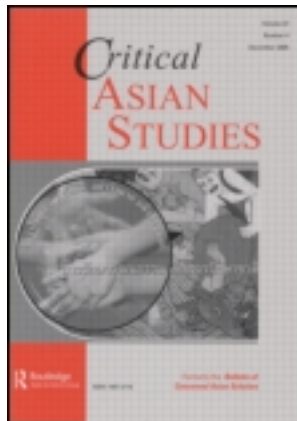


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MEDIATING AND CONSUMING MEMORIES OF VIOLENCE

The Jabidah Massacre in the Philippines

Syed Muhd Khairudin Aljunied and Rommel A. Curaming

ABSTRACT: Considered by many as the founding moment of Muslim separatism in Mindanao, the Jabidah massacre, which took place on Corregidor Island, involved the killing of Muslim trainees who were being prepared by the Philippine military in 1967 and 1968 to infiltrate and sabotage neighboring Sabah. This article analyzes the ways by which memories of this iconic event have in the past four decades been recorded, remembered, mythicized, appropriated, or simply consumed for their own purposes by political elites, civil society actors, and ordinary people in the Philippines. Our angle of vision is directed toward what we term “contentious vectors”—news media, novels, films, and blogs—to analyze the processes by which memories are recast. The ways by which the Jabidah massacre is remembered and appropriated reflect the contestations between civil society and the government in the Philippines, as well as the intense rivalry among the political elites both within and between the Christian-elite-dominated Filipino polity and Muslim communities. The struggle to influence the shape of memories of Jabidah is part and parcel of an ongoing struggle to create competing nations-of-intent amidst the persistent tensions between the state and its dissenters.

On 18 March 2009, a crowd of about 200,000 converged along the national highways from Cotabato City to Davao City in the southern Philippines in support of the Peace Power Day (PPD). The PPD event was a culmination of a string of conferences, talks, and demonstrations aimed at mobilizing civil society groups, religious organizations, and the academe to agitate for the resumption of peace negotiations between the government and separatist movements in the southern region.¹ The choice of 18 March as the date for the PPD was in no

way arbitrary or capricious. This was the date on which in 1968 a dozen or more Muslim military recruits were murdered under the Marcos government. The trainees were being prepared by the military to carry out “Operation Merdeka,” a plan to infiltrate and sabotage neighboring Sabah. Marcos reportedly intended to use the soldiers to sow public disorder and organize an uprising against the Malaysian authorities. In this way, he hoped to reclaim Sabah and make it a part of the Philippines. This claim was based on the historical fact that Sabah was part of the Sulu Sultanate, which lay between the borders of the Philippines and Malaysia before the coming of European colonialism. But something went awry and for some reason that remains unclear even today, the trainees were killed in what is popularly known as the Jabidah massacre. The massacre has stood in popular imagination, particularly among Muslim Filipinos, as a vivid reminder of the (Christian-dominated) Philippine government’s callous disregard of, and gross disrespect for, the culture and aspirations of Muslims in Mindanao. The event is believed to have triggered the rise of an assertive Moro nationalism over the past four decades, and memories of the murders have reinforced the struggle for the Bangsa Moro “nation(s)-of-intent”² as these memories are kept alive, recast, and propagated through oral lore, films, popular literature, monuments, history writing, and, more recently, through blogs and websites.

In this article, we document the ways in which political elites, civil society actors, and ordinary people in the Philippines have recorded, remembered, recast, mythicized, and appropriated the Jabidah massacre for their own purposes. Our angle of vision is directed toward what we term “contentious vectors” of memories. These memories are contentious because they directly or indirectly challenge mainstream perceptions, particularly official versions of past events. By the word “vector” we refer to a vehicle or carrier used to transfer memories from their raw, braided, and often incoherent form to narratives that may be compelling to an audience. Four vectors of memories are at the center of our analysis: news media, novels, films, and blogs.

A few considerations shaped our selection of these vectors. First, all of these contentious vectors of memories have served as convenient channels for expressing views that are subversive or supportive of the master narrative of dominant histories, which in the Philippines are not necessarily equal to the government’s version/s. Second, analyzing in detail each of these contentious vectors allows us to glimpse the processes by which memories are refashioned and consumed. A scrutiny of the features and contents of these vectors, putting them in context as products of particular times and places, enables the teasing out of the social, economic, political, and even personal interests that shape the stories that are being told.

The ways in which Jabidah is remembered and used illustrate the conflictual

1. Elusfa (Romy) 2009; Elusfa (Rolivel) 2009.

2. We use the term “nation(s)-of-intent” in the manner suggested by Shamsul A.B. to refer to “defined idea of the form of a nation...shared by a number of people who perceive themselves as members of that nation, and who feel that it unites them” (Shamsul 1996, 328).

relations between civil society and the government, as well as the intense rivalry among the elites both within and between the Christian-elite-dominated Filipino polity and the Muslim communities. The struggle to influence the shape of memories of Jabidah, we would argue, is also part and parcel of an ongoing struggle to create competing nations-of-intent amidst the frictions between the state and its dissenters. That said, it will be useful at this juncture to discuss what comes close to “official” versions of the Jabidah massacre so as to understand the dissonance between these versions and those represented through the vectors we examine below.

“Official” Histories of the Jabidah

The notion of official history presupposes the distinction between a scientific or academic history, which is believed to be a product of open and impartial inquiry, on the one hand, and sanctioned, premeditated, or biased history, on the other. Geoffrey Hartman, for example, views official history as a dangerous tool employed by states the world over to erase social memories. This is often done to promote the interests of particular groups in society and to rekindle past prejudices against selected communities. In his words, official history “manipulates memory like news.”³ In same vein, Iraida Vargas-Arenas and Mario Sanoja Obediente regard official history as “the history of manipulation” promulgated by ruling regimes.⁴

