

## **AMERICAN PRESENCE IN MINDANAO: THE EVENTFUL YEARS IN COTABATO**

**Michael O. Mastura**

At the turn of this century, the United States joined the European powers in the colonial ventures overseas. Behind the American expansionist designs in the Pacific Islands and the Philippines was an outgrowth of the competition for empire traced to the events of the 1890's. Under these circumstances, the possession of the Philippine Islands as a U.S. tropical colony brought the Moros in contact with the Americans. But the ironic twist in that encounter has been that the repeated clashes between the American troops in Mindanao and the Moros gave publicity to the Moros as the "problem."

### **Two Faces of American Presence**

The outline of this paper is simple: the Spanish Government in the Philippines created complex dilemma for the Moros which was defined by the religious and politico-military conduct of affairs that the Americans inherited from Spain. The Moros absorbed that "problem image" but the Americans institutionalized that state of affairs in the reality of the "Moro problem." That image might best be qualified by two corresponding faces of American presence in Mindanao and Sulu. Interestingly, the idea that Mindanao as "the land of promise" derived from the American myth of the frontier as the promised land. What a promising land Mindanao must have appeared to the colonist who were taken by the alluring slogan: "Young Man, Go South!"

From one angle this conjures up the parallel of "the winning of the West" that lured American pioneers to seek adventure with the promises of abundance. Thus, early in his term the first Governor of the Moro Province, Gen. Leonard Wood, noted that what was needed in Mindanao was "an influx of such people as built up the West." Likewise, the District Governor of Cotabato, boasting about the great possibility of the valley, declared in 1907 that "all we need now is a few bustling Americans to go there to make it the most productive region in this archipelago."<sup>1</sup>

In another spectrum, Mindanao as a frontier resembled the Wild,

Wild West—a land of violence and lawlessness. Actually, one of the dangers in the Philippine Independence Question convincing even pro-independence American leaders like William Jennings Bryan was “the reputed menace of the war-like Moro to his more peaceful northern brother.” This appealed also as a convincing argument against independence, when played up in the press. In fact, complained one Filipino journalist: “certain American correspondents in Manila made names for themselves in the United States and gained notoriety in the Philippines by yellowing, inflating insignificant troubles or disorders in Mindanao and ‘shooting’ them to the Metropolis as horrible carnages, notoriety debaucheries and appalling massacres.”<sup>2</sup>

### Evolution of Administration of Moro Affairs

The march of events between 1898 to 1916 may be seen as the evolution of American administration of Moro affairs. As we view the relations between the Americans and the Maguindanao Muslims along the Moro Gulf to the Cotabato Valley we need to recognize one point. And that is, the official pattern of relationship which result from the American presence in Mindanao was variegated as the local conditions prevailing in each region. The American military strategy itself sharply differentiated the pattern of relations as follows:

First, operations under the Bates' Treaty in the Jolo Archipelago; second, operations on the north coast of Mindanao against hostile insurgents; third, operations on the south and east of Mindanao to reestablish good order and government, to regulate the intercourse between Filipinos and Moros, and to secure and maintain the confidence of the alien races inhabiting this section.<sup>3</sup>

The first American to set foot on Cotabato attempted to achieve the third strategy without much resistance. The initial efforts of winning over the confidence of the Chinese population complemented the regulation of intercourse between the Moros and the Christian elements in Cotabato. As the “Petition to the Provost-Marshal-General in the Philippine Islands” indicates, American contact with the Chinese element in Cotabato was made as early as May 28, 1899, or at least attempt was made to verify the state of affairs. In January, that year, the Spanish Government in the district had evacuated to Zamboanga. The petition described the condition:

To the end that the moral and material order of this community

might be preserved, there was organized a body of volunteer soldiers, under the command of a single officer, who, under the orders of the former chief dato, has rendered valuable services, to the great satisfaction of the community, which efforts are supported by the Chinese commercial interests through a monthly subscription, as they are the most interested in the subject by reason of their having established here their industries and commerce, owning property, etc., which represents a very large sum of money, and especially as they have in the district their families.<sup>4</sup> Clearly, the Capitan de Chinos through tact and competence tried to invite the American troops. It was to their business interest that the Chinese acknowledged as well the protection they received from Datu Piang who was a half-bred Chinese.

On February 1, 1900, the first visit was made to Datu Piang at his settlement, in Dulawan, by the American commanding officer and his men on the US gunboat *Panay*. Datu Piang peacefully and easily made friends with the American authorities. Thus, the Philippine Commission sent to investigate conditions succeeded in bringing about an orderly transition of control. As Daniel Williams noted in his diary of April 1, 1901, the Commission was greeted "by as heterogenous a crowd as imagination can conceive." Advised of the coming of the Commission the upriver Moro datos and their following came to Cotabato. It having been the initial American policy for military authorities to occupy merely "the role of counselors and arbitrators in Moro Affairs," no efforts was made to establish local government.<sup>5</sup>

The American authorities instituted between 1898 and 1903 a government by military districts. It became the principal business of the commanding officers to hear and decide complaints. As this procedure became cumbersome, it was decided on December 7, 1901, to organize a board of arbitration chosen by the Moros themselves to hear all such complaints of a purely civil nature. The policy of going among the people and allowing officers to go among them alone and unarmed became a feature of buying goodwill. The result had been satisfactory in Cotabato and the response can be gleaned from this account:

For the first three years or so the army got along very well with the Moros of the Rio Grande. From Cotabato and outposts at old Spanish forts and blockhouses, exploring parties travelled up and down the river, stopped at villages on the riverbank, and made

friends with Moros of high and low degree.<sup>6</sup>

Under the military administration, as the army was charged with maintaining communication lines, telegraph was extended from Cotabato to Davao during the same period. It was later connected to Tamontaka by telephone, then followed by Taviran, Kudarangan and Reina Regente. Significantly, during a hearing before the US Senate Committee on Philippine Problems on April 10, 1902, recommendation was made "for the extension of a road around the Lake Lanao to and across the divide to Parang which would be the base ultimately and commercial port for all southern Mindanao, the road to be extended to Cotabato." But it was not until 1937 that the main outline of the Mindanao highway was completed. From Cagayan a first class road connected Dansalan (Marawi) to Iligan; from Dansalan, a second road connected Cotabato via Malabang and Parang; from Cotabato, the road continued through the valley, across the Davao mountains to the Gulf. By 1938, there were in Mindanao and Sulu 1,092.9 kilometers of first class road, 1,115.1 kilometers of second class road, and 581.3 kilometers of third class road or a total of 2,789.3 kilometers of roads.<sup>7</sup>

### **Government of the Moro Province**

This brings us to the period between 1903 to 1919. Reviewing the historic sweep of changes in American Moro policy gives perspectives on the Government dilemma of today. A summary of past methods bears repeating here in part: The Americans looked at Moro Affairs as a form of administrative concern to admit the Moros as qualified members of a republican national organization. The Commonwealth faced it as problem of national identity, and placed the administration of Moro Affairs under the Department of Interior with a Commissioner of Mindanao and Sulu. The decision to abolish the Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes that had supervision over the special provinces was contained in the message of President Quezon to the First National Assembly on July 16, 1936, for reasons of fostering the social and economic development of the regions under that Bureau.<sup>8</sup> The Bureau was replaced by the Commission for Mindanao and Sulu.

As we gather from various reports and studies on the government of the Moro Province, it remains debatable whether its abolition in 1913 in favor of the Department of Mindanao and Sulu (1914-1919) was a step backward or forward in Filipino self-government as it related

to Moro affairs. At least, even as early as 1905, a Philippine Commission report perceived the complex problem as follows:

It was recognized that any effort in the direction of establishing government among the Moros must in the nature of things be tentative and experimental, and that in all probability it would be necessary subsequently to modify any government established. It was not deemed wise or just, except to the extent absolutely necessary, to impose upon them the system of laws and of administration of justice which was well adapted to the Christian Filipinos, but which must prove burdensome and odious to them.<sup>9</sup>

The Moro Act of 1903 (Act No. 787), therefore, instituted a government with a governor, a legislative council given broad autonomous powers, and created certain necessary executive offices. Likewise created was a constabulary force to be composed of Moros commanded by white officers, under the direction of an assistant chief of constabulary. Provision was also made for the establishment of a public school system. In addition, the Legislative Council of the Moro Province was specifically enjoined by the Philippine Commission "to enact a law which shall collect and codify the customary laws of the Moros."

Despite the special problems that Muslim Mindanao presented, Peter Gowing, an American scholar on Moro affairs, sees the shaping of American Moro policy as an extension of the policy formulated for the Christian population. Along with this common purpose, the Americans recognized as well Mindanao's economic potentials. As Theodore Friend has shown, the historical discussion of the Philippine Independence acts was centered "obsessively on American economic interests." In the process, according to Thomas Ralph, the development of Mindanao had been delayed by "Christian fears that substantial American investment might contribute to the alienation of that southern area from the rest of the Philippines."<sup>10</sup> And nowhere has the brutalizing effects of colonial policy manifested Christian colonization than in Cotabato even as the Americans charted the political future of Mindanao.

### **Early American Economic Policy for Mindanao**

A. *Moro Trade.* Over the centuries the Moros were masters of their own maritime trade. Noticeable decline in commerce for the Maguindanao traders began to affect Cotabato's economy towards the second part of the nineteenth century. In 1845 Sultan "Untong" Qudra-

tullah entered into a treaty with the Spaniards allowing a trading house at Cotabato to arrest the declining volume of business in the region. The American entry entailed a new commercial policy for Mindanao. In 1901, the Philippine Commission was informed that rice, coffee, guttapercha (rubber), almaciga and bees-wax were the major exports of Cotabato sent by the Chinese to Singapore. The volume that could be gathered was 500 to 600 piculs every two months with an aggregate of about \$150,000 (Mexican dollars). The Moro traders of the Pulangi dealt in guttapercha because they controlled the lands in which these trees grew. The Chinese were the ones who held the bulk of the trade because they maintained friendly relations with the Moros. An interview with Alejandro Dorotheo, a Filipino Christian resident of Cotabato, impressed the Philippine Commission in 1901 that the Filipinos kept little shops in the town.<sup>11</sup>

The Annual Report for 1906 of the Moro Province reflected that the commerce of the Cotabato district was still largely in the hands of the Chinese. The value of exports from the port of Cotabato amounted to \$83,600.00 for the past year. This accounted for the value of exports from the ports of Cotabato alone and did not include those from other parts of the districts as from Tamontaka via the south branch of the Rio Grande to other districts. At the close of 1906, the Government considered the establishment of a commercial boat on the Cotabato River, which was flat-bottom, stern-wheel affair drawing eighteen inches to two feet. Coastwise shipping seemed to have expanded by 1919 providing sufficient tonnage for the waters of Mindanao and Sulu.

Comparison of economic statistics under the Moro Province and the Department of Mindanao and Sulu represent a steady increase in the volume of exports. By 1911, Cotabato exports valued at ₱138,892.13 leaped to ₱391,135.78 in 1913, the year ending the term of the Moro Province. Department figures indicate that in the Province of Cotabato exports jumped from ₱448,800.39 to ₱760,426.42, owing to the expanded production of both food crops and cash crops.

