

MORO RAIDS IN LUZON AND THE VISAYAS, 1571-1896

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For more than two centuries, Moro raids devastated many coastal areas in Luzon and the Visayas. In Kabikolan, mothers still invoke the dreaded raiders' name, saying "*Hala, iya-on na an mga Moros*" (Now there, the Moros are coming) and it is sufficient to send their hard-headed children scurrying home. Remains of many *baluartes* and *cotas* (fortified enclosures) where the coastal inhabitants sought refuge when the Moros appeared still dot many coastal areas of Luzon and the Visayas.

My paper will focus on the extent of Moro raids and will highlight the effects of Moro raids (which were actually counter attacks against Spanish-held areas in the effort to thwart Spanish attempts to subjugate their homelands).

The Era of the Kris

Various factors promoted the Moro raids. European inroads in the Far East saw these foreigners competing for further expansion of their colonial empires. By the 16th century, Moro leaders were discomfited to see their homelands circumscribed by the Europeans, notably the Spaniards, whose expansionist designs impressed in the minds of the Moro leaders the matter of their survival as an independent people. They thus sought to stem this dangerous trend by undertaking internal

consolidation and offensive operations against the Spaniards and Spanish-held territories.

The first major attacks occurred in 1590-91 when fifty *caracoas* of Mindanaoans and Joloans devastated Cebu, Negros, and Panay. The inhabitants of these provinces were so terrified that they abandoned their coastal settlements and retired into the security of the hinterlands.

They came again in 1599-1600. In 1599, fifty *pancos* of Mindanaoans, Joloans, and Camucones attacked Panay and Negros. The raiders were led by Datus Silongan and Sali. They left carrying some 800 captives. They returned in 1600 with some 8,000 men in seventy *caracoas*, and devastated Oton and Arevalo, Panay. Forty-eight *caracoas* of raiders came in 1602. En route to the Visayas, they captured a Manila-bound vessel from Cebu. From here, they sacked Calilaya, Tayabas. In Balayan, Batangas they were beaten off. They turned to Mindoro and sacked its capital town, barely missing the incoming Governor General of the Philippines, Pedro de Acuña, who was aboard a small ship accompanied only by two champans.

The Mindanaoans, Joloans, and Ternatans again attacked Arevalo, Panay in 1605 and the Camucones and Borneans raided the Camarines and Catanduanes in 1610. In 1616, Governor Juan de Silva led an ill-fated expedition to Malacca. In so doing, he depleted the Spanish forces on the Islands. The Mindanaoans and Joloans exploited this weakened state of the country and raided many places in Luzon. The royal shipyard in Bagatao Island, Sorsogon was the focus of this massive raid. Sixty *caracoas* of the raiders surprised the Spanish garrison on October 18, 1616. They destroyed a galleon being built there, another two *pataches*, killed 200 and captured another 400 natives and 30 Spaniards. More than a million pesos worth of property, guns, and supplies were taken or destroyed by the raiders.

In 1625, the Camucones staged a heavy raid where they razed the town of Catbalogan, Samar on November 9. The Joloans came again in 1627. They destroyed the rebuilt Bagatao

shipyard in the last week of 1627 and carried away much booty. The raiders also hit Bantayan Island, Romblon, and Ormoc, Leyte. More than 300 inhabitants were captured in these 1627 raids.

The Mindanaoans and Joloans came again in 1634 and raided Leyte, Cebu, Sorsogon, Albay, Camarines, and Tayabas. In Tayabas, they captured the Alcalde Mayor and almost got the Archbishop of Manila, Miguel Garcia Serrano, who was then conducting his diocesan visits besides capturing or killing 187 inhabitants of the said town. In 1635-36, the Joloan Datu Ache raided several places in Kabikolan. The two years' booty of Datu Ache's raids was reputedly immense: 2,000 ounces of gold, an equal amount in silver, numerous firearms, 1,500 inhabitants captured, and thirty Spaniards captured five of them friars.

In 1641, the Borneans and Camucones occupied for fifteen days the entire island of Marinduque and razed all its coastal towns. Even prior to this raid, reports noted that Marinduque was attacked every year.

On June 24, 1645 a treaty was forged between Sultan Kudarat and the Spaniards. This treaty temporarily halted the Moro raids and lasted until Kudarat's death in 1671. However, Kue-sing's (or Koxinga) invasion threat forced the Spaniards to reconcentrate most of their forces in Manila and this condition was exploited by some of Sultan Kudarat's allies. In 1646, a heavy Moro raid hit Sorsogon Gulf and destroyed the villages of Dumanaog and Ibalon. In 1649, the Borneans and Camucones raided Calamianes. In 1662 and 1663, sixty joangas of raiders hit many Visayan provinces, especially Samar and Leyte. In 1682, a treaty was forged between the Bornean ruler and the Spaniards, thereby accounting for the absence of raids conducted by the Borneans for some time.

