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Connected Through “Luck” Samarnon Migrants in Metro Manila and the Home Village

This article explores the relationship between the notion of “luck” and migration based on a study of villagers from Samar Island who migrated to Manila. Migrant narratives and interactions with people in their home villages reveal that luck is not just a matter of monetary gain but also of the ways in which migrants maintain social relationships. Migrants move out in search of luck, and on their return redistribute resources to relatives and friends for them to be received as fellow kin or villager who are blessed with luck. The notion of luck is utilized dynamically in both material and moral senses, and narrated and enacted repeatedly in the community.

KEYWORDS: SAMAR • MIGRATION • LUCK • RELATEDNESS • VALUE SYSTEM

High geographical mobility is often cited as a sociocultural characteristic of the inhabitants of insular Southeast Asia. For example, in Malaysia and Indonesia, some ethnic groups have specific terms that describe migration as a way of life, such as *masompe* among the Bugis, *merantau* among the Minangkabau, *bejalai* among the Iban, and *asiombala* among the Makassar. These terms, which refer to the act of moving away from one's native land to seek fortune and personal fame elsewhere (Tsubouchi 1998, 54–59; Tanaka 1999, 78–81; Acciaoli 2004), suggest the need to look at the sociocultural aspects of migration. In the Philippines these sociocultural aspects have not been given much attention.

Since the 1970s criticisms have been leveled against overarching theories of migration that are based either on individual rational-choice approach or the structural approach. As early as in 1973, Janet Abu-Lughod (1975, 201) emphasized that migrants should not be considered as “atoms stripped of their cultural and temporal diversity.” In recent years, an increasing number of anthropologists have become interested in human mobility, especially “transnational” ones. Anthropological migration studies, which focus on the cultural backgrounds of a social phenomenon, have also called for a closer examination of local interpretations of these flows of people in relation to migrants' worldviews, social relations, and identity, while taking into consideration the global dimension (Glick-Schiller et al. 1992; Kearney 1995; Brettell 2008).

Most studies of Philippine migration have analyzed it from an economic and demographic point of view, examining factors such as population pressure and imbalances of incomes and wages.¹ Since the 1990s, however, some studies have opened up a new window in Philippine migration studies. These works situate the migration phenomenon and make sense of it within local value systems (Perterra 1992; Margold 2002; Mateo 2003; Nagasaka 2005). Aguilar's (1999, 99) work is particularly salient to the present article as it illustrates migrants' experiences abroad by likening migration to a “rite of passage that also incorporates the element of gambling.” Success is evaluated in terms of symbolic aspects, rather than by socioeconomic indicators. Further, it regards international migration as the pursuit of *suwerte* (luck). What needs to be done, following this insightful work, is to explore how the notion of *suwerte* webs and affects the social relationships of migrants, especially between migrants and those who remain at home.

In this article I examine the phenomenon of internal migration through the notion of *suwerte*, which migrants often emphasize when referring to their act of migration. Based on a study of migrants from Samar Island who have moved to Manila, I argue that a close examination of migrants' narratives and their interactions with people in the home village shows that *suwerte* is not just a matter of monetary gain, but it is also closely related to the cultural norm of sharing resources among relatives and friends. For migrants, finding one's *suwerte* serves as the motive to move out of their familiar place toward a presumably more prosperous place. Upon their permanent or occasional return, the notion of *suwerte* induces migrants to redistribute among relatives and friends the resources that they have acquired, so that they will be received and recognized by the origin community as fellow members who have acquired *suwerte*. As such, the discourse of “searching for one's *suwerte*” is narrated and enacted repeatedly in the community, adjusting itself to the changing macro-socioeconomic system.

This exploration of *suwerte* and relatedness also touches upon the issue of space. Some studies on migration in the late 1980s offered a new theoretical insight into culture and society by viewing migrants and those with whom they maintained links as considering rural and urban areas as part of a single social field within which resources and opportunities, as well as constraints on those opportunities, existed. Thus, they rejected the previously dominant view that paid little or no attention to the migrant's tie with the origin community (for example, Kearney 1986). Along this line, in the field of rural-to-urban migration in the Philippines, Lilian Trager (1988) studied how Filipino migrants continued to maintain their ties to their original families and kin regardless of distance, especially through remittances. Recently Itaru Nagasaka (2003) has illustrated how an Ilocano migrant community was formed near Metro Manila through strong kinship ties, while responding to macrostructural processes. Although these studies have proved a valuable dimension of Philippine migration, they do not discuss the cutting of ties or how one can cease to be related. This article tries to show one way to explain how migrants maintain or discontinue their ties with their home village by focusing on the notion of *suwerte*.

Data Gathering

I have chosen Samar Island as the research area because it is a major—if not the major—area of outmigration in the Philippines since the 1960s.² However,

no major studies have been conducted so far to investigate migration trends and patterns on what is the third largest island in the country.³ Thus, this study serves as the first attempt to shed light on the Samamon diaspora today.

The data in this article were gathered during fieldwork conducted between 2000 and 2003. The fieldwork consisted of (a) a fifteen-month stay in Barangay Bato (not the real name) in Calbayog City, Samar, and (b) a six-month stay in two urban colonies of Batonan in Manila, one on P. Street in Tondo District, Manila, and the other along Katipunan Avenue in Quezon City. Barangay Bato was chosen as the focal research site because it was typical of Calbayog's coastal area in terms of population, educational level, occupational categories, and living standards. During my stay in these two locations, I collected information through participant observation and daily conversations with villagers, life history interviews, and questionnaire surveys.

Waray was the language used in the daily conversations in and around Bato. In their Manila colonies, however, Tagalog was more often heard. Indeed, almost all Batonan whom I met in Manila were bilingual, and fluent in both Waray and Tagalog. However, some Tagalog terms relevant to Manila-bound migration were used more commonly even in Waray sentences, such as *katulong* (helper) and *pasalubong* (present), than their Waray equivalents (*kabulig* and *panupuan*, respectively). In this article the extracts from interviews are presented in the language in which they were recorded.

Life history interviews with special emphasis on migration experiences were collected from sixteen women and thirteen men of various age groups, for a total of twenty-nine life histories. Before these life history interviews were conducted, a survey of the migration experiences of 256 Batonan was conducted in July and August 2000.⁴ Respondents who seemed to best represent migration patterns and characteristics were then selected for the life history interviews. Approximately half of the interviews was conducted in Bato, and the rest in Metro Manila. The average life history interview lasted two and half hours. Of the life histories fifteen were digitally recorded with permission by the interviewees.

Aside from the survey of the migration experiences of 256 Batonan, several other surveys were also conducted, such as a household survey of Barangay Bato (February 2002), a survey of homecoming Batonan and pasalubong items during the barrio fiesta (June 2002), a household survey of the barangay where P. Street was located (March 2003), and a genealogical survey of Bato residents (September 2003). The results of these surveys support

this article's arguments, although due to space limitations the survey results cannot be discussed at length.

