

Kidnapping, Citizenship, and the Chinese

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This essay examines the ways in which the kidnappings from the late eighties to the present historically conflate the Chinese and capital. It takes as its starting point the relations between the Chinese and the state during the post-EDSA period. On the one hand, there is the Chinese demand for political representation and their deployment of a discourse of citizenship and rights, while on the other there is the state's intensified deployment of an extractive policy towards the Chinese on the issue of permanent residency and citizenship. Although kidnapping is treated as a social relation which is implicated in historical forms of power and agency, it also views it as a signifying act that is implicated in the "givenness" of the Chinese. In bringing the two inquiries together, there is the possibility of a "Chinese in the Philippines" that demands, as a condition of its existence, a questioning of borders, a new thinking and experience of home and nation.

IN THE DECEMBER 1995 ISSUE OF THE CHINESE FILIPINO NEWS digest *Tulay* [literally, "bridge"], Jacqueline Co (1995) related the following anecdote: "Two years ago [i.e., in 1993]," she wrote, "I asked a University of the Philippines [UP] graduate student if she was bothered by the spate of kidnapping in the country. Her response was, 'No, because I am not Chinese and I am not rich.'" The student's response is a disturbing, albeit relatively mild, version of what is by now a truism about the economic visibility of the Chinese in the Philippines, a truism that seems to be empirically validated by media coverage of the more spectacular cases of kidnap-for-ransom.

These cases come to our attention already mediated by a narrative that features such well-worn storylines as the exchange of huge sums of ransom money, a rogue's gallery of cops and military personnel, shootouts between government forces and kidnap gangs, and the accidental or deliberate killing of kidnap victims. The UP student's belief that the

Chinese are rich and are therefore the “proper” victims of kidnapping appears to partake of the same general distancing posture that characterizes the media reportage of the events themselves, with its clear-cut demarcations of “us and them,” spectator and spectacle, subject and object, Chinese and Filipino. This demarcation is perhaps emphatically exemplified by yet another truistic attribute of the Chinese, that of its relative cohesiveness as a social body, the state within the state that is the Chinese community.¹ In the last ten years, however, the enclave has seemingly broken out of its internal borders (to use Fichte’s term) and taken over the *fin de siècle* urbanscape. A report in the *New York Times* explains the connection between space, visibility and extortion: “[t]he highly visible role of the Chinese in Philippine economic growth – the Chinese-owned shopping malls and high rises that are transforming Manila – have made them obvious targets of extraction” (Mydans 1996).

The tenacity of deeply held beliefs about “Chinese capital” largely determines the kind of responses available to ethnic Chinese like Co when they deal publicly with the kidnapping issue. One strategy has been to emphasize the fact that the Chinese are not the only victims of kidnap-for-ransom, the idea being to disentangle the identification of “Chinese” ethnicity with the capitalist class. Co, in the rest of her article, argues that the kidnappers, instead of preying exclusively on the members of the ethnic Chinese community, as is universally believed, are now more “democratic” in their choice of victims. This is supposedly evident in the recent demographics of kidnap victims, which appear to have cut across class, racial and geographic lines. Co’s argument implicitly stresses that kidnapping is no longer a “Chinese” problem because it has become, indeed should be considered, “everybody’s problem.”

In this essay, I present some preliminary observations concerning the nature of a specific type of response that “Chinese Filipinos” such as Jacqueline Co have formulated to address the kidnap-for-ransom of ethnic Chinese in the Philippines. Kidnapping, of course, remains a timely and persistent issue in Philippine politics; statistics indicate a record high for kidnapping incidents in 1996. In his *Ulat sa Bayan* [State of the Nation Report] early this year, in fact, President Fidel Ramos acknowledged for the umpteenth time his administration’s failure to curb the rampant criminality that has “lacerated Philippine civil society,” and pledged to devote the last eighteen months of his presidency to solving the problem (Pablo 1997).² Co’s arguments about the democratization of crime notwithstanding, a large number of the most spectacular cases of kidnapping,

both in terms of the amount of ransom paid and the death of the victims, have involved and continue to involve the ethnic Chinese.³ This paper, then, attempts to look into the ways in which kidnapping historically articulates the specific conflation of ethnicity and class that casts the Chinese as “obvious” and “proper” targets of extraction, with a view to examining the underlying assumptions of the specific responses by the ethnic Chinese to kidnapping. My main intention is to highlight the implications that these assumptions have for our ability to think beyond

our commonsensical notions of the state, nation, and economy.

What interests me about Co’s article is not whether her argument about democratic victimization is valid, but whether Co was really saying something else when she made the argument. I shall thus begin by analyzing the language in which ethnic Chinese like Co have framed their responses to kidnapping. (I am using the term “ethnic Chinese” to refer to residents of the Philippines who identify themselves as Chinese or as Chinese Filipino, regardless of their citizenship.)

Co’s implicit message that kidnapping is no longer a “Chinese community prob-

lem” has two intended targets: the Filipino public and the Philippine state. Her message tries to engage the public and the state in an interlocutory relation. The content of this dialogue between the Chinese and the Filipino public and state draws substantially, at least on the part of the Chinese, on the discourse of citizenship and rights. If kidnapping constitutes a kind of resistance to the juridically defined notion that citizens are equally subject to the same law,⁴ it does not come as a surprise that attempts on the part of the Chinese to formulate a position against kidnapping have built the force and logic of their argument on the invocation of citizenship and rights which kidnapping abrogates (the right to freedom, equality, security, and property, for example).

Co’s argument that kidnapping is and should be treated as “everybody’s problem,” for instance, imagines the possibility that every Filipino, and not just every Chinese, is a potential victim of the kidnap-for-ransom crimes; the argument urges all Filipinos to seek a solution to the problem and ultimately expects the proper response from the state.

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This kind of generalization widens the political scope of responsibility to include all Filipinos and thereby “depoliticizes” the issue by unravelling the identification of kidnapping with the Chinese. But such a depoliticizing generalization also opens up, somewhat paradoxically, space for the politicization of specific rights-claims, in this case, the rights-claims of Chinese Filipinos. In other words, the point at which kidnapping becomes everybody’s problem serves to call attention to the way in which kidnapping has abrogated the specific rights to freedom and equality of the Chinese Filipinos. This paradox, in turn, accounts for the contradictions of most public responses to kidnapping, which responses oscillate between claiming that kidnapping is an “equal-opportunity menace” (Saspa 1995) and noting “a form of nationalism” at work in the kidnapping of the Chinese (Why Chinese 1992). Either way, these two arguments locate both the Chinese Filipino and the Filipino responses to kidnapping squarely within the realm of the political.

The timing of these Chinese responses is a crucial element in accounting for these responses. It is no coincidence that the Chinese Filipinos began “speaking out” as individuals and, more importantly, as a community on the issue of kidnapping at about the same time that the media began highlighting reports about the “entry” of the ethnic Chinese into politics (Sy 1995). To be sure, this is not the first time that the Chinese have involved themselves in politics. Fifty years ago, in the presidential election campaign of 1946, for example, about 1,000 Chinese led by Huang Jie and Li Yongxiao, noted leftist resistance leaders, participated in a mass demonstration on September 23, 1945 against Manuel Roxas, whom they denounced as a collaborator. The political action of the Chinese, however, was regarded by some Filipino politicians as “unwarranted interference in the internal affairs of the Philippines” (Tan 1981). As the editorial of *The Manila Post* put it: “The Chinese can advance no justification for butting into the Philippine collaborationism question, or into any of our domestic affairs for that matter. In passing judgment on our congress, the Chinese have stepped over the heads of the Filipino people who had elected their people to congress, the Filipino people who are the only legitimate critics of the officials they have willed into office” (Yuk-wai 1996).

