

EDITORS' NOTES

Rosa Cordillera A. Castillo
Robert Panaguion

This volume of *AghamTao* puts together some of the papers presented in the 29th UGAT Annual Conference held at the Ateneo de Zamboanga University, Zamboanga City on October 25 to 27, 2007 as well as papers on the *Tasaday* which were presented during the 8th International Conference on Philippine Studies held at the Philippine Social Science Center and Ateneo de Manila University in July 2008.

With the theme, *The Practice of Governance*, the 29th UGAT conference ushered in an academic discourse revolving around the cultural processes that (re)shape strategies and interactions between and among state and non-state organizations in such areas as conflict resolution and political assertion. Two of the papers here explore the wisdom of indigenous ways of governance, while the other one opens the horizon for the interaction between state and non-state actors.

Mary Constancy Barrameda, in her research report "Mainstreaming *Bodong* through *Matagoan*," finds that the indigenous restorative justice system of the Kalingas of northern Luzon is gaining more and more adherents in mainstream governance such as in the local government's effort at establishing *Matagoan* (zone of peace) because of its appeal to a humanizing kind of conflict settlement. The *bodong*, the peace pact institution of the Kalingas, is a form of restorative justice system, which according to Barrameda, is "an approach in administering justice that focuses on repairing the harm done to the victim and to the community." It has full participation not only from the victim and offender but also from the whole community and offers restitution to the offender. In the end a sense of community is restored. The *bodong* institution has been in place since time immemorial and the author asserts, "This traditional dispute settlement acquiring the status of living law can be considered one of the best legal systems ever produced by a people whose lives are whole and integral, being deeply rooted in their culture." She adds that the practice of *bodong* does not go uncontested as some sectors of the Kalinga society want it abrogated because of changes the institution has gone through, such as its role in hiding criminals.

The same focus on indigenous justice system is provided by Aleli Bawagan's paper on the "Customary Justice System among the Iraya Mangyans of Mindoro." Bawagan's paper does not only delve on a particular indigenous customary law but also gives reasons behind their persistence and use especially to the Mangyans themselves. The paper implicitly echoes the wisdom of the traditional justice system, which the state's system of justice may have to reckon with.

Maria Carinnes Alejandria's paper explores the political action repertoire of the Palawan Moro National Liberation Front returnees. She discusses the various factors affecting the nature and extent to which the members of the group participate in the political process. As she discovers the significant variables influencing the said repertoire, she also finds surprises and contradictions in the political actions of the members of the group. She concludes that they are engaging in a form of political syncretism as they struggle to gain better representation in government as well as better governmental services for the Muslims in their communities.

Meanwhile, the paper of Michael Charlston Chua revisits the publications related to the Tasaday and offers a periodization of the trends in the discourse. He concludes that "the trends of the discourse reflect the political changes in the Philippines and the major players in the debate, offering us a view of the history of the anthropology of the Tasaday."

The paper of Rosa Cordillera Castillo entitled "The Tasaday Twenty Four Years After: Insights on Ethnicity and the Rights Framework" challenges the social sciences to look beyond the issue of authenticity of the Tasaday as stone-age people. She asserts that the case of the Tasaday provides a good example for studying the concept of ethnicity particularly the fluidity and negotiability of ethnic identity. She also challenges anthropologists to assess their role in relation to the Tasaday who are now asserting their territorial rights.

All the papers selected from the conference *The Practice of Governance* in one way or another somehow radiates an anthropological challenge to the practice of mainstream governance such as the importance of recognizing indigenous governance systems and customary justice that emphasize the restoration of social order and community life. Furthermore, this volume shows the importance of employing an ethnographic approach in studying governance, particularly the strategies appropriated by actors in their everyday negotiation with state and non-state institutions. And while the papers on the Tasaday forum were not necessarily about the practice of governance, they provide insights into the way the issue of the Tasaday was produced, handled and consumed not only by the government but also by the academe, the media and the public.