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INTRODUCTION

This issue of *Lirip* comprises a brief essay authored by National Artist for Literature Gemino Abad, in addition to three social concerns and two book reviews, which collectively serve as the central themes.

The opening line of NA Abad's lyrical essay, "The poet draws from his sense of reality within his own time and culture," effectively establishes the tone for this issue's content. The literary writer's perception of reality aligns with the researchers' direct engagement with actual "reality."

Three social concerns form the central interests: the COVID-19 pandemic, the life satisfaction needs of a community, particularly those of the Ayta women in the central Philippines, and the influence of traditional women's roles in Cambodia. Despite their seeming disparities, these issues significantly impact a nation or state's political and economic conditions.

The COVID-19 pandemic is a case in point. During its early stages, it threw the country into a state of alarm and panic, as it caught its communities unprepared and without the necessary medical technology to deal with the disease. The pandemic practically affected every facet of our economy and prompted the Philippine government to pursue effective measures to thwart the spread of COVID-19 and keep its business sector upbeat.

The paper by Reil G. Cruz and associates provides an interesting perspective on the mode a Philippine community in Central Luzon takes to keep its tourism business, specifically its tourist resorts, operationally afloat during the COVID-19 pandemic. The paper sheds light on resorts' contingent actions in the face of sweeping health odds.

Simple in its grounding but cogent in its concerns, the paper by Eden H. Terol and associates explores the life satisfaction needs of Ayta women. While such needs may seem simple, they provide a foundation for mapping out possible strategies to develop culturally minority-oriented, women-based community programs.

Samphors Mech and her associates have authored a paper that is not about the Philippines but Cambodia. Although its concern is not alien to the Philippine experience, the issue it confronts is unique culturally. It examines an aspect of Khmer women's traditional code of conduct, known as *Chbab Srey*, and the modifications it has undergone, leading to increased gender equality and a gradual shift in women's autonomy and empowerment in Cambodian society. It provides an interesting perspective on the influence of *Chbab Srey* on the country's sociopolitical processes.

Although the latest issues of *Lirip* have focused on social and economic problems, these should not be construed as the limits of the journal's interest. *Lirip* remains open to papers from various social sciences and arts disciplines, provided they are new, insightful, and multidisciplinary research. The papers could also be transdisciplinary and methodologically innovative.

Victorio N. Sugbo

Summing up a Poetics

Gemino H. Abad

1. The poet (as a generic term for the creative writer) draws from his sense of reality in his own time and culture. His poem's representation of an experience, whether as lived or as only imagined, is his apprehension of it. Thus, the meaning (*saysay*) of the experience depicted in the poem is what its words can only evoke from reader to reader, so there may be variant yet plausible readings of it. Consequently, the poem may be said to have a life of its own, reader to reader, over time. There are poems, of course, whose meaning is clear and definite, and poems whose meaningfulness (*diwa*) is richer and deeper where one strives for an adequate interpretation.

One needs to be attentive. The discerning reader, says Marianne Moore, may well be "a literalist of the imagination." His agile sense of language enables him to be acclimatized to the writer's distinctive style or way of using language. He reads close to open the word-weave and enters imaginatively into the experience as simulated or represented. As it was for the poet, so for the reader, too, *the poem is to live*.

2. Interpreting a writer's work is the crux of critical understanding: the Latin words are illuminating—*interpretari*, "to negotiate"; *interpretes*, "agent."

The literary work—be it a poem or story or play or the essay called "creative nonfiction"—is *already* an interpretation of an experience. To interpret it is to be its agent; one negotiates with it to come to a settlement of its meaning. However, the literary work has already *literally* come to terms with itself; the critic then or interpreter must respect the work's integrity for, as both a work of language and work of imagination, it is **autotelic**: that is, governed solely by its own end, a purpose *in*, not apart from, itself. This is what we mean by the literary work's autonomy and "organic unity." For

what artistic end does a literary work have except the representation of an experience through that verbal configuration we call the literary work's form or structure by which we are persuaded and moved.

3. The literary work's *being* or *nature* as bearer of meaning (*saysay*) may well have a moral or ethical dimension—certainly part of that meaningfulness (*diwa*) which is the very spirit of what it is to be a *human being*, its night-shade and its sunrise, both, In that light, both the writing and the reading are a *spiritual* experience which raises the literary work to that we call a universal plane.

4. What is the Filipino sense of his world?

I think of Philippine literature as one archipelago of letters *wrought* from many languages, including English and Spanish, both of which have been assimilated over time into our various indigenous languages like Tagalog, Sugbuanon, Iloko, Bicol, etc. all as much *Filipino* as that evolving Tagalog-based *Pilipino* that eventually, through great writing *from* it, will become genuinely our national language.

It bears stressing that any language can express anything at all that the mind seeks to grasp because writing is a discipline of what the words are made to do such that what is wrought can, through the evocative power of imagination (on both the writer's and the reader's part), transcend the inherent inadequacies of any language to probe and encompass all of Reality. I might add: the very fact that the writer today deals in daily life with English (still the medium of instruction in our school system) and his native tongue may even be a distinct advantage: that is, if he is sensitive and observant, he might become more familiar with that space between languages where precisely he must struggle for clearer expression of his insights through his language of choice.

Our troubled times over the whole world today pose a severe challenge to our humanity, to our mind's power of

abstraction and critical thinking in the quest for truth at the very heart of freedom and democracy. *Ubuntu*, says Nelson Mandela. "I am because we are." We need imagination to grasp the spirit of what he says. To stress our point: "Nation" is a legal fiction enshrined in our 1987 Constitution as our people's dream or vision of an ideal homeland where the people are sovereign, and their leaders are their public servants. One with imagination does not have to be a lawyer to grasp the abstract ideal of a just and humane society. It is in our imagination where the words come alive and speak true. Our leaders, then, must listen well, not play deaf, and be sensitive to, and not resent, criticism; and there are criteria for a proper judgment which presupposes integrity of character and a sound mind.

Is there much to be desired about our sense of country from our day-to-day experience among our people? It cannot be said that our writers since Balagtas, Rizal, and La Solidaridad were ever mute. Without the writer, the poor and oppressed among us have no voice else. Writers and most certainly, other artists and scholars - read us and interpret us to ourselves upon our ground. They sharpen our sense of country because they strengthen our power of abstraction and imagination.

Since the meanings of our words arise mainly from lives lived through a people's history and culture, the literary work's inmost seal is the creative writer's country. For one's country is how one imagines her, as when one says "Inang Bayan" (Tagalog for Motherland). A country is what a people's imagination owes its allegiance to. Our literature, wrought from whatever language, in whatever genre, is what creates our sense of country, which ultimately is forged by our sense of language. Our literature is our people's memory. A country is only as strong as her people's memory! As National Artist Nick Joaquin says: "To remember and to sing that is my vocation."

The creative writer stands upon his own ground, his own native clearing: the way his fellow countrymen think and feel about their world and so live from sun to sun. There, in that clearing, he

forges a given language in the smithy of his mind and heart and grasps his own authentic self. There, too, in the literary work as wrought, if one reads closely and imagines well, the creative writer may well be among his own country's best critics and interpreters, and thereby, he might refresh or enrich a current vision of his country's destiny or renew a lost heritage or even transform it.

*National Artist for Literature **Gemino "Jimmy" H. Abad** is an internationally acclaimed author with various accolades and works under his name. Being the first Filipino to receive the coveted Premio Feronia in Rome, Italy under the foreign author category in 2009, he is also a literary critic who co-founded the Philippine Literary Arts Council (PLAC) that published Caracoa: The Poetry Journal.*

Jimmy has written a wide range of literary pieces in different genres, from poetry and fiction, to anthologies and spoken word. These include Man of Earth, A Native Clearing, and A Habit of Shores: Filipino Poetry and Verse from English, '60s to the '90s. He has also written The Fugitive Emphasis, In Another Light, A Formal Approach to Lyric Poetry, The Space Between, Poems and Parables, Index to Filipino Poetry in English, 1905–1950 (with Edna Zapanta Manlapaz), and State of Play.

source: Panumduman: Literature of Memory, Bio Notes, Page 187

COVID-19 Impact and Response from the Resort Sector: The Case of Magalang, Pampanga, Philippines

Reil G. Cruz, Marjorie June L. Antonio, & Edieser D. Dela Santa

Abstract

The study investigates the impact of COVID-19 on tourism, focusing on the resort sector in Magalang, Pampanga, and the sector's proactive, reactive, and adaptive responses to the pandemic. Utilizing a mixed-method case study design, the authors scanned news articles and government-issued memos, analyzed raw business data, and interviewed selected resort owners and managers. The study's key findings were that the COVID-19 pandemic was unprecedented in scale and magnitude of impact, making it difficult to predict and mitigate. From a resilience perspective, the case of Magalang raises the importance of collaboration among local stakeholders during a crisis and the intricate interdependence between policymakers and tourism businesses when managing one. It also highlights the pivotal role of the local government in crisis governance and destination recovery. Moreover, there is the imperative to move beyond a reactive crisis management response to a forward-looking stance. This entails making operational adjustments and moving beyond surviving to creating adaptive and thriving outcomes. The findings align with the fundamental principles of the resilience-based framework of Sharma et al.

Keywords: COVID-19 pandemic, resort, Magalang, crisis management, resilience

Tourism generates millions of jobs worldwide. As such, any slowdown would threaten progress toward achieving the sustainable development goals (SDGs), particularly those on providing decent work, poverty alleviation, and reducing inequality. Thus, there is a need to examine the tourism sector in the pandemic context to determine impacts on societal goals and how it has affected the "DNA of hospitality at its core" (Rivera, 2020, p.1) and prepare for the future. The COVID-19 pandemic was unprecedented

in terms of the duration and severity of measures taken by the Philippine government to stem its transmission and the damage it caused to the Philippine economy in general and the tourism sector in particular.

Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on the Tourism Sector

From 2010 to 2019, foreign tourist arrivals in the Philippines grew at an annual average of 10.5%. Tourism contributed nearly 13% to the country's GDP, as well as 5.7 million jobs (Department of Tourism [DOT], 2021). Then, COVID-19 happened, causing millions of deaths and wreaking havoc on the global economy. The protracted lockdown and travel ban imposed by the Philippine government caused arrivals to plunge by -82.05 % in 2020 and -88.95 % in 2021 (DOT, 2024). Between January 2020 and January 2022, airlines, hotels, restaurants, and other leisure industries were assessed by S&P Global as some of the industries most probable to default (Vidovic, 2022). Centeno and Marquez (2020) estimate that up to 170.5 billion pesos in income were lost to COVID-19 in just over four months –from March to July 2020. Although Lichauco (2022) finds that resorts in Rodriguez, Rizal, remained commercially viable during the pandemic, with only reduced environmental and social sustainability levels, hotels and resorts around the country suffered financial losses. Among these were hotels in Olongapo City, Zambales, and resorts in Indang, Cavite (Mobo et al., 2020; Malabanan et al., 2022). Calderon et al. (2022) find that the losses incurred by 1,009 resorts in Calamba, Laguna, amounted to PHP 1.72 billion (USD 34.4 M) from March 2020 to February 2021. Lucero (2022) notes a similar negative impact of the pandemic on people, profits, processes, and partnerships among resorts in Marikina. Livelihoods in Cagbalete, Mauban, and Quezon (Alcantara, 2023) and Seven Lakes in San Pablo City, Laguna (Cabillon, 2021) were significantly reduced during the pandemic.

Government and Tourism Stakeholders' Response to the Pandemic

Some of the drastic measures the government had to take in the first year of the pandemic included home quarantine and lockdowns, a ban on domestic travel, social distancing, and wearing of face masks [Bendaña et al., 2020; Gotinga, 2020; Inter-agency

Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF-EID), 2020]. Unlike utility services, public transport services were suspended by the government under ECQ (Enhanced Community Quarantine) and MECQ (Modified Enhanced Community Quarantine), and their operating capacities were significantly reduced during GCQ (General Community Quarantine) and MGCQ (Modified General Community Quarantine) status (Bendaña et al., 2020; Gotinga, 2020; IATF-EID, 2020). The government prohibited Category IV industries, such as amusement parks, beaches, resorts, travel agencies, and tour operators, from operating under ECQ, MECQ, or GCQ (Gotinga, 2020; IATF-EID, 2020; Department of Trade and Industry, 2020). Accommodation establishments (AEs) could only operate with a DOT accreditation and a Certificate of Authority to Operate, which was granted upon compliance with the minimum health and safety protocols (DOT, 2020). The protocols included mandatory employee vaccinations; wearing PPEs, face masks, and face shields; frequent hand washing; installing social distancing markers on the floors; and placing acrylic or plastic barriers on tables and service counters (DOT, 2020). The governors cascaded these policies to the provincial levels through executive orders (Berse et al., 2020).

At the micro-level, Santiago et al. (2022) note that family-owned tourism businesses avoided hiring workers during the restricted period, while non-family-owned businesses, which were larger and had more regular employees, streamlined their operations for greater efficiency as a coping strategy during the pandemic.

Resilience in Tourism

The United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (n.d.) defines resilience as follows:

...the ability of a system, community or society exposed to hazards to resist, absorb, accommodate, adapt to, transform and recover from the effects of a hazard in a timely and efficient manner, including through the preservation and restoration of its essential basic structures and functions through risk management

Several resilience models are available in the literature. Probably the most cited pre-COVID resilience model is Faulkner's (2001) generic model for analyzing disaster management strategies in tourism. In this model, Faulkner identifies the six phases in the

disaster planning process as (1) pre-event (2) prodromal, (3) emergency, (4) intermediate, (5) long-term recovery, and (6) resolution and prescribes a set of appropriate actions and strategies for each of the stages.

Ritchie's (2004) framework is an expansion of Faulkner's model. The model consolidates managing crisis incidents into three stages: 1) crisis/disaster prevention and planning, 2) strategic implementation, and 3) resolution, evaluation, and feedback. Ritchie emphasizes the importance of crisis communication, resource management, and stakeholder collaboration in the Strategic Implementation Stage. As the destination or organization begins to recover from a crisis, the main goal is to control the crisis, reduce its severity, or stop it entirely by making policy changes and adapting or modifying strategies that did not work effectively.

Faulkner's and Ritchie's studies lay the groundwork for several subsequent resilience frameworks in tourism. One example is Sydnor-Bousso et al.'s (2011) model, which uses the community capital approach. The authors suggest that "physical capital (the presence of roads and public buildings of a community), social capital (higher levels of religious associations in a community), and human capital (having larger numbers of college-educated persons)" (p. 210) are indicators of industry resilience in a hospitality context. Sydnor-Bousso et al.'s basic theory is that industry resilience is a function of community capital stocks. Those factors that enable a community to be resilient are the same factors that enable businesses to survive and for hospitality-related jobs to continue.

Several resilience studies also emerged during the COVID-19 pandemic. Burhan et al.'s (2021) study uses an inductive, phenomenological approach to analyze the descriptive accounts of 16 owners/managers of select SMEs in Lahore, Pakistan. It translates the observed phenomena into a Crisis Management Framework, highlighting the factors that impinge on the business continuity of the select SMEs amid COVID-19. The findings reveal that, to ensure business continuity, some resilient practices that SMEs employed were hygiene protocols, increased promotion through social media, innovative marketing practices (such as new product offerings), operational cost-cutting, and employee training.

Duarte-Alonso et al.'s (2020) resilience model used an international sample of 45 predominantly small hospitality businesses in eight countries. Their model identifies the key concerns, adaptive measures, changes, and adjustments made by

these firms during the COVID-19 outbreak. The authors reveal several theoretical dimensions, illuminating the actions and responses of owner-managers in the face of the crisis. To respond to initial impacts, over a third resorted to employing measures to create alternative revenue streams, and 60% changed the day-to-day running of the business “or biding time in anticipation of a changing business environment” (p.1).

Hao et al. (2020) extended Faulkner’s model to form a COVID-19 crisis management framework that situates the principles and strategies adopted by China’s hotel industry in the six phases of disaster planning prescribed by Faulkner. The research is capped with a new business model, a post-pandemic resilience agenda that includes multi-business and multi-channel platforms, digital transformation, product design, and market reshuffling.

Le and Phi’s (2020) research examines the strategic responses of hotels worldwide to the pandemic based on 219 articles collected from global news media. The authors note that an important part of hotels’ crisis preparedness and resilience strategy is the proactive exploration of technological advancement and innovation options. Le and Phi’s proposed crisis management framework integrates the works of Faulkner, Novelli et al., and Ritchie, but adds two contextual factors: 1) hotel size and resources and 2) government regulations and support to refine the model within the context of the hotel sector.

The study by Breier et al. (2021) suggests that business model innovation (BMI) provides a viable solution for successfully coping with the COVID-19 crisis. The authors define innovations in tourism as “everything that differs from business as usual or which represents a discontinuance of previous practice in some sense for the innovating firm and occurs in the form of product/service, process, managerial, marketing, or institutional innovations” (Johannesson et al., 2001 as paraphrased by Hjalager, 2010, p. 2). Employing a multiple case analysis of six hospitality firms located in the Alpine region of Austria, the research shows that incremental and radical innovation mediate the relationship between market turbulence and performance in the hotel sector.

Sharma et al.’s (2021) analysis is drawn from a review of literature that studied the global tourism industry in the wake of the pandemic. The authors argue that the tourism industry has to resort to 1) internal measures (technology innovation and building consumer and employee confidence) as well as 2) external factors (government measures and local belongingness) to build resilience

to fight COVID-19. They further hypothesize that these resilience strategies mediate the revival of the tourism industry post-pandemic by transforming it into the so-called “new global economic order characterized by sustainable tourism, climate action, societal well-being, and involvement of local communities” (p.8).

Finally, Noorashid and Chin’s (2021) study examines the responses, initiatives, and management of 16 Community-Based Tourism (CBT) businesses in Brunei at the height of the pandemic using Sharma et al.’s (2021) resilience-based framework for reviving the tourism industry post-COVID-19. The research shows that the most notable initiatives taken by CBT businesses in Brunei include diversifying tour packages and utilizing local resources and products. Based on these findings, the paper added two transformational factors to Sharma et al.’s (2021) resilience-based framework: 1) the innovation of roles and practices and 2) the appreciation of local products and services.

The Present Study

Rivera (2020) asserts that the first step in situations, as presented by the pandemic, is to offer theoretical perspectives that are pragmatically sound. Consistent with this, Sharma et al. (2021) propose a framework that includes resilience from stakeholders such as market players, governments, NGOs, and others. Our study utilized a conceptual framework that adapts this resilience framework.

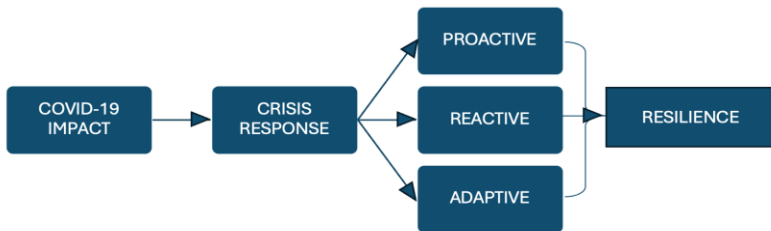
In the wake of the pandemic, it is argued that resilience was the need of the hour, as it was about adapting to new environments and mitigating the effects of crises. Sharma et al. suggest that the coordination of the actors mentioned is important to achieve resilience for the industry.

Following these assertions, this paper evaluates how these stakeholders translate pandemic issues into transformative practices. Taking the case of Magalang, Pampanga, it examines the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the tourism sector and the measures taken by the stakeholders to transform the industry in the post-crisis scenario into a more sustainable form. This paper argues that the magnitude of the impact shapes the resilience of a local destination recovering from the pandemic, the combined response of the stakeholders, and the strategies collectively identified to pursue sustainable outcomes.

To support this argument, key concepts and principles of resilience are outlined, emphasizing coordinative processes and adaptive strategies among stakeholders as mechanisms for building resilience during and after disaster events. These are the critical elements of the framework developed by Sharma et al. (2021) that the paper adopts for the study (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework



The framework is used to analyze the effects of COVID-19 on Magalang’s tourism sector and to examine the responses of stakeholders, as well as the collective strategies they have adopted to recover and transform their destination. Specifically, this research aims to address the following questions:

1. What were the impacts of the pandemic on the tourism sector?
2. What measures were undertaken by the stakeholders, particularly the local government, to transform the industry in the post-crisis scenario to take a more sustainable form?

Methodology

A mixed-method case study design was utilized for the research. To address the first question, news articles available online were analyzed, and tourism demand data at the national and provincial levels were processed, which were accessible from the official website of the Department of Transportation (DOT). For the second question, interviews were conducted via Zoom video conferencing from March 22 to 31, 2022, to gather insights and interpretations from resort owner-managers regarding their experiences during the pandemic. Nine key resource persons were contacted through email and mobile messages. Out of the nine, the

first four responded and agreed to participate in the interview. The interview also sought to identify adaptive measures the owner-managers took to respond to COVID-19. We also drew insights from the series of consultative workshops with the tourism stakeholders in the municipality of Magalang to formulate their Tourism Master Plan between 2021 and 2023, where a COVID-19 recovery program was a key component.

Three of the four resorts that agreed to participate in the study were accredited by the Department of Tourism (DOT). One was classified as a resort, while the other two were designated as Mabuhay accommodations. The Mabuhay accommodation classification includes motels, inns, pensions, and other lodging facilities that do not meet the criteria for resorts or hotels (see Table 1). Only one was a sole proprietorship; the other three were family-owned. Abe's Farm had been operating for over three decades, having started operations in 1991, while the rest were only five to six years old at the interview. Two resorts were located on the foothills of Mt. Arayat; one was outside the Poblacion (town proper), and one was near the Poblacion. The properties were small operations made chiefly of villas, ranging from four to 23 units. One property had four rooms aside from villas, while the drive-in accommodation had 30 rooms. All except one were located on farms. The properties all sold rooms, and three also served food and beverages. Two of the properties had pools. The resort capacities ranged from 50 to 148 and were served by an average of nine staff members during the pandemic. Three resorts catered to visitors from Metro Manila, adjacent towns, and Magalang.

Table 1
Profile of the Respondents

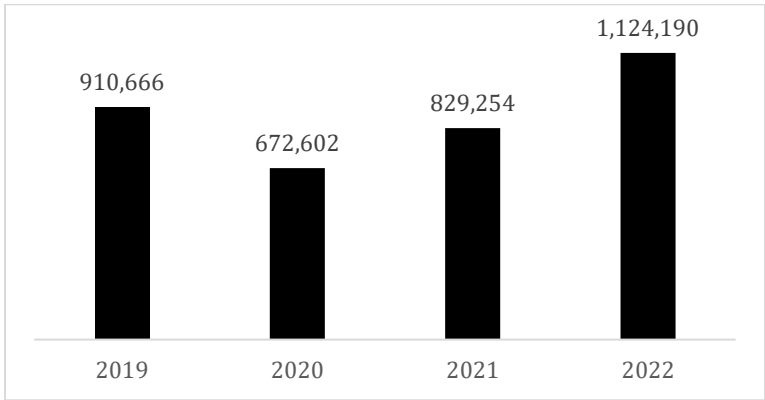
Resort	DOT Category	Ownership	Year Established	Location	Site Description	Revenue Sources	Capacity (pax)	Staff	Market base
Abe's Farm	Accredited Resort	Family	1991	Mt. Arayat Foothills	14 villas (Ifugao huts), farm	Rooms, F&B, Pool, museum tours	40-60	30 pre-pandemic to 24	70%-80% NCR; the rest from adjacent towns
Nauvoo Farm Resort	Mabuhay Accom.	Sole prop.	2017	Mt. Arayat Foothills	4 villas (family and budget), four single hotel rooms, farm	Rooms, pool, function rooms (not in use)	58	21 (including on-call employees)	Mostly NCR
Fiona's Farm	(No longer accredited at the time of the interview)	Family	2017	Outside Poblacion	23 villas, farm	Rooms, F&B (not operational), day tours	148	11 (6 regular)	75% (patrons) from Magalang, 20% from adjacent towns, 5% from NCR
La Hermosa Lodge	Mabuhay Accom. (Drive-in facility)	Family	2016	Near Poblacion	30 rooms, Drive-in near highway	Rooms only	60	10	Mostly overnights from adjacent towns

Results

Impact of COVID-19 on the Tourism Sector in Magalang, Pampanga

As shown in Figure 2, tourist arrivals to Pampanga during the pandemic also declined, but at a lesser rate than in the Philippines, plunging by about 26% in 2020, the first year of the pandemic. However, arrivals quickly recovered by 23% to 36% in 2021 and 2022, respectively. This was due to the relaxation of travel, aided by the availability of vaccines and the decreasing number of new infections. The exceptional spike in arrivals in 2022 could be attributed to so-called “vengeance travel” by people whose travel plans were curtailed during the pandemic and who were taking advantage of the opening of most tourist destinations, including Pampanga.

Figure 2
Total Arrivals to Pampanga



As shown in Figure 3, foreign arrivals constituted 45% of all arrivals to the province in 2019. However, this share quickly dwindled to 23%, 14%, and 20% during the pandemic years of 2020 to 2022. Again, the dramatic decrease in foreign arrivals was due to travel restrictions for citizens in the originating countries and the stringent precautions adopted by the Philippines for incoming travelers from foreign ports, such as the requirement for vaccination certifications and mandatory quarantine in accredited accommodation establishments in the country.