The internal strife that followed Kudarat's death also accounted for the temporary lapse in Moro raids during the last decades of the 17th century. Internal divisions, however, did not prevent some of the Moros from conducting their usual raids

deep into Spanish territories. A 1695 Franciscan account noted that Bacon and its visita, Sorsogon, had only churches and habitations made of nipa and bamboo because they were routinely destroyed by the Camucones and Mindanaoans. The inhabitants of the island of Maestre de Campo, Romblon, abandoned their coastal townsite due to a Moro raid in 1707. Goyena del Prado, a noted Bikol historian, mentioned that the Moros came to Albay in 1730 and "in two years captured a total of 200 Christians." Also, the natives of Ligao, Albay in their 1772 petition to build two *baluartes*, mentioned a village that was destroyed by a Moro raid in 1736. Proximity to Mindanao and Sulu subjected the inhabitants of the Calamianes Islands to frequent Moro raids, from 1732 to 1735.

Efforts by the Spanish authorities in 1737 to rebuild Panay Island's defenses could not be effected for lack of inhabitants who were terrified by frequent Moro attacks. Goyena del Prado also mentioned that the town of Sorsogon was raided in 1737, 1740, 1746, 1749, and 1781. The 1740 raid against the towns in Sorsogon Gulf was particularly bloody. The Moros killed 28 and captured another 28 in Sorsogon town alone. As a consequence of this 1740 raid, the Spaniards relocated the capital of Provincia de Ibalon from the town of Ibalon in Sorsogon Gulf to the town of Albay Viejo in Albay Gulf. On November 7, 1734 the Alcalde Mayor of Calamianes Province reported that for the past two months Joloans had attacked the entire province, sunk the only vessel patrolling its coast, captured 200 of its inhabitants, while another group of 16 pancos besieged the royal fort in Paragua.

The Moro raids in 1746 was also devastating. Not only did Sorsogon and Gubat towns suffer but the raiders also destroyed the town of Gate, a town which was twelve kilometers distant from the coast. It seemed that the perpetrators of these raids following Kudarat's death were largely the Tirones and Camucones, who had been using the isolated islands between Paragua and the Visayas as their bases of operations.

The bloodiest in the history of Moro efforts to thwart Spanish efforts to subjugate their homelands occurred during the decade of the 1750's. The immediate cause was the Spanish colonial government's decision to conquer once and for all the Sultan of Sulu. A Council of War was held by the Spaniard in October 1751 and declared a war of fire and blood (*guerra a fuego y sangre*) against all the Mindanaoans, Joloans, Tirones, and Camucones. An expedition was fitted under Col. Antonio Ramon de Abad. It invaded Jolo in 1752 but was "disgracefully beaten." The Joloans retaliated and "invaded the Philippines in their turn, and successfully desolated and laid waste the Spanish provinces for a period of three years.

Beginning in the late 1752, sixty-eight *joangas* of Moros desolated Kalibo, Aklan; thirty-eight razed Ilog, Negros; fifty-five sacked Banton Island, Romblon; twenty-five besieged Palompon, Leyte; seventeen pillaged Calampan, Mindoro; two thousand Maranaos besieged Iligan, Mindanao for two months, etc. Of the eighteen towns of Mindoro, only two (Nauhan and Calapan) escaped total destruction. No less than 160 *joangas* of Moros were reported to have made Mindoro as their jumped-off base for raiding nearby islands.

The Iranuns and Maranaos came next in 1753 and repeated the same scenes of pillage and desolation. Five hundred of them raided the towns of Iligan, Initao, Caraga, Layuan, and Tagoloan. Six hundred came against Lubungan (whose inhabitants claimed that they were saved by the appearance of their patron saint, San Tiago, riding on a white horse); seventy *joangas* of Moros besieged Iponan for eight days. In July 1753, the Moros destroyed Surigao, Higaquet, Pahuntungan, and the entire district of Butuan. In the Visayas, they attacked Camiguin, Romblon, Tablas, Banton, Simara and Sibuyan. All the towns in Ticao Island were sacked while Calapan, Mindoro and Calavite, Marinduque were burned to the ground. Perhaps what the Moro killer of the *padre ministro* of Calavite said expressed the fury of the Moro warfare against the Spaniards and their native allies: "*Espanol mato a mi padre, yo tambien mato Espanol*" (A Spaniard killed my father, I will also kill a

Spaniard). The raiders reached and attacked the towns of Masinloc and Sta. Cruz, Zambales.

