

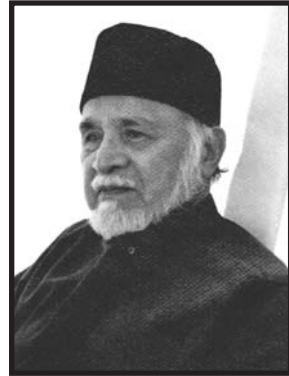
Introduction

Islam and Philippine Society: The Writings of Cesar Adib Majul

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Cesar Adib Majul is the author of ten reprinted articles that comprise the present volume of the *Asian Studies* journal. He is an erudite scholar, well-remembered by his colleagues, students, and friends in the University of the Philippines (UP), in academic circles in Southeast Asia, and in other parts of the world. It augurs well for the UP Asian Center that they are honoring him and his contribution to Philippine scholarship, especially his writings on Filipino nationalism and Muslims in the Philippines.



Those who knew and had read Dean Majul, as he was popularly known, must be familiar with how he extensively dissected the issue of Filipino nationalism. His voluminous body of work covers the Philippine Reform Movement, the Philippine Revolution, and the sociopolitical thought of Jose Rizal and Apolinario Mabini, among others. Equally important are his groundbreaking studies on Islam in the Philippines and Southeast Asia, which cover the nature and dynamics of Moro society; the genesis of Philippine Islam and its cross-cultural currents in the Malay world; and the background, causes, and dynamics of the Mindanao conflict.

It is timely to review his pertinent works, especially in light of recent events. With sheer serendipity, these reprints come auspiciously after the signing of the “Framework Agreement” between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GPH) and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) on October 15, 2012. The Agreement is envisioned to usher a new dawn of peace in the Muslim South. To say the least, these articles provide a rich historical canvas that can help determine the context and possible trajectories of the Framework’s vision of peace.

Undoubtedly, the University of the Philippines has been the nation’s edifice of knowledge, a home for chiseling ideas, and a clarion of liberal thought and philosophy since its establishment in 1908. Dean Majul was a pillar of UP’s Golden Age, which saw the rise of student activism that culminated in the First Quarter Storm. Dean Majul would probably loathe the praise — a

humility that was a hallmark of his personality. Indeed, he hardly spoke about himself in his writings, and, except in some extemporaneous lectures, seldom used first-person pronouns in his work. It is in fidelity to his self-effacing nature that part of this introduction is written. It puts Dean Majul not in the spotlight, but in the company of rare and exceptionally brilliant group of UP scholars.

Very few Filipino academics and social scientists, even if they could match Dean Majul's more than half a century of productive scholarship, could claim to belong to a distinct class of scholars. While many have the rigor to probe the different dimensions of the sciences and diverse fields of knowledge, only few could crisscross into and leave indelible marks on major disciplines; only few could produce such pioneering research in these fields of study.

Such scholars have a comprehensive appreciation of knowledge and its universality, and a solid conviction to develop the fields of sciences, arts, humanities, and culture. They take it upon themselves to provide accessible general education to every Filipino. Aware of the compartmentalization of knowledge in modern times, they are never fazed by the rigidities of specialization, which are lamentably evident in some disciplines. Such scholars contribute greatly to these fields, possibly even more so than traditional practitioners. By engaging in interdisciplinary work, this elite group of scholars grasp a discipline's fundamental assumptions, approaches, and major discourses; they easily recognize its strength and potential, as well as its gaps and weaknesses; they then extrapolate new postulates, and produce powerful, path-breaking research.

If the work of these scholars have withstood the test of time, it is not because of their stature and affiliation but because of their continuing relevance; their careful and just appreciation of facts; their clarity of ideas; the sharpness of their analyses; their dexterous command of the language of various disciplines; and their clear reading of events and careful foresight into the manifold vistas of the future.

Even after their prime, they continue to produce scholarship that has always been grounded; that is, while they have evolved and expanded their intellectual horizons, they never abandoned their early writings and paradigms. Instead, they broaden and refine them, while taking the opportunity to reflect on them.

