

philippine studies

Ateneo de Manila University • Loyola Heights, Quezon City • 1108 Philippines

Sultans and Adventurers: German Blockade-runners in the Sulu Archipelago

Volker Schult

Philippine Studies vol. 50, no. 3 (2002): 395–415

Copyright © Ateneo de Manila University

Philippine Studies is published by the Ateneo de Manila University. Contents may not be copied or sent via email or other means to multiple sites and posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's written permission. Users may download and print articles for individual, noncommercial use only. However, unless prior permission has been obtained, you may not download an entire issue of a journal, or download multiple copies of articles.

Please contact the publisher for any further use of this work at philstudies@admu.edu.ph.

<http://www.philippinestudies.net>
Fri June 27 13:30:20 2008

Sultans and Adventurers: German Blockade-runners in the Sulu Archipelago

Volker Schult

On 27 September 1873 the Hong Kong-bound vessel "Lap Tek" left Manila with a telegram from the German acting consul in the Philippines Richard B. Parr, a British national. Addressed to the Secretary of Foreign Affairs in Berlin, the telegram read, "Two German Brigs *Marie Louise* and *Gazelle* captured by Spanish gunboats accused of breaking Blockade of Soloo [Sulu] Marie Louise already confiscated" (BA BL R 901/11497). The events referred to in this telegram resulted in heavy diplomatic tension between Germany and Spain and an increasing German interest in Philippine affairs, which finally led to the dispatch of the German East Asia Squadron to Manila Bay in 1898.

In order to understand Germany's motives, we should not focus primarily on the decision-makers in the European capitals, but on the so-called men on the spot. It was their actions that involved Germany in such a remote area as the Philippines. Thus, this article seeks to contribute to the rather neglected area of German-Philippine relations in the late nineteenth century and, by focusing on the activities of the men on the spot, it intends to analyze one facet of imperialist policy in greater detail.

The Seizure of the Brigs *Marie Louise* and *Gazelle* off Jolo

In June 1873, the Briton James Benjamin Field entered the office of Augustine Heard & Co., one of the leading trading companies in Hong Kong.¹ He proposed the establishment of trade between Hong Kong and some islands in the south of the Philippines, particularly Palawan and Sulu, and the island of Borneo. Field had just returned from a trip to these islands on board the American schooner "Scotland" without encountering any problems. Although a Spanish gunboat stopped and searched the ship, Field had been able to continue his trip unmolested.

Heard was aware, however, that Spain entered into a treaty with the Sultan of Sulu in 1851, which according to Spanish interpretation, resulted in the Sultan's recognition of Spanish sovereignty over Sulu. Heard believed that in spite of this treaty, the ports of Sulu remained open to trade. After some inquiries, Heard & Co. agreed to assist Field in establishing such a trading system. Cargo was then jointly purchased by Heard and Field.

On 4 July the German brig *Marie Louise* was chartered through Carlowitz & Co.² the Hong Kong agent of the ship owner Joseph Cahn from Altona, Hamburg. Field bought goods worth about Spanish \$11,000. The ship carried 100 boxes of Chinese tobacco (\$1,700), five chests of Benares opium (\$ 2,635), cloth, axes, salt, and other sundry articles. Also taken on board were sixty old muskets, worth \$ 84. Field also brought 200 cartridges for his personal rifle.³

The brig's captain was the German Johannes Hinrichsen. His crew consisted of nine men.⁴ Joining the voyage were: Field, who acted as supercargo; William Russell Hodgins, a young man from Heard's office whose job it was to find out whether this trade would prove to be profitable in future; and a certain John Hagen (or Hagan) of Dutch (or Danish) nationality, who spoke the Malay language and served as interpreter. Because he had his own small boat on board, Field also engaged the services of seven Chinese as oarsmen.

At first, Hinrichsen was not informed of the ship's destination. Then, two days before they set sail, Heard informed the skipper to prepare his vessel for Singapore. On the eve of their departure, Hinrichsen requested the cargo manifest from Heard. But Heard answered that this was not required since Field acted as supercargo and he would take care of these papers. The captain was then ordered to follow Field's instructions on the exact route the vessel was to take. After several inquiries, Hinrichsen was given a map of Sulu. Later, Hinrichsen stated that although he found some of the arrangements a bit odd, he personally did not care so long as he would receive his monthly pay without any deductions. Finally, on 13 July 1873, the *Marie Louise* left the harbor of Hong Kong.⁵

Field then told the skipper to head for Rock (or Rocky) Bay at the southern end of Palawan Island. They stayed there for two days and bartered some tobacco and manufactured goods for gum. According to Field's as well as Hinrichsen's statements, neither arms nor ammunition were landed.

Field then ordered the ship to proceed to Sulu. On 14 August, they were about 50 miles from Jolo Island. Together with Hagen and five Chinese oarsmen, Field sailed to Jolo on board his small boat. The brig was told to follow suit.

The next day, the brig anchored at a distance of about nine miles off Jolo Island. Half an hour later, a Spanish gunboat steamed up to her. Because a blockade had been imposed, the commandant and nine of his men boarded the brig and took possession of the vessel. The Spanish commandant asked Hinrichsen why they had sailed to Sulu if the ship had been cleared out for Singapore. He also had information from Hong Kong that the *Marie Louise* carried weapons and other contraband. Hinrichsen could only refer to his instructions from Heard. In the meantime, on the morning of 16 August, Field and his men attempted to return to the brig but came under fire by the Spanish gunboat. They were eventually put in confinement.⁶

The ship was towed to Zamboanga and then on 18 August to Isabela on the island of Basilan, residence of the Spanish governor. Asked for the cargo manifest, Hinrichsen could not produce the requested papers because Heard had told him none was required. Thereupon the Spanish started searching the whole cargo and found the three cases of muskets. From a Spanish perspective the situation was clear. Finally, they had succeeded in capturing one of the hated gunrunners. On 6 September the brig was again towed to Cavite near Manila.

At this point, diplomatic activities began. Acting German Consul Parr was not officially informed of the seizure of a German ship by the Spanish authorities but was informed by the telegraph station on Corregidor that the Spanish transport steamer *Patino* had taken a German vessel in tow into Manila Bay. In his letter of 16 September, he requested the Governor-General for more information.

