allows for potential discussion in the controversial topic of systematic corruption.

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., p. 19.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p. 19.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 19.

## **Who's to Blame: Globalization or Government?**

Continuing the analysis provided by Zhang and Chin (2003) that Chinese snakehead business exposes government corruption and bribery that coincides with the process of human smuggling, history professor at Hong Kong Baptist University, Cindy Yik-yi Chu (2011) examines the cause(s), nature, and impact of the global problems regarding the practice of human trafficking and smuggling in China. In her analysis of transnational crime, Chu clarifies the distinction between human smuggling and human trafficking. Although the positive perspective is voluntary, both smuggling and trafficking contribute to the illegal migration patterns from Fujian. The definitive barrier between the positive and negative perspectives towards snakeheads allows for further analysis. This gray area concerns various factors of influence involved, whether that be government mediation or societal indifference towards the matter of human transfer. In relation to the snakehead network, Chu further details the large amount of risk that individuals take on when involved with human smuggling from China and the effect that this newly commodified field of work involving snakeheads has on the economy. She identifies the global nature that comes hand in hand with the snakehead organizations. Representing the various avenues of connectivity that comes along with transnational migration and human trading, Chu mentions that “with globalization, the snakehead networks have become increasingly complicated and the smuggling routes have been hard to trace, together facilitating this human trade.”<sup>44</sup> The complex role of the snakehead bridges the gap between cultures, further strengthening the relationships between the host

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<sup>44</sup> Chu, “Human Trafficking and Smuggling in China,” p. 43.

countries and these Fujianese migrants in search for opportunity elsewhere. Though often times controversial, the role that the snakehead individuals take on as facilitators for cultural preservation is important to acknowledge in the migration process.

Chu frames the work of snakeheads as a problem addressed by the Chinese government in 2002.<sup>45</sup> Chu mentions that “smuggled people have contributed to labor in the black market, and this has led to the reduction of the general income of residents of destination countries. At the same time, trafficking has involved kidnapping and exploitation... Making matters worse, trafficking has led to a rise in crime in destination places.”<sup>46</sup> This shift in perspectives raises an interesting point of view towards smuggled individuals as parasitic to the host country, negatively affecting the global economy through black market labor. Chu concludes her article by directing the responsibility to the local and global governing systems in power. Emphasizing the transnational connections required of the snakehead individuals, Chu points towards “international cooperation [to] effectively facilitate the arrest and prosecution of the snakeheads, and the tracing of the trafficking and smuggling gangs.”<sup>47</sup> She casts the blame upon “the central government [who] will need to increase the penalty for such offenses and to educate the public on the terrible consequences of these ever-growing trafficking and smuggling crimes, the results of which have been forced labor, sex trade, illegal adoption of children, deaths during trips, a lack of concern for human rights, an expanding

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p. 49.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p. 43.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p. 52.

smuggling network, and so on.”<sup>48</sup> Chu’s positionality of the negative repercussions towards the global economy as well as the governing systems shows the high risk that this lifestyle of human smuggling brings about.

Holding the government legislation accountable for the health and safety of their host regions, Chu raises an interesting question that Jennifer Bolz also seeks to expand on. Bolz dissects the tragedy that occurred in the early 90s, where a Panamanian vessel, the *Golden Venture*, hosting 300 individuals of human freight had crashed, and as a result, 175 of these illegal immigrants were sent to jail.<sup>49</sup> Tangentially, Bolz questions the accountability of the larger, global, issue of human smuggling by asking: “Why do thousands of Chinese risk death, deportation, and potential indentured servitude in order to reach a foreign country whose citizens are becoming more and more unsympathetic to the plight of illegal aliens?”<sup>50</sup> She expands on the growing network of the triad societies and how these societies have developed as dominant in controlling international smuggling. She adopts the stance that these “Chinese crime groups have become an international threat,” further exposing the government links to organized crime societies.

<sup>51</sup> Bolz emphasizes the global collaboration necessary to combat the “international threat” of smuggling. She concludes that the solution to combating the trend of illegal alien

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., pp. 48-49.

<sup>49</sup> Jennifer Bolz, “Chinese Organized Crime and Illegal Alien Trafficking: Humans as a Commodity,” *Asian Affairs*, 22, no. 3 (Fall 1995), p 154.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p. 150.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p. 150.

trafficking is to hold the government systems accountable and encourage growth in the economic development of China.

Curtis and his colleagues (Curtis et. al, 2003) introduce triads, as a “form of secret society that first appeared in the seventeenth century in southern China in opposition to emperors of the Qing Dynasty.”<sup>52</sup> These early forms of organized crime syndicates paved the way for snakeheads to arise. Curtis clarifies that not all organized Chinese crime groups are attributed to the triad model, though the triad-like rituals and structures are similar in the process of smuggling individuals from China.<sup>53</sup> Although Curtis adopts the stance that these criminal groups constitute a threat to the societies in which they assume, the large support system involved in harboring illegal migrants is “efficient in creating loose, flexible multinational structures that are often linked with legitimate business and enterprises; exploiting weaknesses in the law enforcement systems of individual countries.”<sup>54</sup> Similar to Zhang and Chin’s approach regarding the advantages that the snakeheads provide towards solving China’s social problems, Curtis argues that although these triad-like crime organizations sprouted from a field of illegal potential threats to society, they often include the involvement, and promotion of, legal businesses. Curtis acknowledges that Ko-lin Chin (Zhang, 2002) clarifies that “the term ‘organized crime’ may not apply strictly to what is nevertheless a very large and growing form of criminal

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<sup>52</sup> Glenn Curtis, et al. “Transnational Activities of Chinese Crime Organizations.” *Trends in Organized Crime*, vol. 7, no. 3, (2002): p. 3.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 47.

activity. It is certain that individuals at the transit points are Taiwanese, Chinese, and non-Chinese, although the initiators of this global business are specifically Fujian Chinese in the United States.”<sup>55</sup> Curtis uses this fact to strengthen his more neutral approach that organized crime is vaguely defined and varies in different circumstances, focusing more in depth on the differing levels of snakehead operations. He makes the distinction between snakeheads, which largely focuses on illegal human smuggling, and triads and gangs, which “are also involved in recruiting and smuggling of women for the sex trade in the United States and in running brothels in Chinese communities.”<sup>56</sup> He clarifies that Chinese triads are largely active in the raw materials trade business, often transporting more than just humans, while snakeheads focus their efforts on individuals interested in migration. The negative connotation associated with “illegal” or “smuggling” creates a distinction that defines the varying positionality with regards to these “organized crime groups.” Although there is some overlap between the historical origin of triads and snakehead organizations, the distinction must be made regarding the perspective of this illegal occupation that is in such high demand, particularly in Fujian.

With this in mind, migrants who choose to employ this method of transcultural smuggling submit to valuing and retaining the authenticity of their Chinese culture, rather than directly adhering to assimilation and conformity. Although there are mixed perspectives regarding the snakehead industry and their role in hybrid cultural formation,

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., p. 28.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., p. 29.

the multiple components revert the blame to a systematically corrupt governing structure. Through an understanding of varying snakehead perspectives regarding organized crime networks, we come to better understand the nature of globalization and intercultural influences on a transnational sphere. The rise in demand of Chinese workers as a global commodity puts governing systems in a difficult supporting position. Governments are stuck between the blurred lines of legal and illegal migration, and the birth of the snakehead as an occupation has formed the potential propagation of new identities throughout the Fujianese diaspora. Snakeheads strategically utilize their ambiguous position in society to further contribute to hybrid formation of Chinese identities throughout the diaspora in a global setting.