The Setting

Barangay Bato is located on the western coast of Samar Island (fig. 1). Together with Leyte and some other smaller islands, Samar makes up the Eastern Visayas. According to the 2000 census, Samar has a population of 1.4 million people, and almost all residents are native Waray speakers. The completion of the Maharlika Highway, which connects Luzon and Mindanao via the Eastern Visayas, has facilitated access to Manila via land, with the journey taking from fifteen to twenty-five hours, depending on one's point of departure on Samar.

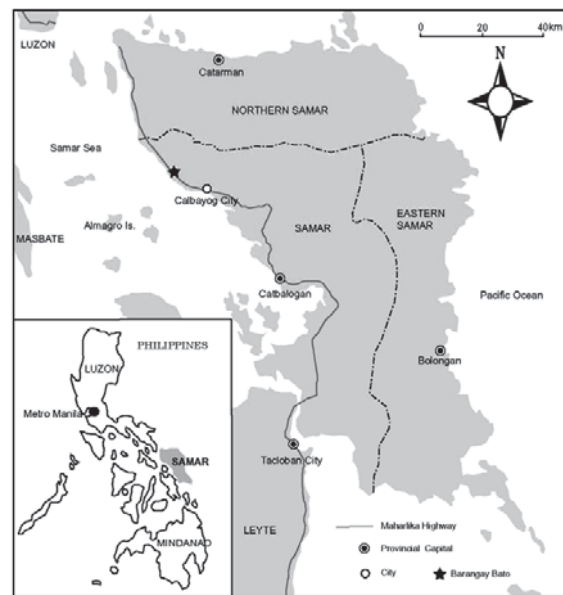


Fig. 1. Map of Samar Island, showing the location of Barangay Bato

The primary economic activities on the island are small-scale agriculture and fisheries. Large landholdings of more than fifty hectares are very rare. Coconut is the principal export crop. Although the people of Samar produce rice, they have yet to achieve self-sufficiency in this staple (BAS 1994, xxxiii–xlili; NSCB 1998, 5.19–5.21). In most coastal areas, farming and fishing go hand in hand. Despite the introduction of new technologies and increasing commercialization over the past forty years, most fishers employ traditional fishing techniques, such as hook-and-line fishing on paddled canoes (BFAR 2001, 25). Manufacturing establishments and commercial complexes have little significant presence on Samar, and the island remains essentially rural.

One striking feature of the island in the latter half of the twentieth century is its high outmigration rate. The population growth rate of the Eastern Visayas during the 1948–2000 period turned out to be the lowest among the sixteen regions of the Philippines, with an annual average of only 1.39 percent, a mere half of the national average of 2.69 percent. Between the two major islands of the region, Samar grew at a slightly lower rate than Leyte. The primary reason for the low population growth rate is the high outmigration rate. According to migration statistical data available for 1960–1970, 1970–1975, 1975–1980, and 1985–1990, the region ranks within the top three emigration areas in all periods except for 1970–1975. By choice of

destination, the region demonstrates a high proportion of people moving to Metro Manila: since the 1960s, approximately one out of every two emigrants has relocated to Metro Manila.⁵

It must be noted that, contrary to the heavy outflow of population in the latter half of the twentieth century, Samar was at the receiving end of population movements from other parts of the Philippines until the outbreak of the Second World War. Immigrants to Samar were looking for land to cultivate on their own (Hosoda 2007a; Cruickshank 1985; McIntyre 1951).

Barangay Bato is located about 20 kilometers from the center of Calbayog City, the only city on the island. Bato faces the Samar Sea on one side, and hilly coconut farms on the other (fig. 2). The Maharlika Highway, which runs along the coast, is the only car route. Most of the houses are made of wooden material, with better-off residents using cement; all houses stand along the highway. The major infrastructures also lie along this road: a chapel, the barangay plaza, and a public elementary school.

As of 2002, the barangay's population stood at 962 (486 males and 476 females) in 191 households. The “dependent population,” consisting of individuals below 15 years old and those above 65 years old, accounts for 50 percent of the population, indicative of a heavy outflow of people aged 15 years old and above.

In the past residents lived on copra and small-scale fishing, but in recent years young people have been entering other occupations. The household survey of Bato conducted in 2002 found that farming and/or fishing were the most important means of livelihood among villagers, with 28 percent of all households considering them as their main source of income. Next in importance was wage employment in the logging industry (20 percent), followed by remittances (11 percent). The rest were drivers or conductors of trucks and public vehicles, carpenters, and small-scale business owners. Generally speaking, men engaged in the types of work described above, while women managed household chores, although it was quite common for women to run a small-scale business near their houses.

The educational level of Batanon residents varies depending on age group. Although the great majority of the older generation finished elementary school only, or dropped out before finishing it, an increasing number of the younger generation (born after 1970) have gone to high school or further on to college. My survey in 2000 revealed that one out of every two females and one out of every three males who were in their

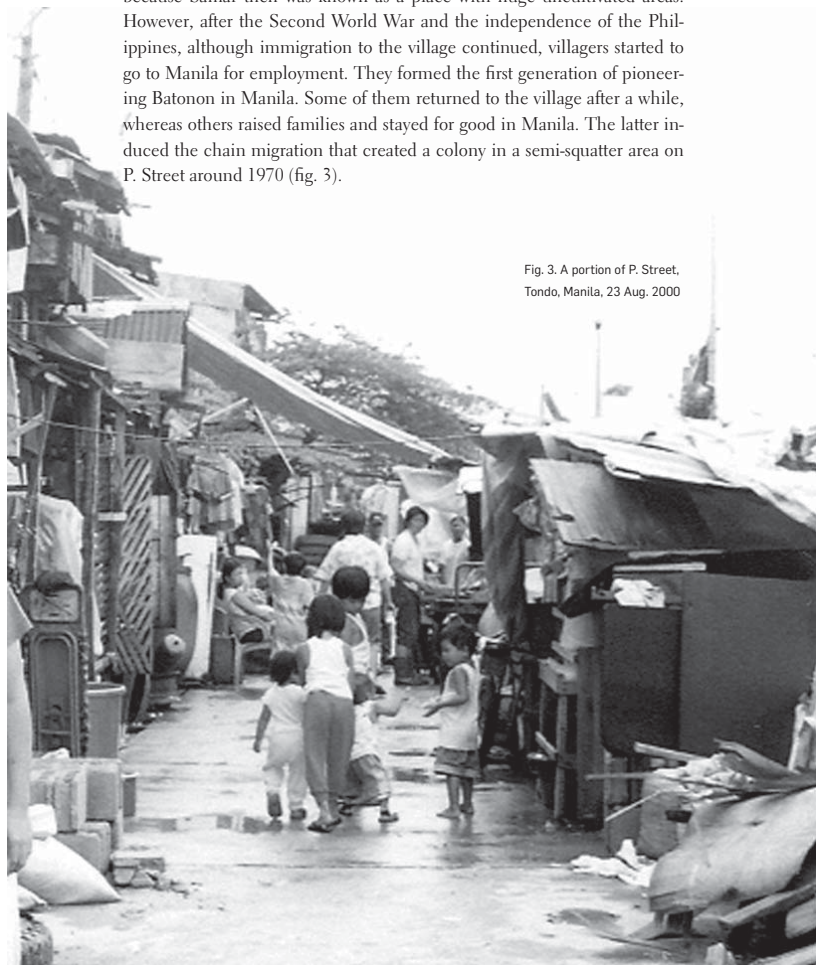


Fig. 2. Barangay Bato's seashore and coconut hills, 30 June 2000

twenties and thirties had experienced studying in secondary or higher educational programs.

