



# PHILIPPINE PHILATELIC JOURNAL

Vol. XXII No. 3



Third Quarter 2000

# PHILIPPINE PHILATELIC JOURNAL

Official Publication of

International Philippine Philatelic Society

Dedicated to the Study and Advancement of Philippine Philately  
American Philatelic Society Affiliate No. 54

Vol. XXII

Third Quarter 2000

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Regular, via Air Mail	US \$25.00
Contributing	US \$30.00
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The Philippine Philatelic Journal is published quarterly by the International Philippine Philatelic Society. A non-profit, non-stock, educational organization, the IPPS was incorporated in the City of Manila on September 24, 1978, as per SEC registration No. 58004, PPJ Purpose: "to publish, on a quarterly basis, original and reprinted material pertaining to the philately of the Philippines." Manuscripts and submissions should be typed and double spaced on one side of the page only. Illustrations should be black and white photographs or very clear photocopies. Send all material to the Editor.

# THE RELATIVITY OF MAJOR PHILATELIC ERRORS

by Paul S. Greenlaw PH.D.

An error is an error is an error. Or is it? Is the concept of "error" in Mary Baker Eddy's Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures<sup>1</sup> pretty much the same from country to country? Or, in our field, is a major philatelic "error" basically similar in all postal domains?

The way such questions are answered in these instances as well as in many others can have important implications for philately in the fields under consideration. The United States has had close relations with the Philippines since the end of the Nineteenth Century. What better questions then, could there be asked than do Filipinos share with Americans the same views as to what both the major philatelic errors and minor varieties consist of? (The major errors will be the focus of this article). It is always difficult to compare phenomena across national borders because the cultural (in its broadest senses) infringes upon them in diverse ways making measurement in most instances horrendous. If your domain is fairly narrow (philatelic errors) however, and you have excellent source data-Dr. Ngo<sup>2</sup>, Scott<sup>3</sup>, and EFO<sup>4</sup>--the task can be manageable. It is so; so let us begin.

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## MAJOR PHILATELIC ERRORS

Many different national catalogs agree to the fact that certain errors are major (although neither the terms "major" or "minor" have ever been precisely defined!). Scott pays attention to overprint, invert, transposition, double impression, imperforation, color, and printed on both sides errors (with attention also given to paper, watermark, and perforation).<sup>5</sup> The latter three are important but not generally given keen focus by error collectors. Thus, we will only make passing reference to them.

### THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS

The seven major types emphasized by Scott are mostly also given attention in the Philippines (Dr. Ngo Specialized—hereafter referred to simply as "Ngo"). Whenever possible, I will provide photographs of U.S. and Philippine stamps to illustrate points, but in some cases where this is not possible, I will substitute specimens from other countries.

### OVERPRINT ERRORS

The most common type of philatelic error OUTSIDE the United States is the overprint error<sup>6</sup>. Many stamps are overprinted, but some people forget that without an overprint (or surcharge) in the first place, there can be no overprint errors afterwards. The United States, with a fairly stable government and economy, has issued very few overprints, and hence there has been little room for overprint errors. One notable exception is the Kans. and Nebr. overprint issues<sup>7</sup> of 1929. Here some specimens exist with different spacing between overprint letters and others consist of a pair, one overprinted and the other not. I have no such errors but will show you what such a pair looks like from Belgium (See Figure 1).

Additionally, if we scan the world, we have overprint errors that are double, triple, quadruple, inverted both inverted and double, slanting, etc. As a SUPERGENERALIZATION, all errors, not only, overprint ones, have their philatelic value determined by Both the STAMP and the ERROR, with scarcity representing an important variable. This is shown in Table 1.



Figure 1

Stamp	Error	Value
Scarce	Scarce	High
Common	Common	Medium
Scarce	Common	Medium
Common	Scarce	Medium

Table 1

This, although somewhat of an exaggeration, is nonetheless useful. The U. S. C3 is normally not really scarce, but only 100 C3 a's, the invert, were discovered with one of these later sucked up by a vacuum cleaner!

