

Borderless tactics: an ethnography of transnational Filipinos

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This thesis constitutes an attempt to seek possibilities for changing the hierarchical relationships between Japanese and Filipino people, which are based on global structural relations of oppression and exploitation, through everyday fieldwork research on people's use of 'tactics'.

From the 1980s, transnational Filipinos have moved between Japan and the Philippines in both directions. First, Filipino women began to come to Japan as contracted workers, and some of them married Japanese men and settled in Japan. Later, another trend was for the Philippines-raised children of Japanese-Filipino couples also to come to Japan, often expanding their social relations through the intermediaries of the Filipino women already resident in Japan. These people are establishing a bi-national lifestyle in a context where they must live in the face of structures of exploitation and oppression.

Transnational Filipino people practice 'tactics' that transform their relationships with Japanese people, who are positioned on the dominant side. People come to Japan not in groups but as individuals, and construct relations with not just Japanese but also with other Filipino people who are living their everyday lives. Sometimes, in order to maximize their rights and to deal with state government migrant management policies, they link up with Japanese activists and scholars who support foreigners in Japan.

Old-style anthropology involved fieldwork to discover and marginalize research objects as practitioners of some 'primitive culture'. Instead, however, it is important for anthropologists to consider how they can take part in people's tactics, and convey anthropological knowledge, which was complicit in the marginalization of 'non-Western' peoples, and knowledge for such people to exercise their limited rights, to close-at-hand marginalized people through 'everyday fieldwork'. This narrative of the 'tactics' that anthropologists can take part in is a 'person-centered ethnography'.