The migration history of people in Bato may exemplify how Samar Island became a well-known source of migrants in Metro Manila. Until the American colonial period, the village was more of an immigration area because Samar then was known as a place with huge uncultivated areas. However, after the Second World War and the independence of the Philippines, although immigration to the village continued, villagers started to go to Manila for employment. They formed the first generation of pioneering Batonon in Manila. Some of them returned to the village after a while, whereas others raised families and stayed for good in Manila. The latter induced the chain migration that created a colony in a semi-squatter area on P. Street around 1970 (fig. 3).

Fig. 3. A portion of P. Street, Tondo, Manila, 23 Aug. 2000



Those who went to Manila after the 1970s can be called the second-generation Batonon in Manila. Unlike the first generation, the second-generation migrants had the advantage of the availability of wide kinship networks in Manila, the change in mode of transportation from ship to bus that made access to Manila easier, and more information about Manila through personal communication and the mass media. At present an overwhelming number (about 90 percent) of men and women in their twenties and thirties have either worked in Manila and/or other urban areas or gone there to hunt for jobs. In Manila most men from Bato are employed as unskilled laborers in the construction and transportation industries, while most women work as domestic helpers and the like in the informal sector. However, their destination is no longer limited to Manila; some go to other big cities within the country such as Cebu, while others move overseas to places such as the Middle East and Hong Kong.⁶

Despite a strong trend of outmigration, only one out of ten households regarded remittances as the most important source of income in the 2002 survey. Batonon in Manila would portray their life in the village as *Kumalon ka la sin kamote, saging, balanghoy, makakasalba ka* (You just eat sweet potatoes, bananas, and cassavas, you can survive). The comment would be followed by the next phrase, as Jhoy (Case 3 below) says: *Pero nahunahuna ko nga waray ko kabubuwason dinhe* [sic], *salit kumanhi ak sa Maynila para makipagsapalaran* (But I thought that I'd have no future [there], so I came to Manila to try my luck).

Suwerte as a Way of Life

When respondents were asked during the surveys why they moved to Manila or elsewhere, the most immediate answer was *trabaho* (job). However, a different way of answering the same question was heard frequently in the course of daily conversations.

For instance, a 29-year-old man in Bato told me and his friends one afternoon while we were all sitting in a *balay-balay* (small house), *Waray nahihinabu dinhe, salit makikipagsapalaran ak sa siyudad* (Nothing happens here, so I will try my luck in the city). Instead of a concrete target, such as getting a job, the statement emphasizes an attitude toward life, one embedded in the local culture's worldview. Thus, *makipagsapalaran* (finding one's luck) is often used in reference to the general attitude of the group to which they belong; it refers to their way of life.

A 59-year-old woman on P. Street explained to me the background of the Batanon on P. Street: *Salit kumanhi kami dinhe para makipagsapalaran, kay kon sadto la kami sa probinsiya, an mga lubi an amon usa la nga pangabuhì* (So we came here to look for luck, because before when we were in the province our livelihood was just coconuts). In another instance, when I was interviewing some Batanon to draw their genealogical chart, a 44-year-old woman in Bato narrated the current dispersion of her family members in the country, *Asya ini an kinabuhì san mga pobre nga Filipinos. Tungod san kapobrehan, napipiritan kami kumadto sa iba nga lugar para makipagsapalaran sa pangabuhì. Pareho siton amon mga kaganak sa tuhod kon nano an ira gin buhat sadto, asya liwat kami yana* (This is the way of life of poor Filipinos. Because of poverty we are forced to go to another place to find luck for our livelihood. Just as our ancestors did in the past, so do we at present).⁷

The root word of makipagsapalaran, *palad*, refers to both the “palm of one’s hand” and “fate” or “fortune.”⁸ Makipagsapalaran means taking a chance or risk and venturing, and could be paraphrased as *makipagsuwerte-han san kinabuhì* (find luck to improve one’s life) and *mamiling nga mau-pay nga kapalaran* (look for good luck). Thus the aim of pakikipagsapalaran (noun form of makipagsapalaran) is oriented toward obtaining suwerte (luck) in relation to kinabuhì (one’s life). The most common image associated with suwerte is receiving an unexpected, large tangible benefit. However, economic benefits acquired through long years of hard work and through thrift are less likely to be called suwerte.

In Bato, although the term suwerte is frequently used on various occasions—from religious scenes to gambling arenas—its notion seems to be most vividly manifested in activities related to fishing.⁹ A big catch is regarded as suwerte, and a certain “ceremony” is associated with it. At dawn, when most fishermen return from the sea, people speak to each other to find out if anyone has got a big catch. If that happens, they wait for the lucky fisherman to arrive at the shore to receive some fish, or else they go home but expect that someone will bring some fish from the fisherman with a large catch. Although the lucky fisherman may not be socially close, as long as another villager waits at the seashore and asks for some fish—an act more common among children and the most hard-up in the village—the lucky fisherman will share some small amount of fish with him. Some say that suwerte may disappear if it is not shared, and a fisherman who does not follow this custom is likely to receive negative comments, either openly or secretly (Hosoda 2005).¹⁰

The case of fishermen suggests that there is some difference in the notion of suwerte in their case and in that of outmigrants. Although both share the notion of sharing bounty, among fishers suwerte refers simply to a big catch or a series of big catches; among migrants suwerte connotes the possibility of uplifting one’s living standard.

Suwerte and the Risking of One’s Life

To identify more concrete aspects associated with the notions of pakikipagsapalaran and suwerte, the life histories of two first-generation migrants to Manila are presented below. Both informants come from the same socioeconomic background in the village. Their families survived at the subsistence level, their parents were engaged in farming and fishing, and they lived in wooden-style houses. They did not finish elementary school, like most other children at that time.

Case 1: PETERNO (male, born 1937)

Peterno, the fourth-born among twelve children in the family, was helping his father in the farm and in fishing in the village, but at the same time he also went around to other villages and worked at logging sites, ricefields, and so on, whenever there were such opportunities. He went as far as Cebu in 1956 at the age of 19, together with his sister and her family who were already staying there. He spent two years as an ice cream vendor just as his sister did at a market in Cebu City. However, noticing that there were few jobs available to him, he returned to Bato.

