

UNITY AND DISUNITY IN THE MUSLIM STRUGGLE

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Some stereotyped ideas or theories about Muslim Filipinos have been propagated by both Muslims and Non-Muslims. They have caused some misconceptions and illusions of Muslim history and culture to such an extent that solutions to problems confronting Muslim areas are difficult to find. A re-evaluation is, therefore, necessary for two reasons: first, recent scholarship has shown more light and development in Muslim societies especially during the past decades; second, contemporary problems in Muslim areas, particularly in Sulu, require no less than a serious study. By this is meant not just a compilation of past opinions and statements, but a critical examination of sources of Muslim history and culture and their underlying assumptions. This examination of contemporary and past sources is essential to proper understanding of what has been called the "Muslim Problem."¹

For purposes of classification, theoretical approaches to Muslim studies, particularly in relation to such an important issue as armed struggle or violence, may be broadly divided into *unitary* and *pluralistic*. The *unitary* approach assumes that Muslims since pre-Spanish period have been a united people and that their oneness had been founded on Malay cultural unity and Islamic tradition, the beginning of which is

¹ The term appears in both official and unofficial sources. Many have questioned the appropriateness of the term including this writer. The term goes back to the Spanish period and, later, carried to the American regime during which the whole situation in Muslim societies was referred to as the "Moro Problem". Subsequently, the term assumed a more religious context in "Muslim Problem" possibly related to the increasing dominance of Christian values in society and the polarization of society into Christians and non-Christians. In more recent times, the terms has acquired a regional dimension and problems in Muslim areas have been referred to as "Mindanao", "Sulu", "Cotabato", "Lanao", or "Mindanao and Sulu" problem. Trends seem to point to the adoption of a more ethnolinguistic terminology. In effect, it is inaccurate or unfair to consider the Muslims or Non-Christians as "the problem" since the Christians have also been partly responsible for the problems and tensions in Mindanao and Sulu.

traced to a time before the fourteenth century. The pluralistic view assumes that basically there has been no Muslim unity either on the basis of history or culture and that the unity referred to as "Muslim" or "Islamic" is more of a desired goal of contemporary Muslim movements rather than a present or historical reality. It is thus necessary to put in perspective the two approaches.

Introduction

In the pre-twentieth century period, Spanish and non-Spanish sources assumed that the "Moros"² were a fierce group of people, strongly influenced by "Mohammedanism," bound by a common Malay culture, and intensely antagonistic to Christianity. Typical of this unitarism were Francisco Combes, *Historia de Mindanao y Jolo* (1897, Retana) Jose Montero y Vidal's *Historia de la Piratería Malayo-Mohametana en Mindanao y Jolo y Borneo* (1888, 2 Vols.); Pio A. del Pazos' *Jolo: Relato Historico-Militar desde su Descubrimiento por los Espanoles en 1578 a Nuesto Dias* (1879); Vicente Barrantes' *Guerras Piraticas ...* (1878); and several accounts and commentaries by Spanish writers in Blair and Robertsons' *Philippine Islands* (1903-1908). The effect of such a unitary view on colonial policy and action was to treat all Muslims of Mindanao and Sulu as "Moros," assuming that they were uncivilized and, therefore, had to be either Christianized or put to the sword. This attitude was in keeping with both the impressions and the scholarship of medieval Europe which was dominated by ecclesiastical attacks on Islam and the Prophet.³ The Muslim reaction in the Philippines was to resist both Christianization and militarism which were the two inseparable instruments of Hispanization.⁴

At the close of the Spanish era and during the first two decades of American rule, Najeeb Saleeby wrote at least three studies on Muslim societies and history. He pursued a unitary pattern of analysis which,

² Peter Gowing traced the beginning of the term "Moro" or "Moor" to the Roman "Maurus" which, he concluded, was changed to "Moros". Then, it was introduced to the Philippines where it has been used to designate all the Muslim Filipinos. Gowing advocates the retention of the term on historical grounds and, in effect, suggests that the Muslims dignify the historic connotation of the term. It seems, however, better to replace it with indigenous terms such as *Tausug, Maranaos, Magindanaos* etc.

³ Francisco Gabrieli, *Muhammad and the Conquest of Islam*, translated from the Italian by Virginia Luling and Rosamund Lenell (N. Y: McGraw Hill, 1968).

⁴ John L. Phelan, *Hispanization of the Philippines* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1967), pp. 136-137.

however, differed in aim from its Spanish or Non-Muslim version. The latter, as was pointed out earlier, attempted to show the "Moros" as uncivilized. Saleeby saw them as one people with a common and proud history, enriched by patriotic resistance to colonialism and united by common belief in Islam and Malay culture. In *Studies in Moro History, Law and Religion* (1905), he showed that Muslim historical unity was strengthened by adherence to customary law and religious tradition. The *History of Sulu* written in 1908 and focused on Tausog society, emphasized diplomatic relations and the role of the Sultanate as a unifying factor. Assumption of unity was related to the continuity of political institutions as shown in the royal genealogies in the *tarsilas*; the important role of the Sultanate; and the numerous treaties between Sulu and foreign powers which considered the Sultanate as a sovereign state. Saleeby's contributions, therefore, to Muslim studies was to provide a theoretical alternative to biased Spanish interpretations of Muslim history and culture and to direct American Moro policy, in which he had part in formulating and implementing, to a positive view of Muslim societies. This was well articulated in the *The Moro Problem* which was published in 1913 when events in Muslimland were moving towards a critical Muslim-American confrontation in Sulu.⁵ But as it developed, American Moro Policy had both Spanish and Saleeby's unitarism which has remained in Philippine government policy.