Many scholars carefully and consciously juggle academic and administrative duties, social responsibilities, and, not least, the constant pressure from politics and government. However, very few can insulate themselves from the morass of power; the temptation of wealth and luxury; and the capacity to fend off promptings and handle people's platitudes; instead, these few choose to adopt a higher moral standard and live a simple life. They are ready to serve anyone and provide opportunities to those with merit

and potential. They are silent humanitarians, generous in their little yet magnanimous ways; and despite opportunities to enjoy the perks of fame, they opt for a spiritual nurturing that even their colleagues and friends hardly notice.

All of these choices and decisions may appear too imposing on a scholar's character and moral fiber. They may seem rigid and limiting to scholastic pursuits. They may even be mistaken as high-handedness or snobbery. However, such scholars approach life, not with frigidity and emotional detachment, but with a positive disposition and down-to-earth friendliness, especially toward their colleagues and students. They possess a magnetic personality, charisma, and a spontaneity to exact humor and crack jokes even on insignificant and, at times, silly situations. These traits win them friends from different generations, who remember them not only with reverence, respect, and admiration but also with fondness and laughter.

Despite the intrigues that come with research work, administrative duties, and political engagement, such scholars have no difficulty shouldering social responsibilities and articulating the ideals of nation-building. They see, among other things, the urgent need to promote harmonious relations between the majority on the one hand and the minority and the marginalized on the other. They believe that no nation is worthy of itself unless it fully respects its own value and that of each part that constitutes the whole.

The mark of these scholars is not only measured by the number of published works; it is also shown, most especially, in their kind words and in the cherished memories they left behind. Lastly, the hallmark of their scholarship arises not only from the veracity of their perspectives (many of them still waiting to be fully recognized) but also from their deep and ongoing relevance. These scholars articulated many social and political problems that have gone unaddressed. Their work are not only social commentaries on their time, but also a lighthouse that the nation and future generations can hardly afford to neglect and learn from; a guide they can look up to so that they can set and right their sail from time to time.

Cesar Adib Majul was born in Aparri, Cagayan on October 21, 1923. He was of Syrian and Filipino descent. He had his primary and secondary education at De La Salle High School. Like many of his generation, Majul was forced to postpone his studies because of World War II. In 1947, he obtained his Bachelor's Degree in Philosophy from the University of the Philippines, where he became a philosophy instructor less than a year later. In 1953, at the same university, he earned a Master's Degree in Philosophy. His thesis was entitled "Formalization of the Logic of Aristotle," written under the tutelage of Ricardo Pascual, the eminent Filipino philosopher who studied under Bertrand Russell. Four years later, in January 1957, he received his Ph.D. in Philosophy from Cornell University. That year also saw the publication of his major work on the Philippine Revolution. In 1967 and 1974, Dean Majul was Visiting Professor at Cornell University.

He became University Professor at the University of the Philippines in 1979 and obtained *Honoris Causa* from the same university on November 27, 1989.

In UP, Dean Majul occupied various academic and administrative positions:

- Assistant Head of the Department of Philosophy, 1959
- Chairman, Division of Social Sciences, College of Arts and Sciences, 1960–1961
- Dean, University College, December 1961–1966
- Dean of Admissions, 1966
- Dean, College of Arts and Sciences, February 1969–June 1971
- Dean, Institute of Islamic Studies, Philippine Center for Advanced Studies, UP System, 1974–9 July 1979
- Officer-in-charge, Institute of Islamic Studies and the Asian Center, UP, 10 July 1979–31 December 1979.

Dean Majul also had other appointments in the Philippine government:

- Member, Board of Regents, University of Mindanao, 1961–1962
- Chairman, Board of Directors, Philippine Amanah Bank, 1974 –March 1980
- Chairman, Presidential Commission that drafted the “Code of Muslim Personal Laws of the Philippines (Presidential Decree No. 1083), 1975.

