

WHEREVER THE WAVES CARRY US: HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF A VISAYAN FISHERFOLK'S LIVELIHOOD STRATEGIES

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"Ang kinabuhi sa usa ka mananagat kay murag sagbut sa tunga-tunga sa dagat. Kung asa ihapak sa balud, adto sad sila i'anud-anud." ("The fisherfolk's living is like grass floating in the midst of the sea. From whichever direction the waves strike, they must drift to and fro.")

A Cebuano Fisherman

Introduction

The above sentiment, expressed by a Cebuano fisherman, reflects the lifestyle of a population of fisherfolk in the Visayas who are migratory. At the same time, it suggests a certain negative image of the fisherman of himself as someone simply drifting from place to place without any direction or plan, leaving himself to the mercies of sheer luck in the face of the vagaries of nature. This negative notion is quite often reinforced by the perception that others have of these fisherfolk, summed up in the expression *tulisan dagat* ("sea robber"), indicating an image of strangers who raid the local stock of sea resources and, after having depleted those, suddenly disappear to another place. In a few words, these negative images of the fisherfolk focus on the seeming arbitrariness of their life.

Rather than the arbitrariness of these Visayan lives, the intention of this article is to reveal the logic in their livelihood strategies. More specifically, focusing on a group of fisherfolk originally from southern Cebu, this study will delineate the shift in their livelihood strategies across the seasons, and discuss how they have made this possible.

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