But what about the Philippines? Let's look at Ngo. We only have detailed data in the specialized catalogue (from 1973-89) but this ought to give us a fairly good idea of Philippine errors. The Philippines (from 1973-89) do not have nearly as many overprint errors as many nations such as Nicaragua<sup>8</sup>. One interesting piece is Ngo 1498 MS a (Type D) with "P.600" on it five times, one inverted on the top margin. (See Figure 2). A question arises here as to whether the "P. 600 might be part of the design. I have uncovered double, triple and quadruple overprints but no quintuple! Thus, if this represents an overprint rather than part of the design, we have a unique item here. Ngo 1308s (no picture) is described as



Figure 2

double overprint. For a clear-cut example of an inverted overprint see Ngo 967a d b (Figure 3).

Ngo also mentions a number of overprint shifts. In general, we did not find a plethora of major overprint errors of the Scott types. This may be due to relatively stable conditions in the Philippines, coupled with good quality control<sup>9</sup>.





Figure 3



Figure 4

### COLOR ERRORS

Basically, there are four different types of color errors: (1) wrong color, (2) wrong shade of color, (3) color omissions, and (4) color shifts. Completely wrong colors (blue for red) are rare and I have no Philippine nor U.S. color errors of this kind, although I have an orange Christopher Columbus from Spain<sup>10</sup>. Wrong shades of color are more common and I recently purchased a U.S. five cent coil (for way more than five cents (Scott 2466) but it was so much like the regular blue, I felt cheated<sup>11</sup>. I have not noted any Philippine specimens in Ngo, so perhaps I looked too quickly or we Americans will buy anything of a philatelic nature however small the deviation from "normal" may be. Next are color omissions, which were not much of a problem when my grandfather introduced me to the hobby in the 1930's. The introduction of multicolor stamps around 1960 kicked off a whole rash of color omissions in the British Commonwealth,<sup>12</sup> United States<sup>13</sup>, and elsewhere. I have one such omission from both the United States and the Philippines as is shown in Figure 4.



Figure 6 Orange Shift  
(unclear in this photo)



Figure 7 Green Shift  
(unclear in this photo)



Figure 8



The U.S. booklet pane has two stamps on it which have their black missing—the middle two. These two stamps were common with a reported several hundred copies "escaping" from production and distribution, 'probably' because the errors are hard to see. More buyers and less plentiful varieties, on the other hand, may make for a much more expensive omission—e.g. U.S. 2204b (red missing) in Datz's Catalogue with only 20 copies reported was priced at \$2,500. Ngo lists numerous color omissions, including 754a (with the pink missing, as is shown in Figure 5 along with the normal comparator). No indication of scarcity or price is given.



Figure 5



Figure 5a

Finally, color shifts are NOT listed in the U.S. general Scott Catalogue, the Scott U.S. Specialized Catalogue or in Datz's Catalogue. They are, included only in the EFO literature and prominently in Ngo. Ngo has many such shifts—757b, orange shifted down (a 5 mm. Major shift) (See Figure 6) and 766b, green shifted down 12 mm. (see Figure 7). I have a means of contrast on the Soviet block of four shown in Figure 8. It is so minor that I do not include it in my collection. How much the shift must be to be collectable has never been universally agreed upon. Imperforations pose a special problem—you need both the philatelic Specimen without perforations itself and a legitimate authority to ascertain that the imperforation is scarce, came into being because of some error, and was not imperforated primarily to sell to collectors.

Of course, many early stamps such as the Cape of Good Hope triangles 1-15 were not perforated then because perforating machines had not been invented.

Many nations have ground out imperforations for collectors—the U.S. (Farley Issues) France until 1996 and at times the Philippines - changing perforations which Ngo clearly points out in his introduction to Specialized Catalogue (pp. ix-x). A Philippine imperforate error was shown in Figure 3, one sheet known.



Figure 9

It should be noted that, with rare exceptions (the Farley, the 1909 Lincoln), the United States, Canada and Great Britain all generally only make imperforate errors which may be very scarce and expensive, such as U.S. Scott 1947a--imperforate, \$750<sup>15</sup>.

Also recognized by both the U.S. and the Philippines are "semi-perfs" or horizontally or vertically imperforate pairs, imperforated only between the stamps. Some are common U.S. 901a, at \$25 horizontal pair, while the vertical pairs are generally scarcer and more costly<sup>16</sup>. I have looked thru Ngo and not found too many. One exception is Ngo 1050a (three sheets known<sup>17</sup>). The U.S. seems to be more error prone in this category than the Philippines.