## Chapter 2: Chinese-Filipino Hybrid Identity

As I walked through the bustling streets of Ongpin in the heart of Binondo, my aunt pointed out the familiar restaurants and markets she frequented during her childhood. Walking north of the Pasig River, we passed the fountain which stands profoundly at the entrance of the Plaza San Lorenzo Ruiz which was later renamed for Governor-General Gomez Pérez Dasmariñas, the Dominican friar who contributed to the creation of Binondo Church in the 16th century.<sup>57</sup> Visiting the site, I remember being in awe of the religious monument, one of the first and main churches in Manila.<sup>58</sup> Stepping back to properly examine the faded and dusty concrete bricks of the building, I noted the surroundings: an interesting mix of pushy tourists, the darkened feet of homeless Filipinos poking out from under umbrellas, Chinese shops decorated to excess with red lanterns, and crowds of schoolchildren rushing and playing across the streets. This area, specifically, was a culmination of years of maritime trade history, Spanish colonization, and cultural intermingling due to Western hegemony and globalization representative of the not-so homogenous attitudes among the Chinese in the Philippines. This thought-provoking space, now occupied by a multitude of individuals with varying backgrounds, allowed for the formation of a “third space” as a result of the hybridized cultures coming together. New forms of distinctions have arisen through this clash of civilizations. The term Sangley, or Chinese mestizo, for example, is separate from the

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<sup>57</sup> Enrique Soriano, “Binondo: The Oldest Chinatown,” *Inquirer Business Binondo the Oldest Chinatown*, *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, February 11, 2017, Accessed March 18, 2019, <https://business.inquirer.net/224378/binondo-oldest-chinatown>.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*



Spanish mestizo, but implies the same social changes that occurred in the Philippines.<sup>59</sup>

The socio-cultural nuances adopted by Filipino-Chinese formed an identity that was not only fluid, but also very ambiguous. In this way, this flexible identity allows for a multitude of interpretations that challenge the duality of what it means to be “Chinese-Filipino,” rather embracing the multilayered aspects of the characteristics and categories of what it means to identify as a “Catholic,” “mestizo,” “Tagalog Filipino,” “Inchik,” “Tsinoy,” or “Chinese” in the Philippines. In addressing the varying categories contributing to what it means to identify as Chinese-Filipino, I was able to contextualize my unique experience as a cultural hybrid.

In collaboration with extensive interviews with family members, this chapter will analyze the impact that Fujianese trade and migration to the Spanish Philippines had on the current<sup>60</sup> identity of current Chinese-Filipinos throughout the diaspora. Due recent time spent in the Philippines, I was able to gain a better understanding of my family’s experience and upbringing as Chinese-Filipino individuals, and their navigation of life as Chinese-Filipinos in the Philippines. Although I was never able to meet my grandfather, the founder of the “Cotangco” family presence in Manila, I came to gain an appreciation for his business ventures and decision making resulting from the extensive legacy he left behind for his seven children in the Philippines as well as two sons in Fujian. Hearing only respectful and positive attributes associated with my grandfather, I felt as though I

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<sup>59</sup> Edgar Wickberg, “The Chinese Mestizo in Philippine History,” *Journal of Southeast Asian History*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (Cambridge University Press, 1964), 62.

<sup>60</sup> Current, for the purposes of this paper, pertains to the last fifty years.

had an accurate glimpse into his life, albeit his passing away before I was born. He was able to build a foundation for the entire Cotangco extended family, as a way of living comfortably, by craftily obtaining a rice mill, shoe business, and multiple buildings throughout metro Manila. In sum, my grandfather was able to successfully cultivate his *guanxi*, “translated into English as ‘connections’ or ‘relationships.’”<sup>61</sup> By navigating the new cultures and spheres in the Philippines, he was able to spread motivations of growth and independence from his upbringing in Fujian. My grandfather’s experience maneuvering a new locale while maintaining his Fujianese roots, and then transferring these notions of preserving the core of his familial values and beliefs, identifies one of the routes towards the “third space” that the Chinese-Filipino encompasses.

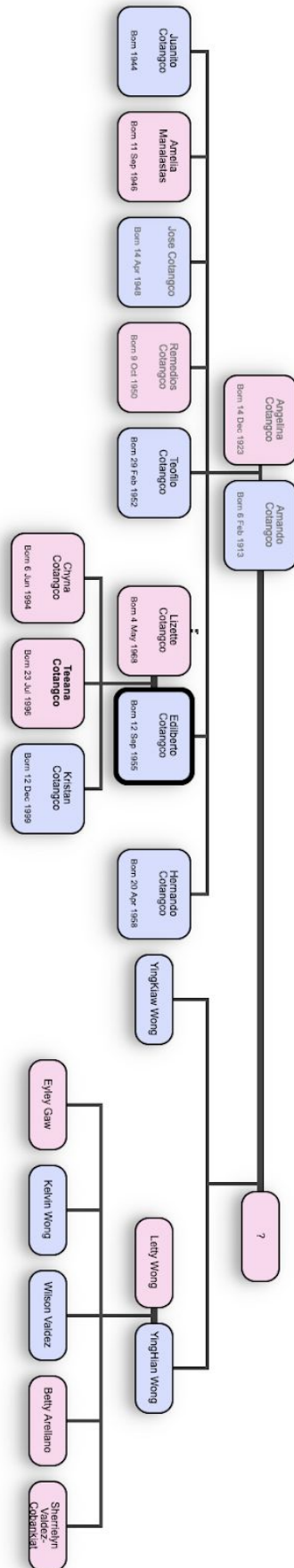
My father, Edilberto, is the second youngest of seven siblings, and was the first to immigrate to America in search of better opportunity. All of the seven Cotangco siblings had varying experiences growing up, considering that they each attended different schools and had different friend groups that they associated with. A prime example of the various routes that the “third space” comprises of, varying from my father’s experience to that of his siblings. The oldest of the seven siblings, Juanito or John Cotangco, attended Crusaders-Lorenzo Ruiz Academy, a Filipino-Chinese Catholic school on Ongpin Street in Binondo. Still fluent in Hokkien, the Fujianese language that was taught at Crusaders-Lorenzo Ruiz Academy, he went on to open up his own fried chicken

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<sup>61</sup> Pierre Ostrowski and Gwen Penner. “Chapter 5 ‘Guanxi’ and ‘Mianzi.’” *It’s All Chinese to Me: An Overview of Culture and Etiquette in China*. (Vermont: Turtle Publishing), 2009, p 48.

franchise called Johnny's Fried Chicken, which has locations all throughout Metro Manila. He was one of two siblings that attended this Filipino-Chinese Catholic School, including my aunt, Amelia Cotangco, who was the eldest female sibling whom I will refer to as Tita Mely. She went on to get her undergraduate degree at the University of the Philippines and fulfilled her career aspirations to be the Justice in the Court of Tax Appeals in Manila. Luckily, I was also fortunate enough to interview my two cousins, Wilson and Eyley, who have retained the surname Wong or Huang from the Fujianese province that our grandfather came from. Their father, Wong Ying Hian, was the second son that my grandfather gave birth to with his Chinese wife in Fujian (my dad's half-brother) and relocated to the Philippines, after the first son, Wong Ying Kiaw, who relocated to Malaysia. This pair of siblings were two of my five cousins from who originated from my grandfather's Chinese family who retained our traditional family name *Huang* in Fujian or *Wong* in Hong Kong. Eyley is the eldest of the Wong siblings, and moved to the Philippines at a young age. She attended the same Filipino-Chinese school that my father and the younger of the siblings attended, Grace Christian. Wilson currently resides in Australia, but relocated from Fujian to Manila to live with my father and his siblings. These complex relationships have often been overlooked because of the strong sense of familial value that the Filipino community has. Figure 2.1 (below) provides a clear visual of my family tree in order to provide a better understanding of the example relationships and experiences provided.

Figure 2.1



Growing up, I was told that my dad's neighbors and family friends were to be called *Tito* or *Tita*, the Tagalog word for uncle or aunt, because neighbors and family friends were to be treated with the same respect and value as a family member, regardless of their blood relation. Whether this was a Filipino trait or not, my grandfather adopted this method of creating close connections very quickly upon arriving in the Philippines. He sent my eldest aunt and uncle, Tita Mely and Papa Johnny to live at a host family's home during their time attending Crusaders-Lorenzo Ruiz Academy in the city of Manila. The family they stayed at was a Fujianese family that was informally indebted to my grandfather, allowing my aunt and uncle to live there during six days of the week to prevent the long commute from our familial home in the province of Marikina to Manila. This exemplifies the extension of my grandfather's *guanxi* network and likeability, permeating from his individual experiences to his reputation of being a prominent businessman constantly looking to help others. In my interview with my Tita Mely, she conveyed her resentful sentiments growing up, "laging tumatakbo ako, sa Linggo ako ay magmadali upang mahuli ang bus sa Marikina."<sup>62</sup> Reiterated in translation, she emphasized how Sundays were important days for family gathering after Church. Her words also spoke of a time when she had to run to catch the bus from school in the city to the family home in Marikina for the afternoon, then hurry back for a quick turnaround in preparation for school the next morning. Although in the moment, she was resentful towards her parents for sending her to a school in the city, disallowing her from living at

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<sup>62</sup> Amelia Manalastas, Interview by Teeana Cotangco, Oral Interview, Philippines, March 22, 2019.

home where her siblings and friends lived, she harbored no hard feelings for being engulfed in Chinese culture. This unique experience of living with a host family forced my aunt and uncle to solely speak Hokkien in the household and at school, as well as form a unique bond with this Chinese family who my grandfather was very close with. Incorporating the multiple perspectives and experiences of my family members in the Philippines, I was able to broaden my scope aside from the historical texts and factual background of my research. In doing so, I gained a better understanding of the uniqueness of the Cotangco family's experience, but also found that this dual Chinese-Filipino life was not uncommon. This prevalent notion of hybrid identity as a result of the centuries of globalization and transcultural exposure in the Philippines resonates not only with my own experience creating a "third space" identifying as a first-generation Filipino-American, but with many other ethnically Chinese individuals throughout the diaspora.

