

NEW BOOK FEATURES

cultural treasures of the T'boli people

BY EDGAR ALLAN M. SEMBRANO

Sandie Oreta Gillis' *Weaving our Dreams: The T'boli People of the Philippines* affords an experience of discovery and rediscovery of the rich cultural heritage of the T'boli, an indigenous ethnolinguistic group in the island of Mindanao, the Philippines. It allows readers to the land of the so-called "dreamweavers," the culture bearers of a sacred textile called *t'nalak*.

The book tells the stories of textile weaver Barbara Ofong and traditional performer Maria Todi with eye-catching paintings by a Mindanaoan artist Francis Herradura of the Vancouver-based Dimasalang III International Artists Group. It is Oreta-Gillis' ode to the country of her birth and an exploration of Lake Sebu, a picturesque town located in the hinterlands of the province of South Cotabato. It is also of note that *Weaving our Dreams* is a product of the coronavirus pandemic and the technologies, particularly online platforms of communication, that came to prominence during the lockdowns and restricted movements.

The book is a good introductory resource for overseas Filipinos wanting to rediscover their roots and it invites foreign readers to visit and enjoy the cultural heritage and natural wonders not only of Lake Sebu but the country as well.

It is written in such a way that readers can get involved and be engrossed in the narratives. It is as if one is reading a tale from an elder of a community, teeming with vignettes and anecdotes on the lives of the persons discussed as well as their vibrant culture. The biographical sketches are intertwined with stories of struggles, hope and celebration.

The book starts with Herradura's immersion into the culture of the T'boli people through the celebration of the Helobung Festival, marked by cultural performances and a showcase of the T'boli movable and intangible culture. It narrates Oreta-Gillis' family background as migrants from the Visayas, and introduces Ofong and Todi. The first chapter ends with the sketches, drawings and paintings Herradura created while in Lake Sebu, which she brought to her home in British Columbia, Canada. These paintings included the portraits of culture bearers Todi and Ofong.

In the next chapter, Oreta-Gillis discusses in detail the life and works of Ofong known by her indigenous name Buwat, as well as the T'boli traditions from birth to marriage and some of their customs. She also discusses here



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF SANDRA ORETA-GILLIS
AUTHOR Sandra Oreta-Gillis

“*Weaving our Dreams: The T'boli People of the Philippines* explores the cultural heritage of the ethnic group of southern Mindanao.

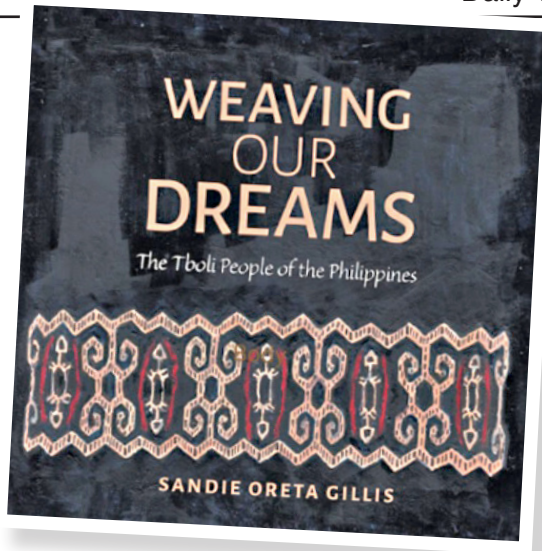


HERRADURAS illustration of the Helobung Festival.

the different designs of the *t'nalak* being executed by Ofong.

The sacred process of making the *t'nalak* cloth is presented in the third chapter starting off with Fu Dalu, the spirit of the abaca who guides the weavers in their designs and ends with the "ironing" of the finished *t'nalak* with a cowrie shell to give it a shiny finish. Here, Oreta-Gillis uses local terms of the materials and processes that are very important to research.