Figure 10

### INVERTS

Both Scott and Ngo pinpoint inverts. The Philippines issued only one invert from 1973-89---753 Ba, inverted blue. (See Figure 10.) All U.S. inverts (including the 1869 one shown in Figure 11) are listed in Scott There seems to be perfect conceptualization of what an invert error is.

### PRINTED ON BOTH SIDES

The United States printed on both sides is an error but my collection is primarily a foreign one, void of U.S. printed on both sides. Those so printed can be very expensive-U.S. Scott 1999 Specialized, 529h for example is \$1450. Several of the foreign both sides errors may be seen in my 1999 article on the subject <sup>18</sup>. Many refer to the whole design printed on both sides but not all <sup>19</sup>. In the Philippines, Ngo illustrates blue printed on both sides.



Figure 11





Figure 12

## DOUBLE IMPRESSIONS

Some stamps have been imprinted twice with the two impressions usually close together. These are called double impression errors or just plain double impressions. They are very difficult to determine since they look very much like double offsets, the intricacies of which I have described elsewhere<sup>20</sup>. Robert Yacano has recently pointed out to me that Philippine errors tend not to be as expensive as their American counterparts<sup>21</sup>. Certain types of American errors are much more costly than others in a similar way. The least expensive U.S. postage inverts, for example, catalogued \$3,000 in 1997<sup>22</sup>. But what about double impressions?

An example of a double impression from both the United States (Scott 529a--\$42.50) and the Philippines (Ngo 1089b -dark green, no price given) is shown in Figure 13 and 13a. The U.S. Scott 529a is a much lower U.S. price than the printed on both sides cited.

As far as the Philippines are concerned, double impressions do not seem to be too plentiful but the 1982 KKK definitive bears both a double and TRIPLE and double impression. I emphasize the word triple here since my over 5000 error Affordable Foreign Errors lists none to my knowledge<sup>23</sup>.



Figure 13

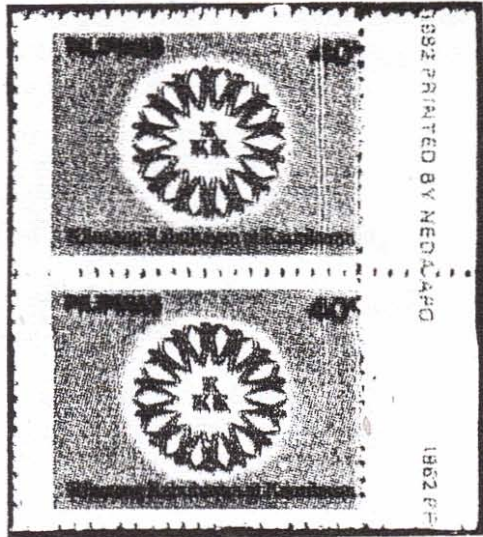


Figure 13a

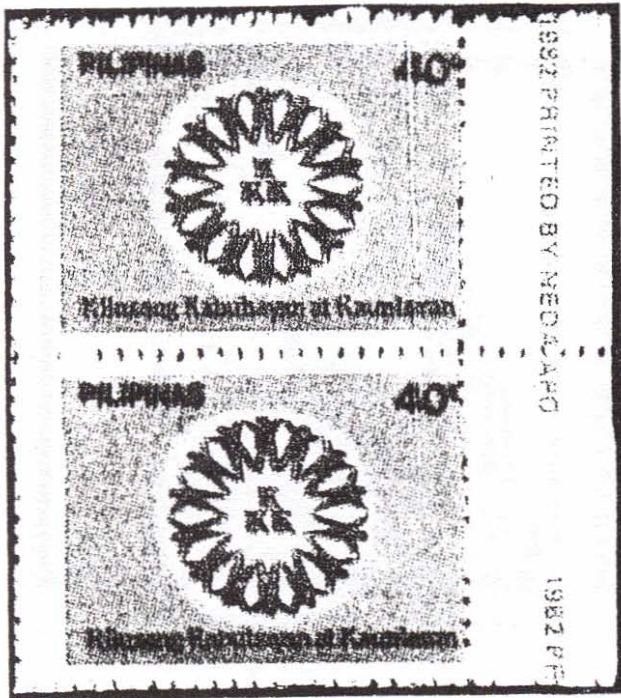


Figure 14

## GUM

Scott ignores printed on gum side while some foreign nations have the printed on a gummed back error 4. Some printed on the gummed back errors, for example, are highly valued in Canada's Unitrade Specialized Catalogue (1998): from the 1977-8 definitives for example:

705ii	(precanceled only known)	\$ 1250
707ii		300
709ii		300
714ii		300

And my proud possession, the lovely 715 (\$40) is shown in Figure 15.



Figure 15



In the Philippines, the name of the game seems to be gum, gum and more gum. I think the best way to sample these specimens is to randomly open to a few pages of Ngo and indicate the gum references:

Found

- p.31 909Aa black offset on gum side
- p.94 1311c blue offset on gum side
- p.57 1090c black (with blue offset on gum side)
- p. 9 none
- p.40 983 black offset on gum side
- 984a blue offset on gum side

Note well, however, that my random numbers picked all offsets on gum.- There are a huge number of these.. There also are a number of printed impressions on the gum side 25 (802 Aa; 805 Cb; and 848 as shown in Figure 16).



Figure 16

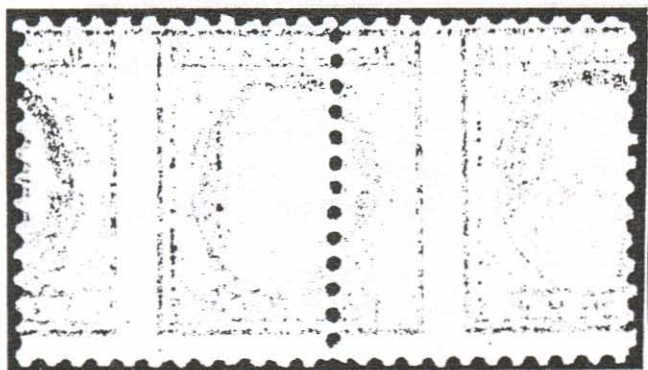


Figure 17

Why gum dominates so much, I do not know. Climatic conditions (e.g. humidity), types of printing equipment used? Lighting and ventilation? Or perhaps Dr. Ngo lists these varieties because a majority of Philippine collectors want him to. Although there seems to be little gum side offset in the United States, a few specimens among EFO collections such as the pair shown in Figure 17 do show up.

#### CLICHES (OR TRANSPOSED SUBJECTS)

Cliches are the least common of the major philatelic errors. They take place when two different stamps erroneously appear on the same plate. These stamps may be of two different countries (or three, in the common Portuguese Guinee/Cabo/Verde/Mocambique cliché) This pair can be purchased for \$10-20. (Some other cliches are so scarce as to be not priced by Scott.) .

The Philippines have never had a cliché in their entire history—the United States has had three all when a carmine 2 was interpreted to be an upside down 5<sup>26</sup> Scott U.S. 505 is shown at the center of the block shown.

It should be noted that all 3 U.S. cliches are relatively expensive.



Figure 18



## SUMMARY

We have found many Philippine errors conceived the same as they would be in the United States, lending credence to the hypothesis that Philippine and American philately have conceptions not primarily supporting a relativistic view. The biggest difference is in the emphasis on Dr. Ngo's gum.

## ENDNOTES

1. Mary Baker Eddy, Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures The First Church of Christ, Scientist, Boston, Massachusetts, 1875.
2. Ngo Tiong Tak T., Specialized Catalogue of Philippine Postage Stamps 1973-1989.1990. P.O. Box 2299, 1099 Manila, Philippines. This work presumably covers all Philippine errors and varieties during this period. Dr. Ngo has also compiled another classic, Philippine philatelic work almost exclusively leaving out the errors and varieties. Since this is an article about errors we will not make further reference to it.
3. Both Scott's General Catalogues (1998) and 1999 Specialized Catalogue of U.S. Stamps and Covers.
4. We know of no Errors, Freaks and Oddities (EFO) Catalog. Much information is contained, however, in their quarterly journal, ~ EFO Collector.
5. Most error collectors do not collect paper "errors" of such as U.S. Scott 24b (laid paper). Some EFO collectors do collect "double paper varieties" and few collect watermark errors e.g., Great Britain 79b "Wmkd 29d "error". Some collect perforation varieties such as the very scarce perfs 11 x 11 x 11 x 10 type.
6. There are about 2500 overprint errors external to the U.S. (only a few Canadian). This is basically because only a few overprints were used in the first place. See Paul S. Greenlaw, Affordable Foreign Errors, (Iola, WI, Krause, 1999) passim.
7. Scott 659-79.
8. See Greenlaw, op. cit., p.198.
9. By "good quality control" we mean culling and otherwise checking the printed sheets of stamps for errors.
10. Scott C46.