What makes the present situation of the Chinese different from that of the leftists in 1945 is that the Chinese criticism of the Philippine government today can no longer be seen to warrant the same kind of dismissive response from Filipino politicians. In claim-

ing citizenship and the right to politics, the present Chinese are saying that they are no longer speaking to the state as Chinese, but as Chinese Filipinos, both Chinese and Filipino. For these second-, third-, and fourth-generation “Tsinoys” (from *Tsino* and *Pinoy*), speaking out, sometimes critically, is part of the universal right to politics to which they are entitled as citizens of the Philippines.

The terminological shift from Chinese to Chinese Filipino, however, is revealing in another sense, since it indicates an attempt on the part

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of self-identified Chinese Filipinos to distance themselves both temporally and conceptually from the politics of the 1945 Chinese. The claim to citizenship is a claim against a certain kind of “Chinese,” a Chinese who can identify with the Filipinos without being one of them, a Chinese who is neither one nor the other, a Chineseness that admits the possibility of contamination and demands that we rethink our commonsensical notions about borders, our experience of home and of nation, of the economy and of politics, on the eve of Philippine “independence.”⁵ This Chinese exceeds the juridical

bounds of a *jus sanguinis* citizenship that tries to neutralize or domesticate the (often secret) immigrant, either by criminalizing him or her as an illegal alien or, perhaps it is the same thing, by “naturalizing” him or her as a citizen. This Chinese exposes the fact that the extremes of rejection and absorption both imply a refusal of difference and a denial of the necessary violence of institutional exclusion that founds any political community. I will return to this point in the third section of the paper.

In claiming membership in the body of citizens, the Chinese Filipinos are in effect attempting to exorcize a concept of the political by reducing it to a matter of politics within the accepted juridical parameters. This move into politics often appears as a counterposing of the body of citizens to the state. It is not a coincidence that terms like civic consciousness and duty, social justice and moral recovery are now being bandied about in public and official forums,⁶ with the post-EDSA period witnessing the proliferation of NGOs and the “resurgence of civil society” debates.⁷ This appears to be a time when the state itself has explicitly organized its separation from society (Ramos 1992, 1993). The government

has been criticized for failing to intervene in the economy by organizing the private sector and for emphasizing, instead, the democratic features of the Philippine political system (Saspa 1996).

In truth, however, the state continues to act in both spheres, and it does so precisely because political and economic stability are inseparable. Aggressively pursuing the policy of attracting foreign investments, Ramos has logged more mileage than any other Filipino president. At the same time, however, state efforts to secure investments are undermined by an often empirically violent flouting of the law by the very people who are responsible for its enforcement.⁸ Formal recognition of equality in law, the very condition of property and rights, at the same time exposes its own illusions and opens up the unrecognized distinction between political equality and economic inequality. The problem is complicated by the fact that this antagonism cannot be glossed over, contra Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*, by expelling violence as a non-civil phenomenon from the social whole. For the state concretizes the recognition of the original violence of property and commerce that constitutes the non-violent life of civil society not by going to war against other nations (although the Spratly Islands dispute with China has generated some military brandishings on both sides in the area), but by turning this violence on the nation-state itself. In other words, the state itself brings its own military strength to bear on the inhabitants within its boundaries. Violence, then, is something that cannot be consigned to the limits of the individual's domain. The irony of the "separation" of state and society is that it comes at a time when the concept of both civil society and state as terrains that putatively mediate and recuperate social antagonisms is at its most tenuous. The anxiety which attends every rumor of martial law, constitutional change and overstaying presidents has done more to underscore the fragility of civil society itself than to underscore the dream of consensus within that society.

In analyzing the Chinese responses, we appear to be dealing with a demand for political representation on the part of the Chinese, but in truth, as I will argue, it is a politicized representation that lacks a solid foundation in society. This lack would normally have been filled by the state's construction of an artificial substitute for the dynamics of civil society. While the information culture and communicative processes have contributed to this end – and this explains why I have chosen to work on the media output of Kaisa – they cannot paper over the state's failure to secure, in the words of Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt (1994)

the normative production of the social, in other words, the state's failure to maintain the illusion of a civil society. There are a number of reasons why this is so, but I have decided to concentrate on examining the contradictions within the discourse of politicized representation itself, contradictions that make it both possible and impossible for the self-avowed elements of civil society to depend on the discourse of citizenship and rights to secure political solutions to the social antagonisms which they act out within the nation-state.

Co's article and the Chinese Filipinos' entry into politics attest to the fact that the ethnic Chinese began using the discourse of citizenship, the affirmation of the universal right to politics extended to "all" Chinese, in order to address the stereotypical conflation of ethnicity and class that the phenomenon of kidnapping reinforces. I shall devote the first part of the essay to examining the way in which kidnapping historically articulates this conflation. I go on to argue, following Etienne Balibar's close reading of the French *Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen*, that while much of the rhetorical force and political charge of the call for public inscription of the "right" to be Chinese Filipino arises from its lack of specificity regarding particular rights to, say, freedom and security, it is this same indeterminacy inherent in the discourse of citizenship and rights that accounts for the practical weakness of the Chinese Filipinos' deployment of the discourse.

In other words, I argue that the Tsinoy's decision to use a discourse of citizenship, a discourse of equality and liberty, constitutes a problematic attempt to disentangle the conflation of ethnicity and class that the kidnapping phenomenon highlights. I shall analyze one other response in order to bring out some of the underlying contradictions of the discourse: Kaisa Para sa Kaunlaran, a civic organization of young Chinese Filipinos that has emerged as the unofficial spokesman organization of the Chinese community in light of the rampant kidnapping incidents in the early 1990s.

BOOMING BUSINESS, SPECTRAL BODIES

I BEGIN with a brief reconstruction of the kidnap-for-ransom phenomenon before I proceed to an analysis of the logic of kidnapping. The first incidents of kidnapping during the Aquino regime were not reported in Manila, where more than 50 percent of the Chinese in the Philippines reside (Ang-See 1995), but in Central Mindanao, specifically Cotabato City. The kidnapping-for-ransom of Chinese Filipino businessmen broke into

the headlines in late 1989. By late April 1991, the Chinese Filipino news digest *Tulay* reported seventeen “rumored” cases of kidnapping in Manila, none of which had been officially reported to the police.

Several theories have been advanced to account for the upsurge of kidnapping cases in Cotabato: kidnapping-for-ransom was quick and easy money for common criminals; the Aquino government had failed to pay the rebel returnees (to the government fold) their regular monthly stipend of 1,500 pesos; kidnapping helped to fill the coffers of the Moro National Liberation Front and the New People’s Army; the tolerance of kidnapping by government officials pointed to a “secret agenda” on the part of the state: the creation of CAFGU (Citizens Armed Forces Geographical Units), the undermining of the leadership credibility of the Autonomous Region of Mindanao, and the much-rumored reimposition of Martial Law (Kidnap-for-Ransom 1991; Mydans 1996). The more suggestive link between the spate of kidnapping and the upcoming national elections in 1992, while unestablished, appears to be a more credible explanation, especially in the case of the Manila kidnappings. The validity of the above theories can only be tested against the indubitable evidence of the membership of police and military officers and personnel in the kidnap gangs.⁹

Two civic organizations formed in the wake of the early wave of kidnappings, the Citizens Action Against Crime and the Movement for the Restoration of Peace and Order, have kept track of the cases, whether reported or not, involving kidnap-for-ransom. They reported 179 kidnap victims in 1993, 286 victims in 1994, 119 in 1995, and 241 in 1996, mostly from the Luzon and Visayas.¹⁰ In 1995 alone, the total amount of ransom money that was disbursed to the kidnap gangs stood at 111.97 million pesos. This figure only covers known payments; in many cases, the exact sum of ransom money remained unknown. A good number of these cases involved the abduction of capitalists themselves, while the rest involved the abduction of their relatives and immediate family members.

