

MUHAMMAD ALIMUDDIN I OF SULU: THE EARLY YEARS

H. DE LA COSTA, S.J.

THE MOST EXTENSIVE AND DETAILED ACCOUNT OF THE REIGN OF Sultan Muhammad Alimuddin I (1735-1773) so far published is that in Najeeb M. Saleeby's *History of Sulu* (Manila: Bureau of Printing, 1908). The recent reissue of this work by the *Filipiniana Book Guild* (Manila, 1963) makes it unnecessary to rehearse the information it contains. However, the present writer has come across data in sources which were not available to Saleeby, and it thus becomes possible to supplement his account and in certain places to correct it. Such is the purpose of these notes.

Saleeby omits to mention that Alimuddin succeeded to the sultanate in 1735.¹ He does say that Alimuddin's immediate predecessor was his brother Nasaruddin.² Ovando, however, suggests that Alimuddin's father was still alive in 1735, and indeed was principally responsible for his succeeding Nasaruddin.³ Ovando further states that before his accession Alimuddin had spent some time with an Arab community in Batavia and that it was there that he acquired command of both the Arabic and Malay languages. He also made such progress in Islamic studies that he won recognition there as a *pandita*.⁴

Soon after he became sultan, Alimuddin sent envoys to Zamboanga to negotiate a peace with the Spaniards. As is well known, the fort and naval station of Zamboanga, founded in 1634, was abandoned in 1662, when Governor Manrique de Lara recalled all the Spanish garrisons in Mindanao and the Moluccas in order to defend Manila against a threatened attack by the Chinese warlord Koxinga. The attack never materialized, but the southern garrisons were not restored for some time, and Zamboanga in particular was not reoccupied until 1718. Its restoration led to several sharp encounters between the Spanish forces and the Sulus;

¹ Francisco José de Ovando y Solís, Marquis of Ovando, governor of the Philippines from 1750 to 1754, in his printed manifesto accusing Alimuddin of treason, Manila, 21 December 1751 (unpaginated, 34 numbered sections), n. 5. Hereafter cited as *Manifesto*.

² *History of Sulu*, p. 68. References are to the Filipiniana Book Guild edition.

³ This was Badaruddin I, whom Ovando calls Maulana Diaasar Sadicsa. "Para llevar al cabo sus designios y perficionar sus ideas," Ovando says of him, "tomó por selecto instrumento a su hijo Mahamad Alimudin . . . Hizole para eso rey no solo de Joló sino de Dongon y Tavi-tavi el año de 1735" (*Manifesto*, n. 5).

⁴ *Ibid.*

and a treaty of peace arranged in 1725 through the good offices of Ki Kuan, a Chinese, did not succeed in putting an end to hostilities. On the contrary, they reached such a pitch of bitterness that Governor Sarmiento Valladares of Zamboanga not only rejected Alimuddin's overtures but put his envoys to death. If we did not have the explicit testimony of Ovando himself, it would be difficult to believe that a Spanish officer would be capable of such an act, so contrary to the usage even of barbarous nations.⁵

Nevertheless Alimuddin persisted in his efforts to arrive at a peace settlement. In 1737 he sent an embassy directly to the central government at Manila, where it was favorably received. Governor Valdés Tamón proposed a draft treaty of five articles to the Sulu ambassadors, Datu Muhammad Ismael and Datu Ja'far. On 1 February the latter, who had come, apparently, with plenipotentiary powers from the sultan and his council, accepted it and swore to its observance.

By this treaty the two high contracting parties expressed their firm intention to keep a permanent peace and settle their future differences amicably. Each would come to the aid of the other if attacked, but exception was made in the case of an attack on Sulu by a European power, the Manila government alleging that it had no independent authority to declare war on European powers. However, it engaged itself to preserve strict neutrality if such a contingency should occur.⁶

This treaty was ratified by Philip V of Spain on 9 June 1742.⁷ Incidentally, it is important to note in view of later developments that it was a treaty strictly so called, that is, one between two sovereign and independent states, each recognized as such by the other. That same year Alimuddin paid a state visit to Zamboanga and was well received by Governor Zacarías, the successor of Sarmiento Valladares. Alimuddin informed Zacarías that a certain Datu Sabdula was conspiring to dispossess him of his throne, and asked for assistance in putting down the conspiracy, invoking the Treaty of 1737. Zacarías at once recalled the Zamboanga naval squadron, at that time engaged in operations on the Magindanao coast, and sent it with troops to escort Alimuddin back to Jolo. As a result, the conspiracy collapsed and Alimuddin was able to re-enter his capital without encountering any resistance.⁸

⁵ *Ibid.*, n. 7.

