

Upholding Filipino nationhood: The debate over Mindanao in the Philippine Legislature, 1907–1913

Nobutaka Suzuki

Christian Filipino legislators in the bicameral US civil administration played a hitherto unacknowledged role in pushing for the colonisation of Mindanao, as part of the Philippines, by proposing a series of Assembly bills (between 1907 to 1913) aimed at establishing migrant farming colonies on Mindanao. This legislative process was fuelled by anger over the unequal power relations between the Filipino-dominated Assembly and the American-dominated Commission, as well as rivalry between resident Christian Filipino leaders versus the American military government, business interests and some Muslim datus in Mindanao itself for control over its land and resources. Focusing on the motives and intentions of the bills' drafters, this study concludes that despite it being a Spanish legacy, the Christian Filipino elite's territorial map — emphasising the integrity of a nation comprising Luzon, the Visayas and Mindanao — provided the basis for their claim of Philippine sovereignty over Mindanao.

Introduction

Cesar Majul, a distinguished scholar of Muslim Filipino studies, relates the following about the colonisation of Mindanao, which started in the early twentieth century in the Cotabato region under the American colonial system:

When the Americans came to Muslim lands after their arrival in the Philippines, they initially labeled the inhabitant[s] savages who needed to be pacified The Americans then assumed responsibility for westernising the Muslims so they would be as capable of governing themselves as the Christian Filipinos, at least at certain administrative levels. They sent Christian Filipino civil officials to Muslim area[s] to introduce new ways of government to the Muslims and to encourage both communities to cooperate in civic projects, in hopes of reducing deep-rooted Christian–Muslim animosity. Possibly, as part of this program, they encouraged Christian Filipinos to settle in Mindanao. Before World War I, they were even responsible for establishing at least

Nobutaka Suzuki is an associate professor at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Tsukuba, Ibaraki, Japan. He may be contacted at: Suzuki.nobutaka.fn@u.tsukuba.ac.jp. His research in Washington, D.C., and in the Philippines was supported by a generous grant from the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (KAKENHI 21520809). An earlier version of this article was presented at the Eighth International Conference on Philippine Studies (ICOPHIL), Philippine Social Science Centre, Quezon City, 25 July 2008. I am grateful for the valuable and critical comments and suggestions from Kazuhiro Ota, Lilian de la Pena and three anonymous *JSEAS* referees.

seven agricultural colonies in traditional Muslim areas. Unlike the Spaniards, the Americans did not encourage Christian–Muslim animosity. By sending thousands of Christian settlers to Muslim lands, however, they sowed seeds of tensions and conflict between the two communities.¹

Interestingly, all instances of ‘they’ appearing in the above quotation connote ‘Americans’. Majul, equating the Christian Filipinos with the Muslims as ‘the colonised’, explained that ‘the Americans’ had promoted the Christian Filipino migration to Muslim areas. In the passage above, Majul obviously plays down and masks the role played by the Christian Filipino elite (the *ilustrado*) in Philippine colonial state-building. This description oversimplifies the relationship between the Americans and the Christian Filipinos, the coloniser and the colonised. Similar arguments can be found in other scholarly works that emphasise the strong desire of the Americans to develop and exploit Mindanao’s abundant natural resources.²

Mindanao was viewed as a land of promise by the US military and American capitalists and merchants who saw the island as having great potential for economic investment.³ Governor Leonard Wood of Moro Province, for example, attempted various plans to develop the island. These included the extension of the Public Land Act to Moro Province, the acceptance of labourers to mitigate the labour shortage, the construction of customs posts and an invitation to commercial shipping from Hong Kong to dock at Zamboanga. Wood also enthusiastically supported railway construction in Mindanao.⁴ Meanwhile, Christian Filipinos also viewed Mindanao as a land of promise, although in a different sense. Though initially not forming a majority of the island’s population, they had migrated in great numbers to Surigao and Misamis in northern Mindanao at the start of the twentieth century. Since their encounters with Mindanao began during Spanish rule, it is worth examining how Christian Filipinos viewed Mindanao and how they contributed to Mindanao’s colonisation during this formative period of Philippine colonial state-building.

In order to trace the role of the Christian elite, both resident in Mindanao and elsewhere in the Philippines, this paper will focus on the workings of the Philippine Assembly during the early American administration, through which bills related to Mindanao’s colonisation took shape from 1907 to 1913. This study will explore in particular the debate between the Philippine Assembly (hereafter the Assembly) and the Philippine Commission (hereafter the Commission) over the bills, and will illustrate to what extent the Assembly, as a Lower House, was involved

1 Cesar A. Majul, *The contemporary Muslim movement in the Philippines* (Berkeley: Mizan Press, 1985), pp. 20–21.

2 See, for example, W.K. Che Man, *Muslim separatism: The Moros of southern Philippines and the Malays of southern Thailand* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1990); Thayil J.S. George, *Revolt in Mindanao: The rise of Islam in Philippine politics* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1980).

3 Patricio Abinales, *Making Mindanao: Cotabato and Davao in the formation of the Philippine nation-state* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2000); Ernesto Corcino, ‘American entrepreneurs in Mindanao’, *Mindanao Journal*, 8 (1981): 97–129; Douglas T.K. Hartley, ‘American participation in the economic development of Mindanao and Sulu, 1899–1930’ (Ph.D. diss., James Cook University of North Queensland, 1983).

4 Leonard Wood to William Howard Taft, 8 Apr. 1905, General correspondence, Library of Congress, Leonard Wood Papers.

in policy-making concerning Mindanao's colonisation. It will also examine the motives and intentions of these bills' authors against the background of a vociferous public debate over proposals to separate Mindanao from the rest of the country. In short, this paper offers a critical analysis of the colonisation of Mindanao from the perspective of the Christian Filipino elite, rather than that of the Americans.

Of primary importance was an agricultural colony project popularly known as the 'rice colonies', implemented from 1913 to 1917 in Mindanao.⁵ Over a five-year period, a total of six such colonies were created in Cotabato and one in Lanao. The sites within Cotabato were Pikit, Silit, Peidu-Pulangi, Pagalungan, Glan and Talitay. In Lanao, the Momungan colony was established for American ex-servicemen with Filipina wives. The 'rice colony' project aimed to alleviate the worsening land tenancy problem and serious food shortages caused by population increases in the more densely inhabited provinces. To cope with these issues, the project focused on two different groups of subjects: Christian Filipinos living outside Mindanao and Muslim Filipinos originally living in, or close to, potential agricultural colony sites. Two acts were devised to implement the project in 1913: the Philippine Commission Act (hereafter Commission Act) 2254 and the Commission Act 2280.⁶ The former appropriated 400,000 pesos to establish the Rice Colonisation and Plantation Fund, while the latter, which came into force on 23 August 1913, appropriated 50,000 pesos to establish the Moro Colonisation and Plantation Fund.⁷ These Acts are the basis of the perception that it was the Americans who initiated the agricultural project.

Careful examination of the legislative record reveals, however, that the agricultural colony project was originally introduced to the Philippine Legislature as the Philippine Assembly Bill 399 in 1913 by three Christian Filipino assemblymen: Leon Borromeo (Misamis), Lucio Gonzales (Nueva Ecija) and Vicente Lozada (Cebu). In addition, the exemplar of establishing the agricultural colony could already be found in an earlier bill: Assembly Bill 148 of 1910. Does this mean that the principal designers and executors of the agricultural colony project were Christian Filipinos and not Americans?

The relationship between the Commission and the Assembly in the early American era has been characterised as being, in general, so hostile and antagonistic that any bills proposed by either House resulted in disapproval or rejection by the other House.⁸ As outlined in Table 3, although eight bills directly or indirectly related

5 Karl J. Pelzer, *Pioneer settlement in Asiatic tropics: Studies in land utilization and agricultural colonization in southeastern Asia* (New York: American Geographical Society, 1945), p. 129.

6 Hartley, 'American participation in the economic development of Mindanao and Sulu, 1899–1930', p. 184.

7 There is little difference between both Acts in terms of their aims: to increase the production of rice and other agricultural products; to equilibrate the distribution of the population; and to allow, for some, the opportunity of becoming landowners, placing public land under cultivation. One hidden political agenda behind both these Acts was to test peaceful living between two settler groups: the Christian settlers and the Muslims. See Pelzer, *Pioneer settlement in Asiatic tropics*, p. 129; United States War Department, Division of Customs and Insular Affairs, 'Special report of Frank McIntyre to the Secretary of War to the Philippine Islands' (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1916). On Commission Act 2280, see also United States Philippine Commission, *Journal of the Philippine Commission* (hereafter JPC), (Manila: Bureau of Printing, 1914), pp. 85–6.

8 James Robertson criticised the Assembly: 'The measures favored by the majority were also doubtless

to Mindanao's colonisation had been proposed, only the similar ninth Assembly Bill 399 was approved by the Commission on 11 February 1913. This demonstrates that the introduction of Assembly bills and their ensuing debate must have met fierce opposition from the Commission. Given such an uncooperative atmosphere, how was Assembly Bill 399 passed by the Commission?

