

REFLECTIONS ON THE MORO WARS AND THE NEW FILIPINO

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The people who inhabit the islands of the Philippine archipelago today are the products of a long historical development influenced by many alien rulers, each of whom tried to recreate the natives in his own image. In the process, not only the native, but his communities as well, became dislocated. Gradually he acquired identities that were at variance with one another. Despite attempts by alien rulers to form a unitary nation-state, and to create a unique cultural personality that later on was to be called the Filipino, the native and his society became a house divided unto itself. The Filipino identified with a multiplicity of groups external to his society; the Filipino society became atomistically split into many local groupings to which individual Filipinos remained loyal, to the exclusion of the nation-state.

The culture itself became a heterogenous gathering of many strains and influence from many sources. Each source was represented by a set of practices, values, and beliefs, but they co-existed rather than mixed and harmonized. Confronted by such variety, many Filipinos got carried away by the opportunities to identify with the rulers, acquired their presumed superior ways, and in the final analysis, alienated themselves from one another. This alienation was manifested in Philippine history by the Moro Wars, among others, and it affects, even up to this day, the full flowering of Philippine nationalism.

The Rise of Philippine Nationalism

In the middle of the 16th century, the central and northern portions of the Philippine archipelago were still sparsely populated and had political institutions incapable of coping with European conquerors.

Most of the people lived in settlements called *barangays*, consisting of from a few dozen families to about a hundred. These *barangays* were ruled by *datus* and they were politically independent from one another. Under this set-up kinship, social class, and local community were the abiding centers of loyalty.

In order to achieve their dual aim which was to Christianize the inhabitants of the archipelago and to extend the material domains of their king, the Spaniards started to conquer or pacify the different *barangays*. By the use of force as well as by persuasion, they succeeded in pacifying the central and northern portions of the archipelago, with the notable exception of the rugged mountain regions of northern Luzon inhabited by hardy Igorots. To better effect their administration over the pacified areas, and in order to facilitate the Christianization of the inhabitants therein, the Spaniards merged neighboring *barangays* into towns (*pueblos*) at a higher level. The colony was divided into provinces (under a governor called *Alcalde Mayor*), each province encompassing a number of towns. On top of the colonial administration was the Spanish Governor and Captain General.

Spanish colonialism thus laid the foundations for the emergence of the new Filipino nation. National boundaries were defined mainly for administrative reasons and so that the responsibilities of the colonial governor for a given territory could be fixed. Moreover, these boundaries were also needed to establish claims and work out accommodations with rival European powers. The foundation of nationalism was further strengthened in the creation of a more integrated socio-political organization that enabled the colonial administrator to establish centralized control over his domain. He had to maintain peace and order in his domain, collect taxes, and protect the interests of the Spanish empire. To achieve these ends, transportation and communication were improved, a national currency was established, and a rudimentary educational system was created. The result was easier and safer movement within the colonial boundaries both for government agents and for the native peoples, which in turn opened the door to the establishment of new and enduring social bonds. Finally, the very existence of a central administration for a defined region stimulated national consciousness, because the government brought a new focus of loyalty, pride, and

concept of community.

The emergence of nations is manifested by a widening sense of loyalty and community-consciousness. In order for a new national identity to emerge, the Spaniards saw to it that the loyalty of the *Indios* extended beyond the immediate bonds of locality and kinship. Such activities as *Indio* participation in the military affairs of the colony, as well as *Indio* participation in religious and cultural celebrations gradually broadened *Indio* loyalties and extended his sense of civil identity.

Subsequent events percolated by factors and forces internal to the colony, particularly the rise of a group of educated *Indios*, eventually created new aspirations, especially the demand for national autonomy. As a consequence, the colonial government ultimately became the target of *Indio* opposition and rebellion. This anti-colonial sentiment further stimulated national consciousness. The subsequent struggle for independence did not seek a return to the situation as it was before the Spaniards came. Rather, what the *Indios* sought was independence for that nation which was the creation of the Spanish colonial master.

