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This note deals with the historic contact between the *Moros* (previously a derogatory, colonial term for Muslim Filipinos), the *Indios* (Christian Filipinos) and the Americans at the turn of the twentieth century. While this contact was relatively brief having spanned only some three decades of American occupation of the Philippines, it had enormous significance in civilizational changes not only in the social structure of the Moros, but also in their social relations with the Christian Filipinos. Out of such contact, which generated a mixed pattern of love-hate relationship, the Moros also became, or were perceived to be, a formidable problem in the politics of nation building. The setting of this complex set of interactions was Mindanao¹—the last Philippine frontier which was, and still is, a contentious issue in nationhood and development.

After Magellan

Actually, the meeting between the Moros and the Americans was unexpected and by any indication, accidental. History confirms that for over 300 years of war of reduction and extermination the Moros never surrendered to the Spanish colonizers, although the former capitulated a number of times. By the Treaty of Paris of 1898, which transferred sovereignty of the Philippines to the United States, all the islands, including the unconquered frontier where the Moros and

This note is derived from a research project, "Moros and Americans in the Philippines: Three Decades of Love-Hate Relations," which the author wrote as a postdoctoral fellow at George Washington University, Washington, D. C. in 1989. While there, he conducted a nine-month archival research at the Library of Congress and the National Archives, Washington, D. C. from September 1988 to May 1989. The author is indebted to the generous support of the USAID, the Asia Foundation and Mindanao State University, who are all exonerated from any error that this report may contain.

pagan groups lived, passed over to the hands of the Americans for a consideration of \$20 million. Yet, the United States was a relatively new power compared to Spain or the Moro country which had been an independent Islamic state for nearly two centuries. Before Columbus discovered what is now known as the Americas, Islamic civilization had been well entrenched in the Malayan world of which the southern Philippines was a part. By 1450 a well established sultanate in Sulu and later a powerful maritime state had been in existence there. By this period Sulu had served as an entrepôt of commerce and trade in Southeast Asia, and perhaps received heavy doses of cultural influence from the Hinduized states of Srivijaya and Majapahit during the seventh to the twelfth centuries.

Such was the situation in the Philippines on the eve of Spanish colonization in 1521 when Ferdinand Magellan "discovered" the Philippines, or about a quarter of a century after the Americas became known to Europe.

The Spanish-American war ended with the Philippines becoming a territorial possession of the United States in 1898. Another overlay of western civilization was soon to emerge, which was particularly more felt by the Moros and other non-Christian elements. In the words of President McKinley, the duty of the United States to the natives was "to civilize, to educate, to train for the science of self-government." Little did the United States realize, however, that this providential duty would cost her \$200 million to pacify an inherited insurrection (i.e., the Philippine Revolution of 1896 against Spain). It also assumed enormous responsibilities in teaching the non-Christian population an entirely new pattern of living centered on a republican form of government. A distant goal, developing a nation for the Filipinos was nonetheless proclaimed to all peoples inhabiting the Philippine islands who hoped for an almost impossible mission. So fragile was this reality that a slight mistake, and several of these policy errors dotted the colonial landscape, would prove fatal to the result of the "experiment." Imperfect a system as the United States was, it did run into this problem, or so it was perceived. That problem was, in a sense, the creation of the Philippines as the first and continuing Vietnam in the Pacific.

It should be worth noting that there had been some internal social difficulties associated with preexisting ethnicity and native traditions. While hispanization had put a complete stop to the inroads of Islamic influence from the south, it had not made a significant incursion into the south either. It succeeded, however, in leaving

behind a dialectic among the natives who were sharply separated by religious differences (the "baptized" and the "infideles") and pitted them against each other in a serious fratricidal conflict. Such differences formed the basis of ethnic emergence, giving rise to the label "Moros" and "Indios." For over 300 years, the Moros were engaged in a holy war (*jihad*) with the Spaniards and the Christianized natives (Indios) who aided them. The conflict produced among the Moros a "warlike" people,² who at 300,000 strong, became the terror of the seas (pirates, according to the Spaniards) for the six million Christian Filipinos who were prey to constant piratical raids and attacks for slaves and booties.

Mindanao: Wild, Wild West

In late 1899 when the US troops set foot on the southern islands of Mindanao and Sulu, they found among these hostile peoples an extension of their Indian wars on the Western frontier. In fact, many officers of the US Army actually regarded the Moros as "the Apaches of the Philippines" (Bateman 1904, 5-10). General John Pershing, writing to the Secretary of War, described the Moros thus:³

They are really Indians and the policy down here so far has been not to meddle with their affairs. The Moro dattos have power of life and death over their subjects, and they fight each other occasionally and steal each other's slaves, capture prisoners once in a while whom they reduce to slavery and it will be a question of evolution or possible extermination, as happened with our own Indians.

