

From Ascent and Descent Towards the Revival: An Introduction to the
History and Genealogy of the Maguindanao Sultanate
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OF MAGUINDANAO, SULU AND NORTH BORNEO

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Introduction

It is a truism, I believe, that history is meant to be written by people who do not make it. The Austrian statesman, Prince Clemens von Metternich' once said, "Those who make history do not have the time to write it. "

I can not, therefore, fault my forebears who failed to write the history of Maguindanao: they were the ones who made it. During their times, it seemed that "the main thing," as Count Otto von Bismarck observed, "is to make history, not to write it." The duty of writing, I submit, primarily rests upon these history-makers' descendants -- who have neither the power, nor the opportunity, to make history.

It is in this spirit that I, despite the lack of formal training, decided to embark on the ambitious project of researching and writing the history of my country, Maguindanao and my forefathers, its Sultans . This paper is a part of that venture. Whether we like it or not, history is often a record of the life and times of rulers and leaders, more than of the people they ruled or led. This is occasioned by the fact that it is the laws they make, the trends they set, the wars they declare, the policies they fix, and the alliances they forge that ultimately affect -- if not determine -- the destiny of nations, particularly their own. Maguindanao (or Mindanao) is the youngest Malay Muslim Sultanate, compared to Sulu and Brunei (or Borneo.) It was established at the close of

the 15th century or the early part of the 16th century. Contemporary historians agree that by 1515 , a few years after the fall of Malacca in 1511, Maguindanao was on its way to becoming a full-fledged Sultanate. It is, however, surmised that as early as the 14th century, Maguindanao was already a port of call by the Chinese.

When Villalobos visited Maguindanao in 1543, he learned that the Sultan was "Siriparra, that is, the Lord of Mindanao " who was probably Saripada Maka-alang, the 2nd Sultan of the realm. But that is going ahead of the story.

Let me first begin by relating the traditional story surrounding the coming of Sharif Kabungsuwan who is accepted as the first Sultan of Maguindanao. I will then relate what is so far known or, at least, can be safely presumed regarding his descendants who ruled according to customs and tradition, was bypassed, or occupied the throne with or without foreign intervention. I will also chronicle the highlights of their rule, and offer glimpses of their relations with other countries and sovereigns and with one another. This will also include the Sultanate's progress from feudal to centralized monarchy during the 17th century and its segmentation after the dynastic wars at the beginning of the 18th century. Then, I will continue on the reign of later Sultans to the decline of their sovereignty in the 19th century, until the first decade of the 20th, when Maguindanao finally succumbed to the colonial yoke of the United States of America. I will conclude with a brief survey of its status under the regime of colonial USA's heir and successor-in-interest, that is, the Republic of the Philippines. Needless to say, the paper will focus on the Sultans, their blood and affinal relationships with other rulers and the circumstances of their accession to the throne. Special treatment will also be given to the external factors which somehow exerted influence on the destiny of Maguindanao and the fortunes of its Sultans, as well as those influenced by them. This will include, as a matter of course, its closest neighbors, Sulu and Brunei, as well as Ternate, Sangir and the rest of the Moluccas. A look into Maguindanao's response to Dutch, English, and, more importantly, Spanish and American incursions into the country --the latter two having exercised partial or total de-facto sovereignty -- will also be made. A cursory look at the political dynamics within the royal family of Maguindanao which contributed to its cycles of consolidation and segmentation, progress and decline will also be taken. This will be complemented with an optimistic essay on the present state of Maguindanao and its Sultanate, as well as their future prospects.

II Putative Origin of the First Maguindanao Sultan

Sharif Kabungsuwan, posthumously known as the first Sultan of Maguindanao ,(reigned @ 1515) is well-known among Maguindanaons, Maranaos, Iranons and other indigenous populations of the traditional realm of Maguindanao, including the non-Muslim indigenes -- Bla'ans, Manobos, Tedurays, etc.– historically known in European sources as Haraforas or Alforezeen and in new Filipino scholarship as Lumads. Kabungsuwan's renown is especially perceptible among the traditional ruling families in mainland Mindanao.

The Muslim ruling elite all claim direct or indirect origin from him while the traditional chieftains non-Muslim indigenes claim descent from either Mamalu or Tabunaway, brothers of the Putri Tunina, one of the wives of the Sharif.

The Maguindanao tarsila points to a certain Sharif Ali Zainal Abidin and Putri Jusul Asikin as the parents of Kabungsuwan. It further states that Sharif Zainal Abidin came from Hadhramawt and a descendant of Muhammad, God's Final Messenger; while Putri Jusul Asikin was a daughter of the Sultan of Johor. Majul, however, contends that Kabungsuwan's mother is of Malaccan origin. This may have been premised on the fact that the royal family of modern Johor is of Malaccan origin.

Another writer insists that Kabungsuwan was a "refugee from the Portuguese seizure of Melaka." This, however, is open to question.