Kidnapping has been called a “growth industry” and a “booming business” (Mydans 1996) and, to a certain extent, it does employ the kind of systematic labor, large personnel and capital outlays (in the form of weapons and vehicles) that characterizes an industry explicitly geared to profit-making. The difference, however, is that kidnapping foregrounds aspects of commodity relations specific to capitalism in a spectacular way. Like any industry, kidnapping is premised on the power of a com-

modity to command other commodities in exchange, a power of exchangeability that Karl Marx calls value. In this case, the commodity happens to be a body, the body of the capitalist or of someone related to the capitalist. The act of kidnapping transforms the body of the victim into an object of exchange, thereby instituting a logic of commodification which treats the commodity, whether capitalist or kindred, as qualitatively equal but quantitatively differential: all kidnap victims are

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alike except in terms of the amount of value that they “contain.”

Value here is determined by the victim’s net worth, that is, by the victim’s access to accumulated capital in the form of money. Kidnapping transforms the body of the capitalist into a commodity, the value of which is based on the capitalist’s possession of money, which, in turn, comprises the accu-

mulation of unpaid surplus labor of the past that is appropriated by the capitalist in the present. The capitalist’s body is thus a commodity the value of which is a calibration of the capitalist’s accumulation of unpaid surplus labor.

There is a certain irony, then, in the fact that kidnapping does to the capitalist what capitalism does to the laborer.¹¹ If capitalism institutes a circuit in which the capitalist buys the labor power that the laborer sells for a price, the wage, kidnapping institutes a circuit in which the capitalist buys himself back for a price, a fraction of his total net worth, which, it must be remembered, represents his accumulation in the present of unpaid surplus labor in the past. Kidnapping, therefore, imagines and realizes a subjectivity – often experienced as a loss of subjectivity¹² – that inexorably links the objective movement of capital and the subjective purpose of the capitalist. That is, kidnapping makes the capitalist an almost literal personification of capital, in the same sense that capitalism makes the laborer the personification of his own labor power. In kidnapping, both the kidnapper and the kidnap victim are constituted by – and both realize – social relations that mimic capitalist relations. Perhaps the real irony lies in the fact that, by making the capitalist its primary source of extraction, kidnapping focuses the lens of inequality inherent in the capitalist relation on those who control the means to sustain this inequality.

The peculiarity of the kidnap-for-ransom phenomenon in the Philippines, however, consists of its victimization of ethnic Chinese in

public spaces. By publicly subjecting the capitalist to the forces of capital, kidnapping seemingly erases the subjective and human qualities of the victim, and imputes to the victim no other motives than that of being an instrument of capital. Kidnapping is, therefore, as much a signifying act as a social relation, because the kidnapping phenomenon invites and fulfills a certain public demand for knowledge of existing social relations. I argue that the knowledge that kidnapping “proffers” is condensed into the term “Chinese.” It is this condensation, rather than the mere fact of the personification of capital as a social relation by the capitalist, that evokes strong emotional reactions. By making the Chinese an almost literal personification of capital, kidnapping calls attention to the ways in which the bodies of the Chinese exist as codifications of a complex, shifting network of material and cultural forces that constitute, among other things, nationness, neocolonialism, and globalization.

But there is more. In targetting the Chinese as “obvious” sources of extraction, kidnapping frames the issue not in terms of the fact that the capitalists who were kidnapped happened to be Chinese, but that those who were kidnapped were Chinese capitalists. Kidnapping seems to give a new twist to Marx’s observation that “commodities cannot go to market by themselves and perform exchanges in their own right,” and that the possessors of these commodities need to “place themselves in relation to one another as persons whose will [*Willen*] resides [*haust*] in these objects and must behave in such a way that each does not appropriate the commodity of the other, and alienate his own, except through an act in which both parties consent.”¹³ Although Marx’s observation elucidates a general theory of the juridical form of the contract, his observation also makes a compelling point about how the absolute abstraction of the individual as “legal” personality is posited with the abstraction of possession into property.

Yet by reflecting on this observation within the context of kidnapping, we are forced to consider a more disturbing issue: In a situation where the kidnap victim’s will inhabits the commodity that is the kidnap victim himself or herself, how do we begin to draw the line between the effect of commodification and the effect of personification? (cf. Derrida 1994). Kidnapping forces us to consider the process of the spectralization of the Chinese through which an “idea or spiritual form is incarnated or given a prosthetic body, which is then (mis)taken by the subject as his or her own corporeal body. The subject’s real body thus becomes spectral when it incorporates this prosthetic body.”¹⁴ This intimate compound of

bodies and meaning that is the Chinese appears to blur the distinction between matter and idea. Moreover, kidnapping creates situations wherein the Chinese victims, in order to survive, actively/passively take on stereotypical codifications of the Chinese as a “second nature,” thereby enacting their bodies’ susceptibility to particular oppressive forms such as racism and commodity-fetishism. This not only amounts to paying the ransom, but to taking on the stereotypes of Chineseness, if not living with these stereotypes as though they were coextensive with one’s own body and consciousness. More than just a signifier, “Chinese,” with all its attendant associations, assumes the character of a referent, a something there, something finite that “takes on and is trapped by specters of what it is not.”¹⁵ Since there is no space in the present essay for me to develop this point, I will leave off with the observation that the spectral character of the Chinese as a conflation of class and ethnicity extends (or ought to extend) the argument beyond the question of the constitution of the subject as citizen and into the questioning of the nature/culture, active/passive and form/matter divide in our theorizing of such a constitution. In its distinctive way, kidnapping provides an account of the persistence – even in the face of critiques that expose the contingent and non-natural character – of the truism about the Chinese as “material men” whose virtual nationality within the Philippine neo/colonial state remains a politically charged and contested issue.

SPEAKING TO/ABOUT THE NATION-STATE

LET me now look at how the indeterminacies of the codification of citizenship become articulated historically. I have mentioned that kidnapping is as much a signifying act as it is a social relation because it invites and fulfills a certain public demand for knowledge of social relations. At least two narratives about “the Chinese” are at work in the responses to the conflation by kidnapping of ethnicity and class. On the one hand, the Chinese are an object of class hatred and revolt, a projection of the abstracted evils of the present social system onto those who have benefitted economically from the system. On the other hand, the Chinese are an object of nationalist hatred and revolt because they represent, by virtue of the history of their symbiotic relation with the colonial and neo-colonial state, the living, “foreign” trace of the colonial history – itself seen as foreign and external – of the Philippine state and nation.¹⁶ Given that the national question in Third World countries is indissolubly linked with the issue of the countries’ specific colonial past, and given

the ambivalent cast of nationalist formulations on capitalism (a consequence of the Philippines' position in the current international division of labor), it is not surprising that the term Chinese comes to stand for all that is "alien" and alienating within the body politic. That the issue of the "alien" Chinese often shades into the issue of "alienating" capital would seem doubly ironic in light of the fact that it is "kidnapped" Chinese money that has helped underwrite the cost of carrying out the political programmes of groups or factions that work within or against the state.¹⁷

