Late Imperial China’s maritime boundaries and beyond

Most of us should be familiar with Professor Ng Chin-keong’s seminal study, Trade and Society: The Amoy Network on the China Coast, 1683-1735, which was first published in 1983. But perhaps we are less familiar with his many other important studies on China’s maritime history – mostly articles and chapters in books in English and Chinese – published over the past forty years. Many of these shorter studies are scattered about in hard to find, obscure journals. Ng Chin-keong’s new book under review here is a collection of fourteen essays published between 1970 and 2015. The book is divided into four parts loosely arranged around the concepts of physical, political, and cultural boundaries and crossing boundaries as applied to maritime China during the fourteenth through nineteenth centuries. As the author explains in his Preface, the ‘boundaries and beyond’ used in the book’s title “highlights the two contesting forces of continuities and discontinuities that characterized China’s maritime southeast in late imperial times” (p. ix). Although boundaries were meant to maintain stability, status quo, and sociopolitical order – to demarcate stability and instability – nonetheless because they were always in a state of flux rulers, statesmen, merchants, and ordinary seafarers had to constantly make adjustments according to particular circumstances.

Reviewer: Robert J. Antony

References
Ng Chin-keong, Trade and Society: The Amoy Network on the China Coast, 1700-1845 (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2008).
Paul A. Van Dyke, The Canton Trade: Life and Enterprise on the China Coast, 1700-1845 (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2005).

Building Filipino Hawai‘i

Roderick Labrador’s Building Filipino Hawai‘i provides a rich, nuanced account of Filipino identities in a distinctively multicultural American context. The study confronts the tremendous diversity of Filipinos in Hawai‘i, who vary in terms of the timing of migration, region, language, and social class. It is in this milieu that Labrador’s highly personal account unfolds, documenting efforts to develop a more united Filipino identity in the Hawaiian context.

Reviewers: Shane J. Barter and Rayen Rooney

LABRADOR PROVIDES A RICH ACCOUNT of diversity among Filipinos in ‘Oahu, charting their origins and continued experiences. With Asian migrants excluded from American territory in the turn of the century, the Philippines, located within the American empire, provided cheap labour on Hawaiian sugar plantations. Skilled plantation labourers brought to Hawai‘i a century ago were primarily Ilocano and most were undoculated. After World War II, more educated Tagalog-speaking migrants began arriving with a new sense of Filipino identity. Today, Filipino migrants continue to arrive in Hawai‘i for jobs ranging from nurses and maids to business persons and academics. Labrador outlines three primary groups of Filipinos in Hawai‘i: Local (born in Hawai‘i, mostly descended from islander migrants), immigrants from the Philippines, and migrants from the continental United States. Labrador succeeds in painting a picture of Filipino diversity, noting how persons of Filipino descent manage and shift their identities over time, evolving different understandings of what it means to be Filipino. Labrador’s study locates Filipinos within Hawai‘i’s rich ethnic tapestry. Filipinos have not seen the upward mobility enjoyed by Chinese, Korean, or Japanese communities. Labrador describes with Asian migrants excluded from American territory in the turn of the century, the Philippines, located within the American empire, provided cheap labour on Hawaiian sugar plantations. Skilled plantation labourers brought to Hawai‘i a century ago were primarily Ilocano and most were undoculated. After World War II, more educated Tagalog-speaking migrants began arriving with a new sense of Filipino identity. Today, Filipino migrants continue to arrive in Hawai‘i for jobs ranging from nurses and maids to business persons and academics. Labrador outlines three primary groups of Filipinos in Hawai‘i: Local (born in Hawai‘i, mostly descended from islander migrants), immigrants from the Philippines, and migrants from the continental United States. Labrador succeeds in painting a picture of Filipino diversity, noting how persons of Filipino descent manage and shift their identities over time, evolving different understandings of what it means to be Filipino. Labrador’s study locates Filipinos within Hawai‘i’s rich ethnic tapestry. Filipinos have not seen the upward mobility enjoyed by Chinese, Korean, or Japanese communities. Labrador describes