

## Book Reviews

Victoria A. Bautista, et al. *National and Local Government Roles in Public Health Under Devolution*. Diliman, Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 2002. 229 pages.

Health devolution is one of the most important and controversy-ridden areas of the current decentralization set-up in the Philippines that began with the passage of the 1991 Local Government Code. Yet, there are very few academic documents written on this topic. So, this book written by academics from the National College of Public Administration of the University of the Philippines and involving meticulous research is a welcome work. The main purpose of the book is to assist donor institutions in determining how assistance could be extended to local government units (LGUs) in the delivery of public health and medical care services in the context of devolution. This is expected as financial assistance for the book project came from the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA).

The study is divided into two main parts. The first part focused on the national government and the Department of Health's (DOH) perspectives on how improvements can be made in the delivery of health services to LGUs, with focus on the Health Sector Reform Agenda, as well as foreign-funded projects on public health/medical care services for LGUs. The section on the Philippine health profile was comprehensive with some comparisons with other Asian countries. It shows that the country's health conditions improved through the years but the country still lags behind many of its Asian neighbors in terms of health standards. This part also includes national and regional benchmarks, averages, and statistics in various health indicators (health personnel, facilities, etc.). Using these national and regional statistics, the authors show that health personnel and facilities are unevenly distributed around the country, with the regions in Mindanao having the least number of health facilities and

personnel. Still another important section is a detailed discussion of the Health Sector Reform Agenda formulated by the DOH in response to the changes brought about by the Local Government Code. Two of the most important reforms introduced by the DOH are the granting of *Sentrong Sigla* (vitality center) seals to health facilities providing comprehensive health services to their coverage areas and the creation of inter-local health zones where several localities can pool and share resources in the delivery of health services.

The second part of the book focused on several cases studies. The first set of cases include the upland province of Ifugao and two of its municipalities, one awarded with a *Sentrong Sigla* seal by the DOH and another one that has not earned this distinction. The second set of cases include the DOH-prioritized province of Negros Oriental and two of its municipalities, again with one granted the *Sentrong Sigla* seal and the other without such DOH recognition. The authors used a variety of data gathering methods in the case studies, like reliance on local government documents, focus group discussions with stakeholders in each province, and key informant interviews.

Based on the case studies, the authors arrived at several conclusions. The local government units (LGUs) that have been granted *Sentrong Sigla* seals are the ones proven to have commitment to health. These LGUs truly invest their resources in health requirements of the populace and demonstrate that these efforts are sustainable under responsive and dedicated local chief executives and health workers. Furthermore, local initiatives and creativity have been the source of activity and comparative advantage of some localities. The national office through recognition and institutionalization of these efforts has further reinforced these areas. Finally, the active participation of NGOs strengthens the initiatives of LGUs. The cooperation of NGOs contributes to the sustainability of health projects and makes it easy for LGUs to fulfill their mission.

In the area of assistance, Bautista et al. found out that the priority areas for assistance are basic: the lack of facilities and lack of management and technical skills in health. However, program commitments in health vary because of the differing problems in LGUs. In addition, localities not benefited by the leadership of a committed LCE may be further pushed to marginalization if no support is extended to them in whatever form. Localities with facilities and health workers complying with standards have the edge and are the ones benefiting from resources from the national office. Also, while a statement of preference is important as a basis for determining an area for assistance, it is also important for the donor institutions to ascertain if this expressed need is valid or if the LGU has absorptive capacity. A feasibility study should have been undertaken first to determine whether there was effective demand for the services to be offered by a new facility. Thus, Bautista, et al. recommended the following principles for assistance: (1) need-based; (2) absorptive capacity; (3) multi-stakeholders; (4) trust fund or commodity transfer; (5) NGOs as conduit; and (6) commitment of LCE and health workers.

While this well-documented study is very much appreciated, there are several shortcomings that weaken the overall impact of the book. First, there was not much comparative presentation of pre- and post-devolution health systems to show how radical devolution has been to the Philippine health system. Second, there was no exhaustive discussion at all of the rationale and politics behind health devolution as well as the ensuing attempts of health workers' groups in the early 1990s to renationalize or recentralize the health system. With these two shortcomings, the book failed to set the necessary context of the importance of the health issue in the general discussion of decentralization in the Philippines.