The year 1754 was no different. Gasang and Sta. Cruz, Marinduque were razed during this year. In March 1754, the Leyte towns of Hinundayan, Cabalian, Liloan, Sogod, Maasin, and Biliran were destroyed by the raiders. In May 1754, seventy-four *joangas* of Moros invaded Manaol, Bongabong, and Bulalacao, capturing 150 persons: seventy-eight *joangas* hit Kalibo and Asin, Aklan and the islands of Banton, Tablas, and Romblon. Seventeen sacked Pandan while forty-seven *joangas* invaded San Miguel de Tibiao, Panay. In June 1754, 900 Maranaos destroyed the town of Bacon, Sorsogon. In July 1754, the *Santissima Trinidad* anchored at Ticao, carrying the incoming Governor General, Manuel de Arandia. He dispatched a *caracoa* of messengers and guards carrying communications from

Acapulco to Manila. It was intercepted at the gulf of Sorsogon and all the men were slain by the Moros who were in control of the place. Had Arandia landed with his men, the Moro raiders could have bagged the biggest captive - the governor general of the Philippines.

On August 1, 1754, all the towns along the shores of Sorsogon gulf were attacked. Macalaya, Donsol, Sorsogon, and the rest suffered despoliation. In September 1754, the capital town of Albay province - Albay Viejo - was occupied by the Moros. It took the Spanish authorities of the province, with help from nearby towns, three days of fighting before they retook Albay Viejo. Manito, a town opposite Albay Viejo in the Gulf of Albay, similarly suffered.

By 1755, the raiders had entrenched themselves in Marinduque, seriously threatening the Manila-Acapulco route, thereby forcing the Spaniards to scrape men and materials to launch an expedition to drive the Moros from Marinduque. A battle was fought in July near Balayan, Batangas where the Moro forces were defeated, thereby clearing Marinduque of its enemy

occupants. Towards the end of 1755, the Moros returned and destroyed the rebuilt town of Sta. Cruz, Marinduque.

The year 1756 continued to witness the same scenes of ruin for the Spanish-held areas. Communications between provincial and colonial officials with Manila during this year mentioned the continued Moro raids against the various provinces and islands in Luzon and the Visayas. The parish priest of Lauan, Leyte reported that the Moros besieged the town in 1756 for forty-six days leaving it destroyed. The town of Mariveles, Bataan was also attacked and destroyed in 1755 and 1756.

In 1757, a Moro leader renowned for his ferocity against the Spaniards and their allies struck fear among the inhabitants of Luzon and the Visayas. He was Datu Salicala. His raids during this year, which brought him to as far as Manila Bay, so terrified the inhabitants that the mere mention of his name sufficed to send them scurrying to the interior. He left with more than a thousand captives. Two raids hit the capital town of Leyte in 1757 which led to the loss of 43,000 pesos worth of tributes collected from the province and waiting for transport to Manila. In 1758, eleven joangas of Moros destroyed the town of Subic, Zambales.

In 1759, the Fathers Provincial of the various religious orders submitted a report to Manila. The Fray Capellan of Imus, Cavite reported that the *contra-costa* of Mindoro was a major Moro base from which the raiders preyed upon passing vessels, especially between Punta de Calabite and Punta de Burruncal whose numerous coves perfectly served as hideouts for the raiders.

On June 8, 1759 the Father Provincial of the Augustinians reported about various Moro raids against Panay, Capiz, Iloilo, Cebu, and Batangas. He noted that in 1758 the towns of Taal and Batangas, four towns in Capiz, and the entire province of Iloilo (except the town of Anilao) were raided by the Moros.

The Father Provincial of the Franciscans similarly gave a gloomy picture for Tayabas and Kabikolan. The Tayabas towns of Mayaboc, Polillo, Gumaca, Mauban, Atimonan, Pagbilao, and Binangonan de Lampon were frequently raided according to his report. In Camarines, the towns of Bagay and Lupi and their six visitas were destroyed while the towns of Oas, Libon, Guinobatan, Libmanan, Calabanga, and Cagsaua were miserable because the Moros often destroyed their croplands. The Father Provincial estimated that in 1758 alone, more than 280 persons in Kabikolan died fighting the Moros and the population decreased due to captivity, deaths, or dispersions in the mountains.

