

REFLEXIONS ON THE MIGRATION THEORY VIS-A-VIS THE COMING OF INDIAN INFLUENCES IN THE PHILIPPINES

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ONE OF THE IMPORTANT PROBLEMS RELEVANT TO THE APPLICATION of the theory of migration on the peopling of the Philippines is the coming of Indian influences into the Islands. This theory has been taken by many a writer¹ as a historical fact. But on examination of the view, there seems to appear questions that would render it doubtful in the light of the developments during the time that this suggested migration occurred.

The purposes of this essay are two-fold—one, to articulate in a single work my views on the theory as expressed in a number of essays published in many journals; and two, to re-examine the same in the light of the new insights that accumulated during extensive field researches conducted by fellow workers and by me with the past decade or so.

The late Professor H. Otley Beyer laid the foundation of this view when writing on Philippines-Indian contacts in ancient as well as in modern times in 1948. He wrote:

The first ship-using folk to trade with the East-Indies and the Philippines, within historic times, were probably the coastal peoples of India—whose daring voyages for trade and adventure into the eastern islands are frequently mentioned in the Jataka tales and some of the other epic and narrative poetry of the early Buddhist period (at least several centuries B.C.).

The first *Indian immigrants* into this region seem to have been chiefly of the old Vedic faith, mixed with primitive nature and sun worship; although Buddhistic ideas became dominant in the early centuries of the Christian era. Indian traders and colonizers of these types seem to have entered the Philippines chiefly through eastern and northern Borneo, and continued to drift in—in competition with the Arab, Indo-Malayan, and Indo-China traders and settlers—down at least until the Chinese traders and settlers began to dominate, from about the 12th or 13th century onward.

A second wave of Indian influences, this time of a Brahmanic character, came into the Philippines from Java and Borneo during the period of Majapahit Contact, in the 14th century²

In more specific terms, Beyer re-constructs the framework of his view, in 1952, and writes that:

¹ E.g., V. A. Makarenko, "Some Data on South Indian Cultural Influences in South East Asia," *Tamil Culture* (Journal of the Academy of Tamil Culture), vol. XI, no. 1 (January-March, 1964), pp. 58-91 and many others.

² H. Otley Beyer, "Early History of Philippine Relations with Foreign Countries, Especially China," Historical Introduction to E. Arsenio Manuel, *Chinese Elements in the Tagalog Language* (Manila: Filipiniana Publications, 1948), p. 8.

Sixth and last of the pre-historic migrations, occurring between 300 and 200 B.C., brought from the south our most numerous and advanced pre-historic people—the Iron Age group usually known as Malays. They filtered in fleets of dug out boats, up from the west coast of Borneo into Luzon via Palawan and Mindoro, and in another ocean pathway through the Celebes Strait to Mindanao and the Visayas. In addition to advanced, irrigated agriculture, these migrants brought four new industries. (1) the smelting, forging and manufacture of tools, weapons, utensils and ornaments of iron and other metals; (2) the manufacture of a great variety of turned and decorated pottery; (3) the art of weaving cloth on a handloom, and (4) the manufacture of beads, bracelets and other ornaments of green and blue glass. These crafts seem to have spread from there to Indo-China and Southern Malaysia, finally reaching the Philippines by way of Borneo and Celebes.³

Earlier in 1928, however, while writing on his finds in Novaliches, Rizal, Beyer appeared to be more certain of the Indian in the Philippines as coming via the migration route,

When we learnt that all his material was not Chinese we looked around for its nearest relatives elsewhere, and found them in the Indian Peninsula. . . . All the Iron Age material is very much like that found in South India, Eastern Java, Northern Borneo, and in some parts of the Malay peninsula. . . . While the prehistoric glass beads and bracelets found in India are of different colours, only two colours of beads are found here—green and blue—this supports my view that the motherland of this culture is India.⁴

On the date of this migration of Indian to the Philippines, Beyer expresses a relative certainty of this movement.