As should be obvious by now, no discussion of the Chinese in the Philippines can afford to ignore the constitutive role played by the state in framing the Chinese question.¹⁸ As a form of social relation, kidnapping owes its historical provenance and success to the long and often troubled relationship between the Chinese and the state,

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to the Chinese's economic role as middlemen and capitalists within the nation-state, the Chinese's immigration history and the pernicious effects of the neocolonial state's exploitation of this history, and the Chinese's perceived "cultural difference" and alienation from the body politic.¹⁹ The most immediate and visible effect of this relationship has been the creation of the Chinese as a "perfect victim," seen in the perennial uneasiness and distrust with which the Chinese have dealings with government officials, their reliance on forging symbiotic "alliances" with government officials, and their relative readiness to pay the ransom. This kind of behavior on the part of the Chinese has often been criticized by the media and by the law enforcers themselves, but rather than blame the victims, I argue that to understand the way in which the Chinese have chosen to "respond" to the state is to look into the way in which the state has chosen to speak to the Chinese. I argue that kidnapping allows us that one telling glimpse of the interlocutory relation between the Chinese and the state. This relation is an indispensable component of Chinese "nationalism" (whether oriented toward China or the Philippines) because the Chinese are historically dependent on the state's ability to secure their continued existence within the Philippines and must perforce deal with the consequences of this dependency.²⁰ In this sense, home and nation take shape in language and practice as a memory of or anxiety about displacement (cf. Derrida 1994).

It is not an exaggeration to say that the present state has an interest, like kidnapping, in conflating race with class because it has historically benefitted from doing so. I would argue, however, that this is not a mere effect of state practice and policy, but is instead constitutive of the post-colonial state as such. That is, the post-colonial nation-state necessarily constitutes itself in terms of a formal repudiation of economic and political inequality, and of the colonial past. These two strains, in fact, come together in the state's periodic attempts to deal with the problem of the legal status of the Chinese, in its attempts to safeguard the economic and political interests of the Filipinos against the "virtual nationality" of the Chinese. The uniqueness of the present state policies on the Chinese, however, consists of their similarity to kidnapping-for-ransom: even though they continue to operate on an extractive logic vis-a-vis the Chinese as they had done during the colonial and post-war periods,²¹ the main difference is that they operate in a terrain wherein the overlapping of membership in kidnap gangs and state apparatuses has rendered the legal/criminal distinction inoperative. It becomes very difficult to determine whether the state is acting like a criminal, or if the criminals act like the state.

We need not go further than the recent enactment of the Alien Social Integration Act (ASIA) of 1995 to obtain some insights into the blurring of the legal/criminal distinction in the Aquino and Ramos administrations' policies toward the Chinese. Immigration Commissioner Leandro Verceles explained that the Act was necessitated by the state's intention of bringing "illegal aliens into the mainstream, and [thus] mak[ing] them active participants in [the country's] development." Active participation here is interpreted in strictly monetary terms – 200,000 pesos per Chinese, 50,000 for spouses and 25,000 for dependents. The government expects to earn 40 billion pesos from the Chinese, and has strengthened its persecution of illegal aliens in order to drum up more participants.²² Lest it be thought that this Act will have an impact only on illegal aliens, we need to remember that Chinese with Filipino citizenship are not safe from state harassment and official inquiry into the history of their immigration and naturalization (the investigation of "Plastics King" William Gatchalian being the most celebrated case).²³ The state has made it easy for Taiwanese and other foreign investors to secure their permanent residency in the Philippines, while rendering the situation of Philippine-born Chinese problematic by virtue of the threat of *jus sanguinis* illegality which continues to shadow

their status as well as their progeny's.

If there is one thing that kidnapping tells us, it is that the extractive logic that used to be identified with the colonial and neocolonial state vis-a-vis the Chinese has become generalized and diffused throughout society. This generalization of criminality is the phenomenal expression of the violent "objective reality" of neocolonialism in the Philippines, that is, of the persistence of the imbalance of unequal development, not only within the nation-state, but between this nation-state and other nation-states in the world capitalist system. Unequal development translates into active pursuit of transnational capital, in the name of "global competitiveness," at the cost of the super-exploitation and outward movement of the Filipino labor force.²⁴ In marrying "national interest" to neo-classical economics, the Philippine state, like most Third World countries, finds itself dealing with its attempts to "apply" the seemingly universal economic laws of capitalist development to its territories, and to rationalize its repeated failure to follow the path of the industrialized countries. The notion of criminality can be considered a form of rationalizing failure of the state application of the "universal" law of value within its own territorial borders. Thus, criminals like the kidnappers, have been blamed for undermining political stability and for driving away foreign investments.

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Yet, what cements criminality to the state is precisely the state's identification with the world capitalist system, and thus, its identification with the injurious consequences of its incorporation into the center-periphery system of unequal development. The state is criticized as much for its deployment of the extractive violence against which it claims to safeguard its citizens as for its inability to guarantee its citizens' rights (to freedom, security, equality) both within and beyond its borders. Like the *Flor Contemplacion* hanging which called forth a veritable outpouring of national grief and anger directed as much against the ineffectual Philippine state as against the offending Singaporean state, kidnapping constitutes the most visible sign of the instability – a perennial flickering – of the hyphen between nation and state within the context of neocolonialism.

One can thus locate the political efficacy and contradictions of both Chinese and Filipino responses to kidnapping in the very flicker of the

hyphen between nation and state. Kidnapping appears to provide the public with an immediate account of both the political and economic alienation of society in general and, at the same time, the state's mediation of inequality in both national and global terms.²⁵ Put another way, kidnapping highlights in the most visible and audible way the primary mode in which the state speaks. The language that kidnapping and the state speak is that of inequality, and the term Chinese is a signifier of the givenness of this practical inequality, an inequality that the state can neither master nor abjure.

WHO/WHAT IS A CITIZEN?

IN the rest of this essay, I will deal with the way in which the Chinese community produces itself, and I will examine the effect of the community's history of dialogue with the state on its self-representation. Here I discuss the activities of Kaisa Para sa Kaunlaran. I argue that Kaisa seeks to intervene in the contestation over the construction of the "Chinese" by interrogating its constitutive conflation of ethnicity and class. It does so by invoking, in however sketchy a fashion, the discourse of citizenship and of rights to equality and liberty. In effect, Kaisa may be considered a historical articulation of the constitutional coding of citizenship. The kidnapping crisis is central to its attempts to (re)define the Chinese within the parameters of citizenship, since kidnapping brought things to a head, so to speak, by serving as the latest manifestation and practical realization of the conflation, but more important, as the site of the contestation over this conflation.

For Kaisa, the kidnapping crisis had the unforeseen effect of providing the crucial impetus that allowed the organization to take on the spokesman function, establishing itself as a rival of the erstwhile spokesman organization of the Chinese community, the Federation of Filipino Chinese Chambers of Commerce. I want to examine in some detail the claims that underlie Kaisa's invocation of citizenship and rights.