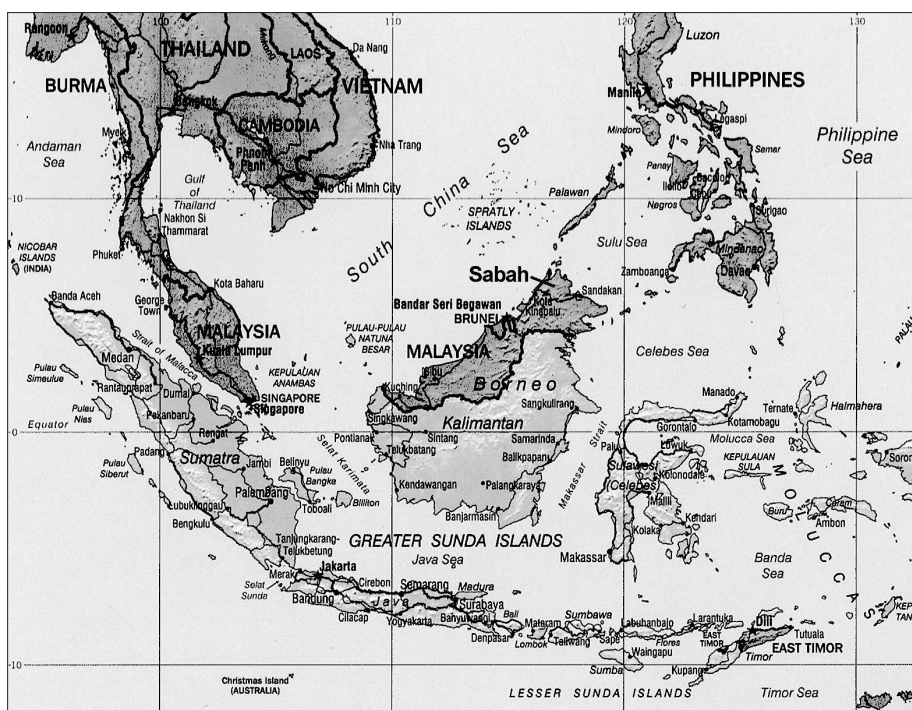
These state-centric conceptions of official history may prove to be problematic in the context of the Philippines. Known for being “weak,” the Philippine state has been vulnerable to pressures from the oligarchies and, to a lesser extent, civil society. It may even be said that control of the state constitutes the ultimate trophy temporarily held by the most dominant coalition of elites, to be challenged and eventually captured by competing group/s. One particular regime’s official history, thus, may not be the same as that of the next regime. It also means that a regime’s official version may not be the most dominant or influential. It is official simply because it is a version endorsed, explicitly or not, by the government or particular state actors.

The contentious nature of official histories in the Philippines can be clearly seen when the news about the Jabidah incident exploded in March 1968 and it assumed scandalous proportions in the days and weeks that followed. The Marcos government was hard pressed to explain the massacre, denying initially that it even happened. Faced with mounting evidence and relentless pressure from the press and the opposition, the government via military spokespersons tried to explain the killings as a legitimate response by the trainers to a mutiny committed by trainees who could not bear the sustained and severe training.⁵ The military also claimed that the Jabidah group was formed not for the purposes of invading or infiltrating Sabah, but to prevent attacks allegedly being planned by unidentified groups of Muslims who sought to advance the claims of

3. Hartman 2004, 419.

4. Vargas-Arenas and Obediente 2004, 50.

5. Anon. 1968a.



Map showing the proximity of Sabah to the southern Philippines. The Jabidah massacre involved the killing of Muslim trainees who were being prepared by the Philippine military in 1967 and 1968 to infiltrate and sabotage neighboring Sabah. (Credit: CIA map)

the Sultan of Sulu.⁶

On the other side of the fence, the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) regarded the Jabidah incident as a sacral moment invoked from time to time to mobilize Muslims to the movement's cause. Backdating its founding day to 18 March 1968,⁷ the day the Jabidah incident happened, the MNLF effectively underscored its intimate link to the event as its fountainhead. This raises the question of why the MNLF placed so much importance on Jabidah when there were plenty of other more brutal incidents in which more Muslims were killed before and after 1968.⁸ The founder of the MNLF, Nur Misuari, viewed the Jabidah incident as the culmination of a series of genocidal attacks that the government had perpetrated against Muslims in Mindanao. For Misuari and his supporters, the youths who were murdered on Corregidor represented the young men of their generation—the generation of the radical sixties—who pinned hopes on the government and their elder Muslim leaders for a better future. After the massacre, Misuari and his Muslim contemporaries realized that

6. Salak 1968; Anon. 1968d.

7. Earlier accounts point to 1969 or 1971 as its founding anniversary. The subsequent move to declare 18 March 1968 as MNLF's founding moment was explained by the alleged need to keep it a secret from the older Muslim leaders whom the younger Muslim activists feared would thwart their move.

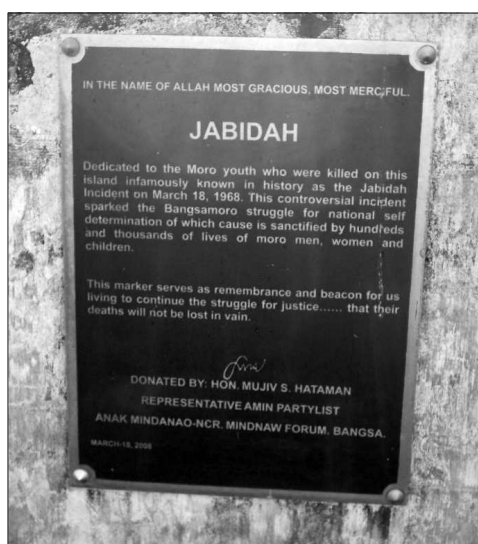
8. Examples include the killings in Bud Daho (1906), Bud Bagsak (1911, 1913), Kamlon rebellion (1950s), Manili (1971), Tacub (1971), Malisbong (1974), Patikul (1977), Pata (1981).

this was a futile dream. Jabidah, in the eyes of the MNLF, of which Misuari was the supreme leader, was the final straw of Muslim tolerance, the beginnings of an all-out secessionist project, and a marker of unflinching defiance against injustice to be invoked from time to time.⁹

In addition, Jabidah stood out among state-inflicted violent actions against the Muslims before and after 1968 for instantly being recognized as an issue of enormous national importance. Unlike other incidents that were soon sidelined in the national press, if mentioned at all, Jabidah generated the sustained interests of a media that normally paid scant attention to Mindanao and Muslim issues. Reasons for this include the

intensifying party politics, the timing (it happened at a time when politicians had the forthcoming presidential and congressional elections in sight), the place (it took place near Manila, not in far-flung Mindanao), the presence of a survivor who lived to tell a dramatic and interesting tale, the strong anti-Marcos sentiment at the time, and of course the incident's international dimension (foreign relations with Malaysia). All these factors conspired to render Jabidah such a potent political symbol that any savvy politician, like the one Nur Misuari soon proved to be, would capitalize on.

The interpretation of Jabidah that Nur Misuari and MNLF propagated earlier on—highlighting the historic victimhood of the Muslims and the Islamic element of the reason for the mutiny (more on this below)—has survived the fractious character of Muslim politics in Mindanao. The Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), which took on the secessionist mantle after the MNLF signed the Final Peace Agreement with the government in 1996, has continued to participate in the annual commemoration of the Jabidah massacre and make pronouncements that reiterate the long-standing interpretation of the incident.¹⁰ The Sultan of Sulu website, in expounding on the history of the MNLF, takes a similar tack, underscoring the costs of Muslim loyalty. The site claims



This marker commemorating the Jabidah massacre on Corregidor Island reads, in part, "Dedicated to the Moro youth who were killed on this island known in history as the Jabidah Incident on March 18, 1968. This controversial incident sparked the Bangsamoro struggle for self-determination...."

