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Philippine Prehistoric Economy*

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THE CAVEMEN ECONOMY

An economic history of the Philippines must begin with the "first Filipino," the first man that archaeological knowledge identifies as having lived and worked for a subsistence on the land.

The first known inhabitants arrived some 250,000 to 300,000 years ago, when the Philippines was apparently connected with mainland Asia through Borneo and Formosa. They were probably hominids, similar in type to the *Pithecanthropus* of Java and China. Archaeological findings, limited as they are, tell us that they came to the Philippines through land bridges, in pursuit of land migrating mammals.

They also indicate, however, a later evolutionary precursor — the Tabon man, who was recently unearthed in a cave on the southwest coast of Palawan Island. In the last Glacial period some 50,000 years ago, the Tabon man travelled by way of the land bridge connecting Palawan and Borneo, eventually settling in the Philippines. Like the rest of the known humanity over other parts of the world at the time, he lived in a cave.

The Tabon man had no regular hearths for cooking. Instead, he built many small cooking-fires on the ancient floor. Around these cooking fires he stored the bones of small mammals, the refuse of his food. Shellfish was apparently not a regular part of his diet, since no trace of sea shells could be found near his

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cooking places. The sea coast, usually about 30 to 35 kms. from his habitation, was simply too far away for it to have become a principal source of food. Thus, his main diet consisted of swifts and bats which he found in the cave.

The Tabon fossils suggest that the cave inhabitants had tools, which they made by knapping large flakes from lumps or nodules of chert obtained from river beds. Archeological findings also indicate that the Tabon man was a land-migrating hunter of small mammals, as can be inferred from the fact that his cave was occupied four times in intervals within a period of over 20,000 years. Each set of dwellers apparently moved out as the local sources of food were exhausted. Their technology never went beyond the flake-tool tradition.

Some 7,000 years ago, however, a new tool tradition emerged in Palawan, although it did not grow out of the Tabonian flake-tool with which it coexisted. Unlike the Tabonian tool, it had a smaller flake and a blade, which suggests differences in the background of the tool users.

This flake-and-blade tool has generally been associated with the pygmy people called "Aetas". They were a nomadic group of people who also lived in caves and subsisted mainly on shell foods, supplemented by fish and small games. Since the sea was their main source of food, they moved continuously along the sea coast.

THE COMING OF MIGRANTS

Archaeological discoveries in Batangas, Laguna, Rizal, and Bulacan show that during the neolithic period a new group of people came to the archipelago. Coming by boat either directly from the south coast of China (Hong Kong-Hoifung area) or indirectly along the margins of the South China sea, they drifted into the archipelago in small groups, simply looking for food. Together with their families, they brought new tools which could fell trees for slash-and-burn agriculture, gouge out boats, and build substantial dwellings.

Aside from these tools, they also introduced taro (gabi), yam, bamboo, and rice into the archipelago. Archaeological studies

indicate that rice became widely distributed in the Philippines at this time, which seems to show that rice was the principal crop of the neolithic people. Its widespread adoption suggests that either the migrants were widely scattered throughout the archipelago or that they were able to influence the other inhabitants. Although they were able to introduce rice, frequently it was not adequate for their diet. Hence, hunting, trapping, fishing, and food gathering remained a significant source of food.

In the year 400 BC there was an increasing movement of people from the coastal areas of South China and Indo-China into the island world of Southeast Asia and eventually into the Philippines. Coming as they did in small numbers, they brought with them new tools and some advanced technology. They had metal, copper, bronze, and pottery molds which made melting and remolding of old bronze tools possible. Utilizing the natural mountain spring as a source of irrigation, they developed terrace agriculture and later introduced weaving, which eventually replaced the use of bark cloth as cloth from such indigenous plant fibers as abaca emerged in increasing volume.

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF COMMUNITIES

The persistent movement of migrants, even as they came in trickles, soon populated the Philippines, strewing the river banks and sea coasts of the archipelago with small communities of related families. In the course of setting up their own communities, the migrants gradually encroached upon the hunting and fishing grounds of the Aetas, Mangyans of Mindoro, and Zambals, and eventually settled on their lands. The migrants found it relatively easy to drive the indigenous nomads away into the mountains, since the latter neither maintained a fixed abode or settlement nor planted fields on a regular basis. Rather, they simply "wandered" through the coast lines and the forest, feeding themselves on fruits, wild pig, and deer. Having been driven away, however, occasionally they would attack and plunder the community or, with their bows and arrows, they would simply stop the migrants from gathering firewood in the

mountains, and from hunting or fishing in rivers near the foot of the mountains. The antagonisms that flared in the course of these encounters did not persist for long as intermarriages and other forms of allegiances emerged, moderating the tension and eventually cementing a bond for some kind of coexistence.

