

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

One of the modern concepts in history today is that history is the study of the present in the light of the past. In the words of Edward H. Carr, "Great history is written precisely when the historian's vision of the past is illuminated by insight into the present . . ." Thus, in history there are no present answers to the present questions. All knowledge is a past knowledge or a re-interpretation of past experiences. To live absolutely in the present is to know absolutely nothing.

In Lanao today, the questions most frequently asked are: why and how did Lanao happen to have literally hundreds of sultanates instead of one? Very often, announcements regarding the enthronement of different sultans in various places in Lanao are seen on streamers and billboards or heard over the radio. The activity becomes too common in the social life of the Maranao. In effect, the enthronement of a sultan every now and then indicates the mushrooming of sultanates in Lanao. The number of sultans and sultanates in Lanao far exceeds the overall total of sultans and sultanates in the world. With the presence of these numerous sultanates, Lanao could appropriately be described as the "Land of One Thousand and One Sultans." How did this happen?

There is no immediate answer to the question. Scholars on Philippine Muslim studies have overlooked this important aspect of Maranao history, culture, society and institutions. A few studies on Lanao sultanates are anthropological and sociological in approach. They do not answer the questions why and how. To the Maranaos, the issue is taken for granted. Many of them just assume that all sultanates are the same. A study of one sultanate presupposes a knowledge of the others.

Some documents available mention the existence of multiple sultanates in Lanao. But western colonial writers failed to offer explanations. What is commonly known is that both the

Iranuns and the Maranaos recognize no supreme authority, be it an outsider or an insider. No one sultan yet ever controlled or restrained the Maranaos, just like the Iranuns (B & R: vol. 48, 172, no. 99) who were under many petty, autocratic princes (B & R: vol 49, 29). There was some talk, however, among geographers "about the existence of an Illanun confederacy, but in actual fact this was not a body-politic but a vague mutual-defense agreement in case of external attack" (Ileto: 1971, 30). Thomas Forrest also mentioned that the Iranuns were under sultans and rajahs who were "a sort of feudal chiefs" (Forrest: 1969, 174) or "a sort of independent chiefs" (Forrest: 1969, 272). Najeeb Saleeby confirmed these observations in the early 1900's when he wrote that:

. . . The large majority of the Moro sultanates are, however, small, and have never been fully numbered or described. They generally represent small divisions of territory and subdivisions of tribes, each under one chief who calls himself sultan or datu . . . Indeed, all the Moros of Mindanao, except the Iranuns (and the Maranaos), were at one time under one influence and were brought under the sole control of the sultan of Mindanao (Saleeby: 1905, 51-52).

When the Americans came, they saw only confusion and anarchy. "Nothing, not even pandemonium, could be said to reign in such disorder," wrote District Governor Robert L. Bullard of Lanao in 1906. "An infinity of chiefs called dattos . . . divided a fine country (Lanao) into many minute sovereigns and independent followings, of uncertain jurisdiction as to persons, places and things" (quoted in Gowing: 1977-335).

In his 1906 Annual Report, Brig. Gen. Tasker H. Bliss indicated that the "(Maranaos) are unwilling to acknowledge the supremacy of any one man, but prefer to maintain their individual independence." Bliss further went on to say that they had "no dis-

position to unite” (Bliss: 1906, 29).

Likewise, the *Fourth Annual Report of the Philippine Commission, 1903* (ARPC) reported that the Maranaos “were broken up into small tribes governed by petty chiefs, or dattos, as they were called, more or less jealous of and hostile toward each other, but all inclined to make common cause against the foreign intruder” (ARPC, 1904, Part 1, 7). Furthermore, this Annual Report stated that:

The population was found to be under the government of a multitude of petty dattos, the greatest of whom could scarcely muster 1,000 men. Each of them had with his following built a fort, called “cotta”, of more or less strength, in and around which he and his followers lived and within which they took refuge when attacked or threatened. All of them indulged for generations, perhaps for centuries, in petty feuds and tribal wars each against the other, so that there was no man among them who had any extensive authority or moral force (ARPC: 1904, Part I, 8).

In his study of the Moros in the Philippines, Edward Kuder wrote that the Maranaos had been the most divided of the Moro groups politically. The same observation was echoed by anthropologist Melvin Mednick in his study of the Maranaos. According to Kuder, states or settlements and titles listed by Forrest still existed in 1941 and let me add until now, “with names almost unchanged. Every community now as then has its own native political head (a datu or sultan) with its coterie of other native headmen and the traditional officials” (Kuder: 1945, 125-126; see also Mednick: 1965, 241-242, n. 1).