This paper will first examine the formation of the Assembly and its legislative jurisdiction over Mindanao and describe how its limited power over Mindanao became the fundamental cause for further political tensions between the Assembly and the Commission. The following sections will illustrate the legislative debate over the nine Assembly bills related to Mindanao's colonisation from 1907 until 1913 and describes how Assembly Bill 399 was finally approved. The final section discusses what made the Christian Filipino elite view Mindanao as 'their' territory.

This paper will use primary source materials and the records of both Houses, including the *Diario de Sesiones de la Asamblea Filipina* (Daily record of the Philippine Assembly) and the *Actas de la Asamblea Filipinas* (Journal of the Assembly), as well as the *Journal of the Philippine Commission*.

The Assembly and its limited power over Mindanao

On 1 September 1900, the second Commission — popularly known as the Taft Commission (named after its chairperson, William Howard Taft) — was formally established as the unicameral legislative body of the colonial Philippine state. Aside from Taft, the four other appointed members were all Americans.⁹ The First Commission (the Schurman Commission) was led by Jacob Gould Schurman, president of Cornell University. The primary missions of the Schurman Commission were to investigate the conditions of the Philippines and to propose an adequate form of government. Schurman's final report concluded that: the United States could not withdraw from the Philippines; the Filipinos were wholly unprepared for independence; and there was no unified Philippine nation, rather, 'only a collection of different peoples'.¹⁰ The racial bias of this report stemmed from the belief of the Commission members that the Filipinos were not given to expressing public opinions and, as such, there was a danger in giving them self-government. The Commission recommended that the President put into operation a civilian government in the

largely arranged in informal gatherings, some of which, it is asserted, were held at the house occupied by the Speaker [...] At the beginning of each meeting, the Assembly hall was cleared of all visitors and roll-call and the mapping of the day's work, and other matters conducted in secret. As a result, many of the open meetings were very short, and the procedure was entirely formal and cut and dried, consisting in the reading or passing of bills by title.' James A. Robertson, 'The extraordinary session of the Philippine Legislature, and the work of the Philippine Assembly', *American Political Science Review*, 4, 4 (1910): 516–36. See also Daniel Barizo, 'The making and establishment of the first Philippine Assembly' (M. A. thesis, Ateneo de Manila University, 1977), p. 145; Camillus Gott, 'William Cameron Forbes and the Philippines, 1904–1946' (Ph.D. diss., Indiana University, Bloomington, 1974); Frank Jenista, 'Conflict in the Philippine Legislature: The Commission and the Assembly from 1907 to 1917', in *Compadre colonialism: Studies on the Philippines under American rule*, ed. Norman G. Owen (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1971), pp. 77–101.

9 The four American commissioners were Henry Clay Ide, Luke Edward Wright, Dean Conant Worcester and Bernard Moses.

10 United States Philippine Commission, *Report of the Philippine Commission* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1900), vol. I, pp. 97–121 (hereafter *RPC*).

parts of the archipelago that were at peace.¹¹ This report provided the justification for the United States' colonial mission in the Philippines: political education under American tutelage.

In response, the Taft Commission immediately undertook to establish a civilian government in the provinces pacified by the American military.¹² The Municipal Code and the Provincial Government Act were both adopted in 1901, the latter making Pampanga in Central Luzon the first centre of local government.¹³ These Acts allowed Christian Filipinos to have full control of their local governments, aside from American inspection and intervention in finance, public works, public health and education.¹⁴ The Commission also formulated the Philippine Organic Act of 1902 (hereafter the Organic Act), which served as a de facto constitution.¹⁵ One noteworthy feature of this Act was the establishment of the Assembly as the Lower House with the aim of overcoming the Filipinos' lack of practical knowledge and experience on how a popular government ought to be run.¹⁶ This limited transfer of power for Filipino self-rule, allowing the Christian Filipino elite to participate in national politics, was highly anticipated in terms of the quest for Philippine independence. On 16 October 1907, the first Assembly was set up, composed of eighty assemblymen, who were elected for two-year terms and who also represented their own provinces.¹⁷

Expanding Filipinos' capacity for self-rule, however, did not mean granting them unlimited autonomy to exercise these new freedoms. There were clear limits to the Assembly's legislative power over the southern Philippines, including Mindanao and the Sulu archipelago. The American government relegated the Filipinos to a status of tribes, with each tribe representing a particular period in the evolutionary stage of human progress. The dichotomy of civilised-wild had been used by the previous coloniser, the Spaniards: Filipinos whom they referred to as *indio* and civilised were those they had baptised as Catholics. The unbaptised were called *ladrones*, to describe how 'wild' and 'untamed' they were. The Philippines Islands were broadly divided into two parts roughly corresponding to these racially charged categories: general provinces and special provinces.¹⁸ The former referred to the areas where Christian residents were dominant, while the latter referred to areas heavily populated

11 W. Cameron Forbes, *The Philippine Islands* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1928), I, p. 123.

12 William H. Taft, 'Civil government in the Philippines', *Outlook*, 71, 5 (1902): 305–21; Oscar Alfonso, 'Taft's views on "the Philippines for the Filipino"', *Asian Studies*, 6, 3 (1968): 237–47.

13 Rene R. Escalante, *The bearer of Pax Americana: The Philippine career of William H. Taft, 1900–1903* (Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 2007), pp. 303–3; Forbes, *The Philippine Islands*, I, p. 161.

14 James LeRoy, 'The Philippine Assembly', *World Today*, 15, 2 (1908): 847–52.

15 The Act's intention was 'temporarily to provide for the administration of the affairs of civil government in the Philippine Islands, and for other purposes', and was introduced by Republican Representative Henry A. Cooper of Wisconsin. Gregorio F. Zaide, *Documentary sources of Philippine history*, vol. 10 (Manila: National Book Store, 1990), pp. 416–53.

16 Taft, 'Civil government in the Philippines', p. 314.

17 Forbes, *The Philippine Islands*, II, pp. 133–6; Gregorio Nieva, *Philippine Assembly official directory, first Philippine Legislature* (Manila: Bureau of Printing, 1908); James LeRoy, 'The Philippine Assembly', p. 848. According to LeRoy, the law of elections required six months' prior residence in the district to be eligible as a representative. However, 'residence' was interpreted very liberally: a number of assembly members, who really spent most of their time in Manila, were chosen to represent provinces of which they were natives, or where they had acquired residence only before the 1907 Assembly election.

18 Forbes, *The Philippine Islands*, I, pp. 161, 593.

by non-Christians such as northern Luzon, Mindanao (exclusive of Misamis and Surigao) and the Sulu archipelago. Under this 'divide-and-rule' policy, the legislative power of the Assembly was solely restricted to the former type of territories, while the Commission was vested with exclusive legislative power over the special provinces.

Under this bifurcated political structure, the Christianised regions of Misamis and Surigao in northern Mindanao already had full autonomy, while the rest of Mindanao was given restricted autonomy. On 1 June 1903 the Muslim-dominated Moro Province was carved out of Mindanao and Sulu. The creation of this province exemplifies the intention to transfer political power to a civilian government, as in the case of general provinces. Moro Province, however, continued to be ruled by American military officials. General Leonard Wood, the first Governor, considered Mindanao as another colonial frontier. The Christian Filipino elite viewed the American military-led Moro Province as being separate from Manila and as belonging to the Americans.¹⁹ What was perceived by Christian Filipinos as their exclusion from their rightful role in Mindanao affairs was to stir up further hostility between the Assembly and the Commission.

Accordingly, Filipino assemblymen aggressively attempted to reverse this decision, resorting to a legal battle as the first Assembly convened. On February 1908, soon after the creation of the Assembly in Manila, three assemblymen — Maximino Mina (Ilocos Sur), Andres Asprer (La Union) and Jose Clarin (Bohol) — immediately expressed their concerns about the unfairness of their limited powers in the southern Philippines. Their resolution was introduced to the Assembly as Assembly Joint Resolution No. 18.²⁰ In this resolution, they maintained that the Christian Filipinos were best suited to draft the laws to govern the people of Mindanao because they were 'the genuine and legitimate representatives'.²¹ To this end, Resolution No. 18 requested both Houses to instruct the Resident Commissioners — Benito Legarda and Pablo Ocampo — to secure from the US Congress either amendments to, or a repeal of, Section 7 of the Organic Act of 1902:

After said Assembly shall have convened and organised, all the legislative power heretofore conferred on the Philippine Commission in all that part of said Islands not inhabited by Moros or other non-Christian tribes shall be vested in a Legislature consisting of two Houses — the Philippine Commission and the Philippine Assembly.²²

The three co-authors emphasised two principal reasons for the resolution: the territorial integrity of the Philippine nation and genuine representation for Filipinos. Behind these motives were the fact that the Christian Filipino elite, with their similar socio-economic, cultural and educational backgrounds in Manila (see [Tables 1 and 2](#)), had come to act as mediators between local (their home province) and national concerns. Born in various provinces under Spanish rule, most of the assemblymen had followed the same path — schooling at San Juan de Letran or the Ateneo

19 Charles Elliot, *The Philippines to the end of the Commission government: A study in tropical democracy* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merill, 1917), p. 93; Abinales, *Making Mindanao*, pp. 18–23.