Figure 3
Composition of Arrivals to Pampanga

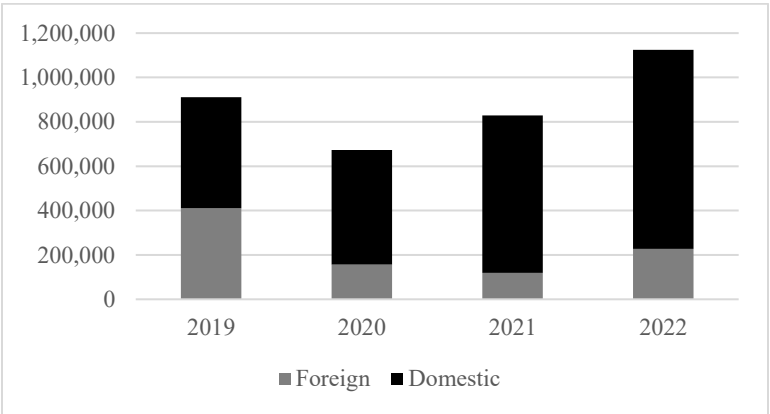
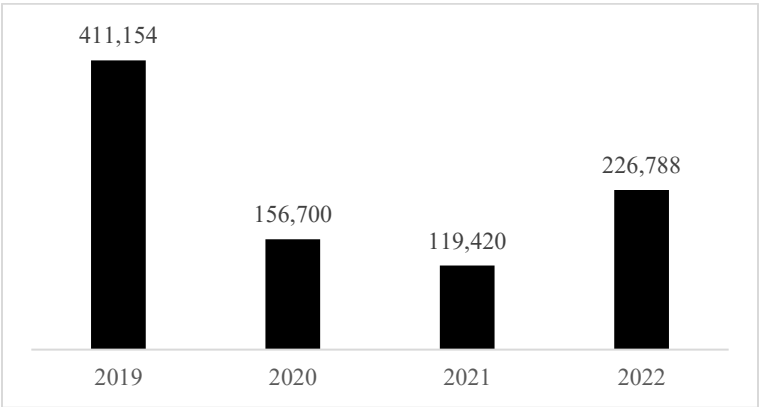


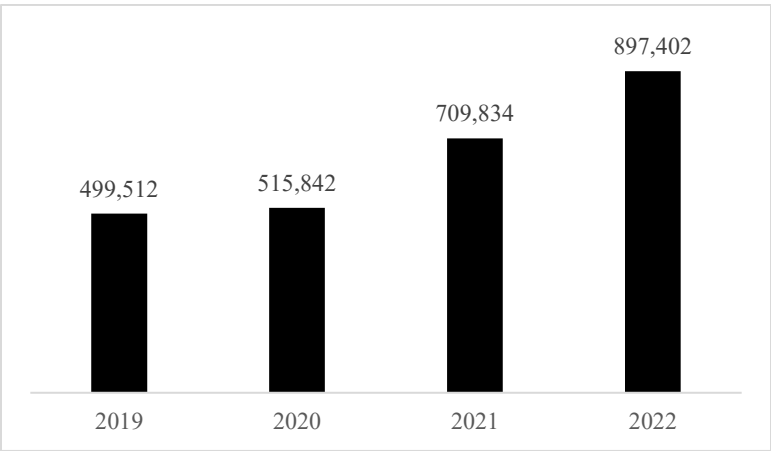
Figure 4 shows that foreign arrivals to Pampanga jumped an impressive 130% in 2019 over the previous year. However, the ban on leisure travel caused foreign arrivals to the province to contract by -62% in 2020 and again by -24% in 2021. After the aforementioned travel restrictions and health protocols were relaxed and the Philippines reopened its borders for all types of travelers in February 2022, foreign arrivals bounced strongly by 90%. Data from the Department of Tourism website does not provide a breakdown of market shares at the provincial level. However, at the national level, the top ten source markets in 2022 were the United States, South Korea, Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom, Japan, Singapore, India, Malaysia, and China. Visitors from the United States and South Korea accounted for more than 35% of total arrivals in 2022.

Figure 4
Foreign Arrivals to Pampanga



During the pandemic, Domestic arrivals to Pampanga declined dramatically between 2019 and 2020 (see Figure 5). Thereafter, domestic arrivals grew by 38% in 2021 and 26% in 2022, following the availability of vaccines and the eventual lifting of travel and health protocols. Domestic arrivals drove tourism recovery in the province as domestic travelers greatly outnumbered foreign travelers by a ratio of 4:1.

Figure 5
Domestic Arrivals to Pampanga



Effect of COVID-19 on the Economy of Magalang

Going into the micro-level, the slowdown in business at the national and international levels due to COVID-19 was mirrored by the performance of businesses in Magalang. Magalang reported its first COVID-19 case in the town on April 16, 2020 (Malig, 2020). Just prior to the pandemic, there was growth in business applications from 1,102 enterprises in 2019 to 1,075 in 2020, an increase of 6% (see Figure 6). However, as the pandemic deepened, there was a noticeable decline in the increase of business registrations, with numbers expanding in 2021 by only 1% % %–slower than in 2020. There was a slight growth of 4% in 2022.

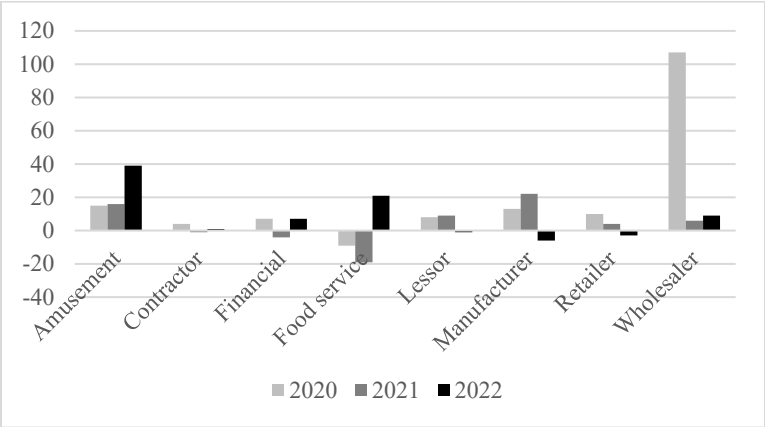
Figure 6
Business Applications in Magalang



Nevertheless, the effect of the pandemic had been uneven, with certain businesses seeming more immune than others. Before the pandemic, for example, wholesalers experienced a fantastic growth of 107% at the beginning of 2020, with registration growing from 15 in 2019 to 31 in 2020 (see Figure 7). Less robust but respectable was the performance of manufacturers, which grew from 45 to 51 businesses—a 13% increase—in the same period. When the pandemic took hold, growth for wholesalers nosedived to 6%, while manufacturers saw their numbers increase by 22%—much faster than the previous year. In 2022, there was a reversal of fortune—wholesalers recovered from slower growth; meanwhile,

manufacturers had their numbers reduced. Their performance can be seen in Figure 7.

Figure 7
Business Registration Growth Rate



The amusement sector seemed impervious to the pandemic. Despite the lockdowns and travel constraints, this sector continued to grow. From 33 business registrations in 2019, there were 38 in 2020, 44 in 2021, and 61 in 2022 (see Figure 8). The registration in 2022 marked a 39% increase over 2021—an impressive figure compared to the other sectors.

Figure 8
Number of Business Applications by Classification

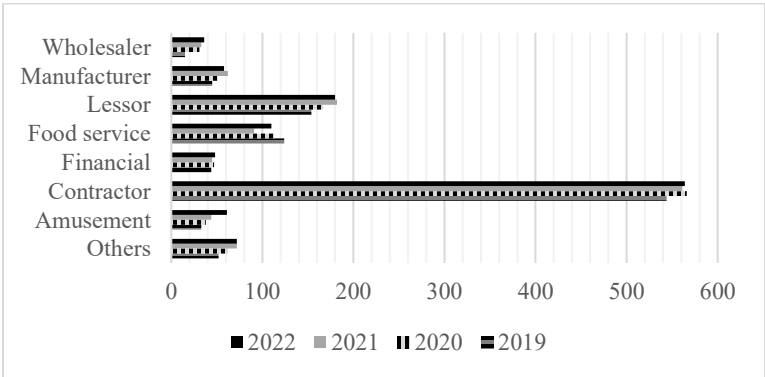
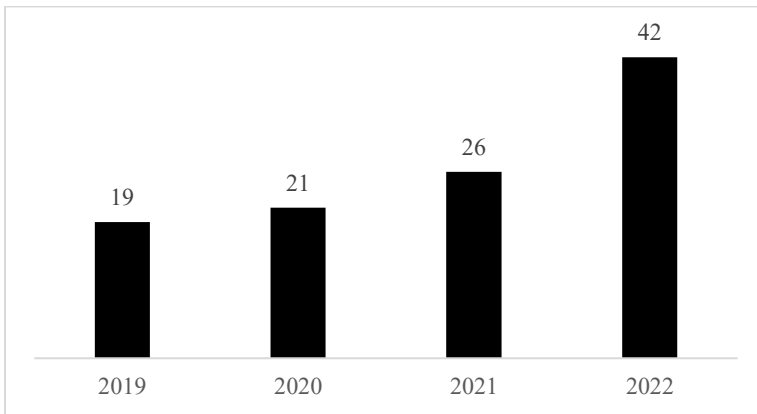


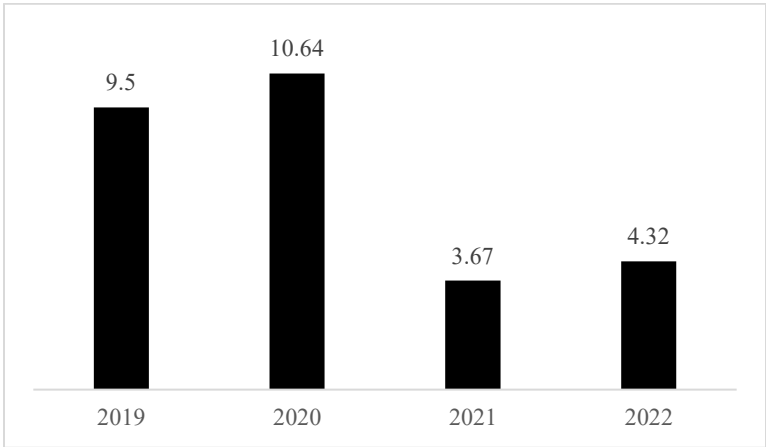
Figure 9 shows the number of registered resorts in Magalang. Reflecting the trend in the amusement sector, the resorts grew from strength to strength. From 19 in 2019, registration increased to 21 the following year, 26 in 2021, and 42 in 2022. In other words, the resorts more than doubled in four years, even with the pandemic. Led by Altezza Resort, an 11-villa property in Barangay Ayala, 13 new resorts registered in 2022, indicating confidence in the ability of tourism to recover in the medium-to-long term.

Figure 9
Number of Resorts



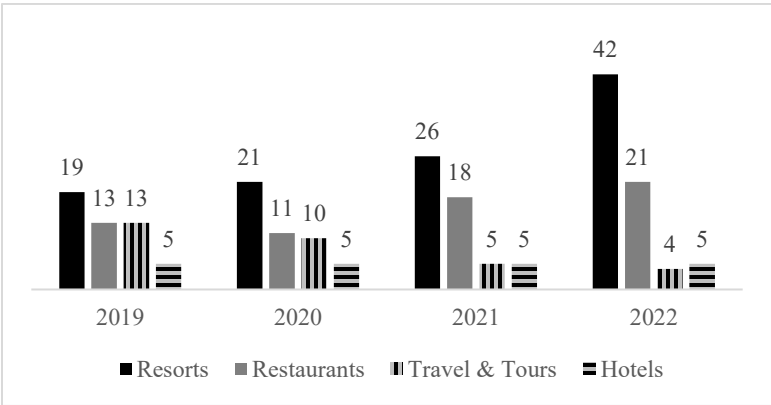
While business applications increased during the pandemic, the resorts' overall financial performance suffered. The declared gross revenue in 2022 was still less than half that earned in 2019 (see Figure 10). The resorts were the worst hit in 2021, with decreased gross sales of -66 %. Many resorts reported zero earnings starting in 2021, forcing three resorts to cease operations in 2022.

Figure 10
Resort Gross Sales in Million Pesos



Less striking but equally indicative of the devastating effects of the pandemic on tourism was the performance of travel agencies, travel and tour operators, and travel consultancies. Collectively, they were the most affected. From 13 in 2019, their ranks were reduced to 10 in 2020 and halved even further in 2021 (see Figure 11). In 2022, only four were registered under this category—a third of the number in 2019.

Figure 11
Number of tourism enterprises by classification



While the local tourism enterprises have already been able to recoup some of their losses following the easing of restrictions, the Mt. Arayat Protected Landscape has remained closed. Before the pandemic, the number of visitors to Mt Arayat's *Banal a Bunduk, Dalan Ning Krus* (Holy Mountain, Way of the Cross) was estimated at 200,000 during the Holy Week (Magalang Tourism Plan 2019-2021). In 2022, according to the Protected Area Management Board (PAMB), this number was at its lowest. This profoundly impacted the livelihood of residents who depended on the park. The PAMB bemoaned that at least 25 of their rangers were now jobless since tourism at the Mt. Arayat Protected Landscape was halted.

The Impact of COVID-19 on the Resort Sector in Magalang

Financial loss arising from last-minute customer cancellations due to abrupt and unexpected lockdowns during COVID-19 was a shared experience among the local resorts interviewed. One resort reported zero income during the first six months of the pandemic (March to August 2020), while another reported zero income for an entire year. The losses were attributed to the shutdown of the facilities and reduced capacity limits to comply with the Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF-EID) from 2020 to 2022. The IATF-EID was created by President Benigno Aquino III in 2014 through Executive Order No. 168 to prevent the spread of EID in the country through a system that involved the screening of persons potentially infected with EID, contact tracing, and implementation of effective quarantine and proper isolation procedures, among others. Most participants reported a plunge in their property's average occupancy rates, which had run at 100% during weekends pre-pandemic. One resort with 23 villas declined to 20% in weekend occupancy levels, while another plunged to almost zero. Recovering from the pandemic proved slow as capacity was limited to 30% for one resort due to IATF restrictions. By 2021, only one of the four resorts could break even.

Reactive Measures

The restriction on leisure travel and health quarantine requirements forced accommodation establishments to adopt business survival strategies. Many AEs offered staycation packages in GCQ areas at up to 30% of venue capacity under strict health and

safety guidelines monitoring. Some more prominent hotels also converted some of their rooms into quarantine facilities for inbound tourists.

The literature emphasizes that the industry's recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic will rely on confident consumers and employees. Mao et al. (2020) demonstrated how companies in China contributed to employees' psychological capital through corporate social responsibility, enabling the employees to maintain hope and optimism amidst difficulties. While not on the same level as those described by Mao et al., resorts in Magalang showed a similar bent. To survive the pandemic, one resort sold farm produce to augment income. It also placed its employees on rotation but with reduced salaries to prevent layoffs. One resort had to temporarily place their employees on standby in 2020, providing them with financial assistance as they waited to be rehired the following year. One resort was forced to cut jobs.

The management of the two resorts also dipped into savings or used personal funds to cover maintenance and salaries. Another resort sold scraps. Another way to minimize costs is by doing repairs and maintenance work themselves.

Adaptive Measures

All the participants said the outlook in 2022 had considerably improved, and business had bounced back since alert level 1 was declared. For some of them, weekend bookings had almost reached pre-crisis levels.

When asked about businesses' most pressing concerns during the pandemic, many expressed frustrations over government-enforced restrictions and the belief that it would not be "business as usual" shortly. When responding to what they would have done differently, one participant highlighted the importance of better preparation, stating that they had not anticipated that the crisis would last so long. None of the respondents mentioned establishing protocols to survive another outbreak like COVID-19.

Regarding post-pandemic recovery measures, the research participants provided the following recommendations:

- Include resort areas in the planned road development.
- Ensure timely garbage collection, as fees for this service are being paid.
- Establish a souvenir shop to showcase local products.

- Construct food establishments near the resorts for customer convenience.
- Create promotional materials to highlight Magalang.
- Encourage local concessionaires to attract consumer traffic to the resorts.
- Develop spa facilities as separate business units.
- Diversify activities on farms by adding options like a fishpond and poultry to create alternative revenue streams.
- Streamline the permit facilitation process to support small businesses.
- Improve the access road to Mt. Arayat.

For the respondents, these actions are essential for restoring confidence among visitors and businesses, ensuring that the destination remains attractive and operationally viable. The recommendations include incorporating resort areas into planned road developments, improving access roads to Mt. Arayat, and establishing food establishments, souvenir shops, and other facilities. Additionally, creating marketing materials to promote Magalang will enhance the physical accessibility and attractiveness of tourist destinations. These efforts are crucial for boosting local and visitor confidence in the area's recovery.

Improving governance is essential alongside infrastructure investment; it includes providing regulatory support for efficient garbage collection services and simplifying permit processes to assist small businesses. These measures align with the broader goal of fostering a sense of community and empowering local entrepreneurs. By facilitating easier operations for small businesses, the destination can create a more inclusive and resilient tourism ecosystem that benefits from the active participation of local stakeholders.

In the context of crisis recovery, these recommendations highlight the importance of incorporating the needs of the tourism sector into policy decisions. The government demonstrates its support and commitment to recovery by implementing these measures. This approach is rooted in the resilience model proposed by Sharma et al. (2021), which suggests internal and external strategies to revitalize the tourism industry following the COVID-19 pandemic.

The resilience model proposed by Sharma et al. (2021) emphasizes the importance of external factors, such as government

measures and a sense of local belonging, in revitalizing the tourism industry after the COVID-19 pandemic. A notable example of this is the proactive approach taken by the local government of Magalang in developing the Magalang Tourism Master Plan (TMP), which includes a strategy for post-COVID tourism recovery.

The Tourism Master Plan underscores the need for compliance with the 2020 Department of Tourism (DOT) memorandum circular regarding the New Normal Health and Safety Guidelines for Accommodation Establishments. It calls on the local government unit (LGU) of Magalang and its tourism stakeholders to adhere to these guidelines. Additionally, the plan recommends that the LGU incorporate inspections into its licensing processes to ensure that tourism establishments meet these requirements. It also encourages tourism businesses to coordinate with the public health system, particularly with the Barangay Health Emergency Response Team (BHERT) and local medical facilities.

Sharma et al. (2021, p. 4) argue that the “feeling of belongingness among locals will dictate terms for the revival of the tourism industry” (p. 4). This is in recognition of the importance of domestic tourism and the strength of local linkages. In Magalang, local belongingness was seen through the active participation of the tourism stakeholders in the crafting of the TMP. Through workshops and consultation meetings conducted in 2022, the TMP not only gave a voice to the local community but also incorporated many aspects that will make the tourism sector in Pampanga more sustainable and resilient to future crises. These include product portfolio diversification, livelihood and enterprise development, governance system development, and destination marketing. Product portfolio diversification includes ecotourism, agritourism, and cultural heritage tourism. Livelihood and enterprise development covers training on educational farm tours with coffee, tea, and wine tasting; farm-to-table dining; handicraft production workshops and cooking demonstrations; and workforce development. Developing a governance system includes tourism code development and revenue enhancement through collecting environmental fees. Finally, marketing programs include digital, traditional, and affiliate marketing efforts.

Many of the strategies mentioned above represent innovation—an important pillar of the framework by Sharma et al. (2021). The technological side of innovation is indispensable in dealing with the disruption of the COVID-19 pandemic, allowing the resorts to maintain minimum health standards and control

customer traffic. Livelihood and enterprise development includes enhancing links with local enterprises so that the “one existing souvenir shop inside the Pampanga State Agricultural University” would be augmented. Workforce development was also proposed to elevate service standards that had dipped during the pandemic, with resorts “operating like a *carinderia* (a small restaurant serving mainly local food).” Technology is expected to be a significant force in managing the industry’s response to external challenges.

Discussion and Conclusion

There were several reasons the pandemic had such a disastrous impact on the resort sector in Magalang. First, resorts were among the businesses placed under Category 4, which meant they could not operate under the first three levels of community quarantine (ECQ, MECQ, and GCQ) and could operate at only 50% capacity under MGCQ. Second, like other accommodation facilities, resorts were allowed by the DOT to operate only upon application for a Certificate of Authority to Operate, the requisites of which were compliance with health protocols and DOT accreditation. Third, as a non-essential industry, the resort industry did not receive any financial support from the government. Fourth, the resorts in Magalang had small capacities and were far from the population centers, which prevented them from converting into income-generating quarantine facilities. Fifth, the lockdowns and travel bans dried up the demand for resorts. Lastly, the resorts could not use e-commerce to provide services amid travel bans and social distancing requirements because, unlike physical goods, accommodation and services could not be separated from the location and the persons providing them.

From a resilience perspective, it was clear that the resort sector in Pampanga had no proactive measures in place to deal with a pandemic with the scale and impact of COVID-19. Most of the resorts’ actions were reactive, which reflected the general condition in the Philippines and most of the world. Indeed, a significant outcome of the pandemic was the mainstreaming of health protocols among tourist establishments.

On a positive note, none of the resorts permanently closed or filed for bankruptcy. This success was attributed to their ability to minimize costs, develop alternative revenue streams, and utilize savings or personal funds. However, a single-proprietary resort did report a temporary closure, while three family-owned resorts

experienced declines in income and occupancy rates. This indicates that the combination of business and family concerns fostered a strong commitment to continue operating despite the challenges posed by the pandemic. Other factors that undermined the single-proprietary resort's resiliency were the combination of a smaller capacity (four villas) and its dependence on the National Capital Region (Metro Manila) for its customer base.

The local government of Magalang deserves recognition for developing the Tourism Master Plan during the pandemic, which includes a strategy for post-COVID recovery. In response to COVID-19, the local government unit (LGU) was advised to adopt New Normal guidelines. These guidelines require strict adherence to sanitation and emergency procedures among tourism establishments and should be included in the business registration checklist. The Tourism Master Plan (TMP) was developed through the collaborative efforts of various stakeholders in the municipality's tourism sector. This group included the town mayor, the Municipal Tourism officer and staff, resort and restaurant owners and managers, members of the academic community, local government officials, and residents. Collaboration among local stakeholders is crucial, especially during difficult times. It demonstrates that working together can result in better outcomes for the community.

From the reviewed resilience literature, one of the most common crucial factors found to mediate the resilience of tourism enterprises post-pandemic is service innovation or diversification into new growth avenues (e.g., Breier et al., 2021; Duarte-Alonso et al., 2020; Hao et al., 2020; Le & Phi, 2020; and Noorashid & Chin, 2021). The experience of the resort sector in Magalang amid the COVID-19 crisis underscores the imperative to move beyond its mostly reactive crisis management response to a forward-looking stance based on strategic resilience. This entails more than mitigating crises by making operational adjustments such as cost-cutting, putting employees on furlough, or dipping into personal funds, with ownership structure, size of operation, and market dependence likely to calibrate the ultimate response. It means moving beyond surviving to creating adaptive and thriving outcomes.

Aside from the adaptive transformation of local enterprises, the Magalang case highlights the local government's pivotal role in crisis governance and destination recovery. Indeed, one revelation of the pandemic is the intricate interdependence between

policymakers and tourism businesses when managing crises. The initiative to formulate a Tourism Master Plan incorporating a post-COVID recovery Strategy illustrates the proactive stance taken by the local government of Magalang to optimize the crisis response capacities of the destination.

The COVID-19 pandemic was unprecedented in scale and magnitude of impact, which made it impossible to detect and prevent its repercussions. While disaster preparedness protocols were in place, these measures were insufficient or inapplicable to the COVID-19 crisis. From a resilience perspective, the tourism sector has been largely reactive in its response to COVID-19. However, a certain level of adaptation took place by adopting New Normal protocols and formulating the Tourism Master Plan incorporating a Pandemic Recovery Strategy.

These findings align with the fundamental principles outlined in Sharma et al.'s (2021) framework, which emphasizes that the tourism industry must resort to both internal measures—such as the proactive engagement of local stakeholders—and external factors—such as government interventions not only to build resilience to combat COVID-19 but also to transition the industry into a more sustainable form.

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Dr. Reil G. Cruz is an Associate Professor at the UP Asian Institute of Tourism, where he currently serves as Institute Secretary. Dr. Cruz has served as a consultant for the UN World Tourism Organization, as a Visiting Professor at Woosong University, Korea, and as a project leader for tourism development planning, marketing, and tourism code for tourism offices at various levels. He has authored books on ecotourism, sustainable tourism, and tourism planning and development. His current research interests are overtourism, destination branding, and inclusive tourism. He was the editor-in-chief of the *Journal of Philippine Tourism and Hospitality Studies*. He was recently elected (2025) as Vice President of the Philippine Association of Researchers for Tourism and Hospitality.

Dr. Edieser Dela Santa is a professor at the University of the Philippines Asian Institute of Tourism, where he currently serves as the Graduate Program Coordinator. Since obtaining his master's and doctoral degrees from Japan and New Zealand, respectively, he has actively led or participated in numerous research projects. His works and publications have examined the politics of tourism policy formulation and implementation, the representation of culture and heritage, tourism and hospitality curriculum development, and tourism governance in protected areas. Currently, he is one of the conveners of the Batanes Tourism and Hospitality Monitoring Center, a research group that monitors the long-term sustainability of tourism in the Batanes Islands, now affiliated with the United Nations World Tourism Organization's International Network of Sustainable Tourism Observatories.

Ms. Marjorie June Lucero-Antonio brings over 30 years of combined experience in the tourism and hospitality industry and the academe. She has almost eight years of teaching experience at the UP Asian Institute of Tourism. She is also a Certified Hospitality Trainer, conducting international certification courses and workshops for hotel professionals, educators, and industry practitioners. She has also been a consultant in Tourism Destination Marketing and

Tourism Planning and Development. Ms. Antonio holds a Master of Science in Tourism Development and Management (MSTDM) degree from the UP Asian Institute of Tourism, and diplomas in a Professional Development Program (PDP) in Advanced Marketing from Cornell University, and in Marketing Strategy Course (MSC) from the Asian Institute of Management.

Exploring the Life Satisfaction of Ayta Women of Central Luzon

Eden H. Terol, Rosanne Marie G. Echivarre,
Cristabel F. Tiangco, & Bryan Q. Engay

Abstract

This study utilized indigenous Filipino research methodologies, specifically *pakikipagkwentuhan* (“engaging in conversation”) and *pagtatanong-tanong* (“asking questions”), to explore the life satisfaction of 45 Ayta women from Central Luzon, Philippines. A narrative analysis approach was employed to interpret the data. The findings reflect the participants' subjective well-being, indicating that their life satisfaction was primarily linked to their health, faith, and interpersonal relationships. However, dissatisfaction stemmed from problems such as poor health, poverty, and relational conflicts. The results were discussed in the context of the participants' realities. The social barriers they faced, including perceived discrimination and the inability to fully benefit from their land, made life more challenging for the Ayta women.