In the fourth chapter, Todi's life and works is presented as well as her important role in the safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage of the T'boli through the School for Living Traditions put up through the help of the National Commission for Culture and the Arts. Oreta-Gillis also presents here Todi's family, the songs she sings and the musical instruments she plays.



PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF EDGAR ALLAN SEMBRANO
THE book tells about the T'boli people of Lake Sebu.

which featured the T'boli's sacred cloth, are featured while Chapter 8 peeks into the safeguarding methods done by both Todi and Ofong for their crafts and practices.

A synopsis of the book is presented in the last chapter which also discusses the Narragila Culture and Arts Foundation, a non-government organization founded by Oreta-Gilles and Herradura to help the cultural bearers and artisans of their birth country to which they are still deeply connected.

Weaving our Dreams is a melange of personal stories woven together into one immersive and interesting book. It is published by Friesen Press in Canada. Launch will be this July in Vancouver, and it will be available online and in Solidaridad Bookshop in Manila.

The way to Santiago

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Soon after, their parents died and it was believed that the hardship the family had to endure caused the two Marias to become mentally unstable.

At the park, Maruxa and Coralia, both fully made up, would show up at 2 p.m. to flirt with university students while dressed in bright clothing.

The locals commiserated with them but when Maruxa passed away sometime in the 1980s, Coralia left town and likewise died three years later.

The sad story of the two remains almost exclusively chained to the Galician region and is hardly known outside the province.

All in all, Santiago de Compostela offers something extra-special and unique, something the other regions across Spain would be hard-pressed to match.

But the Camino remains the undisputed draw and one

day, I would like to see myself carrying a well-equipped backpack, holding onto a trekking pole and wearing hybrid trainer-hiking shoes as I make my way to Santiago like countless others before me.

Venga!



THE Two Marias at Alameda Park tells a story of despair and misery. The symbol of the Camino de Santiago (inset).

NCCA and ASEAN launch digital art contest

The competition is deemed pertinent as the region navigates the unprecedented effects of the health crisis

BY KYLA BARBOSA
Contributor

The National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA) opens the ASEAN-Philippines Digital Art Contest 2022, now on its third year, for Filipinos 18 years old and above, whether residing in the Philippines and abroad.

The NCCA is inviting submissions of original works inspired by the theme, "ASEAN A.C.T.: Addressing Challenges Together," for the annual celebration of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Month in August.

This year's contest aims to showcase the best of Filipino amateur and professional artists' digital art expressions in promoting ASEAN awareness by highlighting the cultural identities shared by Southeast Asian citizens amidst the ongoing global crisis.

In line with Cambodia's 2022 chairmanship theme, the competition is deemed pertinent as the region navigates the unprecedented effects of the health crisis, which continue to threaten not only the general well-being of its citizens but also the state of the economy.

All entries must be created using digital technology and presented in a variety of

stand-alone digital art image formats, including, but not limited to graphic poster, web comic, fractal/algorithmic art, data-moshing, dynamic painting, 2D computer graphics, 3D computer graphics, pixel art, digital photography, photo-painting, manual vector drawing, integrated art/mixed media and hybrid painting, raster painting and computer-generated painting.

Digital artists are limited to individual amateurs or professionals with valid government ID or Philippine passport (for Filipinos overseas) and Tax Identification Number. Submissions from groups or companies will not be accepted.

The contest will have a two-stage selection of winners from regional finalists to national winners. NCCA will choose a total of 40 finalists from the National Capital Region, Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao.

Applicants must fill out and upload the required details in the Google Entry Form available on the NCCA official website. Each participant is only allowed to submit one entry. The submission of entries began on 1 July and will close at 11:59 p.m. on 12 August.

According to the NCCA, the process of the contest will be done online, from submission of entries to the selection and announcement of winners.



PHOTOGRAPHS BY AUDREY C. GIONGCO FOR THE DAILY TRIBUNE
PILGRIMS engage in a tight embrace after completing the Camino.