Daniel F. Doeppers

Feeding Manila in Peace and War 1850–1945. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2016, xvii + 443 pp. [New Perspectives in Southeast Asian Studies Series]. ISBN 978029930510 9. Price EUR 80.00 (hardback).

In his latest book, Daniel F. Doeppers adds another important entry to his long list of scholarly works on the history of Manila. The professor emeritus of geography and Southeast Asian studies from the University of Wisconsin-Madison has devoted his career to historicizing Manila's urban development with an emphasis on the late-colonial period, as most notably demonstrated in his book *Manila, 1900–1941: Social Change in a Late Colonial Metropolis* (Doeppers 1984). His academic legacy already cemented, Doeppers nonetheless shows no signs of stopping. His newest release, *Feeding Manila in Peace and War, 1850–1945*, tackles the sociopolitical significance of the most important food items and commodities that sustained the Philippine capital city, from production to distribution and eventual consumption. As such, he gives the reader an almost omniscient vista of this critical time frame in Manila's urban history: straddling the last half-century of the Spanish regime, the four decades under US colonialism, and the chaotic three years under Japanese occupation.

Feeding Manila is Doeppers at his best. This book reinforces his reputation for in-depth research using a wide array of sources and his ability to situate everyday events and trends in Manila vis-à-vis the international context without sacrificing local intricacies. In my opinion the two main strengths of this book are its attention to detail and his dexterity in giving structure to the wealth of detail he presents.

The book's empirical pith is an accumulation of data Doeppers has gathered from years of research. It includes archival materials, government documents, contemporary periodicals, and even interviews. Doeppers's use of oral records serve as a perfect complement to offset the inherent bias of published sources, as exemplified by his reconstruction of the histories of traveling buyers known as *viajeros* (p. 141) and fish vendors in Manila's Tondo district (pp. 180–181), and most especially in his retelling of the everyday experiences of ordinary people during the Japanese occupation in chapter 11.

Given the sheer enormity of data this book presents, Doeppers's success in giving it structure is remarkable in itself. Each of the first three parts of *Feeding Manila* focuses on a commodity or set of commodities. Part I is all about rice, the most important food item in Philippine society. The first three of its four chapters are arranged chronologically ('The Manila Rice Trade in the Age of Sail', 'Paleotechnic Marvels and Rice Production Disasters, 1876–1905' and 'The Manila Rice Trade to 1941'), while the last one, chapter 4 ('Changing Commer-

cial Networks in the Rice Trade'), elaborates on the patterns that characterized the business behind rice, with race as a critical factor. Part II foregrounds the Filipino concept of *ulam*, which Doeppers deftly translates as 'what you eat with rice' (p. 123). Each of its four chapters, namely chapters 5 to 8 ('Vegetables, Fruit, and Other Garden Produce,' 'Fishing and Aquaculture,' 'Generations of Hustlers': Fowl and Swine in Manila,' and 'Beef, Cattle Husbandry, and Rinderpest'), analyzes the significance of a specific type of *ulam* and the social networks that facilitate their production and consumption. Liquid refreshments are the focus of the two chapters in Part III: chapter 9 ('Fluids of Life: Water and Milk') and chapter 10 ('Foreign Fashions: Flour and Coffee versus Cocoa'). Doeppers devotes the sole chapter (chapter 11: 'Subsistence and Starvation in World War II, 1941–45') in Part IV to an appraisal of the effects of the Japanese occupation on Manila's food supply. Notwithstanding certain questionable decisions structure-wise, such as the placing of the subsection on 'Usury and Market Vendor Indebtedness,' which talks about short-term, small-scale loans in Manila markets, under the heading 'Provincial Gardens' in chapter 5 (pp. 143–144), Doeppers's skill in providing a clear road map for readers to navigate a complex world of facts and figures remains astounding.

Provisionment is Doeppers's central analytic concept in this book. According to him, 'Provisionment was the essential precondition of the dramatic growth of historically modest colonial port cities into modern megacities of 10 to 20 million people' (p. 5). Based on this definition, Doeppers operates from the premise that Manila cannot be understood as a city divorced from its surroundings: 'the countryside made the city by feeding it. At the same time, the city transformed the countryside' (p. 5). As such, a sort of urban–rural dialectic serves as a unifying thread throughout the book's eleven chapters. Moreover, provisionment is not just a line that links farm to dinner table; commodity flows change through time. A confluence of factors can divert, hinder, or reverse even the most established stream of goods. Perhaps the best example of a reversal of an important commodity flow is the 'epochal transition' in Manila's role in the rice trade: from being the final destination of rice produced in nearby Luzon provinces to becoming the entrepôt and distribution center of imported rice to the same hinterlands (p. 46).

More than just an exposition on everyday nourishment, *Feeding Manila* allows readers to see the wide-ranging impact of the seemingly banal act of eating. One important insight the book imparts is that the successful provisionment of a city does not automatically denote a net gain for all stakeholders. When a rapacious metropolis is fed by profit-oriented food producers, resources can be depleted and the environment can be irreparably damaged. For example, the rapid expansion of *bangus* (*Chanos chanos*) aquacul-

ture from the late nineteenth century to the early twentieth century led to the loss mangrove and nipa forests in Manila's environs (pp. 175–179). At the same time, provisionment is intimately tied to politics and social movements. For instance, new farming technologies, land arrangements, and massive crop failures can help us understand the peasant revolts that erupted in various places in Manila's hinterlands throughout the late-colonial period, like the infamous Tayug uprising in Pangasinan province (p. 86) or even the Philippine revolution (1896–1898) itself.

Doeppers deserves commendation for his new book. It is one of those rare scholarly works that leave readers full yet, at the same time, hungry for more.

Michael D. Pante

Ateneo de Manila University

mpante@ateneo.edu

Reference

Doeppers, Daniel F. (1984) *Manila, 1900–1941. Social Change in a Late Colonial Metropolis*. New Haven Conn: Yale University Southeast Asian Studies.