In 1960, having heard from one brother who returned from Manila that there were plenty of jobs there, Peterno left the village to go to Manila with his brother. He stayed at their uncle’s house in Frisco, Quezon City. Initially he spent time making recycled sacks in the house where he lived, and he also worked in construction sites. However, as soon as he heard that his cousin knew a good *amo* (employer) he moved to P. Street, where he began to work as a *pahinante* (crew) in the trucking business of his cousin’s employer. He then got married to a woman from Pampanga. When the trucking business declined, he worked as a carpenter or a construction worker. In the 1970s he started his own “buy-and-sell” business, handling various goods, including watches and jewelries smuggled at the South Harbor. A close friend had introduced him to this trade.

There were times when he visited towns in northern Luzon whenever he heard of opportunities there. On one occasion a friend offered him the

chance to start a retail business in Baguio, but he backed out. His friend succeeded in the business and now owns a store in Baguio. Peterno thinks that this success might have been his suwerte as well had he gone to Baguio, but it eluded him. Now he complains that his body aches and he finds vending difficult. He thinks of retiring soon, but returning to Bato is not in his plan because his parents had passed away and his children are all in Manila.

Case 2: LINDA (female, born in 1944)

Linda first moved to Manila in 1957 at the age of 13. She had wanted to go to Manila to earn money and help the family, but her widowed mother did not allow her. However, when her mother's close friend from Bato said she could take care of Linda in Manila, her mother permitted Linda to leave. After six months in Quezon City, her mother's friend disappeared without giving notice to Linda, so the latter searched for her own relatives in Manila whom she found in Tondo. Linda's relatives helped her obtain work as *kabulig* (domestic helper). But she did not feel safe in this kind of work, as in one house she was nearly raped and in another the amo secretly arranged for her to marry a man she disliked. Thinking that she was better off in Samar, Linda went back to Bato in 1960 and married a man from the next village whom her mother recommended.

In 1969 a fire broke out at the center of Bato village and her house burned down. The following year Linda's whole family moved to Manila, this time to P. Street where they could count on their fellow villagers' help. She found work as a *labandera* (laundrywoman) and her husband as a *pahinante*. Five years later, however, Linda was possessed by an *espiritu* (spirit). Taking it as a bad sign, the scared family moved back to Bato. Many years later, in 1988, Linda moved to Manila alone and worked again as a *labandera*. After a few years, she met an amo who is *buotán* (kind and helpful, see the next section), for whom she works until today. Her husband and some of her children also went to Manila to explore opportunities with Linda's amo or in other places.

Linda says that she has not received suwerte. She says, *Kay an pananglitán, an bato kuno nga makiwa, waray lumot. Ganito siguro ang nakasulat sa palad ko* (As a saying goes, a rolling stone gathers no moss. Maybe this is what is written on my palm). Her hope is now pinned on her bright youngest son who is currently attending high school in Manila and who aspires to be an overseas worker someday.

These life histories demonstrate several aspects of the notion of pursuing suwerte. First, as the word *mamiling* (root: *biling*, or search) indicates, finding suwerte involves not a passive wait but an active search for opportunity. In one's life there may be one or more chances to receive suwerte, but if the person misses the chance it is believed that the opportunity may never come again, as Peterno's interpretation of his life implies. Life histories of other Batonon show that many migrants have moved around places or changed jobs or employers until they find suwerte. Even migrants who have stayed in one job and one place watch out for the arrival of suwerte.

It is important to remember that suwerte is considered basically as a god-send, rather than as a simple material gain over which only human beings have control. The notion of suwerte is tied to the larger context of socio-cosmic principles in the area. Many events in life—both good and bad—are believed to be caused by God or, sometimes, by animistic spirits. On the one hand, these supernatural powers can bring special benefits to a particular person if they acknowledge or appreciate something in that person, such as an innate characteristic (appearance, for example) and good deeds. On the other hand, they can also bring hardships if they deem the person to deserve them. Thus, a number of rituals and taboos are aimed at influencing or deflecting the course of supernatural events. Moreover, people often emphasize that they behave morally and that their pursuit of suwerte is not only for their own sake but also to help others, especially the family (Hosoda 2007a, 74–75, 85).

Second, the concept of *makipagsapalaran* includes the sense of risking and what is put at risk is nothing else but one's life. Generally speaking, and as the word denotes, ventures that involve risks are typically regarded as *makipagsapalaran*. However, in the vicinity of Bato, the term is usually used when someone moves to another place, hoping to improve one's life. Normally villagers do not consider the business ventures of those with access to financial resources as *makipagsapalaran*; rather, they regard people with resources as different because *mayada na sira suwerte* (they already have suwerte). This contrast may come from the idea that moving out of a familiar place involves risking one's life, which is a person's last resort. This interpretation can explain why *makipagsapalaran* is considered as a way of life for "poor Filipinos" as one informant puts it—"poor Filipinos" are portrayed as without any capital to risk other than their lives.

The idea of risking one's self is closely related to notions of space and boundaries among the villagers. The achievements and stories of those who

return permanently or occasionally from Manila are the most powerful media for spreading its image as a place of abundant resources, symbolically represented by their appearance and accouterments (e.g., whiter skin, travel bags, and high heels for women), and the many boxes of pasalubong, gifts brought by those returning home.¹¹ At the same time, the destinations that makipagsapalaran migrants aim for are described as unfamiliar and dangerous places. The negative aspects of Manila that villagers emphasize are its hazardous working conditions, oppressive bosses, high cost of living, unhealthy living environment, numerous crimes, and even dangerous spirits, as in Linda's life story. Such spatial images do change, along with changes in the macroeconomic conditions, availabilities of technologies and networks, and so forth. Indeed, Linda and many others stress that Manila is no longer *mabango* (fragrant, meaning attractive), but "abroad" is (Hosoda 2007a, 78–84).

Third, the way to receive suwerte is not limited to economic activities but also includes building strong ties with people with suwerte. In his life story, Petero cites finding a good means of livelihood as the suwerte he has possibly missed, which is often what other migrants interviewed also say. Becoming overseas workers and having children who are overseas workers are also common examples of receiving suwerte. In other cases, being able to build strong ties with buotan people with suwerte is considered as a sign of suwerte, such as finding a kind and wealthy employer or spouse. The desire to find a wealthy spouse is often heard among female migrants seeking suwerte.

Fourth, there seems no end in one's pursuit for suwerte. As Linda grows old and thinks of retirement, her hope is that her last son will become an overseas worker. Even successful migrants (discussed below) who are called *masuwerte* (full of suwerte) do not consider their pursuit as having ended. There is still a need to keep suwerte to uplift the living standard not only of their immediate families but also of the many relatives of theirs so that all of their in-group will cease to live the way of the pobre. Indeed, the concept of suwerte has another side that can function to keep the individual search for suwerte as a communal pursuit, as discussed in the next section.¹²

Relatedness in Everyday Life

Thus far we have discussed the search for suwerte from the individual's point of view. However, as will be explained further, the attainment of suwerte re-

quires recognition by fellow villagers. In this light, the interactions between economically successful migrants and other villagers need to be understood. But, first, we shall look briefly at basic social relations in the village.

