

1 Looking for God in the Complexities of Filipino Migration and Diaspora

Theology and Filipino Cultural Identities in a Globalized World

Julius-Kei Kato

Introduction: Framing Our Theme, Challenges, and Task

As the title boldly declares, our quest here is to “look for God” in the complexities of Filipino culture as found in migration and diaspora. A more properly theological way of expressing it would be: reflecting on Filipino migrant-diaspora culture as a *locus theologicus*.¹ Is that even possible? How might we go about correlating theology with the complex varieties of Filipino cultural identities in our globalized world? It is obvious how challenging it is to identify even just the main characteristics of Filipino cultural identities as they are present in the various loci of migration and diaspora today because Filipinos around the world have, and continue to go through, extensive and complex migratory patterns. Moreover, they have established diaspora communities in many places around the world that interact with local contexts in multifarious ways, producing a variety of new cultural forms. As if that were not enough, we could even throw in the fact that “Filipino culture” in the diaspora means vastly different things across different generations of people who still self-identify in some way as “Filipino-a, not to speak of various mixtures or hybridities in which the Filipino element is mixed with other cultural elements. In the face of all these factors, could we still speak of these diverse, continually developing cultures as “Filipino” in some way?

This chapter surveys the big picture of contemporary Filipino migration and diaspora from cultural perspectives and suggests the contours of what may still be labeled as shared “Filipino identity.” Starting with an essentialized idea of “culture,” it will go on to show how migration, diaspora, and hybridity in their Filipino versions necessitate a process of complexifying the notion of cultural identity. What this means concretely is that migration and diaspora produce what could be called a hybrid “Filipino-X” cultural identity. It is not just a sum of its component parts (Filipino plus some other concrete cultural context[s]) but a complex and hybrid entity that must be dealt with on its own merits. The chapter argues that this “Filipino-X” cultural identity in the Filipino diaspora should be made the explicit and primary context, as well as object, of theological reflection. After all, it is the task of theology to indicate that it is in the context of the diversity and complexity of various Filipino-X cultural identities

around the world that the process toward a greater wholeness (salvation) is being continually realized in the reign of God.

Describing “Culture”: A First Take

Culture is one of the most commonly used words to describe the human condition. Yet, when examined more deeply, it might come as a surprise that its precise meaning is quite difficult to state plainly. Theologian Robert Schreiter, who has worked extensively in the field of culture and theology, comments that “culture is a notoriously slippery concept, with no agreed upon definition.”² Thus, it might be best to begin with a survey of some conventional definitions of culture as preliminary heuristic aids to have a framework for understanding this slippery concept. These definitions will be critically engaged with later to see if and how they might apply to culture as lived in Filipino migration and diaspora.

A classic definition of culture is offered by Clifford Geertz, who holds a prominent place in cultural anthropology. Geertz defines culture as an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which people communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life.³ Theologian Michael Gallagher provides a helpful synthesis of the “essential aspects for any description of culture,” that adds a rich nuance to our understanding. Culture, according to Gallagher, is a uniquely human product inherited from the past yet ever-changing in order to cope with different historical environments. It evolves into *a set of assumptions*, often unconsciously assimilated by a given group or society, involving an entire way of life that, in turn, becomes a source of solidarity and identity for the group members. Culture, Gallagher adds, is a whole complex of ways of interpreting the world. It carries with it meanings and beliefs, values, customs, practices, and traditions. This complex of factors extends from the most mundane human activities to more profound concerns, such as the significance of existence. Not to be forgotten is culture’s communicative dimension: it seeks to pass its cumulative wisdom to future generations. Last but not least, culture often involves some religious vision.⁴

As a third heuristic aid, we turn to Kathryn Tanner, another theologian who has reflected profoundly on the relationship of culture and theology. In *Theories of Culture*, Tanner summarizes the “modern” view of culture (as opposed to a “postmodern” one). More specifically, she speaks of culture as a universal element defining what is human. At the same time, Tanner says culture highlights human diversity in that it varies from one social group to another, distinguishing the specific pattern of behaviors which define a society as different from all others. One can, therefore, say that the boundaries of a particular culture become the boundaries of a particular society. Considering culture as specific to a particular group, one can understand that a group’s culture refers to its entire way of life.⁵