Apart from books like *The Political and Constitutional Ideas of the Philippine Revolution*, *Mabini and the Philippine Revolution*, *Muslims in the Philippines*, *The Contemporary Muslim Movement in the Philippines*, and *Islam and Conflict Resolution: Theories and Perspectives* (as co-author), Dean Majul wrote around 150 articles that were published in national and international journals and other reputable publications. After his retirement from UP in 1980, Dean Majul continued to write in the United States. His last work is *Remembrance and Forgetfulness in the Holy Qur’an*; he finished it a few days before passing away in San Pablo, California on October 11, 2003.

In broad strokes, the writings of Dean Majul may be grouped into four, cumulatively evolving areas: (1) Philosophy and logic; (2) Philippine social and political thought, Philippine revolution, and Filipino nationalism; (3) Asian studies, Islamic thought, Muslim history, society, and culture; (4) and spirituality of Islam and Qur’anic exegesis.

The first and fourth areas, which cover the early and the last phase of Dean Majul’s intellectual career, are not represented in this volume. However, the ten articles below epitomize the second and third areas. They form a

substantial body of work on crucial and ongoing issues in the Philippines, including the converging yet varying postulates of Philippine nationalism and the Moro struggle; contesting discourses on Asian values and humanities; and the advent of Islam in Southeast Asia, particularly in the southern Philippines.

The articles, which were published in previous issues of *Asian Studies*, have been divided into two sections. The first covers the history of Muslims in the Philippines; the second discusses Dean Majul's writings on the Philippine Reform Movement and Filipino nationalism. The years in parenthesis indicate the original year of publication in *Asian Studies*.

“Islam in the Philippines and its China Link (1999)” is based on one of Dean Majul's last lectures, which was delivered during the UP Centennial celebration. In this article, he returned to the main source of the Sulu relics, particularly the Tuan Maqbalu Tombstone in Bud Datu. Using what may be described as “archaeological historiography,” he sheds (more) light on the advent of Islam in the Philippines, which he previously discussed in *Muslims in the Philippines*. His analysis in this article juxtaposes archaeological diggings in China; tombs like that in Bud Datu in Sulu; and tomb designs and calligraphy in Central Asia. Dean Majul integrates his findings with the historical data to reveal the networks of an Islamic Emporium, one that spanned Sulu, China, and Central Asia during the 13th and 14th century CE. In particular, he showed the Philippines' early Islamic link with China via Sulu, citing exquisite narratives that speak of early Muslims travelling from Arabia to China as early as the 7th century CE.

“An Analysis of the ‘Genealogy of Sulu’ (1979)” supplements and clarifies Dean Majul's discussion in his 1973 book, *Muslims in the Philippines*. In the latter, he explored the issue of *tarsila*, or genealogy, of royal families, particularly in Maguindanao and the Sulu Sultanates. The work provides a broader understanding of the chronology of Islam in the Philippines, especially its relation to the broader trend of Islamization in Southeast Asia. In “Analysis,” he writes that “no history on the Muslims of the Philippines can be written without paying due regard to *tarsilas*.” “Their existence can also be a source of pride,” Dean Majul added, “not only for the Muslims but for all Filipinos; for they represent the efforts of the human mind to understand the past within an ordered pattern — that of descent and sequence of events in time and space.” Finally, he declares that *tarsilas* “have given part of the Filipino people a historical sense, without which their present would be unintelligible and their future blurred.”

Dean Majul locates the advent of Islam and Christianity within the broader history of Southeast Asia in **“An Historical Background on the Coming and Spread of Islam and Christianity in Southeast Asia (1976).”** Aware of both religions' postulates and origins, he recognized the clashing tendencies of and the long historical antagonism between Islam

and Christianity, as shown in the age-old “Moro wars” and the difficulties of Muslim-Christian dialogue and co-existence. But even before interfaith dialogue became a buzz word, Dean Majul had also already perceived Islam’s and Christianity’s nurturing and cooperative elements; he proposed the need to further strengthen Muslim-Christian policy of unity and co-existence in Southeast Asia.

