

## Book Reviews

Gerard A. Finin, *The Making of the Igorot: Contours on the Cordillera Consciousness*. Manila, Philippines: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2005. 345 pages.

In the context of globalization, increasing instances of religious extremism and rapid technological changes have made the issue of identity-politics increasingly relevant. The process of an ever-widening horizon for interaction by indigenous peoples has provoked questions of "integration", withdrawal or combinations of these responses with the majority cultures. However, in order to have a better grasp of this process, the roots, nature and formation of the identity of peoples have to be understood.

Written by Gerard Finin, the book, *The Making of the Igorot: Contours of Cordillera Consciousness*, is a welcome addition to the list of scholarly papers on the history and identity of the Cordillera people. The book comprises ten (10) chapters on the following topics: aspects of geography, the written texts about the Cordillera people, the impact of the American colonial period, the creation of a Mountain Province as a distinct geo-political unit (the constitutionally mandated Cordillera Administrative Region or CAR), the process of the creation and development of an Igorot consciousness among different groups in the area, and the evolution of that consciousness during the Second World War, the post-war period, the Martial Law and Post-Martial Law times.

The author argues that the "collective ethnoregional consciousness among highlanders" or what some call as the pan-Igorot or pan-Cordillera identity that has been the basis for the clamor for political autonomy is not based on "natural" features of the physical environment, but on the policies of American colonizers. This argument highlights the question of the roots of the Cordilleran peoples' identity that has long been assumed as based on land tenure. As argued by Finin, identity politics is not traced to particular systems of resource ownership or on unique indigenous practices, awareness or boundaries (be it geophysical or social), but rather on created institutions, systems and boundaries (also both geophysical and social). A case in point

organizations. The author also discussed how the aspirations for recognition of the Igorot identity became part of the struggles waged by the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) during Martial Law. During this time the CPP led the indigenous peoples' struggles against the activities of a large logging firm and the construction of a dam that displaced many communities and upset the ecological balance. This later gave way to intensified post Martial Law clamors not only recognition but the right to self-determination as well, the corner stone for the call for autonomy in the Cordillera.

The book's major contribution lies in its clear explanation of the creation and transformation of the geopolitical boundaries and the society of the Cordillera resulting in an identity shared by the peoples of the region. This transformation resulting from the region's historical experience, particularly during the American period, was the emergence of an "Igorot" identity that eventually became the basis for the right to self determination, and later legally recognized in a Constitutional provision for regional autonomy.

In the development of this identity, Finin emphasizes the role of institutions and the educated intelligentsia of the Cordillera who were able to avail themselves of Manila-based education or higher learning, eventually becoming the bureaucratic, intellectual and political elites of the region. It somehow misses out on what happened in the villages or "ilis" spread out further on in the region. Indeed, future research on how the "pan-Igorot" or "Cordilleran" identity was diffused among the villages away from Baguio City will be a welcome complement to this newest scholarly research on identity-politics in the Cordilleras. ❖

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Philip Oxhorn, Joseph S. Tulchin, and Andrew D. Selee, eds. *Decentralization, Democratic Governance, and Civil Society in Comparative Perspective: Africa, Asia, and Latin America*. Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2004. 351 pages.

*Decentralization, Democratic Governance, and Civil Society in Comparative Perspective* asks and provides straightforward answers to the prevailing question on how decentralization is transforming the relationship between the state and civil society. The volume offers rich historical and empirical data on decentralization projects from six countries distributed on three continents: Mexico, Chile, South Africa, Kenya, the Philippines, and Indonesia.

Juxtaposing each country's governance experience with decentralization, the authors present each case study as parts of a larger attempt to build a common empirical thread connecting decentralization with democratic governance. Authors of the book went about this task in two ways. First, Oxhorn established in the introduction the theoretical and analytical focus of the study. He surveys issues related to decentralization and lent focus on three: which actors have been most responsible for initiating and sustaining decentralization, how much decentralization at the regional and local level has transformed the national government and the state in general, and whether local autonomy results in greater accountability by public officials and more democratic voice for the people.

Second, empirical data presentation and data analysis from each country then follow the introductory chapter of the book. Collectively, the eight case studies (two each on Mexico and Chile) form the heart of the volume. Each case study expectedly starts with a description of the separate historical trajectories decentralization took in each country. With the ultimate goal of pinpointing admirable conditions and appropriate institutional frameworks needed to make decentralization work towards improved democratic governance, authors draw from the nuanced particularities of each country's historical, political, and culture-grounded explanations on decentralization.

