

Press Release

Philippines: Book on CPP-NPA origins in Bicol has come off the Ateneo University Press

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A new book *TIGAON 1969: Untold Stories of the CPP-NPA, KM and SDK* by retired RTC Naga City Judge Soliman M. Santos, Jr. has come off press under the Bughaw imprint of the Ateneo de Manila University Press. It tells and substantiates several previously untold or unpublished stories on how the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP)-New People's Army (NPA) started its successful expansion to the Bicol region in 1969 with an unheralded all-Bicolano five-person expansion team that took root in rural Tigaon, Camarines Sur.

This belies the official CPP or Bicol Regional Party Committee (BRPC) version that it started there only in 1970 with the return of the native Tigaon brothers Romulo and Ruben Jallores (later also known as NPA Kumander Tangkad and Kumander Benjie) coming from the "First Quarter Storm" in Manila where they were student activist and trade union activist, respectively.

That "first five" team of the CPP expansion to Bicol — for whom the book seeks to give their due historical recognition and to set the historical record of this straight — consisted of three Tigaon natives (Marco Baduria, Nonito Zape and David Bruceles), a fourth one from Polangui, Albay (Francisco Portem) and the fifth from Bulan, Sorsogon (Ibarra Tubianosa), their leading element who was then no less a member of the Politburo of the first Central Committee of the CPP. All five were of *Kabataang Makabayan* (KM) student activist background, with three of them from the Lyceum of the Philippines at a time when the KM Founding Chairman and eventual CPP Founding Chairman Jose Maria Sison was teaching and organizing there in 1964-67.

The expansion team's leading element Tubianosa, who was once a close collaborator and then bitter protagonist of Sison, passed in 2000, long before work on the book started in 2009 but his widow Estrella Cayaban, who was with Tubianosa in Tigaon in 1969, provided her valuable first-hand corroborative account of that by Baduria and Zape. As of the book manuscript's completion in July 2022, after about 13 years in the making, only Zape among the "first five" has survived. Sison himself passed in December 2022, prompting an important postscript with a full quotation of a since "discovered" (by the author) revealing 2016 facebook comment by Sison on that historical issue of the CPP expansion to Bicol.

The book traces its origins from the author's March 2009 four-page article on "How the CPP-NPA Started in Bicol" which Sison soon after contested by way of paragraph-by-paragraph annotations. These and other interesting documents are among the Appendices to the book. The Tigaon 1969 story of the CPP expansion itself involved several previously untold sub-plots or historical issues,

such as contested by Sison, aside from the fact of the “first five” expansion team. Among these sub-plots or historical issues were a higher CPP organ directive for that expansion team to “abort” mission and pull out of Tigaon after the contemporaneous CPP expansion to the Negros island region was nipped in the bud in August 1969; and the independent decision of Baduria and Zape to stay behind in Tigaon towards the end of 1969 and continue the expansion work of revolutionary mass movement building even without a higher CPP organ connection, guidance and logistical support. One chapter explains why Tigaon as a revolutionary entry point, including its feudal milieu of big *haciendas* owned by a few families of notably Spanish ancestry.

There are also the sub-plots of the second wind reinforcement of the Tigaon expansion front by the independent infusion, including with its first few firearms, from the University of the East (UE)-Taytay (Rizal) chapter of the *Samahang Demokratiko ng Kabataan* (SDK) through its member Romulo Jallores in April 1970; the subsequent removal of the SDK UE-Taytay main group from the Tigaon front in late 1970 as a playing out of “the struggle between two lines” on the issue of CPP reconnection and supervision; and the “reestablishment” of the CPP at the Tigaon front in early 1971, after some earlier internal debate on the “leap-frog” vs. “wave upon wave” mode of expansion. There is one chapter on the first year of the armed struggle of the NPA in Bicol in 1971, characterized by the rise and fall of Kumander Tangkad (Romulo Jallores).

Apart from all that on the Tigaon front, the book also tells the largely untold stories of the relevant lateral or parallel KM-SDK split in 1968 (the year of the CPP founding), the SDK “rectification” back into the CPP fold in 1969 (the year of the NPA founding), and continuing KM-SDK and intra-SDK dynamics in 1970-72 (the years of the “First Quarter Storm,” the “Diliman Commune,” the deployment of the CPP delegation to China, the Plaza Miranda Bombing, the writ suspension, the M/V *Karagatan* arms shipment landing, and the martial law declaration). By the end of 1972, the Tigaon guerrilla zone and its NPA units had already been largely suppressed and dispersed, including by their transfer to Sorsogon.

