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ABOARD THE GIANT CLAM: RAMON MUZONES'S MARITIME HISTORICIZATION OF THE NATION

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Abstract

Philippine literature scholarship is currently interested in decentering the discourse of nation-building from the capital to the periphery, but least often is attention given to the very geography that makes these communities marginalized. Habitually, multiculturalism and multilingualism have been convenient explanations for why it is difficult for the Philippines to come up with a “national literature” and a paradigm for imagining a nation. This essay centers on this neglected aspect, casting a novel written by a marginalized author in a vernacular language – the *Margosatubig* (1946) by Ramon Muzones. Three prime objectives guided the navigation of this paper: (1) to posit Ramon Muzones in “national” literary and cultural research; (2) to appraise the maritime characteristic of the novel in evoking historical and ethnic affinities, mythic discoveries and heroic greatness, and individual and national psyche; and, (3) to present “archipelagic imagination” as a geopolitical shape for homeland-imaging.

Keywords

archipelagic communities, Hiligaynon literature, maritime folklore, maritime historiography

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Approaching colorful Muslim ships greet the reader of Ramon Muzones's magnum opus.¹ On board these ships are chieftains of neighboring island kingdoms who sailed to the historic island (*maragtasong nga banwa*) of Margosatubig in response to the Sultan's solicitation of judgment for a case deemed fatal by the holy Koran. Datu Ibyn Parang, Sultan's only child, fell in love with a Christian (identified as “the baptized”) who was his

captive while navigating the Siwaragan river of the Irong-Irong seas. Their affair bore fruit, which aggravated the situation, prompting the Sultan to submit the case to the Council of Elders (*Kasapulanan sang mga Agurang*). Hesitant as they were, the Council was given three days to weigh their religious and affective subscriptions involved in the case, after which they must decide punishment. Instead of death, they decided, Ibyn Parang would be exiled for life to the island of Tubbataha. The baptized woman and her son, the verdict continued, should be served as prey to the giant clam.



The first one-page advertisement of *Margosatubig*, published in *Kasanag* (May 15, 1948, page 34) while its sequel, *Amurukpok*, was being serialized. Muzones was the editor of *Kasanag*. Scanned from the original newsprint page, 12x8.5. Copy of the latter novel and permission for its scholarly use from Atty. Rex Muzones, the author's son, December 2002.

The opening chapter of the novel, hailed as the first Hiligaynon bestseller, offers exciting avenues for cultural imagination.² One enters a Muslim world packed with interesting units. The parade of ships signifies a material culture that can support the reading of a community that greatly benefits from having sea as its enveloping body and also from having shipping as its ways and means of existence. This existence is anchored in the stories that navigate across the islands, narratives of which are both mythical and heroic. The romantic ingredient is thrilled by the continuing conflict between Christians and Muslims and the affective accommodation that prevailed among pro-Sultan servants. Whatever happened to the woman and her son is an important capsule that would keep the reader engaged with this historicization site.

Muzones branded *Margosatubig* (1946), including its sequel *Amurukpok* (1948), as novels of *maragtas* (Hiligaynon term for “history”). It is exciting to note that his discovery of Margosatubig, a town in Zamboanga, was a result of his three-year crisscrossing of Philippine waters on an interisland ship (Locsin-Nava *History* 14). His imagination was caught by this legendary battle for possession that was said to be the myth behind the bitterness of island waters at certain times.³ Necessary to cite, however, is that despite the historical flavor that he assigned to his novels, a biographical stance comes as a stronger form of narrative – the first was described in parenthesis as history of Salagunting and the second as his son’s. Given Muzones’s purist affiliation to the Hiligaynon language, it is essential to look at the novel both as historical literature and as “his-story” in epic mode. It would have been easier to coin a term for “biography,” but Muzones opted for *maragtas* which was an influential concept in his writings.⁴

It was during the Commonwealth era in the Philippines when Muzones wrote *Margosatubig*.⁵ The State and the Church compromised on a bill attempting to unite literature and nationalism in one front that would eventually decolonize the Filipinos (Constantino and Constantino 296-8). During the decade of the 1950s, the Republic Act 1425 (1956) also called the Rizal Bill, saw a pilot application of the mandate to teaching Rizal’s life and writings throughout the educational system. Two novels were singled out, *Noli Me Tangere* and *El Filibusterismo*, as a “constant and inspiring source of patriotism.” It can be said that the Bill was able to locate nationalism in literature and, at the same time, to find in the novel an alternative history.

Benedict Anderson comes first to mind in understanding the role of fiction in the construction of nation. His classic definition of a nation as an “imagined community” puts every product of imagination, like literature, at the threshold of affinity and passion. Built apart from its predecessors that observed divine order and obsessed about hierarchy, a nation is an egalitarian society (“horizontal comradeship”), open even to the communal ownership of a representative assemblage, thus there is no need for face-to-face contact by its members. A member accepts that somewhere out there lives an anonymous being who shares the same complexities of symbols and events. The “out there,” however, is a location and a time that may be coincidental and is subject to concrete performances. Print capitalism provided answers to such need, introducing the processes of circulation and transaction. Just when the novels were using print as a dominant means for de-scribing the social and cultural aspects of a nation, imagination was an accommodating human faculty proliferating molds of projections and compromising forms of the community mind. As commodities, the circulation of the novels was dependent on the market, and

their production relied on technology, creating a culture of reproducible consciousness. This, therefore, suggests the multiplicity of “the moment” that the stranger members have pictured. Such a moment is a product of identities and becomes imagined by a community. Given its multivocality and multifocality, the debate on who should represent springs, and on the event of the failure of imagination, from whatever greater circumstance can spin the imagination – either centrifugal or centripetal – to its need to become a nation.

Subscribing to the hegemony inherent in the Rizal Bill, Anderson devotes essays on the hero’s novel, *Noli*, regarding it as a crucial founding text for Filipino nationalism. Historically, Timothy Brennan, in appeal to Anderson’s authority, says that it was the novel that “accompanied the rise of nations by objectifying the ‘one, yet many’ of the national, and by mimicking the structure of the nation, a clearly bordered jumble of languages and styles.” (49). In particular, the novel’s capacity to construct a narrative audience and its nature to circumscribe a plot, theme and imaginative world, have shaped and, in a more succinct term, legitimized the nation. This may be one of the Bill’s arguments in legalizing the novel as both an educational and political apparatus.

To trace the history of the Filipino novel is to trace “the imaginary body of the Filipino nation” says Resil Mojares (*Centennial* 205-22), who authored a book on the history of the Filipino novel.⁶ Given the European conversance and nineteenth-century mentality, Rizal instinctively knew that it was the novel “that offered him a medium for encompassing ... experience (that) is something driven and determined by historical forces, and rendering it as ... provocative of a collective response to the readers of his time.” (Mojares, *The Origins* 206). Rizal was aware of the constraints of his literary predecessors, and for that, he avoided the literary forms and disembodiments that limited the representations of an emerging national community. Though limited to a mere parcel of geography and history, his novels clarified that the social and territorial space is conterminous to the country Spain has colonized and illustrated the features of such colonization. What emerges as the protagonist in Rizal’s novels, Mojares argues, is not Simoun/Ibarra but a nation-in-formation. Rizal, of course, was writing from his particular position – that of the *ilustrado* (literally meant “enlightened,” the term later referred to a Western-educated exile). This may explain why he did not foresee the possibilities of uprisings and movements of resistance that would later be launched as a connection of consciousness to and from him. Yet, Rizal succeeded in fleshing out the “imaginary body of a nation,” dramatizing a community symbolic in its struggle against its enemies, in authoring “the Book” (208-9). Though it is not always in the novel that a nation should seek its birth, Rizal’s narratives were exemplary – to the point that to write Philippine history is to refer to the inertia and

reaction of his characters and their society. Of greatest influence to the “writing of nation,” the Rizalian series of connections is tantamount to a tradition of the image of the nation that is the Philippines. Thus, everything starts with Rizal, why his novels are the “master narrative” of social and, even of, magic realists, and why every nation-builder and literary packager is a footnote to his monument.