Johor, now a modern Malaysian state bordering Singapore, was a muddy town, prior to the downfall of Malacca to the Portuguese. It was only in 1511 that the defeated Malacca royal family fled to Johor and established a new Sultanate there. There is ample evidence, however, that during the 14th century, Tumasek (or Singapura Tua) was also called Johor, as can be illustrated by both Brunei and Singapore history and genealogy. Recently, Dr. Zakaria Abdullah, a professor at the University of Malaya questioned the alleged marriage of Brunei's first Sultan, Awang Alak Betatar a.k.a. Sultan Muhammad Shah to a princess of Johor, as the Brunei genealogy asserts, since "Johor only came into being after the fall of Malacca in 1511." The head of the Brunei History Centre in Bandar Seri Begawan was quick to the defense. As Brudirect.com (an online magazine on Brunei) reports:

"In an interview with Radio Television Brunei (RTB), Pehin Dato Dr Haji

Awang Mohd Jamil Al-Sufri commented about the statement made by Dr. Abdullah. According to Pehin Dato Dr Haji Awang Mohd Jamil Al-Sufri, what had been referred to in the Brunei sultanate genealogy as Johor was in actual fact Tumasek or Singapura Tua and not Malacca.”

The head of the Brunei History Centre, according to the same report, confirms that Sultan Muhammad Shah, the first Sultan of Brunei, did actually marry a princess from Johor in the year 1368, making Sultan Muhammad Shah or Awang Alak Betatar the son-in-law of Paduka Seri Sultan Muhammad, the third Sultan of Singapura Tua, or Johor, as it was written in the Brunei genealogy.

Whether the Johor referred to in the Maguindanao genealogy was the kingdom founded by the defeated royalty of Malacca after 1511 or the Singapura Tua which was extant by 1368, is an interesting subject of study. But as far as Maguindanao royalty is concerned, there seems to be no contention here. Generations of Maguindanaons, supported by some scholars of renown, take it for granted that Kabungsuwan was a product of a hybrid union between a male Sharif or Sayyid from Hadhramawt and a female member of Johor nobility.

The Tarsila is more specific about the parentage of Kabungsuwan’s father. A copy of the Tarsila traces the origin of Kabungsuwan thus: “Baginda Ali married Fatimat uz-Zahra and begot Sharif Hassan and Sharif Hussain . Sharif Hussain begot Sharif Ali Zain al Abidin who begot Sharif Muhammad al-Baqir who begot Sharif Ali who begot Sharif Isa who begot Sharif Ahmad who journeyed to Hadhramawt.” Thence it traces the line that corresponds with other well-documented genealogy of Sharifs and Sayyids from the Middle East, particularly Hadhramawt who migrated to what is now known as Southeast Asia. Finally it asserts that “Sharif Ali Zainal Abidin married “Putri Jiusul Asikin” (probably a descriptive title denoting a noble princess who led in piety, but not necessarily a proper name), with the union producing Sharif Muhammad Kabungsuwan. Again, whether his mother was from Singapura Tua like the wife of Sharif Ali, 3rd Sultan of Brunei, or from Malacca is an interesting subject of further research. At any rate, Sharif Muhammad Kabungsuwan is credited with the propagation of Islam and the establishment of the Sultanate system of governance in mainland Mindanao.

III The Development and Expansion of Maguindanao:

Sharif Kabungsuwan, as the Maguindanao Tarsila relates, arrived at Tinundan,

near the present-day Cotabato City; converted the natives led by Datu Tabunaway and Datu Mamalu and spread Islam throughout Maguindanao.

First, he married Putri Tunina, the (adopted) sister of Datus Tabunaway and Mamalu, by whom he begot no male heir, but three daughters, one of whom was married to the founder of the principality of Buayan whose later rulers also adopted the style of Sultan. Marrying an Iranun princess, Angintabu, he begot Saripada Maka-alang who became the second Sultan of Maguindanao (reign: between 1515 and 1574). Saripada Maka-alang married Bulim, the daughter of a Bla'an chieftain, thus widening further Maguindanao's sphere of influence to include the aborigines. The Bla'ans are the indigenous people of the mountainous interior of the south and central regions of the archipelago. Out of this marriage, was born Datu Bangkaya who ruled as 3rd Sultan of Maguindanao (@ 1574-1578).

Out of three marriages, Datu Bangkaya bore three children who all ruled Maguindanao, one after the other. By an Iranun lady, he begot Datu Dimasangkay, 4th Sultan of Maguindanao (@1578-1585). By a Buayan lady, he begot Gugu Sarikula, 5th Sultan of Maguindanao (@1585-1597). By a Maguindanaon lady, he begot Datu Buisan – who was called Kapitan Laut during the reign of his elder brothers -- 6th Sultan of Maguindanao (1597-1619).

All the datus and "Sultans" in the principalities of Lanao, except a few who trace their lineage to the legendary Bantugan, claim descent from Sultan Dimasangkay.

Sultan Sarikula married a daughter (or, as some say, sister) of the Sultan of Sulu, Sultan Muallil Wasit a.k.a. Rajah Bungsu and reportedly resided in Sulu after he was ousted by his younger brother in 1597. By this time, Buisan has already consolidated his hold on the whole island with the Iranun and Maranao datus acknowledging his suzerainty.

