

## AN OVERVIEW OF CULTURAL RESEARCH ON MINDANAO\*

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Cultural studies and research properly belong to the social sciences particularly the disciplines of ethnology, anthropology, archeology, and more recently, ethnohistory or culture change. A study of culture removed from its societal and human moorings is no longer acceptable hence, even in archeology where the primary focus is on artifacts, or the remains of man's material culture as evidence of the past of the community or society, the relative value of the archeological evidence lies in the information or insights that it can provide by way of elucidating the lifestyle or culture of the people to whom it belongs. Cultural research would then presume an underlying and ultimate interest in understanding man through a study of his culture. Indeed, it would not be an overstatement to say that man is only understandable through his culture.

Scientific cultural research in Mindanao was started by American anthropologists who arrived in the Philippines during the first decades of the present century. Otley Beyer, Fay Cooper Cole and Laura Watson Benedict were some of the earliest scientists who pioneered the study of culture in these parts. The very proliferation of cultural groups indigenous to the island of Mindanao and which at the time of Beyer, Cole and Benedict were practically in pristine stages served as the beacon to the first cultural studies undertaken.

We must not forget to mention the non-American and less scientific sources and writers such as the Spanish missionaries who preceded the American anthropologists. The Recollects and the Jesuits may not have been writing in any scientific or anthropological sense but their descriptions of the customs of the various "nations" so-

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*called in Mindanao* are veritable sources of ethnographic and anthropological material that make up the substance of a baseline study. As every social scientist knows, studies of culture and social change are only as good as the available matrix or baseline data.

Unfortunately, most of the results of these studies have long ago been repatriated to the respective homelands of their foreign authors. A good example of this is the famous "Newberry Collection" at the Regenstein Library in the University of Chicago in Illinois. A few researchers were gracious enough to leave copies of their works in Manila libraries and the National Archives.

After the war, and for reasons that can only be inferred or surmised, interest in cultural studies on Mindanao considerably waned. A small number of trained Filipino anthropologists who were based in Manila universities turned up some exciting volumes on the cultural groups of the Cordilleras and Luzon in general but cultural research on Mindanao was conspicuously lacking. Some of the notable exceptions to this Luzon-centric interest were Espiridion Manuel who produced four books on the Bagobos (actually Guian-gans) and Manobos of Davao and Marcelino Maceda and Rudolf Rahmann who studied the Mamanuas of Lake Mainit in the Surigao area. Linda Burton, an archaeologist based in Xavier University in Cagayan de Oro City, likewise performed a highly creditable work in the excavations of the pre-historic *balangay* in Butuan City the results of which are now contained for posterity in the Butuan Historical Museum. My own modest contributions to contemporary cultural research on Mindanao is the *Bagobos of Davao* ... the result of a five-year study of the Tagabawa Bagobo of Davao del Sur, and the Tambara, the Ateneo de Davao University Journal which is probably the only journal that publishes cultural studies on Mindanao. It would be remiss not to mention the *Gimba*, a quarterly magazine that also publishes cultural articles.

In brief, I wish to emphasize by this brief resume' that cultural research on Mindanao leaves much to be desired. Below is a partial and preliminary bibliographical listing of cultural works on Mindanao. Since it is an annotated bibliography I think it will be very useful to those attempting to break ground in cultural research in Mindanao.

## ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

### BAGOBOS

Benedict, Laura W. "A Study of Bagobo Ceremonial Magic and Myth". Annals New York Academy. Vol. XIV (May 15, 1916)

The study deals with the mythological concepts of the Bagobos in the first chapter. In the second chapter, it delves into the rituals of human sacrifice, marriage, death and burial. Charms, diseases and healings, taboos, omens and dreams are the foci of the third chapter. The fourth chapter looks into the problems of sources of ceremonials and myths.