The intention to protect Moro and other native inhabitants from unscrupulous businessmen was accented by the setting up of "industrial trading stations" in 1910 which had replaced the Moro exchanges. The Legislative Council also passed in 1913 an "Itinerant Traders Law" to protect the non-Christians from unscrupulous traders. The law obliged traders to secure license at the district governor level, thus relieving a

problem which had become particularly serious in the Cotabato and Davao districts. By an act regulating the trading system in the Department of Mindanao and Sulu passed in 1916 by the Philippine Commission, the Insular Government extended new "trading systems" to the regions lacking trade facilities.<sup>12</sup>

B. *Land Tenure System.* American land policy as effected in the Cotabato district began to take shape between 1905 and 1913. As illustrated by General Wood's recommendation at the end of his term to which his successor General Tasker Bliss agreed, in the Moro Province — Land should neither be homestead, leased, nor sold to individuals or corporation in those districts occupied by Moros or other non-Christian tribes, except on a certificate by the district governor that the land is actually unoccupied, or that being occupied, a satisfactory arrangement has been entered into between the native occupant and the would-be settler, purchaser, or lessee. A simple arrangement of this description will prevent the crowding out of natives and will do much, to give them a feeling of security, thereby tending to establish friendly relations with their white neighbors. Above all, it will help them to hold on to their present holdings to the extent authorized by the land law until they can be regularly surveyed.<sup>13</sup>

In a certain way the Wood and Pershing administrations resembled each other in their approach to the land problems. In General John Pershing's report for 1913, what General Wood anticipated is mentioned again:

The effect to fix Moros upon their land is a very important step toward their civilization and should continue until the head of every Moro family becomes settled down on land that will pass from father to son in perpetuity. When this is accomplished, there will be reasons to hope that the common individual Moro may eventually achieve industrial emancipation.<sup>14</sup>

Beginning in 1905 the Philippine Commission, by resolution, extended the application of The Land Act or portions thereof, as recommended by the Legislative Council of the Moro Province. The Act was effected in its entirety throughout Zamboanga, parts of Davao, the Lanao district, excluding that portion of the basin of the Lake. The provision relating to leases of the public domain was applied to the entire district of Cotabato, with the exception of the island on which the town of Cotabato, is situated, the island of Tamontaka, and certain

immediate areas about the forts of Reina Regente and Pikit, and in the island of Tawi-Tawi in the district of Sulu. The part of the Act relating to homesteads on the public domain was made applicable to the portions excepted in the districts of Cotabato and Davao, and the immediate vicinities of the town of Jolo and of Siasi, in the district of Sulu.<sup>15</sup>

If it was not complete physical isolation, transportation costs did much to handicap the surveys of land for registration under the Moro Province. In Cotabato, the district Governor distributed a few hundred blank forms, but white businessmen had challenged Maguindanao claims over the valley before many could register their lands. The Maguindanao farmers and other native inhabitants generally did not care much about the surveys for two reasons. First, because perhaps the Moros refused to come completely under the influence of the government, or on account of conflicting attitudes on the nature of the land system. The Moros adhered to the *pusaka* (ancestral) land tenure. Second, it seems instructive to keep in mind that the settlement of the Moros in severality was the ultimate aim but it was another question whether they were prepared for such a change in their condition of communal ownership.

And yet, General Pershing had perceived by 1910 some changes. As he explained it, "in the District of Cotabato conditions are entirely peaceful, as they have generally since American occupation, with the exception of the time (of) Datu Ali." In the main, he added, the Moros of this district "are less inclined to be nomadic than those of other localities," and that he believed that the time had come "when they may be induced to settle down permanently and occupy land in severality." In retrospect, the town sites survey of Dulawan, Dansalan, Parang-Parang and Cotabato were completed in 1908. By 1911 soil tests had been completed also which showed that the Cotabato Valley was well suited for hemp, rubber, coconut, sugar cane, rice, corn and sweet potatoes in that order; Pikit and its environs were found to be favorable for the growth of rubber trees. It was apparent, however, that American concern for individualizing land ownership did not catch on with the average Moro minds. As of 1913, or seven years after the extension of the provisions of the Land Act to the Moro Province, only the land of about 1,000 Moros was surveyed in the Cotabato District.<sup>16</sup>

Owing in fact to the length of time before lands could be accurate-

ly surveyed for registration the Moros defaulted in settling claims upon definite parcels of agricultural farms. Thus, when the Americans began a cadastral survey and introduced procedures for registering claims, the Maguindanaons lagged far behind in taking up disposable and alienable lands. This opened the avenues for speculations and land grabbing.<sup>17</sup> The survey party, instead of making definite arrangements for the non-Christian natives to protect their rights, merely gave these people verbal assurance that their rights would be protected. So that, according to Karl Pelzer, land grabbers exploited the fact that "the bureau of lands based priority of claim upon priority of filing instead of priority of occupancy."<sup>18</sup>

C. *Moro Dependency Economy*. In the development of agriculture in Cotabato the concern for land registration was a factor, but it was also tied to the problem of people. As in the pre-American period, the hold of the *datus* on the masses of the Maguindanaon people was a function of the dependency economy. The situation was put forward in the historical context of the anti-slavery question. The economics of "slavery" among Maguindanao *datus* traced its root to the *mangiaio* (raid) system during the Spanish period. As an "industry" slave-raid was the productive activity itself.