Thus, the Spaniards, attempting to secure alliance with individual datus of the Lake utterly failed. As one writer put it, "The region in the vicinity of Lake Lanao was under the rule of King Buhisan (sic) at the time of the first Spanish penetration."

As Kapitan Laut or Admiral of the Navy, Buisan was in charge of punitive raids against the Spanish Philippines, following the latter's armed intrusions into Maguindanao territory. During the course of these raids, he entered into friendly relations with the native Datus of the Visayas, promising them aid in case they fight the Spaniards. When he became Sultan and overlord of Mindanao, he continued, even intensified these policies. This was a period when Maguindanao, like its European counterparts, actively engaged in "privateering" or slave-procurement and trading, with its best merchandise finding its way into the hands of the gentlemen of the British East India Company (EIC) and the Dutch Verinigde Oostindische Compagnie (VOC).

Buisan was a diplomat, naval officer, statesman and king rolled into one. He gave his daughter Gayang in marriage to Amatunding, son of Sultan Dimasangkay, strengthening further his hold on the Iranuns and/ or Maranaos. He also married off his son, Kachil Kudarat to another daughter of Sulu Sultan Muallil Wasit, Pangyan Ampay. In passing, it bears recalling that this Sulu Sultan was reputed to be a son of Sultan Hassan of Brunei by a daughter of Sulu Sultan Halim or Pangiran Buddiman .

By the time of his death around 1619, Sultan Buisan has paved the way for a smooth succession of Katchil Kudarat, who proved as worthy as his father. Reigning and ruling as the 7th Sultan of Maguindanao for more than half a century, Sultan Dipatuan Muhammad Qudratullah Nasir-ud-Din (1619-1671) saw the zenith of Maguindanao's external and internal sovereignty. Here, we omit details of Kudarat's achievements, especially his war exploits, as it has been extensively covered by Majul, Casiño, Laarhoven, and others. An article was also written in the Philippine Daily Inquirer emphasizing the little discussed traits of the Sultan such as his being a diplomat, trader, polyglot, mystic, legal authority, ecumenist and gentleman, contrary to his image painted by some ignorant portraitists.

The period beginning from the reign of Kabungsuwan to Sultan Kudarat saw the expansion of Maguindanao from a tiny riverine town in what is now known as Cotabato City to a semi-feudal kingdom with all the trappings of a state extending from Sindangan Bay in the Zamboanga Peninsula eastward to Tagum in the Caraga region, and from what is now known as Northern Mindanao to Saranggani Island.

IV Development Plateau

After the death of Sultan Kudarat, there was a 47-year period described by

Majul as the "Interlude" in the so-called "Moro Wars" wherein, he asserts, the Sultanate's decline began. This view, however, was contradicted by Laarhoven who characterizes the period as the zenith of Maguindanao's glory. Territorially, the sovereignty of the Maguindanao Sultan which extended over an area described in the Atienza-Kudarat Treaty of June 24, 1645 as extending from Zamboanga to Tagum, increased considerably after the Treaty. Laarhoven asserts that it was maintained or expanded further by his successors during the later part of the 17th century .

Spain, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom vied for lucrative relations with Maguindanao during this period. The Sultans of the era took advantage of the competition among the European powers. The son of Sultan Kudarat, Sultan as-Salehin Saifullah, also known as Sultan Dundang Tidulay succeeded as the 8th Sultan (@1671) him for a brief period. Not much is known of his reign, except that he had a modus vivendi with Datu Buissan of Davao with whom he shared the Butuan Bay people as subjects. Sultan as-Salehin's son, Sultan Muhammad al- Mu'thabat Barahaman Muizz-ud-daulah (@1671-1699) probably ruled the domain jointly with his father until the latter's death. He was the 9th Sultan of Maguindanao.

Sultan Barahaman was able to fend off a rebellion in Buayan and further strengthened Maguindanao's superiority. Marrying a Sangirese princess, Basing (who was a daughter of Datu Mangada, ruler of Sangir or Sangihe island) he later succeeded in annexing island (now part of Indonesia) paving the way for the recognition of his son by Basing as Sultan of Sangir later, He was also reported to have married a Ternatan princess, cementing further Maguindanao's relations with the Spice Islands. He initiated relations with both the Dutch and the English, employing a Polish-born secretary-interpreter, Jacobus Ardes, to facilitate his commerce with those visitors, as well as correspondents abroad. His demise on July 6, 1699 ushered, however, an unfortunate phase in Maguindanao's history.

In sum, the period beginning from the reign of Sultan Salehin to that of Barahaman marked the further development of the state and royal institutions of Maguindanao and a little more expansion of its territory.

V. Maguindanaon Misfortune: The Dynastic Wars

During Sultan Barahaman's reign, his younger brother, Maulana Kahar ud-Din, also known as Kuda or Kudai, has already exerted considerable power

within the kingdom as the Kapitan Laut or Rajah Laut. His court by the mouth of the Simuay River in Central Maguindanao across his brother's Palace was well-known among foreign dignitaries. There, he entertained ambassadors from Sulu, Ternate and other nearby kingdoms, as well as European traders and researchers.

