

The “Mail-Order Bride” as Babaylan

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The Philippine Commission on Filipinos Overseas estimated that as of December 2013, there were around 10.24 million Filipinos working and living in more than 200 countries and territories.



Filipino Migration to Australia:

1970-1990 – Family reunion Program as spouses or fiancées then family members sponsored by Filipino migrants

1990-present – skilled migrants

Australian Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs released *A Bride for All Reasons: Report on a Pilot Survey of Filipino Brides in 1982*.

“Mandatory counselling services for Filipinos in intermarriages” by the Commission on Filipinos Overseas as part of “Anti-trafficking in Person Act of 2012”.

Stereotype of the the poor, hapless, backward Asian woman transplanting herself to wed a richer person in a more “modern” country.





image source (left): <http://i0.wp.com/listverse.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/02/roger-pe-anti-mail-order-bride-stamp-ad-tm.jpg?resize=212%2C350>
Image (right): "The Babaylans" from *The Progress of Medicine in the Philippines* by Carlos "Botong" Francisco

My husband was a sailor, and he left me alone in Gerringong a few days after our wedding. I was left bloody lonely. All our guests were Australian, and I didn't know anyone. My in-laws introduced me to their friends, but they were all 'senior citizens'. I was lonely for many months until my father-in-law drove me to a Catholic church. I met many Filipinas there, and many many more afterwards. - Beth

I felt so blessed! I came to Australia, and there was so much [blessings]. Life is okay...very easy...One feels blessed because one's husband is a good person...And I still uphold my covenant with God...I did not feel too lonely moving here because I am still part of El Shaddai here [in Australia] with other Filipinos; I am still very involved with the church. Every Sunday, I bring my kids [to hear mass]. - Lorie

There is a spare room in our house. There is a Filipina who was the last one to stay there for several weeks. She was being abused by her husband, and I told her she can stay with us when she left him. I said she can stay until she decides what to do next. But she came back to him. Before her was a couple I met in church. They were having problems finding work and were about to use up their savings, so they stayed here for free and only contributed for gas and electricity until the wife found a job. - Carol



Mary's Shrine



Members of the Choir



Children telling the story



*We never thought our lives in Australia would turn out like this. We work until our hands become numb, our elbows start to creak from doing the same things over and over again, and our backs almost give way. It is still much better than what we had back in the Philippines, but it is a hard life. I thought that if I married an Australian, I would live in a beautiful city, travel, and not worry about money: the easy life. ...These get-togethers with other women that Karen hosts has helped me. We talk about our marriage, our kids, sometimes we tell each other about available jobs. Karen has also faced many challenges but succeeded. She has a lot of advice to give us. - **Zeny***

*My husband doesn't want me to talk to the other Filipinas. He said that if he ever found out that I have been telling them about us, he will kill me. But I have gone to doctors and they only gave me pills. If I didn't talk about my problems with Carol and the others, I would have gone crazy a long time ago. - **Gina***

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