Whether or not Saleeby's unitary approach was in consonance with either historical realities and undetached from its sociological context remains the main issue of contention. But it seems quite difficult to validate his thematic conclusion, either from historical evidences or from contemporary developments.

Providing support for unitarism is Majul's *Muslims in the Philippines* (1973) which seems to depend heavily on historical evidences including Southeast Asian sources. In fact Majul extends the same unitary approach to Muslim societies in Southeast Asia and the rest of dar-al-Islam.⁶ His contribution, therefore, to Muslim studies is in

⁵ Samuel K. Tan, *Sulu Under American Military Rule, 1899-1913* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines. Philippine Social Sciences and Humanities Review, March 1967); Paul D. Rogers, "Battle of Bagsak", *Philippine Magazine*, vol. XXVI, No. 9 (Sept. 1939), pp. 370-71, 380-382.

⁶ Cesar A. Majul, *The Muslims in the Philippines* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 1973).

providing support for a unitary approach to Muslim problems, in articulating a “Muslim perspective” for Philippine history and culture, and in establishing a theoretical link between Muslim history and that of the Muslim world. With a few exceptions, Majul’s writings are limited to the pre-twentieth century period of Muslim history in the Philippines but the theoretical framework has been used by contemporary Muslim movements and by the government. It seems, however, that, although unitary in approach, Majul, in a pamphlet on integration,⁷ recognizes the lack of unity in Muslim leadership and movements. But whether or not such recognition is a repudiation of unitarism which has characterized most of his works and others before him remains a question.

What appears to have been left unanswered is the issue of fragmentation, diversity, and disunity in Muslim societies especially in the Muslim armed struggle. Perhaps, such problem can best be treated by inquiry into an analysis of social, political, economic, cultural, psychological, and ecological determinants of Muslim attitudes and behaviour. This is contingent on an integrated research program in which the contributions of the disciplines are recognized and utilized.⁸ But this integration of disciplinary methodologies is only possible in a situation where scholars are more aware of their inadequacies and limitations than their contributions. It is in the vacuum of intellectual inadequacy and humility that meaningful interdependence operates between scholars of various persuasions and specializations. Such interdependence in scholarship leads to better perception and, therefore, conceptualization of problems.

The unitary emphasis is also found in Alunan Glang’s *Muslim Secession and Integration* and Jainal Rasul’s *The Muslim Struggle for Identity*. But it is not clear how much unity is present in Muslim societies in view of more evidences of disunity or diversity. In Lanao, Cotabato, and Sulu, Muslim rebels labelled “Maoists” are fighting not only government troops but also Muslim returnees called “balikbayans” and Muslim recruits called “bagonglipunans.”⁹ A macro view of the whole Muslim struggle shows the Sulu Muslims left alone in what seems a difficult conflict. The Lanao and Cotabato Muslims have

⁷ Cesar A. Majul, *Cultural Diversity, National Integration and National Identity in the Philippines* (Caloocan City: Convislam Press, 1917).

⁸ W. G. Runciman, *Social Science and Political Theory* (Cambridge: University Press, 1969), p. 1; Stuart Chase, *Proper Study Mankind* (N. Y.: Harper, 1963), p. 202.

⁹ *Times Journal*, March 1974.

been pacified following a historical pattern in which the last significant battle against colonial rule was fought in Sulu in 1913 after Lanao and Cotabato had long been subdued.¹⁰

It seems then that Glang and Rasul provide repetitious support for unitarism referring to historical events in which inter-relationships are difficult to establish. Rasul restates the same assumption of unity somewhat affected by an emphasis on Muslim search for 'identity' which implies absence of social cohesion. The theory of the "Ninth Ray" which Glang articulated in many occasions and, later, Duma Sinsuat, merely expressed in more symbolic terms and form the unitary approach to Muslim problems and Muslim demand for symbolic representation.¹¹ Thus, the theoretical contributions of Glang and Rasul to Muslim studies offer no alternative to what Saleeby and Majul have already expressed adequately.

Pursuing the same unitary view and expressing it in typical western terminology and methodology are American scholars whose publications and researches on Muslim Filipinos were connected mostly with their graduate work. Clifford Smith in *History of the Moros: A Study in Conquest and Colonial Government*¹² assumed Muslim unity under a benevolent American rule, and Dorothy Rogers in *History of American Occupation and Administration of the Sulu Archipelago, 1899-1920* developed the same emphasis with a local focus.¹³ Peter Gowing in *American Mandate Over Moro'land*¹⁴ criticized some aspects of American policy and rule in Muslimland but underscored America's fine record not only in governing the Muslims well but also in bringing them together under one political rule. The same might be said of Ralph Thomas' *Muslim but Filipino; the Integration of Philippine Muslim, 1917-1946*¹⁵ and Thomas Keifer's *Tausug Armed Conflict; the Social Organization of Military Activity in the Philippine Muslim*

¹⁰ Samuel K. Tan, *The Muslim Armed Struggle in the Philippines, 1900-1941*, an unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, Syracuse University, 1973, pp. 33-34.

¹¹ Mama S. Sinsuat, "Ninth Ray For the Filipino Flag", *CNI Monthly Bulletin*, Manila (Jan.-Feb. 1970), p. 4.

¹² Unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Chicago, 1948.

¹³ Unpublished M.A. thesis, University of San Francisco, 1959.

¹⁴ Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Syracuse University, 1969.

