

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Being homogenously Maranao, the Pengampong constitutes a single, large kinship and closed structure of society and institution sharing a common language, customs and traditions, religious belief system, laws, values, practices and norms. The Pengampong also provides the Maranaos a way of distinguishing themselves from non-Maranaos and the defining their closed society in terms of social, religious, non-Maranaos political and territorial aspects. Although it aggregates a number of socio-political units into a single whole, it also implies a territory geographically and culturally distinct from the other Philippine ethnolinguistic societies regarding their own respective development.

Membership in the Pengampong not only excludes the other Muslim groups but also the "people of the forest" (*isebanganen*) or the "people of the mountain" (*Igaonen*), who are thought of as *kapir* ("pagans" infidels," "animists"). These people are Maranao speakers living in the mountain (not included among them are the people of Dimaik in Wao), who are not considered Maranao. This "concept of unitary society," according to Mednick, "not only furnishes criteria for membership within it, but also acts to even define language and belief" (Mednick: 1965, 49).

All Maranaos then are bonafide members of the Pengampong and all are in one way or another related by blood and marriage. Every individual Maranao finds himself a place through the *salsila* which traces for him his ancestral line of descent from any one of the Pengampong of Bayabao, Masiu, Unayan and Balo-i and another from the Sarips.

Because of geographical location and historical circumstances that isolated them, the Maranaos preserved and developed certain marked peculiarities not commonly found among other ethnolinguistic groups in the Philippines. According to Baradas:

These features include ranked descent, arranged marriage with complicated brideprice transaction, a system of elite titles and keen competition for such titles by way of a rotating system of succession among major descent line claimants, specific association of lines of descent with particular localities, a notion of a precise social contract, and a system of rank differentiation—all operating within the context of a multicenter power system in which basic political relations are couched in *salsila* . . . On top of these indigenous Malay features is an Islamization process introduced into the area approximately 250 years ago and in more recent period, the superimposition of the Philippine Central government bureaucratic system is exerting the kind of influence that is definitely undermining the traditional system (Tiamson: 1974, 305-306).

The description that Lanao is considered the “Land of One Thousand-and-One Sultans” may be appropriately valid. Lanao has probably more or less 291 sultanates with 582 to 873 sultans. This estimate is arrived at on the basis of the following theoretical computation: In 1980, Marawi City, with a land area of 22.6 sq. kms. had a total population of 53,812. In 1972 (assuming that there had been no increase in their number since then), Marawi had 34 *agama*/sultanates. Dividing the population by the number of *agama*, we have 1,582 persons per *agama*. For the land area, the city has 22.6 sq. kms. which is to be divided by 34 and we get .66 sq. km. per *agama*. Thus, we have a population density of 1,582 per *agama* as compared to the 2,381.1 population density of Marawi per sq. km. Our discussion of the *agama* as a sultanate shows that there are some sultanates with only one sultan and others with more than one to an extreme of more than 10 sultans. Taking two or three as an average number of sultans per sultanate, we have for Marawi alone 68 or 102 sultans for the 34 *agama*.

To determine the number of *agama*/sultanates for Lanao del Sur, the Marawi data may be used. The 1980 population of the

province was 404,971. When this number is divided by 1,582 (the population density per *agama*) we have 256 sultanates. This number is in turn to be multiplied by two or three. Thus we have 512 or 768 sultans. For the population density of the province, we divide its land area of 3,872.9 sq. kms. by 256 (sultanates) and the result is 15.1 sq. kms. per *agama*; therefore, we have 1,582 (population density per *agama*) or per 15.1 sq. kms. 104.6 per sq. km.

Based in the Souvenir Program (Jan. 31, 1982) on the occasion of the enthronement of Sabdullah Ali Pacasum as the new Royal Sultan of Balo-i, the Pengampong of Balo-i located in Lanao del Norte has 35 sultanates. Again if 35 were multiplied by 2 or 3, we would have 70 or 105 sultans there.

The overall total of sultanates in the two Lanao provinces is 291 (not counting the 15 *pegawidan* and 28 *pegawid* sultanates and the boundary Sultanates of Madamba, Sawir, Bakayawan and Dalama of the four Pengampong) with 582 to 873 sultans.

For laymen, this may be called statistics, but the figures are not absolute or exact.

Nevertheless, in Lanao though the figures may be inaccurate, they reveal one fact: that whether we like it or not there really exist in Lanao multiple sultanates, which certainly far exceed the number of sultanates and sultans all over the world combined together.

The proliferation of the number of sultanates in a relatively narrow geographical area with a relatively small number of homogenous population is indeed not only shocking, intriguing, revealing but also interesting.

The steady mushrooming of Lanao sultanates can be explained in terms of the region's geographical location or isolation; the *pengampong* concept using multicentric power system approach and the segmentation theory; Islamization; the triple one concept; the yellow head concept; trade and commerce; population distribution; the non-standardization of the *taritib*, the presence or absence of the god-king concept; and the presence or absence of colonial powers.