Whether they moved into the mountains, after being driven away by a new and stronger group of migrants or after exhausting the food resources within their surroundings, the nomads would continue to live along or near the headwaters of the major rivers and tributaries, gradually evolving in the process a "riverine and coastal" orientation.

Of course, it was natural for the nomadic inhabitants to settle along the rivers and sea coasts because these were the primary sources of protein food. Fishing often provided greater returns than hunting and agriculture. From the sea, they would gather fish, eels, crabs, shrimps, sea weeds, and shell meat. From the forests and the mountains, they gathered edible wild plants, tubers, fruits, and nuts or hunted for deer, monkeys, snakes, and wild boar, exercising great care lest they get stuck in mire, or be bitten by some poisonous viper or vermin, or eaten up by a crocodile.

Hunting became a more difficult means of subsistence, requiring prowess and ability. A *dato* was expected to have such prowess. Rice cultivation, on the other hand, was a very risky and tedious task. Constantly threatened by devouring wild boars, pests, and locusts and occasionally ravaged by warring communities, rice growing was an unstable source of food. This further encouraged the inhabitants at the time to move on to different places, as they were forced out by a stronger community or as they exhausted the food reserves of the forest and the sea. Such mobility, together with the present state of knowledge of the people, reinforced their nomadic behavior.

While it is hard to determine the relative rates of migration from one place to another, the duration that communities stayed in a particular place, or the relative exhaustion of resources from the sea and forests, certain communities nevertheless managed to grow rapidly, establishing themselves per-

manently before the Spaniards came. The relative permanence of a community in a particular place depended on the size of the community, their peaceful coexistence with other communities, the established territorial boundaries between communities, their level of subsistence and occupation, and their involvement in trade.

SIZE OF THE COMMUNITY

If a trading settlement like Cebu had a population of 800 people, the typical community probably had from 30 to 100 families. Sugbu, a large pre-Hispanic settlement in the island of Cebu, had houses arranged in a linear pattern, stretching out from present-day Mandawe to Talisay — a distance of 12 kilometers.

Communities settled down in places where they planted palm tree, nipa, coconut, and banana groves or where they intended to grow rice. Through conquest or peaceful agreement with other communities, they would mark off the boundaries of each community. Peaceful agreement was easy to conclude when the communities were related to one another by blood, kinship, or marriage ties. Wherever antagonism was present in the relationship, numbers counted. Besides meeting the contingency of wars, the size of the community also determined to what extent agricultural activities can be undertaken.

PREHISTORIC COMMUNITY STRUCTURE

Within the community, each household provided for its own subsistence. The head of the family would go out to fish and hunt, while the wife would gather food from the forest. With the use of their bolo, the men in each household would fashion boats, tables, and plates out of the trunks of trees. The women, on the other hand, would weave cloth from tree barks, particularly from palm trees. They also cleaned and pounded the rice. In some communities, specifically those which carried on some domestic trade, the women accompanied their men to higgler and haggle with neighboring communities.

The men would clear the land, mutually assisting each other. Such assistance would be reciprocated according to the established community practice of remuneration or according to one's capacity to compensate. After work in the fields, they would all come together to eat and drink wine made from palm, coconut, or rice, in the course of which they would talk about life and their differences. In the process, more goodwill was fostered, as well as better understanding among themselves.

In addition to interactions in their agricultural occupations, households also interacted in the course of various rituals. There were rituals for planting, for harvest, and for every significant event like birth, marriage, war, and death. With common economic and social activities, religious beliefs and practices, the daily life of each household became integrated with those of the rest in the community, making for an increasing sense of solidarity.

Such common activities very often centered around the elders of the community, or the *dato*. Just as he led the community in public hunts, he also led them in wars of aggression or revenge against other communities. He exercised authority in settling disputes and quarrels within the community, well versed as he was in the customary laws and religious sanctions.

Somewhat lower in status and influence than the *dato* were the *maharlikas* or *fumaos*. They were the legitimate sons of the *dato*, his relatives, or the descendants of other *datos*. They comprised the independent households within the community in the sense that they were not bound to give tribute to the *dato*, even as they were bound to follow him in wars. If one of them proved himself to the community in either war, hunting, or in providing food and wine after work in the fields, he could become a *dato* or even form his own community.

Two other groups of people helped constitute the community. One group were the so-called *aliping namamahay*. He had his own house and a piece of land to cultivate, but he agreed to give part of his produce and render service to the *dato*. This obligation arose from the fact that he either came to the community as a stranger or was unrelated in blood to either the *dato* or *fumao*.

