

CHAPTER IV

THE SULTANATES VIS-A-VIS THE CHANGING WORLD

According to Ibn Khaldun, "history refers to events that are peculiar to a particular age or race" (quoted in Rosenthal :1969, 15). In relation to the ethnocentric view of Maranao history, Robert Redfield had this to say in general:

We have thought only of the history of the little community as conceived by the historian who looks at the community from outside of it and writes that history as he comes to see it . . . Such a history would be a people's own story as that people have to come to conceive it. It would show how a group conceives its unity in relation to time . . . History written from the inside view is the temporal dimension of world view and is probably best considered with that concept (Redfield: 1955, 110-111).

Partly, Lanao seemed to have been by-passed by colonial history. Little was known of its sultanates outside the Maranao world, except perhaps recently. Partly, too, little was known from oral traditions, of the development of the *pengampong*, except the present Pengampong which in turn is also not known to non-Maranaos. Coupled with these "little knowns" are the Maranaos' extreme view of their ethno-history and the non-Maranaos' biased knowledge and uninformed opinions on the sultanates.

Despite the 17th and 19th centuries Spanish penetrations to the Lake region, we learn that the Spaniards had nothing to report on the *pengampong* institution in general nor the individual sultanates in particular. They had something, however, to say on the sultanates of Sulu and Maguindanao because there was a central authority to each to which the Spanish authority had to deal

with. This fact puts these sultanates in the limelight not only of national but also of international history. It is these sultanates that became popularly known and continued to be known in the present. These have been further popularized by Majul in his solid, extensive book on the Muslims in the Philippines, except the Lanao sultanates. Thus our knowledge today of the sultanates is centered on Sulu and Maguindanao.

During the colonial period, the Moros were thought to constitute a homogenous population and therefore represented by a single central authority. The Spaniards probably thought that by dealing with the Sultanate of Sulu, they would, in effect, be dealing with all the Muslims in Mindanao. They had such treaties as the 1851 Treaty signed between Sultan Pulalun of Jolo and Col. Jose Maria de Carlos y O'Doyle (Politico-Military governor of Zamboanga) and the 1878 Treaty signed between Sultan Jamalul Allam and Col. Carlos Martinez (see Guingona: 1981, 171-180). In fact, any government with a central authority had to recognize the continuing multicentricity of power in the history of the Moros. Failing or refusing to recognize this fact accounted for the series of government failures in dealing with these people.

Such failures under Spain were repeated during the American period. The relationship between the Americans and the Muslims began exactly where the Spaniards left, with grudging acknowledgement of the sovereignty of the United States, token military occupation, and an agreement of non-interference in Muslim affairs. When the Americans took over the Philippines under the Treaty of Paris in 1898, the Muslims offered resistance and fought well to continue to preserve their independence, religion and culture because they believed that Americans were no better than the Spaniards.

The early years of the American presence under the first American administrators who were military men was a repetition of the Spanish experience, "a tale of battle, murder and sudden death." This experience did not change until the Americans learned that the Muslims would respond more readily to kindness,

respect and tact than to rifles. Thus, they developed the so-called "policy of attraction."

It must be noted that after constant fighting which yielded negative results on both sides, the Americans had to choose between two alternatives: they either had to annihilate every living Moro, including women and children, or they had to adopt a policy other than the military. The Americans, took the latter course and began to recognize the leadership of the local chiefs (datus and sultans); peace and order campaign thus launched progressed. But the American authorities made a mistake: they assumed in their dealings with the natives that the latter constituted a homogenous people, to be governed and disposed of as a single entity. There was no "Filipino people" as the Americans thought, but "numerous peoples." The existence of the mutually independent sultanates in Mindanao and Sulu delayed the American pacification campaign and their aim to control the southern parts of the Philippines.

This led some American authorities to propose a direct means to handle the Muslim affairs. It is to be noted here that the American mandate was mildly implemented during the period of military occupation (1898-1903) in the area because of the policy of non-interference, as stipulated in the Bates Treaty, which precluded any strong effort to develop, civilize, educate and train the Muslims in the science of self-government. Some army officers were unhappy about this non-interference because certain features of Moro society such as judicial procedures, slavery, the tyrannical relationship of the sultans and datus to their followers offended their American sense of justice and good order. Some authorities were eager to take a direct hand in "civilizing" the Muslims and to shift American policy respecting the Moros to direct rule.

The resulting shift led to the abrogation of the Bates treaty/agreement in 1904. The Moros responded with the same fierce opposition they had shown the Spaniards for centuries but the Americans were better equipped, trained and disciplined to deal with the Muslims, culminating in the battles of Bayang and Masiu

(1902), Taraka (1903), Bacolod (1904) in Lanao; in Cotabato (1904); and Bud Dajo (1906), Bud Bagsak (1913) in Sulu; etc. (see Tan: 1977, 161-167).