Kaisa intervenes in the representation of the Chinese as a collective subject. Since the early nineties, it has emerged as the unofficial spokesman for the Chinese community. It is important to stress that this is an organization of young businessmen and professionals, and that this organization has declared itself to have avowedly civic rather than economic goals. To wit, Kaisa has concentrated on research and publications (including the monthly and now biweekly English and Tagalog-language news digest *Tulay*, the first issue of which, not incidentally, appeared on June 12, 1987;

and the monthly Chinese-language column *Rong He* [literally, “fuse” or “merge”]²⁶ which appears in *Shijie ribao*, or *The World News*, the Chinese daily with the largest circulation in the Philippines, public relations (making several representations with the Office of the President, with Congress, the Department of Justice, etc. on issues affecting the Philippine Chinese), and social work (weekly Philippine General Hospital Medicine-Assistance programs, Alay Puso Feeding Center in Del Pan and Tayuman, and Tatalon Free Clinic and Immunization projects). Until funds ran out, Kaisa had also coordinated with the Batibot Children’s program to produce “Pin-pin,” a *Batibot* for Chinese Filipino kids.

Kaisa’s credo established its integrationist stance quite clearly in the first issue of its *Tulay* news digest: “The Philippines is our country,/it is the land of our birth,/the home of our people./Our blood may be Chinese,/but our roots grow deep in Filipino soil,/our bonds are with the Filipino people./We are proud of the many cultures,/which have made us what we are,/it is our desire, our hope and aspiration/that with the rest of our people,/we shall find our rightful place/in the Philippine sun.” The fact that this credo is written in English points to an important difference between Kaisa and the much older and rival spokesman organization, the Federation of Filipino-Chinese Chambers of Commerce and Industry. Kaisa’s use of English and Tagalog in both its internal and external communications represents the first break within this century between the spokesman function and its “native” medium of communication. If Chineseness used to be tied to linguistic nationalism (here, Chinese encompassed Hokkien and putonghua), Kaisa represents a new appropriation of Chineseness, a Chineseness no longer tied to language, but to a more abstract “anthropological” and “cultural” difference within the givenness of the nation-state.

Compared to the Federation, Kaisa has been outspoken in its criticism of the government, focusing on the government’s failure to “maintain law and order” in the face of rampant kidnapping and its exploitation of the Chinese community, e.g., its treatment of the Chinese primarily as “sources of relief funds and campaign contributions” and a “convenient scapegoat for economic ills” (Tsinoys 1994). Teresita Ang-See (1995), one of the founders of Kaisa, has said in an interview: “When I start to speak up about the peace and order situation, I did so conscious of the fact that as a Filipino, it is not just my right to do so, it is my responsibility, too.” This kind of statement not only constitutes a subjective recasting of rights (most evident in the

term “Chinese Filipino” and the hybrid neologism “Tsinoy” popularized by Kaisa), but an affirmation of the universal right to politics. The claim that the Chinese are Filipinos is both a cultural and a political claim, because it not only reiterates the demand for citizenship, but also for what Etienne Balibar (1994) has called the “public inscription of freedom and equality.” More importantly, the credo suggests that accession to full political rights redefines the Chinese in terms of their historical belonging to the Philippine nation-state. This claim to rootedness, then, contrasts with the “flexible citizenship”²⁷ of the Chinese

The claim that the Chinese are Filipinos is both a cultural and a political claim.

business family, which has often translated, rather conveniently by virtue of the conflation of ethnicity and class, into capital flight.

Kaisa’s credo also explains the provenance as well as function of a news digest like *Tulay*. The demand for public recognition, in writing, of the Tsinoy’s right to freedom and equality raises the stakes in talking

successfully to the state. Kaisa has criticized the government for its inability to forge a comprehensive, cohesive and responsive policy on the Chinese in the Philippines (Tsinoy 1994).

Kaisa’s demand for public inscription of freedom and equality through its deployment of the discourse of rights and citizenship, however, must contend with the fact that the discourse and the demand are institutionally unstable. This means that while the very force of such statements comes from their indeterminacy, such an indeterminacy is also the source of the practical weakness of the act of enunciation – more precisely, the practical weakness of the statement consists of the fact that “the consequences of the statements are themselves indeterminate because they are entirely dependent on ‘power relations’ and the evolution of a conjuncture in which it will be necessary in practice to construct individual and collective referents for equaliberty” (Balibar 1994). In other words, Kaisa must contend with the fact that the success of its statements about citizenship and rights is dependent on the existing power structures and on the existence of situations that call for Kaisa’s ability to tell us who the Tsinoy is and what the ethnic Chinese community is. The kidnapping phenomenon is one such conjuncture.

Kaisa “constructs” a referent for the term “Chinese” by using an integrationist stance, which basically uses a discourse of citizenship that explicitly calls attention to its own overdetermination by anthro-

pological and cultural difference. Kaisa's credo is oriented towards the transformation of the idea of citizenship as inclusive of all people (including the Chinese) by its insistence that the Chinese have a "rightful place in the Philippine sun" and are among the many peoples who are also finding their rightful places in the Philippine sun. But at the same time, Kaisa sees its integrationist agenda as distinct from the state's domestication of "cultural difference" as a "foreign," "alien" source of revenue (as discussed in the first half of this paper). While Kaisa insists on the inclusiveness of the idea of citizenship and this idea's ability to accommodate cultural difference (the "Chinese heritage"), it denies with equal fervor the naturalization of Chineseness by the state. In so doing, Kaisa finds itself dealing simultaneously with the problem of cultural difference and with the state. The difficulty for Kaisa, as I see it, lies in constructing a practical conduct on both these levels – how to talk to the Chinese and how to talk to the state – without synthesizing or collapsing them both into "Chinese interests." For previous spokesman organizations like the Philippine Chinese General Chamber of Commerce (PCGCC) and the Federation of Filipino-Chinese Chambers of Commerce and Industry, collapsing, on the one hand, the state's naturalization of Chineseness as foreign, and, on the other hand, the idea of "Chinese" cultural difference, had not been a problem, since it was precisely this conflation that allowed them to speak on behalf of "alien" Chinese interests to the state.²⁸ Kaisa, however, works in the cusp of its avowed goal of securing democratic representation for "all Chinese" and its production of the Chinese as "national" constituents.

WHO/WHAT IS CHINESE

BUT who are the constituents? The invocation of citizenship and rights to liberty and equality can only be guaranteed a degree of institutional stability by requiring the mediation of terms like "fraternity" and "property." Kaisa, as I have argued, ostensibly uses the concept of fraternity (the Chinese community) to mediate its invocation of citizenship and rights. Kaisa commits itself to an idea of the nation that is not a mere set of all citizens, for as the first stanza of its credo makes clear, it is the claim to historical belonging that guarantees the citizenship rights of the Chinese. This idea of the nation, however, remains centered on the state, and nowhere is this clearer than in the incident that I shall relate.

On the occasion of the Chinese New Year in 1995, the Alex Boncayao Brigade, a breakaway faction of the Communist New People's Army, faxed a letter to the media, a letter addressed specifically to the Chinese Filipinos, urging them to never again allow themselves to be "milking cows" of corrupt government officials. The ABB also threatened to execute more "corrupt police officers involved in kidnapping," and vowed to "hunt down...officials and other notorious elements in the bureaucracy who victimize the Chinese community." The ABB said that it was not against economic development as long as it "benefits our country and people." As long as the workers' welfare is assured, the ABB promised to "foster industrial peace." Finally, the ABB stated that the Chinese Filipinos were "integral parts of the nation who should not be treated as second-class citizens," and declared that "there can be unity of purpose despite the cultural diversity" (ABB 1995).²⁹

When Teresita Ang-See of Kaisa was asked to comment on the ABB statement, she gave a very interesting response. She expressed surprise and comfort in the fact that "the leftist group seem[ed] to be stretching out its hand to the Chinese Filipino community." At the same time, however, she noted that it was a big shame that such statements had to come from the ABB. "It would have been better, and we would have been happier," she said, "had such statements come from the government itself" (ABB 1995).

