

# Entangled Island: Filipino Colonial Technocrats, the Philippine Legislature, and Mindanao Settlement Plans from the 1920s through the Late 1930s

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Mindanao, a large tract of fertile, unexplored land with abundant natural resources in the southern Philippines, attracted much attention from American capitalists and entrepreneurs as well as Filipino policymakers and settlers beginning in 1898. However, little is known about how it attracted Christian Filipino settlers in the early twentieth century. It remains unclear how the government-led national settlement project of 1939 evolved and was implemented following the Cotabato agricultural colony project. This paper, focusing on the vital role of Filipino technocrats, aims to explore their contribution to the planning of Mindanao's settlement and the motives behind their drafting of related bills in the Philippine legislature. The technocrats, taking their inspiration from California's State Settlement Land Act of 1917, drafted bills to promote a similar project—yet their plans had little chance of being enacted, as they were enormously expensive. The settlement plan materialized as the Quirino-Recto Colonization Act of 1934, in response to American concerns that the growing Japanese community in Mindanao threatened the Philippines' national security. Depicted as a national security issue, the plan became increasingly divorced from its original aims of increasing food production and promoting population redistribution. Further, American intervention both altered Mindanao's development plans and overlooked indigenous people's rights.

**Keywords:** Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes, State Land Settlement Act, colonial state-building, Filipino colonial technocrat, Mindanao settlement, pensionado, Quirino-Recto Colonization Act, Jose Sanvictores

## I Introduction

The US colonization of the Philippines is often characterized as benevolent assimilation (Owen 1971; May 1980; Paredes 1989; Golay 1997; Go and Foster 2003; Nagano 2003; Kramer 2006; Go 2008; Anastacio 2016; Moore 2017). However, US rule yielded some-

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what exceptional trajectories from the outset (Thomas 1971; Tan 1973; Thompson 1975; Gowing 1983; McKenna 1998; Abinales 2000; Hawkins 2013; Charbonneau 2020). Unlike Christian-dominated regions of the Philippines, where democratic political institutions were quickly introduced, non-Christian areas such as Mindanao and the Sulu Archipelago—which were populated by Muslims and other non-Christian highlanders<sup>1)</sup>—were not given the chance to establish local autonomous provincial and municipal governments and were given only limited local autonomy. Further, in Mindanao military rule by force was tolerated, and American military officers were appointed as provincial and district governors (in Cotabato, Davao, Lanao, Sulu, and Zamboanga). This shows the bifurcated colonial system of civil and military governments under US colonization from 1903 to 1913 (Harrison 1922). Established in 1903 by the US military, Moro Province had the same political institutions and procedures as Christian-dominated regions but was administered solely by the US military. The Americans' firm belief that Muslims were a menace to national security justified military rule over Mindanao. Though the military administration used force to quash rebellions against the US colonial order, it also sought to co-opt Muslim leaders as new Filipino collaborators in order to stabilize the tribal ward system. Some influential Muslim leaders were specially appointed as headmen representing the tribal wards under the Moro provincial district. This divide-and-rule policy also allowed exploration of the possibility of industrial development via public schools and vocational training.

After the 1912 presidential election, American colonial policy in the Philippines changed greatly. There was an acceleration of "Filipinization" at the administrative and legislative levels, aimed at the smooth national integration of Christians and non-Christians (Harrison 1922). Mindanao was no exception. Following a shift in the Mindanao administration from US military rule to civil administration, many Muslims and other non-Christian leaders amenable to US rule were appointed to head newly organized local government units. They were particularly active at the provincial, municipal, and municipal district levels, stabilizing and entrenching US control. With the Jones Act of 1916, the Philippine legislature became unicameral, and all elected legislators were to be Filipino. This implicitly shows that Muslims were offered more chances to

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1) In this paper, the term "non-Christian" refers to Muslim and indigenous non-Muslim people living in Mindanao and the Sulu Archipelago from at least before the start of the national government-led Christian settlers' program. The latter were generally regarded as pagans under US rule and called *lumad* in the Visayan language in modern times. When the United States colonized the Philippines in 1898, Filipinos were divided into two racial categories: civilized and wild. The former were Christian and the latter non-Christian. In the early twentieth century, the northern part of Mindanao—Misamis and Surigao—due to its high concentration of Christian residents was considered the same type of Christian area as such areas in Luzon and the Visayas region (Rodil 2022).

represent non-Christian Filipinos nationally. In contrast, the administration of Mindanao affairs was downgraded from the Department of Mindanao and Sulu (1914–20) to the Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes, a division within the Department of the Interior. The first appointed bureau chief was the American civilian Frank Carpenter, but the bureau's management was delegated to his Christian Filipino subordinate Teofisto Guingona, as a form of political tutelage.

The formation of the bureau to supervise non-Christians in Luzon, Mindanao, and Sulu not only announced the reorganized administrative system to facilitate Muslims' integration into the Philippines as a nation, but also the end of American involvement in Mindanao affairs. Undoubtedly, this shift delighted Christian Filipino leaders in Manila. Meanwhile, some Muslim leaders, faced with the negative effects of Filipinization, condemned it as a new form of Christianization and publicly demanded the US return to Mindanao. In this way, both the shift in US colonial policy in the Philippines and the corresponding introduction of Filipinization with an eye to the Philippines' future independence heightened Mindanao's political fluidity, dynamics, and socioreligious complexities more than ever. The year 1913 marked a turning point in Mindanao history under US rule. The earliest Mindanao settlement plan addressed was envisioned with the formation of the Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes and when Filipino Christian technocrats who had studied in the US as government-sponsored pensionados to learn advanced knowledge and state-of-the-art technology began overseeing Mindanao's affairs. Amidst this shift in power—from a US monopoly to Christian Filipino elites—how was the Philippine government-led Mindanao settlement, which was modeled on California's State Land Settlement Act, evolved, shaped and implemented? In contrast to the rich literature on US colonial state-building in the Philippines, these questions remain unanswered. The significance of this problem cannot be reduced to a conventional inquiry into the Mindanao master settlement plan imported from the US and realized by Filipino technocrats. Instead, it is closely related to conjectures about colonial empowerment and disempowerment and how we make sense of the historical and political complexities behind Christian Filipinos' attempts to establish a new Christian colony within Mindanao as a home for non-Christians, despite Christian, Muslim, and other non-Christian highlanders' colonization under the US.

The key to addressing this overlooked issue lies in examining the role of bureaucrats and technocrats involved in Mindanao affairs, particularly those from the Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes, which was established under the Department of the Interior to develop an area densely populated by non-Christians.<sup>2)</sup> After the bureau's first director,

2) The establishment of the Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes under the Department of the Interior was approved by Act No. 2674 on February 20, 1917. This was made possible by the Jones Act, ↗

the American Carpenter, the four succeeding directors (including one acting director) were Filipinos (Teofisto Guingona, Antonio de las Alas, Jose Sanvictores, and Ludovico Hidrosollo) and three were former pensionados.<sup>3)</sup> In short, Mindanao's administration was consistently directed by Filipino Christians who were familiar with its affairs and had professional knowledge and hands-on experience. Jose Sanvictores' and Ludovico Hidrosollo's subsequent legislative careers as representative and senator from the non-Christian district, respectively, demonstrated how technocrats were viable resources for ensuring efficient colonial governance. Interestingly, Sanvictores authored 1928's House Bill (HB) 1022, aimed at Mindanao's settlement (Sanvictores to Winship, November 27, 1928, Box 197, Quezon Papers). He borrowed almost all his ideas from the California State Land Settlement Act of 1917 (Mead 1915; 1920; State of California 1931). As director of the Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes, in 1924 he authored the memorandum "Plan of Land Settlement for the Philippines," in which he argued for introducing a more comprehensive plan like California's (Sanvictores, June 10, 1924, Box 254, Quezon Papers).

The pensionados' colonial state-building has been, to some extent, explained by Takagi Y., A. Francisco, and others (Posadas and Guyotte 1992; Francisco 2015; Takagi 2016). Takagi (2016, 46–53) analyzed the vital role of technocrats' participation in the Philippine Economic Association during the 1930s. N. Teodoro (1999) regarded the role of pensionados as key to the "transmission of US culture." However, the only pensionados recognized as new bearers of professional knowledge and skills were Camilo Osias and Francisco Benitez (Francisco 2015, 90–95). Instead, much attention was focused on Filipino politicians as local landed elites, called *cacique* (LeRoy 1968, 97–113; Anderson 1988). We cannot deny that, due to an overemphasis on the legislature, Philippine historiography tended to overlook colonial Filipino technocrats and their roles by foregrounding political elites on the front line of colonial politics. As demonstrated below, the technocrats' influence cannot be reduced simply to devising practical master plans for a certain colonial project; the technocrats also authored bills on Mindanao's settlement and development and served as a think tank to ensure enlightened and progressive

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↘ enacted on August 18, 1916, which facilitated the Philippines' reorganization of governmental departments and bureau offices (Act No. 2674, Box 281, Quezon Papers). For more details on the Jones Law, see Chu (1982).