That same day, Field and the German Christian Steffens, second mate of the *Marie Louise*, suddenly presented themselves to the German consul. They told Parr that they escaped from the brig because they were denied any contact with their consulates. Parr advised them to return immediately to the brig and let the consulate act on their behalf. Field, however, responded that he was the owner of the cargo and had persuaded Steffens to escape. Thus, he was also responsible for him and they would not return.

On 17 September, Parr visited the Governor-General to lodge an official complaint. The Governor-General, however, responded that the

crew were gunrunners with contraband on board and that they would be condemned as a legitimate prize.

Two days later the Admiralty Court held its session which Parr and his secretary Sackermann were allowed to attend.⁷ The Admiralty ruled that the *Marie Louise* was indeed condemned as a legitimate prize. Thus, the ship and its cargo were finally impounded.⁸

Upon their request, Parr sent Field and Steffens to the British consulate where Field officially protested the seizure of the *Marie Louise*. He claimed that the vessel carried ordinary cargo and was cleared out for Singapore. The old, rusty muskets, which the Spanish found had been purchased in a bazaar and had been on board the ship for months. He also presented the ship's complete documents.

Acting Consul Coates requested from Sir Arthur Kennedy, the Governor of Hong Kong, that he order the return of the British gunboat *Avon*, which had earlier left Manila but, because of bad weather conditions had only sailed to Sual. He also asked for a more powerful gunboat. Coates paid a visit to the Governor-General and the Admiral. According to Coates, both men became rude and agitated. Coates was then dismissed without any concrete results (BA BL R 901/11497 Coates to Kennedy, Manila, 24 and 26 September 1873).

Meanwhile another incident involving a German vessel had occurred. The *Gazelle*, a brig of 196 tons, had left Hong Kong about a fortnight after the *Marie Louise* had set sail. The skipper was the German Johann Friedrich Möller and the crew consisted of a German mate and seven Malays. It was chartered to the Chinese merchant companies of Fook Loong Hong and Kwon Wo Hong through the German Bourjau & Co. and was loaded directly for Sulu.

Approaching Jolo on 1 September, a Spanish gunboat steamed towards the vessel. After firing a warning shot, Möller immediately decided to strike sail. As the Spanish boarded the ship, the captain told them that they were not aware of the Sultan's rebellion against Spanish sovereignty, or of a blockade or that Jolo was no longer an open port. Furthermore, Möller declared that they were only carrying ordinary cargo and handed over the cargo manifest. In it was listed silk, smoking tobacco, opium, and sundry articles, worth \$12,950 in all. But the *Gazelle* also had on board two cases containing forty old muskets worth \$65, twenty pistols, twenty-five pounds of powder, and 2,000 bullets. Having discovered these arms and ammunition, the brig was towed to Zamboanga and then to the Cavite arsenal where she arrived on 30 September. Again, the Spanish felt confirmed in their suspicion

that they had caught a gunrunner. On 7 October the Admiralty Court passed judgment. Although the ship was released to its owner, its cargo was impounded.⁹

When the report of the seizure of the two German ships reached the German consulate in Hong Kong, Consul Johann F. Cordes was unable to take action because no German man-of-war was available within short notice. Thus, he contacted Governor Kennedy. The British also felt compelled to respond because British subjects were involved. Cordes asked for British support and protection in case of a deterioration in the situation in Manila.

In early October, the British government sent the gunboat *Kestrel* from Hong Kong to Manila. Her order was to support the diplomatic efforts for the two German ships and, if necessary, to protect life and property of British and German nationals.

These incidents clearly reveal that although Germany's interests in East and Southeast Asia were on the rise, she did not have the capacity to support her diplomatic activities by means of "gunboat diplomacy." This was because Germany lacked men-of-war and a permanent naval base in the region. Thus, Germany still had to rely on British power.¹⁰

This situation was reflected in an article that was published under a pseudonym in Berlin in 1874. The author, most probably a high-ranking German civil servant, emphasized the helplessness of German authorities in these incidents. The *Nymphe*, the only German man-of-war in East Asia, was on her way to San Francisco when the German brigs were seized. The Spanish dared to do so only because they knew that Germany could not react by sending gunboats. The "decrepit Spanish colonial government" treated the German representatives in Manila with derision. Thus, German trade and prestige had been severely harmed. While Britain immediately dispatched a gunboat from Hong Kong and British subjects were released, "nobody believes that Germany will get what is her right by force." Accused of trading in contraband, "peaceful" German vessels were seized. But there actually was a flourishing trade in European weapons, old and new, in this area. These could be purchased in Hong Kong and other ports by European merchant companies. Britons, Americans, Dutch and Germans were involved in this business. Never, however, had there been any complaints about the activities of the vessels of other nations. "We will thus have to act firmly if this trade is prohibited only for the detriment of our defenceless compatriots." The author opposed the estab-

lishment of a German colony in this area, but emphatically supported the acquisition of a permanent naval base with three or four men-of-war, which should be at the disposal of the diplomatic representatives. He concluded, "Our position, our honour require this" (Asiaticus 1874, 414-17).

Since no resolution to this affair was achieved within the next several months, the agent of the *Gazelle*, Bourjau, finally made a plea for support to the German Reich's chancellery. He wrote that Captain Möller had not even received his personal documents until 1 January 1874. Neither he nor the brig could leave the Philippines. Hence, the financial damage increased constantly. Additionally, the vessel's owner, Peter Matzen, turned to the Reich's chancellery to request an acceleration in the efforts to solve the case and to receive financial indemnity from Spain (BA BL R 901/11498 Bourjau to Reich's chancellery, Hamburg, 16 February 1874; Matzen to Reich's chancellery, Apenrade, 22 March 1874).

But diplomatic friction over the two ships dragged on. After the *Marie Louise* had been judged to be a good prize by the Admiralty Court, the Spanish unloaded the cargo and used her as a coal ship flying the Spanish flag. Meanwhile, Hinrichsen still could not leave Manila and got into serious financial difficulties. He complained that although he could move freely in the city, the German consul never seriously attempted to obtain a passport for him. At the same time Hinrichsen criticized Parr's attitude in this affair. Parr was a British subject and could not even speak any German. Moreover, he cared more about his private business than about the affairs of the consulate. For Parr, a merchant who served as acting consul, it was more important to remain in good terms with the Spanish so as not to endanger his private business. It took Hinrichsen more than a year after the seizure of his ship to return to Germany. He finally arrived in Hamburg in December 1874 (BA BL R 901/11497 Hinrichsen to Cahn, Manila, 30 October 1873).