Because of bitter fightings and bloody encounters from which no one benefitted and because the Muslims responded more to kindness, respect and tact than to rifles, the Americans studied and observed Muslim affairs and began to formulate policies for the future administration of Moroland, with the direct rule policy in their minds.

This policy was implemented through a series of government agencies created for purposes of administering the Moros separately from the rest of the Filipinos and at the same time attempting to prepare them to be integrated into the mainstream of the national body politic. These agencies were the Moro Province (1903-1913), the Department of Mindanao and Sulu (1914-1920) and the Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes (1920-1936). The Commonwealth government took over this role with the creation of the Office of the Commissioner for Mindanao and Sulu in 1936. This office was the forerunner of the Office of the Commissioner for National Integration (CNI) which, in turn, was absorbed by the Office of the Ministry on Muslim Affairs during the Marcos regime and now, the Office of the Muslim Affairs and Cultural Communities.

In the Bates Treaty (agreement) signed between Sultan Jamalul Kiram II and Brig. Gen. John C. Bates, military commander of Sulu district, the sultan allegedly acknowledged American sovereignty and the Americans promised not to interfere with the religion and customs of the Muslims. The treaty also provided that "piracy must be suppressed and the sultan and his datos agree to heartily cooperate with the United States authorities" (Gowing: 1977, 31-37 and Guingona: 1981, 182-186). In the same Treaty, the sultan and datos were to receive salaries. It would be more interesting if we could document that these "salaries" were considered by the sultan and his leading datos as tributes paid to them by the Americans. The treaty, however, did not cover the sultan-

ates in Mindanao which were independent of the Sulu sultanate. It recognized the rights of the sultan and his datus and presumed indirect American rule, until it was abrogated. It was abrogated, on Wood's recommendations, on March 2, 1904 by the President of the United States on the following grounds:

In view of the failure on the part of the sultan and signing datus to discharge the duties and fulfill the conditions imposed upon them by said agreement, that they forfeited all rights to the annuities therein stipulated to be paid from and to all other considerations moving to them under the agreement, the treaty is abrogated and held for naught, and as residents of the Moro Province in the Philippine Archipelago they are subject to the laws enacted therein under the sovereignty (quoted in Guingona: 1981, 185).

The policy to use direct rule over the Muslims with attendant disregard for the traditional rights of the sultans and other titled datus was articulated clearly by General Wood, first governor of the Moro Province, when in 1904 he told the Sultan of Sulu: "I am going to be frank with you. At present your rights as a nation are nothing . . ." (quoted in *Ibon*: 1981, 3, See also Guingona: 1981, 184-185). There were a lot of similar, if not the same, views expressed against the traditional rights of the Muslim leaders as sultans and datus; hence, there was the attempt to abolish the sultanates as an institution. All these probably found their way in a memorandum addressed to the Secretary of the Interior during the Commonwealth period: President Manuel L. Quezon of the Commonwealth issued a memorandum dated September 20, 1938 to the Secretary of the Interior defining the government's policy to be followed in dealing with the Moros including other non-Christians in Mindanao and Sulu as part of his social justice policy. In part, the memorandum states:

It has been, in my opinion, the weakness in the policy heretofore adopted by the Government of the

Philippines in dealing with the Mohammedan Filipinos or Moros in Mindanao and the Sulu Archipelago to give some sort of recognition to the datus, so that they have become in practice *ex-officio* officials of the Government. This policy must be stopped and changed radically. It gives the impression that there is a dual government for the Moros—one exercised by the appointed or elected officials of the government and the other by datus and sultans. It perpetuates the overlordship exercised through the ages by these datus and sultans over the *sacup*, who, on this account, continue to be, in fact, slaves of their sultans and datus as they were under the Spanish regime. The Government is duty-bound to protect the common people in Moroland, as much as it is bound to protect the common people in other provinces and regions of the Philippines, from the control or exploitation of those Moros and Christian Filipinos, whether they be called sultans, datus, leaders, or hacenderos, or caciques, who would exploit or abuse them. Therefore, from this time on you should instruct the governors and municipal presidents in the provinces composing the territory under jurisdiction of the Commissioner of Mindanao and Sulu to deal directly with the people instead of with the datus, sultans, leaders or caciques (quoted in Guingona: 1981, 200).