Despite the aforementioned veneration of Rizal, the Philippines continues the search for that ever-illusive “Filipino novel,” desperately seeking to augment the shortcomings of “the Book,” raising issues of geographic centralization, class representation, and choice of language. Being an *ilustrado*, the social order that allegedly brought Rizal to the American project of educational phantasm, Rizal’s propaganda is questionable. His mere choice of a foreign language which only the wealthy and privileged of his time could comprehend challenges the debate for national understanding and national literature. *Whose* literature are his works? *To whom* did he speak? These issues were addressed by novelists through writings primarily in English and in Tagalog (the basis of Filipino, the ongoing national language). The body of novels in the two aforementioned tongues, however, is insufficient to the need for the imaginary body of a nation. The literary circles manned by Manila resulted in the neglect of a non-center representative literature – in this case, that of the Hiligaynon which is one of the eight major languages of the Philippines. Given the archipelagic and mountainous nature of the country, Lucero laments, “Philippine literary history will never approach accuracy nor fair representation if its gaps are not filled by regional/non-Tagalog, non-English literature..., if such geographical and cultural features are not factored into its definition” (104).

Muzones had once submitted himself to the predilection for Tagalog writing. With his first Hiligaynon novel, however, he found a love for his own language which he considered richer in image and expression. His linguistic chauvinism resulted in a purism and, eventually, authorship of a Hiligaynon grammar and dictionary.⁷ His choice of genre and love for Hiligaynon may have been accidental, but he achieved something that Rizal missed: presenting the linguistic margins and writing in a minority language.

“NECESSARY FICTION”

Ibyn Parang suffered from an incredible loss upon his exile. His father’s sudden and unexplainable death added to the injury that his wife and son were the *dagà* (prey) to be offered for the *manlut* (sacred giant clam) at the enchanted island of Paragwa. He relied on the narratives of his men who were tasked to deliver him to Tubbataha. They reached

the island with the midnight star as the astronomic marker of the voyage, prompting Ibyn to overawe his men and recall their loyalty. His men cooperated with Ibyn in the mission to regain Margosatubig, held by Datu Mohammed, his father's closest ally and nearest successor to throne. In their preparation for what must be the biggest battle at sea, Ibyn found his wife, Dulcinea, at Paragwa's shore. Unbelievably, for several times, Dulcinea was spewed out by the *manlut*, and only their infant was lost to the giant clam. Ibyn and his men peacefully stayed at Balabak, east of Paragwa. The island served as their refuge with its resources enabling them to survive while they regained their strength and valor.

Ibyn and his men were successful in their initial attack on Margosatubig, whose army was led by Datu Mohammed despite his being an ally of Ibyn's father. They were unaware, however, that Datu Mohammed had plans for the throne and had instructed the island's warriors to fight against Ibyn. From then on, the novel narrates, Margosatubig was a seat of blood: the saltiness of its waters became unbearable, witnessing to the memory of the fateful, terrifying combat.⁸ And on moonless nights, the island hears the mightiest voice of a warrior; it was Ibyn, the elders would tell. The novel is narrated by Sani, Ibyn's most trusted servant, one of the few survivors who can narrate the history.

Sani understood the essence of narration. Knowing the ephemeral characteristic of memory, he constantly immerses his being in every detail of history that he witnessed and in which he played a role. His persistence to survive time is a counter-exercise toward forgetting (it is a death) of the account that he values as a spiritual principle of the people who have been in diaspora since Ibyn's death and Mohammed's ascendance to power. "Nations, like narrative, lose their origins in the myths of time and only fully realize their horizons in the mind's eye," Homi K. Bhabha writes (1). This perspective tells of the intangibility of things – that a nation's beginning crosses the border of memory and forgetting across time. The narration in Sani's memory is in danger – like a *vinta* of the warriors who were lost at sea and attacked by enemies, whose histories sunk with shipwrecks, leaving fleeting fictions of untraceability.

"Necessary fictions," Caroline Hau says, "collectively make up a specific and highly valorized genre of imaginative writing..., the fictive quality of nation... in the sense of something *made* or *fashioned*" (i, emphasis in original). Producing their own histories, Hau continues, the arbitrariness of their creation comes to be endowed with the force of historical necessity. "Necessary fictions" are narratives that supply a paradigm for a collective imagining of a nation. Their essentiality arises from the need of a narration, oral or written. The need is communal for the purpose of origin. "*Ang dili magbalikid sa iya ginhalinan, dili makalab-ut sa iya padulungan* (Not looking back is not reaching your

destination),” cites a popular Hiligaynon *hurobaton* (saying) with hundreds of translations and variations across Philippine linguistic diversities. This moral statement posts the problematique of “past,” a sine qua non in achieving the future. The task of literature, of imaginative writing, is to offer its idiosyncrasies in filling in the blanks that are positioned before the present. For a community, for a group of people sharing the same symbolic system and ideological prototype, who wants to sustain and extend their existence, fictionalizing is an essential act of writing the irretrievable past.

One understands Sani’s character clinging to accuracy. The loss of a detail of the past may result in uncontrollable permutations, given the context where speech is the only medium of information. Obligated by the request of his masters, Sani was sentient that time is the enemy of his memory and the enemy of the entire Moro nation. Never written, the myth of bitter waters and the story of the lost kingdom were at the brink of extinction, subject to the swaying pendulum between falseness and truthfulness. Muzones input several forms of oral history to enrich his fictionalizing. At the onset, a “once-upon-a-time” account, witnessed by Sani, became the fountainhead of the history of the island. Agurang Kuataw’s hearsay became a folktale, travelling to different regions, spanning decades, alluding to images, constantly remembering, desperately seeking proofs.

Margosatubig represents the Hiligaynon novel’s foundation of a rich oral tradition, which counts among its literary antecedents prose forms like the *asoy* (story of real or imaginary events), the *panugiron* (narrative), and the *sugilanon* (tale). This fictive convention is paired with the Hiligaynon’s supposed origin – coming from *iligay* (“to flow”) – after a group of people living along the river delta whose occupation was floating bamboo poles downstream. Thus, *Iligaynon* (from *manog-ilig sang kawayan* or bamboo-floater) was said to be an erroneous reply to a Spaniard’s query about the name of these raft-riding men who navigated the Jalaour River (Locsin-Nava *History* 37). This popular tale, acknowledged by the common *tao*, elicits particularities. It was a community that appraises the sea as an engine of historical change. The mistaken response, the error, generated the branding of the natives. This tale suggests varieties of permutation, reordering, allusion, and contextualization – all are fiction approaches. It can be inferred that a people simply needed a fiction to represent their roots, and they were unmindful of appropriating an error. For them, a fiction was urgently needed just before the *Foreign* would take its power and trademark its subjects according to its own system.

The Iligaynon narrative speaks so much about the maritime beginnings of the society that Muzones was writing about. Hailed as the “past,” the fiction presents the ability of the native to utilize an explicitly postcolonial account to their own perspective

and advantage. The Spaniards could have taken such an account of their discovery of a people, but what the natives did was an ethnic performativity. It was a dynamic conception of the interaction of literary representation and historical context.

In writing a maritime novel, a tale that is at the threshold of ownership of the real Margosatubig, Muzones provides an opportunity to look at the emergence of a nation. His novel shows the thematic tensions arising from the necessity of equilibrium between borrowed generic conventions and indigenous materials, between tales and established histories, between landed contexts and maritime details, between local authorship and national reception. The native tradition that he familiarized has given him the vast horizon of fictionalization, and apparently the need to historicize the sea and to imbue it with narratives.

HISTORICIZING THE SEA

The impact of the ocean, a body larger than the sea, on the course of modern history, Bernhard Klein and Gesa Mackenthun say, has been as enormous as its roles have been contradictory: “the sea has served as an agent of colonial oppression but also of indigenous resistance and native empowerment, it has been a site of loss, dispersal, and enforced migration but also of new forms of solidarity and affective kinship, a paradigm of modern capitalism but also of its creative reinterpretation, a figure of death but also of life” (2-3). This reaction, one can surmise, stemmed from a dualistic perspective, introducing the sea, or the ocean for that matter, as a seat of struggle, both cultural and political. This, at least, removes the sea from the ahistorical and atemporal figuration. “The sea has occasioned radical changes in human lives and national histories,” Klein and Mackenthun conclude, “and it continues to be encompassed.” There is a need to “trace the hidden human histories in the vast oceanic archives,” to discover the “elusive traces” of those who “crossed the water.” Both Klein and Mackenthun clearly understand the nature of historicizing at sea – always in flux, with ever shifting contours, constantly dissolving.