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In the final chapter, editors Tulchin and Selee conclude by stating “decentralization, in and of itself, does not improve democratic governance.” Citing results from the studies in the volume, they isolate motivations of principal actors, patterns of state-society interaction, and nature of institutional arrangements as prime factors influencing the degree to which decentralization contributes to a more dynamic and democratic relationship between the state and its citizens.

Taken as a whole, the book is an attempt to find evidential coherence while at the same time interrogating established factors and motivations — stated or otherwise — known to drive decentralization projects around the world. It draws its strength mainly from its rich and eloquent presentation of details. The fusion of historical and analytical facts echoes methodical judgment on the part of the authors while the empirical data collated provide scholars and academic novice alike clear understanding of the issues and circumstances surrounding decentralization efforts being undertaken in the countries surveyed.

The articles are generally well-written and without the usual excessive jargon usually accompanying collections that discuss highly contested concepts of democracy, governance, and civil society. The editors use a standard definition of decentralization bereft of normative values and discourse: *the transfer of power to different subnational levels of government by the central government.*

While the work is concerned with the study of a number of controversial and disputed concepts, the authors and editors break with the usual procedure of arguing for or against certain *figures of thought*. Instead, they went for neutral definitions and outright selection of an explanatory framework attached to the democratic transition paradigm that profess to explain the nexus between decentralization and democratic governance as emanating from pacts and agreements between and among elites and in some cases, with other social and political actors.

For Mizrahi, to know whether decentralization has contributed to reducing the gap between the rich and the poor and between prosperous

states and states submerged in poverty is worthwhile; while Angeles and Magno call for more researches on decentralization that ultimately lead to social learning and discussion of democratic governance identified more with social, rather than mere economic transformation and elimination of structural inequalities that perpetuate poverty and all forms of domination.

As it chose to safely hinge majority of its theoretical and analytical discussion on the democratic transitions paradigm, the book failed to benefit from the possible application of the fruits of a more vigorous theoretical discourse on decentralization. Thus, it falls short of the expectation of *decentering* from the traditional transition paradigm that has been a constant feature of works on decentralization. As a result, conclusions are generally tepid and characterized by usual suggestions on how to meet the liberal democratic criteria for governance and neo-liberal barometer for economic efficiency.

Indeed, many of the authors with the exception perhaps of Angeles and Magno fail to bridge the gap between data presentation and alternative critical analysis in their conclusions. By offering only lip-service to decentralization's potential as catalyst for social transformation, many concluding remarks are nothing but salutary remarks or warnings against the automatic equation of decentralization with deeper democracy and more accessible and efficient government.

As a result, the volume inadvertently paints a general picture where *the decentralization project is having a crisis of images* where ambiguities (still) significantly abound. The editors state that the primary aim of the volume is not about criticizing empirical evidences for decentralization *but the usually equated better world image* that comes with it. The greater paradox is the admission of the editors that the volume "does not enable us to draw firm conclusions on the reason why decentralization produces such different outcomes across the political landscape of the same country". They suggest that the landscape of existing state-society relationships influences these outcomes significantly. In itself, this conclusion is an admission of the research's lack of a strong theoretical foundation that can adequately explain the dynamics behind these relationships.

The promise of alternative explanation would have been made possible had the potential of the undercurrent emphasizing the importance of fostering identity been magnified and further developed with what is possible and what is acceptable in terms of (civil) society involvement in democratization and governance through decentralization. *Decentralization, Democratic Governance, and Civil Society in Comparative Perspective* may have identified the greatest obstacle for enhanced local democracy as resting in our failure to see its potential and possibilities. However, we need new metaphors as much as alternative maps to explain and show how and why this has been so. ❖

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Manuel E. Contreras, ed. *Corporate Social Responsibility in the Promotion of Social Development: Experiences from Asia and Latin America*. Washington, D.C.: Inter-American Development Bank, 2004. 256 pages.

The practice of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has spread worldwide. The engagement of business firms in community development and governance is difficult to deny especially with the emerging challenges posed by the contemporary global economy. This book is a collection of articles discussing the different cases of CSR initiatives — the nature, context, issues and lessons learned- from the two regions. It was the product of a workshop that took place in Tokyo and Okinawa in 2004 aimed at analyzing and synthesizing the development of CSR in Latin America and East Asia and its effect on community development. Moreover, the workshop was conducted to identify relevant research issues and gaps in order to enrich the literature, and fine-tune the research agenda focusing on CSR.



