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Teaching *'Ajaib* in Philippine Schools: Princess Urduja and The Power of Imagination

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Abstract

Why did a tale narrated by a 14th century Maghrebi traveler influence modern Philippine history? Why were Filipino children learning Arabic mirabilia (*'ajā'ib*) tales in schools to pass grades in Philippine history? Why was an Arabic text written by the Andalusian Ibn Juzayy al-Garnāṭī (1321-1357) in the Western Mediterranean material to teach to 20th century Southeast Asian students? This paper aims to clarify myth and history in narrating the origins of pre-Hispanic Philippines, and how Arabic sources influenced historiography to the point of considering what part of *'ajā'ib* literature (mirabilia) as historical facts. Using a historical research design and document analysis, this study found that the story of Princess Urduja from the fanciful kingdom of Tawalisi received great attention indeed, from official to popular culture, from professional history to political representation. We inquire into the reasons for the great pedagogical success of this medieval Arabic tale in the Philippine curriculum, and into the reality behind ideological and postcolonial agency towards empowerment through imagination.

Keywords: *'Ajā'ib*; Arabic Literature; Global Islam; Ibn Baṭṭūṭa; Philippine Archipelago.

Abstrak

Mengapa kisah yang diceritakan oleh seorang penjelajah Maghreb abad ke-14 memengaruhi sejarah Filipina modern? Mengapa anak-anak Filipina mempelajari kisah-kisah mirabilia ('ajā'ib) berbahasa Arab di sekolah untuk lulus ujian sejarah Filipina? Mengapa teks berbahasa Arab yang ditulis oleh Ibn Juzayy al-Garnāṭī (1321-1357) dari Andalusia di Mediterania Barat menjadi bahan pengajaran bagi siswa Asia Tenggara abad ke-20? Makalah ini bertujuan untuk mengklarifikasi mitos dan sejarah dalam menceritakan asal-usul Filipina pra-Hispanik, dan bagaimana sumber-sumber berbahasa Arab memengaruhi historiografi hingga mempertimbangkan bagian mana dari literatur 'ajā'ib (mirabilia) yang dianggap sebagai fakta sejarah. Dengan menggunakan desain penelitian historis dan analisis dokumen, studi ini menemukan bahwa kisah Putri Urduja dari kerajaan Tawalisi yang penuh khayalan memang mendapat perhatian besar, dari budaya resmi hingga budaya populer, dari sejarah profesional hingga representasi politik. Kami meneliti alasan di balik kesuksesan pedagogis yang besar dari kisah Arab abad pertengahan ini dalam kurikulum Filipina, dan realitas di balik agensi ideologis dan pascakolonial menuju pemberdayaan melalui imajinasi.

Kata Kunci: 'Ajā'ib; Ibn Baṭṭūṭa; Islam Global; Kepulauan Filipina; Sastra Arab.

INTRODUCTION

When the First Republic of the Philippines (1898) was suppressed by American military aggression,[1] Filipinos faced complex and unexpected problems. To contest the medieval power of the Church was an easy-win debate for liberal ideas. Another matter was to contest the military power of the United States and, afterward, the *benevolent assimilation* of the most proclaimed liberal nation of the world: *"Finally, it should be the earnest wish and paramount aim of the*

[1] Samuel K. Tan, *The Filipino-American War, 1899-1913* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 2002).

military administration to win the confidence, respect, and affection of the inhabitants of the Philippines by assuring them in every possible way that full measure of individual rights and liberties which is the heritage of free peoples, and by proving to them that the mission of the United States is one of BENEVOLENT ASSIMILATION substituting the mild sway of justice and right for arbitrary rule."[2]

Republican William McKinley proclaimed on December 21, 1898, the policy of "Benevolent Assimilation." Filipinos were going to be considered under a cultural *tabula rasa*.[3] Decades and centuries of Western thought in the Philippines were obliterated; martyrs in the name of progress, Gómez, Burgos, Zamora, and Rizal, died in vain; and the only real civilization was the one taught by soldiers-soon-to-be-teachers: *"Hence, as the Philippine-American War that killed nearly two hundred thousand civilians and nearly twenty thousand Filipino soldiers subsided, ideological intervention was urgently felt. The pacification effort took the form of enlisting soldiers as teachers."*[4]

This was not the first time that a policy of colonial education was imposed. In fact, France and Great Britain were undertaking similar policies in Algeria, Indochina, India, and other locations. Beyond the cultural and intellectual consequences for the colonized, it is interesting to read the experience of the *Kenyan Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o*, and, of course, the Tunisian Albert Memmi's The Colonizer and the Colonized (1957). The process has already been described in sociological and psychological terms. The pioneering effort to explain in detail the whole process of personal and cultural alienation as a consequence of an imposed education (and the means to escape it) was produced by the Brazilian Paulo Freire.

He applies concepts such as anti-dialogics, banking education, alienation, and des-humanization in his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970): "The desire for conquest (or rather the necessity of conquest) is at all times present in anti-dialogical action. To this end, the oppressors attempt to destroy in the oppressed their quality as 'considerers' of the world. Since the oppressors cannot totally achieve this destruction, they must mythicize the world. To present for the consideration of the oppressed and subjugated a world of deceit designed to increase their alienation and passivity, the oppressors develop a series of methods precluding any presentation of the world as a problem and showing it rather as a fixed entity, as something given, something to which people, as mere spectators, must adapt."[5]

Benevolent assimilation was given to the Philippine population as a gift, as an assumed mandatory rule. The colonizer does not engage with the colonized's worldview and does not allow dialogue. By using the word (the *logos* / *λόγος*), it is an act to consecrate the myth, the propaganda of the imperial myth: *"Pedagogy which begins with the egoistic interests of the oppressors (an egoism cloaked in the false generosity of paternalism) and makes of the oppressed the objects of its humanitarianism, itself maintains and embodies oppression. It is an instrument of dehumanization. This is why,*

[2] William McKinley, "The Benevolent Assimilation Proclamation. 21 December, 1898," Congressional Serial Set, Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1902, 777, https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/executive-order-132.

[3] About the cultural impact of American imperialism in the Philippines see, from different points of view: Glenn May, "Social Engineering in the Philippines: The Aims and Execution of American Educational Policy, 1900-1913," *Philippine Studies: Historical and Ethnographic Viewpoints* 24, no. 2 (June 1976), https://doi.org/10.13185/2244-1638.1829; Stuart Creighton Miller, *Benevolent Assimilation: The American Conquest of the Philippines, 1899-1903* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1984); Vicente L. Rafael, *White Love and Other Events in Filipino History* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000); Michael Salman, *The Embarrassment of Slavery: Controversies Over Bondage and Nationalism in the American Colonial Philippines* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).