In the same memorandum Quezon told the Secretary to advise government officials not to allow the sultans and datus to interfere with government functions. But like all other citizens, these sultans and datus could be heard and consulted on matters affecting their respective areas of responsibilities but they were to have no special right to interfere with functions considered official. Referring to Lanao, Quezon said:

. . . this Government cannot recognize the datus as having any special right to interfere in matters affecting

school service or any other service in the Government. I told the Moro sultan who had spoken, right there and then, that I should have been more pleased if he had spoken in behalf of the people of Lanao, instead of in the name of the sultans. And I added that the sultans have no more rights than the humblest Moro and that under my administration the humblest Moro will be given as much protection as any datu under the law, and that his rights will be recognized exactly as the rights of a datu will be, and that every datu will have to comply with his duties as a citizen to the same extent and in the same manner that the humblest Moro is obligated (quoted in Guingona: 181, 201).

Whether we like it or not, or whether the government will abolish them or not, the sultanates especially in Lanao are going to stay on as long as there are Muslims in this part of the country. For this reason, we might as well make use of whatever positive contributions this institution can provide us. Personally, this writer cannot agree with those who say that utilizing this traditional institution is anachronistic in this modern and fast-changing world. It is not this institution that is anachronistic, but rather our traditional as well as colonial knowledge of it.

The government's superimposition of modern administrative territorial structure has not succeeded in any way to dismantle the indigenous structure of the Pengampong, neither has Islam succeeded in totally eradicating it. In fact, the *pengampong* has some sort of an assimilative or integrative quality, accommodating what is non-Maranao or foreign or simply tolerating it. With this quality of the *pengampong*, the Maranaos in general fail to make a distinction between what is Maranao with that is Islamic. Similarly, they perceive that what is Arabic is Islamic. Since they are Muslims, things Maranao are also considered Islamic. Consequently, telling these people to abandon things Maranao is equivalent, first, to telling them to lose their identity as Maranaos and

as Muslims and, second, to asking them to accept what they consciously or unconsciously refuse to accept. In short, there is no way to go back and remove history—in this case, their indigeneness. We cannot simply take away the external influences that had already become a part of them. These psychological corks, overlays or blinders have become inherent within them.

A lot of Maranaos entertain the idea that the sultanates are characteristically either monocratic or gerontocratic or a combination of both; that is, mono-gerontocratic. The Sulu Sultan (Majul: 1978, 317-337) and the Maguindanao Sultan (Mastura: 1978) may or may not necessarily be autocratic, despotic, authoritarian, dictatorial, or exploitative but the *pengampong* as system of multiple sultanates is different. It may be democratic, consultative, or representative. It is in the *agama* level where we find different types of government: monocratic, gerontocratic, despotic, authoritarian, egalitarian, dictatorial, autocratic, democratic, theocratic, feudalistic, etc. In fact, this sense of variety could also be one of the factors that may help explain the mushrooming of sultanates in Lanao. (see Appendix-G).

Whatever arbitrary descriptions were given about the sultanates and the sultans in the past, they no longer matter today. There are now sultans who are Western-educated as well as Islamic/Arabic-educated. Combining the best of both worlds, they can contribute a lot in shaping the future destiny of their people, unless of course, despite their education, they would like to maintain that they are still “stupid.” In Lanao today, there are engineers, medical doctors, lawyers, mayors, vice mayors, councilors, governor, vice governors, scholars, military officers, government and private employees, teachers, businessmen, theologians, the unschooled, the fanatics, certified public accountants, farmers, fishermen — you name it, we have them all, so to speak—who are sultans.

As a concept, the Maranao sultan today is a traditionalist, a transitionalist and a legalist rolled into one (see Saber 1957 and 1967). Position-wise, as a traditionalist he is the sultan of a place;

as a transitionalist, he is both the sultan and, say, mayor of the same place; and as a legalist, he is again say, the mayor of a place. Identity-wise, he is a Maranao, a Muslim/Moro and a Filipino citizen. Closely related to this is his knowledge of the local traditions, Islam and Arab culture, and western education. Armed with his position, identity, and knowledge, the Maranao sultan is in the best position to catch “up with yesterday, for tomorrow (he) shall be ready for today.” As William Allan White pointed out: “I am not afraid of tomorrow for I have seen yesterday and I love today.” Jose Rizal had this to say, too. He said: “In order to read the destiny of the people, it is necessary to open the book of its past.” So did Antonio de Morga: “It is necessary first to make known to us the past in order that we may be able to judge better the present . . .”

Unless otherwise stated, the following are messages taken from the Souvenir Program, on the occasion of the enthronement of Sabdullah Ali Pacasum as the new Sultan of the Royal Sultanate of Balo-i, Balo-i Pengampong on January 31, 1982 :

Tato Esmael (Sultan of Maguindanao): “. . . the Sultanate will be able to contribute to the promotion of peace and tranquility so necessary in achieving national progress and prosperity . . . (it) will play an important role in bringing about a better life for his people and also in forging ties of understanding and unity among all peoples in the region.”