Keywords: Ayta women, life satisfaction, Indigenous people, Central Luzon

Indigenous Peoples (IPs) groups all over the world are nearly three times more likely to live in extreme poverty, be malnourished, lack social protection, and be subjected to social discrimination (UNDP, 2021). The Aytas, whose ancestors are considered the first inhabitants of the Philippine archipelago, are in similarly disadvantaged condition as the world's IPs as they experience “unfair trade, inaccessibility of government services, lack of safe water and adequate sanitation, unsustainable livelihood and resources, no security of tenure, and social discrimination” (Estacio & Marks, 2010, p. 550). Their experiences of relocation from their indigenous communities, as prompted by calamities and development, disrupted their indigenous way of life. Their exposure to the non-Ayta culture facilitated change in their Ayta worldview (Mallari, 2017; Shimizu, 2001).

Living in a relatively disadvantaged condition, the Aytas who desire to cross socioeconomic boundaries through education are regularly threatened by a host of challenges, such as exorbitant

school fees, bullying, and language barriers, among others (Rogayan, 2019). These roadblocks discourage the Ayta youth from pursuing higher educational goals (Estacio & Marks, 2010). Although not articulated in systematic studies, the challenges in their current milieu and the barriers to development may affect the Aytas' life satisfaction or subjective well-being.

This study presents a glimpse of the life satisfaction or subjective well-being of Ayta women from Mabalacat, Pampanga in Central Luzon. Systematic studies on the lives of the Indigenous Peoples may bring about public awareness of their plight that can inform programs and policies intended to promote their general welfare.

Subjective Well-being and Life Satisfaction

Subjective well-being (SWB) refers to a person's cognitive appraisals of life satisfaction and affective evaluations of one's life and conditions (Diener & Diener, 1995; Diener et al., 2002). Some also use "happiness" interchangeably with SWB (Ratzlaff et al., 2000). It has three hallmarks: it is subjective or resides within the experiences of the individual, is characterized by positive measures and not just the absence of negative factors, and is an integrated judgment of one's personal life (Diener, 1984). SWB is important in creating healthy and productive societies (Durand, 2015). The following seven broad categories are determinants or correlates of SWB: basic demographics, socioeconomic status, health and functioning, personality, social support, religion and culture, and geography and infrastructure (Das et al., 2020).

***Sikolohiyang Pilipino* and Contemporary Life, *Kasighawan*, and the Indigenous Studies View**

This study uses life satisfaction to understand the subjective well-being of the Ayta women residing in Pampanga in Central Luzon, Philippines. For the Ayta people, perceptions of their life satisfaction may be anchored on recognizing the Filipino's relational self, which honors and upholds one's shared identity with another (*pakikipagkapwa*). Enriquez (1990) describes *kapwa* as a "shared self" at the core of Filipino personhood. *Kapwa* is an expression of the "I" as extended to include the other, which entails moral and ethical elements encouraging equal treatment of others as fellow human beings.

Among the contemporary resettled Aytas, however, confusion ensues amongst adolescents who were instructed by kin to assume the values of generosity, obedience, kindness, and patience but also deal with bullying and discrimination in schools and their community. With this convergence of traditional values and the current needs of the youth in the changing society, proactive solutions may be implemented to serve the welfare of the Ayta youth (Terol, 2018).

Among the Ayta Mag-Antsi of Mabalacat and Bamban, Tarlac, the concept of *kasighawan*, which may be roughly translated to the idea of “well-being,” embodies their vision of an ancestral domain and communities teeming with abundance, enjoying order, lasting peace, social justice, good health and security among kinsmen, and the interdependence of creation. According to their culture and inspiration, this vision will only be realized with their ownership, governance, and development of their ancestral domain (Alipao, 2019). Associated with *kasighawan* is the concept of *kahampatan*—a vision of self-determined development for the Aytas of Zambales where there are positive relationships (with a supreme being, with the self, with others, with nature) and goodness of life for everyone (Meneses, 2019). Lemke and Delormier (2017) claimed that the Indigenous Peoples have been sustained by their food systems and balanced relationship with nature for thousands of years. The lack of access to their lands and natural resources due to structural inequalities threatened their food system, resulting in hunger and malnutrition — with women and girls suffering the most significant burden.

There is a long history of displacement of the Mabalacat and Bamban Aytas – from 1947, during which the US military base was established, to the eruption of Mount Pinatubo in 1991 and the establishment of the Clark Special Economic Zone (CSEZ) in 1993. Simultaneously, the influx of migration from the lowlands significantly reduced the ancestral lands of the Aytas (Gobrin & Andin, 2002). With internal displacement and the corresponding lifestyle changes, the ideals of *kasighawan* are far from being realized.

Sebastian (2020) identified the Aytas of Mabalacat and Bamban, Tarlac as one of the four communities that were awarded the Certificate of Ancestral Domain Title (CADT) in May 2009 per the Indigenous Peoples’ Rights Act (IPRA) Law ratification in 1997. The areas covered and their corresponding land size are as follows: “Aytas in the village of San Nicolas, San Vicente, Santo Niño, Anupul

and Calumpang in Bamban, Tarlac and parts of Barangay Marcos in Mabalacat, Pampanga, under CADT R03-BAM-1204-025, were awarded lands that were the biggest among the four—10,323.308 hectares. The CADT was awarded to 3,000 families in the mentioned areas” (Orejas, 2009a in Sebastian, 2020, p.18).

De Leon (2017) claimed that the success of programs and projects for the Aytas and other IPs depends to a large extent on governance in which their collective good is pursued through a standardized system. Among the Clarkfield Aytas, there seem to be some conflicts in terms of leadership and governance. The Council of Elders, led by the chieftain; the tribal association, led by a chairman; and the local government unit, led by a barangay captain, seem to conflict with who should govern the communities. While the Aytas acknowledge their indigenous governance structure, for the Council of Elders, the tribal association chairman is considered their leader who fights for their rights and provides them with economic assistance. Meanwhile, the Aytas have ambivalent perceptions of the national and local governments and other organizations. With leadership conflicts and governance issues in the community, development projects and programs may be derailed to the detriment of the people’s socioeconomic conditions.

However, aside from leadership and governance, the most pressing concerns among the Clarkfield Aytas are the lack of water, medicine, and jobs, with the latter being the most serious problem. As such, the Joint Management Agreement (JMA) between their tribal association and the Clark Development Corporation (CDC) on some parts of their ancestral domain is perceived to be inequitable in favor of the CDC (De Leon, 2017). A fair and just resolution of issues regarding the management and utilization of their resources can be a step toward the realization of *kasighawan* among the Clarkfield Aytas

An Indigenous research paradigm developed by Lambert (2014)—anchored on Indigenous personhood and human connections—is similarly helpful in studying the life satisfaction and possible selves of Ayta women. The Spider Conceptual Framework aims to empower and preserve the integrity of Indigenous individuals and their community, giving attention to context, collaboration, and intergenerational interactions in research. Likewise, acknowledging the marginalization of the Indigenous population in the course of history and development, the framework demands a higher regard for the Indigenous participants – for example, engaging them in consultation and informing them of the

outcome of the study – for them to regain their dignity and self-respect and, consequently, promote their well-being (Terol, 2023). *Sikolohiyang Pilipino*, the traditional concept of *kasighawan*, and Lambert's indigenous paradigm were helpful guides in the conduct of this study.

Methodology

This paper is an essential interpretive exploration of the life satisfaction of selected Ayta women participants from Mabalacat, Pampanga, in Central Luzon, Philippines. Their communities were designated as relocation areas found at a considerable distance from their original farming areas. This relocation was part of the Clark Ecozone Development Plan. The basic interpretive approach in this research seeks to understand the subjective meanings that individuals attach to the areas being studied (Elliot & Timulak, 2005).

Participants

The researchers set no selection criteria except that the participants: (1) were from Mabalacat, Pampanga communities; (2) belonged to the Ayta group; and (3) could communicate in Filipino. Although the language barrier presented a limitation to the study since the researchers were not proficient in Ayta languages, the queries were stated using simple Filipino words. Forty-five Ayta women expressed their willingness to participate in the study, mainly due to their availability during the initial community visit. Thus, the participation of women was not intentional but somewhat serendipitous. The age of the participants ranged from 25 to 56. All women participants were married or cohabiting and had at least three children. They were housewives or vendors while their husbands or partners were either out planting crops or working in the companies within the Clark Special Economic Zone (CSEZ), where they were employed as utility workers.

Method

Preliminary steps included getting institutional approval to carry out the study and coordinating and negotiating with community leaders who took on the role of gatekeepers of the community. Seeking gatekeepers' assistance helped establish smoother relationships within the community and better understand contexts from which responses can be anchored. The gatekeepers informed residents about the research, and those willing to participate or available during the day of the community visits were invited.

The research team had a one-on-one dialogue with each participant. Before a sharing session, the objectives of the study, what participation entailed, the benefits and risks, and how the data would be used were explained to the participants. They were also assured of confidentiality and anonymity and were informed of their rights, such as the right to decline participation at any point in the study. Participants were encouraged to ask questions if they had any. The researchers proceeded with data-gathering only after checking that the participants comprehended the vital points of the research and that verbal and written consent was granted. A semi-structured interview/discussion guide was used to ask about the participants' satisfaction with their lives. The researchers utilized the indigenous methods of *pakikipagkwentuhan* and *pagtatanong-tanong* as data-gathering tools. Researchers also took note of their observations, which were documented via field notes and served as data sources.

The participants were visited at their homes, where the dialogues took place. Sessions were audio-recorded with the participant's consent. Food items and school supplies were given to the women as tokens of appreciation for participating in the study as data-gathering was concluded.

The audio-recorded conversations were then transcribed and encoded. The transcriptions and the researcher's field notes were used as data sources in the preliminary content analysis. Using meta cards, themes (topics, ideas, and repeatedly occurring ideas and patterns of meaning) were identified. Significant statements such as illustrative verbatim and unique responses were also noted using meta cards. Themes were then reviewed and defined, and each theme's best responses were identified (Braun & Clarke, 2019). The researchers scoured the transcripts individually and, later on, as a group, discussed and resolved points of contention. Participants

were asked to comment on the findings in another data validation session. The researchers deemed this verification process important in data validation and considered it an integral part of the research. The researchers were mindful that an outsider's point of view may still influence their perspective despite efforts to remain faithful to the narratives of lived experiences.

Results and Discussion

Life Satisfaction: Wellness, Faith, Good Relationships

In this research, life satisfaction describes how a woman perceives her life and whether she is content living her life. Women's satisfaction with life may come from their perception of their well-being. The women respondents claimed they were happy and satisfied despite their complicated lives. Their reasons for being satisfied with life included wellness or being in good health, having faith in God, and having a good relationship with others. For instance, one participant, Marissa (34, housewife), said she chose to be happy because wallowing in sadness would not lead her anywhere:

Kahit mahirap ang buhay, masaya. Wala naman kasing mangyayari kung malungkot ka eh. Mahirap ka na nga, malungkot ka pa. Dapat ay masaya, lalo na kung hindi sakitin ang pamilya mo ("Even if life is difficult, it's happy. Nothing will come of being sad. You are already poor and, on top of that, unhappy. You have to be happy, especially if your family is not sickly").

Anita (26, vendor) had a similar thing to say:

Sa awa ng Diyos, kahit naghihirap, masaya kami; kahit nahihirapan, nalilipasan ng gutom, nagtitiis, tumutulong naman ang mga kapatid ko sa amin ("In God's mercy, even if we're impoverished, we're happy; even if we're having difficulties, starving, my siblings are helping us anyway"). Good health and family are things to be thankful for despite poverty. Rola (30, vendor) claimed:
'Yung iba nga mayaman, ang dami namang problema at may sakit na kung ano-ano; kami, kahit mahirap, okay naman ang kalusugan at masaya naman kami kahit na

papaano (“Others may be rich, but they have plenty of problems and illnesses; we may be poor, but we are happy because we are healthy”).

Elsa (35, housewife) said that as long as she enjoys a good relationship with her husband, life is okay with her:

Basta masaya kaming mag-asawa, okay na rin yun.

With her faith as the reason for her life satisfaction, Marta (40, housewife) claimed that her happiness was rooted in her faith in God:

Oo, masaya ako, kahit na ganito kahirap ang buhay; sumasandal ako sa Kanya at sa Kanya ko iniaalay kung ano man ang mangyari sa amin. Siya na ang bahala sa amin (“Yes, I am happy even when life is this difficult; I lean on God and it’s to Him I surrender whatever happens to us. I leave it up to Him to take care of us”).

Gina (40, vendor) claimed that it is the feeling of being respected in the community that makes her feel satisfied:

Malinis naman ang pagkakakilala nila sa akin dito at di ako nasasangkot sa gulo (“I have a clean reputation around here, and I have not been involved in any disputes”).

While they did not find their lives easy or comfortable, these Ayta women claimed to be satisfied with their lives. One respondent narrated that her present life was much better than when they were in the mountains, recalling when children had little access to school or no electricity. While still challenging, the woman’s improved condition made her feel satisfied with life. This somehow explains the gratefulness and satisfaction with the women’s lives. To some, the amenities or conveniences that life in the lowlands offered them indicated their quality of life had improved. Sebastian (2020) suggests that many of the young Aytas have imbibed the mainstream way of life as they receive the same education the public school system provides to the rest of the Filipinos. While this may indicate their life’s progress, it takes them further away from their ethnic heritage.

The dominant reason for these Ayta women's life satisfaction was good health. Another reason was social activity. Among the Ayta, *pakikipagkapwa* is considered a salient social feature and important in their highly collectivist indigenous society (Enriquez, 1990; Jocano, 1998, 2001). Hence, interpersonal relationships between members of the family and the community bring a sense of well-being and life satisfaction. Terol (2018) described the qualities highly regarded in the Ayta community as simple, peaceful, helpful, polite, generous, and disciplined. Given these prosocial qualities, the Ayta women find comfort, companionship, and support from neighbors and kin to share the ups and downs of life.

Dissatisfaction with Life: Ill Health, Poverty, Injustice, and Relational Conflicts

Some Ayta women did report that they were not satisfied with life. Their dissatisfaction stemmed from ill health, poverty, injustice, and relational conflicts.

Being ill was cited as the foremost reason. Among the health issues disclosed were hypertension, goiter, myoma, and liver problems. On being sickly, Marie (53, housewife) said:

Madalas sumasakit ulo ko at mataas ang BP ko ("I get frequent headaches, and my blood pressure is high").

Ill health brings discomfort to the Ayta women. As much as some take pride in being healthy, which is a source of their life satisfaction, others find their illnesses a liability in living a satisfying life. The World Health Organization (WHO, 2024) defines well-being as a multifaceted state encompassing physical, mental, emotional, and social health. Physical health is the foundation of an overall sense of well-being. Nina (39, vendor), for instance, feels hopeless about her declining physical condition, stating the following about her health:

Naoperahan ako ng tatlong beses-sa goiter, myoma, at bato. Mataas din ang aking BP, cholesterol, at naninikip ang paghinga ko. Pakiramdam ko malapit na akong mamatay...siguro mga limang taon na lang ("I was operated on thrice—for goiter, myoma, and stones. My blood pressure

and cholesterol levels are also high, and I have difficulty breathing. I feel that I will die soon...I probably have only five years left”).

The discomfort and pain from such ailments, medical procedures, and restrictions regarding mobility, activities, and food intake impact one's life satisfaction. This relationship between physical health and life satisfaction is demonstrated by Kim et al. (2021), who found that those with higher satisfaction also tend to enjoy more excellent physical, psychological, and behavioral health. Moreover, compared with individuals with the lowest physical health outcomes, respondents with higher life satisfaction had higher self-rated health and a lower number of chronic conditions. Terol (2022) suggests that among resettled and involuntarily displaced Aytas, health issues are associated with a lack of access to natural food supplies and medicinal plant remedies. The Aytas' healing tradition consists of folk remedies based on plants and group ceremonies that include praying, sharing a meal, and being a part of nature (Fabrigas & Maniago, 2018). With the Ayta women's resettled condition, traditional healing practices may be challenging to pursue and carry on.

Suffering from ill health combined with other life stressors, the Ayta women may find day-to-day living extra challenging. Estacio and Marks (2010) observed that members of indigenous communities generally tend to suffer from poorer health than those from non-indigenous communities. In the case of the Mt. Pinatubo Aytas, barriers to health included “unfair trade, inaccessibility of government services, lack of safe water and adequate sanitation, unsustainable livelihood and resources, no security of tenure, and social discrimination” (p. 550). Hence, poor health conditions may also be associated with psychological stress and economic hardships.

Indeed, poverty was also cited as a primary reason for life dissatisfaction among the Ayta women. There were reports that family members were forced to accept menial jobs that paid very little just to put a decent meal on the table. Tita (29, housewife) complained of the lack of food supply. She said:

Hindi masaya kasi mahirap ang buhay. Kahit saan mo tingnan, palaging iniisip kung saan kukunin ang pagkain (“It

is not a happy life because it is a hard life. However you look at it, you keep thinking of where to get food to eat.

Likewise, Zita (29, vendor) found her situation hopeless, seeing that nothing would change:

Wala na...habang buhay na kaming ganito. Mahirap...parang gusto mo nang sumuko. Bawat isang linggo nangungutang, problema kung saan maghahanap ng pagkain ("There is no hope...we will be like this our whole lives. It's difficult...I feel like giving up. I borrow money every week, where to get food has been a problem").

The women also vehemently pointed to the injustice brought about by what they believed to be a curtailment of their rights to the ancestral domain and its resources as a source of their frustration and anger. Linda (34, vendor) talked about her anger at the injustices that they experienced:

Kung naisip namin ang mga karapatan namin, nakakagalit. Ang daming bagay na dapat kami ang nakikinabang tulad ng lupa, trabaho, at iba pa pero iba ang nakikinabang ("I feel angry when I think about our rights. There are so many things that we should be benefiting from, like land and work, but it's others who benefit").

Likewise, Rica (28, housewife) also claimed:

Hindi tumataas ang sahod kahit matagal na sa trabaho. Walang overtime pay. Hindi makatarungan ang patakaran ("Our salaries do not increase even if we have been working there for a long time. There is no overtime pay. The policies are unjust").

Mangahas (2021) found that life satisfaction is influenced by the abundance or lack of material resources, such that individuals in dire economic conditions tend to be more hopeless when it comes to having satisfying lives. However, those people whose basic needs are met daily tend to be more satisfied with their lives. With their basic needs covered, they tend to have more freedom to engage in other pursuits to improve their lives and those of their families. Meanwhile, for impoverished individuals, poverty-related concerns

(e.g., where to get the next meal, how to pay the rent) consume much of their mental resources, leaving less for other tasks such as learning and mastering skills. The lack of financial resources may also lead to poor decision-making, perpetuating poverty (Mani et al., 2013). Poverty is interlinked with other conditions, such as poor health, inadequate literacy, and more significant stress in daily living that impact interpersonal relations. For these Ayta women, the lack of easy access to food sources causes hunger and poor nutrition that may impact their health. Moreover, the lack of literacy also keeps them from securing gainful employment, and the perceived inequitable resource utilization and management of their ancestral domain leave them disempowered (De Leon, 2017).

In addressing issues of poverty, there is a need for the cooperation and engagement of those who hold the power. For instance, to ease poverty, traders should refrain from oppressive practices of unfair trade with the Aytas. Education providers such as the government and volunteers from the government and other socio-civic organizations are key to sustaining literacy services to the community, and land security rests on title holders (Estacio & Marks, 2010) and equitable management schemes (De Leon, 2017). Cooperation among tribal leaders and the local government unit is necessary for progress to ensue (De Leon, 2017). To see real change, a practical top-down approach is crucial in lifting poverty among the Aytas.

These dissatisfied Ayta women were conscious of their shared experiences of marginalization and poverty, for instance, saying *Pare-pareho naman kaming walang pera* ("We are all penniless"). Several responses alluded to poor work conditions and exploitation of the Ayta workers, as well as the sentiment that the government was not responsive to their needs. Harding et al. (2020) suggest that, in general, believing that the world is a just place for oneself and others is associated with life satisfaction. On the contrary, believing that the world is unfair based on experiences of marginalization is associated with diminished life satisfaction.

Some of the women expressed the belief that their conditions would no longer improve. How these participants described their experiences resonates with the concept of "existential poverty" described by Dixon and Frolova (2011) as "to live in or near persistent material poverty, while also being socially

excluded, marginalized, or disadvantaged” (p.1). This condition is a life-disempowering experience that ultimately can result in “learned helplessness,” in which individuals believe they have no control over their circumstances; any action will likely be futile.

Some of the women also claimed that conflicts in the family left them dissatisfied with life at times. These conflicts revolved around mother-daughter issues and marital infidelities. Sandra (34, housewife) complained about her mother (a Kapampangan who married an Ayta), who had an indifferent attitude towards her and her five siblings, which resulted in constant conflicts among them. Sandra expressed her sentiments against her mother:

Hindi kami magkasundo ng nanay ko. Hindi man lang kami tulungan kahit na nakikitang nagugutom ang mga bata; nasa kanya naman ang pension ng tatay sa pagtratabaho sa Base. Iba ang ugali niya (“I don’t get along with my mother. She wouldn’t help us even if she sees the children starving and she has our father’s pension from working in the Base. Her attitude is different”).

Similarly, Dina (29, vendor) claimed that she is also dissatisfied with life due to her husband’s infidelity. Expressing her marital concern, she said:

Mahirap...madalas kami mag-away dahil sa pambababae. Mas madali lang sana ang buhay kung tapat (“It isn’t easy...we constantly fight because of his womanizing. Life would be much easier if he were faithful”).

Rokach and Chan (2023), in their review of the impacts of infidelity, find that the discovery of spousal infidelity is associated with feelings of jealousy, which lead to anger, feelings of insecurity, fear, betrayal, paranoia, depression, loneliness, confusion, envy, resentment, and trauma. These emotions may even lead to aggressive acts towards the guilty party. Hartnett et al. (2023) suggested that infidelity impacts the well-being of relationships and the whole family’s welfare. Intervention measures are important to build healthier and more resilient relationships. For the Ayta women, family issues and conflicts make their lives less satisfying, and they claim that marital faithfulness would have made their lives easier.

Feelings of dissatisfaction and the thought of having very little outside support worsened their perception of injustice and violation of their rights. Likewise, the resentment over others benefiting from their ancestral domain was salient. Hagen and Minter (2020) assert that the lack of protection for Indigenous welfare can be attributed to the prejudice against Indigenous Peoples and the marginal position of their rights within the dominant Philippine development paradigm and ideology.

All the women respondents, regardless of whether they were satisfied with their lives or not, acknowledged their need to improve the quality of their lives. Anna (25, housewife) claimed:

"Sana maipagpatuloy ko ang pag-aaral ko, pero kung hindi na, makatapos lang ang mga anak sa pag-aaral at makatulong sa mga kapatid at makapasok sila sa trabaho ("I wish I could continue my education, but if there is no chance for that, I just wish for my children to finish their studies and help their siblings and get a job").

Self-improvement may be a goal to enhance one's quality of life. This may involve awareness of areas in life that need improvement and having the motivation to pursue goals. Improving oneself is linked with well-being, which is associated with greater life satisfaction (Huta & Ryan, 2010). Among the Ayta women, the areas in their lives that they want to improve are education and employment. Barriers to education among the Aytas may also be structurally addressed. Rogayan (2019) suggests that a multitude of personal and social issues are confronted by Aytas who pursue higher education, such as verbal bullying, fear of their teachers, language barrier, low self-esteem, and academic pressure. With education viewed as key to stepping out of the cycle of poverty and oppression, it takes so many societal reforms to break the educational barriers for the Aytas to benefit from higher education entirely.

Central to the narratives of Ayta women is the continuous process of adaptation to life in the resettlement areas and the broader social and occupational environments they find themselves in as involuntarily resettled and as a marginalized Indigenous group. While the experience of poverty characterizes the lives of Ayta women participants, some chose to be content as they identified areas in their lives that were functioning relatively well, such as

good health and satisfactory personal relationships. The presence of supportive relatives and marital partners is enough reason to be content in life. Relationships with others and with a higher power (God) cushion the blows that are part of life. This attitude seemed to help them get by daily with a sense of hope that things would improve for them or their children. Faith, good health, and *kapwa* make life satisfying. It appears that even if they were aware of the challenges and the constraints, some saw the attitude taken—that of gratitude for what they have—as a choice available to them. Across different populations studied, gratitude is a protective factor that buffers against stressful circumstances (e.g., Maina & Muasa, 2024; Saeed & Mahmood, 2024).

There were also those who “surrendered” their destitute condition to the will of God. This can be interpreted as an act of resigned acceptance of their lot in life; on the other hand, this can also be seen as an active coping mechanism with which one can discern the limits of what one can control in this life. A belief in a higher power helped ease their burdens as they perceived that they were not alone in their struggles—a deity was sharing the load with them. When things become too much, there is a reprieve when they “surrender to God.” There is support that “surrendering” is associated with lower stress levels and is a mechanism by which religiosity influences health (Clements & Ermakova, 2012).

What seemed to bring a sense of dissatisfaction the most was one’s failing health—whether currently experienced or its possibility—which can impact their earning capacity and the family’s emotional well-being. When health problems arise, there is a feeling of helplessness since medical services are perceived to be inaccessible or not readily available to them.

Relational problems such as marital discord and parent-child issues were also expressed as sources of dissatisfaction. For the Ayta women who prioritize harmonious relationships, relational problems make life unhappy. As the cloud of poverty constantly hovers over them and survival is threatened by unemployment, underemployment, and lack of secure financial resources, they openly acknowledge their need to improve their lives and increase their capacity to provide food for the family, to send their children to school, and to meet other obligations. For some women, going back to school and the prospect of personal advancement through the acquisition of skills was believed to equip them for gainful employment. The prospect of the children finishing formal schooling

also brings hope that the latter will be able to contribute to the family resources someday.

As mentioned, good health, faith in God, and good relationships were the common reasons for the women's reported life satisfaction. However, having life satisfaction did not necessarily mean that they were comfortable living their lives or could meet their needs. While their daily lives were still characterized by scarcity, there indeed were conditions for which they could be thankful. However, whether satisfied with life or not, women generally acknowledged their need to improve the quality of their lives. They envisioned future selves aligned with their aspirations to improve their life circumstances.

This study provides a glimpse into the lives of these Aytas women participants, showing that they, just like others in mainstream Filipino society, are facing the usual challenges of contemporary life (Medina, 2005). While living in the lowlands offers opportunities for advancement with the accessibility of schools and opportunities for gainful employment, their lack of education and skills is a clear disadvantage in the stiff competition for jobs in the labor market. Consequently, their lack of income leaves them with a feeling of helplessness in addressing the high standard of living in their lowland community.

