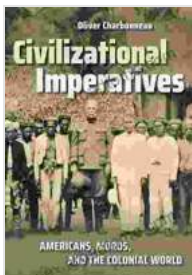


# Americans, Moros, and the Colonial World: Uncovering the Interwoven Histories of the United States and the Philippines

In the annals of American history, the United States' colonial presence in the Philippines often occupies a relatively obscure chapter, overshadowed by more prominent episodes like the westward expansion or the Spanish-American War. Yet, this era was a complex and consequential one, marked by both cooperation and conflict, and left an enduring legacy that continues to shape the relationship between the two nations today.



## Civilizational Imperatives: Americans, Moros, and the Colonial World (The United States in the World)

by Brian VanDeMark

★★★★★ 5 out of 5

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At the heart of this intricate story lie the American Moros, a term used to describe the Muslim inhabitants of the southern Philippine islands, primarily concentrated in Mindanao, the Sulu Archipelago, and Zamboanga. Their unique identity, shaped by centuries of Islamic influence, fierce resistance

to foreign encroachment, and intricate social and political structures, would profoundly influence the course of American rule in the Philippines.

## **The Lure of Empire and the Moro Wars**

The United States' acquisition of the Philippines in 1898, as part of the spoils of the Spanish-American War, marked a watershed moment in the country's history. Driven by a mix of economic, strategic, and ideological motivations, the United States embarked on a colonial project that would profoundly impact the lives of the Filipino people, including the American Moros.

The American administration in the Philippines, led by Governor-General William Howard Taft, initially pursued a policy of conciliation and assimilation towards the Moros. However, this approach quickly faltered in the face of fierce resistance from Moro leaders like Sultan Kudarat of Sulu, who vehemently opposed American rule and launched a series of bloody uprisings. Thus began the Moro Wars, a protracted and brutal conflict that would span nearly two decades.

The American military, despite its technological superiority, faced a formidable foe in the Moros. The Moro warriors, skilled in guerrilla warfare and bolstered by a deep sense of religious and cultural identity, proved to be a tenacious and resilient adversary. The conflict was characterized by intense fighting, atrocities on both sides, and a devastating loss of life, particularly among the Moro population.

## **Governing the American Moro Province**

As the Moro Wars gradually subsided, the United States established the Moro Province in 1903, an autonomous region encompassing the

predominantly Muslim areas of the southern Philippines. The administration of the Moro Province presented a unique challenge for the American colonial authorities, who sought to balance the demands of governance with the need to respect Moro customs and traditions.

The American approach to governing the Moro Province was marked by a combination of pragmatism and cultural sensitivity. While they introduced Western-style institutions and infrastructure, such as schools and hospitals, they also recognized the importance of preserving Moro legal and political systems, including the role of traditional leaders like the datu and sultans.

This approach, known as the "Moro Policy," aimed to foster cooperation and prevent further conflict. It was not without its complexities and contradictions, however. While the American administration sought to incorporate the Moros into the broader Philippine polity, they also maintained a degree of separation, perpetuating a sense of otherness and fostering a lingering mistrust.

### **Cultural Exchange and Resistance**

Despite the ongoing tensions, the American colonial period also witnessed a period of cultural exchange and interaction between the Moros and Americans. American missionaries, educators, and administrators lived among the Moro communities, learning their languages, customs, and traditions. Moro students attended American schools, gaining access to new ideas and perspectives.

This exchange, while often asymmetrical, laid the foundation for a deeper understanding between the two peoples. It also gave rise to a generation of Moro intellectuals and leaders who would play a significant role in the

Philippine nationalist movement and the eventual struggle for independence.

However, cultural exchange was not always a peaceful process. Moro resistance to American rule continued throughout the colonial period, taking various forms. Some Moros engaged in armed rebellion, while others pursued more subtle forms of resistance, such as refusing to cooperate with American authorities or preserving traditional practices in the face of modernization.

### **The End of American Rule and the Moro Legacy**

The United States' colonial presence in the Philippines came to an end in 1946 with the granting of Philippine independence. However, the legacy of the American Moros continued to shape the nation's history and identity.

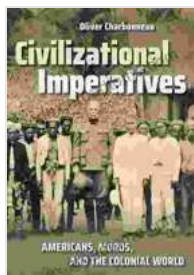
The Moro Province was integrated into the Republic of the Philippines, but the region's unique history and cultural heritage remained a source of both pride and tension. The Moros faced ongoing challenges related to land rights, political representation, and economic development, which contributed to a sense of marginalization and discontent.

In the decades that followed independence, the Moro people continued to struggle for their rights and self-determination. This struggle took on various forms, from armed separatist movements to peaceful negotiations. The Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) emerged as prominent organizations advocating for Moro autonomy or independence.

The relationship between the Philippine government and the Moro people has been complex and often fraught with conflict. However, there have also been periods of dialogue and negotiation, leading to agreements such as the 1996 peace accord between the Philippine government and the MNLF. The Moro struggle for self-determination continues to shape Philippine politics and society today.

The history of American Moros and the colonial world is a complex and multifaceted one, marked by both conflict and cooperation, resistance and accommodation. It sheds light on the complexities of colonialism, the resilience of indigenous cultures, and the enduring legacies that shape the relationships between nations and peoples.

By exploring this rich and often overlooked chapter in history, we gain a deeper understanding of the intertwined histories of the United States and the Philippines, and the ongoing quest for self-determination and cultural preservation in a rapidly changing world.



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