A Stab at Describing Filipino Culture

Given the abovementioned conventional meanings of culture, let us take a first stab at delineating some dominant features that might give us some idea of “Filipino culture.” Imelda Marcos, the (in)famous former First Lady of the Philippines, once declared, “The Philippines is in a strategic position—it is both East and West, right and left, rich and poor.... We are neither here nor there.”⁶ This intriguing description captures—what I consider—an essential characteristic in attempting to describe Philippine culture. Philippine culture, both in the country itself and more widely in the diaspora, can be considered a “mixture” of many things. Niels Mulder, for example, speaks of the “mixed-up” symbolic language of the Filipino whom he describes as “an English-speaking Malay, with a Spanish name, who loves to eat Chinese food.”⁷ Others refer to the Filipino as the “brown American” with a contemporary culture that gives the impression of a “bricolage.”⁸ I will use “hybridity” here to capture this characteristic of Filipino (cultural) identity.

Indeed, Filipinos/-as, as a group, are living embodiments of hybridity. Although present-day Philippine society is composed of an ethnically diverse people, the ancestors of the vast majority came from Southeast Asia, especially the islands that make up Indonesia and environs. These Filipino ancestors were of the Malay ethnic group. Hence, we can say that this original and dominant Malay ethnicity and culture forms a cultural bedrock together with those of the smaller number of indigenous peoples. Subsequent history brought waves of other ethnicities and cultures to the Philippine archipelago that transformed it in irrevocable ways. We can include here the waves of Chinese immigration, the influence of Islam in the southern part of the country, the long colonial reign of Spain from the mid-16th to the end of the nineteenth century, the US occupation and administration period (1898–1946), and the brief Japanese occupation during World War II (1941–1945).⁹

With such a history, we can say that Filipinos/-as have a cultural identity stemming from original indigenous cultures that have subsequently been hybridized in many ways through the waves, and long periods, of colonial history and through ongoing globalization. Thus, the Filipino language, ethnicity, and culture constitute an interesting amalgam (a hybrid) resulting from the various mixtures of indigenous elements with the uneven power relations to which they have been subjected to (between colonizer and colonized), and continue to be subjected to by other forces in our contemporary globalized world.¹⁰

What then could be named as the most common and typical values and characteristics that define Filipino culture? In my quest to sketch the general contours of what may be considered a corporate Filipino identity,¹¹ I turn, first, to an enlightening study of Philippine politics by sociologist David Timberman, where he identifies what, he posits, are key traits that profoundly shape the dominant political culture of the country: the primacy of kinship, the influence of particularism and personalism, the importance of reciprocity and patron-client relations, the emphasis on smooth interpersonal relations, and the effect of pervasive poverty on values and behavior.¹²

Another helpful resource is a list of Filipino personality traits and values identified in a 2010 research paper published by a team of researchers of Rishō University in Tokyo for the purpose of advocating for Filipinos/as to come to Japan as caregivers.¹³ Noteworthy here is the fact that their list was compiled from a study of 24 works of pertinent research previously published by Filipino scholars¹⁴ and augmented by personal interviews conducted by the research team. The study mentioned the following as the most “characteristically Filipino” personality traits¹⁵ in the order that they appear in the list: *pakikisama* (smooth interpersonal relationships), *hiya* (embarrassment, shame, timidity) and *utang na loob* (debt of gratitude), close family ties, *bahala na* (“come what may” optimism along with feelings of submission and resignation to fate or luck), *amor propio* (personal pride, self-esteem), *bayanihan* (mutual aid and cooperation) and hospitality, and *ningas cogon* (doing well, in whatever one is doing, at the beginning).

To the abovementioned studies, could be added the characteristics that the *Catechism for Filipino Catholics (CFC)* identifies as fundamental traits of Filipino identity:

- 1 family-oriented (particularly shown in the *anak–magulang* [child–parent] relationship);
- 2 meal-oriented (*salu-salo, kainan*);
- 3 *kundiman*-oriented (in the sense of “heroes sacrificing everything for love”);
- 4 *bayani* (hero)-oriented;
- 5 spirit-oriented (having a spiritual sense or *pagiging relihiyoso*).¹⁶

CFC suggests that these five characteristics are key to shaping a Christian catechesis that is well suited to the Filipino identity.

The abovementioned cultural characteristics are obviously not authoritative nor all-encompassing. Rather, they should be treated as merely sketching the general contours of Filipino culture and a Filipino corporate identity. Clearly, Philippine society is quite diverse with significant differences between urban and rural areas, as well as between different regions and ethnic groups. It is also constantly evolving as a result of different historical and social forces. Any list of so-called Filipino cultural identity traits, therefore, cannot be universally applied to all sectors.