⁶ Spanish text in Patricio de la Escosura, *Memoria sobre Filipinas y Joló* (Madrid: Manuel G. Hernández, 1882), pp. 415-419; summary in Saleeby, *History of Sulu*, pp. 69-70.

⁷ Philip V to Alimuddin I, Buen Retiro, 12 July 1744, in *Guerras piráticas de Filipinas*, Vicente Barrantes, ed. (Madrid: Manuel G. Hernández, 1878), p. 322.

⁸ Ovando, *Manifiesto*, n. 8.

Two years later Alimuddin returned the favor by joining the Spaniards in a punitive expedition against the Orang Tedong of the North Borneo coast and offshore islands. This non-Muslim people, the Tirones or Camucones of the Spanish accounts, made frequent piratical and slaving raids on the Visayan islands, and were noted for their cruelty to their captives. Because they interfered with the raids organized by the Sulus, these had no more reason to love them than the Spaniards did. Hence Alimuddin was able to collect a formidable force of 8,000 men for this expedition, and they threw themselves into it with such enthusiasm that they left the Orang Tedong, in the words of our Jesuit source, "completely cowed."⁹

It would seem that from the very first years of his reign Alimuddin made it his object to strengthen his government against the turbulent and unruly aristocracy of Sulu. Saleeby notes, for instance,¹⁰ that he began to organize an army and navy under his immediate control, a move that would have made him independent of the feudal levies upon which his predecessors had been compelled to rely. He coined money, evidently seeking by this means to establish a uniform currency under state supervision. He began the codification of the laws of Sulu, Koranic as well as customary. He tried to regulate worship. His anxiety to make peace with the Spaniards probably sprang from a realization that he needed time to make these reforms effective. On the other hand, Sabdula's conspiracy may have been a manifestation of the aristocracy's reaction to such centralizing reforms.

Another clue to the quality of Alimuddin's statesmanship is the fact that he dispatched a "tribute mission" to China which arrived at the imperial court in 1744. According to the official Chinese records,

the King of Sulu sent messengers with . . . articles of tribute. The King requested that the inhabitants of his kingdom might be enrolled as part of the population of China. The proposition was submitted to the Board [of Imperial Ministers], who remarked that the barren isles and waste places of the barbarians were turning towards the civilization of China. As for this kingdom, its territory and people were already within the generous influence of the sacred Son of Heaven and there was no need to send the registers of population.¹¹

⁹ Josef Wilhelm, Jesuit missionary in Zamboanga, to his brother Johann, 18 May 1747, Archives of the Jesuit Province of Tarragona (hereafter JAT), E-I-a-18, 3/660. Ovando in referring to the expedition (*Manifiesto*, nn. 13-14) understandably minimizes Alimuddin's participation in it.

¹⁰ *History of Sulu*, p. 70.

¹¹ Quoted from "Ta Tsing Hwei Tien" (1820) by G. Jamieson, "The Tributary Nations of China," *China Review*, XII (Hong Kong, 1883-1884), 104.

It is well known that what the court of Peking designated as tribute missions were in reality trade missions, this amiable fiction being made necessary by the official doctrine that the only conceivable reason a foreign potentate could have for sending envoys to the Emperor was to pay the homage of vassalage. Thus Alimuddin's tribute mission must be interpreted as an attempt not to seek Chinese protection but to expand Sulu commerce.

Meanwhile, the Treaty of 1737 encouraged the Jesuit missionaries stationed at Zamboanga in the hope they had long entertained of attempting the conversion of the Sulus to Christianity. In 1744 their agent at Madrid, Father José Calvo, persuaded Philip V to write a letter to Alimuddin requesting that the Jesuits be granted permission to preach the Catholic religion in the sultanate, and the Sulus freedom to embrace that religion if they so desired. Philip also expressed the hope that Alimuddin himself and his chief vassals would in time accept Christianity as "the only religion shown to be true by the light of faith, revelation and tradition." To remove any possible suspicion that the proposal had a political object and that the missionaries would be used to pave the way for conquest, Philip was at pains to assure Alimuddin that he was determined to abide by the terms of the Treaty of 1737.