9. Interview with authors, Manila, 16 February 2010.

10. See, for example, Al Jazeera's feature on Jabidah that appeared in March 2009 in which MILF spokesman reiterated the same view (discussed further below). See "Philippines Marks Massacre Anniversary," available at www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Fg-d9zlhXE; accessed 25 February 2012.

that “thousands” of Muslim soldiers died in the Jabidah massacre.¹¹ Whereas the Marcos regime’s version has never been clear as to what prompted the mutiny or massacre, the Sultan’s website, in restating the views of the MNLF and MILF, declares unequivocally that the tragedy was triggered by the refusal of the Muslim trainees to obey orders upon knowing that their mission would entail the killing of fellow Muslims in Sabah. In the following, we shall see how the Jabidah event has been retold and how these versions of official histories have been challenged or recast through different mediating channels, resulting in an array of alternative, popular, and personal histories of the event.

Jabidah in News Media

News media in various forms are the most often and widely used vectors of public memory. They are also probably the most reliable indicator of the changing contours or patterns of prevailing discourses. Among various forms of news media, we shall concern ourselves here with two documentary films, along with selected newspaper and magazine articles. News broadcast through radio and television shall not be covered for the simple reason that longitudinal coverage via these media is not easy to obtain.

On 26 March 2009, a short documentary on the Jabidah massacre appeared in Al Jazeera, a premier Arab news channel that provides alternative coverage of developments in the Muslim world and in areas where Muslims constitute the minority population. The documentary has been widely circulated over the internet via YouTube. It also appeared in one of the programs of the biggest media company in the Philippines, ABS-CBN. In this documentary, Filipino correspondent Marga Ortigas gave voice to the version of the event that is one of the most widely held in recent years, that is, that the Jabidah massacre was *the* founding moment of conflict in Mindanao. The Jabidah massacre is thus portrayed as illustrating the oppressive character of the state, which is allegedly bent on exterminating Muslims. The fact that other far more brutal political violence had taken place, such as Bud Daho (1906), Bud Bagsak (1911), Bud Talipao (1913), Kamlon rebellion (1950s), and Manili (1971)—incidents that had resulted in the loss of a greater number of lives and that had the same potential to generate bitter memories—is a point blatantly ignored. As the logic of the Muslim victimhood and state culpability are stretched to the limit, whatever ambiguities or uncertainties for which the Jabidah massacre is notorious are erased. In their place is an image of a Manichaean battle between “good” Muslims and the “evil” Christian state.

In a key segment, the lone survivor of the Jabidah incident, Jibin Arula, expressed regrets for having divulged what he knew about the killings. Had he not spoken, so he told the interviewer, the devastating and prolonged conflict in Mindanao would have not arisen. It is pertinent to note here that in all of the news coverage and interviews with Jibin over the past four decades (specifically

11. Royal Hashemite Sultanate of Sulu and Sabah official website: royalsulu.com/mnlf%20history.html; accessed 9 February 2011.



Jibin Arula (pictured above) is the lone survivor of the Jabidah massacre. He told an interviewer in March 2009: "My call to those in Mindanao, Muslim or Christian, is to help each other seek help from government to sign the MOA for peace in Mindanao.... That's all I ask. I am not an important person, but I remember this conflict originated from that [Jabidah] case so they might see from Davao to Cotabato that I am still alive, that I am with them to ask help. What I want, in my age, is that even if die, there would be no more conflict in Mindanao."

(Credit: Carolyn O. Arguillas/MindaNews. Keith Bacongco, photographer)

until March 2008 on the occasion of fortieth anniversary of the event), he makes no mention of the Jabidah incident or his earlier public comments about the massacre being the root cause of the ongoing conflict in Mindanao. If he regrets anything, Jibin says, it is the fact that nothing had come out of the investigations of the incident and that the whole Jabidah affair had ruined his life and that of his children. One is thus left to wonder what happened in the past ten or so years that enabled the complicated roots of the

Mindanao conflict to be reduced almost singularly to this iconic event. Indeed, if one were to read the multifarious analyses of the conflict in Mindanao offered by scholars and journalists, the impression given is that while the Jabidah was not insignificant, the complexity and deep roots of the problems in Mindanao are generously acknowledged.¹² What then brought about the change in the discursive pattern within the media from that of seeing the Jabidah as part of a wider context of conflict and politics in the Philippines to one that centers primarily around the dynamics of the massacre? To answer this question, we must trace the evolving attitude of the media toward the question of what triggered the incident.

In the earliest media coverage of the event, on 19–21 March 1968, it is clear that the commonly cited triggering event was the nonpayment of fifty pesos monthly allowance promised to the trainees. On 23 March 1968 the National Coordinating Council for Islamic Affairs (NCCIA) issued a statement offering a counter claim. The NCCIA asserted that the trainees wished to quit not because of the allowances but because they realized that their mission was against the tenets of the Koran, which prohibits the killing of fellow Muslims.¹³ This idea, which Muslim leaders such as Rashid Lucman and Salih Ututalum had underscored in the speeches they made in Congress and in media interviews, was overshadowed by the claims Jibin repeatedly made in interviews with the media and in testimonies he gave in congressional investigations and in the military tri-

12. Majul 1973; Muslim 1994; McKenna 1998; Lucman 2000; Kadir Che Man 1990; Vitug and Gloria 2000 (Crescent); Kreuzer and Werning 2007; George 1980.

13. Anon. 1968b.

bunal.¹⁴ The twenty-four other members of the Jabidah group whom Ninoy Aquino interviewed upon their return to Jolo on 24 March 1968 confirmed Jibin's claim, slanting media attention away from the counterclaims the NCCIA had made.¹⁵

From February 1971, when the military tribunal decided to acquit almost all the accused, until the EDSA uprising in February 1986 the Jabidah incident was barely mentioned in the nationally circulated magazines and newspapers. This lack of attention may have been due to the restrictive atmosphere and the muzzling of the press during the Marcos dictatorship. With the collapse of the Marcos regime in 1986, the new government made a greater effort to look into cases that had been sidelined or ignored. Calls for the reopening of the Jabidah case mounted and finally in September 1986, the case was opened for reinvestigation under the jurisdiction of the newly instituted Presidential Committee on Human Rights (PCHR).¹⁶

News coverage during the mid 1980s continued to cite the nonpayment of the fifty pesos monthly allowances as the trigger for the incident; less attention was given to the Muslim soldiers' refusal to attack fellow co-religionists.¹⁷ One weekly magazine went so far as to declare, "While the Malaysian-backed Muslim politicians alleged that the Jabidah recruits 'rebelled' because they refused to fight fellow Muslims in Sabah, the real reason was that Jabidah officers had played around with the funds intended for salaries and supplies."¹⁸

It is notable that at least one news item in 1986 noted the link, significantly enough in a guarded tone, between the establishment of the MNLF and the Jabidah incident.¹⁹ Three years later in 1989, the same newspaper, *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, which is probably the most influential newspaper in the country, abandoned what had been a rather cautious tone and declared in a lengthy, front-page feature article: "Jabidah Massacre gave birth to MNLF."²⁰ By 2000, the trajectory appeared to have reached its zenith, with headlines such as "Jabidah Massacre: The spark that ignited the Muslim rebellion."²¹ These declarations are of course old news in the official newsletters and newspapers in Muslim Mindanao. But in national dailies, it was of fairly recent provenance.