A third shortcoming is that the discussion of case studies was too descriptive and technical, and without much political analysis or exhaustive discussion of the politics of health

service delivery in a locality. More political analysis would have provided more insights into the problems of health devolution. For instance, the role of local leadership was mentioned in the conclusion but it was not exhaustively discussed in detail in the case studies. In addition, barangay health workers and representatives of people's organizations were not included as key informants or participants in focus group discussions, thereby obscuring people empowerment as one possible important aspect of health devolution. Though NGOs were mentioned as playing important roles in health service delivery, their roles were not elaborated.

Another important drawback of this study is that its title is misleading and seems inappropriate for the study's main aim of possible areas where assistance could be extended to LGUs in the delivery of health services. Still, while the book did not focus on national and local government roles in health devolution, the discussion on foreign donor assistance was too descriptive and lacks a careful analysis of the impact and problems of previous and existing foreign assistance projects in the health field.

A final weakness of this book is its failure to link its findings with previous researches and approaches in the study of decentralization. Maybe this is because from the very beginning, the book lacks an overarching framework to guide its analysis of the various data available.

Nevertheless, the book is a good reference and starting point for descriptive data on the Philippine health system in a devolved set up and several local cases, given the dearth of academic literature in this area. However, it is up to succeeding researchers in the field of decentralization, particularly in health devolution, to be mindful of the current book's shortcomings and to produce a more comprehensive political analysis of health decentralization in the Philippines. ❖

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Ikehata Setsuho and Lydia N. Yu Jose. Editors. *Philippines-Japan Relations*. Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2003. 618 pages.

In reading this latest addition on Philippine – Japan Relations, which consists of sixteen provocative papers of a beguiling but largely unattended issue in Philippine history, the conglomerate's arrangement may remind the reader about *Go*, the Japanese classic board game. There is a fielding of two sets of players: Japanese experts on the Philippines on one side of the *goban* (game-board, in this context what is geographically known as the Pacific Rim), versus Filipino experts on Japan at the opposite, mutually applying their gambits in the not-so simple game of 'International Relations' of their respective countries.

As the editors Ikehata and Yu-Jose aptly couches this complexity, this volume "uncovers the ups and downs of this relationship from the late-nineteenth century to the 1990s, through periods of cooperation and trust, suspicion and war, close entanglement with the United States, and diplomacy through regional and international organizations."

Though Philippine – Japan relations antedates written history, this volume 'highlights' a century of this communion. Beginning with the 1880s, where an inverse stance between the two places was taking place, with Japan opening its doors to the world after three centuries of *Sakoku Shidai* – or isolation, and the Philippines, on the other hand, contemplating on *Kalayaan!*, or isolation from three centuries of Spanish colonization, the papers, "in chronological order", take the reader on the enormity and the intricacy of this bilateral relationship.

With the seeming mismatch of an economic *Goliath* like Japan and a *David* like the Philippines playing it out, could there be a fair game in the first place? A contributor believes it is possible, which may be the group's consensus.

"The relationship between the Philippines and Japan", he said, "is not a simple case of interaction between a powerful nation and a small one" (Villacorta, p.576). The imagined level field, for his part and which concerned recent events, is provided by the 'special' case of Japan as an industrial giant of the world, allowing the authenticity of a fair play, even with a diminutive Philippines. Since the present anthology has uncovered so many facets of this relationship, it warrants that there was no mismatch in the first place.

Actually, with the book's hierarchy of topics ranging from economic, political and cultural aspects between the Philippines and Japan that "in the last one hundred years had taken place in a context wider than formal bilateral relations" (p.1), one could also think of a chess game in the same 'Pacific Rim' board. With the diversity and immensity of perspectives in this relationship, like sundry stratagems in chess, traditional categorization, as the editors and their contributors thought so, could not hold ground, since "(t)he area ... is so rich that in addition to these three aspects, there are areas that relate to ideas or ideologies, immigration and emigration, and national defense, to mention only a few", which were covered in the book.

There is an enviable arrangement, with almost perfect *ikebana* symmetry, of topics that balances a reader's taste in spite of the richness of the presentation.

Part I (*Beyond Bilateral Relations*), contains four issues: Japan and the Philippines, 1885-1905: Mutual Images and Interests by Ikehata Setsuho, Philippine, American, and Japanese Relations as Seen through the Issue of Neutralization, 1900 to 1939 by Lydia N. Yu Jose, Philippines and Japan in the Intra-Asian Trade: 1868-1941 by Nagano Yoshiko, and Japanese Goods in Prewar Philippines by Hayase Shinzo

Part 2 (*Diplomacy in Peace and Wartime*) has the following papers: Cultivating Goodwill between Japan and the Philippines in the 1930s by Motoe Terami-Wada, Test of

Wills: Diplomacy between Japan and the Laurel Government by Ricardo T. Jose, and Christianity and the Japanese Occupation by Terada Takefumi.