Although "Chinese *mestizos* (to use the Philippine term for persons of mixed Chinese-native ancestry) have not been formally and legally recognized as a separate group — one whose membership is strictly defined by genealogical considerations rather than by place of birth," these individuals play an essential role in not only Filipino society, but also in the economy.<sup>63</sup> A similar trend with regards to identity and sentiments of "separateness" have been documented in Richard Chu's *Chinese & Chinese Mestizos*

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<sup>63</sup> Edgar Wickberg, "The Chinese Mestizo in Philippine History," *Journal of Southeast Asian History*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (Cambridge University Press, 1964), 62.

*of Manila* book which was published in 2010, where he introduces the Chinese mestizo experience that was determined upon the father or husband's ethnic classification.<sup>64</sup> This systematic classification of Chinese mestizo or Sangley identity harbored these anti-Chinese sentiments or anti-Sinicism originated in the Western world. These distinctions have formed the "nation-based approach to the study of ethnic identities, an approach that is often couched in exclusionary-inclusionary, binarist, or either-or terms" that will be addressed in this chapter.<sup>65</sup>

The distinct racial and ethnic divide between Chinese immigrants and the Filipinos today have been derived from various different factors that I aim to simplify in this chapter. Segregation of these Chinese immigrants from Fujian was initially due to religious incentives and colonization, economic opportunity, and familial ties that further led to a noticeable "otherness" among the local Chinese-Filipino communities. Whether this be assessed through the conformity to the Spanish Christian religious beliefs, or the ambivalence towards assimilating to this religious culture, this formulation of social norms created a distinct notion of the majority versus the "other" minority which sanctioned potential discrimination towards Chinese in the Philippines. Incorporating the various influences in effect when defining the fluid relationship that arises when identifying as Chinese in the Philippines, this section unpacks the complex relationships between Chinese merchants and their families in both China and the Philippines. Through

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<sup>64</sup> Richard Chu, "Chapter 6. Rethinking The Chinese Mestizos and Mestizas of Manila." *Chinese and Chinese Mestizos of Manila*, (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2010): 254.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 254.

use of primary sources among interviews with family members in the Philippines who identify as Chinese-Filipino, as well as dissection of texts this section aims to begin to clarify the ambiguity that accompanies the complex nature of being Chinese-Filipino today.

Among the growing Chinese population in the Philippines, the three major influences on the Fujianese diaspora involve history of colonization, merging of customs and practices, and Western hegemony. Specifically, the longstanding history of Fujianese merchants in the Spanish Philippines during the 16th century led to the intermingling of customs and practices that resulted in the unique identity of Chinese-Filipino individuals. During the early 20th century specifically, aspects of colonization and Western hegemony have always played an essential role in the background formation of identity in the Philippines, whether under Spanish colonial rule or under the influence of the United States of America after World War II. These influences on the Fujianese diaspora in the Philippines had a significant effect on the Chinese-Filipino individuals' experiences, forming clashing nationalistic identities and a sense of pride in the "otherness." This chapter accounts for the narrative of Chinese history throughout the Philippines through the events of Spanish colonization, Chinese nationalism, Filipino nationalism, and finally Western colonization.

### **Parián Paradise: Chinese Identity in Spanish Philippines**



The physical segregatory sentiments originated from Chinatowns across the globe that represent the cultural persistence and versatility that Overseas Chinese foster. Like the rising presence of the Fujianese merchants in the Spanish colonial Philippines, these culturally specific districts represent the long standing history of Chinese migration to an area with very little Chinese population. These developments allow for a mutually beneficial relationship between the migrant communities and the host country, specifically the Fujianese merchant migrants in the early 16th and 17th century Spanish Philippines. Although most major cities in the developed countries around the world have a Chinatown, Binondo in Manila holds the title of the oldest and first Chinatown in the world.<sup>66</sup> As early as the 1570s, merchants from Fujian Province claimed to have struck gold by discovering the New World in the island of Luzon.<sup>67</sup> As a location, Binondo was ideal for “wholesale and retail trading for commodities” because of its proximity to major ports and harbors, fostering maritime trade and growing population of Fujianese immigrants.<sup>68</sup> Though these merchants did not quite literally find gold in the Philippines, they were able to find a steady supply of silver. These Fujianese traders were present in the Philippines long before the establishment of an official Chinatown, “it was after the founding of Manila by the Spaniards in 1571 that the city became the single largest foreign port for Chinese goods for the next two centuries and *the* place from which New

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<sup>66</sup> Soriano, “Binondo: The Oldest Chinatown.”

<sup>67</sup> Ryan Dominic Crewe, “Pacific Purgatory: Spanish Dominicans, Chinese Sangleys, and the Entanglement of Mission and Commerce in Manila, 1580-1620,” *Journal of Early Modern History*, 19 (2015): 345.

<sup>68</sup> Soriano, “Binondo: The Oldest Chinatown.”

World silver flowed into China via the galleon trade.”<sup>69</sup> Not only did the emergence of silver attract these Fujianese travelers, but the potential for social mobility and a better life further enhanced the growth of trade relations between China and the Philippines.

Incentivized by the economic profit and trade opportunity, these Fujianese merchants seized the sudden uprise of potential that presented itself in Manila.<sup>70</sup> Due to the timing of economic events in China, these Fujianese migrants were no strangers to the Philippines even before the documentation of their migration in the 16th century. Trade routes had been established “either directly across the Pacific in the Manila galleons or indirectly via Europe and its trading links with Asia.”<sup>71</sup> Though the initial population of Fujianese migrants in the Philippines tended to be low income individuals in search for better opportunities, the “Spanish conquest of Manila occurred at an opportune time in China. The changing economic conditions in China began to sway imperial policy back in Fujian’s favor. A monetary crisis due to overprinting paper money led to the government to require that all tax payments be made in silver, which was scarce and highly valued.”<sup>72</sup> This increasing demand for silver caused the Fujianese population in the Philippines to skyrocket due to the large outflow of merchants that were highly active in the silver trade. “In the Philippines, the Chinese population grew from about 40 in

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<sup>69</sup> Lucille Chia, “The Butcher, the Baker, and the Carpenter: Chinese Sojourners in the Spanish Philippines and Their Impact on Southern Fujian,” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, Vol. 49, No. 4 (2006): 514.

<sup>70</sup> Crewe, “Pacific Purgatory,” 345.

<sup>71</sup> Brian Moloughney, “Silver, State, and Society: A Monetary Perspective on China’s Seventeenth Century Crisis,” (Master’s Thesis, University of Canterbury, 1986) 51.

<sup>72</sup> Crewe, “Pacific Purgatory,” 345.

1570 to more than 15,000 by 1600 and each year large numbers of merchants sailed from the ports of Fujian and Guangdong to trade in Manila.”<sup>73</sup> The Fujianese merchants and businessmen were an essential spark plug to the Spanish Philippines’ economy. As a vehicle for linking together both the Chinese and Philippine economy, these Chinese migrants contributed to the joint dependence and collaboration between the two countries by occupying this unique “third space.” Especially “after the Spanish colonial government established the Manila-Acapulco galleon trade system in 1571, the Chinese found a ‘niche’ in the Spanish colonial economy.”<sup>74</sup> This Chinese niche that heavily sought after silver supply, further enhanced the economic activity of the Spanish Philippines. Although the Fujianese presence was not uncommon in Manila, “the Spanish conquest and the silver-laden galleons that followed, opened up a transpacific economy with unprecedented opportunities.”<sup>75</sup> Particularly during a period of time where silver was extremely valuable to these Chinese migrants, the Fujianese merchants would purchase silks, cottons and ceramics, had the intention of exporting these goods in exchange for foreign silver.<sup>76</sup> Not only did this alteration incentivized Fujianese merchants to participate in the silver galleon trade affect the Spanish Philippines, but it also had an effect on trade around the world. During the 16th century, “the Chinese demand for silver is what elevated the value of the commodity and provided the impetus

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<sup>73</sup> Moloughney, “Silver, State, and Society,” p. 62.