Conditioned by the wars of resistance for centuries and fiercely loving their ancient freedom and traditions, the Moros naturally opposed the coming of another intruder. In the beginning, the opposition was merely symbolic: stealing horses owned by Americans, cutting telephone wires, firing into their camps at night, and attacking small parties of soldiers for the purpose of taking their rifles. If necessary, they would put up a big fight as when the annoyed soldiers interpreted their gestures as a disrespect for the American flag and defiance of the United States sovereignty over the islands. Punitive expeditions began in May 1902 that led to what was known as the Battle of Bayang in Lanao. These acts were repeated several times (among them were the Battles of Bud Dajo in 1906 and Bud Bagsak in 1913, all in Sulu) against many Moro bands who preferred to resist rather than to accept American friendship. In battle after battle,

the proud Moro warriors were beaten, whose *krises* (native swords), brass cannons and antiquated rifles were no match for the devastating mountain batteries and powerful krag of the American military. Like the Indian war of old, the Moro war only resulted in the decimation of thousands of native fighters. Badly defeated, the only alternative was cooperation (or was it collaboration?) in exchange for peace and acceptance of the civilizing mission short of evangelism.

American perception of the Moros as "warlike" largely determined the contour of the policies for governing them and extending the new civilizational mandate. In a letter to the Adjutant General on 30 April 1902, Gen. Adna Chaffee recommended a military solution for Moro affairs:⁴

So far as the future government of the Moros is concerned it is my opinion that it should be controlled by the military for some time to come . . . They are nothing more than savages and must be handled with care, but at the same time with firmness.

Thus the US War Department decided to place the governance of the intractable Moros under a military regime, while the more docile Christian Filipinos were governed by the Philippine Commission, a civilian body. In 1903, the Moro Province was organized with five districts covering at least two-thirds of Mindanao and Sulu. The US Army directly administered the affairs of Moroland until 1913, whose officers were appointed there on the basis of their experiences during the frontier era in the United States. The officers and men of the Moro Province, notably the first and last (of three) military governors, were actually veterans of the American Indian wars, such as the popular Gen. Leonard Wood and the equally venerated Gen. John J. "Black Jack" Pershing. Both rounded up the Apaches, the Sioux, the Cheyennes and other defiant Indian tribes during the heyday of American expansion. Wood subdued the notorious Geronimo and organized the "Rough Riders Cavalry" during the Spanish-American War. Pershing, on the other hand, captured Pancho Villa and was known for his command of the American Expeditionary forces in Europe during the First World War. The military administration of the Moro Province ended in 1913, which coincided with the end of the Republican control when Woodrow Wilson was elected President. It was this new era which ushered in significantly more and lasting changes in the Moro affairs.

All those years of American occupation saw the Moros as America's own "wards," that is, as a protected community like the American Indians after their defeat in battles. While the handling of the Moros rested principally on the use of force and might, the authorities also applied the policy of attraction and pacification through nonmilitary means. Schools were established in Moroland and in due time supplanted the preexisting system of pedagogy based on the Islamic *madrasah* school. One of the dramatic effects of western education was the change in the traditional stratification since many of the children of slaves were sent to school by their Moro masters instead of their own. Today, these slave children have become professionals who are on equal footing with, if not better than, the members of the old Moro elite. Commerce and trade were also introduced, and with them modern communication developed to back up more business activities. Roads, bridges and wharves were built where none had existed, which slowly began to destroy the isolation of many Muslim communities from the outside world. As the frontier was opened, it also broke the centuries of insularity of Mindanao and Sulu and gave way to Christian penetration and global trade.

Perhaps the most significant mark of American presence in the islands was the "secularization" of property and commercialization of the lands and the seas. Occupation of the southern islands also meant increasing economic relations which fortified the status of lesser elites. However, it also sustained the old elite, thereby altering somewhat the old stratification system. But more importantly, Mindanao and Sulu as a hitherto unexplored frontier were rediscovered and opened for development through the productive use of the rich natural resources centering on land. Mindanao covered some 40,000 square miles of land, mostly tillable forest lands, where the Moro and pagan tribes lived. It was there where 90 percent of the public lands were available at the beginning of the century. By the operations of a legal, technical system, these lands became part of the so-called public domain in which only the government exercises full powers to regulate their use or disposition. Its effect on the traditional system of land ownership was that the natives were dispossessed of their rights to the land, which were defined by customary laws based on kinship. Traditional and suspicious as they were, the Moros did not realize the value of the modern concept of legal ownership of lands, and naturally did not bother to have their lands surveyed, classified and covered by torrens title. To them, it was enough

that they lived by their own rules, which later ran inconsistent with modern law.

