

Area Studies in a Time of Nationalism: Dr. Josefa SanieI and Japanese Studies in the Philippines in the 1960s

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Abstract

This article examines the scholarship of Dr. Josefa SanieI, Professor Emeritus of the Asian Center, University of the Philippines Diliman. It situates the five articles republished in this issue within her overall body of work, and its historical, social and political context. Dr. SanieI's studies on Japan in the 1960s and 1970s ran against prevailing nationalist and anti-Japanese sentiments, but also exemplified the close link between area studies and nation-building. At the same time, her pioneering studies prefigured the work of Filipino Japanologists in the late 20th- and early 21st centuries. Doubling as a partial account of the history of area studies and Japanese Studies in the Philippines, the essay discusses the differences and changing imperatives of Japanese Studies in the Philippines since the 1960s and reflects on the relevance of that era in an age of globalization, migration, and populism.

A Biographical Sketch

Any account of the history of area studies in the Philippines, specifically Japanese Studies, should include the contributions of Dr. Josefa M. Saniel.

Born in 1925, she finished her Bachelor of Science in Education at the University of the Philippines (Magna Cum Laude) in 1949; obtained her M.A. in History at the University of Chicago in 1953 under a Fulbright Smith-Mundt grant (Soriano and Retizos 1981, 330); and took her PhD in Far Eastern Studies at the University of Michigan in 1961. She was supervised by John W. Hall,¹ a student of Edwin O. Reischauer and an authority on premodern Japan (Scott 1997). Just as Professor Hall played an influential role in the development of Japanese Studies in the United States, so did Dr. Saniel in the case of the Philippines. She helped establish area studies as a field of study, and develop Japanese Studies as a graduate degree program, in the University of the Philippines. She also edited a collection of papers (Saniel 1967) presented at the “inaugural meeting of the Association for Asian Studies on the Pacific Coast” in San Francisco from 16 to 19 June 1967. Later on, she produced four different surveys of the state of Japanese Studies in the Philippines (1969, 1984, 1989b, 1992), and undertook an overview of Asian Studies and area studies programs in the United States and Canada (1989a).

From May to June 1955, she was part of a delegation that travelled across Southeast Asia to “study at close range the histories of the Southeast Asian peoples” (quoted in Saniel 1955, 2). In November, the Board of Regents of the University of the Philippines approved the creation of the Institute of Asian Studies (IAS), which would later be known as the Asian Center (Santamaria 2017). The idea for establishing such an institute originated from President Ramon Magsaysay’s letter to UP president, Vidal Tan (Santamaria 2017). In turn, the entire initiative belonged to the general foreign policy thrust of the Philippine government. In 1954, President Magsaysay set up the Asia Good Neighbor Commission amidst the

geopolitical competition between the United States and the Soviet Union. The Commission was also “a basis of cooperation...between the Philippines and her neighbors” (Saniel 1955, 1). The Southeast Asian Treaty Organization (SEATO) had been established in the same year, and the Bandung Conference would take place in 1955. As in the United States, area studies in the Philippines was born in the exigencies of the Cold War.

As part of the the university’s thrust to develop the IAS, Ms. Saniel took up her PhD in the United States, specializing on Japan, while a colleague focused on China. She was part of a generation of Filipinos—Cesar Adib Majul, Felipe Jocano, Onofre D. Corpuz, among many others (Rafael 2015, 3)—who pursued graduate studies in the U.S.

Back home, she wrote on modern Japanese history, with particular emphasis on the second half of the 19th century; Philippines-Japan relations; Japanese culture, society, and literature, and Japan’s foreign policy in Southeast Asia. Some of her publications were translated into Japanese and published in Japan.² She is the author of *Okuma Shigenobu and the Philippine 1898 Problem* (1965b), and the pioneering, *Japan and the Philippines, 1868-1898* (1963b), which is based on her PhD dissertation. Published by the University of the Philippines Press, it is her most-cited work. It was reprinted in 1969 and republished in New York by Russell Publishers Press in 1973 (UP EAA 2010, 100).