Attempts by the Spanish authorities to bring the warfare to the Moro homeland met disaster. In a naval fight off Zamboanga, in July 1757, a Spanish naval force was defeated by a force of Mindanaoans led by Datu Jamsa and his son.

Until the British occupied Manila in 1762, the Spanish colonial authorities and the inhabitants of Luzon and the Visayas were fully preoccupied with the Moros. In addition, there were other developments which aggravated the critical condition of the Spaniards and their native allies rendering them in no position to successfully resist the British invasion. In 1761, the galleon *Concepcion*, together with 500 men aboard it and the years *situado*, was lost leaving the colonial treasury of Manila empty. Before this event, drought and plagues of locusts destroyed many croplands in Luzon, leaving the inhabitants in severe want and hunger. Thus, what the British found when they came was a prostrate country and people which Juan de la Concepcion graphically described as "*un desmayado cuerpo, sin Espiritu y sin Sangre.*"

The British occupation of Manila left the Moros in full control of the seas. Even after the British left in 1764, many more years elapsed before the Spaniards could rehabilitate their efforts against the Moros. Meantime, the latter raided with impunity various places in Luzon and the Visayas. In fact, right after the British left, the Moros raided the town of Cabcaben,

Bataan at the same time cruising all over Manila Bay, taunting the Spaniards as the latter watched helplessly.

In 1769, the Moros raided various towns in northern Mindanao, and the islands of Camiguin, Cebu, Panay, Sibuyan, Mindoro, Leyte, Iloilo, Negros, Samar, Albay, and Masbate. They reached up to Bataan where they destroyed the towns of Mariveles and Cabcaben. The raiders had become so confident to the point that in the island of Inangpolongan, in the strait separating Iloilo and Negros, they built a *tangcal* (a corral or enclosure) where they gathered all their captives in their raiding sorties before transporting them to the slave markets in Jolo or Borneo. In 1771, another big raid occurred reaching up to Palanan, Isabela where a Dominican friar and a Spaniard were captured on January.

Forty-one joangas of Moros raided Manito, Albay at dawn on October 24, 1772. Two raids hit the town of Putiao, Albay in 1773-74, forcing its inhabitants to abandon the town. The town of Maripipi, Leyte was attacked in 1777 but the raiders were defeated. Seven of their pancos and 120 raiders were captured by the local defenders. The town of Catanauan, Tayabas was destroyed by the Moros in 1780. Sorsogon and Albay was again raided in 1782 and 1786. In 1796, Camarines was hit, the Moros destroying the village of Himoragat, but they suffered a setback when one of their groups was defeated in Bacacay, Albay. Sorsogon suffered another raid in 1799. In one of their petition to the Governor General, the people of Donsol, Sorsogon mentioned that their town was attacked in 1790, 1804, 1816, and 1821. They also mentioned that they captured a Moro chief, named Hungara, and seven of his men.

Kabikolan was again raided in 1805. On May 28, 1804 the Moros bagged the vessel carrying the entire tributes collected from Albay Province and consisting of 512 cavans of rice and 2,332 pesos. Twenty pancos of raiders, led by Datus Capasa, Tabor, Tumbao, Tiroden, and Gatansa raided Mambulao, Camarines Sur on Nov. 15, 1805 and captured fifteen fishermen. Another group of forty pancos blockaded Sorsogon Gulf from

November to December of that year. On November 15, they captured the vessel carrying 100 firearms and its entire cargo of gunpowder destined for the defense of the port of Sorsogon. On November 24, they got the vessel owned by the Alcalde Mayor of Albay. They left towards the end of December loaded with booty and captives.

In 1810, the parish priest of Bulan, Sorsogon reported that the Moros raided the town in 1809 taking away 300 cavanos of palay. In November 1810, the Bishop of Nueva Caceres reported about the raid during that year of 170 pancos of Moros against Kabikolan. Their October 1810 raid against Libmanan was unforgettable for its inhabitants. Not only did they take 100 of them into captivity, the Bishop noted, but the raiders also forced the women to disrobe, made their *tapis* into sacks for the palay they got and forced the naked women to carry them to their pancos before leaving.

The Moros made another big raid in 1818. On May 28, they captured a vessel led by a Spaniard. They raided Palanas, Masbate but was beaten off. They went to Capul Island, near Samar, where they exchanged some of their captives for palay. On July 2, near Rapu-Rapo Island, they captured three vessels of the colonial government of Albay. On July 6, they invaded Sarrgay, Camarines Sur, capturing 84 of its inhabitants, including the town's parish priest and gobernadorcillo. On July 9, at the encenada de Pitogo, Tabogon Bay, Camarines Sur, they captured the entire government fund of Catanduanes Island after sinking the two vessels carrying said fund and killing all the crewmen. Another group of raiders briefly stopped at Casiguran, Tayabas and picked up a woman in exchange for not raiding the town. Returning to Tabogon Bay, the raiders met an initial defeat from the Albay *armadilla*.

