



THE LAST DANCE OF THE YAKAN WEAVERS

by: MICHEL VINCENT SOTTO CALANTAS

In the heart of Zamboanga City, where Spanish colonial walls embrace the sea and the scent of curacha fills the air, there lived an old woman named Lola Minda—a Yakan master weaver whose hands bore the calluses of a hundred sunsets.

Her house stood quietly in the barangay of Upper Calarian, tucked beneath the shade of ancient molave trees. Its walls were lined with vibrant tennun cloth—geometric tapestries of crimson, gold, and emerald—that whispered tales of a people resilient and proud. The floor creaked with stories, and the air inside smelled of pandan tea, worn wood, and time.

Lola Minda had outlived her husband, her children, and most of her students. But every morning, she sat on her wooden loom and wove. Her eyes were clouded, but her fingers remembered—the patterns, the stories, the rhythm of ancestry pulsing through every thread.

"You must finish this one," she told her granddaughter Amira one humid morning, gesturing to a half-done cloth. "The saputangan must be ready for the Regatta de Zamboanga. We cannot lose our place in the dance of cultures."

Amira, fresh from university and clothed in denim and dreams of Manila, hesitated. "Lola, nobody wears these anymore. They're for tourists. They buy them cheap and hang them like curtains."

Lola Minda chuckled, the sound a blend of wisdom and weariness. "No, hija. These are not just cloth. They are prayers. Look closer."

Amira leaned in.

Editorial Team

Editor-in-Chief: Alvin B. Punongbayan

Associate Editor: Andro M. Bautista

Managing Editor: Raymart O. Basco

Web Editor: Nikko C. Panotes

Manuscript Editors / Reviewers:

Chin Wen Cong, Christopher DC. Francisco, Camille P. Alicaway, Pinky Jane A. Perez,
Mary Jane B. Custodio, Irene H. Andino, Mark-Jhon R. Prestoza, Ma. Rhoda E. Panganiban, Rjay C. Calaguas,
Mario A. Cudiamat, Jesson L. Hero, Albert Bulawat, Cris T. Zita, Allan M. Manaloto, Jerico N. Mendoza



"This," Lola traced a green diamond, "is the rice field your great-grandfather plowed. This yellow zigzag? The river we swam in. This red? Blood spilled when our people fought for our land. We weave what we remember."

That afternoon, news echoed through the city—Hermosa Festival would return in full splendor after years of silence. The streets would bloom with vintas, the seas dotted with sails of every hue. There would be music from the kulintangan, the pounding rhythm of tambol, and the graceful sway of pangalay dancers.

Inspired, Amira took up the shuttle. Her fingers fumbled at first, unused to the tight rhythm, the delicate pull. But as the sun dipped into the Sulu Sea, painting the sky in mango and fire, she began to find the music beneath her skin.

For the first time, she did not resist.

The day of the Regatta arrived like a promise. Zamboanga City was a kaleidoscope—Chavacano serenades echoed from the Plaza Pershing, Tausug elders walked proud in their badju, and Sama-Banguingui children ran barefoot with laughter, their mothers shouting lovingly in a blend of dialects that felt like home.

By the shore, vintas danced with the tide—each sail a story, each wave a witness. Amira stood among them, wrapped in the saputangan she had finished with her Lola. Tourists took photos. Locals nodded in silent approval.

Then came the parade.

One by one, tribes danced to the rhythm of legacy—Yakan, Tausug, Subanen, Sama, Maranao. Their movements were prayers. Their garments, scripture.

Editorial Team

Editor-in-Chief: Alvin B. Punongbayan

Associate Editor: Andro M. Bautista

Managing Editor: Raymart O. Basco

Web Editor: Nikko C. Panotes

Manuscript Editors / Reviewers:

Chin Wen Cong, Christopher DC. Francisco, Camille P. Alicaway, Pinky Jane A. Perez,
Mary Jane B. Custodio, Irene H. Andino, Mark-Jhon R. Prestoza, Ma. Rhoda E. Panganiban, Rjay C. Calaguas,
Mario A. Cudiamat, Jesson L. Hero, Albert Bulawat, Cris T. Zita, Allan M. Manaloto, Jerico N. Mendoza



And at the center of it all sat Lola Minda, frail in her wheelchair, but radiant. The Mayor had asked her to lead the final procession.

When the kulintangan struck its final note, she raised her hand.

The people paused.

With tears in her eyes, Lola Minda whispered, "Maga hija y hijo del Zamboanga—sigui ustedes con el danza de nuestra cultura." Continue the dance.

As the sun dipped behind the crimson sails of the vintas, Amira danced.

Not just for her Lola.

Not for the festival.

But for the memory of a people who wove their stories into cloth, who sang in many tongues, and whose hearts beat to the rhythm of the South.

Zamboanga.

The City of Flowers.

La Bella.

Always blooming.

Forever dancing.

Editorial Team

Editor-in-Chief: Alvin B. Punongbayan

Associate Editor: Andro M. Bautista

Managing Editor: Raymart O. Basco

Web Editor: Nikko C. Panotes

Manuscript Editors / Reviewers:

Chin Wen Cong, Christopher DC. Francisco, Camille P. Alicaway, Pinky Jane A. Perez,
Mary Jane B. Custodio, Irene H. Andino, Mark-Jhon R. Prestoza, Ma. Rhoda E. Panganiban, Rjay C. Calaguas,
Mario A. Cudiamat, Jesson L. Hero, Albert Bulawat, Cris T. Zita, Allan M. Manaloto, Jerico N. Mendoza

INSTABRIGHT e-GAZETTE

ISSN: 2704-3010

Volume VII, Issue I

August 2025

Available online at <https://www.instabrightgazette.com>



—For the Yakan weavers, the sea-bearing Sama, the proud Tausug, and the soul of Zamboanga.



Editorial Team

Editor-in-Chief: Alvin B. Punongbayan

Associate Editor: Andro M. Bautista

Managing Editor: Raymart O. Basco

Web Editor: Nikko C. Panotes

Manuscript Editors / Reviewers:

Chin Wen Cong, Christopher DC. Francisco, Camille P. Alicaway, Pinky Jane A. Perez,
Mary Jane B. Custodio, Irene H. Andino, Mark-Jhon R. Prestoza, Ma. Rhoda E. Panganiban, Rjay C. Calaguas,
Mario A. Cudiamat, Jesson L. Hero, Albert Bulawat, Cris T. Zita, Allan M. Manaloto, Jerico N. Mendoza