When he assumed as the 10th Sultan of Maguindanao (1699-1702) Kahar ud-Din was considered not only as Koenig (or King), but Kaiser (or Emperor) by the Dutch. Laarhoven, quoting Dutch archival sources, has vividly described the pomp and pageantry of Sultan Maulana Kahar ud-Din Kudai's court. The latter part of Kahar-ud-Din's rule, though, was replete with conflict and controversy, leading to his death in the hands of Sultan Shahab-ud-Din of Sulu on August 10, 1702.

When Kahar ud -Din succeeded his older brother, Barahaman, the eldest son of the latter was disappointed, believing that he should succeed in accordance with tradition that the eldest living son should succeed the father in a direct line. This son, Bayanul Anwar, therefore, contested his uncle's rule. Enlisting the aid of his relative, the Sultan of Sulu (Badar ud- Din) he mounted a potent rebellion which obviously succeeded . He was proclaimed as Sultan Jalal-ud-Din (1702-1736), agreeing to the condition that he rule jointly with his younger half-brother, Jafar Sadiq Manamir.

Under Kahar ud -Din, who was also his father-in-law, Manamir was both Rajah-Muda and Kapitan Laut who was groomed to succeed to the Sultanate. Succumbing to the pressure of the Bitiara Atas (Supreme Advisory Council) he agreed to the joint-rule arrangement akin to the former Barahaman -- Kahar ud -Din arrangement.

In 1710, Jalal ud-Din broke some provisions of their agreement, prompting Ja'far Sadiq to re-assert his right to the Sultanate. Moving to Tamontaka, presently a part of Datu Odin Sinsuat municipality in Maguindanao province, Datu Manamir started contesting his brother's reign. The Dutch referred to him as the Young King to distinguish him from Jalal ud-Din. In 1710, he formally assumed as Seri Paduka Sultan Ja'far Sadiq Manamir, 12th Sultan of Maguindanao (1710-1733).

While Jalaluddin was recognized along the coast, Ja'far Sadiq was recognized in the interior of Maguindanao, as well as Sangir. To make matters worse, in

March, 1733, Datu Malinug, Jalaluddin's son and heir-apparent, killed his uncle in a fierce fight where hundreds of others died. Thus, Sultan Ja'far Sadiq was posthumously known as Shahid Muffat. Immediately thereafter, the latter's son and heir-apparent, Fakir Maulana Hamza, succeeded his father as 13th Sultan of Maguindanao (1733-1755).

Meanwhile, Jalaluddin was still recognized as Sultan along the coast. While Spain recognized Hamza, the Netherlands recognized Jalaluddin. In 1736, Jalaluddin abdicated in favor of his son, Datu Malinug, who assumed as Sultan Tahiruddin (1736-1748). Pressure from Hamza and Umarmaya Tubutubu, the former's powerful brother, being allied through marriage with Ternate, Tahiruddin retired to Buayan where his maternal relatives dominate. By 1748 after Tahiruddin died, Hamza became the undisputed monarch in Maguindanao.

VI Attempts at Reconsolidation

Sultan Hamza was one of the most educated sovereigns of Maguindanao. A forward-looking statesman, erudite scholar, wise mystic, accomplished diplomat, and benevolent ruler, he attempted to reconsolidate the kingdom and transform it into a dynamic polity according to the standards of his day. Educated abroad, most probably in Sumatra and other Malay Muslim centers of learning, he was exposed not only to a vast body of religious knowledge but also a wide array of political theory and practice. Credited with earliest codification of Maguindanao Muslim law (Paluwaran) and written edition of Maguindanao genealogy (Tarsila), he also made peace with his cousins, the heirs of Sultan Bayan-ul Anwar, by marrying the latter's daughter, Putri Daung.

He invited foreigners including the Dutch, Spaniards and English to trade with Maguindanao, even inviting His Britannic Majesty King George III to put up a factory in "Bunwoot" (Bongo Island, near the town of Parang in Maguindanao.)

VII Segmentation: The Maguindanao Sultan as primus inter pares

Sultan Fakir Maulana Khair ud-Din Hamza Amir ud-Din was, in addition to being a legislator, diplomat, and statesman, was also a pandita and mystic. Thus, he was given to patience and tolerance. But this did not prevent the segmentation of his kingdom, his other cousin, Datu Ma-anuk (Jalal ud-Din's son) tried to revive the rival kingdom of Buayan which was eclipsed by and joined with Maguindanao from the reign of Kudarat to Kudai.

Finally, Manman's son carved out from Buayan a new petty kingdom aptly called Bagu-inged (New Realm) where he became Sultan. This was only the beginning. Subsequent generations of Bagu-inged Datus moved from one place to another and styled themselves Sultans. The Sultan of Maguindanao, by all indications, was at least recognized as primus inter pares. By the middle of 19th century, there were at least 13 such sultanates vying for supremacy.

