MORAL POLITICS IN THE PHILIPPINES: Inequality, Democracy and the Urban Poor. *Kyoto-CSEAS Series on Asian Studies, no. 18. By Wataru Kusaka. Singapore: NUS Press in association with Kyoto University Press; Chicago: The University of Chicago Press [distributor], 2017. xiii, 341 pp. (Illustrations, tables, B&W photos, maps.) US$48.00, cloth. ISBN 978-981-4722-38-4.*

Philippine democracy gained worldwide attention and even admiration after it was restored by a popular uprising that ended the dictatorship of Ferdinand Marcos in 1986. Following the assassination of opposition politician Ninoy Aquino, hundreds of thousands of protesters had assembled on Epiphanio de los Santos Avenue; the revolt became known as EDSA 1. Fifteen years later this heroic feat was apparently repeated when a crowd of similar size successfully demanded the impeachment of President Erap Estrada, who was widely, and appropriately, considered incompetent and corrupt. However, EDSA 2 was quickly followed by events that shocked the well-developed "civil society" of the Philippines: Manila's urban poor, whom the NGO activists considered to be their clientele and constituency, took to the streets in large numbers to *defend* Estrada. After several days of intense rallies and riots, EDSA 3 was crushed but the events left behind (or rather, exposed) a deeply divided society. It is this series of events and their underlying structures that Wataru Kusaka's book sets out to explore and analyze.

Kusaka bases his analysis on the concept of "moral politics," defined as "politics that creates groups that are seen as either 'good' or 'evil' and draw a demarcation line between the two, (…) clearly distinguishable from 'interest politics' which is concerned with the distribution of resources" (1). The rise of a well-educated and relatively wealthy middle class in the Philippines fuelled hopes that the traditional dominance of oligarchic elites, expressed and solidified through the political rule of a few dynasties, would be weakened and would give way to an improved and stabilized democratic system. The alliance between this rising middle class and the impoverished masses, symbolized by the slogan "people power" and underpinned by the organizing activities among the poor by numerous civic organizations, proved to be frangible, however. The self-proclaimed "citizenry" standing in opposition to elite hegemony came to realize that the poor continued to seek patron-client relations with these elites and/or trust their fate to populist politicians rather than following the activists "instilling discipline in and leading an intellectually and morally inferior impoverished class (the 'masses')" (11). The demarcation lines between the antagonistic "civic sphere" and "mass sphere" came to indicate not only divisions between people, but between good and evil—a "moral division of the nation" (242ff.).

Kusaka's Gramscian analysis of hegemonic struggles in these dual public spheres in the tradition of Michael Pinches is sharp and enlightening but arguably not without weaknesses. The term "class" is used rather loosely,

referring to the unequal distribution of "economic, occupational, educational and other resources" (6), and not systematically conceptualized. Common-sense labels like "middle class" (actually a self-description of the old and new rich) and "the poor"/"the masses" (disregarding massive inequality within that category) conceal more that they clarify. The focus on moral and political division leads the author to pay little attention to the material basis of antagonism in present-day urban Philippines, namely access to legal and secure housing. According to Marco Garrido and other writers, the housing divide between enclaves and slums, or "citadels" and "ghettos" in the classic terms of Max Weber, have become the crucial fault line and the social foundation of class identities and class conflict. Dynamic development, accompanied by speculation, has driven land prices and rents out of reach of the majority of the population, including large parts of the middle class in sociological terms, such as teachers, office clerks, and security personnel. The stigma associated with the labels "slum dweller" and "squatter" unifies an otherwise highly diverse population, and the "non-citizens" become susceptible to any semblance of respect offered by populist politicians. The author does discuss this issue in chapter 5, but does not fully recognize its crucial importance beyond urban governance.

These shortcomings notwithstanding, this book is essential reading for anyone interested in Philippine politics, and I have learned a lot from it. Wataru Kusaka has progressed all the way from struggling with the English language during his first visits to the Philippines to casually explaining the success of Duterte in Tagalog TV talk shows. He has immersed himself in the slums and gained the trust of his respondents without the help of (often biased) NGO intermediaries; at the same time, he has given justice to the fears of enclave dwellers who feel threatened and outnumbered by the unruly masses and their populist champions. The very rich data are analyzed thoroughly and systematically, with convincing conclusions. The diagnosis offered by Kusaka—the crisis of democracy under neoliberalism "marked by the rise of a moral politics characterized by repeating cycles of moral division of the nation and reactive solidarity of the nation" (254)—is valid far beyond the Philippines. Whether the proposed "new mutuality" and a return to interest politics concerned with resource distribution will reduce social fragmentation and hamper the rise of the Dutertes and Trumps of this world remains to be seen.

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