In off-the-record comments to Consul Cordes, Parr stated that he believed the *Gazelle* and its crew would soon be released and only the cargo or the part that was classified as contraband would be impounded. "The question of her capture is a simple one and had she not arms on board, probably she might have been put at liberty at once after her capture." The case of the *Marie Louise*, however, was more complicated because she was cleared out for Singapore. The Spanish suspected her of having unloaded illegal goods at Palawan

and she did not have the right to sail to that place or to Sulu. Moreover, her documents were incomplete. Parr assumed that both ships had been spied on in Hong Kong and had been expected by the Spanish (BA BL R 901/11497 Parr to Cordes, Manila, 11 September [should be October] 1873).

The Spanish stated three reasons why the *Marie Louise* had been seized. First, she had contravened the blockade because one of her boats had communicated with the coast. Second, she transported contraband, such as arms and other items, to the rebels, the Taosug of Sulu. Third, trade with Jolo was illegal. Since the Sultanate had been subjugated in 1851, it belonged to Spain. In 1860 the foreign powers had again been informed that this trade was illegal. The Spanish, however, conceded that the first point was rather weak. The blockade had been implemented by decree only on 2 August 1873 and there was no customs office in Jolo to which foreign captains could report.

On the other hand, Britain did not accept any of the reasons mentioned. A state of war had not been declared which would have justified such a blockade or the confiscation of contraband. Even if the sovereignty of Spain over Sulu had been acknowledged, which was not the case, it could only have been executed within shore jurisdiction. The *Marie Louise*, however, had quite obviously been seized off shore (Tarling 1978, 133–36).¹¹

While Spanish authorities released the *Gazelle* on 22 August 1874, her cargo remained confiscated. Thus, a certain F. Grobien, partner of the German Sander & Co. from Hong Kong, turned to the Reich's chancellery on behalf of his business partners, the Chinese Yam Suok Guy and Tshan Tye San of the Fook Loong Hong Company and the Chinese Lam Fee Yin of the Kwon Wo Hong Company. They were the original owners of the ship's cargo impounded by the Spanish. Since the principle prevailed that the flag protected the cargo, they hoped for assistance from the German government (BA BL R 901/11500 Grobien to Reich's chancellery, Hong Kong, 10 September 1874).

Reports of these incidents had meanwhile arrived at the highest echelons of the German Reich. Although the *Gazelle's* cargo belonged to Chinese merchants, who had already turned to the German consulate in Hong Kong for support, German officials had to act on their behalf. Otherwise, German commerce in the Far East would be negatively affected since it could be assumed that goods transported under the German flag would not be granted appropriate protection.

The general opinion was that it was unacceptable for German interests, even far away from home, to be harmed in this way. The German envoy to Spain received orders to take care of this affair and intervene in Madrid. On 29 March 1875 the Foreign Office Secretary, von Bülow, reported on the situation of the impounded vessels and their cargos to the German Emperor Wilhelm I. Bülow stated that the affair had been solved in a more or less satisfactory manner. A thorough investigation into the problem revealed that a blockade had never been effectively implemented and had become known to the public only after the ships' seizures. Furthermore, only some old and rusty muskets had been found in both ships. But, most importantly, Spanish sovereignty over Sulu had not been acknowledged by any power.

The British envoy to Madrid, Baron von Canitz, was also ordered to take the necessary diplomatic steps. This was necessary because the cargo of the *Marie Louise* was owned by a British merchant. However, the negotiations in Madrid were delayed because of its great distance from the Philippines and because of the inactivity of Spanish colonial authorities. Finally, von Canitz was eventually guaranteed that the vessels would be released and indemnity would be paid. But action continued to be delayed. Then suddenly, on 29 August 1874, the colonial authorities in Manila released the *Gazelle* and the Spanish government paid more than 80,000 Reichsmark as a first indemnity instalment for both ships to the German envoy Count Hatzfeldt.

But complications started again after a change of government in Madrid. Although the new government agreed to pay indemnity, it required that the original invoices of the cargo first had to be presented. Nevertheless, von Bülow was optimistic enough to report to the Emperor that this entire affair, "which has been of great importance for the interests and security of German merchant shipping," would soon be resolved (BA BL R 901/11500 von Bülow to Emperor, Berlin, 29 March 1875; *Norddeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, 30 April 1875).

The release of the *Marie Louise* proved to be a very delicate affair. After her confiscation, the Spanish authorities used the vessel as a transport for coal. When her release was ordered, the German owner in Altona refused to take the ship back. In August 1874, the Spanish government was finally convinced to pay the insurance value of the ship in the amount of 75,000 Reichsmark plus interests. But due to difficulties in communication, Captain Hinrichsen had in the meantime accepted the ship after it had been repaired at Spain's expense. The

Spanish then repurchased it at a public auction. Spain had a credit because of the indemnity she had already paid. The latter had to be balanced with diverse claims such as lost orders for potential cargo. After long discussions, a final financial settlement was at last agreed upon (BA BL R 901/11500 Norddeutsche Zeitung, 30 April 1875).¹²

On the other hand, the negotiations for indemnity of the *Gazelle's* cargo dragged on for years although both governments had arrived at an agreement on 12 April 1875. The agreement specified that the unspoiled part of the cargo should be returned to its Chinese owners whereas the spoilt part, particularly opium, was to be compensated for in cash. However, a new problem arose since the delivered goods were not identical with those that had been originally part of the cargo. Consequently, the German legation in Madrid once again became involved in this affair. The Governor-General of the Philippines then demanded the presentation of the cargo's original documents before taking any action. Consul Ruttmann was able to present these only in August 1878. But these documents were sent back and forth between Madrid and Manila. Finally, the Spanish offered an indemnity of \$555.38. This was rejected as being much too low by the German consulate in Manila and the problem was still pending in 1891. In May of the same year, a royal order from Madrid was sent to the Philippines saying that 5,000 pesos had been allowed for indemnity.¹³ Due to further bureaucratic delays in Manila, the final sum was paid to Sander & Co. on 26 January 1892. This finally ended the affair that had commenced in 1873.¹⁴

The Sultan of Sulu, Adventurers and European Powers

Why was it so profitable for merchants, ship owners and captains to set sail for Sulu and risk losing one's crew, ship and cargo? What were the reasons behind the final engagement of the German Reich in what was actually a minor affair in a remote region somewhere in the Far East? In order to answer these questions, we must focus on the Sulu Sultanate.