It is not thought that any of these early Indians voyages reached as far as the Philippines before or about the 2nd or 3rd century B.C., where the 1st Iron Age culture seems to have been introduced from some South Indian source. From that time on, however—and especially after the 2nd century A.D., Indian penetration seems to have slowly percolated into the Islands in a fairly continuous flow.⁵

In support of his view of a Tamil influence upon Philippine culture, particularly systems of writing, V.A. Makarenko uses the wave of migrations theory as seen in the Beyer postulations.⁶ These Tamils according to the view of Makarenko were part of the sixth wave that came to the Philippines bringing with them this culture tool—the syllabic systems of writing. These Tamils, of course, were those that first settled in the Malay Peninsula, and who came with Malays who constituted this sixth wave of immigrants.⁷

In another work, much earlier than that by Makarenko, the argument to explain the introduction of ancient systems of writing in the Philippines

³ H. Otley Beyer and Jaime C. de Veyra, *Philippine Saga* (Manila: Capitol Publishing House, 1952), p. 2.

⁴ H. Otley Beyer, "A Prehistoric Iron Age in the Philippines," *Philippine Magazine*, October, 1928.

⁵ H. Otley Beyer, *Early History of Philippine Relations with Foreign Countries, Especially China*. (Manila: National Printing Co., 1948), p. 9. (Xerox Copy).

⁶ Makarenko, *op. cit.*

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 86-87.

was presented by Fletcher Gardner.^{7a} Gardner is even more direct in his reference relative to the people who introduced the ancient scripts of the Filipinos were those who came from the time of Asoka, the famous emperor who ruled the Northeastern part of India—in the areas covered by the present Bihar, Bengal and Orissa in the 3rd century, B.C. And these came in the manner similar to that which was described by Beyer (and amplified by Makarenko).

The theory, as expounded by Beyer in another of his works, accepted by local writers for want of alternatives,⁸ elaborated in more specific terms vis-a-vis South Indian Tamil presence in the area by Makarenko and argued in very expansive terms relative to the introduction of ancient Philippine scripts from the Asoka times of Gardner, has spawned some questions which are significant in the full understanding of the theory. These questions were more or less raised in a critique (of the theory) by F. Landa Jocano. He writes that Beyer's "scheme⁹ of the waves of migration appears very impressive [and] assume[s], a semblance of verified facts."¹⁰ The implication of this is that somehow the view is very much overdrawn and the conclusions therefrom very tenuous. I shall have occasion to refer to this in further detail later in this essay.

In more precise terms, the questions raised by Jocano may be cited *in extenso*, which in the light of the subject of the present essay are as relevant as they are in the context by Beyer's schemata of the peopling of the Philippines.

How big was one wave of migration so as to establish large identifiable community and population patterns in a frontier, rain-forested area like the Philippines during pre-historic time? Did they carry along with them the necessary equipment so as not to adjust any more to the ecological givens of the new land, thus meeting effectively the requirements of the technology necessary

^{7a} See Fletcher Gardner, *Philippine India Studies*, San Antonio, Texas: Witte Memorial Museum, 1943. Also Gardner and Idefonso Maliwanag, *Indic Writings of the Mindoro-Palawan Axis*. San Antonio, Texas: Witte Memorial Museum, 1939-1941. 3 volumes. (Microfilm). For a full critique of Gardner's writing see my *Philippine Palaeography*, 1969 (Revised 1966 Mss.), pp. 20-28.

⁸ Pedrito Reyes, cited in Makarenko, *ibid.*

⁹ Beyer's scheme as summarized by Jocano "Beyer's Theory on Filipino Pre-History and Culture: An Alternative Approach to the Problems," in M.D. Zamora, Editor, *Studies in Philippine Anthropology* [Quezon City: Alemars-Phoenix, 1967], p. 131 is cited here for easy reference:

"The early sea-migrants came from South China, arriving in Northern Luzon during the periodic time-sequence, ranging from 5000 to 500 B.C. The Second "wave" came via south-central Luzon between 1500 [and] 500 B.C., coming from Indo-China. There were the supposedly rice-terrace building people, the descendants from whom now allegedly represent 18 per cent of the contemporary population. Between 800 [and] 500 B.C. another group of people came from Indo-China, crossed the China Sea and reached the Philippines by way of Southern Luzon. This was followed, sometime between 200 [and] 300 B.C., by the so-called iron-culture bearing people. This group came from Java and Sumatra. Then between 300 [and] 700 A.D. another group, the jar-burial people, came from South China and arrived in the Philippines by way of the Batanese group."