Mahakuttah A. Kiram (Sultan of Sulu): “Cognizant of the glorious past and proud history of the Sultanate as a social and political institution antedating the present-day government . . . for a more responsive institution oriented to the challenges of a fast changing Philippine society.”

Ferdinand E. Marcos (then President of the Philippines): “I am positive that this noble and royal institution will conti-

nue to play a vital role in bringing about the much desired closer understanding, unity, and brotherhood in the South.”

Imelda R. Marcos (Wife of President Marcos): “. . . will inspire pride in the centuries—old heritage of our Muslim brothers and that the Sultanate will complement government efforts to foster the social and economic development of our Muslim communities.”

Jose D. Aspiras (then Minister of Tourism): “The century-old royal institutions and traditions of our Southern brothers are eloquent sources of cultural and historical values, which likewise serve as a strong support of their identity.

“Our nation has experienced your remarkable unity and cohesiveness. Your support of our country’s developmental program is truly edifying and inspiring.”

Romulo M. Espaldon (then Minister of Muslim Affairs): The Sultanate itself is “an institution with a revered tradition of success in the development of a community among Muslim Filipinos throughout Mindanao and Sulu.”

Lininding P. Pangandaman (then Ambassador to Saudi Arabia): “. . . the glorious heritage of one of the four major principalities in the royal social structure of undivided Lanao. . . a vital factor in harmonizing the traditional and modern ways of our communities in accordance with the tenets of Islam.”

Homobono A. Adaza (then Governor of Misamis Oriental): “The traditions of a people are worth preserving even with the passage of centuries. More so if these traditions contribute to unifying and preserving the identity of a people.”

Emmanuel Pelaez (then Minister of State for Foreign Affairs):
That the new Sultan “will no doubt bring fresh ideas and perspectives into the Sultanate, thereby ushering in a new era of unity, peace and prosperity . . . to combine the best features of modern ways with traditional methods, the new Sultan is expected to govern this Lanao principality with vision, foresight and wisdom . . . to bring the Sultanate into the mainstream of present-day culture and progress.”

Carmelo Z. Barbero (then Deputy Minister for Civilian Relations, Ministry of National Defense): The Sultanate “brings together the old and the new, the ancient and the modern, the traditional and the progressive, all bound by one objective: the attainment of peace, national unity and prosperity.”

Luis L. Lardizabal (then COMELEC Commissioner): The Sultanate “plays a very important role in the economic, political, religious and social growth of Mindanao.”

Mama D. Busran (then Justice of the Court of Appeals, Manila) :
“Among the Muslims, the role of the Sultan in the governance of the community is indispensable . . . It is the duty of the Muslims to respect and obey the Sultans, or whoever is in authority, otherwise there will be no order.”

Carlota P. Valenzuela (then Deputy Governor, Central Bank of the Philippines): The Sultanate will play a major role to bridge “the relationship between our traditional and modern ways which both affect the life of our people and in fostering lasting peace, national unity and prosperity in the country.”

Whether these messages carry with them the qualities of truth, honesty and sincerity or not is beyond the scope of this study to analyze. However, all of them have one thing in common: they reflect the recognition that the sultanates indeed are a part of Philippine cultural and political heritage and that with the knowledge gained from both the Western and Islamic educational systems, the sultanates can be a potential force for cultural, political, social and economic development. Former Lanao del Sur Governor Mohamad Ali Dimaporo (Sultan of Masiu) had this message found in the Souvenir Program on the occasion of the enthronement ceremonies of Sheik Ismail Sarip Laut as the new Sultan of the Royal Sultanate of Rogan, Poonā-Bayabao on March 17-19, 1983:

The installation of the various Royal Sultans in the Province of Lanao del Sur has strengthened the cultural enrichment movement initiated by the national leadership. The Sultanates had proven in the past as the effective and workable means of preserving the social and cultural heritage of the Muslims in this country and at the same time helped establish permanent bonds of friendship among us. Today, the Sultanates are considered veritable and reliable partners of the national government in bringing to the grassroots the various countryside development programs aimed at improving the social, cultural and economic well-being of our people.

The recognition of Muslim institutions was further articulated by President Marcos. He said:

As long as I am President of the Republic, I shall see to it that our Muslim brothers are afforded all the opportunities to serve the nation so that they can truly become part of the national community; that this government shall serve them with the rest of the Filipino citizenry; that their culture, heritage and religion, which

is Islamic, shall forever be part of the Pilipino contribution to world culture and civilization (Marcos: n.d., 3)