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Where Asia Smiles: An Ethnography of Philippine Tourism by Sally Ann Ness

Reviewed by Lou Antolihao

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It can be observed, accordingly, that Lumbera's collection hopes to achieve one end, and that is the production of consciousness. Because the writer intends his plays to be read, they are inextricable from the uses of pedagogy. It is only proper, in that case, to regard Lumbera as a chief architect of the pedagogy of consciousness. This does not come as a surprise to those who have seen the literature textbooks that Lumbera has authored and, in certain instances, co-edited with others: *Pedagogy*, *Philippine Literature: A History and Anthology*, *Rediscovery: Essays in Philippine Life and Culture*, *Filipinos Writing: Philippine Literature from the Regions*, and *Paano Magbasa ng Panitikang Filipino: Mga Babasahing Pangkolehiyo*.

Lumbera admitted elsewhere how his personal vision was transformed after reading the works of nationalist historian Renato Constantino. How beautiful it is to imagine the scale of minds molting after reading Lumbera. It is only right that Lumbera joins the ranks of Balagtas, Rizal, Lazaro Francisco, Amado V. Hernandez and the others loyal and true biographers of *Inangbayan*. In the next one hundred years, Lumbera's texts will reveal to their readers the way we have come to understand the country of our time.

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Sally Ann Ness, **Where Asia Smiles: An Ethnography of Philippine Tourism**. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002. 392 pages.

Although the last three decades have seen the active development of Philippine tourism, attempts to study the consequences of this development have been few. As such, *Where Asia Smiles* is certainly an important contribution to Philippine tourism literature. This book is the only major publication in tourism research to have come out in the Philippines since Linda Richter's *Land Reform and Tourism Development* (1982), the first monograph published on tourism in the Philippines.

The title of the book sounds rather like a tourism promotion slogan and is probably lifted from an earlier photodocumentary entitled

Philippines: Where Asia Wears a Smile, produced by the Department of Tourism in 1976. Nonetheless, the book provides an interesting and insightful analysis of the development of tourism in Davao City, with implications for other tourist destinations in the country and other places in the world. Ness makes painstaking and rigorous observations that help understand the dynamics of tourism and its relations with the “features of contemporary cultural reality—globalization, diasporic multiculturalism, advanced capitalism, transnationalism, postcoloniality, and the profound uncertainties of postmodern forms of self-consciousness” (p. 1). By integrating her own persona with the subjects of her inquiry, Ness is able to exercise superior scholarship in dealing with the problematic relationship between tourism and ethnographic research and in presenting new approaches for understanding tourism.

The *leitmotif* of the book is the local and global/supralocal nexus as illustrated by the relation of tourism and culture. The ten chapters, each of which is divided into three parts, tackle different topics, but they are woven into a cohesive narrative.

Composed of the first three chapters, the first part of the book serves as the introduction to the study and the study site. Ness’s detailed account of her arrival at the Davao International Airport and the trip going to her hotel not only presents the necessary information on the research setting but also provides the link between Davao City and the larger matrix of tourism. Specifically, the airport literally and symbolically connects the city with other localities in the country and around the world, as it becomes part of a larger system of interaction. Consequently, the author tries to elaborate on this internal-external nexus by looking at how such an external construction as tourism is articulated in the local. However, her discussion of “Davao understanding of tourism” (Ch. 3) is limited in that it focuses only on the views of educated, upper-class personalities who are mostly involved in the affairs of tourism. More often than not, the perspectives of these people mirror the views of tourists and tourism developers, and do not necessarily reflect the perceptions of the locals. The accounts of the local residents regarding two different tourist facilities in the subsequent chapters better reflect the “Davao understanding of tourism.” They not only illustrate the local perspective on the impact of tourism development on their personal lives and community but also present the different strategies that people employ to respond to the opportunities and challenges posed by tourism.

The second part adds to Richter's work on the relation of tourism development and land reform. Richter's research focused on policy-making strategies employed by the state. This book complements Richter's macro-level analysis by presenting some cases in which such policies are articulated and conceived at the community level. Ness's study also intersects with Trish Nicholson's evaluation of the Samal Island Tourism Estate (SITE) Project in her book, *Tourism Development and Community: Four Philippine Case Studies in Boracay, Marinduque, and Davao City* (1997). Nicholson's study concentrates on the impact of the incorporation of "cooperative tourism" on the project beneficiaries, whereas Ness uses the SITE vis-a-vis the Pearl Farm Resort as a model of a tourism "utopics." Nicholson's study is largely normative, while Ness's is mainly a processual narrative.

The third part presents some of the tourist facilities in Davao City and the neighboring Island Garden City of Samal. Interestingly, Ness explains how many of these establishments operate as hybrid spaces, functioning both as an extension of a family household and as a commercial enterprise. Ness calls this the "tug of war between familial and transnational" (p. 201), where local practices are in transition, "shedding their domestic status" to conform to standards "designed at distant centers of tourism industry" (p. 200). However, this hybridity of the local tourism establishments also serves as proof that hospitality, which is supposed to be the core value of tourism, is a personal and intersubjective encounter beyond the gauge of "Quality Tourism" standards. This "reinvention of home in the city's business hotels provides a new model of conduct" (p. 233) that challenges the dominant criteria set by external tourism development bodies.

The concluding chapter provides a wide-ranging analysis that touches on ethnographic, theoretical, and methodological issues. In general, Ness describes the impact on local culture of tourism development in Davao City as a "gradual but nonetheless pervasive process" (p. 234), where tourism is increasingly becoming an integral element of the city's cultural character. In this process, tourism not only produces new "utopic landscapes" but also becomes the hegemonic mindscape that influences the development of the city and its people. However, the representation of tourism as a "utopic model of development," which became prominent during the height of the EAGA (East Asian Growth Area) project in the mid-1990s, is problematic. The failure of the SITE project and the industry's vulnerability to external factors, such as the

peace and order condition and tourist preference, among others, have proven the difficulty of turning utopias into reality.

This book is not only important to tourism specialists but also benefits scholars who are drawn to the study of Philippine culture and society. It provides a good model of a cultural approach to understand different issues in the contemporary world. Anthropologists, too, may also gain from this book since it addresses some current theoretical and methodological issues arising from some inherent conflicts in touristic and anthropological identities and practices.

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Robert A. Scebold, **Central Tagbanwa: A Philippine Language on the Brink of Extinction**. Linguistic Society of the Philippines Special Monograph Series 48. Manila: Summer Institute of Linguistics, 2003. xiii+168 pp.

Sociolinguistic factors such as schools, local government, mass media, and interethnic marriages have contributed to make Central Tagbanwa an endangered language. If the current trend continues, the language will soon die out completely. In-migration of non-Tagbanwa settlers from other islands after the Second World War to seek land and livelihood has been so extensive that Tagbanwas are now very much a minority in their own land. Furthermore, mother-tongue Tagbanwa speakers have become very proficient in languages of wider communicative reach and power such as English, Tagalog, and Cuyunon, and they have been teaching these to their children for decades—leading to substantial language and culture shifts.

As a result, the younger generations are ethnically more diverse and linguistically less proficient in Tagbanwa than prior generations. They are also more attuned to the wider world through more education and modern media.

With diversity of background, many young people have a choice as to which heritage to gravitate toward Tagbanwa, or the other side of the family. Some develop a strong sentiment toward maintaining a Tagbanwa identity. These young people often learn Tagbanwa despite