Part 3 (*The Road to Normalization of Relations*) includes: The Tokyo War Crimes Trial by Nagai Hitoshi, Postwar U.S. Military Policy Toward the Philippines and the "Japanese Factor," 1945-1951 by Ito Yuko, The Politics of Mourning by Nakano Satoshi, and War Reparations Implementation, Reparations-Secured Loans and a Treaty of Commerce by Yoshikawa Yoko.

The last part, (*Bilateral Relations in a Rapidly Changing World*) comprises: Postwar Japanese Direct Investments by Gwendolyn R. Tecson, Postwar Trade by Rosalina Palanca-Tan, The Politics of Japanese ODA to the Philippines, 1971-1999 by Temario C. Rivera, Filipino Migration to Japan, 1970s to 1990s by Ma. Rosario Piquero Ballescas, and Political Relations between Japan and the Philippines during the Aquino and Ramos Administrations by Wilfrido V. Villacorta.

*Philippine-Japan Relations*, to be honest, is not intended for traditionalists. It levitates itself from the saturating topics that have filled Philippine history books and current events, e.g., Rizal and his *O-Sei-San*, Bonifacio and the propagandistic *Kogyo ship*, Katipuneros emblazoning their newsletter with a fake Yokohama address, the *Nonubiki Maru* affair and the short-changing of the Filipino revolutionaries by a wily Japanese arms dealer, Mariano Ponce in *kimono*, Artemio Ricarte changing his *rayadillo* for the uniform of the Japanese Imperial Army, comfort women (which was cited, not as an event but as a concern and a policy, pp. 593-594), and the Death March. And the book is very successful in this regard.

From the topics on Philippine-Japan relations, which in recent years have been already dealt in monotonous, threadbare proportions by scholars, the volume redeems

itself with its perplexing and novel perspectives and insights. There are still, as if the contributors seem to flaunt, "hidden lights" about the Philippine Revolution, World War II, Japanese Occupation, and other aspects concerning the Philippines and Japan that need to be shed.

Through a re-reading of the *Tokyo Asahi*, *Osaka Asahi*, *Jiji Shinpo*, and other Japanese newspapers during the 1880s, the Philippine Revolution, until the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Ikehata, for example, was able to perceive the transformation of the Japanese image about the Philippines, from pure economic interest to being in sympathy with the struggle. It is also good to learn that, with the Revolution in the backdrop, major Japanese newspapers were actually featuring "ordinary Filipino people and their daily lives " (p.39), which is a boost in local historiography.

On the other hand, Yu-Jose was able to decipher unusual strands in affiliations prior and during World War II, rather than the simplistic scenario of the Philippines hiding in the trousers of the U.S., or Japan being merely the enemy. Among was the issue of neutralization, which President Quezon was contemplating as early as 1939 and as late as February 1942, with the war already in the Philippines. "This may be interpreted," she says, "that Quezon felt disillusioned with the United States, and was indirectly telling Roosevelt that if no aid came at once, he would go over to the side of Japan. p.69)!"

There were ironical instances cited in the usually gruesome Japanese Occupation in the Philippines that may be compelling reasons for the immediate rewriting of our history books. Concerning the 'puppet' Laurel government, for example, R. Jose was able to discuss the fighting stance of this maligned administration, that it "refused to be a submissive government." "In its own way," he opines, "diplomacy during the Japanese occupation exposed those Filipinos in the field to the realities of power in international politics. It had given them an opportunity to test their wills



with that of an occupying military power, not winning all the time, but trying to present and serve Filipino interests, albeit in their own limited way, and stand up to contrary Japanese plans. (Jose, p.213)" And it was during the Occupation that the Filipinization of the clergy was first achieved (Terada, pp.233-236), an unsuccessful effort on the part of Frs. Pelaez and Burgos during the Spanish period and Fr. Aglipay during the Philippine Revolution.

The anthology is filled with trivia. Do you know, for example, that the Japanese were already participating in the Manila Carnival Fair of the Americans as early as 1909 (Hayase, p.126)? Do you know that there were already various friendship/goodwill organizations and exchange programs, as the Firi-pin Kyokai, between the Filipinos and the Japanese, even before the war (Wada, pp.153-178)? Do you know that the Greater Co-Prosperity Sphere that the Japanese did not achieve during the war was actually realized after, e.g. "the Kishi-Garcia Axis" (Yoshikawa, pp.399-400)? Do you know that there were many *tanka* (short 5-7-5-7-7 syllable verse poem) for the war dead?

