# TOURISM AND HERITAGE IN A GLOBAL SOCIETY: THE PHILIPPINE EXPERIENCE (SOME PHILOSOPHICAL CONSIDERATIONS)<sup>1</sup>

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#### **Abstract**

This article tries to clarify the meaning of several terms such as "global society," "tourism," "heritage," and relate them particularly to the Philippine experience. While there are reasons to promote tourism and preserve the national heritage, there are certain obstacles to these that must be overcome. The article further argues that the present Filipino generation has accepted the current global culture—described by James Fallows as a "damaged culture"—as a source out of which a new understanding of Filipino identity is possible.

#### INTRODUCTION

A global society is here assumed to mean a world which is fast becoming borderless in that restrictions to travel from one state to another have become minimal. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is an example where only a passport, not a visa, is required for entering a geographical national boundary. In the European Union (EU) one is "free to move." S/he can travel, study, and work anywhere in the 25 EU countries,<sup>2</sup> if s/he is an EU citizen. "In most of the EU you can travel without carrying a passport and without being stopped for checks at the borders. With very few exceptions, you may buy anything you want anywhere you want and take it all back home with you" (see "The European Union at a glance," 2004). In time, it is highly probable that ASEAN will have a common monetary unit, like EU's euro, and may possibly discard

the requirement of a working permit for employment within the region. If such a thing happens worldwide, then we surely have a genuine global society.

The other component of globalization—aside from the usual economic consideration of transnational corporations directly doing business or commercial agreements with local governments and generally bypassing to a large extent national governments, which basically simply set the national economic agenda and laws<sup>3</sup> (see Omae 1996 and Gripaldo 1996-97:75)—is the idea of multicultural ethnicity.<sup>4</sup> Let me quote some relevant portions of the speech by Patricia Evangelista<sup>5</sup> (2004) in Great Britain:

...this is a borderless world, where no individual<sup>6</sup> can claim to be purely from where he is now. My mother is of Chinese descent, my father is a quarter Spanish, and I call myself a pure Filipino—a hybrid of sorts resulting from a combination of cultures.

Each square mile anywhere in the world is made up of people of different ethnicities, with national identities and individual personalities. Because of this, each square mile is already a microcosm of the world. In as much as this blessed spot that is England is the world, so is my neighborhood back home.

Seen this way, the Filipino Diaspora, or any sort of dispersal of populations, is not as ominous as so many claim. . . .

A borderless world presents a bigger opportunity, yet one that is not so much abandonment but an extension of identity. Even as we take, we give back. We are the 40,000 skilled nurses who support the UK's National Health Service. We are the quarter-of-a-million seafarers manning most of the world's commercial ships. We are your software engineers in Ireland, your construction workers in the Middle East, your doctors and caregivers in North America, and, your musical artists in London's West End.

The point of Evangelista is that a global society consists of not merely foreign tourists and transnational companies coming into a country, but also migrants in search of the good life or for "greener pastures". Some of these migrants become permanent residents or naturalized citizens, adding up to the multicultural ethnicity of the locality. They also transform themselves into tourists during their free time.

The thrust of my paper, however, is limited to the linkage between tourism and heritage.

# **TOURISM AND HERITAGE**

Tourism accounts for a significant amount of domestic and international travel. To see different cultures and peoples, to see places and scenic spots, to experience and enjoy one's leisurely time in a beautiful country or island with beaches and corals and marvelous ocean waves, are some of the reasons for traveling. In one sense, these cultural and natural tourist attractions constitute a country's national heritage.

UNESCO issued a World Heritage List as of July 2004 of some 788 properties, 611 of which are cultural, 154 are natural, and 23 are mixed in 134 states. Of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), Indonesia has seven, Kampuchea one, Malaysia two, Philippines five, Thailand four, and Vietnam five. On the World Heritage Danger List only the Philippines in Southeast Asia is cited with one, that is, the Rice Terraces of the Cordilleras. Domestically, however, if one goes by the roster of every country, the list of national heritage sites is relatively long.

Tourism and heritage are compatible bedfellows, but the philosophical issues are: why should a nation promote tourism and why should it protect and preserve its national heritage?

## WHY TOURISM?

Tourism is defined as a leisurely trip to a place where one can spend a few disposable hours or days from one's usual ordinary routine to enjoy culture and natural scenic spots. It is meant to free or unwind one's mind from the daily round-the-clock habitual boring existence. Tourism is different from occasionally going to beer houses or night spots to drink a few bottles of beer or spirits and watch some entertaining shows. It is also different from just going to movies and watching cultural presentations especially in the cultural centers of one's own country. Although these can be components of a tour schedule, tourism connotes going to places not necessarily within one's locality but somewhere else. Tourism oftentimes requires a plan or schedule, no matter how haphazard it may initially be. There are, of course, rare occasions when one decides on the spot to have a travel tour unscheduled.

