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Transnationalizing the History of the Chinese in the Philippines during the American Colonial Period: the Case of the Chinese Exclusion Act

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Introduction

In this essay, the focus of interconnections between the center and the periphery is the Chinese Exclusion Act. The timeframe investigated in this paper is from 1898 to 1903, i.e., during the first five years of American colonial rule, and during which the Chinese Exclusion Act was officially applied to the Philippines.

In terms of sources, reports and testimonies from the Schurman Commission and the different newspaper articles in Manila and in the United States will be utilized. Questions that this chapter seeks to answer include: What were the reasons for implementing such legislation in these two places?

How were the reasons similar and different?

More importantly, how does a transnational and comparative approach to answering these questions shed more light on the contradictions and tensions surrounding U.S. racial politics and imperial ideology at the turn of the 20th century? This essay ends with some suggestions on what other areas of inquiry can be explored using such an approach.

The Chinese Exclusion Act: A Comparison of the Arguments For Its Implementation in the U.S. and in the Philippines

Reasons for the Implementation of the Chinese Exclusion Act in the United States: An Overview

Lịch sử người Hoa ở Phi-líp-pin trong giai đoạn thuộc địa Hoa Kỳ dưới góc nhìn xuyên quốc gia: Đạo luật loại trừ người Hoa

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Giới thiệu

Trọng tâm của mối tương quan giữa mẫu quốc và thuộc địa trong bài viết là Đạo luật loại trừ người Hoa. Khoảng thời gian được nghiên cứu trong bài viết là giai đoạn từ năm 1898 đến năm 1903, tức là khoảng thời gian 5 năm đầu tiên của giai đoạn thuộc địa Hoa Kỳ, và trong thời kỳ Đạo luật loại trừ người Hoa được chính thức áp dụng tại Phi-líp-pin.

Nguồn bài viết bao gồm các báo cáo và bằng chứng của Ủy ban Schurman và các bài báo tại Manila và Hoa Kỳ. Chương này của bài viết sẽ đi tìm lời giải cho những câu hỏi sau:

Các lý do cho việc ban hành những quy định pháp luật như vậy tại hai quốc gia là gì?

Những lý do này giống và khác nhau như thế nào?

Và quan trọng hơn, bằng cách nào một phương pháp tiếp cận nghiên cứu so sánh và dưới góc độ xuyên quốc gia nhằm trả lời các câu hỏi này có thể làm sáng tỏ thêm những mâu thuẫn và căng thẳng xung quanh những vấn đề chính trị sắc tộc và hệ tư tưởng đế quốc của Hoa Kỳ tại thời điểm chuyển giao sang thế kỉ 20? Bài viết này sẽ kết thúc với những gợi ý về những vấn đề khác có thể được giải đáp bằng phương thức tiếp cận này. So sánh những lập luận về việc thực thi Đạo luật loại trừ người Hoa tại Hoa Kỳ và Phi-líp-pin



The first significant wave of Chinese immigrants to arrive in the United States started around 1850, when large numbers of Chinese, mainly from the area surrounding the Pearl River Delta in the southern Chinese province of Guangdong, joined the gold rush in California. When the mines dried up, many shifted to work on the railroads and in agricultural farmlands. Toward the end of the nineteenth century, the Chinese could also be found in manufacturing, washing, domestic service, and other low skilled occupations.

Heavily concentrated in Hawaii and on the West Coast, their numbers expanded from a few thousands in the 1850s to as many as 107,000 in 1890. Women also came, but they only constituted a fraction of the total Chinese population.

Though welcomed initially, especially when considered as a panacea to the labor problem facing the United States after the abolition of slavery in the 1860s, the Chinese over time began to encounter discrimination—sometimes in the form of physical violence—against them, their wives, and their children. Various types of legislation were enacted to constrain or inhibit their movement, economic activity, and interaction with local white people. For instance, the Page Law of 1875 prohibited the importation of foreign women to work as prostitutes, but specifically targeted Chinese women, for fear that they would swell the number of settled Chinese families in the U.S.

Existing anti-miscegenation laws at the time also prohibited intermarriages between whites and the Chinese. The most egregious legislation of all was the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, which barred Chinese laborers, both

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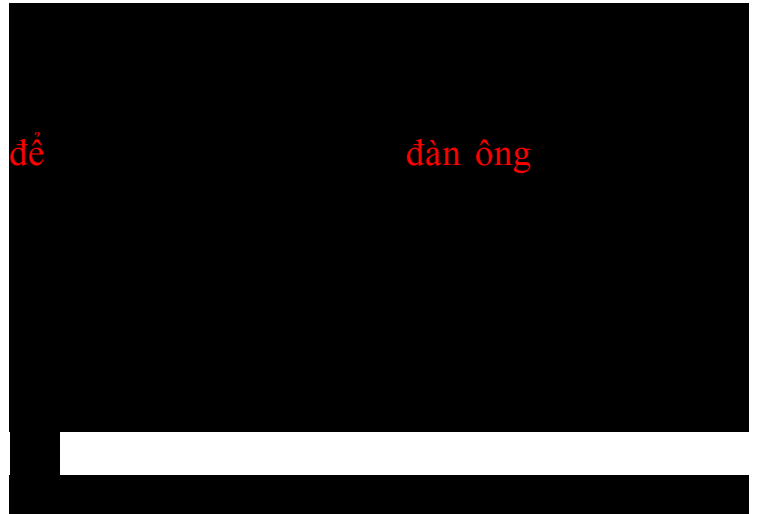
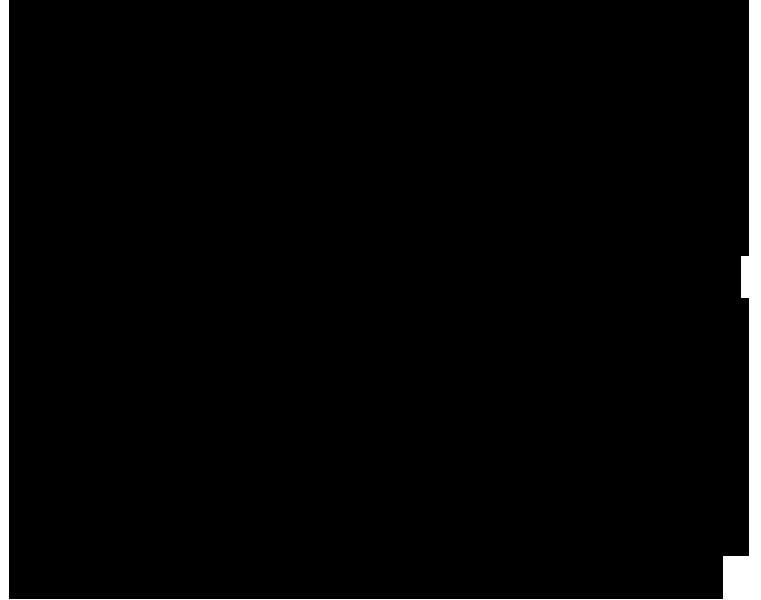
skilled and unskilled, from entering the United States for a period of ten years. In 1892, the Chinese Exclusion Act was renewed, and again in 1902. In 1904, it was extended indefinitely.iii

What reasons lay behind the anti-Chinese sentiments of many Americans and the American government that culminated in the implementation of the Chinese Exclusion Act in the U.S.? Kurashige and Murray (2003, 96) summarized these reasons into categories of “race,” “class,” and “politics.” In addition to these, I would add “gender.”