Perhaps nothing can better illustrate the sharply altered atmosphere than the article published in 2000 in the *Philippine Graphic* under the byline Nick Joaquin. This article is largely a reprint of the piece the same author wrote for the *Philippine Free Press* in 1968, under the pen name Quijano de Manila.²² That the piece was reissued with only minor additions and revisions in 2000 was striking enough. One can hardly miss the suggestion that the level of under-

14. Yambot and Salak 1968; Caparas 1968.

15. Anon. 1968c.

16. Gloria 1986.

17. See, for example, Anon. 1986a; Anon. 1986b.

18. Casenas 1986.

19. Gloria 1986, 6.

20. Anon. 1989.

21. Vitug and Gloria 2000 (Jabidah).

22. Quijano de Manila was the nom de guerre of Nick Joaquin, one of the most respected journal-

standing of the event had not changed in the intervening thirty years. More significantly for the purpose of this article, however, among the few lines the author inserted pertains to the trigger for some to rebel against their trainers. Whereas the original article merely noted the usual allowances-not-paid line of the story, the author took pains in the newer version to insert the revolution-to-killing-fellow-Muslims line as a trigger for the incident, an explanation that was totally absent in the original version. Among the reasons for the change, one can surmise that the shift in the tenor of Muslim-related political discourses in the post-EDSA years could have prompted him to update or revise his understanding of the cause of the mutiny that led to the killings.

Admittedly, the media's portrayal of Jabidah is far more complex than the evolutionary ordering suggested above. Yet, what is important to register here is that the particular approach the media took toward Jabidah gained so much currency it altered the views of even the most seasoned observers. In addition, it could have given a certain version of Jabidah the status of an unassailable truth.

This possibility is further illustrated in the case of the short (eight-minute-long) documentary *Case Unclosed: Jabidah Massacre* that was produced by GMA, one of the two biggest media companies in the country, and shown on GMA News on 26 February 2009. The anchor, Kara David, poses at the outset an important question: Was it really a massacre or a mutiny that resulted in the killings? There is of course nothing new in this question as it is almost as old as the event itself. To recall, convinced that there was indeed a massacre, Ninoy Aquino went to Jolo and Simunul a few days after the incident to conduct his own investigation. Upon his return, he declared to the shock of friends and to the delight of his political enemies, that there was really no massacre.²³ What was significant in David's question was that it was raised at all, given a media environment that tended to tolerate, if not support and promote, a version of the incident as no less than a massacre precipitated by the trainees' refusal to violate Islamic tenets.

David's question raises anticipation, nurturing hope that the documentary will offer more than the usual, unidimensional view of the event. This was not, however, to be the case. The documentary merely reenacts the long-rehearsed story as Jibin recalls it. Contending views that others have proposed were left muted, particularly one that Arnold Molina Azurin advanced in the *Philippine Free Press* in 1994 and later expanded to form a chapter in his book *The Cult of Dissidence*, published two years later.²⁴ In this article, which was based on the author's textual analysis of congressional reports, news dailies, and oral interviews done with Jibin Arula—analyses published in popular Manila-based periodicals—Azurin bluntly called the Jabidah massacre a myth that Nur Misuari and the MNLF had nurtured, appropriated, and promoted for their political interests. He also hinted at the involvement of the CIA or other U.S. operatives, in addition to the likelihood that Malaysian spies had infiltrated the Jabidah group

ists and literary figures in Philippine history.

23. Anon. 1968c.

24. Azurin 1996.

and were well-placed even in Malacañang. None of these elements found their way into the documentary. Those with no prior exposure to Jabidah would finish watching the documentary and still be unaware of the event's controversial character.

Whereas the Al Jazeera feature is pitched to evoke pathos and sympathy for the Muslims in Mindanao, inviting the audience not only to identify with their cause but also to blame and hate the government for their misery, the GMA documentary dwells on Jibin's personal pains and on the sad plight of those who were killed. The GMA documentary includes none of the issues raised in the Al Jazeera documentary and concludes merely with a note on the new chapter in the life of Jibin Arula and Bangsa Moro that the tragic event ushered in.

Significantly, the two journalists who anchored the documentaries hailed more or less from similar cultural and professional backgrounds: Marga Ortigas once worked for GMA News, in the same news agency in which Kara David is employed. Had they both been working in a similar media context we might assume that they would have approached the documentary in the same way. Their contrasting tones may have been due to their different target audiences. With Muslims making up a large portion of Al Jazeera's target audience, Ortigas's report may have been conditioned by the prevailing expectations about Muslims in general and Muslims in Mindanao in particular. This does not mean, however, that the GMA documentary is any less bound to a political context. By opting to treat the Jabidah incident as a personal tragedy, the GMA version strips it of much of the politically loaded symbolisms that have gathered around Jabidah and that made it such a potent political icon. It is devastating swipe at those who made Jabidah a milking cow for political capital.

Another aspect of the media context worth noting is the difference in the format and the timing of the reports. Ortigas's is a short documentary, whereas David's is a full-length documentary. With only three minutes, compared to David's eight minutes, Ortigas had to pack her message into a limited space, precluding a complex treatment.²⁵ Be that as it may, the attempt to reduce the roots of conflict in Mindanao to a limited range of factors in which Jabidah was a linchpin is evident and this may have its roots in factors other than the limitations imposed by the format. The timing of the production of the reports is also crucial. Ortigas's short report appeared two weeks before the anniversary of the Jabidah massacre, and months after the aborted signing of the "Memorandum of Agreement on the Ancestral Domains" (MOA-AD). The Memorandum of Agreement, which recognizes Muslim rights over the control of resources in their area, was thought to facilitate the reaching of a peace agreement. Instead it intensified the tension between competing groups and plunged Mindanao once again into a flurry of violence and forced the dislocation of hundreds of thousands. In hopes that the MOA-AD would pave the way for peace in Mindanao, the Ortigas report was no doubt pitched to encourage the public to put pressures on the contending parties to return to the negotiating table and

25. We wish to acknowledge an anonymous reviewer for pointing this out.

continue peace efforts. Thus, the feature simplified the roots of the conflict.

Visualizing Jabidah through Film

In the Philippines, as elsewhere, events that are scandalous and sensational, such as massacres and assassinations, are often quickly made objects of film and documentary making. The Jabidah massacre was among the exceptions.²⁶ Owning perhaps to the nature of the incident as embarrassing to the government and personally to Marcos himself, not to mention its serious national and foreign relations implications, it took more than twenty years before a movie was made on the event.