The greatest achievement of the author’s research is the opening of a new field so far neglected by Western scholars.... One must praise Dr. Saniel for what must have been the extremely difficult research involved in detailing the activities of the *shishi*, Japanese military officers and civilians who were sent to the Philippines despite the official hands-off policy of Japan. (Flood 1965)

She began her academic career as a history instructor at the University of the Philippines in the 1950s. In 1963, she was Assistant Professor at the Department of History and later served as Associate Professor in East

Asian Studies and Program Coordinator of the Institute of Asian Studies. By this time, she had “spent a year researching at the Archives of the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs.”³ In 1967, she was “the first Asian Visiting Leverhulme fellow of the School of Political Science, University of New South Wales, Kensington” in Australia (Soriano and Retizos 1981, 330).

Two years later, she was a consultant for Japan Affairs, Office of the Secretary, Department of Foreign Affairs (331). In June 1971, she visited Japan, together with Acting Executive Secretary Roberto V. Reyes and Dr. Antonio Arizabal, Director of the Board of Investments. This academe-government link partly explains the sociopolitical thrust of her scholarship.

She served as the “Secretary, Institute of Asian Studies (later known as the UP Asian Center), 1968–1974; Officer-in-Charge, Institute of Philippine Studies, Philippine Center for Advanced Studies (PCAS), 1974–1975; Dean, Institute of Asian Studies, PCAS, 1974–1979; Officer-in-Charge, Asian Studies Program, July–December 1979; and Dean, Asian Center, 1980–1985” (UP EAA 2010, 100). Dr. Sanieel became a full-fledged professor of East Asian Studies in 1973.⁴ That year, the Philippine Center for Advanced Studies, a think-tank of the Philippine government, absorbed the Asian Center, which remained part of PCAS until 1979. She was “instrumental in bringing into reality the construction of the Asian Center building (later renamed Romulo Hall) and in successfully re-establishing the Asian Center as a college unit of the University of the Philippines upon the abolition of the PCAS...” in 1979 (Santamaria 2015).

Dr. Sanieel was a member of various local and international academic organizations, including the International Association of Historians of Asia, Association for Asian Studies, Philippine Historical Association, and the American Academy of Political Sciences, among several others (Soriano and Retizos 1981, 330). Because of her contributions to the field, on 29 May 1986, she was “awarded the Third Class Order of the Precious Crown by His Majesty the Emperor of Japan and the Japanese Government” (Santamaria 2015). She became Professor Emeritus of the Asian Center

in 1993. Today, the Asian Center library maintains the Sanieel collection, which consists of over 1,773 books (Landa 2018, n.p.) that she donated. Needless to say, many of them are Japan-related.

Area Studies Versus Nationalism and Anti-Japanese Sentiment

Known primarily for his ideas on the will to power and the *ubermensch*, the German philosopher, Friedrich Nietzsche, also wrote *Untimely Meditations* in the 1870s, a series of essays on German culture and philosophy. “Untimely,” says a biographer, “is a small and overlooked word in English but for Nietzsche *unzeitgemasse* was a word of great stature. It meant standing outside time forward and time backward: outside current fashion and outside the drag-anchor of history, too” (Prideaux 2018, 118).

Dr. Sanieel’s works are untimely in this Nietzschean sense. She was doing area studies at a time of what might be called high nationalism in post-war Philippine society. She directed her gaze outward to Japan, while her many of her contemporaries—flushed in varying degrees of nationalism—largely looked inward to the Philippines. In principle, nationalism and area studies were not mutually exclusive and were in fact complementary,⁵ but by and large, Filipino nationalist scholarship focused on finding and defining the Filipino. Its radical, anticolonial strain rejected the foreign, imperial, and the colonial, not least if it was American.⁶

Dr. Sanieel wrote her articles at a time when bitter memories of the Japanese occupation were still fresh. “The suspicion, antagonism and threat perception [of the Japanese] remained, albeit more intense because of trauma of the war” (Sta. Romana and Jose 1991, 79). In the 1960s and early 1970s, there also loomed a “fear of possible Japan’s ‘economic invasion’ and the fear of a possible re-militarization as a result of the Japan’s continuing expansion of... economic capacities and capabilities...” (Reyes, Arizabal, and Sanieel 1971, 3; cf. Sta. Romana and Jose 1991, 81–82). Both countries did sign a Treaty of Amity, Commerce and Navigation

in 1960, but it was “probably the most scrutinized and vilified treaty in Philippine diplomatic history” (80). It was ratified only in 1973, after Congress had been abolished. It must be said, however, that this anti-Japanese sentiment did not stop Japanese commodities from entering the Philippines (Saniel 1972, 377).