3) The system of sending Filipino students to the United States at the Philippine government's expense was enacted by Philippine Commission Act No. 854 on August 26, 1903, "An Act Providing for the Education of Filipino Students in the United States and Appropriating for Such Purposes the Sum of Seventy-two Thousand Dollars, in Money of the United States" (Philippine Commission Act No. 854). These scholars were popularly known as pensionados. Though such a word is not found in the Act, this paper adopts the term to refer to them, due to its familiarity.

administrative and legislative management.

Of particular importance in examining Sanvictores' proposed plan is the vital role of technocrats and former pensionados in colonial, modern, and transnational knowledge transmission, production, and application to the Philippine context.<sup>4)</sup> When embarking on a new colonial project, the Filipinos needed new knowledge and ideologies. Before Filipinization, American colonial bureaucrats provided this knowledge transmission and production; but as the American bureaucrats were steered toward early retirement, US-trained Filipinos filled their roles. For the Philippines, the US offered an ideal role model for achieving material, moral, and social development. Michael Adas dubbed US colonial rule as "engineers' imperialism," arguing that the Americans saw themselves as "the most scientific of modern colonizers" with "engineering skills and industrial technologies" (Adas 2006, 136). Since the US had no prior experience of colonialism and was ignorant of the Philippines' social and political affairs, it needed absolute trust and confidence in the superiority of its technical knowledge and skills. The unyielding view that the development of highly technical knowledge would bring material progress and civic development was embraced enthusiastically, even by Filipino technocrats, who saw it as a true resource and indispensable for colonial state-building following the American progressive model (Posadas and Guyotte 1992; Teodoro 1999; Francisco 2015; Takagi 2016).

Even if advanced knowledge and skills were within reach of the colony, it was a different story whether they inspired the planned colonial project. Between 1913 and 1941, there were three major state-sponsored Mindanao land settlement projects: the Cotabato agricultural colony program (1913–17), the homeseeker program (1918–39), and the National Land Settlement Administration program (1939–41) (Pelzer 1945; Hartley 1983; Umehara 2009; Suzuki 2013; 2023). The technocrats' first comprehensive Mindanao settlement project, as a bridge between the US mainland and Manila, was the National Land Settlement Administration (NLSA) project, begun in 1939 (Pelzer 1945; Umehara 2009). It had been almost 23 years since the Jones Act had given Christian Filipino elites legislative power over Mindanao. When reviewing the trajectories of

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4) The pensionado system was based on the experiences of the British government sending people from India to England, and of the Japanese government sending students overseas to learn advanced knowledge and technology (Racelis and Ick 2001, 232–233). In other words, it was not only knowledge and skills but also institutionalized frameworks, such as studying abroad, that the US employed to educate Filipino students transnationally and trans-imperially, facilitating the exchange and transmittal of intellectual assets. Briefly, the motive and mission behind colonial state-building in the Philippines, by both American bureaucrats and Filipino colonial technocrats from 1898, were already embedded in the transnational and trans-imperial influences of colonial, modern, and practical knowledge before their inception.

Mindanao settlement plans from the 1920s to the 1930s, we must note that the related bills that were ultimately introduced had been rejected many times by uncooperative legislators, particularly in the senate. Further, the senators' incoherent and unintelligible attitude, and their haphazardness and nonchalance, were major obstacles to the plans' realization. Considering the twisted and tangled settlement plans, this paper—which focuses on the distinctive role of technocrats/pensionados in Mindanao's affairs—examines how the settlement master plans were originally conceived through the exchange of transnational knowledge, and how they offered a solid legal and institutional basis for shaping numerous succeeding bills related to settlement from the 1920s through the 1930s.

This paper contributes to a better understanding of Filipino technocrats' colonial state-building, navigating Mindanao affairs through transnational connections between the US and colonial Manila. Further, it highlights valuable implications to make sense of the historical complexities of pre- and postwar Mindanao history. The primary sources of data and materials used here include annual reports by the US governor-general's office; public documents from the Philippine colonial government (the Philippine Commission and Moro Province); Philippine English-language magazines and daily newspapers; archives from the manuscript reports of the governor-general's office (National Archives, Washington, DC); Joseph Ralston Hayden Papers (University of Michigan); President Manuel Quezon Papers (National Library of the Philippines), Bureau of Insular Affairs; the Department of War (National Archives, Washington, DC); and secondary materials, when necessary.

## II Filipino Technocrats/Pensionados Navigating Mindanao's Affairs

Julian Go's (2003) comparative study of colonial state-building in the Philippines and other Asian colonies noted two major details. Unlike other colonial states, US efforts in the Philippines relied greatly on experts with specialized knowledge for administrative management. Since the US was a latecomer to colonialism (Fujiwara 2011), this offered more incentives for efficient management by mimicking the experiences of the UK, the Netherlands, and France, which had long been colonial powers. Further, the knowledge and technologies that US specialists benefited from did not originate in the United States; they were appropriated through trans-imperial and transnational networks and linkages. As such, colonial knowledge was highly flexible and fluid. Unsurprisingly, Filipino technocrats tried to personalize their ideas, experiences, skills, and insights from the US and faithfully apply them to overcome the Philippines' backwardness. As explained

below, the State Land Settlement Act did not originate in California; it was borrowed from Australia's Victoria state (Mead 1920, 31). The Californians found Australia's plan attractive because of its well-organized agricultural development system, even though its application in the US remained at the trial-and-error stage. Sanvictores, personalizing some ideas from the California program, tried to devise an ideal Mindanao plan. Undoubtedly, he belonged to the "Christian Filipino professional-managerial class with deep transnational ties to scientific communities pursuing similar aims" (Miller 2019, 61).

After the late 1910s, Filipino administrators played a vital role in the country's colonial state-building. In 1914 US Governor-General Francis Harrison issued an executive order stating, "when there are names on the proper eligible register of the bureau of Civil Service[,] no appointment shall be made to a position in the classified civil service of a person residing outside of the Philippine Islands" (Casambre 1968, 8). Consequently, all but nine director posts were filled by Filipinos until 1921, when Harrison left office (Casambre 1968, 7; Torres 2010, 43–45). Pensionados, regarded as possessing technical knowledge and a modern, rational way of thinking, became intellectual assets for realizing the colony's political, social, and economic development and represented the genesis of its colonial bureaucracy. Mindanao's affairs were no exception. Mindanao's administration, run by the United States Army until 1913, had been exempt from the laws applied to Luzon and the Visayas. Yet, when the power to govern Mindanao was transferred from the US Army to the Department of Mindanao and Sulu under civilian Governor Carpenter, the number of Filipino employees grew rapidly (Harrison 1922; Gowing 1983). Considering Mindanao's integration into colonial state-building, this shift indicated that power and authority to rule the non-Christian provinces was yielded by Filipino technocrats to the Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes.

The first Filipino to oversee Mindanao was Guingona, deputy governor of the Department of Mindanao and Sulu. A lawyer and politician, Guingona had also been Agusan's provincial governor. After terms as a representative and senator, he was named director of the Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes under the commonwealth. He was also the first commissioner for Mindanao and Sulu after the bureau's abolishment. Except for Guingona, the other four bureau directors and commissioners through 1939 were pensionados. They had earned bachelor's degrees in law, agriculture, and civil engineering. Their career histories revealed where the greatest concerns for Mindanao's administration lay (see Table 1). When Guingona resigned from the Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes to serve as senator from the 12th district representing Mindanao and Sulu, Antonio de las Alas was named acting director. He was among the first group of pensionados, having graduated from Indiana and Yale Universities. From 1922, after

Table 1 Brief Career Histories of Filipino Politicians and Technocrats Involved in Mindanao's Affairs, 1907-41