Nevertheless, we can now paint, with the above as heuristic aids, a broad picture of a corporate cultural identity using the abovementioned traits that can be arguably identified as “Filipino.” For our subject matter here, we should go further and ask: If those are salient markers of Filipino culture and corporate identity *in* or *within* the Philippines, what happens when a large number of the population carrying such a cultural identity moves out of the country and disperses to different parts of our globalized world because of different push and pull factors? This phenomenon of large-scale migration is not only hypothetical but, in the case of the Philippines, it has truly happened and is an ongoing process.

The Global Philippine Migration-Diaspora and Culture

According to the Commission on Filipinos Overseas, there are 10.2 million Filipinos outside of the Philippines.¹⁷ Out of that number, 4.8 million were “permanent” migrants, 4.2 million were “temporary” migrants, and 1.2 million were “irregular” migrants. The term “permanent migrants” relates to Filipino immigrants, legal permanent residents, and naturalized citizens of their host country. “Temporary migrants” pertains to the documented land-based and sea-based workers and others whose stay abroad is six months or more, including their accompanying dependents. “Irregular migrants” include Filipinos who are without valid residence or work permits, or who may be overstaying workers or tourists in a foreign country.¹⁸ Temporary and irregular migrants comprise those who are commonly called “overseas Filipino workers.”

A *National Geographic* article in December 2018 provides an insightful, vivid, and expansive analysis of those figures. The 10.2 Filipinos living and working abroad, the article notes, have been “pushed” abroad mainly because of unemployment, scarce opportunities, or low wages. They have been “pulled” to over 200 countries or territories to do all kinds of things such as:

[being] domestic workers in Angola and construction workers in Japan ... staff[ing] the oil fields of Libya and [serving as] nannies to families in Hong Kong, ... sing[ing] on the stages of far-flung provinces in China and help [ing] run hotels in the Middle East.¹⁹

One can find Filipinos in all kinds of professions and jobs in the diaspora from medical professionals, health-care workers, teachers, and technicians to those performing what are conventionally considered “lowly” jobs such as fast-food workers, nannies, and household help. Noteworthy here is the fact that a full quarter of the world’s seafarers, a crucial workforce that keeps the global supply chain of goods functioning, is Filipino. The large-scale labor migration, which has been officially and constantly encouraged by the Philippine government, has made the Philippines one of the top exporters of migrant labor worldwide. Critics, however, problematize the brain drain suffered by the country, the disruptions of family life, and the persistence of the image of the Philippines as a servant, even a “slave” nation.²⁰

Faced with such a large-scale movement of Filipinos/-as outside the country, it is logical to wonder what happens to the Filipino cultural identity sketched above, albeit in an essentialist way, in the complex contexts of migration and diaspora. Moreover, are the conventional ideas and descriptions of “culture” introduced earlier in the chapter even applicable to the contexts of migration and diaspora?

Complexifying the Idea of Culture

To date, the views of culture presented in our “First Take” remain widely held. The question now is can these standard notions of culture *really* apply to the

complex and diverse Filipino diaspora? A closer examination of the above-mentioned descriptions of culture vis-à-vis the complexities of the Filipino migration and diaspora will reveal that the element of “mixture” (of Filipino cultural elements with various other cultures) that normally occurs through migration and diaspora does not seem to be clearly recognized in them. Although Geertz’s “pattern of meanings” or Gallagher’s “set of assumptions” does describe culture *as it has been traditionally conceived*, they seem to presuppose either a pattern of meanings, or *one* set of assumptions (in the singular).

It is evident that these definitions of culture cannot be applied to the many incarnations of Filipino diaspora culture located in various contexts around the world because the very people in those situations would instinctively know that their experience of “culture” normally takes the plural form: They involve what I would describe as “Filipino culture + X (some other cultural influence).” Second-generation Filipino American theologian Michael Sepidoza Campos describes Filipinos in the diaspora as “nomads who interrupt citizenship.”²¹ Hence, for them (even more so for their offspring and later descendants), there are normally at least *two or more* “patterns” or “sets” of meanings (or assumptions) to which the notion of culture refers.

The abovementioned description of modernity’s view of culture found in Tanner’s study, meanwhile, might make Filipino migrants even more uncomfortable. The notion that culture is “a boundary that marks off one group from another,” cuts them in half and gives the impression that they are not whole but rather fragmented, fractured beings lying on the boundaries of (at least) two self-contained entities.