[4] Dinah Roma-Sianturi, "'Pedagogic Invasion': The Thomasites in Occupied Philippines," *Kritika Kultura* 1, no. 12 (December 2024), https://doi.org/10.13185/1656-152x.1050.

[5] Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970), 139.

as we affirmed earlier, the pedagogy of the oppressed cannot be developed or practiced by the oppressors. It would be a contradiction in terms if the oppressors not only defended but actually implemented a liberating education."[6]

Having these concepts in mind, we can outline a process to practically implement the guidelines depicted in "The White Man's Burden", a programmatic poem written by Kipling in 1899.[7] In a century where Anglo-Saxon imperialism dominated the globe, colonial expansion was justified in terms of order, progress, and civilization, as noted by Frederick Funston, the American General who captured Aguinaldo: "*They [Filipinos] are, as a rule, an illiterate, semi-savage people, who are waging war, not against tyranny, but against Anglo-Saxon order and decency.*"[8] The introduction of teaching was another military activity for the American army; it was a part of the pacification campaign, soon to be developed on a wider scale by civilian teachers. Education, in its sense of enlightenment and knowledge, was not the goal of the soldiers. It was rather military discipline and control of *pueblos*:

The primary goal of the army's teaching program was not to educate Filipinos but rather to pacify them by convincing them of American goodwill. The army's schools were, in effect, a mere adjunct of its military activities.[9] Scholarship on United States educational imperialism in the Philippines is quite extensive nowadays and has been clarified in many respects.[10] However, a part of the historiography still uncritically assumes, with ambivalent consideration, some of the mottos of 'Benevolent Assimilation.' Agoncillo's words are symptomatic: *"America's greatest achievement in the Philippines was the introduction of the public school system. It was not a system based on life beyond, but one based on life on earth. It emphasized honesty, civic consciousness, cooperation with the government in advancing the welfare of the people, mutual help, love of labor, and the advancement of learning."*[11]

Although Agoncillo irremediably moved historiography towards a new criticism, some of his appreciations still connect with traditional truisms. Consequently, the more aseptic positions try to label a Manichean orientation about the history of American education in the Philippines. One side argues that the American common school system was an improvement over the private, elitist Spanish version and ushered in literacy and democracy in the country (Karnow 1989; May 1980). The other side contends that the American curriculum served as a

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[6] Freire, 54.

[7] Rudyard Kipling, "The White Man's Burden (1899)," *McClure's Magazine*, 1899; There is a modern contestation to this program, in very different context, yet interesting to note: William Easterly, *The White Man's Burden: Why the West's Efforts to Aid the Rest Have Done So Much Ill and So Little Good* (New York: Penguin, 2006).

[8] Jennifer M. McMahon, *Dead Stars: American and Philippine Literary Perspectives on the American Colonization of the Philippines* (Manila: University of the Philippines Press, 2011), 35.

[9] May, "Social Engineering in the Philippines."

[10] There is a large bibliography on American education in the Philippines, in many cases done by Filipinos, in many cases as doctoral dissertations, and evolving along the time in criticism. To mention some: Antonio Isidro, *The Philippine Educational System*, 3rd edition. (Manila: Bookman, 1949); Maria Acierto, "American Influence in Shaping Philippine Secondary Education: An Historical Perspective, 1898-1978" (Dissertation, Loyola University Chicago, 1980), https://ecommons.luc.edu/luc_diss/1792; Amparo Santamaria Lardizabal, *Pioneer American Teachers and Philippine Education* (Quezon City: Phoenix Press, Printer, 1991); Kimberly A. Alidio, "Between Civilizing Mission and Ethnic Assimilation: Racial Discourse, U.S. Colonial Education, and Filipino Ethnicity, 1901–1946" (Dissertation, The University of Michigan, 2001); Augustu Fauni Espiritu, "Augustu Fauni Espiritu, 'Expatriate Affirmations': The Performance of Nationalism and Patronage in Filipino-American Intellectual Life" (Dissertation, University of California, 2000); Augusto Fauni Espiritu, *Five Faces of Exile: The Nation and Filipino American Intellectuals* (California: Stanford University Press, 2005); Adrianne Francisco, "From Subjects to Citizens: American Colonial Education and Philippine Nation-Making, 1900-1934" (UC Berkeley, 2015), https://escholarship.org/uc/item/01x8n57g.

[11] Teodoro A. Agoncillo, *Introduction to Filipino History* (Quezon City: Garotech Publishing, 1974), 224.

"mis-education," depicting the United States as a benevolent hero that rescued the country from Spanish theocracy and native primitivism.[12]

To set a variety of storylines against the main object under the hermeneutic circle, academic paraphernalia masks the word's sharp meaning. The strong industrial and imperial development of the main Western nations translated the concept of "progress" into two key concepts: Democratic politics and Darwinian utilitarianism. Its translation in cultural terms was the superiority of Western culture over *venality and oriental barbarism*. There is a clear colonial program behind this motto, as denounced at the turn of the century by members of the Anti-Imperialist League: Du Bois saw the incentive behind this 'modern colonial system' as economic. He was at a point in his career where he perceived racism as intimately bound up with Capitalism. He considered this step toward colonization of the Philippines as galvanized by the markets, cheap labor, and natural resources it promised to offer.[13]

The *Manifest Destiny* required an educated, indoctrinated political body, an elite formed according to the American way of life, ready for Capitalism rather than Liberalism. The natural consequence was Clientelism, debtor politicians, and subordinated technocrats. At the end, a huge number of children were forced to become part of the colonial setting, and forced to climb. *Hence, the language became, for tens of thousands of ambitious, upwardly mobile Filipinos, the gateway to social, political, and economic advancement*.[14] Benevolent assimilation was, in this sense, forgetting the past, alienating the self, and copying the USA: If the Filipino had to be educated or shaped into a good colonial model, in conformity with the American ideals, he had to be taught the American brand of English by American teachers and to use American-oriented textbooks. The English language became the common denominator that separated the tiny, well-educated Filipinos from the masses […] The net impact of the American colonial education on the three successive generations of Filipinos is that their colonial mind had not gotten out of the colonial incubation of dependence and culture of underdevelopment.[15]

From this point, the inevitable generational split between parents facing colonial intervention and their children, already educated in the colonizer's civilization, originated. When these children became adults and expressed concerns about communicating effectively and recognizing themselves within society, they realized they had a borrowed voice. Their parents did not understand them, and they did not understand their parents, and then, inexorably, the expression was just imitative. The imitation of colonizer models decisively affected the production of ideas.