In this nationalist context, Dr. Saniel’s works on Philippines-Japan relations—“Four Japanese and their Plans for Expansion in the Philippines” (1963a) and “The Japanese Minority in the Philippines Before Pearl Harbor” (1966)—were easy to overlook. A 1963 review of *Japan and the Philippines, 1868–1898* dismisses the book’s significance to Philippine historiography on the 19th century, which at that time largely focused on the Philippine Revolution.

the actual Japanese-Philippine interactions dealt with in the monograph were of subordinate importance to events occurring in each individual country during this period. (Rocamora 1963 quoted in Albos 1973, 229)

Moreover, area studies was an emergent field in post-war Philippine academia, and in an age when the social sciences were consolidating themselves, the field was subject to the familiar accusation of having no unique scope and methodology. By contrast, many of her contemporaries made their mark on their respective disciplines, and were more explicit in their nationalism and/or indigenization initiatives: Renato Constantino, Teodoro Agoncillo, and Cesar Adib Majul on history; Virgilio Enriquez on Filipino psychology; and Felipe Jocano on anthropology, just to name a few.

Area Studies and National Development

If she was out of her time, Dr. Saniel was equally a product of it. Though an area studies scholar, she was no less affected by nationalism and other contemporaneous trends in the 1960s. *Japan and the Philippines, 1868–1898* (1963b) opens with a discussion of imperialism in the 19th

century, tackles Japan's expansionist tendencies then, and sheds light on Filipino-Japanese relations during the Philippine Revolution of 1896. The book came out at a time when Dr. Sanieel was Assistant Professor of History at the University of the Philippines. She worked with Teodoro Agoncillo, author of *Revolt of the Masses* (1956), who received her gratitude for "reading and criticizing part or all of the dissertation" (xiii). Her "*Jose Rizal and Suehiro Tetcho: Filipino and Japanese Political Novelists*" (1964b) was written just three years after the centennial of Rizal's birth. It sought to establish the influence of the former on the latter's novel and beyond the confines of the Philippines and Southeast Asia.

Dr. Sanieel saw area studies as part of nation-building and national development. Her article, *Area Studies: A Focus of a Multidisciplinary Approach in the Social Sciences* (1975) must partly be seen in this light. Here, she argues that such an approach is instrumental to responding to the needs of society. It provides a holistic way of looking an object of study that coordinates different disciplines to, say, improve social policy or understand a country, region, or even a particular problem. In the 1960s, these needs meant modernization, state-building, and national development.

Like many states after the Second World War, the Philippines was trying to modernize and develop its economy. Modernization theory was a key paradigm in academic and policy-making circles during the first few decades of the Cold War (see Lebra 1967 for an example of such scholarship). In Southeast Asia, modernization theory belonged to a broader political thrust: determine how primarily agricultural nations could develop and industrialize, and help stave off the communism (cf. Cullather 2010). At any rate, this inevitably entailed understanding the cultures—broadly understood—of Southeast Asian states. Thus was born what might be called the culture-for-development nexus.⁷ The success of the Japanese economy in the 1960s added impetus to this trend. It showed developing nations like the Philippines that tradition need not conflict with modernity and Westernization, that they need not abandon—nay, must even rediscover—their culture in order to develop. Japan illustrated that these developing states could modernize on their own terms; and that the process need not be wholly imposed from the outside.

Three of Dr. Saniel's works imbued this spirit of post-war state building and the role of culture in the enterprise. "The Mobilization of Traditional Values in the Modernization of Japan" (1965a) shows just that. "The Japanese Minority in the Philippines before Pearl Harbor: Social Organization in Davao" (1966) explores the Japanese family system and its role in promoting social cohesiveness in Davao. It was, among other things, an exposition of how culture (in the broadest sense) could be effectively harnessed for broader social and political goals. "Japan and the Philippines: From Traditional to Modern Societies" (1977) examines how the family systems and kinship relations of both countries figured (or otherwise) in state-building and modernization.