But the slave traffic had changed by the time the Americans intervened in Mindanao for it had become economically unsound. A shift in manpower needs may have been the cause for the new profitability of slave-holding. Describing the process, Maj. Lea Febiger, who was the commanding officer of the Cotabato district in 1902, had this to say:

The subject of slavery among the Moros is a difficult one to discuss, as the word does not define the condition that exists, and when it approaches slavery as understood by us (Americans) it has so many and indefinite side issues and ramifications that a white man can not grasp it. The so-called slaves, taken as a whole, are more like peons of the soil, vassals or serfs of feudal times. There is hardly a single follower of any *dato* that is not in his debt for money, supplies, or material advanced, and his vassalage is due to such debt.<sup>19</sup>

In more accurate terms the relationship was one of debt-bondsman.

At the start of the American period, the Philippine Commission found that about one-eighth of the Moro population were debt-bonds-

men. The Moros were estimated to number about 300,000 at the turn of the century but a 1903 census placed them at 250,000. In an interview, Datu Piang informed the Americans that in Cotabato not more than a quarter of the Maguindanao inhabitants were "slaves." There were of two categories: (a) those who were purchased from other slaveholders and (b) those who sold themselves for debt. Most of the slaves were held for \$40 to \$50 (Mexican dollars) for which they did all kinds of work in the field and in the house. Presumably an economically viable system was beginning to develop when the Legislative Council enacted on September 24, 1903 the anti-slavery act (Act No. 8).<sup>20</sup>

The difficulty in the way of the strategy that, hopefully, the abolition of slavery would lead to independent farming was that the Moro peasants had been cut off from access to direct credits which the dependency economy had been able to provide through the datu system. As it was, the Americans tried to impart individual industry and private acquisitiveness among the Moros in anticipation of getting them acquainted with the western economy. As titled properties, it was rationalized, land would turn into saleable and disposable commodity by individuals. The ironic twist was that the Moro farmer continued to occupy their traditional landholding through the datus; for, the novel element of banking system (as a capital source) was not introduced in the area until 1919. Where some favored the individual patents as opposed to communal ownership they proceeded to part with their lands or ended up mortgaging them rather than farm the area themselves.

Ill-prepared to participate in the new economic order, with its differing values and standards, the Moro sense of communal enterprise was lighted. As Datu Piang afterwards reflected:

From a situation simple, clear, understandable to us, set up by the first government, when all was moving towards order, contentment and happiness we were plunged into one of confusion, which began in disorder, and for thirteen years turmoil, chaos, tyranny has marked its every step.

By 1916 it was obvious that the change in the parameters of government control over Moro affairs was becoming complicated for the Muslims as it was not matched by political tutelage. But more comprehensible was the Christian Filipino policy of colonizing Mindanao as this had operated on the Moro land tenure system. Thus, Datu Piang complained:

. . . The Moro has witnessed many of the choiced parts of his country parceled out to (Christian) Filipinos.

Has seen the shrines where once his ancestors gathered in solemn worship now converted into pig-wallows or drinking shops—two abominations to the Moslem.

He has been pushed from his better villages and towns and these sites given over largely to (Christian) Filipinos.<sup>21</sup>

American responsibility for bridging the transition had called for certain wardship protectionism. For instance, in 1913 the Legislative Council passed Act No. 304 to prevent the Moros from unwisely disposing their land or other valuable holding "without the direct, written approval of the district governor." This cumbersome but necessary extension of government assistance in conveyances or transactions found its way eventually into Chapter II of the Administrative Code of Mindanao and Sulu.

Soon demographic considerations tinged the problem before the Moros could be firmly settled and acquainted with the capitalist economy. For example, drought in 1913 caused serious decrease in rice supply in other parts of the Philippines so that it was decided to bring homesteaders from the overpopulated parts of the country to Cotabato. Pursuant to 2254 Christian Filipinos were settled in the upper part of Cotabato. Five agricultural colonies were initially set up in Cotabato: Colony No. 1 at Pikit; Colony No. 2 at Silik; Colony No. 3 at Paidu-Pulangi; Colony No. 5 at Pagalungan; Colony No. 7 at Talitay; and in 1919, Colony No. 9 at Glan was established. Between 1913 and 1930 there was a total of 4,194 families of colonists and homeseekers or 19,441 immigrants. From 1930 to 1932 there had been 1,089 additional homeseekers who came to Cotabato.<sup>22</sup>

The foundation of traditional power structure was in itself undergoing changes by reasons of demographic factors. Jeremy Beckett argues that the datu may have accepted Christian immigrants on this account, "seeing them as potential followers and payers of tribute."<sup>23</sup> It may be further commented that in this fashion new economic relations impinged upon the dependency economy. The new patron-client relationship was showing its color in political terms as the changed situation had temporarily worked over certain factional

alliances that vied for Christian support. Traditional source of political and economic power was in itself accommodating ethnic expressions of social forces in order to achieve other goals. Thus, the subsequent assertion of ethnic or even cultural sub-nationalism is indicative of a political development which must await another investigation more than limited space here will require.

### The Clash of Interests

General Leonard Wood's statement quoted earlier to encourage exodus of immigrants to Mindanao had never been retracted by his successors. It was consistently articulated by American capitalists, Filipino nationalists, Government publicists, and other group interests. The dream of frontier prosperity in Mindanao and Sulu was nowhere more visibly exhibited than in the Cotabato Valley where American capitalists had given a keen interest.

Under Spanish rule, attempts to draw white European migrants was proposed in 1884. It was then thought that the government should make arrangements with the mail transport companies for the passage of European workers to Mindanao. In 1905, Wood made a similar proposal for immigration of white European workers who would homestead and be granted American citizenship once settled in Mindanao. The *Mindanao Herald* even reported that Wood had persuaded the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Manila, Jeremiah Harty to approach the Italian government about encouraging Italian immigrants to Mindanao to solve the labor problems.<sup>23</sup>

In 1907, General Wood informed the Governor of the Moro Province, Gen. Tasker Bliss, that a group of American businessmen had applied for a ten-year rubber concession covering the entire Cotabato Valley. But the Bliss administration opposed the move for fear that violent land disputes might erupt as "the Moros and Pagans have made no attempt at registration (of their lands)." Meanwhile, the "Filipinization" move under the Harrison administration had overtaken the plan. It was not until Wood's return in 1921 as Harrison's successor that the proposal for rubber plantation was revived. The light of publicity was once more thrown upon Mindanao, the only region under the American flag then where Para rubber grows.

