

Climate Change and the Impact of Drought on Human Affairs and Human History in the Philippines, 1582 to 2009

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This paper will draw attention to the causes and consequences of food shortages and famine with respect to the relationship between climatic factors, namely El Niño events, drought and disease, and, food scarcity, regional characteristics and social structure. Hence, in examining famines in the past and present, I will stress the structural links between food shortages, Filipino peasant societies and the weather factor. In addition, I will explore the historical relationship associated with economic and political changes and societal group inequality that becomes ever more explicit in famine.

Until recently, famine and starvation have been so distasteful to many scholars of the Philippines that little effort has been made to understand their historical bases and social behavioural effects. In employing a classic approach to climate, the environment and human activity, I will try to understand the present in the Philippines by looking at the past. As such, I will reconstruct a picture of the past with respect to drought, food shortage and famine.