With the demise of the Marcos regime in 1986, interests in the reinvestigation of the Jabidah case were renewed. As the new government of Cory Aquino wished to avoid a diplomatic row with Malaysia, however, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs cautioned the Presidential Committee on Human Rights and the media to be careful in any reinvestigation of or reporting about the case.²⁷ Against the backdrop of this injunction a film on Jabidah was produced. Entitled simply *Jabidah Massacre*, the film was produced by Viva Films, then one of the two biggest film companies in the Philippine, and shown in 1990. Written by Daniel Martin and directed by Jerry O. Tirazona, the star-studded film featured notable names in the Philippine movie industry in the late 1980s and 1990s, including Bambol Roco, Anthony Alonzo, and Roi Vinzons.

As with many other Filipino films produced in the 1990s, at a time when producers and moviegoers did not appear to care much about quality, the film appears to have been haphazardly made—characters are underdeveloped, the story line is unclear and formulaic, the acting and musical scoring are grossly melodramatic and uninspired, the editing is less than competent, and gross distortions and inaccuracies abound. Nevertheless, the film is noteworthy for its completely different interpretation of the Jabidah massacre. This interpretation contains elements that were hinted at in a few other accounts, such as Azurin's *The Cult of Dissidence*,²⁸ but which other observers failed to pursue.

The opening scene shows a group of men meeting in a house in highland Tagaytay in the year 1967. What appears to be the leader speaks in accented American English, telling his compatriots of the Marcos government's ongoing campaign to confiscate firearms and to eradicate private armies particularly in Mindanao. The possibility of establishing peace in the region was in the air. This, according to another man speaking in a tongue-tied Filipino English, would be detrimental to their interests so he urged them to resort to "Plan B." The "leader" concurs and elaborates on what this plan will entail: to form a group that will infiltrate and sabotage Sabah so as to set the ground for a quarrel between Malaysia and the Philippines. A state of conflict, he declares, will ensure enormous economic profits for their group from weapons sales to the

26. Barely a month after the event, some Muslim leaders actually thought of making a film about the incident, although nothing ever materialized (Landicho 1968).

27. Anon. 1986c.

28. Azurin 1996.

warring parties. What follows in the film are depictions of the circumstances that led to the recruitment of the group of young men, the arrival of the trainees in Corregidor in early January 1968, and the killings on 18 March 1968.

For a film based on a historical event, many details are unclear or left out altogether. Viewers with no prior knowledge about the incident would be easily lost. One could argue that this lack of clarity is understandable given the controversial nature of the narrative. Viewed from another angle, much in the film would be suggestive to the audience. Why, for instance, is the first scene in English? This might not mean anything to a lay audience, but it may also be a rhetorical ploy to hint at American involvement in the Jabitah incident. Questions such as who was the man who spoke in American English and why the American accent, raise intriguing possibilities that those who were the chief architects behind the plan to invade Sabah had some form of training in the United States or that they had been trained by the Americans. The man appeared rich and powerful and his physical features resemble a highly Westernized Filipino. He may also be a foreigner (an American?). One wonders if the movie-makers are suggesting the involvement of the CIA or other American operatives, an idea that some accounts allude to, but which other, more popular versions have sidelined.

The cinematic license exercised by the filmmakers will infuriate those who expect at least a semblance of history in such a film. The scenes of the killings are

A member of Joint Special Operations Task Force–Philippines (below), instructs a Filipino soldier during a training exercise in early 2012. Special Operations forces and support personnel from all four branches of the U.S. military work together with the Armed Forces of the Philippines “to fight terrorism and deliver humanitarian assistance to the people of Mindanao.” Questions linger about the extent—if any—of U.S. military and/or CIA involvement in the Jabitah incident. (Credit: JSOTF–Philippines)



particularly unsettling. The film portrays the supposed massacre of innocent Muslim trainees as a fight between two armed groups—military vs. mutineers—leading to the decimation of the military men and the victory of the combined force of the Muslim–Christian trainees. And what may be disturbing for Muslim viewers are Christian trainees coming to the rescue of Muslim co-trainees, turning the tide against the military. The narrative of victimhood that dominates other versions of the Jabidah incident has been considerably toned down in this film. What pervades the film is the spirit of cooperation and brotherhood between Christians and Muslims.

Embedded in such a depiction of the Jabidah incident are ambiguous messages. On the one hand, it reflects the unsympathetic stance of the filmmaker toward the plight of the Muslims, a stance that is perhaps conditioned by centuries of Christianity-centered values formation among the large majority of the people. On the other hand, there exist an underlying aspirational message for Christian–Muslim unity and a cynical commentary on the greed of certain groups, including some in the military. The latter interpretation becomes plausible if seen against the backdrop of the film’s closing scenes. Two men who were involved in the plan to invade Sabah have this conversation, in English:

Man with American accent: “...for as long as we have the money there will always be other people willing to be used.”

Group leader: “...what about the causalities?”

Man with American accent: “Let us not talk about casualties in terms of people. In this kind of game, people are mere pawns in the game of chess. Let’s talk about governance, nations, of groups and organizations, of establishment, institution....

Group leader: “What about conscience?”

Man with American accent: “Conscience is what you feel when the heart is involved. But who needs heart in the game of chess?”

Group leader: “The heart makes a difference between man and beast.”

The man with the American accent was dumbfounded. His only response was a subtly twisted facial expression. As this scene fades, flashed in the closing frame were the two protagonists who survived the killings, a Christian and a Muslim. They were reuniting with their sweethearts. The contrast could not be starker between the heartless views of the man with the American accent in the earlier scene and the passionate and longing embrace of the two couples in the final scene.

The group leader cited above was most likely intended to be Eduardo “Abdul Latif” Martelino, a military officer who directed the training of the recruits. Martelino had converted to Islam ostensibly to marry a beautiful Muslim woman, which explains his other name, Abdul Latif. For those who know how Martelino has been depicted in the media as well as in scholarly accounts—adventurous, womanizer, unscrupulous, reckless, mercenary—the film’s depiction of him in the closing scenes as philosophical, principled, ethical, and a concerned human being was uncanny and baffling. More importantly, for a film made in 1989/1990, when antipathy toward Marcos was at its peak, the film presents a picture that is salutary, even sympathetic, toward the ousted presi-

dent. By highlighting the interests of weapons suppliers who happen to be either closely connected to military officers, or military personnel themselves dabbling in gun runnings, and by hinting at the possibility of their leader's foreign origin, the film effectively shifts the blame away from Marcos. Time and again, so the film seems to suggest, certain greedy groups used the government for their own advantage. Unfortunately, the political orientation of the filmmakers is unknown; so too are their noneconomic reasons for making the film. Overall, however, the film's biting cynicism might be construed as a critical commentary on the greed of the powerful that can only crush the hopes of the common people.

Another interpretation is of course possible. One common and dominant pattern in political and historical discourses in the Philippines that cuts across the leftist, centrist, and rightist ideological divides is the tendency either to pass the blame on to, or to exaggerate the role of, foreigners or foreign sources for the woes of the country. Scapegoats are many, including the CIA, global capitalism, communism, Russians, Chinese, Spanish, and Americans. In this way, the Filipino elites as a collective are absolved of any responsibility, or their culpability is greatly reduced, in accounting for the sorry state of the country. This film's recasting of the roots of the Jabidah incident hints at this line of reasoning.