The ABB's assertion of the discourse of rights and citizenship would seem to echo in an uncanny way the position that Kaisa takes – its insistence that the Chinese should not be treated as second-class citizens, for example, as well as its emphasis on the coexistence of unity of purpose and cultural diversity. Ang-See's statement, however, reflects Kaisa's strong reliance on addressing the state, a distinct but not unusual feature of Chinese spokesman positions from the *capitan de chino* to the Chamber of Commerce and the Federation. Because of its dependence on state interlocution, Kaisa's production of the Chinese as a collective referent is necessarily dependent on the terms on which dialogue can be conducted with the state. Seeing how the state persists in employing an extractive logic in its dealings with the Chinese, Kaisa does not totally escape its own adoption of the very definition of its constituents by the state that it is critical of. One example is Kaisa's cooperation with Miriam Defensor Santiago's Alien Legalization Program (ALP), which had originally set the pattern for "buying" citizenship.³⁰

The mediating term "fraternity" is thus necessarily a split term, pre-

cisely because it comes up against the mediating term of "property." Because Kaisa pins its main hopes on addressing the state, its notion of the people is necessarily circumscribed by the terms of the referent that the state "sees." In other words, the moment Kaisa's concept of the nation becomes centered on the state, a certain notion of the people detaches itself and moves toward a general idea of the masses. This is evident in Kaisa's inability to gauge the extent to which ethnic Chinese live below the poverty line. Historian Edgar Wickberg's (1992) estimate that more than 20 percent of the Chinese live below the poverty line seems necessarily speculative, given the lack of available statistics. Where the middle-and upper-class Chinese can integrate into the so-called mainstream of society, the rest of the Chinese, that is, the poor Chinese, can only disappear into the masses. The point at which one becomes or does not become Chinese, the point at which one appears as Chinese on the social map, turns out to be equally a question of property as it is of fraternity. The main implication of my argument is that Kaisa's production of a collective referent called the Chinese community is implicated in the general ideological form of the class struggle.

But perhaps even the term "fraternity" itself is not as self-evident as it appears to be. For Kaisa's insistence on revaluing the heritage of "Chinese culture" comes at a time when public space itself has been emptied of the Chinese. Chineseness is marked visibly in temples, cemeteries, and TV programs, but these "Chinese" spaces do not bear the imprint of the "lived experience" of Chineseness. (Instead, the Chinese have taken over "Filipino" spaces like Luneta Park for morning exercises and they appear in "politically neutral" spaces like the malls.) The traditional day-long Chinese celebration of All Souls disappeared after Chinese community officials banned parking inside the cemeteries. TV programs run Hong Kong and Taiwanese soap operas that the younger generation can no longer understand, thanks to the decrepit Chinese-language curriculum of "Chinese" schools. Opera troupes are manned by Chinese-mestizo actors who learn their lines phonetically, and attendance is feeble. Who and what is Chinese, then?

CONCLUSION

LET me summarize, in brief, some of the points I made about kidnapping. I argued that media coverage of the kidnap-for-ransom cases since the late eighties appears to lend fresh credence to the truism about the economic prominence and visibility of the Chinese in the Philippines, a

truism which casts the Chinese as “obvious” and “proper” targets of extraction. Kidnapping however, adds a new dimension to this truism because, by treating the body of the Chinese as a commodity, it makes the Chinese an almost literal personification of capital. Kidnapping, therefore, calls attention to the ways in which the bodies of the Chinese Filipinos exist as codifications of a complex, shifting network of material and cultural forces that constitute but also destabilize nationness and neocolonial globalization. But, more than that, kidnapping highlights a situation wherein the Chinese victims, in order to survive, actively/passively take on these codifications as a “second nature,” and enact their bodies’ susceptibility to particular oppressive forms such as racism and commodity-fetishism. In its distinctive way, kidnapping provides an account of the persistence – in the face of critiques such as those advanced by Kaisa that expose the contingent and non-natural character – of the truism about the Chinese as alien, “material men” (to use James Rush’s term) whose virtual nationality within the Philippine neocolonial state remains a politically charged and contested issue.

In this essay, I examined not only the specific ways in which the kidnappings historically conflate the Chinese and capital, but also the ways in which the Chinese themselves have used the specific historical occasion of the kidnappings in order to publicly interrogate such a conflation. My inquiry took, as its starting point, the interlocutory relation between the Chinese and the state and looked into the changing relations between the Chinese and the state during the post-EDSA period. These relations primarily express themselves, on the one hand, in terms of the Chinese demand for political representation and their deployment of a discourse of citizenship and rights that counterposes the body of citizens to the state. On the other hand, these relations express themselves in terms of the state’s own explicit organization of its separation from “civil” society and its intensified deployment of an extractive policy towards the Chinese on the issue of permanent residency and citizenship.

In my analysis of the activities of Kaisa Para sa Kaunlaran, I have argued that its cultural/political solution to the conflation of Chinese and capital highlighted by kidnapping reveals in its turn the conflictual and contradictory aspects of the discourse on citizenship. Balibar (1994) has argued that these repressed contradictions haunt modern politics. My main concern is not merely to point out that the issue of kidnapping and the response of the Chinese community train the spotlight on these contradictions. I am more concerned about the implications that must be

drawn from this kind of analysis. What remains central to any invocation of rights is not only the history of naming and the creation of individual and collective referents that seek to grant the discourse a degree of enunciative and practical stability. What remains central to any invocation of citizenship and rights, as Balibar (1994) has noted, is the question of power relations, the issue of inequalities, and of "the foundations (equality, liberty, property, fraternity) that are constantly invoked in order to institute inequalities and thereby limit or annul the freedom of an entire 'class' of humanity." As Balibar (1994) writes: "[B]ehind these inequalities, there is a kind of difference that cannot be overcome by the institution of equality. This does not mean that equality is not the formal condition of liberation. It only means that it remains purely external, that is, there can be no 'political solution' purely in terms of equaliberty."

"Chinese" must be seen as a term, following Balibar (1994), that is inscribed in a relation of collective inequality which is "reproduced, exercised and verified as a personal relation, which is to say that instituted state power does not subject the same individuals, nor the same class of individuals, by the same means, even though it does not stop adding to itself in the process." In resisting the juridically defined notion of citizenship that subjects everybody equally to the law, kidnapping is only the generalized form of the way that the state has chosen to speak to the Chinese. The danger lies in the Chinese community allowing itself to be defined by this kind of state interpellation, and by the meaning of history that this interpellation entails.

But while it is necessary to challenge the ways in which the state has constrained the discourse of citizenship, we would do well to think of the lessons from Kaisa, to wit, that the discourse of citizenship presupposes the existence of a state and therefore citizenship cannot be thought outside of state interpellation. The Chinese recourse to citizenship as a matter of strategy is determined by the specific characteristics of the Philippine colonial and neocolonial state, even as it is indicative of the historical negotiations in which the Chinese have engaged in order to secure a space for themselves within the bounds, perhaps even the teleology, of the nation. But given the contradictory articulations of Chinese belonging to the Philippine nation-state, the Chinese attempt since the post-EDSA period to counterpose themselves as a body of citizens against the state appears to be an ineffectual political solution to the kidnapping crisis, especially because this solution cannot by itself bring about changes in the attitude of the state, nor curtail the violence that the state

is capable of bringing to bear on the Chinese.