The "Sulu zone," as James Warren called the area centered on the Sulu and Celebes Seas (1981, xxi ff.; 1998, 9 ff.), developed into an important center in the trade network of the region between 1768 and 1848 with the town of Jolo as the Sultanate's entrepôt. But the incursion of the Spanish colonial power threatened the Sultanate's economic and political position. With the help of steam gunboats, the Spanish conquered the so-called pirate stronghold of Balangingi in 1848. This

marked the beginning of Spain's final attempt to conquer the Muslim territories of southern Philippines and was meant to counteract rival British colonial activities in this area.

Since 1846 Britain had been in possession of the small island of Labuan off Brunei's northeastern coast. In order to stimulate its sluggish trade, Governor James Brooke negotiated a "Treaty of Friendship and Commerce" with the Sultan of Sulu. Although never ratified by Britain, the treaty resulted in the redirection of Sulu trade to Labuan. The Spanish reaction was not long in coming. Landing on Jolo on 28 February 1851, Spanish troops, burned down the town but then retreated in fear of counterattacks. The Spanish then forced Sultan Muhammad Palalun to sign a treaty, which was defined as an "act of incorporation into the Spanish monarchy." However, the Sultan and his Taosug subjects interpreted this treaty as resulting in the establishment of a Spanish protectorate and thus continued to trade with Labuan and Singapore.¹⁵

The Spanish tried to interrupt these trading connections in the following years. In 1855, they issued a decree requiring all vessels trading with Sulu to first sail to the new customs house in Zamboanga and pay differential customs duties. But less foreign ships and Taosug *prahu* called at the port of Zamboanga and Sulu remained the major economic redistribution center in the south. To emphasize their claim of sovereignty over Sulu, the Spanish declared on 2 July 1860 that only the ports of Manila, Sual, Iloilo and Zamboanga were open to foreign vessels in the Philippines.

Meanwhile a flourishing illegal trade had developed in the Sulu Sea. The Sultan and his people were in dire need of all kinds of goods such as textiles, rice, tobacco or opium, but particularly arms and ammunition in order to fight the Spanish. Different ships commanded mainly by British adventurer-captains, sailed to and from Sulu in the 1850s and 1860s while Spanish gunboats tried, without much success, to interrupt this trade. German traders also became engaged in this business.¹⁶

The most notorious was Hermann Leopold Schück, who came into contact with the Sultan of Sulu in 1864 while on a trading trip from Celebes to Singapore. He soon became a close friend of the Sultan and, on account of his many successful trips, became a resident merchant enjoying trading privileges.¹⁷

Still dependent on British blockade-runners and under military pressure of Spain, the Sultan, decided to come into contact with the

newly emerging European power in this area—Prussia. While on a commercial trip in the Sulu Sea, the Prussian ship *Vampyr*, under the command of Captain Noelke, called at the port of Jolo in August 1866. He soon entered into negotiations with Sultan Jamal-ul Azam. Noelke reported that the Sultan wanted to boost his position against his external enemy, Spain, and his domestic rivals, the local chiefs (*datu*). According to Noelke's oral statement, the Sultan was willing to cede northeastern Borneo in exchange for Prussian support. Unfortunately, we lack information to the extent to which Schuck influenced the Sultan, but we can conclude that he may have already played a central role in the affairs of the Sulu Sultanate.

The Sultan's handwritten letter to "My Beloved Brother William King of Prussia" was handed over to Noelke. In this letter, the Sultan complained about Spanish attacks on his country. He reported that although he had requested assistance from Britain he had not yet received a reply. Then he made an urgent plea for Prussian support. The Sultan offered a treaty of friendship and asked for the Prussian King's assistance in resolving the problems in Sulu.

Although this letter caused a sensation in Berlin, no reply was ever sent. Rudolf von Delbrück, president of the Reich's chancellery, mentioned that the Sultan's motives seeking a treaty with Prussia were influenced by personal interests and his consideration "that sooner or later his empire would be annexed by a European power and then perhaps under more unfavorable conditions." Delbrück concluded that the acceptance of such an offer would be considered an act of partisanship against Spain and was thus not in the interest of Prussia.

While this affair reveals that Germany was interested in establishing a foothold in the Borneo-Sulu region, Europe was still of prime interest to the Prussian Prime Minister Bismarck. Any colonial adventure would thus disturb his plans for a unified German Empire.¹⁸

Meanwhile, on the other side of the globe, the situation of the Sulu Sultanate had deteriorated. Concerned that the gunrunners' activities could improve the Sultan's position and challenge Spain's claim of sovereignty over Sulu, more gunboats were sent to the Sulu Sea and Spain's fleet was increased from five to thirty-five ships. In November 1871, the Spanish blockaded Sulu and shelled Samal villages on Tawi-Tawi. For five months starting in February 1872, they shelled Jolo. As even these efforts proved to be ineffective, Spanish officials ordered steam gunboats to cruise the Sulu Sea and seize, ram or sink any native prahu they encountered.

Within the next two years, this "cruising system" produced some positive results. Spain interrupted the connection between Sulu, Palawan and Labuan. But by then, the Taosug traders preferred to sail to Sandakan on Borneo's northeastern coast because it was safer. The gunrunners had also reacted and established a trading post there. Schück and the Labuan Trading Company, a German-British joint venture, soon began to play a crucial role in the Sulu trade (for more information see Schult 2000, 85 ff.).

The cruising system seriously harmed the sultanate's economy. The collection of mother-of-pearl, the Taosug's major trade item, became increasingly difficult and dangerous because their prahu were particularly vulnerable near the reefs and could easily be surprised by Spanish gunboats. It also became harder as well as more expensive to import goods such as textiles, tobacco, opium or rice. Consequently a process of economic transformation was initiated as the Taosug commenced to farm and clear the forest, causing sustained ecological damage.

The shortage of firearms and ammunition also proved to be more dangerous for their war effort as this increased even further the Sultan's dependence on the gunrunners. Desperately in need of allies, the Sultan again turned to Britain and Germany.¹⁹

Through British and German gun-runners, the Sultan sent several letters to London and Berlin requesting support. He wrote two letters to the British Queen in 1872 and one more in 1873, offering a port on Borneo's northeastern coast. However, the British replied that they maintained friendly relations with Spain and would not take any action.