At about the same time as Manman's assumption (as Sultan sa Bagu-inged, around 1770) another cousin of Sultan Hamza -- Umarmaya Tubutubu's son named Digra-alam -- was made Sultan of Kabuntalan.

VIII Further dynastic squabble and Spanish foothold

Returning to the core Sultanate of Maguindanao, Sultan Fakir Maulana Khair ud-Din Hamza declared his younger brother, Datu Panglu as heir-apparent on condition that his son, Datu Kibad be made Rajah-muda and heir-apparent.

Around 1775, Hamza abdicated in favor of Panglu who assumed as Sultan Fahar ud-Din, 15th Sultan of Maguindanao (1775-1780). When the British Captain Thomas Forrest visited Maguindanao, Fahar ud-Din was on the throne. After the Sultan's death, he was called Mufat Hidayat. Prior to that, he declared his eldest son, Datu Nain, also known as Sultan Iskandar Zulkarnain as his successor, assigning to him the administration of Sibugay, a lucrative principality. He also bequeathed all his wealth to another son, Datu Anwaruddin who thereafter was nicknamed "Kawasa," that is, Wealthy One.

As fate had it, Datu Kawasa assumed as Sultan Kawasa Anwaruddin, 17th Sultan of Maguindanao (1805-1830). Apparently, Datu Nain -- who was also formally addressed as Sultan Iskandar Zulkarnain, and whose royal seal was even used by the incumbent in signing agreements and correspondences with Spain -- assented to his brother's rule. He maintained his rule in Sibugay, naming one of his sons by a Sulu princess, Jamal ul-Alam, as "Datu Dakula" or grand datu ruling the mainly Subanen community. Another son of Datu Nain, known only in the Tarsila as Rajah Tua, was named Rajah-muda and successor to Sultan Kawasa.

When Sultan Kawasa died, another uproar erupted in Maguindanao, albeit less violent than previous ones. With Rajah Tua apparently predeceasing the

incumbent, his rights and prerogatives fell on his eldest son, Datu Untong (sometimes called Kudarat II). This, however, was contested by Datu Musa, son of Sultan Kawasa.

Taking advantage of the controversy in the Maguindanao realm, the Spanish government in Manila tried to gain control or influence once more. In the guise of arbitration, Spanish officials separately befriended the contending parties. While offering a solution, they obtained concessions from Musa, who was named as Amirul Interino or "interim ruler."

In upstream Buayan, Sultan Maitum resuscitated the eclipsed realm, and opposed the Interino. He (Maitum) threatened to declare himself "Sultan Na Telu ka Inged" or king of three realms, probably referring to Maguindanao, Buayan and Bagu-inged. Sultan Maitum of Buayan was the maternal grandfather of Datu Untong (sometimes called KudaratII) and actually supported the claim of the latter to the throne of Maguindanao. Finally, after about six years of stalemate, Datu Untong was proclaimed Sultan Iskandar Qudratullah Faha ud- Din Jamal ul-Alam, 18th Sultan of Maguindanao (1837-1854) with the son of Amirul Interinu Musa by the name of Datu Makakawa as Rajahmuda.

For Spain's "services," she was granted the right to establish a garrison in what is now Cotabato City and a church in Tamontaca near the court of Sultan Kudarat II.

The Sultan was also made to ratify a treaty entered into by Spain and the Datu Dacula of Sibugay, an amended version of the earlier Kudarat -Aienza Treaty, but he consistently refused – an action which could have led to his mysterious disappearance around 1854. That "occultation" happened after the Spaniards invited him for a friendly conference at the court of his uncle, the Datu Dakula at Sibugay. The event was treated with suspicion by his relatives in Buayan, who mounted sporadic attacks against the Spanish in Cotabato, as well as their wards, the succeeding Sultans, Makakwa(1854 - 1884) and his son Pablo Jalaluddin (1884-1888).

The shift of Spanish active politico-military policy presently turned to the resurrected Buayan, where sons of Sultan Maputi, Datu Bayao and Datu Bangon were apparently divided over cooperation and combat.

Meanwhile, both Makakwa and Pablo (one after the other) faced constant pressure from the Datu Bangon and allies, as well as the famous Utto, son of Datu Bangon. Sultan Pablo married one of Buayan Sultan Bayao's female descendants, perhaps, as a neutralizing factor. After Datu Bangon's death, Datu Utto gained ascendancy in Buayan, with his uncle, Sultan Bayao, silently acquiescing actual rule. All these contributed to the further weakening of Maguindanao.