¹⁵ Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1971.

¹⁶ (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969).

*Society*¹⁷ which assumed the existence of a “Muslim Society.” The idea of “Muslim culture” also permeated the studies of Mednick, Saber and Baradas for Maranao society and the Notre Dame of Jolo. A host of others have also written on Muslim culture and History but they all fall within the same unitary context.

Looking back to what had been said, two interrelated questions are brought to focus: first, are the conclusions of unitary Muslim studies reflective of historical and contemporary realities? Or, are they only expressed goals of Muslim movements and leaders vital to the Muslim struggle for justice and recognition in Philippine society? It seems that there are evidences to show that Muslim unity is only found in the hopes, aspirations, and dreams of the Muslim people. The evidences are historical, political, cultural and contemporary.

Historical

The historical argument for unitarism is anchored on the continuity of Muslim resistance to colonialism. Resistance, accordingly had been concerted that the Muslims had never been conquered. Publications, especially by Muslims including the writer’s *Sulu Under American Military Rule, 1899-1930* have not failed to emphasize the “unconquerability” aspect of the argument. The unitary premise, however, raises some doubt. While persistent and often times furious, Muslim resistance was not necessarily consolidated or unified. Persistence merely revealed the general impact of colonialism on Muslim and Non-Muslim societies, more or less related to the nature and implementation of colonial policies. The continuity of resistance is not necessarily correlated with the existence of basic unity in culture or history, otherwise, the problem of integration would not have arisen. There was, in fact, no connection between depredations from Sulu and from Mindanao or any relation between armed opposition to Spanish rule in Lanao and Cotabato to that of Sulu and the rest of the Muslim areas.¹⁸

¹⁷ Melvin Mednik, *Encampment on the Lakes: the Social Organization of a Moslem Philippine (Moro) People* (University of Chicago: Philippine Studies Program, 1965); Gerard Rixhon, editor, *Sulu Studies* (Jolo: Notre Dame of Jolo, 1972), Vol. 2, 1973.

¹⁸ *Historical Sketch Dating From the First Expedition Up the Rio Grande de Mindanao to 1897*, Folder I — “History of the Philippine Island-Zamboanga Intelligence Reports”, *John L. Pershing Papers (JJP Papers)*, Subject File, Philippines, 1902-1903, Box 319, pp. 9, 25, and 26.

The Muslim struggle was divided and limited. Sultan Kudarat's struggle considered the most significant in Cotabato and Lanao was limited in involvement and extent. But this does not in any way minimize Kudarat's stature as Cotabato's best leader in History equalled only by Datu Uttu of Buayan. The conflict of Datu Uttu with Spanish forces was plagued by Uttu's feuds or differences with Rio Grande datus, especially Datu Ayunan and Datu Gadung, and later, Datu Piang¹⁹ At one instance, Uttu provided boats for Spanish operations against Muslim groups who were not within his alliance.²⁰ In Lanao, the struggle was represented by at least three groups: *Bayabaos*, *Onayans* and *Macius*. The latter claimed to be the most important being more ancient, so they said, than the other two. In Sulu the "Amirul-Harun rivalry" for the Sultanate polarized into two contending parties. Harun's faction supported Spanish claim of sovereignty in exchange for Spanish support for Harun's claim. Harun's stand was either in disregard of Muslim consensus or customary law or in line with the recurrent nature of disruptive patterns in Muslim societies.

In the American military regime the pattern of disunity was again apparent in Muslim resistance. There was no connection between resistance in Lanao led by Datu Sajiduciman, the sultans and datus of Bacolod, Bayabao, Bayan Maciu, Tugaya, and Taraca and similar reaction in Cotabato led by Datus Ali, Sansaluna, Mopuk, Tambilawan, several Upper Cotabato chieftains. Nor were they related in any way to uprisings and movements in Sulu led by Panglima Hassan, Datu Usap, Paruka Utik, Maharajah Andung, and Pala. How then could there be basic historical unity in the absence of even one evidence of cooperation or coordination in the resistance?

In fact, dissensions and rivalries affected the Muslim struggle. In Cotabato, Datu Ali, whose rebellion (1903-1906) was the most significant anti-colonial response in Mindanao during this period, attempted to solicit support from Lanao Muslims for what Ali thought was the only meaningful answer to American militarism.²² But the "united

¹⁹ Reynaldo Ileteo, *Magindanao, 1860-1888: Career of Dato Uto of Buayan* (Ithaca: Cornell University, 1971).

²⁰ Tan, *Muslim Armed Struggle* . . . , p. 133.

²¹ *Report of John Pershing to the Adjutant General, May 15, 1903, Camp Vicars, Mindanao, JJP Papers, Folder I, "Camp Vicars, 1900-1902"*, Subject File, Philippines, Box 317, p. 1.

²² *Sunday Star*, Washington D. C., March 24, 1912, Bureau of Insular Affairs File (B. I. A.) 4865-64; Leonard Wood Diary, October 31, 1906;

front” never materialized because there was no interest or sympathy on the part of the Lanao Muslims many of whom had already been won over by the Americans. More detrimental than Lanao’s indifference was his father-in-law’s alliance with the government. Datu Piang, dictated, perhaps, more by practical realities than ritual kinship ties, supported American campaigns against Ali and subsequently against all “insurrections” in Cotabato. He provided American authorities with vital information on Ali’s movements leading ultimately to Ali’s death in Simpitan.²³ Piang’s attitude was probably influenced by the old rivalry between Piang and Uttu, Ali’s uncle or father. This strained relationship never disappeared in Cotabato’s history. It continued to hamper Muslim struggle and came to a more defined hostility between the Piangs and the Ampatuans who claimed lineage to Datu Uttu.

