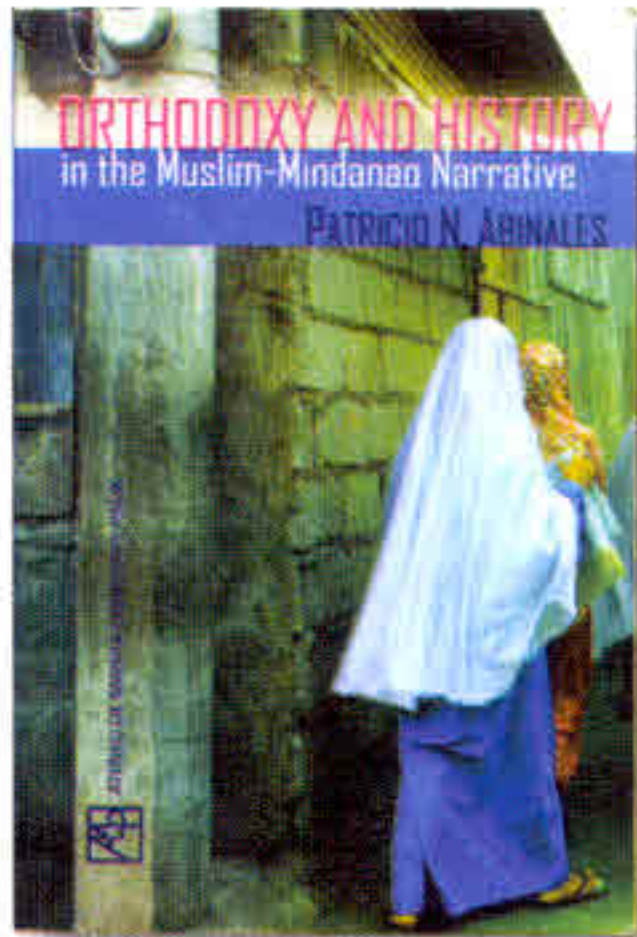


BOOK REVIEWS



Orthodoxy and History in Muslim-Mindanao Narrative by Patricio N Avinales. Ateneo de Manila University Press, Quezon City. c 2009, 265 pages, 15.3x23 cm.

Orthodoxy and History in Muslim-Mindanao is a masterpiece of a relatively well substantiated thematic presentation of varied historical structures of governance, economy and society that paved roles of the outstanding state actors whose dauntlessness is embedded in the pursuits of the Moros in Mindanao. It highlights the historic responses from Mindanao to Luzon's wielded Unitary Designs throughout the history of the Filipino Muslims towards the 20th century and beyond.

Chapter 1 presents a twentieth century Philippines hovered with pervasive entanglements that ushered a military regime in southern Mindanao throughout the first decade of American imperialism in the region. The impetus of American political complexities is reflective of the imperial metropolis sustaining a colony via the call for a benevolent assimilation at the turn of the century towards the commonwealth period. Pervasive entanglements are in the chapter's Progressive-Machine Conflict and Colonial State Building. The chapter opens as it shares an approach to a study aimed at revisiting the political development of Mindanao from the designs of the colonial rules to the supremacy of the orthodox administrators.

Chapter 2 shows a glossy presentation of the *raison d'être* of Muslim struggles in Southern Philippines. The struggles are aimed at sustaining the Moro lucrative economic ventures in the strategic eastern region of Southeast Asia. In their aspirations for political advancement, a leader was enthroned, introduced as Datu Piang. His politically crafted design indeed crippled the identified political rivals thereby perpetuate the various political affairs of his family. The strategic approach known as the Cooptation of the elite designed by the state brokers offer a common end that serves the interests of the state actors and colonial state builders. The story of these statesmen

is contained in this chapter, 'From Orang Besar to Colonial Big Man'.

Chapter 3, 'Notes on Provincial Relations: Late Colonial Cotabato and Davao in Comparative Perspective' offer an array of outstanding comparisons and distinct contrasts of two places. Both are centers of settlement in southern Philippines that deserve a special political makeup for their special classification as centers of the wild tribes. Outstanding in Davao civil political initiative was the attempt to bring the tri-people of Islam, Christianity and Animism ushering the fire of abetment. A distinct drive in Cotabato was in the form of military political leadership. It was a leadership that was well crafted by the unification of forces and subservient allegiance. Indeed colonial state builders may have the grand designs but it is the response of the state actors that showers colors to the political landscape in the history of the Filipinos in Southern Philippines.

Chapter 4 adapts a befitting form for a title justified by its interrogative state suggesting the nationalist context of Neo-Colonialism vis-à-vis the inability of the state actors to contain insurgency coupled with the incapacity of the nationally led international campaigns for regional enforcers to deter the international network of cells for regional chaos. All of these are in this chapter, 'The Good Imperialists?'. The extreme support of the politicians to the Joint Military Exercises speaks of the true color of a complex picture magnified over the local and national Philippine politics. It is not the nationalist interest that engenders the action of the regional and local players but the prevailing need and demand of their respective locale. Indeed, a call for a nationalist stance in redefining the Filipino nation, the non adherents of the Islamic faith included.

Chapter 5, 'Sancho Panza in Buliok Complex: The Paradox of Muslim Separatism' traces various Islamic entities that once expressed support for the advancement of the political aspirations of the Muslims. Since the very beginning, various reasons of the struggle of the Moros toward separation, personal and political motives tainted with the deeply rooted rido, political rivalry and rebellion would definitely outshine the budding political idealism as may have been afforded within their ranks. This idealism amplifies a call for the Filipino Muslims to define their capacity toward autonomy.

Chapter 6, 'Mindanao in the Developmentalist Fantasy of the Philippine State, 1900-2000.' Shows the undesirable impact of the highly centralized government policy on migration to Mindanao. Development programs of a number of the aspiring (to be truly) Republican State Actors are delivered with the inherent virus of corruption, hence, their failure. Alternatives are called for in these incapacitated policies and programs. Although the regional Southeast Asian economic growth areas offer Mindanao the strategic proximity with its neighboring insular development centers, all need the strategic mind and the big heart of the head of the state.

Chapter 7, 'Local Power and Its national and International Overlords in Okinawa and the Southern Philippines' cites the forms of US interests and presence in the frontiers in the strategic West Pacific Asian States. Common history of comparable

struggles hold true to the completely vertical flow and almost equally sustained source of State power in both “*terras incognita*.” Political enterprises between the local and national centers of power show the prevailing elements of national and local antecedents. The sustained and evident colonial designs of the US in the region unfold a dramatic façade of state actors who may eventually be willing to risk their sorts of political aggrandizement.

Orthodoxy and History in the Muslim-Mindanao Narrative is a timely material with a working reference for those enthusiasts interested to dissect the recently crashed politically crafted top-down alliance between the Ampatuans and the Arroyos. It provides a postscript that calls not for speculations but a concrete response via well founded and therefore valid research – a research work that may consider the hauling wilderness exposed before the actions of the belligerent MILF.

Roel B Absin