Influenced by Schück, Sultan Jamal-ul Azam also drafted a letter to Bismarck, the chancellor of the new German Empire, which Schück then forwarded to Berlin via the German consulate in Singapore. In his letter, the Sultan complained about Spanish actions towards his sultanate, expressed his wish to establish friendly relations with Germany and asked for support. The letter was accompanied by a gift of pearls and Schück's reports on Sulu and its trading prospects (PRO F.O. 71/3 Bulwer to Granville, Labuan, 22 March 1873; Majul 1973, 291; Warren 1981, 115).

Bismarck was still not in favor of colonies, but the situation had changed since the Sultan's last letter of 1866. In 1868 a resolution was passed to establish a "permanent East Asia station" because the main task of a new navy was the protection and support of North Germany's naval trade (Petter 1975, 166). But no comprehensive plan

was developed to implement this decision. Thus, Germany still had to rely on British supplies and dock facilities in Singapore or Hong Kong. It was only in early 1870 that two corvettes arrived in Singapore.

After the foundation of the German Reich in 1871 some politicians, diplomats and high-ranking naval officers favored the enhancement of Germany's influence in the world and the protection of her increasing maritime trade. Reference was then made to the Sultan's letter of 1866. Delbrück informed the Admiralty that efforts should be made to get hold of a naval station in the Far East. The German warships should "examine the value of Noelke's statements in a careful way by taking the sensitivity of third powers into consideration and explore the ports he described" (BA BL R 901/11497 Delbrück to Admiralty, Berlin, 16 Feb. 1872).

It was in these circumstances that the Sultan's new letter arrived in Berlin. Although Bismarck did not reply because of his political preference for Europe,²⁰ the Admiralty ordered Lieutenant Commander von Blanc of the *Nymphe* to explore the Southeast Asian archipelago, with special emphasis on Sulu for potential naval stations.

After consultations with the British governors of Singapore and Labuan, Blanc set sail for Sulu, carrying a letter from the British government to the Sultan where Britain declared her disinterest in Sulu. Joining him was Schück, who acted as his interpreter. In March 1873 Blanc, who thought to act strictly in accordance with the Admiralty's orders, inspected the three ports of Marudu, Sandakan and Bongao on Tawi-Tawi Island, which the Sultan was willing to cede to Germany.

The British observed Blanc's actions with suspicion because the sea route from Australia to China passed along Sandakan and Bongao. Bulwer, Governor of Labuan, wrote: "Captain von Blanc did not tell me that the Sultan of Sulu has made an offer to cede to the Emperor of Germany the Island in question, but I think it quite possible that he has made or is disposed to make this or any other cession" (PRO F.O. 71/3 Bulwer to Granville, Labuan, 10 April 1873).

On the other hand, the Sultan interpreted Blanc's action as an indication that Germany acceded to his request and gave him gifts for the Sultan's "Brother" Wilhelm and declared that he waited for a just treaty and German support.

In April, Blanc reported directly to the Emperor. Blanc's action caused a great stir throughout Berlin. Because the British government worried that Germany intended to occupy the Sulu Archipelago, Foreign Secretary von Bülow appeased London by explaining that in spite

of increasing German trade in this region, the German government neither wished nor intended to acquire any territories in Sulu.

Bismarck was also not pleased about rumors in Europe that Germany planned to occupy the Philippines. He drafted the Emperor's reply to the Sultan, explaining that in case of war, the German navy was much too weak to defend any colonies. Then he made it clear that the navy commanders had to exercise utter restraint in political matters. The Emperor himself let the naval authorities know that they had to act strictly in this respect. Blanc personally had to convey this negative response to the Sultan in July 1873.

The activities of the *Nymphe*, however, were considered to be a provocation by the Spanish authorities and they ordered the bombardment of Jolo as retaliation for the Sultan's contacts with Germany.²¹

Although the Sultan's attempts to win an ally proved to be a failure, there was still a chance that the political climate in Germany might change. Moreover, the Labuan Trading Company, founded in 1872 for the sole reason of running arms, ammunition, opium and other contraband to Sulu, had established a trading post in Sandakan called Kampong German. From there, small steamers loaded with contraband, headed for Sulu. They were part of the profitable Singapore-Labuan-Sandakan-Jolo trade system. Adventurer-captains like William Clarke Cowie, John Dill Ross and Hermann Leopold Schück took the risk of supplying the Sultanate of Sulu with vital goods in order to make a quick profit.²² Despite the many Spanish attempts, they had not yet been able to seize even one of the blockade-runners.

The year 1873, when the brigs *Marie Louise* and *Gazelle* set sail for Sulu, would be crucial for future developments in the Sulu Archipelago (see Schult 2000, 85 ff.). On account of their cruising system, the Spanish notched some success in interrupting the Taosug trade with Labuan. As a consequence, the Taosug suffered from scarcity of food, arms and ammunition. The Sultan, on the other hand, tried to counteract this development by requesting support from Britain and Germany in exchange for stations. The prospect of acquiring a base seemed to be more enticing for the newly founded German Reich than for the long-established colonial power Great Britain. Furthermore, it was much more convenient for Britain to accept the old waning Spanish Empire than the dynamic and rising power of Germany.

With the transfer of a piece of land in Sandakan to the German blockade-runner Schück, and the subsequent erection of a central trading post, the Sultan supported the blockade-runners, who were essen-

tial for the sultanate's political survival. But, for the Spaniards, the trading station at Sandakan meant that the Taosug had a real chance of getting out of the tight spot. If Germany got hold of a naval station in this area under the pretext of protecting her maritime trade, Spain would not be able to exercise her sovereignty over the southern part of the Philippines without risking a war with Germany. In this context, the trips of the *Nymphe* deeply alarmed the Spanish authorities. Consequently it was essential for Spain to seize the blockade-runners, impound their ships as well as their cargos and imprison the captains and crews, for they were the key to the defeat of the Sulu Sultanate.

Germany's attitude toward the situation in the Sulu Archipelago was ambivalent. While Bismarck refrained from establishing colonies or naval stations, other politicians and naval authorities wanted to expand Germany's activities in the world. To them, it was absolutely necessary to acquire naval stations in order to protect German maritime trade. The Sulu Archipelago, where an ailing colonial power struggled to maintain her influence while the Sultan offered such bases, seemed to be a promising area.