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

for the reproduction of the home-culture here? If they did not, which was likely, then the reproduction of the home-culture in the Philippines must have yielded to the pressures of the new environment. What culture complex, in other words, which we encounter here in the Philippines, was then the highly modified local developments rather than the "carry-over" from the mainland as averred?¹¹

Jocano further emphasizes the point by writing that Beyer's "correlation has been based on typological comparisons of insufficient archeological materials. . . it is being unrealistic to assert that the characteristics of such a migrating people would still be present and definable today after several thousands of years of racial and cultural developments."¹²

Implications that may be drawn from the question raised by Jocano are inevitable. Migration, or wave of migration, as the term implies involves a pre-knowledge of the locus a people moves into. Such a fore-knowledge would further imply that the immigrants would have to carry with them the most important tools of their culture to be able to survive in a "frontier, rain-forested area like the Philippines." At the same time such a group of people would be culturally and even racially homogenous. In such a case, the Indians (as Beyer thought of them to be, or Dravidians, particularly the Tamils, as Makarenko had shown or the Asoka immigrants as Gardner has argued who immigrated to the Philippines, must have brought with them all that they could carry—their culture, tools, e.g., language, writing, rituals, etc. If these Indian groups were culturally and racially homogenous, they would have preserved much of what is now found in India-South India for that matter, for it was certainly the Coromandel coast from which these immigrants embarked for new lands.

Indeed, since South India and the Philippines possess comparatively similar climactic conditions, the culture that the Indians could have brought with them in the long years of their movement into the Philippines would still be flourishing until today, if not merely surviving in the remote areas of the Islands, considering the fact that it (the Culture) was transplanted in an ecologically non-hostile region.

Moreover, on this basis of what Beyer argues that "Indians traders and *colonizers* . . . seem to have entered the Philippines. . . until about the 12th or 13th century. . . ." (see fn. no. 2), similar questions may be raised. The most important, however, would be—since the Indians did not only come to the Philippines as traders but also as colonizers (and colonization may also presage immigration), why do we not find similar intensive influence of Indian culture in the Philippines? Some Indian scholars, like R.C. Majumdar,^{12a} have called the Indian presence in Southeast Asia

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 133.

^{12a} R.C. Majumdar, *Ancient Indian Colonies in the Far East* (Calcutta: Modern Publishing Syndicate, 1927, 1938), 2 volumes: I: Champa; II.

as the result of extensive colonization. But why not the Philippines also, which is indeed a part and parcel of this region, racially and culturally?

Examining all the evidences of Indian cultural influences in the Philippines—language, literature, art, writing, religion, to mention a few¹³—it becomes superfluous to argue for the full saturation of Philippine culture with Indian elements. Evidences to support the migration wave theory in these cultural aspects are extremely isolated in the whole context of Philippine life. For if there were actually immigration—even as Makarenko argued that the immigrants were “primarily the Tamils from Malaya and adjacent territories and from Indonesia,” to support his view of long standing Tamil movements vis-a-vis the introduction of writing in the Islands—from India to the Philippines via the intervening areas, one would expect the most important aspects of Indian culture to be wholly preserved, and to function in the spirit and substance of that culture these immigrants brought with them for their motherland.

In more precise terms, a cursory examination of each of these evidences may be made to give better perspective of the problem as discussed above. These will in one way or another bring to light the salient features of these influences in terms of the data so far used to support the immigration view.

The most extensive evidences of Indian influences in the Philippines are Sanskrit elements in the languages of the country. These have persisted since their introduction in the Philippines between the 10th and 15th centuries,¹⁴ and have been fully assimilated into these speech systems. They are, however, still recognizable through their forms in the Indonesian and Malay languages, which have been very profoundly Sanskritized.

There are about 336 words in Philippine languages which are recognizably probable Sanskrit in origin. But on further studies there are about less than 50% of these which have definitive provenance in Sanskrit.¹⁵

Much of the Sanskrit (or Indian) substratum of Philippine folk literature heritage could be discerned in motifs and perhaps themes. But very

¹³ The subject has been dealt with in various papers by me, some of which I cite here for easier reference: Juan R. Francisco, “Sanskrit in Philippine Languages,” *Adyar Literary Bulletin* (Madras, India), vol. XXIV, nos. 3-4, December 1960, pp. 153-172; “A Note on Agusan Image,” *Philippine Studies*, vol. XI, no. 3, June 1963, pp. 390-400; “A Buddhist Image from Karitunan Site, Batangas Province,” *Science Review*, vol. IV, No. 7, July 1963, pp. 7-11; *Indian Influence and Literature*, Quezon City, University of the Philippines, 1964; “Notes on the Probable Tamil Words in Philippine Languages,” *Proceedings*, vol. II, International Conference-Seminar on Tamil Research, University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, 1968, etc.