METHODS

This study uses a historical research design and a document analysis study. This design was chosen because the research focuses on tracing, reconstructing, and interpreting narratives

[12] Roland Sintos Coloma, "Disidentifying Nationalism," in *Revolution and Pedagogy: Interdisciplinary and Transnational Perspectives on Educational Foundations*, ed. E. Thomas Ewing (New York: Palgrave Macmillan US, 2005), 20, https://doi.org/10.1057/9781403980137_2.
[13] McMahon, *Dead Stars*, 42; Roger J. Bresnahan, *In Time of Hesitation: Anti-Imperialists and the Philippine-American War* (Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1981).
[14] Benedict Anderson, *The Spectre of Comparisons: Nationalism, Southeast Asia, and the World* (Verso Books, 1998); Raul Pertierra and Eduardo F. Ugarte, *Cultures and Texts: Representations of Philippine Society* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 1994), 105.
[15] Serafín D. Quiason, "The Philippines: A Case of Multiple Colonial Experiences," *Siglo. A Journal of the Philippine Centennial Commission* 1, no. 2 (1988): 63.

about Princess Urduja in the context of education in the Philippines, specifically how the figure is constructed as a medium for teaching the *'Ajaib* values (wonder, imagination, and cultural memory) in schools. The historical method allows researchers to understand the origins, development, and transformations in the meaning of Princess Urduja across historical periods. Document analysis systematically examines written documents that represent Urduja in educational and cultural discourse. This approach is relevant because historical research aims to interpret past phenomena by critically evaluating available sources. At the same time, document analysis allows researchers to gain an in-depth understanding of the meanings contained in written texts and artifacts.

The research data come from primary literature, including books on Princess Urduja, Philippine history, education, and folklore, as well as works that examine the concepts of imagination and wonder in education. The data collection technique involved a literature review, with the stages of identification, selection, classification, and recording of documents relevant to the research focus. The collected data were then analyzed using qualitative content analysis, involving data reduction, theme categorization, interpretation of meaning, and historical synthesis to identify patterns in the representation of Princess Urduja in the educational context. Data validity was assessed through external and internal source criticism, namely by evaluating authenticity, credibility, publication context, and content consistency, and by triangulating sources to ensure the validity of the resulting interpretation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Arab *'ajā'ib* and American pedagogy in the Philippines: From *Tales of the Alhambra* to Urduja

To break the continuum that culminated in the Philippine Revolution and the first Asian Republic, American propaganda divided the history of the archipelago into two colonial periods: on one side, the old, 'dark and tyrannical' Spanish period; on the other, the modern, 'democratic and brilliant' American one. A continuation of the natural cultural course developed by Filipinos in the Modern Age was not possible. The division not only sanctioned, as natural, the replacement of a colonizer by another but also anticipated that a good one would replace a bad colonizer. It was easy in this context to design a coherent policy of self-justification in the eyes of Filipinos: "*The Americans are actually the second colonizer, a position that very much influenced their policies and ways of managing the native population.*"[16]

The narrative was supported by continuous messages that enforced and fixed the permanent idea, the *Black Legend* against Spain and Hispanic culture. It was suitable that Filipino infants started their schooling days reading sections in English of Washington Irving's *Tales of the Alhambra*: "Many are apt to picture Spain in their imagination as a soft southern region, decked out with the luxuriant charms of voluptuous Italy.[17] On the contrary, though there are exceptions in some of the maritime provinces, yet, for the greater part, it is a stern, melancholy country, with rugged mountains, and long, sweeping plains, destitute of trees, and indescribably lonesome, partaking of the savage and solitary character of Africa."[18]

[16] McMahon, *Dead Stars*, 4.
[17] Washington Irving, *Tales from the Alhambra* (Bremen: BoD – Books on Demand, 2012).
[18] Test in grammar, reading, spelling and composition as contained in Supplement n.º 21, series 1905, for Filipino children, copied in Dinah F. Mindo, "The Development of English in the Philippines," Marikina: J. C. Palabay Enterprises, 2002, 11–12.

Jennifer M. McMahon explains in her book *Dead Stars* the literary impact of imperial aggression for both Americans and Filipinos. Names such as Mark Twain censured the deplorable consequences of colonial expansion on the pristine American ideal.[19] Máximo Kalaw, Paz Márquez Benítez, and Juan Laya deployed alienation and generational conflicts as consequences of the educational system and the American dream. And finally, McMahon reveals that there is nothing innocent in teaching *Tales of the Alhambra* to innocent Filipino infants: Washington Irving's *The Alhambra* is actually about Spanish culture, not American, and this is exactly the point.[20] The society described in Irving's *The Alhambra* is indolent, corrupt, and static […] The two selections from The Alhambra chosen for this Bureau of Education textbook implicitly distinguish an indolent Spain and a progressive America.[21]

It seems that the clue to adjusting a colonial policy toward the Philippines after a bloody war was to alter historical consciousness, to divide the periods radically in Manichean terms.[22] The two colonial processes were mutually antagonistic: the tyranny of Spain against the freedom of the United States. In addition, a rich pre-Hispanic period should be created to express the unfortunate consequences of Spanish intromission, and the necessity to abolish anything Hispanic in front of the new benefits of Anglo-American culture. As a matter of fact, the conformation of a pre-Hispanic splendorous period suited at the same time any local or indigenous reclamation for a primaveral identity, a chance that eventually opened the door to contest both colonial interventions.