The Moro-Christian Tug of War

The economic significance of Mindanao as a frontier was a main factor that put the Moros at loggerheads with the Christians, activating ethnic consciousness and the need to dilute this awareness for the sake of nation building. Land offered a convenient justification for the political process of "integration" which the American administration of the Philippine islands laid out as part of its Filipinization policy during the democratic era (1912-21). The agricultural settlements initially opened in Moroland by Gen. Pershing in 1912 turned into a policy which was pursued with more vigor by Frank Carpenter who saw in the democratic program of Francis Burton Harrison an opportunity to make Moros and Filipinos friends.⁵ Carpenter, the first civilian governor of Mindanao, debunked the much ballyhooed notion that the Moros and the Christian Filipinos could not live together in peace once the Americans turned the islands loose. Earlier, President Roosevelt (in his letter to Joseph Gurney Cannon, 12 Sept. 1904) echoed a threat thus: "To abandon all control over the Moros would amount to releasing these Moros to prey upon the Christian Filipinos, civilized or uncivilized, as well as upon the commerce of other peoples."

In due time, seven agricultural colonies were formed in Moroland, which gradually saw an increasing penetration of Christian settlers in the areas traditionally inhabited by Moros and pagans. The initial number of 100 Christian families who settled in Cotabato in 1912 increased several fold to 2,362 by 1915.⁶ Contrary to the military expectation, not a single Christian head was cut off by the Moros. But perhaps more importantly, the lands served as a magnet to American capital which had started pouring in earlier for the development of lands suitable for export cash crops, such as rubber, coconuts and hemp. BF Goodyear and Findlay Miller, are some of these companies which are still very much alive today. Thus, where trade followed the flag, capitalism in agriculture became a tempting prospect for the American investors. By the end of the first decade, at least half of the big plantation owners were Americans who formed a strong interest group with a decided liking to remain in Moroland, preferably under American military control.

Interestingly, some members of the Moro elite who had fought the Americans also showed preference for the continuance of American control and protection. Proclaiming themselves as "Americanistas," as the coopted Moro elite were also called, they found new enemies within their ranks, the "Filipinistas," who wanted to see the Americans go, and favored an early Philippine independence. The Americanistas vociferously opposed self-rule and expressed a desire to remain under American protection rather than be delivered to their ancestral enemies, the Christian Filipinos. They sent a barrage of petitions to the United States President and the Congress during the 1920s and 1930s urging the annexation of Mindanao and Sulu into American territory rather than for these islands to become part of an independent Philippines, as if these petitions were all truly expressive of their sentiments. A problem, however, was that some of these petitions were signed by sympathetic Americans, who had on occasion prepared them in flawless English, as Governor-General Forbes was to discover later. One such petition, written in 1921, obviously revealed that it was the handiwork of interested Americans, some of them being officials of the former Moro Province, "who were the first to sign the document, and by any indication had prepared the same" (Forbes 1928, 475-86).

In some instances, direct American instigation was also noted to incense the Moros. A case of this type caused Mark Hershey, Chief Inspector of the Moro Province, to investigate the sending of troops attendant to the visit made by US Representative Miller.⁷ He said:

The alarm in this district incident to the taking out of the white troops was augmented very much by Mr. Miller's persistent questions to Moro Sultans and Dattus, as to what they would do provided Filipinos were set to rule over them. They really got the idea that they were to have a Filipino governor in the Moro Province and Filipino deputies in the districts and sub-districts . . . they have expressed themselves very emphatically as to what would happen if this was attempted, having no hesitation in declaring their purpose to cut the heads of any would-be rulers of this kind.

Acts of this nature created a triangle of social relations, in which three groups were linked together in a mixture of friendliness and hostility. The hostility between Moros and Christian Filipinos was reinforced by the outward posturing of the Americans who bitterly obstructed Philippine independence, but who showed compassion to

the release of the Moros from Filipino rule. Otherwise, without this perceived behavioral cues of the Americans, the duo got along together well. As Frank Carpenter relayed it (to Gen. Frank McIntyre in 1928) after his tour of duty as civilian Governor of the Department of Mindanao and Sulu:⁸

The Moro and most of the tribal peoples are very keen to guess what a visiting Governor-General wishes to hear when he inspects their regions and if he is an American they always assume he wishes to hear criticisms of Christian Filipinos . . . The fact is the Moros and tribal peoples get on together and with the Christian Filipinos very well when not encouraged otherwise by Americans.

