

Culture



Henry T. LEWIS. *Ilocano Irrigation: The Corporate Resolution*. Honolulu: Asian Studies at Hawaii, No. 37, University of Hawaii Press, 1991, 158 pages, (paper)

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the biggest deficiencies of this ethnography remains the lack of indigenous voices. This text, written in a clear style, raises many compelling issues. However, some questions are only tacked on and the risk to simplify complex issues such as "westernization," which Lockwood considers "synonymous with 'modernization'" (p. 46), is there. Nevertheless, it is a text to be recommended in introductory courses in "development studies" and "women's studies."

Henry T. LEWIS. *Ilocano Irrigation: The Corporate Resolution*. Honolulu: Asian Studies at Hawaii, No. 37, University of Hawaii Press, 1991, 158 pages, (paper).

By Brian Fegan

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This is a welcome book for students of social organization in societies with bilateral kinship, for those interested in debates about the organization of self-help irrigators' groups and their relation to state irrigation systems in peasant societies and for human geographers and anthropologists of Southeast Asia and especially the Philippines. Its theme is that in a society with bilateral kinship and therefore overlapping personal kindreds, the nuclear family can act as a corporate group, and that above this level, groups based on control of property (for example, villages and irrigators' groups) may be corporate, depending on ecological, demographic and economic factors. Its strength lies in the detailed account of the various layers of rights in water and land held by landowners, tenants, the irrigators' group, group officials, members holding land from the group, and farmers who buy its surplus water.

Professor Lewis made a comparative study of wet-rice farmers in two villages of related culture in the Northern Philippines. Based on fieldwork in the 1960s and 1970s, the book builds on Lewis' *Ilocano Rice Farmers* (University of Hawaii Press, 1971). His argument that the family and irrigation association are "corporate" follows the ideas of George Appell in *The Societies of Borneo* (Special Publication of the American Anthropological Association, 1976). Lewis holds that the proper criteria for whether a group is corporate are "essentially the control of property" (p. 16) and "whether it has the power as a social entity to enter into jural

relations" (p. 16, citing Appell 1976, p. 70). He rejects as a criterion whether the group is perpetual.

In both of the villages described, households range in wealth from poor landless families through those holding a barely adequate set of plots that they own and work, rent in or rent out, to a few that have enough land to derive most of their income from rents. Many work for other villagers or at non-farm work; some, notably in Ilocos Norte, receive remittances. Corporateness is not an either/or state:

[...] the relatively wealthier, higher status families are more corporate [...] in that they are [...] more involved in the management and maintenance of family resources (p. 33).

Buyon in Ilocos Norte is densely settled and old. The nuclear or stem family household acts as a corporate group holding farm, house and water rights; however farms are so small that families operate them in virtual isolation from each other. The state-imposed village has few functions and little to hold it together. However a Buyon household belongs and has obligations to each of the tightly corporate irrigation societies that delivers water to its scattered plots. Mambabanga in Isabela Province of the Cagayan Valley, was pioneered around three generations ago by migrants from Ilocos Norte. It is less densely settled and farms are bigger. The household is a weaker corporate group as members seek land and income outside it, while its members engage in exchange labour with its several field neighbours. Here the village has a smaller population, sewn together by dense mesh of exchanges and is quasi-corporate; corporate irrigators' groups are rare in this area.

The book focuses on the *zanjeras*, technically sophisticated communal irrigation systems. Membership is based on collective ownership of water resources and is separate both politically and socially from the organization of state-imposed villages, based on residence.

Lewis' thesis is that Ilocano *zanjera* irrigation societies are corporate groups that farmers developed for the solution of a common goal or problem. *Zanjeras* are corporate in that they control the use and inheritance of property, meet more or less regularly and have representative leadership. The written charters of some show they have endured for over 200 years. Crucially, the *zanjera* is what

others would call a "legal person"; in Appell's (1976) terms "it has the power as a social entity to enter into jural relations."

Above the level of the *zanjera* there may be a confederation of several such groups that share a dam and primary canal several kilometers distant. When the main dam is washed away in the annual floods, up to 1,000 male farmers whose lands are watered by it assemble under a headmen to repair it with bamboo and rocks. The government's National Irrigation Authority, inclined to fixed arrangements in concrete dams and bureaucracy, is less able to respond flexibly to the shifting streams and local currents of opinion.

In contrast to the *zanjera* irrigation societies, the Ilocano bilateral kindred supplemented by ritual kin, age-mates, friends, neighbours and work-mates, lacks well-defined boundaries and corporate definition – and constantly shifts in composition. At most, Filipino bilateral kinship can give rise to a personal "alliance" centred on a leader, who must constantly reinforce it by reciprocal favours. The *barangay* (village), is the state-imposed lowest unit of local government. But in Ilocos Norte it does not hold fiestas, while exchange labour is rare, families act as economic isolates and village-wide networks of reciprocal obligation are poorly developed. In Isabela, where villages have fewer families, farms are bigger, *zanjeras* are not the rule, but exchange of labour is common and the village has more social "substance."

The bulk of the book consists of one very long chapter on corporate groups, with major and minor divisions. This hides its greatest strength: the detailed account of the land and water rights and organization of the *zanjera*. At 32 pages, this discussion deserves its own chapter. Six clear maps locate the study areas and show schematically their field and irrigation patterns. There are eleven black and white photographs with informative captions. Appendices present samples of irrigation agreements, land agreements and an extended legal case beginning in 1775 that indicates how rights to water were exchanged for rights to land. The glossary, bibliography, and index are useful.

Claudia NOTZKE, *Aboriginal Peoples and Natural Resources in Canada*, North York: Captus University Publications, York University, 1994.

By Mike Robinson

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Aboriginal Peoples and Natural Resources in Canada is the first comprehensive treatment of historic and contemporary resource management issues on First Nations' land and water bases in Canada. The author, a geographer by training, works out of the Centre for Aboriginal Management Education and Training (CAMET) at the University of Lethbridge in southern Alberta. The book is divided into ten chapters, covering Native perspectives on natural resources management, water resources, fisheries, forestry, wildlife, land, non-renewable resources, protected areas, environmental impact assessment and synthesis and outlook. Overall the work relies heavily on published sources, sometimes at the expense of original analysis by the author. Certain authoritative authors such as Richard H. Bartlett (eight citations), Fikret Berkes (occasionally *et al.*; eleven citations), Harvey Feit (five citations), Milton Freeman (six citations), Evelyn Pinkerton (six citations), Edward Struzik (six citations), Peter Usher (occasionally *et al.*; fifteen citations) recur throughout the text with much frequency, and their analysis subsequently forms much of the book's analysis.

Having rendered this criticism, one cannot fault the overall and somewhat Herculean task that the author has accomplished in pulling together so many diverse sources to describe the mushrooming practice of co-management on First Nations' traditional lands. It will be hard to avoid consulting this book as a first "port of call" in future thesis and research projects that consider any aspect of co-management in Canada, from both disciplinary and inter-disciplinary viewpoints.

From the standpoint of alternative models of sustainable development, the book provides several perspectives on aboriginal stewardship of lands and species. In this respect communal resource management is as well covered as is co-management. For those who are interested in postindustrial models of stewardship and who wish to speculate on a return to more communal forms of land