In depicting the history of the maritime world, Hayase Shinzo expressed that a new type of history writing is necessary, a kind that is non-empiricist, something that does not hinder the flexibility of the mobility of nomadic peoples (1-4). Refuting the present-day view of the concept of the land-nation, he emphasized that the maritime world has its own history based on its own logic. It is necessary, he argues, to tell the history through the perspective of people who lived in the maritime world where they were not in control. Not solely powered by the sea, the maritime world witnessed the rise and fall of kingdoms

depending on the advantage of geography and trade, and depending on the time period and the demands for certain features that they possessed. One may indeed resort to marine biology and investigate ecosystems to depict the sea world, or to anthropology and showcase cultural significance to explain maritime culture. Muzones, however, capitalizing on his imagination, offers an alternative to the aforementioned need. Limited to his literary animation, he historicizes the sea using myths and probabilities.

The fateful battle between the forces of Parang and Mohammed positions the spotlight of literary form and historical understanding on the sea. Being the venue of what is considered “the myth” of Margosatubig, the sea occupies an indelible foreground in the formation of a community-nation. Knowledge of the sea brings us to the metaphors that are necessary in dissecting it as the location of history – embellished by unpredictable “waves,” tranquilized by “silences,” and mythified by “depths.”

Naming the island-product from a unique “bitterness” of seawater demonstrates the importance of the gustatory sense and system in writing history. Breaking from the usual branding of geographies, (for example, using names deriving from rulers or discoverers), and instead using forms and characteristics resembling the inhabitants, this naming from a *taste* of a body of water offers narratives of experiences. In narrating the history of Margosatubig, one jumpstarts from its bitter beginnings – from lust for chieftdom power to vengeance for lost kingdom. Primarily characterized by personal grudge, Mohammed’s rise to power capitalized on a religious feud, giving the Sultan and his son a *taste* of fall. This deception, as narrated, resulted in exile and consumption – the former brought “bitterness” to Parang toward those who unjustly struggled for power, and they then offered a *luscious food* to a sacred predator. It is interesting to note that what was served as prey was Dulcinea and her infant Salagunting, although the former was later spewed out again by the giant clam. This performance shows an ability to assess consumption – between the foreign and the hybrid, and between the insignificant and the functional.

Muzones’s cloaking of narration with hybridity and functionalism is probably a result of his assessment and awareness of the Visayan readers’ *taste* in literature from his context. In the process, Locsin-Nava notes “his novels served as a barometer of public taste as he run through a gamut of types from the romantic to the humorous and satirical, the supernatural, the science fictional, the socio-political, the romantic-realistic” (“The Historical Novel” 50). With eleven novels prior to this *obra maestra*, he must have noted the need for literary ingredients for his audience’s desired mix and flavor.

Just after he briefly introduced the origins of Margosatubig in the first two chapters of the novel, Muzones banked on the next two chapters to answer what happened to the

child that was consumed by the giant clam. Sani, after years of solitude in a far-flung island, goes to Balabak and befriends Agurang Kuataw, a native who has a scattered knowledge of the mother-and-child story. The assumed myth, Agurang Kuataw tells Sani, may be true if one considers the existing oral lore: At the foot of the mountain of Paragwa, there lies a cave where a giant clam floats, and aboard this is a man of stunning physicality wearing a striking necklace with a crocodile-tooth pendant. No one goes out of the cave alive, Agurang Kuataw warns Sani. Paragwa, he says, is *mariit* (“enchanted”), guarded by giant aquatic serpents that spew fire, and ferocious birds with enormous wings and claws. But Sani is unperturbed. He goes to Paragwa and pursues enchantment.

Sani was enveloped by disbelief when he witnessed the enchantment. Meeting “the man” was a moment peculiar and beyond his present experience and understanding. He is then obliged to chant to Salagunting, and he chants the narrative of the lost kingdom. The astonishment of such a disclosure gave Salagunting a full grasp of his existence, his own *maragtas*, which was held by his surrogate father, Balitawtaw, the king of the sea. This approach displays enchantment as both an individual incredulity and a community character. Sani’s confrontation with the narrated apparition shows the mysterious regard of humanity toward the sea, while Balitawtaw’s presence executes nature’s command over the human and superiority over the land.

These sophisticated forms of enchantment, furthermore, generally call for virtuosic performances. The novel presented sorcery in the character of Pandit Gulamu, babaylanism in dayang-dayang Morgana, and superpower in Datu Kadlum. It is important to note that this display of enchantment is part of the seeking of symbolic connections of folkloricity through fascination and defamiliarization. This approach, a going-back-to-the-native, may have been the flavor (the *taste*) needed for the Hiligaynon readers to see the “common” in their own culture. Central to this nativist theatricality of magic is the *bagani* (hero), the center of narration and the representative image of nation. Herein is the series of the hero’s prodigy using Isagani Cruz’s function of Philippine epics (241-56).⁹

Function of the Epic	
1. The hero leaves.	Salagunting leaves the kingdom of Underwater.
2. The hero receives an enchanted thing.	Balitawtaw awards his surrogate son a bunch of kinaadman (supernatural power correlated with the forces of nature): a wild’s mutya, a mantra for air and water, an enchanted banawug, an algae charm, and a binsul nga pakpakan (magical winged knife).
3. The hero will go to the location where he will find what is looking for, usually, a loved one.	Salagunting departs for the world of Land, Margosatubig. There, he meets Maria Cristina, a Christian from Rom-rom.

4. The hero will be engaged in a war.	Salagunting's pakikipagsapalaran (chasing of fate) follows:
5. The hero will be fighting for so long a time.	<p>a) As a captive, he was served as a gladiator against the Highness' greatest warrior. At the peak of their fight, he used his <i>banawug</i> to save his life and that of other captives.</p> <p>b) When the warriors of Mohammed were approaching Rom-rom, he dipped his <i>banawug</i> in seawater, cited a mantra, and instructed the big fishes to attack the <i>buyongs</i> (bandits).</p> <p>c) The <i>buyongs</i> attacked the Rom-rom and took Maria Cristina. She would be served as <i>daga</i> to the fire. Her ash shall be used to capture Salagunting. But her hero arrived just in time. Pandit Gulamu attempted to hypnotize Salagunting, but the latter succeed in bewitching Gulamu. Salagunting and Maria Cristina suddenly disappeared with a tornado.</p> <p>d) Disguising as Saliyaw, Morgana captured Salagunting and detained him in a <i>batong bantiling</i> (live stone) which the former positioned at the summit of the mountain which is surrounded by quicksand. With the help of <i>libon nga hungot</i>, the stone softened and Salagunting was saved.</p> <p>e) A giant bird of enormous claws and wings attacked Salagunting, Sani and Raskal at the quicksand. Salagunting threw an enchanted thing, and the bird died on fire. Salagunting told his followers to hold on to him, and they flew.</p> <p>f) When Morgana captured Salagunting for the second time, she threw him to the enchanted well. There a giant octopus lived. The creature attacked Salagunting. Unsuccessful, the octopus recognized his master.</p> <p>g) After a careful plan, Salagunting instructed the sea creatures to attack Margosatubig for the first time.</p> <p>h) Upon Salagunting's reclaim of the kingdom, Datu Mongtut, Morgana's avid suitor, visited the former with a dark plan. Morgana instructed him to open the praskita that houses a deadly vapor. Salagunting found this out. He approached the vapor until it formed into a dangerous snake, and turned it into a cane.</p> <p>i) Salagunting disguised as Tampuling and submitted himself to the Banwang Tagudili at Lanaw, the new kingdom that Mohammed founded with the help of his daughter, Morgana. Unluckily, Tampuling was not able to escape from a baptism rite that Mohammed requires from his men. Tampuling was imprisoned inside a live stone. Unfortunately, his left foot was sprinkled with the Tagudili's enchanted water.</p>