But why should an individual or a nation promote tourism?

One reason is that it is good for one's health, both physical and mental. It relaxes and releases tensions brought about by work or by the workplace such that a brief change of environment seems appropriate to break the monotony. There are agencies that promote health tourism, and in some cases, although many disapproved of it, sex tourism. The disapproval arises because sex tourism is basically exploitative. In the Philippines for example, many arrests are made of pedophiles exploiting minors (2003a).<sup>7</sup>

Secondly, it is good for the economic health of the nation. The Philippines in ASEAN has one of the lowest tourist arrivals of about 2.3 million while Thailand and Malaysia are enjoying annually over 10 million tourist visitors (2003b, 2003c, 2003d). Translated into financial terms of \$500 spent per tourist on the average, the amount runs into billions of dollars, which is good for the national economy. Moreover, part of the tourism income can be used to preserve the national heritage. In Cambodia, e.g., tourism played a part in the removal of the Angkor Wat temple from UNESCO's "in danger" list since enough tourist money has been generated "to hire local residents to work as guards and to pay them enough to prevent them and others from looting the site and selling artifacts overseas" ("UNESCO urges countries...," 2004).

There is one other feature in tourism which in the Philippines may be called, in one sense, a "reverse tourism." There are between 7 to 8 million Filipino migrant workers distributed throughout the world. They earn money primarily as workers in a foreign land, but secondarily transform themselves into tourists by enjoying and experiencing the cultural and natural

scenic places there. The point is that, as reverse tourists, they remit money to the country of origin that amounts to about \$7-\$8 billion dollars annually (2003e). And this amount—sent through the banking system—excludes the "padala" system, or the money that a worker sends through another migrant worker who is coming home to be given to his/her family.

Lastly, tourism is basically educational. To see places and meet different people, to phenomenologically experience the ambience of the place is something which cannot be duplicated by simply watching it in television or reading it in a brochure.

## WHY PRESERVE THE NATIONAL HERITAGE?

UNESCO classifies a heritage as cultural, natural, or mixed. Cultural heritage "refers to monuments, groups of buildings and properties with historical, aesthetic, archaeological, scientific, ethnological or anthropological value." Natural heritage "refers to outstanding physical, biological and geological formations, habitats of threatened species of animals and plants and areas with scientific, conservation or aesthetic value." Mixed heritage is a combination of both cultural and natural properties. According to UNESCO, since "1992 significant interactions between people and the natural environment have been recognized as cultural landscapes." UNESCO listed 24 mixed properties in 14 countries (see UNESCO from the Internet). Upon nomination of a Party State, that is, a country which has adhered to the World Heritage Convention, certain national properties are selected by UNESCO as a world heritage under certain criteria.<sup>8</sup>

But why preserve or conserve a national heritage?

Firstly, a national heritage is a public good. It is owned collectively by the people as a national treasure. It must be preserved because people come and go, the ownership is fluid and passes on from one generation to the next. Preservation of a national heritage ensures that the treasure is inherited, so to speak, by the sibling generation.

Secondly, a national heritage is a source of national pride, which enhances a sense of love of country and strengthens the nationalistic spirit of the people. Preservation, as in the first case, sustains the firmness of the people's patriotic bond.

Thirdly, especially for cultural and mixed types, a national heritage is an investment that requires human labor. It may or may not generate income, but the point is that the product of such labor may be compensated in terms of the people's aesthetic appreciation of it. If it is a sight to behold, if it enlivens one's sense of wonder, then *that* is its own compensatory reason for being. Its preservation helps assure the people on the continuance of this sense of appreciating beauty.

Lastly, a national heritage can be included in a tourist schedule. As such, it has an income-generating potential. Many state ministries or departments of tourism actively promote heritage sites and places, ethnic cultural features, natural beautiful sceneries, etc. because of their economic potential. Sustainability of such tourism income necessitates the preservation of a national heritage.

## **OBSTACLES TO TOURISM AND HERITAGE**

If tourism and heritage are sweet bedfellows, why are tourist visitors of countries in a global or globalizing society not uniform in number? In ASEAN, for instance, why are there more tourists in Malaysia, Thailand, and Singapore than the rest of the member countries? Why do other countries lag behind.

One, the cultural, natural and recreational sites in these countries are less preserved and maintained.

