

philippine studies

Ateneo de Manila University • Loyola Heights, Quezon City • 1108 Philippines

The Agusan Image

W. J. Van der Meulen

Philippine Studies vol. 12, no. 2 (1964): 347–348

Copyright © Ateneo de Manila University

Philippine Studies is published by the Ateneo de Manila University. Contents may not be copied or sent via email or other means to multiple sites and posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's written permission. Users may download and print articles for individual, noncommercial use only. However, unless prior permission has been obtained, you may not download an entire issue of a journal, or download multiple copies of articles.

Please contact the publisher for any further use of this work at philstudies@admu.edu.ph.

to a marked degree. The Demócratas died because there was never enough patronage for its stalwarts. But there is far more accuracy in the contention that the Democratas destroyed themselves.

MICHAEL PAUL ONORATO

The Agusan Image

A few annotations to Dr. Juan R. Francisco's article on the Golden Image of Agusan (*Philippine Studies* 11/3 (July, 1963), 390-400) may be of some use.

The communication of Dr. F. D. K. Bosch concerning this image may be found in *Oudheidkundige Dienst in Nederlandsch-Indie* (Oudheidkundig Verslag, 1920), pp. 101-102. He contends that "Hindu-Javanese stylistic influence can be readily recognized. The similarity with the bronzes of Ngandjuk is specially striking. The high, steeple-like *makuta* with rosettes on the forehead fillet, the bracelets ornamented with four-leaved flowers, the female cord... and finally the face with the long Greek nose recall vividly the Ngandjuk images. Only, the Philippine statuette is of a much coarser workmanship and more primitive finish. For that reason it cannot well be ascribed to a Javanese artisan. It is more probably a case of stylistic influence and imitation." He says further that it is impossible to identify this female deity with certainty. She may be Saiva, but is more probably Buddhist, because sivaite bronze or gold images are quite rare, and as a rule are standing, not sitting.

We may add that the statuettes of the Nganjuk collection, which indeed show striking similarities, are undoubtedly Buddhist, but of a very popular and syncretic (bodhisatva) character. For this reason they are difficult to identify, even though they are provided with attributes (see N. J. Krom, "De bronsvondst van Ngandjoek" in *Rapporten van den Oudheidkundigen Dienst in Nederlandsch-Indie* (1913), pp. 59-72, and the accompanying photographs). The *mudra* (gesture) shown in the Agusan image is partly (for the left hand only) found in some male representations (nos. 29-33 of the photographs of Krom). Krom relates these, with much hesitation, to figures of Vairasattva and Virupaksa. The females in the collection are of a similar haziness (nos. 21-23, 37, 38). No. 22 may be a *devi dupa* (incense), the next a *devi dipa* (lamp), known also in India, and no. 37 is probably the Buddhist Sarasvati, the female consort of Manjusri.

My own suggestion would be that for an understanding of images of this kind it is not sufficient to study Buddhist iconography; we have to take into account the local indigenous iconographic tradition also.

W. J. VAN DER MEULEN