	<p>j) Salagunting was told that the only way to defeat Morgana was to detach the golden hair that comes out when she is asleep. He was successful in doing this.</p> <p>k) Datu Kadlum, the leader of Sarawak, attacked some kingdoms in Mindanao. Salagunting chased for him up to the Visayas and Luzon islands. An unexpected news reached Salagunting: Datu Kadlum deracinated the Banwang Tagudili, leaving even Datu Mohammed and Pandit Gulamu to death. He was even able to attack Margosatubig when Salagunting was away. It was the longest war at sea. Both parties were taking kingdoms to conspire with them. At the instance when Salagunting hears that Kadlum's men are out to the sea, he would instruct the swordfishes and other sea creatures to assault.</p> <p>In two attacks headed by Kadlum's men, Datu Baam and Datu Abubakar, Salagunting and his men were successful. After the defeats, Kadlum manned his throng of warriors toward Dipolog where Salagunting and his men were taking refuge. Strategically, Salagunting brought his men to the sea and, as expected, instructed the sea creatures to attack while his men were sailing for safety to the island of Basilan.</p> <p>Kadlum found an ally in Datu Talaugis of Dayak. He sent two warriors, Sinsuat and Dikyang, to Basilan to do surveillance. Both disguised as pearl divers and were accommodated in Salagunting's kingdom. The two, however, were tasked by Kadlum to put a dagger in Salagunting's bronze protective footgear. Salagunting announced a trial attack. It ended, though, as the bloodiest fight. He was able to regain Margosatubig – yet without having an encounter with Kadlum.</p>
6. The fairy will stop the hero.	On the eve of Salagunting's coronation as the new sultan of Margosatubig, Katipayan reminded Salagunting of the importance of peace. However, Kadlum attacked him while he and Katipayan were on the shore. Katipayan, who gave up her being a siren, saved his life.
7. The fairy will disclose to the hero that his enemy is a kin.	With the death of Katipayan, Salagunting looks for dayang-dayang Morgana. He found her at Mekka.
8. The hero will die.	Salagunting almost died when Kadlum attacked him.
9. The hero will live again.	Balitawtaw came to rescue Salagunting.
10. The hero will go back to his hometown.	Salagunting rules Margosatubig.
11. The hero will be wed.	Salagunting and Morgana took their vows in what must be the grandest wedding in the Muslim world.

Table 1: The Epic Heroization of Salagunting

Muzones embedded Salagunting with enchantment. He is *busalian* (powerful) and *may kinaadman* (has extra-sensory capability). These he achieved by having *anting-anting* (talisman), *tagadlum* (supernatural power), and *pangalap* (ritualized objects). He is

ornamented with unequalled charm, both toward his enemies and women – two necessary entities of manhood and heroic romantic. The pinnacle of his stature, however, is his performance of offering and sacrifice – as an infant prey and a man of war. His heroic greatness may be an offspring of Muzones's imbibement of Lambunao lore recited to him by his maternal grandparents (Locsin-Nava *History* 39). The Lambunao originated the *Hinilawod* (from "lawod" which means wave), the Philippines's longest epic.¹⁰

But Salagunting's heroism has difficulty achieving the sense of typical heroism. He is actually "at home with homelessness." As a hero away from his nation for a long time, he is, in the words of Salman Rushdie, diving into the reefs of lost time, "haunted by some sense of loss, some urge to reclaim, to look back, even at risk of being mutated ... [experiencing] physical alienation ... [this] inevitably means [he] will not be capable of reclaiming precisely the thing that was lost, that [instead he] will create fictions ... invisible ones, imaginary homelands" (10).

The resistance of the Moros toward Salagunting's reclaim of Margosatubig is, in fact, understandable. Having no idea about his origin, the people cannot just give in to the narration of his-story. One may resort to a contrapuntal reading to understand this – on why a leader of hybrid existence is necessary. One needs to go back to the context and milieu of Muzones's writing. In the years of Commonwealth, when the Americans were expanding their imperial powers in the Philippines, part of the assimilation project was the continuing appropriation for public improvement and so the extension of local (Moro) presentation in national government was deemed necessary. It was, however, reported that local officials were incompetent and so the Americans replaced them.¹¹ To simply accept this view is, of course, unfair to Filipinos. So, Muzones, measuring the extent of the multivocality of his time, presented a hero of complexity and ambivalence. Coming from his perspective, a leadership coming from two worlds (Muslim and Christian) fits best the test of neocolonialism.

In 1936, a decade before the *Margosatubig* series, Moro affairs were thrown into confusion by the struggle for the Sulu archipelago while the Commonwealth government was aiming at the final assimilation of the Muslims (Glazer 87). Muzones, in his introduction to the book form, said that for ten years, he was looking for the best voice that would represent his *weltanschauung* and his time. Knowledgeable of the heteroglossic nature of the genre, Muzones found the opportunity in Salagunting, who, according to many Christians and Moros in his novel, is best to lead for a fluid co-existence.

Surveying the need for voice, Muzones scattered ecofeminist traces in portraying the women of the novel. Exciting, above all, is how he created the romantic affair between

Salagunting and Maria Cristina, how they were separated by war, and how love was measured by circumstances of enchantment. In the end, Muzones writes, up at the summit of the mountain where a captive is imprisoned in a charmed tree of *Banwang Tagudili* (this could be explicitly translated into “a forbidden nation”), a fall of water sprung forth. It was the rushing tears of a woman whose love was lost in the sea of religious and political conflicts, the legend of the now renowned Maria Cristina Falls. In present geography, this Falls is situated at the crossroad of the cultural mix of the Maranaos of Lanao del Sur, Higaonons of Bukidnon, and the dominantly Christian settlers and migrants from the Visayas and other places of Mindanao – the very peoples, places, and religions that Muzones cited in his descriptions and milieus.

The highlighting of the woman, and *her-story* as a citizen of a nation, dominantly worked in the character of Morgana through whom Muzones spoke his *paktakon* (riddle) and *hurobaton* on beauty. When she disguised herself as Saliyaw, an allusion to a wild flower that only grows at the depths of the falls, Muzones (through Salagunting) showcases the language’s ability to mix captivation and exoticism, “enchanting to the eye, unachievable even by I.” Of babaylanic character, Saliyaw disguised as a white deer with a golden necklace, formed Diwang Balangaw, a kingdom of flowers, hypnotized Salagunting, and when he failed to own his faith, became a colorful butterfly with tattered wings. Assessing the woman as unpredictable like the sea, one surmises the nature of Muzones’s metaphors. This act of Saliyaw allows the full representation of genders, as Salazar notes: “*Babaylan* completes the triumvirate of key persons of pre-Hispanic Philippines, the other two are the *datu* and the *panday*. Usually a female, the babaylan is the specialist of culture, religion, medicine, and in theoretical and practical knowledge on natural phenomena” (6).

In the end, the reader may subscribe to the myths Muzones created and may believe in the *maragtas* of Margosatubig. The response of the reader may be ambivalent as the people of *Margosatubig* and as the nation of the author’s time. It was a time of divided affiliation but remained aesthetically pleasing through American munificence. The hero’s name may be taken as a clue in this riddling of homeland-imaging: *sala* (error) and *gunting* (cut); a reminder of a popular Filipino *paktakon* of the sea, “*ilang ulit kong sinaksak, nahiwa ma’y walang sugat* (having been cut for severable times but remaining unwounded).” Muzones subscribed to the “forgetting” of an unnecessary past and suggested an alternative national consciousness.

Silently Othered, the sea, with all of its secrets disclosed and powers revealed, is the alter ego of Salagunting, and vice versa. When he suffered cuts, the sea never failed him or Margosatubig in cleansing the wounds of the physical and metaphorical body.

Representing each other, Salagunting and the sea acknowledged the act of being “aboard.” While he boards the sacred clam, afloat magnifying the hybrid product, his author, Muzones, witnesses the circumstances of Spanish/ilustrado and American/pensionado arrivals – and finds a means of literary disembarkation from their foreign ideas. Muzones will not board their colonization. In this, Muzones wittingly points at the maritime junction of nation-building and underlines the necessity of contacts that would eventually strain the excesses and the errors of the nation-project.

