

## BOOK REVIEWS

*The Boys from the Barracks:  
The Philippine Military After EDSA (Updated Edition)*

Criselda Yabes

2009. Quezon City: Anvil Publishing

Review by Roel Flores

*Technical Writer, Caloocan City Hall, Philippines*

*BS Community Development 2007, University of the Philippines, Diliman*

After the miracle that was EDSA-I, an event that ended the 20-year dictatorship of Ferdinand Marcos and helped install Corazon Aquino to the presidency; almost everyone was in a euphoric mood. So much that people hardly noticed the grumblings that were going on within the ranks of what some perceived as the real heroes of EDSA: the military. Not long after, these discontents turned into a series of *coup de etat* meant to topple the Aquino administration, attempts which did not achieve the desired end, but left the infant administration crippled nonetheless. Criselda Yabes presented these events in her first book *The Boys from the Barracks (the Philippine Military After EDSA)*. It first came out in 1991, when the episodes were still fresh from everyone's mind. In 2009, the author felt compelled to release an updated version; mainly because of the failed "mutinies" that happened during the presidency of Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo (GMA).

The old version is divided into three Parts. The first two Parts set the stage for the one Part titled *Seven Days in December*, the bloodiest attempt by the military rebels to seize power. Main players were introduced, and their reasons for either joining the malcontents, or remaining loyal to the sitting president were discussed. The last part shows some recalcitrant rebels licking their wounds, picking up the pieces, planting the seeds for yet another rebellion, planning from inside military jail cells, or for those lucky enough not to be captured, hopping from one military camp to another. In the updated version, an epilogue was added, narrating the military adventurism during the administration of GMA.

The author presented the events like a novel, without over-analysing the facts. Excerpts from a speech by Capt. Ricardo Morales to a group of officers after the 1989 *coup* were used as introductions to every part. The *Seven Days in December* part will not let the reader put down the book until the part where the rebellion was put down. She does not judge, but lets the readers do that instead. Her friendship with the main players,

especially the rebels, enabled her to gather facts unavailable to other writers. Anecdotes give faces to the otherwise grim façade of the rebels as shown on the television. The photo gallery provides a glimpse of how the key players looked like then; it also shows photographs of a young Danilo Lim, rebel then, rebel now.

Reading the book, one gets the impression of spoiled military men who will stage a mutiny if they are not allowed to have their way. And juxtaposed with what happened and what is happening, the impression might be more than justified, because instead of the military being beholden to the people, the one in power is afraid of the army, lest he or she incurs the displeasure of these brats. People in uniform elicit fear, not respect. Things have not changed much. If the results of the 2010 national election are of any indication, the people behind those unrests, recent or otherwise, are still around. And are still in power. The United States of America still play a big role in our affairs.

It is said that the people are the true heroes, unless everybody realised this, army men, will always think of themselves as saviours, and this book might yet need another updated version.

***Urbanization and Formation of Ethnicity in Southeast Asia***

Edited by Toh Goda

2008. Quezon City, Philippines: New Day Publishers.

Review by Eleanor Marie S. Lim

*Graduate student, Archaeological Studies Program, University of the Philippines*

At first glance, the title of the book appears to involve the entire Southeast Asia, which is just illogical and absurd since there is no way that a single book can encompass the ethnic groups in the whole Southeast Asia in its 200-plus pages. However, reading the preface, the editor states that only four countries, namely: Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia and Vietnam would be the focus of this volume. Consisting of 11 chapters in total, the first four chapters focus on the Philippines, followed by two articles regarding Malaysia, then one on Indonesia, and two chapters concerning Vietnam. The contributors are all Asian, mostly from Japan—seven, and Vietnam—two. A profile of all contributors can be found after the bibliography section of this volume.

Toh Goda, the editor of this book, *Urbanization and Formation of Ethnicity in Southeast Asia*, is professor of social anthropology at the