All of the 962 villagers in Bato at the time of my research were related to one another through consanguinity or affinity. As the villagers themselves emphasize, *magkaurupod kami nga tanan* (we are all relatives). As in many other parts of Southeast Asia, the bilateral kinship system is observed in Bato. The most common composition of members living in one *balay* (house) is a combination of parents (or a parent) and their unmarried children, or the so-called nuclear family. Those living in one house are called *usa ka pamilya* (one family). Pamilya refers to a group of people who perform daily activities together, characterized especially by actual coresidence and shared consumption. Pamilya is defined as a group of people who share one hearth or stove. In Bato a neolocal residence style is observed; it is common for a couple, after marriage, to build their own house and live independently of their parents.

The term *urupod* denotes relatives in the Waray language.¹³ Among persons considered to belong to the same urupod relationships are expressed in terms of "close" or "distant" relatives. Urupod derives from the term *upod*, which means a companion. When focusing attention on the relationship between persons who are categorized into an urupod, it seems that factors such as birth, as well as eating and living together, are its basic elements. This is similar to the concept of pamilya. However, pamilya can be distinguished from urupod in terms of the intensity of the relationships, that is, those between urupod members are less intimate than those of the pamilya.

What seems to be given emphasis in local social relationships is actual interaction. People carefully examine the nature, quality, and level of intimacy of their relationships, often by asking for and offering help on a daily basis. The most visible instance is the daily exchange of food. Through these interactions people ceaselessly discuss whether a person is buotan or not. Buotan denotes a person who knows what it is to be human, which according to common usage is best manifested through interactions with a person in need. A buotan will listen to the hardships of the poor, feel compassion, and then offer help, in cash or in kind. The word buotan is never used to describe a person who looks down on the poor. If one does not express feelings of compassion toward a person in need, one will receive a bad reputation, be isolated, and run the risk of losing support and protection in the village (Hosoda 2005).

In particular, villagers carefully monitor the behavior of newly rich members of their community. Ordinary villagers divide the “rich” into two categories depending on their way of dealing with others: those with a spirit of sharing and helping are called “buotan rich,” while those without such a spirit are referred to merely as “rich.” Based on their actual attitudes, people further describe the mere “rich” with adjectives opposite to buotan, such as *kuripot* (stingy), *duhong* (greedy), and *matapobre* (looking down on the poor). These negative terms are used not only in rumors but also to the face of the rich.

Masuwerter Migrants and Fiesta Homecoming

During the life history interviews and everyday conversations on P. Street, I learned that some migrants are considered to have received suwerte and are admired by their fellow villagers as masuwerter (or may suwerte), and that there seems to be a certain standard to qualify as such. The number of persons who are regarded as masuwerter varies depending on the person being asked. Nevertheless, four individuals are almost always included in the list of masuwerter on P. Street. Note that many men living on P. Street are employed in the trucking business, as the street faces a parking lot for trucks that go to the South Harbor. Thus, the most common success story in this area is to become a truck owner.

- Porsing (female, born in 1928): worked as a katulong at a Chinese store, then married a son of her amo; she now runs retail and loan businesses.
- Nono (male, born in 1943): after working as a pahinante and then truck driver, he became the first truck owner among Bato migrants; he now owns six trucks.
- Fanny (female, born in 1962): worked as a katulong near P. Street, then married a truck driver from Pampanga; she now owns three trucks and an apartment building, and runs a small store.
- Jhoy (male, born in 1966): after working as a pahinante and various similar jobs, started a loan business with his wife from Batangas; he now owns seven trucks, and runs a loan business.

Taking into consideration other masuwerter migrants not included in the list above, we can identify several criteria used by people to recognize someone as masuwerter. One is the type of profession. The masuwerter tend to

be (a) owners (truck owner, storeowner); (b) office workers (public servant, accountant); or (c) overseas workers. They tend to send their children to universities or colleges, and live in a large house made of hard materials, such as concrete blocks. Interestingly, these socioeconomic qualifications are necessary but not sufficient to be called masuwerter. In fact, some migrants who meet the socioeconomic criteria are not mentioned as masuwerter. Leleth (discussed below) is a case in point. The crucial difference seems to arise from how migrants maintain relationships with fellow villagers. All four of the migrants mentioned above either directly employ fellow villagers or have introduced them to prospective employers. They also either provide support to fellow villagers in need, or at least do not rudely reject their requests.

Homecoming is another occasion when people judge if a migrant can be regarded as masuwerter. Most migrants from Bato return to their home village during the fiesta season, which is considered as the most important event of the year (fig. 4 and fig. 5). Masuwerter migrants perform five ideal-typical acts.

First, they return in triumph and are dressed in fancy clothes, with women sporting jewelry and cosmetics conspicuously. They shower their families, relatives, and friends with boxes of pasalubong. To cite an example, in 2003, Luz, a 44-year-old married woman working on the office staff of a Catholic convent in Manila, spent two months of her salary on thirteen boxes of pasalubong. Luz went to Manila in 1991, leaving her husband (a farmer) and five children in Bato. Having worked as katulong in many houses, in 2001, *sa kaluoy san Diyos* (by the mercy of God), she met a buotan priest who introduced her to the convent where she receives a monthly salary of P7,000 (previously her monthly salary was P2,000). Her trip to Bato in 2003 was her first return visit to the home village after she was said to have received suwerte. Luz gave electrical appliances, furniture, and clothes to her family, and clothes and sandals to her close relatives and friends. She brought various groceries to stock the home and pass to other relatives who might need help. In addition, she brought six kilograms of biscuits and other snacks to give to visitors stopping by to greet her. Because she did not have enough money for the homecoming, she borrowed the equivalent of one month's salary from a private agency. Indeed, migrants often dread going home only to be called *kuripot* or *iba na* (she or he is different now).

Second, masuwerter migrants offer special dishes (mostly pork and beef) to visitors during the fiesta. The fiesta is not only a religious celebration but



Fig. 4. Long-distance buses from Manila stop at Bato to unload passengers and their *pasalubong*, 26 May 2002



Fig. 5. Fiesta mass of Barangay Bato, 26 May 2002

also an opportunity for family members and relatives to reunite. People eat from the same plate, which is called *saro* (share with the food) and symbolizes unity. In insular Southeast Asia, it is commonly argued that food symbolizes life, and that relationships (through the sharing of food as well as blood, as in childbirth) mark the core of the area's kinship system (Carsten 1997; Janowski 2007). Meals, therefore, appear to be part of a process of stabilizing social relationships between relatives, colleagues, business customers, and friends. The host family of the fiesta is expected to offer lavishly special dishes to such visitors. Masuwerte migrants add expensive dishes to the menu and feed visitors extravagantly.