The author is of the opinion that throughout the continuous and unbroken communication between the mountain Bagobos and the coast Bagobos with other people together with the intermittent flow of whole families from the hills and mountains to the coast and from the sea back to the upland villages, the Bagobos were able to preserve their old traditions and the integrity of the whole tribal religion. She attributed this largely to the presence of the old chieftains and to the existence of trade centers. Nonetheless, she believed that the death of several old datos and the transfer of entire mountain groups to provide native labor for American plantations were factors that brought about marked changes in Bagobo culture.

Cole, Faye Cooper. "The Bagobos of Davao Gulf". The Philippine Journal of Sciences. Vol. VI (June 1911).

Cole, in great detail, described the various aspects of the Bagobo culture, namely: physical appearance and clothing; religious rites and practices; social struc-

tures; legal structures; birth and healing practices; dances and music; and beliefs.

\_\_\_\_\_. The Wild Tribes of Davao District, Mindanao. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 1913.

This book represents an extensive study of the various tribes in Davao, among which are the Bagobos. It discusses the various aspects of their cultures.

## HIGAONON

Baquiran, Lorettra L. "Bukidnon Designs." Gimba: The Popular Magazine of Mindanao Culture. Vol. 1 (No. 1). Cagayan de Oro City: Mindanao Ethno-Culture Foundation. 1984.

This article is about the contemporary designs utilized by the Higaonon people. These designs are predominantly found in the group's clothing and accessories.

Cole, Faye Cooper. The Bukidnons of Mindanao ed. by Paul S Martin and Lilian Ross. Chicago: Chicago Natural History Museum. 1956.

This is a study made at the time the Americans were forming the Higaonons into model villages and supplying them with plows and facilities for farming. The newly established villages were replicas of the more advanced settlements of the Christianized Bisayans. The *datu*s or local headmen were being replaced by "elected" village officials.

Francisco, Juan. Notes on Culture Change Among the Higaonon. Vol. 1 (No. 1). 1990.

In explaining culture change among this people, the author touched on their practice of swidden agriculture. He identified the months during which active farm work may be observed.

Lynch, Frank. trans. "The Bukidnon of North-Central Mindanao in 1889 (Letter of Fr. Jose Maria Clotet to the Reverend Father Rector of the Ateneo Municipal)" in Readings on the History of Northern Mindanao compiled by Renato Reyes y Bautista. Cagayan de Oro City: Xavier University. 1978.

The letter gives the reader a view of the various aspects of the culture of the Higaonon people: clothing and adornment, religious practices, marriage customs, weaponry and other artifacts, agricultural practices, tribal concept of justice and law, tribal etiquette, superstitious beliefs, dwelling places, and burial rites.

## MAMANUA

Rahmann, Rudolf, S.V.D. "Mamanuas of Northeastern Mindanao". CMU Journal of Sciences, Education and Humanities, vol. I (No. 2). 1990.

The author devotes a few pages of his work to a description of the crude kind of horticulture practiced by the Mamanuas. The kind of tools used depends on the type of crop. In addition, the Mamanuas gather all kinds of forest products.

## MANDAYA

Valderrama, Ursula C. The Colorful Mandaya: Ethnic Tribe of Davao Oriental. Davao City: Tesoro's Printing Press, 1989.

The book contains a discussion of the subsistence patterns of the Mandaya.

Cole, Faye Cooper. The Wild Tribes of Davao District, Mindanao. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1913.

This is a study of the various tribes in Davao, among which are the Mandayas. In this book the various aspects of the Mandaya culture are discussed.

## MANOBOS

Arcilla, Jose S.J., ed./trans./annot. Jesuit Missionary Letters from Mindanao, Vol. 1 (The Rio Grande Mission) Quezon City: Philippine Province Archives, 1990.

This book is a compilation of letters written by Jesuit missionaries doing work in Mindanao in the 19th century. Most of these letters treat of the ethnic groups found mostly in the mountains of Mindanao. The letters give the reader glimpses of the culture of the Manobos, among other tribes. Descriptions of their general appearance, clothing, farming practices, economic ventures, as well as dealings with neighboring tribal groups are also found. At the beginning, the Pulangi Basin was settled by the Manobos. The settlements were separated by natural barriers. Access to some of these settlements was made difficult by the hostile activities of the Moros.

