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Ligaya Fernando-Amilbangsa, Ukkil: Visual Arts of the Sulu Archipelago

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which spirituality is never exempt) is always characterized by uncertainty, unevenness, and ambiguities. But it is precisely this uncertainty that provides the space in which the irruption of meaning, of life, of God may occur.

With Bourdieu, Gaspar's study looks at spirituality from outside-in. With de Certeau, it invites us to view it from inside-out. Ironically, in his works, de Certeau is in polemics with Bourdieu, just as phenomenology can never sit well with structuralism. But Gaspar has made these two great authors and philosophical traditions to sit down and dialogue with each other in order to put forward a view of spirituality for our times.

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Ligaya Fernando-Amilbansa. **Ukkil: Visual Arts of the Sulu Archipelago.** Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2005. 296 pages.

The author, an artist and a former teacher in Tawitawi, has regaled us here with a coffee table book that follows and surpasses her earlier *Pangalay* illustrated presentation of folk dances and other related artistic expressions in Sulu (Filipinas Foundation, 1983). This new volume is a feast for the eyes, with abundant and beautiful color photographs and exquisite drawings. It covers a wide range of artistic genres found in the Sulu Archipelago: basketry, cloth weaving, embroidery, appliqué and cutwork, pottery, carving, blacksmithing and casting, and gold- and silversmithing. Of great importance to the researcher are comprehensive classification tables that follow some of the chapters, the most notable being those of the various decorative designs, the designs in mat weaving, embroidery, grave markers, and selected blacksmithing products.

The graphics of this book, at least most of the photographs and all the drawings, are of high quality. In themselves, they bear a well-deserved testimony to the diverse richness of Sulu's visual arts across the years and until now. For me, most stunning is the cover itself that reproduces

a Burrak picture made of shells, mounted and painted on a board around 1975 by Jaiyan Kara, a young Sama artist from Sibutu, Sitangkai, TawiTawi. Another contemporary Tausug sculptor, National Artist Abdulmari Imao, gave the final touch to the cover, and contributed many photographs and drawings to this volume.

Visually, this book does justice to the little-known (and often misunderstood) cultures of the Sama and the Tausug peoples. Further, it illustrates in vivid colors the research work that was started forty years ago by David Szanton, which was published by the Institute of Philippine Culture (1963) and revised for *Sulu Studies* 2 (1973). Ms. Amilbangsa dutifully acknowledges this pioneering work. However, the absence of any reference to Harry Nimmo's *Magosaba* (Ateneo Press, 2001), where the Sama Dilaut boatbuilding in TawiTawi takes a whole chapter, is regrettable.

Not being a social scientist, the artist-author approaches her subject in a very descriptive way that is often uncritical. For instance, she presents a map supposedly of the "Muslim areas in the Philippines . . . in 1521" (p. 10), but the map is of recent political vintage and has no significance to her study. Moreover, this map ignores completely the existence of the indigenous peoples who dwelled in those very areas since long before the coming of Islam. Elsewhere, the discussion of the versatile wood carving adze, the *patuk*, on page 174, would have benefited from some of its pictures relegated to pages 234–35. This amazing tool is at the center of Sama boatbuilding and other forms of carving, especially in Sibutu.

These criticisms notwithstanding, this lavishly illustrated volume is an important and unique artistic contribution that ought to trigger a renewed interest in Sulu's traditional arts, visual and others, as well as in their revival. It ought to be used by educational institutions in Mindanao and elsewhere in the Philippines. This visual documentation is all the more timely these days because of the threats, on one hand, of modernization and, on the other, of fundamentalist condemnations from radical Muslim quarters.

To paraphrase a recent and felicitous assessment of classic books, I dare say that the great merit of Amilbangsa's *Ukkil* is that of a thoughtfully designed book that makes "nearly as important a statement to the

reader as thoughtfully written books.” (A. Rawsthorn, *International Herald Tribune*, 19 June 2006, p. 7). The author and her publisher are commended for regaling the reading public with this beautiful publication.

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Cirilo F. Bautista. **Bullets and Roses: The Poetry of Amado V. Hernandez, a Bilingual Edition.** Manila: De La Salle University Press, Inc., 2003. 165 pages.

It is said that so much is lost in translation. No matter how masterful the translator is in the receptor language, the translation always falls short of capturing a poem, especially its musicality. Such is not the case, however, of most of Cirilo Bautista's rendering into English of some of the poems of Amado V. Hernandez, one of the Philippines' most prominent Tagalog poets, who in 1973 was proclaimed National Artist in Literature.

Take, for example, the following stanzas from “An Armstretch of Sky,” a translation of “Isang Dipang Langit,” one of Hernandez's most popular poems:

From the narrow window all I can see
 Is an armstretch of sky full of tears,
 a meager cover to a wounded heart,
 a ghastly emblem of my falls and fears.

Sharp as lightning are the eyes of the guard,
 nobody dares approach the padlocked door;
 the prisoner's cry in the nearby cell
 sounds like an animal's desperate roar.

The whole day is like a heavy chain
 dragged by a pair of bloody feet,