¹⁴ Juan R. Francisco, “On the Date of the Coming of Indian Influences in the Philippines,” *Philippine Historical Review*, vol. I, no. 1 (1965), pp. 136-152.

¹⁵ I am indebted to William Henry Scott for giving actual statistical count of Sanskrit words in Philippine Languages based on my work *Indian Influences in the Philippines* (1964). He wrote—“Some 150 separate Sanskrit words are identified as the origin of Philippine terms, 64% of which appear in Tagalog, 36% in Bisaya and 28% in both Ilocano [sic] and Sulu. Although a different [sic] 28%” See his *Pre-historic Source Materials for the Study of Philippine History* (Manila: UST Press, 1968), pp. 52-53. Also see my “Further Notes on Pardo de Tavera’s EL SANSCRITO EN LA LENGUA TAGALOG,” *Asian Studies*, vol. VI no. 2 (August 1968), pp. 223-234.

few are the actual adaptation of the Indians' whole tales or epic studies. I am still in the process of assessing these influences in the folk epics of the Muslim peoples of the Philippines who may have been the most deeply Indianized groups before Islam was accepted by them as a religion. In the August 1969 issue of this journal, I published a brief study on a Maranao prose tale which tells in miniature the lives of Rama, Sita, and Ravana.¹⁶

In the field of art, there are only a few pieces which show definitive Indian styles. But these have their development in the intervening areas, particularly Siam and Java, where Indian art flourished to rival its development even in the mainland. Since there are few of these pieces, it would not be superfluous to enumerate them here. There is the now famous Agusan image, which was originally identified as Saiva in orientation by Beyer, but which I identified as a Buddhist Tara on the basis of a re-study of the image. A clay medallion or votive stamp on whose obverse face is an image of the Avalokitesvara Padmapani in bas relief. It stands in the classic Indian pose known as *tribhanga*, "three bends," and appear to hold a *padma*, "lotus" in his right hand. This object was discovered in Calatagan, Batangas, associated with 14th-15th century Chinese porcelain wares which were dug from an ancient graveyard of the same age.

From Mactan are the Lokesvara statue and a statue of the elephant-faced god, Ganesha. These two are known only through photographs published by H. Otley Beyer. The latest addition to these Indian-oriented statues is the golden *garuda* pendant, found in Brookes Point, Palawan. Like the clay medallion, it is now deposited in the National Museum of the Philippines.¹⁷

Apart from these statues, there are other art objects like glass beads of various colors which Beyer identified to be of Indian provenance.¹⁸

Related to the expected development of the statues mentioned above in their function in the society would be their connection to the religious practices of the people who own these objects. However, there seems to be no evidence of the statues' direct relevance to the belief systems of the early Filipinos. If Beyer's reference to the Agusan Image as a "sacred heirloom"¹⁹ were to be interpreted as an object of veneration by the Manobos [sic], still it cannot be established that it has any active function, in the belief systems of the ethnic groups from whom they were collected. In fact, except the Garuda image, which was bought from a family in Brookes Point, all the other images were excavated from archeological sites.

¹⁶ Juan R. Francisco, "Maharadia Lawana," *Asian Studies*, vol. VII, no. 2 (August 1969).

¹⁷ Detailed description of these art objects may be found in my "Notes on the Indo-Philippine Images," in M.D. Zamora, Editor, *Studies in Philippine Anthropology* (Quezon City: Phoenix-Alemar's, 1967), pp. 117-127.

¹⁸ See *fn.* no. 4 above.

¹⁹ H. Otley Beyer, "Outline Review of Philippine Archeology by Islands and Provinces," *The Philippine Journal of Science*, vol. LXVII, nos. 3-4 (July-August 1947), p. 302.

The ancient syllabic writings of the Islands are believed to have their ancestry in the South Indian Pallava Grantha script. But their development into what they were (and still are as they are being used by the Tagbanuwa of Palawan and Mangyan of Southern Oriental Mindoro) can only be understood in terms of their intermediate forms in Sumatra.²⁰ But, the very "primitive" forms of these scripts do not necessarily speak of their having fully developed in the context of their having represented in sophisticated symbolic forms the phonology of the Philippine languages.

Looking at all these evidences of Indian influence in the Philippines, as they are brought to bear upon the conditions—demographic, climatological and ecological—in the Islands at the time, it is hardly possible to accept the view that these elements of culture were brought by Indian immigrants, according to Beyer. That these immigrants did not come to the Islands in one single movement, but in waves, as Bayer argued, furthermore there would have been evidences of a full development of Indian culture in the Philippines.