11. I ordered this "light blue" over the internet and when it came I could hardly tell the difference between it and my "blue".
12. See Greenlaw, op cit., passun.
13. Stephen R. Datz, Catalogue of Errors on U.S. Postage Staips Sanabria, 1997, p.109
14. Ibid.
15. Scott's 1999 U.S. Specialized Catalogue, p.140.
16. U.S. 1595e, for example, is unpriced, see ibid, p.127.
17. Ngo,p.50.
18. Paul S. Greenlaw, "Printed on Both Sides", Collectors Club Philatelist vol.78, No.6, November-December, 1998, pp.331-339.
19. See the Liberian specimen, in ibid, p.332.
20. Paul S. Greenlaw, "The Heuristic Approach to the Analysis of Double Impressions", The Collectors Club Philatelist 79 (2), March-April, 2000, pp.79-85.
21. Mr. Todd Bayne, who has had a nice Philippine error collection has reinforced this view.
22. The Pan American 4 cent of 1901 with a specimen overprint and Dag Hanimarskjold of 1962. Datz, op. cit., p.135.
23. Nor does Scott. The triple impression here is of black rather than dark green as is the double impression.
24. See, for example, Bolivia RA 1
25. These would then also be "printed on both sides".
26. Scott 505, 485 and 467. About 3540 cliches are known to exist. See: Paul S. Greenlaw, "Transposed Subjects", American Philatelist, 113(9), September 1999 866-868.

**Paul S Greenlaw is Emeritus Professor of Management of the Pennsylvania State University and author of Affordable Foreign Errors, Krause, Iola Wisconsin.**

Ed. Notes: The figures submitted with this article were in color and clearly showed the errors referred to. This is one of those times when color in our Journal would have improved the understanding of the Subject.)

## WW II ALIEN CERTIFICATE OF REGISTRATION

Douglas K. Lehmann

I recently got a document with a delightful array of fiscal stamps, cancellations, and markings. The cancels span four years (the last three during the Japanese Occupation) and the markings are in two languages. The document is in good condition despite being folded to pocket size and missing some stamps. Documentary fiscal stamps with Japanese Occupation cancels are difficult to find. I last wrote about them in the PPJ First Quarter issue of 1992 showing a May 31, 1944 pen cancels. The document described today starts with a July 20, 1941 marking and ends with a May 9, 1944-handwritten cancel. Additional cancels are for May 30, 1942 and May 30, 1943.

Gene Garrett's book (page 311) describes the Japanese Occupation rate as "An Alien Registration Law was imposed under the JMA by 'Executive Order No. 25' dated April 1, 1942 requiring every alien to register with and pay a fee to the Bureau of The Census and Statistics, and a 'one-peso documentary stamp furnished by the alien' was to be affixed to the registration certificate." Gene goes on to describe a rate increase by Executive Order No. 66 on July 24, 1942. The new rates ranged depending on income and age. For children less than 14 years old, the rate stayed at one-peso. The document has two printed pages each about eight by 12 1/2 inches. **Figure I** shows the top and bottom three inches of the front of the document. The boxed rectangular hand-stamp on the top is purple and reads ALWAYS HAVE 'THIS CERTIFICATE WITH YOU FOR PRESENTATION ON DEMAND BY THE AUTHORITIES.