The Moro Communities

Even before the coming of Islam to the Philippines in the 14th century, the chiefs of Jolo and Cotabato had already become more than mere *datu*s of local *barangays*. Their respective population centers were important trading places ran by organizations that were already supra-*barangay* in function. The process of Islamization then only accelerated the natural expansion of the *barangay* and in effect produced what some observers regard as an "Islamic variant" of the *barangay* type of society. It has been observed that the sultan, in spite of the Islamic facade of his position, was just a *datu* among *datu*s and, as has been historically studied, was not always the most powerful of *datu*s.

Islam gave a sense of community to those who embraced it, a consciousness of being part of an international brotherhood that transcended tribal, linguistic and even racial considerations. The coming of the Spaniards with the sword and the cross intensified Islamic activities to such a point that Islam emerged as a rallying ideology which, together with patriotism, served as a force against Christianity.

The vast majority of Muslims were never incorporated into the Spanish colony. For more than three hundred years, the relations between the Spanish colony and the Muslim communities would be characterized by hostilities (known as the Moro Wars), except in periods of intermittent truces. The rivalry and conflict between the two groups were very dissociative forms of interaction that pulled them apart while increasing the internal solidarity of each respective group.

The Moro Wars

The Moro Wars, as observed by Dr. Cesar A. Majul, could be divided into six stages.

The first stage, represents a struggle between Spain and Brunei for political and commercial primacy in the Philippine archipelago. At this stage, the Spaniards succeeded in destroying the Manila settlement and fort that was ruled by a Bornean aristocracy and in eliminating Bornean traders from the Visayas and Northern Mindanao. This stage ended with the Spanish attack on Brunei in 1578.

The second stage, covering about two decades, is characterized by the attempts of the Spaniards to establish a colony in Mindanao, reduce the rulers of Sulu, Maguindanao and Buayan into vassalage, prohibit these rulers from admitting Muslim preachers, and persuade them to accept Christian missionaries.

The third stage, covering the first few years of the seventeenth century, witnessed the contest between the Spaniards and an alliance between the people of Maguindanao and Buayan for control of the Visayas. In this phase, there was Iranun and Ternatean support for the Maguindanao sultan. This contest was decided in Spain's favor after her conquest of the Moluccas in 1606.

In the fourth stage, there was an acceleration of Spanish imperialistic expansion. In this phase, which started with the building of the fort in Zamboanga in 1635, the Spaniards decided to conquer the sultanates. In this effort the *Indio* was made to fight the Moro. The Spaniards adopted the policy of depopulating the Muslim areas — burning settlements, plantations, fields, and orchards, and enslaving the Muslim for the galleys. Lamitan, the capital of Sultan Kudarat, fell to the Span-

iards in 1637. The Sulu sultan's *cotta* in Jolo, defended by people from Makkasar and Basilan in addition to Tausugs and Samals, fell in 1638. The Tausugs retired to the interior of Jolo and other islands. The Maguindanaos and the people of Buayan also retired to the interior. The threat of Dutch attacks, combined with the possibility of Muslim retaliation on Spanish-controlled towns, led the Spaniards to make peace with Maguindanao in 1645 and with Sulu in 1646. Conflict broke out again between the Spaniards and the Maguindanaos in 1656 because of Spanish provocations in territories tributary to Sultan Kudarat. A *ji-had* against the Spaniards was declared by Kudarat who also called on the Sultans of Sulu, Ternate, and Makkasar to help drive the Spaniards out of Muslim lands. A bloody but inconclusive war ensued. However, in 1663, Koxinga's threat to Manila made the Spaniards abandon the Moluccas and Zamboanga forts. For about fifty years, there was to be relative peace between the Spaniards and the Muslims. The relative peace was again broken in 1718 when the Spaniards decided to re-occupy Zamboanga and fortify it. This period of history, according to Majul, demonstrated the fact that the Muslims were willing to keep the peace provided the Spaniards would leave them and their territories alone.