To argue thus, however, in no way invalidates the exigency or necessity of the courageous stand taken by Kaisa in its criticism of the government. It merely underscores the fact that we also need to radically change the state, partly through a rearticulation of the meaning of citizenship in a way that opens up the possibility of justice, a justice that is not a matter of calculable distribution nor restitution, but a justice open to the call for emancipatory transformation. For the Chinese Filipinos, heeding the call for justice entails listening to the call of

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other silenced and marginalized voices, the call of the 1945 Chinese across time, and undoing the fifty years of neocolonial amnesia. We cannot re-imagine a “Chinese in the Philippines” without questioning borders, without rethinking and re-experiencing a new state and economy, home, and nation. Can we, in fact, begin to think of the secret immigrant who lives and moves amongst us as one who is not one of “us” but whom we cannot send out of our border?

Can we begin to think of historical belonging not in terms of blood or birth, but in terms of shared experience and struggle? Can we rethink the ethnic Chinese’s place in Philippine history? If our present ambivalence about the Chinese is one more way in which we are trying to make sense of our (neo)colonial history, what implications would this have for our ability to deal with the essential contingency of the Chinese that the nation-state can neither embrace nor repudiate, if by embracing or repudiating the Chinese the nation-state hopes to exorcise what is constitutive of its existence as such, to which the Chinese bears witness by her very presence and by what she signifies? And what of the essential contingency of the nation-state itself that the Chinese can neither embrace nor repudiate? Kidnapping teaches us that dealing with our ambivalence as Tsinoys cannot be a matter of noting the irresolution of the contradictions within our experience, but of understanding that it is this irresolution which forces us to decide and act. This may be a way of acknowledging that it is precisely in the sense that a political community is formed only through exclusion and struggle that it must always be made and unmade.

NOTES

Author's Note: I thank Pheng Cheah for reading earlier drafts of this paper. The shortcomings of this essay are my responsibility alone.

1. The metaphor of a Chinese state within the state can clearly be seen in a series of articles on the internal politics of the Federation of Filipino-Chinese Chambers of Commerce and Industry Inc. written by Robert C. Villanueva at the height of the kidnapping crisis. See his Big Trouble in Little China (1993) *Philippines Free Press*, May 8; The Chinese (near) Exodus (1993) *Philippines Free Press*, July 3, and Secrets of the Federation (1994) *Philippines Free Press*, January 8.

2. Pablo's report also noted that 29 people were kidnapped (about one victim a day) in November 1996, the same month that the Philippines hosted the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit in Subic. The figures are based on reports by two civic groups, the Movement for the Restoration of Peace and Order and Citizens Action Against Crime. The total amount of ransom money in 1996 has been conservatively pegged at 99 million pesos.

3. To give an example: in August 1996, realtor and construction magnate Benito Co Uy-Gam was released by his kidnappers after his family paid the ransom money, believed to be at least 30 million pesos. The most well-known cases include high school student Charlene Mayne Sy, who died in a shootout between her abductors and government forces at the EDSA-Quezon Boulevard junction in January 1993; and college students Kenneth Go and Myron Uy, who were tortured and killed by their captors in September 1992.

4. The link between kidnapping and citizenship was first suggested to me by Vicente Rafael when he reacted to a paper about political representation and the formation of the Chinese community in the Philippines that I had read at the Association for Asian Studies Conference in Honolulu, Hawaii in April 1996.

5. The question of the "Chinese" in the Philippines demands an examination of the affiliations between ontological and historically specific sociopolitical sites of analysis and critique. Inasmuch as the question of the Chinese within Southeast Asia is coextensive with questions of nationalism, and of colonialism, imperialism, orientalism, racism and sexism, it is deeply implicated in the question of Occidental modernity and its planetary (uneven) scope. For a general theorizing of such affiliations, see Jacques Derrida (1994).

6. This kind of vocabulary has also been used by the Federation of Filipino-Chinese Chambers of Commerce and Industry, Inc., the official spokesman organization of the Chinese community. In celebration of *Tulay's* 8th anniversary, the congratulatory ad of the Federation describes the Federation as "an association serving the Filipino people and committed to promote commerce and industry, foster national unity, and in every way uphold the torch of true friendship, brotherhood and understanding among all peoples of whatever race, religion or political belief, under the ideals of peace, freedom, democracy and social justice."

7. The current articulation of the discourse of citizenship owes its provenance to the events that led to EDSA and the toppling of the Marcos administration. The general opposition to the Marcos dictatorship in the early 1980s addressed itself to two adversaries: absolutism, which represented a negation of freedom; and privileges, which represented a negation of equal-

ity. The events of EDSA brought the two terms of equality and liberty together in public discourse. This conjoining of terms would later be appropriated by the Chinese Filipinos in their deployment of the general discourse of citizenship and rights. Since the proposition of “equaliberty” was first historically articulated during the French revolution of 1789, and since the EDSA event has often been represented as a “revolution” reminiscent of 1789, I decided to use Etienne Balibar’s close reading of the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen* of 1789 as a reference for my argument. See Etienne Balibar (1994).

8. This is complicated by the existence of non-reformist liberation movements such as the Communist New People’s Army and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, for which armed struggle (basically a justification of violence in the name of a social subject, “the people”) is the main principle of political action. One interesting question would be: To what extent does the ontologizing of violence as the principle of political action serve to highlight the necessary relation between law and violence?

9. The article, Order of Battle: Kidnap-for-Ransom Gang Members Wanted (1992), in *Tulay*, November 8, lists the names and affiliations of arrested suspects. The Philippine police and military seem to be very well represented, with PNP officers in the Red Scorpion Gang, marines in the Tinsay-Espejo Gang, Philippine Army officers in the 8 “Hoodlums in Uniform” Gang, BID and NBI people in Atayde’s Gang, CPD personnel in the Omar Ring, WPD in the Eddie Chang Group, the AFP (RAM) in the Morales Group, and PNP-NARCOM in the “Wang-Wang” Group. In 1995, a former police officer, Col. Reynaldo Berroya – head of an anti-kidnapping task force under the Presidential Anti-Crime Commission and replacement for two previous task force chiefs (Jose Pring and Timoteo Zarcal) – was himself convicted of involvement in the kidnapping of a Taiwanese businessman and sentenced to life imprisonment.

10. The Losing War Against Crime (1995), *The Sunday Chronicle*, October 22 and *Tulay* (1996), January 8. The figures for 1994 include Fr. Cirilo Nacorda and the 78 teachers abducted by the Abu Sayaff in Mindanao on June 8, 1994.

11. The seeds of this insight belong to Vicente Rafael.

12. I am indebted to Marx’s discussion of the capitalist as “capital personified” in *Capital I*, Chapter VIII, I (English Edition, Chapter X, 1).

13. Marx (1977), *Capital I*, Ch. 1, 4, trans. Ben Fowkes, New York: Vintage Books.

14. See Pheng Cheah’s excellent discussion of Derrida in the context of feminist theorizing of the body in his “Mattering,” *Diacritics* 26 (1): 108-39.

15. Rather than being a unique case, the spectralization of the Chinese points to the unavoidability of spectralization for all finite beings. For a discussion of the latter point and its implications for the analysis of historical forms of power and transformative agency, see Cheah.

16. The most influential twining of these two narratives in historiographical form is Renato Constantino and Letizia R. Constantino (1975), *The Philippines: The Past Revisited*, Quezon City: Foundation for Nationalist Studies.