Efforts of American rubber interests played into the hands of Congressman Bacon who in 1926 filed a bill separating Mindanao and

Sulu from the Philippines and reorganizing it into an unincorporated territory under the American flag. Reviewing the logic of the events at this time Howard Fry wrote:

The community of interests that had developed for the moment between separatist Moro elements and United States business interests was now made manifest by the declaration of support for the Bacon bill by Senator Hadji Butu of Sulu, a lead to be followed later in the year by ex-Representatives Ugalingan Piang of Cotabato, son of Datu Piang. It is reasonable to speculate that those Moros who favored separation were not only motivated by cultural consideration but also by the thought that the large-scale introduction of American capital would bring to the area a prosperity which it had never known before.<sup>24</sup>

The question of whether Christian Filipinos could govern the Moros would assume an important issue that the American business interests had played up. This is a point we shall return to later, as it affected the Independence Question.

Meanwhile, the Japanese workers who came peacefully and gradually since 1907 had caught national attention. The year 1926 saw charges brought against Japanese landgrabbing in Davao and it became a concern whether measures to stop Japanese economic penetration had to precede grant of Philippine independence. Upon investigation it was found that about 5,000 hectares or over 28 percent of the entire 106,000 hectares of cultivated land in Davao were under the direct control of the Japanese. The leading nationalist paper *The Independent* in its editorial of May 4, 1929, cautioned that "the legislative committee now visiting Mindanao has been made to realize without passion and to the full the magnitude of the Japanese menace." The Japanese colony had posed a threat to national security and it was then decided that substantial number of Christian Filipinos be settled in Cotabato to act as buffers.<sup>25</sup>

Beginning 1939, the Commonwealth government pushed anew the systematic colonization of South Cotabato through the National Land Settlement Administration (NLSA) created under Commonwealth Act No. 441. The resettlement of the Koronadal Valley in Cotabato by the NLSA was spearheaded by General Paulino Santos with the purpose of bringing excess population of Luzon and the Visayas to Mindanao. For this project, 200 Christian families were allocated each with twelve

hectares of farm land, the government providing financial assistance running to ₱7.5 million. Subsequent settlers came faster than could be accommodated so that the Land Settlement Development Corporation (LASEDECO) opened the Allah Valley settlement that spawned Cotabato post-war squatter problems.<sup>26</sup>

Coincident with the planned colonization in Cotabato a proposal came that the Commonwealth might as well settle the Jewish people from Germany and Austria. A Jewish contact of President Quezon wrote in 1940 from Oregon:

After you settle these (Jewish) people in your Commonwealth, I suggest you pass a law similar to that passed by Chile, South America, that foreigners can *not* settle in your Commonwealth. This would keep out the Japanese without insulting Japan.<sup>27</sup>

The president of the Jewish Refugee Committee would apply for the registration in the country of the Refugee Economic Corporation of New York as a non-stock Philippine corporation. Then, the National Development Company as the nominee of the Refugee Economic Corporation would acquire "leasehold interests of certain lands in Bukidnon which had been selected by the Committee as suitable for the purpose, such acquisition to be accomplished with money furnished by the Refugee Economic Corporation."<sup>28</sup> Only the outbreak of the second global war prevented the plans from being carried out. But the presence of a Japanese colony in Davao indeed posed the greatest problem during World War II.

### The Moro Question Again

The planned colonization of Mindanao, in particular Cotabato, paralleled the concern to dispel the views of certain American officials of the time that the Christian Filipinos and Moros were antagonistic elements. Since 1912 Filipino publicists addressed themselves to the Moro Question which was defined during this period by those who asserted that "the Christian Filipinos cannot establish a government of their own owing to the existence of "wild tribes"—the Moros included.

"Every year since the American occupation," Quezon argued in 1912 in *The Filipino People*, a nationalist organ.

there has been some kind of a warfare with certain Moro groups, and even during the past year there were several engagements between Moros and American troops, which resulted in loss of life

on both sides. A Philippine independent government can govern the Moros at least as well as the United States is governing them today, if not better.<sup>29</sup>

The Moros were kept under subjection through the American army which was not more than 7,000 strong. Quezon had argued that under a Philippine independent government a standing army of at least 30,000 troops could be supported out of which one-third could be placed in Mindanao to keep order among the Moros. But record shows that in 1930 the Constabulary strength in Mindanao and Sulu was 52 companies with 124 officers and 2,411 men. The troops were deployed for campaign activities between 1931 and 1935.

From 1919 to 1921 Filipino authorities in Manila took stock of their "filipinization" gains. According to Constabulary annals, 1922 was considered "a year of great unrest" and the year 1923 was one of much fighting in Cotabato, Sulu, and Agusan. But 1929 was "the quietest year in Moroland since 1916." Even the anti-independent Wood-Forbes Mission sent to investigate conditions in the Philippines could not help but report that public order was "excellent throughout the islands, with exception of minor disturbances in the Moro regions." The Moro outbreaks of the early 1920's was attributed principally to the hasty enforcement of the compulsory-school law and in part the failure to give the Moros adequate representation in local governments. Inasmuch as the problem of the Moros and their ultimate disposition entered into any question of Philippine independence effort was made during the Harrison administration to overcome or minimize this stumbling block. This was effected through vesting control and administration of Mindanao and Sulu on Filipino Christian officials. And it had the effect on the disarmed Moros of "what amounts to an absolute control by Christian Filipinos."