Among other things, what emerges from these comparative studies is a contrast between the two countries. Meiji Japan had social cohesion, "strong and responsible leadership," a "political system stable and powerful enough to channel cohesive social action in the attainment of national ends," and "strong national group consciousness and solidarity" (Saniel 1965a, 143–45). By contrast, there was social and political fragmentation in the Philippines, and the prevalence of partisan interests that militate against nation-building. Advocating for "national cohesion" and loyalty to the "nation," her conclusion in the discussion the Treaty of Amity, Commerce and Navigation, resonates today.

The crucial need of the Philippines today is the transcending of personal and small group interests which impede the channeling of loyalties to the larger community—the nation state. Once national cohesion is reached, it would be difficult for any country or people to bargain for any arrangement detrimental to the country and its people. The sooner this is realized by the Filipino leaders, the faster can national goals be reached, and the easier it will be for the Filipino political leaders to negotiate for mutually beneficial arrangements with another country, say Japan.... (Saniel 1971, 81)

Japan's lesson for Philippine development came with caveats, however. Dr. Saniel knew that "industrialization was not matched by a rapid rise of levels of living for" Japanese peasants and "urban workers" (Saniel 1965a, 142), and it did not "develop individual initiative and personal freedom." Japan's was a "politics of authoritarianism" (Saniel 1977, 81). She also wrote that there is no "one-to-one duplication of [its] experience in the developing countries of South and Southeast Asia today" (Saniel 1965a, 143). Indeed, the mobilization of such traditional values in the Philippines was a complex question. For all the lessons that Japan could offer, nation-building was ultimately up to the Filipinos, not to "intuitive solutions" and "foreign assistance programs" (Saniel 1965a, 146).

Area Studies and Philippines-Japan Relations

The nation-building thrust of area studies also meant a link to foreign policy-making. Under Republic Act 5334 (signed in 1968), the Institute of Asian Studies became the Asian Center, University of the Philippines. Now a degree-granting institution, it sought "to develop a closer and broader contact with our Asian neighbors in the field of learning and scholarship to attain knowledge of our national identity in relation to other Asian nations through profound studies on Asian cultures, histories, social forces and aspirations" (Chan Robles Virtual Law Library n.d.). This objective was part of UP President Carlos P. Romulo's Philippines-in-Asia thrust in the 1960s (Santamaria 2017).

Dr. Saniel was a consultant for Japan Affairs in the Department of Foreign Affairs in 1969 at a particular point in Japan's post-war foreign policy. With its reputation marred after the war, Japan sought to make amends and rebuild relations with Southeast Asian states through the reparations agreements, the (re)opening and improvement of trade and diplomatic relations (Saniel 1971, 21–31), the extension of Japanese aid for national and economic development, and Japan's need of Southeast

Asian raw materials (Saniel 1972). All these measures sought to reduce dependence on the United States, compensate for the loss of their access to the Chinese (now communist) market, and sustain their economic development, while creating a buffer against the threat of China and the Soviet Union (Katzenstein and Shiraishi 1997; Hau and Shiraishi 2018).

It was at this point in Philippines-Japan relations that she penned the Rizal-Tetcho article, discussed Japanese foreign policy in Southeast Asia in the 1960s (Saniel 1972), and wrote *The Philippines-Japan Treaty of Amity, Commerce and Navigation: An Overview* (1971) to help guide Philippine foreign policy.