In the defense of their lands, the Muslims never had a standing professional army of their own. Each man was a citizen-soldier who was prepared to give his life in defense of the community. In describing the people of Sulu, Saleeby observed that in times of Spanish attacks, every able-bodied male was a soldier and a sailor. Thousands of Tausugs and Samals stood ready at a moment's notice to man a fleet or defend a fort. Every fort the Spaniards reduced, the Tausugs could rebuild in a short time; every fleet destroyed, they could replace with little expense, and a few months after defeat, they were ready to fight again, better prepared than before.

In Majul's observation, the fifth stage of the Moro Wars began with the re-fortification of the Zamboanga fort in 1718 and ended in the Spanish failure in the 18th century to reduce the Muslims to vassalage. It was during this stage that the Iranuns of Butig and the Maranaos of the lake area began their devastating attacks on the other parts of the archipelago, reducing the number of tributes for Spain coming from the

Visayas and causing a virtual disruption in the economic life of many islands under the Spanish colonial regime. The British invasion of the Philippines in 1762 and their subsequent capture of Manila dislocated Spanish colonial power and brought about a decline of hostilities between the Spaniards and the Muslims.

The sixth stage of the Moro Wars was deemed to have commenced with the Spanish campaign of 1851 against Sulu and ended only towards the end of Spanish rule in the Philippines. This stage also witnessed the decline of the Sultanates of Maguindanao and Sulu resulting from the operation of certain factors, major among them being the use of improved war equipment on the part of the Spaniards, and within the Muslim societies of Mindanao, institutional incapacity to respond adequately to increased and sustained Spanish military pressures. It was at this time that Sulu became a focus of European rivalry. The French wanted a naval base in Basilan in the 1850's and around the same time the English started to renew their 18th century trade agreements with Sulu. All these alarmed the Spaniards who concluded rightly that the presence of other rival European powers on their southern frontiers spelled danger to their hold on the Philippines. Using the piratical activities of some *datus* as an excuse, the Spaniards captured Jolo in 1851 and claimed Sulu as a protectorate. The Sultan of Sulu interpreted the resultant peace terms to represent merely a declaration of firm friendship between two sovereign powers, thus he acted as independently as before. The Spaniards, however, used the treaty as a legal document to prevent other rival European powers from entering into treaties with Sulu. To settle once and for all the issue of Spanish sovereignty over Sulu, a big expedition was sent to Sulu in 1876. The campaign was meticulously planned and public opinion was deliberately roused by Manila newspapers for its support. Many Filipinos made substantial contributions to the campaign. Towns subscribed to it. Even students enrolled in friar schools donated thousands of pesos. Consequently, on February 5, 1876, a strong Spanish force led by Governor General Jose Malcampo left Manila for Zamboanga where it was reinforced by volunteers from towns in the northern part of Mindanao. With about 9,000 troops and a fleet composed of ten steamboats, eleven gunboats and eleven transports, Malcampo reached the island of Jolo on February 21.

The resistance against the Spaniards was fierce, but eventually the *cottas* and deep trenches fortifying Jolo fell one by one, forcing the sultan and his loyal warriors to retreat to Bud Datu from where he coordinated many attacks against the Spaniards. The guerilla warfare that ensued against the invaders had tremendous popular support. Finally, on July 2, 1878, a peace treaty was entered into between the sultan and the Spanish government making Sulu some sort of protectorate of Spain while retaining a great deal of autonomy for the Sulus both in matters of internal administration and commercial activities.