Scholars who have used the “race” paradigm to explain the anti-Chinese movement in the U.S. point out that such xenophobia stemmed from a fear of the “yellow peril” or of the “yellow horde” invading the shores of the United States, bringing with it a race of people with their mysterious and dangerous practices that could destroy the social and moral fabric of American society. If allowed to stay, and worse, intermarry with American women, these people would dilute the racial purity of American society, producing a generation of “degenerate hybrids.”

Chinese men were also regarded as “sexual threats” to white women, as some white women had become prostitutes catering to the predominantly bachelor Chinese community. These women had also begun to practice the habit of opium smoking, causing them to lose their modesty, turn their sexual appetite approaching a “frenzied state,” and stop being “pure, pious, domestic, and submissive” (Ahmad 2000, 58).

Those who use “class” to explain the enactment



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of the Chinese Exclusion Act argue that it was the threat provided by Chinese labor to white laborers and labor unions by driving down wages that propelled these disaffected workers and their unions to push for anti-Chinese laws. The refusal of the Chinese to join unions was also a reason for the anti-Chinese sentiment among them.^{iv}

Calls for the limitation or prohibition of Chinese coolie labor were especially loudest during the economic depression that hit the United States in the late 1870s. Furthermore, the Chinese were viewed as “strangers” or “foreigners” who did not contribute to the economic welfare of the United States by not investing their money back into American soil, and instead sent as remittances to China.

An approach taken by Andrew Gyory (1998) points to “politics” as that engine that served to “fuel” and “steer” the U.S. toward excluding the Chinese. In other words, while anti-Chinese racist sentiment in the West Coast played a role in agitating for the control of Chinese labor, “(p)oliticians and national party leaders were the glue welding the active anti-Chinese racism of westerners within the nascent anti-Chinese racism of other Americans” (Gyory 1998, 257). To protect their political interests and advance their careers, politicians both in the West Coast and in Washington D.C. used the anti-Chinese sentiment prevalent among Americans and introduced the exclusion act as a way to gain popular support among their constituents.

While these paradigms of “race,” “class,” and “politics” explain convincingly why the Chinese Exclusion Act was implemented in the U.S., another perspective— “gender”—can provide an additional layer of explanation. In the drive for imperialism in the latter part of the

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nineteenth century, during which the United States saw itself as a major player, the need for building up a stable society of strong and robust American men and pliant women was paramount (Hoganson 1998). However, the presence of the Chinese in the U.S. could thwart this goal.

For instance, the Chinese' habit of smoking opium was beginning to spread to the general American population. If left unchecked, this habit would deplete American men of their energies, thus creating a society of effete and "soft" men such as that of China. Some doctors wrote that American opium smokers would develop "Chinese" and feminine characteristics of "introspection, indifference, defeatism, and silence" (Ahmad 2000, 55). Consequently, the United States would become "weak" like China and be dominated by other world powers.

Thus, issues of masculinity also influenced the logic of anti-Sinicism at the time.

From this general discussion of the different reasons for the implementation of the Chinese Exclusion Act in the U.S., this essay now turns to a discussion of the different reasons given for its implementation in the Philippines, as found in the different testimonies and questions given during the hearings conducted by the Schurman Commission and in various U.S. and Philippine newspapers. This section also asks whether such reasons as they existed in the U.S. for the exclusion of the Chinese also existed in the Philippines, and that if there were variations, what factors could help explain such differences.

Reasons for the Exclusion of the Chinese in the Philippines: The Schurman Commission

As I mentioned elsewhere, when the Americans took over the Philippines from Spain in 1898,

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they were at a loss as to how to deal with the heterogeneous population found in the Islands (Chu 2006). One of the issues was how to deal with the thousands of Chinese living in the Philippines at the time.v

In September of 1898, Major-General Elwell S. Otis, commander of the U.S. Army in the Philippines, ordered the application of the Chinese Exclusion Act in the Philippines. However, the order was meant to be a temporary measure. In 1899, the U.S. government sent the Schurman Commission to the Philippines to gather information about, among other things, the Chinese.vi

Arriving in early 1899, members of the Commission spent several months interviewing various prominent people in Manila—ranging from foreign merchants, local residents, and Chinese merchants—and sought their opinions about the “Chinaman” question.

One of the arguments given by those opposed to the immigration of Chinese laborers to the Philippines that echoed one found in the U.S. was that Chinese labor competed with “native” labor. While in the United States “native” labor meant “white” labor, in the Philippines it pertained to the “indios” or “Filipinos.”vii

Most of those who were of the opinion that Chinese laborers should be excluded agreed that the Chinese laborers in the Philippines, like those in the U.S., were hardworking and thrifty, and who, through the wage-contract system, managed to enter the country and work for lower wages. But according to O.F. Williams, appointed acting American consul to the Philippines since 15 October 1897, the “Filipinos” felt very badly toward the system for “it (took) work away from them and

(prevented) their receiving wages and gaining prosperity” (Report II 1900, 252). Furthermore, to allow Chinese immigration would lead the Chinese to “swarm over” the Philippines, and eventually spill over into the United States.

Thus, the threat posed by Chinese laborers in the Philippines to “native” or “Filipino” labor was also a threat to “white” labor in the United States. While the Chinese Exclusion Act as it was applied in the U.S. had effectively stemmed the tide of Chinese immigration to the United States, a stream of Chinese immigrants could still manage to come in through the “back door.” But by implementing the Chinese Exclusion Act in the Philippines the Chinese would be denied an alternative route to the United States. And move to the United States they would, for, as Williams declared, “America is looked upon as a heaven by them, and there is not anything that the Chinese would not do to get into America” (Report II 1900, 254).

