

Pasuguan ng Pilipinas
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The Pilipinas Muna Collection of Papers is a first-ever multifaceted representation of Philippine studies in Russia. It is an offshoot of the Philippine Studies Conference of the same title, which was held in St. Petersburg, Russian Federation on 14-15 September 2009. Organized by the Peter the Great Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography (Kunstkamera) of the Russian Academy of Sciences, in cooperation with the Philippine Embassy in Moscow and the Philippine Honorary Consulate General in St. Petersburg, the success of this conference led to the compilation of the papers and its eventual transformation into a publication that puts Russia on the map as one of the poles of research on the Philippines.

Pilipinas Muna or “The Philippines is a Priority” gathers the writings of the best and brightest experts in such fields as folklore, literature, history, linguistics, anthropology, ethnology, ethno-linguistics and art related to the Philippines, a country of more than 92 million people who are spread out over 7,101 islands and belong to more than 150 linguistic or ethnological groups.

During the half-century period of American colonization, Philippine studies outside the country became extensive through the pioneering work of such scholars as Henry Otley Beyer. Unfortunately, the promise of that early success did not blossom and extend as hoped in the latter half of the century for most of the academic world outside

the Philippines. Thus, despite its rich cultural, ethnological, linguistic and anthropological heritage, the Philippines has not enjoyed the attention of scholars or generated resources from institutions that it deserves.

One of the exceptions, however, is Russia. Long before Manila established diplomatic relations with Moscow in 1976, academicians, scientists and researchers throughout the Soviet Union had already begun building a body of research that sustains itself to this very day. The seeds for Philippine studies had been planted way back in the early 19th century, just around the time of the first visits to the Philippines during overseas voyages of Russian ships, and an attempt to establish the first Russian consular mission in Manila. Peter Dobell, an Ireland-born trader with joint US-Russian citizenship was authorized by the Imperial Court of St. Petersburg to open a consulate-general in the Philippines, but the attempt was blocked by the Spanish Crown in Madrid.

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia has kept up efforts to establish itself firmly as one of the poles of research on the Philippines outside of the Philippines itself. It is worth mentioning that both the Moscow Lomonosov State University and the St. Petersburg State University maintain undergraduate and post-graduate programs devoted to the study of the Philippines.

And now, with the publication of this book, the colorful collage of knowledge accumulated as a result of these efforts is put together in one significant collection of papers.

My warmest congratulations and appreciation go to Dr. Maria V. Stanyukovich, Chair of Kunstkamera's Department of Australia, Oceania and Indonesia, and all the writers who have painstakingly contributed to *Pilipinas Muna*. Thanks to Dr. Stanyukovich's patient lobbying, this academic endeavor was able to generate the interest and support of prestigious scholars, thus helping to raise Philippines studies to a higher position in the global academic firmament. Her efforts were ably backed up by the institutional support given by Director Yuri Chistov of Kunstkamera, to whom we owe our gratitude too. Dr. Stanyukovich is the foremost expert on Philippine anthropology and epics, including the *Hudhud*. Indeed, without her, the diverse group of scholars would not be able to put in the results of their work.

I would like to pay due respect to the founder and Chair of the Philippine Philology Department of the Asian and African Faculty of the St. Petersburg State University, Dr. Gennadiy E. Rachkov, a distinguished Russian linguist famed for his advanced studies in Tagalog and Korean grammar. His monograph on the morphology of Tagalog (1981) and his comprehensive big Tagalog-Russian dictionary (in print) are two marking points in the Tagalog language studies in Russia.

Finally, four professors from the University of the Philippines, namely, Wytan de la Peña, Ma. Crisanta N. Flores, Amparo Adelina C. Umali III and Ricardo Jose, deserve mention for their efforts to guarantee crucial Philippine involvement in this important pioneering academic enterprise.

Mabuhay!




H.E. VICTOR G. GARCIA III
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of the Republic of the Philippines
to the Russian Federation