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Book Review

The Thriving of Indigenous Knowledge Systems: A Review of Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Practices on Disaster Risk Reduction and Management of Selected IP Groups in the Davao Region

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There is one clear contribution of this current work: the plausibility and intellectual strength of its argument that the knowledge systems of these indigenous peoples and communities in Mindanao cannot be dismissed by outsiders or the institutions of the state that do not support the thriving of the Ata, Bagobo-Klata, Bagobo-Tagabawa, Kagan, Manobo, Mansaka, Matigsalug, and Sama. While it is a powerful reminder that this country is both diverse and plural, it also affirms that its diversity is its greatest strength.

There is a major problem in this book: it presents some issues. But here lies its paradox: it offers solutions to these problems by referencing the wise people of the past and present—the inheritors of traditions, rites, rituals, ceremonies, epistemologies, cosmologies, and languages of bodies, souls, and spirits.

Written by dedicated scholars from the University of Southeastern Philippines (USeP), this work, titled *Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Practices on Disaster Risk Reduction and Management of Selected IP Groups in the Davao Region*, expands our understanding of disasters and calamities, as well as how to prevent or cope with them. Organized into ten chapters, the first sets the foundation, and the last provides a summary. The eight middle chapters focus on the eight Indigenous People's (IP) groups that have not been covered in the first book of this kind by the university's Mindanao Center for Policy Studies (MCPS) and the Institute of Languages and Creative Arts (ILCA).

This work meticulously documents the lived experiences of these IP groups—lives lived earnestly, teaching us about their heritage, resilience in the face of storms, typhoons, drought, and scarcity, and their deep understanding of their unity with the external, physical world—even as they also comprehend the inner realm and their relationships with others, with non-human entities, and with forces that are often not within their control. They say that it is easier to become a human being and far more difficult to be human. Yet, among these eight groups, there is boundless hope as they live

quietly in the world, their quietude—a verb and a noun at best.

The book emphasized four main points: (a) the spiritual connection of the IPs to their environment; (b) practical strategies for daily life, such as observing and interpreting natural signs like the shedding of leaves, bird sounds, and using tools to warn others of impending disasters; (c) the impact of disasters on IPs' lives and how they adopt resilience by coping with and addressing the loss of their livelihoods; and (d) the need to supplement traditional disaster response methods with modern disaster management technologies.

The book's methodology is characterized by a variety of approaches and techniques, including group discussions, key informant interviews, photo-ethnography, and thematic analysis, as well as other methods that complement these. It is worth noting that the engagement with the communities involved was ethical and committed, achieved through the Free, Prior, and Informed Consent. This highlights the emic perspective—that of an internal researcher who understands what must be done to earn the respect and trust of the community. It also illustrates the etic perspective—the outsider or researcher who simply comes and leaves without sharing their findings in a language the community understands.

There are at least three strong points we can identify from the book: (a) a comprehensive overview of each of the eight IPs, with the voice of each IP community preserved and the voices of informants reconstructed, often in their own language and translated for outsiders; (b) a clear sensitivity and respect for the heritage, cultural, and intellectual property rights of these IPs, assuring them that the representation is based on data; and (c) a wealth of insights from the field—from the very people who must be heard and given a space in the country's public life. These insights, without doubt, will motivate public officials, policymakers, cultural workers, scholars, and researchers to become involved and engaged with these communities.

There are two areas that could perhaps be explored for the next book project of this kind: (a) how disasters could have different effects on IP people in general and IP men, women, children, and other community members in particular; and (b) how younger, capable individuals could be involved in disaster risk reduction and management efforts.

The significance and the materiality of the book are other important aspects to consider.

Hannah Mae G. Lolong's cover design clearly shows us who these IPs are: we see what we get, and we get what we see. There is so much potential in how this approach presents IP life on the page through thoughtful colors and well-designed shapes. The pages feel natural, as if the design happened spontaneously at a table in a timeless yet perfect way. The arrangement of pages with photos calmly guides the eye, offering moments for pause. Maps highlight the current state of research and engagement with a specific IP, while tables facilitate creating page breaks and enhancing readability. For someone like me, the inclusion of definitions, references, and a glossary invites further exploration, encouraging me to continue looking, with the hope that this process will transform into a deeper, more meaningful encounter. This made the case.

Ultimately, we require more books like this.

Conflict of Interest Statement

I have no conflict of interest to disclose.

AI Disclosure

I declare that this manuscript was prepared without the assistance of artificial intelligence. Hence, the content of this paper is original.

Reference

Risonar, J. R., Ortiz, G. F., Ingilan, S. S., Reginio, F. N., Cenojas, L.A., Agbas, M. G. Z., & Torremocha, V. S. (2024). *Indigenous knowledge systems and practices on disaster risk reduction and management of selected IP groups in the Davao Region.* The University of Southeastern Philippines - Institute of Languages and Creative Arts. https://doi.org/10.53899/iksp.b2.001