Name	Birthplace and Date	Academic Qualifications (Degree Obtained or Degree Course)	Public Service Career History
Teofisto Guingona	Iloilo, September 20, 1883	Bachelor of Law, Escuela de Derecho, 1907	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Second District of Negros Oriental, House of Representatives (1909-12, 1912-14)</li> <li>• Governor of Agusan (1914-17)</li> <li>• Acting governor, Department of Mindanao and Sulu (1918-20)</li> <li>• Director, Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes (1920-21, 1931-36)</li> <li>• Senator, 12th district (1922-24)</li> <li>• Acting commissioner (1936-37) and commissioner (1939-41), Mindanao and Sulu</li> </ul>
Antonio de las Alas	Batangas, October 14, 1898	Bachelor of Laws, Indiana University; Master of Laws, Yale University	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deputy director, Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes (1920-21)</li> <li>• Acting secretary, Department of the Interior (1922)</li> <li>• 1st district of Batangas, House of Representatives (1922-24, 1925-27, 1928-30, 1931-33)</li> <li>• Secretary, Department of Public Works and Communications (1933-35)</li> <li>• Member, 1934 Constitutional Convention (1934)</li> <li>• Secretary, Department of Finance (1936-38)</li> </ul>
Jose Sanvictores	Rizal, December 9, 1887	Bachelor of Science in Agriculture, University of Illinois, 1908	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bureau of Agriculture (1908-20)</li> <li>• Secretary to the president of the senate (1920-21)</li> <li>• Director, Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes (1921-24)</li> <li>• House of Representatives member from Mindanao and Sulu (1928-30) and Agusan and Bukidnon (1931-33)</li> <li>• Member, 1934 Constitutional Convention (1934)</li> <li>• Acting assistant secretary to the president of the Philippines</li> </ul>
Ludovico Hidrosollo	Capiz, September 2, 1885	Studied agriculture, University of Michigan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bureau of Agriculture</li> <li>• Director, Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes (1925-31)</li> <li>• Senator, 12th district (1931-33)</li> </ul>
Marcial Kasilag	Batangas, October 13, 1881	Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering, Purdue University, 1908	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Junior assistant engineer, Rizal Province (1908-9)</li> <li>• Assistant director and director, Bureau of Public Works (1919-36)</li> <li>• First commissioner for Mindanao and Sulu (1936-39)</li> </ul>

Sources: Cornejo (1939); Goodman (1962, 29).



being elected to represent his hometown district of Batangas, he authored bills related to Mindanao's settlement. Following Alas was Sanvictores, also from the first group of pensionados, who had studied agriculture at the University of Illinois. Though he also served in the legislature, he was originally a technocrat. At the Bureau of Agriculture, he was private secretary to Senate President Manuel Quezon and then promoted to direct the Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes from 1921 to 1925 (Quezon to Sanvictores, June 1, 1920, Box 241, Quezon Papers; Sanvictores to Quezon, November 26, 1921, Box 281, Quezon Papers).

The fourth technocrat was Ludovico Hidrosollo, who had studied agriculture at the University of Michigan. After returning home, he worked for the Bureau of Agriculture as a special agent. He served as deputy director under Sanvictores and was named director upon Sanvictores' resignation in 1925. Later, he was a senator for a non-Christian district. Having worked in non-Christian regions, he was known in the local media as "Datu Hidrosollo" (*Tribune*, July 19, 1931).<sup>5</sup> The fact that both Sanvictores and Hidrosollo, who learned advanced and technical knowledge in agricultural experiments and methods in the US, served as the director of the Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes explicitly indicates the importance of Mindanao's administrators being skilled in agricultural development. Lastly, Marcial Kasilag, the engineer appointed as the first commissioner for Mindanao and Sulu in 1936, was also from the first group of pensionados. He studied civil engineering at Purdue University and worked for many years at the Bureau of Public Works before being appointed to the commission (Kasilag 1938). During this time the Mindanao settlement plan, authorized by Act No. 4197 in 1934, was suddenly suspended, and the plan to construct inter-provincial highways connecting Cotabato, Davao, and Lanao began. Kasilag's appointment to the commission signaled that public works was the new agenda for Mindanao. The four above-mentioned Filipino colonial technocrats/pensionados from the first half of the twentieth century consistently managed Mindanao's affairs and administration.

### III Sanvictores' Settlement Plan: Making Mindanao Another California

Sanvictores accepted the nomination to serve as director of the Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes on November 25, 1921. On June 10, 1924 he drafted a four-page memorandum titled "Plan of Land Settlement for the Philippines," in which he briefly summarized five fundamental facts: (1) in spite of the importance of agriculture as a mainstay of Philippine

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5) "Datu" is an honorary title and/or prefix given to Muslim leaders. It means "ruler" in the Malay language.

industry, it had remained backward; (2) while the population grew rapidly in certain areas, a large section of Luzon and all of Mindanao remained uncultivated; (3) since only a few individuals owned large tracts of land, peasants with great potential to improve the land's productivity remained tenants, hampering agricultural progress; (4) intensifying conflicts between landlords and tenants could be resolved by economic reforms; and (5) due to a lack of government coordination, young agricultural school graduates failed to find proper workplaces and were thereby driven from the agricultural sector (Sanvictores, June 10, 1924, Box 254, Quezon Papers). Beyond that, recalling the 1918 homeseekers program, Sanvictores criticized the inadequacy of state-sponsored land settlement. He argued that for Mindanao's settlement to succeed, sending homeseekers alone was inadequate. The government needed to take full responsibility to uphold settlers' welfare related to public order, public health, transportation, and education. Sanvictores concluded that the failed Mindanao settlement projects were the result of ill management of these duties, which had been left up to the settlers. In contrast, he praised the State Land Settlement Act's agricultural development:

The Land Settlement Board of California which is an organization created and financed by the State of California buys large tracts of uncultivated land; subdivides them into convenient sized farms; constructs irrigation systems; puts up fences; builds homes, complete to the last detail, and the necessary farm buildings; helps the new communities in providing themselves with social attractions and in establishing commercial and rapid means of communication with the neighboring communities; and then sells the subdivisions to enterprising farmers who desire to establish themselves in California under these conditions; 5% of the total cost of the improved farms in cash and from 36-1/2 years in which to pay the balance at a reasonable rate of interest (5%). (Sanvictores, June 10, 1924, Box 254, Quezon Papers)

Sanvictores added that Minnesota and other US states were following California's example, and that Australia and England had preceded California in this settlement work. Judging from this, the primary reason why he criticized the Philippine government's ongoing homeseeker program as "do-nothing" was attributed to his belief that California's system of land settlement was a perfect example to follow. The motives behind his reference to California's settlement were also related to US Governor-General Leonard Wood's tight budget policy, which reduced appropriations to the homeseeker program. Wood strongly opposed government-sponsored land settlement as unnecessary, arguing it should be led by the private sector. Sanvictores maintained the need for a more comprehensive government-backed settlement program, saying the Philippines could not afford to wait until private funds were diverted to Mindanao and land cultivation was achieved (Sanvictores, June 10, 1924, Box 254, Quezon Papers). For Sanvictores, the California case was the best example for challenging Wood's assumptions.

In the US, the California land settlement program garnered much public attention, and people from all over the country were visiting and studying its success. Even US President Warren Harding, addressing Congress in December 1921, praised it:

California now has the distinction of creating the first and the most efficiently organized rural communities in America. . . . The state settlements at Durham and Delhi in California owe their wide and favorable reputation and their business success to careful planning and efficient management. (Harding, December 1921, Box 163, Wood Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress)

The settlement program became popular largely due to its energetic propagation by Elwood Mead, chairman of California's State Land Settlement Board and a professor of agriculture at the University of California. He not only demonstrated his strong leadership by implementing and managing the project, he also enthusiastically publicized its advantages through his books *State Aid in Land Settlement* (Mead 1915) and *Helping Men Own Farms: A Practical Discussion of Government Aid in Land Settlement* (Mead 1920). Sanvictores learned from Mead's example, realized the limitations of the homeseeker program, and began to explore how best to overcome the backwardness of Philippine agriculture.

At the end of his "Plan of Land Settlement for the Philippines" memorandum, Sanvictores stated that the "Alas Bill," patterned after the California State Land Settlement Act, was already in good shape (Sanvictores, June 10, 1924, Box 254, Quezon Papers). "Alas" refers to Antonio de las Alas, the Filipino legislator. A pensionado like Sanvictores, he was the acting director of the Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes before Sanvictores took the position in 1921. The Alas Bill was proposed as HB 257 on November 15, 1922 (see Table 2). Though we do not know the bill's details, its title resembles California's State Land Settlement Act, (officially "An Act Creating a State Land Settlement Board and Defining Its Power and Duties and Making an Appropriation in Aid of Its Operations"). The Alas Bill was "An Act Creating a Board of Agricultural Colonies and Defining Its Duties and Powers, and Making an Appropriation for Agricultural Colonization Work." This similarity is important because while the homeseeker program, aimed at replacing the unsuccessful Cotabato agricultural colony of 1913–17 (Bryant 1915; Hartley 1983; Suzuki 2018b), was initiated to send settlers to homestead on public lands, some legislative actions had already begun exploring a more comprehensive, state-sponsored Mindanao settlement plan as early as the 1920s.<sup>6)</sup> This is a good point of departure for

6) In 1914, the Report of the Philippine Commission (United States of America 1915, 373–381) did not clearly mention that the Cotabato project was a failure in the lengthy description by Carpenter, the governor of the Department of Mindanao and Sulu, who was a principal designer of the colony project. Further, the Report by the Secretary of Agriculture and Natural Resources within the Annual Report of the Governor General of the Philippines (United States of America 1918, ↗