The Indigenous women's struggle for survival and limited access to food and sources of livelihood, as well as the disruption to their lives and the continuation of their cultural identity caused by the abrupt dispossession of ancestral lands, need to be examined according to the root causes of disparities experienced by Indigenous Peoples (Lemke & Delormier, 2017). Among the Aytas of Mabalacat, Pampanga, an in-depth exploration of sociopolitical, historical, cultural, environmental, and economic contexts may offer a perspective that could shed light on the underlying structural causes of inequality and power relations that account for the generational cycle of poverty and a diminished sense of collective agency among their communities. Other topics that could be explored are the perspectives on development and well-being among the Aytas.

With increased understanding, what is hoped for is that programs and policies geared toward uplifting the quality of life of Indigenous Peoples groups are sufficiently informed by the relevant contexts so that these are responsive, appropriate, and sustainable. To this end, research and extension can be powerful tools, but only if scholars shift paradigms from those that perpetuate the status quo

dynamics of power to one where the sense of the indigenous is at the front and center, such as what is depicted in Lambert's Spider Conceptual Framework. This entails that those doing research, whatever discipline they may be in, intentionally and continually examine and reflect on their motivations, world views, values, and biases. Terol et al. (2023) reiterate that relevance ought to be a key feature in research; that which contributes to social justice and the emancipation of the oppressed is indeed of global significance. Thus, there is a call for researchers to go beyond the role of producing knowledge to that of advocate and ally. Being an advocate and ally is consistent with being a *kapwa*, where there is a sense of being one person as individuals from different walks of life recognize injustice and work together to bring about change. In the case of the Aytas in Mabalacat, Pampanga, this study may be a good starting point for the journey toward *kasighawan*, where there is "lasting peace, social justice, healthy peoples and communities, risk-free environment, and integration of creation" (Alipao, 2019).

Recommendations

Poverty, relationship problems, injustice, and ill health are among the issues that contribute to dissatisfaction with life among Ayta women. Programs that address the need for continuing education related to functional literacy and other skills may be developed that can open doors for Ayta women to improve their lives through employment and entrepreneurial opportunities. A comprehensive scholarship program that may incorporate school survival training and mentoring to facilitate the completion of their skills development training would also be helpful. To further address poverty, micro-financing with corresponding money management training could also be provided to the members of the Ayta community to aid them in running small businesses. From the perspective of community development, these steps may address the perennial issues of poverty and ill health among the members of the Ayta communities.

However, the more significant challenges that need to be addressed include the issue of ancestral domain utilization and management and the provision of sustainable health services to the Ayta community. Also, the provision of health services may be coordinated with the local government units to provide the medical attention needed to the members of the Ayta communities. Lastly, strengthening the institutions that address the welfare of Filipino

Indigenous Peoples groups, such as the National Commission on Indigenous People (NCIP) and other non-governmental organizations, will go a long way in providing the necessary services that will uphold and protect the rights of the Aytas of Central Luzon.

On a final note—and on a bigger scale—the national development plan should be reexamined; perhaps there is space to include cultural constructs of development emanating from the Indigenous Peoples groups to ensure that the concerns of IP groups are likewise addressed and not only a few sectors in society benefit. This aligns with the central, transformative promise of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals—that of leaving no one behind.

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Eden H Terol, PhD, RPsy is an Assistant Professor of the Bachelor of Arts (Applied Psychology) at the University of the Philippines Extension Program in Pampanga (UPDEPP). She also coordinates research and extension and the National Service Training Program (NSTP) at UPDEPP. Her research interests include mental health, youth development, women's and children's issues, and Indigenous studies.

Rosanne Marie G. Echivarre is an Assistant Professor of the Bachelor of Arts (Applied Psychology) at the University of the Philippines Extension Program in Pampanga. She advocates community psychology, well-being, and quality of life.

Cristabel Fagela Tiangco is an Assistant Professor of the Bachelor of Arts (Applied Psychology) at the University of the Philippines Extension Program in Pampanga. She has facilitated several workshops on wellness and psychological support. Research interests include psychology applied to the school setting, women's issues, and the family.

Bryan Q. Engay is an Assistant Professor at UPDEPP. He is also the Coordinator of the Applied Psychology Program and previously served as the faculty counselor of the unit. He is also a consultant for the Humanitarian Legal Assistance Foundation, an NGO that promotes the welfare of Persons Deprived of Liberty and Children in Conflict with the Law. His research interests include the Psychosocial Impacts of Prisonization among the PDL and Its Implication on Their Reintegration and Post-prison Experiences.

Beyond Survival: *Chbab Srey* in Adult Education and the Cultivation of Autonomy

Samphors Mech, Bo Chankouluka, & Kelly Grace

Abstract

This article explores the historical significance of the *Chbab Srey*, a traditional Khmer code of conduct for women, and its influence on women's autonomy within Cambodian culture. Originating in the 19th century, the *Chbab Srey* served as a moral guide emphasizing obedience, modesty, and domesticity, thereby reinforcing patriarchal norms and limiting women's independence. Although removed from Cambodia's mandatory school curriculum in 2007 due to its restrictive gender implications, its legacy continues to shape societal expectations of women. The article examines the historical significance of the ongoing discourse surrounding the *Chbab Srey*, its relationship with neighboring Thailand, and its contemporary context in Cambodia. Using the eight agentic skills introduced by Meyers (2002) on 'autonomy' and highlighting efforts to reinterpret its teachings to promote gender equality, it argues that while the *Chbab Srey* historically constrained women's roles, modern challenges to these norms are fostering a gradual shift towards autonomy and empowerment for Cambodian women in both cultural and societal contexts. Reflective pedagogies and reinterpretation of cultural gender texts will amplify the critical lens in uncovering gender equality, women's empowerment, and development.

Key concepts: Autonomy, code of conduct, feminist studies, gender studies, adult education

Introduction

Feminism originated from the French word "féminisme" in the 19th century, which was used as a medical term to describe the femaleness of the male body or to describe women who exhibited characteristics typically associated with men (Pilcher & Whelehan, 2004, p. 48). According to Pilcher and Whelehan (2004), feminism is understood as the political stance of individuals committed to

changing women's positions in society. The term "gender" has been used frequently since the 1970s (p. 56). It is used to analyze the differences between biological and behavioral aspects of men and women, as well as their capacities. A closer examination reveals that feminism and gender concepts are not defined in the Khmer dictionary; instead, English terms are borrowed. The culture of a nation, whether in Asia or Europe, influences the ways people live, think, and lead their individual lives, as well as the lives of their families, communities, and societies (Hofstede, 1984; Kitayama & Salvador, 2024; Roal, 2024).

In the Western tradition, works such as Richard Allestree's *The Ladies' Calling* (1673) and *The Whole Duty of a Woman* (1696) outlined the proper behaviour of Christian women in alignment with Protestant moral codes, reinforcing the ideals of modesty, obedience, and domesticity (Armstrong, 1987). Similarly, Latin America witnessed the widespread influence of Manuel Antonio Carreño's *Manual de Urbanidad y Buenas Maneras* (1853), which combined Catholic morality and colonial etiquette, guiding women to become symbols of virtue and civilization within patriarchal and imperial structures (Rama, 2002). Within the Asian context, Confucian-informed texts such as *Ban Zhao's Nü Jie* (Instructions for Women) and *Kaibara Ekken's Onna Daigaku* (Greater Learning for Women) reinforced similar expectations of female submission, loyalty, and restraint in China and Japan (Ko, 1994). These works codified women's roles within families and communities, often upholding patriarchal authority as a moral necessity. In Southeast Asia, such texts also circulated and functioned within different frameworks of social control. In the Philippines, *Urbana at Feliza* (1854) by Fr. Modesto de Castro became a foundational text for Filipino women during the Spanish colonial period. Structured as an epistolary novel, the book narrates the exchange of letters between two sisters who discuss religious morality, manners, and womanly virtues, all grounded in Catholic and colonial teachings (Mojares, 2006). It reflected the merging of Christian morality and Tagalog social values, shaping generations of Filipino women according to colonial ideals of womanhood.

In Cambodia, programs have been established to raise awareness and promote gender mainstreaming within both the public and private sectors, as well as among development agencies and NGOs that are actively involved. Women's empowerment and leadership are integral to all national policy frameworks in Cambodia, encompassing various fields. Cambodia has undergone

significant social change, marked by political stability and rapid economic growth, since 1993 (Saphon, 2015; Horng, 2024). However, traditional gender stereotypes persist and deny women numerous freedoms. Women remain subordinated to men in every aspect of their daily lives. Responding to the need for greater gender equality, the government, in cooperation with the non-government sector, is strengthening gender-related policy and empowerment through gender mainstreaming in various sectors through the Ministry of Women Affairs (MoWA)'s Neary Rattanak¹. The introduction of gender discourse and development equality agendas by NGOs and development partners has influenced local cultural norms and perspectives on gender. This shift has sparked controversy regarding the roles and responsibilities of women and men in contemporary daily life.

Misinterpretations of metaphysical and epistemological meanings persist in Khmer women's codes of conduct. These false perceptions often lead to criticism and devaluation of their educational value. Without a proper understanding of the text in its historical and cultural context, people miss the opportunity to apply its principles to modern life. (Santry, 2005). With the attempt to deconstruct how Western scholarship conducted in Cambodia relates to the poetry text of *Chbab Srey* and uncover the possibility of alternative scholarship, this article aims to:

First, investigate the historical background of the primary text, including its socio-cultural and political aspects, through discourse analysis by comparing two different modes of interpreting Cambodian and Thai poetry and their socio-political significance. It applies historical, socio-political, and literary analysis to discuss the exchange between poets of the two cultures and how poetry, within Buddhist traditions, represents variations in context, societal roles, and human conditions.

Second, analyze the eight agentic skills in terms of "autonomy" or "self-determinism," as described by Dianna Tietjens-Meyers (2002) and reflect on the *Chbab Srey*, which is taught in

¹ The Five-Year Strategy of the Ministry of Women's and Veterans Affairs (MoWVA) was set up in 1999 and integrated into the National Socio-Economic Development Plan 2001–2005. The goals included strengthening the institutional infrastructure and policies and planning for improving the status of women; promotion of women's reproductive health; reduction of violence against women and children; improvement of women's economic development; training on gender and development; and public sensitization campaigns for these causes. The Five-Year Strategic Plan 2009–2013 (Neary Rattanak III) of the Cambodian Ministry of Women's Affairs. Neary Rattanak:

secondary school textbooks, to explore the potential connection between adult education and self-cultivation. This analysis examines the possibility of integrating cultural texts into the gender and development agenda. This study employs autonomy theory to guide its analysis, adhering to Dianna Tietjens Meyers's understanding of autonomy as socially embedded rather than individualistic (2002). According to her, autonomy is fostered through social interaction, self-criticism, and resistance to internalized oppression, aligning with feminist positions emphasizing social structures' impact on individual agency. In the context of education, particularly adult education, this theoretical framework recognizes the significance of autonomy in promoting critical consciousness, resilience, and self-efficacy. The study also draws insights from Global South Feminism, which recognizes autonomy not merely as individual freedom but as a competency shaped by social and cultural relationships. This perspective enables a broader and more transformative conceptualization of learning processes, whereby autonomy is examined in its broader socio-cultural context.

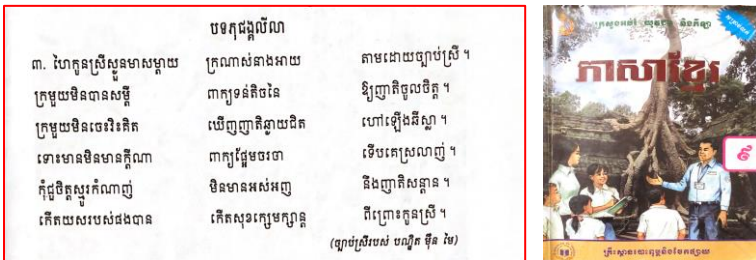
The Situation and Influence of *Chbab Srey* in the Cambodian Educational Context

This section analyzes how the codes of conduct for Cambodian women affect education, curriculum, and contemporary society. It specifically focuses on how traditional codes, particularly *Chbab Srey*, affect women's political status, educational opportunities, and social advancement within the context of globalization. *Chbab Srey*, a de facto classroom textbook, dictates women's conduct and role, while its counterpart, *Chbab Proh*, dictates moral manhood. To be examined is the original text, *Chbab Srey*, a cultural gender norm that has a long-standing presence in the Khmer national curriculum (Ledgerwood, 1990; Grace & Eng, 2015; NGO-CEDAW, 2023). The Khmer text of M'in Mai's version is the source used, but to assist international readers, an English translation (translated by Jacobsen 2016) is provided in the analysis. The main reason that this article used the *Chbab Srey* text authored by *Pandit*² M'in Mai is that, among the existing texts, it was the only poetry text included in the general education curriculum from generation to generation (Brickell, 2007), especially in the

² In Khmer, it means the wise, intellectual person (or even Doctor)

post-colonial modern education (Ledgerwood, 1990; Jacobsen, 2008). Moreover, after the fall of Democratic Kampuchea, M'in Mai's version of *Chbab Srey* remained in the Khmer language curriculum for grades 4, 7, 8, and 9 under the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sports (MoEYS) until 2025. The text, included in poetry and textbooks, was taught in Grade 9 as part of the poetry methodology curriculum (MoEYS, 2016b, p. 35).

The left image below shows the original text in Khmer, as included and taught in the textbook, and the right image is the cover of the textbook where the *Chbab Srey* was taught (an example from Grade 9). The original poetry text of the selected poet³ comprises 11 pages, containing 227 verses in the form of *Pujaṅgalilā*⁴, a “serpent pleasing gait meter” poetry writing style (Chuen Nath Association, 1974).



³. Poetry: Khmer poetry has very specific and diverse forms. Diversity arises from various elements, including measurement, rhyme, sentence structure, the limitations on the number of words in each sentence, and the context in which they are presented. The methodology of poetry, known as *kab sastra*, specifically refers to the method of counting the words in each phrase as well as the number of phrases in each sentence. A sentence (*Vagga*) is a composition of words or phrases ending with periods. Phrase (*Khlea*) refers to collections of words. Word (*Pyeong*) is the smallest element of poetry composition, which cannot be further split. E.g. For the eight-word poetic meter (*Bot peak brambei*), there are four phrases in each sentence, and there are eight words in each phrase (Khmer Language, for grade 7 (MoEYS, 2018b, pp. 50-51). Khmer poetry has different forms, such as *Phramkiti*, *Karkkati*, *Bantolkak*, *Peak Brampi*, *Peak Brambei*, *Peak Prahmbeun*, *Pujaṅgalilā*, and *Pummol*.

⁴ *Pujaṅgalilā* (serpent pleasing gait meter) is a type of poetry developed and composed by ancient poets to describe the ways of walking to describe the nature of the forest, its beauty, or how works have been done. This type of poetry can mean “the walk of a naga or walking naga” (Khmer Language, grade 4 (MoEYS, 2018, p. 198). This poetry has its specialty, which is very different from other poetry in composition, rhyme, singing method, and context. E.g., Poetry methodology: a sentence is composed of 3 phrases, and a phrase consists of 6 words (for the first phrase of each beginning of the sentence, but for the second and the third, it has 4 4-word components).

This paper is limited to examining texts (verses) related to secondary textbooks that directly align with the research aims. It explicitly focuses on discourse analysis, particularly on the sections included in the general education curriculum, such as the textbook. The goal is to reconstruct the metaphysical understanding of *Chbab Srey* to enhance educational outcomes and foster positive attitudes toward modernization. The approach in this study is to promote cultural studies by using local knowledge.

Transformation of Codes of Conduct Poetry in Khmer and Thai Societies

Examining the origin of women's codes of conduct is crucial, as Cambodia is the only country with such a behavioral code. In contrast, neighboring countries, such as Thailand, have a long history of manners (Jory, 2020). Thailand (formerly known as Siam) also has a similar code of conduct for girls and women. In Thailand, Tangsantikul (2016) notes the existence of a *Kritsana* son song titled "Kritsana's Instructions to Little Sister: Introduction to the Fine Manners of the Civilized Period." *Kritsana Son Nong's* special emphasis on women reflects a perceived need to control and regulate female social interactions compared to their male counterparts during rapid and profound socioeconomic change⁵. *Kritsana Son Nong* was based on the American textbook *Manners Made Easy* by Mary Beery (1949)⁶. The Thai version took a different form, with fewer chapters than Beery's. Additionally, the author did not clarify why some were omitted. Significantly, *Kritsana* stresses to her sister the importance of adopting only what is appropriate to Thai geography, weather, and traditions. These aspects are reflected in three major areas of difference between the books: fictionalization, graphic treatment, and a focus on women.

Due to the limitations of this paper, it will not further discuss the three aspects; however, it would be interesting and

⁵ Further reading: Juthamas Tangsantikul. *Kritsana Son Nong: The politics and practice of manners in modern Thailand (1950s-1970s)*. *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 47(2), pp 189-209 June 2016. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022463416000047>

⁶ Beery wrote this manual for a social conduct course that she taught at South High School in Ohio in 1943. The manual consists of fifteen chapters organized into five main themes: "Home Ground," "School Spirit," "As Others See You," "Table Talk," and "Stepping Out." However, the *Kritsana son Nong* version conflicts with Beery's original work. Notably, the *Kritsana son nong* only covers the first eleven chapters of Beery's book.

perhaps beneficial to reflect on Khmer *Chbab Srey* in relation to the first aspect of fictionalization. The *Kritsana son nong* borrowed the theme of sisterly communication from the old didactic poem, *Kritsana son nong khamchan*⁷. In the poem, the main character, Princess Kritsana, discusses the virtues of being a good wife with her sister. This poem is a cornerstone of Thai literature, serving as an important source for traditional Thai views on proper behavior for women. The literature and historical records regarding manners and codes of conduct in Thailand prompt a deeper exploration of the Khmer text known as *Chbab Srey*. They somehow have a connection and link with the Indian epics, the Ramayana and Mahabharata, as well as the Cambodian *Prachum Suphasit Khmer* (collections of Khmer Marxism). Thailand also has *Suphasit*, which involves the transformation of authorship, styles, and contexts of educational construction, referred to as the politics and practices of manners (Tangsantikul, 2016). Moreover, it is crucial to discover that Buddhism might have influenced the *Chbab Srey* (Jacobsen, 2008). The origin and influence of the emergence and development⁸ of the *Chbab Srey*, compared with neighbouring contexts, has been influenced by Buddhism. Several researchers have explored these influences. Judy Ledgerwood (1990) suggests that the “*Chbab Srey*”, written in 1837 by Prince Ang Duong, is a royal poem modelled after a Buddhist sermon. As such, this text reflects Buddhist influence. Additionally, Khmer kings had opportunities to study in Thailand, which may have contributed to the influence of knowledge, literature, and epistemology on gender roles and the development of poetry (Ledgerwood, 1990). Similarly, Kent (2011) notes that the *Chbab Srey* was composed by Khmer Buddhist monks and portrays the ideal Khmer woman as virtuous and sacrificing for the benefit of her family or society. These writings suggest that Buddhist teachings strongly influenced the *Chbab Srey* and significantly shaped societal expectations of women's behavior in Cambodia.

This paper emphasizes that although Thailand and Cambodia have followed different historical paths regarding colonization, social dynamics, and political changes, both countries exhibit similar influences from Indian culture. This influence stems from various sources, including Hindu texts such as the

⁷ This poem is based on the Indian epic, *Mahabharata*. It is related to *Prachum suphasit son ying* [A collection of didactic texts for women].

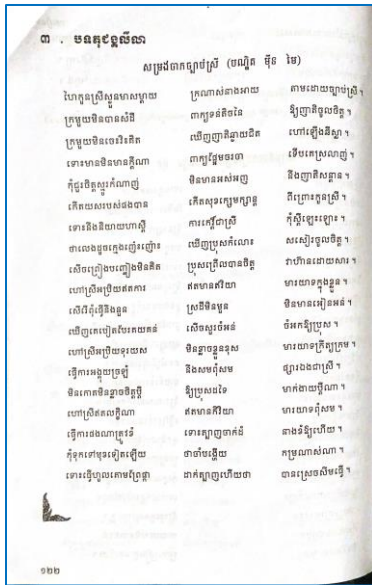
⁸ It would be more interesting to explore the various versions of *Chbab Srey*, particularly those by Dr. Mai and King Ang Duong, and how they contributed to women's educational practices.

Dharmasastra and the Indian epic *Ramayana*, as well as Buddhist literature, including the *Pali Canon* and the *Jataka* tales. Both nations have a comparable history of written literature, poetry, and fiction that aim to define social gender roles, adapting to cultural and social changes over time, as supported by existing studies. (Loos, 2006, 2020; Ratana, 2009). The practice of poetry and its dissemination throughout history warrant further investigation to understand its role in shaping moral discourse.

Moreover, with differing sociopolitical and literary environments, Cambodia and Thailand follow a familiar path in utilizing poetry to construct discourse on moral practice, self-cultivation, identity, and citizenship. The research argues that both countries have utilized poetry as a foundation for self-development and developing "soft skills," highlighting its significant presence in their educational and cultural histories.

Discourse Analysis of *Chbab Srey*'s Poetry and Its Existence in the National Curriculum

The presence of *Chbab Srey* in the Khmer language (Pheasa Khmer) poses ongoing challenges for curriculum developers. Despite efforts by gender specialists and advocates in women's affairs, particularly the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA), removing *Chbab Srey* from the national curriculum remains a topic of contention (NGO-CEDAW, 2023, p. 2). The survival of the *Chbab Srey* poem in today's curriculum does not emphasize behavior, ethics, teaching methods, or gender awareness. Instead, it focuses on poetry and writing techniques, aimed explicitly at developing literary skills in poem composition. In the curriculum, the *Chbab Srey* is presented in only a few paragraphs or sentences to illustrate how the poetic form and its methodologies work. This research article examines the role of *Chbab Srey* in the Khmer Language curriculum for grades 6, 7, 8, and 9, where it was taught in only a few paragraphs and sentences. The study focuses on the status and presence of *Chbab* prior to 2007, the year when it was officially removed from the curriculum by the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA). A deeper exploration of these codes' context, significance, and implications in the curriculum is necessary. Future research will include interviews and discussions to understand better the perspectives and reasoning behind the decision to *eliminate Chbab Srey* from the national curriculum.



This research found that the textbook includes 34 verses or sentences. (MoEYS, 2016a, pp. 113-114). Additionally, it contains 19 sentences. (MoEYS, 2016, p. 35 & 122). The remainder has only six sentences.⁹ Alternatively, verses were included throughout the poetry. To visualize, the left image is an example of another inclusion of the text. The medium length of the verse is appropriate for Grade 9 (MoEYS, 2016b, p. 122).

The image also presents the original text from a Khmer-language textbook without its English translation, intentionally

highlighting the native format. Instead, the focus is on capturing the nature and appearance of the referenced verses in Khmer as part of Cambodia's poetic methodologies. On this page (MoEYS, 2016b, p. 122), the type of poem and the author are presented, teaching how to compose, recite, and reflect on poetry. These elements are embedded in the text as learning outcomes of the textbook.

Despite campaigns for its withdrawal since 2007, these verses continue to be used to teach poetry writing, reading, recitation, and reflection skills. The image on the left serves as an example.

⁹ To demonstrate, the English translated text of the *Chbab Srey* below is just an example:

[8] Oh, my dear daughter, my precious treasure, it is rare for people to follow, but my child, please do adhere to the *Chbab* (codes) for women.

[9] The first weakness (poverty): A woman may be uncommunicative, leading to less pleasant interactions with her relatives and neighbors.

[10] Another weakness is that a woman is incapable of reasoning (thoughtful) and exercising kindness to those who are close or distant relatives. Kindly invite them to take a morsel [of betel nut].

[11] No matter how much you have, communicate kindly to be loved.

[12] Be polite, generous, and helpful to your relatives and others.

[13] You once achieved fame, honor, wealth, and harmony through your attitude, my daughter.

According to Meyers (2002), the agentic skills required to provide feminist voice theory with a credible epistemology involve articulating an implicit theory of autonomy. The theory of self-determination explains how individuals can distinguish their desires, values, and goals from the noise of external pressures and societal expectations. It outlines the skills that enable self-determination (or autonomy) to be realized (p. 19).

This study uses the aforementioned skills to measure and argue the cultivation of autonomy in Khmer culture through literature. It also aims to establish a connection between Khmer culture, gender, and feminist education within general education. The alignment is necessary to meet the quality framework that requires knowledge, attitudes, and skills related to these topics. Below is a rubric analysis mapping the eight agentic skills of "Autonomy" to codes of conduct, illustrating how they represent and foster gendered and autonomous competence. The following is a brief narrative to illustrate the correspondence between these skills and the verses in education textbooks over the years:

1. Introspection skills: related to 7 verses from [14-20] among the total 227 verses in the entire *Chbab Srey*;
2. Communication skills: related to 10 verses from [8-17];
3. Memory skills: related to 18 verses from [17-34];
4. Imagination skills: related to 12 verses from [24-35];
5. Analytical and reasoning skills: related to 13 verses from [36-48] and three verses [78-80];
6. Self-nurturing skills: related to 9 verses from [90-98];
7. Volitional skills: related to 2 verses from [24-25] and seven verses [92-98];
8. Interpersonal skills: related to 11 verses from [15-25]

By categorizing the order of the verses about skills from 1 to 8, it can be concluded that among the total 227 verses in *Chbab Srey*, only verses 8 to 98 are included in the textbooks. Within the grouping, they show the connection between the skills and the repetition of verses. Five groupings appear: In the first grouping (3, 4, 7, and 8), there are four skills (memory, imagination, volitional, and interpersonal skills) that appear to overlap and correlate with each other from verses 17 to 35. In the second grouping (6 and 7), two skills (self-nurturing and volitional skills) overlap and correlate with each other from verses 90 to 98. The third grouping (1 and 2)

has two skills (introspection and communication skills) that have a connection from verses [8] to [20]. The fourth grouping (7) encompasses the only skills that are linked to two skills (volitional and self-nurturing skills) from verses [24-25] and [92-98]. The last grouping (5) encompasses analytical and reasoning skills from sections [36-48] and [78-80].

