



## REVIEWS

Denyse J. Snelder and Eileen C. Bernardo, eds. 2005. *Comanagement in Practice: The Challenge and Complexities of Implementation in the Northern Sierra Madre Mountain Region*. Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press. 284 pp.

This book is an eye-opener for the reader who would like to find out about the basic principles and issues surrounding comanagement, defined in the book as a cooperative arrangement for handling resources, as practiced in the Northern Sierra Madre. As an output of two international conferences on comanaging the environment, the book draws on the experiences and expertise of the faculty of the Isabela State University and their Dutch project counterparts, to present a fairly recent (as of 2002) picture of their comanagement situation. This is a situation represented by a handful of forest and coastal sites where trust between community members and nongovernment organizations has been established, whose success can also be traced to foreign donor aid and technical assistance, and to the exercise of rights spelled out in the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act, a relatively advanced law when contrasted against the absence of equivalent decrees elsewhere in Southeast Asia.

In general, this publication is a significant contribution to the personal libraries of land-use planners, environmentalists, and advocates of indigenous peoples' rights, because the majority of its sections provide a solid exposition of lessons learned from the development of

local and international laws, lowland-upland socioeconomic ties, management of ecological resources, and community responses to comanagement. For instance, the authors have observed that comanagement arrangements offer a socially and environmentally appropriate means for increasing local participation in resource decision making. This, vis-à-vis the recognition that no single type of arrangement and property rights regime (state, private, or community) uniformly succeeds or fails to halt major resource degradation throughout the region, is a problem which may need more macro-oriented interventions. For those readers already steeped in comanagement literature, this book can serve as a handy comparative reference vis-à-vis other areas in the Philippines.

The combination and sequence of studies presented is the book's strongest point, for which editors Snelder and Bernardo should be commended. They are apparently taking a deductive approach from a discussion of global, particularly Asian, movements toward comanagement down to the details narrated by case studies. The nine chapters of the book follow this logic, making it easier for the uninitiated reader to grasp guiding principles at the onset (chapters two and three), to work through the chapters on the biophysical and economic givens in the midsection (chapters four to six), and to explore at leisure the remaining situational reports that fill the rest of the book. I personally found the following sections more vigorously written than the rest. "Indigenous Peoples and Tropical Rain Forest Management: Global Discourses, Local Dilemmas" (chapter 2) by G. Persoon, T. Minter, and P. Visorro gives a concise historical and regional treatment of the concept of *indigenous people* and shows how the Philippines leads in recognition of such. "Environmental Comanagement in the Philippines" (chapter 3) by B. Malayang III localizes the history of decentralization and the rise of nongovernment entities after the EDSA revolution, eventually showing how this has influenced forest use, and thus comanagement. "Biophysical Perspective on Comanagement of Natural Resources" (chapter 5) by D. Snelder, L. Spijkerman, and J. Sevink presents a good overview of the terrestrial resources of the region, inclusive of notes on its geological history (but it fails to explain the technical terms on chemical quantities in soil). "Managing the Coastal Resources of the Northern Sierra Madre Natural Park" (chapter 6) by H. Van Lavieren, H. De Iongh, and A. Belen takes the reader literally to the "other side" of the mountains, where coastal comanagement presents its own unique issues, such as

the difficulty that comes with patrolling a large coastal area with scattered coral reefs, given lack of staff, equipment, and organization that could otherwise prevent stakeholder disagreements over resource use and incursion of fishermen using illegal extraction methods.

These four articles were backed by an abundance of references, and presented details about such events as the limited recognition of indigenous peoples by Indonesia and Malaysia, the successful management of the Saint Paul Subterranean River through power sharing between the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and the local government, the invasion of forest streams by lowland tilapia (St. Peter's fish) among other effects of forest exploitation, and the conflict between Dumagats and lowlanders in using reef flat resources.

Toward the latter part of the book, more location-specific studies follow, which are also more brief, albeit not less scholarly in tone nor in the treatment of particular cases. Among the more interesting ones are the narrations of the mixed successes attendant to the adaptive strategies of the Cagayan Agta (chapter 8), and the implementation of the Socialized Industrial Forest Management Agreement in San Mariano, Isabela (chapter 7). In these chapters, the reader will get a good sense of reality after discovering how the Agta have to juggle different livelihoods to survive during lean seasons, and after following the shift from hostility to acceptance of comanagement by indigenous community members.

On the other hand, *Comanagement in Practice* has a couple of shortcomings that diminish its usefulness to impatient readers unfamiliar with the subject matter. The first weakness is the Introduction, which provides the basic definition of comanagement and other fundamentals, such as comparison of property rights, and a brief discussion on decentralization, but all in a chapter that may be glossed over by the reader who habitually jumps to the body text. Moreover, only the last two pages of this first chapter actually give us the overview of the rest of the book's contents—something which one might expect to be covered by the entire Introduction. I would have personally preferred a separate chapter just for the fundamental definitions and issues, if only to ensure that the reader “starts off on the right foot without missing his shoes.” The second point for improvement is the concluding chapter. “Rethinking Comanagement of Natural Resources: Some Considerations and Future Perspectives” should be rethought indeed, or rather firmed up in terms of the statements it

makes about the likely directions of comanagement in the Sierra Madre. Here we read the usual criticisms about DENR's failures, about the need for specific actions to encourage state support, and the urgency of reducing corruption. A more concrete, even more picturesque, termination might have anchored the book more firmly in its reader's mind.

On the whole, this book deserves recognition as a well-organized compilation of reports, which assemble a fairly accurate and, therefore, useful description of indigenous peoples' experience with comanagement in the Northern Sierra Madre. It is a worthy reference material that may even prompt further investigation by the curious reader.—JOSE EDGARDO GOMEZ JR., INSTRUCTOR, SCHOOL OF URBAN AND REGIONAL PLANNING, UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES-DILIMAN.

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**Catherine Ceniza Choy. 2003. *Empire of Care: Nursing and Migration in Filipino American History*. Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press. 272 pp.**

Catherine Ceniza Choy is one of the few critical voices in the North American academia whose work on the connections between empire building in Asia and the Pacific and American history exposes not only the persistence of US imperialism but its invisibility in the American mass media and other postmodern (and persistent) developmentalist discourses in the academe. The racialization, feminization, and commodification of migrant nurses are discussed alongside their efforts to form organizations and support networks to struggle against the conditions that shape their profession.

*Empire of Care* is a comprehensive study of the history of Filipino nurse migration and its transnational dynamics. Its methodical approach includes ethnographic and archival research. Choy notes that the main objective of this "two-shores approach" is "to place a human face on [this] study through in-depth oral interviews with Filipino nurses working in New York City hospitals" and a "five-month research trip to the Philippines" that allowed her to talk with "nursing deans, faculty members, and students at several Philippine colleges and schools of nursing in Manila; directors of nursing and staff nurses at private and government hospitals in Manila; government employees working in overseas agencies; and workers in nongovernment organizations focusing