The dissension in Lanao was more pronounced than in other areas during the first decade of the century. This was revealed in numerous letters of local datus, sultans, cabugatans, sangkapans etc. who wrote in the local language and in broken and difficult type of Spanish and English. Local chieftains offered to give information or help to the colonial authorities in the campaigns against recalcitrant Muslim groups or bands. Others even fought each other to court colonial recognition and benefits. Some fought for purely personal reasons or for supremacy. This was, for instance, shown in the “Lumamba-Tawakir dispute”²⁴ over the issue of secular versus religious authority in local matters. The dispute was complicated by customs which recognized avuncular rights or privileges. It was finally settled by American intervention which enforced agreement based on “separation of powers.”

Rivalry and dissension were also noted in Sulu.²⁵ The Sultan helped the government in suppressing uprisings and, in fact, was behind the operations against Panglima Hassan and, later, Pala. At the same time, he gave comfort and sometimes support to the uprisings. The Schuck family whose ancestry goes to a German-Tausug origin, assisted American troops in tracking Jikiri and his band to their death in Patian Island. Datu Julkarnain, Datu Kalbi, and Datu Tahil opposed and fought the forces of Sultan Kiram, Pang’ima Indanan, and Datu Bandahalla. Sometimes they cooperated with American authorities. Jul-

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Report of Provincial Governor H. Gilheuser to the Secretary of the Department of Mindanao and Sulu, Zamboanga, October 18, 1916; B. I. A. 5075-119-A, p. 8.*

²⁵ Tan, *Muslim Armed Struggle...*, p. 37.

karnain, until his death in 1912, became one of America's best friends. He was respected not so much for his acquiescence and friendship, but for his stubborn resistance to American rule in the period of the Bates Treaty (1899-1904) which represented the only tangible basis of Sulu-American relations at that point in time. These inter-Muslim conflicts appeared to have been connected with family rivalries. Julkarnain and Kalbi were brothers and Tahil was Julkarnain's son. Indanan and Bandahalla were rivals of Kalbi. Kiram was a constant target of Julkarnain's opposition and his frustration in failing to win over one of Sulu's most powerful families had never failed to inspire him to take advantage of any opportunity to weaken Julkarnain's popular base even if it meant accommodating Indanan's unpredictable alliance.

In the civil regime (1914-1935), the Lanao Muslims were divided into pro-Americans and pro-Filipinos.²⁶ The *Americanistas*, as the first group was referred to, were led by Amai Manibilang of Madaya and Datu Lawi Usongan of Maciu. The *Filipinistas*, largely composed of government officials and employees, were led by Datu Ibra. A showdown came during the 1924 visit of Gov.-Gen. Wood in which both factions were eager to demonstrate loyalties and convictions.²⁷ Wood had to meet separately with the Manibilang-Usongan faction because of tension that the rivalry created, while Secretary of Interior, Felipe Agoncillo, had to confer with the Ibra group. In 1934, Lanao was again torn by strifes and violence when several bands roamed around, particularly those led by Amai Milon, Dimakaling, and Ingud.²⁸

About the same time in Cotabato, peace and order were disrupted by a number of incidents. Datu Alamada continued Ali's anti-colonial movement.²⁹ But Datu Inuk and Datu Piang opposed Alamada and offered to help American troops to bring Alamada to surrender and, if

²⁶ Maj. Charles S. Livingston, *Constabulary Monograph of the Sulu Province*, November 15, 1915, *Joseph R. Hayden Papers (JRH Papers)*, Box 29-35, pp. 71-72.

²⁷ "Inside Story of Wood's Last Tour". *Philippine Herald*, April 2, 1924, B. I. A. Wood File, Clippings, pt. 3.

²⁸ Gov. Gen. Dwight Davis to Chief of the Bureau of Insular Affairs, May 22, 1930, No. 267, B. I. A. 4865-172; *Report of Provincial Governor J. Heffington*, December 21, 1934, *JRH Papers*, Box 28; Confidential Letters of Elpidio Mamaradlo and Sabar Muto to the Division Superintendent of Schools, Lanao, August 26, 1935; Fred J. Passmore, Superintendent of Schools, to the Director of Education, August 20, 1935, *JRH Papers*, Box 28.

²⁹ District Governor Edward Dworak to Gen. John Pershing, December 25, 1912, Folder 5— "Gov. of Moro Province 1910-13", *JJP Papers*, Book File, Memoirs (unpublished), 1904-1913, Box 371.

unsuccessful, to liquidate him and his followers. In 1923, Datu Santiago rose up against the government because of abuses committed by school authorities who forced them, under constabulary guards and threat, to repair school buildings without compensation.³⁰ He was followed four years later by Datu Mampuroc of Kitibud who had grievances against Datu Piang for collecting ₱20,000 from his Manobo people. His reaction, marked by bloody clashes with government troops, led to what became known as the *Alangkat Movement* which included Muslims.³¹ The movement started in the heart of Mt. Kitibud, Northern Cotabato where Mampuroc established some kind of mountain or messianic rituals which bound devotees to the cause.