To further illustrate the narrative mentioned above, a rubric analysis examining the relationship between the talents and verses referenced in the textbooks is presented in the following tables.

8 Agentic Skills by Meyers	Quotation from the codes of conduct ¹⁰	Abstract analysis is linked to skills and codes. ¹¹
1. Introspection Skills that sensitize individuals to their feelings and desires, enabling them to interpret their subjective experiences and helping them judge how well a self-portrait captures their likeness.	[14]- When you speak, think of your reputation; do not be playful. [15]- Do not babble like silly girls. When young men are around, do not glance toward them, [16]- Do not laugh without thinking; men are easily tempted and bold. [17]- Such a woman is called evil, without honor, self-control, or good conduct. [18]- She is feckless; she loses goods through inconsistency, losing them shamelessly. [19]- She stares at men, watches them, teases them, and scoffs. [20] Such a person lacks integrity and dignity; she is not afraid to be compromised by acting against the rules.	These paragraphs aim to cultivate the principles of autonomy, self-monitoring, and evaluation in all human behavior and interrelationships by illustrating the consequences of these behavioral acts through critical thinking in all aspects. This is what Meyers called “autonomy” (Meyers, 2002, p. 22)
2. Communication Skills that enable individuals to benefit	[8]- Oh my dear daughter, my precious treasure, it is not easy, my child, to apply the	The abstracted thoughts presented in these paragraphs

¹⁰ These quotes of the verses used the original English translation version by Trudy Jacobsen (Jacobsen, 2016)

¹¹ This abstraction of thought is drawn from the idea of the thought written in Meyers’s chapter on autonomy on pages 20-24.

<p>from others' perceptions, background knowledge, insights, advice, and support.</p>	<p><i>cbpab</i>¹² Of women. [9]- The first obstacle: an Inarticulate woman incapable of uttering even the softest word that pleases the family. [10]- Another obstacle: A woman incapable of reason, who, when seeing her close or distant relatives, does not invite them to take a morsel of betel. [11]- Whether she is wealthy or not, if she speaks gentle words, she will be loved by others, [12]- Being neither impolite, vulgar, nor petty, not forgetting her obligations to all family members. [13]- One gains wealth, rank, <i>sokh</i> [health] and harmony through well-born daughters. [14]- When you speak, think of your reputation; do not be playful. [15]- Do not babble like silly girls. When young men are around, do not glance toward them, [16]- Do not laugh without thinking; men are</p>	<p>suggest that, as social beings, women need to develop practical communication skills, particularly in the context of intercommunication between individuals, communities, and society. The author acknowledges that young women have not yet developed sufficient skills in such a poem. To succeed, an individual must be fully developed as a social being. Hence, personal communication's positive and negative effects will benefit women and those around them. <i>Chbab Srey</i> does not teach women to be subordinate or passive; instead, it teaches them to develop a personal</p>
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¹² This refers to '*Chbab Srey*' (as used by Jacosen, so when she is quoted and referred to, this writing will appear) and other moral codes or rules (*cbpab*) or *Chbab* in the Cambodian context.

	easily tempted and bold. [17]- Such a woman is called evil, without honor, self-control, or good conduct;	methodology and technique in negotiation and dialogue, with a strategic and psychological foundation that emphasizes superiority, prestige, virtue, and value, resulting in effective authority in all aspects of communication.
3. Memory Skills that enable individuals to recall relevant experiences—not only from their own lives but also those that associates have recounted or that they have encountered in literature of other art forms.	[17]- Such a woman is called evil, without honor, self-control, nor good conduct. [18]- She is feckless; she loses goods through inconsistency, and she does so shamelessly. [19]- She stares at men, watches them, teases them, and scoffs. [20]- Such a person lacks integrity and dignity; she is not afraid to compromise herself by acting against the rules. [21]-She does not work in a manner befitting a woman. [22]- She neither respects nor fulfills her husband's wishes; she encourages other men to act against him. [23]- Such a woman is called oht lakkhana [not	The profound meaning of these behavioral codes is that they aim to educate young couples about different ways of life. However, these behavioral principles advocate for young females to develop a long-term vision for their personality and behavior, aiming to become well-educated and responsive adults and mothers. Even though women in the past often worked as housewives, rearing children and managing the household, the codes have

	<p>full of virtue], lacking self-control and good conduct.</p> <p>[24]- In all endeavors, you must apply yourself; in weaving, sewing, and pressing, apply yourself to complete each task.</p> <p>[25]- Do not leave anything undone for later and say 'I will finish it'; that will not work.</p> <p>[26]- In weaving lantern-covers or flowered silk, one first readies the loom and does not begin until after that.</p> <p>[27]- Behave in this manner to maintain a good reputation. Do not go dallying with others.</p> <p>[28]- Guard well, my dearest, my heart; apply yourself to the tasks of your youth.</p> <p>[29]- Once married, how do you act? You will be busy with crying children and have no leisure time.</p> <p>[30]- Your heart is weary as one child after another demands food and is crying.</p> <p>[31]- Your efforts increase to find food and calm them.</p> <p>[32]- You will fulfill these tasks with ease; knot</p>	<p>also trained women's internalization and personalization competence in all aspects. Consequently, the knowledge of these codes can be applied in contemporary society and to how women work outside. The behaviour codes trained women to be responsible, accountable, and reasonable problem solvers, critical thinkers, and consequentialists.</p>
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	threads for hul designs, start a body of weaving [33]- In place of leaving them tangled up in a basket: you run the risk of rendering them useless otherwise. [34]- Daughter dear to my heart, observe this well without a moment of distraction.	
4. Imagination Skills that enable individuals to envisage feasible options—to audition a range of self-images they might adopt and to preview a variety of plot lines their lives might follow.	[24]- In all endeavors, you must apply yourself; in weaving, sewing, and pressing, apply yourself to complete each task. [25]- Do not leave anything undone for later and say ‘I will finish it’, that will not work. [26]- In weaving lantern-covers or flowered silk, one first readies the loom and does not begin until after that. [27]- Behave in this manner to maintain a good reputation. Do not go dallying with others. [28]- Guard well, my dearest, my heart; apply yourself to the tasks of your youth. [29]- Once married, how do you act? You will be	The meaning of those paragraphs aligns perfectly with the skills. The code is about self-direction, self-discovery, and self-definition ¹³ . The poet composed by placing imagination to educate girls and women in the ways they perform their roles, disregarding marital status, social status, or position, but this gives women the vision to predict and have a sense of carefulness and alertness, with critical consequential

¹³ See more on (Meyers, 2002, pp. 22-23)

	<p>house; leave only one tiny flame that you bring to light another.</p> <p>[40]- If you do not pay attention, if you bring the inside fire out and fan the flames, it will burn all before it.</p> <p>[41]- If one keeps alive and ignites anger in all, even toward children, that is wrong.</p> <p>[42]- Be very attentive, my dear, to always guard the three hearths and tend them.</p> <p>[43]- When fire is well tended to by you, it will bring you a high rank, above all else.</p> <p>[44]- It will bring you honour and wealth in abundance, of superior quality. [45]- The first hearth to maintain is to do right toward your mother and father, cherished guardians.</p> <p>[46]- You must respect them and obey your parents.</p> <p>[47]- Act toward them nicely, find them dishes they like</p> <p>[48]- And keep them only for their enjoyment; offer them this often.</p> <p>...</p> <p>[78]- My beloved daughter, my treasure, that is a grave fault; do not act in such a manner.</p>	<p>decisions in all aspects of life, from individual to family and societal levels of moral reasoning. They also aim to teach girls to develop skills that cultivate critical analysis and visioning with careful and responsive behavior. Cultivate compassion, loving-kindness, and gratitude towards both sides' relatives — these virtues that Confucius called for, emphasizing the importance of harmonizing with one's surroundings to achieve success and serve as a societal model.</p>
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	[79]- If your husband upsets you, my daughter, go away to your room and reflect. When you come out, speak to him softly to smooth over the rift.	
<p>6. Self-nurturing Skills that enable individuals to secure their physical and psychological equilibrium despite missteps and setbacks—that enable them to appreciate the overall worthiness of their self-portraits and their self-narratives, assure themselves wanting or their self-narratives are not wanting, and sustain their self-respect if they need to correct their self-portraits or revise their self-narratives.</p>	<p>[90]- Do not stay with others for too long, whether you have things to do or not; hurry home.</p> <p>[91]- My daughter, the flower of my heart, being a woman, is demanding.</p> <p>[92]- A girl may be pretty, but she is not preferable to one who knows her duty.</p> <p>[93]- In place of respect, she will know only distress, which are ten in number.</p> <p>[94]- She may be beautiful; if she knows her duty, she will win the admiration of others.</p> <p>[95]- A woman may be pretty, have fair skin, and be unrivalled but unaware of the <i>cbpab</i>.</p> <p>[96]- She is undoubtedly pretty but lacks spirit. Others, who may be dark and dull, are renowned for their deeds.</p> <p>[97]- Moreover, they are not discourteous; they exhibit good manners and conduct.</p> <p>[98]- Only they, the wise, call of great beauty, full of good breeding.</p>	<p>These behaviour codes advocate for girls and women to develop well-cultivated skills, not just to cultivate and polish their physical appearance but also to cultivate a mentality that enables them to be skilled in both household and outside talents, thereby building individual value and merit that returns through practicing these moral codes. Being physically attractive is not enough to lead a fulfilling life, build a strong family, and contribute to one's social community—thus, mental and physical competence require training and nurturing.</p>

<p>7. Volitional Skills that enable individuals to resist pressure to capitulate to convention, allowing them to maintain their commitment to the self-portrait and the continuations of their autobiographies that they consider genuinely their own.</p>	<p>[24]- In all endeavors, you must apply yourself; in weaving, sewing, and pressing, apply yourself diligently to complete each task to the best of your ability.</p> <p>[25]- Do not leave anything undone for later and say 'I will finish it'; that will not work.</p> <p>...</p> <p>[92]- A girl may be pretty, but she is not preferable to one who knows her duty.</p> <p>[93]- In place of respect, she will know only distress, which are ten in number.</p> <p>[94]- She may be beautiful; if she knows her duty, she will win the admiration of others.</p> <p>[95]- A woman may be pretty, of fair skin, unrivalled, but unaware of the cbpab;</p> <p>[96]- She is certainly pretty but lacking in spirit: Others, who may be dark and dull, are renowned for their deeds.</p> <p>[97]- Moreover, they are not discourteous; they exhibit good manners and conduct.</p> <p>[98]- Only they, the wise, call it great beauty, full of good breeding.</p>	<p>These codes equipped girls with the capacity to choose and prioritize the knowledge and qualifications necessary for self-development, thereby gaining virtue, respect, and happiness, which are the values of the individual. The core values of girls or women are not defined only by physical appearance.</p>
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<p>8. Interpersonal Skills that enable individuals to join forces to challenge and change cultural regimes and institutional arrangements that pathologize or marginalize their priorities and projects, that deprive them of accredited discursive means to represent themselves to themselves and others as flourishing, self-respecting, valuable individuals, and that close off their opportunities to enact their self-portraits and self-narratives.</p>	<p>[15]- Do not babble like silly girls. When young men are around, do not glance toward them, [16]- Do not laugh without thinking; men are easily tempted and bold. [17]- Such a woman is called evil, without honour, self-control, nor good conduct. [18]- She is feckless; she loses goods through inconsistency, losing them shamelessly. [19]- She stares at men, watches them, teases them, and scoffs. [20]- Such a person lacks integrity and dignity; she is not afraid to compromise herself by acting against the rules. [21]- She does not work in a manner befitting a woman. [22]- She neither respects nor fulfills her husband's wishes; she encourages other men to act against him. [23]- Such a woman is called oht lakkhana [not</p>	<p>It is most appropriate for <i>Chbab Srey</i> to advocate for challenging their behaviour to earn appreciation for self-acknowledgement. It is also required in the National Qualification Framework of MoEYS in all education curricula and courses¹⁴.</p>
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¹⁴ ELOs (Expected Learning Outcomes) are the required part in the course syllabus of any course, according to the Cambodian National Qualification Framework (CNQF). ELOs consist of five domains: 1. Knowledge; 2. Cognitive skills, 3. Interpersonal skills and responsibility; 4. Numerical skills, Information Technology and Communication, and 5. Psychomotor skills. (MoEYS: the model of curriculum for all higher education institutions, both private and public, to follow).

	<p>full of virtue], lacking self-control and good conduct.</p> <p>[24]- In all endeavors, you must apply yourself; in weaving, sewing, and pressing, apply yourself to complete each task.</p> <p>[25]- Do not leave anything undone for later and say 'I will finish it'; that will not work.</p>	
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The quoted verses prove that the literary work *Chbab Srey*, authored by M'in Mai, possesses educational value through the eight agentic capacities of autonomy in Khmer society and is included in the general education curriculum. Although codes are being taught, they lack explicit interpretation or decomposition of their educational themes, which would help develop behavioral and moral dispositions. Despite this, the codes continue to influence learners' positive and negative thoughts and behaviors. It is acceptable to claim that codes of conduct are a form of gender conceptualization, as this aligns with the concept of "gender" presented in Meyers's book in the first chapter. Most Western feminists define "gender" as a kind of social structure or system of linguistic classification, which is not about describing or defining the personality of someone. Meyers (2002) argues that those feminists' definition is just a false universalism about gender; they only superficially look at the term gender and can only express identity. She does not agree with those feminists; she reiterates her argument by saying that "gender is related to the internal of a person and it becomes a part of other women's identification".

Below is the argument to support the hypothesis that contemporary practices pose a threat to the preservation of behavioral model practices in Khmer society, and young children lack behavioral models upon which to reflect. Those challenges can also not encourage the development of the eight agentic skills:

In the *Cambodia Daily* issued on 9th June 2015 an article entitled "There is no place for 'Chbab Srey' in Cambodian schools", mentioned that, in 2007, the Ministry of Women Affairs (MoWA) proposed that the government withdrew "*Chbab Srey*" from the general education curriculum of Ministry of Education Youth and Sport (MoEYS) (Grace & Eng, 2015; NGO-CEDAW, 2023). As a result, some parts of *Chbab Srey* were withdrawn, but others still exist in the Khmer literature textbook used for teaching Literature subjects to students in grades 7 and 9 (Grace & Eng, 2015). Grace & Eng (2015) acknowledged that codes of conduct still strongly influence Khmer society, based on their study conducted with secondary teachers in Siem Reap Province. According to the author's writings, "*teaching Chbab Srey threatens the promotion of gender equality in schools in Cambodia, adding more complications and challenges for girls to face which can cause problems for girls, welfare and their family*". It is crucial to notice that in the study, "*there were most of the teachers' response on their perception from 93 to 97% and from 76% to 79% of students who gave perception on the significance and importance of teaching and learning Chbab Srey and regards the*

codes as compulsory to study—because it is part of Khmer culture, virtuous women are those who know and practice the codes". There are diverse perspectives based on different approaches to interpreting the codes, which provide a concrete meaning of the *Chbab Srey*. These perspectives are informed by the individual's favourite, professional, specialized knowledge and empirical experiences, allowing them to utilize the codes as a vision and tool to benefit from the interpretation.

The analysis reveals that *Chbab Srey* is not included in gender studies or behavioral training but instead falls under poetry studies, focusing on composition and literary competence. The post-genocide environment, which annihilated intellectuals and teachers, left society lacking a philosophical foundation, moral values, or a social system for encouraging values and virtues. This hiatus hindered the transmission of social values to the next generation, affecting the nation's ability to resist social change and achieve self-development. There must be an appreciation for the positive role of *Chbab Srey*. In response, Mrs. Lim Molyrattana established an unofficial vocational school, the "Daughter-in-Law School," at Toul Tumpung to educate girls and women on traditional norms, behavior, and virtues. Muong (2015) suggests that there was still appreciation for cultivating household management skills alongside modern education, promoting healthy family life and personal development.

Ultimately, training *Chbab Srey* is essential in developing girls and women into better individuals, promoting their dignity, family well-being, and sociopolitical advancement. Proper training, interpretation, and critical education are essential for its proper impact on people and the welfare of society. Gender constructs must adapt to domestic values to attain cultural competence and women's empowerment. An academic analysis of the eight skills in *Chbab Srey* is essential to advocate for policies that apply these codes to foster gender equality and women's empowerment.

Conclusion

This study highlights how the influence of Indianization, through religious, cultural, literary, and lifestyle adaptations, significantly shaped similar codes of conduct for women in Khmer and Thai cultures. This process involved the exchange of knowledge, diplomatic relations, and religious practices, which played crucial roles in establishing these similarities. Additionally, examining the

evolution of poetry and literary works within the Thai and Khmer contexts reveals significant transformations in epistemological and metaphysical understandings of social adaptation and the construction of gender roles and expectations over time and across different spaces.

Equipped with a research methodology, tools, and limitations, this paper reveals that Khmer poetry, *Chbab Srey*, reflects the connection between cultivating the eight agentic observed skills, where autonomy is embedded and enriched through exercises based on the verses. By utilizing effective teaching methods, following the code of conduct, and engaging in self-reflection within social contexts, one can cultivate personal skills, social values, recognition, and respect, ultimately fostering happiness and dignity for families. Integrating cultural literature, such as the poetry of *Chbab Srey*, can help learners critically reflect on modern gender roles and eliminate misinterpretations rather than ignoring them. The *Chbab Srey* is a moral philosophy (ethics or philosophy of morality)—the cultivation of the arts of living and the promotion of a better quality of life and value, leading to self-empowerment and individualization. According to Meyers, “gender” is the integration of internalization and individualization of a woman¹⁵. Based on her theory and argument regarding the concept of gender, *Chbab Srey* is a literary work that explores gender within the Cambodian context, warranting further critical study, reflection, and analysis from broader perspectives. *Chbab Srey* is an essential form of gender literature in Khmer culture, reflecting the cultural norms and societal influences of its time and still holding relevance today. This study suggests that future comparative analyses could examine *Chbab Srey* alongside similar codes of female conduct in Thailand and other parts of Asia. Such comparisons and historical analyses would reveal common cultural trends, points of divergence, and dynamics of change within the region. Ultimately, these insights can contribute significantly to understanding regional gender discourse and help develop contextually relevant frameworks for women's empowerment.

¹⁵ Please see more (Meyers, 2002, 4-6 & 20-24)

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Asst. Prof. Samphors Mech, the Deputy Head of the Philosophy Department, has over 17 years of teaching experience at the Royal University of Phnom Penh (RUPP). Samphors is deeply committed to pedagogical development and professional advancement. With her ongoing Ph.D. study in Humanities at RUPP's Khmer Studies Program and her master's degree in Cultural Studies with a philosophy background, she has proved her leadership in academic administration. She leads educational quality assurance and curriculum development and has specialist knowledge in philosophy, philosophy of education, ethics, Buddhist studies, gender studies, and generic education discourse and research. Email: samphorsmech@gmail.com

HE. Dr. Chankoulika Bo is the Under Secretary of State at the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport of Cambodia, overseeing policy and cross-sector coordination. With a PhD in Education from Flinders University, Australia, and over a decade of experience in research and policy leadership, she is well-positioned to lead educational research projects and shape impactful education policies.

Kelly Grace, PhD holds a PhD in Comparative and International Education and applies feminist theory to education issues in the Cambodian context. She is the Education Assessment Specialist at the Health Education Center: Co-Lead Evaluation Team, Clinical and Translational Science Award (CTSA), Institute for Translational Sciences. Adjunct Assistant Professor, School of Public and Population Health- PHHD at the University of Texas Medical Branch at Galveston in Texas, USA. Email: krgrace@utmb.edu

ANG PAANYAYA NG REBYU

Nananatiling malaking hamon sa produksiyon ng mga babasahin sa iba't ibang anyo nito ang mababang kultura ng pagbabasa, hindi dahil ayaw natin magbasa kundi dahil mas kailangang pakinggan at unahin ang panawagang lamnan ang sikmura. Ngunit hindi handlang ang kalagayang ito sa patuloy na produksiyon ng mga babasahin at kaalamang na pumapaksa sa mga kinakaharap at danas na ito ng mga mamamayan. Magandang bigyan ng diin ang paglalaan ng mga pahina para sa rebyu ng mga aklat at mga anyo ng sining dahil naghahain ito ng malumanay na espasyo sa gitna ng mga puwersa at impluwensiya na maglimbag ng mga refereed abstracted journal. Pagkakataon din ito upang maisatinig ng mga mamamayang naisalaylaylayan ang kanilang mga pangarap at danas at kung paano nila inilalaban ang kanilang karapatang mabuhay nang patas. At pagkakataon din para sa ating nasa akademya na basahin ang kanilang danas, makidama at paglaon ay makiisa sa kanila, at maging mas malalim at mas matalas ang pagsusuri sa danas ng mga tao at sa mga solusyong kanilang nalilikha. Sa ganitong kaligiran inilalapag **ng *Lirip 2023-2024*** ang dalawang rebyu ng mga aklat na naglalarawan sa kanilang pagbalikwas upang bawiin ang tinig at lakas na inalis sa kanila.

Ang rebyu ng *Artsibo ng Araw-Araw: Ang Bente-Bente Zines Vol. 1 Bilang Tala ng Buhay at Isinasabuhay na Kasaysayan* ay isang masinsing pagsusuri sa nilalaman ng unang tomo ng *Bente-Bente Zines* na binubuo ng 12 zine. Inihahayag ng maikling mga babasahing ito ang mahalagang papel ng mga zine sa produksiyon ng panitikang ayon kay John Brixter M. Timo ay “makapangyarihang instrumento ng pagbalikwas, identidad, at kasaysayan.” Naghahain ang mga ito ng masinsin at sanga-sangang pagsusuri sa pamamagitan ng mga kuwento at tulang likha ng mga batikan at kabataang manunulat na pumapatungkol sa mga danas na may kaugnayan sa pag-big, kalayaan at karahasan. Ang kalipunang ito ay kontribusyon din sa patuloy na pagsulong ng lokal na produksiyon ng zines sa bansa, katulad ng Zine Orgy, Magpies Press at Better Living Through Xeroxography.

Binigyang-diin naman ni John Carlo S. Santos ang halaga at kalakasan ng antolohiyang *Tatlong Pasákit ang Pagiging Babae, Ina, At Pesante: Pagbása sa Lupang Ramos: Isang Kasaysayan*. Ang aklat ay kalipunan dalawampung kuwento at danas ng pagiging babae, ina, at pesante ng tatlong henerasyon ng mga magsasaka ng Lupang Ramos sa Dasmariñas, Cavite.” Inihahayag sa aklat na ito ang danas ng mga babaeng magsasaka sa Lupang Ramos, at kung paano nilang pinahalagahan ang pagkakaisa at pagdadamayan bilang lakas na siyang nagpapalaya, hindi lamang sa kanila kundi sa kanilang pamilya at komunidad. Ayon pa sa rebyuwer, ang karanasan ng mga babaeng ito ay “nararapat na hindi mawaglit sa kamalayán at alaala ng mga mamamayan.”

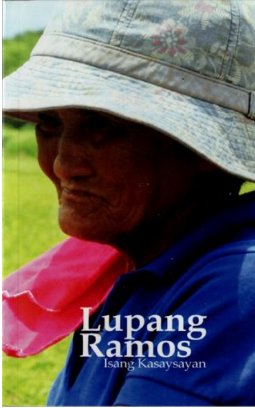
Mahalaga ang dalawang rebyu dahil naghahatid ito ng paanyayang basahin ang mga aklat upang higit nating maunawaan ang ating kapwa, at makidama sa kanila bilang kapwa at bilang Pilipino.

Rowena P. Festin

Tatlong Pasákit ang Pagiging Babae, Ina, at Pesante: Mga Kuwento ng Pakikibaka sa

Lupàng Ramos

John Carlo S. Santos



Katipunan ng mga Lehitimong Magsasaká ng Lupàng Ramos (KASAMA-LR) at Gantala Press, Inc. (2019). *Lupàng Ramos: Isang kasaysayan*. Gantala Press, Inc. & AMIHAN National Federation of Peasant Women. 74 pahina. Aklat.

Abstrak

Ilalatag sa papel na ito ang “kalakasan” ng antolohiyang *Lupàng Ramos: Isang Kasaysayan ng Katipunan ng mga Lehitimong Magsasaká at Mamamayan ng Lupàng Ramos* (KASAMA-LR) at Gantala Press, Inc. Una, sapagkat dalawampung kuwento ng pagiging babae, ina, at pesante mulâ sa tatlong henerasyon ng pakikibáka ang aakda sa kasaysayan ng Lupàng Ramos sa Dasmariñas, Cavite. Ikalawa, dahil itatángi ang papel ng babae sa mga gawaing pambáhay, pang-ekonomiya, pambáyan, bagaman sasabihing embes na “papel” ay mas kinakikitaan ito ng “pasákit” dahil hadlang túngo sa ganap-na-pagkilála-sa-sarili. Ikatlo, dahil hayag sa antolohiya ang “femininity as marginality” ni Julia Kristeva, na kakabít ng pag-íral ng “symbolic order” ni Jacques Lacan at “kabuluhan ng peminismo sa búhay ng mga babaeng magsasaká” ng AMIHAN. Tutuntungan ito ng paninindigan na ang pagkababae (gagamiting sálin ng *femininity*) ay kumakatawan hindi lámang sa kasarian kundi sa lahat nang bulnerableng sektor ng lipunan. Ang pagkilálang ito ang magsisiwalat sa lalaking orden, ang imahen ng

“kalaban”, sang-ayon sa mga kuwento ng mga mamamayan ng Lupang Ramos. Sisikapin din sa kongklusyon na ipások sa pambansang ulirát ng panitikan ang mga personal na salaysay ng kababaihang mayroong malinaw na rebolusyonaryong tradisyong pampanitikan at pangkasaysayan ng Pilipinas.