Table 2 Introduced Bills and Acts Related to Mindanao's Settlement

Bill Number, Legislative/ Assembly Session	Bill Title	Date of Introduction/Approval	Author(s)
House Bill 257, 6th session	An Act Creating a Board of Agricultural Colonies and Defining Its Duties and Powers, and Making an Appropriation for Agricultural Colonization Work	Introduced November 15, 1922	Antonio de las Alas
House Bill 1612, 7th session	An Act Providing for the Establishment of Public Land Settlements, for the Creation of a Reimbursable Fund for the Promotion of Agricultural Pursuits upon the Said Settlements, and for Other Purposes	1926, exact date unknown	Manuel Briones, Jose Altavas, Leoncio Dacanay, and 22 other representatives
House Bill 1022, 8th session	An Act Creating a Board of Agricultural Colonies and Defining Its Duties and Powers and Making an Appropriation for Agricultural Colonies	Introduced September 26, 1928; passed by the House October 24, 1928	Manuel Briones and Ishidoro Vamenta
Act No. 4197, 9th session	An Act to Facilitate and Promote the Occupation and Cultivation of Public Land at Present Unoccupied by the Establishment of Settlement Districts, and to Appropriate the Sum of One Million Pesos for Said Purpose and for Other Purposes	Introduced November 7, 1934 as Senate Bill No. 105; passed by the House and the senate November 8, 1934; approved by the president of the United States February 12, 1935	Elpidio Quirino and Claro Recto
Commonwealth Act No. 441, Second National Assembly	An Act Creating the National Land Settlement Administration	Approved June 3, 1939	Unknown

Sources: Sanvictores (June 10, 1924, Quezon Papers); HB 1612 (1926, Quezon Papers); Senate Bill No. 105 (1934, BIA); Act No. 4197 (1934, Hayden Papers); Commonwealth Act No. 441.

exploring the motives behind the planning of Mindanao's settlement in the 1920s and the backdrop of the ongoing but unpopular homeseeker program (Suzuki 2023).

How did Sanvictores and Alas gather information? At least two key people, Guingona and Hidrosollo, made fact-finding trips to San Francisco. On August 14, 1919, Guingona—deputy governor of the Department of Mindanao and Sulu—traveled there to inspect advanced agriculture industrial models, such as rice and other plantations, logging operations, and commercial fisheries, all of which would be directly valuable to future Philippine governments (Carpenter to Chief of the Bureau of Insular Affairs, 1919, BIA subject file Frank Carpenter, RG350). Hidrosollo had gone to Michigan to study agricultural extension work in 1920, and before heading back to the Philippines he received a message from Governor-General Harrison asking him to study “thoroughly the operation [of] land settlement board of California” (Carmack to Hidrosollo, May 24, 1920, BIA subject file Ludovico Hidrosollo, RG350). After being appointed senator, he visited the Bureau of Indian Tribes in Washington, DC, and Middle Eastern countries with high concentrations of Muslims (*Philippines Herald*, September 2, 1931). Undoubtedly, Filipino technocrats like Hidrosollo served as intermediaries between California and Manila, disseminating trans-imperial and transnational knowledge. Their overseas experience and knowledge were also of great value for implementing colonial projects, but what particularly deserves special mention is Sanvictores' enterprising disposition and strong will to overcome long-standing agricultural problems by customizing the California experiment to Mindanao's context.

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↘ 193) carried the optimistic view that “in general, it may be stated so far that the colonies in the Department of Mindanao and Sulu, excepting Momungan, have been a success . . . the colonists were self-supporting, and they do not require any assistance save in few instances, such as transportation to and from the hospital in case of sickness and the purchase of carabaos for those who need them, they being unable to pay its high cost on cash.” The author's judgment, however, is that the Cotabato agricultural colony program was considered a failure, based on the following grounds. First, additional appropriations from the Philippine legislature were discontinued from 1917, due to the lack of tangible outcomes in agricultural production. Thus, all settlers were forced to be self-supporting. This hampered the further expansion of the agricultural colony project in Cotabato. Second, agricultural production dropped between 1916 and 1920. With the total cultivated land area almost unchanged, the ratio of destroyed crop areas, such as of rice and corn, was extremely high, reaching almost 99 percent in 1916 and 50 percent in 1920; this meant that in 1916, almost all crops were lost. Third, the Annual Report of the Director of the Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes for 1921 (Records of the Bureau of Insular Affairs, NARA), by the acting director of the Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes, concluded that “as to the economic objective, it may be stated that the agricultural colonies are a failure.” Considering these reasons, it would be safe to say that the Cotabato agricultural colony project failed.

#### IV The Mindanao Settlement Bills and US Governor-General Wood's Criticism

The Mindanao settlement plan, modeled by Sanvictores on California's State Land Settlement Act, did not quickly materialize into legislation. This was partly because following the failure of the Cotabato agricultural colony, legislators were too intimidated to make appropriations for similar projects. Thus, Mindanao remained uncultivated. In addition, except for a few lawmakers, most were generally indifferent to the island's development; this hindered generous appropriations. However, interest in Mindanao suddenly grew among lawmakers after US Senator Robert Bacon introduced a bill (the Bacon Bill) separating Mindanao and Sulu from the rest of the archipelago in 1926 (Fry 1978). The Bacon Bill aimed to attract more foreign investment and capital by incorporating these areas as US territories. For Christian Filipino politicians, the bill—which would explicitly lead to the territorial loss of Mindanao's rich natural resources—hastened the seventh session of the Philippine legislature (1926) to introduce Mindanao settlement bills in protest.<sup>7</sup>

During the seventh session, which began on July 16, 1926, several bills related to Mindanao's settlement were presented. HB 1612 was the only one passed by both the House and the senate (see Table 2) (House Bill No. 1612, 1926, Box 196, Quezon Papers). It called for land prior to settlement by colonists to be divided into subdivisions and offered loans for land improvement. The bill also included roads, public health facilities, and the sale of agricultural products. Some lawmakers were concerned that the mistakes made with the Cotabato agricultural colony project would be repeated, leading to financial failure (*Diario de Sesiones de la Legislatura Filipina*, 1926, Vol. 1, Num. 76: 1570–1575, Vol. 448, BIA, RG350). To them, “financial failure” meant that colonists who took out loans were unable to repay them. According to Sanvictores' investigation, the per capita amount of unpaid loans reached 352 pesos (Sanvictores, June 24, 1924, Box 254, Quezon Papers).<sup>8</sup> In response to this criticism, more favorable opinions were expressed. Those

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7) Several powerful Muslim leaders favored the introduction of the Bacon Bill, hoping it would bring US rule over Mindanao and Sulu. In this context, Senate President Manuel Quezon became skeptical of the loyalty of the powerful Cotabato Muslim leader Abdulla Piang to the Filipino-run colonial government. Piang was also the appointed representative of the House, since he was rumored to be pro-America and a supporter of Governor-General Wood. Quezon wrote to Piang and received the latter's pledge that “[w]e people of Mindanao and Sulu in general, does [*sic*] not fully want for independence.” Quezon replied, “I am happy over your assurance that the peoples of Mindanao and Sulu welcome the settlement of these regions by their Christian brothers” (Piang to Quezon, September 2, 1927, Box 344, Quezon Papers; Quezon to Piang, September 6, 1927, Box 344, Quezon Papers).

8) Sanvictores proposed a new scheme to resolve the long-held debt that had amassed between 1913 and 1917. For details, see Sanvictores (June 24, 1924, Box 254, Quezon Papers).

anxious to approve the bill acknowledged the previous colony's failure but argued that Mindanao had great potential, as the land tax had continued to rise (*Diario de Sesiones de la Legislatura Filipina*, 1926, Vol. 1, Num. 76: 1570–1575, Vol. 448, BIA, RG350). However, remarks defending the bill were superficial, and there were growing fears of the possible loss of Mindanao. It is unlikely that their favorable support represented the general will of the lawmakers; rather, it was understood that, considering the imminent political situation over Mindanao, the chemistry between the House and the senate was perfect, allowing them to communicate wordlessly.<sup>9)</sup>

Governor-General Wood vetoed the bill, dismissing it as too paternal and concluding that “[t]he financing of new settlements is a matter which should largely be left to private initiative” (Wood to the Speaker of the House of Representatives, December 7, 1926, Box 196, Quezon Papers). He argued that, aside from the introduction of much more liberal land laws related to the homestead clause allowing 200 acres per person, private enterprise should handle the financial support of new settlements. He also emphasized the need for an influx of ambitious, industrious, and enterprising settlers qualified to develop the land in the best interest of the Philippines and the US (United States of America 1904, 20). Similar criticism had been leveled against state aid in land development. Mead (1915) refuted the criticism:

To the objection that such aid would be paternalism I would reply that it is no more paternalism than the Homestead Act, or River and Harbor improvements, or rural delivery in the Postal Service. Of all governments, democracies should be the ones most capable of performing and willing to perform any direct service for the people which the public welfare requires. Relief and protection for the settler is both a national duty and an opportunity. (Mead 1915, 12)

For Mead, the government was the best political institution to provide people with all necessary services in a direct and efficient manner. Wood favored small government without publicly funded land settlement projects. Wood's veto was an implicit lesson on the Mindanao settlement bill. While Wood was governor-general, similar bills on Mindanao would not be passed. For the legislature, since introducing a bill on Mindanao's settlement was only a political tool to protest the Bacon Bill, once it was killed in the US (in 1927), the Philippine legislature's concern about Mindanao correspondingly declined.