In Sulu, disunity in Muslim leadership and struggle was portrayed in political disputes and intrigues. Datu Tahil, an escapee of the 1913 Bud Bagsak encounter and husband of Princess Tarhata, revolted against the government because of political grievances and economic problems.³² In the early thirties the Sultan was opposed by a powerful combination of Sangkula, Tulawi, and Indanan who earlier was Kiram's ally against Julkarnain's faction.³³ Toward the close of the decade, the disputes, sometimes accompanied by violence, led to a political fragmentation of Sulu into several contending parties each claiming right to succession.³⁴ The factions finally polarized into two powerful camps led by Datu Tambuyong on one hand and by Dayang Dayang Piandao and Datu Ombra, her husband, on the other.³⁵ The resulting establishment of two sultanates, one in Igasan under Tambuyong and another in Maimbung under Ombra in 1937, marked the eclipse of the Sultanate as a significant institution in Muslim History. The unity it had maintained loosely in Sulu through a delicate balance and

³⁰ *Ibid.*; Frank Carpenter to Frank McIntyre, February 19, 1927, B. I. A. 5075.

³¹ *Manila Bulletin*, February 22, 1927, *JRH Papers*, Box 28-34. The term "Alangkat" might have been derived from local terminology which means "ruined".

³² Frank W. Carpenter to Gen. Frank McIntyre, B. I. A. Chief, January 28, 1927, Frank W. Carpenter "P" File, Pt. II; National Archives, Washington D.C.; *New York Times*, January 15, 1972, B. I. A. 4865-A-88.

³³ Arolas Tulawi to Bishop Mosher of the Episcopal Church, August 23, 1933, *JRH Papers*, Box 28-31; Akuk Sangkula's *Memorandum of Charges Against Governor Spiller*, January 6, 1934, *JRH Papers*, Box 29-35; Sangkula to James Fugate, November 12, 1933, *JRH Papers*, Box 29-39; Fugate to Hayden, May 27, 1934, *JRH Papers*, Box 29-31.

³⁴ Howard Eager to Sergeant Walter S. Hurley, December 2, 1938, B. I. A. 21887-147.

³⁵ *New York Tribune*, January 31, 1937, *JRH Papers*, Box 29-30.

compromise of vested interest, sometimes through intrigues, came to an end. Since unity disappeared with the collapse of the Sultanate structure, was therefore not rooted in strong cultural foundations, either Malay or Islamic, and Muslim unity was at best idealistic.

After the last war the only meaningful outbreak in Muslimland was the Kamlun Uprising in 1952 which was triggered by political threats, agrarian intrigues, and socio-economic problems.³⁶ During his surrender to Magsaysay, in Jolo, Kamlun revealed what appeared to be the Tausug fear of the future in the face of modern changes which tended to benefit the Christian sectors rather than the natives. In the uprising which dismembered the famed Nenita Unit of the Armed Forces, the pattern of weakness emerged from Tausug individualism. But Magsaysay's program or promise was more idealistic than realistic having no adequate funds to undertake massive development projects for Sulu. Tausug grievances, as the uprising demonstrated, were not eradicated. They were, in fact, nurtured by the "resettlement" of Kamlun and his closest men in Muntinlupa rather than in Tawi-Tawi. These grievances were buoyed up by Tausug fear of dismemberment on account of rapid Christianization in Sulu undertaken by religious missions (Catholic and Protestant) and secular institutions which promoted Christian culture. This created the preconditions to conflict and tensions.

Postwar conflicts or movements were not felt in other Muslim areas such as Lanao and Cotabato which remained quiet until the Muslim struggle gained momentum and gradually assumed *jihadic* pattern as a result of both Christian and Muslim atrocities and prejudice.³⁷ Violent conflagration was fanned by internal politics in which Christian politicians and traditional Muslim leaders seized the opportunity to get government concessions at the expense of the Muslim people. It was also reinforced by influence from both rightist and leftist elements which sought to mix ideology with religion in an effort to create a Muslim base for revolutionary and counter-revolutionary movements.³⁸

From historical patterns, it seems quite difficult to see a "Muslim society" bound together by historical experiences and the struggle against colonialism. It is hard to find any inter-relationship between uprisings.

³⁶ "Kamlon Case Ends", *Manila Chronicle*, November 23, 1952.

³⁷ Harvey Stockwin, "A State of Violent Suspense", *Far Eastern Economic Review*, March 18, 1974, pp. 27-28.

³⁸ *Far Eastern Economic Review*, March 25, 1974, reprinted in *Times Journal*, April 3, 1974, p. 6.

movements, or reaction in various areas of Muslimland. It is even more difficult to deny the numerous feuds, rivalries, and bloodshed which occurred between Muslim groups and within Muslim societies. How then can historical events support the unitary approach to Muslim studies and problems?

Political

Based on folk literature, the political structure of Muslim societies such as found in Sulu offers proof of what may be called a "centrifugal" tendency in Muslim development.³⁹ Structural forms in pre and post-Spanish times were represented by four institutions which probably marked the distinctive structural developments in the political evolution of Muslim societies. The four phases or stages have survived through centuries of interactions with external forces, internal disruptions, and conflicts with foreign powers because Muslim societies were free from colonial imposition as a result of Spanish failure to subdue the Muslims. The subjugation of Muslimland came in the second decade of the twentieth century when American rule was accepted throughout Muslim areas following Muslim defeats in a series of uprisings from the Bud Dajo Encounter in 1906 to the decisive battle of Bud Bagsak in 1913.

The structural evolution of Tausug polity involved delineation of power, role, and status not necessarily along kinship line. This may be seen from an examination of four institutions: *Kamaasmaasan*, *banua*, *kaduatuan*, and *sultan*.