20 *Philippine Free Press* (hereafter *PFPP*), 9 Nov. 1907; 16 Nov. 1907.

21 *PFPP*, 9 Nov. 1907; 16 Nov. 1907.

22 Zaide, *Documentary sources of Philippine history*, pp. 416–53.

Table 1: Philippine assemblymen: Major occupations

Occupation/s	1st Assembly (1907–9)	2nd Assembly (1910–12)	3rd Assembly (1912–13)
Lawyers	48	42	49
Agriculturalists	6	13	5
Agriculturalists/businessmen	4	3	3
Agriculturalists/landlords	2	4	2
Businessmen	1	4	3
Businessmen/medical doctors	0	1	0
Businessmen/landlords	4	2	1
Landlords	0	0	5
Landlords/teachers	0	1	0
Medical doctors	4	4	7
Teachers/professors	6	2	2
Pharmacists	2	0	1
Journalists	2	2	2
Others	1	3	1
Total	80	81	81

Note: The number of assemblymen increased to 81 in 1909.

Sources: Gregorio Nieva, *Philippine Assembly official directory, first Philippine Legislature* (Manila: Bureau of Printing, 1908), pp. 16–19; Ramon Diokno, *Asamblea Filipina directorio oficial, segunda legislatura Filipina* (Manila: Bureau of Printing, 1912), pp. 6–9; Teodoro Kalaw, *Directorio oficial de la Asamblea Filipina, Tercera legislatura Filipina, Primer periodo sesiones* (Manila: Bureau of Printing, 1913), pp. 6–9.

Municipal de Manila and then the Universidad de Santo Tomas to study law. As Benedict Anderson observed:

[The Christian Filipino elite] got to know one another well in a civilised ‘ring’ sternly refereed by the Americans. They might dislike one another, but they went to the same receptions, attended the same churches, lived in the same residential areas, shopped in the same fashionable streets, had affairs with each other’s wives, and arranged marriage between each other’s children.²³

Their homogeneity in many aspects was so marked that they had great potential to act as a political interest group, particularly to defend their taken-for-granted prerogatives and to put their wishes into practice.²⁴

As Julian Go puts it, despite the diverse geographical and spatial differences of the Philippines, colonial state-building served to provide the elite with a forum for

23 Benedict Anderson, ‘Cacique democracy in the Philippines: Origins and dreams’, *New Left Review*, 169 (1988): 11.

24 Robertson, ‘The extraordinary session of the Philippine legislature’, p. 518.

Table 2: Philippine assemblymen: Educational backgrounds

School	1st Assembly (1907–09)	2nd Assembly (1910–12)	3rd Assembly (1912–13)
San Juan de Letran	34	28	28
Ateneo Municipal de Manila	23	20	15
Universidad de Santo Tomas	52	35	33

Sources: Diokno, *Asamblea Filipina directorio oficial*; Kalaw, *Directorio oficial de la Asamblea Filipina*; Nieva, *Philippine Assembly official directory*.

discursive exchange such as in the Assembly.²⁵ For example, in handling bills, the Assembly in general favoured public works, education and agriculture because the Assembly expected some material benefits for the welfare of the Christian provinces they represented. In contrast, the Assembly was always suspicious of the civil service, constabulary, and insular police largely because they disfavoured intervention by the American-dominated Commission, thereby attempting to cripple its workings during sessions. Given the ever-present unequal power relations vis-à-vis American officials, Filipino assemblymen — not only from Mindanao, but also from all over the country — started to see themselves as the defenders of Mindanao for all Filipinos.

Undoubtedly, the Christian Filipino assembly members' resistance made the Commission quite wary and defensive.²⁶ One of the Commissioners noted that

while the assembly is doubtless genuinely representative of the Christian inhabitants of the several provinces which have elected its members, it is not, and could [not] be, in any sense representative of the non-Christian inhabitants of these provinces nor the Provinces of Benguet, Nueva Vizcaya, Lepanto-Bontoc, Agusan and the Moro Province [...] The Christian and non-Christian peoples of the Philippines have up to the present time had little [if] anything in common; indeed the relations between them have too often been those of active warfare.²⁷

Consequently, the Committee of Non-Christian Tribes, headed by Worcester along with two Filipino commissioners — T.H. Pardo de Tavera and Jose R. de Luzuriaga — made an investigative report on its legitimacy and unsurprisingly proposed 'the indefinite postponement' of Assembly Joint Resolution No. 18 on 26 March 1908.²⁸ Undertaking state-building in collaboration with the elite, American officials such as Worcester had been forced to grant the latter powers while limiting their ability to execute them. This subtle control was vital for the Commission to simultaneously induce the cooperation and consent of the Filipino elite while demonstrating American legitimacy over the Philippines. Given that more than half of the

25 Julian Go, *American empire and the politics of meaning: Elite political cultures in the Philippines and Puerto Rico during U.S. colonialism* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2008), p. 279.

26 *JPC*, 26 Mar. 1908, pp. 110–1.

27 *Ibid.*

28 *Ibid.*, pp. 64, 70, 105, 109–12.

assemblymen were lawyers, their weapon for undermining American hegemony was open and public attack in the media and through law-making.

The legislative debate over Mindanao's colonisation

Bills related to the colonisation of Mindanao accordingly began to be introduced in the Legislature as soon the Assembly was created in 1907. From 1907 to 1913, before the passing of Commission Act 2254, there were nine Assembly bills explicitly or implicitly concerning the colonisation of Mindanao (See [Tables 3](#) and [4](#)). The bills had mainly two kinds of purposes: the first category of bills focused on the migration of the landless or the poor. The rest focused on the creation of agricultural colonies. The former can be called a push-and-pull model, whose purpose was to alleviate overpopulation by means of migration to promote the resettlement of poor farmers in less densely populated areas of the Philippines such as Mindanao, Palawan and Mindoro. The latter was regarded as a model to dramatically improve the food supply through introducing modern agricultural technology to put an end to the chronic food shortages, thereby developing so-called independent Filipino farmers.

The areas under consideration were grouped into two main zones: areas targeted by the push-and-pull model were explicitly concerned with Mindanao, Mindoro and Palawan. These islands had the lowest population density and the largest percentage of uncultivated land in the Philippines. On the other hand, the later bills involving the agricultural colony model did not specify areas where such settlements would be established and rather ambiguously referred to 'uninhabited places' of the Philippine archipelago. As shown in [Table 4](#), however, 'uninhabited places' logically included not only Mindoro and Palawan, but also Mindanao, all islands known for their abundant land and unexploited natural resources.²⁹ Hence, the masking of Mindanao as a possible destination for population redistribution can be seen as a rhetorical legislative strategy to get the bills passed.

Nevertheless, it should be noted that the most of the authors of the nine bills were from provinces with high population densities (Cebu, Pangasinan, Batangas, Nueva Ecija); the exception were the two from Misamis in Mindanao (see [Table 5](#)). This suggests that demographic conditions — specifically, an ever-increasing population — in their provinces had something to do with the drafting of bills related to Mindanao's colonisation. Legislators from the more densely populated provinces would have felt the need to cope with the rising problems of chronic land shortages and unbalanced land distribution.

Let us examine the legislative process through which the bills — both the push-and-pull model and the agricultural colony model — were, respectively, discussed and debated in both Houses (for a summary, see [Table 3](#)). The four bills under the push-and-pull model were more or less alike in purpose. Three bills were introduced by Jose Clarin, a representative from Bohol, a 'regular' Christian-dominated province, who later became senator and authored another bill to develop a town named after his family in Misamis, Mindanao, where he and many Visayan Christians had migrated independently. His assumed territorial map

29 United States Bureau of Census, *Census of the Philippine Islands* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1903), II, pp. 28–30.