But the incidents involving the *Marie Louise* and *Gazelle* only indicated the beginning of severe conflicts over the Sulu Archipelago, which was to escalate in the next few years. In order to emphasize Germany's position, the gunboat *Hertha* was dispatched in early 1875. On 23 October of the same year, Schück's vessel *Minna* was also seized. Germany again exerted strong diplomatic pressure on the Spanish government in Madrid which led to the release of the ship in January 1876. The same thing happened after the second seizure of the *Minna* at the end of the year.

Still believing that Germany was secretly planning the annexation of Sulu or even the Philippines, Spain began preparations for the final attack on Jolo which took place on 29 February 1876. The Taosug retreated into the island's interior and the war dragged on for two years. The Spanish efforts to control the region had produced results (Tarling 1971, 188 ff.; 1978, 126 ff., 182-84; Schult 2000, 89 ff.).

Shortly after the *Minna*'s second seizure, the Spanish were again successful. In December 1876, they seized the notorious *Tony*, which was flying the German flag under the command of Capt. Otto Sachse. Apart from transporting contraband, charges were brought against Sachse for his involvement in the region's slave trade.²³

One reason for Spain's more successful confrontation with the blockade-runners was the fact that the government could take advan-

tage of the efficient services of an agent in Labuan. This Spanish agent was Father Cuarteron who reported any ship movements in Labuan to Manila. For instance, he wrote on 11 September 1876, "que se concluya la guerra en Joló es necesario que á todo trance se haga prisionero al Vaporcito Alemán 'Torry' ['Tony']." Then on 14 November, he reported the vessel's imminent departure.²⁴ Soon after, the vessel was seized.

The German envoy to Madrid, Count von Hatzfeld, was once again ordered to intervene and emphasize that Germany's men-of-war would protect her flag. The Spanish government quickly gave in, released the vessel and paid indemnity. She could do so because with the occupation of Jolo, Spain had confronted the other European powers with a *fait accompli*.²⁵

Until the early 1870s, it was not necessary for Great Britain to expand her position along the northern coast of Borneo. But then the situation changed. Since the French had gained a foothold in Vietnam, the Dutch encroached from southwest Borneo and the Germans displayed an increasing interest in this region, Britain thought it necessary to safeguard her position.²⁶ From her point of view it was more acceptable for the ailing Spanish colonial government to expand her power over the Sulu Sultanate than any other nation.

As the political vacuum had vanished, it was impossible for Germany to encroach into this region. Together with Germany, Great Britain succeeded in commencing diplomatic negotiations against Spain in order to safeguard the freedom of trade in the Sulu Archipelago. These talks resulted in the Sulu Protocol of 11 March 1877. Spain conceded complete liberty of commerce and navigation with Sulu while she was allowed to levy custom duties only in places actually occupied by Spanish troops. Great Britain and Germany had thus acknowledged Spain's occupation of parts of the Sulu Sultanate. Spain, on the other hand, agreed to this protocol because she believed that she would be able to conquer the entire sultanate in due time.

Indeed, on 20 July 1878 Sultan Jamal-ul Azam and his datus had to conclude a treaty with Spain accepting a Spanish protectorate over the sultanate. In this context, Warren pointed out, "By 1878, the demise of the trading-raiding system stripped the Sultanate of any trace of its former importance as major entrepot in the global-regional economy in eastern Asia" (1998, 63).²⁷

This also marked the end of the blockade-runners. Shortly after the protocol of 1877, the Labuan Trading Co. was dissolved and left Sandakan for good. But this did not mean that German interests in the

Philippines in general, or the Sulu Archipelago in particular, had dwindled. Schück, owner of an hacienda on Jolo Island, continued to play an important role in Sulu until his death in Singapore in 1887. The year 1885 also saw the "Carolines dispute" between Germany and Spain, the signing of the Second Sulu Protocol granting Germans the right of land ownership in Sulu on equal terms with the Spanish (see W. Salazar 1997, 135 ff.), as well as Consul Kempermann's report to Bismarck about the prospects of expelling Spain from the Philippines and the suitability of the Mindanao-Palawan-Sulu region as a colony. In the previous year, the short-lived German Borneo Company had been founded in Hamburg. The company established the Hacienda Gomantong in Jolo, but went bankrupt in 1889. The German navy also remained on the spot in these years by dispatching several gunboats to Sulu such as the *Illtis* in 1881 or the *Nautilus* in 1887 (see Schult 2000, 94 ff.).

Thus, the Philippines, and the Sulu Archipelago in particular, remained on the political agenda of Germany. But it required other developments to seriously involve Germany in Philippine affairs once again.

Notes

1. The company was founded in Canton in 1840 by the American Augustine Heard. In 1858, it moved to Hong Kong. Its main business was selling opium and participating in the lucrative local steamer traffic. In the 1870s, however, the company faced financial difficulties. It failed in 1876. Some reasons put forward to explain this development were the misappropriation of funds by an associated company, the general business depression and the sudden lack of quick profits (Bard 1993, 80–81). We should see the risky engagement of Heard & Co. in the Sulu trade against this background.

2. Richard von Carlowitz and his partner Bernhard Harkort founded a trading company in Canton in 1845. After a split in partnership, Carlowitz opened a branch in Hong Kong in 1866. The company was engaged in coastal shipping and general merchandizing. Baron von Carlowitz also acted as Prussian Vice-Consul and stayed in the Far East until 1873. He died in 1886 (Bohner 1939, 342–57; Bard 1993, 99).

3. BA BL R 901/11497 A. Heard & Co., List of "stores" and "cargo," Hong Kong, 14 July 1873; Heard to Colonial Secretary Smith, Hong Kong, 1 Oct. 1873; Consul Cordes to Governor Kennedy, Hong Kong, 1 Oct. 1873; R 901/11498 Heard to Consul Cordes, Hong Kong, 26 Nov. 1873; Heard, Invoice sundry goods, Hong Kong, 31 Mar. 1874.

4. Hinrichsen was forty-nine years old. His first mate was Heinrich Christian Hellberg, thirty-one years old; his second mate Christian Steffens; and the seamen were Carl Braun, forty-two years old and Johann Christian Wendt, twenty-three.

