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The Mangyans of Mindoro: An EthnoHistory and Born Primitive in the Philippines

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Book Reviews

THE MANGYANS OF MINDORO: AN ETHNOHISTORY. By Violeta B. Lopez. Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 1976. xvii, 151 pages.

BORN PRIMITIVE IN THE PHILIPPINES. By Severino N. Luna. Carbondale, Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1975. xix, 138 pages.

The first book aims to fill a gap in "Mangyan Studies." It claims that other studies in the past had merely been ethnographic, content to describe individual ethnic groups in Mindoro such as the Hanunoo, Buid, Iraya, Alangan, etc. The present one is ethnohistoric and Mindoro-wide, i.e., it takes the inland as well as coastal populations as integral units in the evolution of Mindoro society. The historical framework is simply divided between "pre-1898" and "20th century," the former timeframe being broken down into pre-Hispanic and Hispanic; and the latter into American and Philippine. The structural framework likewise is simply an action-reaction model. This is clearly revealed in the central questions posed at the beginning of the book: (1) What constitute lowland pressures to the Mangyans of Mindoro? (2) How do Mangyans respond to lowland intrusion in their lives? (p. xiii).

Such intrusive elements include Chinese traders, European colonizers and missionaries, Tagalog and Moro immigrants, American designs on the Philippines, government integration policies, and other measures on social development. In response to these pressures the Mangyan reaction-patterns were either withdrawal or submission. Those who followed the flight option generally became the inland groups, while those who submitted became part of a mixed coastal population. With the successful Christianizing efforts of the Spaniards in the lowlands, the upland-lowland dichotomy evolved into the contrast between Mangyans and lowland Christians.

The flight inland was intensified when so-called Muslim marauders from Mindanao and Sulu fought the Spaniards over control of trade and slavery in Mindoro. The Mangyans, caught as it were in the cross-fire, fled the coastal settlements to the relative safety of the hills. With the coming of the Americans

the Mangyans were further isolated in their distinctiveness because of the American policy of keeping them away from the influence of the Tagalogs and other lowland Christians. The problem of "integration" eventually emerged with the nationalist concept of a national society transcending tribal and religious distinctions. This is a continuing problem up to the present.

The book's claim to provide a "new" or ethnohistoric perspective on the Mangyans is valid as far as presenting a general framework. But the contents of this framework have not been fully synthesized. The contents appear as a series of commentaries on excerpts culled from archaeological and historical sources arranged in a simple chronological series. Even the thematic focus on action and reaction is not explored deeply enough. For instance, the suggestion that the inland groups were constituted as a result of withdrawal from external exploitation is questionable. The nature of pre-Spanish Mangyan trade with the Chinese and other Asian traders presupposes the presence of active settlements in the mountainous hinterlands. The trade items that were exchanged for foreign imports were mostly forest products, e.g., wax, resin, rare woods, and other tropical forest products that are generally found in upland regions. People settle where resources are. Thus we can assume Mangyans already settled in the uplands long before any flight or withdrawal from the coast.

A final point should be made. Lopez corrected Leothiny Clavel and Marnintal Tamano on the history of the Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes. She probably does not realize that there were two bureaus with this same name. One, established in 1901, was renamed Bureau of Ethnographic Survey and died out before 1910. The other bureau with this name was established in 1916 and was "welfare-oriented" in contrast with its earlier namesake, which was "research-oriented."

The photographs are badly reproduced, making the book less attractive. In spite of its shortcomings — like calling Domingo Navarrete, O.P., a Jesuit! (p. 30) — in both content articulation and format, Lopez is to be congratulated for coming out with a useful pioneer work.

In contrast to Lopez's sweeping ethnohistory, *Born Primitive in the Philippines*, by Severino N. Luna, is a biography of a Buhid boy. The narrator, a young man called Bag-etan, recounts his adventures growing up in Buhid society, in the course of which we catch glimpses of customs and beliefs that are inherently interesting, if not as exoticism, as ethnographic information. Through the wanderings and transactions of Bag-etan, we see much of the Buhid life-cycle — birth, weddings, divorce, death. We catch something of law and politics through the accounts of conflicts and their resolutions. We see basic economic activities in the description of swidden farms and harvest customs.

The background of this book is no less interesting. Luna had a 300,000-

word manuscript in three volumes, collected over years of contact with the Buhid Mangyans. He passed the manuscript on to a group of Philippine friends at Michigan University who reworked the manuscript into a shorter, more popular account, in the process reducing the manuscript to about 10 percent of its original length. The chief editor claimed that nothing was ever added, either of substance or style; they only sifted the data in two steps. Perhaps because of this process of reduction, the book has, in some respects, an air of artificiality. The style is smooth and clean, calculated to attract English-speaking readers. But some of the behaviors and emotions attributed to Bag-etan, especially his series of amorous encounters, appear rather Hollywoodish. If one is interested in exotic reading and entertainment, rather than in hard ethnographic data, *Born Primitive* can be recommended as a complement to *The Mangyans of Mindoro*.

Eric S. Casiño

THE JAMA MAPUN: A CHANGING SAMAL SOCIETY IN THE SOUTHERN PHILIPPINES. By Eric Casiño. Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1976. xiv, 159 pages. ₱27.00/US\$9.00.

The Jama Mapun opus of Casiño, is basically a descriptive study that vacillates between definitive theoretical frames of reference. In the main, the author intends to show how the economy, polity and belief systems of this group have been affected by the European and American impact, and what were the sociohistorical mechanisms that projected the Jama Mapun "traditional" society into the modern world. The time scale of the study includes three periods: 1500–1900, 1900–1945, and 1945–1970. Two villages comprise the units of observation, while the unit of general survey is the entire ethnolinguistic group. The thematic problem chosen is sociocultural change, but set primarily in the historical context. The people referred to here are distributed differentially over Cagayan de Sulu, Southern Palawan, and coastal north Borneo. Cagayan de Sulu municipality includes the main island and eight islets, Kinapusan, Pambelikan, Bisu Bintut, Boh'an, Manda, Bulisu'an, Muligi, and Mambehewan, but the island group includes Taganak, Langawan, Leheman, Boh'an, Sibadung, and Bakungan. More narrowly focused, the study takes a close look at the villages of Duhul Batu located in the north-eastern corner of Cagayan de Sulu, and Pulot in southeastern Palawan.

In treating the general topics of government and law, the author shifts from the above-stated "more narrow focus" to a macrolevel approach. He defines the level of political activities of the "traditional" Jama Mapun society as occurring within the context of the state which is controlled by the Sultan, the district ruled by noble chiefs or prominent commoners, and the villages under headmen. He admits, however, that in practice management of