The point here is that all these reports mentioned the existence of many sultans, each sultan being independent from one another. There was no mention of any one ruler/datu/sultan ruling the entire Lake Lanao region, or the recognition among

them of any supreme ruler/sultan. Neither were there explanations why, except probably for the clue from Gen. Bliss' report quoted above. In fact, the "pretty feuds and tribal wars" could have been the opportunity for one sultan to rise above the others as what had happened in the Dutch Java and British Malaya from the 17th to the 19th centuries. That is, in almost all cases, there was to be one petty state (kingdom, sultanate) that would rise to dominate other petty, independent states; but not in Lanao. This claim is supported by the statement quoted earlier that there was "no man among them who had any extensive authority or moral force" to do so.

This writer disagrees with the use of the term "tribal wars" in Lanao. Tribal wars involved two or more tribes engaged in wars. The Maranaos are considered one tribe or more precisely an ethnolinguistic group and, as much, they are homogenous.

There is also a possibility that there might have been some sultans who attempted to dominate the others. This possibility cannot be easily dismissed for it is quite difficult to historically prove or disprove it. However, granting that there were attempts to do so, why did these attempts fail in Lanao and yet succeeded in other areas?

To answer the questions of why and how, it is necessary for us to go back to history. There must be some explanations of all these, if not in history, perhaps in oral traditions. Although there are more questions in history than answers, at least the questions provide some clues and challenges. Both Herodutus and Robin G. Collingwood asserted that history is a kind of research, inquiry, or investigation and that the historian or any student of history is more interested in the things he does not know; that is, going into the *tierra incognita*.

It is in the context of all these past and present problems that this study intends to accomplish the following aims and objectives : 1) To historically reconstruct the evolution of these multiple sultanates in order to discover the reasons why and how Lanao happens to have so many sultans and sultanates with

the hope that both the Maranaos and non-Maranaos alike shall understand this particular Maranao socio-political and territorial institution; 2) To place the sultanates of Lanao in their proper historical perspective along with other Philippine sultanates; 3) To contribute something to the growing knowledge, interest and better understanding of Muslim history in general and Maranao history in particular; 4) To help shape the perspectives of those people who are involved in the national and regional policy-making decisions concerning the interests and amelioration of the Maranaos and towards the attainment of national body politic; 5) To see the problems and prospects of the sultanates today in the light of the changing world; 6) To preserve and strengthen this particular aspect of Maranao institutions; and 7) To inform the general reading public about it with the hope of developing a better understanding and enlightened appreciation of the Maranaos' indigenous culture.

In this study, both library works and field interviews were used. The former included visits to some selected college and university libraries and archives, research centers, historical collection libraries of the different embassies and museums. Both primary and secondary materials available and accessible in the Philippines were explored. This means that historical methodology was used together with other methodologies from sister disciplines especially anthropology. Primary sources were given top priority but secondary sources were likewise utilized.

However, we have to take into consideration that primary sources, especially during the Spanish period, are very meager on the Lake Lanao region. The Spaniards who failed to even temporarily occupy the region had recorded nothing of historical significance. Moreover, the Maranaos themselves had no historical sense of recording their own past. But during the American period, the Americans had occupied portions of the region and reports based on their own observations, contacts and dealings with the Maranaos. These sources are found in the National Library and the Historical Collection Library of the U.S. Embassy

in Manila. For the Commonwealth period, the Quezon Papers are available in the National Library. From this period onwards historical records are quite in order.

For field interviews, the study used the oral historical methodology relying extensively on oral traditions provided by oral authors (genealogists or *pananalsila* in Maranao). Coupled with these traditions are the written genealogies (*salsila*). Inasmuch as every Maranao family has a royal genealogy which can be traced back to the founding fathers of the *Pengampong* (the traditional socio-political organization and territorial divisions of the present-day two Lanao provinces), random representative genealogies shall be presented only as a basis for analysis especially in approximately dating the founding of the said *Pengampong*. It must be noted that generally the Maranaos have no sense of historical dates and events.