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Another reason that was given why Chinese laborers were undesirable was that they were unidentifiable, i.e., as soon as they earned a “few dollars,” they developed “into something else,” i.e. as a trader or merchant, as expressed in the testimony of Neil Macleod, and reiterated by Edwin H. Warner (Report II 1900, 35; 198). Furthermore, the Chinese in the Philippines in general “simply hoarded what money they could earn...or what money they could spare from their earnings, and went back to China with it” (Testimony of O.F. Williams, in Report II 1900, 252; see also testimony of Edwin H. Warner, Report II 1900, 17). This image of the Chinese is reminiscent of the views expressed in the U.S. of the Chinese as “sojourners” or “foreigners” and not “settlers.”

Those favoring the application of the Chinese exclusion laws in the Philippines also argued that, aside from laborers, merchants or traders should be excluded. For instance, William Daland, an American who had been in the Philippines for thirty years, professed that Chinese traders did not “enrich the country” and were “strong competitors against the better classes or more civilized” (Report II 1900, 166-7).viii

And, like their ever-morphing laborer-counterpart, the Chinese merchant in the Philippines were also hard to locate or pinpoint, for they were of the “lower class,” who went into “business transactions ...(got) into trouble, ...generally (ran) away and make a complete failure...[and] may have twenty names instead of one” (testimony of Daland, Report II 1900, 166).ix Warner opined that even with a system of cedula certificates, it would be “very difficult” to identify the Chinese (Report II 1900, 201).

Another similar image being described between the Chinese in the U.S. and those in the Philippines was that they were “polygamists and heathens,” in contrast to Filipinos who were “Christians as a rule” (Testimony of Williams, in Report II 1900, 252). In particular, richer Chinese merchants would have more than one wife, sometimes as many as four (Testimony of Williams, in Report II 1900, 253), with one native wife in the Philippines and a “Chinese” wife in China (Testimony of Macleod, in Report II 1900, 41).

lý giải nguyên nhân

(họ rất khó lường)

chẳng hạn như

Edwin H. Warner nhắc lại

Hình ảnh này về người Hoa gợi lại cách nhìn của những người dân Hoa Kỳ về người Hoa cũng

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Unlike those in the United States, however, the Chinese in the Philippines had had a long history of intermarrying with local women. The Chinese minister in Washington D.C. Wu Ting-fang, for example, in arguing against the application of the Chinese Exclusion Act in the Philippines, pointed out that “many of [the Chinese] were native born (in the Philippines) and intermingled by marriage with the Philippine races... (quoted in Fonacier 1949, 9).

However, it was precisely this long practice of intermarrying with local women that some people opposed Chinese immigration to the Philippines. According to Charles Ilderton Barnes, an American businessman, this practice produced a society in which many natives of the Philippines had become, to some extent, “Chinese” (Report II 1900,187).

While there was an opinion circulating that intermarriages with the Chinese might “improve” the native race, Barnes was of the opinion that the “mixing” of these two races did not produce a very satisfactory result,” i.e., the creation of a “Chinese mestizo” class (Report II 1900, 190). Most of those who testified viewed the Chinese mestizos with disfavor for the following reason: the leaders of the revolution against Spain and later on the fight versus the Americans were mostly “Chinese mestizos,” including Emilio Aguinaldo, the president of the revolutionary Philippine government.

For Warner, the Spanish policy of not allowing Chinese women to come to the Philippines had the unfortunate consequence of producing the “Chinese half-breeds” who were “causing all the trouble” (Report II 1900, 19). Macleod echoed the same sentiment a few days later when he testified that (The Chinese) has a Tagalog wife here and his native wife at home. Some of them raise large families, and a great many of these families are among the insurrectos (Report II 1900, 71).

Daland also called the Chinese mestizo the “worst class” of Philippine society, and the reason he gave was that...they have always been taken so; they are treacherous and unreliable, but they are smart; the touch of Chinese blood seems to make them more cunning (Report II 1900, 167).

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R.W. Brown, an agent for a bank who had lived in the Philippines for twelve years, also regarded the Chinese mestizos as “very clever merchants” who were “very tricky,” on whom one could not put much confidence in, and as citizens were of the “discontented” kind (Report II 1900, 205).

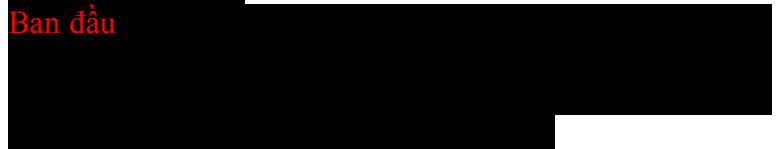
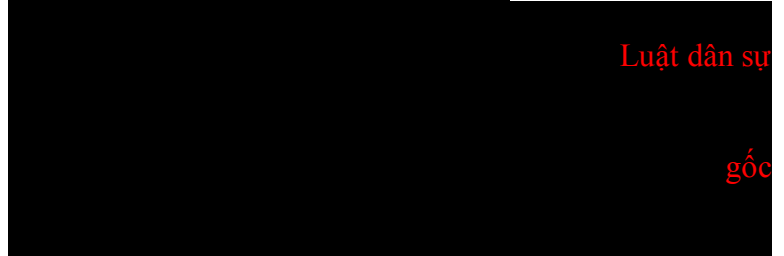
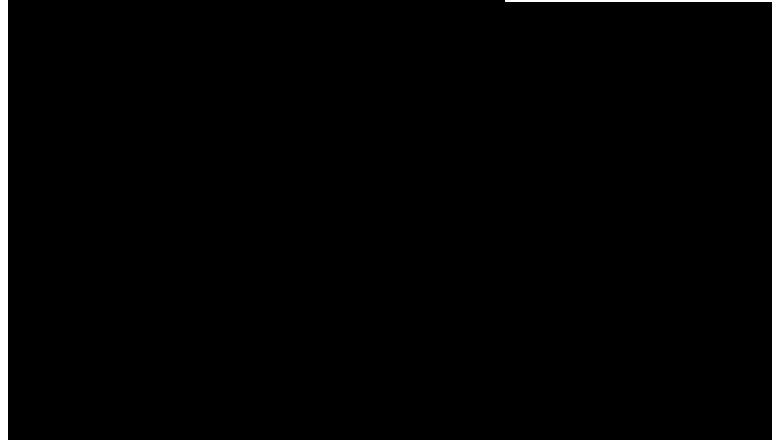
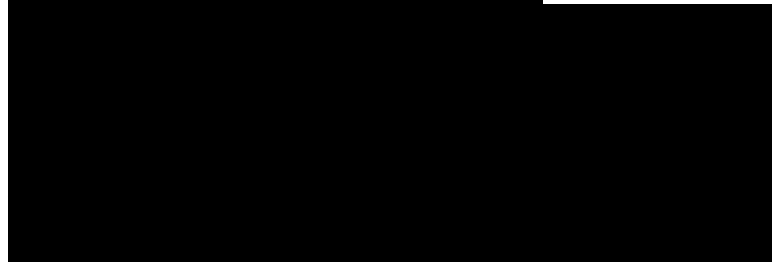
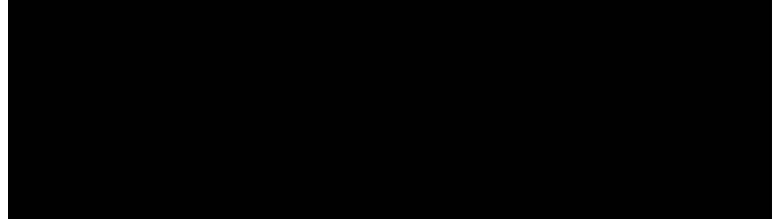
Carlos Palanca, a rich Chinese merchant who had lived in the Philippines for forty-three years, also had a low opinion of the Chinese mestizo. He described the Chinese mestizos as the “wealthiest Filipinos in the place,” who obtained their wealth by charging usurious interest rates, but not having “very good intellects” (Report II 1900, 224).