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The book focuses on the effects of CSR interventions on community development and social development as a whole. It describes how corporations, business firms and civil society groups are encapsulated in the CSR processes through the extrapolation of various country-specific case studies. From each case study, the characteristics of how corporations engage in community development are described thoroughly with emphasis on the type of corporation-community partnership; cultural context of the intervention; the processes and dynamics of corporate citizenship project; the prevailing issues and problems encountered; and the lessons learned. The editor identified three aspects that were derived from the case studies: the importance of the role of NGOs (non-government organizations) and civil society groups in CSR interventions; the effects of such interventions at the community level; and the role of multinational/ transnational corporations.

Chapter 1 of the book serves as an overview of the trends, lessons and experiences of East Asia in CSR both theoretically and empirically. The analysis of CSR activities in Asia reveals that the concept of corporate responsibility has cultural and philosophical underpinnings. Moreover, it argues that there is a need to develop a legal framework that will facilitate the participation in CSR, not only of private business groups but NGOs and POs (people's organizations) as well.

Chapters 2, 4 and 5 examine the cases of leading business groups and corporations embarking on CSR projects through their synergy with civil society groups such as NGOs. The cases of Indonesia, Thailand and Singapore stress that NGOs can provide expertise in community development; mobilize support in the local level and gain the trust of people in the community through mechanisms that enhance social capital. For instance, a case about Thailand reiterates that a large local NGO had strong, top-level connections with Nike.

Development of CSR in the Philippines was a product of strong civil society advocacy and a weak state is discussed in chapter 3. This chapter illustrates how a pro-active approach in CSR through the support of NGOs and POs can foster community mobilization and strengthening. Civil society's role as a hub for mutual support and networking proved to be instrumental

in the success and effectiveness of an environmental resource management project.

The initiative to integrate and institutionalize the concepts of corporate citizenship and social responsibility in big corporations is discussed from chapters 6 to 8. The cases of Japanese companies instructs how the integration of CSR culture in corporate policies improves both the quality of goods and service the company provides and the appeal of the company to clients by adhering to societal and environmental regulations.

Chapter 9 reflects on the various CSR mechanisms and type of intervention present in Latin America. The authors of the article elucidate the rationale of each intervention by comparing the corporate-community projects across countries in Latin America. The same chapter also contemplates on factors that impede success of CSR efforts such as patronage politics, paternalistic relationship of corporations and community; and the lack of a conducive environment for community-corporation-state synergy.

All cases report community strengthening as a by-product of CSR interventions. Chapters 10 to 13 focus on the cases of Latin American countries such as Venezuela, Chile, Mexico and Brazil. Agricultural cooperatives, environmental management committees, and school and health boards were some of the outcomes documented. Furthermore, communities were strengthened by the increased participation of formerly marginalized sectors such as women, indigenous people, the poor and children in governance and development projects.

Mainly descriptive and narrative, the strength of the volume is its empirical contribution to the literature on CSR. Specific case studies effectively map out the extent of CSR interventions in Asia and Latin America that can help identify under-explored research problems; discover research gaps and define the relevant research agenda. Empirical cases are discussed according to country-contexts—making each case unique and worth studying—where a plethora of issues, challenges and lessons can be unearthed.

However, the book lacks a common theoretical or conceptual framework that integrates the problems, findings and conclusions of each case to make

a coherent analysis. This makes each empirical case difficult to compare with another as the respective articles dealt on an amalgam of divergent issues, assumptions, definitions and operationalizations. Moreover, the plan of the book in embarking on the impact of CSR on community development and social development is more of a descriptive enterprise than an explanatory one. The literature on CSR indicates that there is still lack of measurable indicators especially in the macro level that will gauge the effect of interventions on actual development. Empirical cases point out that development impact of CSR was mostly qualitative in nature — empowerment, participation, self-esteem, mobilization, etc.

Corporate citizenship and social responsibility crosscuts the public-private divide. The demands for greater efficiency, responsiveness, participation, transparency and accountability in governance especially in the local and community levels where citizens are immediately vulnerable makes CSR interventions and participation of non-state actors critical. Business organizations and companies can mobilize important resources efficiently as civil society can organize support and social capital effectively in the local level. This synergy accentuates the importance of participation in promoting good governance.

As examined by the book, the experiences of Asia and Latin America in CSR assert that participatory local governance — the increased role of civil society and the private sector in local governance — is a social development tool. This makes the published work meaningful in the literature of governance and significant in the advocacy for good governance.

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