Though Wood vetoed HB 1612, Hidrosollo persisted. Once promoted to director of the Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes, he modified the bill, arguing the importance of Mindanao's settlement for agricultural development, and prepared his own bill as “An Act Providing for the Establishment of Land Settlements, for the Creation of a Reimbursable Fund for the Promotion of Agricultural Pursuits upon the Said Settlements, and for

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9) For the reaction and response of the Philippine legislature to the Bacon Bill, see Suzuki (2018a).

Other Purposes” (Government of the Philippine Islands, Bureau of Education 1929, 69–71). It was based on his belief that raising agricultural productivity on public land was vital for ensuring the Philippines’ economic development and for solving the unemployment problem (*Philippines Herald*, August 7, 1929). Hidrosollo referred to the California example to enhance his ideas’ legitimacy:

[A] land settlement movement similar to that of California will greatly help toward making the country attractive . . . the bill herewith attached contains the essential requirements of a land settlement movement, and we therefore recommend that it be submitted to the Philippine Legislature for consideration. (Government of the Philippine Islands, Bureau of Education 1929, 69)

In 1928, after Wood’s death, Sanvictores authored his own Mindanao settlement bill. In September 1928 Representatives Manuel Briones and Ishidoro Vamenta introduced HB 1022 (see Table 2), “An Act Creating a Board of Agricultural Colonies and Defining Its Duties and Powers and Making an Appropriation for Agricultural Colonies” (House Bill No. 1022, 1928, Box 197, Quezon Papers). Sanvictores was the true force behind the bill. He proudly noted, “It is the result of years of study of colonization in other parts of the world and of actual experience in the handling of the Cotabato agricultural colonies” (Sanvictores to Winship, November 27, 1928, Box 197, Quezon Papers). Recalling the past state of Philippine agriculture and homesteading, he expressed regret over “the lack of scientific management as compared with the kind of management provided for all land settlement projects as tried in Australia, New Zealand and California.”

Let us examine the details of HB 1022 (Sanvictores to Winship, November 27, 1928, Box 197, Quezon Papers). It included, aside from the preparation of subdivided parcels of land for sale, the construction of irrigation systems, the establishment of a marketing division for agricultural products, a goods procurement division, and a loan of 100 pesos per hectare (up to 10 hectares) for each settler. Loan repayments were set for the fifth year of settlement and were due within twenty years. The bill created much public expectation for legislative approval. The day after the bill passed the House, on October 24, 1928, a local newspaper carried an article expressing an optimistic view of Mindanao’s settlement (*Philippines Herald*, October 25, 1928). Despite such high expectations, it was never discussed in the senate. Even though HB 1612 passed both the House and the senate under Wood, similar bills were never again passed by the senate, once its fear of threats against senators’ vested interests were minimized. In this setting, Sanvictores continued to author bills on Mindanao’s settlement, trusting that the island’s development would become a reality. Likewise, Hidrosollo continued to claim the need to approve bills based on public land settlement. In contrast, the legislature, especially the senate, maintained a disinterested attitude until 1934, never approving any Mindanao-related



bills. The stark contrast between technocrats like Sanvictores and Hidrosollo, who were committed to solving actual problems like agricultural development, and lawmakers who were focused on their own self-serving concerns showed the huge gulf between their ideas, visions, and methods regarding Mindanao's colonization (*Philippines Herald*, August 7, 1929).

## V Concerns among US Governors-General about Mindanao and the Ambivalent Attitude of Filipino Legislators

During the post-Wood period, concerns began to surface about Mindanao (*Philippines Herald*, September 7, 1929). One major reason for this was Wood's replacement as US governor-general by Henry Stimson. Stimson had shown great interest in Mindanao's affairs, and during the opening of the eighth legislative session, in 1928, he called Mindanao the "promised land" (United States of America 1930, 39; Smith 1970, 109). He claimed that despite its abundant natural resources, its potential had not been fully realized, thereby leading to the malnutrition of the Filipino nation due to food shortages and outbreaks of tuberculosis and beriberi. Based on current tax revenues alone, infrastructure such as bridges, hospitals, public facilities, and schools could not be improved. Stimson maintained that foreign capital was urgently needed for efficient state management. His successor, Dwight Davis, warned that Mindanao was no longer a promised land but rather a place with multiple longstanding evils (United States of America 1932, 72–73). Davis noted that while Mindanao may have seemed a promised land, its promise remained unfulfilled. What Davis ardently requested was road construction. He suspected that poor roads had hampered homeseekers' settlement, eventually diminishing chances for provincial income generation.

Under these circumstances, Sanvictores appealed to Davis to solve the problem. In 1929 Sanvictores, as a representative in the House, submitted two important memoranda to Davis, "Development Plan for Mindanao and Sulu" and "Supplement to the Development Plan for Mindanao and Sulu" (Sanvictores, August 26, 1929, Box 197, Quezon Papers; October 15, 1929, Box 197, Quezon Papers). In the former, Sanvictores pointed out six major items: (1) transportation systems, (2) government-supervised migration, (3) protection for the rights of native-born citizens, (4) universal education, (5) extension of voting rights, and (6) an advisory committee. Protecting the rights of native-born citizens was something that had never been included in previous bills on Mindanao's settlement. Davis assumed more settlers would soon arrive in Mindanao, so he argued the need to protect indigenous peoples' rights, to make a reservation for

them, and to provide an agent to help them obtain land titles. He also addressed extensive political and social issues ranging from providing transportation and creating healthy ways of living to expanding educational opportunities and non-Christian suffrage. Simply put, the major concerns of both plans were to achieve “the amalgamation of the different peoples of the Philippines” and “their assimilation into our body politics” (Sanvictores, August 26, 1929, Box 197, Quezon Papers).<sup>10</sup> For Sanvictores, these were his own solutions to the long-term Moro and/or Mindanao problems.

In the supplementary document, Sanvictores proposed a more specific and detailed plan for a transportation system that carefully considered the geographical characteristics of the provinces. He maintained the need to construct roads and design towns to attract more settlers. Also of prime importance in the proposal was a focus on the role of ports and the need to improve them. This jibed with Stimson’s comments on the development of inter-island shipping transportation in his opening address to the eighth legislative session in 1928 (United States of America 1930, 42–44). Sanvictores’ use of the word “town” in his supplementary document concretely referred to “all the essentials of modern life,” such as social life, property protection, schools, and public health facilities in rural settings. He was also aware that indigenous peoples’ rights needed protection. He said, “Migration to our non-Christian territory should not be encouraged or even permitted until proper steps have been taken to safeguard the interest of our non-Christian natives.” He was apprehensive about the indigenous population because, to him, it was “a simple act of justice to these people that Government do everything” (Sanvictores, October 15, 1929, Box 197, Quezon Papers). All of his plans for Mindanao’s settlement were predicated on the assumption that settlers were entitled to the benefits of modern life but the indigenous people had a right to justice.

Given Davis’s support for Sanvictores’ plan, a great step forward was expected. The Committee on Development of Mindanao, with the assistance of the Philippine legislature and administration, was formed on November 22, 1929.<sup>11</sup> The committee’s chairperson, Honorio Ventura, was the secretary of the Department of the Interior; its members were Senator Benigno Aquino; Representative Ishidoro Vamenta; A. D. Williams, director of the Bureau of Public Works; Serafin Hilado, director of the Bureau of Lands; and Hidrosollo, director of the Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes. The committee considered six major issues, all of which were noted in Sanvictores’ “Development Plan for Mindanao and Sulu”:

10) When Sanvictores was the director of the Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes in 1925, he submitted a proposal on the Moro problem, “The Non-Christian Problem of the Philippines,” to Senate President Quezon. In it, he argued that modern education and “Mohammedanism” were compatible by referring to the case of Turkey (Sanvictores 1925, Box 281, Quezon Papers).

11) The committee’s establishment was approved by Act No. 3540 (Act No. 3540, November 22, 1929, Box 29/7, Joseph Ralston Hayden Papers).