Towards the end, the book’s main text presents postscripts, profiles and perspectives pertaining to all of the “first five” pioneers of Tigaon 1969, including whatever happened to them after their “small” parts in that bit of revolutionary history. The book’s concluding reflections start with a recognition of the necessity of historical honesty, including by revolutionary movements that unfortunately have had a track record of erasing from its history certain leaders who have fallen from the revolutionary party leadership’s good graces. The book calls on those concerned to “rectify the omission and recognize the mission” of that successful initial CPP expansion team to Bicol, regardless of whatever true reason for their omission from revolutionary history.

The book attempts a fair in-hindsight assessment of the contributions of those Tigaon 1969 revolutionary pioneers in the bigger picture of Philippine history, society and revolution. It credits their ground-level roles most immediately in advancing the interests of the peasantry and the cause of land reform in Tigaon and even beyond, both spatially and temporally, and their indirect longer-term contributions to the cumulative movement leading to the eventual ouster of the Marcos dictatorship and the restoration of democracy in February 1986. But the book also poses questions on how this squares with the Marcos family return to presidential power in mid-2022, shortly before the completion of the book’s concluding reflections. These reflections ultimately deal with two challenges. The first concerns the writing of a more grounded and more rounded revolutionary (and for that matter Philippine) history, with its own special sources and methodologies. The second challenge concerns the need for new and better trajectories of the generic and organic movement for progressive or even radical change, addressed to today’s youth or younger generations whose own time has come in making new history.

The book’s foreword by Universite de Montreal Professor Dominique Caouette, who himself has

written significant tracts, including a 2004 doctoral dissertation on the CPP, says of *TIGAON 1969*: “History is nothing fixed but evolving and contested. This is particularly true when it comes to revolutions whether victorious, defeated or confronted with internal and external contestations. Oftentimes, officialized narratives tend to stall and fix time and events in nothing but imaginary linearity. Soliman ‘Sol’ Santos, a participant himself, a keen long-time observer, and now a genuine and unassuming historian challenges such linearity by offering a densely researched and reflexive opus on one situated fragment of the Philippine contemporary revolutionary movement.... Combining mixed methodologies, interviews with key protagonists, archival research, mobilizing existing scholarly research, email correspondence, and even actual visits to key sites, Sol Santos seams an elaborate quilt that offers a *vue d’ensemble* that opens, that invites reflexivity on the complexities and limits of historiography.”

Caouette further says of the book: “Bringing light to the lives of five forgotten remarkable pioneers of the Bicol revolutionary movement becomes the narrative thread (*fil d’Arianne*) that leads the reader into discovering how localized and situated historiography can become a powerful device to explore broader questions and contending views that marked the early years of the CPP/NPA.... Keeping history unfinished, contentious, alive and humane, as Sol Santos does in his book, is an invitation to actively look back to see better what is coming up ahead.”

Santos has a 1975 undergraduate degree in History *cum laude* from the University of the Philippines in Diliman, Quezon City. Though he has since moved on to the field of law for four decades now, as both a government and non-governmental lawyer, and then as a Judge on both the MTC and RTC levels, he has continued to dabble in matters of history. Among his authored and edited books in the history genre are *Militant But Groovy: Stories of Samahang Demokratiko ng Kabataan* (Anvil, 2008) and *Homages & Histories: Family & Friends, Nagueños & Moros, Rebels & Soldiers, Warriors & Peacemakers* (Ateneo de Naga University Press, 2015). Both as a humanitarian and peace advocate as well as a legal scholar, he has written extensively on both the Moro and Communist fronts of war and peace.

His major written works on the Communist front are found in his co-authored books *Philippine Human Development Report 2005: Peace, Human Security and Human Development in the Philippines* (National Academy of Science and Technology 2007 Outstanding Book Award for Social Sciences) and *Primed and Purposeful: Armed Groups and Human Security Efforts in the Philippines* (Small Arms Survey, Geneva, 2010), and in his authored books *How Do You Solve a Problem Like the GPH-NDFP Peace Process? Paradigm Shifts for 2016 and Beyond* (The Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, Siem Reap, Cambodia, 2016) and its sequel *How Do You Solve a Problem Like the GRP-NDFP Peace Process? Part 2* (Sulong Peace Inc., 2022). All these four books touch on the history of the CPP-NPA, either in overview and/or for particular periods or aspects of that history.

TIGAON 1969 is available for P600 from the Ateneo de Manila University Press (Bellarmine Hall, Katipunan Avenue, Loyola Heights, Quezon City, Tel. 8426-5984, books.unipress_ateneo.edu, www.ateneo.edu/ateneopress) as it would also be soon enough in the country’s best bookstores.

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