5. According to a statement by Augustine Heard & Co. it was 14 July. BA BL R 901/11498 Heard to Cordes, Hong Kong, 26 Nov. 1873. BA BL R 901/11497 letter of protest Field, Manila, 16 Sept. 1873; Heard to Colonial Secretary Smith, Hong Kong 1 Oct.

1873; affidavits by Hinrichsen et al. in Parr's presence, Manila, 24 Sept. 1873; Hinrichsen to Cahn, Manila, 30 Oct. 1873.

6. BA BL R 901/11497 letter of protest Field, Manila, 16 Sept. 1873; Heard to Colonial Secretary Smith, Hong Kong, 1 Oct. 1873; Parr to Foreign Office Berlin, Manila, 4 Oct. 1873; affidavits by Hinrichsen et al. in Parr's presence, Manila, 24 Sept. 1873; BA BL R 901/11498 Heard to Cordes, Hong Kong, 26 Nov. 1873.

7. This is contrary to the statement by Heard & Co. that no consul was allowed to be present. BA BL R 901/11498 Heard to Cordes, Hong Kong, 26 Nov. 1873.

8. BA BL R 901/11497 letter of protest Field, Manila, 16 Sept. 1873; Hinrichsen to Admiralty Court, Manila, 25 Sept. 1873; Parr to Foreign Office Berlin, Manila, 26 Sept. 1873; Parr to Foreign Office Berlin, Manila, 4 Oct. 1873; affidavits by Hinrichsen et al. in Parr's presence, Manila 24 Sept. 1873; BA BL R 901/11498 Heard to Cordes, Hong Kong, 26 Nov. 1873.

9. BA BL R 901/11497 Consul Cordes to Governor Kennedy, Hong Kong, 1 Oct. 1873; Parr to Cordes, Manila, 11 Sept. 1873. The month seems to be incorrect because Parr reported, among other things, about the presence of two British gunboats. Thus it should be October; Hinrichsen to Cahn, Manila, 30 Oct. 1873; R 901/11498 report by Captain Möller, 1 and 2 Sept. 1873; List of Goods, Hong Kong, 18 Nov. 1873; R 901/11500 Grobien to Reich's chancellery, Hong Kong, 10 Sept. 1874.

10. BA BL R 901/11497 Cordes to Kennedy, Hong Kong, 1 Oct. 1873; Kennedy to Earl Granville, Hong Kong, 2 Oct. 1873; telegram consulate Hong Kong to Foreign Office, Berlin, 4 Oct. 1874; Wright 1972, 68–69.

11. The data given in the documents consulted vary from eight to 15 miles. They concur to the effect that the brig had been off shore jurisdiction. See, for instance, the eyewitness account of Captain Schück, brig "Augusta," in BA BL R 901/11497 Schück to Consulate Singapore, Sulu, 11 Sept. 1873, although we must take into consideration that Schück was not an objective observer.

12. Then news from Manila said that the vessel had run aground and sunk in the southern seas of the Philippines the first days of the year 1875.

13. In the meantime, however, the peso (Mexican silver Dollar) had been devalued. One peso was equivalent to about one U.S. dollar before 1875, but only worth about U.S. \$0.8 to 0.95 between 1875 and 1894, falling to about U.S.\$ 0.5 between 1894 and 1898 (Corpuz 1997, 182).

14. BA BL R 901/11502 Grobien, firm of Sander & Co. to Reich's chancellery, Hong Kong, 26 Apr. 1877; Ruttmann to Count von Hatzfeldt, Manila, 22 May 1878, 8 Aug. 1878; Ruttmann to Governor General, Manila, 31 July 1878; Legation Madrid to Foreign Office Berlin, Madrid, 25 Sept. 1878; Acting Consul Leupold to Governor General, Manila, 4 Jan. 1883, 23 Feb. 1883; Consul von Möllendorff to Governor General, Manila, 17 Oct. 1887, 14 Apr. 1888, 20 Feb. 1889, 13 July 1889; Fragozo, customs directorate, to von Möllendorff, Manila, 8 May 1891; Agius, general director's office, to von Möllendorff, 26 Sept. 1891; Gomez, customs directorate, to von Möllendorff, 7 Oct. 1891; von Möllendorff to Governor General 9 Oct. 1891; Agius, general director's office, to Governor General, Manila, 23 Oct. 1891; General Governor Weyler to von Möllendorff, Manila, 26 Oct. 1891; von Möllendorff to Reich's chancellor von Caprivi, Manila, 14 Nov. 1891; von Möllendorff to von Caprivi, Manila, 29 Jan. 1892.

15. PNA Mindanao y Sulu 1845–1896, Exp. 2, Fol. 4–12, Jolo, 28 May 1849; PRO, F.O. 71/3 No. 11, Bulwer to Granville, Labuan, 9 Aug. 1873; F.O. 71/7 Derby to Russell, London, 17 Jan. 1876; Saleeby 1908, 102 ff.; 107–11; Orosa 1923, 29–30; Majul 1973, 284 ff.; Warren 1981, 64, 104–7.

16. PRO F.O. 71/3 Bulwer to Granville, Labuan, 22 Mar. 1873; Wright 1972, 67–69; Majul 1973, 288–90; Warren 1981, 110–19.

17. For a more detailed study of Schück's role see, Schult 2000 and for additional information on Schück see, Salazar 2000, 218 ff. and Schuck Montemayor 2000.

18. BA BL R 1001/7154 Noelke to von Carlowitz, Hong Kong, 26 Oct. 1866; Sultan to King Wilhelm, Sept. 1866 (Malayan original and English and German translations); BA BL R 901/11497 Delbrück to Admiralty, 16 Feb. and 11 July 1872; Schult 2000, 82–83.

19. PNA Mindanao y Sulu 1845–1896, Exp. 60, Fol. 311–12, Zamboanga, 20 May 1871; Exp. 61, Fol. 323–27, Zamboanga, 21 July 1871; Wright 1972, 68–69; Majul 1973, 288–90; Warren 1981, 115–22.

20. It was only in 1875 that Emperor Wilhelm I. let the Sultan know that the diplomatic situation in Europe prevented him from lending any support to him. But he sent a gift that included a bust of the emperor, a crystal vase and a dagger with a silver scabbard (Warren 1981, 115).