The Philippine Independence Question

Thus arose a deadly triangle of Moro-Christian consanguinal conflict and American intrigues, whose net influence stymied a reasonable discussion of the granting of Philippine independence during the Congressional hearings relative to the passage of the Jones Act of 1916 and the Tydings McDuffie Law of 1934. Americans opposed to the granting of independence held on to the belief that the Republican "experiment" would fail if the Philippines were set free. One theory they entertained at that time was that the Moros would resume their piratical raids upon the Christians and reduce them altogether to slavery, thereby defeating the spirit of self-rule. No less than US President Theodore Roosevelt had earlier claimed that ". . . the Christian Filipinos could not live six months in peace, if there was not some strong government over the Moros" (Pres. Roosevelt to Ms. Josephine Shaw Lowell, 1 Aug. 1904 in Morison [1951, 4:874-75]). The Moros would resume their "piratical" expeditions against the Christians, which practice was effectively stopped by the Americans when they outlawed slavery in the islands. The Wood-Forbes Report on the conditions of the Philippine Islands in 1921 re-echoed this belief, that the "Moros are a unit against (Philippine) independence and are united for continuance of American control and, in the case of separation of the Philippines from the United States, desire their portion of the islands to be retained as American territory under American control." It came as no surprise for then Governor-General Wood to say during an interview in 1925 that there would be "strife, disorder, bloodshed" once the Americans gave independ-

ence to the Philippines (Interview with Edward Price Bell, July 1925, in Leonard Wood Papers, Box 218, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.).

At the other extreme, it was feared that because the Filipinos were not yet mature enough for political autonomy, they would take advantage of their powers to abuse the now helpless Moros and pagans who had been disarmed by the US Army. "They are not yet ready to take over complete control of their own destinies," and are "even less ready to take over the government of nearly a million non-Christians." "The temptation to exploit these ignorant people would be very great, especially rich public domain included in their territories."⁹

The split among the previously fractious Moros also posed some obstacle to the proclaimed goal of unification, complicated as it was, by the apparent interest in Mindanao by some Americans (i.e., planters and businessmen) who had personal interests and who feared for their loss of investments when Philippine independence was ultimately granted. Add to this factionalism the existing enmity between Moros and Christians and it was understandable why the Filipinos were perceived as incapable of independence, much less of governing other peoples.

Conclusion

After this review of the three decades of Moro experiences under American rule, some tentative generalizations may be offered. First is the fact that the Moros yielded to American conquest for the first time. As warriors they were bitterly defeated and disarmed, with little or no alternative but to accept collaboration and submit to conscription (e.g., holding minor public offices) rather than to continue their defiance and suffer from certain annihilation and more humiliating defeats.

Second, as a consequence the Moros learned to live and settle down peacefully as they were prepared for participation in the conduct of government, abandoning as they did slavery and piratical raids upon the Christians and pagan tribes. The old Moro structure was modified by or gave way to the coercive nature of the system as part of the operations of western values and culture. The sultanate and datuship, then on the decline, crumbled like a house of cards as they began to lose their sovereignty. In their place was installed the abstract concept of republican government, where allegiance and loyalty shifted from personal to group orientation.

But more important was the social transformation from one based on "sacred" to another one based on "secular" system. Obedience to the datu or sultan gave way to submission to legal authorities as the former lost much of their powers (e.g., judicial and taxation). Traditional and familial property rights were replaced by new ones. By technicality and default, the Moros were dispossessed of their ancestral lands by the principle of public domain, which the government used to its advantage by encouraging settlers and capitalists to put idle lands into productive use. Land became a pugnacious issue in the establishment of the foundations of nationhood, threatened by competing forces that brought about the Filipinization policy under the Harrison-Carpenter era.

Third, Moro-American relations also determined the scope and quality of Moro-Filipino ethnic association. Although American policy was, in general, resolved to unite all the native groups preparatory to independence, the changing political climate and the persisting demands of some sectors (American planters and Filipino nationalists) for participation in the development and control of Mindanao partly mitigated the value of such a noble purpose. The triangle of social relations among Moros, Americans and Filipinos with respect to the frontier was inimical to the proclaimed aim of integration as it left unresolved the idea of two nations: one for Moros, another for Filipinos. The two-nation concept animated ethnicity, rekindled secessionism and became a virtual generator of a conflict situation in another form. However, it is to the credit of the American administration during the second decade that integration was installed to unify the previously embattled Moros and Indios.