Heavy seas and winds prevented the local defenders from effectively scouring the seas. It also prevented the raiders from leaving the area. On August 17, fifty pancos of raiders again occupied Indan, Camarines Norte. The Albay *armadilla* could not give aid because of the presence of 31 pancos of raiders

which attacked Magdalena, Masbate. One group of raiders attempted to attack Sorsogon Gulf but desisted upon seeing the inhabitants of the areas prepared to give them not a warm welcome. Another group, numbering some 3,000, was sighted heading towards Palapag, Samar towards the end of August 1818.

A fight between the *lancha* de Ticao and the raiders near Burias Pass on October 20, was for the curtain-raiser for the big naval fight that was shaping up. The raiders suffered 18 deaths and the capture of two of their vessels. The big battle between the raiders and the local defenders finally took place on the night of October 25. The raiders lost fourteen of their vessels and some five hundred of them were forced to flee on land. At dawn of October 26, forty pancos of raiders were intercepted at Tabogon Bay and was led by no less than "Prince Nune, the son of the Sultan of Mindanao." After thirteen hours of battle, twelve pancos of raiders were sunk, another nine captured, and thirty captives freed. Prince Nune, however, escaped capture when one of his leaders, Datu Gampon, returned to the battle scene and spirited him away. Two weeks after this October 25-26 battles, more than sixty corpses of the raiders were washed ashore. Until late December 1818, a running fight continued between the raiders and the local inhabitants.

The 1818 battle at Tabogon Bay proved to be the watershed to Moro resistance against Spanish rule. Thereafter, the raiders were no longer as daring in conducting their attacks. Their defeat at Tabogon Bay must have impressed them with the increasing competence of organized resistance against their devastating attacks. Various reports from 1818 to 1860, when the last heavy Moro raids occurred reaching up to Ilocos, largely mentioned various sightings of passing Moro pancos, the capture of isolated fishermen, or the burning of croplands.

For two more times the inhabitants of Mindanao and Sulu came to Luzon and the Visayas to show their defiance against Spain. One was in 1846-1847 when they raided coastal towns as far as Ilocos and Pangasinan. The group that went to the Ilocos was driven ashore in Bauang, La Union by a storm. The

inhabitants of Pangasinan and La Union fought the raiders capturing 32 of them, killing three, and freeing 6 captives.

In 1860, the last massive Moro raid occurred in Kabikolan when several pancos of Moros attacked the Bikol region from May to October. Substantial damage were inflicted by this six-month raid: several persons were captures, killed, or wounded: trade and travel throughout Kabikolan was held up, and the colonial authorities were rendered helpless to succor the raided places. In fact, the raiders almost captured the entire fund of Catanduanes, amounting to 1,000 pesos.

There were still sporadic raids - the last taking place in 1896, according to some local accounts - but for the Moros their era of raiding and destroying Luzon and the Visayas with impunity had already declined. By the last half of the 19th century, it was their turn to be progressively on the defensive as the onslaught of Spain against the Moros mounted.

The Effects of Moro Raids

Governor General Marquina's comment that the Moro raids were an evil without remedy (*era un mal sin remedio*) aptly described the effects of the Moro resistance and counterattacks against Spanish colonial expansionism. To the Spanish colonial authorities, the Moro attacks were not only detrimental to their interests in the Philippines but were also the root cause of the depopulation of the many coastal areas and their lack of commercial and agricultural growth, especially in the Visayas. Governor General Basco y Vargas, in 1778, attributed the decadence of the Islands to the continuous Moro raids which disrupted peace and order, stopped inter-coastal trade and commerce, destroyed many towns and croplands, and carried many inhabitants to captivity.

One of the obvious effects of Moro raids was the substantial number of captives taken from the various coastal

towns of Luzon and the Visayas. In 1621, Hernando de los Pios Coronel mentioned about the "more than ten thousand captives" taken by the Moros during the past decades. In 1634, Manila Archbishop Miguel Garcia Serrano reported that in the first thirty years of the 17th century more than 20,000 Christians were captured by the Moro raiders. Vicente Barrantes cited a report by the Recollect Father Provincial that Palawan alone suffered some 10,000 killed or taken captive during the years 1719 to 1751. A 1735 report noted that Maestre de Campo Island, Romblon had only a population of 28 tributes while Biliran Island, Leyte, once a populous island, was inhabited by a few bagamundos for the past fifty years.