As happened with Washington Irving's *Tales of the Alhambra*, American colonial administrators, in looking back to the pre-Hispanic past, found the Islamic civilization. Before the construction of Spain, al-Andalus existed, and before the constitution of the Spanish Philippines, the Islamic maritime silk road and the initial Islamization of the archipelago existed.[23] This is where to seek references and data in Arabic and Islamic sources on early descriptions of the region and on possible connections between the Philippine archipelago and the wider world, and this is where you can find the story of Princess Urduja from Tawalisi, one of the most important female figures in Filipino history in the last century.[24] The famous Maghribi traveler Ibn Baṭṭūṭa al-Ṭanjī (1304-c.1369) in his *Tuḥfa al-nuẓẓār fī garā'ib al-amṣār wa-l-'ajā'ib al-asfār*, better known as the *Riḥla* (Travel), describes a strange land beyond China that captivated the imagination for a long time:

> We arrived at the country of Ṭawālisī, named after its king. It is a huge nation whose lord is comparable to the Chinese king. […] His daughter, Urdujā, was appointed regent. […] There were women around her holding records. Others, the elders, were her advisers and remained seated on the throne, seats of sandalwood. Ahead were men. […] This princess had women among their troops, free, servants, and prisoners who fought like men. She goes to the head of the army—both men and women— leads raids against

[19] To the point to darken the flag in the essay *To the Person Sitting in Darkness*: "And as for a flag for the Philippine Province, it is easily managed. We can have a special one—our States do it: we can have just our usual flag, with the write stripes painted black and the stars replaced by the skull and cross-bones", quoted in McMahon, *Dead Stars*, 37.
[20] Irving, *Tales from the Alhambra*.
[21] McMahon, *Dead Stars*, 58.
[22] Glòria Cano, "LeRoy's The Americans in the Philippines and the History of Spanish Rule in the Philippines," *Philippine Studies: Historical and Ethnographic Viewpoints* 61 (January 2013): 3–44, https://doi.org/10.1353/phs.2013.0004.
[23] Irving, *Tales from the Alhambra*.
[24] Isaac Donoso, *Narrating Islamic Origins in the Philippines: From Princess Urduja to Alexander the Great*, October 19, 2022, https://doi.org/10.1163/25899996-20221031.

> the enemy, watches the battles, and fights with the champions. […] A lot of princes ask her in marriage, and she responds: «I will marry but just the one that defeats me». Thus, many pretenders abandon confronting her out of fear of the shame of defeat.[25]

No other classical author mentioned this account, but Ibn Baṭṭūṭa did. Only in Ibn Baṭṭūṭa's *Riḥla* «Ṭawālisī» is the place mentioned, together with the marvelous story of its female ruler, the warrior princess Urdujā. Consequently, speculations and suggestions about the location of this Asian kingdom emerged over many decades: This country [Ṭawālisī] has been variously identified, but not satisfactorily. Candidates include Cambodia, Cochin, China, Champa, Tongking, Celebes (Sulawesi), Tawal island in the Moluccas, Brunei, and Sulu. Yule, who suggested the last, admitted to 'a faint suspicion that Tawalisi is really to be looked for in that part of the atlas which contains the Marine Surveys of the late Captain Gulliver'. Professor Yamamoto would connect the name with the princely title *taval* in use in Champa.[26]

The Philippine archipelago was absent in Arabic sources, and accordingly, Tawalisi could fill the gap. Indeed, it was Sir Henry Yule who, after despairing about its location and criticizing the sense of the story,[27] suggested that, probably, and after a more convincing location, the place was around the Sulu archipelago: Tawálisi is really to be found in that part of the atlas that contains the Marine Surveys of the late Captain Gulliver. Putting aside this suspicion, no suggestion seems on the whole more probable than that Tawálisi was the kingdom of Soolo or Súlúk, N.E. of Borneo.[28]

The door had been opened to speculation, and in a letter to Dr. A. B. Meyer signed in London on January 7, 1889, José Rizal inaugurated Filipino interest in Tawalisi. As a matter of fact, the most important statement about the location of this rare place came when José Rizal (1861-1896), the most eminent Filipino thinker and national hero,[29] located (after a very complex

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[25] Our translation from the original:
إلى البلاد طَوالسي ,وملكها هو المسمّي بطَوالسي ,وهي بلاد عريضة […] وملكها يضاهي ملك الصين [...] وولّى بنته بتلك المدينة واسمها أرْدُجا٠ وحولها النساء القواعد ,وهنّ وزيراتها, وقد جَلَسنَ تحت السرير على كراسي الصندل, وبين يديها الرجالُ ومجلسها مفروش بالحرير […]هذه الملكة لها في عسكرها نسوة وخدم وجوار يقاتيلن كالرجال ,وأنّها تخرجُ في العساكر من رجال ونساء ,فتغيرعلى عدوّها وتشاهد القتال وتبارز الأبطال ,وأخبرَني أنّها وقع بينها وبين بعض أعدائها قتالٌ شديد ,وقتَلَ كثيرٌ من عسكرها […]فلمّا عادت إلى أبيها ملّكها تلك المدينة التي كانت بيد أخيها. وأخبرني أن أبناء الملوك يخطبونها فتقول, لا أتزَوّج إلاّ من يبارزني فيغلبني, فيتحامون مبارزتها خوف المعرّة إن غلبتهم.
For a full Arabic text and English translation of this tale see Isaac Donoso Jiménez, *Islamic Far East: Ethnogenesis of Philippine Islam*, in *Islamic Far East: Ethnogenesis of Philippine Islam* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 2013), 252–56, https://observatorio-cientifico.ua.es/documentos/5f0500c2299952466643129a?lang=en; Ibn Battuta, *Rihla* (Beirut: Dar Bayrut li-l-Tabaʿa wa-l-Nashr, 1985), 564; Abu 'Abd Allah Muhammad Ibn Battuta, *Voyages d'Ibn Batoutah, Texte Arabe, Accompagné d'Une Traduction*, trans. C. Défrémery and B. R. Sanguinetti (Paris: à l'Imprimerie Imperiale, 1853); Ibn Batuta, *The Travels of Ibn Battúta, A.D. 1325-1354*, trans. Hamilton Alexander Rosskeen Gibb (London: The Hakluyk Society, 1995); Muhammad b Abd Allah Ibn Battuta, *A Través del Islam*, trans. Federico Arbós and Serafín Fanjul (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 2005).

[26] H. A. R. Gibb and C. F. Beckingham, *The Travels of Ibn Battuta: A. D. 1325-1354, Vol. 4* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2016), 884; Tatsuro Yamamoto, "On Tawalisi as Described by Ibn Battuta," Memoirs of the Research Department of the Toyo Bunko 8, 1936, 93–133; Najeeb M. Saleeby, *The History Of Sulu* (Texas: Alpha Edition, 2020).

[27] Sir Henry Yule, *Cathay and the Way Thither: Being a Collection of Medieval Notices of China* (London: Hakluyt society, 1866), 48.

[28] Yule, 158.