Table 3: Nine Assembly bills related to Mindanao's colonisation, 1907–13

Year introduced	Bill no. and title	Assemblymen responsible/Main features	Outcome
1907	<i>Assembly Bill 39:</i> An act to provide transportation and protection to Filipinos desiring to remove to the islands of Mindoro and Palawan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduced by Jose Clarin (Bohol) • Encouraged the poor without resources to go to Mindoro and Palawan • Provided for at most 16 ha of land and rations for six months, two work animals and medical service until they became independent 	Rejected
1909	<i>Assembly Bill 394:</i> An act providing facilities to the poor in the densely populated places, for removal to the northeast of Mindanao and to the island of Mindoro	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduced by Jose Clarin (Bohol) • Encouraged migration to Mindanao and Palawan, particularly the four provinces of Misamis, Surigao, Agusan and Mindoro • Provided housing, farm implements, public works, free food provision for one year and to prepare a possible site for migration with 16 ha of land 	Rejected
1910	<i>Assembly Bill 148:</i> An act to provide for the organisation of agricultural colonies in uninhabited places of the Philippine Islands under the direction of the Bureau of Labour and for appropriating funds for said purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduced by Isauro Gabaldon (Nueva Ecija) and Teodoro Kalaw (Batangas) 	Rejected

Continued

Table 3: Continued

Year introduced	Bill no. and title	Assemblymen responsible/Main features	Outcome
1910	Assembly <i>Bill 181</i> : An act to foster emigration to the Island of Mindanao	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduced by Deogracias Reyes (Pangasinan) and Nicolas Capistrano (Misamis) • Encouraged Mindanao migrants to permanently settle, by means of free transportation and various privileges such as exemption from <i>cedula</i> (head tax) and any direct tax during the first five years • The poor with property worth less than 500 pesos were eligible and had to stay there for at least five years 	Rejected
1910	Assembly <i>Bill 251</i> : An act to provide for the organisation of agricultural colonies in uninhabited places of the Philippine Islands, under the direction of the Bureau of Labour, and appropriating funds for said purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduced by Isauro Gabaldon (Nueva Ecija) and Teodoro Kalaw (Batangas) • Established an agricultural colony through the Bureau of Labour • Facilitated homesteading on public land • Free transportation 	Rejected

Continued

Table 3: Continued

Year introduced	Bill no. and title	Assemblymen responsible/Main features	Outcome
1911	<i>Assembly Bill 612:</i> An act providing for the organisation of agricultural colonies at uninhabited points in the Philippine Islands under the direction of the Bureau of Labour and for appropriating funds for that purpose	• Introduced by Isaura Gabaldon (Nueva Ecija) and Teodoro Kalaw (Batangas)	Rejected
1912	<i>Assembly Bill 209:</i> An act providing facilities for the poor in densely populated places for removing to the northeast of Mindanao and to the Island of Mindoro	• Introduced by Jose Clarin (Bohol)	Rejected
1913	<i>Assembly Bill 346: Ley que destina la cantidad de seiscientos mil pesos para establecer colonias y granjas de demostraciones agricolas, para nivelar la poblacion de estas islas, y para otros fines</i> [only Spanish original text is available]	• Introduced by Leon Borromeo (Misamis), Lucio Gonzales (Nueva Ecija) and Vicente Lozada (Cebu)	Substituted for Assembly Bill 399
1913	<i>Assembly Bill 399:</i> An act appropriating the sum of four hundred thousand pesos for establishing colonies and plantations for rice and other food grains, for bringing about an equal distribution of the population of these islands and for other purposes	• Introduced by Leon Borromeo (Misamis), Lucio Gonzales (Nueva Ecija) and Vicente Lozada (Cebu)	Passed and enacted as Commission Act 2254

Sources: Philippine Assembly, *Actas* (Manila, 1911), VI, pp. 20, 151, 167, 219–21; Philippine Assembly, *Actas* (Manila, 1913), VIII, pp. 4, 128, 134–6, 143, 155, 212, 223, 227; Philippine Assembly, *Diario* (Manila, 1912), VII, pp. 142–4; War Department, List of bills introduced in the Philippine Assembly during the inaugural, first and second sessions of the first Philippine Legislature, p. 4, BIA, 26854/13; War Department, Rejected bills first Legislature, pp. 176–85, BIA 364/150; War Department, Rejected bills second Legislature, pp. 192–9, BIA 364/151.

Table 4: Classification of nine assembly bills by objective and migrant destination

Bill No. (Year Introduced)	Destination (Author)
<i>Push-and-pull model</i>	
Assembly Bill 39 (1907)	Mindoro and Palawan (Clarin)
Assembly Bill 394 (1909)	Northeast Mindanao and Mindoro (Clarin)
Assembly Bill 181 (1910)	Mindanao (Reyes and Capistrano)
Assembly Bill 209 (1912)	Northeast Mindanao and Mindoro (Clarin)
<i>Agricultural colony model</i>	
Assembly Bill 148 (1910)	Uninhabited places (Gabaldon and Kalaw)
Assembly Bill 251 (1910)	Uninhabited places (Gabaldon and Kalaw)
Assembly Bill 612 (1911)	Uninhabited places (Gabaldon and Kalaw)
Assembly Bill 346 (1913)	Not specified (Borrromeo, Gonzales and Lozada)
Assembly Bill 399 (1913)	Not specified (Borrromeo, Gonzales and Lozada)

Sources: Philippine Assembly, *Actas* (Manila, 1911), VI, pp. 20, 151, 167, 219–21; Philippine Assembly, *Actas* (Manila, 1913), VIII, p. 4, 128, 134–6, 143, 155, 212, 223, 227; Philippine Assembly, *Diario* (Manila, 1912), VII, pp. 142–4; War Department, List of bills introduced in the Philippine Assembly during the inaugural, first and second sessions of the first Philippine Legislature, p. 4, BIA, 26854/13; War Department, Rejected bills first Legislature, pp. 176–85, BIA 364/150; War Department, Rejected bills second Legislature, pp. 192–9, BIA 364/154.

Table 5: Population densities of provinces whose representatives authored 9 bills

Province	Population density (persons/sq. mile)	Bill authors
Ilocos Sur	398	
Cebu	337	Lozada
Pangasinan	334	Reyes
Batangas	215	Kalaw
Bohol	178	Clarin
Nueva Ecija	62	Gonzales, Gabaldon
Misamis	47	Capistrano, Borrromeo
Surigao	16	
Zamboanga	15	
Cotabato	11	
Mindoro	10	
Davao	7	
Palawan	2	
(Average)	67	

Sources: Bureau of Census, *Census of the Philippine Islands* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1903), II, p. 28; Diokno, *Asamblea Filipina directorio oficial*, pp. 6–9; Kalaw, *Directorio oficial de la Asamblea Filipina*, pp. 6–9; Nieva, *Philippine Assembly official directory*, pp. 5–8.

of the Philippines was soon to cause issue with the Commission over the Assembly's jurisdiction.

Assembly Bill 39, which was initially introduced by Clarin on 12 November 1907, aimed to move poor Filipinos to Mindoro and Palawan to take up land.³⁰ This Bill did not talk about Mindanao at all. Applicants, who had to be economically hard up and at least sixteen years of age, were expected to receive various kinds of support such as food, medical services and sanitation. The budget proposed was 100,000 pesos. It was struck down by the Commission, however.³¹ Clarin's Bill was motivated by his disapproval of the increasing number of Filipinos emigrating to Hawaii as labourers; he wanted to divert such labour to less densely populated areas in the Philippines, where there was great possibility for economic progress and agricultural development.³² He felt that encouraging migration would serve sparsely populated areas in need of labour while giving families in Luzon and the Visayas the chance to take advantage of the riches of the 'promised land'.

A year-and-a-half later, Clarin introduced Assembly Bill 394 of 1909, which appears to be almost identical to Assembly Bill 39.³³ This too was rejected by the Commission for the following reasons: Palawan should have been included in the project; all provinces did not necessarily favour out-migration; the four provinces in favour of out-migration were distant from one another, making the management of the Bill difficult in practical terms; there seemed to be little chance for individuals to repay their debt; and the obligations and responsibilities of the assigned place were indefinite in nature. The Commission also commented on its technical inadequacies: 'this bill was received by late on the last day of the session of the Legislature as it contained numerous good features, and with necessary amendments might well be passed ... further consideration [should] be given to this very important subject at the next session'.³⁴

Clarin then authored Assembly Bill 209 on 26 November 1912, the title of which is also identical to that of Bill 394 (see [Table 3](#)).³⁵ Once again, although the Bill was passed at the Assembly, it was rejected by the Commission. The following recommendation was reported from the Committee on Matters Pertaining to the Department of Public Instruction:

This bill provided for a degree of paternalism inconsistent with a people as progressive and well developed as the people of the Philippine Islands, and your committee does not believe that the Legislature is justified in assuming the degree of incompetence on the part of the people that the passage of this bill would indicate. Besides, even if this were true, it calls for an appropriation of 750,000, which, in the present condition of the Treasury, does not seem advisable. Moreover, the bill is of such complex character

30 *PPF*, 16 Nov. 1907.

31 *Ibid.*

32 *PPF*, 21 Dec. 1907.

33 US War Department (hereafter War Department), List of bills introduced in the Philippine Assembly during the inaugural, first and second sessions of the first Philippine Legislature, United States National Archives, Record Group 350, Records of the Bureau of Insular Affairs (hereafter BIA), 26854/13.

34 *JPC*, 1910, pp. 593, 613.

35 War Department, Rejected bills first Legislature, pp. 176–85, BIA 364/150.

and contains so many provisions that it would require such comprehensive study as your committee is not able to give in these closing days of the special session.³⁶

None of the three bills drafted by Clarin were passed. An underlying motive for his repeated attempts to pass these bills was that the Bohol assemblyman had forged an interdependence with Mindanao through an inter-island network mediated by ongoing migration between Bohol and Misamis. Clarin strongly feared the detrimental effects to Christian Filipinos of a possible loss of Philippine sovereignty over Mindanao to the Americans, who wanted to dominate the island's rich natural resources.