The reason why the nuance of “mixture” or hybridity has little recognition in conventional descriptions of culture is that cultures have been traditionally understood to be *consistent wholes*. In contemporary times, especially in the context of migration and diaspora, that presupposition is being seriously questioned. Postcolonial scholar Homi Bhabha points out that “the very concepts of homogenous national cultures, the consensual or contiguous transmission of historical traditions ... are in a profound process of redefinition.”²² Tanner certainly critiques the modern view of culture and points out that the tendency to see cultures as consistent wholes could be traced to the anthropologists’ own need to interpret and decipher the constituent elements of a particular culture. Consequently, after having examined specific elements of a given culture, anthropologists tend to construct generalizations about the culture. This is what postcolonial theorists frequently refer to as “essentialism.”²³

It is proper, therefore, to admit at this point that the sketch of dominant Filipino cultural traits presented above is actually an exercise in essentialism. We have seen that such preliminary and essentialist generalizations still form the backdrop against which “culture” is usually studied. Unfortunately, if we do not start heuristically with an essentialized idea of a culture, cultural study, it may be argued, becomes very challenging because it is hard to begin to interpret a culture intelligently without seeing it first as a consistent whole. The irony of an essentialized picture of culture, however, is the fact that, to the participants of a given culture, their own culture is almost never a consistent whole.²⁴

Further, Tanner offers an alternative postmodern reconstruction of the notion of culture. Significant for us here is her suggestion that in the postmodern view differences (among cultures) are not marked by boundaries separating self-contained cultures. Rather, “cultural identity becomes ... a *hybrid*, relational affair, something that lives between as much as within cultures.”²⁵ It goes without saying that I subscribe to the postmodern position, that is, that culture is more complex than previously thought, and that it is a hybrid, relational affair, living in between as much as within what has hitherto, been clearly demarcated from other types of culture.

“Diaspora” and Filipino Migrant Culture

When a significantly large segment of a people bearing a particular culture (in this case, Filipino culture) moves and disperses from a home country to different parts of a globalized world due to various push and pull factors, diaspora happens. In postcolonial studies, diaspora is a technical term that means the “voluntary or forcible movement of peoples from their homelands into new regions.”²⁶ Particularly insightful is Robin Cohen’s picture of diasporas as communities of people living together in a (often new) country who “acknowledge that ‘the old country’—a notion often buried deep in language, religion, custom or folklore—always has some claim on their loyalty and emotions.”²⁷ Cohen explains that a member’s adherence to their diasporic community consists of accepting an “inescapable link with their past migration history and a sense of co-ethnicity with others of a similar background.”²⁸

I prefer to use the term “diaspora” in a broader sense in line with what postcolonial biblical scholar Fernando Segovia refers to as “a minimalist approach with its emphasis on geographical dispersion or scattering from one’s own land and people to somebody else’s land and people”²⁹ without preoccupying oneself excessively with defining minute criteria. Again, in line with Segovia’s position, I am not concerned with specifying and expanding a particular experience of diaspora into an “ideal.”³⁰ Instead, I focus on a continuum of experiences that involves being uprooted from one’s original homeland and transferred to a new land where one experiences marginalization from the dominant group and further alienation from one’s homeland. One then develops a hybrid identity as a result of being located betwixt and between this new land and one’s original homeland.

We must also note that “diaspora” is often used interchangeably with the term “migration.” In this study, I prefer the former because if we keep to Cohen’s definition of diaspora as people affected by “past migration history,” we will be able to include in diaspora the offspring of migrants who have not actually experienced migration at first hand but who continue to be affected (albeit quite differently in many significant ways) by their forebears’ migration history.³¹

Obviously, the experience of diaspora alters people in a profound way. Being uprooted from one’s homeland and transported to a different land continues to have effects on a person long after the formal act of migrating has been

completed. In fact, “for some groups, migration is not a mere interval between fixed points of departure and arrival, but a *mode of being in the world*.”³² In this vein, it is justifiable to speak of “diaspora identities” of migrants, an identity situated in between and in both the worlds of origin and residence.