Two: The sites are less promoted. It is sometimes the case that when a country becomes popular as a tourist destination, the promotion budget of a tourism ministry or department gets bigger, and tourist arrivals continue to increase annually. Accredited tourist agencies of a country have linkages with many types of transportation such as airlines, shipping lines, bus companies, car-for-hire outfits, etc. These agencies have also promotional come-ons and add-ons, or additional privileges and benefits such as discounts, a side-trip to a tourist spot not originally listed in the usual tour schedule, an additional free night, etc.

Three, the country may be isolated such that it is basically uneconomical to visit since tourist preference is to connect by train or bus to other countries. If the viable transportation is only by air, then the tourist

budget must be bigger than usual. England tried to connect itself to mainland Europe by train through an underground tunnel (see Internet).

Four, international business meetings, international academic conferences, international political summits, and the like are few. Members of these gatherings are generally considered as tourists in that many live in hotels, in university lodgings, in tour cottages, etc. and spend their nights or break days sightseeing the city or locality. Some even extend their stay in the country to visit more places and craft stores. In the *XXIst World Congress of Philosophy* that I attended in Istanbul, Turkey, many participants skipped the morning or afternoon sessions to take a bus tour around the city or take a boat tour of the Bosphorus Strait, visit the Blue Mosque, the Sophia Hagia, the Underground Cistern, a night spot to watch some belly dancers perform, or even extend their stay for several days to take a bus tour in Asia Minor to see the ruins and scenic spots of ancient city-states, including Cappadocia and Troy.

Five, the country is visited by natural calamities, the effects of which is long-lasting. In the Philippines there were the Mt. Pinatubo eruptions which practically covered several provinces with dust, ashes, and lahar. For many years the area affected was a virtual wasteland and some of the important tourist places desolated, albeit temporarily. An earthquake or a strong typhoon can also do an extensive damage to cultural, natural, and mixed heritage.

Six, transnational companies who come to a country can destroy potential tourist areas because of the construction of the work-and-factory sites and the pollution of the environment. Moreover, it can also threaten the ethnic culture of the locality because of the possibility of urbanization and modernization.

Seven, local governments may be unmindful of these heritage sites despite the explicit provisions in existing laws to protect and preserve the national heritage. The mayor of Cagayan de Oro City, for example, in the Philippines approved the construction of a "new bridge and road that could destroy the Huluga Site [Open Site and Caves], an area recognized by the National Museum as an important historical and archaeological discovery" ("Manifesto…," 2001). The construction violated Republic Act 4846, "which renders unlawful the destruction of archaeological or historical sites identified by the National Museum" and Presidential Decree

105, "which makes it unlawful to change the features of existing historical landmarks."

Last, a political turmoil exists. We are here talking about political terrorism, an invasion, a civil war, or a country with pockets of rebellion.

There are also travel advisories by foreign governments discouraging their respective nationals to visit a particular country, or parts of that country, because of war, terrorist bombings, kidnappings, and the like. The Philippines has a pocket Muslim rebellion in the south, a series of Abu Sayyaf kidnap-for-ransom terrorist activities in Basilan and a few places in Southern Philippines, and a communist resistance movement which occasionally attacks or ambushes some military outposts. So the Philippines receives such advisories from foreign governments, particularly from the United States, New Zealand, and Australia.

## WHAT IS TO BE DONE?

We have seen that the development and sustained maintenance or preservation of the national heritage does not guarantee the increase of tourist arrivals because of various obstacles to be hurdled. Nothing can be done in a country at war, not until the bloody rebellion (not just a symbolic coup d'état<sup>9</sup>), civil war, or invasion is ended. Nothing much can also be done immediately in terms of restoration of a national heritage when a natural calamity such as a devastating typhoon and flood, a strong earthquake, a destructive volcanic eruption, a tsunami, etc. destroys it. The process of restoration and redevelopment of the tourist site takes a little longer. But something can still be done in other areas.

The first thing that can be done is to minimize or contain the troubled spots to a certain locality as much as possible so that tourism can be encouraged in a vast expanse of peaceful areas. Tourist spots, lodging houses, resorts, and the like must have a telecommunication system, including a siren, and a sufficient number of efficient security guards equipped with two-way radios in cases of emergencies or terrorist infiltration. It is advisable that a helicopter from a nearby military or civilian base should be handy. The Abu Sayyaf, for instance, infiltrated and abducted several tourists from a tourist resort (Dos Palmas) in the island of Palawan in Western Philippines. They also abducted tourists from a

Malaysian island resort, i.e., at Sidapan, Sabah (see Abu Sayyaf Group 2004). Their area of operations goes beyond the boundary of their base of origin (Basilan).<sup>10</sup>