By this time, Kabuntalan also gained prominence in Spanish eyes, attempting to wrest control of that principality, a fierce battle ensued, ending in the signing of a "Capitulation" by and between the rulers of the Delta (Kabuntalan and its environs, including the emerging "Sultanate" of Etdabidan or Taviran) and the Spanish governor of Cotabato (from Maguindanaon Kuta-a-Watu, "Stone Fort," descriptive of the fort in what is now PC Hill in Cotabato City where the Spaniards held camp.) The Rajah of Taviran, Datu Bigkungan, scion of Sultan Diruyuden of Bagu-inged, who married a Kabuntalan princess, Bai Ganap, figured prominently in this treaty. Some years later, his eldest son, Datu Ayunan, was granted the rank of "Gobernadorcillo del Delta," in addition to being Sultan of Taviran, and invested the Escudo al Valor for invaluable services to Spain. He was the prime instrument of Spain in checking the advance of Datu Utto towards becoming paramount chief of Maguindanao. Thus, Spain have capitalized on the lack of unity among the peoples of the Maguindanao realm brought about by the perceived lack of legitimacy in the center. In Sibugay, former dominion of Sultan Iskandar Zulkarnain, Spain exercised sovereignty indirectly, through the Datu Dakula who was invested with the grand Spanish title of "Principe de Sibuguey."

When Sultan Pablo Jalaluddin died in 1888, matters became worse. Perhaps, as an attempt to consolidate Maguindanao (if not improve his personal status), Datu Utto proposed his brother-in-law and first cousin, Rajamuda Mamaku, son of Sultan Kudarat II, who obviously had a better claim to the Sultanate of Maguindanao, to no avail.

Datu Mangigin, son of Datu Pugat, son of Datu Dakula I, wrote to the Spanish authorities to proclaim him Sultan. Meanwhile, the Sultanate was apparently under the regency of Rajah Putri, high-born daughter of Kudarat II and wife of Utto. Sultan Mangigin, in an attempt to consolidate his power – and, perchance, to improve his leverage with the United States colonial government -- married the wealthy Rajah Putri, daughter of Sultan Kudarat II and widow of the renowned Rajah of Buayan, Datu Utto in 1906.

Thereafter, Datu Mangigin was recognized 21st Sultan of Maguindanao (1906-1926). The union did little to perk up his situation, though. After Rajah Putri died, he retired to Sibugay where he quietly passed away in 1926, or thereabouts. The decline of Maguindanao, as it seemed, went on unabated. But not the serene legitimacy of the Sultanate.

IX American colonial intrusion

It was under Sultan Mangigin's reign when the US Marines illegally occupied Maguindanao. The United States of America had no treaty with Maguindanao, whether just and real or onerous, similar to the "Bates Treaty" it had with Sulu. Therefore, the USA held no legal or moral-ethical claim to the land and its resources. The only claim it had was based on the "white man's burden" that it assumed with regards to colored nations and the fact that it was struggling to be a world power when Spain was clearly on the wane and by the presumed inclusion on the purchase it made against the Philippine Islands under the Treaty of 1898.

The failure of Sultan Mangigin to put up a military struggle was neither a recognition of the Superpower's sovereignty, nor the total relinquishment of his own or that of his nation. Clearly, his order to his people "to refrain from causing trouble" to the Americans was a strategic move to appease the invaders while buying time in the hope that, perhaps, the situation will improve and an opportunity will arrive to reassert Maguindanao sovereignty.

The struggle of individual datus, like Datu Ali son of Sultan Bayaw, who was styled as "Rajahmuda sa Salunayan" and Datu Santiago of Parang, was fought not because of a central policy from a single European-style monarch, though. It only illustrated what has become of the Sultan of Maguindanao's rule by the beginning of the 20th century: A figure-head in a loose confederation of local groups, he had very little national or central authority.

Prior to the end of Sultan Mangigin's reign, the Watamama sa Maguindanao, second-ranking in the order of succession, Datu Mamadra of Nuling, positioned himself as the next ruler of Maguindanao by adopting a radically new title, "Tambalilid sa Maguindanao" implying an authority with no superior. This seemed to be a defiance of Datu Mangigin's appointment of the non-royal Datu Mandi of Zamboanga as Rajah Muda (or first in rank in the order of succession) contrary to tradition. There was no open outbreak of conflict between the two, though. At any rate, Datu Mamadra sired a

daughter with one of the wives of Sultan Mangigin. Whether he forcibly took the woman or married her after a divorce with the Sultan is still a subject of hushed "debate" among the old nobility in Nuling (now known as the municipality of Sultan Kudarat.). The Mamadra clan, however, acknowledge the product of that union as a legitimate daughter in the spirit of the Prophet's dictum that "a story should be accepted according to its best version."

Datu Mamadra, the man who would be Sultan, predeceased his father, Mastura, then Datu-sa-Nuling. It can be recalled that Datu Mamadra, along with his father, led the signatories to the "Cotabato Memorial" in 1916 addressed to the American colonial government during the incumbency of Datu Mangigin as Sultan, demanding some sort of self-government. Datu Mastura, the only surviving son and heir of Sultan Qudratullah Jamalul Alam Fahaaruddin, who was eligible for the Sultanate acceded to what had become an imaginary throne as "Sultan Hajji Iskandar Hijaban Mastura," 22nd Sultan of Maguindanao (1928-1932).