The perception of “home” in diaspora merits particular attention. What has been referred to above as a diaspora identity is well illustrated by how people in a particular diaspora (e.g., Filipino) come to perceive “home.” Home as an idea is normally linked with shelter, stability, security, and comfort. To be “at home” conventionally means to feel comfortable in a place where one belongs and is accepted by the people with whom one shares salient commonalities.³³ But for the diaspora person, what really is home? Some may continue to consider the land they left behind as “home,” but this home often exists only in their minds. The home that they knew has also changed over the passage of time with the result that if they were to go back after much time spent away, they might not actually feel at home there anymore. Conversely, and especially for immigrants, the new home, that is, the country of settlement, does not necessarily fully become one on account of discrimination or racism³⁴ and/or transnationalism. Home in the diaspora, in a sense, is profoundly reflective of the metaphor of “resident aliens” as it is used in the Bible to describe the relationship of the people of God to the world they live in.³⁵

Nuancing Cultural Identity: A Hybridized Filipino Cultural Identity in the Diaspora

A second immense process that happens when a people with a particular cultural identity is dispersed throughout our globalized world is what I refer to as hybridity. I take hybridity to mean, at the most basic level, the mixture of phenomena, in particular, relating to culture, tradition, race, ethnicity, and religion that have been hitherto commonly considered self-contained, monolithic, or distinct from others. The mixture occurs to such an extent that a *tertium quid* (a third entity distinct from its parent substances) often results from it.³⁶ Such a mixture reveals an important facet of hybridity: that it is a cross-category process. What the “categories” in question are—cultures, nations, ethnicities, classes, genres, or anything else—is secondary. The essential point is that the hybridization *blurs the distinctions* in a process of dynamic boundary-crossings and mixing between categories (categories that, as stated, have hitherto been commonly conceived of as self-contained), and eventually results in a new entity that carries traits from all the ingredients of the mixture but cannot be identified exclusively any longer with any one of them.

In the Filipino diaspora, the corporate Filipino cultural identity undergoes a process of hybridization. The process differs, of course, from person to person and from community to community depending on many factors, the dominant one still arguably being the encounter and mixing of Filipino culture with the dizzying array of diverse cultures and contexts in which Filipinos are located the world over. We have seen that this corporate Filipino cultural identity could

be identified by some typically Filipino traits such as close family ties, *utang na loob*, *pakikisama*, *hiya*, *amor proprio*, *bayanihan*, and *pagiging relihiyoso*. In the Filipino diaspora, however, when this corporate Filipino identity encounters and absorbs other cultural influences in diverse contexts, it inevitably changes into what I call a hybrid “Filipino-X”³⁷ (“Filipino” combined with something else such as Filipino-US, Filipino-Japanese, Filipino-Italian, etc.) cultural identity. This is more evident in migrants whose ability to assimilate to different host cultures is stronger, certainly among the later generations born and/or raised outside the Philippines.³⁸ Moreover, this hybrid Filipino-X identity is not only a sum of its parts but is a more complex hybrid entity that has to be dealt with on its own particular and contextualized merits.³⁹ When we talk about Filipino cultural identity in the diaspora as a place of theology then, it is this hybridized “Filipino-X” identity that, I contend, is our primary *locus theologicus*.

Filipino-X Cultural Identity in the Diaspora as a Locus of Theology

Here we come to a point where, as it were, the rubber hits the road. We have endeavored thus far to examine different facets of Filipino cultural identity in the diaspora in order to provide the context for theological reflection, that is, the hybrid “Filipino-X” identities⁴⁰ that are hard to classify because they are found in a dizzying array of diversity in different locations in our globalized world.

A methodology based on liberation theology,⁴¹ I suggest, works in such context, especially since the theological task should start, ideally, with a thick description of the particular “Filipino-X” cultural identity within which one is trying to reflect theologically. A liberationist approach would also work since it is firmly rooted in people’s concrete *lo cotidiano* (daily reality) experience and is strongly oriented toward liberative praxis. Further, and as reflected in Jon Sobrino’s dictum *extra pauperes nulla salus* (without the poor there is no salvation),⁴² a liberationist approach privileges the experience of the poor and marginalized, making it profoundly useful in wrestling with the migrant plight, or human condition, that *Fratteli Tutti* refers to as being an “existential foreigner,”⁴³ or what the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops’ pastoral statement *Encountering Christ in Harmony* laments as the treatment of Asian Americans as perpetual foreigners.⁴⁴

A theology that has Filipino-X cultural identities in the diaspora as its locus could, therefore, be assisted by the “Galilee principle,” a critical reflection on the story of Jesus related to the story Mexican Americans, for whom *mestizaje*—the mingling of ethnicity, race, and culture—is a distinctive feature of their identity. In this theological concept, the person of Jesus, whose marginalized Galilean identity also marked him as a mestizo, the Mexican-American struggle for identity and new life becomes luminous.⁴⁵ This concept clearly aligns with the marginality and struggle for *ginhawa* that characterize life among many Filipinos in the diaspora⁴⁶ whether as temporary, permanent, and, certainly, as irregular migrants.