There was involved in the Moro Question a move on the American authorities to return to the earlier policy that required a special government for the Moros. Fears were presented that were the Christian Filipinos to govern the Moros minus American supervision, "an expensive and ruthless war, in which the Moros would be defeated without being eliminated as a serious problem of government would be quite possible."<sup>30</sup> Anti-Filipino Christian agitation was closely tied to the issue reflected both in the Wood-Forbes Report of 1923 and the Thompson Report of 1926 that "the Moros are a unit against independence."

Viewed from the perspective of the Filipino nationalists, a confidential report by Director Teopisto Guingona to President Quezon revealed:

All indications appear that the element of imperialism is playing its last card by using the Mohammedans as instruments to promote their imperialist designs. Using the "divide and rule" to arouse hostility and loss of confidence in Filipino Christians, Fletcher who married Datu Mandi's daughter connived with Datu Gogo, Tabujor Taupan, Arolas Tulawi, Hadji Tahil, Abdula and Ugalingan Piang, Amai Manabilang, Sultan sa Masiu and Datu Lawi.<sup>31</sup> Guingona reported further that during the carnival at Zamboanga on December 15-23, Mr. Alvarez, Chief of the Atkins Kroll & Co., made the Moro leaders sign at his residence a petition against independence and the separation of Mindanao and Sulu. More than one hundred had signed the petition. Worth mentioning were the Sultans of Maguindanao (Mangigin, Hadji Panglima Nuño, Datu Sakaluran, Maharaja Habing, Abdula Piang, and Datu Benito). The group led by Abdula Piang from Cotabato paraded with playcards opposing independence. Datu Piang and his son Abdulla and Ugalingan were working for the Americanization of position of responsibility against independence.

There was an organization of Muslims, the report added, under the protection of the imperialists called "Sarikatul Islam Association" which aimed to unite a major number of Muslims as possible. There was actually a tendency to associate the unrest among the Moros to the developments taking place in the Muslim countries. Thus, a Constabulary report indicated:

1922 was a year of great unrest—and preparation. Moro pilgrims returning from Mecca, the Holy City of Mohammed, brought back reports of a return to power of the Moslem nations. Based on the fact that Turkey had forced a revision of the Versailles Treaty to regain the territory first given to Greece, the establishment of autonomous Arab nations in the Near East and the growing power of the Moslems in India, exaggerated reports stirred the Moros throughout Mindanao and Sulu.<sup>32</sup>

Given this mood of the period it was not of little consequence that the Moro enrollment declined and that certain Moro leaders had lost confidence and respect for the government and the Filipino Christians in power. The most surprising thing about it is that as Wood wrote a

friend he tried Filipinos to govern the Moros but with one exception they had all proven failures. The exception, he said, was in Cotabato, "where the Filipino Governor (Capt. Dionisio Gutierrez) has done fairly well, due largely to the vigorous support of old Datu Piang." Thus, the relative peace and order in Cotabato contrasted sharply with other Moro provinces. Thomas notes that various factors in Cotabato contributed to these circumstances but the Maguindanao Moros were pro-American and they felt greater pressure from Christian immigrants than did the Maranaos or Tausogs. Gumbay Piang, for instance, saw that the colonization would operate against the Moros.<sup>24</sup>

There is evidence that in response to what was considered an excitement of "merely secondary character" and which in a way affected "the sentiments of adhesion and loyalty of the Moros to the government and to the Christian Filipinos," the nationalist leaders released a counter-petition by Gulamu Rasul of Jolo, Sultan sa Ramin Alonto of Lanao. *The Independent* issue of July 17, 1926, published a document entitled "Our Moro Brothers Want Independence," in which the signatories protested "against the allegations published . . . to the effect that we are enemies of the Christian Filipinos and that we would never submit ourselves to a government managed by them." During the hearings before the Committee on Territories and Insular Affairs of the US Senate on February 24, 1930, these documents became Exhibits of contention purporting to present the views of the Moro population on the Philippine independence question.

In general, it seems more likely that the politics of the Moro leaders was to play up to the men in power. Typical of this situation was an interview of the associate editor of the *New York Times* with Datu Piang in January, 1926. The old man accordingly wanted to know why American capital did not come to Mindanao. Incidentally, he also expressed his views on Filipino politicians, but they could not be printed without exposing him to possible violent vengeance at their hands. But by 1934 Datu Sinsuat Balabaran who had placed himself in the pro-independence group of Alauya Alonto and Facundo Mandi of Zamboanga was appointed senator, replacing Sultan Jamalul Kiram of Sulu.

Seen in another perspective, writer Maximo Kalaw has recorded the story about some Moros who expressed confidence in Christian Filipinos but told Americans their expression of distrust. In 1931 Director Lodovico Hidrosollo had accompanied some Americans to

Mindanao and on one occasion the Moro datu told the Americans that they did not want the Christian Filipinos to rule them, and they wanted the Americans to remain in Mindanao. Later on when one of the Moro Datus realized the presence of the Director, he invited Hidrosollo to a private corner. When they were out of hearing of the Americans, the Moro datu said: "Well, Director, don't mind what we said in our speeches. They are for American consumption."<sup>25</sup>

Anyway, with the inauguration of the Commonwealth, a government of the Moros by Filipino Christians was realized. Mindanao solons felt themselves a useful and responsible unit of the national government. In appraising the changed situation under the Commonwealth, Assemblyman Ombra Amilbanga reported that measures affecting Mindanao and its inhabitants were referred to and decided by the Committee on Mindanao and Sulu. What was more positive was that "most of the legislative projects for the development of Mindanao and Sulu have been conceived and sponsored by these representatives of the southerners." To give equitable political authority, the Assembly also empowered the President of the Commonwealth to appoint the acting provincial governors of non-Christian provinces whenever the governor proper was incapacitated or unable to perform his duties.<sup>36</sup>