Meanwhile in the Mindanao mainland, the Spaniards garrisoned the town of Cotabato in 1861. In 1871, Cotabato was made by the Spaniards as capital of Mindanao. A disastrous fire and earthquake hit Cotabato that year thereby prompting the Spaniards to move the capital back to Zamboanga. With the decline of the Maguindanao sultanate, many Iranun settlements in the Malabang area, began to look up to the Sultan of Ganassi in the lake area as their overlord. A last attempt to recover the ancient glory of the Maguindanaos was made by Datu Utto in whom the Spaniards saw the makings of a "second Kudarat." This desire, however, was short-lived because of a successful military campaign against him in 1886-1887 led by Governor General Emilio Terrero. As a result Datu Utto surrendered to the Spaniards and ended his life as a wealthy man — dedicating his energies to cattle-raising, farming, and collecting slaves.

Governor Valeriano Weyler tried to duplicate the achievements of Governor Terrero, but this time, in the Maranao area. In 1889, he ordered troops to land in Parang and Malabang and to reconnoiter near the lake area. In 1891 he finally presided over the attack against the Maranaos. Weyler divided his soldiers into two columns, one starting from the Malabang area to attack Ganassi while the second started from Iligan. After a series of bloody clashes, Marahui was occupied on August 19 in spite of strong resistance from the cotta of Datu Amai Pakpak.

Weyler finally terminated his campaign in September of 1891 without, however, actually conquering the Maranaos. But this was not the end of Spanish attempts to conquer the Maranaos. In March 1894, the Spaniards occupied Pantar, a few miles north of Marahui. In res-

ponse to this the Maranaos began to build additional *cottas*. On June 5, the *datus* of Ramin, Masiu, Taraka, and Rumayas, cooperated in the fortification of sections around the Agus River for their mutual defense. Guerilla warfare was conducted against the Spaniards, many of whom died in frequent ambushes. The Spanish reaction to all of these was to build additional fortifications while strengthening older ones. The first two months of 1895 saw the commencement of systematic Maranao attacks against the Spanish forts. On March, the Spaniards unleashed their final expedition against Marahui where they found themselves faced by a strong *cotta* under the personal command of the same Amai Pakpak whom they had encountered before. This *datu*, his son, twenty-three other *datus* as well as 150 other Maranaos, fell defending their *cotta*. The Spaniards lost two officers and sixteen soldiers while about twenty-one other officers and 176 soldiers were wounded. Although Marahui was occupied, it was under a constant state of siege because of sporadic Maranao attacks and ambushes.

Thus the Hongkong Revolutionary Junta declared that the Moros "are in reality our brothers who are also fighting for *their* independence." This was echoed by the Sultan of Sulu in 1898 when, upon being told about the fight between the revolutionists and the Spaniards, responded that what the Filipinos in Luzon were doing was nothing else but what the people of Sulu had been doing for the last three centuries. The separate political existence of the Moros was recognized in Emilio Aguinaldo's message to Congress on January 1, 1899, when he proposed that his government be empowered "to negotiate with the Moros of Mindanao and Sulu for purposes of establishing national solidarity upon the basis of a real federation with absolute respect for their beliefs and traditions." Earlier in 1898, the revolutionary government distributed a manifesto to various *datus*, proclaiming in effect that the Spaniards had tried to exterminate their common race, and spoke of "our ancient liberty," adding that it was the inexorable decree of "Bathala" to regain or attain them. The great Apolinario Mabini, in time, was forced to recognize that the Muslims of his time did not constitute an integral segment of the First Philippine Republic. Accordingly, upon his instigation, the Revolutionary Government in 1898, and the succeeding Republic in 1899, had to deal with the Sultan of Sulu as an indepen-

dent sovereign. And more than this, they had to deal separately with various *datus* as if these were without any suzerain.

On January 19, 1899, a few days before the inauguration of the Philippine Republic, Aguinaldo wrote a friendly letter to the Sultan of Sulu, calling him a great and powerful brother. The message stated that the Filipinos, after having thrown off the yoke of foreign domination, "cannot forget their brothers of Jolo to whom they are bound by the ties of race, interests, security and descent. . . . The Philippine Republic has resolved to respect absolutely the beliefs and traditions of each island in order to establish on solid bases the bond of fraternal unity demanded by our mutual interests."