<sup>74</sup> Richard Chu, “Chapter 2. The Chinese in Late Spanish Colonial Manila: An Overview,” *Chinese and Chinese Mestizos of Manila*, (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2010): 54.

<sup>75</sup> Crewe, “Pacific Purgatory,” 345.

<sup>76</sup> Moloughney, “Silver, State, and Society,” p. 93.

for trade around the globe."<sup>77</sup> The foundation for this important Pacific trade relationship between Spain's American colonies and China through the Philippines was implemented as early as in "1564 when a Spanish fleet under the command of Miguel Lopez de Legaspi sailed across the central Pacific from New Spain," giving life to the transpacific trade between the Spanish and the Philippines, also providing a source of silver for the Chinese.<sup>78</sup> Shifting the global economy, Fujianese migrants sparkplugged the budding seeds of globalization in the Philippines. Although the Chinese were a seemingly beneficial economic asset to the Philippines, lingering sentiments of otherness and separateness were still apparent in the Philippines. The additional factor of religion among these Chinese merchants further enhanced the mixed treatment among Filipinos and Chinese-Filipinos.

There was not only an exchange of goods like silver between the Chinese-Filipino individuals and Dominican missionaries in the Spanish Philippines, but also a priority towards the exchange of new religious beliefs. Like that of the profit-bearing travelers and traders, Dominican friars aimed to spread and expand Christianity to Asia and China by passing through the Philippines.<sup>79</sup> Specifically "in Manila, the Dominicans hoped to unlock that door by engaging and growing an economically vital community of Chinese merchants and migrants from the nearby Fujian Province. The Spaniards called them

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<sup>77</sup> Katharine Bjork, "The Link that Kept the Philippines Spanish: Mexican Merchant Interests and the Manila Trade," *Journal of World History* Vol. 9, No. 1 (1998): 31.

<sup>78</sup> Moloughney, "Silver, State, and Society," p. 61.

<sup>79</sup> Crewe, "Pacific Purgatory," 338.

Sangleys, after the Hokkien *sing-li*, meaning ‘trade’ or ‘doing business.’”<sup>80</sup> This newly formed labeling of these Chinese-Filipino individuals was a common theme of Chinese relations in the Philippines, forming a sense of “otherness” and awareness of the Chinese “differentness” from the ideal Filipino locals. Because of the Spaniards in Manila fostered sentiments of “fear and distrust of the Chinese as a result of their historical experiences with non-Spanish and non-Christian peoples in the Iberian peninsula... Non-Christian Chinese were either deported or restricted in their movements and interaction with the locals.”<sup>81</sup> In 1594, the Spanish government took action to the rise in population of non-Christian Sangleys, creating a segregated community specifically for the Chinese immigrant population to trade. Between the walls of the Manila Cathedral and the doors of Santo Domingo Church, the market space and Chinese living quarters were referred to as the Parián.<sup>82</sup> These Sangley quarters in the Chinese Parián of Manila for non-Christian Chinese in compliance to the Dominican mission, fostered the growing transpacific trade and relationship between the Spanish and Sangleys in the Philippines.<sup>83</sup> The physical barrier formation segregating these non-Christian Chinese from “other” conforming figures. This allowed negative sentiments to resonate among the Spanish Christian authorities in power with any sort of intermingling between these rebellious non-Christian Chinese individuals. In this way, the Parián was a district that fostered the mutually beneficial relationship between the Sangleys and the Dominican missionaries

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<sup>80</sup> Crewe, “Pacific Purgatory,” 339.

<sup>81</sup> Chu, “The Chinese in the Late Spanish Colonial Manila,” 55.

<sup>82</sup> Soriano, “Binondo: The Oldest Chinatown.”

<sup>83</sup> Crewe, “Pacific Purgatory,” 339.

providing the Chinese with a government recognized commonplace while providing the potential to achieve the Dominicans' "ultimate goal... to 'seek martyrdom among the Chinese' in China."<sup>84</sup> Although those Christian Chinese in Binondo were treated with more respect than the non-Christians who resided in the Parián, these Chinese individuals were still essential to the Spaniards in bridging the gap between the Philippines and Asia. According to ethnographer and intercultural author, Juliet Uytanlet, "the Chinese success and constant increase in population caused alarm among the Spaniards that led to a number of massacres and the destruction of the Chinese settlements."<sup>85</sup> The missionaries aimed to utilize the Parián district as a method to trace the Chinese networks back to mainland China in order to achieve their goal of spreading Christianity to broader Asia. In response, the non-Christian Chinese members in the Parián tended to convert to Christianity out of convenience, "choos[ing] to be baptized only because the State and the Catholic Church granted more rights and benefits to converts. After having been converted, however, they returned to their 'pagan' ways."<sup>86</sup> This unique relationship that the non-Christian Chinese individuals had with the Spaniards and local Filipinos formed a sense of "otherness" among the Chinese in the Parián.

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<sup>84</sup> Crewe, "Pacific Purgatory," 339.

<sup>85</sup> Juliet Lee Uytanlet, "The Hybrid Tsinoyos: Challenges of Hybridity and Homogeneity as Sociocultural Constructs among the Chinese in the Philippines," Pickwick Publications, (2016): p. 39.

<sup>86</sup> Richard Chu, "The 'Chinese' and the 'Mestizos' of the Philippines: Towards a New Interpretation," *Philippine Studies*, Vol. 50, No. 3, (2003): 337.

Contributing to the complex relationship formation among the Spanish authorities and the Sangleyes, the Parián was an essential location “full of blurred visions, awkward translations, and tricksters.”<sup>87</sup> Essential because of its capacity to host an amalgamation of multiple cultures, among Dominican Spaniards, local Tagalog-speaking Filipinos, and Fujianese merchants from China. This symbiotic relationship formed as “the Spanish began very quickly to rely on the Sangleyes, not only for goods from China, but for all kinds of services in their colony. All the craftsmen, storekeepers, unskilled laborers, and most farmers, fisherman, and domestic servants were Chinese.”<sup>88</sup> The keystone district of the Parián was crucial in forming the transpacific relations between Asia and America, straddling the line “between missions and commerce, the story of the Sangley-Spanish encounter in the Parián reveals global and transoceanic forces that were contingent on local interactions.”<sup>89</sup> The combination of these Spanish missionaries as well as the rise in demand for silver, silks, sugar, and other luxury goods hand in hand with a monetary perspective, created an opportune time for Fujianese populations to rise in the Spanish Philippines. The rise in population of the Chinese posed a potential threat to the masses in the Philippines which led to the inherent societal segregation. This rise in population implied a rise in power which cultivated “resentment and restrictions towards the Chinese [which] resulted in their segregation and concentration in Binondo, population control for centuries, and inevitably, the development and encouragement of the vocation of trade

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<sup>87</sup> Crewe, “Pacific Purgatory,” 341.

<sup>88</sup> Chia, *The Butcher, the Baker, and the Carpenter: Chinese Sojourners in the Spanish Philippines and Their Impact on Southern Fujian*, p. 515.

<sup>89</sup> Crewe, “Pacific Purgatory,” 340.

that reinforced the stereotypes.”<sup>90</sup> These sentiments of segregation, isolation, and discrimination carried on further during the gradual formation of Filipino identity throughout the 20th century.