Cotabato's governor remained appointive until after World War II. Under the Commonwealth, Col. Dionisio Gutierrez was retained to the post, and it is well to end this section with what he wrote in 1932:

Not infrequently people make the remarks that the Province of Cotabato is out-of-the-way that there are many mosquitos and crocodiles, and that there are no roads and facilities of communication and transportation. These talks are already things of the past. For instance, it is true that in the lakes and deep streams in the interior regions there are many crocodiles, but out of the skins of these reptiles are beginning to have profitable industry. A representative of the well known Tropic Export Company, Inc., of New York, buyers of reptile skins, was here recently and bought and exported for his Company, during the last six months, from this Province to New York, 12,243 pieces of crocodile skins.<sup>37</sup>

Then, he wittingly conclude: "This simply shows that even things that are feared in this province are valuable and profitable. Therefore any

bugaboo that uninformed capitalists shun here may be a blessing in disguise.”

### Conclusions

A pattern of Spanish peaceful penetration gradually integrated into the American government methods of control over Mindanao and Sulu was the colonization scheme. The pattern it has established for Cotabato was determined by the following points:

(1) In many respects, American Moro policy took over from the Spanish Moro policy by providing practical solutions to the problem of placing Mindanao and its inhabitants under government control but at the same time bringing its non-Christian elements into contact with Western civilization and culture. The action of the government was justified as “an experimental and probational period” of reconciling sectional conflicts.

(2) The colonization of Mindanao, even as it was linked to the Philippine Independence Question, was an experiment in colonial administration technique to achieve law, order, and development. Cotabato offered the necessary ethnic distribution that would put a Filipino government into better position to govern the Moros than the American authorities;

(3) In large measure comparability of the degree of shifting patterns of leadership became an index of Moro responses to structural rearrangement in Mindanao. The thrust of Moro-Christian leadership coalition in the relocation of responsibilities from one government level to another proved in Cotabato how the Moros would stand participating in national life and the future of the Republic.

(4) Moro sub-nationalism may have reached the same level of intensity as the nationalist aspiration had the Americans continued to control Moro Affairs independent of the Filipino politicians. Moro political consciousness did not begin to intensify until after they produced a generation of educated class. Moro cultural sub-nationalism was encouraged by capitalist interests.

NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Citation on Wood is taken from the *Report of the Governor of the Moro Province* (1904), p. 23, also quoted in full in Peter Gowing *Mandate in Moroland* (Quezon City: 1977), p. 126; for the quotation on Cotabato see statement attributed to Major A.B. Foster in *The Mindanao Herald*, November 23, 1907.

<sup>2</sup>See Alfredo V. Veloso, "The So-Called Mindanao Problem Inside Out" in *Graphic*, January 14, 1928.

<sup>3</sup>*Annual Report of the Commanding General, William Kobbe* (Zamboanga 1900) in Appendix of Annual Report of Major Gen. Arthur McArthur (Manila: 1900).

<sup>4</sup>*Report of the Philippine Commission* (Washington Government Printing: 1901), III, see section on "Interview of the Commission with the Capitan Chino and other Chinos." Hereafter, RPC.

<sup>5</sup>Report of the Commanding Officer, Cotabato, Lea Febiger, June 4, 1902 in *Department of South Philippines* (1902), p. 522-529, see also Daniel Williams, *The Odyssey of the Philippine Commission* (Chicago: 1913). Hereafter, *Febiger Report*.

<sup>6</sup>Horace Hobbs, *Kris and Krag: Adventure Among the Moros* (privately published 1962), p. 118.

<sup>7</sup>Data culled from Juan Sabares, "The Conquest of Mindanao" in *Commonwealth Fortnightly*, pp. 4-5; also Marcial Kasilag, "In Mindanao Lies Our Hope" in *The Commonwealth Advocate*, (October, 1938), pp. 9-12. Mindanao to date has 39,644 kilometers of roads, 195 public ports, 23 national airports.

<sup>8</sup>See Quezon to Apolonio Curato, July 28, 1936 in *Messages of the President* (Bureau of Printing, Manila: 1938), p. 211; also "Message to the First National Assembly on Abolition of Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes" (July 16, 1936), p. 200.

<sup>9</sup>*Report of the Philippine Commission* (Washington: Government Printing, 1905), p. 21.

<sup>10</sup>Cf. Gowing, *op. cit.*, Theodore Friend, *Between Two Empires: The Ordeal of the Philippines, 1929-1946* (Yale University Press: 1965), Ralph B. Thomas, *Muslim But Filipino: The Integration of Philippine Muslims, 1917-1946*. Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis (University of Pennsylvania, 1971).

<sup>11</sup>Data gathered from "Interview of Commission with Certain Filipinos at Cotabato" and "Interview of Commission with Dato Piang, Cotabato," dated April 2, 1910 in *Report of the Philippine Commission*, *op. cit.*

<sup>12</sup>This paragraph and the preceding paragraphs are culled from Gowing, *op. cit.*; also *Report of the Department of Mindanao and Sulu* (P.I. 1914) (Washington Government Printing: 1916). *The Mindanao Herald* (August 20, 1910) particularly "Exports of Moro Province."

<sup>13 & 14</sup>Gowing, *op. cit.* pp. 224-225.