Direct challenges to the authority of the Commission over the issue of Mindanao continued unabated. Assembly Bill 181, seeking migration to the island, was co-authored by two assemblymen in 1910: Deogracias Reyes and Nicolas Capistrano.³⁷ Capistrano, like Leon Borromeo, represented Misamis, a regular 'Christian' province north of Mindanao. The Bill focused on the poor with property worth less than 500 pesos and was accordingly expected to serve to improve their well-being. The destination for migration specified Mindanao alone. The Committee on Affairs pertaining to the Moro Province within the Commission spontaneously rejected the Bill, because 'it [contained] certain provisions affecting the whole of Mindanao, and therefore the Moro Province, over which the Assembly [had] no jurisdiction.'³⁸ Undoubtedly, it would obviously violate the Organic Act, as the Bill straightforwardly and explicitly focused on Mindanao. Nevertheless, Capistrano, who was a native of Misamis in Mindanao and who was also the chair of the Committee of Mindanao Affairs and Special Provinces, would not give up the cause of defending the interests of Mindanao against American rule — it was almost of equal benefit to his own people, as the ruling elite of Misamis, and of all Filipinos. Indeed, he dared to challenge the Organic Act.

Meanwhile, the idea of constructing an agricultural colony was, for the first time, presented in Assembly Bill 148 on 24 October 1910 by Isauro Gabaldon (Nueva Ecija) and Teodoro Kalaw (Batangas). The regions that they represented were known as heavily populated regions of Luzon. During the same session, however, it was substituted by a modified version — Assembly Bill 251 — on 10 November 1910.³⁹ Both were identical in title and substance. Bill 251 included the following aspects: the creation of an agricultural colony; the encouragement of homesteading on public land; the assignment of a supervisor to oversee the work of an agricultural colony; and a free transportation service to the destination by the Bureau of Labor. The explanatory statement of Assembly Bill 251, prepared by Gabaldon and Kalaw, deserves special attention.⁴⁰ It explained how, despite the availability and fertility of vast areas of land within the Philippines where American sovereignty was established, many 'unsettled regions' of the Philippines failed to achieve agricultural development.

36 *JPC*, Manila, 1913, p. 696.

37 United States Philippine Assembly, *Diario de Sesiones de la Asamblea Filipina* (hereafter *Diario*), (Manila: Bureau of Printing, 1911), pp. 651–2.

38 *JPC*, Manila, 1911, p. 713.

39 War Department, Rejected bills second Legislature, pp. 192–9, BIA 364/151.

40 *Ibid.*

They attributed such an anomaly to ‘the lack of labour, though American and foreign enterprises had made a success’. Yet, it was insufficient and unsatisfactory. Accordingly, Bill 251 suggested that more development measures should be encouraged through the immigration of Filipino labourers, particularly of those who had remained landless in highly populated areas. Interestingly, this statement implicitly indicates the Bill’s hidden aims, given that the proposed migrant destination to ‘unsettled regions’ in areas ‘free from typhoons’ undoubtedly refers to Mindanao, which is outside the typhoon belt, unlike Luzon and the Visayas. In this sense, introducing the Bill may be understood as the authors’ claim for their legitimate share in the economic exploitation of Mindanao. The Bill was rejected by the Commission, which found the plan extremely ‘paternal’; in addition, the plan was said to have no positive prospects; further, there had been too little time for careful examination during the session. In the subsequent session, Assembly Bill 612, identical to Assembly Bill 251 of 1910, was proposed on 16 November 1911.⁴¹ This bill was rejected too, this time on financial grounds: ‘Your committee favors the passage of this or a similar bill as soon as the finances of the Government will justify the expenditure of the money — a condition which does not exist at present.’⁴²

The eighth bill, Assembly Bill 346, was introduced on 12 January 1913 by three assemblymen — Leon Borromeo (Misamis), Lucio Gonzales (Nueva Ecija) and Vicente Lozada (Cebu) — and contained the following: creation of a colony for agricultural experiments; equal distribution of the population; and appropriation of 600,000 pesos for funding.⁴³ This Bill was immediately substituted by Assembly Bill 399 on 31 January 1913 to reduce the amount for funding to 400,000 pesos. Its modification was suggested by the Special Committee to eliminate any grounds for refusal. The Bill was finally passed in the Assembly on 1 February 1913 and forwarded to the Commission on 3 February 1913. It was consequently adopted as Commission Act 2254 after minor changes.⁴⁴

The debate in the Commission, after the two modifications had been made, guaranteed its passage by majority vote. There were six ‘yes’ votes (five votes were cast by the Filipino commissioners, along with the American governor-general) and two ‘no’ votes. The two ‘no’ votes were cast by two American commissioners — Newton Gilbert and Dean Worcester — who both disliked the ‘paternalism’ which they saw in the Assembly bills. Gilbert stated that, for him, the Bill was quite ‘paternal’ and ‘socialistic’ in nature, and was thus far removed from being an experiment in agricultural development. He noted that this kind of Bill may be a bad example for the majority of Filipinos hoping for early and immediate establishment of self-government. Consequently, he believed it would have an unfavourable outcome fairly quickly.⁴⁵ Worcester added that there was no reason for this Bill to provide for farm cattle and implements through public funds to migrant settlers who would be sent to such a fertile and large place such as Mindanao. For this reason, he felt that material

41 *Diario*, 1912, pp. 142–4.

42 *JPC*, 1912, p. 880.

43 United States Philippine Assembly, *Actas de la Asamblea Filipina* (Manila, 1913), pp. 128, 212, 223, 227 (hereafter *Actas*).

44 *JPC*, 1913, pp. 612–14.

45 *Ibid.*, p. 625.

assistance would be more of a hindrance to further agricultural development.⁴⁶ To these commissioners Bill 399 seemed to aim at offering a generous ‘give-away’, which was contrary to the vision of the agricultural experiment model. That is, the development of independent farmers.

The legislative debate accompanying the bills reveals that there were two kinds of reasons why the Commission rejected the Assembly bills: technical and political. First, the Assembly was said to have handled the bills ineptly during the sessions and some were sent to the Commission on the last day of their session. Due to the Assembly’s inexperience in the new legislative process — a model based on the US House of Representatives — this tardiness made obtaining the Commission’s approval even more impossible.⁴⁷ It would be incorrect to say, however, that the Assembly failed to deliberate on each bill properly. As Table 6 indicates, seven bills, except for two bills introduced by Clarin, had been referred to various committees during the Assembly’s sessions for further revisions and modifications at least before being sent to the Commission.⁴⁸ The second kind of reason given for rejection was political: bills were rejected due to a lack of appropriation funding or thrown out because they contained provisions relating to Mindanao, which was regarded as being beyond the Assembly’s jurisdiction. All the ‘push-and-pull’ bills were rejected. The bills involving the agricultural colony model seemed to be more flexible, in that no destination was specified, but the result for the first few was the same. The American commissioners always suspected that the Assembly bills contained more or less ‘paternalistic’ features, a hindrance to their notion of self-rule, and further evidence of Filipinos’ unpreparedness and inability to govern themselves.

Despite the opposition of two commissioners, how and why was Assembly Bill 399 approved in 1913? In order to answer this question, we need to consider at least two factors — external and internal — affecting the evolution of this legislation. One external reason was related to food shortages in the Philippines. Since the United States’ takeover of the Philippines, two serious rice shortages had already taken place, in 1903 and 1911,⁴⁹ attributed to poor harvests triggered by drought, cattle disease and transmittable diseases such as cholera. In order to cope, the colonial state, upon solving the immediate food crises, needed to establish a sustainable food farming system as soon as possible. As a countermeasure, two plans were carried out: the introduction of scientific agricultural methods to increase crop yields and promoting rice as a staple food. Gilbert, who was acting governor-general and one of the leaders most concerned about economic conditions in the Philippines, referred to Mindanao as a promising site for rice plantations.⁵⁰ His plan was to convert a broad valley of

46 Ibid.

47 Robertson, ‘The extraordinary session of the Philippine legislature’, p. 521; Barizo, ‘The making and establishment of the first Philippine Assembly’, p. 135.

48 The *Actas* and *Diario* provide little information on how each bill was discussed by the committees of the Assembly, unlike the reports of the Philippine Commission. The lack of substantial data such as committee reports considerably obscures the actual workings of the Assembly.

49 Philippine Commission, *RPC* (Manila, 1912), pp. 22–3, 39–41; Hugo H. Miller, *Economic conditions in the Philippines* (Boston: Ginn and Co., 1913), pp. 33–4. In 1911, the Philippines took urgent measures to import 11,400 metric tons of rice, equivalent to 1,715,552 pesos in value, and to recommend corn as a substitute food. See *JPC*, 1913, p. 23.