Knowing the necessary data and keeping the country's interest in mind, the Philippines' political leaders can be guided in choosing from among policy alternatives the one which may hasten the attainment of our national goals and maximize the protection of our country's interests. This policy, together with the means of implementing it to reach national goals.... has to be cast within the practical limits of possibilities and desirability, if we intend to arrive at some success in our relations with Japan. All this requires skill and judgment among our country's decision makers and as accurate data as possible for making realistic appraisals so as to avoid being swayed by purely unfounded fears of imaginary dangers. (Saniel 1971, 80–81)

“Imaginary dangers” alludes to the deep suspicion about Japan’s “economic invasion” and “possible remilitarization” (Reyes, Arizabal, Saniel 1971, 3). And her plea for “accurate data” and “realistic appraisals” represents a pushback against, and a vital corrective to, such anti-Japanese sentiments, or at least ignorance about Japan. She adds,

there is need for our Government to have a systematically organized data as possible on various pertinent categories. These should include information items on transactions between Japan and the Philippines (which, as intimated in various parts of this paper, are inadequate) and those on Philippine and Japanese society as well as Filipino and

Japanese behavior. The latter types of information would make us aware of, and understand better, ourselves and the Japanese. In this way, irritations and antagonisms between Filipinos and the Japanese arising from an insufficient understanding of each other's culture, or "ways of doing things," could perhaps be minimized. (Saniel 1971, 80)

In 1971, she traveled to Japan with Roberto V. Reyes, Executive Secretary and Dr. Antonio Arizabal, Director of the Board of Investments. Their report, *Contemporary Japan's Image Among Southeast Asian Countries With Special Reference to the Philippines* (Reyes, Arizabal and Saniel 1971), discussed economic planning, trade, industry, finance, investments, defense, economic aid to Southeast Asia, and "academic and cultural institutions of Japan" (Reyes, Arizabal and Saniel 1971, ii-iii). All the information, they hoped, could "be of assistance to Filipino decision makers in adjusting present policies or formulating new ones concerning our relations with Japan" (136). The policy-making, of course, should by no means compromise Philippine interests.

... these policies will have to focus on how these relations will aid the Philippines attain her priority goal(s). A word of caution is necessary here concerning the indiscriminate acceptance of any kind of Japanese assistance within any one sector of our economy simply because Japan can offer capital and know-how under easy terms. While, in the short-term view, this arrangement is tempting because it seems to be the easiest solution to the Philippines' need for funds and know-how for the development of her economy, in the long-range view, it is necessary that our country diversify its sources of capital....(Reyes, Arizabal, Saniel 1971, 136-137)

In her pursuit of "accurate data," Dr. Saniel embodied the scholar with a keen, scientific eye for detail, a fact attested by the copious footnotes, tables, graphs, and appendices in many of her works. The 1971 report on the trip to Japan lists the itinerary, complete with the names of people they met and their institutional affiliations, and the dates of the visit, among others. It has over 20 appendices covering the organizational structure of

Japanese ministries, including the names of officials; detailed tables on Japan's economic plans; "percentages of the components of "Japan's Gross National Expenditure;" capital formation, and so on.

In her discussion of "imaginary dangers" and "realistic appraisals" like that of the 1971 report, Dr. Sanieel arguably wanted to help "de-exoticize" Japan for Filipinos, just as her PhD supervisor, John W. Hall, did in the United States.

What I think.... Hall tried to do was de-exoticize the study of Japan," said Harry Harootunian, a professor of history and director of East Asian Studies at New York University and a former student of Professor Hall's." To de-exoticize anything is to bring it closer to us, to eliminate the distance that we imagine exists between ourselves and the object of our study. (Scott 1997)

Pioneering and Prefiguring the Future of Japanese Studies in the Philippines

True to her area studies background, Dr. Sanieel wrote in an impressive range of disciplines: history, literature, anthropology, international relations, foreign policy, political science, and political economy. "Japan and the Philippines: From Traditional to Modern Society" is arguably her most interdisciplinary work, combining anthropology, history, politics, and political economy. But *Japan and the Philippines, 1868–1898* undeniably remains her biggest and most prominent scholarly contribution. In the introduction, she notes a dearth of literature on Philippines-Japan relations, and states that the book seeks "to fill a gap in the interest of historical continuity" (1963b, viii). This seems mundane, but it must be kept in mind that Dr. Sanieel was writing at a time when there were little academic studies of Japan by Filipinos. At that time, much work on Philippines-Japan relations was carried out by foreigners,

particularly Americans.⁸ Filipinos of course knew and wrote about Japan before the war. Japan was already a political inspiration for some Filipinos, not least Pio Duran (Goodman 1970; Yu-Jose 2000, 6) in the 1930s, and *bushido* was much admired (ibid.). Dr. Saniel in many ways built on these themes, albeit under different contexts. But as (one of) the first Filipino(s) to specialize in an area studies program, Dr. Saniel blazed a trail for Japanese Studies in the Philippines as an academic discipline in its own right, one practiced by Filipinos. Indeed, she belonged to a generation of Filipino scholars who became pioneers in their respective fields.