During the Filipino-American hostilities, there were also many appeals for the Moros to join the fight against the Americans. The most eloquent among these appeals was the manifesto issued by General Mariano Trias on August 10, 1899, where he explained how the Spaniards tried to exterminate their common race. It mentioned that the Americans had now succeeded the Spaniards in their greed. The manifesto acknowledged the "legendary valor" of the Muslims and affirmed that among them and the revolutionists ran the same blood, that they stood under the same sun, that they breathed the same air, and that they were born and lived in the same soil united by the same aspirations of liberty and independence.

Whether the letters or manifestos of the Revolutionary leaders reached the Muslims or not was, in the final analysis, of no consequence. The Spaniards' studied use of Christian Filipinos to fight their wars against the Muslims for about three centuries, was showing its negative effects. Indeed the major effect of the Moro Wars on present day Philippine Nationalism has been dissociative rather than integrative.

Again, to accentuate what has been already mentioned at the beginning of this paper, the common man and his society became a house divided unto itself. The negative stereotypes that the Muslims and the Christians of the Philippines had for each other, was a regrettable result of the Moro Wars, and even today, these negative images still exist as a barrier against the eventual flowering of an all-embracing nationalism that would be meaningful to both Christians and Muslims in today's society.

Hopes

After numerous and false starts in their past, today's Filipinos should be involved in the challenge to form a new society with the end in view of correcting past deficiencies through the exercise of collective will. In this new society the Filipino should manifest his nationalism, not by a private definition of the nation and what it stands for, but by universalizing his concerns, and his acts, so as to embrace the entire collectivity and every part and segment of it. Thus, to be truly nationalistic the new Filipino must think and behave in such a way that his thought and action redound to everyone's benefit, or at least does no injury to anyone else, to any group, or to the entire society.

Nationalism, therefore, is to be involved in the affairs of the larger community, and to be concerned with the import of one's actions, or of others' actions. It assumes a common conception of the identity, the purposes and future prospects of the nation — it assumes a consensus. A nation comes into being not for its own sake but for the separate and collective interests of all its members. The existence of the nation promises for all, each according to his bent, the fulfillment of aspirations, but not fulfillment at the expense of another.

But to ensure this requires the supremest of efforts. The harmonizing of interests and the unraveling of conflicts must be made a part of the process of working out a consensus; this implies in turn, the existence of an active dialogue among the people, and between them and their leaders. Only through dialogue and consultation can consensus be achieved; consensus implies unity; and unity implies consensus.

National unity will be the foundation on which the new society will be built, for it will give rise to a consensus on the things that matter most to the nation. Thus we should first be united with one another — Christian with Muslim, lowlanders with mountain people, workers and employers, leaders and followers — on the issues that matter. They matter most that have to do with the material welfare and the cultural integrity of everyone. On these and other crucial issues, nationalism means to have a regard for the requirements of unity and the safety of the whole. In the final analysis, nationalism entails that one transcends the divisive and parochial demands of ethnicity, creed, social station,

and occupation, and move on to the universal concerns of all the people.

The formation of a nation and a state presupposes a spontaneous and universal decision of a people, converging on a common set of propositions, to come together, so as to accomplish together, what they could not otherwise separately accomplish.

In the task of nation-building, the new Filipino, after having gained insight into himself, can now proceed to recreate his identity. He has the unparalleled advantage of a rich fund of materials with which to do so: his historical experiences, his intimacy with the best of other cultures. A major effort, a revolutionary process, is called for — one that will wrench the Filipino out of his old status, and, someday, into a new status as the modern *Maharlika*. The *Maharlika* were the freemen of ancient times, who started out with such promise to accomplish great deeds, but were prevented from doing so by the dolorous advent of the alien rulers. In resuming where they left off, the new Filipino faces a brand-new task, for these are modern times where problems of survival and development are vastly much more complex, than in the simpler days of our ancestors.