### **Opportunities Sprouting from Prejudice and “Otherness”**

The complex relationship formed by the creation of a physically segregated community for non-Christian Chinese Sangleys in the Spanish Philippines was not always symbiotic and civil. This distinct sense of “otherness” admitted to the Sangleys by the formation of the Parián from the culturally normative attitudes adopted by the Spanish, fostered attitudes of discrimination by nature. By the early nineteenth century, the Hokkien term, Sangley, slowly transitioned into the term “Chino” or “Tsinoy” which was derived by the Chinese population becoming more diverse and “identified more as nationals of China than Chinese merchants.”<sup>91</sup> Throughout the nineteenth century, the social structure in the Philippines had altered dramatically. With the transition from the *barangay* or *barrio* framework where groupings or municipalities were separated by regions that allowed for easier ruling of small communities, to classes segregated by racial background. Of these social classes, the Chinese were placed at the lowest tier in society.<sup>92</sup> The Spaniards successfully segregated and isolated the pure Chinese from the pure Filipinos, but failed at spreading Christianity and assimilating them into the Spanish

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<sup>90</sup> Juliet Lee Uytanlet, “The Hybrid Tsinoy,” (2016) 39.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., p. 39.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., p. 40.



community.<sup>93</sup> This fostered a sense of “Chineseness of the Chinese people, uniting them as one in times of crisis and trouble” which further raised a sense of nationalism among Chinese-Filipinos in the Philippines.

On the topic of embracing “Chineseness” and the Chinese-Filipino identity, I asked my aunt, Tita Mely, if she had experienced attitudes of prejudice or discrimination regarding her identity as Chinese-Filipino. Straddling the line between being “seen as too Filipino in school, but also 'intsik beho' on the streets,” as she mentioned the derogatory connotations behind the names uttered towards her during her childhood.<sup>94</sup> The term “intsik beho” was coined during a time when the Chinese Filipinos were discriminated by both the Filipinos and the Spanish communities in the Philippines, whereas “intsik” was a negative term used to describe the Chinese associated with eating congee, while “beho” was an alteration of the term “viejo” meaning “old” in Spanish. Although these pejorative connotations associated with the term “intsik beho” and being called “Intsik” are used to denote and categorize Chinese in the Philippines, the term is a form of the hybridized cultural formation emerging from the aspects of globalization and transcultural integration.

The close association with their homeland ties and family values distinguished the Chinese-Filipino individuals from those of pure Filipino background. My aunt spoke

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid., p.41.

<sup>94</sup> Amelia Manalastas, Interview by Teeana Cotangco. Oral Interview. Philippines, March 22, 2019.

about her childhood weeknights that were spent at her host family's home, where her and my uncle's busy schedules only allowed them to return home to Marikina, a city East of Manila, on Sundays for a couple of hours. My uncle, Papa Johnny or Juanito, mentioned the term "tsekwa" or "chekwa"<sup>95</sup> which is also a derogatory term that was used to tease and make fun of the Chinese, while the Chinese would call the Filipinos, *hoan-á*, which means foreigner or barbarian in Hokkien.<sup>96</sup> Similarly, my dad and his younger brother who attended Grace Christian, a Chinese Christian School in Quezon City, spoke of his experience riding the bus to and from school. He vividly remembered having to roll up the windows when passing by the low-life cigarette vendors who gathered at the street corners, swarming the bus to tease and *batok* (the Tagalog word for smack) him and the other children on the back of their heads. On the bus, they would generally be called "chinks" and hear "*intsik beho kain lugaw*" (congee eaters who were weak in the knees) which were intended to insult him and the other children for their Chinese background. These low-income individuals on the streets were typically uneducated and ignorant, "they teased us because we were different."<sup>97</sup> Although there were different motivations and incentives behind the emotions towards Chinese-Filipino relations, attitudes of national pride and heritage became the norm.

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<sup>95</sup> This term originated from a combination of the Philippine Hokkien saying "Intsik gwakang" or *in chek/chiak, góa kang* [叔, 我工] meaning his or her uncle that was later morphed and shortened to tsekwa or chekwa.

<sup>96</sup> Juanito Cotangco, Interview by Teeana Cotangco. Oral Interview. Philippines, March 20, 2019

<sup>97</sup> Edilberto Cotangco. Interview by Teeana Cotangco. Oral Interview. Philippines, March 18, 2019.

Individuals interviewed in Juliet Uytanlet's book, *The Hybrid Tsinoyos*, shared related experiences when asked questions regarding their identification as Chinese in the Philippines. Chris, a first generation Chinese mestizo who also attended Chinese school, mentioned that "what [he] liked about Chinese is that if they know you are Chinese, they will accept you. Similarly, what [he] does not like is that if they learn you are *hoan-á, yun na* negative *na* (they already have negative responses)."<sup>98</sup> Depending on who asks, the levels of prejudice will be judged accordingly and affects the illicit response. Alternately, my cousin Wilson, mentioned that he did not experience harsh mistreatment, because "most of the Chinese were financially capable in comparison to the common Filipinos."<sup>99</sup> He went on to point out that as long as you were civil, minded one's own business, and did your job, not showing off too much to inhibit sentiments of jealousy or bad attitudes, no harsh attitudes from the local Filipinos. These varying perspectives regarding identity as mixed-race Chinese-Filipino in the Philippines show the generations of progress and adaptations that have transformed since the 16th century.

These "cultural notions of nation-based identities" accompanied by the rise of Chinese nationalism and Filipino nationalism accompanied the trends in familial practices of Chinese merchant families during the early twentieth century. Corresponding with the historic rise in nationalism in China, the older generations of Chinese (those born in the 1920's and 1930's) in the Philippines "still [felt] strongly attached to China

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<sup>98</sup> Chris, CM individual. Interviewed by Juliet Lee Uytanlet. "The Hybrid Tsinoyos," 22 July 2012.

<sup>99</sup> Wilson Valdez. Interview by Teeana Cotangco. Oral Interview. Philippines, March 22, 2019.

are products of the rise of nationalism in China and the Philippines.”<sup>100</sup> This sense of pride in “Chineseness” can be traced throughout my grandfather’s experience, who was born in Fujian in 1913 and migrated to the Philippines in 1939. After getting married into a poor and hard situation in Fujian at the age of 18, my grandfather sought a method of migration to the Philippines. His brother-in-law was a General in the Chinese army, but was based in the Philippines during the Japanese occupation in the 50s, and assisted in foraging a fake birth certificate and accompanying documents to stay in the Philippines. This was the birth of the local name “Amando Cotangco” which he later used to start his family in the Philippines, after marrying my grandmother, Angelina Reyes, a Filipino-born with distant Spanish heritage. My grandfather first worked in a restaurant in Pasig, then moved on to open up a grocery store which later closed down. Eventually, he had formed enough connections and earned enough money to open up a “bigasan” or rice retailing business, which was a popular business in Marikina, that he settled in. Together with his brother, Eng, my grandfather opened a shoe last factory called “Modern Heel” which later sprouted into a leather shoe factory. Along with some of the unique themes and traditions adopted by Chinese merchants living in the Philippines, came the practice of having multiple wives, one in mainland China and one in the Philippines. The Chinese practice of having “concubines” became culturally specific when these individuals resided in the Philippines. In practice, the Chinese merchants in the Philippines “who took in Filipino ‘concubines,’ or ‘secondary wives,’ their Chinese wives and families condoned this practice as long as ‘proper priority’ was given them, in that the union with

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<sup>100</sup> Chu, “The ‘Chinese’ and the ‘Mestizos’ of the Philippines,” 354.

the Filipino ‘wives’ occurred after the marriage in China.”<sup>101</sup> In a similar vein, my grandfather had a wife and two children in Fujian, prior to migrating to the Philippines in search of better opportunities.<sup>102</sup> The dual marriage practices were common among many of the rich Chinese merchants who spent their time in both China and the Philippines.<sup>103</sup> Asking around among my cousins and uncles, there were little questions asked towards my grandfather’s decision to live a dual life, fostering two families and maintaining relationships with all of his sons and daughters. When directly addressing this concept of dual family practice with family members, they casually overlooked it, taking a positive outlook regarding the beneficial result of having a larger family. These sentiments geared towards appreciating familial values are deeply ingrained in both Chinese and Filipino culture. Although after “the height of Chinese nationalism in the Philippines in the 1930s, unions with Filipinas, whether legal or otherwise, began to be perceived ‘as a threat to the existence of the Chinese community by racial dilution and acculturation.’”<sup>104</sup> This reiterates the notion of “otherness” and emerges from the transcultural hybridity and the “third space” that straddles the line between acknowledging tradition and maneuvering a new sphere.

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<sup>101</sup> Richard Chu, “Chapter 8, Chinese Merchant Families: Family, Identity, and Culture in the Early Twentieth Century,” p. 336.