The other group was called *aliping saguiguilir* who served and lived in the dato's household. If he had been born and reared in the dato's household, he was treated humanely. He ate the same food as the household had, and the dato even adorned him with trinkets of gold. Some of them were eventually permitted to withdraw from the household and live on their own. However, for those who were captured in war, the treatment was less humane. They were given the more severe work and could be sold any time, perhaps for a basin of gold.

The *aliping saguiguilir* rendered numerous services. The men took care of the dato's fields, fashioned his boats, went fishing and hunting, and gathered wine from the coconut trees. The women, on the other hand, performed household chores, wove clothing materials, and took care of the dato's wife.

There were numerous other ways by which one became an *aliping saguiguilir*. As an outsider, he could have been caught hunting in the community forest or fishing in the sea without the permission of the dato. Or he might have failed as a member of the community at meeting his obligation to the dato. If he failed and died, his children became the *alipin* to render service to the dato.

Besides the dato, the *fumaos* and *maharlikas* also had dependents, acquired either through exchange, inheritance, or as a gift from the dato for bravery in war.

THE ECONOMY OF THE COMMUNITY

This constituted the geographic, cultural, and social context in which individual households and their whole community organized for production and distribution of goods.

In the community economy, unsettled land belonged to the individual who first planted it with coconut, fruit trees, and abaca. While this generally served as the norm for ownership, it also became an issue of dispute between communities. On the other hand, the land on which a community had settled was divided among its members. Thus, every household had its own plot of land to cultivate.

Mountain ridges were not divided but rather belonged to the whole community, partly because it was a common source of food and partly as a result of communal disputes with the older inhabitants of the mountains. Anyone was free to clear the mountain ridges and cultivate them, but only after asking permission from the dato. The forest and the sea, on the other hand, belonged to the "lord of the forest" or to the *Divata*. The dato was responsible for their care and, when asked, granted permission to outsiders who wanted to fish and hunt on them. The dato also initiated the offering of a hog to the "lord" and that of the first harvest of fish to the *Divata*.

Each household relied either on fishing, hunting, food gathering, or rice cultivation for its subsistence, depending on its capacity to work. They cultivated rice, the principal crop, through the slash-and-burn method of farming. This type of technology is called "shifting agriculture." This was generally the practice, although in some parts of Luzon such as Laguna and Pampanga and of the Visayas such as Leyte and Panay, wet rice agriculture or irrigated terracing was widely practiced.

Although rice was their main staple food, their harvest frequently did not last them the whole year round. So that their diet during certain periods of the year consisted of millet, borona, roasted bananas, beans, root crops and wine. However, there were other areas in which rice surpluses accumulated. When the Spaniards came to Dulag, Leyte, for example, and to some parts of Pampanga, they saw that a rice market had emerged.

In areas of shifting agriculture, it was rather difficult to produce a surplus. The process of shifting agriculture began with the selection of the land. The cultivator would pick a long reed stalk that he cut into many small pieces. He would place three to four pieces to a side, trying to form a square. If he succeeded in forming two squares, he would conclude the land to be fertile.

Together with his own dependents and some relatives and neighbors he had invited to come, they would start clearing the land with their bolos. However, in the course of clearing the land, if they discovered ant houses or a land snail, they would

immediately abandon the land and look for another patch. The presence of ant houses or snails on the land was considered a bad omen.

If the land was found fertile and free from dangers, it was cleared and prepared for planting. In the naturally-irrigated rice terraces or in areas irrigated by rain or the river, rice seedlings that had previously been soaked in the river and placed in a bamboo mat covered with earth were transplanted, one by one, on to the rice field. However, in the unirrigated land, seeds were planted with the use of a "planting stick". The planting stick was used to make holes in the ground. In each hole, the women would place five to six grains of palay and then, using their toes, cover the hole.

After planting, they set up enclosures to prevent wild boars from destroying the crops. The household also had to keep the undergrowth from choking the rice stalks by weeding, even just two days after planting.

The process of producing rice was obviously a tedious task. A lot of labor went into the clearing of the land, making holes, planting, and weeding. One household, working by itself, would not accomplish much. It was imperative for a household to recruit more labor since the number of people that could be mobilized determined the extent of land that could be cleared and cultivated. The ability of a household to mobilize labor depended on the number of its dependents or *aliping saguiguilir*, as well as on the number of relatives and neighbors it could persuade to work and it could provide with food and drink. In some communities, food and wine for lunch and supper were usually sufficient to remunerate labor. But, in other communities, the household also had to give five *fenge* or an *itneg* of palay (which may be one ganta of rice) per day's work, out of the harvest.