<sup>15</sup>Colonization acts subsequently systematized public land settlements of Mindanao beginning 1913. In 1927, Assemblyman Briones of Cebu introduced a bill (No. 2091) "for the establishment of Public Land Settlements, for the creation of a reimbursable fund for the promotion of agricultural pursuits upon the said settlements." The settlements created under this act was to be established only on the Island of Mindoro.

<sup>16</sup>See my own "A Short History of Cotabato City and Its Historic Places" in *Cotabato City Guidebook*, edited by Simeon F. Millan and Potenciano Alino (Gen. Santos City: 1979, pp. 16-17. Gowing, *op. cit.*

<sup>17</sup>The Cotabato squatters problem in post-war years has not been reviewed but is partly explained by Felix Maramba, "Mindanao" in *The Philippine Yearbook 1951-1952*, p. 44. This is also a point raised by Jeremy Backett, "Datus of the Rio Grande de Cotabato Under Colonial Rule" in *Asian Studies* (April-August-December, 1977), p. 59

<sup>18</sup>Karl Peltzer, *Pioneer Settlement in the Asiatic Tropics: Studies in Land Utilization and Agricultural Colonization in Southeastern Asia* (New York: American Geographic Society, 1948), p. 142.

<sup>19</sup>Febiger Report, p. 526.

- <sup>20</sup>See Interview of the Commission with Datu Piang in RPC, *op. cit.*
- <sup>21</sup>Datu Piang to the President of the United States, March 28, 1928, copy available in my collection.
- <sup>22</sup>See *Yearbook of the Philippine Islands, 1930* edited by Cornelio de los Reyes (Manila: 1930); also Nicasio V. Garces, *Cotabato Emigration and Settlement* (Manila: 1933), p. 21.
- <sup>23</sup>Wayne W. Thompson, *Governors of the Moro Province: Wood, Bliss and Pershing in the Southern Philippines, 1903-1918*, Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis (University of California, San Diego, 1975), pp. 111-119.
- <sup>24</sup>For an excellent discussion the Bacon Bill see Howard T. Fry, "The Bacon Bill of 1926: New Light on an Exercise in Divide-and-Rule" in *Philippine Studies* (Third Quarter, 1978), pp. 257-273.
- <sup>25</sup>For a more detailed discussion, see Grant K. Goodman, *Davao: A Case Study in Japanese-Philippine Relations* (Lawrence, Kansas: Center for East Asian Studies, University of Kansas, 1967); also Thompson, *op. cit.*, 151.
- <sup>26</sup>An interesting review of the career of 38 of the original settlers is Maria Elisa S. Munda, *The Socio-Economic Changes in the Lives of the Original Settlers of Koronadal Valley and Their Implications for Social Welfare*, unpublished M.A. Thesis (Philippine Women's University, 1970). See also article by Josefa Jara-Martinez, "A Social Welfare Program for the Koronadal Valley Settlement" in *Fookkien Times Philippines Yearbook, 1978* (Manila), pp. 334-338. Miss Munda is the granddaughter of General Paulino Santos; Dr. Martinez visited the settlement in 1939.
- <sup>27</sup>S.E. Sabin to President Quezon, March 4, 1940 in *Quezon Papers*, Box No. 139.
- <sup>28</sup>Alex Frieder to President Quezon, March 9, 1940 in *Quezon Papers* Box No. 139.
- <sup>29</sup>Quezon took this stand on the Moro Question which was published in *The Filipino People* (October, 1912) at a time when there were still few Christian

migrants to Mindanao. It was estimated at this time that there were 6,987,686 Christian Filipinos as against 647,740 non-Christian population, the more numerous being the Moros who were 277,547.

<sup>30</sup>Ralph Hayden, "The United States and the Philippines—A Survey of some Political Aspects of Twenty-Five Years of American Sovereignty," in *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* (1925), p. 28-29. Decrease was noted annually in the attendance of children of non-Christian tribes as reflected in the *Yearbook of the Philippine Islands*, 1930: 1922-23 - .77%; 1923-24 - 6.77%; 1924-25 - 9.53%; 1925-26 - 2.70%; 1926-27 - 6.30%. This implies some correlation between the alienation of Moro students from the public school and the political alienation of the leaders.

<sup>31</sup>See Teopisto Guingona, *Confidential Report to President Quezon* dated January 25, 1924 in *Quezon Papers*, Box No. 158. Guingona was designated Technical Consultant of the Committee created by virtue of Concurrent Resolution No. 25 of the Philippine Legislature and made his trip to Mindanao beginning December 10, 1923. He visited the provinces affected by the so-called "Moro Problem" namely, Zamboanga, Cotabato, Jolo, and Lanao. He visited to colonies of Pikit, Cotabato.

<sup>32</sup>Harold H. Elarth, *The Story of the Philippine Constabulary* (Los Angeles: Globe Printing Co., 1949), p. 121.

<sup>33</sup>The Wood statement is quoted by Thomas *Muslim But Filipino*, *op. cit.*, p. 103, from Wood's letter to Gen. James Harbord, August 10, 1925; also see p. 240.

<sup>34</sup>For excerpted portions of Datu Gumbay Piang's speech, see Thomas, *op. cit.*, pp. 132-133.

<sup>35</sup>Maximo Kalaw, "The Philippine Question" in *Philippine Social Science Review* (September, 1931), particularly the chapter on "The Moro Bugaboo," p. 375.

<sup>36</sup>See Datu Ombra Amilbansa, "The Mohammedan Filipinos Under the Commonwealth" in *Philippine Yearbook* (November, 1936), pp. 116-119.

<sup>37</sup>Dionisio Gutierrez's Preface to Garces' *Cotabato Immigration and Settlement*, dated August 10, 1932. He was at the time the incumbent Governor of Cotabato.

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University Research Center  
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P.O. Box 5594  
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