Dr. Saniel's work anticipated developments in Japanese Studies in the Philippines. She was among the first post-war scholars to explore an Asian (Japanese at least) dimension of Philippine history. Her discussions of Philippines-Japan relations, particularly in the 19th century, prefigure the regional, transnational, and global thrusts of recent Philippine historiography (Nolasco 2016), where scholars focus not only on events within the nation-state, but on their regional or global contexts.⁹ Her Rizal and Tetcho article predates John Nery's book (2011), which explored Rizal's influence in colonial and modern Indonesia. It also anticipates Resil Mojares's (2011) discussion of Mariano Ponce and the Asianist thrust of the Philippine Revolution in the 19th century. Similarly, Dr. Saniel was transnational *avant la lettre*. In 1966, way before the era of large-scale labor migration, she was already doing migration and mobility studies with "The Japanese Minority in the Philippines Before Pearl Harbor: Social Organization in Davao."

Proclamations of the Asian Century are now *de rigeur* in international relations. It is fashionable today to speak of a multipolar world, as opposed to a bipolar one. However, in 1973, Dr. Saniel's article, "The Erosion of the Bi-polar Power Structure in the 1960's: Its Impact Upon East Asian Countries," provides a historical background of the events that had led to such erosion, and how they affected the security configuration in East Asia. She anticipated a change in the region's international relations in the late 1970s and 1980s when Asian powers, especially Japan, began their rise to greater prominence.

She engaged in comparative (area) studies long before Benedict Anderson (1998) popularized abroad, if not in the Philippines, Rizal's "*el demonio de las comparaciones*." Indeed, one could argue that for Dr. Saniel, Japan was the specter—the model, the inspiration, the foil—that haunted her studies on the Philippines, as just as Europe was for Crisostomo Ibarra in *Noli Me Tangere*. As a comparativist, she was unique even among the area studies scholars of her time. Majority of the field's practitioners then specialized on one Asian country. Not her. She was also a Filipinist, no less concerned for the Philippines than she was for Japan.

Japanese Studies Then and Now: Preliminary Remarks

Dr. Saniel's work represents "the origin story" of Japanese Studies in the Philippines as an academic, degree-granting discipline. To look back at her scholarship allows us to see the changing imperatives and contexts of the field. Filipino and Japanese scholarship since her time picked up where she left off. They have continued the story of Philippines-Japan relations well into the 20th and 21st centuries, exploring hitherto little discussed aspects and opening new research vistas altogether: Motoe Terami Wada (2010) on the early American colonial period and Yu-Jose (1999) on the prewar years. Abinales (1997) on Japanese's Davao settlement, focusing on political economy; and Yu Jose and Dacudao (2015) on the Filipinos in the community. Hau and Shiraishi (2018) examined Rizal and Techo in light of recent scholarship on Japanese pan-Asianism. Ikehata and Yu Jose (2003) also surveyed Philippines-Japan relations for the last 100 years or so.

Except for "Humour in Japanese Literature" (1964), Dr. Saniel wrote little on Japanese culture (in the narrower sense of the arts), but Filipino Japanologists since her time have explored the topic in greater scope and depth. Another difference lies in the locus of their education. Dr. Saniel pursued graduate studies in the United States in the 1950s, while the

latter did so in Japan later on. The Japanese government had begun offering scholarships in the Philippines since 1954 (Sta. Romana and Jose 1991). At that time, however, the United States was still the top-choice for graduate work, and Japan had just regained her sovereignty two years before. In contrast, the next generation of Filipino Japanologists studied in an economically advanced Japan, and did so in increasing numbers by the 1980s (85). Furthermore, Dr. Saniel was for a very long time one of the few Filipino Japanologists in the Philippines. Today, scholars in the field form a wider academic community, have more opportunities to travel to Japan, and undertake their research in Philippine universities with Japan or Japan-related programs, which are far more numerous now than in her time.