The *Kamaasmaasan*⁴⁰ was probably the earliest not necessarily the simplest form of Muslim society in Sulu. There was no formal ve-

³⁹ Kiefer used the same terms to describe change in Tausug polity, "Tausug polity and the Sultanate of Sulu: A Segmentary State in the Southern Philippines", *Sulu Studies* (Quezon City: Bustamante Press, 1972), I, pp. 19-64. Although Kiefer leans very much on Majul's theoretical model, yet in making a comparative reference to Southeast Asian structure such as Clifford Geertz' analysis of Balinese polity, he admits the possible existence of a "centripetal pattern" in Tausug society somewhat neutralized by a centrifugal force provided by what he calls a "vision of a unitary state", p. 39.

⁴⁰ Based on The Legend. "Manik Buwangsi", told by Bapah Sayuman of South Laud, Siasi, still alive during the Japanese occupation and in whose house the writer and his parents lived. Sayuman was very fond of telling *kissas* or *katakata* after returning from his fishing trips. His *kissas* refer to numerous accounts which show *kamaasmaasan* as an established institution. Such terms as "ha waktu sin kamaasmaasan" or "awal jaman" in the *kissas* or *katakata* seem to refer to pre-hispanic, pre-historic, or pre-islamic eras. The first term means "in the time

hicle which constituted this entity. It was an informal socio-political organization of elders in the village in which age appeared to be one of the bases, if not, the basis of acceptance or inclusion in the group which carried some authority and influence. It was developed possibly by "social consensus" based on familial recognition and acceptance of patriarchal or matriarchal role. Although no existing written sources give information on this institution, it more or less functioned as a mechanism of social control, rendering judgment on the conduct of village affairs and social action. It was only convened when serious problems such as external threat or epidemics required immediate action by the village. The composition of the group was general in a sense that both sexes were represented. But it was also limited in that membership was confined in a descending direction to the heads of the nuclear families. This was the simplest way to determine the age limit within which a person could be called an elder or *maas*. So that the age criterion involved in the *kamaasmaasan* was not chronological or numerical but rather socio-structural. In brief nominal and actual heads of nuclear families, regardless of age, were considered *maas*⁴¹ and, therefore, part of the institution.

It seems that there was no delineation of responsibility and distinction of levels of authority in the *kamaasmaasan*. Group consensus seemed to be the basis of decision or judgment. There was consequently no simplification, based on specialization, of functions or roles in the institution. Possibly, the institution, in the course of social development, was modified and simplified to accommodate needs for a

of the old" or "in olden times" and could not have meant the time of the old people during which the reciter Sayuman lived or told the *Kissa*. The reference was to a time in history when an institution of old sages was recognized in the community. The second term literally means "historic time". *Jaman* means "time" or "time device" and "*awal*" refers to "beginning" or "start". The time would either be the time of the "bangsawan" a race believed to have developed from a mixture of the three racial groups in Sulu before the Islamic advent: the *Buranuns*, the *Tagimahas*, and the *Bakalya*. Or, the term could refer to the "*Muslims*" who ushered in a historic era in Sulu's development. The term could not refer to post-Islamic time since local terminologies distinguish Spanish, American, and Japanese eras as *waktu* or *timpu kastila*, *milikan*, and *jipun*.

⁴¹ *Maas* is a Tausug term for an old person, male or female. It is often used by spouses, children, and kinsmen when referring to the mother or the father in the family. *Maas babai* (Literally, old woman) refers to mother and *Maas usug* (Literally, old man) to father. The *Samal* term for old man (general) is *Aa toa* which is a general designation for both sexes. *Matoa dinda* is used when referring to old woman and *Matoa lul'la* when referring to old man.

more efficient way of conducting affairs of the village or of coordinating the increasing and diversifying activities of the people. It was not, however, eradicated. It was only functionally relegated to a nominal overseeing entity serving as an invisible but real, although less influential, instrument of social control. From it probably emerged what became known as the *banua* which manifested clear evidences of relationship to the *kamaasmaasan*.

The transition from *maas* to *banua* followed a socio-transformational process in which social needs preconditioned the emergence of appropriate political forms. In the *banua*,⁴² therefore, could be found or traced the beginning of a political role in an institutional level. That is, it was a role more characteristic of a group rather than an individual. The *banua* was thus a small duly-established or recognized association of elders in the village in which membership appeared to have been limited or restricted to male heads of the nuclear families. There was in this institution a definition of political role or function although not status which came in later development, probably in the *kadatuan*. The *banua* member, who was also a part of the larger *kamaasmaasan*, became delineated as a leader with specific political role. He, therefore, with the rest in the *banua*, exercised the prerogative and, consequently, the power of decision-making which involved judicial, legislative, and executive responsibilities although the tripartite distinction in the power structure was not really distinguished or specialized as in the case of the *kadatuan*. But it was, however, more identifiable than in the *kamaasmaasan*.

Growth in population and increase in social activities resulted in the further simplification of the flow of authority in the *banua* system which underwent a "second phase" of structural transformation in which *banua* members became the heads of relatively self-supporting groups. The self-supporting units which were called *kaum* or *lung*⁴³

⁴² The legend, "Lunsay Buhuk" is a story of a beautiful woman with long hair that reached to her toes. Her final marriage to a wealthy and powerful prince came only after repeated frustrations and intrigues of ambitious women of royalty. The old council of elders (*banua*) finally recognized her right and status. This theme is also found in several similar stories.