Muzones signified the sea as a contact zone, “a social space where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination – like colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out across the globe today” (Pratt qtd. in Klein and Mackenthun 2). Though the seas are “the same sea,” it was “the language of the sea” familiarized by communities that signaled the occasions of navigation and attack. In the end, Muzones showed that there is no precise Margosatubig waters, that each body of water is, to borrow Klein and Mackenthun’s words, “subdivided into discrete but related and inherently polymorphous sociopolitical zones” (6).

Balancing the needs of the native and the modern historicizing, Muzones designed his culinary taste narration of a long-awaited literary menu. Noteworthy in this metaphor is the gastronomic theory that views nations as “composed of discrete elements and their cultures possess a variety of ingredients with different flavors and provenances,” a piece of “social engineering” (Smith 164-5). Indeed, Smith makes explicit, that nationalists and their followers select elements of diverse origins and put together the various ingredients of the nation to cook a composite artifact, “cobbled together from a rich variety of cultural sources.” The hybridity of Salagunting shows that the culture and identity of Margosatubig are not solely of those who were born within its land. With the immigrating nature of the sea and with the intermarriage among religions and cultures, there is no longer such a thing as a pure Margosatubig. Salagunting, the then Moro-Christian infant consumed by the *manlut*, is the symbol of the nationhood of Margosatubig, or in a larger context, of the Philippines. In Salagunting’s veins run two opposing politico-religious forces. And in his body breathes the binary sea-land. His persona is an insistent image of myths unified. Fictive by nature, he is the object of a power game of the nation-building of a country that was testing the waters of Commonwealth politics.

Margosatubig is an example of Anderson’s “imagined community.” Written in the late period of American rule, in a year when the Philippines was “truly free,” Muzones created a nation by cultural and mythical means. He found an island that needed to

account for itself. He constructed a mythical past, illustrated a historian, launched a hero, and invented a history worth writing. He monumented from his *weltanschauung* the necessary symbol of a man exemplar. The eclectically-made Salagunting, born from a Christian womb and son of a Moro, who rose from Muslim waves and converted the people to an ideal citizenship – the ideal of Muzones’s aspirations.

Muzones’s reading of the *Maragtas* and his observations of the loosening of social barriers brought him the idea of social ascendance. He was fascinated by the fluid status of the Visayan *timawa*, the freeman, the personal vassal to a *datu* to whom he bound himself as a seafaring warrior (Loscin-Nava, *History* 23). Historically, the *timawa* (with variations of *timaua*, *timava*, *timagwa*) was on equal footing with the *maharlika*, the Tagalog term for freeman. They had the same obligation and rights. They supply important and specialized services in a community. Anyone at the *alipin* (servant) class can ascend to *timawa* rank if he has freed himself from debts. This freedom in pre-Hispanic times is termed “katimawaan” (Kimvell-Gabriel 4-8). One can arrive at an inference from this: to achieve the full removal of the class stigma, a myth is needed. The bearer of this myth must be one who best represents both of the clashing classes – a *timawa*. It is therefore understandable why Sani, the *timawa*, remained alive and survived, despite bloody sea wars and gerontological constraints.¹² Muzones needed him to project a history of a freeman, assuming that freedom elicits objective reminiscence. Sani’s correctly-remembered eyewitness accounts became reliable because of his freeman stature. It was the packaging that Muzones needed during the final years of Commonwealth. It was a practice of imagining a community, of historicizing from an existing island that is barely cited in history.¹³

Muzones was aware of the *historicizing* techniques that he embedded in his magnum opus. In his subsequent literary work, he reused some of these techniques. He wrote *Amurukpok* which was serialized in the weekly magazine *Kasanag* from January 10, 1948 to August 21, 1948. *Amurukpok* dealt with another period in Margosatubig’s history: the epic of Salagunting II. There are repetitions in the two plots, as a repetition of history. The novel *Amurukpok* commences with Salagunting I’s demise from the attack of *amurukpok*, a mythical creature that lives in limbo. This time, the creature’s target prey is the infant Salagunting II. Morgana supplants him with another baby, and the creature reveals itself as the dead magician Pandit Gulamu. Determined to find her husband, Morgana solicits the services of the outlaw Yugis Tulawi who eventually invaded Margosatubig. Twenty years later, Salagunting II journeys in search of his parents. While attempting to help the bewitched Kadene, he meets Balitawtaw. He receives a *binsul nga pakpakan* and is given the same advice as his father – to avoid women until he has regained the kingdom. This advice

is also lost on Salagunting II. He drifts to Mangsi where he vanquishes and decimates the *amurukpok*. He returns to earth and discovers Margosatubig groaning under Tulawi's rule. Eventually, he defeats Tulawi, wins back the kingdom of his forefathers, and marries Kadene. This sequel, creating a full body of mythology, turns the nation into a narrative to be recited. Reinforcing its objective, the narrative body continued to disseminate the symbolic representations, and gives the nation a body.

One grasps the meaning of the nation through the images that Muzones casts and the fiction his two novels evoke. Ideologically, *timawa*-ism offered a social and economic agenda through the mass education of the Filipino public from the reading of the novels. On the political level, Muzones's use of the freeman Sani, the *timawa*, as narrator became an important political statement on the equality of the classes and the fight for equality. Sani, the *timawa*, inspired a local politician's program. Harnessing the *timawa* power, the "Freedom Law" was launched and Iloilo councilor Rodolfo Ganzon swept away all his political opposition race, making him "like the great proletarian hope to Muzones and his fellow timawas" (Locsin-Nava *History* 22-6).¹⁴ Muzones may be deemed a successful culinary artist in devising a recipe for imagining a nation, both in letters and in politics. He gathered the central ingredients of his tradition and devised a political strategy for the mobilization of his class and kind. For Muzones, there is no concrete historical reality but it is producible. The nation has always been there, even if submerged in the hearts of its members.

While some questions of characterization and representation may arise, Muzones found it safe to show both sides of the experience of colonization. It may be dismissed as a collaborative literature in favor of the Spaniards; after all, Mohammed rightfully owned the throne based on analysis of Muslim laws, and the Moros' banditry was a resistance to foreign rule, as Guieb has observed (90-109). Yet, Muzones moderated the conflict using age old adages of empathy and equality; universal values which the ruler-characters in the novel unfortunately dismissed. There were, it must be said, datus who offered their kingdoms and men for the achievement of peace of the entire Muslim state. Besides, there are records of Muslim capturing converts during the early years of Spanish colonization. However, there is not enough research to assess whether these attacks were forms of resistance or mere banditry. What Muzones projected, then, is a nation unified by differences and by individual acts of historical imagination. Muzones, as a historian, is a man of his time. "What the historian selects for consideration of the past is influenced by the interests of the age in which he lives" notes Lee (24). The late Commonwealth context is essential to understanding the apropos of images and events that Muzones wove into

his novels. It was an ambivalent period of history, with the Philippines seeking ideas and symbols necessary for a nation trying to make sense out of its brand new autonomy.

The necessity to produce a history was symptomatic in a people without a nation, in a people identified only by their geography, itinerant and thus always in search of identity. Muzones, despite his self-confessed penchant for Western literature, was aware of the fragmentation benevolently designed by the Americans who lorded over the sea and owned the Philippine harbors and lands. What was left uncontrolled by this Occupation were the southern bodies of water and their nomadic inhabitants whose number was not included in any population census and whose history had not seen print. It was a time of Americanization, and Muzones took a modest step (*kubos nga dulot sa taliambong*) toward the prevention of further fracture in the relationship of nation and art.¹⁵ He returned to ethno-symbolism, created a nation of *la longue durée*, mythical, cultural and symbolic; wrote a sequel to signal a recurrence, continuity, and reappropriation; gave his community-formation an ethnic basis; and held *Margosatubig* as the ethno-history of a people en route to nationhood.¹⁶ It was a beautiful *maragtas* of a nation in mind. It was a literary sentiment of a nationalist who did not have yet a nation. Lumbera also recognizes that the opportunity for Filipinos to achieve a sense of nation and national identity (and thus, a literary voice of their own) was lost in the subsequent fragmentation of the American Occupation.