When disturbances are contained, tourism may still grow in peaceful areas. For instance, the Philippine Muslim resistance movement is basically limited in actual operations to a few provinces in Southern Mindanao: Sultan Kudarat and North Cotabato of Region XII and Lanao del Sur, Maguindanao, Basilan, Sulu, and Tawi-Tawi of the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao. These are predominantly Muslim provinces. Foreigners may be prohibited in going to these places. These two regions themselves have many relatively safe provinces like Saranggani and South Cotabato. Together with Region IX (Zamboanga del Sur, Zamboanga del Norte, Zamboanga City, and Zamboanga Sibugay), it is less risky to go to these places. But Regions I-VIII (Luzon and the Visayas provinces), together with Regions X, XI, and the Caraga Region (Mindanao provinces) are very safe. Foreigners can visit these places (see "Political map," 2004).

Promotion of tourist places and sites must include an advisory to relatively unsafe places so that foreign tourists will inhibit themselves from going there. It is important for tourist agencies locally and abroad to issue an advisory on places not to visit because of the bad publicity a terrorist abduction, for example, will generate.

There is a need to *balance* "tourism with heritage protection." The director of ecological sciences of the UNESCO, N. Ishwaran ("UNESCO urges countries...," 2004) says that "Tourism can be a benefit as well as a threat." In both China and India, some tourists caused damages to the sites such that it is advisable for local and national officials to monitor the movements of tourists. As Ishwaran further notes: "For sites in Europe, Asia and America, where access is easy, tourism can become a threat unless it is monitored." In northwestern China, e.g., the centuries-old Buddhist art painted in the Mogao Caves "is under threat from the crowds of visitors" and so management was compelled to "restrict the number of tourists entering the caves." It is likewise necessary to strictly implement laws governing constructions, as in the case of the Huluga Site, as these might damage heritage sites.

It is perhaps advisable that the state should not only cater to government conferences, but Ministries or Departments of Tourism should

also have a linkage with national academic organizations and with a little financial support, at least in terms of advertisement or media coverage, encourage these to sponsor international conferences. In this way, more participants and tourists can come in. In some world conferences I attended, such as the World Conference on Mulla Sadra and Issues in Contemporary Western Philosophy, held in Tehran in May 1999, and the XXI<sup>st</sup> World Congress of Philosophy, held in Istanbul in August 2003, these had the blessings of their respective governments. Some academic organizations may not want a government linkage, but in the Philippines, such international conferences do not usually get the national attention as if it were an insignificant event, unless, to my mind, government comes in. It is important to have an advertisement space in newspapers and television in which issues are ventilated and discussed prior to the conference so that many will be interested to attend.

It might be useful for some countries to take a deep and profound look into the proposed "open air" or "open sky" policy in order to determine the quantitative merits of such a policy to countries concerned in terms of tourist promotion.

Finally, laws on air and water or environment pollution for transnational corporations operating in a locality should be strictly implemented to protect the national heritage. It is, I think, advisable for transnational companies to operate in a localized zone such as an Export Processing Zone or a Special Economic Zone or the like. In this way, their production activities are confined to the zones and not scattered anywhere else which could endanger a national heritage.

#### CONCLUSION

Philippine society has been the result of hundreds of years of colonization. As such there is no national ethnic culture to speak of (although there are still tribal ethnic cultures). It is a hybrid national culture which retains some ethnic cultural traits and adopts many Western cultural traits. As every generation adopts more and more of the Western traits, it gradually diminishes the ethnic cultural traits. Consequently, what was described by James Fallows (1987: passim and Gripaldo 2000:26-27) as a "damaged culture" is now the accepted culture, out of which the current Filipino

generation—especially the younger Filipino generation—is reshaping its own sense of nationalism. And from the point of view of this generation, it is a progressive culture, western-oriented, and generally optimistic about the future despite current economic and political disturbances.

In a manner of speaking, there is no Filipino culture that globalization will threaten because its culture now is the culture of globalization. It accepts the fact that as transnational companies come into the country to do business, so are Filipinos going outside the country to seek "greener pastures." As Patricia Evangelista (2004) says:

When I was little, I wanted what many Filipino children all over the country wanted. I wanted to be blonde, blue-eyed, and white.

I thought—if I just wished hard enough and was good enough, I'd wake up on Christmas morning with snow outside my windows and freckles across my nose!