As a proof of my sincerity [he said], I assure Your Highness on my royal word that under no circumstance or pretext whatsoever will Your Highness or your chief vassals be troubled in their possessions or government by my troops or subjects, but that you and they will by all means continue to enjoy complete and absolute sovereignty in the same manner and form that you now enjoy it; nor will my Governor of the Philippine Islands or any other general officer, functionary or subject of mine presume or attempt to molest Your Highness or your chief vassals or subjects, or enter your territory without your express permission. For if any should presume or attempt such a thing, they will incur my royal wrath, and Your Highness, if you should apprehend them within your dominions, may punish them according to the nature and gravity of their offense.¹²

This was the letter that Saleeby mentions as having been presented to Alimuddin by a special commission in 1746,¹³ although the correct date would seem to be 1747.¹⁴ But even before the receipt of the royal letter

¹² *Guerras piráticas*, p. 324.

¹³ *History of Sulu*, p. 70.

¹⁴ The commission left Zamboanga on 24 August 1747 and arrived at Jolo on 1 September. It was headed by the Jesuit missionary Sebastián Ignacio de Arcada and included the commandant of the Zamboanga garrison, Tomás de Arrivillaga, and several other officers. They were given a magnificent reception by Alimuddin. Cf. "Relation des nouvelles missions a Jolo et Mindanao" (1748), JAT, E-I-a-18, n. 663, and Juan de la Concepcion, *História general de Filipinas* (14 vols., Manila, 1788-1792), XII, 90-91.

the Zamboanga Jesuits had already established friendly relations with Alimuddin. Josef Wilhelm, writing to his brother on 30 August 1746, remarks that

the Sultan is very well disposed. One of our missionaries was explaining to him one day the first commandment of our faith: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart and thy whole soul and with all thy strength. The Sultan replied that our very nature directed us to love our friends and do them good; is it then necessary for us to be commanded to love God, from whom we have received so many benefits? He is very friendly to us Jesuits and when he comes to visit us in our house he embraces us fraternally according to our custom.¹⁵

Wilhelm adds that some of the Sulu *datus*, encouraged no doubt by Alimuddin's example, also came to call.

Many of the Jolo chieftains are not averse to us. Even as I write this a Muslim of high rank with four others are in our church to examine and admire it. I was appointed to show him around, and he seemed to appreciate and approve what I told him about the various articles in the church, and was specially interested in the statue of Our Lady.¹⁶

A year later, Wilhelm noted how much Alimuddin's interest in the Christian religion had grown.

I have a book of hours in Arabic printed in Rome in 1725 which was sent to me as a present by the Dominican commissary of the Inquisition at Manila, my good friend. I showed it to the Sultan of Jolo, who knows Arabic, and he perused it with great attention. When he came to the *Credo*, he asked me whether that was a summary of the fundamental points of our faith. I said yes. He asked me to explain them and I did. I do not know what impression this made on him, but he was quite thoughtful and abstracted during the banquet that followed at the Governor's residence . . . My Arabic book has attracted many Joloan nobles who come to the college to examine it. One of the Jolo panditas heard of it and wants to come to see it. The Sultan's chief minister came several times to borrow it and copy out some pages, especially the *Credo*, in order, he said, to be able to discuss it with the Sultan.¹⁷

In September 1747 Alimuddin paid a special visit to Zamboanga to deliver his reply to Philip V. He came with a large entourage which included his son and heir, Muhammad Israel, two daughters, his sister, and numerous concubines. His letter, written in Arabic and Spanish, was accompanied by a princely gift: a pearl the size of a pigeon's egg weighing $5\frac{1}{2}$ *tomines* (3.278 grams).

¹⁵ JAT, E-I-a-18, n. 3/659.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ Josef to Johann Wilhelm, Zamboanga, 28 September 1747, JAT E-I-a-18, n. 3/661.