MARITIME COMMUNITY

Maritime by its very nature, the pre-Spanish Philippine community was mobile and controlled, but was significantly unstable. It was mobile in the sense that it was continuously venturing to different areas, discovering other communities with whom to barter goods and ideas. The sea was more of a unifying than a dividing body, making each boat of people understand the smooth flow of co-existence among their various cultures. Their mobility was not feared as a diasporic. They were a solid community within a liquid geography, loyal to their kin and leader. It was a controlled community in the sense that a boat could only accommodate a maximum number of passengers-cum-citizens. This boat, manned by a paternal leader, maintained the population control and census, and decided the limits of their sailing territory. The pre-Spanish communities navigated the seas aboard their *balangay* – the native term which evolved into *barangay*, the Philippines's basic political unit.¹⁷ Scott defines that a Tagalog *barangay* was a “group of people ruled over by the sultan ... [to whom] they owed allegiance ... though datos often joined their

barangays in common communities, reckoning precedence and making alliances among themselves" (Scott *Barangay* 6). It was "a kinship grouping most commonly of some twenty to about a hundred miles, most of whom usually resided in a primary settlement that may be termed a village," according to Wernstedt and Spencer (158). They added that the group functioned socially, economically, politically, and regionally, and represented an independent territorial unit having political autonomy. "Loose concepts of territoriality held sway," Wernstedt and Spencer concluded, and "political structuring everywhere was immature" (118). The absence of a stable inter-barangay structure made impossible a united reaction to the Spanish take-over of the islands. This instability, we can argue, made the native communities susceptible to foreign domination. Territorialization was an issue too alien to these sea-born *barangays* and so the sea ironically became a division, making geography the prime factor of difference.

Maritime communities are more susceptible to outside political, economic and cultural differences. Unlike landed communities who can border their territories, those at sea struggle to form their identity and heritage. Some islands divided by the sea have fostered commonalities in their cultures primarily because their sea distance has instilled in them the need to co-exist. Those whose distance is impossible to bridge have to confront independence; thus, the rise of kingdoms, the evolution of chieftain cultures, the construction of hegemony. The kingdom that has exhausted its political power and has influenced the community of dispersed affiliation gets the share of geopolitical stardom, thus the capacity to formulate stringent laws and to subject weak communities.

Muzones designated Margosatubig as the center of the Moro nation. Its king, therefore, is deemed as the most powerful of all the heads of Muslim states. Its history, the spine of the Moro nation, one observes in the novel, is embedded with memorialization and monumentation, driving people to iconatrophism for further validation and authentication and enrichment of its hegemonic narration. Knowledgeable of the needed bordering of terrains, Muzones cartographically assigned ethnicities, religions, and philosophies. Lanaw, for example, is allotted to Muslims who do not submit to the power of Mohammed; and Rom-rom is the island of Christians, represented by Maria Cristina's family, Legazpi, (which may be an allusion to the renowned Spanish circumnavigator who once crossed the Philippine seas, Miguel Lopez de Legazpi).

Living surrounded by water, Peter Boomgaard says, people have tried to make sense of the blessings, the dangers and the risks that are connected, or at least they thought of as connected to the sea (1-23). Thus, he continues, they "populated" the sea with the rich variety of animals, spirits and other beings. While some of these beings are recognized

by modern biology, it is still widely accepted that the seas have not yet yielded all their secrets. Interestingly, *Margosatubig* fashions this sea cosmology. It is an indelible piece for the accounting of mythological characters in Philippine maritime folklore. The novel presents a hierarchy of the sea kingdom with Balitawtaw as its king and with Katipayan as the most beautiful and most powerful *kataw* (mermaid). These deities, as shown, have helped Salagunting to reclaim the kingdom. It is also interesting to note what Pandit Gulamu exclaimed when he heard the attack of the swordfishes: “*ang akig sang dagat!* (the sea’s wrath).” This statement can be approached in two ways: the environmental fury and the dangerous zone. According to the former, the abundant marine resources are deemed exploited. As *orang laut* (sea people), communities benefiting from the sea, they have a greater tendency to neglect its better use. Mohammed shows an example of this negligent attitude, lustfully consuming the resources that the sea offers. Driven by narcissism and by the promise of power, Mohammed sends out his divers and warriors, instructing them to amass the precious stones of the sea and to incarcerate inferior sailing societies. This unstoppable greed returned ghastly stories and experiences that resulted in the worldview of a fear and an avoidance of the sea and thus the sea became a dangerous zone. While Mohammed constantly sends out his men to the sea to exploit it, other political leaders stimulated the fear of the dangerous sea as a means of keeping their subjects from leaving their land territory.

It can be seen that the sea was staged as “a man’s space.” It was the zone of colonialism, captivity, banditry, and piracy – performances of man-made threats. It was the playing ground of *buyongs* and *tulisans*. It was also the stage of colorful ships that boarded warriors for a man’s cause. This assigning of the sea as the social location of an exclusively male sphere is definitely a masculinist approach. While one may assume that history is *his-story*, Muzones’s projection of a leader as the datu of a *vinta* or *balangay* is a Filipino appropriation of the captain and his ship. The role of women in largely masculine maritime projects remains fleeting, but one cannot subtract their essential silence and sea-like unpredictability in Salagunting’s heroism. (Like the sea, they too have been exploited and disregarded, and they too have been seen as a dangerous zone.)

The men of Ibyn and Salagunting executed the ethnic Filipino seamanship described by Scott: skilled boat-building (and galleons thereafter as directed by the Spaniards), raw celestial navigation, unique constellation-agriculture calendar creation, observatory meteorology, knowledge of the powerful and capricious currents of Philippine seas (*Boatbuilding* 17-20). These skills are indelible in the characterization of native Filipinos (see *Boat Building*). Boats are symbolic to their existence, and remain so today for many Filipino

seamen and their families.

The *Margosatubig* is an artifact for the enrichment of the sea and the shipping corpus of the Hiligaynon, as well as the Filipino language itself – urgently needed by what is a national language in progress. In the absence of a native word or its equivalence, Muzones coined new words – a genuine act by a grammarian and lexicographer. To support the comprehension of his readers, Santiago Alv. Mulato, Muzones’s nativist colleague, sustained a weekly vocabulary column, *Mananaghaw*, filled with Muzones’s created terminologies. There, Mulato explained the “impregnation” and importance of the new words. Muzones was involved in the preparation of a Hiligaynon grammar and a dictionary in two instances: when a member of a local literary project in 1949, and when he was the first president of *Gakud ni Sumakwel* (Knights of Sumakwel), a group of Hiligaynon writers. Muzones’s novel adds authenticity and excitement to the maritime vocabulary, which permits deeper insights into ancient Philippine culture.

TOWARD ARCHIPELAGIC IMAGINATION

What kind of imagination fits the “Filipino” then? Abstract in its very nature, imagination submits itself to the process of shaping that is dependent on the visualizations of the community – being anchored to the ethnic concept or to the compromise of merged existence. Understanding Muzones’s fiction brings the reader to a form that is archipelagic.

Fernand Braudel observes that geography “helps us to rediscover the slow unfolding of structural realities, to see things in the perspective of the very long term ... it helps us to discover the almost imperceptible movement of history, if only we are prepared to follow its lessons and accepts its categories and divisions” (qtd. in Sutherland 28). Braudel’s idea brings an important axiom to the limelight of imaginative exercise: that no one is exempted from the politics of geography. With the sea as the site of the extreme margins of every Philippine location, understanding its structure and the diversity of cultures surrounding it could have assisted the Filipinos in perceiving cultural penetration.

Philippine national history has been dominated by the arrivals of its colonizers. The Spaniards, led by Portuguese explorer Ferdinand Magellan, for example, arrived with their fleet of ships in 1521, established settlements in the islands, celebrated Catholicism, and benefited from the galleon trade. In 1543, Ruy López de Villalobos led an expedition to the islands and gave the name *Las Islas Filipinas* (after Philip II of Spain) to the twin islands of Samar and Leyte, which was later adapted by the entire archipelago. It is not surprising, therefore, why the 333-year occupation is represented by a cross on the

prow of a ship. In addition, the American occupation is always represented by the U.S.S. Thomas, the vessel that brought the first teachers (later branded as Thomasites) and their English books to the shore of Manila Bay in 1901. Americans built schools, generated a Western mentality. They established harbors and left hyphenated offspring. With these national narratives of colonizers who arrived and left are images lost and found and angles celebrated and relegated. What was reduced to a lesser importance in the discussion of the magnificent arrivals is no less their maritime nature. Had public histories focused on the very geography that made the archipelago vulnerable to foreign dissemination of power, Philippine scholarship could have not condensed its socio-politics to the rank of peripheral and subaltern, which colonialism and imperialism are deemed to have produced.