In this task, let not the new Filipino think for a moment, that he can turn his back on what he was before, whether in his pristine life as a freeman, or in his life of bondage to other cultures. For part of the Filipino's primordial genius was in exploiting what lay in his reach and turning it to his advantage. The *Maharlika* of the future will be equipped with the puissance of European, American, South East Asian and Arabian civilization, for these have become a part of his armament, to use for his betterment.

In the spirit of re-sculpturing his identity, let the new Filipino think of using every one of his acts, in whatever sphere of his life, as a detail in the totality, the final product of the artists' effort. There may, indeed, be no final product for the act of creation is one of becoming, rather than one of terminating.

The identity of the new Filipino will take shape in the manner by which he dispenses justice among his fellowmen and in the way he orders his relations with them. It will take shape in the manner he relates to the larger community, to government and the state, and in

the manner these relate to him. It will take shape in the manner he joins others in participating in the affairs of the community; it will take shape in the manner he marches resolutely forward in the material improvement of his people and country. And finally, it will take shape in his actions and desire to see to it that material and spiritual advance does not become the monopoly of anyone or any group.

Reflections

While Spanish colonialism was busy laying out the foundations of the Filipino nation, the impact of historical events, particularly the Moro Wars, on the Muslim communities of the South, also resulted in conceptualization of a greater "Moro community" that would involve the meaningful participation, not only of the different Islamized tribes of the South, but also the participation of the non-Islamized ones. Opposition to Spanish rule gave the different peoples of the South common experiences, common aspirations, and a common enemy. The need for united resistance against the Spaniards was voiced out as early as 1603 when Buisan, the great father of a great son, assembled the datus of Leyte at Dulag, and impressed upon them the fact that only through concerted action would they be able to throw off the Spanish yoke. About twenty-five years later, his son, the famous Sultan Kudarat, sent an emissary to the people of Butuan, urging the creation of a united struggle and inciting opposition to the Spaniards there. The now-famous speech of Sultan Kudarat to the Maranao datus in the 1640's also followed the same logic. That this logic succeeded in permeating into the consciousness of the different tribal aggrupations can be manifested in the many instances of cooperation among the various Muslim tribes during their long war with Spain. The history of this confrontation is replete with many instances of Maranao/Iranun, Tausug/Maguindanao and Iranun/Tausug cooperation against the Spaniards. In all of these concerted ventures, the consciousness of belonging to a "greater Moro" community transcended linguistic and tribal boundaries. This enlarged sense of community consciousness can be considered as the embryonic stage of what ultimately would be verbalized by the Moro datus of the early 1900's as the "Moro Nation," the product of a long historical

development that took place separately from that of the "Filipino" nation of the 1900's.

Unfortunately, at different stages of history, the concept of nationalism had been expounded and defined by an articulate few. Thus in the political maneuvers of the 1920's, Filipino politicians succeeded in their campaign for the "Filipinization" of government offices. The fulfillment of Filipino aspirations at the expense of Moro aspirations was observed by many Americans of that period as morally illegitimate. It was pointed out that Filipino spokesmen for independence were inconsistent in that they advocated self-government and home-rule for Filipinos while they denied the same to the Moros. In order to be consistent, the campaign for "Filipinization" of government offices in the Christian areas should have been carried side by side with an accompanying campaign for "Moroization" of the offices in the Moro areas.

Throughout the long history of Spanish rule, the fact that they came from the same race was always recognized by both the Moros and the *Indios*. This ancestral affinity especially became prominent when the aspirations of both the Moros and the *Indios* ran parallel to each other during the twilight years of the Spanish rule. At this particular stage of history, both *Indios* and Moros were fighting for freedom against the same enemy – Spain. The awareness of a common beginning shared by both peoples also carried with it the regrettable knowledge that, somewhere along the way, the Spaniards had alienated two peoples from each other.