Both Dr. Saniel and the later generation of Filipino scholars produced their work under different contexts and imperatives. As we have seen, Dr. Saniel wrote at a time of post-war modernization and nation-building of the 1960s. By contrast, scholars since then have also had to grapple with increased Filipino migration to Japan and related issues such as marriages, identity, policy, assimilation, and integration (or the lack thereof); Japan's management of its ageing society; and the rise of Japanese popular culture.

Not that today's generation of Japanologists do not desire national development or modernization, but their scholarly focus—particularly on migration and its attendant issues—is less explicitly tied to nation-building than it had been in the 1960s and 1970s. This is reflected in different institutional backgrounds. Dr. Saniel was writing in a state university, in a nation caught up in the throes of state-building and modernization. Today, few Japanologists work in such a context or do so in less ambitious terms. In fact, despite the discourse of *bagong bayani*, diasporic philanthropy, diaspora-for-development projects, and the role of migration studies for policy-making, it is harder to argue convincingly for, and work within, a migration-nation-building nexus in Philippines-Japan relations. Whatever else the benefits of large-scale migration, not least for the families, it already signifies the failure of the nation-building project, i.e. the inability of the state to help provide for its citizens, to say nothing of exploitation and abuse Filipinos abroad face.

The area studies-nation-building nexus eroded by the 1980s. The hopes and dreams of the two previous decades—for modernization and development—did not materialize. The Philippine economy took a severe downturn in the early part of the decade, triggering a chain of events that would culminate in the anti-Marcos People Power Revolution of 1986. This was also the era of the structural adjustment programs of the World Bank, which paved the way for the neoliberalization of the economy in the 1990s and the consequent further weakening of the Philippine state’s direct control of the economy.

There is a need of course for a more detailed look at these differences and changing contexts vis-à-vis the fate of area studies. At any rate, Dr. Saniel’s work ought to be a starting point, and she herself has laid down some markers with her surveys of the state of Japanese Studies (1969, 1984, 1989b, 1992), which also double as accounts of area studies practice in the Philippines. Indeed, her area studies article of 1975 is essentially a first-hand account of the discipline in the mid-1970s. It would be interesting to juxtapose and analyze later surveys of Japan Studies in the Philippines (Gonzales 1996; 1998; Chua 2017) with those of Dr. Saniel.

Area Studies, Nation-Building, and Liberal Democracy in an Age of Globalization

In the Philippines, the K-12 school curriculum has introduced subjects that incorporates and transcends a variety of disciplines, such as “Introduction to the Philosophy of the Human Person” or “Understanding Culture, Society, and Politics.” Her words—that of an education major—in *Area Studies: A Focus of the Multidisciplinary Approach in the Social Sciences*” resonate today. Area studies offers a holistic approach to understanding society and help in the teaching of “courses outside their [teachers’] own disciplinary specialization” (87).

Dr. Saniel’s appreciation and pursuit of “accurate” for the Other—and her search for “accurate data”—remains vital, not least because it’s a

crucial pillar of liberal democracy. Amidst racism, area studies is an antidote to any form of Othering: against migrants, minorities, and even fellow citizens who belong to a different tribe, province, group, religion, or ethnicity. Area studies can provide Filipinos a better understanding of the societies they will be living, working, or travelling in. And in a diverse, multicultural nation like the Philippines, the appreciation of the Other that area studies can cultivate can help Filipinos build a nation that genuinely recognizes and respects the different ethnicities, traditions, and societies (Nolasco 2015).

