



## Origins of the name Sulu Garden

I am often asked why I named this place Sulu Garden. Always, I had a ready answer that I named it after the Sulu Sea. The town of Miagao is one of many coastal towns along the Panay Gulf, which is part of the inland sea called Sulu. That answer made sense even now for most of our curious guests.

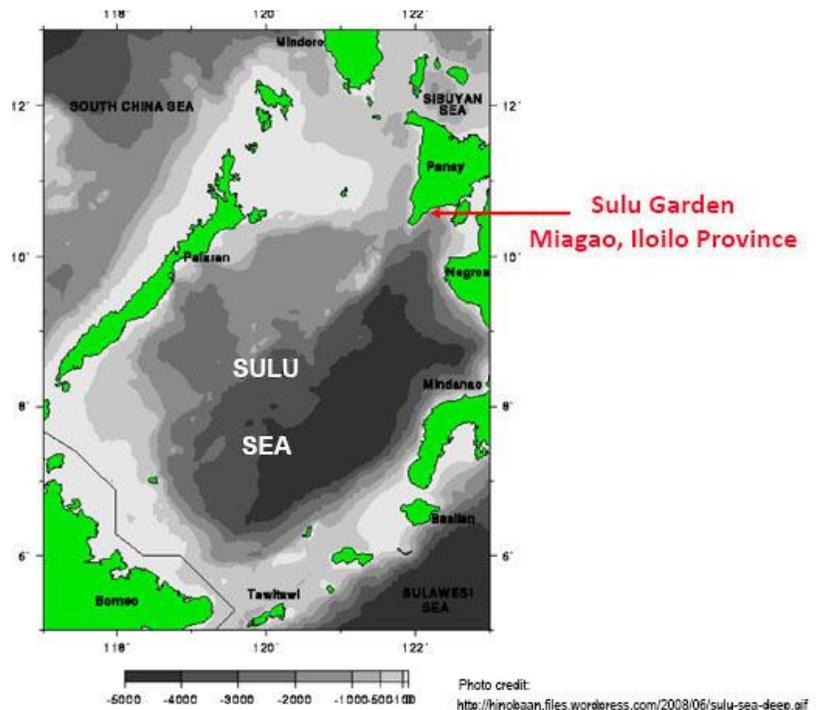
That was not entirely true. Today, a visitor (Tito Ilagan) made the first ever correct answer that this garden restaurant was named after Lt. Sulu of the Starship USS Enterprise from the television and movie series called Star Trek.

Yes, boys and girls, I am a Trekkie.

Star Trek, which began in 1966 and ended in 1969, was an hour long science fiction series broadcasted on television. The story line was about Captain Kirk and the crew of the Starship USS Enterprise with the scientific mission to travel the galaxies in search of new life forms. I did not see the original TV show because I was then a young boy living in Imus, Cavite. At that time, we were the first to have television in the neighborhood and only had two local channels. It was not until I came to New York in 1973 as a political 'refugee' after then President Ferdinand Marcos declared martial law that I came to watch Star Trek for the first time when it appeared on evening re-runs. It was popular for many reasons, but perhaps because the series appeared on television at a time when the United States was at the height of the space race and the Apollo Moon Missions.

Also during that period, I was also an avid reader of Isaac Asimov's science fiction novels. I suppose the two forms of entertainment kindled an intense fascination with science fiction. Even more fascinating as I grew older was to see that the futuristic gadgets of Star Trek, especially the mobile phones, hand-held diagnostic devices and computers are common place now. The concepts of teleportation of objects from one place to the next and Klingon cloaking devices have recently been demonstrated to be scientifically possible.

The boyhood fantasy of being an astronaut never came to be, but I have always been a fan of space travel and always privately been a Trekkie.



I saw the property beside Sapa Creek in 1997 while I was in Miagao (1995-1999). It was a swampy, humid, dark, foreboding, haunted old property with a dilapidated bakery building beside a creek with a moss covered old bridge, forested by bananas and talisay trees. Strangely enough, I liked the place.

When my wife asked what I wish to call the place, I instinctively said Sulu.



*Lt. Sulu played by George Takei in 1966 and John Cho in 2009.*

The TV Series, Star Trek, was a landmark period in American television. You can read more about why in the links below. At the time, it was a landmark for me because for the first time there actually was an Asian character on TV. The 1970's was a time of Affirmative Action after the rallies against segregation of African Americans. Star Trek was the first TV show that had an Asian and a black woman (Lt. Uhuru) on the screen as major permanent characters, along with aliens including Lt. Spock. Hard to believe that even the simple mixing of the races on television was a major event back in the in the 60's and 70's America.

Lt. Hikaru Sulu was the helmsman of the starship USS Enterprise and was played by a Japanese-American Actor named George Takei. Decades later, George Takei replayed the same character in the Hollywood movie version of the Star Trek television series. George Takei, at age 77, is still very much alive as a director, stage actor and among the most famous personalities on Facebook today. The 2009 movie version was played by a Korean-American actor named John Cho. Maybe the future movies will be played by a Filipino-American.

You never know!

Between 1997 and 1999, Sulu Garden was a Filipino seafood restaurant. The garden was still a forest of banana trees interspersed with seawater and freshwater ponds, tables and bars. The reincarnation of Sulu Garden started in 2012 when I returned to Miagao, after a 13 year absence. It was transformed into what I had originally intended it to be: an arts and nature center with a Japanese garden setting and Japanese food.

The transformation continues till this date and it's about time for Lt. Sulu to come for a visit.

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*George Takei*



Links:

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George\\_Takei](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Takei)

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Star\\_Trek](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Star_Trek)

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isaac\\_Asimov](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isaac_Asimov)

<http://www.livescience.com/33482-star-trek-popular.html>