Written during a critical period in 1976, **“Some Social and Cultural Problems of the Muslims in the Philippines”** draws the historical background of various social and cultural problems of Muslims in the southern Philippines. In this article, Dean Majul shows how the so-called Muslim problem had been defined and addressed from the colonial period to the Martial Law years. He underscores the fact that the emergence of a new economic order in the South necessitates the birth of a new Muslim leadership, one imbued with the teaching and fundamentals of Islam.

“The Role of Islam in the History of the Filipino People (1966)” idealizes the concept of a national community in the Philippines and the extent to which it accommodates a heretofore separate but parallel history of the Muslim South; Dean Majul rightly saw that the history of Mindanao, like that of Christian Philippines, is a response to Western colonialism and imperialism. More particularly, the article problematizes the location of Islam and the history of Muslims in the Philippines within two historical formations: that of the Filipino-dominated national community on the one hand, and that of Southeast Asia on the other. The latter includes the resistance of generally Islamized peoples against European colonialism in the Malay World.

“Principales, Ilustrados, Intellectuals and the Original Concept of a Filipino National Community (1977)” is a postscript to Majul’s early writings on the Philippine Reform Movement. The article examines (the then) new historical sources of Spanish colonialism in the Philippines, and traces the development of reformist groups like the *ilustrados* and intellectuals like Jose Rizal.

“Asia and the Humanities (1973)” analyzes Western attitudes on the Asian humanistic tradition; Dean Majul acknowledges the different and underlying cultural, historical and sociological forces that shaped Asian humanities in Asian countries and their diverse animation with the West. Dean Majul argues that the West’s interest on humanities in Asia is a product of ever-changing needs, from particular to relatively universal concerns, including an increasing focus on spirituality. The West’s interest was, at times, a part of a general search for exotic and unknown sources of wisdom, which were used to aid the proselytization efforts of Western Christian missionaries. Majul then points out that such interest belongs to a broader political scheme, whereby imperial powers sought not only to know the weaknesses of their colonial subjects but also to find indigenous

knowledge that could help them rule more effectively.

In “**National Identity and the Philippine University (1973)**” Dean Majul underscores the task of nation-building and the ongoing process of forging a national community. He identifies the elements of nation-building: a sense of belonging, commitment to a definite ideology, and a vision for individual and social good. After citing the fundamental requirements to help establish such elements, Dean Majul points out the important role of educational institutions in nation-building; universities like UP can nurture academic excellence, intellectual leadership, and critical thinking.

“**The Relevance of Mabini’s Social Ideas to our Times (1973)**” reflects on the social and political thought of Apolinario Mabini, the philosopher *par excellence* of the Philippine Revolution. Mabini had chiseled his vision of the Filipino national community in his *Decalogue* and other writings. In his article, Dean Majul examines the extent to which Mabini’s ideas mirror Philippine politics and society in the 1960s. He also explains the role of Mabini’s thought in shaping Filipinos’ notion of national community. Majul then weighs the balance sheet in terms of how such vision of community is underpinned by both positive and negative appropriations, a reason why Filipinos continuously struggle to increase their national consciousness.

“**Social Background of Revolution (1971)**” supplements “*Principales, Ilustrados....*” While the latter delineates the major groups and critical players in the rise of reform movements, the former provides a deeper background: it looks back to the beginning of Spanish colonialism in early Islamic Manila. “Social Background of Revolution” injects new historical nuances that complement Majul’s discussions in his major books, *Political and Constitutional Ideas of the Philippine Revolution* and *Mabini and the Philippine Revolution*.

Though written decades ago, these ten articles provide a rich background on Philippine history and its relation to other Southeast Asian countries and the rest of the world. In light of China’s preponderant role and a new US pivot in Asia, the articles offer a firm historical framework that can help one understand ongoing issues, tensions, and opportunities. Finally, the articles can play a substantial role in resolving the issues behind the Framework Agreement of 2012. Dean Majul’s writings offer well-articulated and historically grounded studies that can help reconcile and renegotiate the clash and convergence of two national communities and identity formations: the Filipino and the Moro.

Julkipli Wadi is Dean of the Institute of Islamic Studies, University of the Philippines Diliman. He is writing a biography of Cesar Adib Majul.