Alimuddin informed Philip that he was granting his request and allowing the Jesuits freedom to preach Christianity in his dominions. He was even going so far as to permit his son and successor, Muhammad Israel, to receive religious instruction from the missionaries. With reference to Philip's suggestion that he might become a Christian himself, Alimuddin returned a cautious and perfectly correct reply. "Your royal Catholic Majesty exhorts me," he wrote, "to embrace the Catholic religion, which you say is the true religion. If in the course of time God should move me to it, I shall endeavor with His light to comply."¹⁸

In view of this favorable attitude, the Jesuit provincial superior, Pedro de Estrada, appointed Juan Anglés, rector of the Antipolo residence, and Josef Wilhelm, who was already in Zamboanga, to found the mission of Jolo. Wilhelm, however, died before Anglés could reach Zamboanga, and Patricio del Barrio took his place.¹⁹

The missionaries were furnished with an interesting set of instructions prepared by the secretary of the colonial government, Dr. Domingo Neyra.²⁰ They were to try to persuade the sultan and his *datus* to send some of their sons to Manila "so that they might learn the Spanish language and culture, and in other ways receive instruction suited to their age." The sultan himself should be invited to pay a visit to Manila. It should be clearly explained to the sultan and *datus* that the principal aim of the King in sending missionaries to Sulu was to make known the Christian religion; he entertained no territorial ambitions whatever. On the contrary, he was prepared to make common cause with the sultan against a common enemy, "whether it be one of the nations close at hand, or a European power."²¹ The missionaries should exercise strict supervision and control over the members of their entourage, in order to avoid friction with the natives. This entourage was to consist merely

¹⁸ Dated Jolo, 12 September 1747, in *Guerras piráticas*, pp. 329-332. The envoys sent by Alimuddin to deliver his letter and gift to Manila were accorded a reception even more splendid than that which he had given to the Spanish envoys; cf. the "Relation des nouvelles missions" cited above, note 14.

¹⁹ Pedro de Estrada to Pedro de San Cristóbal, Manila, 8 July 1748, in *Guerras piráticas*, p. 335. San Cristóbal was the procurator or agent of the Jesuit Philippine Province at the court of Madrid. Wilhelm volunteered for the Philippine missions from the Lower Rhine Province. He and Alimuddin became great friends. During the frequent visits to Zamboanga, the sultan invariably dropped in on the Jesuit and spent long hours in converse with him at the Jesuit college. Wilhelm died of a contagious disease contracted while ministering to the Spanish and Sulu victims of an epidemic in Zamboanga. He was instructing two *panditas* for Christian baptism just before he died. Alimuddin made a special trip to Zamboanga to attend his funeral. Cf. "Relation des nouvelles missions."

²⁰ In full in *Guerras piráticas*, pp. 343-347.

²¹ This would seem to be an extension of the commitment undertaken in the Treaty of 1737.

of household servants and workmen, because the colonial government, relying on the sultan's pledge to protect the missionaries, had decided not to provide them with an armed escort; much less was there any intention of building a fort on Sulu territory. The missionaries were to apply to the governor of Zamboanga for anything they needed, and report regularly to the central government on the progress of the mission.

Anglés arrived in Zamboanga on 21 January 1748, and soon afterwards wrote Alimuddin that he and his companion were ready to go to Jolo. Alimuddin, however, asked them not to come by themselves, but to wait for him to come and fetch them. He did not do so until the following May, three months later. He gave various excuses for his delay, but a member of his entourage told the missionaries that the real reason was that there was strong opposition in Jolo to their coming, based precisely on the fear that the mission was the initial move in a plan to bring Sulu under Spanish rule. Alimuddin had been engaged in trying to allay that fear, and he now apparently felt that it would be safe for the missionaries to come. He returned to Jolo, directing the missionaries to follow shortly afterwards, which they did on 8 July.²²

Alimuddin had designated a place called Booboo, just outside his capital, as the site for the mission, and the Jesuits purchased a piece of land there from him for 400 pesos. Anglés and del Barrio seem to have actually occupied this site initially. They quickly discovered, however, that with very few exceptions the Sulus fiercely resented their presence and needed little urging to do them injury. Alimuddin, fearing for their lives, had to insist that they move into the palace compound. No one was particularly pleased with this arrangement; not the missionaries, for it cut them off almost completely from the people they had come to evangelize, nor the Sulus, particularly the principal *datu*s, who found it intolerable that their sultan, who was their religious head as well as their temporal ruler, should harbor in his own household priests of the Christian faith.²³

Opposition to Alimuddin on this score rapidly grew more vocal and violent, even among the *datu*s of the blood royal. Perhaps we should say especially among them, for Alimuddin's younger brother Bantilan soon emerged as the leader of the opposition. Alimuddin desperately tried to retain his ascendancy by showing that in spite of his friendship for the missionaries he was still a good Muslim at heart. He refused them access to his sister Bakilin when she was dying, to make sure that she died in

²² Estrada de San Cristóbal, Manila, 8 July 1748, *Guerras piráticas*, pp. 336-340.