[29] Biographies on Rizal are numerous: Wenceslao Emilio Retana, *Vida y escritos del dr. José Rizal* (Madrid: Librería General de Victoriano Suárez, 1907); Austin Craig, *Lineage, Life and Labors of José Rizal, Philippine Patriot: A Study of the Growth of Free Ideas in the Trans-Pacific American Territory* (Manila: Philippine Education Company, 1913); Carlos Quirino, *The Great Malayan: The Biography of Rizal* (Manila: Philippine Education Company, 1958); Rafael Palma, *Biografía de Rizal* (Manila: Republic of the Philippines, Bureau of Printing, 1949); Rafael Palma, *The Pride of the Malay Race: A Biography of José Rizal*, trans. Roman Ozaeta (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1949); Sixto Y. Orosa, *Jose Rizal: Man and Hero* (Manila: Nueva Era Press, 1956); Leon Ma Guerrero and Leon Maria Guerrero, *The First Filipino: A Biography of José Rizal* (Makati: Guerrero Publishing, 2010); Austin Coates, *Rizal, Philippine Nationalist and Martyr*

explanation) Tawalisi over the map of the Philippine province of Pangasinan, in Northwestern Luzon: Drawing two arcs, one from Canton with a radius of 180 miles or geographical leagues, assuming a favorable wind and 12 miles a day, and another from Kakula (between Java and Sumatra) of 430 radius, assuming an average speed by paddling, we have the intersection of both arcs falling precisely in the northern region of the Philippines.[30]

This identification caused a major shift in Philippine history, as it assumed the archipelago's factual presence in a major historical book. Accordingly, an indigenous, prosperous Philippine kingdom, Tawalisi, was ruled by Princess Urduja long before the arrival of the Spaniards in the region. Seeking to build an affluent Philippine pre-Hispanic history, Urduja came to be a symbol of modernity, independence, and prosperity, a scenario eroded by the Spanish conquest. Proving the existence of the kingdom of Tawalisi and Urduja furthers Rizal's nationalist project, which links Urduja with the birth of Filipino identity. By trying to prove Batuta's account historical, he turns Urduja, a literary stock figure in Arabic popular romance, into a figure of indigeneity.[31]

As a matter of fact, paintings of an imagined Urduja appeared everywhere; city halls were renamed, and monuments to this modern princess, immortalized by the Moroccan historian, were erected, along with movies, statues, political murals, and all kinds of memorabilia. No questions were raised about who Ibn Baṭṭūṭa was or about the true scope of Arabic and Islamic sources for ancient Philippines. The goal was to proclaim a splendorous and Edenic past before colonization and Western intervention. Interestingly, Ibn Baṭṭūṭa came from the Islamic West, and this Western Islamic connection was perceived as more natural than the Western Christian evangelization of the early modern era.

The narrative entered school handbooks and manuals, and was sanctioned and enthusiastically endorsed by American colonial professors, as Austin Craig in his volume *Gems of Philippine oratory; selections representing fourteen centuries of Philippine thought, carefully compiled from credible sources in substitution for the pre-Spanish writings destroyed by missionary zeal, to supplement the later literature stunted by intolerant religious and political censorship, and as specimens of the untrammeled present-day utterances* (Manila, University of Manila, 1924, p. 11). The section translated had the evocative title, "Ancient Filipino culture and prominence of women," convincing about the liberal role of women in pre-Christian Philippines: In the American narrative of progress, Urduja suggests a promise of an egalitarian society if liberated by American ideals of democracy. Thus, the Americans champion Urduja as a kind of mascot, representing American public schools and newfound opportunities for Filipina schoolgirls. Through the public school curriculum and Rizal's endorsement, Princess Urduja is recognized as a national heroine.[32]

(Oxford \: Oxford University Press, 1968); José Barón Fernández, *José Rizal : Filipino Doctor and Patriot* (Madrid: Manuel L. Morató, 1992); Antonio M. Molina, *Yo, Jose Rizal* (Madrid: Ediciones de Cultura Hispanica, 1998); Asuncio Lopez Bantug, *Lolo Jose: An Intimate and Illustrated Portrait of Jose Rizal* (Quezon City: Vibal Foundation and Intramuros Administration, 2008).

[30] Our translation from: "Trazando dos arcos, uno desde Cantón con un radio de 180 millas o leguas geográficas suponiendo que con un viento favorable recorriese 12 leguas diarias; y otro desde Kakula (entre Java y Sumatra) de 430 de radio, calculando que remando sólo consiguiesen una velocidad media, tendremos que la intersección de ambos arcos cae precisamente en la región norte de Filipinas," in José Rizal, *Escritos Politicos e Históricos [1872-1896]*, Edición del Centenario (Manila: Comisión Nacional del Centenario de José Rizal, 1961), 50; See also Jose P. Apostol, "Rizal on Tawalisi," *The Journal of History* 6, nos. 2–3 (1958): 120–130.

[31] Tera Kimberly Maxwell, "Imperial Remains: Memories of the United States' Occupation of the Philippines" (Dissertation, University of Texas, 2011), 166, http://hdl.handle.net/2152/ETD-UT-2011-05-3576.

[32] Maxwell, 169–70.

It is interesting to note that Urduja mainly appeared in the works of Filipino historians trained in American standards, such as Conrado Benítez or Zoilo Galang. But she was not mentioned in other general histories elaborated under the Philippine or Spanish curricula, such as the monumental Historia de Filipinas (Manila, La Pilarica, 1916) by Manuel Artigas y Cuerva. When the American rule ended after the Second World War, Urduja was quickly dismissed as a historical fabrication and a hoax. Jaime C. de Vera limited the scope of the datum by searching the contents of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa's tale. In 1951, he published a thorough study in Spanish analyzing the Arabic text, its English translation, and the difficulties of locating the court of Urduja in the context of the 14th-century Philippines.[33]

'Ajā'ib in context: The historical Maritime Silk Road and the Philippine archipelago

Previously, de Veyra and Otley Beyer had published *Philippine Saga. A Pictorial History of the Archipelago since time began* (1947). Beyer's prestige in the Philippines was immense at the time, even more so after he established the "Wave Migration Theory." Namely, he traced the early Philippine history to the existence of an Arab maritime route: From the late tenth century onward, Arab ships pursued both routes, and the earliest recorded mention of the Philippines in Chinese written history is the arrival of an Arab ship at Canton with a cargo of native goods from Mindoro (Ma-i) in 982 A.D.[34]