The discussion on the Chinese mestizos thus rested on both racial and political issues. “Tainted” with Chinese blood, they had become the “worst class” in local society, assuming characteristics that made them untrustworthy, greedy, deceitful, and discontented. Politically, they made a “dangerous breed” that would continue fomenting trouble on American aspirations in the new colony.

A close examination of the questions and answers posed surrounding the Chinese mestizos shows that there was some misunderstanding on the definition of “mestizo.” Under Spanish colonial rule, a mestizo was defined as a person whose father was Chinese or Chinese mestizo. Mestizos were considered indigenous subjects of Spain and not of China, and had the same legal rights as the indios to participate in local government and changing their residence (Wickberg 1964, 64-5; [1965] 2000, 31). Even after several generations, male and female descendants of Chinese paternal ancestors were considered mestizos, (Wickberg 1965, 33; Robles 1969, 77).

However, when it came to first-generation Chinese mestizos, there seems to be a disagreement or confusion with regard to their identity. Under Spanish civil law, they were “mestizos,” but how did people view them? To the Chinese father, he or she could be “Chinese,” as can be gleaned from the testimony of Carlos Palanca. When asked to define who a mestizo was, he said

In the commencement a Chinaman marries a Tagalo woman and they get children from that marriage, and their children marry in time and the descendants of that marriage are called mestizos (Report II 1900,



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Thus, Palanca's own son Engracio, whose mother was a Chinese mestiza, was to the eyes of his father, a "Chinese."xThis makes sense, since Palanca, as pointed out earlier, was very critical of Chinese mestizos. But to him, these Chinese mestizos belonged to later generations, and who were descendants of intermarriages between Chinese mestizos.

In their report made after their investigations, the Schurman Commission stated that the Chinese in the Philippines had a long history of trade with "natives" of the Islands, and that they exerted great influence on the Philippine economy, especially in the realm of "commerce, industry, wealth, and production" (Report I 1900, 152).

They opined that the "chief reason for the prevailing and pronounced antipathy to the Chinese" was not due to the virtues or habits of the Chinese, but due to "labor competition" (Report I 1900, 154). But it was not only in labor that they offered competition, but also in commerce. For instance, they monopolized the tobacco industry, and in general, the wholesale and retail trade (Report I 1900, 157-8).

In concluding their report, the Commission acknowledged the following: 1) that there was Filipino hostility toward the Chinese, but that these varied from place to place; 2) that Filipinos were less inclined to work than the Chinese; and 3) Chinese labor would be advantageous in developing some areas of commerce (e.g. mining), and some areas in Luzon, Mindoro, Mindanao, and Palawan populated by "wild tribes" or those which were uninhabited.

Thus, its recommendation to the President of the United States was for a careful consideration of the "question as to how, where, and for what purpose the Chinese should be allowed to enter the Archipelago" (Report I 1900, 159).

After the Schurman Commission submitted its report, it took several more months before the Chinese Exclusion Act was officially implemented in the Philippines. Hence, up until the end of 1901, the Otis proclamation continued to be the de facto law barring Chinese laborers from entering the country.

On 29 April 1902, the U.S. Congress extended the

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Act in the U.S. and also approved its application in Hawaii and the Philippines. In the days, weeks, and months before and even after the implementation of the Act in March of 1903, newspapers from both the U.S. and the Philippines published articles debating the pros and cons of extending this Act to the colonies. What were the arguments some of these newspapers gave for supporting its implementation in the Philippines? Did these reasons echo those given for excluding the Chinese in the United States and those given during the Schurman Commission hearings?

Newspapers Articles and Reasons for the Exclusion of the Chinese in the Philippines

It seems that, for the most part, those who advocated for the application of the Exclusion Act in the Philippines reiterated some of the earlier fears pertaining to a Chinese “invasion: of the U.S. For instance, The Manila American reported on 2 May 1902 that some quarters in the United States were still “disgruntled” with the application of the Chinese Exclusion Act in the Philippines because some of the changes that were made in the legislation were not enough to stop California from being “flooded with Asiatics.”

The detrimental effect that Chinese labor would also have on native labor was also cited. The Washington Star wrote that whatever had been decided in the U.S. should also be applied in the “recently acquired territory,” since in the Philippines, there was popular objection to the Chinese quite as strong as that we find here at home. The Chinese are as cordially hated by the Filipinos as are the Spanish friars.

To open the gates at Manila therefore would be as serious a mistake as to open them at San Francisco. There are disturbing factors enough in the archipelago without admitting within its borders a horde of people whose presence would work only injury to us and to themselves (quoted in The Manila American 19 June 1902).