Third, masuwerte migrants are eager to participate in fundraising dances called *kuratsa*. The *kuratsa* is a traditional courtship dance popular in Samar and Leyte, which has been incorporated recently in fundraising activities of the fiesta. In this dance, participants throw money, called *gala*, onto the floor while dancing (fig. 6). The money on the floor is collected as a donation to the barangay council and to the chapel (fig. 7).

Fourth, some masuwerte migrants take on the prestigious role of *mayor* (main sponsor). The mayor acts as the village's representative in renewing the patronage of the village saint by providing various offerings, including repairing the chapel building, inviting priests from big towns for the fiesta mass, and providing food and drinks to hundreds of visitors. Records in Bato show that, in recent years, successful migrants or village people who receive financial assistance from successful migrants have performed the role of mayor.

Lastly, it must be emphasized that offering money or goods to other villagers as described above also has a moral dimension: it must come from a spirit of compassion. In Bato, as stated earlier, people constantly examine the nature, quality, and level of intimacy of their relationships by asking for and offering help, and they then discuss if a particular person—especially one with more resources than others—remains *buotan* or not.

The concept of *buotan* becomes of particular interest when we look into the different behaviors of migrants who have acquired resources as a result of their *pakikipagsapalaran*. This notion seems to affect the behavior of homecoming migrants, who execute the typical acts of masuwerte migrants outlined above.



Fig. 6. *Kuratsa* dance at the Bato barangay plaza, 25 May 2002



Fig. 7. *Gala* collected and counted immediately after each *kuratsa* dance, 25 May 2002

Different Types of Migrants with Resources

To illustrate the social context in which *suwerte* is recognized in a migrant with resources, three different cases of economically successful migrants are presented below. The first case is that of a migrant whom villagers consider as *masuwerte*.

Case 3: JHOY (male, born in 1966)

Jhoy affirms that he came to Manila in 1990 in order to *makipagsapalaran*. As of 2003, in addition to his seven trucks, he owns a three-story house made of concrete blocks, the best-looking house on the vicinity of P. Street.

Although he is regarded as a *masuwerte* migrant, he is afraid of slanderous rumors. These days the people of Bato consider Jhoy, his parents, and siblings as successful. At the same time, some people both in Bato and on P. Street question whether they remain *buotan*. It has been rumored that Jhoy might be getting money from illegal activities, which worries him because *libak* (backbiting) may affect his family in the home village.

Jhoy is the eldest of six siblings. His parents employ five to six crewmembers for their fishing enterprise, while his second and third brothers run the largest *sari-sari* (variety) store and loan business in the village, respectively. His second brother and brother-in-law are members of the barangay council. The types of assistance Jhoy is expected to provide include providing jobs in his trucking business, paying for medicine and babies' milk, hosting drinking sessions, and lending money.

He returns to the village every fiesta with his wife. He explains, *Asya la ini iton akon oras nga makaupod ko iton akon mga urupod ngan nagpapasalamat ak sa Ginoo* (It is my only chance to be together with my relatives, and I must give thanks to God). To him attending the *kuratsa* dance is one big joy. In 2003 he brought along P30,000 for the gala and the fiesta dishes. Jhoy considers it a pleasure that many people approach him. He says, *Malipayon ak pamation nga iton akon mga kasangkayan o barkada nga gintatawag ak nira nga "Jhoy," o mga umangkon, "Mano Jhoy"* (I feel very happy to hear my friends call me "Jhoy," or my nephews and nieces call "Mano Jhoy").

Despite the heavy expectations laid on him, he remains within the Bato community. There may be an economic reason for his maintenance of good relations with villagers, because his trucking business requires a pool of trust-

worthy male laborers, and it is best if he knows well the original families of his workers. The successful migrant may also derive joy and satisfaction when village mates rely on him.

Equally important here is the fear of libak, which drives Jhoy to act according to what is expected of masuwerte migrants both in Bato village and on P. Street. It suggests that members of the Bato community possess the means and power to negotiate and form relations with their fellow migrants who have acquired suwerte (cf. Foster 1972).

The next case is that of an economically successful migrant who has only weak ties with the village.

Case 4: PAPANG (female, born in 1935)

Papang, one of Jhoy's aunts, is one of the pioneers of the Batanon community on P. Street and is now a truck owner. In recent years, however, she rarely visits her home village.

In 1965, when she became a widow, she migrated to Manila and began to work as *sa balay* (domestic helper). Then, having built a hut of her own on P. Street, she brought her three children from Bato to Manila. At present, she earns a living from a truck bought by her daughter-in-law and two grandchildren who work in Taiwan. She also owns a two-storey house on P. Street. She has hosted a number of Batanon who have come to P. Street to check if any opportunities existed for them in Manila.

Papang recalls that the last time she went back to Bato was in 1990 for the funeral of her elder brother. She has not returned to the village since then. She says,

Mayada ako tuna didto sa Bato. Karuyag ko talaga bumisita ngadto, pero iton problema iton kwarta. Mahal iton pagbiyahe, ngan kinahanglan mo magdara sin mga pasalubong nga damo. Kon magdadara ak sin mga pasalubong, an akon mga kababaryo, malipayon sira tanan. Ngan kon si ak naman iton mauli na ngadto sa Maynila sira naman tanan may pabalon sa akon nga mga kamote, saging. Usahay makaar-owod kon waray kwarta.

I have a piece of land in Bato. I really want to visit there, but money is a problem. The trip is expensive, and you need to bring lots of pasalubong. If I bring pasalubong, my fellow villagers will all be happy. And

then when I return to Manila it's their turn to give me a lot of goodies to bring home, sweet potatoes and bananas. It is a shame, nonetheless, if I do not have enough money there.

Papang seems to think that she is expected to bring a share of her luck in the form of pasalubong when she visits the village. This share of luck is supposed to match her lifestyle in Manila. Thus, she is afraid of not meeting such expectations, which discourages her from returning to Bato. This may be regarded as a case in which the migrant escapes from the sociocultural norms of the village, while avoiding direct confrontation.

What happens when a migrant returns to the village but does not meet the villagers' expectations? Actually it is not easy to observe the direct interactions between such a migrant and the villagers, because this type of migrant is likely to keep a distance from the village community. The next case, that of a niece of Papang who worked overseas, is rather rare. Although she built a concrete house in Bato, her attitude toward villagers is quite different from the ideal masuwerte migrant.

Case 5: LELETH (female, born in 1968)

Leleth came to Manila when she was 15 years old. Since then she has been living on P. Street. After working in factories and restaurants in Manila, in 1993 she began an overseas career as a domestic helper in the Middle East, Hong Kong, and Taiwan. In 2001 she temporarily stopped working overseas. She lives in a concrete house on P. Street together with her parents. As of 2003, she is running a small sari-sari store, and is waiting for a chance to go to Taiwan again. She has also built a concrete house in Bato as a vacation house, which is unoccupied when she is not in the village.