²³ Concepción, *Historia*, XII, 92-98, 115; Ovando, *Manifiesto*, n. 20; "Relation des nouvelles missions."

the Muslim faith. He withdrew the crown prince, Muhammad Israel, from their tutelage and sent him away to be educated by *panditas*. But he did not take the one step that might have saved him his throne. He did not break his pledged word; he did not send away the missionaries.²⁴

The situation suddenly erupted into violence. There are conflicting accounts of the affray or ambush in which Alimuddin was wounded. Saleeby says that it was Bantilan himself who drove a spear into his royal brother's side or thigh in an attempt to assassinate him. According to Concepción, however, the wound was inflicted by unknown assailants who fell upon the sultan at one o'clock in the morning, while he was returning from a visit to a favorite concubine. The assailants were reportedly of Bantilan's faction. This latter version would seem to be the more likely, in view of the subsequent relations between Bantilan and Alimuddin.²⁵

Be that as it may, the attack convinced Alimuddin that his position in Jolo had become untenable, and he decided to leave. Before doing so, however, he seems to have succeeded in getting his principal *datus* to accept a regency in his absence, the regents whom he appointed being Salicala, Mamancha and Bantilan. If we assume this amicable settlement to have taken place, and if we further assume that it was not Bantilan himself who wounded Alimuddin, then there is no reason to doubt the report that Alimuddin was escorted to his cruiser by his chief vassals, including Bantilan, with every appearance of loyalty and affection.²⁶

Alimuddin left Jolo for Basilan on 1 September 1748. The two Jesuits stayed behind, hoping against hope that the regency would allow them to continue the mission. It was not to be. Exactly a week later, on 8 September, Salicala put them aboard a ship and sent them back to Zamboanga.²⁷

What plan of action did Alimuddin have in mind when he left Jolo? It is hard to say. He may have intended merely to sojourn in Basilan while waiting for the popular clamor against him to subside. He may have hoped that the Jesuits, deprived of his protection, would leave Jolo voluntarily, thus solving his problem for him. The Jesuits did leave, not quite voluntarily, as we have seen; but their leaving solved nothing. For

²⁴ Saleeby, *History of Sulu*, p. 181; Concepción, *Historia*, XII, 116-117; Ovando, *Manifiesto*, n. 20.

²⁵ Saleeby, *ibid.*; Concepción, *Historia*, XII, 134-136. Concepción's account was based on a diary kept by Anglés; see *ibid.*, p. 116.

²⁶ Concepción, *Historia*, XII, 121, 129-130; Ovando, *Manifiesto*, nn. 21-24; "Testimonio" of Juan González del Pulgar, governor of Zamboanga, 28 March 1749, JAT, E-I-c-2, n. 13.

²⁷ Ovando, *Manifiesto*, n. 21; Concepción, *Historia*, XII, 129-130, 134-136.

soon afterwards Bantilan, with the consent of the principal *datus*, dissolved the regency and proclaimed himself Sultan Muhammad Mu'izzuddin.²⁸

Thus Alimuddin was, in effect, deposed, and under the circumstances the only way he could regain his throne was to seek the assistance of the Spanish government under the terms of the Treaty of 1737. This he proceeded to do by going first to Zamboanga, whose governor could do little for him, and then to Manila, where he arrived with a large retinue of seventy persons on 2 January 1749. He was royally received by the interim governor, Bishop Juan de Arechederra of Nueva Segovia, and lodged as a guest of the government in a house in the suburb of Binondo. While his petition for aid against his enemies was being considered, he asked for Christian baptism.²⁹

It was a most unusual request. Alimuddin could not have been unaware that his becoming a Christian considerably reduced his chances of being accepted by his own people as their religious and temporal ruler. On the other hand, he may have had reason to believe that it considerably increased his chances of securing the aid he desired from the Spaniards. What then was his motive—conviction or policy?

That it was a political move which did not spring from any real conversion is suggested, among other things, by a veiled question which Alimuddin put to Anglés while they were still in Jolo together. Alimuddin wanted to know whether a Muslim who accepted Christianity would be liable to divine punishment if he subsequently returned to Islam.³⁰ Does this imply that he was even then weighing the advantages of a purely temporary adherence to Christianity? It is likely.