(1) recommendations for a comprehensive system of highways and/or railways; (2) advice on ways and means for establishing agricultural colonies in Mindanao; (3) recommendations for adequate reservations for non-Christians, homesteaders and small capitalists, and other government purposes; (4) recommendations on ways and means of providing elementary education; (5) recommendations of appropriate actions for local government organization; and (6) recommendations for proper coordination among offices to deal with non-Christian problems (Act No. 3540, November 22, 1929, Box 29/7, Joseph Ralston Hayden Papers). The committee submitted its final report to Governor-General Davis on July 15, 1930 (*Philippines Herald*, June 12, 1930; Ventura, Aquino, Vamenta, Williams, Hilado, and Hidrosollo to Davis, July 15, 1930, Box 29/6, Joseph Ralston Hayden Papers).

Of the above six issues, the most remarkable progress was made on road construction, the matter of greatest interest to Davis. Director Williams proposed a ten-year plan to construct roughly 6,000 kilometers of roads and improve port facilities (*Tribune*, June 14, 1930; June 26, 1930; June 29, 1930b; July 16, 1930). The plan, which included sample bills to request needed appropriations, aimed to allocate 2 million pesos over ten years. Despite this, the legislature rejected the plan, saying “no money available” (*Tribune*, October 5, 1930). The following year the debate over the plan continued, but Acting Senate President Sergio Osmeña announced a two-year postponement of the project due to the economic problems triggered by the Great Depression (*Tribune*, August 2, 1931). No concrete action was taken to prepare appropriations bills on the remaining issues. Sanvictores requested the reservation of public land for non-Christians, for the sake of justice, but this was also rejected; the legislature declined to appropriate funds even for land surveying (Sanvictores, October 15, 1929, Box 197, Quezon Papers; *New York Times*, December 27, 1930).

Though the legislature did not consent to the Mindanao settlement plan, that did not mean they disliked the idea of road construction. On the contrary, after some members made an investigatory visit to Mindanao and Sulu in October 1927, they unanimously supported road-building (*Report Sobre Mindanao y Sulu* 1927, BIA 5075/156, RG350). They especially recommended hastening the construction of inter-provincial highways connecting Misamis, Zamboanga, Cotabato, Lanao, and Davao. When another fact-finding trip was completed in 1929, Director Hidrosollo of the Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes made note of homeseekers who had “penetrated the hinterlands and turned vacant and unproductive areas.” He appealed to Senate President Quezon for an immediate budget appropriation of 1 million pesos to construct roads (Hidrosollo to Quezon, May 27, 1929, Box 281, Quezon Papers). In line with these Mindanao developments, a comprehensive Mindanao development plan aiming at road construction, popularly known as the “Sanvictores Plan,” was also introduced at the ninth legislative session in September

1931 (*Tribune*, September 6, 1931). Sanvictores and two other lawmakers co-authored it, and the media even carried a special feature article on it (*Tribune*, October 24, 1931). The plan, which emphasized road construction and port facility improvement, was identical to Sanvictores' "Development Plan for Mindanao and Sulu" memorandum submitted to Governor-General Davis, but the bill failed, once again, to gain legislative approval.

In addition to Sanvictores' attempt to enact his Mindanao bills between 1929 and 1931, as noted above, Rafael Alunan, the secretary of the Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources (1928–32)—also known as "the sugar planter"—deserves special mention as another planner of a unique Mindanao bill. Alunan aggressively promoted a hacienda-oriented Mindanao development plan (United States of America 1932, 23). Unlike Sanvictores, he intended to modernize Philippine agriculture by inducing homesteaders to settle around plantations and/or haciendas. Specifically, his bill aimed to reserve 20,000 hectares of public land, where capitalists were invited along with homesteaders to grow crops necessary for the plantation (*Philippines Herald*, November 24, 1928). Comparing the sugar plantation to the homeseeker program (1918–39), Alunan was proud of the modernity represented by the former type of agricultural development: "The employees of sugar centrals are furnished comfortable homes, running water and electric lights. They are, besides, given facilities for recreation and amusement, in addition to hospitals, schools and all the conveniences of modern life" (Alunan 1938, 8). The plan was well received by Senate President Quezon, who quietly observed the deliberations on the bills (*Philippines Herald*, October 20, 1928). Yet it did not work well once Senator Osmeña suggested more time was needed for careful investigation. Consequently, no progress was made.<sup>12)</sup>

Despite Davis's ardent support of Mindanao's development plans, the apathetic and uncooperative attitude of the Philippine legislature led to disappointment, as the media had raised hopes of legislative approval (*Philippines Herald*, October 11, 1929; July 3, 1930; July 4, 1930; October 23, 1930; *Tribune*, May 8, 1930; October 5, 1930; August 6, 1931). The frustration was attributed to the unchanged attitude of legislators who self-servingly maintained pork-barrel spending for public works in other regions (*Philippines*

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12) Governor-General Davis invited Alunan on a 45-day goodwill and fact-finding mission to French Indochina, the Straits Settlements, the Federated Malay States, and the Netherlands East Indies between February 28 and April 14, 1931. Following the visit to these colonies, Alunan said, "in modern farming, we are years behind them." He attributed the rapid and spectacular agricultural development of his neighbors to liberal policies of extending government assistance to industry, the progress of scientific research, the support of experimental stations, the establishment of irrigation systems, and/or the cooperative financing of farmers. Based on his observations, he presented 17 recommendations for the Philippines' agricultural development. It remains unknown how many of these recommendations were put into practice (United States of America 1932, 21–65).

*Herald*, October 23, 1928; November 14, 1928; *Tribune*, April 27, 1930). One of the committee members, Senator Aquino, who favored road construction, even mentioned that he opposed the appropriation of 2 million pesos. Likewise, Acting Senate President Osmeña was critical of Davis's idea (*Tribune*, June 29, 1930a). Osmeña asserted that the ambitious plan was unnecessary for the current Philippines. He claimed there were three types of movements, with the most desirable a voluntary homeseeker program initiated by local residents (*Manila Bulletin*, September 7, 1931). This affirmed the status quo view that there was nothing special to do and that the current program, from 1918, was satisfactory. While negotiations over the Philippines' independence proceeded, the legislature had little or no interest in domestic affairs, especially in the south (Friend 1965, 156). George Malcolm (1936, 168–171), former senior justice of the Supreme Court of the Philippine Islands, noted the peculiar practice of postponing legislative work until the next day. By this practice, work remained unfinished until the last day of the session. The above-mentioned cases on Mindanao's settlement confirmed the intentional postponement to kill bills. Both Sanvictores and Hidrosollo, familiar with Mindanao affairs, played a vital role in preparing the drafts of several Mindanao settlement and development plans, all of which served as the foundational basis of the legislative process. But it was apparent that for a legislature increasingly preoccupied with Washington due to concern over the accelerating drive in US Congress toward Philippine independence, and the loss of free trade privilege, Mindanao's development was not a high priority (*Philippines Herald*, November 20, 1929; *Tribune*, November 1, 1931; Anastacio 2016, 244). Lawmakers pretended to be sympathetic toward Mindanao but followed the usual strategy to scrap the bills (*Tribune*, August 30, 1930).

## VI The Quirino-Recto Colonization Act and Its Change

In examining the legislative process of bills related to Mindanao's settlement in the first half of the twentieth century, an unusual event may be noticed. On November 8, 1934, just before the establishment of the Philippine Commonwealth government, Senate Bill (SB) 105, introduced by Senators Elpidio Quirino and Claro M. Recto, aimed to appropriate 1 million pesos for Mindanao's settlement (Senate Bill No. 105, BIA, RG350). Both the House and the senate passed it as Act No. 4197, popularly known as the Quirino-Recto Colonization Act.<sup>13)</sup> Under its terms, the government, after reserving at least 300

13) Its formal title was "An Act to Facilitate and Promote the Occupation and Cultivation of Public Land at Present Unoccupied by the Establishment of Settlement Districts, Appropriate the Sum of One Million Pesos for Said Purpose, and for Other Purposes."

hectares of public land per settlement, and surveying the lands, prepared subdivided land for settlers. Upon settlement, homes for settlers would be established, along with one farm animal, farm implements, and seeds for the first year's cultivation. Loans of no more than 200 pesos would be provided only for the first year of settlement. In addition to the building of the town, roads, schools, and other public facilities would be constructed, with one supervisor and a staff assigned to run them. An organization to nurture the settlers' common spirit would also be formed. As for SB 105, Secretary of Agriculture and Natural Resources Eulogio Rodriguez expressed disapproval because it would lead to government assistance for the settlers, which he feared would fail like the Cotabato colony project starting in 1913 (*Tribune*, October 9, 1934b). Quirino defended the bill, saying that similar settlement plans had been successful in the US state of Utah along with England and Canada (*Tribune*, October 6, 1934). Even the Philippine media supported Quirino's plan by carrying a favorable editorial (*Tribune*, October 9, 1934a; November 30, 1934). The bill was approved on February 12, 1934, without any major opposition.<sup>14)</sup>