More than four centuries under western domination does that to you. I have sixteen cousins. In a couple of years, there will just be five of us left in the Philippines, the rest will have gone abroad in search of "greener pastures." It's not just an anomaly; it's a trend: the Filipino diaspora. Today, about eight million Filipinos are scattered around the world. <sup>13</sup>

There are those who disapprove of Filipinos who choose to leave. I used to. Maybe this is a natural reaction of someone who was left behind, smiling for family pictures that get emptier with each succeeding year...

- ...I come from a Third World country, one that is still trying mightily to get back on its feet after many years of dictatorship. But we shall make it, given more time....
- ...Nationalism isn't bound by time or place. People from other nations migrate to create new nations, yet still remain essentially who they are....

In a few years, I may take advantage of whatever opportunities come my way. But I will come home. A borderless world doesn't preclude the idea of a home. I'm a Filipino, and I'll always be one. It isn't about just geography; it isn't about boundaries. It's about giving back to the country that shaped me.

And that's going to be more important to me than seeing snow outside my windows on a bright Christmas morning.

#### **ENDNOTES**

<sup>1</sup> Slightly revised paper originally delivered during the 6<sup>th</sup> philosophical conference of the Asian Association of Catholic Philosophers held at Assumption University, Huamak and Bang Na campuses, Bangkok, Thailand on 17-20 August 2004. The conference is sponsored by the Graduate School of Philosophy and Religion of Assumption University with the theme, "Asian Heritage in a Global Society."

<sup>2</sup> There are four candidate countries for EU, in addition to the 25, namely, Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania, and Turkey (see "The European Union at a glance" 2004).

<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, nations are interconnecting for economic survival. Toffler (1980) says that the Third Wave will be the Age of Regional Technopoles or the Age of Transnationals and Regional States. The global role of the nation-state will be secondary and not dominant as in the Second Wave civilization. This is good in the sense that world conflicts will be minimized because nations will have to go into interdependent linkages to sustain their economies (Toffler 1993:289).

They will become post-nations. Drucker (1993:141-56) likewise maintains that the nation-state is rapidly becoming obsolete.

<sup>4</sup> There are two senses of multicultural ethnicity. One is "inner," or being a hybrid or having many ethnical biological origins. The other is "outer," or living in a multicultural environment or living with people belonging to many ethnic groups within a locality. Both senses are used in this paper.

<sup>5</sup> Evangelista, a Mass Communications student from the University of the Philippines, unanimously won the International Public Speaking contest held by the English Speaking Union of London against 59 other students from 37 countries.

<sup>6</sup> We may interpret the individual as a cultural or ethnic hybrid even as far back as the Homo sapiens when they migrated and inter-copulated with each other to bring about an inner ethnicity that, over the centuries, is not originally pure today.

<sup>7</sup> The Australian Center for Independent Journalism (ACIJ) discusses the Philippine child sex industry and the work of Father Shay Cullen, an anti-pedophile campaigner for more than twenty years now (see "ACIJ features sex tourism…", 1995).

<sup>8</sup> UNESCO mentions 23, but an actual count as of 29 July 2004 yielded 24. The Party States have also increased from 134 to 178 as of 1 May 2004. Regarding the criteria, there are 6 for cultural properties and 4 for natural properties (see UNESCO overview).

<sup>9</sup> By a "symbolic coup d'état" I mean only an attempt to grab power not seriously but symbolically by occupying a hotel or another building just so plotters can express their dissatisfaction with the government and press for their reformist demands. The Philippines has many such cases. The latest occurred on 27 July 2003 when 300 military officers and enlisted soldiers took over the Oakwood Hotel in Makati City and pressed for demands from the government to cleanse the military of corruption.

<sup>10</sup> The bullet train service will connect by land from Vietnam to Kampuchea and Thailand, and then possibly to all the other countries of mainland Southeast Asia.

<sup>11</sup> The train chunnel connecting England and France costs "more than \$13 billion and took seven years to complete." The distance between the Philippines and Vietnam is much longer than the English Channel ("Channel tunnel…", N.d.).

<sup>12</sup> Deputy Director General Reynaldo Velasco (2004) of the Philippine National Police and also the concurrent executive director of the Philippine Center of Transnational Crimes said the center was alerted by "its foreign counterparts such as the Interpol on the plans by the terrorists" and is now tightening security on "tourist spots" as possible terrorist "soft targets."

<sup>13</sup> Here is a quote from William Hyde (2004), the deputy representative of the International Organization for Migration, regarding Filipino migration:

...the Filipino migratory process is so extraordinary compared to other countries that foreign authorities regularly travel here to learn more about how it all works. They know that this country embraces migration and deals with it as a routine part of life. They know that they can learn a lot looking at what Filipinos have already gone through and they are interested to see how the government is managing the process now.

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