⁴³ *Kaum* and *lung* are Tausug and Samal terms used to designate types of places. The *lung banua* existed in what is now San Raymundo, a part of Jolo Town where the *adjungs* or galleons used to dock. The place could have been an important pre-hispanic area in Jolo where the council of elders (*banua*) lived or met. The term means the "section of the *banua*".

in its narrowest limit became consequently self-governing. The breakdown in the initial interdependence of constituting units in the *banua* system, which in the early phase was characterized by a more or less primitive type of communalism, tended to draw the unit or units around the personality of the *banua* member whose political role and, hence, status were to be clarified by internal rivalries in the system. The issue of leadership of the group was determined by certain "criteria of leadership" such as age, wealth, prowess, consensus, or lineage.⁴⁴

The conflict, which sometimes brought bloody feuds was so allowed to develop that units were alienated from the whole system, aided by absence of any common law and strong mechanism of social control. Individualization and consequently separation of units, in the *banua*, with the emergence of personal leadership provided the ground for what might be termed "the institutionalization of role and status" of *banua* members. Institutionalization led to polarization of Muslim society into "primary wielders of power" — the *datu*s and the "recipients of responsibility," the people. Long period of "unit independence" led not to democratization but to "autocratization" of power represented by the institution of the *datu* or its collective form, the *kadatuan*. In short, the *kadatuan* was the outcome of internal changes in the *banua* system which manifested centrifugal rather than centripetal directions in development.

The *kadatuan*,⁴⁵ as a political institution manifested characteristics that differentiated it substantially from either the *banua* or *kamaasmaasan*. It was a loose cooperation or association of independent *datu*s with a formalized structure of power. The *datu*'s autocracy was the ultimate development in the process of power delineation and it was probably reinforced, if not, brought about by the economic dependence of the subject on the *datu*'s wealth which came from produce of communal lands and raids. It may be essential to point out that, in the communal stage of land tenure, the tendency was to give economic advantage to the *datu* who by virtue of his institutionalized political role and power which accompanied it received portions from each cultivator.

⁴⁴ Literally, in Sulu age continues to be observed as a criterion for proper ethics and conduct.

⁴⁵ The term *kadatuan* is a collective term used today in Muslim societies. It has survived in Tausug as well as Samal terminologies.

For purposes of common protection against threats too strong for one *datu* to meet, an organization of more than one *datu* resulted in the formation of the *kadatuan*. But the independence of the datuship seemed to have so developed that no formalization of the *kadatuan* structure resulted and various *datus* remained loosely bound to each other. The same centrifugal pattern which characterized the *banua* system also marked the process of transformation in the *kadatuan*. The *datu* was delineated from the people as the source of authority and the dispenser of justice and it was not uncommon or unusual for interdatuship conflicts to occur as a result of personal differences between *datus* or interkinship conflicts to arise as a consequence of the priority of political over consanguinal ties.⁴⁶ It was in this context that the *Sultanate*, which was not indigenous in origin, found a place in the political structure of the Muslim society.

The sultanate, being an external introduction in the Islamic advent, provided Muslim societies with one important source of centralizing force. That is, it became a vehicle of political cohesion, because *datus* tended to accept the authority of an external power rather than that of a rival *datu*. Acceptance of the sultanate which began with Abu Bakar in Sulu and Kabungsuwan in Mindanao was aided partly by an attraction to Islamic beliefs and rituals accompanied by the introduction of gorgeous and impressive attire, ornaments, and displays of Islamic royalties. The Sultan assumed the prerogatives and power of a typical Middle Eastern or South East Asian Sultan or King with a retinue of subordinate chiefs, attendants and guards.

The political process through which Muslim societies passed followed a pattern of development from the complex *kamaasmaasan* through a simplification of the power structure in the *banua*, *kadatuan*, and, finally, to the centralization of authority in the Sultan. The process was marked by concentration not the democratization of power, first, in a few in the case of the *banua* and, then, in a person, in the case of the *datu* and the Sultan. The trend toward absolutism, was, however, checked by the *datu's* reassertion of independence re-

⁴⁶ The Case of Sihaban and Asjali may illustrate kinship in conflict. Sihaban and Asjali were kinsmen or cousins. They both lived in Pata Island. But Asjali worked as a public school teacher and as such was linked to the government which Sihaban did not favor. Sihaban killed Asjali for siding with the government.

sulting in the emergence of the *ruma bichara*⁴⁷ which served as a check and help to the Sultanate.

The *ruma bichara* which had acquired important status in Muslim history was a council of recognized leaders or *datus* within the jurisdiction of the *Sultanate*. Since the jurisdiction of the Sultan was measured initially by the extent to which the sound of the Sultan's gong could be heard, membership was therefore relative to the ability of the *datu* or his aide's to hear or to the change in ecological conditions. To extend the authority of the Sultanate or to keep *datu*ship within its jurisdiction, a political machinery had to be developed and institutionalized among more objective criteria not affected easily by transitory factors. In effect the *ruma bichara* which served as an advisory body to the Sultan actively shared in the power of the Sultanate and participated in the decision-making process. The body became territorially rather than personally oriented. But the institution was so constituted so that it actually represented a loose combination of power structures represented by the individual *datu*s. The inter-relationship between these power units was contingent not on the Sultanate but on the nature of the interests which affected the various *datu*ships and which were sometimes in harmony with that of the Sultanate. The breakdown, therefore, in cooperation or relationship between the *datus* and the Sultan resulted from the lack of common interest or need.