The struggle over geography, Edward Said commented, is about ideas, forms, images and imaginings (3-14). The traffic of these abstract goods left imprints on cultural roads, creating avenues for colonization. But “neither imperialism nor colonialism is a simple act of accumulation and acquisition. Both are supported and perhaps even impelled by impressive ideological formations that include notions that certain territories and people require to beseech domination” (9).

Rizal, propagandizing during his time, wanted a benevolent assimilation from Spain. Spanish circumnavigators, after all, were captivated by the beauty of the islands. The inviting images of the mistaken spices opened historical milestones and heroic accounts – Rizal being the image of uncertainty over colonial viewpoints. Despite the obvious distance of Spain, and later the United States, from the Philippines, why did these forces sail through the seas? The idea of beseeching domination, that Said mentioned, might have been the signal that geography sent. The archipelagic geography might have been destiny.

Statesman Carlos P. Romulo, in 1973, defined the concept of archipelago as “all waters around, between and connecting the 7,000 islands ... belong to and form part of the inland waters subject to the exclusive sovereignty of the Philippines.”¹⁸ Jose Ingles stated that when the Philippines pleaded for the recognition of the unique position of archipelagos, it was merely requesting legal confirmation of an acknowledged geographical and historical fact.¹⁹ Irrespective of their width and dimension, the islands are deemed “necessary appurtenances” of the land territory. Water areas “embraced within the lines described in the Treaty of Paris” are considered as “maritime territorial waters” for purposes of “protection of [its] fishing rights, conservation of [its] fishery resources, enforcement of [its] revenue and anti-smuggling laws, defense and security, and protection of such other interests ... deem vital to [its] national welfare and security, without

prejudice to the exercise by friendly foreign vessels of the right of innocent passage over these waters.” Further, position papers claim that “all natural deposits or occurrences of petroleum or natural gas ... within the territorial waters or on the continental shelf, or its analogue in an archipelago, seaward from the shores ... which are not within territories of other countries, belong ... to the Philippines, subject to the right of innocent passage of ships of friendly foreign State over those waters” (*Yearbook* 69-70).²⁰

The “archipelagic principle” includes three main arguments:

An archipelagic state, whose component islands and other natural features form an intrinsic geographical, economic, and political entity, and historically have or may have been regarded as such, may draw straight baselines connecting the outermost points of the outermost island and drying reefs of the archipelago from which the extend of the territorial sea of the archipelagic state is or may be determined.

The waters within the baselines, regardless of their depth and distance from the coast, the sea-bed, and the subsoil thereof, and the superjacent airspace, as well as all their resources, belong to, and are subject to the sovereignty of the archipelagic state.

Innocent passage of foreign vessels through the waters of the archipelagic state shall be allowed in accordance with its national legislation, having regard to the existing rules of international law. Such passage shall be through sea lanes as may be designed for what purpose by the archipelagic state. (Philippines 9-10)

It may be inferred from the principle that a people residing in scattered existence became conscious of the need to define their map – not just by looking at the aerial representation of their geography, but also in reclaiming their natural resources without discounting the essence of global co-existence. Applying this principle in the novel and the nation, one may go back to the origin of *Margosatubig* and assess the striking claim of Anderson regarding “the profound fictiveness of the newspaper.” What is interesting to probe is how far the novel, and its serialization, led to imagining a national community of readers. The serializing of novels in local magazines was a part of the popular culture of Filipinos during the decades of Commonwealth. In fact, for Tagalog writers to reach a “national” readership, their novels needed to be translated into the languages of regional magazines. Muzones was one of the translators. It can be supposed that he was not just translating, he was learning from the political issues and the consciousness that his

predecessors from the capital region were advocating. The local magazines and the novels they were serializing, therefore, were opportunities of representing what was happening in myriad arenas across the nation.

Colonizers of the Philippines wrote stories of incredibility, orientalizing the archipelago, packaging the bundle of islands according to the strangeness of botanical and zoological imagining that they had in mind. This exoticism is the same approach that Muzones used to assert the crossbreed identity of his time. His voice might not have been sufficient to address the need for finding “the Book,” given the social realism that was popular to Tagalog readership. But the images that he captured in his native language and shipped to the population of Filipinos, including those who migrated to the National Capital Region, was an act worthy of acknowledgment – that he *did* problematize a nation.

Muzones might have felt that the Commonwealth was the perfect time to find idioms for national character. It might have been the same urge that Rizal experienced when he wrote his *Noli* half a century before *Margosatubig*. Interestingly, Rizal also capitalized on the maritime nature of his nation, in the fleeting mode of historical consciousness in the community he found the potential to become a nation. His *El Filibusterismo*’s first chapter, usually translated as “The Bapor Tabo,” highlighted the multivocality and multifocality of a boat. It was a socio-political metaphor of boarding and sailing through the currents of history, desperately waiting for the time of arrival, looking forward to the port of destination. *Margosatubig*, like any novels, is a cultural institution – remitting signs of resistance and vulnerability. “Unity in diversity” may be overused in the continuing search for the siren of national harmony. While waiting for the siren – or the spirit – one may find contentment in the boat which is an insoluble image in the nationalist narration of Rizal and Muzones.

Having argued Muzones’s maritime historicization and the national foundation of nation-border, it can be inferred that archipelagic imagination is an act of concept formation of a community divided but, more importantly, united by bodies of water, conscious of co-existence among cultures of a knowable sovereignty, narratable through historical navigations anchored on maritime geography.

This essay remains modest, of course, and further investigation of marine contexts is encouraged. There is an urgent need to gaze at the sea that envelopes each geopolitical territory and to acknowledge the cultural interactions that are Philippine. A critical challenge lies within Filipino alternative historicizing, as “official histories” have characterized the phenomena of colonization and empire through foreign accounts – all of which are nautical narrations. While the world may have witnessed the grandeur of the Spanish and American navigation to the Philippines, it is high tide for hometown scholars to expand their own maritime historiography.

NOTES

1 Locsin-Nava divided Muzones novel-writing into three periods: apprenticeship (1938-1941), maturity (1946-66), and decline (1967-1973). Muzones is said to be the longest reigning “King of the Hiligaynon Novel,” perennially occupying this title from 1938 to 1972, against Serapion Torre, author of *Benjamin*, the first Hiligaynon novel, from 1920-1937, and Conrado Norada, 1976-1988 (Locsin-Nava History 69). Muzones chronicled Iloilo society from 1938 to 1973 with his impressive record of sixty-two serialized novels – of which only *Margosatubig* saw book publication (Iloilo City: Diolosa, 1948), English translation, and partial Filipino translation. The English translation of the novel, in book-bound copy, was by Edward D. Defensor (Iloilo City: UP College in Iloilo, Visayas Studies Program, 1979). Filipino translation of the first chapter of the novel, together with an appended glossary of untranslatable Visayan-terms, was by Leoncio P. Deriada, published in *Katipon: Gawad Bonifacio sa Panitikan Centennial Award* (Manila: National Commission for Culture and Arts, 1999. 101-8). Winton Lou G. Ynion has a Filipino translation of the first two chapters which appeared in *Banwa: Journal sa Filipinolohiya* (Manila: Far Eastern U, 2006. 167-87). Locsin-Nava mentions that Muzones has written sixty-two novels. The list in her appendix, which includes a summary for each title, enumerates only fifty-one. This author’s visit to the law office of Muzones’s eldest son in 2002 was instrumental in discovering a novel that is not in Locsin-Nava’s list. Meanwhile, it is safe to cite that he has fifty-two novels in his corpus.

2 In 1946, *Yuhum*, a locally-published magazine, made history by publishing *Margosatubig* for thirty weeks. The novel raised the magazine’s circulation from 2,500 to 37,000, an impressive number given the 12,000 weekly circulation of *Hiligaynon*, Yuhum’s first rival. Important Hiligaynon writers shared space in the preface of the book form: Conrado Norada, Santiago Alv. Mulato, Emilio Zaldivar, Pura Araneta, and Donato Flor de Liza, all praised Muzones for his literary achievement (Locsin-Nava, *History* 66-7).