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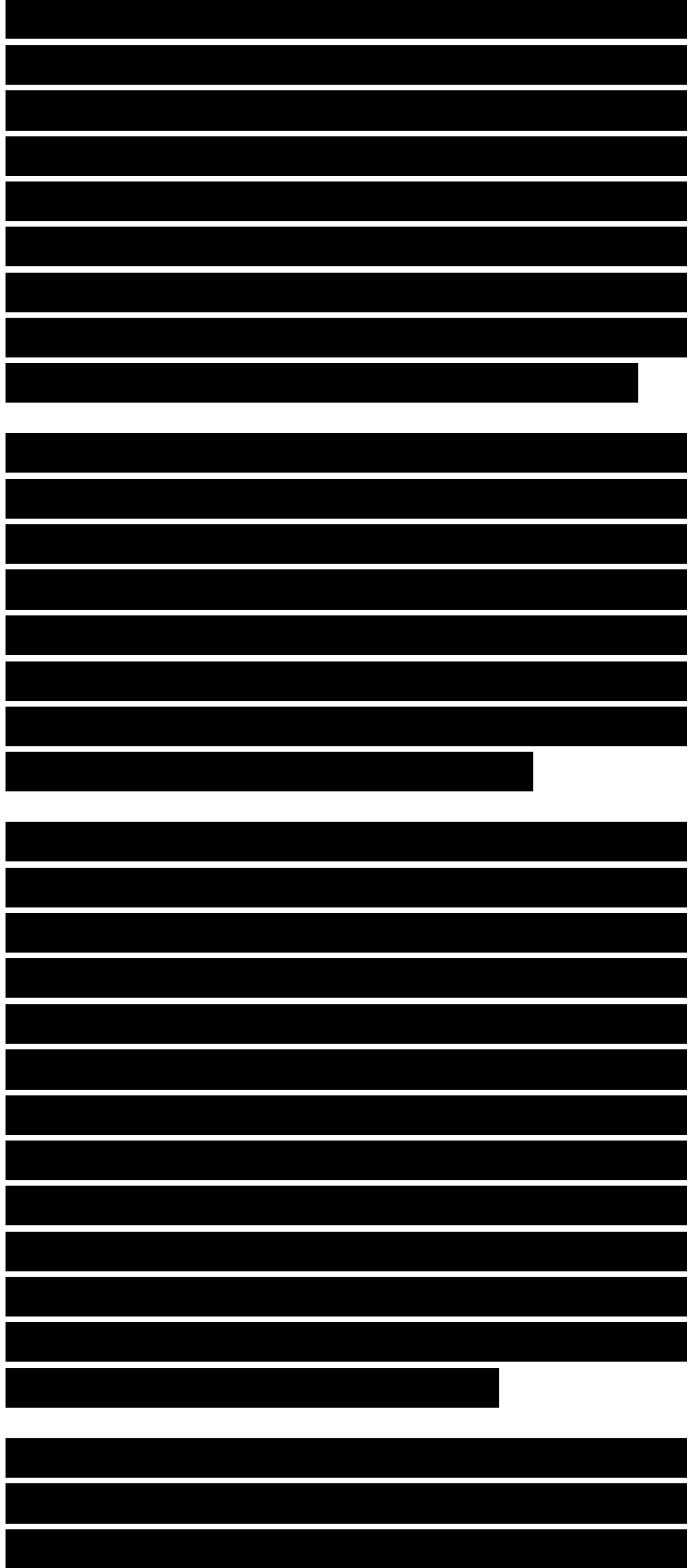
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Hence, reasons related to “race” and “class” were also operative in the arguments for the exclusion of the Chinese in the Philippines. In addition to these, “politics” played a role, in that the issue of whether or not to exclude the Chinese laborer was debated within the framework of U.S. quest in becoming a major global power. But herein lies the conundrum.

On the one hand, the United States wanted to develop the Philippine countryside, having decided that the Philippines economy would be primarily based on agriculture. Thus, it would need manpower to farm the land and build the country’s infrastructures, such as roads and railways, and the infusion of Chinese labor was seen as a solution to this labor problem.

The development of the Philippine economy would also lead toward a better economic relationship with China. Hence, to exclude the Chinese from the Philippines would render the Philippine economy stagnant. On the other hand, it wanted to demonstrate to the Filipinos and other imperial powers that the U.S. was different from other colonial powers (i.e., in the spirit of American exceptionalism), in that its conquest of the Philippines was to aid Filipinos achieve political, economic, and social progress, and to create a Philippine nation mainly for “Filipinos.”

As one newspaper in San Francisco astutely framed it, the debate surrounding the “Chinese



problem” in the Philippines was between those who viewed U.S. annexation of the Philippines as a matter of “commerce and politics” and those who viewed it as a matter of “principle and interest,” and that the issue could easily be resolved if people agreed on which purpose it was that the United States had annexed the Philippines (The San Francisco Call, quoted in The Manila American 9 May 1902).

The racial discourse as found in the Schurman Commission hearings to justify the exclusion of the Chinese was also found in the different newspapers. Yes, the Chinese were hardworking, while the Filipinos indolent. Furthermore, the Manila American stated that the Filipino, compared to the American, “is not a trustworthy laborer” (24 August 1903).

However, in his report dated 1 October 1902, Taft wrote that to allow unlimited introduction of the Chinese into the Philippines “would be a great mistake,” and that the objection of the Filipinos to such a course was “entirely logical and justified.” He thus supported the limited immigration of the Chinese, saying that:

I do not think it would be just to the Filipinos, or a proper course for America in the development of this country, to do more than to...admit, upon reasonable restrictions, a certain limited number of skilled Chinese laborers, who may contribute to the

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construction of buildings and the making of other improvements, and who at the same time by their labor may communicate to Filipino apprentices the skill which the Filipinos so easily acquire (reprinted in The Manila American 9 January 1903).

As a solution to the problem that would result from the exclusion of Chinese laborers from the Philippines, some proposed that white laborers from the U.S. be imported. An article appeared in The San Francisco Call stating that while it was true that Filipinos were “lazy” and “simple,” in time their exposure to Americans would create in them a “new desire” that would “induce work” (reprinted in The Manila American 23 October 1902). In other words, Filipinos, under American tutelage, would eventually become capable of achieving prosperity.

An editorial dated 12 November 1900 from the Washington Star called for Americans to train the Filipinos into “effective workingmen.” It ended by saying: The true American course is plain and straight. On the one side is present profit and future danger, wrecked land and a crushed people a record of shameful tyranny, as disgraceful as ever was written by Spain. On the other side will appear the growth of a people into prosperity and self- government, the discharge of a high trust for the benefit of civilization, a truly American demonstration of nation-making. Which shall it be? (reprinted in The Manila American 28 December 1901).