During the 2003 fiesta, Leleth went back to the village in her brother's car. Her brother is also an overseas migrant worker. She brought with her electrical appliances and furniture for the vacation house. With the exception of a package of sweets for her relatives who take care of her house, she did not bring anything for the villagers. She did not participate in the kuratsa dance; instead, she watched the dance, seated at a table that she had rented from the barangay council for the night. At her table were her companions from Manila.

Leleth seems to keep a psychological distance from the villagers and the way they interact with one another in Bato. She says,

Ang mga tawo sa Bato, inuuna kasi ang bisyo, parang inom, sugal
Hindi pa namumunga ang niyog naibenta na, kaya pagna-copra wala na, nasa ibang tao na Ang mga tao din doon, iyong bang umaasa din lang sa padala ng mga anak nila na may trabaho dito.

People in Bato give priority to vices, like drinking and gambling
Before the coconuts even sprout on the trees, they have sold it already, so when it's time for copra it's gone already, it's owned by someone else already. . . . The people over there also rely only on what their children here [in Manila] send to them.

On P. Street Leleth interacts with people from Bato in a way that is different from the way people like Jhoy do. Among the migrants from Bato, she closely associates only with her parents and siblings as well as with Papang, who lives next door to her on P. Street. Within the migrants' community there, people tend to exchange and borrow food and drinks as well as daily necessities such as soap. Leleth does not engage in any such exchanges. In addition, when a visitor comes from Bato she serves only a *meryenda* (snack), and never allows them to stay in her house. As a result, Leleth is often the target of negative remarks by many people from Bato, who describe her as *maarte* (artificial in manners), *mayaman lang* (mere rich), and as having *masamang ugali* (bad character). During my interviews in Bato as well as on P. Street, no one mentioned her as masuwerte.

Masuwerte as Social Recognition

People judge whether a migrant has become masuwerte or not based on the mainstream value system of the village.

People in Bato determine the outcome of a pakikipagsapalaran endeavor by evaluating the kinds and quantity of goods the migrant brings to the village. In making such scrutiny, not only do they individually examine the closeness of their own relationship to the migrant, but they also check what sort of attitude the migrant maintains. Compassion toward the poor, especially to the magkaurupod, must accompany the essence of these gifts.

Moreover, feeding relatives and visitors, throwing money while dancing kuratsa, and taking on the role of mayor can also be regarded as symbolic acts proving that the migrant has sufficient resources to support many

people. Playing the role of mayor, in particular, means that the migrant now supports not just certain individual persons but also the entire village.

What happens when migrants do not follow this cultural norm of sharing gains? They are likely to acquire a negative reputation and be called as "stingy," "greedy," and "selfish" people. Malicious rumors may also circulate: people may hint that their wealth comes from illegal activities, such as drug trafficking, as in the case of Jhoy, who is thus anxious about backbiting. Bad reputation and vicious rumors can isolate a migrant. Leleth's is a case in point. She is not called masuwerte despite her economic achievements, and is treated like an outsider.

We can say, therefore, that the notion of suwerte is closely related to the cultural norm of sharing resources among relatives and friends. Suwerte refers to a large amount of resources that are not secular, but are gifts sent by God or the spirits to someone for being buotan, a good and generous person. Thus, suwerte is something to be shared with others, particularly with those poorer than one's self, in order to live up to society's moral expectations. If not shared, these resources do not constitute suwerte, and the migrant herself or himself is in no possession of suwerte.

The argument above reveals two things. First, various styles of communication between masuwerte migrants and the villagers confirm that they still belong to the same social group. Masuwerte migrants provide basic substances to ensure survival, epitomized by sharing food with family and relatives as they are supposed to do as in-group members. Second, the communication between masuwerte migrants and other villagers proves that the application of the word masuwerte is a form of social recognition for these migrants, giving them the title of achievement at the end of one's quest for suwerte. In short, we can say that migrants and villagers communicate through: (1) the migrants' provision of food, pasalubong, and other items to villagers; (2) the villagers' acceptance of these provisions; and (3) the villagers' acceptance of migrants as in-group members as well as their act of recognition of someone as masuwerte. In this manner, the one who has left the community and those who remain are able to reestablish connections and affirm their respective social positions.

One may ask why a considerable number of migrants feel that it is important to be recognized as masuwerte upon their return. Aside from moral reasons, it can be assumed that they need to maintain kinship ties for economic, social, and psychological reasons, as already mentioned in the case of

Jhoy. In addition, and more importantly for the analysis of *suwerte*, it is the local community who serve as the group with whom one can be recognized as *masuwerte*. Even if they succeed in their pursuit of *suwerte*, for example by becoming a truck owner or an office worker, they may still be categorized as poor according to city standards. In other words, nearly no one outside the Batanon community will recognize them as *masuwerte* in the city.¹⁴

Considering both narratives of Batanon as well as their basic livelihood style, we can assume that the notion of looking for *suwerte* has long existed in the village, even before rural-to-urban migration became prevalent. Over the decades, the discourse of searching for one's *suwerte* has been enacted by those who went to Manila and by whoever looked prosperous; it has also been narrated repeatedly among both migrants and those remaining in the village, in accordance with its value system. It may be regarded that the discourse now serves as a cultural device that allows villagers to interact with the changing macroeconomic structure, while maintaining the local value system.

Migrants and the Home Village in Sociocultural Context

The findings of this study suggest a number of implications, especially with regard to styles of relatedness—how people can relate to (or loosen ties with) others in the context of a spirit of compassion and the act of sharing.

As stated earlier, a part of Filipino migration literature, especially from the late 1980s, stressed the strong and firm ties among migrants as well as between migrants and nonmigrants in the home village (Trager 1988; Nagasaka 2003). At the same time, other works have pointed to the ambivalent attitudes that migrants away from home may have toward their families and others in the home village or town (Constable 1999). These two sides of migrants' relations with people at home can be explained, at least partially, in terms of the sociocultural context in which migrants originate, particularly the process in which a migrant relates to others in a dynamic way. Because the physical movement of people will further accelerate within the Philippines as well as from the Philippines to other countries, the close examination of relatedness in each local context will acquire more importance in order to comprehend the social changes taking place in the context of the expanding migration phenomenon.

The examination of migration and relatedness in the given sociocultural context will also provide another perspective as to the effects of migration on the local economy. This topic has long been studied (see Bautista 1994).

Yet the focus of many studies is laid on remittances—how much is sent, how they are spent, how they affect the economic situation of the family or community—but leave aside the meaning of remittances. However, if we perceive migration as a way of *pakikipagsapalaran*, there appears to be a variety of interactions taking place between migrant and origin community, which are not limited to just remittances. One striking aspect of such interactions is the *pasalubong*. The actions taken by migrants who return home laden with *pasalubong* despite the high travel costs, and who flood the village with food, drinks, and other largesse—in a way that makes little sense from a purely economic point of view (instead of investing in economically productive activities)—can make sense if viewed within a sociocultural context. In this connection, future studies may rethink the meanings of remittances, what they substitute for, in a given cultural context. Detailed investigation of these meanings can also lead to a reinterpretation of migrants—who they are and what they are doing.

