

BOOK REVIEW

Fleurs de Paroles: Histoire Naturelle Palawan (Volumes I–III). Nicole Revel. Paris, France: Peeters-Louvain-Paris, 1992. Volume I, *Les Dons de Nägsalad*, Pp. 391; Volume II, *La maîtrise d'un savoir et l'art d'une relation*, Pp. 354; Volume III, *Chants d'amour/chants d'oiseaux*, Pp. 208. ISBN 2-87723-022-8 (Volumes I, II), 2-87723-033-3 (Volume III). (Price per volume approximately \$60.00 U.S.)

This 3-volume series represents a significant contribution to our knowledge of a traditional people of insular Southeast Asia, and a major addition to the literature on ethnobiology and ethnoscience in general. The book stems from 18 years' fieldwork, which is reflected in the remarkable depth and thoroughness of the treatment.

The books deal with the Palawan people of the southeastern part of the island of Palawan in the Philippines. This mountainous island is one of the most isolated and least acculturated parts of the country, and the peoples there are among the least studied. The Palawan people are an agricultural Austronesian people, one of the few native groups in the Philippines using an ancient syllabic script.

The first volume of this series is of the most direct interest to ethnobiologists. It contains information and analysis of ethnotaxonomy and ethnoanatomy of a wide variety of plants, animals, and fungi found on the island. Several different classification schemes are presented based on different criteria. Not only is there a hierarchical life-form-based classification scheme but also a "male/female" characterization based on factors such as texture and color, as well as a classification based on utilization. Information is also presented on native methods of plant identification. There are line drawings of several plant and animal species illustrating how the native names for parts of these organisms are applied differently to different species. Also included are Palawan and French texts of native myths concerning the origins of various taxa.

The second volume expands these taxonomic concepts to other semantic areas. Included is a discussion of classification of diseases, spirits, food, and work patterns. The last chapter in the book is concerned with the ethnogeography and ethnoastronomy of the Palawan.

Volume III is a fascinating description of Palawan songs and poetry, complete with lyrical texts and melodic transcriptions. The author uses a structuralist approach to illustrate the relationship between various natural sounds, especially bird calls, and the patterns found in the Palawan musical repertoire. Many bird names in the Palawan language are onomatopoeic, based on bird calls, and many melodic structures in love songs are strongly influenced by such natural sounds.

All in all, the series represents a valuable contribution not to be overlooked. It is a classic that deserves a place on the bookshelf of every ethnobiologist.

Joseph E. Laferrière
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