50 *The Filipino People*, I, 4 (1912), p. 19; Lewis E. Gleeck, *Nueva Ecija in American times: Homesteaders, hacenderos and politicians* (Manila: Philippine Historical Conservation Society, 1981), pp. 81–2.

Table 6: Bills and committees of the Philippine Assembly referred to

Bill No. (Year introduced)	Committee/s
Assembly Bill 39 (1907)	Unknown
Assembly Bill 394 (1909)	Unknown
Assembly Bill 181 (1910)	Appropriation, Labour and Immigration, Mindanao Affairs and Special Governments
Assembly Bill 148 (1910)	Agriculture, Appropriation, Labour and Immigration
Assembly Bill 251 (1910)	Agriculture, Appropriation, Labour and Immigration
Assembly Bill 209 (1912)	Labour and Immigration, Mindanao Affairs and Special Governments
Assembly Bill 612 (1911)	Labour and Immigration
Assembly Bill 346 (1913)	Special Committee
Assembly Bill 399 (1913)	Special Committee

Sources: Diokno, *Asamblea Filipina directorio oficial*, pp. 6–9; Kalaw, *Directorio oficial de la Asamblea Filipina*, pp. 6–9; Nieva, *Philippine Assembly official directory*, pp. 5–8; Philippine Assembly, *Actas* (Manila, 1911), VI, pp. 20, 151, 167, 219–21; Philippine Assembly, *Actas* (Manila, 1913), VIII, pp. 4, 128, 134–6, 143, 155, 212, 223, 227; Philippine Assembly, *Diario* (Manila, 1912), VII, pp. 142–4; War Department, List of bills introduced in the Philippine Assembly during the inaugural, first and second sessions of the first Philippine Legislature, p. 4, BIA, 26854/13; War Department, Rejected bills first Legislature, pp. 176–85, BIA 364/150; War Department, Rejected bills second Legislature, pp. 192–9, BIA 364/151.

Cotabato province into a vast rice granary. To transform such enthusiasm into reality, at the opening of a session of the Third Legislature on 16 October 1912, a message from Governor-General Cameron Forbes, who expected the Legislature to draft the bills concerning the food shortage, was read:

I desire to recommend to the thoughtful consideration of the Legislature a plan which attempts the development of some of these areas upon as large a scale as many seem wise, for the two-fold purpose of increasing the food supply of the Islands and of encouraging immigration of people from the more populous and sterile districts into those parts of the Archipelago where nature has been most bounteous in her gifts. Such tracts of land may be found in various parts of the Archipelago, some of the best of them being in the Islands of Mindanao; and I would like to suggest what seems to be sometimes forgotten, that the Philippine Archipelago consists not of Luzon and the Visayas alone, but of Luzon, the Visayas and the Moro province.⁵¹

Hence, the introduction and approval of Assembly Bill 399 can be understood as a realistic option, or as a political compromise on the part of both Houses in the face of deteriorating economic conditions in the Philippines. Without a food crisis, Assembly Bill 399 would not have been passed. The other reason was the change in membership within the Commission owing to the rising tide of ‘democratisation’ in US politics which contributed to a smoother session in the interests of the Filipinos. When the Commission came into being in 1900, its members were originally all

51 *JPC*, 1913, p. 23.

Americans. In 1912, however, ‘Filipinisation’ had already pervaded the Commission due largely to the rise of Democratic President Woodrow Wilson (after decades of Republican rule in Washington) and the consequent appointment of Francis Burton Harrison as Governor-General of the Philippine Islands, to the extent that more than half of the commissioners’ seats were occupied by Filipinos. This explains the number of ‘no’ votes cast by the two American members of the Commission and the six ‘yes’ votes from the five Filipino commissioners (Frank Branagan, Jose de Luzuriaga, Rafael Palma, T.H. Pardo de Tavera and Juan Sumulong) and the American Governor-General. This meant that all except Gilbert and Worcester favoured Assembly Bill 399. In a politically fluid situation, the Christian Filipino assemblymen had succeeded in winning over the Filipino Commissioners to get the Bill passed.

The other debate over Mindanao separation

To look at the wider political context, we also need to consider the growing tensions over Mindanao affairs during these years between American capitalists and Moro provincial officials (mostly Americans and their Moro supporters) in Zamboanga and the Christian Filipino elite over the idea of making Mindanao a US territory. Attempts to separate Mindanao from the Philippines reached a climax twice, in 1905–6 and 1909–13. The nationalistic claim of Philippine sovereignty over Mindanao was reflected in this debate, and involved not only the authors of the nine bills, but also local government officials and the Philippine media. For the bills’ authors, Mindanao constituted an indispensable part of the Philippine territory. The Christian Filipino elite explicitly represented themselves as defenders of the Philippine nation against the threatened loss of Mindanao.

The debate over Mindanao can be described as one of the biggest political struggles involving the centre (Manila) and the local (Zamboanga) versus the imperial centre and metropole of Washington, specifically the Department of War and the White House. The first attempt at political separation began with the resolution titled ‘Mindanao for the Americans’, unanimously passed and approved by the Zamboanga Chamber of Commerce (hereafter the Chamber) on 8 August 1905.⁵² This document contended that Mindanao, being separate from the Philippine body politic, should be given the status of a US territory. This resolution was made in time for the visit of Taft, then the US Secretary of War, who arrived in Zamboanga ten days later.⁵³ For the Americans, a territory referred to an administrative area which did not yet qualify for the full status of being a state. The incorporation of Mindanao as a US territory would indicate that its land, sooner or later, would be integrated into the United States.⁵⁴ The Chamber pointed out the following reasons to justify the legitimacy of its claim: the availability of vast amounts of fertile land in Mindanao; that there was no

52 ‘Translation from *El Renacimiento*’, 17 Aug. 1905, BIA 14464.

53 *Manila Times (MT)*, 21 Aug. 1905.

54 The sovereignty of territory, though having a limited autonomy, belonged to the Federal government. As early as 1901, the US Supreme Court decided that the Philippines was classified as ‘an unincorporated territory’. See Julian Go, ‘Introduction: Global perspectives on the U.S. colonial state in the Philippines’, in *The American colonial state in the Philippines: Global perspective*, ed. Julian Go and Anne L. Foster (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), p. 7.

hindrance to America's civilising projects due to the limited number of natives; that American settlers had a need to propagate their Western civilisation in the colony; and Christian Filipinos did not possess any system for self-governance and, therefore, they were not capable of ruling Moro Province. At that time, Zamboanga published a weekly newspaper called the *Mindanao Herald* under the auspices of its foreign business community. Its editor, Samuel DeRackin, who was also President of the Bank of Zamboanga, waged a series of political campaigns supporting Mindanao separation. From July to September of 1905, the *Herald* featured articles and editorials related to the Chamber's resolution, such as: 'We demand separation', 'Colonisation of Mindanao', and 'Mindanao's ambition'.⁵⁵

The other debate was initially proposed by Moro Province. In its annual report in 1909, Colonel Ralph Hoyt, Acting Governor of the Moro Province, recommended the plan titled, 'the Mindanao Plantations', which was about the permanent separation of Mindanao, the Sulu archipelago, and Palawan, inclusive of neighbouring islands from the rest of the Philippine archipelago.⁵⁶ In this plan, Hoyt strongly emphasised that despite Moro Province's potential for great change and material improvement, it had failed to attain this end: fragile and unstable surroundings were the biggest obstacles in inducing capital investment and an influx of more able settlers from abroad.⁵⁷ Hoyt's recommendations included: making Mindanao the coal station and naval base within the Philippines; continuing the current military rule; maximising the use of natural resources for large-scale plantations; and allocating reservation sites for the native population. Following its first resolution in 1905, the Chamber decided to adopt the resolution again on 30 January 1910, adding that 'we pledge ourselves to use every effort to have Mindanao and the adjacent Islands become a territory of the United States'.⁵⁸

Both debates, which took place just before and after the creation of the Assembly in 1907, had similar aims regarding Mindanao's development and both also wanted Mindanao separated from the Philippine body politic. Some officials of Moro Province and the Chamber already thought of Mindanao as a US territory. Following the creation of the Assembly of 1907, both Moro Province and the Chamber feared that political and economic conditions would only become less favourable. On 8 April 1905, twelve days after the the Governor-General Luke Wright publicly announced an election for delegates to the newly established Assembly, an editorial in the *Herald* entitled 'A white man's country' argued strongly that 'The Moro Province is a white man's country and will remain so. The native

55 *Mindanao Herald (MH)*, 22 July 1905; 12 Aug. 1905; 26 Aug. 1905; 2 Sept. 1905; 9 Sept. 1905; 16 Sept. 1905; Wayne W. Thompson, 'Governors of the Moro Province: Wood, Bliss, and Pershing in the Southern Philippines, 1903–1913' (Ph.D. diss., University of California, San Diego, 1975), p. 115. During Taft's visit to Zamboanga, a special issue of the *MH* requesting a territorial government for the Moro Province was distributed; see *MT*, 21 Aug. 1905.