Behind this immediate approval lay two major changes surrounding the Philippines. First, unemployment had become a concern, and Mindanao's settlement seemed a likely remedy (*Philippines Herald*, September 1, 1929; September 2, 1930; *Tribune*, June 15, 1930; May 1, 1931; October 7, 1936). Quirino mentioned that even the unemployed, aside from agriculturists, were taken into consideration as possible beneficiaries. This suggested that the bill, instead of fostering agricultural development in Mindanao, intended to address social issues such as serious tenancy and unemployment problems in each Christian Filipino lawmaker's electoral district (*Tribune*, September 20, 1934). Second, Governor-General Frank Murphy claimed the urgency of Mindanao's New Deal Policy to promote social justice (*New York Times*, September 29, 1933; *Mindanao Herald*, February 22, 1934; March 3, 1934; March 24, 1934; *New York Herald Tribune*, February 22, 1934; *Tribune*, June 19, 1934; July 15, 1934).<sup>15)</sup> Once the New Deal Policy was announced, Guingona, who had been reappointed director of the Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes, submitted his "Development Plan for Mindanao-Sulu" (dated February 23, 1934) and "Proposed Governmental Reorganization" (dated July 16, 1934) (Guingona, February 23, 1934, Box 29/8, Joseph Ralston Hayden Papers; July 16, 1934, Box 28/32, Joseph Ralston Hayden Papers). In the former, Guingona viewed the coming ten years leading

14) The NLSA project was implemented based on Act No. 4197 (the Quirino-Recto Colonization Act), approved by the president of the United States. K. Pelzer (1945, 135), however, briefly mentioned this Act in the footnote of his book.

15) For this special mission, Governor-General Murphy appointed Professor Hayden from the University of Michigan (political science) to serve as US vice governor-general from 1933 to 1934 (*Tribune*, February 22, 1934).

to independence as a transition period to achieve the complete national integration of non-Christians into the Philippine body politic and emphasized the need to formulate a feasible Mindanao development plan. To this end, the sending of more Christian settlers, who were believed to have a more advanced civilization than their Muslim counterparts, was imperative for bringing about swift and prompt assimilation through intercultural and political mingling. In the latter proposal, Guingona requested a special measure to reorganize the Department of Mindanao and Sulu during the Commonwealth period (*Tribune*, April 11, 1934). The aim of his proposed revival of the department as a transitory government lay in setting up the complete coordination of different activities in Mindanao and Sulu, which were at the time dispersed and sometimes antagonistic toward each other. However, the legislature maintained the view that without a definite Mindanao development plan, no political reforms would follow. In this context, the Quirino-Recto Colonization Act was approved without a clear-cut development plan to accelerate Murphy's vision behind the New Deal Policy for non-Christians' national integration. The Act was the political consequence of prioritizing the unachieved national integration of non-Christians. For this reason, Mindanao's settlement had to become more changeable due to unexpected exogenous factors most likely during the Commonwealth era.

On February 12, 1935, when Act No. 4197 was finally approved by the US president, the responsible bureaus (Lands, Forestry, Public Health, and Plant Industry) decided which public lands would be reserved as settlement districts and began to recruit applicants (*Tribune*, February 7, 1935). However, in 1936 a new plan suddenly emerged connecting Lanao, Cotabato, Davao, and Surigao by inter-provincial highways (*Tribune*, April 7, 1936). Further, it was decided that the budget surplus from the 1 million pesos appropriated for the Quirino-Recto Colonization Act would be diverted to construct these highways and three possible settlement sites within Mindanao (*Manila Bulletin*, April 30, 1936). After this, Quirino and Rodriguez abruptly announced that the Quirino-Recto Colonization Act intended to "block the foreigner's penetration," a reference to Japanese immigrants to Davao (*Tribune*, March 23, 1938; October 15, 1938).

In this context, C. McWilliams, a scholar of the California land settlement project, stated that without the threat of a growing Japanese immigrant population attempting to occupy large tracts of land in California, the state would not have pushed through the settlement project (McWilliams 1999, 209–210). If his analysis is correct, it suggests that the settlement projects in California and Mindanao were manipulated almost simultaneously and for the same political purpose: to block the expansion of Japanese immigration. It remains uncertain to what extent Sanvictores and Hidrosollo, Quirino, Rodriguez, and Hayden were already aware of—and had absorbed—such a political motive and its importance. Still, Mead, the chairman of California's State Land Settlement Board, as

early as 1921 was aware of the growing danger posed by Japanese immigrants in his state. He cautioned, “the danger is that America will not understand what is taking place or realize the disaster which this migration is certain to bring if the movement is not stamped out at once.” He added, “to compete with the Japanese, the American farmer must change his ideas of what is desirable in life and surrender inherited habits” (Mead 1921, 54).

In this way, within five years after approval of the Quirino-Recto Colonization Act of 1934, the aim behind it had drastically changed. This shift was largely influenced by the Americans’ view that an increase in the number of Japanese immigrants in Davao, Mindanao, would be detrimental to national security, particularly in an independent Philippines (*Tribune*, June 10, 1930).<sup>16</sup> This concern was affirmed by a communication from Hayden, former vice governor-general in charge of Mindanao affairs, to Paulino Santos, an administrative manager of the NLSA (Santos to Hayden, May 15, 1939, Box 29/13, Joseph Ralston Hayden Papers; Hayden to Santos, June 28, 1939, Box 29/13, Joseph Ralston Hayden Papers). In the letter, Hayden disclosed his intent to pressure Philippine legislators to design three Mindanao settlement districts to block Japanese immigration. He added in his 1942 book *The Philippines: A Study in National Development* that these were the Compostela-Monkayo region, the “Kidapauan” Valley, and the Lower Koronadal Valley (Hayden 1942, 720–721). He chose these strategically, from a national security viewpoint, rather than on the basis of scientific soil surveys. Upon receiving a letter in 1939 from Santos, in the midst of the NLSA project, Hayden reassured him: “if you can put a million Filipino settlers into Mindanao in the next 10 years, you will make that island forever yours” (Hayden to Santos, June 28, 1939, Box 29/13, Joseph Ralston Hayden Papers).

Filipino politicians, in contrast to Hayden’s view of Japanese immigrants as a threat to Philippine security, consistently assumed a careful and cautious attitude, which led to an underestimation of the Japanese threat in Davao (*Philippines Herald*, March 26, 1930; *Tribune*, June 20, 1930; June 26, 1930; July 27, 1930; August 28, 1930; June 21, 1931; March 1, 1935; December 22, 1935; *Manila Bulletin*, April 23, 1936; June 10, 1936). Behind the Filipino politicians’ attentive outlook lay the undeniable consideration that almost half of the tax revenues collected in Davao were from Japanese immigrants and their businesses, and the Philippine government, in preparation for its political independence in 1946, did not intend to further jeopardize relations with Japan (Hayden 1942,

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16) This is similar to the American view that due to the Philippines’ vulnerability against Japanese aggression, the Philippines as a colony would be the United States’ Achilles’ heel. This was something President Theodore Roosevelt already felt as early as the 1905 Russo-Japanese War (Anastacio 2016, 245).



719–720). However, the claim that Japan was not a menace could hardly be accepted at face value. Filipino politicians, caught in a dilemma between the US and Japan, were obligated to take action following Hayden's recommendation. In June 1939, Commonwealth Act No. 441 allowed the NLSA to begin construction on a settlement in the Koronadal Valley with Santos as its administrative manager (Commonwealth Act No. 441). The budget allocated for this was diverted from coconut oil excise taxes returned from the US to the Philippines (*Tribune*, July 14, 1938; January 3, 1939; March 22, 1939; May 12, 1939; August 11, 1939; September 27, 1939; Hartendrop 1939; Pelzer 1945).

### VII Entanglements among Technocrats, US Governors-General, the Philippine Legislature, and a Muslim Leader

Sanvictores and Hidrosollo both designed Mindanao settlement plans patterned after the California mode, aimed at upholding Philippine agriculture rather than focused on national security. Being familiar with science and technology, they had unwavering faith that their plans were sound and modern and would lead to systematic management. However, even the California plan was a financial failure by 1931 and eventually led to the abolition of the California State Land Settlement Board (State of California 1931, 6). As a result, the Mindanao plans lost logical ground. Instead, the NLSA project, begun in 1939, was forced to pursue national security as its top agenda, at the cost of agricultural development and socioeconomic issues related to deteriorating rural conditions, population growth, and unemployment. Sanvictores' and Hidrosollo's Mindanao plans and the legislative debates over the Mindanao bills materialized in unanticipated ways. Coincidentally, both the California and the Mindanao plans, though conceived at different times, served to eliminate a perceived alien menace (Mead 1920, 213).

