

From white man's country to Filipino settler colony: Reexamining the mindanao settlement in the first half of the 20th century

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Abstrak

The Mindanao settlement of the early twentieth century was dogged by an unresolved issue: the number of Christians lured there by a state-sponsored resettlement program, which undermined privately led migration on public lands. This paper, on the development of the Homeseekers Program (1918–39), explores how the formation of a Christian Filipino settler colony in Cotabato, Mindanao, was intertwined with its self-governing capacity, demonstrated by settlers and the local government. Settler colonialism is the research framework for situating this overlooked element within the colonial pattern stemming from a fluid, multifaceted political situation. During the early American colonial period, Christians moved to Mindanao and built homes for themselves. Among them were agriculturists and educated young professionals who worked as teachers and government officials. Their arrival, essential for establishing colonial governance through public order, infrastructure building, and public health and education systems, contributed greatly to creating a settler colonial space independent from the central government and detrimental to indigenous people. Given the disorganized nature of the settlement process, however, land grabbing and squatting on public lands were common in the 1930s. This analysis demonstrates that the Christian settler colony materialized as a logical outcome of Filipino settler colonialism, leading to subtle, solid colonial governance.