With the activism of Malays within the Muslim global network and the introduction of the sultanate, the eastern maritime world was incorporated into the arena. Therefore, the commercial intercourse with eastern Southeast Asia was part of the regional Malay commerce. This does not mean that eventually, when Malays were Islamized, other Muslims (Arabs, Indians, Persians, Chinese, Turks, and so on) could sporadically intervene as private entrepreneurs.[35] Another matter is to consider the factual existence of a regular Arabic route to the Philippine islands:

> Five years later [977], a merchant from China with the family name of P'u, which was often used in Canton for the Arabic name Abu, led a tribute mission to the Chinese capital from the ruler of Brunei, who told the court that Ma-i [Mindoro] and Champa were both 30-day voyages from Borneo. And in 982, some Ma-i traders are reported to have brought valuable merchandise to the Kwantung coast […] Beyer opened an imaginative new chapter in the history of Philippines trade contacts by referring to an «Arab ship… with a load of native goods from Mindoro».[36]

It seems that the so-called route across Borneo and the Philippines towards China was not an Arab business. More likely, both the Chinese and people from the Philippine archipelago

[33] Jaime Carlos De Veyra, *Quien Fue Urdujan Urduja Un Ser Mitologico Estudio Historico* (Manila: Nueva Era Press, 1951).

[34] Ching-hong Wu, *A Study of References to the Philippines in Chinese Sources from Earliest Time to the Ming Dynasty* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines, 1959), 75–76. According to Wu Ching-hong, the translation of Ma Tuan-lin's *Wen Shiann Tung Kao* fragment is as follows: "There were traders of the country of Mo-yi carrying valuables merchandise to the coast of Canton (for sale) in the seventh year of Tai-ping-shing-kuo (of Sung Dynasty, that is 982 A.D.)," in p. 75.

[35] Isaac Donoso, "Development of the Philippine Islamic Courts," in *Bichara: Moro Chanceries and Jawi Legacy in the Philippines*, ed. Isaac Donoso (Singapore: Springer Nature, 2023), 113–36, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-19-0821-7_5.

[36] William Henry Scott, *Prehispanic Source Materials for the Study of Philippine History* (Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1984), 65, 147.

exploited this area in local activities.[37] Those Chinese traders heading towards southern lands were under Islamic influence or were Muslims themselves (i.e., Hui). Eventually, a Muslim (Arab, Persian, Indian, Malay, Andalusian, etc.) could be part of the crew. Arabs regularly reached Chinese ports across the Malay Strait route until Malays themselves were actively engaged in the commerce, and Chinese ports were closed.[38] In contrast to long-distance trade, regional activity was undertaken by indigenous nations (Chinese and Malays), who eventually joined and, eventually, led the Muslim monopoly. In sum, it is not possible to speak about a regular Arab maritime route from Borneo to Canton through Mindoro:

> These references [Arab sources] are hearsay evidence or tales about lands at the end of the world, not descriptions of Arab trade routes. Their negative testimony is especially disappointing in view of H. Otley Beyer's oft-quoted statement that Arabs opened a new trade route via Borneo, the Philippines and Japan to Korea in the eight century […] By the time of the Spanish advent, Filipino merchants and mercenaries were spread all over Southeast Asia […] If one wishes to speculate about the advent of Arabs and Arab influences in the pre-hispanic Philippines, therefore, a ready explanation is available—namely, that they were in vessels built, owned and manned by islanders born within that triangle [Manila-Timor-Malacca], […] It is perhaps surprising that nobody has yet looked for Sindbad-the-Sailor's lands of cannibals, peppers, coconuts, and pearl-fisheries in the Philippines.[39]

However, by misinterpreting the sources, Beyer condemned early Islamic history in the Philippines to Sindbad the Sailor's narrative and to Arab fanciful routes. To complicate things further, Princess Urduja ruled Pangasinan, according to José Rizal, and Arabic *'ajā'ib* literature sanctioned the ancestral history of the archipelago, before the entrance of the Westerners. Interestingly, Ibn Baṭṭūṭa was a westerner himself, a Maghribi and a resident of the Islamic West, who supposedly traveled to the Islamic Far East. Moreover, he did not write down his *Riḥla*, but the Andalusian Ibn Juzayy al-Garnāṭī (1321-1357), who annotated, edited, and reframed the narrative according to Ibn Baṭṭūṭa's dictation. He was the son of Abū-l-Qāsim Muḥammad ibn Juzayy (1294-1340), one of the greatest intellectuals of the Sultanate of Granada, an *ulama* and martyr in the Battle of Río Salado:[40]

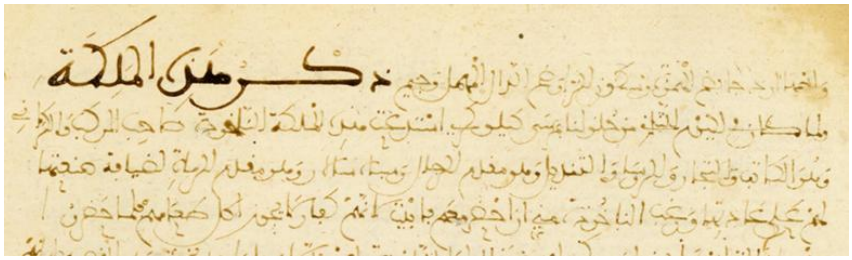

Figure 1. Handwritten manuscript by Ibn Juzayy al-Garnāṭī of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa's *Riḥla*. Section where the name Urdujā appears, second word on the right, first line[41]

[37] Cf. Robert Fox, "The Archeological Record of Chinese Influence in the Philippines," *Philippine Studies* 15, no. 1 (1967): 41–62.

[38] John W. Chaffee, *The Muslim Merchants of Premodern China: The History of a Maritime Asian Trade Diaspora, 750-1400*, New Approaches to Asian History 17 (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 49.

[39] Scott, *Prehispanic Source Materials for the Study of Philippine History*, 80–83.

[40] F. N. Vázquez Basanta, "Abu l-Qasim Ibn Yuzayy: Fuentes Arabes," Al-Andalus Magreb: Estudios Árabes e Islámicos, *Al-Andalus Magreb: Estudios árabes e islámicos*, no. 6 (1998): 251–88; Jorge Lirola Delgado and José Miguel Puerta Vílchez, *Biblioteca de al-Andalus* (Almería: Fundación Ibn Tufayl de Estudios Árabes, 2012).

[41] Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd Allâh (1304-1369?) Auteur du texte Ibn Baṭṭūṭaẗ, "Seconde partie des Voyages d'Ibn Baṭouṭâh (رحلة بن بطوطة).," manuscript, 1356, https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b52521475z.