In the area of field research, problems were encountered. First, the use of oral history which is well developed in the western world is relatively recent in the Philippines and its recentness has yet to be widely accepted by orthodox and conventional Filipino historians. Attendant to this problem is that oral historical methodology is mainly dependent on Jan Vansina's *Oral Tradition: A Study in Historical Methodology* (1961) and David Henige's *The Chronology of Oral Tradition: Quest for a Chimera* (1974). Second, the inaccessibility of some genealogies which are considered to be "sacred" (this will be explained later). Third, the researcher's decision whether to pay or not the oral authors to obtain information. Related to this item is the credibility/reliability of the informants/interviewees. Fourth, the attitudes of people towards research; that is, they claimed that usually nothing comes out concrete for them to see after the research. This is compounded with the fear or apprehension that the results of such research may be used against them or to exploit them. Fifth, some areas are not accessible due to the all-year-round rains, no electric lights throughout the province except Marawi City and the municipality of Saguiaran, and the problem of irregular and

limited transportations coupled with poor road conditions. Sixth, there is this difficulty, a next-to-impossible task, to reconcile or integrate colonial with the indigenous source materials. And seventh, the problem of the unpredictable and unstable peace and order situation in the area.

Nevertheless, the data gathered from both library works and field interviews were used to historically reconstruct the origin, evolution and development of the multiple sultanates of Lanao. This work then is the first of its kind to attempt to study and write the history of the mushrooming of Lanao sultanates, or the *Pengampong*.

Furthermore, this study used several but general factors for the analysis of these multiple sultanates, namely: 1) Geographical location/isolation; 2) The Pengampong concept; 3) Islamization; 4) The "Triple One" concept; 5) The non-standardization of the *taritib*; 6) The "Yellow Head" concept; 7) Population distribution; 8) Trade and Commerce; 9) The presence or absence of the Divine Kingship concept; and 10) Presence or absence of colonial powers.

The approaches were comparative, analytical and interdisciplinary.

The two Lanao provinces (Lanao del Sur and Lanao del Norte), the traditional home-provinces of the Maranaos ("People of the Lake" or "Dwellers") were the target area of this study (see maps at the end of this chapter).

During the Spanish period, Lanao was under the military district of Cebu but when Cagayan de Misamis was created as the second military district of Mindanao, the administration of Lanao was transferred under it. During the American regime when the Moro Province was created for administrative purposes in 1903, Lanao along with Cotabato, Davao, Zamboanga and Sulu became a district. Later, it was converted into a special province under the Bureau of non-Christian Tribes, a division of the Department of the Interior. It continued to be administered as such until its division into two in May/June 1959.

The 1980 national census and statistics provided us with the following data (1980: 43-45): Lanao del Norte with a land area of 3,092 sq. kms. had a total population of 461,049. This gives us a population density of 149.1 persons per sq. km. With Iligan City as its capital, the now predominantly Christian province (*Ibon: 1981, 6* reported only 35.6% Maranaos) consists of 22 municipalities. On the other hand, Lanao del Sur with its land area of 3,872.9 sq. kms. had a total population of 404,971 and a population density of 104.6 persons per sq. km. The Maranao-dominated province (*Ibon: 1981, 6* reported 91.5% Maranaos) with Marawi City as its capital has 36 municipalities. In 1973, there was an attempt to further divide Lanao del Sur into two: the first was to retain its original name and its capital and the second would be called the Maranao Province with Malabang as its new capital. This did not, of course, materialize. But whether the government succeeds or not, its super-imposition of modern administrative territorial structure has not succeeded in any way to dismantle the indigenous structure of the Pengampong.

However, Lanao del Sur is given more emphasis here because the bulk of the sultanates is located around the Lake Lanao region. Lanao cannot be studied in isolation from the rest of other sultanates in Cotabato, Sulu, Indonesia and Malaysia. Its sultanates have to be seen in a broader perspective. In order to better understand this particular problem or area of research, it is necessary to compare and contrast these sultanates wherever and whenever possible, with other sultanates. Implications, allusions, and inferences derived from events occurring in other sultanates can shed light on the Lanao sultanates and vice versa.