Today, the role of the family in Philippine politics is often brought up only to be rightly rejected as anathema to democratization (read: political dynasties). But it cannot be ignored or abandoned. The family will remain part of the Philippines' social fabric. Any movement to democratize and develop will have to take it into account and entertain the possibility that kinship relations need not necessarily and always conflict with public interest (Nolasco 2019).

the ethics of care recognizes the moral value of and importance of relations of family and friendship...Having grasped the value of caring relationships...., the ethics of care often examines social and political arrangements in the light of these values. In its more developed forms, the ethics of care as a feminist ethic offers suggestions for the radical transformation of society.... [I]t reconceptualizes traditional notions about the public and the private. (Held 2005, 12)

In this respect, Dr. Saniel's (1977) engagement with the family systems of both Japan and the Philippines poses a challenge to, and opportunity for, ongoing efforts on development and democratization. Hers was a time when culture in the broadest sense figured more prominently in such initiatives. Notwithstanding the association of Asian Values with authoritarian-developmental states, can the culture-for-development nexus be reworked and harnessed for Philippine democracy? Following Antonio Gramsci, can we afford to dismiss culture when it is the battleground of hegemonic and counterhegemonic processes? Can the Philippines develop and consolidate its democracy by drawing on its cultural resources?

In this age of neoliberalism, globalization, and migration, does it still make sense to speak of nation-building, industrialization, and modernization today? Or has that ship already sailed (Williamson and de Dios 2014)? Do Filipinos build their nation on new foundations: the expansion of the service industry, including BPOs, and the remittances of overseas Filipinos? Or should they build a nation where citizens no longer need to leave the country to find a better life? How and to what extent will and should migration figure in 21st-century nation-building? It has undeniably provided a better life for many Filipinos, and propped up the Philippine economy. While it has been a solution in this respect, isn't it also part of the problem, not least of which is the lack of economic opportunities at home? The growth of the service sector has contributed to the Philippines' economic boom, but can it be the springboard for the growth of the other sectors of the economy? Can and should Filipinos rehabilitate the nation-building project of the 1950s and 1960s and anchor it in a 21st-century context?

Reading Dr. Saniel's work has transported us, young scholars, back to a time bursting with the hopes of a young, independent nation. Many of those dreams have since turned into disappointments and disillusionments. But in this jaded age, perhaps there is something to be said for regaining the optimism of the 1960s while learning from its mistakes and recognizing new contexts. After all, the past offers opportunities to rethink the present and chart the future.

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End Notes

- ¹ In the introduction to *Japan and the Philippines, 1868–1898*, Dr. Saniel (1963b, xi) writes “I am especially indebted to Prof. Hall for his advice and encouragement at every stage of my doctoral program, in particular, for his patience in guiding me through every chapter of my dissertation.”
- ² This is taken from the Contributors page of *Asian Studies* 15: 1977.
- ³ This is taken from the Contributors page of *Asian Studies* 4 (1): 1966.
- ⁴ This is taken from the Contributors page of *Asian Studies* 11 (2): 1973.
- ⁵ “A main thrust of President Carlos P. Romulo’s administration as U.P. President (1962–68) was his mission to reorient the University’s curricula towards Asia from a “heavily Western oriented school system,” by increasing courses on Asia in order to correct the imbalance” (Saniel 1992, 19). See also Claudio (2017, 23–44) for a discussion of Camilo Osias’s nationalism and cosmopolitanism.
- ⁶ Filipinos did not disregard Asia. The Communist Party of the Philippines and allied/sympathetic organizations and individuals drew inspiration from Maoism. They knew of the Vietnam War, taking part in anti-War protests, but for the most part, their intellectual energies were directed to the Philippines.
- ⁷ This would later give way to the discourse of Asian values, which allegedly accounted for the spectacular economic success of some East and Southeast Asian states, especially the Four Tigers.
- ⁸ In her introduction to *Japan and the Philippines, 1868–1898*, Dr. Saniel notes that existing research covered diplomatic history from 1896 to 1898 or Japan-Philippines relations in the 16th and 17th centuries (Saniel 1963b, vii–viii). But even then, the materials were inaccessible. Two were, at that time at least, unpublished dissertations written by Americans in the United States in the 1940s and 1950s, while a few were written in Spanish or Japanese.
- ⁹ Exemplifying this trend is *Spain, China, Japan in Manila, 1571–1644: Local Comparisons and Global Connections* by Birgitte Tremml-Werner (2015).

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