When Ibn Baṭṭūṭa narrated his adventures around the world to the Granadian Ibn Juzayy, the expertise of the latter enabled him to compose a literary work that was both attractive and within the conventions of the art. *Tuḥfa al-nuẓẓār fī garā'ib al-amṣār wa-l-'ajā'ib al-asfār* was a finished artistic product, as the title in rhymed prose or *saj'* / سجع testifies. It was made based on the testimony of the journey, but not only that. Much of the journey took place many years before the final writing; names, places, and news had been forgotten, and the remembrance of what had taken place was intended to delight, in a work that would bear witness to the wonder. Ibn Baṭṭūṭa sought to testify to his successful career, if not as a Maliki ulama in India (with a disastrous ending, according to his narration), at least as a businessman and pious pilgrim in the abode of Islam to the end of the world.

Arriving in Calicut, he discovered the magnificence of trade with the Far East and was offered the opportunity to embark for China as the Sultan of Delhi's ambassador. However, an accident spoiled the whole convoy, and Ibn Baṭṭūṭa withdrew to the Maldives, fearful of reprisals. From this point on, the story moves extremely quickly, because in a few paragraphs the whole of Southeast Asia is described, reaching as far as Peking, and then returning; that is, several thousand kilometers are covered in a few pages. The strangest thing of all is the content of the stories, since what he tells could have been perfectly well known through an informant at the ports of the Indian Ocean during his long stay in India and the Maldives.

Leaving aside the data which can be contrasted and verified in other sources, there is one name that only Ibn Baṭṭūṭa mentions, he alone, being moreover the most exorbitant of the whole *Riḥla*: the country of Tawalisi. The land of Ṭawālisī is such a problematic place that practically all Ibn Baṭṭūṭa's commentators have placed it in different places. The whole account of the country points to something extracted from the land of the Turks, and this is what some editors have suggested. Others have attempted to find a name in Southeast Asia resembling Ṭawālisī and have produced Tawal in the Moluccas. Yule suggested the Sulu Islands.[42] It is most likely that this place was somewhere in Indo-China. So far, no Arabs have mentioned a route further east, although Ibn Mājid vaguely indicates one through the Moluccas.[43]

Nowhere else can you find a name similar to the one described in the account, with the same features. It sounds more like literary license to catch the audience's attention, to fill the gap left by the long trip to China, to compete with marvels in voyages, following the genre's imperatives. In fact, the third part of the *kitāb*'s title is *'ajā'ib al-asfār* (marvels of traveling), exposing that the *Riḥla* is also a book of *'ajā'ib*.

Therefore, there are only two possibilities to trace the sense of the famous kingdom of Tawalisi. Firstly, it could be a literary creation, done in connection with the Andalusian Ibn Juzayy, a literatus well trained in classical forms, to reshape an Amazon kingdom with vivid details. Or secondly, it could be a bombastic recreation of a feasible landing in some entrepôt in the route to China, perhaps that place known as «Tanaçari» in the *Livro de Duarte Barbosa*, where many Muslims traded:

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[42] Yule, *Cathay and the Way Thither*; Isaac Donoso, "Princess Urduja From Tawalisi: Arabic Mirabilia And Philippine History," *Tashwirul Afkar* 44, no. 1 (May 2025): 113–22, https://doi.org/10.51716/ta.v44i1.662.

[43] G. R. Tibbetts, "Study of the Arabic Texts Containing Material on South-East Asia," in *Study of the Arabic Texts Containing Material on South-East Asia* (Brill, 2025), https://brill.com/display/title/3548; A. C. S. Peacock, "Melaka in the Arabic, Persian and Turkish Sources," *Indonesia and the Malay World* 52, no. 153 (May 2024): 155–78, https://doi.org/10.1080/13639811.2024.2373582; Saleeby, *The History Of Sulu*.

Logo saindo do reino de Pegú, está uma grande cidade de porto de mar que, chamam Tanaçari, onde há muitos mercadores mouros e gentios, que tratam toda sorte de mercadorias; e assim tem muitas naus que navegam para Bengala, Malaca e outras muitas partes.[44]

Tenasserim, a melting pot Burmese entrepôt on the northern Malay Peninsula, was a place to stop on the way to the Malaccan Strait. Undoubtedly, Muslim traders reached it. The rendering of the name seems movable in this Babelian city, and, between the many adaptations and pronunciations, the form Ṭa-wā-li-sī / طـَوالسي does not lie far: The name of this town has been rendered variously in European literature, depending on the nationalities of the travelers, the sources of their information, and other circumstances. The present Siamese name of Tenasserim is *Tănaosí*; the Malay form is Tānahshí or Tānasarí; while the Burmese has been rendered as Tenanthari, Tannethaiee, Ta-nen-thā-ri, and Tanang-sărí. The Chinese name appears to be *Ta-na-ssu-li-sen*.[45]

Be it a literary construction forged by Ibn Juzayy of Granada, or a bombastic entrepôt reached by Ibn Baṭṭūṭa of Tanger, Princess Urduja of the kingdom of Tawalisi ended her reign as historical ruler of Pangasinan in the pre-Hispanic Philippines. Nowadays, the Philippine hoax seems to have been deciphered, and in the academe, no one considers Urduja a historical character. Urduja: The Princess Who Never Was. Many Filipinos have heard about a legendary Amazon warrior princess named "Urduja", and she has served as a rallying point for the people of Pangasinan. Thus, in Lingayen, capital of Pangasinan, the Governor's official residence is named Urduja House in her honor. She has been adopted as the symbol of a Filipina heroine and the inspiration for "women's power" in national development. Her story, of course, thrills the imagination, but unfortunately, it is simply not true.[46]

Nevertheless, the intensity of Filipinos' attachment to their famous precolonial princess makes it difficult to remove her name from the imagination and self-representation. This was precisely the goal of *'ajā'ib*; beyond the myth and folklore, it operated within a broader epistemological structure, shaping a new logos of communal identity. Local memories emerged in hagiographies, legends, and marvels, connecting the mythological origin with the sacred and universal narrative. *'Ajā'ib* was a *silsila* chaining the geo-historical imagination with the sacred legitimacy, operating beyond the criteria of truthfulness or untruthfulness.