Frequently, it was only the households of the dato, the maharlikas, or those of the fumaos that managed to gather the number of people and the complementary amount of food and drink required for rice production. In the process of achieving this, the dato succeeded in keeping his position of authority and

leadership. However, if a maharlika later surpassed the dato in the number of workers he could put to work, the position of the dato was unconsciously undermined. For the ability to put so many people to work on one's field and keep them happy was a source of status, an achievement, and a topic for conversation in the community.

The rice production process was not only tedious and labor-intensive. It was also fairly risky. Each household with a cultivated plot had to build enclosures to protect the crops from animals and pests. It also had to build a house in the field in order to be able to watch closely over it. Even after each household had made its own field secure, the whole community must together defend its fields from the preying attacks of unfriendly communities. The lowland Pampanga communities, for example, always had to be prepared to counter the forays made on their fertile and cultivated plains by the clans inhabiting the Zambales mountains.

In efforts to ward off these dangers, in addition to their customary habits and religious practices the communities sought the assistance of their ancestors and anitos by performing rituals for them. To these "supranatural beings" they offered a *linangang*, (a bird-shaped container made of palm leaves filled with rice) and sacrificed a wild hen. They believed that doing this prevented the leaves of rice stalks, sweet cane, and other plants from drying up. They also believed that a man must stay away from fire and from his wife so that the rice would not become straw. Moreover, one had to stop work for the day whenever he had a bad dream, when it thundered or when the sky turned red in the afternoon. Everyone maintained these beliefs individually, although they performed communal ceremonies in which they put together all the fish and root crops that they could gather and then held a feast to ask their anitos for protection.

For these people, since their religion and beliefs were so intermingled with their economic activity, productivity, besides being the result of collective and defensive efforts, personal position, and influence within the community, was also seen as partly determined by certain "supernatural" realities that they

worshipped, tried to appease, and patterned their lives after.

COMMUNAL ECONOMIC ACTIVITY

Directly or indirectly, the individual household participated in the production process or in providing for its own subsistence. Production was not merely a household activity. Frequently, it was a communal activity. Through his *Paraishat* (someone similar to a town crier), the dato would call on his kin, the maharlikas, and every able-bodied man in the community to work. Together with his household of dependents, they went on public hunts and fishing expeditions, later storing in the dato's house everything that they had caught and gathered. Out of this supply of provisions, his *Paragahin* (a steward) went around distributing to every household what it needed for subsistence, recording every provision in the process. Whoever partook of the food provisions felt communally obliged to reciprocate the dato by rendering "tribute" to him or by affirming loyalty to him.

If the supply of food that had been gathered exceeded the immediate needs of the community, the excess was used for rituals and community feasts. Just as the dato meted out punishment on erring members and non-members of the community, he also treated the community to feasts and celebrations. In the process, he managed increasingly to solidify his community as well as ease the apparent differences in wealth-holdings.

DIFFERENCES IN WEALTH-HOLDINGS

One way of telling the amount of wealth a given household or person had was the amount of clothing he had on. As Pigafetta once observed and noted in his diary:

"The queen came with great pomp . . . She was dressed in black and white with a large silk scarf, crossed with gold stripes thrown over her head, which covered her shoulders, and she had on her hat. A great number of women accompanied her, who were all naked and barefoot, except that they had a small covering of palm-tree cloth before their privies, and a small scarf upon the head..."¹

¹ Pigafetta, Antonio. *First Voyage Around the World*. p. 40.

Another obvious indicator of wealth-holding was the number of dependents or alipins one retained. A third indicator was the amount of gold, precious stones, platters, and porcelain that one had procured or inherited from his ancestors. The last two indicators symbolized social status and were highly-valued items for exchange. In hard times and during famines, a household could easily exchange them for the necessities of survival.

DOMESTIC TRADE

Generally, the economy of a given community provided its members the subsistence they needed, including what they needed for their various rituals. However, on those occasions when they failed to produce enough rice or gather enough edible roots, they sought these goods from neighboring communities by bartering in exchange for them whatever surplus goods they could raise from their surroundings, such as fish and game, wax, salt, gold, even raw cotton that was later woven into cloth. Inhabitants of the coast would barter their fish with those who lived on the soil inland. The *Tinguianes* or "mountaineers" who could gather quantities of honey and wax would trade them for the products of the lowlanders. The Suluans, who made salt from sea water, exchanged their salt for rice. The community of Ygolots in Camarines, on the other hand, mined gold and silver from their rich mountains, exchanging the gold and silver for the rice, swine, and cloth from some Ilokano communities. And in Cabite, Pampanga, Manila, and Cebu where no cotton was produced Ilokano cloth was exchanged for rice and even gold.