It also bodes well for a Filipino-X theology on cultural identity to approach binaries in contextually diverse and nuanced ways. This approach could prove useful in negotiating the debate and divide between those who advocate the use of Filipinx and Pinxy (an approach largely associated with those, albeit not all, in the US) and those who continue to use Filipino (an approach largely associated with those, albeit not all, in the Philippines) as a gender-neutral term not simply for historical or nationalist reasons.⁴⁷ It is a theology that embraces not just “interstitial integrity”⁴⁸ but also superdiversity. Superdiversity is a concept that points to the necessity of considering multidimensional conditions and processes affecting migrants in contemporary society. It is characterized by an interaction of variables that connect the more obvious dimensions of migrant life (nationality, ethnicity, language, gender, religion, age, education) with the ones that are less obvious like legal status, social networks, and labor-market niches.⁴⁹ In theological terms it is about creatively navigating the “betwixt and between predicament” of migrants and the “multi- and inter-culturality” of theology.⁵⁰ This is illustrated in theological works on *bahala na* that reframe it as an explicitly religious value in the context of the precarity of diasporic life.⁵¹ To do theology that has Filipino-X cultural identities in the diaspora as locus, in other words, entails doing theology *en via* or, perhaps more appropriately, *via theologica*. Migrant/diasporic identity, like theology, is always on the way.

Conclusion: Toward an Incarnational Theology of Cultural Identity

Due to the prevalence of the experience of migration in our globalized world,⁵² theologians and biblical scholars are increasingly taking this phenomenon seriously and, consequently, attempting to theologize and interpret the Bible more explicitly from the context of migration. The chapter demonstrates that to look for God in the complexities of Filipino migration and diaspora entails complex and contextualized sensitivity to the impacts and implications of movements and transitions to cultural identities. *Deus migrator est*, that is, “God is a migrant” encapsulates the framework and fruits for this theological task. Rendered more creatively, God can be considered as the “Migrant *par excellence*” if we interpret the central Christian mysteries of Creation and the Incarnation as God’s “moving” from a state of relative stability to a new adventure characterized by uncertainty and suffering. In creation, God “migrates” from a state of absolute spirit to finite matter. In the Incarnation, God migrates from divinity to humanity. In these events, God embraces the precarious, marginalized, threatened, and endangered condition of the migrant.⁵³ This embrace can be taken, too, as a migration from the safety of an eternal home to the strange and risky land of the human family in which God also becomes a “foreigner” needing embrace, protection, and love.⁵⁴ In this “downward mobility,” or “crossing over into the dark territory of a sinful broken humanity,” Jesus, as the perfect embodiment of the *imago dei*, helps people migrate back to God by restoring in them what was lost by sin.⁵⁵ To look for God in the complexities of the Filipino migration, therefore, is to adopt an incarnational imagination. In the Incarnation, God assumes a divine–human identity that

can be ambiguous, disorienting, and even marginalized in a way that is similar to what I have proposed in this study as a hybrid “Filipino-X” identity.

