

Violence Delays Project In Philippines

Terrorism in the Philippines has forced Orly Ongkingco of Manila to temporarily halt his research on kites throughout the archipelago. Ongkingco was the recipient of a grant from the Drachen Foundation to document the broad-spectrum kite culture of his country—the various types of kites, their makers, raw materials, tools, history, mythology. He was not only charged with doing written research but also with making photographs, as well as collecting choice examples of kites.

This is one of several Drachen country projects in effect currently. Other important ones are now being conducted in Cambodia and Guatemala.

Because the Philippine culture apparently began in the south, at Mindanao (where Orly was born and raised), he began his study there in early October. He was on Siargao Island doing his first interview when Moslem rebels set off a bomb in nearby Zamboanga which killed several people and injured hundreds more. “Mindanao is a hotbed of the Moslem rebel movement,” Orly observes.

Because of security precautions, Orly says he had terrible problems with kite baggage in airports. He

was not allowed to carry big kites in his luggage because they wouldn’t fit into the x-ray machines and the smaller kites worried officials who pointed out the sharp-pointed bamboo bones could be disassembled to become deadly weapons.

Orly left the south just before the Philippine military attacked a rebel camp. This served to scatter the terrorists over the area and they took civilian hostages to protect themselves. In exchange for the hostages, the military permitted the rebels to escape to the mountains.

“I don’t want to alarm you,” says Orly, “but the present situation has affected my research. I canceled several in-country trips and thus my research timetable has been disrupted. I’m still traveling—but out of the country, to Hong Kong and Johor, Malaysia, for festivals. And I’m planning a trip to Nanjing and Weifang in China in April.

“I’m sending on my partial report, along with slides, maps and other material, but will continue the research project at a later date, when things calm down here. Best regards.”

Dangerous Kites

Because of an increased use of metallic wire with nylon cord in flying lines, kiteflying with such equipment has recently been forbidden in the Punjab of Pakistan. Loss of lives and damage to household appliances because of electrical shorts caused by these dangerous kites was cited for the new law. A fine of 15,000 rupiahs or imprisonment for three months are the penalties to be imposed for contravening the ordinance. The Pakistan Cabinet was assured by Brigadir Ejaz Ahmed Shah that if the perilous kiteflying was taking place in a location where women were in purdah, or seclusion, arrests would only be made by “a lady councillor and a Grade-17 female government officer, upon giving the occupant notice to withdraw from her place.” The government emphasized the law “does not intend to stop the exuberance of the general public, rather to have a deterrent impact since it aims at saving private and public properties from damage and loss of human life through the prohibition of harmful kiteflying activities.”

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