If this view that the Indian influences in the Philippines were brought here by waves of immigration can not be accepted in the light of the existing facts brought about by advances in research, then what could be the alternative or alternatives to explain the presence of these cultural elements recognizably Indian in orientation, if not in origins?

There are two possible alternatives to this view. The first alternative uses for its proofs those that Beyer himself had used to argue for his view. On re-examining all these evidences, particularly the Novaliches finds, R.B. Dixon concluded that all artifacts found in the (Novaliches) sites [as well as others], were brought over as a result of a "long standing trade between the Philippines and India, particularly the South, even prior to the historic South Indian Chera, Chola and Pandyan kingdoms, whose history goes to the beginnings of the Christian Era or before."²¹ This argument seems to fit this alternative view, but apparently it has an inherent weakness. For, if the Novaliches finds were to bear upon this alternative as proofs on which Dixon based his view, i.e., "while the pre-historic glass beads and bracelets found in Indian era, of some fifteen colors only two colors of beads are found here—green and blue—this supports my view that the motherland of this culture is India,"²² the following question may be raised: Why are there only *two colors of beads* found here, if there were a *long standing trade between the Philippines and India*? Considering the span of time the Chera, the Pandyan and the Chola ruled South India, there is a range be-

²⁰ Juan R. Francisco, *Philippine Palaeography*, 1969 (Revised 1966 Mss.). In preparation for the press as Monograph No. 5 of the U.P. Asian Center.

²¹ R.B. Dixon, "Recent Archeological Discoveries in the Philippines and their bearing on the Pre-history of Eastern Asia," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* (Philadelphia 1930), vol. LXIX, no. 4, pp. 225-229.

²² See fn. no. 4, above.

tween the early 2nd and the late 12th centuries A.D.²³ Dixon even goes further back in time “to the beginnings of the Christian Era or before.” Hence, there would not had been just two colors of beads that were traded during this great span of time.

Corollary to this “long standing trade” is the view that this was not one way in direction. Rather, there were also Indonesians and Malays who plied the Bengal Bay in ancient times, and necessarily they were also the inevitable agents of culture movements. It is also possible—and probable—that this two-way direction of the trade between the Southeast Asian insular and peninsular regions and India may have also precipitated the introduction into India of Indonesian or Malay cultural elements; and these elements may have undergone a process of Indianization; then re-exported back in Indian clothing. The Philippines appeared to have been a very passive participant in this two-way traffic of goods—both material and non-material—because it was not in the direct route of that traffic.²⁴ Hence, the Indian aspect of its culture has been the result of a long and unconscious percolation from India through Indonesia and Malaya, a process which is the next point to be discussed in the alternative to the theory of immigration.

The second alternative view utilizes the same materials in support of it. All the Indian elements—from linguistic to literary, artistic, archeological and palaeographic—are relatively not as extensive to allow drawing the conclusion that India indeed participated directly in the peopling and/or enriching the cultures of the Philippines via the immigration movement. Unlike the Javanese, the Balinese or even the Malay, the Philippines can not compare with these peoples in the extent of the Indian overlay in their cultural orientations.

Indian cultural elements as they are now discernible in the fabric of Philippine culture can only be explained in terms of the intermediary of the Javanese and/or Malay who first received these Indian elements. The Javanese and/or Malay sojourn of these Indian aspects of the culture underwent modifications to suit the character and nature of the host culture. These finally reached the Philippines by the process of culture drift or stimulus diffusion. Of course, the process did not take place within a few years—say one decade or one score—but more likely centuries of slow and perhaps even “painful” percolation. This rather slow drift and stimulus diffusion may have been aggravated by the fact of history that at the period of this movement, the height of Indian influence in Java and Malaya and Sumatra has already reached its peak and it was on a steady decline. Even this slow process of movement was further checked by the very successful inroads of Islam, which was to become the most important single factor that finally stopped the influence of Indian elements into the Philippines.

²³ See K.A. Nilakantha Sastri, *History of South India* (Madras: University, 1958) for the dates of these dynasties—Chera, C.A.D. 130-210 (pp. 112-119); Pandya, A.D. 520-920 (p. 165); and Chola, c. A.D. 846-1173; (p. 210).

²⁴ See my *Indian Influences in the Philippines* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines, 1964), p. 267.