Notes

- 1 See Gemma Tulud Cruz, *Toward a Theology of Migration: Social Justice and Religious Experience* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 1–9.
- 2 Robert Schreiter, *The New Catholicity: Theology between the Global and the Local* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997), 29.
- 3 Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Culture* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 89.
- 4 This paragraph has been summarized from Michael Paul Gallagher, *Clashing Symbols: An Introduction to Faith and Culture* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1998), 22–23.
- 5 Kathryn Tanner, *Theories of Culture: A New Agenda for Theology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1997), 25–29.
- 6 David Steinberg, *The Philippines: A Singular and Plural Place* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1982), 129.
- 7 Niels Mulder, *Inside Philippine Society: Interpretations of Everyday Life* (Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1997), 4.
- 8 Raul Pertierra, “‘The Market’ in Asian Values,” in *Asian Values: Encounter with Diversity*, eds Josiane Cauquelin et al. (London: Curzon Press, 1998), 119.
- 9 See Chapter 1 of Jose Canoy, *An Illustrated History of the Philippines* (Oxford: John Beaufoy Publishing, 2019).
- 10 See Chapters 4 and 6 in this volume.
- 11 With the proviso that this should be regarded with caution and used only as a heuristic aid because lists of this sort always run the risk of unfairly essentializing what, in reality, is a more complex phenomenon.
- 12 David Timberman, *A Changeless Land: Continuity and Change in Philippine Politics* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2015), 16–21.
- 13 Isamu Saito et al., “Filipino Personality Traits and Values for Social Support: FOW [Filipino Overseas Workers] as Human Resources for Work Life Balance in Japan,” *Rishō Daigaku Shinrigaku Kenkyūjō Yōki*, 8 (2010): 1–16, <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/268585064.pdf>
- 14 The 24 documents include F. Landa Jocano, *Filipino Value System: A Cultural Definition* (Manila: Punlad Research House, 1997); Tomas Andres, *Understanding the Positiveness of Filipino Values* (Quezon City: Rex Bookstore, 1996); Crispin Maslog, *Communication, Values, and Society* (Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1992); Evelyn Feliciano, *Filipino Values and Our Christian Faith* (Manila: OFM Literature, 1990); Tomas Andres, *Positive Filipino Values* (Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1989); and A.S. Lardizibal, *Customs, Beliefs, and Superstition: Readings on Philippine Culture and Social Life* (Manila: Rex Bookstore, 1976).
- 15 The Filipino traits were extracted from the 24 literary documents studied as part of the research then ranked based on the number of times each trait was mentioned in the documents.
- 16 Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines, *The Catechism for Filipino Catholics*, new edn (Manila: Word and Life Publications, 1997), 35–44.
- 17 The latest government data available at the time of writing is for 2013.
- 18 Commission on Filipinos Overseas, “Philippine Migration at a Glance,” Commission on Filipinos Overseas website, <https://cfo.gov.ph/statistics-2>
- 19 Aurora Almendral and Hannah Reyes Morales, “Why 10 Million Filipinos Endure Hardship Abroad as Overseas Workers,” *National Geographic*, December 2018, www.nationalgeographic.com/magazine/2018/12/filipino-workers-return-from-overseas-philippines-celebrates

- 20 See Chapter 13 in Yves Boquet, *The Philippine Archipelago* (Cham: Springer International, 2017). See also Rhacel Parreñas, *Servants of Globalization: Migration and Domestic Work*, 2nd edn (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2015); and Geraldine Pratt, *Families Apart: Migrant Mothers and the Conflicts of Labor and Love* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2012).
- 21 Michael Sepidoza Campos, “Not Quite Here: Queer Ecclesial Spaces in the Filipino Diaspora,” in *Church in an Age of Global Migration: A Moving Body*, eds Susanna Snyder et al. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 175.
- 22 Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), 5.
- 23 Bill Ashcroft et al., *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, 2nd edn (New York: Routledge, 2006), 77–80.
- 24 Tanner, *Theories of Culture*, 42.
- 25 Tanner, *Theories of Culture*, 58 (emphasis added). See also Peter Phan’s excellent summary of the critiques of the modern notion of culture as well as the advantages of the more nuanced postmodern view. Peter Phan, *Christianity with an Asian Face: Asian American Theology in the Making* (New York: Orbis, 2003), 13.
- 26 John McLeod, *Beginning Postcolonialism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 68.
- 27 Robin Cohen, *Global Diasporas: An Introduction* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 1997), ix.
- 28 Cohen, *Global Diasporas*, ix.
- 29 Fernando Segovia, “Interpreting beyond Borders: Postcolonial Studies and Diasporic Studies in Biblical Criticism,” in *Interpreting Beyond Borders*, ed. Fernando Segovia (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 17.
- 30 Segovia, “Interpreting beyond Borders,” 17.
- 31 Frank Yamada, “Constructing Hybridity and Heterogeneity: Asian American Biblical Interpretation from a Third-Generation Perspective,” in *Ways of Being, Ways of Reading: Asian American Biblical Interpretation*, eds Mary Foksett and Jeffrey Kah-Jin Kuan (St. Louis, MI: Chalice Press, 2006), 164–177.
- 32 Emphasis mine. Russell King et al., *Writing across Worlds: Literature and Migration* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), xv.
- 33 McLeod, *Beginning Postcolonialism*, 210.
- 34 A classic text on this topic is Carlos Bulosan, *America Is in the Heart: A Personal History*, rev. edn (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2014).
- 35 Hebrews 13:14.
- 36 Julius-Kei Kato, *How Immigrant Christians Living in Mixed Cultures Interpret Their Religion: Asian-American Diasporic Hybridity and Its Implications for Hermeneutics* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 2012), 25. I would like to emphasize that by using the expression *tertium quid* I do not intend to essentialize the result of the hybrid mixture which itself is not easily amenable to fixed descriptions but should be properly treated on a case-by-case basis.
- 37 Filipino-X, as used in this chapter, is different from Filipinx, which is a term associated with the advocacy for gender-neutral language that is largely rooted in US multiculturalism.
- 38 Kato, *How Immigrant Christians Living in Mixed Cultures Interpret Their Religion*, 97–98. For an insightful anthology of stories and reflections on this theme, see Virgie Chatterby and Pepi Nieva, eds, *Pinay: Culture Bearers of the Filipino Diaspora* (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2017).
- 39 See Martin F. Manalansan IV and Augusto Espiritu, *Filipino Studies: Palimpsests of Nation and Diaspora* (New York: New York University Press, 2016). For a study on Filipino-X identity focusing on race, see Anthony Christian Ocampo, *The Latinos of Asia: How Filipino Americans Break the Rules of Race* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2016); and E.J.R. David, *Brown Skin, White Minds: Filipino-American Postcolonial Psychology* (Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing, 2013).