On the other hand, the lively interest which Alimuddin had always shown in Christian belief, his friendship for the Jesuit missionaries, his refusal to close down the Jolo mission even under severe pressure, and above all, his willingness to be regarded as a renegade by his own people, could scarcely have been feigned. Do they then imply an attachment to Christianity for its own sake, and not merely as a convenient means of currying favor with the Spaniards? They seem to.

In short, the question remains an open one, and all we can do in the present state of our knowledge is to set down the ascertainable facts.³¹ Bishop-Governor Arechederra had no doubts whatever that Alimuddin

²⁸ Saleeby, *History of Sulu*, pp. 181-182.

²⁹ Concepción, *Historia*, XII, 146; Joaquín Martínez de Zúñiga, *Historia de Filipinas* (Sampaloc, 1803), p. 557; Ovando, *Manifiesto*, n. 24.

³⁰ Concepción, *Historia*, XII, 117.

³¹ The narrative that follows is based on Ovando, *Manifiesto*, n. 24; Concepción, *Historia*, XII, 156-153, 156-170; Martínez de Zúñiga, *Historia*, p. 559.

was sincere. Nevertheless he endorsed the matter to Archbishop Pedro Martínez de Arizala of Manila as the competent religious authority. The archbishop very properly ruled that Alimuddin should first take a course of religious instruction, at the end of which his understanding of the Christian faith could be tested as well as his motives for seeking admission to the Church. And since Alimuddin was already favorably disposed toward the Jesuits, the archbishop appointed as his tutors two Jesuits, Patricio del Barrio, one of the Jolo missionaries, and Fulcher Spilimberg, the rector of the College of Manila.

After several weeks of instruction, Del Barrio and Spilimberg reported that while the royal catechumen possessed an adequate knowledge of Christian doctrine, he did not, in their opinion, have the proper dispositions for receiving baptism. Archbishop Martínez de Arizala concurred, and informed Alimuddin that he was delaying his baptism until he gave more convincing proofs of the sincerity of his conversion. Alimuddin appealed to Arechederra, who called together a board of fifteen theologians, including the two Jesuit tutors, to advise him on the matter. The board examined Alimuddin and declared by a majority vote, only the Jesuits dissenting, that he was ready for baptism. Arechederra accepted this recommendation; but since the baptism could not take place in Manila against the wishes of its archbishop, he sent Alimuddin to the province of Pangasinan, which was within the confines of his own diocese. There, on 29 April 1749, Alimuddin received the sacrament of baptism at the hands of a Dominican, Fray Enrique Marrón, and was christened Fernando.

When the news became public, Manila went wild with joy. It was a story-book event, the happy ending of a hundred *moro-moro* plays come true. It was history repeating itself, for what else did the conversion of this new Constantine presage but the conversion of his whole people, and an end at last to the ancient enmity of the Sulus to the Christian name? The return to Manila of Don Fernando Primero, Rey Cristiano de Joló, was a veritable triumph, and the people of Manila gave themselves up to "four days of illuminations, three of masquerades, three of bullfights, four nights of fireworks, and three comedies."³²

But Jolo gave back no echo of this rejoicing, only an ominous message to Major Juan González del Pulgar, governor of Zamboanga:³³

This is a letter from Sultan Muhammad Mu'izzuddin, who rules the realm of Jolo by land and sea . . . to His Excellency the Governor of the Fort of Zamboanga, seeking to learn how long he intends to continue

³² Concepción, *Historia* XII, 171.

³³ Quoted in Concepción, *Historia*, XII, 240-245.

killing people of Sulu, that the Sultan may be informed thereof. For only by knowing what the Spaniards mean by putting people of Sulu to death will he know what to do about it.

What seems to have happened was that the deposition of Alimuddin had occasioned a number of "incidents" between Sulu warriors and the troops of the Zamboanga garrison. The quarrel between Alimuddin and his princes was a purely domestic affair, said Mu'izzudin; the Spaniards had no call to interfere. The Spaniards and the Sulus had become brothers by treaty; but

is this how brothers deal with one another? Granted that the people here wounded the king [Alimuddin] because he gave land to the Spaniards [the Jesuit missionaries] without the consent of the princes; did they thereby put any Spaniard to death? Did not the same thing happen to the Marshal whom a priest put to death because he wanted to give Manila to the King of Siam? Did the Sulus intervene in that quarrel?