Conclusion

There has been a tendency to view Filipino migration primarily as an economic phenomenon. However, the acts and narratives of migrants reveal certain aspects that cannot be explained under the mainstream view that people move from one place to another simply to maximize their material gains. Rather, these acts and narratives suggest the importance of looking at the phenomenon of migration within its sociocultural context.

This article has focused on the search for one's *suwerte*, a concept that is said to motivate many people in Bato village as well as elsewhere in the country. It has elucidated how *suwerte* can justify the moving out of a village yet maintain membership of the in-group. *Suwerte* is generally imagined to be a large amount of wealth sent from the spiritual world. In actuality, for such wealth to be acknowledged as *suwerte*, it must be shared with one's fellows, and in particular with family members and relatives. In this way, "the pursuit of *suwerte*," now an accepted discourse, sanctions the act of going out into the risky but relatively richer "outer world" so that, if given a chance, they can bring resources back to the village to support as many relatives and community members as possible. It also means extending help to fellow villagers in the migrant's destination, especially those who arrive later and need assistance. If this mission is accomplished, the migrant is recognized as *masuwerte*, with a correspondingly elevated social status. *Suwerte* therefore

does not denote simple material gain, but is an important socially and culturally constructed notion.

There are possibilities and potentials in investigating further the relationships between local notions such as *suwerte* and the migration phenomenon. Within the Philippines, findings from this study can be reexamined and contrasted with studies of other groups with other characteristics, especially because vernacular concepts closely related to migration may differ depending on area, class, generation, and other factors. Moreover, these local notions of *suwerte* and *pakikipagsapalaran* may be compared with similar notions in the larger context of Southeast Asia. A comparison between such local concepts, paying special attention to the historical background of each ethnic group, may help us better understand the lives of migrants in Southeast Asia.

Glossary

WARAY/TAGALOG

amo	employer
buotan	kind, helpful, well-mannered
gala	money thrown onto the floor during <i>kuratsa</i>
katulong/kabulig/sa balay	domestic helper
kinabuhì	life
kuratsa	traditional courtship dance popular in Samar
libak	backbiting
makikipagsapalaran (noun: <i>pakikipagsapalaran</i>)	to take a risk, to seek <i>suwerte</i>
pobre	poor
pahinante	crew (as in tucking business)
palad	palm of one's hand; fate
pasalubong	gift on returning home
masuwerte	full of <i>suwerte</i>
mayor	main sponsor of fiesta
pamilya	family
suwerte	luck
upod	companion
urupod	relative

Notes

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- 1 These studies assume that migrants belong to the category of "rational homo economicus," and conform to rational-choice theory that is founded on neoclassical economics (Hosoda 2007a, 1–9). Two annotated bibliographies of Philippine migration studies—Yukawa (1996), and Perez and Patasil (1998)—are available and provide a useful guide to published and unpublished materials.
- 2 Since the 1960s, both regions of Eastern Visayas and Bicol stand out not only for their especially high rates of population drift, but also for the high percentages of people migrating to Metro Manila. Nevertheless, a good number of existing studies on migration focus on the Ilocos region. For the Bicol region an extensive study was done in the 1970s (Cariño and Cariño 1976), but no major study on outmigration from the Eastern Visayas has been conducted.
- 3 This academic neglect is not limited to migration studies. Bruce Cruickshank (1982, 219), who has studied Samar's social history, says that Samar has been viewed only as a "backwater" or an "undeveloped frontier" despite its being the third largest island in the Philippine archipelago.
- 4 See Hosoda (2007b) for a summary of findings from this survey.
- 5 A demographic analysis of Samar Island is presented in Hosoda (2007b, 3–8).
- 6 The development of migration from Bato to Manila is discussed in detail in Hosoda (2007b, 12–22).
- 7 The expression *makikipagsapalaran* or its equivalent, "try one's luck," is found in migrant narratives in other ethnographic works, such as Cariño and Cariño (1976, 2:2) and Ilo and Polo (1990, 64). However, these works do not analyze the cultural meanings associated with this expression.
- 8 Some explain that one's destiny is supposed to be etched on the *palad*, the palm, and moreover that fate is not totally predetermined but that its outcome can be changed by individual effort (Mercado 2000, 68; Aguilar 1998, 72–73).
- 9 A couple of valuable works analyze the concept of *suwerte* within the local social-cosmic context, in relation to which this present study may make an interesting comparison. Veloro (1994) elaborates on the notion of *suwerte* in relation to what is considered success among small-scale fishermen in a Palawan village, whereas the work of Aguilar (1998) provides an in-depth analysis of *suwerte* and cockfighting on Negros Island until the early twentieth century.
- 10 In Bato the sharing of a big catch with relatives and other villagers is considered a type of *barato* (sharing of small amounts with others around). The Batanon explain that sharing *suwerte* is a good deed, which assures the continuation of favor from God and other spirit beings. This cosmic view is similar to Aguilar's illustration of *batato* in the colonial gambling arena, which involved the distribution of small amounts from the winnings in gambling, because sharing one's luck with others was believed to increase the chances of winning in gambles in the future (Aguilar 1998, 74).

- 11 In Bato *pasalubong* may consist of anything, even objects unrelated to the places the traveler has visited. The majority of pasalubong brought to Bato consists of assorted groceries, such as canned food, powdered milk, sugar, instant coffee, and soap. However, if the place where the returnee lived is known for its high standard of living, returnees may bring goods that are symbols of middle-class society, such as fashionable clothes and accessories, brand-name goods, and electrical appliances.
- 12 Naturally, there are cases of migrants who moved to Manila not directly to make *pakikipagsapalaran* but to accompany the family. In other cases also the reasons were unclear or very personal, such as a family feud. Even in these cases, the socially accepted discourse of *makipagsapalaran* may be employed and migrants may talk about themselves and act in accordance with it so that their moving out can be justified.
- 13 *Paryente* and *partido* are also used when referring to one's kin. These words are derived from the Spanish language.
- 14 *Masuwerte* migrants who find this reference group no longer necessary may interact more closely with non-Batonon than with Batonon. For example, while Papang maintains close communication with Batonon people on P. Street, she deems it important to have more friends outside the Batonon community, namely, other residents in the neighborhood (migrants and their descendants from other parts of the country). According to Papang, she and her friends stay together and help each other by exchanging daily goods and services. Leleth's closest friends are those living in other parts of Manila whom she met while working abroad. She stresses that with these friends she exchanges "moral support, not material support." The lifecourse, value, and social relationships of Batonon migrants in Manila will be the subject of further investigation by the author.

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