21. BA BL R 901/11497 Delbrück to Admiralty, Berlin, 11 July 1872; PRO F.O. 71/3 Bulwer to Granville, Labuan, 22 Mar. 1873, Tarling 1971, 188–89; Petter 1975, 213–17; Rohde-Enslin 1992, 30–31.

22. The "Tony," for instance, only had a registered tonnage of 14 tons. This does not seem much, but it could be quickly handled and one ton of mother-of-pearl was then sold for circa 250 pounds in Singapore. St. John Hart 1906, 351–52.

23. The Governor of Labuan, Ussher, investigated in these from a western standpoint severe charges because the "Tony's" owner was the British Cowie. It seemed that in this case no slaves had been transported, but it was common business for the Sultan to enslave the Spanish prisoners of war, who were all native Filipinos, and sell them on the northeast coast of Borneo and in Sandakan in order to purchase arms and ammunition. Shortly before his death in Labuan in 1877, Sachse confessed that he could remember having transported some prisoners of war, but he did not know anything of their further fate. PRO F.O. 71/11 Pol. No. 3 Ussher to Derby, Labuan, 1 Mar. 187; ditto No. 4, 2 Mar. 187; ditto No. 5, 13 Mar. 1877.

24. PNA Isla de Borneo Tomo II-Folder 1, Exp. 26, Fol. 112–15 Comandancia General de Marina an Governor General de Filipinas, Manila, 9 Nov. 1876; Tomo I-Folder 1, Exp. 33, Fol. 178–79b, Labuan, 14 Nov. 1876.

25. PRO F.O. 71/10 confidential: Münster to Derby, London, 11 Jan. 1877; F.O. 72/1562 Ussher to Derby, Labuan, 7 Feb. 1877; PNA Mindanao y Sulu 1861–1898, Exp. 23, Fol. 123–34, Manila, 6 Mar. 1877; St. John Hart 1906, 347–54; Tarling 1978, 159.

26. For instance, in early 1877 Germany again nailed her colors to the mast by dispatching the corvette "Elizabeth" to the Sulu Archipelago. Hildebrand et al., vol. 2, 1980, 63.

27. Saleeby 1908, 239–41; Wright 1972, 68–69; Majul 1973, 294, 299–300; Bacareza 1980, 63; Warren 1981, 123–24; Wehler 1984, 209; Rohde-Enslin 1992, 31.

References

Bundesarchiv Berlin-Lichterfelde (BA BL)

R 901 Auswärtiges Amt. Handelspolitische Abteilung, 1869–1912.

-R 901/11497 Spanien No. 13, Sept. 1873–Jan. 1874

-R 901/11498 Spanien No. 13, Feb. 1874–May 1874

PHILIPPINE STUDIES

- R 901/11500 Spanien No. 13, Dec. 1874–June 1875
- R 901/11502 Spanien No. 13, Sept. 1877–March 1892
- R 1001 Reichskolonialamt
- R 1001/7154 Colonisations-Projekte und Errichtung von Flottenstationen
Vol. 1 Jan. 1866-Dec. 1867

Public Records Office, Kew, England (PRO)

Foreign Office Records (F.O.)

-71/3, 7, 10, 11 Sulu, 1848-1888

-72/1562 Spain

Philippine National Archives, Manila (PNA)

-Isla de Borneo. Tomos I-II

-Mindanao y Sulu. Bundles 1845-1896, 1861-1898

Asiaticus. 1874. Sulu und das deutsche Reich. In *Preussische Jahrbücher* 33: 414–17.

Bacareza, Hermógenes E. 1980. *A history of Philippine-German relations*. Quezon City: National Economic and Development Authority.

Bard, Solomon. 1993. *Traders of Hong Kong: Some foreign merchant houses, 1841–1899*. Hong Kong: Urban Council.

Bohner, Theodor. 1939. *Der deutsche Kaufmann über See*. Berlin: Deutscher Verlag.

Corpuz, Onofre D. 1997. *An economic history of the Philippines*. Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press.

Hildebrandt, Hans H., Albert Röhr and Hans-Otto Steinmetz, eds. 1979–1983. *Die Deutschen Kriegsschiffe. Biographien - Ein Spiegel der Marinegeschichte von 1815 bis zur Gegenwart*. Vols. 1-7. Herford: Koehlers Verlagsgesellschaft.

Majul, Cesar Adib. 1973. *Muslims in the Philippines*. 2d ed. Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press.

Orosa, Sixto J. 1923. *The Sulu archipelago and its people*. Yonkers-on-Hudson, New York: World Book Company.

Petter, Wolfgang. 1975. Die überseeische Stützpunktpolitik der preussisch-deutschen Kriegsmarine 1859-1883. Ph.D. diss., Freiburg.

Rohde-Enslin, Stefan. 1992. *Östlich des Horizonts. Deutsche Philippinenforschung im 19. Jahrhundert*. Münster: Wurf Verlag.

St. John Hart, E. 1906. The strange story of a little ship. *The Wide World Magazine*, 347–54.

Salazar, Wigan. 1997. British and German passivity in the face of the Spanish neo-mercantilist resurgence in the Philippines, c. 1883–1898. *Itinerario* 21 (2): 124–53.

———. 2000. German economic involvement in the Philippines, c. 1870–1918. Ph.D. diss., University of London.

- Saleeby, Najeeb M. 1963. *The history of Sulu*. Manila: Carmelo & Bauermann, Inc.
- Schuck Montemayor, Michael. 2000. Saga of a German sea captain in the history of Sulu. *Manila Bulletin*, 30 August.
- Schult, Volker. 2000. Sulu and Germany in the late nineteenth century. In *Philippine Studies* 48 (1): 80–108.
- Tarling, Nicolas. 1971. *Britain, the Brookes and Brunei*. Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press.
- . 1978. *Sulu and Sabah: A study of British politics towards the Philippines and North Borneo from the late eighteenth century*. Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press.
- Warren, James Francis. 1981. *The Sulu zone 1768–1898: The dynamics of external trade, slavery, and ethnicity in the transformation of a Southeast Asian maritime state*. Singapore: Singapore University Press.
- . 1998. *The Sulu zone: The world capitalist economy and the historical imagination*. Amsterdam: VU University Press.
- Wehler, Hans-Ulrich. 1984 [1969]. *Bismarck und der imperialismus*. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp.
- Wright, L. R. 1972. The Anglo-Spanish-German treaty of 1885: A step in the development of British hegemony in North Borneo. *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 18, 1 (April): 62–75.