

BOOK REVIEW

Cynthia Neri Zayas, Makito Kawada, and Lilian de la Peña (editors). *Visayas and Beyond: Continuing Studies on Subsistence and Belief in the Islands*. Quezon City: UPCIS Publications, 2014. 153pp.

Joseph Palis

The present volume of the Visayas Maritime Anthropological Studies (VMAS) is the fourth in a series that spanned several years of research undertakings in the Visayan islands. The collaboration between Filipino and Japanese scholars started in 1987 and has since seen the publication of several books and monographs. The VMAS series invites local and international scholars to share preliminary research results as well as full-blown research findings, in order to re-center the attention to the rich terrain of maritime studies in the various islands of the Visayas.

Visayas and Beyond draws from a rich pool of scholarship. The introductory essays, written by Zayas and Kawada, contextualize, situate, and historicize the development of VMAS, both as a book series and as a multidisciplinary maritime research institution composed of scholars and field practitioners. The articles assembled for the latest series are as varied as the approaches and styles employed by the writers to present past and current research projects.

The article by Zayas engages with the extant power relations that embed the resource-rich terrain of the Visayan seas. Of particular focus is the clash of institution-led directives such as marine protected areas (MPAs) and the customary and lived praxis of islanders regarding the view on local fishing rules and regulations. Despite the inevitability of modernization in fishing, globalization ironically abetted the depletion of resources in the area. Most of the standardization that governments have a tendency to impose had adverse effects as illustrated by the joint article of Lilian de la Peña and Zayas that discusses patron-client relationships among fishers. There is fluidity in the relationships between the *amo* and *sakop* that eludes easy categorization. The complexity of this relationship comes from both historical and contemporary roots that manifest even more strongly in the era of modernization and skewed power relations.

Two articles infuse narratives from very different sources. In the joint article written by Mary Jane Calderon-Hayhow and Rolando Mascuñana, the personal stories of fishers about their lives and the shift in the adoption and use of fishing machinery and equipment parallel the change traditional coastal societies go through in the name of modernity. Magos, on the other hand, elicits a rich reading of archival epic narratives that chronicle the visit

AghamTao, 2015, Volume 24:178-179

of Labaw Donggon to the Land of the Dead. Her close reading sheds light on the spatial configurations of the worlds of the dead vis-a-vis that of the living and the similarities of these two spheres.

Personal narratives in terms of the worship for the Virgin of the Guadalupe in Cebu comprise the study of Makito Kawada. Although the current crop of worshippers and devotees may not know the connection of the Virgin of the Guadalupe with the veneration of Mexicans to a similar-named deity, Kawada shows that various forms of knowledge that may emanate from different sources among devotees point to a configuration of power that aids in the perpetuation of an official and socially approved story.

Not all articles in the present edition of VMAS focus on the Visayas as has been the norm in previous editions. Satoru Nishimura writes on rural landlessness in Tarlac which refreshingly resonates with the study of the land-owner-tenant relationship undertaken by Takahiro Kobayashi in western Visayas. Kobayashi spotlights *diskarte* as a modus operandi which he calls as "... a negotiation method to remind or assume the idea of moral and social obligation in the relationship with the landowners..." (77). De la Peña's essay focuses on the change of indigenous knowledge in terms of healing and folk medicine among the Ati population. This change may have been caused by an institutional push that produced a different outcome among the everyday practices of the Ati.

Koki Seki's article, which is also the volume's strongest, discusses the subjectivities that emerge from people's encounter with practices emanating from the coastal resource management regime. Seki's accounts range from the sedentarization, policing, and surveillance that aim to control practices of fishers and the coastal communities. He emphasizes the role of *metis* in the recognition of different practical knowledge embedded among the local population and how it eludes the institutional tendency to discipline nonstate spaces.

Finally, Efren Flores' account of his life as an administration person in fisheries is like a swan song of sorts. Flores, who died shortly after he wrote the piece, lovingly looked back at a life of administration and the joy he experienced from seeing fisheries education and endeavors take flight. The essay, just like the wonderful pieces in the volume, goes beyond the normative, to paint vivid stories of the elusive lives and practices of fishers in the entire archipelago.

Joseph Palis, PhD is Assistant Professor in the Department of Geography, University of the Philippines Diliman.

Email: josephpalis@gmail.com