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Before the Secessionist Storm

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Book Reviews

BEFORE THE SECESSIONIST STORM: MUSLIM-CHRISTIAN POLITICS IN JOLO, SULU, PHILIPPINES, 1961-62. By Wilfredo F. Arce. Occasional Paper No. 73, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies. Singapore: Maruzen Asia Pte. Ltd., 1983. xii, 121 pages.

Jolo has long been viewed as one of the more dangerous and exotic places in the Philippines. At least since the turn of the century, the fierceness of Jolo's Muslims, along with their colorful dress and traditions, has been the subject of numerous articles in mass circulation magazines in the Philippines and abroad, especially in the United States. By concentrating on the fighting prowess and the Islamic uniqueness of the Joloanos, however, many of the articles have (wittingly or unwittingly) emphasized the differences between the Muslims of Jolo and the Christians of northern Philippines. At the same time, little attention — even in the scholarly literature — has been devoted (until very recently) to areas of similarity between these two Filipino communities. Fortunately, Professor Wilfredo Arce's study does not belong to the genre of popular writing on Jolo, but instead represents an attempt to understand leadership formation and political behavior in Jolo within the context of both Joloano society itself and Philippine society more generally.

Arce's study is based on extensive field research in Jolo in 1961 and 1962 in which he examined how Joloanos select their leaders, form alliance networks and political factions, and engage in political competition. Central to the research was the discovery of who were Jolo's most influential leaders in the early 1960s. How Arce did this is presented in detail in a methodological appendix that links his Jolo research with the work of Frank Lynch and Mary R. Hollnsteiner, with whom he was associated at the Institute of Philippine Culture at the Ateneo de Manila University, in the Philippines and the work of G. William Skinner in Thailand. Briefly, Professor Arce employed a reputational selection system that generated 545 names of influential Joloanos. From the initial list, 67 leaders — 35 Muslims, 30 Christians, and two with ambiguous group affiliations — were selected for more intensive study. Using

structured and unstructured interviews, participant observations, and employing several key informants, Arce then set out to discover how the leaders performed as leaders and how the alliance and political faction system had functioned in Jolo since the war, paying special attention to religious group differences on community leadership.

Following brief chapters on the objectives of the research and a description of the research setting, Arce devotes a chapter to the basic characteristics of Jolo's most influential leaders. Here the analysis focuses primarily on the sixty-seven leaders generated from the reputational selection process. Controlling for religious group, the leaders were analyzed in terms of age, sex, ethnicity, intermarriage (between Muslim and Christian), education, language competence, and voluntary association membership. Although there were some differences between the Muslim and Christian leaders in terms of age, ethnicity, intermarriage, and language competence, both groups were much more highly educated than the general population of Jolo and tended to be members of civic and religious organizations in the community.

The next three chapters (IV, V and VI), which comprise the bulk of the monograph, are devoted to a discussion of the role influential leaders play in the community's major social institutions, an analysis of the town's political power structure in 1962, and a description of the factional alignments and realignments in Jolo (and Sulu) since 1946, including several detailed case histories of representative Muslim and Christian leaders. As one might expect, Arce found a close correspondence between leadership and playing a key role in community social institutions. Yet not all of those occupying key roles in community social institutions were chosen as leaders, since designation as a dominant leader in Jolo was most often measured in terms of the ability to get elected or to influence an electoral outcome. Success in the electoral arena, in turn, depended on the size, strength, and durability of a leader's kinship group, alliance network, and political faction, and, although Arce only mentions the factor in passing, a leader's personality.

Arce discovered that, with the exception of the use of fictive kinship (*compadrazgo*), prevalent in the Christian parts of the Philippines, the emergence of leaders, the creation of alliance networks and political factions, and the rules of the political game were essentially the same in Jolo as they were in the rest of the country. Political leadership in Jolo was characterized by the cultivation of personal relationships between leaders of equal, subordinate, and superordinate stature, and required the observance of social norms involving gratitude, shame, and friendship, as well as an exchange of money and favors in return for votes. And since money and favors were scarce relative to demand, the result was considerable alliance network and factional shifting over time.

The research of Professor Arce is important for at least two major reasons. First, Arce's use of a comparative methodology gives his study a usefulness

that goes beyond the Jolo findings themselves. For example, by comparing the Jolo findings with other research, such as that of Landé and Hollnsteiner in northern Philippines, Arce's analysis tends to underscore the similarities, rather than the differences, between Muslim and Christian political behavior, and as such, the Jolo research provides a benchmark for additional studies on Muslim and Christian relations in the Philippines. Second, Arce's detailed research lays the groundwork for future scholarly work on Jolo society and politics, and indirectly suggests the importance of personality, which he only touched upon lightly, as an understudied aspect of leadership formation and political success in both Jolo and the Philippines more generally.

To be sure, scholars interested in Muslim-Christian relations, community power formation and local politics, and the role of patron-client relations in politics will find Arce's pioneering study useful. But others, like myself, who have long been captivated by the charms and glories of Jolo and the Sulu Sultanate, will also find *Before the Secessionist Storm* a pleasant antidote to all of the myths and misinformation about the Muslims of Jolo.

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FILIPINOS IN RURAL HAWAII. By Robert N. Anderson with Richard Collier and Rebecca F. Pestaño. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1984. x, 188 pages.

Hawaii's Filipino community dates back to 1907 when the Hawaiian Sugar Planters' Association (HSPA) first began to recruit laborers for the sugar plantations from America's only Asian colonial state. During the 1920s and 1930s at least 100,000 Filipinos, mostly Visayans and Ilocanos, signed three-year work contracts with the HSPA and left their homes to work in Hawaii. Some eventually returned home, and some went on to the U.S. mainland, but many thousands became permanent *Hawaiianos*, and were subsequently largely forgotten by their less adventurous compatriots. At this point in history the Filipino communities of Hawaii are largely a mystery to us in the Philippines, for they have been away so long, and we often assume that they have been Americanized in many respects.

On the other hand, in Hawaii they are still considered a minority or ethnic group, contrasting with the U.S. mainstream in social behavior as well as in economic class. In recent times they have been labelled "marginal" because the closing down of many of the larger sugar and pineapple plantations has taken away their economic base, leaving closely-knit plantation