Arguments over the Mindanao settlement bills from the 1920s to the late 1930s and their changes indicate that the legislature was aimless and haphazard (*Tribune*, December 18, 1938). The bills' unplanned management was attributed largely to a lack of vision for Mindanao's settlement and development. For instance, though HB 1612 was passed during Governor-General Wood's administration, the senate declined to pass similar bills after his death. This about-face had nothing to do with the bills' content. Importantly, senators' concerns were simply whether they might harm their personal vested interests. The Bacon Bill was a good example. It aimed to separate Mindanao and Sulu from the rest of the Philippine archipelago. To counteract it, the legislature introduced Mindanao bills, which were also used as political tools to establish an amicable relationship with the governor-general. When Stimson and Davis expressed

serious concerns about the desperate conditions in Mindanao, the legislature responded by cautiously addressing their demands, introducing bills, and highlighting the problems' severity (*Tribune*, August 30, 1930). Nevertheless, conditions remained unchanged until 1934. These developments represented the general attitude of legislators toward Mindanao's settlement until 1935, the beginning of the Commonwealth period. Under the Commonwealth, however, security-related concerns intensified, thereby affecting the settlement plan's fate.<sup>17</sup> Though Mindanao was previously discussed in an agricultural development context, it was reexamined as an important element of national security after independence.

This shift enabled the Commonwealth government (1936–41) to manipulate Mindanao settlement plans under the cause of national defense. In 1938 Marcial Kasilag, the commissioner for Mindanao and Sulu and a former pensionado, mentioned in his annual report that—modeling the Quirino-Recto Colonization Act—he was proposing another colonization bill (Annual Report of the Commissioner for Mindanao and Sulu 1937, Box 29/11, Joseph Ralston Hayden Papers). Unlike the Quirino-Recto Colonization Act, Kasilag's proposal aimed to create a citizen army to strengthen national security by relocating twenty thousand twenty-year-old men annually to Mindanao for military training. Though the plan never materialized, it aimed to strengthen the country's self-defense capabilities and took a more nationalistic outlook to counteract alien aggression. Curiously, Mead, chairman of California's State Land Settlement Board, had proposed the same idea in 1919, when he planned the California scheme. He admitted that this was not an original thought but one borrowed from France, Belgium, and Australia (Mead 1919, 64–66). Still, it should be noted that Kasilag attempted to broaden the land settlement's scope beyond practical rural development by former soldiers to include nurturing a love of country and patriotism as new sources of national strength. There were many curious overlaps between Kasilag's and Mead's ideas. All Mindanao land settlement plans and bills advocated by Sanvictores, Hidrosollo, and Kasilag left important footprints on Mindanao's colonization by Christian Filipinos; yet viewed from a global perspective, their attempts can be understood within the realm of transnational and trans-imperial knowledge exchange.

Lastly, it is important to mention the response from a Muslim leader who attempted to defend indigenous people's land rights. This paper deals with the planning process and debate over Mindanao land settlement at the national level, but we know of no

17) Under the Commonwealth government, there was a growing awareness of national security in Mindanao that eventually led to Quezon's decision to accept Jewish refugees from Europe beginning in 1939. This also derived from humanitarian considerations. In addition, there was the political consideration of curbing the number of Japanese immigrants (Ephraim 2006, 410–436; 2008, 43–50; *Los Angeles Times*, June 4, 1939).

objections raised by Muslim legislators. Thus, it should be mentioned that, hearing about the Quirino-Recto Colonization Act of 1934, the young Muslim Cotabato-born attorney Salipada Pendatun—a senator in the post-independence period—had already foreseen the worst results of a potential influx of Christian settlers to Mindanao. He wrote to Professor Hayden, vice governor-general in Manila, and Teofisto Guingona, chief of the Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes, requesting immediate and appropriate action (Correspondence from Salipada Pendatun to Hayden, February 7, 1935, Box 27–30, Joseph Ralston Hayden Papers; Correspondence from Salipada Pendatun to Teopisto Guingona, 1935, Box 27–30, Joseph Ralston Hayden Papers). In these letters, Pendatun cautioned that national government-sponsored Christian migration could eventually render non-Christians “strangers” in their homes. This was a reference not only to the negative effects triggered by growing numbers of Christian settlers, but also to the possible danger that due to a lack of support for the homesteading of non-Christians, their indigenous land rights could be lost and/or taken away. For this reason, Pendatun proposed setting aside a similar reserved area for non-Christians, like Native Americans received in the US, claiming it was the government’s responsibility to safeguard the rights and lives of indigenous people.

Pendatun’s reservation request was identical to Sanvictores’ idea in his 1929 memorandum “Development Plan for Mindanao and Sulu,” where he argued for protecting the rights of native-born citizens and providing an agent to help them obtain land titles. In other words, Sanvictores, drawing the Mindanao land settlement plan, was fully aware of the importance of protecting indigenous people’s land rights, but such concerns over the reservation question disappeared with the Quirino-Recto Colonization Act of 1934. Considering the Act as the point of departure for the Philippine government’s initial settlement projects in the early twentieth century, it may be said that a fatal mistake—disregarding indigenous people’s land rights—was already embedded in the colonization program. In addition to Pendatun’s concerns, Christian Representative Ishidoro Vamenta claimed the need to secure a reservation for Muslims. Taken together, it was felt that due to American intervention, the acceleration of Mindanao’s land settlement projects during the Commonwealth had endangered non-Christians’ homelands without any legal protections.

## VIII Conclusion

This paper highlights the role of colonial technocrats in Mindanao’s affairs, examines the development of Mindanao settlement plans from the 1920s through the late 1930s, and

examines the legislative processes of bills related to these plans. By capitalizing on their advanced professional knowledge, Filipino colonial technocrats hoped to solve the numerous problems the colonial Philippines faced during state-building. Sanvictores had insight and foresight; without him, the NLSA's 1939 settlement project would not have been realized. Resil Mojares, evaluating the role of modern knowledge production by the Filipino intellectuals Pedro Paterno and T. H. Pardo de Tavera, called them the "brains of the nation" (Mojares 2006). Likewise, the technocrats were both committed to colonial state-building under US rule and worked to address both imminent and long-held problems through transnational knowledge exchange. They were the "new brains" for knowledge transmission, production, and application.

The analysis in this paper offers new insights into the characteristics of colonial technocrats/pensionados. They were united in their unwavering faith that the US was a model for the Philippines, though aware that the Philippines and the US differed greatly in many respects. In this way, Filipino technocrats and American bureaucrats were alike. Yet the Americans were generally ignorant of the Philippines' political and social conditions because they idealized the superiority of US institutions and technologies as the pathways for making the Philippines into a modern and democratic nation despite being colonial latecomers (Fujiwara 2011, 3–5). To overcome their imperfections in running a colony, they counted on technical knowledge and its application to colonial realities (Adas 2006, 144). For them, the colonial Philippines was a laboratory for validating practical and engineering knowledge (Anderson 2007). By contrast, the gaze of the pensionados, which glamorized the US as a perfect model, was shaped and personalized by their overseas studies, associations with American officials, and fact-finding trips abroad.

Despite Mindanao settlement plans mimicking the California model, they never materialized as designed by Sanvictores, due to Filipino legislators' apathy toward appropriations. This paper explicitly demonstrates the stark contrast between the enthusiastic Filipino technocrats who planned settlement projects using colonial knowledge transmission and application to the Philippine context and Christian Filipino lawmakers unconcerned about Mindanao. What was striking was that despite the lawmakers being given free rein over Mindanao, they lacked a will and vision comparable to Sanvictores', which led them to toy with Mindanao's settlement only intermittently. We must also note the impact these colonial entanglements had on non-Christians in Mindanao. Since the scope of this paper is limited to the national planning and debate over Mindanao settlement plans, it is difficult to determine the overarching effect of the plans on Mindanao's history and experience without a thorough and careful consideration of the NLSA's implementation (1939–41) and the Japanese occupation (1941–45).

Still, it cannot be denied that the government-sponsored Mindanao migration project, starting in 1939, contributed to attracting greater Christian migration during the postwar period. Similarly, those who migrated to Mindanao before World War II served as a vital pull factor. Under such circumstances, the influx of migration endangered indigenous non-Christian people's status as traditional landholders, since the Christian settlers' challenge was predicated on American notions of public land laws and homesteading, irrespective of indigenous home and land rights. However, it would be unfair to attribute the causes for such injustice solely to Filipino technocrats and the Philippine legislature, because the Philippines as a US colony already had an entrenched and racially bifurcated colonial system long before the establishment of the Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes in 1917. As a complicating factor in the Mindanao situation, the growing presence of Japanese in Mindanao and Japan's occupation of the Philippines (1941–45) should not be underestimated. It still remains to be understood why and how the twentieth-century Mindanao settlement plans and development triggered the dislocation of non-Christians and made Mindanao into a land of burning injustice.

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