Blogging the Jabidah

Internet blogs are clearly serving as alternative sources of information and knowledge as well as shapers of sociopolitical activism in the Philippines. A recent study by Liezel C. Longboan confirms that blogs provide the long-sought-for spaces for individual and group expressions in ways that are unprecedented in the history of the country.²⁹ Notwithstanding the appellation "the freest press in Asia," the Philippine media has actually been dominated by wealthy families whose conflicting interests influence the shape of the media landscape. The situation is made worse by news coverage that is centered narrowly on events in Metro Manila and other urban areas in the Philippines. When developments in the rural areas such as the Muslim South are mentioned at all, they are slanted toward an examination of the plausible implications of significant happenings in the periphery upon the urban center.

The coming of blogs has thus opened up new channels for the dissemination of previously inaccessible information throughout the Philippines. This was most evident in 2005 at the height of the "Glorigate" scandal. Journalists and media watchdogs exposed in their blogs President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's attempts to rig the 2004 presidential election results. A blog managed and updated daily by the Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism (PCIJ) received download requests at a level that was described as unprecedented.³⁰ A quick search in GoogleBlogs using the keyword "Jabidah" yields more than 500 results. Having analyzed all of the available blogs on the topic, we found that most

29. Longboan 2009.

30. Pabico 2005.



Protesters picket the government-run Veterans Memorial Medical Center where former Philippine president Gloria Macapagal Arroyo was under hospital arrest while awaiting arraignment on electoral fraud charges, 17 February 2012. In 2005, at the height of the “Gloriagate” scandal, journalists and media watchdogs in the Philippines played an important role in exposing in their blogs President Macapagal-Arroyo’s attempts to rig the 2004 presidential election results. (Credit: AP Photo/Bullit Marquez)

bloggers were merely parroting popularly known facts and ideas about the massacre. Jibrael Angel’s blog is different.

A graduate of the Philippine Maritime Institute and a life-long Muslim, Jibrael Angel (real name Jibrael bin Omar) was a seaman for more than three decades before his retirement a decade ago. In his first blog posting he vividly recounts tales of his travels throughout Southeast Asia and his relationships with men and women of different ethnicities and religions. He demonstrates an acute knowledge of the history of the Philippines, refashioning commonplace information in ways that are appealing to the layperson and interlacing “publicly shared” memories with his personal observations and expressions of hope. Jibrael’s blog thus serves multiple functions for both himself and his audience. As Bonnie Nardi et al. observe, the blog is simultaneously a document of Jibrael Angel’s life, a platform for social and political commentary, a catharsis, a muse, and a community forum.³¹

Jibrael’s blog article entitled “The Mindanao Conflict and the Jabidah Massacre” was posted on 23 May 2007.³² Read in the context of a period of instability, the article was evidently written in a fit of despair over the events of that time. The Philippines in the first half of 2007 was scarred by violence and beset by per-

31. Nardi et al. 2004, 43–45.

32. Jibrael bin Omar 2007. See jibrael.blogspot.com/2007/05/mindanao-conflict.html; accessed 10 February 2010. Because of the temporal nature of blogs, the authors have printed and archived hard copies of Jibrael’s postings.

petual crises. During the election campaigns in 2007, 126 voters were killed and another 148, injured. Adding to the list of election-related casualties were deaths arising from conflicts and sabotage involving militant groups in the Muslim South such as the Abu Sayyaf. The prospect of success of the ongoing peace talks with the MILF seemed to be getting dimmer even as negotiations about the proposed borders of the Bangsamoro homeland were underway.³³ As Jibrael had openly admitted in his blog, he was searching for solutions to the growing antagonism between Muslims and non-Muslims in the Philippines, between the state and the people. The Jabidah massacre provided a convenient way for him to call up memories of past events, use them to comment on current problems, and suggest a way to resolve the problems.

For Jibrael, the Jabidah massacre as a remembered event must be understood not in its own right but as part of a longer history of Muslim–Christian relations in the Philippines. He begins his rendering of this long-standing relationship with the assertion that Muslims and Christians had coexisted harmoniously for many generations despite their ethnic differences. The coming of European colonialists in the sixteenth century changed all of this. After converting a segment of the Filipino community to the Christian faith, the Spanish and later the Americans launched violent campaigns against the Muslims whose identity began to crystallize around Islam and place: Mindanao. The advent of the postcolonial state in the twentieth century brought no positive change in this state of affairs. Rather, the systematic resettling of Christians into Mindanao widened the gap between Christians and Muslims. As if this were not enough to wound the pride of the Muslims throughout the Philippines, the Sulu Sultanate, which stretched across Mindanao and North Borneo, had, Jibrael claims, to be ceded upon the establishment of Malaysia by the British and Malay elites. In 1962 the Sultan of Sulu sought the assistance of the Philippine government to recover lost territory, Sabah. Wishing to pursue the claim of Sabah, Marcos prompted a small group within the military to train a commando unit to infiltrate and sabotage Sabah in preparation for an invasion. Initially, in 1967, the guerrilla forces were based on Simunul Island near Sabah. Later they moved over a thousand kilometers away to Corregidor, in Manila Bay, when suspicions surfaced about Malay spies infiltrating into the ranks of the Special Forces.

It is at this point that Jibrael's story differs radically from other versions, including the official narratives. He blames Malaysian spies—not Filipinos—for the failure of the mission to infiltrate Sabah. These alleged spies were able to convince the Muslim trainees to cease all training and demand to be returned to Sabah. Whether Muslim recruits did in fact return to their hometowns and when the massacre occurred are not discussed in the blog posting. Jibrael seems to doubt that the Jabidah massacre actually happened. In his view, the supposed massacre is a fictional account that provided the pretext for Muslim insurgency in the South, serving as it did the interests of the MNLF and the Christian-dominated Philippine government at the expense of everyone else in

33. Hicken 2008, 78.

the Philippines. In his words: “The secret training ended in fiasco and led to an *alleged massacre*. The alleged Corregidor massacres led to the outcry of Muslim Filipinos for justice and [in] that year the seeds of another Muslim revolt were planted.”³⁴

Jibrael is not alone and is certainly not the first to have propounded the view that the Jabidah massacre is fictional. As noted above, Azurin argues that no proof exists that a massacre actually happened.³⁵ The only exception is the testimony of one trainee, Jibin Arula, who escaped on the day his Muslim friends were murdered. But Jibin’s testimony, according to Azurin, was inconsistent and contradicted statements he had made on other occasions. For Azurin, Jibin’s testimony is a weak foundation on which to make a case that a massacre took place. Like Jibrael, Azurin maintains that the Jabidah massacre was a “founding myth” invented by the MNLF’s founders and propagated by writers who subscribe to the MNLF’s memory of the event. Unlike Azurin, however, Jibrael argues that President Marcos’s decision to invade Sabah was one that would have benefited “the whole Filipino nation particularly our Muslim brothers in the south.” Instead, the attempt turned out to become the impetus for Muslim rebellion against non-Muslim rule. Jibrael ended this 23 May blog posting by linking the memory of Jabidah with the present and he poured out his hopes that his version of the Jabidah would heal old wounds. He declared:

In the past few years there is a resurgence of the armed conflict in Mindanao but the problem of Mindanao cannot be solved by military might as some in the government would like to believe. Those Muslims or Moros were also Filipinos and not foreign invaders. In our view, peace and stability would be possible only when the people, especially in the grass-roots, are deeply and completely healed of their hurts, prejudices and biases. The process will take a long time, perhaps a generation.

