

**Sustaining Sulu People's Identity of Power, History, and Culture  
Through Their Visual Arts**

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This paper deals with power, history, culture, and identity of the people of Sulu, primarily the Tausug, as suggested or expressed through their visual arts. An overview of Sulu's history of power is narrated to provide the historical context for the definition of Sulu people's identity and analysis or discussion of representative art samples such as *ukkil* (curvilinear) aesthetics and military artifacts, among others. Part of the discussion of the historical and cultural contexts critically comments on prevailing Philippine historical writings. The discussion also makes reference to some theoretical or conceptual frameworks such as culture, history, and "representation." Towards the end, the role of arts and culture in sustaining a people's identity is highlighted as a positive force in serving the interests of Mindanao peace and helping sustain a cultural diversity in a globalized setting.

**OUTLINE**

**INTRODUCTION AND SOME  
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORKS**

- Culture as Power
- What is History, and For Whom?
- The Two Streams of Philippine Historical Development
- Representation as a Problem

**SULU PEOPLE'S IDENTITY**

- What Have Some Scholars Written about Sulu and Its People
- Summing Up Sulu People's Identity
- "People of the Current" or "People of the Path of Knowledge"?

**OVERVIEW OF SULU PEOPLE'S  
HISTORY**

- History of Power and Sovereignty
- International Trade and Commercial Power
- Military Power and Anti-Colonial Struggle

**EXPRESSIONS OF SULUPEOPLE'S  
IDENTITY IN THEIR VISUAL ARTS**

- Ukkil and the Sulu people's aesthetic sense
- Sulu arts showing links with Southeast Asia (e.g., *naga*, *sunduk*, *pis siyabit*, *luhul*, *mamaan*, etc.)
- Sulu Arts as influenced or conditioned by Islam (*ukkil* and other abstract compositions, the square format, *jawi* calligraphy, *burraq*, *masjid* and *langgal*, *pis siyulatan*, *boras*, etc.)
- Sulu military artifacts (*taming baran* or body armor, *lantaka* or *layla*, *kalis*, *barung*, *taming* and *budjak*).

**SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION:  
SUSTAINING SULU PEOPLE'S IDENTITY  
THROUGH THEIR CULTURE AND ARTS**