If the policy of integration had its merits, it also had its own failings. While the policy was good and laudable, the practices that follow it may have departed from the ideal. The official policy was to uphold it and carry it to the finish, but imperfect as the system was, many practices were expressed, or perceived, to the contrary. The attempt of some Americans and their Moro friends to revive American control over, or at the extreme to separate, Mindanao and Sulu, caused Moro-Filipino relations to deteriorate. Also, the idea of separation between these two groups has been repeatedly played up in history, thereby widening rather than closing the differences and antagonism between Moros and Christian Filipinos. While the attempt to create a Moro Province under permanent American sovereignty did not bear fruit, it succeeded in reinforcing, it seems, the Spanish colonial policy of "divide and rule." It also instilled in the minds of

the natives an imaginary sword of Damocles that kept them fighting each other like the captive Roman gladiators who had no choice.

It also appears that the initial assumption of the military regarding the profound ethnic differences between Christians and Moros was hostile to nation-building. It lent to a magnified concept of "dual government" that treated the Moros and pagans as "special cases."¹⁰ This gave them to understand a continuing protection, after being disarmed, by the Americans rather than by the Filipinos. State protectionism of a conquered people was an idea whose time has lapsed. While American efforts to abolish the old conflict (Moro piracy and slavery) were successful, these only narrowed down its scope or magnitude, but not the temporal manifestation of the conflict as a dialectical process. Differences in cultural and economic achievements between Moros and Filipinos remained large and widening, principally because of the stamp of westernization which many Moros rejected at the start. Thus the potential for conflict has loomed large, since ethnic distinctions stayed constant. The emphasis on ethnic separateness between Moros and Christian Filipinos during the military era in Moroland, and its revival during the 1920s by die-hard Republicans (through the machinations of Bacon and American planters in Mindanao) bolstered the concept of "two nations apart." This concept undeniably nourished the political sentiments among the Moros toward separatism from or outright denial of the Philippine state.

By the time the Filipinos took control of politics, conditions in Moroland had turned from bad to worse. The inauguration of the Philippine Commonwealth in 1935 faced social problems in the north and the south: peasant unrest in Luzon and recalcitrant Moros from Mindanao who were unwilling to become Filipinos. Its fledgling organization was rocked by the depression of the 1930s and again battered by the coming of World War II. The Philippine Republic of 1946 embarked upon an accelerated program to develop Mindanao, following the blueprint of integration of 1913-17 by sending thousands of Christian settlers there. This move was not entirely a success as it only tended to displace the Moros even more as the balance in population tipped in favor of the newcomers. While the frontier issue was resolved to the satisfaction of colonial policy, it has nonetheless turned Mindanao into a brewing melting pot for two ethnic groups.

In a sense the conflict continued, and still goes on. The Wild, Wild West in Mindanao is still very much alive (see R.J. May in Turner, May, and Turner [1992]).

Notes

1. In this note, the word *Mindanao* refers to the island of Mindanao, including Basilan, Sulu and Tawi-Tawi.
2. Important American officials, such as William Howard Taft, General John Pershing, General Leonard Wood and others actually perceived them as "warlike" right at the start. This perception justified the need to impose a military regime over Moroland, which lasted for over a decade until 1913, even if the Philippine insurrection under Aguinaldo was already suppressed as early as 1902.
3. John J. Pershing to Secretary of War Elihu Root, April 1900, Box 317, John Pershing Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, D. C.
4. Henry Corbin Papers, Box 1, Library of Congress, Washington, D. C.
5. According to Frank Carpenter, the aims of the agricultural colonies are these: (1) increase the production of rice and other cereals, (2) equalize the distribution of population in the islands, (3) afford opportunity to colonists to become landed proprietors, and (4) bring under cultivation extensive public lands. See *Report of the Department of Mindanao and Sulu*, 1916, Frank Carpenter Papers, Box 1, Library of Congress, Washington, D. C.
6. *Report of the Department of Mindanao and Sulu*, 1916, in Frank Carpenter Papers, Box 1, Library of Congress, Washington, D. C.
7. Mark Hershey, reporting to Philippine Constabulary Chief James G. Harbord, 28 November 1913, Bureau of Insular Affairs No. 5075-76, National Archives, Washington, D. C.
8. Frank Carpenter to General Frank McIntyre, 22 January 1928, Bureau of Insular Affairs No. 5075-153, National Archives, Washington, D. C.
9. F. Lej. Parker memo to the Secretary of War, 6 January 1932, Bureau of Insular Affairs No. 5075-183, National Archives, Washington, D. C.
10. This is based on the American concept of "wards," in which the Moros—like the American Indians of Wild, Wild West—were "protected minorities" by the state.

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