The 1750's which saw the heaviest Moro raids witnessed a big population reduction in many coastal areas. It was reported that the partido of Panay was reduced from 1,500 tributes in 1750 to only 500 in 1757; Romblon, from 1,370 to 995; Aklan, from 1,164 to 549; etc. Mindoro, from 1752 to 1756, suffered more than 1,000 of its inhabitants killed and another 1,300 captured. The Bishop of Nueva Caceres reported on June 29, 1758 that the series of Moro raids had reduced Kabikolan's population by 8,000 persons. The Spanish historian, Jose Montero y Vidal, estimated that an annual average of 500 persons were taken captive by the Moros from the various places that they raided.

Undoubtedly, a substantial number of persons were either taken or killed by the Moro raiders every year. However, it is difficult to ascertain the figures given by the friars. No less than the Father Provincial of the Franciscans, in 1759, noted that the *padrones de almas* (population lists) in the various towns they administered showed many members missing or unaccounted for and that they were either captured, killed, or had taken refuge in the mountains. In other words, Moro raids was not the sole cause for the depopulation of many coastal towns. The destruction, desolation, and terror sown by the raiders certainly drove many of the coastal inhabitants to the interior. Consequently, this evacuation to the interior was reflected in the growth of settlements therein and in the reduced

number of tributary populations manifested in the *padrones de almas* of the various coastal towns.

The friars' claim that Moro raids accounted for the population decline in most coastal towns was overstated. Their exaggeration was partly due to the effects of the raids against them. They, together with their native flock, bore the brunt of the raiders' fury. Their patient years of labor gathering the natives "under the bells" were easily destroyed by a single Moro raid. Thus, their determination to hold out in their missions and parishes. For the farflung areas, the friars were the sole rallying points for the natives. They not only donated vessels to patrol the coast and fight the Moro raiders, but they themselves led the people during times of Moro attacks.

Thus, the Moro raiders saw the friars' vital role and the friars became their prime target. As a consequence, many friars suffered death, captivity, and ill-treatment. No friar was ransomed for less than a thousand pesos, many times over the amount paid for the liberty of any captive native *principalia*. The Cura of Casiguran, Tayabas was captured in 1798 and ransomed for 2,500 pesos. The Father Provincial of the Recollects and another friar, captured in May 1823, were ransomed for 10,000 pesos.

The relatively weak resistance shown by the inhabitants of many coastal areas also partly accounted for the successes of the raiders. This weak resistance was due to Spanish policy of prohibiting the natives from carrying any form of arms which the latter could have used for self-protection. The prohibitions were intended to control the vagabonds and *tulisanes* who had become daring and destructive, too. This policy, however, less affected the *tulisanes* than the general inhabitants, especially those in the coastal areas, who were rendered helpless before the Moro raiders. It was only after the destructive Moro raids of the 18th century that the ban to carry arms was eased by the Spanish authorities as they passed on to the native population in 1799 the burden of conducting the wars against the Moro raiders.



Abetting the Moro raiders' successes, too, was their establishment of various bases and settlements in many islands which were located right at the backdoors of the christianized towns. The islands of Mindoro, Burias, Samar, Leyte, Biliran, Masbate, Polillo, and Paragua contained many Moro rancherias which served as bases and rendezvous points for them in attacking nearby islands or coastal towns. In 1775, a native who escaped from Moro captivity enumerated and identified for the Spanish authorities these various Moro bases. In Leyte, in Silanga de Himaguas there was a Moro *rancheria* of forty camarines under Datu Dacus. There were various Moro rancherias in Silanga de San Juanico and Rio Bagonbon; one of which consisted of more than two hundred huts under a Principe Panglima and Datus Minuncan, Mathoan, and Mangilala. Another rancheria of more than two hundred huts was in Rio Payt under Datus Sani, Pari, Matan, Bago, and Aminudin; and another rancheria located between Rio Payt and the town of Palompon, Leyte.

Masbate was also a major Moro base. In a river named Daraga, there was a Moro rancheria of more than two hundred huts where more than 5,000 Moros were based, together with 113 sacayanes and a galera. This must have been a major base because the escapee reported that raiding teams came and went while constant trading among the Moros took place, where many captives and arms of various calibers as well as cannons were traded or sold. Malbog, Bagombong, Banamao, Limban-Cauayan, Cataingan, and Malbaranon were the other places in Masbate where the Moros had their bases. There was also a Moro base in southern Burias island under Datu Amar Casilano. Mamburao, Mindoro was also a major Moro base while the island of Marlisum, opposite the town of Culasi, Antique was labelled by the Spaniards as "refugio de Moros."