Viewed in its totality, Jibrael’s blog is as liberating as it is disturbing. Liberating because it casts doubt over an event that has long been regarded as iconic and symbolic. By calling the Jabidah massacre into question, Jibrael has destabilized a long-standing marker of difference between Muslims and non-Muslims in the Philippines. To remember the Jabidah massacre as fabrication, in Jibrael’s formulation, is the first, much-needed step toward dissolving the artificial ethnic lines that have divided the country. Jibrael’s blog is disconcerting for the same reason. It disturbs the narratives propounded by the MNLF to pave way for the reinterpretation of accepted events into myths. In presenting the Jabidah massacre as a product of imagination, Jibrael deliberately lends credence to the call of the reigning Christian state for the creation of a unified Filipino nation, one that would include Mindanao as an integral part of the larger Philippines. The blame thus is shifted from state to the victims—Muslims—who “should also learn to accept that their beloved island is now a shared

34. Jibrael bin Omar. 2007. The Mindanao conflict and the Jabidah massacre. *Jibrael Angel Blog*. 23 May. Available at jibrael.blogspot.com/2007/05/mindanao-conflict.html; accessed 27 February 2012.

35. Azurin 1996, 20.

land and our heritage, beliefs, and land tie us all together,” as Jibrael confidently puts it. To forget the Jabidah massacre is to realize the construction of an imagined community bounded by distinct, though ever-changing, territorial boundaries. An imagined community that will be neither Muslim nor Christian but one that is overtly Filipino.

The Novel as Memory

While the Jabidah massacre may have secured a pride of place in blogs, net forums, and web pages, the same cannot be said about novels, short stories, and other forms of fiction. A survey of novels, short stories, plays, and poetry written by Muslim and non-Muslim creative writers based in the Philippines since the 1970s shows that nothing has been written about the Jabidah massacre.³⁶

The lack of fictional writings about the Jabidah makes the book by Ricardo M. Octaviano, entitled *Sabah of the Philippines*, an important document that merits close scrutiny.³⁷ As a contentious vector of memories comparable to Jibrael’s blogspot, Octaviano’s novel provides an inventive interpretation of the circumstances that led to the naissance of Operation Merdeka, which led to the Jabidah massacre; an interpretation that subverts the logic of official histories while providing alternative anecdotes that turn “canonical historiography” on its head.³⁸ Whereas Jibrael tries to link the “myth” of the Jabidah massacre with the history of Muslim–Christian relations, Octaviano portrays Operation Merdeka as real and personal. He believes it is “real because he heard a detailed account of the planned infiltration from the retired military colonel who was responsible for the clandestine mission. It is also real because Octaviano himself was the psychiatrist with whom some high-ranking military officers involved in Jabidah shared information. Octaviano raises his portrayal of the Jabidah event to the level of historical fact rather than myth by coloring his narrative with stories about the ambitions of a few men who saw the regaining of Sabah as an act of bravery and a chance for self-aggrandizement. He claims his motive in writing his book was an altruistic desire to share his memories and those of persons he knew in order to educate posterity.

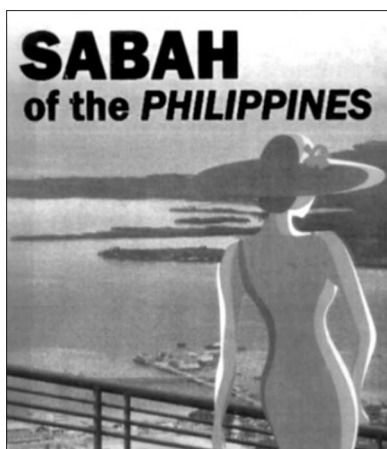
Finally, there is the wider historical dimension to Octaviano’s unique interpretation of the Jabidah event. *Sabah of the Philippines* is clearly a historical novel written in a realist mode. Borrowing Petrolino Bn Daroy’s observation on realism in Philippine novels, the book assimilates “history into the texture of the narrative rather than allow[ing] it to remain a passive backdrop.”³⁹ The author goes to great lengths to ground his narrative in a specific historical time, interweaving lucid descriptions of actual places with references to real persons and events. As Octaviano sees it, the struggle to reclaim Sabah was borne more out of contemporaneous geopolitical exigencies and less from the fact that the is-

36. In an edited collection of short stories written by Filipino Muslims (Barry 2008), for example, none are concerned with the Jabidah massacre.

37. Octaviano 2004.

38. Pison 2005, 16.

39. Daroy 1969, 257–58.



In his historical novel *Sabah of the Philippines* author Ricardo M. Octaviano goes to great lengths to ground his narrative in a specific historical time, interweaving lucid descriptions of actual places with references to real persons and events. As Octaviano sees it, the struggle to reclaim Sabah was borne more out of contemporaneous geopolitical exigencies and less from the fact that the island was once a part of the long historical legacy of the Sulu Sultanate.

land was once a part of the long historical legacy of the Sulu Sultanate. From this vantage point, Octaviano proceeds to tell the story of two retirees from the Armed Forces of the Philippines. “One showed how he tried to reclaim the eastern Malaysian state known as North Borneo, locally called Sabah. The other is an associate and an accomplice.”⁴⁰ Nearly half of the book is dedicated to the intimate details on how Colonel Andy Andaya (real name Alvaro S. Andaya) and General Pacelo Asepero (real name Angelo Quedding) rose to the higher ranks of the military.

Operation Merdeka emerges midway through the book as a climactic moment in the lives of the two men—one with implications for the Philippines as a whole. The reader is kept in the dark about its origins except to be told that unnamed military planners were drawing up the outlines of the operation and handing over command to the 42-year-old Colonel Andaya. Like an action thriller, the plot then moves quickly into the deployment of a Muslim Army Ranger, Racid Ammand, to an intelligence-gathering mission in Sabah at the height of the Indonesia–Malaysia confrontation in the early 1960s. We are then told that twenty-four forest rangers, forty-four female teachers, and ten Army Scout Ranger Teams were already based in Sabah to ensure the smooth running of the operation. Although Racid risked his life to gather this information, the conduct of the whole operation convinced him that the Philippine government never seriously planned to retake Sabah by military force. The plot then shifts to Colonel Andaya’s efforts to ensure that Operation Merdeka was executed according to his plans. In his own capacity, he recruited 200 young Muslims and devised an ambitious plan to retake Sabah. The recruits were maltreated, however, and this led to defections from the ranks. Octaviano tells of one recruit who managed to escape and was later brought to a station hospital. Although his name is never mentioned, that person must be Jibin Arula.