Mga susing salitá: Lupang Ramos, babae, ina, pesante, KASAMA-LR, Gantala Press, AMIHAN

This paper outlines the strengths of the anthology "Lupang Ramos: Isang Kasaysayan" by the Katipunan ng mga Lehitimong Magsasaká at Mamamayan ng Lupang Ramos (KASAMA-LR) and Gantala Press, Inc. Firstly, it narrates the history of Lupang Ramos in Dasmariñas, Cavite, through twenty stories of being a woman, mother, and peasant, spanning three generations of struggle. Secondly, it highlights the role of women in domestic, economic, and community activities, yet instead of “role,” it emphasizes the “burden” as it hinders their full self-realization. Thirdly, the anthology reveals the concept of “femininity as marginality” by Julia Kristeva, tied to Jacques Lacan’s “symbolic order” and “the significance of feminism in the lives of female peasants” as studied by AMIHAN. This discussion is based on the stance that femininity represents not only gender but all vulnerable sectors of society. This recognition exposes the male symbolic Order, the image of the “enemy” according to the stories of the legitimate residents of Lupang Ramos. The conclusion aims to integrate women’s narratives, which have an evident revolutionary literary and historical tradition in the Philippines, into the national literary consciousness.

Keywords: Lupang Ramos, woman, mother, peasant, KASAMA-LR, Gantala Press, AMIHAN

Anim na taón nang isinasagawa ng Katipunan ng mga Lehitimong Magsasaká at Mamamayan ng Lupang Ramos (KASAMA-LR) ang Bungkalan.¹ Paraan ito ng ng mga magsasaká ng Dasmariñas na ipanawagan sa pámahalaán na ipamahagi na ang 372 ektaryang sakaháng mahigit sa tatlong dekada na niláng sinasáka.

¹ Aktibo ang KASAMA-LR sa mga pagkilos hanggang sa kasalukuyan. Mababása ang kaniláng mga pahayag at makikita rin ang kaniláng mga gawain sa facebook.com/KasamaLR.

Ayon sa kuwento ni Nanay Miriam Villanueva, Pangkalahatang Kalihim ng KASAMA-LR, 1990 pa nagdesisyon ang Department of Agrarian Reform na ilipat sa mga magsasaká ang pag-aari sa nasabing lupà. Gayunman, kahit na kinatigan nina Presidente Fidel Ramos at Deputy Executive Secretary Renato Corona ang desisyon ay naudlot pa rin ang pamamahagi ng sakahan sapagkat dumulog ang kampo nina Emerito Ramos (ang bumili sa lupà noong 1965) sa Court of Appeals para makakuha ng temporary restraining order (TRO) laban sa pag-iisyu ng Certificate of Land Ownership. Tila naging permanente ang TRO hanggang sa ipag-utos ng korte na palayasin ang mga magsasaká (KASAMA-LR, 2019, pp. 3-13).²

Hindi nagpatinag ang mga "lehitimong mamamayan"³. Nag-organisa sila, nagbarikada, at nakipaggitgitan sa goons ng panginoong may-lupà. Kinompronta ng mga babaeng magsasaká ang batalyon ng mga sundalo⁴ na walang habas kung magtabóy, manákot, at mang-araro ng kampo at tahanan ng mga magsasaká. Gayundin, sinuhulan at hinati nilá ang Buklod (organisasyon bágo ipanganak ang KASAMA-LR) para huminà ang sama-sámang pagkilos ng mga magsasaká.

Ganito ang sitwasyon hanggang sa kasalukuyan, lalo na nang magkaroon ng contract to sell ang mga Ayala noong 1997 (KASAMA-LR, 2019, p. 7). Noong Marso 3, 2018, tinangkâ siláng i-demolish ng Provincial Government Public Safety Battalion. Pinilit ng mga pulis na makapasok sa hanay ng mga pesante. Nanakot pang imamasaker ang sinumang pesanteng nakaharang (p. 11). Hunyo nang taon ding iyon, pinaputukan umano sila ng grupong

² Si Nanay Miriam ang sumulat ng kasaysayan ng Lupàng Ramos. Ibinabalita ng alternatibong midya ang kasaysayan ng Lupà, bagaman "bansot" ang pagkilála mulá sa mga pahayagang mainstream. Ilán sa mga pahayagang naglalathala ng mga kuwento sa Lupàng Ramos ang Bulatlat (www.bulatlat.com/tag/lupang-ramos/), Heraldo Filipino (heraldofilipino.org/existing-and-persisting-lupang-ramos/), Esquire (www.esquiremag.ph/long-reads/features/lupang-ramos-agrarian-reform), at Philstar (www.philstar.com/headlines/2022/10/18/2217368/lupang-ramos-resistance-and-hope-after-letdown-polls).

³ "Mamamayan" ang tawag ng KASAMA-LR sa mga magsasakáng nakatirá sa Lupàng Ramos. Ginamit ito nang halinhinan sa "lehitimong mamamayan" para kilalanin ang ineestabilisang identidad ng mga pesanteng nasa antolohiya. Ani Villanueva, "Ngayon, tanungin mo kami kung taga-saan kami. **Lehitimo** ang aming ginagawa, makatwiran, at makatarungan" [akin ang diin] (KASAMA-LR, 2019, p. 10).

⁴ Ayon sa salaysay ni Miriam Villanueva, binuhat ni Major Carranza si Nanay Masang (miyembro ng KASAMA-LR) at initsa sa araruhan habang dinedemolish ang protest camp ng mga magsasaká (KASAMA-LR, 2019, p. 6). Nitong Abril 2024, umupò si Vice Mayor Edward Carranza bílang Acting Mayor ng Silang, Cavite. Mababása sa www.news.abs-cbn.com/news/2024/4/25/silang-mayor-kapatid-sinuspinde-ng-ombudsman.

pinaniniwalang pinamumunuan ni Kagawad Nestor Pangilinan ng Barangay Langkaan Uno (Cabico, 2018). Kinuwento rin ni Nanay Miriam sa Philippine Collegian na ang Lupà ay nilibot ng mga inspektor, kasáma ang kapitan ng barangay at ang Special Weapons and Tactics, kahit walang pahintulot ng Department of Agrarian Reform (San Juan, 2022).

Ayon sa patotoo ni Nanay Lilia, residente ng Lupà mula pa noong 1970: “Ang hirap. Maiisip ko nga ‘yung noon, sa demolition, pag-upô ni Bong Revilla, nakatayô kami riyan, nakaharang kami, ‘yung mga sundalo, nakaumang sa amin ang mga armalite. Sinong magsasabi kung mabubúhay pa kami? Makaliligtas pa kaya kami sa ganitong sitwasyon?” (KASAMA-LR, 2019, p. 41).

Mga salaysay nina Nanay Miriam, Nanay Lilia, at ng labíngwalo pang mga babaeng magsasakáng ng Lupàng Ramos ang tinipon sa akdang *Lupàng Ramos: Isang Kasaysayan*. Layon ng antolohiya na ihayág ang deka-dekadang pakikibáka ng mga lehitimong magsasaká at mamamayan ng Lupàng palagian na lámang kinalilimutan ng pámahalaán. Nais din nitong italâ ang salaysay ng mga pesante nang sa gayon ay maiugnay sa kasaysayan at panitikan ng Pilipinas ang kaniláng mga kuwento. Isa rin itong panawagan sa taumbayan na tulungan ang KASAMA-LR sa kanilang laban para sa tunay na repormang agraryo hindi lámang sa Dasmariñas, kundi sa buong bansa.

Kasaysayan ng Pakikibáka

Mga prayle ang unang nagmay-ari ng Lupàng Ramos noong panahon ng Español na nang lumaon ay naging pagmamay-ari ng isang nagnangalang Tandang Miyanang. Napangasawa ng matanda ang isang Ongkingco na nagbubungkal ng sakahán. Nang yumao ang matanda, tinituluhan ng mga Amerikano ang lupà kayâ hanggang sa gitna ng siglo 19 ay tinawag itong Lupàng Kanô. Magmulâ noon, ang mga residente rito ay naging manggagawa na lámang. Ang buông pag-aari at titulo ay nasa kamay na ng mga dayuhan (KASAMA-LR, 2019, pp. 3-4).

Taóng 1965 naman nang bilhin ng mga Ramos ang lupà mula sa Manila Golf & Country Club. Nakapailalim ito sa Emerito M. Ramos & Sons Property na nagnanais gawing komersiyal ang

Barangay Langkaan Uno (pp. 6-7).⁵ Pagdating ng 1972, nang maging pangulo si Ferdinand Marcos, Sr., ibinabâ ang Presidential Decree 27 para sa pamamahagi ng mga lupang sinasakahan ng palay at mais. Para hindi mapabilang sa mga ipamamahaging lupa ay nagpalit ng tanim ang mga Ramos. Ipinások nito ang pagtutubô at kagyat na pinalawig ang negosyong real estate (pp. 4-5).

Nang mabuô ang Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP) sa ilalim ni Presidente Corazon Aquino, itinatag ang Buklod ng Magbubukid sa Lupang Ramos (Buklod). Bagaman estabilisado ang Buklod sa kampanyang okupasyon, humarap pa rin sila sa patong-patong na suliranin. Dahás ang kinaharap ng mga magsasaká na malimit pinapuputukan ng mga baril at nilolooban ng goons tuwing gabí. Tinatakot ng mga sundalo ang mga magsasaká para iwan nilá ang Lupà (KASAMA-LR, 2019, pp. 5-6a).

Sa likod nito ay nanatiling matatag ang Buklod sa pamumunò ng kababaihan. Ang mga martir na tulad ni Ka Masang ang nangunguna sa mga piket at humaharap sa mga traktorang Ramos (p. 6b). Lumápit din sila sa Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP) upang higit pang mapalakas ang kaniláng panawagan. Nag-aral din ng Ingles ang mga miyembro ng samahán para deretsong makatugon sa mga dokumento at makapagsulát ng petisyon sa mga ahensiya, tanggapan, at panlalawigan at pambansang pámahalaán (pp. 8-9).

Sa gitna ng pakikibáka, “nalihis ng landas” at nagkaroon ng “money fever” (p. 7) ang ilán sa mga pinunò ng Buklod. Mayroong mga nasuhulan, sumukô, at nagpabayad sa mga kumakamak sa kaniláng lupa. Magkagayon ay nagreorganisa ang hanay at kanilang iniluwal ang KASAMA-LR, ito ang katipunan ng mga magsasakáng patúloy na lumalaban para sa lupa at repormang agraryo.

Malaki ang papel ng kababaihan sa bágong organisasyon. Kahit na “alam naman naming pinapatáy ang mga magsasaka” (KASAMA-LR, 2019, p. 11a) at “halos kalahati nga ng aming mga aktibong miyembro ang tumigil at nakikiramdam na lámang sa mga susunod na mangyayari” (p. 11b), nanatiling aktibo sa pakikipaglaban ang mga babaeng magsasaká. Sila ang gumampan ng pinakamahahalagang tungkuling panlipunan sa panahong ito kahit na nadodolina ng kalalakihan ang kasaysayan at sektor ng

⁵ Ang kasaysayan ay mulá sa naratibo ni Miriam Villanueva. Mababása ang mga kaugnay na káso sa GR 131481, Marso 16, 2011 (elibrary.judiciary.gov.ph/thebookshelf/showdocs/1/37024) at GR 210043, Setyembre 26, 2018 (elibrary.judiciary.gov.ph/thebookshelf/showdocs/21/64588) ng Korte Suprema.

agrikultura ng Pilipinas. Ang mga tulad nina Nanay Masang, Nanay Miriam, Nanay Oya, at Nanay Jocelyn, sampu ng iba pa, ang impukan-kuhanan ng lakas at paninindigan ng KASAMA-LR—siláng ang kapakanan ng pamilya at uri ang inuuna bágo ang sarili.

Tatlong Pasákit ang Pagiging Babae, Ina, at Pesante: Pagbása Sa *Lupàng Ramos: Isang Kasaysayan*

Tampok sa aklat na *Lupàng Ramos: Isang Kasaysayan* ang mga kuwento ng kababaihan. Mahihimay sa mga salaysay na tinipon ng Gantala Press at AMIHAN ang patong-patong na pasanin ng mga babaeng nása *Lupàng Ramos* — mga pasaning pampamilya, pang-ekonomiya, at pampamayanan. Alalaong бага, sa unang pakiwari’y “tungkulin” ng babae na maging nanay, magsasaka, at organisador pero “pasakit” din ito sa kanilá sapagkat napipiligilan nito ang pagpapaunlad sa kaniláng sarili. Sa artikulasyon at paglilimbag ng mga salaysay naging kongkreto at napatotohanan ang danas at damá ng babae at kritikal itong naimamápa sa kasaysayan at nailalahok sa pambáyang kamalayán ng mga pesante at ng mga Filipino.

Pasákit Pampamilya

Sariwa pa sa alaala ni Nanay Bining ang pangaral ng kaniyang ina: “Mahirap ang walang anak pagtanda kaya dapat daw ay magkaroon ako ng anak” (KASAMA-LR, 2019, p. 18a). Dahil dito, labíng-anim na taóng-gulang pa lámang ay nag-asawa na siya.

Umikot ang búhay ni Nanay Bining sa asawa, sa mga anak, at sa mga gawaing kakabit ng *Lupàng Kanô* mulá noong matapos ang Ikalawang Digmaang Pandaigdig. Tinuruan niya ang kaniyang mga anak na mag-asarol, magbungkal, at mag-áral. Lumaki ang kaniyang pamilya kasabay ng pagbili sa lupà at pagtatayô ng mga opisina at kamalig ng Pamilya Ramos. Magkagayon, aniya, “Ang kuwento ng *Lupang Kanô* ay usapin ng aking pagkatáo” (p. 18b).

Gaya ng kuwento ni Nanay Bining ang kuwento ni Nanay Oya na ang hinahangad ay “ang ikabubuhay ng aming pamilya” (p. 20). Si Nanay Josie ay ganoon din. Mula Masbate ay lumipat siya sa Cavite sa pangarap na mabigyan ng maalwang búhay ang mga anak. Ngayon, kasáma niya ang kaniyang pamilya sa pakikipaglaban upang makuha nilá ang *Lupàng Ramos* na matagal nang ipinagkakait. Aniya, “Willing kaming lumaban para rito, búhay na namin ito” (p. 24).

Hindi lamang babae, kundi “nanay” ang deskripsiyon sa labimpitóng kuwento. Ang mga ito ay nakapalibot sa kapakanan ng kaní-kaniláng mga anak. Panaka-naka ay lumalabás ang mga salitang “kahit babae lang” na manipestasyon ng kaniláng “mababâ” at “ibang” turing sa sarili kompara sa lalaki. Malinaw sa mga kuwento na walang babaeng domestikado (walang ginagampanang tungkulin liban sa mga gawaing pambahay) sapagkat ang nanay ay hindi nananatili sa loob ng tahanan. Ang pagiging nanay sa Lupang Ramos ay palagiang may kaugnayan sa pagsasáka dahil sa Lupà nagmumula ang kabuhayan ng pamilya. Pagsasáka ang tanging paraan ng mga nanay para mapasaayos ang kaniláng pamilya.

Malimit tinitingnan ang pagiging nanay bílang pribado-pambahay na gawain. Para sa marami, hindi ito totoong trabaho datapuwa natural lámang na asikasuhin ng nanay ang kaniyang pamilya na tila isang sinumpaang responsabilidad. Subalit kung ang pagiging nanay ang dahilan ng pagod at di-boluntaryong pagtigil sa pag-aaral (p. 26), pagkatuliro (p. 31), kawalan ng seguridad (p. 34), at karahasan (p. 37), tungkulin pa ba itong maituturing o pasákit o pasáning pumipigil sa babae na magkaroon ng búhay na kasiyá-siyá? Mababása sa labimpitóng kuwento ng mga nanay ng Lupang Ramos na marangal mang gawain ang pagiging nanay at pag-aalaga sa mga anak, tila hindi pa rin maitatatwang hadlang ito sa ganap na pagkilála sa sarili.

Pasákit Pang-ekonomiya

Wala ni isang pagkakataóng nahiwalay ang salitáng “nanay” sa “magsasaká”. Hayag sa dalawampung kuwento na inaasahan ang babae na magbungkal para may pagkain at kita hindi lang para sa sarili, hindi lang para sa pamilya, kundi para sa KASAMA-LR. Saklaw ng mga babae ng Lupà ang trabahong pormal at impormal dahil sa “pagsasaka kinukuha ang pera para sa pag-aaral” (KASAMA-LR, 2019, p. 38). Kinakailangan ding maghanap-buhay ang babae (kahit na ibig sabihin ay tatalikdan ang sariling kaligayahan) dalá ng matinding kahirapan (p. 39). Patúloy ang pagbabanat ng butó kahit na sumusukô na ang pisikal na katawan sa tindi ng gawain dahil “wala nang mapuntahan” (p. 42).

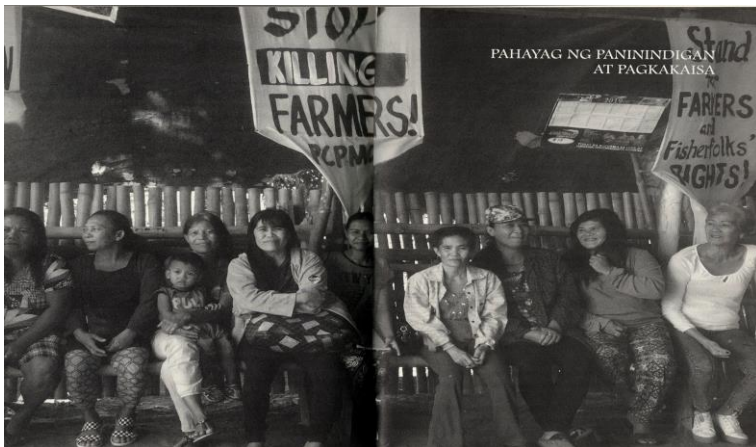
Ibinahagi ni Nanay Marites na kailangan niyang yakapin ang mas malaking responsabilidad bílang anak nang mawalan ng kabuhayan ang ama dahil nasalanta ng bagyo (p. 46a). Umalis sila sa Lupà para maghanap ng mapagkakakitaan, kargo niya bílang

babaeng manggagawa ang magúlang at sariling pamilya. Noong 2010, nang magreorganisa at mabuô ang KASAMA-LR, bumalik siya sa Lupà upang humanay at magsúlong ng repormang agraryo (p. 46b).

Tunay na aktibong aktor pang-ekonomiya ang kababaihan sapagkat nakaatang sa kanilá ang gampanin na bungkalin ang lupà. Ang pagbubungkal ay nása balik at ng mga babaeng pesante, at ang naturang responsabilidad ang tanging pamana ng kaniláng mga ninuno.

Hindi na sila nakawala sa paningíng materyal. Ang mga babaeng pesante ay itinuturing na puhunan at salik pamproduksiyon lámang ng lipunang malapyudal. At bagaman di mapapantayan ang ambag nilá sa ekonomiya ay wala siláng karapatang magkaroon ng ari-arian. Ni pagtatamasa sa batayáng karapatan, kasiguruhang makakáin at katiyakang makaalpas sa kahirapan ay wala rin. Magkagayon ay mas nasasadlak sa bulnerableng kalagayan ang pisikal, emosyonal at panlipunan niláng katawan.

Yayamang nabanggit na rin ang katawan, isa pang aspektong puwedeng ligírin ay ang kalusugan ng mga nanay sa Lupàng Ramos. Hindi man maidaíng ng mga may-akda ang anumang karamdamang pansarili, halimbawa ay ang nanginginig na mga kamay, marupok na mga tuhod at mga karamdamang internal, ay mapipigá ito sa mga retratong nakapalamán sa antolohiya. “May nasasaktan dahil sa kaniláng ipinaglalaban” (p. 48), tayutay man o literal.



Retrato mula sa antolohiyang *Lupàng Ramos: Isang Kasaysayan* ng KASAMA-LR at Gantala Press, Inc. (2019).

Sa likod ng kaniláng kakisigan, “mahinàng katawan” pa rin silá para sa panginoong may-lupà at mga sundalo. Kaysa makipag-usap nang legal at makipagtálo sa antas ng pagiging produktibo, karahasang seksuwal at pisikal ang ipinararanas sa kanilá. Ang págod ni Nanay Marites ay napatungan ng tákot at pangamba noong 2017 nang tangkaing gahasain ng kalaban (sic) ang labíng-anim na taón niyang anak (p. 46). Naghabla si Nanay Marites subalit hindi nito napigil ang patuloy na pagpaparanas ng kahalayan sa kaniyang anak.

Pasákit Pampamayanan

Makalalayà lámang ang babae sa karahasang seksuwal at sa mga pasákit pampamilya at pang-ekonomiya kung sasapi siya sa organisasyong nagsusúlong ng kaniyang kapakanan (AMIHAN, 1990, pp. 2-3a). Ito ang mahabang panahon nang iginigiit ng kababaihan. Lumalahok sa kilusán ang babae para magkaroon ng karapatang kikilála sa kaniyang lakas na kapantay ng sa lalaki upang sa gayo’y makapaghanapbúhay at makakilos nang malayà para sa pamilya at pamayanan. Sa madalíng sabi, madaragdagan ang naunang dalawang pasanin (bílang nanay at pesante) ng gawaing pampamayanan (ikatlong pasanin) dahil mapalalayà siya nito. Ayon sa AMIHAN (1990), “Bagaman malawak at komprehensibo, ang pagsasagawa nito [peminismo] ay maaaring magsimula sa maliliit at unti-unting pagsasagawa, halimbawa, **ang pagpapalahok sa kanilá sa kabuoang pakikibaka para sa tunay na reporma sa lupà** ay isang napakalaking hakbang na” [akin ang diin] (pp. 2-3b).

Sapul nang ginipit ng Pamilya Ramos ang mga magsasaká, hindi nag-atubili ang mga lider-kababaihan na manguna sa laban. “Kababaihan ang humarang sa mga goons. Inihiga nilá sa kalsada, sa halamanang dadaánan ng mga mapanira, ang kaniláng mga anak habang sila ay nagkakapit-bisig” (KASAMA-LR, 2019, p. 5a). Si Nanay Masang ang ehemplo ng KASAMA-LR nang panahong iyon, ang matapang na nanay na gumamit ng Good Morning towel upang sakalin ang tsuper ng traktorang gigiba sa mga kamalig ng mga pesante: “Masisira mo ang aming mga pananim, mamamatáy ang aming mga pananim, ngunit patáy ka rin” (p. 5b).

Gaya ng nabanggit, titindig at magiging aktibo sa kilusán ang babae para maakses ang rekursong para sa kaunlaran ng mga táong itinuturing niyang bahagi ng kaniyang búhay. Magiging ekstensiyon ng araw-araw niyang hininga ang pangangalaga sa komunidad at kikilalanin niya ito bílang sariling pamilyang dapat

arugain datapuwa tungkulin, tulad ng sambit ni Nanay Annie na sumápi sa KASAMA-LR, “upang magkaroon ng permanenteng panirikan ng bahay, at sakahan upang matustusan ko ang walo kong anak na nag-aaral dito sa Cavite, para sa kaniláng magandang kinabukasan, dahil sila ang pag-asa ng ating bayan” (p. 47). Kay Nanay Jocelyn naman, ang dahilan ng paglahok sa piketlayn: kapitbahay. Relatibong maayos ang búhay ng kaniyang pamilya, aniya. Hindi kailangang sumiksik sa Lupàng Ramos. Pero napanood niya sa TV ang mga nasasaktan. Naramdaman niya ang pagsusumamo ng mga kapitbahay, napagtanto niyang ang mga magsasaká ay marapat na kinakalínga ng pámahalaán kayâ mismong araw na iyon ay nangutang siya ng pamasahé para tumúngo sa Maynila at ipanawagan ang kalagayan ng kaniyang ekstensiyong pamilya—Dasmariñas at ang buong Filipinas (p. 49).

Mobilisado at organisado ang mga nanay ng Lupàng Ramos magmulâ nang matukoy nilá ang mga miyembro ng Buklod na nagpatunaw sa kalaban (p. 7). Patunay nito ang anim na taón at nagpapatulóy pang Bungkalan Protest Camp. Malinaw na napapanawagan ang kahilingan ng KASAMA-LR sa “land for the farmers” na mantra at ang pagpapaalis sa mga pulis sa Lupàng Ramos. Ang kuwento ng mga nanay ay kuwento ng pakikipaglaban para sa komunidad at kuwento ng matinding pagnanais na magtagumpay ang tatlong dekadang pakikipagbunô para sa ikabubuti ng nakararami.

Mahirap paniwalaang tatlong pátung na pasákit ang pasan-pasan ng mga nanay ng Lupàng Ramos. Wala siláng kapaguran sa pagkilos para sa awtentikong repormang agraryo. Ang batíd niláng wasto para sa pamilya, ekonomiya, at pamayanan ay hindi ikinukubli (talagang lampas nga sa sarili) sapagkat kahit na mabigat ay hindi nilá iniwan o kinakalimutan o ipinagwawalang-bahala. Inialay na ng babae ang kaniyang sarili sa taumbayan.

Pasákít, Hindi Tungkulin: *Femininity as Marginality*⁶

Hindi kailanman ginamit at binigyang-kahulugan ni Julia Kristeva⁷ ang *femininity* (isasalin sa papel na ito na “pagkababae”) dahil aniya, pagkababae (babae ka, para kang babae, babae ka lang) ang ginagamit ng “patriyarkal na lipunan” upang isadlak sa marhinalisadong estado ang isang partikular na hánay o uring panlipunang nais nitong tanggalan ng diwa at posisyon. Kung gayon, puwedeng sabihin na ang pagkababae ngayon ay hindi na lámang nalilimita sa mga babae (tumutukoy sa kasarian), kundi kumakatawan na rin sa lahat ng “oppressed classes of society” (Kristeva, 1986, p. 296) gaya ng mga pesante, proletaryado, people deprived of liberty, persons with disability, at iba pa. Ani Kristeva, “...it is the same struggle, and never one without the other” (Kristeva, 1986, p. 138). Nang banggitin sa antolohiya ang mga salitáng “magsasaká”, “pesante”, “manggagawa”, at “kasamá”, malinaw agad na ang mga kuwentong lahoc ay kuwento ng pagkababae na may mas ilalalim pang danas at damá nang lahukan ng mga salitang “babae”, “nanay”, at “ate”.