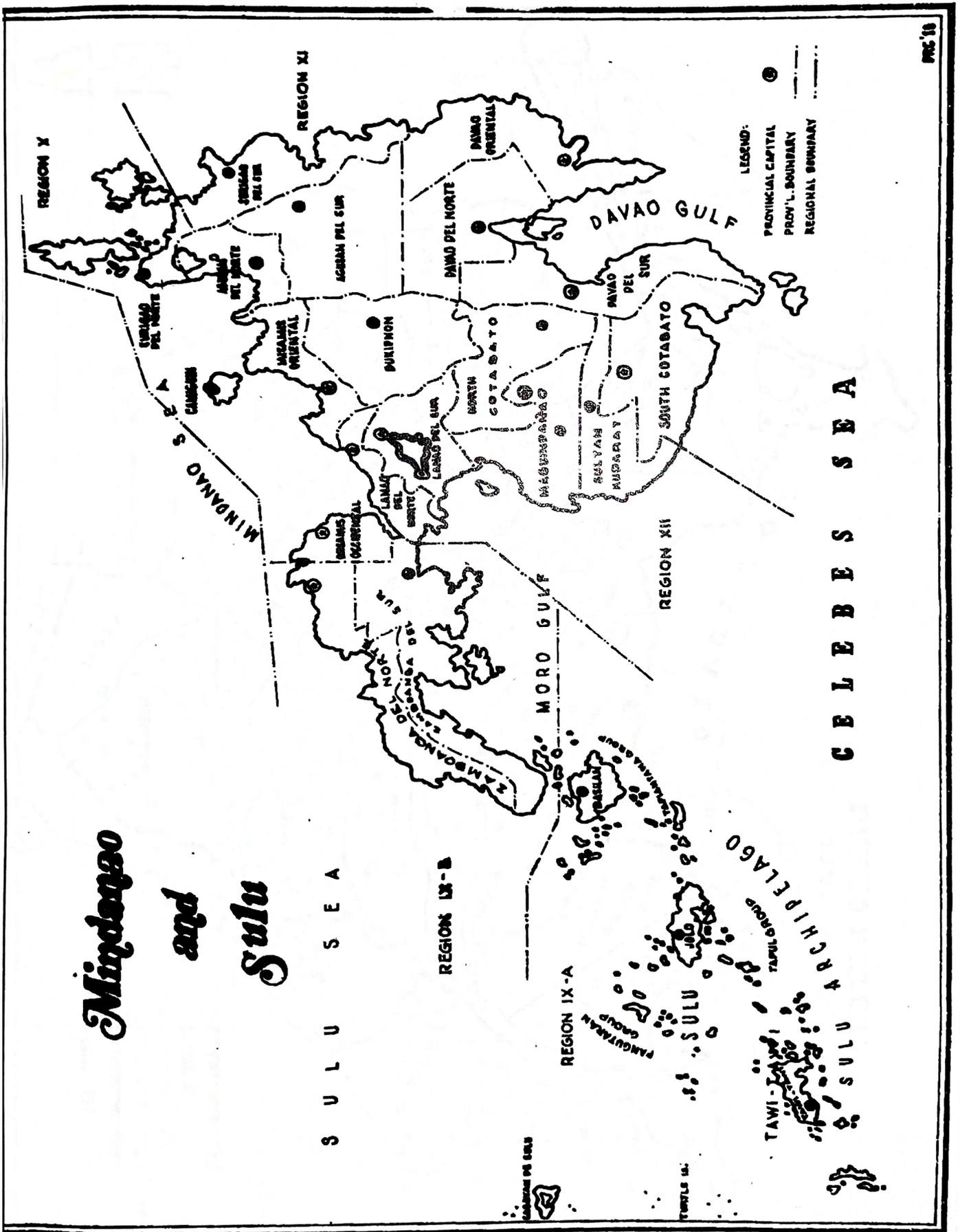
The period covered in this study range from the pre-Islamic period in the Philippines through the coming of Islam, the Spanish and American colonial periods to the present.

Other limitations center on the meager colonial documents on the subject, absence of archaeological evidences and cultural restrictions or prohibitions on the use of indigenous source materials. These limitations would immediately scare away any

history researcher. Oftentimes, in the absence of historical documents and archaeological evidence, the historian cannot write. He waits for anthropological and sociological studies to come out and then cites and quotes them. Perhaps, this role can be reversed. The yet-to-be-studied “anthropological and sociological facts” are also historical facts.

This is admittedly a tough task. Yet, waiting for documents, archaeological evidences and indigenous source materials to be publicly opened forever prevents any writer from coming out with the history of the Pengampong as it evolved from a simple to a complex socio-political organization and territorial division of innumerable units, in which each unit is a sultanate.

The reconstruction of *Pengampong* is based on the data gathered and bits of information available. It should also be pointed out here that this study is primarily concerned with the institution itself and not personalities.



Mindanao
and
Sulu

LEGEND:
 ● PROVINCIAL CAPITAL
 - - - - - PROV'N. BOUNDARY
 - · - · - REGIONAL BOUNDARY

LANAO DEL NORTE

ILIGAN BAY



