

MAKING MINDANAO: Cotabato and Davao in the Formation of the Philippine Nation-State. *By Patricio N. Abinales. Manila (Philippines): Ateneo de Manila University Press. 2000. xii, 235 pp. (Tables.) US\$24.00, paper. ISBN 971-550-349-7.*

This book addresses state-making in the Philippines via the integration of Mindanao and the role played in this process by two regional centres of power, Cotabato and Davao and their respective political “strong men.” Patricio Abinales investigates the political and economic evolution of Mindanao up until the beginning of martial law and aims to further our understanding of Mindanao’s political landscape, the causes of the Moro rebellion and the communist revolution. He also seeks to investigate the resilience of the emerging Philippine state and the dynamics of the centre

versus regional power struggle that took place. Such a quest is a formidable task, particularly when trying to generalize about state-making through such a narrow focus, and given the existence of so many other factors at play—such as ideology, ethnicity, warlordism, world war, foreign invasion—all of which played a considerable role in the formation of the current Philippine state.

Abinales' historical approach rightly pays significant attention to the U.S. colonial period and how the U.S. military resisted Mindanao and the Muslim Filipinos' (Moros) integration into the rest of the Philippines during the initial years of the republic.

Further, Abinales criticizes prevailing notions of a singular colonial state-building process and argues that the nature of Mindanao was in the end shaped most significantly by the centre versus regional power struggle for state centralization, led by "strong presidents" such as Marcos and regional strong men such as Salipada Pendatun and Alejandro Almendras. In other literature, these men are considered warlords. Abinales argues that the state ultimately determined the role such strongmen played; in so doing he downplays ethnicity and ideology as determining factors. Moreover, he infers that much of the political evolution of Mindanao is to be understood by an elite-focused perspective, which considers their various power plays and accommodations with the Americans, Japanese and Manila itself.

Overall, however, this work merely presents a number of unrelated diverse studies, arbitrarily tied together to constitute what is a rather dubious thesis of state-making. Too many other factors are ignored, such as the wave of radical Islam that swept the Philippines in the late 1960s, international connections such as the Islamic Conference, and the role of competing "radicalisms" and nationalisms, each fed by different historical, economic and political processes. This work is also far too focused on elites, denying ordinary Muslim Filipinos any significant role in determining outcomes. Only passing attention is made to the new generation of anti-elite Moros, and to the growth and impact of youth radicalism on the campuses in the Philippines (which fed both rebellions), not to mention the role of individuals such as Nur Misuari, who came to head the Moro National Liberation Front. While mentioning the Muslim Independence Movement (MIM) and the Jabidah massacre, Abinales also does not adequately expand on their role in subsequent events. In short, the book appears written by a Christian Filipino with a very Manila-centric point of view, attributing all influence to those warlords prepared to play the power game of the emerging and Westernized Filipino state. Nevertheless, it is worthy in its contribution as a selective history of the development of the two regions and the political fortunes of some key strongmen involved in Mindanao's political development. In explaining Philippine state-making it falls short.

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