The Moro raiders' tactics of attacking at dawn when the people were in deep slumber and their practice of burning the town, the church, and the croplands also accounted for the psychological impact that terrified the inhabitants of the coastal town that they raided. The Bishop of Nueva Caceres' circular on

February 24, 1757 to the religious ministers in Kabikolan aptly expressed this impact. The bishop rebuked the religious ministers for the neglected state of their parishes and the dispersed inhabitants of their towns, many of whom lived in the mountains without the benefit of the "Santos Sacraments," further saying that "the Indios have their synagogues, the Moros their mosques, the Gentiles their temples, the heretics their churches - all, except the Christian Catholics of my Bishopric who do not have theirs." Except for their roofs, the bishop added, the churches in Kabikolan could be likened to a snake-pit (*madrigueras de culebras*), or like the hut of an *indio cimarron*, as most of them were poorly-built structures (*malformados camarines*).

Many passes in the various seas surrounding the Philippines were described by the inhabitants as perennial lairs of the Moros (*madriguera perenne de los piratas Moros*). Their dominance of the seas literally ended inter-island trade and traffic. Mindoro was described as a depopulated island (*unto despoblado*) while Samar and Leyte were very decadent (*en grave decadencia*) as described by a report in 1792. The Father Provincial of the Franciscans reported on January 26, 1770 that Kabikolan towns were very poor because the inhabitants could not trade with other places due to Moro dominance of the seas (*los pueblos estan muy pobres por no haber traficar sus generos acausa de los Moros*). As late as 1838, half of Catanduanes Island's annual palay harvest was taken away by the Moro raiders. Other islands were equally destitute. Burias was largely deserted while Masbate had only few and poor inhabitants (*con muy corto de pobres habitantes*). Antique was described as in a very miserable state in 1783 while the Calamianes group of islands were described as pitiful in 1735. Marinduque was very miserable, too, because the Moros came every year and destroyed everything that they rebuilt.

The raids did not only account for the poverty and miserable state of many places in Luzon and the Visayas. They also caused the decline or death of many coastal towns. As late as 1826, the entire western coast of Kabikolan was deserted. Even after the dissipation of Moro raids towards the middle of

the 19th century, many inhabitants who evacuated to the interior did not return to their former townsite. Spanish policy of relocating or reconcentrating the inhabitants of isolated towns or visitas also explained why a good number of said settlements declined or died. This policy was enforced especially during the decade of the 1750's when Mindoro's twenty-two towns were reduced to only seven towns in 1757. In 1755, all the towns in Burias and Masbate were reconcentrated into one town only while Albay Province was reduced to eight towns from thirteen by 1757.

Moro raids also exacted very substantial damages against the Spanish colonial finances. The destruction caused by the raiders upon many coastal towns left the inhabitants in dire circumstances, rendering them unable to meet their tribute obligations to the colonial government. In 1641, consequent to the Moro raids against Marinduque the previous year, the governor general condoned the Marinduque inhabitants' payment of tribute for three years. In 1734, the inhabitants of Culion, Palawan were exempted to pay their tributes and render personal services for a period of three years to enable them to build a stonefort for their protection. In 1735, the inhabitants of Maestre de Campo island, Romblon was also given the same exemption for a period of two years to enable them to rebuild their town which was destroyed by Moro raid. In 1737, all the towns in the Calamianes Province were exempted from paying their tributes for the years 1732-1736. In 1757, the inhabitants of the Marinduque towns of Gasano & Sta. Cruz; Cuyo, Calamianes; and Palompon, Leyte were exempted from paying their tributes for the year 1756, while Palompon was exempted for three years. The town of Lauang, Leyte was also exempted to pay tributes for 1756 due to Moro raids. The town of Batangas was excused from paying tributes for two years beginning in 1757 to enable its inhabitants to build a stonefort for their defense against the Moros. The inhabitants of Lubang, Mindoro were granted tribute exemption for three years beginning in 1757 to enable them to transfer their townsite and rebuild their church and convent. In 1771, the town of Mariveles, Bataan was exempted to pay their tributed and personal services for a period of three years also to

enable them to rebuild their town which was destroyed by Moro raids in 1755. And in 1785, the town of Catanauan, Tayabas was exempted from paying tributes for the period of two years to enable them to rebuild their town which was destroyed by a Moro raid in March 1780. While these exemptions meant relief for the inhabitants of the said town, it meant loss of income for the colonial coffers.