Sultan Mastura was known to be a pious pandita with a mystical inclination. To this day, some old people in Nuling (now Sultan Kudarat and Sultan Mastura municipalities) still relate stories from their parents who swear witnessing the Sultan's ability to cruise the Pulangi or Rio Grande de Mindanao on a small banca sans paddles, as well as walk in the rain without getting wet. Najeeb Saleeby described him as the "most informed datu" in Cotabato. Though held in reverence according to the custom, he was far from being the most powerful. That distinction was held by Piang, a non-royal datu. . Mastura's silence and withdrawal from day-to-day politics is, palpably, a part of his effort to maintain the dignity of the Sultanate. He, however, became well acquainted with Saleeby, who, he understood, could help record for posterity the heritage of Maguindanao. That silence, however, is far from a resigned acceptance of the colonial order. Even prior to his becoming Sultan, mastura inconspicuously made sure that the Sultanate as an institution will survive colonialism. For instance, in an era when slavery was still essential in maintaining royal dignity and economic supremacy of the royalty, he worked towards the protection of that institution. In February, 1904 around Valentine's Day, he brought two cousins-in-law, Datu Ampatuan and the petty Sultan of Kabuntalan, along with other important Maguindanaon datus and met the famous Datu Ali (who by then, became an active rebel against the colonial government, and his brothers, and allies at Kudarangan, Cotabato, where they declared their opposition to American abolition of slavery . Little did they know, of course, that back in the USA, slavery (masquerading under other labels such as

“forced labor” and “indenture”) was still an essential adjunct of industry and agriculture.

XI Under Philippine Government: Hibernation and Hope of Revival

When Sultan Mastura died, Datu Baraguir bin Datu Mamadra (was chosen by the Council of Elders (Bitiara Atas) to succeed him, but he waived in favor of Datu Ismael bin Kalog on condition that this should be restored to Datu Baraguir or his heirs later. At the time of his waiver of his title to the Sultanate, Datu Baraguir was already serving as a Municipal District President in one of the largest districts in the American colonial government in Mindanao and, perhaps, saw the conflict of interest between the two positions.

The reign of Sultan Ismael bin Datu Kalog was marked by quietude. In Cotabato City and the Empire province of Cotabato, he was little known. Only the senior members of the core royal families knew him. Neither in politics nor in commerce did he actively involve. He should be credited for his wisdom and prudence for keeping the royal institution concealed from the prying eyes of the public and, therefore, maintaining its dignity, independence and sanctity. His last act shortly before he met his Creator was to make sure that the succession will smoothly take place in accordance with good custom and rightful tradition. Faithful to a covenant made almost half a century earlier, Sultan Ismael “returned” the title to the heirs of Datu Baraguir Mamadra, in whose stead he reigned peacefully. Together with Datu Dakula Rajah of the principality of Sibugay, journeyed to Nuling (now Sultan Kudarat municipality), hometown of the descendants of Sultan Mastura, including its trunkline, the Mamadra clan, and the latter’s trunkline, the Baraguir family. There, they invited the descendants of Datu Baraguir to a formal caucus and determined, according to customary protocol, the most pre-eminent and eligible successor of the former. Having determined that it was Atty. Datu Gutierrez M. Baraguir, the latter was declared Rajahmuda a Magiseg-iseg or heir-apparent, who would automatically assume as Sultan upon the death of HRH, Sultan Ismael.

Having the succession virtually settled, the wise Sultan peacefully passed away sometime in 1991.

In a conference of Maguindanao notables, including the succession council called “Pat-a-Pelaus” (Four Pillars) in Sultan Kudarat, Maguindanao, Datu Gutierrez was proclaimed Sultan. First to congratulate him were MNLF

Chairman Nur Misuari who wrote from Libya, and the Datu Dakula VI of Sibugay.

The Sultanate have been returned to the House of Datu Baraguir bin Datu Mamadra bin Sultan Mastura. As the Maguindanaon saying goes, "Muli bun sa panggungan su awang a sinembayan." The borrowed boat shall ultimately return to its own berth. During his reign, Al-Marhum Seri Paduka Sultan Sayyid Hajji Datu Muhammad bin Datu Baraguir (1991- 2000), along with a small core of like-minded young traditional leaders, worked quietly, laying the groundwork for a peaceful settlement of the Mindanao problem in faithful consideration of history, the will of the people, and the contemporary trends and developments, which should include the settlement of Maguindanao's right to self-determination . A week before he passed away, he entrusted this mission to the author whom he declared as successor before his immediate family. It constitutes a proposed solution to the Mindanao Problem (or, at least, a part of it) particularly pertaining to the Sultanate of Maguindanao and the Maguindanaon people . A summary of this proposal is incorporated in the Epilogue of this paper.

XII

Conclusion

We have seen how Sharif Kabungsuhan, carrying the Muhammadan bloodline and message established the rudiments of a Malay Muslim order which his successors, at various times and in various circumstances, carried through. Now speeding, then stuttering, now moving forward, then stepping backward, only to survive as a social institution devoid of power, but pregnant with promise toward a more positive role in forging the destiny of the Maguindanaon nation and the submerged Maguindanao proto-state.

