

Philippine Studies: Historical and Ethnographic Viewpoints

Volume 73
Number 1 *Portraits of Mindanao*

Article 21

5-2-2025

Editor's Introduction

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Recommended Citation

Pante, Michael D. (2025) "Editor's Introduction," *Philippine Studies: Historical and Ethnographic Viewpoints*: Vol. 73: No. 1, Article 21.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.13185/2244-1638.5080>

Available at: <https://archium.ateneo.edu/phstudies/vol73/iss1/21>

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Philippine Studies: Historical and Ethnographic Viewpoints

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Editor's Introduction

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Philippine Studies: Historical and Ethnographic Viewpoints
vol. 73 no. 1 (2025): 1–2

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.13185/2244-1638.5080>

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Editor's Introduction

Santanina “Nina” Rasul is the subject of Irineo Miranda’s 1951 portrait *Tausug Princess*, which is among the few works at the National Museum that portray Muslim individuals. Geronimo Cristobal’s article, “Irineo Miranda’s Ethnographic Portrait of Nina Rasul and the Philippine Bangsamoro,” interprets *Tausug Princess* “as an allegory of Muslim Mindanao’s contested assimilation into the nation-state” (3). Cristobal reveals how the artist flattens Mindanao ethnicities to present Bangsamoro identity as an assimilated and supposedly unified element of the Philippine nation. Miranda, whose aesthetics belong to the Fernando Amorsolo school, represents Islamic femininity in the painting by deploying visual cues such as former senator Rasul’s traditional Tausug attire and jewelry. However, Cristobal troubles this skin-deep appraisal by revealing a cultural mismatch in the image: the presence of a doppelgänger holding a Maranao musical instrument. It is also worth noting that the initial title of the portrait was *Maguindanao Princess*.

For Cristobal, *Tausug Princess* is not just an artwork but an ethnographic sketch that is an attempt at representing a complex mix of Mindanao ethnicities with a global modernist and feminist sensibility at a time when armed secessionist movements in the southern Philippines were about to make their presence felt. Despite the portrait’s inherent limitations in conveying intricate identities, it nonetheless provides the viewer a fresh angle through which Mindanao can be viewed, an angle that goes beyond the caricatures and stereotypes long associated with its peoples.

A different kind of Mindanao is presented in “Seeking Paradise in Early Twentieth-Century Mindanao: The Philippine Experience of Vic Hurley” by Brendan Luyt. American businessman Vic Hurley, who explored the island during the colonial period, is the focus of Luyt’s essay, which tackles how the Orientalist discourse of finding paradise in the tropics figured in Westerners’ travel accounts. The article examines two of Hurley’s nonfiction books, *Southeast of Zamboanga* and *Men in Sun Helmets*, which were published in 1935 and 1936,

respectively. Both publications exemplify how essentialist notions of the tropics motivated colonial projects, but at the same time they also uncover Hurley's depiction of colonizers not as "intrepid adventurers but of people cast adrift, exiled from where they rightfully should be" (46), putting forward a complicated assessment of colonialism's assumed dominance in their exoticized paradise. For Luyt, Hurley's writings can be seen as both an indictment of white settlement in America's Pacific colony and an act of support for the nativist arguments against Filipino migrants forming their own communities in the United States.

Amorisa Wiratri anchors her article in the concept of a "maritory," a term that denotes not only a maritime counterpart of the traditionally terrestrial notion of territory but also the fluid character of sea-based communities. Wiratri's "*Badaseng: Reclaiming the Indigenous Maritory of the Sangir Diasporic Community in the Southern Philippines*" explores the world of the Sangir, an ethnolinguistic community that has a rich historical tradition of seasonal migration, living on both sides of the permeable international borderline that separates the southern Philippines and North Sulawesi in Indonesia. At the heart of the discussion is *badaseng*, which refers to the construction of makeshift shelters during the periods of their seasonal migration, specifically in the Sangihe Islands of North Sulawesi and Balut and Sarangani Islands in the southern Philippines. *Badaseng*, however, goes beyond the physical construction of houses; it is a tradition that "has led them to consider these islands as part of their cultural territory, given that the practice was inherited from their ancestors and that some of their families continue to reside there" (75). Given the Sangir's mode of living, Wiratri argues that the cartographic conventions, a legacy of Western colonialism, that define the territories of nation-states cannot serve as an adequate basis for differentiating between those who are indigenous and those who are not. The necessity of revisiting our definitions of concepts such as indigeneity, borders, and territory is crucial given the political precariousness of many Sangir who remain undocumented and/or stateless.

The different portraits of Mindanao that are exhibited in this issue—Miranda's *Tausug Princess*, images of the tropics in Hurley's travelogues, and the faces of diaspora among the Sangir—are a testament to the dynamic and rich culture that the island possesses. Acknowledging this complexity goes a long way in ensuring fine-grained depictions of the peoples of Mindanao and promoting cross-cultural understanding.

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