<sup>102</sup> Juanito Cotangco, Interviewed by Teeana Cotangco, Oral Interview, Philippines, March 20, 2019.

<sup>103</sup> Richard Chu, “Chapter 9, Negotiating Identities Within Chinese Merchant Families: To Be ‘Filipino’ or To Be ‘Chinese,’” *Chinese and Chinese Mestizos of Manila*, 377.

<sup>104</sup> Chu, “Chapter 8,” 336.

The unique cultural characteristics that the Chinese mestizos harbored have been driven by discrimination, segregation, and colonization. Although the derogatory terms and ambivalence towards identifying as “Chinese” dependent upon who inquires, this dual identity shines through as beneficial. The sentiments of “nationalism swept the country, the Chinese acknowledged their gratitude to the Philippines for giving them a place for refuge by calling themselves Filipino-Chinese.”<sup>105</sup> Through compiling information from family members as well as secondary sources, I have been able to dissect the progressive but hybrid nature that comes along with approaching what it means to identify as Chinese-Filipino. In this way, globalization contrasts tradition in the expansive and inclusive nature that encompasses the dichotomy and duality of the birth of a hybrid “third culture.”

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<sup>105</sup> Uytanlet, “The Hybrid Tsinoy,” p. 191.

### Chapter 3: Big Mac in a Small World

“About four-fifths of the world's population, most of whom live in what is commonly called the Third World, have had their lives shaped by the experience of colonialism. However, global-impacting developments beginning with the end of the 1980s, and the whole phenomenon of globalization have contributed to a more dynamic foregrounding of postcolonialism.”<sup>106</sup> Directly correlating to the Spanish colonial era in the Philippines and how Fujianese individuals belong, Michaela Wolf's perspective on globalization as a “dynamic foreground” ties together the universal effect that comes hand in hand with cultural formation in the “third space.” The progression of the cultural formation that links the Fujianese migratory patterns with the hybridized cultural nuances of Filipino-Chinese identity in a globalized postcolonial context. Through a brief introduction of George Ritzer's term, *McDonaldization*, I will provide a foundational background on the progress of globalization and the effect on hybridity among cultures. The negotiation of national identity as well as unification under a common theme results in the formation of a “third space” and the acknowledgment of multiple cultures. Through the constantly progressing lens of cultural globalization, hybridization allows for the formation of a new type of culture, individually driven by local and foreign forces.<sup>107</sup> As a result of both colonization and the rise in capitalism throughout the global economy, hybridity among cultures and the formation of this “third space” has become an

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<sup>106</sup> Michaela Wolf, "The Third Space in Postcolonial Representation," *Changing the Terms*, University of Ottawa Press: 2000, p. 128.

<sup>107</sup> Dal Yong Jin, “The Rise of the New Korean Wave,” *New Korean Wave: Transnational Cultural Power in the Age of Social Media*, University of Illinois Press, (2016): p 9.

increasingly common phenomenon around the world. Especially during the Internet era of the twenty-first century, information and communication is easily and readily available and intercultural exchange is not an uncommon phenomenon.

Through the lens of cultural globalization, hybridization creates a new type of culture driven by local and foreign forces. Particularly after a transitional era in China, from a socialist to market-based economy, it is important to evaluate the prevalence of outside forces on the progress of the formation of a new identity among the Fujianese diaspora. With regards to Fujianese merchant out-migration and the unique ambiguity of the Filipino-Chinese identity, a proper understanding of hybridity in a global sense serves as a tool to understand the fluid and continuous definition of the third space in cultural formation. Is there something lost from a culture's authenticity when foreign elements are introduced? At what point does a cultural hybrid become identified as a core culture rather than a cultural mixture?

The rise in phenomenon of *McDonaldization*, introduced by George Ritzer, an American sociologist, professor, and author who studies globalization and social theory, allows for further analysis of the larger implications of globalization. In the framework of my argument, McDonaldization is an example of the progressing nature of globalization under the broader significance of capitalism. Commonly known as: Mickey D's, Golden Arches, Mak Kee, Makku, or McDick's, these are all shorthand variations and/or slang



for McDonald's, one of the most recognizable fast-food chains across the globe.<sup>108</sup>

However, this chapter is not about the fast-food industry or the commercialization of the famous clown, Ronald McDonald, alternatively I will be assessing how McDonald's food chain acts as a global phenomenon and how it serves as the quintessential example of globalization's range, particularly in the postcolonial era of social media. In this sense, this route of globalization can be seen through the capitalistic contemporary lens with the presence of McDonald's as a large chain existing in multiple spheres throughout the world. In tangent with a rapidly modernizing world, McDonald's has been able to expand their brand on a global sphere, asserting its dominance in the fast food industry. An example of the influential effect that McDonald's has on a global sphere is presented in the September 1986 edition of *The Economist*, a prestigious magazine publication, which released the first annual "Big Mac Index" as a part of "burgernomics" indicating the purchasing power of currencies around the world in relation to the local price of the Big Mac.<sup>109</sup> This index represents the importance of McDonald's global presence, particularly during a time of rising commercialization and an increasing rise in consumption, specifically, the fast food industry. The "trend of growing worldwide interconnectedness has been accompanied by several clashing notions of cultural difference" that makeup *globalization*.<sup>110</sup> Especially during a time when social media allows for easily accessible

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<sup>108</sup> Alex Frank, "What McDonald's Is Nicknamed Around the World," spoonuniversity.com, <https://spoonuniversity.com/lifestyle/mcdonalds-nicknames-around-the-world>

<sup>109</sup> George Ritzer, "An Introduction to McDonaldization," *The McDonaldization of Society*, Pine Forge Press 1993, 11.

<sup>110</sup> Jan Nederveen Pieterse, "Globalization as Hybridization," *International Sociology*, Vol. 9, No. 2, (Rowman & Littlefield, June 1994): p. 41.

interconnectedness and collaboration among cultures, acknowledgement of cultural and national differences is extremely essential. For example, although the “Big Mac Index” implies that there is consistency throughout all McDonald’s branches throughout the world, McDonald’s in China has experienced an extremely rapid approach to expansion than that of McDonald’s in America.

McDonaldization theory acknowledges the homogenization of societies during an era of rising capitalism and rapid modernization. This example demonstrates the varying positionality of globalization as “a form of intercultural hybridization, partly in its origins and certainly in its present globally localizing variety of forms.”<sup>111</sup> McDonaldization alludes to some aspects of global implications that arise in tangent to the United States and the rise of consumption. Globalization is commonly interpreted as a standardization or “cultural synchronization” that is further tied with modernity.<sup>112</sup> Alternately, globalization theories can be classified to varying degrees depending on the basis of their emphasis on the duality that the globalization of culture provides. These differing viewpoints expose two clashing extremes that pose both an optimistic view adhering towards hybridity and the creation of a new “third space” as well as a realistic perspective underscoring the blatant deletion of original cultures. According to Homi Bhabha, “the Third Space ‘carries the burden of the meaning of culture.’”<sup>113</sup> He defines this space as existing in between “former fixed territories that the whole body of resistant

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid., p. 55.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., p. 67.

<sup>113</sup> Wolf, "The Third Space in Postcolonial Representation," p. 135.

hybridization comes into being in the form of fragile syncretisms, contrapuntal recombinations and acculturation.”<sup>114</sup> The Chinese-Filipino identity as hybrid, rather than a deletion of one culture in priority over another, is an example of the collaboration involved in the formation of Bhabha’s “third space.” Ranging from the understanding that the world is becoming a more uniform and standardized to recognizing the contextualization of cultural background and history, “globalization of culture can lead either to a trend toward common codes and practices (homogeneity) or to a situation in which many cultures interact to create a kind of pastiche or a blend leading to a variety of hybrids (heterogeneity).”<sup>115</sup> The understanding that the world is becoming increasingly more uniform and standardized through means of modernization extends an optimistic perspective towards hybridization of cultures in a global context. Michaela Wolf interprets Homi Bhabha’s analysis of hybridity as “not simply a third term that resolves the tension between two cultures in a dialectal play of ‘recognition,’ and cannot be discussed as an issue of cultural relativism.”<sup>116</sup> The collaboration between two cultures, in this case, the Spanish colonial Philippines and Chinese migrants from Fujian, cooperate to form the unique and “culturally relative” identity of Chinese-Filipino.