This number of sultanates may have led some people, (as a Maguindanaon friend, who is well-known as a lawyer and scholar, has been led) to remark that the *pengampong* is not really a sultanate in the real sense of the word. This of course can be considered a personal point of view. The remark may be valid as far as the Maguindanaons are concerned but may be invalid to the Maranaos. In addition, the *pengampong* is claimed to be just the indigenous, traditional socio-political organization and territorial division with some Islamic-Arabic overlays. Once the overlays such as the term "sultan" are removed, what remain would be the Maranaoness of the *pengampong*.

A further remark was advanced that as long as the *pengampong* continues to exist, Islam will find itself making little headway in Lanao. *Pengampong* is not only the inner core but also the essence of Maranaoness and Islam seems to serve only as an outside layer, a veneer. Islam possibly can never succeed without penetrating that inner core. This brings us to the issue that in Lanao, it is the Maranaoization of Islam that prevails over the Islamization of the Maranaos. This issue has contributed among others to the reawakening, but popularly described as resurgence, of Islamic consciousness beginning in the late 1960's. This is evidenced by the existence today of many Islamic organizations or movements such as the Tableegh and the Da-awa; the proliferation, too, of Arabic schools (*Madrasa*; sing. *madrasah*) around the Lake region; and the number of pilgrims going to Mecca every year as well as the number of students studying in universities and colleges in the Middle East.

These developments threaten to a large extent the Maranao belief in the *tonong* and its attendant practice. *Tonong* is a general term for spirits (water spirits, tree spirits, etc.). The belief has its origin from the Indarapatra and the Darangen periods and it continues to the present. Occasionally, we observe people, even in urban areas like Marawi City, performing rituals invoking the *tonong* to help heal the sick, to prevent illness, to prevent children from drowning, to help provide good harvest or good catch

in fishing, and other benefits, including even the demise of enemies. This belief has its relevance to the *pengampong*. Every *pengampong*, *suku*, *inged*, even every *agama*, as well as every royal line of descent or family or group of families has its own respective *tonong*, to offer to, to appease or to invoke.

Though the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and the MNLF-Reformist call for a separate study, which we will not attempt here, it is possible to say at this point that the *pengampong*, as a system of multiple sultanates, has some relevance to them, insofar as the Maranao members of these groups are concerned. The *pengampong* provides us the necessary answers to the question why there exist factions among these liberation fronts, on the one hand, and why there exists rather too many zone and field commanders in the Lake region. Sometimes, these commanders operate independently of one another and without the approval or the knowledge of the higher command. This implies that sometimes there is no chain of command, but an absence of command responsibility. This particular situation, in a sense, reflects the *pengampong* multiple sultanates.

These multiple independent divisions may be more of a strength than a weakness. They appear to be, militarily, strategically and logistically advantageous to themselves. It is difficult for a controlling centralized government to identify which of these groups should really be dealt with on one hand, while each of the groups would like to deal with the government on the other. Moreover, no one among these groups is authorized to represent them all. The *pengampong* then may be a useful lesson for the government to learn, for dealing with the 13 Moro (Muslim) ethnolinguistic groups in general and with the Maranaos in particular. These groups have their own respective peculiarities. The use of the divide-and-rule strategy by an external force does not seem to work out in the *pengampong* because each of these multiple divisions of minute units is relatively too insignificant to be considered as a powerful force to reckon with. From a broader perspective,

dividing further the divided serves no purpose. In fact, it will even create more problems and difficulties.

Lastly, with regard to the question of autonomy, the *pengampong* may also provide the government a model in its search for solutions to the Mindanao-Sulu problem in particular and to the national problem in general. If indigenous source materials can provide us some practical model, then there is no need for us to import foreign models which may not fit into local conditions. In fact, it is the imposition of the foreign world, that local people fight against.

The *pengampong*, as we know, functions like a pseudo-federal or a loose federal system of government without a common central authority. As a federal structure of government organization, the *pengampong* has component states being tied up together by the *taritib*. We are told that it has "no central agency to compare with that of a modern central government having a central executive, legislative, and judiciary powers" (Gowing and McAmis: 1974, 220).

If this indigenous socio-political and territorial organization without central authority and power system operates and functions harmoniously and without coercions among members of an *agama* or between *agama* (except personal feuds), could it not be tried, with some modifications, to suit the local setting as an experimental pilot area in one or more non-Maranao communities? The *pengampong* as a loose form of federal system of government with its democratic features can be tried without government interference in its internal operations. The trouble and confusion would ensue when there is imposition, when there is interference from the outside. This concept is believed to be better than the concept of the autonomous region which only leads to the struggle for power and divides people.

The *pengampong* operates with the least internal conflicts, less headaches for the national leadership, and is far less expensive, too. The concept of the *agama* is an excellent example where the

concept of self-help can best be put to test or can best be achieved if placed in a proper perspective. Within the *pengampong*, an *agama* does not seek help from any of the larger units for its development, neither the larger units help develop an *agama*.

The *pengampong* is more practical because it is an indigenous system rather than a foreign one. With its familiar system, the people of a certain community can easily manage their own local affairs.

It would be more successful to implement government programs and project if these should be channeled through the Council of Elders of the *agama* rather than through the barangay leaders, municipal mayors, provincial governors, or regional directors in the Philippines. Perhaps it is worth trying out.

Finally it is suggested that the government should carefully study how the *pengampong*, as a socio-political machinery, is being run, administered and operated by the people. Again, this may help the government determine workable strategies for successfully implementing its programs and projects.