Mu'izzudin was here drawing a parallel between the wounding of Alimuddin and the assassination of Governor Fernando Bustillo de Bustamante, *el Mariscal*, in 1719. It affords, incidentally, a rare and interesting insight into how events in Manila were understood and interpreted at Jolo. Bustamante, who had for one reason or another incurred the bitter enmity of almost the entire Spanish community of the colony, was indeed done to death, not by a priest, but by an infuriated mob. And some years earlier he had sent an elaborate embassy to Siam for the purpose of strengthening trade relations. The Sulus pieced the two events together, although they were unrelated in actual fact, and came up with an explanation of Bustamante's untimely death and which, from the way Mu'izzudin cites it, must have been widely accepted among the Sulus.³⁴ It makes one wonder whether the margin of error was not equally wide in the interpretation given by contemporary Spanish observers of events taking place in Sulu.

But if Mu'izzudin's history is shaky, his argument is clear enough. The intervention of the Spaniards in the internal affairs of Sulu was

³⁴ There are several eyewitness accounts of Bustamante's assassination and the events leading up to them, of which the present writer has seen the following: a letter of Gilles Wibault, S.J., Manila, 20 December 1721, in *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses écrites des missions étrangères par quelques missionnaires de la Compagnie de Jésus* (34 vols., Paris, 1707-1776), XXIII, 416-424; "Relación de los sucesos de Manila del año de 1719," unsigned, but obviously by a Franciscan friar, in the Roman Archives of the Society of Jesus, Philippine section, XII, 256-259; "Copia de la carta del P. Diego de Otaño de la Compañía de Jesús de 19 de Noviembre de 1719 sobre acontecimientos en las islas Filipinas," JAT, E-I-c-2-2. Otaño was the priest who heard Bustamante's dying confession. On the embassy to Siam, see Benito Carrasco Paniagua, *Relación de la navegación de estas islas Filipinas por el reyno de Siam* (Manila, 1719).

totally uncalled for. And what of their regrettable propensity to blame the Sulus and their sultan for practically everything untoward that happened to them?

Is the Sultan perchance to blame because the Orang Tedong commit depredations, because they seek to avenge themselves for what the Spaniards and my elder brother [Alimuddin] did at Tedong when they attacked it? And when the Orangkaya³⁵ Abdul Hari and Sailon went raiding in the Visayan islands, how was the Sultan to blame? It was because the Orangkaya wanted to avenge a first cousin of his whom the Governor [Pulgar] commanded to be put to death. If the Orangkaya and Sailon were at fault for thus taking vengeance on the Spaniards, why is it that the Spaniards kill the Joloanos only, and do nothing whatever to Sailon, who lives in Basilan?

These things Mu'izzuddin found extremely difficult to understand. Was there peace between the Spaniards and the Sulus or was there not? For if not,

although it is true that we may be likened to a dog, and the Spaniards to an elephant, yet the elephant may one day find the dog on top of it. This is why the Sultan is weighing well the words he says to the Spaniards, for if once he decides on a war of vengeance, it will have to be to the death. For when a small people makes war on a great people, this is what it must expect: it must win, or it loses all. The dog cannot vanquish the elephant; but it can bar its way to its feeding grounds.

The resumption of hostilities by Mu'izzuddin, following immediately on this letter, was probably what decided the Spanish government to take prompt action in restoring Alimuddin to his throne. In July 1750 a new governor arrived in Manila: Francisco José de Ovando, Marquis of Ovando in Extremadura, a real admiral of the royal Spanish navy. He at once ordered an expedition against Jolo to be got ready and invited Alimuddin to accompany it.³⁶ The expedition left Manila on 18 May 1751 with Alimuddin and his household aboard the frigate *San Fernando*. The *San Fernando* developed trouble with its rudder and put in at Calapan for repairs while the rest of the squadron sailed ahead, casting anchor before Jolo on 26 June. The commander of the expedition, Colonel Antonio Ramón de Abad, landed troops and engaged the Sulu feudal levies until the *datus* sued for terms. They agreed to receive Alimuddin back as their sultan and Datu Asin was appointed to meet him at Zamboanga with an escort.