56 Samuel Kong Tan, 'The Muslim armed struggle in the Philippines, 1900–1941' (Ph.D. diss., Syracuse University, 1973), pp. 180–81.

57 Extracts from annual report of the governor of Moro province for the fiscal year ended June 30, 1909, BIA 14464/19.

58 Resolution passed by the Zamboanga Chamber of Commerce at a general meeting held at Zamboanga, Moro province, Philippine Islands, 10 Jan. 1910, BIA 14464/18.

population is infinitesimal, and conditions are so entirely different here than in the northern provinces.⁵⁹

The Chamber also believed that Christian Filipinos could not be trusted to govern the region. The editorial was immediately followed by two articles outlining the Chamber's political campaign for separation. DeRackin, in particular, insisted that current policies in Moro Province were inadequate and counter-productive which he attributed to Christian Filipinos' inability to govern the region.⁶⁰ Clearly the debates indicated Zamboanga's foreign businessmen's fears about being placed under the political control of Christian Filipinos. Nevertheless, those who were pressing to separate Mindanao from the Philippines failed to get the support of Manila and Washington, or even Zamboanga,⁶¹ with the exception of a tiny group of Manila-based American journalists.⁶² Washington put an end to the chaos by announcing that 'the administration has no intention at this time of dismembering Mindanao from "the Philippine group"'.⁶³ But matters did not end there.

Christian Filipinos' fierce opposition and Muslim Filipinos' response

A furious and nation-wide opposition and agitation by the Christian Filipino elite erupted, particularly in the pro-Filipino media. Soon after the publication of 'A white man's country', heated arguments broke out between those for and against Mindanao separation. The Filipino newspaper *La Vida Filipinas* opposed the plan in an article entitled 'Three stars of the Philippine banner'.⁶⁴ Another Filipino newspaper, *El Renacimiento*, published the whole text of the Chamber's resolution on the same day — 17 August 1905 — that the US Secretary of War, William Taft, was scheduled to visit Zamboanga, through which the move for separation taking place far from Manila soon came to be known to the public.⁶⁵ Furthermore, *La Vanguardia*, a pro-nationalist newspaper, suspected that the real purpose of Secretary Jacob Dickinson's removing his visits to Misamis and Surigao from his itinerary was to warrant Mindanao separation.⁶⁶ In addition, a petition signed by the provincial governor of Misamis and eighty-nine other local officials was also forwarded to Washington through the governor-general.⁶⁷ Opposition to the separation of Mindanao surfaced and continued for almost a year until the end of 1906.⁶⁸ The opposition's campaign seemed more influential and profound than that of those agitating for separation. Matters reached a climax when a number of memoranda signed by those against the plan were brought to the attention of President Theodore Roosevelt.⁶⁹ The Manila government, which handled all memoranda forwarded to Washington, tried

59 *MH*, 8 Apr. 1905.

60 *MH*, 12 Aug. 1905.

61 Thompson, 'Governors of the Moro Province', p. 122.

62 *MH*, 26 Aug. 1905.

63 McIntyre to Eliot, 19 Sep. 1906, BIA 14464/4; de la Vina to Edwards, 26 Jan. 1907, BIA 14464/11.

64 Translation from *La Vida Filipina*, 10 July 1906, BIA 14464/3; *MT*, 10 July 1906.

65 Fergusson to Wiederkehr, 1 June 1907, BIA 14464/13.

66 *MT*, 9 Aug. 1910.

67 McIntyre to Governor of Misamis, 1 May 1906, BIA 14464/1.

68 Rao to Taft, 19 Aug. 1906, BIA 14464/7; Municipality of Dapitan to Taft, 12 Sept. 1906, BIA 14464/10; Veloso to the Philippine Commission, 11 Dec. 1906, BIA 14464/12.

69 Roosevelt to Eliot, 13 Sept. 1906, BIA 14464/4.

to remain neutral on this particular matter. Acting Governor-General Cameron Forbes had only this to say: 'I recommend that no action be taken on it as there were a number of Moros.'⁷⁰ The situation became tense and volatile, especially after the creation of the Philippine Assembly.

Three years later, in 1910, a second debate was staged. Misamis' delegate to the Assembly, Capistrano, sent a petition to the visiting Secretary of War of the United States demanding that Mindanao be placed under the direct rule of Christian Filipinos:

The petition which the inhabitants of the island of Mindanao respectfully present to the Congress of the United States through the worthy means of Your Honor, referring to the extension of the jurisdiction of the Philippine Assembly to the parts of said Island inhabited by Moros and other non-Christian tribes, so that there may be only legislative power in the islands, the Philippine Legislature, instead of the three that now exist: the Commission, the Legislative Council of Zamboanga, and the Philippine Assembly ... [the] Assembly, which now satisfactorily cooperate to legislate for the Christian peoples, will be more competent to legislate for the small remainder of the country inhabited by Moros and non-Christian, who from their ignorance require simpler laws and a simpler government, even though a firmer one, if desired.⁷¹

The second debate deserves special attention because it involves other provinces of Mindanao, particularly Zamboanga, Misamis, Surigao, and other local governments as far as Negros in the Visayas, Mindoro, and Bulacan in Luzon.⁷² The threat of Mindanao being separated from the Philippines had awakened Filipino nationalism over the issue: who owns Mindanao? Behind this resistance was the Christian Filipino nationalists' intention to take full control over Mindanao, sincerely believing that the second largest island belonged to *Las Islas Filipinas*. Such an objective could only be fulfilled if the region would be able to parry the separatist aspirations of American officials, big planters, and their Moro protégés.

As described earlier the seeds of this political turmoil were sown when the colonised Philippines was segregated into 'civilised' and 'wild'⁷³ and Section 7 of the Organic Act of 1902 prescribed that 'all the legislative power, heretofore conferred on the Commission in all that part of said islands not inhabited by Moros or other non-Christian tribes shall be vested in a Legislature consisting of two Houses — The Commission and the Philippine Assembly.'⁷⁴ The Christian elite were highly dissatisfied with their exclusion from Mindanao affairs.

Some sectors of Philippine society clearly saw the move as America's ploy to destroy their sense of national integrity.⁷⁵ Given that the setting up of Moro Province itself was viewed with suspicion, the plan to separate Mindanao from the

70 Forbes to Dickinson, 5 Aug. 1908, BIA 5075/30.

71 Capistrano to Dickinson, 11 Aug. 1910, BIA 14464/21.

72 US War Department, *Special report of J.M. Dickinson, Secretary of War, to the President on the Philippines* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1910), pp. 37–40.

73 Vicente Rafael, *White love and other events in Filipino history* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2000), pp. 19–51.

74 Zaide, *Documentary sources of Philippine history*, p. 421.

75 *El Renacimiento*, 10 Aug. 1905.

Philippines was bound to spark political contestation. Opposition was strong from the Christian Filipinos in Misamis and Surigao where, prior to the creation of Moro Province, autonomy had already been provided. The Christian elite had been granted substantial legislative power, and hence could mobilise a large-scale and persistent resistance within public and official realms. Capistrano, for instance, challenged the authority of military rule in Moro Province in introducing with Pangasinan assemblyman Deogracias Reyes Assembly Bill 181 in October 1910 to make Mindanao a 'Filipino' and not a 'white man's' country. The political power vested in the Christian elite had expanded dramatically to become stronger and more influential than ever. Their influence was felt throughout the colonial system, even if they were colonial subjects themselves, and they came to constitute a vital counterpart to the colonial government based in Manila.

Meanwhile, unlike Christian Filipinos who responded aggressively to the debate over Mindanao separation, the Muslims were demonstrably ambivalent. During the first debate in 1905, Moro Province was still run by Governor Wood, who was still restoring peace, quelling uprisings and chasing 'outlaws'. The primary purpose of American direct rule over Mindanao was to weaken the political influence of the *datus* (traditional elite), and then turn Muslim society into a tribal ward system, where traditional leaders would be expected to serve as headmen representing each ward.⁷⁶ Some leaders disliked and opposed American military rule,⁷⁷ however, they quickly realised that they were powerless and their strategies were feeble. Consequently, the majority of Muslims, while resorting to sporadic resistance, became rapidly submissive to the American military for their own purposes. Their leaders were mainly appointed as intermediaries between the Americans and the ordinary Muslims, or between the American military and the so-called outlaws. As a result Muslim voices were hardly heard during the first debate over Mindanao in Zamboanga.⁷⁸

When the debate resurfaced in 1909, two years after the creation of the Philippine Assembly, however, the responses of Muslims, particularly the elite *datus*, became more public and articulate. The *datus* requested lasting protection from the Americans against the Christian Filipinos, as well as over Mindanao. They collectively rejected the Christian Filipinos' claims over Moro Province and Mindanao. Datu Mandi, the most powerful and influential Muslim leader of Zamboanga, as well as an American military aide, is a good example: he strongly favoured the rule of the American military as colonisers of Moro Province:

As I look about, I see far more Moros than the Filipinos contingent, and if that is so, that is the reason it is called the Moro Province ... If the American government does not

76 Peter G. Gowing, *Mandate in Moroland: The American government of Muslim Filipinos, 1899–1920* (Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1983), pp. 112–16.