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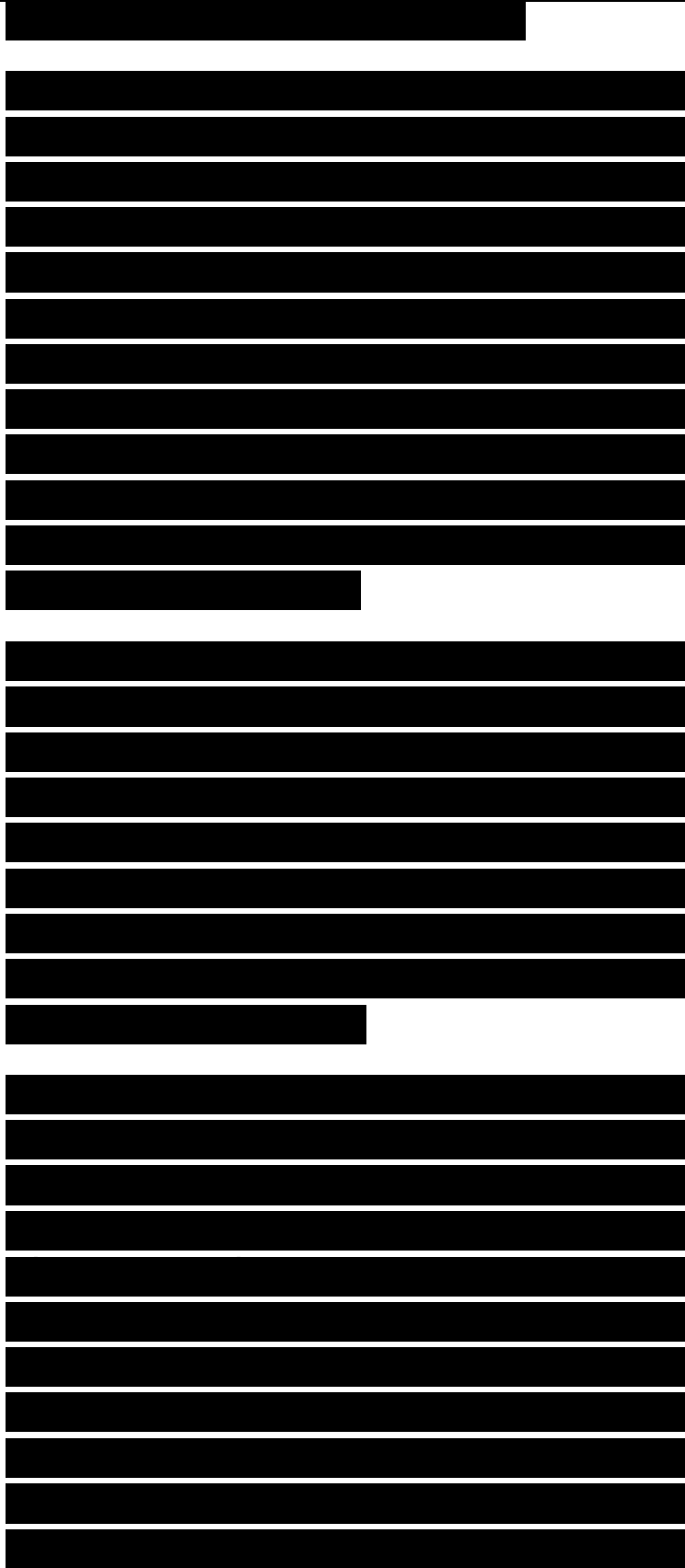
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However, some people found the idea of sending white laborers to the Philippines untenable. The different climatic conditions in the new colony were deemed too harsh for such men. Woodrow Wilson, in his five-volume work called History of the American People, wrote that “Caucasian laborers could not compete with the Chinese...who, with their yellow skin and debasing habits of life, seemed to them hardly fellow men at all, but evil spirits rather” (1902, volume and page number to be provided).

The Manila American stated that the admission of Chinese to the Philippines would prevent the “white man (in the Philippines from being) injured” (6 August 1902). Other races were also considered to replace the Chinese. For instance, the editor of The Manila American, G.O. Ziegenfuss, pointed out that the “colony of Moros,...can and do work, but cannot be depended upon” (22 January 1902).

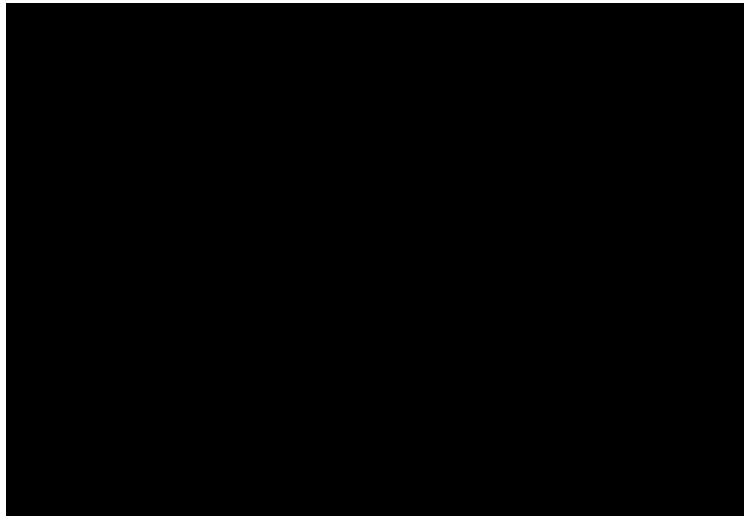
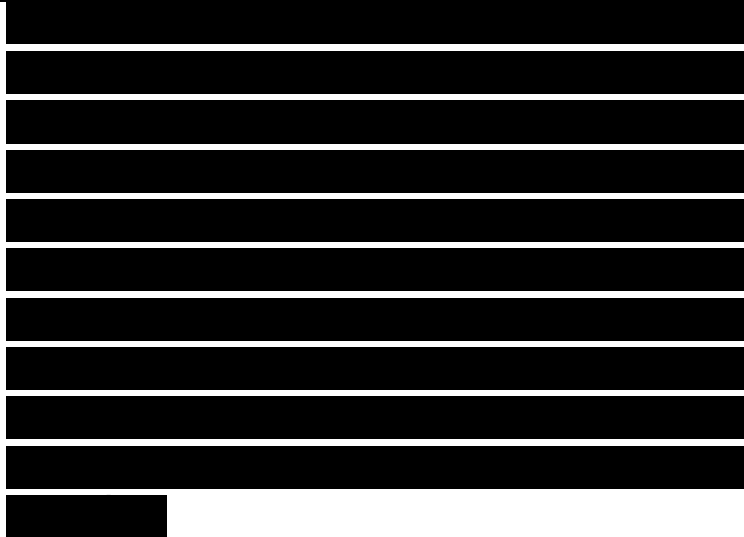
An article from the same newspaper dated 12 March 1902 mentioned that General Hughes, who had been assigned to the Philippines, testified before an “investigation committee” that white labor for the Philippines would be a “total failure” and that he favored the encouragement of “negro immigration” to supplant the gap in labor. A U.S. official, Senator John T. Morgan of Alabama, had also proposed to the U.S.