Taking into consideration education, public landmarks like streets or monuments, popular culture like comics and films, Princess Urduja is displayed as the Philippine symbol of femininity and freedom, precolonial pride and ethos: "The resilience of Urduja in the popular mind can be attributed to several factors: the teaching of her invented story in the school curriculum and her dissemination in popular culture".[47]

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[44] Duarte Barbosa, *Livro de Duarte Barbosa* (Lisboa: Publicações Europa-América, 1993), 163.

[45] John Anderson, *English Intercourse with Siam in the Seventeenth Century* (London: K. Paul, Trench, Trübner, & Company, Limited, 1890), 11–12; He annotated coming from the Malay «Tanah Sri» (Prosperous Land), the name given also to Ceylan by the Indians and recorded by Duarte Barbosa as Tenarisim. See Duarte Barbosa, *Livro de Duarte Barbosa* (Lisboa: Publicações Europa-América, 1993), 145.

[46] Sonia M. Zaide, *The Philippines a Unique Nation*, Second edition. (Quezon City: All Nations Publishing, Co., Inc., 1999), 43–44; Emily Sanchez Salcedo, "From Urduja to Maria Clara; From Pura Villanueva to Lola Rosa - Faces of the Filipina Across Phases of History," SSRN Scholarly Paper no. 2214224 (Rochester, NY: Social Science Research Network, February 8, 2013), https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2214224.

[47] Erwin S. Fernandez, "Thalamasin, Ari Kasikis and Urduja: US Colonial Discourse in the Making of a Contrived or Fake History and Lessons in Historical Methodology," SSRN Scholarly Paper (Rochester, NY: Social Science Research Network, June 1, 2023), https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4468030.

She was (and still usually is) considered in textbooks as a Philippine bayani, that is, a heroine within the pre-Hispanic world, a world still untouched by the colonizer and preserving the idealized spirit of freedom, splendor, and rightness. We can see, for instance, what was said in probably the most important textbook during the mid-20th century, Gregorio Zaide's *Philippine political and cultural history* (1957):

> Quite several famous women had appeared, like shooting meteors, across the firmament of Philippine history. Among them were Lubluban, legendary Bisayan lawgiver and granddaughter of Lalake and Babae, first man and woman in Filipino mythology; Aran, Iloko Eve; Bangan, Igorot Juno; Sambuyuya, Tiruray demigoddess of virginity; Kalaiigitan, sultana of the Pasig and Lakan-Dula's grandmother; Princess Urduja, said to be the Amazonic ruler-warrior of ancient Pangasinan, who was visited in 1347 or 1348 by Ibn Batuta, a Mohammedan traveler from Morocco.[48]

Accordingly, together with deities and sultanas, legends or facts, the Amazonic ruler-warrior crafted by Ibn Baṭṭūṭa and Ibn Juzzay in the 14th century was really part of the Philippine pantheon of national heroes and models to follow and imitate: Despite Urduja's exile from history, Filipinos claim Urduja as their own because she evokes a past blotted out by Spanish conquistadors, a history of a civilized, egalitarian society predating Spanish conquest. This precolonial fantasy narrative negotiates five centuries of occupation in which Spanish conquistadors forced conversion by the sword, and Spanish friars wielded Christianity to claim indigenous land and dominate the minds and hearts of the people. Urduja constitutes a melancholic object.[49]

What is interesting in this case is that an Andalusian-Moroccan medieval text substantiated the ancient history of a Southeast Asian Christian state, such as the Philippines, not because of its historical validity, but due to its *'ajā'ib* ethos. Imagination is part of history, also through that cultural and political construction, or agenda, which connects the logos with the myth. Thus understood, Urduja is still a national hero or *bayani* of the Philippines: "But if the historical personality of Urduja seemed implausible, almost incredible, what would happen if we took it as a type of legend? Thus, it would be a sea without shores, without offense to the truth. Imagination has wings, to which nobody dares to cut them off. In this sense, even the Rizal hypothesis would gain more vitality [...] Be Urduja the target of our ambitions![50]

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that Princess Urduja cannot be categorized as a historical figure under modern historiographic standards, but remains a significant cultural symbol in the collective memory of Filipinos. The persistence of the Urduja narrative demonstrates that the concept of *'ajā'ib* in the Islamic intellectual tradition does not merely function as a story of miracles, but rather as a medium for shaping the historical imagination, social identity, and collective consciousness of a society. In the context of Islamic education in the Philippines,

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[48] Gregorio F. Zaide, *Philippine Political and Cultural History* (Manila: Philippine Education Company, 1957), 54.
[49] Maxwell, "Imperial Remains," 159–60.
[50] Our translation from: "Pero, si la personalidad *histórica* de Urduja pareciese inverosímil, casi increíble, ¿qué ocurriría tomándola como tipo de leyenda? Aquí se hallaría como en mar sin orillas; no habría ofensa a la verdad; la imaginación posee alas, a las que nadie sería osado cercenarlas. En tal sentido, hasta la hipótesis de Rizal cobraría mayor vitalidad […] ¡Sea Urduja el blanco de nuestras ambiciones!, in Jaime Carlos De Veyra, *Quien Fue Urdujan Urduja Un Ser Mitologico Estudio Historico* (Manila: Nueva Era Press, 1951), 14–15; We can find an interesting document written by Nicolas Zafra, "Was the Kingdom of Princess Urduja in the Philippines?," *The Journal of History* 2, no. 1 (1952): 1–1.

these findings highlight the importance of understanding how narratives derived from classical Islamic traditions, such as those of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa and Ibn Juzayy, can continue to influence the construction of national and local identities, despite ongoing debate over their historical validity. Thus, Islamic education plays a role not only in transmitting religious knowledge but also in developing students' abilities to critically read the relationships between history, memory, culture, and identity.

The implications of this research suggest that Islamic education in the Philippines, particularly in madrasah institutions, Islamic schools, and Islamic history education programs, should develop a historical-critical approach that enables students to distinguish between historical facts, legends, and cultural symbols without neglecting their educational value. This approach is crucial for strengthening Islamic historical literacy and fostering awareness that the identity of Filipino society, including Muslim communities, is shaped by a complex interaction among historical sources, oral traditions, and collective imagination. However, this research is still limited to textual analysis of historical sources and secondary literature, thus failing to empirically describe how Urduja narratives are taught, received, or interpreted in contemporary Islamic education practices in the Philippines. Therefore, future research should involve fieldwork in Islamic educational institutions to explore the role of historical and semi-legendary narratives in shaping Islamic identity, nationalism, and multicultural awareness in Filipino society.

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