Ang “patriyarkal na lipunan” na tinutukoy rito ay halaw sa *symbolic order* ni Jacques Lacan—“the social and cultural order in which we live our lives as conscious, gendered subjects” (Hendrix, 2019, p. 2). Ginagarantiya ng symbolic order ang pagkapatriyarkal ng lipunan dahil “lalaki” (ang simbolikong awtoridad o big Other) lámang ang kumukumpas at nagdedesisyon ng kilos at katayuan ng sinumang “hindi lalaki” o “babae.” Sa madalíng sabi, ang babae ay walang permanenteng posisyon sa lipunan maliban kung bibigyan siya ng kahulugan ng lalaking nagmamaneobra ng komunidad. Halimbawa, mayroon lámang silbi ang babae (wife) dahil mayroon siyang asawa (husband); mayroon lámang din siyang (mother) silbi dahil mayroong nakipagsiping sa kaniya (father) at mayroon din siyang tungkulin bílang anak (daughter) dahil ibinigay sa kaniya ang mga tungkuling hindi ginagampanan ng anak na lalaki (son).

⁶ Una kong natutukan ang buod ng peministang teorya ni Julia Kristeva sa artikulo ni Jhoanna Lynn Cruz sa LIKHAAN Book of Philippine Criticism, 1992-1997 (2000) tungkol sa “Mga Lihim ni Pinay” ni Ruth Elyna Mabanglo. Artikulo ni Cruz ang naging daan sa paglalapat ko ng teorya ni Kristeva sa antolohiyang *Lupàng Ramos*.

⁷ Si Kristeva ay isang Bulgarian-French na pilosopo at peminista. Siya ay kilalá sa mga teoryang nagkokompara at nagtataghi sa “semiotic” at “symbolic.” Siya rin ang awtor ng *Power of Horror* (1980) na tumatalakay sa konsepto ng abjection. Partikular sa papel na ito ang ambag ni Kristeva sa peministang diskurso sa pag-aadap niya sa teoryang symbolic order ni Jacques Lacan.

Dinidiktahan at hindi pinagsasalitâ ang babae sa patriyarkal na lipunang pinatatakbo ng lalaki.

Makikita ang ganitong pagbása sa salaysay ni Nanay Miriam nang humiga sa daraanan ng traktorang Ramos ang mga babae at ang mga batàng miyembro ng KASAMA-LR dahil ang katwiran nilá, “magiging marahas kapag mga lalaki agad ang humarap” (KASAMA-LR, 2019, p. 5). Gumampan ng tungkuling pampiket ang mga babae batay sa utos “nilá.” Ang “nilá” rito ay tumutukoy sa lalaking order. Ang lalaking “nilá” ang nagdikta ng dapat gawin ng babae sa piketlayn na animo’y ang pagkilos ng babae ay nakasalalay lagi sa utos ng makapangyarihang “nilá”.

Dagdag pa, may labímpitóng kuwento sa antolohiyang tungkol sa mga babaeng may-asawa na pare-parehong nagsipag-asawa sa murang edad dahil sabi ng “pamilya” o ng kani-kaniyang “tatay”. Sambit ni Nanay Bining, turò ng kaniyang magulang (ang symbolic order) na “kailangan” mag-asawa at magkaroon ng anak. Mahirap daw kasíng wala (p. 18) dahil “tungkulin” daw ito. Si Nanay Josie naman, nagtrabahong “panlalaki” (p. 23) sapagkat sinabi sa kaniyang kailangan ito. At ang nagdiktang “kailangan” ito ay ang lalaking symbolic order. Muli, mulâ sa mga kuwento ng pag-aasawa, nag-asawa ang babae dahil inutos ng patriyarkal na “sila”.

Sa kabilâng bandá, masasabing makapangyarihan ang babae kung nakalahok sila sa kilusán, gaya ni Nanay Miriam. Sa katunayan, may kapangyarihan ang babae kung babasahin ang kuwento ng kabayanihan ni Nanay Masang na tatawaging “martir” nang komprontahin niya ang goons (KASAMA-LR, 2019, p. 5a). Subalit tila naging martir lang si Nanay Masang dahil sabi “nilá” mas mainam kung babae ang haharap (p. 5b)—mulâ pa rin sa dikta ng patriyarkal na “nilá.” Hindi pa rin ganap ang kalayáan dahil hindi babae ang unang nagpasiyá—sumunod lámang si Nanay Masang sa sinabi ng lalaki. Gayunman, mahalaga pa ring puntuhin sa salaysay na “gumilid” ang lalaki (p. 5c). Habang ang mga babae ang humaharap sa goons, sila ay “tuloy-tuloy [lámang sa] pagtatanim” na tila ba ipinaubaya na sa babae ang akto ng komprontasyon. Tumiklop ba ang lalaki? Sa yugtong ito, kinilála ba ng lalaki ang kakayahan ng babae? O ginawa lámang pananggaláng ang babae para magsilbing unang hanay ng proteksiyon sa nakaambang madugóng harápan?

Kung si Kristeva ang tatanungin, hindi tumiklop ang lalaki at lalong hindi kinilála ng lalaki ang kakayahan ng babae.

Kinakailangang kontrolin ng lalaki ang babae dahil ang tunay nitong halaga ay kailanman hindi káyang higitan (o tapatán man lámang). Natatákot ang symbolic order na mawalan siya ng kalayàang magpatakbo ng lipunan kayâ patuloy niyang sinusupil ang babaeng gaya ni Nanay Masang.

Sa *Ano ang Kabuluhan ng Feminismo sa Aming Buhay?* ng AMIHAN, detalyadong ipinaliwanag ang pananaw ng mga babaeng magbubukíd tungkol sa kahulugan at katuturan ng pagkababae at “peminismo.” Katúlád sa pananaw ni Kristeva, damá ng babaeng magbubukid ang pagiging “alipin” (AMIHAN, 1990, p. 2). Kung ang magbubukíd ay walang boses sa pagdedesisyon dahil ang panginoong maylupà ang may kontrol ng poder sa politika, lalong walang boses sa paggawa ng desisyon ang “kababaihang magbubukíd” dahil una, tinatanaw na “suporta” lámang sa produksiyon ang babae at hindi siya itinuturing na magbubukíd; pangalawa, padre de pamilya (diin: lalaki) lámang ang kinikiláláng tagapagsalita para sa buong pamilya; at pangatlo, padre de pamilya (mulí: lalaki) ang tanging may karapatan at boses sa lahat nang bagay (pp. 2-3). Kung aktibong lalahok sa kilusán, masisimulan ang paglayà ng babae at ito ang kikilála sa partisipasyon at boses niya sa usaping pampolitika (p. 3). Kung idaragdag pa, “para sa kababaihang magbubukíd, ang pagkakapantay-pantay ay usapin ng pagkakaroon ng sariling lupà, may karapatang magdesisyon, **may karapatang mamunò, malayà**, at may demokrasya [akin ang diin] (p. 4).

Kung gayon, ang paggilid ng kalalakihan sa gitna ng pagkamartir ni Nanay Masang ay indikasyon na ba ng pagkilála sa boses niya at ng kababaihan? Ang malayàng pag-aakda ng kasaysayan ng Lupàng Ramos at ang pagbubuo ba ng antolohiya ng KASAMA-LR at Gantala Press ay kalayáan na rin bang maituturing?

Para kay Kristeva, hindi. Kailangan munang biguin at pabagsakin ang symbolic order para masimulan ang paglayà ng babae. Para maabot ito, aniya,

...we must act with “all who rebel against the existing relations of production and reproduction” but reject the extreme positions of receding into the silence and “meaninglessness” of the semiotic and of an inverted form of sexism which blames the male sex for all the ills of society...and we must deconstruct the very notion of sexual difference and find a new signifying space

in which the identity of the symbolic bond is itself demystified. (Kristeva, 1986, p. 149).

Para kay Kristeva, tungkulin ng babae “to give voice to each individual form of the unconscious, to every desire and need” (p. 295). Kailangang kilalanin ang opresyon at marhinalisasyong nararanasan ng lahat na niyuyurakan ng symbolic order para magkaroon ng kahulugan ang babae at pagkababae sa lipunang kasalukuyan nating kinapapalooban.

Sa kabilâng panig, idinidiin ng AMIHAN na “ang peminismo na nakikipaglaban sa usapan lámang ng paglaban ng kababaihan para sa pagkakapantay-pantay, ay walang direksiyon at lilikha lámang ng pagkakahati sa hanay ng mamamayan” (AMIHAN, 1990, p. 4). Pareho ang tingin ng babaeng magbubukíd at ni Kristeva sa paglayà: kailangang idekonstrak ang paniniwalang babae lámang ang palalayàin ng “peminismo,” kundi, lahat nang bulnerableng sektor na sinisira ng symbolic order.

Ang patúloy ng paglahok ng mga babae sa KASAMA-LR at sa mas malawak na pakikibaka tungo sa tunay na repormang agraryo ay mula sa matindi nilang pagnanais na lumayà sa lalaking Other. “Galít na galít” (KASAMA-LR, 2019, p. 22a) si Nanay Oya dahil “naghahangad akó ng progreso ng laban at pagkapanalo” (p. 22b). Patúloy namang nagsisikhay si Nanay Baby dahil gusto niyang patunayang “ang magsasaka ay arál na” (p. 27a) at “hindi na sila dapat makahon bílang pinakamababang urì ng manggagawa” (p. 27b). At gayon na lámang ang pagkamulat ni Nanay Miriam sa kasaysayan ng kaniyang pamilya sa Lupà. Aniya, “saksi akó sa pagpapakapagod ng nanay ko at sa pagiging biktima niya ng maling pananaw sa kababaihan sa lipunang ito” (pp. 36-37) kayâ kahit mapanghámon ay tulóy pa rin ang laban. Kung susuriin, ang ugat ng pakikibáka ng mga babae ng Lupà ay hindi simpleng usapin ng salapi at karapatan at katotohanan, kundi lampas pa rito—kalayáan. At itong kalayáan na ito’y pagkilála sa sarili labas sa isinusubong pilit ng patriyarkal na order ng lipunan. Iginigiit ng babae (at pagkababae) ang posisyon nilá sa lipunan at itinatambol nang itinatambol ang kalayáan niláng umokupa ng espasyo sa Lupàng Ramos, sa Pilipinas, at sa lipunan sa pangkalahatan.

Sa tinatayáng tungkulin ng babae na bigyang boses ang marhinalisado pumapások ang antolohiyang *Lupàng Ramos: Isang Kasaysayan* nang mayroong diin sa pagtatalâ nito sa salaysay ng pagkababae sa diskursong Filipino. Ang hakbang ng Gantala Press at

AMIHAN na ilimbag ang boses ng babae ay paglelehitimisang “may babae.” Sa artikulasyon (at paglilimbag) ng mga kuwento nakokongkreto at napatotohanan ang damá at danas ng babae; kritikal na naimamá sa kasaysayan at nailalahok sa pambáyang alaala (kamalayan) ng mga pesante at ng mga Filipino.

KONGKLUSYON

Bakit pasákit, at hindi tungkulin, ang pagiging babae, ina, at pesante? Sapagkat dahil sa tatlong gampaning ito, na walang demarkasyon at laging magkakapatong, hindi namamaksima ng babae ang kaniyang sarili. Sabihin pa ay malabò sa kaniyang paningin ang sariling imahen, hindi niya kilálang lubos ang sarili, sapagkat natatabunan ng mga “tungkulin.” Dahil sa mga gawaing pampamilya, pang-ekonomiya, at pampamayanan, nawawaglit ng babae ang sarili; sapilitan itong kinukuha ng lalaking lipunan mulá sa kaniyang kaibuturan. Ang mga “pasákit” na naghuhunyangong “tungkulin” ay tandâ na ang kamalayan ay nadodomina ng lalaking kaisipang naglilimita sa babae bílang pambahay sa halip na pambáyan.

Ang suliraning ito ang sinisikap balikwasin ng antolohiyang *Lupang Ramos*, bagaman ang paglipon ng mga salaysay, na ang pangunahing layunin ay magsiwalat ng karanasan ng mga babaeng magsasaká, ay nagbukás ng mas maraming isyung pambabae at pagkababae. Mulá nga sa pamagat ng koleksiyon, ang pag-aakda ng mga patotoo ay hindi lámang simpleng súlat o kuwento, bagkus ay panitikan at kasaysayan. Ang karanasan ng mga abá at marhinalisadong babae, ina, at pesante (at organisador din) ay nararapat na di mawaglit sa kamalayán at alaala ng mga mamamayan kayâ labis ang pangangailangang ito’y ilimbag at basahin at ipabása sa tuwina.

Rebolusyonaryo ang tradisyong pampanitikan at pangkasaysayan ng Pilipinas (Lumbera, 1996, p. 1; San Juan, 2002, p. 18), subalit ang rebolusyong ito ay lagi na lámang umiikot sa iiláng pangalan at apelyido ng mga lalaking gaya nina Rizal, Bonifacio, at del Pilar at iba pang pinunong manunulat at historyador na may pribilehiyong magkaroon ng espasyo sa pambansang kanon.⁸ Sa kabiláng bandá, ang mga rebolusyonaryong miyembro ng Katipunan na wala sa mga teksbuk—mga Sakdalista, mga pesante at

⁸ Hinihram kay Bienvenido Lumbera ang problematisasyon sa “kanon,” kawing sa *Writing the Nation/Pag-akda ng Bansa* (2000).

proletaryadong unyonistang nakikibáka para isúlong ang kapakanang agraryo ng bansa—iyong mga lehitimong mamamayan ng Pilipinas na aktor at biktima ng makailáng tiklop ng madugóng kasaysayan (at kasaysayang pampanitikan) gaya ng mga babae, ina, at pesante ng Lupàng Ramos—ay wala sa “tradisyon.” Magkagayon ang pagtatángi ng papel na ito sa marangal na gawain ng KASAMA-LR, Gantala Press, at AMIHAN ang pagsusumikap na ipások sa kanon ang babae at pagkababae kahit na lalaking-lalaki ang katangian ng lipunang Filipino sa kasalukuyan.

Sa likod ng lahat ng ito, sa hulí, babae lámang ang may kakayahang magsiwalat ng kaniyang sitwasyon. Ang salaysay ay mahalaga para makapagmúlat ng mga mamamayang bulág sa nasabing problema. At ang parehong salaysay din ay may saysay para mismo sa mga babaeng nagsasalaysay—pagharáp sa sarili, pananalamin sa tatlong pasákit sa pag-asang darating ang tagpong pangkasaysayan na hindi na ito pasan-pasan pa.

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*Si **John Carlo Santos** ay gurò ng panitikan sa UP Diliman
Departamento ng Filipino at Panitikan ng Pilipinas. Interes niya sa
pananaliksik ang mga panitikang-bayan, epikong-bayan, at mga
pananaliksik ni E. Arsenio Manuel.*

Artsibo ng Araw-Araw: *Ang Bente-Bente Zines* Vol. 1 Bilang Tala ng Buhay at Isinasabuhay na Kasaysayan

John Brixter M. Tino



Retrato ng *Bente-Bente Zines* Volume 1. Kuha ni Edbert Darwin Casten.

ABSTRAK

Ang *Artsibo ng Araw-Araw: Ang Bente-Bente Zines* Vol. 1 Bilang Tala ng Buhay at Isinasabuhay na Kasaysayan ay rebyu ng *Bente-Bente Zines* (Vol. 1). Sinisipat nito ang mga nakalimbag na naratibo at tula sa mga zine na tumatalakay sa mga tema ng pag-ibig, kalayaan at karahasan. Sinipat din ng rebyu ang mahalagang papel ng mga zine sa Pilipinas sa pagpapalakas ng tinig mga marginalisadong sektor at sa paghubog ng alternatibong diskurso sa panitikang Pilipino.

Mga Susing Salita: *Bente-Bente Zines*, panitikang Pilipino, alternatibong diskurso, marginalisadong sektor

This review analyzes *Bente-Bente Zines* (Vol. 1) as a powerful subversion, identity, and history tool. It examines the anthology's mix of narratives and poetry by established and emerging writers, tackling themes like love, freedom, and violence. Standing in solidarity with independent publishers like Zine Orgy and Magpies Press., this collection also strengthens local zine culture in the Philippines. The review highlights the volume's role in amplifying marginalized voices and shaping alternative perspectives.

Key Words: *Bente-Bente Zines*, Philippine literature, alternative discourse, marginalized sector

Nag-aalok ng masinsing pagsusuri ang unang tomo ng Bente-Bente Zines sa papel ng mga zine bilang mahahalagang aparato ng temporal, kultural, at panlipunang dokumentasyon. Sa pamamagitan ng pagsasaklaw ng mga epemeral, ng mga grassroots na kilusan, at pagbabagong pangkultura, ang tomong ito ay isang masiglang rekord ng kasaysayan na humahamon sa mga dominanteng naratibo. Taglay ang ethos ng DIY (do-it-yourself), lumilikha ang mga zine ng alternatibong dokumentasyon ng pang-araw-araw na buhay, paniniwala, at malikhaing praktika ng mga nakakaranas ng opresyon na hindi kinakailangang dumaan sa mga pormal na filter ng mainstream media o akademikong institusyon. Ang tomong ito ay isang patunay na bagaman maikli at mabilisang babasahin ang mga zine, ang nilalaman ay may kakayahang maging pangmatagalang testimonya ng pagbalikwas, pagkakakilanlan at pagbabagong panlipunan.

Ang pangalang BBZ ay hango sa presyo ng bawat zine—dalawampung piso bawat isang zine. Ibinalangkas nina Joti Tabula, Junley Lazaga at Niles Jordan Breis ng National Committee on Literary Arts (NCLA) ang inisyatibang ito. Pinangunahan naman ni Edbert Darwin Casten ang una at ikalawang implementasyon at disenyo. Pumili siya at nagtipon ng mga akda ng mga beterano at kabataang manunulat mula sa iba’t ibang panig ng bansa upang mabuo ang kalipunang ito. Inilabas ang unang tomo ng BBZ noong Hulyo 2024. Ang pag-usbong ng *Bente-Bente Zines* (BBZ) ay maaaring unawain bilang direkta at estratehikong tugon sa mga hamong inilantad ng Readership Survey (2023) ng National Book Development Board (NBDB) at Social Weather Station (SWS). Ayon sa naturang pag-aaral, ang pangunahing salik na nakakaapekto sa pagpili ng mga aklat ay affordability at accessibility. Sagabal rin sa pagbabasa ang mataas na presyo at limitadong distribusyon ng mga aklat. Sa pamamagitan ng modelo nitong nakaayon sa abot-kayang halaga at malawakang distribusyon, ang *Bente-Bente Zines* ay nagbibigay ng solusyon upang maging inklusibo at demokratiko ang panitikan.

Pangunahing estratehiya ng BBZ ang pagtatakda ng mababang presyo nito upang maging abot-kaya ang mga akdang

pampanitikan. Bukod dito, dahil maaari rin bilhin ang BBZ sa online platforms, naiiwasan ang limitasyong heograpikal—isang mahalagang hakbang sa bansang ito kung saan ang mga tindahan ng aklat ay kadalasang matatagpuan sa mga sentrong urban. Sa paggamit ng digital na distribusyon, naipapalaganap ng BBZ ang kanilang mga akda sa mas maraming mambabasa. Bukod sa presensya nito online, aktibo ring lumalahok ang BBZ sa iba't ibang book festival. Dahil dito, naging kabahagi ito ng malawak na palitan ng mga diskursong pangkultura at pangkomunidad. Bukod sa pagbibigay ng pisikal na espasyo para sa interaksyon ng mambabasa, manunulat, at mga zine, pinagtitiyay rin nito ang diwa ng kolektibong pagmamay-ari at pakikilahok sa larangan ng panitikan. Itinataguyod ng BBZ ang isang kolektibong diwa kung saan nabubuwal ang mga tradisyonal na estruktura ng kapangyarihan na ikinakahon ang mga manunulat, mambabasa, at ang mismong teksto. Sa pamamagitan ng desentralisasyon ng produksiyong pampanitikan, hindi pagsentro sa Kalakhang Maynila, at pagbibigay ng espasyo sa mga tinig mula sa iba't ibang rehiyon, henerasyon at pamumuhay, binabaklas ng BBZ ang mga herarkiya na nagbibigay-pribilehiyo sa mga kilalang manunulat, perspektibang metropolitan at makikitid na pamantayan ng tekstuwal na awtoridad.

Sa kumbensyonal na espasyong pampanitikan, ang awtor ay kadalasang ipinepedestal bilang natatanging pinagmumulan ng kahulugan, ang mambabasa ay pasibong tagatanggap, at ang teksto ay isang tiyak at di-nagbabagong bagay na dapat suriin alinsunod sa nakaugaliang pamantayan. Taliwas dito ang BBZ. Sa halip, pinayayabong nito ang kolektibong ethos kung saan naglalaho ang mga nasabing hangganan dahil sa tatlong dahilan. Una, dahil tinipon sa tomong ito ang mga kabataan at beteranong manunulat mula sa iba't ibang panig ng Pilipinas, nabubura ang ideya ng iisang "awtor" at napapalitan ito ng maraming tinig. Pangalawa, ang mambabasa ay hindi tahimik na tagatanggap lamang, bagkus ay aktibong kalahok sa pagbuo ng kahulugan at nakikipag-ugnayan sa mga teksto at bumabalikwas sa monopolistikong interpretasyon. At pangatlo, ang akda ay hindi na obheto kundi isang aktibong diyologo na patuloy na hinuhubog at umuunlad.

Ang ganitong mga hakbang at layunin ng *Bente-Bente Zines* ay sumasalamin sa malawak na pilosopikal at materyal na pag-unawa sa produksiyon ng kaalaman at kasaysayan. Sinabi ni Michel-

Rolph Trouillot (1995) na ang kasaysayan ay hinuhubog sa iba't ibang espasyo—mula sa akademya at midya hanggang sa malawak na kulturang popular. Pinaigting pa ni Stephen Duncombe (1997) ang kahalagahan ng zine, na ito ay hindi lamang daluyan ng radikal at demokratikong ideyal, ito ay mahalagang plataporma rin para sa mga marginalisadong grupo. Ayon sa kaniya, ang zines ay nagbubukas ng espasyo para sa mga indibidwal at komunidad na karaniwang isinasantabi o sinusupil ng dominanteng kultura—tulad ng kababaihan, LGBTQIA+, punk enthusiasts, at iba pang pangkat at kultura.

Bahagi ang mga kulturang ito ng yumayabong na lokal na produksiyon ng zines sa bansa, kahanay ng mga inisyatiba ng *Zine Orgy*, *Magpies Press*, *Better Living Through Xeroxography*, at marami pang iba. Sa aklat na *Zine/Thesis: Isang Paggalugad na Pananaliksik sa Mundo ng Zines sa Pilipinas sa Kasalukuyan* (2020), inilahad ni Jockaz SP. Latigar ang kasaysayan ng kultura ng zine sa Pilipinas, kung saan kinilala niya ang *Herald X* ni Tommy Tanchanco na lumabas noong 1987 bilang kauna-unahang zine na inilimbag sa Pilipinas. Ayon kay Latigar, golden age ng zines sa Kalakhang Maynila ang mga taong 1996 hanggang 2002. Nagsilbing patunay ang mga publikasyong tulad ng *Lunar Landing* at *Halohalo* sa paglawak ng saklaw ng zine—mula sa punk patungo sa iba't ibang temang panlipunan. Ang panahong ito ay kinatatampukan din ng DIY ethos na hindi lamang ginawang mas demokratiko ang malikhaing produksyon kundi naging hamon din sa dominasyon ng mainstream media. Inilarawan ni Latigar ang muling pagsigla ng zine sa kasalukuyan sa pamamagitan ng apat na magkakaugnay na pwersa: ang diyalektika ng digital na saturasyon at muling pagpapahalaga sa mga analog na materyal bilang anyo ng nostalgia; ang pag-usbong ng alternatibong monetisasyon sa malikhaing sektor; ang paglakas ng mga kolektibong inisyatiba sa pamamagitan ng mga fair (*Zine Orgy*, *Better Living Through Xeroxography*) at mixed spaces (*Studio Soup*); at ang paggamit ng digital platforms upang palawigin ang abot ng zines.

Maisasaklaw rin ang unang tomo na ito ng BBZ sa tradisyon ng sining ng protesta na tinalakay ni Alice Guillermo (2001) sa kaniyang akdang *Protest/Revolutionary Art in the Philippines 1970-1990*. Masusi niyang tinunton ang radikal na potensyal ng sining na nakasandig sa bernakular at kultural na produksiyon. Bagaman hindi tahasang binanggit ang partikular na anyo ng zines, saklaw ng

kaniyang teoretikal na balangkas ang subersibong materyalidad ng mga ito, kahalintulad ng mga epemeral na anyo ng sining tulad ng peryodikit, polyeto, komiks, at iba pang midyum. Ayon kay Guillermo, ang popular na anyo ng sining ay gumagamit ng magagaang materyales subalit tumatalakay sa mga kongkretong usaping panlipunan. May malinaw itong kaugnayan sa estratehikong paggamit ng BBZ sa abot-kayang paraan ng produksiyon at ang presyo — isang anyo ng "materyalistang estetika ng aksesibilidad," kung gagamitin natin ang termino ni Guillermo.

Gumagampan ang tomong ito ng BBZ bilang diskursibong espasyo na lumalampas sa limitasyon ng mga usaping sosyopolitikal at eksistensyal, at sumasalamin sa pluralistikong tinig ng mga contributor mula sa iba't ibang henerasyon at rehiyon. Kabilang sa madalas na temang tinatalakay sa mga zines ay *kalayaan* na inilalarawan hindi lamang bilang personal na emansipasyon kundi kolektibong paglaya mula sa mga hegemonikong estruktura; *kalikasan* na naglalahad ng krisis pang-ekolohiya mula sa perspektiba ng mga katutubo at manggagawa; *identidad* na tumutuon sa mga PWD, queer, at iba pang marginalisang grupo sa bansa; *karahasan* na inilalantad ang panunupil ng estado, at historikal na trauma: at *pag-ibig* na hindi lamang nakakahon sa mga romantikong nosyon at konotasyon.

I. Kalayaan

Ang zine ni MJ Rafal na *ang mga bata, naging binhi ng oliba, nakatanim sa lupa* ay tumatalakay sa kalayaan sa konteksto ng pakikibaka ng mga Palestino. Inilarawan ng limang tula sa zine na ito ang mga sandali ng pakikibaka, katatagan at kolektibong gunita, isang kontra-naratibo sa nangingibabaw na mga diskursong pangkasaysayan at pampolitika ng Israel at United States.