On the other hand, modernization also imposes the potential “erasing cultural and biological diversity in its way, and now not only the gains (rationalization,

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid., p. 135.

<sup>115</sup> George Ritzer and Elizabeth L. Malone, “Globalization Theory: Lessons from the Exportation of McDonaldization and the New Means of Consumption,” *Journal of American Studies*, (2000), 98.

<sup>116</sup> Wolf, "The Third Space in Postcolonial Representation," p. 134.

standardization, control) but also the losses (alienation, disenchantment, displacement) are becoming apparent.”<sup>117</sup> Albeit, “with respect to cultural forms, hybridization is [also] defined as ‘the ways in which forms become separated from existing practices and recombine with new forms in new practices.’”<sup>118</sup> The notion of separating in order to successfully recombine and form anew is an fundamental aspect that comes along with hybrid cultural formation. The dichotomy between homogeneity and heterogeneity recognizes the clashing notions of cultural difference that comes hand in hand with the rapid process of modernization. For example, in Homi Bhabha’s work, he frames this process to be “imitating an original in such a way that the priority of the original is not reinforced but by the very fact that it can be simulated, copied, transferred, transformed, made into a simulacrum and so on: the ‘original’ is never finished or complete in itself.”<sup>119</sup> Through proper understanding of modernization, distinct from Western hegemonic and Eurocentric approaches, rather in a global capitalistic sense, topics of hybridity through the progressive lens of globalization allows for the creation of the “third space.” This framework allows for advances in the development of modernization, providing an outlook for cultures like that of Chinese individuals in the Philippines, to acknowledge their original heritage while combating obstacles of new cultural formation in a foreign sphere.

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<sup>117</sup> Jan Nederveen Pieterse, “Globalization as Hybridization,” 45.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 72.

<sup>119</sup> Wolf, "The Third Space in Postcolonial Representation," p. 137.

## **Uniformity at the Cost of Resistance and Depletion**

Although global homogenization adheres to recognizing cultural differences and aiming towards a more uniform social relations, “globalization is not an all-encompassing process of homogenization but a complex mixture of homogenization and heterogenization.”<sup>120</sup> It can be broken down to associate homogeneity to be categorized under cultural imperialism and heterogeneity with localism. Often times, this conflict highlights implications of “otherness” that comes when cultures clash and combine. Similar to the Chinese mestizo experience negotiating the Philippines under Spanish colonialism, this formation of hybrid identity was composed through distinctive formation of the majority in power versus the minority other group. In this sense, “hybridity therefore describes a process in which the single voice of colonial authority undermines the operation of colonial power by inscribing and disclosing the trace of the other so that it reveals itself as double-voiced.”<sup>121</sup> This homogenizing form of standardization or unification often disregards the localities and the indigenous cultural differences, often associated with cultural imperialism and the rise in the spread of market economy.<sup>122</sup> Separation and notions of “otherness” often lead to discrimination and competition, resulting in loss of authenticity.

Interestingly enough, conflict that tends to divide humanity, like conquest and opposition, also tend to unite humankind through antagonism and formation of a “global

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<sup>120</sup> George Ritzer and Elizabeth L. Malone, “Globalization Theory,” 98.

<sup>121</sup> Wolf, “The Third Space in Postcolonial Representation,” p. 134.

<sup>122</sup> Ritzer and Malone, “Globalization Theory,” 98.

melenge” of cultural experiences, slowly coming to formation through adaptation to other cultures.<sup>123</sup> The negotiation between the deletion of cultures, but also the formation and evolution of a new third dimension that arises from the “divergent cultural patterns” allude to a “*transcultural space*.”<sup>124</sup> Although this can often lead to misinterpretations and cultural divergence, this unique interpretation has come into fruition after taking into account histories of colonization and Western imperialism. In this sense, hybridization or hybridity refers to the construction of new culture that emerges from the interweaving of elements between the colonizers and colonized, challenging the validity of any fixed indigenous cultural identity.<sup>125</sup> A specific example of this combination and intercultural communication is the Spanish Philippines and the formation of a *mestizo* identity. This reiterates Pieterse’s definition that “globalization taken widely, however, refers to the formation of a worldwide historical field and involves the development of global memory, arising from shared global experiences. Such shared global experiences range from intercivilizational encounters such as long-distance trade and migration to slavery, conquest, war, imperialism, colonialism.”<sup>126</sup>

The Spanish Christian conquests in the Philippines and intermingling between Dominican friars and local indigenous Filipinos are a culmination of years of

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<sup>123</sup> Pieterse, “Globalization as Hybridization,” 67.

<sup>124</sup> Britta Kalscheur, “Encounters in the Third Space: Links Between Intercultural Communication Theories and Postcolonial Approaches,” *The Global Intercultural Communication Reader*, Routledge 2014, 34.

<sup>125</sup> Yong, “New Korean Wave,” p. 13.

<sup>126</sup> Pieterse, “Globalization as Hybridization,” p. 76.

homogenization that creates an identity of subculture. Furthermore, Dick Hebdige's conceptualization of subculture as "a form of resistance in which experienced contradictions and objections to this ruling ideology are obliquely represented in style" is useful in that it prioritizes the form of resistance to the dominant social norm.<sup>127</sup> This raises the potential question of who has the authority to dictate what becomes standardized to be socially accepted as the "norm" when referring to the common practices and traditions of a culture? Authenticity is lost in the homogenization process, as commonly seen in Western imperialism. This theme is often translated in the American context where the consolidation of cultures into a melting pot of uniformity is normalized through pursuit of the American Dream.

### **Salad Bowl > Melting Pot**

An important distinction must be made in clarifying the difference between modernity and globalization, as a result of Westernization. Although this process of modernity originated from Western imperialism, creating a new space while acknowledging "worldwide social relations," it must be interpreted loosely as a salad bowl rather than a melting pot.<sup>128</sup> Avoiding the Eurocentric angle that problematizes the global perspective of the formation of new cultures, the theory of a salad bowl emphasizes the importance of not diluting indigenous cultures, but rather highlighting and acknowledging authentic themes. In contrast with the more conventional "melting

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<sup>127</sup> Roald Maliangkay, "Ch 13: The Popularity of Individualism," *The Korean Popular Culture Reader*, Duke University Press, 2014, p 306.

<sup>128</sup> Pieterse, "Globalization as Hybridization," p. 71.

pot,” that merges and dilutes cultures, imposes marginalization and assimilation rather than a multicultural salad bowl that calls for integration and recognition of diverse ethnic backgrounds.<sup>129</sup> Particularly looking back at United States history, the idea of achieving the “American Dream” favors the Western perspective of multiple cultures merging together to form a nationalistic melting pot of cultures that encapsulate what it means to be American. In contrast, Homi Bhabha’s “concept of hybridity is radically heterogeneous and discontinuous, a dialectical articulation that involves a new perspective of cultural representation.”<sup>130</sup> This approach to a hybridized society allows for acceptance rather than deletion of new perspectives, highlighting the heterogeneous manner that Bhabha implies. With this sentiment in mind, immigrants, like Fujianese immigrants and merchants, assimilate into their host country’s new world culture and encounter obstacles to maintain their traditional cultural practices of what it means to be authentically Chinese. I was able to witness a result of this hybridization first-hand during my time in the Philippines where I attended my cousin Sherrielyn’s wedding where Hokkien, Tagalog, and English were all spoken.

Critical theorist and scholar of hybridity and the Third Space in a postcolonial context, Homi Bhabha introduces the “third dimension,” negotiating the intersubjective realm that blurs the boundaries between intervention and insertion.<sup>131</sup> These blurred

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<sup>129</sup> Safi Mahmoud Mahfouz, “America’s Melting Pot or the Salad Bowl: The Stage Immigrant’s Dilemma,” *Journal of Foreign Languages, Cultures & Civilizations*, Vol. 1 No. 2, Dec 2013, p 2.

<sup>130</sup> Wolf, “The Third Space in Postcolonial Representation,” p. 134.