3 Margosatubig is described as “a fourth-class municipality situated 52 kilometers away from Pagadian City ... bounded on the north by the municipality of Lapuyan; on the south by Moro Gulf overlooking the Celebes Sea; on the east by the municipalities of San Miguel and Dimatiling; and on the west by Dumanquillas Bay.” It is composed of seventeen barangays containing a total land area of 8, 831.9634 hectares with a 33,754-population. Margosatubig first became a municipal district of Zamboanga in 1917 (“Margosatubig”).

4 Written in 1901 and published in 1907, *Maragtas* was written by Don Pedro Monteclaro, a local historian and war hero. It is believed to be a record of events that transpired during the 13th century, and reportedly based on oral and written documents. But it is “neither folklore nor history,” Locsin-Nava says, “an article of faith among Hiligaynon writers to trace the beginnings of Ilonggo culture to the mass

migration” (History 46). It is a “historical prop of racist migration theory,” comments William Henry Scott on this ethnocentric pride (Scott Prehispanic 139). As a result, it inspired literary works, including Muzones’s whose allusions are in *Salagunting* (1946), *Margosatubig*, *Aninipay* (1948), *Maratabat* (1950), *Kulintas nga Manangyad* (1952), *Ang Lantoy* (1965), and *Sri-Bishaya* (1969), (Locsin-Nava 112-3). For further discussion on Scott’s critique on *Maragtas*, see *Prehispanic* 91-103.

5 The Commonwealth Period lasted for almost twelve years, with Manuel L. Quezon (November 15, 1935 – August 1, 1944) as the first president of the Commonwealth and with Sergio Osmeña (August 1, 1944 – May 27, 1946) as the second.

6 Mojares briefly reflected on the “imaginary national body” that Rizal constructed in his novels, and how this same process worked in the case of a contemporary novelist (F. Sionil Jose and his renowned Rosales tetralogy of novels). His *The Origins and Rise of the Filipino Novel* is an indispensable reference in the study of Philippine literary history.

7 While pursuing law, Muzones was a part-time copyreader in *Hiligaynon*, a sister publication of the nationally-published magazine in Tagalog, *Liwayway*. To augment his income, he mastered Tagalog in six months and furtively wrote under a pen name for *Hiwaga*, another *Liwayway* sister publication, with whose associate editor he was friendly. His editor discovered this and dared him to write novels, since *Hiligaynon* was running mainly translations of Tagalog novels. He wrote his first novel, *Tibud nga Bulawan*, and from that time on, “*Hiligaynon* was never without a Muzones novel” (Locsin-Nava, *History* 17-8).

8 In Hiligaynon, “margosatubig” means bitter water. According to Margosatubig’s website, however, the term is a combination of two Subanen words: “malagos” and “tubig,” which when put together means “swift river current.” The term refers to the “swift-flowing river traversing the Margosatubig Pilot Training Center and the Guiwan area (“Marosatubig”). It was said that Margosatubig is the oldest municipality in the Zamboanga peninsula. However, it remained cut off from the rest of the province and could only be reached by sea crafts, until an asphalt road was constructed by the Philippine Australian Development Assistance Program linking it to other areas.

9 Cruz surveyed seven ethnoepics and four modern epics to come up with the function (he termed “anda” in Filipino).

10 *Hinilawod* is divided into three parts: *Labaw Donggon*, *Humadapnon*, and *Dumalapdap*. The titles are the names of the three heroes of the epic that are said to be the mirror of the Lambuano worldview. So far,

only *Labaw Donggon* is accessible to the public. This 53,000-line epic has been transcribed from the chants of a *binukot* (epic singer) by F. Landa Jocano, a renowned anthropologist.

11 Sidney Glazer did a survey of Muslim failed resistance during Spanish and American colonization in “The Moros as a Political Factor in Philippine Independence,” *Pacific Affairs*, 14.1 (March 1941), 78-90.

12 Few instances from the story suffice to prove this: once, when Salagunting and Sani were at sea, a group of *buyongs* captured them. The leader, disbelieving that they were fishermen, hacked Salagunting; but Sani was “swift like lightning” and got the scythe to save his master’s life. Salagunting used his enchanted algae to cure his *timawa*. Later, Sani noticed that the *buyong’s vinta* was on the way to Margosatubig. Afraid of being recognized, Salagunting changed Sani’s image and named him Lagudgud. In another instance, Sani and Raskal’s body scattered when saving Salagunting’s life. Sani gathered his body parts, put them together again, and with the power of water, the *timawa* Sani came back to life.

13 There are very few citations of Margosatubig throughout the writing of Philippine history. A certain Sultan Mangigin built his palace in Margosatubig but had been repeatedly rejected by the datus. One of the objectives of the American colonial administration was to make the datus obedient and loyal collaborators but the Muslims resisted resulting in Leonard Wood, the first governor of the Moro province, being relieved of his duties, and the rejection of Mangigin (Shinzo 151).

14 Alfredo Ellenberger, a neighbor, introduced Muzones to Iloilo Councilor Rodolfo Ganzon. Little did Ganzon know Muzones would provide him a capstone for his political career that would spell the end of the powerful Ilonggo political elite represented by the Lopez-Ledesma faction. Under the timawaism banner, Ganzon burst onto the political scene in 1951 when he garnered the highest number of votes in the city councilor race. When the “Freedom Law” was passed, he ran and won overwhelmingly as mayor of Iloilo City. He replicated his mayoral victory in 1959, 1972, and 1986. He served two terms as congressman in 1954 and 1962 and one term as senator in 1964. Ganzon dominated Iloilo political history for the next forty years whether he was in or out of power (Locsin-Nava 22-6).

15 In his preface, Muzones said that Margosatubig is his *kubos nga dulot sa taliambong* (literally translated as “modest offering to literature”). *Taliambong* is a created term, a compound from *tali* (bundle) and *ambong* (beauty). It was also Muzones who coined the term *sugilambong* for novel, a compound for *sugid* (tale) and *ambong*.

16 Ethno-symbolism, Smith argues, is “ what gives nationalism its power are the myths, memories, traditions, and symbols of ethnic heritages and the ways in which a popular ‘living past’ has been, and can be, rediscovered and reinterpreted” (9).

17 According to Scott, *balangay* was one of the first native words the Spaniards learned in the Philippines. When Antonio Pigafetta, Magellan’s Italian ethnographer, went ashore to parley with the rules of Limasawa, they sat together in a boat drawn up on shore which Pigafetta called *balangai*. When the Spaniard reached Luzon, they found this word for boat also being used for smallest political unit of Tagalog society. The two meanings of *barangay*, Scott emphasized, call attention to two important characteristics of the 16th century Philippines: dependent on boats and highly localized government (Barangay 4-5). Wernstedt and Spencer said that the *barangay* “was essentially a kinship group; but it included economic dependents, and its leader also functioned as a political leader for the group resident in a specific locality” (118).

18 Based on the stenographic transcript of the August 29, 1973, television interview with Romulo, former Foreign Affairs Secretary. The concept of archipelago, he said, was the Philippine Government’s reply to the request of the Secretary-General in 1955, during the preparation for the United Nation’s First Conference on the Law of the Sea. The government “strongly espoused” the concept in the 1958 conference in Geneva; however, it was unsuccessful due to lack of sympathetic support. Transcript from *The Archipelagic Principle*, a monograph, published by the Office of the Press and Public Affairs, Department of Foreign Affairs (Philippines).

19 Ingles, Romulo’s undersecretary, was the one who presented “The Archipelagic Theory” at the Diplomatic Symposium, Hyatt Regency Hotel, on June 28, 1973. The concept was advocated in the Asia-African Legal Consultative Committee, the UNESCO and the International Oceanographic Commission. The theory was first presented in 1958 during the Geneva conference though there was a position paper already submitted on March 7, 1955 (see Philippines).

20 The Treaty of Paris between the United States and Spain was concluded in Washington, D. C. on November 7, 1900, and was made public in December 10, 1898. Ingles’s cited position came from the *Yearbook of the International Law Commission* (1956) Vol. 2, 69-70.

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