Nagbubuklod ang limang tula upang ihugis ang kalayaan hindi bilang isang abstraktong adhikain kundi bilang umiiral na ontolohiya ng pag-asa sa gitna ng mga guho. Ang muling pagsibol ng punong oliba sa tulang “yumayabong, tumatayog ang oliba” ay nagsisilbing elehiya at manifesto sa isang gibang mundo—isang larawan ng panibagong simulain sa harap ng pagkawasak. Sa tulang “pagkat yumayabong tumatayog ang oliba sa daigdig,” isinulong ang kalayaan bilang tanong — “Sino ang nagpatuloy na magsaboy ng dilig?”—isang pahayag ng mga aninong “lasog na rin kapiling ng

guho." Sa tulang "nang tumubo muli ang mga punong oliba," isinasaad ang kalayaan bilang imahen ng inang tahimik na lumuluha, at "tumatagas ang pagtangis," habang iniaalay ang bangkay ng anak bilang binhi ng kinabukasan sa gitna ng "makipot na lupa." Samantala, sa tulang "munting mga kamay suot ang pulseras na pangalan," nagiging epemeral ang materyalidad ng kalayaan—ang pulseras na may pangalan ng bata ang nananatili sa gitna ng guho, isang relihong nananatili sa gitna ng paglipol.

Ang huling tulang "ang mga bata, naging binhi ng oliba, nakatanim sa lupa," na siya ring titulo ng zine, ay matalim na pagmumuni sa hindi matitinag na diwa ng kamusmusan sa kabila ng mapanirang epekto ng digmaan at pananakop. Ang matitingkad na imahen ng mga batang "naglalaro sa ibabaw ng guho," "nagkakantahan," at nagiging "binhi ng oliba" matapos puksain ng "mga berdugo" ay isang testamento sa paulit-ulit na trahedya at muling pagbangon. Mapapansin sa mga tula ang pag-uulit ng imahen ng oliba. Ang puno ng oliba ay sagisag na malalim na nakaugat sa kulturang Palestino at sa kanilang pambansang pagkakakilanlan. Sa paglalarawan sa mga bata bilang biktima at tagapagtaguyod din ng hinaharap, binabaligtad ng tula ang karaniwang salaysay ng kawalang-pag-asa sa mga lugar ng sigalot. Sa halip, ipinapakita ang paulit-ulit na siklo ng paglaban at ang katiyakan ng pagpapatuloy ng kultura at diwang panlipunan.

Kalayaan din ang paksa ng mga zine na *Metro Mega Meka*. May limang tula ito na may himig-nanunudyong at nagpapatawa. Malikhaing paraan ang mga tula upang galugarin ang masalimuot na ugnayan ng makikitid at mapanupil na mga batas ng agham at prinsipyo ng etika. Muling itinatanghal ng mga tula sa zine na ito ang mga batas sa pamamagitan ng isang absurdong lente at inilalantad ang mga salimuot at limitasyong kaakibat ng mahigpit na mga patakarang sinusubukang saklawin ang hindi mahuhulmang katangian ng tao at makina.

Mapang-uyam din sa kapangyarihan at naghahangad ng kalayaan ang zine na *Walang Diyos sa Simbahan* ni Steven Lombos. May limang tula rito na nagsusulong sa buhay at adhikaing manggagawa. Tinutuklas nito ang sanga-sangang ugnayan ng paggawa, relihiyon, at sistematikong karahasan. Litaw rin ang Marxista at peministang sensibilidad sa zine na *Handurawan* ni Pia Montalban. Sinisiyasat ng limang tula sa koleksiyon ang ugnayan ng

kasarian, uri at kapangyarihan sa kasalukuyang lipunan. Sa pagsasanib ng personal at politikal, lumalampas ang tula sa indibidwal na danas at inilulugar ang sarili sa mas malawak na konteksto ng kasaysayan at ideolohiya.

May limang tula naman na nakasulat sa English sa zine na *Poetry is a Mistake* ni Jass Sacdalan. Nakasentro ito sa ontolohikal at eksistensyal na aspekto ng paglikha ng tula. Nagsisilbi itong ars poetica at confessional na umiinog sa pag-asa at pangamba ng isang kabataang makata na nakikipagbuno sa di-masusukat na kahingian ng sining at sa patuloy na agos ng panahon. Inilulugar ng zine ang persona sa isang krisis: kung wala ang pagsusulat, sino siya? Ang paulit-ulit niyang kilos—pagsusulat, pagbura, pagpugot sa kamay at muling pagkabit nito—ay nagiging sagisag ng walang katapusang siklo ng paglikha kung saan ang makata ay hindi lamang lumilikha kundi siya mismo ang nililikha ng kanyang sining. Sa ganitong lente, ang sining ay hindi na lamang isang proseso kundi isang kulungan—ang makata ay kapwa bihag at bumibihag sa sarili.

Mula sa pagbibigay-tinig sa pakikibaka ng mga Palestino, pagtuligsa sa mga batas ng agham, pagtataguyod ng karapatan ng manggagawa, hanggang sa pag-alagwa sa mga limitasyon ng malikhaing pagpapahayag—ang bawat zine ay sumasalungat sa nangingibabaw na naratibo at nagmumungkahi ng mga alternatibo. Tinututulan ng mga akda ang pananahimik at itinataguyod na ang tunay na kalayaan ay isinilang sa kolektibong pagsalungat—laban sa imperyalistang sistema, sa mapang-abusong hanapbuhay, o sa mismong mga limitasyon ng sining. Sa pagsasama-sama ng ganitong mga konsepto, ipinahihiwatig ng mga zine na ang paglaya ay hindi hiwa-hiwalay kundi magkakaugnay, na hindi sapat ang personal na liberasyon, kailangan ang pagbuwag sa mga estrukturang sumusupil sa ating lahat.

II. Kalikasan

Ang mga zine nina Gen Asenjo at Klara D. Espedido ay may radikal na potensyal sapagkat nakaugat ang kanilang mga prinsipyo sa pagpapahalaga sa kalikasan at karanasan ng mga katutubo at manggagawa. Epektibo nilang kinilala at binatikos ang mga sistemang mapagsamantala sa tao at kapaligiran, sa pamamagitan ng mga imahen at wikang hinubog ng pilapil, ng bundok, at ng lupa.

Krisis sa klima ang paksa ng *Heat Index 2024* ni Gen Asenjo. Ang pagtukoy ng zine sa espesipikong panahon ay pagbubukas ng daan sa mga darating na henerasyon na maunawaan ang karanasan ng mga indibidwal na tinatangkang umangkop sa mga sakunang nangyari sa panahong ito. Sa tulang "Vlogger," inilahad ang akda bilang serye ng obserbasyon. Piraso-piraso subalit konektado ang naratibo. Ang persona ng tula ay gumaganap bilang isang saksi, *itinatala ang pagbabago ng isang vlogger na magsasaka sa El Niño, maging ang iba't ibang reaksiyon ng komunidad*. Ang paggamit ng tauhan at salitang "vlogger" ay naglulugar sa akda sa isang modernong kaligiran. Ipinapakita rito ang pagsasanib ng kontemporaneong gawain at teknolohiya sa sinaunang pamamaraan ng pagsasaka at mga pagsubok na kaakibat nito. Isa itong palatandaan ng nagaganap na pagbabagong pangkultura. Sa unang linya ng tula, bumungad ang suryalistang imahen, "Tumubo ang monggo sa kaniyang ulo." Pinagsasanib nito ang katawan ng tao at ang lupa na nagpapahiwatig ng hindi mapaghihiwalay na ugnayan ng pag-iral ng tao at ng kalikasan. Bagaman suryal, ang imahen na ito ay may matibay na pundasyon sa reyalidad ng kalamidad na dulot ng El Niño kung saan nangingibabaw ang mga suliraning pang-agrikultura.

Pagkasira rin ng kalikasan ang tema ng zine na *Lahat Silang Hindi Nahahagip ng Paningin* ni Klara D. Espedido. Ginawa niyang lunsaran ng ekopeministang protesta ang limang tula sa kaniyang zine. Habang tinatalakay ng mga tula ang pagkasira ng kapaligiran, pinalalawak din nito ang kritika sa mga patriyarkal na estrukturang nagbubunsod ng naturang pagkawasak. Ang "Humayo Ka't Mangaliwa" ay patotoo kung paanong ang zine ay nagsisilbing mahalagang rekord ng mga grassroots na kilusan. Kaakibat nito, inilalahad din ng tula ang panlipunang resulta ng pagkawasak ng kalikasan, lalo na sa mga komunidad ng mga Agta-Dumagat. Kinukondena nito ang hindi pantay na epekto ng mga proyekto ng pamahalaan at pribadong sektor sa mga katutubong pamayanan.

III. Identidad

Tungkol sa pagiging person with disability (PWD) ang zine na *Kartilya ng Katarata* ni John Brixter Tino. Naglalaman ito ng anim na tulang umiikot sa karanasang dulot ng katarata. Higit pa sa pagtalakay sa panlalabo ng paningin, tinutuklas ng koleksyon ang malalim na ugnayan ng persepsiyon at identidad. Tinatangka nitong

ipakita kung paano hinuhubog ng katawan at ng mga limitasyon nito ang ating pag-unawa sa sarili at sa mundo. Sa pamamagitan ng mga imahen, inilalarawan ng mga tula ang buhay bilang lansag-lansag na danas, at isa ring bahagi ng mas malaking talakayan tungkol sa kahulugan ng pananaw, katotohanan, at pag-iral sa loob ng isang di kumpletong katawan.

Ginamit sa tulang "Pamana" ang makukulay na imahen upang tuklasin ang pira-piraso, ang binubuo at binubunong pagkatao. Mula sa pambungad nitong taludtod, inilalarawan ang isang alkemikal na proseso ng paglikha—ang maingat na pagsasama-sama ng mga pakpak ng bayakan, kuko ng kuwago, at mga paa ng alitaptap upang makalikha ng isang nilalang na wala sa natural na kaayusan. Sa pamamagitan ng ganitong *bricolage*, inilalahad ng tula ang di-mapipigilang pagnanasang buoin ang sarili mula sa mga bahagi ng iba, isang proseso ng konstruksyon na kaakibat ng mga hanggahang itinakda ng katawan.

Ang zine na *Dilat sa Pusikit* ni Harold Fiesta ay may pitong tula na maaaring ipaloob sa tradisyon ng confessional poetry. Nakatuon ang modang ito sa "ko/ako" bilang pangunahing tinig, at sa matapat na pagsasalaysay ng *panloob* na kalagayan ng isip at damdamin. Ang tulang "Halimaw" ay pagbabalik-tanaw sa pagkabata kung saan ang takot at pagkamulat sa masasalimuot na damdamin ay nagsisimulang humubog sa pagkakakilanlan ng nagsasalaysay. Ang pagkatuklas ng persona sa "inalikabok na lumang tipan" at sa "larawan ng natutupok na Sodoma" ay nagbubukas ng mga temang may kinalaman sa panrelihiyon at panlipunang deskriminasyon. Sa mga tekstong panrelihiyon, ang Sodoma ay kumakatawan sa mga ipinagbabawal na akto, partikular sa usaping *sekswalidad*. Dahil dito, inilalantad ng tula ang maagang pakikisalamuha ng persona sa konsepto ng kasalanan, pagnanasa, at ang takot na kaakibat ng pagiging iba sa mata ng lipunan. Kung gayon, ang "halimaw" sa tula ay maaaring basahin bilang sagisag ng lumalawak na kamalayan ng persona sa kanyang sekswalidad— isang aspekto ng sarili na inilalarawan bilang mapanganib o bawal ayon sa mga itinatakdang panuntunan ng lipunan at relihiyon.

Ang koleksiyon na *Sandaang Mata sa Batok* ni Franchezca Christine Rosales ay naglalaman ng limang tula na umaangkop sa iba't ibang paraan ng pagsipat sa mga bagay, partikular sa mga suliranin ng isang babaeng Gen Z. Ang tulang "Sandaang Mata sa

Batok" ay isang mapangahas na panimula sa temang ito. Nagpapasikot-sikot ang akda sa mga teorya sa sikolohiya ni Freud upang suriin ang ugnayan ng paningin, pagnanasa, at pag-aakda ng sarili. Sa pamamagitan ng imahen ng "sandaang mata sa batok," nililikha ng persona ng tula ang isang pilas-pilas ngunit malawak na abot-tanaw na lumalampas sa karaniwan. Nag-aalok ito ng maraming perspektiba na humahamon sa nakasanayang anyo ng pagkakakilanlan, kapangyarihan, at ugnayan ng mga indibidwal.

Tungkol din sa identidad ang zine na *Lamanglupa Unlimited: Pagpapakilala* ni Edelio Aris De los Santos. Sinusuri ng kuwento ang mga ontolohikal at eksistensyal na dilema ng mga elemento mula sa alamat habang sinisikap nilang makibagay sa hamon ng modernong panahon— isang temang kaugnay ng malawak na diskurso hinggil sa pagkakakilanlan, pakikiangkop at ang tensyon sa pagitan ng tradisyon at pag-unlad. Ang magaan at mapaglarong himig ng akda ay nagsisilbing daluyan ng satire at komentaryo, ipinapakita kung paanong ang mito at realidad ay maaaring magtagpo sa isang mundo kung saan ang hiwaga at pang-araw-araw na buhay ay patuloy na nag-uugnayan.

Isa namang sipi mula sa sanaysay ang *Other Side* ni Gerome Nicolas dela Peña. Tungkol ito sa eksistensyal na paglalakbay ng isang kabataan batay sa alaala ng may-akda sa kanyang matalik na kaibigan at sa personal niyang karanasan noong siya ay nasa hayskul. Tinatalakay ng sanaysay ang tema ng teenage angst—isang kalagayan na hindi lamang emosyonal na ligalig kundi isang pilosopikal na pananaliksik sa pagkakakilanlan, kalayaan at paghahanap ng mga kahulugan sa pagitan ng kamusmusan at pagtanda. Magaan ang wika ng sanaysay. Ang sentro ng naratibo ay ang matalik na kaibigan ng may-akda, at ang mga pakikipagsapalaran niya at romansa ay nagsisilbing mikrokosmo ng mas malawak na karanasan ng mga kabataan.

Ang zine na *Paralaya* ni Jayson Visperas Fajardo ay sipi mula sa eksperimental niyang nobela. Mahusay na inilatag sa kwento ang iba't ibang tauhan na isinilang o naninirahan sa Gitnang Luzon—isang rehiyong mayaman sa kasaysayan at kultura. Nilampasan ni Fajardo ang simpleng pagsasalaysay at panlilibang na tipikal sa mga kuwentista at nobelistang nauna sa kaniya. Ang *Paralaya* ay isang masusing pagsusuri sa ugnayan ng pagkatao, gunita, at panlipunang estruktura na hinulma ng mga sakuna, dulot

man ito ng kalikasan o gawa ng tao. Sa pamamagitan ng inkorporasyon ng mahahalagang pangyayari sa kasaysayan—tulad ng pagsabog ng Bulkang Pinatubo—ang akda ay hindi lamang nagbibigay ng konteksto kundi ginagamit din ang trahedya bilang tagapagsulong ng kwento. Ipinapakita nito kung paanong ang kolektibong trauma at katatagan ay nagiging bahagi ng personal na naratibo ng mga tauhan. Ang mga tauhan, na karamihan ay nagmula sa uring manggagawa, ay nagtataglay ng kani-kaniya subalit nagsasalubong na mga pakikibaka at pangarap. Bukod sa masusing pagtalima sa detaye, gumagamit din si Fajardo ng di-kumbensyonal na teknik sa pagsasalaysay—gaya ng paggamit ng mga grap, call log, at arrow sign—na sumasalamin sa watak-watak at maligalig na realidad ng kontemporaneong buhay. Ang mga elementong ito ay hindi lamang estetikal na inobasyon kundi epistemolohikal na kasangkapan na bumabasag sa linyar na naratibo at nag-aanyaya sa mambabasa na maging mas aktibong kalahok sa pag-unawa ng akda.

IV. *Karahasan*

Ipinadarama rin ng mga zines na ang karahasan ay hindi lamang pisikal na brutalidad. Isa rin itong saligang mekanismo ng kapangyarihan na nakapaloob sa mga panlipunang estruktura at sa indibidwal na pag-iral. Ang karahasan ay lumilitaw sa hayag at tago nitong anyo at nakaukit sa personal na salaysay at kolektibong gunita. Ibinubunyag ng mga akda sa BBZ kung paanong ang karahasan ay hindi lamang umiiral sa lantarang anyo, kundi mas madalas ay nakahabi sa mga batas, alituntunin, at araw-araw na ugnayan na nagpapanatili ng mga umiiral na herarkiya at kontrol. Sa ganitong pagtalakay, hinahamon ng mga akda ang ilusyon ng kaayusan at kapayapaan, na kadalasang tumatabing sa mas malalalim na anyo ng paniniil.

Karahasan ng bayan ang paksa ng zine na *Sa Kalsadang Puno Ng Pananagimsim* ni Renz Rosario. Naglalaman ito ng limang tula na masinsing hinabi ng konseptwal na motif ng isang kalsada. Ang kalsadang ito, bagaman tahimik at di-nakikitang tagapagmasid, ay nagiging isang lunan kung saan sinusuri ang ugnayan ng gunita, trauma, at espasyo. Maiugnay rin ito sa *topoanalysis* ni Gaston Bachelard (1994) kung saan ang espasyo ay hindi lamang isang pisikal na estruktura kundi isang dinamikong dimensyong hinuhubog ng sikolohikal at eksistensyal na kahulugan. Sa zine na ito, lumalampas ang kalsada sa kaniyang materyalidad. Ito ay

nagiging isang pahinang pinagpatungan ng mga bakas ng pagdurusa at pagpupunyagi—isang espasyong pinaglalapit ng panahon at lugar upang ilantad ang di-naglalahong marka ng karahasan tanawin at sa ating kolektibong kamalayan.

Matagumpay na inilarawan ng kaniyang tulang "EST 2016," ang laganap na takot at karahasan sa panahon ng extrajudicial killings (EJK) sa ilalim ng rehimeng Duterte. Ganito nagsimula ang tula: "Gabi-gabing may itinatagong / bangkay ang dilim, mga katawang / timbuwang sa malalansang bangketa't hindi pa rin makila-kilala / kung sino ang nag-iwan, ang kumitil sa mga ito." Binubuksan ng mga taludtod na ito ang isang malagim na depiksyon ng gabi-gabing pagpaslang. Binibigyang-diin ang kawalan ng identidad ng kapwa biktima at salarin. Ang imahen ng dilim bilang tagapagkubli ng mga bangkay ay nagpapahiwatig hindi lamang ng pisikal na pagtatago kundi ng sistematikong pagsanggalang ng hustisya at katarungan. Sa ikalimang saknong, isinaad na "paulit-ulit ibinabalita / ang pagkakakilanlan ng mga pinaslang: / adik, magsasaka, mangingisda, iskwater, / tindero, basurero, rebelde, at terorista." Ipinapakita ng talaan ang sistematikong pagtugis sa mahihirap at mga nasa laylayan ng lipunan. Ang dami at lawak ng mga nasa listahan ay nagpapatunay sa saklaw at kalupitan ng mga pagpaslang.

Sa *Altar Ng Pangungulila*, ipinapakita ni Edbert Darwin Casten kung paano ginalugad ng limang tulang bumubuo sa koleksiyon ang sari-saring mukha ng damdaming ito, isang estado ng damdamin na hindi lamang pansariling tugon kundi isang pakikibaka sa wala, at muling pagkilala ng sarili matapos ang hindi na maibabalik na puwang. Ang pangungulila, sa ganitong konteksto, ay hindi na lamang isang pribadong karanasan kundi isang masalimuot na proseso ng pakikibaka.

May tatlong tula sa wikang English ang koleksiyon ni Jazminne Peña na *When All I Could Do Was Write*. Sa koleksiyong ito, nagsasalubong ang ugnayan ng karahasan, desperasyon at ang pagsusulat bilang anyo ng paglaban. Inilalantad sa tulang "Hero" ang komodipikasyon ng konsepto ng kabayanihan at ang sikolohikal na epektong dulot ng sistematikong dahas. Ang zine naman na *Mukha ng Pag-uwi* ni Ivan Jethro Mella ay isang monologo na nagmumuni sa pag-alis at pagbabalik sa tahanan ng persona sa harap ng pagluluksa. Ang bida ay naglalahad ng sakit at galit dulot

ng kamatayan ng minamahal na kinitil ng estado. Ang pag-alis/pagbalik sa tahanan, ayon sa monologo, ay hindi lamang pisikal na kilos kundi isang metapisikal na paglalakbay na hinubog ng dislokasyon at alenyasyon.

V. Pag-ibig

Binubuo ng pitong tula ang zine na *Kapag Sinabi Ko* ni Redwin Dob. Maikakategorya ang mga tula bilang amatory discourse—nagsisiyasat sa emosyonal, eksistensyal, at ontolohikal na mga dimensyon ng pag-ibig. Ang mga tulang ito, na maaaring basahin bilang mga lirikal na epistola para sa isang minamahal, ay hindi lamang naglalarawan ng romantikong idealisasyon, nagbubukas din ang mga ito ng diyalektika sa pagitan ng personal at ng lugar. Sa pagtutumbas ng persona sa kaniyang minamahal bilang kaniyang bayan, nagkakaroon ang akda ng masalimuot at makapangyarihang simbolismo kung saan nagsasalubong ang heograpikal at emosyonal na mga aspekto. Ang ganitong pagtatambal ay maisasaklaw rin sa konsepto ng *topoanalysis* ni Bachelard (1984)—ang pagsusuri sa poetikong espasyo bilang daluyan ng alaala at identidad. Ang bayan ay hindi lamang isang pisikal na lugar kundi isang espasyong sikolohikal—isang sisidlan ng nostalhiya, pakikibuklod, at pag-iral.

Ang tula na "Kapag Sinabi Ko", na nagsisilbi ring pamagat ng zine, ay isang serye ng mga deklarativong pangungusap upang palakasin ang sentral nitong tema. Ang pag-uulit ng linyang "Kapag sinabi ko na ikaw ang aking bayan," ay anaphora na nagbibigay-diin sa tema ng tula habang lumilikha ng ritmo. Ginamit sa tula ang mga metapora kung saan pangunahing inihahalintulad ng persona ang kaniyang minamahal sa kaniyang bayan. Ang mga metaporang ito ay sistematikong pinalalawig at nagbibigay ng buo at malinaw na mga imahen. Ang taludtod na "iisa ang ating balat" ay nagpapahiwatig ng pagbubuklod at ugnayan ng pagkakakilanlan. Ipinapakita nito ang matalik na ugnayan ng mga tauhan sa tula. Samantala, ang imaheng "May bulkan rin sa aking dibdib." ay nagpapahayag ng masidhing damdamin—nag-aalab, at maaari ring maging mapanganib.

Binabaligtad naman ng zine ni Ronel Osias na *Saglit Lang* ang karaniwang pagtingin natin sa paglaho ng isang minamahal. May pitong tula ang zine, bawat isa ay naaayon sa tema ng panahon—isang konseptong hindi lamang sumusukat sa daloy ng oras kundi

sumasaklaw rin sa mga metapisikal at penomenolohikal na dimensiyon. Sa *Pumpon ng Paglilimi*, ipinapakita naman ni Christian Jay Raynera sa kaniyang pitong tula ang masalimuot na salimbayan ng pag-ibig at sariling kamalayan. Ginamit sa mga akda niya ang penomenolohikal na lente upang suriin kung paanong binabago ng emosyon—lalo na ng pag-ibig—ang ating pananaw sa espasyo at realidad.

Ang mga teksto na ito ay naglalaman ng radikal na potensyal sa pamamagitan ng reimahinasyon sa konsepto ng pag-ibig. Inilalarawan ng mga akdang ito ang pag-ibig bilang makapangyarihang puwersa—hindi lamang bilang emosyon, kundi isang aktibo at rebolusyonaryong pakikisalamuha sa mundo, na maaari itong maging isang pundasyon ng paglaban at kolektibong pagbabago.

Paglalogom

Pinatutunayan ng unang tomo ng *Bente-Bente* ang makapangyarihang potensyal ng zine. Mula sa payak na pinagmulan ng mga ito, ang mga zine ay naging makapangyarihang instrumento ng pagbalikwas, identidad at kasaysayan. Lumalampas ito sa pagiging maikling babasahin upang hamunin ang hegemonikong naratibo. Ang BBZ ay may natatanging katayuan sa produksiyon ng zine sa ating bansa sa dahil naibabalanse nito ang inobasyon at tradisyon. Ang mababang presyo nito ay hamon sa komersyalisasyon ng sining habang ginagawang mas abot-kamay ang panitikan sa mas maraming mambabasa. Naiiba ang proyektong ito dahil itinatampok nito ang iba't ibang tema at tinig at pag-iwas sa makikitid na espesyalisasyon upang makalikha ng bukas na plataporma para sa malikhaing pagpapahayag. At sa kabila ng mga natatanging katangiang ito, nanatiling tapat ang BBZ sa diwa ng zine—dedikasyon sa grassroots publishing. Sa ganitong paraan, ang BBZ ay kumakatawan sa ebolusyon at preserbasyon ng alternatibong kultura ng panitikan. Mula sa mga zine na natipon dito, lumilitaw ang kalayaan hindi bilang abstraktong ideyal kundi bilang serye ng mumunti ngunit matatag na mga hakbang.

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Tubong Perez, Quezon, si John Brixter Tino ay nag-aral ng AB in Literary and Cultural Studies sa Polytechnic University of the Philippines. Ginawaran siya ng National Youth Achievement Award for Literary Arts mula sa National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA). Kinilala ang kaniyang mga tula sa Don Carlos Palanca Memorial Awards for Literature, Maningning Miclat Prize for Poetry, Premyong LIRA at Gawad Bienvenido Llumbera. Natamo rin nya ang Grand Prize sa pagsulat ng personal na sanaysay ng Gawad Rene O. Villanueva. Naimbitahan na rin siyang magbasa ng kaniyang mga tula at akademikong papel sa International Conference on Poetry Studies sa Birkbeck, University of London. Nailathala na rin ang kaniyang mga akda sa Philippine Collegian, Mekong Review, Kasing Kasing Press, TLDTD Journal, at iba pang zine't antolohiya. Naging fellow rin siya ng Palihang LIRA at Palihang Rogelio Sikat. Kasapi siya ng Human Rights and People Empowerment Center (HRPEC) at Kolektibo Kalimbahin.

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