The Moro raids also drained the Spanish colonial coffers. As early as 1722, the colonial authorities in Manila noted the heavy financial exhaustion of the colonial treasury in maintaining or repairing churches and other colonial structures routinely burned and plundered by the Moro raiders. The central government enjoined the provincial officials to exert extra efforts (*asiste tarde y mañana*) in the collection of tributes to alleviate the heavy financial drain. On July 14, 1755 the Governor General anxiously petitioned Madrid for additional financial aid because the Islands' finances were exhausted by the continuous Moro raids, by the eruption of Taal Volcano which destroyed many nearby towns, and by other needs which equally required urgent attention.

From 1778 to 1793, the Spanish colonial government had spent the amount of 1,519,209 pesos for the salaries, ships, and expeditions sent against the Moros. The amount was described as demonstrating "the extraordinary cost of the incessant war against the Moros since the start of Spanish rule in the Philippines." In 1826, the Spanish colonial government was annually spending the amount of 50,000 pesos in the war against the Moros. It was an amount which no less than the Governor General then described as "excessive."

Notwithstanding the enormous amounts expended by the Spanish colonial government, these did not include those spent by the parish priests and the inhabitants who, without much help from the colonial government, took it upon themselves to build the *castillos* (watchtowers), *baluartes* and *intramuros* (fortified enclosures into which the people sought refuge), and *faluas* or *paraos* (small, fast-sailing vessels) in defending themselves

against the Moro raiders. Neither could the value of destroyed towns, churches, properties, and croplands be disregarded because they were immeasurable: nor the captured funds and goods and the thousands of captives taken by the raiders. Finally, there was also the very substantial amount of supplies and services annually shouldered by the inhabitants (consequent to the decision by the colonial government in 1799 to pass on to them the burden of defense) in maintaining and provisioning the armadillas ordered formed by the colonial government and which the people themselves constructed and manned through the *polos y servicios*.

It is important to point out, too, that the above discussions excluded the expenses shouldered and the destruction suffered by the inhabitants of Mindanao and Sulu whenever the Spanish colonial government attacked their homelands, and the thousands of Moro lives lost or condemned to the galleys by the Spaniards.

Summary and Conclusions

The centuries of Moro raids was one factor that deeply affected the inhabitants of Luzon, the Visayas, and Mindanao and Sulu. The raiders came, as Cesar Adib Majul conclusively showed, in retaliation to Spanish efforts to subjugate their homelands. They retaliated against Spanish-held territories to offset the execution of Spanish plans to conquer them. The raids destroyed the bases or sources of support of Spanish expansionism. The impact of their retaliatory raids were incalculable showing that the Moros of Mindanao and Sulu succeeded in making the Spaniards and their local allies pay dearly for the efforts to conquer their homelands.

Documentary sources mentioned three important near-misses by the raiders. They almost captured an Archbishop of Manila and two incoming Governors-General. One wonders what would have been the impact on Spanish expansionism in the

Philippines had the Moros captured these symbols of Spanish power.

It is significant to note that the centuries of Moro raids also demonstrated the tenacity of the inhabitants of Mindanao and Sulu in thwarting Spanish expansionist ambitions. In fact, it may be said that the destructiveness of their raids produced a stalemate in the Philippines - one where the Spaniards were confined in Luzon and the Visayas and the Moros in Mindanao and Sulu. Perhaps this stalemate bought vital time for the latter as their raids prolonged their independent existence until the Americans came.

It could also be said that the centuries of Moro raids deepened the separation of the Christian and Muslim inhabitants of the Philippines. The ferocity of the raids drove their christianized kin to side with the Spaniards while, on the other hand, the former's alliance with the Spaniards alienated them from their Moro brothers. It is unfortunate that many of the christianized inhabitants failed to see themselves as mere tools of the Spaniards in the latter's efforts to conquer the Moro homelands. Apparently, unrelenting Moro pressures prevented many christianized inhabitants from entertaining such thoughts. Some Moro leaders perceived this and attempted to rekindle the pre-colonial ties that they had with the inhabitants of Luzon and the Visayas. The Sultan of Sulu's three attempts to forge an alliance against the Spaniards by proposing marriage to the granddaughter of Rajah Catunao of Bohol failed because the latter was already won over to the Spanish faith. It was also the same with Datu Buisan's talks with the native chiefs of Leyte. The failures of such efforts demonstrated that the inhabitants of Mindanao and Sulu had to fend for themselves and fight for their independent existence because their Christianized kin in Luzon and the Visayas were already accustomed to the yoke of Spanish subjection.

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