The novelist reaches the height of his creative powers from this point onwards. Memories of the Jabidah are recreated through congressional hearings

40. Octaviano 2004, 6.

and commentaries that Octaviano culled from leading newspapers and other published accounts. The voices of army generals, statesmen, journalists, and radio broadcasters are interspersed throughout the novel's pages.⁴¹ During one congressional enquiry into the incident in 1968, questions were asked about the involvement of state politicians in the scheme to invade Sabah, about how young Muslim men were recruiting into the Special Forces, and on casualty rates connected to Operation Merdeka. Interestingly, Octaviano makes a direct reference to twenty-men being killed in action, but their deaths are depicted as part of the tough and dangerous training that Army Rangers had to undergo.⁴² The impression Octaviano gives is that it was the dissenting voices in society and politics that catapulted the Jabidah incident from an ordinary occurrence in the armed services to historical infamy. The main target of public vilification at that time was President Marcos. In tarnishing the image of an enlightened leader of the nation with allegations about the killing of Muslims servicemen, the press, politicians, and civil society activists had changed the course of Filipino history. He writes:

"Jabida! Jabida! *Jab Right! Jab left!*" was the writings on the wall.... The pen was more potent, more powerful than the elite Special Forces. But the pen was not used properly; news reports were mostly opinionated and not constructive either. The news barrage unrelenting, the press releases so intense; it became a conflagration. There was a pandemonium. And all hell broke loose!⁴³

The novel moves forward in time into the 1980s with Colonel Andaya reminiscing about a failed mission that cost him an illustrious military career. Had Operation Jabidah been successful and had Marcos stayed in power, Sabah would now be part of the Philippines. Had the minor glitch in the training of Muslims for the taking over of Sabah not leaked to the press and to political opportunists, the rebellions in Mindanao would not have happened. But Octaviano expresses a reservation about the colonel's memories and conjectures. His voice enters the text to close the story of Jabidah in an almost didactic fashion, as if to inform the reader that although all memories of the Jabidah are problematic, his fictionalized version of the event is to be regarded as closest to reality:

And from there, I also took over Andy's story; thinking deeply, trying hard to analyze why Operation Jabida came about. I could not fully comprehend how Operation Jabida—if it was a success—could have ended the nagging insurgencies and rebellions in the Philippines, pervading up to the present. Particularly how Operation Jabida relates to the present Muslim rebellions in Mindanao.

41. There are far too many newspaper articles and congressional proceedings to be cited in full here. Useful samples from this wide collection would be "Camp Massacres Bared," *Manila Times*, 19 March 1968; "President Marcos and His Military," *Manila Chronicle*, 30 March 1968; "Operation Might? Jabidah? Merdeka?" *Philippine Free Press*, 6 April 1968.

42. Octaviano 2004, 209.

43. *Ibid.*, 216.

Militant youth outside Western Mindanao State University in Zamboanga commemorate the 43rd anniversary of the Jabidah massacre, 18 March 2011. "This massacre is one of the darkest parts of our history and, until now, justice has not yet been served," said Anakbayan Zamboanga City spokesperson Mark Valdez. (Credit: arkibongbayan.org)



And....?

You know now, why I could write the realities of partisan conflicts, discords and dissensions, and all the events and facts of a top secret Army operation—hatched, contrived and plotted in the early 1980's [sic] and never declassified up to this day. It was just thrown into the dustbin of history and let go from memory. I gathered and learned it partly from Andy, his friends and close associates...and by the mere fiction of the mind, I penned it in literary style.⁴⁴

Given its rich and provocative rendition of a landmark event in Filipino history, one might expect that *Sabah of the Philippines* would have been given the attention Octaviano desired. This was not to be, however. Interest in Filipino novels in English is limited in part due to the weak distribution of small-run publications such as Octaviano's. That said, the importance of the novel does not rest on its wide readership or its popularity, but on its ability to interweave the recording of the personal conflicts of its protagonists with the "larger problems plaguing the nation."⁴⁵ As part of a long-standing genre of realist fiction dating back to Jose Rizal's *Noli Me Tangere*, Octaviano's novel illuminated, manipulated, and appended suppressed memories of the Jabidah massacre with relatively unknown facts about the incident. In doing so, he skillfully employed the medium of the novel as not only a work of literature and art but as an intervention into the memory of massacre that remains unsettled after many decades. That intervention is to be found in his portrayal of the Jabidah as a failed project of a few influential men and the handiwork of irresponsible media and perfidious politicians.

44. Ibid., 224.

45. Hidalgo-Pantoja 2000, 334.

Conclusion

This article illustrates the different modes by which groups and individuals remember the Jabidah incident. It offers possible explanations for the contrasting tenor of these memories, sometimes reinforcing, other times challenging, or simply ignoring “official histories.” It illustrates, moreover, the fluidity of memory as it reflects and to an extent shapes changing sociopolitical contexts. Of equal importance, it explores the role of various media as vectors of memory in conveying, shaping, and recasting memory.

We have utilized the notion of “contentious vectors of memory” to underline the complexity of the process of “mediating.” One aspect of this process involves the transfer of messages from various vectors of memories to audiences. The blogger, filmmakers, newscasters, and novelist who have figured in our analysis may have had this particular message for specific audiences in mind when they embarked on their respective projects. Another aspect pertains to vectors of memory that serve as platforms upon which competing messages can take on a life of their own. That is to say, the vectors of memories and the audience interrelate to produce new forms of remembering and forgetting about a particular historical episode. Admittedly, this is beyond the scope of this article, but this is worth pursuing in future research.

Still another aspect approximates the famous claim by Marshall McLuhan that the “medium is the message.”⁴⁶ The memories of Jabidah carried through blogs, for instance, given as they are to the immediacy and temporariness of cyber-technics, may be received differently than those delivered through the novel, even if the contours of the message are largely similar. This is yet another aspect that deserves to be pursued more seriously in a future undertaking.

Finally, the performative aspect of mediating process should also be underscored. As mediating mechanism, the various vectors of memories not only convey, or recreate, or influence the message, they also “perform” it, gradually and subtly encoding the message in the thoughts and behavior of the people. The notion of “mediatized conflict,”⁴⁷ which Jabidah seems to exemplify, aptly captures the performative function of the vectors of memories such as news media. That is, by reporting about Jabidah—regardless of whether the reportage is biased or not—the media re-enacts, re-lives, and re-activates at the same time the memories of the tragedy, inadvertently contributing to the perpetuation of a state of conflict. This is evident in the protests, demonstrations, and rebellions launched in the name of the Jabidah massacre.

46. McLuhan 1964.

47. Cottle 2006.

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