- 40 It is better to use the plural form in order to clarify the multiplicity of Filipino-X identities in the Filipino diaspora. However, I sometimes use “identity” in the singular as a way of saying that despite its multiplicity, there is some common Filipino root in all these very diverse identities.
- 41 For details on this method, see Ignacio Ellacuría and Jon Sobrino, eds, *Mysterium Liberationis: Fundamental Concepts of Liberation Theology* (New York: Orbis, 1993), 57–85; and Leonardo Boff and Clodovis Boff, *Introducing Liberation Theology* (New York: Orbis, 1987), 22–42.
- 42 See Chapter 4 of Jon Sobrino, *The Eye of the Needle* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2008). The liberative principle, including the preferential option for the poor, has also been reinforced by the church in the Philippines. See Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines, *Acts and Decrees of the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines* (Pasay City: Paulines, 1992), 22–23.
- 43 Existential foreigners are “citizens with full rights, yet (they) are treated like foreigners in their own country.” Pope Francis, *Fratelli tutti* (On Fraternity and Social Friendship), 97, www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20201003_enciclica-fratelli-tutti.html
- 44 United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Encountering Christ in Harmony: A Pastoral Response to Our Asian and Pacific Island Brothers and Sisters* (Washington, DC: USCCB, 2015), 18. See also Chapter 4 in this volume.
- 45 See Virgilio Elizondo, *The Galilean Journey: The Mexican-American Promise* (New York: Orbis, 2005).
- 46 See Chapters 2, 3, and 13 in this volume.
- 47 The debate started with dictionary.com’s standardization of Filipinx and Pinxy as the name, term, or signifier for all native inhabitants of the Philippines, implying that Filipinos need to call themselves Filipinx if they wanted gender-neutrality. For a critical discussion on the debate see John Toledo, “Filipino or Filipinx?” *Rappler*, September 15, 2020, www.rappler.com/voices/ispeak/opinion-filipino-or-filipinx
- 48 Rita Nakashima Brock, “Cooking without Recipes: Interstitial Integrity,” in *Off the Menu: Asian and Asian North American Women’s Religion and Theology*, eds Rita Nakashima Brock et al. (Louisville, KY: WJK Press, 2007), 125–143.
- 49 Steven Vertovec, *Migration and Diversity* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2014), 733.
- 50 Peter Phan, “The Experience of Migration as a Source of Intercultural Theology,” in *Contemporary Issues of Migration and Theology*, eds Elaine Padilla and Peter Phan (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 183–189.
- 51 See, for example, Rowan Rebusillo, “Bahala Na: In Search of an Ordinary Theology for the Filipino Diaspora,” *International Journal of Practical Theology*, 22 (2) (2018): 234–252.
- 52 For a succinct survey of migration from a Catholic perspective, see Elizabeth Collier and Charles Strain, *Global Migration: What’s Happening, Why, and a Just Response* (Winona, MN: Anselm, 2017). See also Elaine Padilla and Peter Phan, eds, *Christianities in Migration* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016); and Peter Phan, ed., *Christian Theology in the Age of Migration* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2020).
- 53 Peter Phan, “*Deus Migrator*—God the Migrant: Migration of Theology and Theology of Migration,” *Theological Studies*, 77 (4) (2016): 845–868.
- 54 Phan, “*Deus Migrator*,” 861.
- 55 Daniel Groody, “Crossing the Divide: Foundations of a Theology of Migration and Refugees,” *Theological Studies*, 70 (3) (2009): 648–649.