<sup>131</sup> Homi Bhabha, “The Location of Culture,” Routledge 1994, 191.



boundaries, arise hand in hand with the observations of intercultural discourse between distribution of power among Western and non-Western cultures that align with sentiments of Western imperialism.<sup>132</sup> In the process of new cultural formation, it is important to distinguish between deletion of culture and appreciation. The progressive formation of Chinese-Filipino identity in a postcolonial context encompasses this notion of creating a “third space” identity. Jin Dal Yong (2016) mentions in his analysis of hybridity, “conflict, conquest, and oppression only divide people, then nations themselves would merely be artifacts of division for they too were mostly born out of conflict.” Acknowledging the theories of globalization and hybridity in a Western dominated sphere, this progression is “far from giving us a universally homogenous culture, globalization defines a space in which the world’s cultures rub elbows and generate new, heterogeneous meanings and understandings.”<sup>133</sup> This comparison and development of a new “third space” as a result of crossover cultures and intercultural collaboration, directly corresponds with the unique Chinese-Filipino identity comes into fruition, allowing for acknowledgement of the traditional past and a more progressive future.

This negotiation of intersections between global and local forces encompass a rich history of colonization while acknowledging the new spaces that come into fruition to form the unique identity of what it means to be Filipino. These “multiple identities and the decentering of the social subject are grounded in the ability of individuals to avail

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<sup>132</sup> Kalscheur, “Encounters in the Third Space,” p. 33.

<sup>133</sup> Ritzer et al., “Globalization Theory,” p. 104.

themselves of several organizational options at the same time. Thus globalization is the framework for the diversification and amplification of ‘sources of the self.’”<sup>134</sup> In reconsidering who necessarily dictates the cultural normativity that deems itself as the “standard,” the true definition arises intrinsically. In this way, experiences of conflict also unite humankind, producing an ambivalent unity that emerges out of the ashes of antagonism, conflict, and oppression.<sup>135</sup> This hybrid identity has laid the foundation for Filipinos around the diaspora to embrace this “third space” identity of assimilation, whether that be as a Fujianese merchant in the Spanish Philippines or a Chinese mestizo navigating the streets of postcolonial Manila. The blurred boundaries mentioned in Bhabha’s *third space* involves new forms and cultural meaning and production to occur, blurring the limitations of existing boundaries and calling into question the established classifications of culture and identity.<sup>136</sup> Although hybridization often leads to ambiguity and the “in-between” identity, Bhabha points out that “hybridity needs to open up a ‘third space’ within which diverse elements encounter and transform... where minority discourses intervene to preserve their strengths and particularity.”<sup>137</sup> This complex and overlapping identity is a result of the new hybridized global order. Identity formation is a continuous cycle and is constantly progressing as a reemerging transnational relationships form.

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<sup>134</sup> Pieterse, “Globalization as Hybridization,” p. 76.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 77.

<sup>136</sup> Yong, “New Korean Wave,” p. 14.

<sup>137</sup> Bhabha, “The Location of Culture,” pp. 217-218.

**Conclusion:**

Fujianese migration has been a widely discussed, largely due to the legal and illegal implications associated with the migration of its people. Specifically among Fujianese migrants in the Philippines, there are those who embody the indigenous Filipino culture and those who have brought a migrant culture from Fujian Province. With this transcultural mixing, we now have a creation of a “third space” that centers on both the formation of a new cultural identity while acknowledging and maintaining the authentic culture of their homeland. In beginning to unpack this unique circumstance, I interviewed family members who have directly experienced, and been affected by, this phenomenon of “illegal” migration from Fujian. In interviewing my family members, I found that they had to selectively choose when and where to appropriate the cultural identity they associated themselves with. Thinking about those who had migrated from Fujian in order to establish a new life and create new waves of cultural identity, I’m reminded of my time in China.

During my summer abroad, studying and interning in Shanghai, I was constantly approached with the question: *Nǐ shì hàn guó rén ma?* [你是汉国人吗?] which in translation means “Are you ethnically Han Chinese?” There was constant inquiry regarding my ethnicity and cultural background, whether it be by a range of random strangers on the street or by my peers. Unsure of how to respond, I answered that I was American, but that my parents were born and raised in the Philippines. I vividly recall the man who approached me on the street who was unsatisfied with my response, further

questioning where my father's father originated from. When I had finally told him that my grandfather migrated from Fujian, he sighed with relief and suggested that I respond accordingly next time, with the claim that I was indeed Han Chinese. This interaction left me puzzled as to why he had felt so strongly about my identity and what it meant to identify as ethnically Han, the largest ethnic group in China.

During the years going into college, I traced my racial breakdown through my family tree and came to the conclusion that, yes, I am technically 33% ethnically Han Chinese because of my grandfather's Fujianese roots, but I am also 33% Spanish and 33% Filipino. Though in America, I am simply categorized under the broader term "Asian," under the assumption that there are only five or six racial categories available in the multiple choice bubble section above "Other." In navigating this sphere of cultural ambiguity that characterizes the Filipino-American identity, I was able to deeply self-reflect on my own personal experience, as well as mirrored experiences of Chinese-Filipinos throughout the diaspora. These joint experiences inspired this topic of research regarding cultural hybridity during a century of rapid globalization.

What I took from my experience is that individuals around the world are predominantly a mixture of hybrid cultures constantly migrating and forming new spaces. In the creation of a "third space" it is important to acknowledge the role that snakeheads provided in facilitating the successful migration of culture. Snakeheads directly influence

cultural preservation through utilizing their intricate *guanxi* network of Chinese individuals both in Fujian and throughout the diaspora. The fundamental role of the snakehead, also considered a middle-man in the human smuggling process, is a keystone element in routes of migration and cultural formation in new spaces. In the creation of a new migrant identity and culture, we can't overlook the role that the snakeheads held in facilitating cultural migration and the new identities that followed. From my research it's clear that these well-connected individuals play an essential role in the formation of Chinese identities throughout the diaspora. Imperative to facilitating relationships between migrants and their host countries, snakeheads maintain a unique position of crossing the boundaries between cultures and creating a new "third space." My experience in China as an individual who fits into the ambiguous "third space" of not directly belonging to the broader majority while adhering to a specific perceived identity has allowed me to negotiate this distinctive "otherness."

Addressing my identity as a Filipino-Chinese American citizen while navigating the new spheres provided in a culturally diverse country, I have come to acknowledge the nuances that come hand in hand with hybridity. Rapid globalization has formed links between and among cultures that further contribute to the construction of hybrid identities. Taking into consideration the various spheres of influence involved in this process, like government corruption, this proposed issue of human smuggling associated with the snakehead business has a global effect. In this way, Fujianese migration becomes a microcosm for a larger, global phenomenon. When we consider the

implications of “illegal” migration and the creation of a new “third space,” we acknowledge the past experiences that contribute to the progressive collection of fluid hybrid identities. The concept of hybridity and understanding cultural differences is essential and transcultural links continue to grow and progress. This pressing and relevant topic regarding the various routes hybridity takes is apparent, particularly in Filipino-Chinese identities like my own.

In speaking with locals in Shanghai, particularly the man who assigned me the identity that I *should* claim while in China, I learned the importance in focusing on oneness rather than distinctions of “otherness.” I became privy to the intricacies involved in recognizing the fluid and ambiguous nature that comes with identity. Although there are various factors that come into play when combating identity, the multiplicity of cultural borders are a permanent feature of contemporary societies. Transcultural links have played an integral role in the postcolonial twenty first century and continue to establish the narratives of hybrid individuals. In my final interviews with my family members, the development was made that “Filipinos are survivors. We are able to adapt and thrive [to the environment] wherever we end up at. Filipinos are more focused on being able to do well and succeed rather than be restricted to identifying with ethnicity.”

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<sup>138</sup> Edilberto Cotangco, Interviewed by Teeana Cotangco, Oral Interview, America, April 10, 2019.

After speaking with my father and reflecting on his words, it reminded me of my transition into college. When I first came to Claremont McKenna College, I had to grapple with who I knew myself to be and who CMC thought I was. In recognizing this moment of uncertain identity, I found myself conforming to the preconceived notions of the CMC identity, whether that be in the classroom, on the basketball court, or in the everyday social scene. In navigating this gray in-between “space” of identity formation, I started to make decisions for myself in order to “do well” in my own areas of expertise instead of adhering to a prescribed identity that was not necessarily me. In doing so, I was able to examine and recognize the beauty in the growth. Looking progressively towards the future, I was able to appreciate the identity assigned to me in this new space while acknowledging the authenticities of my old perceived identity, in order to create an identity of my own in this “third space.” I can see now how the formation of cultural hybridity is not unique to my own experience, instead, it reveals an experience had by all, and too, recognizes the permanence that cultural hybridity has on a global level.

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