77 One good example of this is Datu Ali of Cotabato. *Ibid.*, pp. 151–4, 156–9.

78 Jeremy Beckett, 'The defiant and the compliant: The *datus* of Magindanao under colonial rule', in *Philippine social history: Global trade and local transformations*, ed. Alfred McCoy and Ed C. de Jesus (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1982), pp. 391–414; Paul A. Kramer, *The blood of government: Race, empire, the United States and the Philippines* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006); Michael Salman, *The embarrassment of slavery: Controversies over bondage and nationalism in the American colonial Philippines* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2001); Tan, 'The Muslim armed struggle'.

want the Moro Province any more they should give it back to us. It is a Moro province. It belongs to us.⁷⁹

Another prominent *datu*, Hadji Nuno proclaimed:

We are a different race; we have a different religion; we are Mohammedans. And if we should be given over to the [Christian] Filipinos, how much more would they treat us badly, when they treated even the Spanish badly who were their own mothers and their own fathers in generation? How did they treat them? Think about it! Think twice! We far prefer to be in the hands of the Americans, who are father and mother to us now, than to be turned over to another people.⁸⁰

These highly politicised speeches made by the *datu*s to welcome the visiting US Secretary of War, Jacob Dickinson, to Zamboanga on 23 August 1910, did not clearly suggest whether they favoured Mindanao separation. Considering the nature of the occasion, a gathering of almost 200 Christian Filipinos and 2,000 Muslims, their expressed desires favouring lasting American rule of Mindanao can hardly be accepted at face value.⁸¹ For the Muslim elite, the occasion was a political ritual to publicly demonstrate their allegiance and loyalty to the American military. In other words, the Muslim leaders tried to convince the Americans to free Mindanao from the agitation of Christian Filipinos. Secretary Dickinson was helpless, but announced his reluctance to entrust Mindanao affairs to Christian Filipinos right after four *datu*s publicly swore their allegiance to America.⁸²

Dickinson's address at Zamboanga discouraged Christian Filipinos because he emphasised the importance of listening to the voices of the majority in Mindanao:

When you go before Congress to urge that the time has come for Philippine independence, your main argument is bound to be that government should rest upon the consent of the governed. Now if that be true, are you occupying a consistent position when you ask the American government to withdraw from the present administration and turn over 335,000 Moros to be governed by 66,000 Christians?⁸³

The speeches were sensationalised in a Manila-based daily newspaper: 'Moros offer allegiance to US and say they will fight' and 'Filipinos can't have Moros to govern says Secretary Dickinson'.⁸⁴

Throughout America's rule in Mindanao, the Muslims were considered as the 'silent majority'. The discourses of the *datu*s presented here can hardly be considered to represent the whole of Muslim society; they reflected instead the merits of the *datu*s themselves, whose status had been redefined by colonialism. It is safe to say that the Muslims, except for certain *datu*s, neither favoured nor opposed the debate over Mindanao separation. But the Muslim elite were sensitive to the subtle changes of

79 Forbes, *The Philippine Islands*, II, p. 44.

80 *Ibid.*, p. 45.

81 *MT*, 24 Aug. 1910.

82 *Ibid.*

83 Address by Jacob Dickinson, Secretary of War at Zamboanga, 23 Aug. 1910, BIA 19289/53; Can the Filipino and the Moro be amalgamated, BIA 5075/94/B.

84 *MT*, 24 Aug. 1910.

governance in Mindanao and Moro Province and felt insecure as Christian Filipinos began agitating against Mindanao separation. The continuing struggle of the Christian Filipinos to attempt to establish migrant colonies in Mindanao, through legislation and media attacks, stirred up the issue of who owned Mindanao.

Despite their predicament, the Muslims failed to mobilise their power to prevent Christian Filipino agitation, largely because they were never organised as a monolithic group. Instead, they were differentiated into numerous regional and linguistic sub-groups and hence, unlike the Christian Filipinos, they failed to consolidate and organise their struggle. The Muslims could only resort to seeking protection from the US military — in short, the retention of Moro Province and Mindanao under American rule. Put differently, the bond between the American military and the Muslim elite was cohesive as long as they had a common foe: Christian Filipinos. The Christian Filipino elite viewed the debates and the attendant responses from the Muslims as a great threat to the territorial foundation of Filipino nationhood.

Conclusion

This paper has examined why the Filipino Christian elite regarded Mindanao as a territorial asset in the early years of the American administration, pursuing this goal in a series of bills to enact migration and resettlement in Mindanao from the more populated Christian majority areas. The motives of the bills' drafters were not entirely consistent, and, in fact, were rather more situational. All of them, however, developed a common vision and interest with regard to Mindanao as an integral part of the Philippine nation. The assemblymen, with their similar cultural, educational and occupational backgrounds, considered themselves to be 'genuine representatives of the Philippines' as a whole, and were dedicated to defending its national interests, including protecting the nation's sovereignty over Mindanao.

The national territorial map of the Christian Filipino elite was increasingly engendered through their translocal communication and experiences under the Americans, as many of them resettled or established economic and labour migration networks in the less developed islands, in particular, in northern Mindanao. The Assembly was vital as the legislative body for the Filipino elite in terms of practical political education, but also as a public sphere under colonialism.⁸⁵ This new public sphere was where assemblymen in Manila formed and accumulated social capital beyond their regional differences, and where they shared their common concerns and interests,⁸⁶ institutionalising translocal networks of knowledge, information and sentiment. The introduction of bills on Mindanao's colonisation affirmed what the Christian elite regarded as self-evident, that the island was part of the Philippines. This territorial concept was a byproduct of both Spanish colonialism and Filipino nationhood-in-the making.

Majul, who apparently underestimated the role of the Filipinos in crafting the colony project in Cotabato, had assumed that this project was the sole handiwork

85 Churchill says that the Assembly provided the political leaders with a forum where they could cultivate political sentiments on independence. See Bernadita Reyes Churchill, *The Philippines independence missions to the United States, 1919–1934* (Manila: National Historical Institute, 1983), p. 4.

86 Benedict Anderson, *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism* (London and New York: Verso, 2006[1983]), p. 140.

of the Americans. As this paper pointed out, in fact, two Americans in the Commission were vehemently opposed to it but were outvoted at the very end. The colony project, was approved and then implemented under the aegis of the Moro Province with General John Pershing as governor (1909–13). Still American capitalists and sympathetic American officials (the likes of Captain Hoyt) desiring the separation of Mindanao from the Philippine territory for Americans, fuelled the already ingrained hostility between the Moros and Christian Filipinos, who were supposed to become friendly neighbours in the colony project. This plan was not only expressed in the petitions during 1905–6 and 1909–13, but was pursued for years, notably in the failed Bacon Bill submitted in 1926 to the US Congress, which aimed to make all of Mindanao a permanent territory of the United States.⁸⁷

Also, Majul's underestimation of the nature of the colony project was perhaps reinforced by the succeeding administration of the Moros by an American civilian government under Frank Carpenter (1913–17), who tried to uphold the same civilising mission. The project, however, had a distinctly 'Filipinised' face that would change the tone of the presumed enmity between Moros and Filipinos while these two communities were being prepared for Philippine independence. Under these circumstances, it would be misleading to think that Christian Filipino interest in Mindanao was novel or something discovered only after Philippine colonial state-building had begun to take place under the Americans. Rather, the nationalistic view of the geo-political map, emphasising the territorial integrity of the Philippines comprising Luzon, the Visayas, and Mindanao, must have taken shape over the long period of Spanish colonialism of more than 300 years. During this period, the Christian elite must have absorbed and formed into their mindset such a 'self-evident' territorial concept of Mindanao. The Moro *datus* did not seem to have, or display, similar nationalistic sentiments, perhaps on account of their own diverse origins in multiple independent sultanates; also they were oriented toward a non-Western world where nationhood or modern state formation had yet to be encoded in their discourse. Perhaps more intriguing is how the inherited notion of Philippine territory came to be re-contextualised as 'natural' in an entangled colonial space, consequently acquiring a new nationalistic meaning. Thus assemblymen representing other regions of the Philippines proclaimed themselves responsible for Mindanao.

For them, the notion that Mindanao was an inseparable part of Philippine territory was not to be questioned, a fervent belief which they demonstrated through legislative debate and the media, despite the fact that the majority of the inhabitants in that region were not Christians. Mindanao was part of the Christian Filipino elite's territorial map and was not for the Americans to own or administer on behalf of the Moros that they had conquered. In this way, the assemblymen were upholding the idea of Filipino nationhood; and Mindanao now shines as one of the stars in the Philippine flag.

87 Howard Fry, 'The Bacon Bill of 1926: New light on an exercise in divide-and-rule', *Philippine Studies*, 26, no. 3 (1978): 257–73.