



Unweaving Basey: A Poet's History of Home (Rethinking the Sense of Place in Local History)

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Abstract: This paper interrogates the field of local history and the idea of place central to it. What is 'local' in local history? Does 'local history' betray the interconnections a place embodies? If 'local history' were to be a paradigm arguing for a place as representing the global, at which point in the continuum could a place be located? My ongoing book project on Basey (a small island in Western Samar, Philippines) rethinks 'place' apart from the usual notion of history writing. While Basey sits on the path of the Pacific Ocean, it has been on the fringes of historical awareness. I attempt to reclaim it—through its complex riverways—by retracing its role in the ancient trade between East and Southeast Asia; revisiting it as an escape route of US soldiers who survived the 1902 Balangiga massacre; and, its ruin by the historic typhoon Haiyan (Yolanda) on 13 November 2013. More importantly, I attempt to reclaim Basey through my own relationship with it as my birthplace. A further question hence: How does the personal become historical? In the process of answering the question, it is the goal of this study to cross the threshold of history so as to explore the intimate linkage of place and memory.