17. The Federation of Filipino Chinese Chambers of Commerce established a “war chest” for campaign contributions, arguing in 1954 that channeling campaign contributions through the Federation would create a buffer between the politicians and the rich Chinese, as well as increase the political leverage of the community as a whole. See James R. Blaker (1970), *The*

Chinese in the Philippines: A Study of Power and Change, Ph.D. dissertation, Ohio State University.

18. It should be added that the Chinese played a constitutive role in the formation of the colonial state under the Spanish and the American regimes. I explore these issues in "Reading Binondo: Mapping the Chinese Community in Manila," paper delivered at the Association for Asian Studies Conference, April 1996.

19. See Edgar Wickberg (1965), *The Chinese in Philippine Life, 1850-1898*, New Haven: Yale University Press; Antonio Tan (1972), *The Chinese in the Philippines: A Study of Their National Awakening*, Quezon City: Garcia Publications; Remigio Agpalo (1962), *The Political Process and the Nationalization of the Retail Trade in the Philippines* Quezon City: Office of the Coordinator of Research; Alfonso Felix, Jr., ed. (1966), *The Chinese in the Philippines*, 2 vols., Manila: Solidaridad Publishing House; Schubert Liao (1964), *Chinese Participation in Philippine Culture and Economy* Manila: The Author. Chinese-language histories of the Philippine Chinese include: Huang Zisheng and He Sibing, (1987), *Feilubin Huaqiao Shi*, Guangzhou: Guangdong Gaodeng Jiaoyu Chubanshe; Liu Zhitian (1969) *Zhong-Fei Guanxi Shi*, Taipei: Zhengzhong Shuju; and Huang Mingde (1956) *Feilubin Huaqiao Jinji*, Taipei: Haiwai Chubanshe.

20. It is, perhaps, no accident that one of the stereotypical attributes of the Chinese in the Philippines involves their litigiousness or legal-mindedness (depending on the attitude of the beholder). See Victor Purcell (1965), *The Chinese in Southeast Asia*, 2nd ed., Oxford: Oxford University Press.

21. The Chinese provided one of the major sources of revenues for the colonial state during the Spanish period, mainly in the form of taxes and contract farming. James Blaker (1970) argues that American policies towards the Chinese appeared to be contradictory, laying the legal foundations, on the one hand, for depriving the Chinese of the means of political participation and, on the other hand, for encouraging Chinese economic activities. Legal and economic nationalism before and after the second world war has made it difficult for the Chinese to acquire citizenship while encouraging an entire industry of corruption based on bribery and forgery.

22. BI Now Accepting Applications from Illegal Aliens (1995), *Manila Chronicle*, June 1. The Verceles quote appeared in a related article in the June 2, 1995 issue of *Manila Chronicle*. For Chinese reaction to ASIA, see "Act with Integrity," Editorial (1996), *Tulay*, April 1. ASIA grants permanent residency status to the aliens who will be eligible for citizenship after five years. For an account of the harassment of "illegal aliens," see BID 'Raids' Tutuban Center (1994), *Tulay*, July 4. Witnesses to the Tutuban raid claimed that BID agents used the criterion of "Chinese looks" to arrest people. Moreover, some raiders demanded 20,000 pesos to 30,000 pesos from the arrested in exchange for their freedom. Of the 18 people taken to the Immigration offices, 11 were released immediately for lack of evidence, and 6 of the remaining 7 were freed after presenting proper documentation. The sole foreigner whose status remained in doubt was an Indian. The rather inflated figures that the government expects to earn have since been scaled down to a more modest sum of one billion pesos. See P1-B Immigration Revenue Eyed (1994), *Manila Bulletin*, September 4.

23. For an account of the Gatchalian case, see Salvador T. Hernandez (1991), The Man Who Fought To Be Called a Filipino, *Philippines Free Press*, July 6.

24. For an exposition of unequal development in the context of center-

periphery relations within the world capitalist relation, especially as they are articulated in the Third World, see the works of Samir Amin, in particular, *Delinking: Towards a Polycentric World* (1990), trans. Michael Wolfers, London and New Jersey: Zed Books.

25. Cf. Etienne Balibar's discussion of the Jew as scapegoat in "Class Racism," in Etienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein (1991), *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities*, translation of Etienne Balibar by Chris Turner, London and New York: Verso. The classic text on the relationship between property and civil rights is Karl Marx's "On the Jewish Question," in *The Marx-Engels Reader* (1972), ed. Robert C. Tucker, New York: W.W. Norton and Co., Inc. Although the analogy between the Chinese in Southeast Asia and the Jews in Europe enjoys some currency in popular and academic discourse, this analogy has for the most part been made with the most general comparisons in mind, with immigration/diaspora, persecution in the host nation, cultural and religious difference, and economic visibility as categories of comparison. The crucial difference between the Jewish question and the Chinese question is that the former is mainly posed in terms of the religious opposition between Christianity and Judaism, often as a question of the Jew's virtual nationality within a Christian state, while the latter is posed in terms of the political opposition between the national and the colonial, often as a question of the Chinese's virtual nationality within the neo/colonial state. In this sense, the analogy between the Jews and the Chinese should be investigated with more than simple empirical parallels in mind.

26. It may be worth observing at this point, as a prefigurement of a later argument, that the *he* in *rong he* is also the *he* in *hetong*, which means contract.

27. This term comes from Aihwa Ong's "On the Edge of Empires: Flexible Citizenship Among Chinese in Diaspora," *Positions* 1(3). Ong's notion of flexible citizenship is based on her assumption about the location of overseas Chinese elites on the edge of empires (countries and capitalisms). Although Ong limits her essay to a general discussion of hegemonic notions of "being Chinese" and focuses on the way the Chinese themselves have selectively intervened in Orientalist constructions of Chineseness, her argument does not go beyond interrogating the Orientalist logic endemic to scholarship on Chinese societies. Research into the exact nature of the Chinese's negotiation of "different terrains in the world economy" is needed, if only to begin a critique of the "edge of empire" location of the Chinese that Ong takes for granted.

28. For a history of the PCGCC, which acted as spokesman for the Chinese during the American and the Commonwealth period, see *Feilubin Minnila Zhonghuashanghui Sanshizhounian Jiniankan* (1936) Manila: Manila Press, Inc. See also Li Qichang, ed. (1968), *Feilubin Huaqiao Shanju Gongsuo Jiushizhounian Jiniankan*, Manila: Philippine Chinese Charitable Association, Inc.. For a history of the Federation, organized in 1954 at the height of the anti-Communist drive with Magsaysay's blessings, see Gao Qingyun (1974), *Shangzong de Dansheng yu Zhuangda*, in *Shangzong Niannian: Feihua Shanglian Zhonghui Changli Ershizhounian Jiniantekan*, Manila: Federation of Filipino-Chinese Chambers of Commerce, Inc. See also Deng Yingda (1988), *Wo Zai Shangzong Sanshinian*, Manila: The Author.

29. The NPA itself has disavowed kidnapping-for-ransom as a source of funds on ideological grounds. See Edward R. Kiunisala (1993), *Ka Hector: Rebel of Common Criminal?*, *Philippines Free Press*, March 27, p. 3.

30. On March 27, 1996, Immigration Commissioner Leandro Verceles announced that aliens who had applied for permanent residency under

the ALP had to reapply under the ASIA and pay the new and increased fees of 200,000 pesos, up from the original 50,000 pesos. Although this statement was later rescinded when Fidel Ramos signed the ASIA into law, it remains a fitting example of the cupidity characteristic of state policies toward the Chinese.

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