I do not know what year this was stamped. The middle portion (not shown) has data and description of Victoria Cheng who was born June 2, 1930 in Manila. She was then 11 years old, with brown eyes, black hair, 4'-10" tall and listed as a student. She was born in Manila of Chinese parents who were living in the Philippines as aliens using passports. The existing law made her Chinese. The bottom shows W-734, the very common 20 centavos ultramarine small documentary stamp printed up to 1938. This amount pays the certification fee for the official's signature. This series is perforated 11 by 11 and only this value plus the 50c and P1 values are reported on Japanese Occupation documents within this series. To the left of this fiscal stamp is a space that



BUREAU OF IMMIGRATION  
MANILA

No. 239964

ALWAYS HAVE THIS  
CERTIFICATE WITH YOU  
FOR PRESENTATION ON  
DEMAND BY THE AUTHOR-  
ITIES.

City of MANILA  
Municipality of \_\_\_\_\_  
Province of \_\_\_\_\_

**ALIEN CERTIFICATE OF REGISTRATION**

THIS IS TO CERTIFY that VICTORLA CHINO a citizen or subject of CUBA  
has applied for registration and fingerprinting as evidenced by Registration Form No. 1 and  
that he has been issued the Certificate of Registration pursuant to and under the provisions of Section  
4 of the Philippine Alien Registration Act of 1941.

---

Given under my hand and official seal this 20th day of July, 1941, at  
Manila  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Rep. Cert. Bk. #1 Chinos pp 240  
Binondo, Manila

By Berafin P. Hilado  
Commissioner of Immigration

By [Signature]  
(Official designation)




Figure 1: The top and bottom three inches of the front of the document.

plus the 50c and P1 values are reported on Japanese Occupation documents within this series. To the left of this fiscal stamp is a space that originally contained the basic fee stamps required by Section 4 of the Philippine Alien Registration Act of 1941. I was unable to determine this exact fee but believe it was either five or ten pesos. The space shows that up to four stamps were once there. I assume the stamps were removed by a collector because of the high values. However, it is possible that they were removed during the Japanese Occupation period because the cancel was objectionable in some manner.

Dr. Robert M. Spaulding graciously translated the Japanese markings on this document. **Figure 1** (bottom) has the first Japanese marking, the small purple rectangle to the right of the 20c fiscal stamp. It means "Military Administration." There is another boxed hand stamp directly on the fiscal that appears to have faint Japanese characters but they are too faint to read. I assume the Military Administrative hand stamp was added later as the original date precedes the Japanese invasion. I believe





This is the side of the document that I will display in my collection. The first column calls for a signature, either the alien or parent. Victoria signed the top line in 1942 but her mother used her fingerprint in 1943 and 1944. The page's columns two through four are for the date, place and official's signature. The fifth column calls for a 50 centavo documentary stamp. However, the rate was doubled to 1 -peso two months before the first renewal. The top stamp used for 1942 is W-725. This is the only 10 x 10 perforation value recorded used during the Japanese Occupation. This series was last printed in 1931 but I am not surprised to see its use in 1942. War-time shortages pressed all previously unused tax stamps into use for the duration of the war. However, I doubt very many were used and fewer survived.

The fiscal stamps used for 1943 and 1944 is W-736. Rows two and three were used for the 1943 renewal. These years use the 1-peso green fiscal in the 11 x 11 perforation series printed through 1938. There are two purple-boxed hand stamps in the middle columns used in 1943 and 1944. They are the same and read:

“ Documentary stamps in the amount of / P.....Paid under the provision of / Executive Order 66. (Lower right) Registration Officer”. In each renewal year, the official entered the number 1 or 1.00. The 1943 markings are spectacular from my perspective. They are printed in Japanese and English using black ink. The English reads in three lines: PHILIPPINE EXECUTIVE COMMISSION / DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR / BUREAU OF THE CENSUS AND STATISTICS. Above the English is the Japanese equivalent of the three English lines, except line three omits the word CENSUS found in the English line three. The last W-736 was cancelled in 1944. The date is in column two and the cancel on the fiscal stamp is the perforated initial cancel with the first four letters of IMMIGRATION.

This document is a beautiful non-philatelic example bearing fiscal stamp for the Japanese Occupation period.



# International Philippine Philatelic Society

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*(A non-profit, non-stock, educational organization incorporated in the  
City of Manila, Philippines, on September 24, 1974 as per  
SEC Registration #58004.)*



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