President that black workers from the southern states be shipped to the Philippines as a way to solve the labor problem. However, The Manila American opposed the idea, pointing out that there were already blacks in the country, vestige of the Philippine-American War, who had defected, or who had decided to stay, and were “vagrants...(who) live off of the native women whom they terrorize into supporting them, and who are commonly called ‘ladrones’...worthless.” The piece in the newspaper further stated that:

This land of mañana is a paradise for the negro as a class, and he is working his graft for all there is in it. It has often been said by men of observation that the government at Washington made an awful blunder when it sent colored troops to the islands, and from the way in which a large majority of the discharged colored soldiers who remained in the islands have been conducting themselves, it is becoming plainer everyday that it was a blunder (10 February 1903).xi

On 28 March 1903, The Manila American reported that the Civil Commission passed an act that effectively placed the law into effect. However, there was continued protest against the implementation of the Chinese Exclusion Act in the Philippines. One reason for opposing it was that American soldiers were asked to do the manual labor that Chinese labor could have performed. In an article entitled “Why Should American Soldiers Do Coolie’s Work,” we



read that American soldiers were building the road in Lanao, Mindanao.

The author of the article agreed that, since the war was supposed to be over, these soldiers could be required to perform non-combat or non-military work, but “civil work” was not supposed to be equal to “manual labor.” He went on to say that the reason why the American soldiers had to do the road work was that Filipinos were lazy, and that they considered themselves “to be equals and to have right to enjoy the blessing of personal liberty to the point of retarding the advancement of their country.”

These “quasi-brothers” were ungrateful to the Americans, for they questioned “our right...to civilize themselves, “and who deemed themselves “already fit to rank among independent nations of the world.” Some of the American soldiers working on the road had become sick with cholera, and those who complained were court-martialed. The article continued to state that those Filipino soldiers who wore the American uniform and drew money from the government should relieve the Twenty-Eighth infantry, and that these Filipinos could be goaded or forced to do so “were we less concerned about wounding their pride.”

Even bribing them to work, by paying them three times the average wage, did not have any effect (The Manila American 28 April 1903). Another article several months later printed

that the decision by the War Department to “force” American soldiers to build roads in “Morocountry” [i.e., Mindanao] outraged many Americans, and the author of the piece wrote that it was a disgrace to the United States that the administration countenance(d) the degradation of American manhood in the eyes of the world and place(d) not only Americans but members of every other white race where savages can treat them with contempt.

The soldiers who built the roads in Mindanao while the savages stood contemptuously by were considered by these uncouth fanatics as nothing more or less than coolies. And so long as white men (were) forced to perform a slave’s duties in the Moro country they (would) be treated as slaves those people (The Manila American 11 December 1903).

As we can see here, apart from “race,” “class,” and “politics,” the perspective of “gender,” in which U.S. anxieties over projecting a masculinist image to both its colonial subjects and the outside world, also framed the debates surrounding the Chinese Exclusion Act in the Philippines.

Conclusion

This essay is an attempt to compare and contrast the historical issues surrounding the “Chinaman” question in the Philippines and in the U.S. Specifically, it focuses on the Chinese Exclusion Act and the arguments or reasons given by its proponents. One question this



essay sought to answer was: what were the similarities and differences between the arguments and reasons given for its implementation in the U.S. and those in the Philippines?

Naturally, any meaningful discussion in comparing the situation of the Chinese in the Philippines and the Chinese in the U.S. has to start with the obvious: the difference in the historical and geographical context in which the exclusion policies were applied. One main difference, for instance, was that, by the time the Chinese Exclusion Act was made operative indefinitely in the U.S. in 1902, several decades had already transpired in which the American public and the U.S. government had had the chance to examine their “Chinaman” issue closely, to adjust and adapt their policies to the direction political, economic, and social winds of change blew, and to form their racialized view of the “Chinaman.” In the case of the Philippines, the U.S. government (both in the metropole and in the colony) did not have such luxury.

Hence, the question of whether or not to allow laborers to enter the Philippines would persist for another decade or so. Another important difference was the fact that any decision made on the “Chinaman” question in the Philippines had to be measured against the civilizing project of the U.S. for its new colony as well as its quest to become an imperial power, albeit one that would showcase “American

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exceptionalism,” as opposed to a mainly domestic issue or matter of national interest that framed the discussions of the Chinese in the U.S. Furthermore, one has to take into account the longer history of the Chinese in the Philippines and their relationship with other Philippine ethnic groups.

The findings included in this essay pertaining to the reasons for excluding the Chinese in the Philippines are by no means exhaustive. Other sources, such as U.S. Congressional hearings or other newspapers, may reveal other reasons that could deepen or complicate those discussed herein. However, it is not within the scope of this essay to include such sources.

The main objective of this essay is to demonstrate how paying attention to the interconnections between the historical experience of the Chinese in the Philippines and that of the Chinese elsewhere, and in this case, in the U.S.—an approach I broadly define as transnational and comparative—can lead us to broader perspectives, further insights, and new fields of research in our study of the history of the Chinese in the Philippines.

In the course of examining the sources used in this essay, I observed other facets of the “Chinaman” question in the Philippines that point to the transnational character of the issue. For instance, at the height of the discussions regarding the salience of implementing the Chinese Exclusion Act in the Philippines, a suggestion was made to learn from the British