Sultan Kudarat transformed what Kabungsuhan built into a monarchy encompassing a vast territory which was ruled and maintained or even expanded by his successors for about half a century. A dynastic war segmented it into various principalities, wherein, Sultan Hamza and a couple of successors were recognized as primus inter pares. Then, after Sultan Kudarat II's mysterious "occultation," Spanish illegal intrusion gained headway that in the last years of its rule over the Philippine archipelago, it had the temerity to declare the traditional domain of the Sultan of Maguindanao as the 5th Military District of the Spanish government in the Philippines. The Sultanate was sufficiently weakened when the Americans came that they found it convenient to deal with individual royal and non-royal datus.

The history of Maguindanao is a story of triumphs and failures. Its status depended much on the fortunes of its Sultans. Some Sultans' foibles and follies, not without the influence of foreign intrigues, contributed to its decline as a political order. However, the stability of the institution proved resilient even under colonial domination. Whether it will assume an important role in addressing the dormant and suppressed right of the Maguindanaon nation for self-determination will be known in the not-too-distant future.

Epilogue: Why (and How) Revival?

"You see what is and ask, 'Why?' I see what could and ought to be and ask, 'Why not?'"
--George Bernard Shaw

Maguindanao's yet unannounced claim to nationhood, aspiration to statehood and the pursuit of the right to self-determination is a just, moral and practical proposition. It is the logical link that connects its glorious past with a more livable future. For a Maguindanaon, to fail in this duty is to live a wasted life.

History shows that as a nation or people, the Maguindanaons have continuously enjoyed their independence prior to the illegal occupation of America which was merely based on the illegitimate inclusion of Maguindanao in the sale of the Philippine Islands to the USA by Spain.

"Ex injuria jus non oritur" Right cannot originate from wrong. "This," as the present Sultan of Ache says, "is the most fundamental principle of international law." Some, or many of us, may have grown quite comfortable with the present state of affairs. Still, many others are distressed. Maguindanaons, from generation to generation since the colonization of Maguindanao have mounted some kind of protest or complaint in one form or another. During the last two decades, the noisiest and most irksome to the government is the now bloody, now tricky protest by Maguindanaons who established the Moro Islamic Liberation Front from a faction of the Moro National Liberation Front. This is crying for the right solution. But a right answer will never issue from a wrong question.

The "myth of Morohood," as Thomas McKenna calls it, have been hoisted by the courageous, but intellectually confused Maguindanaons on an initially disinterested, but now disturbed, government. Confusion, contention,

contempt, and flustered compromise promises a convoluted solution, whatever that will be . Thus, we boldly assert that the present peace process between the government and the MILF, possessing those elements is a wanton waste of resources that will prove unbeneficial to all: the Philippine government, the Maguindanaon people, and the international community.

Any rational, integrative, and stable solution must start with the right question.

Along with the people of Sulu, what is the right of Maguindanao that was violated and to which, therefore, due restitution be made? This question begs _____ and _____ deserves _____ an _____ answer.

Difficulty to observe Islamic tenets and practice is not an issue: Everywhere, even in Muslim countries, it is even more difficult to practice the right and natural religion of Islam. Poverty is not an issue: It is a global reality asking for _____ no _____ special _____ solution. The issue, as far as Maguindanao is concerned, is the issue of self-determination. We were not duly consulted when Spain illegally sold us. We were not rightly consulted when the U.S. occupied us. We were not adequately consulted when the Philippines inherited us from the illegal occupant _____ – _____ the _____ USA. Today, the GRP-MILF Peace Process seems to be well under way. Based on a wrong premise, will anything resulting from this be beneficial or even acceptable to the Filipino people and government? For the Maguindanaon nation? For the international community? Again, "right cannot proceed from wrong!"

It can be argued that the investments made have been enormous. But this argument does not justify the continuation of a patently losing venture. It would be more economical, in the final analysis, to abandon such experiment and invest in a more propitious trade, so to speak.

What is the relevance of the Sultanate in this? As the historical and traditional symbol of the people the Sultan is the right entity to advance their claim. With neither Internal Revenue Allotments, nor party favors to lose; and because of his fear of busung or curse from his predecessors; and of the sense of sacred mandate with regards the trust and responsibility imposed by the forefathers who bequeathed the office to him: the Sultan is

morally bound to advance the welfare of his people and traditional domain, at the least discomfort or destruction to them.

Having been chiefly instrumental in the continuous violation of Maguindanao's right to self-determination -- a wholesale violation that blurs all other human rights violation -- the governments of the Republic of the Philippines, the United States of America and the Kingdom of Spain, along with the rest of the international community, should realize their urgent duty to help restore the prestige of the Sultanate and work together towards a final solution to half of the Mindanao Problem. The other half they should settle with Sulu and North Borneo. This is not the place to go into details. Let me end by reiterating that any solution to the so-called Mindanao Problem must take into consideration the right of the Maguindanaon nation to self-determination and to recognize the Sultanate as the social, cultural, and moral, if not political, institution that has the supreme prerogative and obligation to represent that right.

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