Such was the case of Muslim opposition and resistance to Spanish and American rule. There appeared to be a united action during the period of serious confrontation (1850-1903) when no definitive policy was pursued by the colonial power except that of militarism which Muslim societies perceived as a common problem requiring armed resistance. But the introduction of American policy of attraction after 1903 and its realistic implementation during the Carpenter Era (1914-1921) brought some Muslim leaders and *datus* to the side of the colonial administration. The policy was based on the recognition of traditional power structure and status and ambiguous acceptance of an external colonial superstructure. The common interest of armed resistance to foreign domination was lost and conflicts between *datu*-

⁴⁷ *Ruma bichara* means "house of speech". The Tausug term for house is *bai* and *ruma* has no Tausug meaning except in relation to *Ruma Bichara*. *Ruma* seems to be the same as *luma* the Samal term for house. *Banua* is both Tausug and Samal while *kamaasmaasan* is Tausug.

ships became frequent. The so-called “unity” brought by common opposition to colonialism was therefore circumstantial or incidental. It lacked the essence of unity which could come only from a realistic integration of experiences and meaningful communications and relationships which were not present in Muslim societies.

Today the political institutions which outline the evolution of Sulu’s society are still evident in Tausug polity except that they are either remembered merely as history or are substantially devoid of their status, role, or power. Interaction with Christian and western civilization has been largely instrumental in bringing about the changes although the the traditional forms have remarkably remained unchanged.

Cultural

Indigenous Malay tradition and Islamic influence have been brought out as proofs of Muslim unity but it seems quite difficult to comprehend or to grasp the nature or meaning of such a tradition or influence. What are evident in Muslimland are works of art and social forms: *masjids* (mosques), *madrassas* (religious schools), and Islamic secular schools. But are these proofs of unity based on Islamic influence? Or, are these mere symbols of Muslim aspirations, ideals, and goals? It seems that historical and non-historical evidences show that the introduction of Islam, like the penetration of Malay culture in pre-Islamic period, was shrouded in ambiguity although some clarifications are found in the works of Saleeby and, more recently, in Majul’s.

The Islamic culture or tradition referred to by Muslim scholars as well as by Non-Muslim scholars often refer to that “ambiguous reality” somewhat revealed by visible art forms and artifacts of culture: *sari-manok*, *ukul*, *gulis*, *kalis*, *barung*, *kampi’an*, brasswares, ornaments, attire, music, dances, etc. These things, however, vary from one Muslim group to another and it is quite difficult to trace or identify what Islamic strain is present — Southeast Asian syncreticism, sunnism, sufism, or shiism. What in fact appeared in Muslimland were pluralistic or syncretic forms of Islam, showing dominant indigenous features: *alat*, *omboh*, *kadja*, and *tampat* which somewhat resembled in structure to but differed in substance from, their counterparts in Southeast Asia.

The only tangible aspects of Islam which became part of Muslim societies were the Arabic script and the Five Pillars. But the integration of these Islamic features was accompanied by the “localization” or “na-

tivization” of indigenous traditions. The Arabic was transformed scriptologically into the *Jawi*⁴⁸ which is not substantively intelligible to an Arab or even to other Muslim groups. The adherence to the Five Pillars, especially to the *shahada*⁴⁹ was mainly theoretical and the practical application of theological belief in terms of appropriate rituals was done through local customs and practices. In Sulu, for instance, Islamic worship and practice were wrapped up in the *kadja*⁵⁰ among the Tapul people, the *omboh*⁵¹ among the *Samals* and *Badjaos*, and the *tampat*⁵² which is observed generally by people in Sulu including Non-Muslims. Islamic ethics was submerged in *adat*, *tabiat*, and *martabat* which all involved proper etiquettes, customs, and courtesies.

In theory, one therefore finds Islamic influence and, in practice, one sees a continuous adherence to local beliefs and practices which are not Islamic. Since these local traditions tend to reinforce ethnocentrism along definite practices or norms of conduct, the integration of various ethnic groups and their unity can only be done by something external and by so dominant an influence as to compel independent cultural units to come together. This was what actually happened when American colonial superstructure based on strong militarism and American institutions brought various ethnic groups under one central control, including the Muslims. But American unity was confined mainly to the political organization of Muslim societies and American policy of religious toleration allowed Islam to remain as an important ins-

⁴⁸ *Jawi* is the script derived from Arabic and is found in Southeast Asia. Perhaps, in the Philippines it has a better prospect of survival among the Muslim societies of Mindanao and Sulu where it is used in preserving traditional genealogies.

⁴⁹ The *shadada* is the “First Pillar” of Islam.

⁵⁰ *Kadja* refers to an indigenous practice in Tapul Island, Sulu in which the devotees offer a sacrifice of white chicken, rice, and other food-stuffs in a mountain shrine. The purpose is to prevent *bala* (calamity) or *mulka* (curse) and to attain *pahala* (blessing).

⁵¹ *Omboh* is an animistic practice among Samals and Badjaos of Sulu. It consists of a small shrine located usually in one of the remote corners or areas of the house where certain things (a pillow, a small mat, strings, bones, and other sacred objects) are kept. Disturbances of the site or things means curse or even death unless counteracted by appropriate rituals.

⁵² *Tampat* is a small rock shrine located on a mount, near the shore or in the middle of the river or sea. The location is always on top or by the side of a huge weird-looking rock, or huge tree, or mount believed to be the habitation of spirits. It is common practice among natives of Sulu including even some marginal groups. Non-observation of rites before the shrines may mean *sakit* (illness), *busung* (a light curse) or *bala* (curse).