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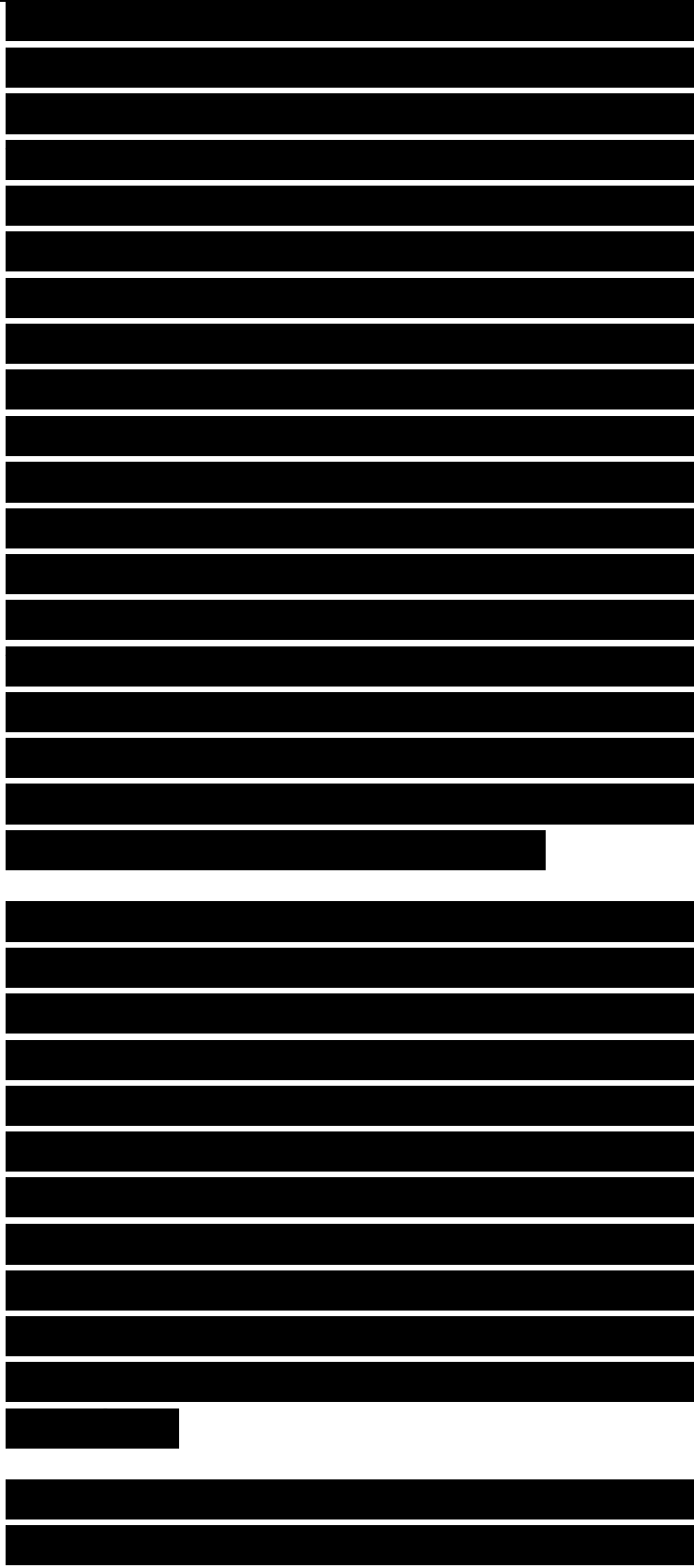
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experience. An article reported that in British North Borneo, “Chinese cheap labor” had not “ruined” it. It further reported that in order to attract Chinese labor, the British allowed the Chinese to hold lands under perpetual lease, smoke opium, gamble and to “follow other home customs to which American authorities would not dare give legal sanction” (15 December 1901, *The Manila American*). Indeed, in its efforts to find solutions to its own “Chinaman” problem, the U.S. consulted the experiences of the Dutch, the British, and the Japanese in dealing with their own “Chinaman” problem, sending, for instance, delegations to Taiwan and British Malaya to examine how other imperial powers dealt with the opium question.

A comparative study between the way the U.S. dealt with its Chinese colonial subjects and the way other European and the Japanese colonial powers did is one research area waiting to be explored and one that could lead to greater understandings of U.S. history as well as that of Philippine history. Another suggested area of research requiring a transnational approach is to investigate how Americans returning to the U.S. from the Philippines helped influence the debate over policies governing the Chinese.

A writer for *The Manila American* pointed out that American soldiers returning from the



Philippines were painting the conditions in the colony “in false colors” and hence giving “the people across the big pond the wrongest (sic) kind of wrong ideas of how matters really (were)” in the Philippines (The Manila American 2 September 1902).

As a consequence of this misinformation, the article called supporters of Chinese immigration to be vigilant in writing Senators and Congressmen in the United States to oppose the Chinese Exclusion Act. In sum, it is hoped that this essay may convince the reader of the viability, importance, and productivity of using a transnational and comparative approach to the study of the history of the Chinese in the Philippines, particularly during the American colonial period.

Likewise, historical studies of the Chinese in the U.S. have not fully explored, if at all, how U.S. experience of the Chinese question in the Philippines and other U.S. colonial possessions might have affected U.S. treatment of the Chinese in the metropole. However, it is not within the scope of this paper to undertake such project.

This essay is part of a larger book project which aims to examine the interconnections between U.S. experience of its Chinese immigrants and of the Chinese in the Philippines. The premise of the project is that a transnational and comparative approach to the study of certain events and issues involving the Chinese in both the metropole and the

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periphery would expand our understanding of the “Chinaman” questions the U.S faced during its rise as an imperial power in the Pacific during the first half of the twentieth century.

As mentioned, the focus of interconnections between the metropole and the periphery in this essay is on the Chinese Exclusion Act as applied in the Philippines. Other case studies to be investigated would be immigration laws, policies, and implementation; the construction of a “Chinatown” in Manila; the opium issue; prostitution; the boycott of Japanese goods in 1921; the Chinese labor question in both the U.S. and the Philippines; the Cable Act of 1921; and the lifting of the Chinese Exclusion Act in the U.S. in 1943.

iii Teachers, students, merchants, travelers, and diplomats were exempted, along with those who had already been living in the United States, provided they obtain special certificates known as Section 6 certificates that would allow them to come and go freely. The law was not repealed until 1943.

iv This, however, did not preclude the fact that Chinese laborers pressed for better working conditions, especially through the leaders of the Chinese community in the West Coast or through Chinese officials in the U.S.

v In 1899, the estimated number of Chinese residing in the Philippines was 40,000. In the census of 1903, the number was placed at

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41,035, although other estimates put it at as many as 100,000.

viThe commission, was headed by J.G. Shurman, hence its name. Other members were George Dewey, Charles Denby, and Dean C. Worcester.

viiNote that at the time when citizenship laws were just transitioning to nationalized ones, the term indio, a applied by the Spaniards to refer to the predominantly Malay Christianized “natives,” was still sometimes used, as seen in Neil Macleod’s testimony (Report II 1900, 35).

viiiBenito Legarda, a prominent Filipino, shared Daland’s view, and added that Chinese merchants were “dishonest” (Report II 1900, 178).

ixReacting to Daland’s statement, one member of the commission commented that to exclude Chinese merchants would be “an exactly opposite idea from what we have at home” (Report II 1900, 167).

xAnother “Chinese mestizo” who participated in the fight against the Spaniards and Americans, Mariano Limjap, was also considered “Chinese” when he tried to pass off as “mestizo” (see Chu 2002).

xiThe article added that the wage that was going to be paid to the negro would not attract

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him, and that the Chinese was still the best type of labor for the country (10 February 1903).

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