One of the strengths of the volume is its bounteous bibliography, which is evident in every paper presented. The same goes with the supplementary notes. For the Filipino scholar in particular, this is a plus factor, especially for the painstaking effort of the Japanese, as well as the Filipino, contributors to make available sources about the Philippines in *Nihongo* and *katakana/kenji* scripts.

And the anthology is an economic milestone. Discussions on the pre-war Philippines-Japan Intra-Asian Trade (Nagano, pp.81-109), Japanese Goods in Prewar Philippines (Hayase, 117-151), "reparations and loans" (Yoshikawa, pp.377-420), Postwar Japanese Direct Investments (Tecson, pp.443-478), postwar Trade (Palanca-Tan, pp.484-505), and the Japanese ODA [official development aid](Rivera, pp.509-537) are profound, with enormous statistics, in forms of tables, charts, and graphs,

his mind convoluted, is to get a glass of expensive sake or, if he has none, the cheaper *ginebra*, and offer a toast to the editors and their contributors. *Kampail!* ❖

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Dorothea Hilhorst, *The Real World of NGOs: Discourses, Diversity and Development*. Quezon City: Ateneo De Manila University Press, 2003. 257 pages.

More than ever, the cliché that books should be experienced rather than read should not be applied to Hilhorst's book. The author's narration of the Cordillera Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) "world" leaves one absorbed, doubtful, confused and betrayed at the same time.

Steeped in details, the book examines minute aspects of NGO "reality". This is largely due to the actor-oriented or ethnographic approach to the study of NGOs utilized by Hilhorst. The book comprises 11 chapters that are replete with informative conceptual and theoretical evidences that shed light on relevant concepts such as, *NGO, discourse, development, social movement, accountability*, to cite a few. Indeed, the vast literature explored by the author is enough to whet the appetite of academic readers. However, because of the diverse themes expounded by each chapter of the book, specifically from Chapter 2 to 9, the book presents itself as a hodgepodge of everything and appears disjointed.

for support. My only fear, which may somehow be a dent in the "almost perfect *ikebana* symmetry" and which may merely be an unfounded coincidence, is how come Filipinos are seemingly the only one interested with present and future bilateral relations while their Japanese counterparts are already contented with the economic past?

It is heartening that the anthology ends with a happy note, with Philippine-Japan relations at its highest point during the Aquino-Ramos Administrations (Villacorta, p.597). Of course, this is not the real ending, especially with the many economists among the bevy who are aware of 'realistic' economic trends, like the law of diminishing marginal utility.

And for a relationship that had painful nodes, it is a natural law that though wounds will eventually heal, scars will remain. There are certain things that cannot be, or should not be, forgotten, like the war. A contributor phrased this 'mixed feeling' so well: "Memorializing the war dead is different from recalling war memories." From his piece that should have been placed at the end, rather than in the middle of the anthology, *tanka*-like words reverberate: "One may also ask what will happen when the era of war memorials is over with a change in generations and the two peoples have to confront each other without common grounds or any dialogue about their collective past. When one thinks of the future, it may be not so much a taciturn respect for the dead as a voluble recounting of memories that will be desirable as the future behavior pattern in Philippines-Japan relations." Interestingly, he is a Japanese (Nakano, pp.368-369.)

At any rate, the many variations of what was previously considered as common, overused themes that this present anthology has produced results in multitudinous perspectives, a feature not strange in the playing of either Go or chess, and certainly it will encourage a thousand more. In the meantime, what a reader could do, after having

his mind convoluted, is to get a glass of expensive sake or, if he has none, the cheaper *ginebra*, and offer a toast to the editors and their contributors. *Kampai!* ❖

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Chapter 1 of the book answers the *what, why and how* questions that readers may possibly ask before they get a glimpse of Cordillera NGO world. The book is an ethnographic narrative on Cordillera NGOs. It exists for "there is no single answer to the questions of what an NGO is, what it wants and what it does" (p.3). Hilhorst chooses to discuss NGOs more as "Organizational" rather than "Non-Governmental" entities using the actor-oriented approach which concentrates more on the everyday practices of organizations.

In Chapter 2, Hilhorst uses the social movement theory as a backdrop in tracing the early beginnings of the Cordillera development NGOs to the National Democratic movement. The author narrates lengthily how a "protest" against the building of Chico dams led to a proposal for regional autonomy.