³⁵ An *orangkaya* was a great noble, roughly the equivalent of a thane. Macbeth was a Scottish *orangkaya*.

³⁶ On this expedition and its sequel, see Ovando, *Manifiesto*, nn. 25-33; Martínez de Zúñiga, *Historia*, pp. 565-570; Saleeby, *History of Sulu*, pp. 183-185.

Meanwhile Alimuddin, impatient at the delay, had boarded a *caracoa* at Calapan and reached Zamboanga on 13 July; the *San Fernando* with his retinue arrived 12 days later. Zacarías was once again governor of Zamboanga. His suspicions as to Alimuddin's loyalty to his Christian profession and Spanish allegiance seem to have been aroused by reports that his behavior during the voyage was that of a Muslim rather than a Christian prince. They were confirmed when he intercepted a letter which Alimuddin, before he left Manila, had been asked by the government to write to Sultan Muhammad Amiruddin of Magindanao. He had written it in Arabic. Zacarías had it translated into Spanish, and discovered that Alimuddin did indeed exhort his fellow sultan to deal peaceably with the Spaniards, but added that he wrote "under pressure, being under foreign dominion, and am compelled to obey whatever they tell me to do."

The arrival of Datu Asin at Zamboanga with a force somewhat larger than a guard of honor convinced Zacarías that something was afoot. He put both Alimuddin and Asin and their respective retinues under arrest. A search of their ships and quarters turned up large quantities of concealed weapons. To Zacarías—and to Governor Ovando, when he learned about it—this was proof positive of treason. The latter ordered the Sulu prisoners, 217 in all, of both sexes, to be brought to Manila. He then issued the manifesto which we have already cited several times in the course of this paper. It ended with the following declaration:³⁷

Wherefore, as Governor, Captain-General and President [of the royal Audiencia], upon the advice of the Council of War and the recommendation of the Administrative Council, I order that the King of Jolo, Muhammad Alimuddin, be brought a prisoner under strong guard to the Fort of Santiago of this headquarters, there to be imprisoned and guarded indefinitely or until such time as His Majesty the [King of Spain] shall deign to dispose of his life and person; that all the *datos* and other vassals of the said King, as well as those already captive as those who may hereafter be captured in Jolo, Basilan, Tawi-Tawi, Dongon, Curan and the other islands and settlements of the realm of the said King of Jolo, be reduced to slavery irrespective of their rank; that they be branded on the face or some other part of their bodies in such wise as to be immediately recognized for what they are, since their being indistinguishable [from the other natives] in manner, color and speech may cause confusion and favor conspiracies . . . ; that the royal squadron assigned to assist Muhammad Alimuddin. . . turn its arms and forces against this recreant and punish his perfidy by laying waste, burning and utterly destroying the towns and fields of his dominions, and by capturing or killing his subjects, who, in addition to the misdeeds of their King, are guilty of crimes enough to make them worthy of being banished from the face of the earth.

³⁷ *Manifesto*, n. 36.

And lastly, I decree that no peace of any kind be given to the Moros of the realm of Jolo unless they surrender all their Christian captives, for whose liberation I order unceasing war, not for territorial conquest but to confound the enemies of Church and State.

Saleeby gives an account of the grim but inconclusive war that followed.³⁵ In 1753 the Spanish government released the Princess Fatimah, Alimuddin's sister, and permitted her to go to Jolo for the purpose of negotiating a peace with Mu'izzuddin. In 1754 Pedro Manuel de Arandía succeeded Ovando as governor of the Philippines. A peace conference was held at Jolo the following year, but negotiations broke down on the question of releasing the Christian captives. The Spanish government insisted on this condition, which the sultanate claimed was impossible of fulfillment because many of the captives had already been sold to purchasers outside the territorial limits of Sulu.

Arandía kept Alimuddin prisoner but treated him with greater leniency. He allowed him the freedom of the walled city, gave him a monthly subsistence allowance, and released most of the Sulu noblemen and women who had been arrested and imprisoned with him. The archbishop of Manila readmitted him to the sacraments and married him to one of his former concubines according to Christian rites.³⁹

In the meantime, however, a new protagonist had made an unobtrusive entrance on the Sulu stage, and would in succeeding years have a decisive influence on Alimuddin's fortunes. This was the English East India Company.

³⁸ *History of Sulu*, p. 185.

³⁹ Martínez de Zúñiga, *Historia*, pp. 578-680.