Burton, Erlinda. "Gudgud: A Manobo Curing Ritual". Gimba, Vol. I No. 1 (November 1984). Cagayan de Oro: Mindanao Ethno-Culture Foundation. 1984.

This article discusses the procedure for carrying out the Gudgud ritual by describing in great detail one such event which the author herself had witnessed. The essence of the ritual lies in the *umagad* (soul) of a sick person being searched for and finally retrieved by the *baylan* (shaman) from the *diwata* or *diwatas* (spiritual beings) who may have snatched or captured it to be devoured. The ritual is said to be performed because of the belief that unless the patient's *umagad* is recaptured, he will never recover from his illness.

Cole, Faye Cooper. The Wild Tribes of Davao District, Mindanao. Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1913.

The book represents an extensive study of the various tribes in Davao, among them the Manobo. It contains an account of the history of these people.

Manuel, Esperidion A. Manuvu Social Organization. Quezon City: The Community Development Research Council. 1973.

In discussing the social organization of the Manuvu, the author mentions in scattered portions of the book aspects of the "slash and burn" method of dry agriculturing engaged in by these people.

Garvan, John. The Manobos of Mindanao. Washington: United States Government Printing Office. 1931.

The book treats of the great religious revival of the period between 1908 and 1910 among the Manobos of the Libuganon River. It started with the "miraculous

recovery" of a certain Manobo who had already been abandoned by his relatives because of his malignant sickness/disease. He attributed his recovery to the works of beneficent spirits. His people believed that he had been transformed into a deity who as such could impart himself to all whom he designed to honor.

He was later believed to have prophesied the destruction of the world after one moon and that the old tribal deities would cease to lend assistance to all who garbed themselves in black (non-Christians), with instructions to his relatives as to how they could save themselves.

Dubois, Carl D. "Death and Burial Customs of the Sarangani Manobo". Kinaadman: A Journal of the Southern Philippines, Vol. XII (No. 1). 1990.

The article deals with the various stages of the rites performed by the Sarangani Manobo for the sick, dying or dead person.

## MORO

Gowing, Peter G. Mandate from Moroland. Quezon City: PCAS. 1977.

Gowing described the hostile activities of the Moros directed against the American colonial government in Mindanao in the 1900s and the corresponding reactions of the latter to such activities.

## TIRURAY

Arcilla, Jose S.J., ed./trans./annot. Jesuit Missionary Letters from Mindanao, Vol. 1 (The Rio Grande Mission) Quezon City: Philippine Province Archives. 1990.

The book is a compilation of letters written by Jesuit missionaries doing work in Mindanao in the 19th

century. Most of these letters speak of the ethnic groups found mostly in the mountains of Mindanao.

The letters give the reader glimpses of the culture of the Tiruray, among other tribes. Descriptions of their general appearance, clothing, farming practices, economic ventures, as well as dealings with neighboring tribal groups were the topics of many of the letters.

Schlegel, Stuart A. "The Traditional Tiruray Zodiac: The Celestial Calendar of Philippine Swidden and Foraging People". Philippine Quarterly of Culture and Society, Vol. 15 (Nos. 1 & 23), 1987.

The article contains a description of the subsistence economy, of the traditional Tiruray. (The acculturated Tiruray, on the other hand, plow their own, or, more commonly, their landlord's established fields, repeatedly preparing, planting and harvesting the same plots of land.)

Schlegel, Stuart A. Tiruray Subsistence: From Shifting Cultivation to Plow Agriculture. Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press. 1979.

The book offers a contemporary case study of the transformation of a traditional economic system, as well as a glimpse into the day-to-day activities of the Tiruray, who have been compelled to change over from their traditional subsistence system (i.e swidden agriculture) to sedentary farming.

Schlegel, Stuart A. Tiruray Justice. California: University of California Press, 1970.

The author links the Tiruray sense of justice to their subsistence economy which is dependent on swidden agriculture, hunting, fishing and gathering of wild foods.