In the succeeding chapter, the author continues the story of these Cordillera development NGOs and examines the development of a dominant discourse amidst the discursive voices of "multiple realities" on political development and regional autonomy. Chapter 3 cites how attempts by the Cordillera Women's Non-Governmental Organization (CWNGO) to include the gender issue remain marginal in the hegemonic political discourse of the national democratic movement.

Chapter 4 shows how the dominant development hegemonic discourse manifests itself in practice as observed in a barangay named Kayatuan in Mountain Province. Here, the author argues that the development discourse penetrates a particular village through social interfaces or "real or imaginary meeting points of different discourses" (p. 83). In this chapter, Hilhorst shows how the discourse of development may become fragmented, altered or modified strategically by local development actors for their own ends and for their projects. To prove her point, the author uses the Kayatuan case when an NGO was said to "empower" elderly women through the "written word".

In Chapter 5, the author justifies the practice of local development actors by discussing amply the notion of “room for manoeuvre” or the “social space available to actors” who are involved in development intervention (p. 106). This chapter strengthens the feature of NGOs as organizations that allow for planned intervention for the sake of “control” or making sure that actions would conform with the plans of the organization. This organizational phenomenon is what the chapter referred to as “facipulation” or a combination of facilitating and manipulating (p. 106). Hilhorst then proceeds to discuss cases that emphasize the power and influence that local actors have in shaping NGO intervention.

Chapter 6 tackles two modes of accountability that may concern not only NGO practitioners – rational and moral accountability. In particular, this chapter raises the question of the reliability of NGO accountability processes especially since accountability assumes clarity of accountability relations. Readers may find themselves agreeing with Hilhorst as she reiterates the nature of NGOs as “constituted by networks of actors that cut across organizational boundaries” (p. 142) that may account for the ambiguity of accountability ties among NGOs, their clients and other stakeholders, like their funding agencies. Towards the end of the chapter, the author provides an actor-oriented view on accountability when she observes that though “transparency” is meant to reveal the “real stuff”, there is actually no “real stuff” outside of NGO actors’ accounts (p. 144). Hilhorst essentially points to the fact that it is the actors’ reality that actually counts.

Chapter 7 discusses an ill-researched topic or the aspect that highlights NGOs as socio-cultural and human institutions. She narrates three cases of individual staff members as examples of three typologies of members within the CWNGO. The first category includes the management staff who are ingrained with political ideals of the national

democratic movement. The second category consists of members who are familiar with and inclined towards the national democratic body of thought. While the third type of staff members are not familiar at all with the political aspects of NGOs.

In Chapter 8, Hilhorst presents leadership theories before she focuses on the primary actors in NGO realities – their leaders. In Chapter 9, she presents NGOs vis-à-vis the diverse stakeholders or funding agencies that more or less shape their lives.

In the tenth and concluding chapter, Hilhorst extracts from her study themes that she feels are worth reiterating as regards development NGO everyday politics: 1) the notion that development NGOs are answerable to different stakeholders is problematic; 2) that development does not depoliticize or make NGOs “anti-politics” machines and that “convergence is therefore an exaggeration” (pp.225-226). The author, alas, impliedly admits that unfolding the “real world” of NGOs is close to impossible and is outright ambitious for NGOs operate within a world of “multiple realities”.

The chapters may have been stitched together for coherence but the author fails to satisfactorily cover the threads. The transition from one chapter to the next appears to be smooth owing to the reader-friendly narrative method of presentation but the pieces sewn together reveal the author’s pessimistic outlook toward the “real world” of NGOs. Unfortunately, readers may find their interest in the book dwindling towards the end of the book if they expect too much reality from a little over two hundred pages of disjointed, albeit, empirical case studies or if they do not concur with the NGO reality that the author seeks to construct.

In the Epilogue, the author redeems herself by explaining the usual caveats faced by anthropological studies like hers.

The three major concerns about the study stressed by the author include: 1) its constructivist approach 2) its use of ethnography, and 3) its "damaging" effect on the organization under study (p. 229). Hilhorst emphatically defends her book by presenting counter-arguments but whose validity is best reserved to the judgment of the readers.

But what is the "reality" of NGOs as the author sees it: that NGOs are distinct creatures whose world cannot be understood when taken out of context. Though Hilhorst provides seemingly insufficient proof to describe NGO reality her attempt to uncover part of it deserves full academic support. ❖

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