Thus, production was intended mainly for the consumption of the community. There was trade only as necessity called for it. Hardly was there any regular effort at producing specifically for trade. More likely it was the "surplus" provided by nature that enabled them occasionally to trade for consumption. The naturally endowed community seldom exploited its natural resources solely to market products to other places. The resources were exploited only insofar as it met a community's needs for subsistence. The communities in the mountain ranges

of Pangasinan, Paracale, and Pampanga had amber, civet, and gold mines as a matter of fact. But, as de Letona in his *Description of Filipinas Islands* wrote, the natives "are wont to dig from them only the amount necessary for their wants."

Some communities, of course, greatly depended on trade for their subsistence and livelihood. The people of Catanduanes, who made boats, traded their boats with the coastal communities of Luzon. For the Sulu and some Visayan communities, piracy and slave raiding constituted the primary occupation, and trade, an extension of this occupation. They brought their loot and slaves for exchange with the communities within the archipelago or with the neighboring islands of Borneo, Java, and Malacca.

EXTERNAL TRADE

During the tenth century, trading communities were emerging along the river and sea coasts. This was the time when Arab traders brought products from places like Sulu and other countries to the ports of South China. It was also about this time that Moslem preachers were converting the people of Malaysia to the Islamic faith. Soon after, Chinese traders appeared on the scene and started competing with them. Using bigger and sturdier boats, they eventually succeeded in breaking the Arab trade monopoly during the thirteenth century.

Trade relations between communities in the Philippines and those of China subsequently developed, as indicated by trade potteries of the Tang Dynasty found in such places like Babuyan Island, the Ilocos and Pangasinan coasts, Manila, Mindoro, Bohol, Cebu, Butuan, Jolo, and Cagayan de Sulu and corroborated by Chinese historical accounts describing trade with some places in the Philippines.

In Chao Ju Kua's accounts, he mentions that in San Tao (which must have been Mindoro, Palawan, Busuanga, or the Western Visayan Islands), the "soil of the cultivated land has become lean" and that there was little rice produced. He further noted that Pi-Shioh-Ya (which was Samar, Leyte, northern coast of Mindanao or eastern Visayas) was practically barren, with

very few cultivated fields. The land did not yield anything for trade. Instead, its inhabitants lived on piracy, exchanging with the Chinese their loot of gold and slaves. Describing them, Chang wrote in another account

"They would hide themselves in some sequestered hills or valley that are uninhabited. When they came upon any fisherman or wood-cutter, they often seized him and took him home. Later they would sell him to other lands at the price of 2 taels of gold. Hence the people of Eastern Ocean are all afraid of them and will run away."²

He further recounted that the people of Sulu

"employed the method of burning the hills . . . their cultivated fields are unfruitful. They are fit more for the planting of millet and wheat. The people eat sago, fish, shrimps, conches, and clams. They boil sea water to make salt. And they ferment treacle into wine."³

In a 1349 Chinese record, Sulu was said to have lost its fertility on the third year of cultivation. Though the Sulu fields were not very productive, a Yuan record in 1277–1368 spoke of the popularity of Sulu pearls.

Knowing the resources and the people of the island, the Chinese traders brought for exchange their porcelain, commercial gold, iron vases, leaden objects, glass pearls of all colors, iron needles, black damask, silk fabrics, fish nets, tin, and silk umbrellas. In return they received cotton, yellow wax, sinamay cloth, coconuts, onions, fine mats, pearls, soft-tortoise shells, betel nuts, jute, and kapok. In a later period, the Chinese traders limited their merchandise to porcelain, iron and silk. Porcelain was highly valued because it was used both as a decorative item and as a ritual vessel for burials. Iron, on the other hand, gave them materials for fashioning bolos and other tools, while silk was displayed to indicate status.

Whenever the Chinese came for trade, they would beat their gongs to inform the natives of their arrival. Depending on their familiarity with or the "notoriety" of the community, they would either enter the harbor and stop in front of the official

² Before the Ming dynasty (1368–1644 A.D.), the islands from Borneo to Japan were called the Eastern Ocean. Quoted in Wang Teh-Ming, *Sino-Filipino Historico-Cultural Relations*, p. 304. Cf. Chang Shieq, *Tung-Si-Yang-Kao* or *The Study on the Eastern and Western Oceans*.

³ *Ibid.*

trading area or stay in their junks and wait for inhabitants to come into their boats. Pigafetta reports that in Zubu (Cebu) it was customary for a ship entering the harbor to pay tribute to the dato.

The natives and Chinese merchants transacted business on the Chinese junks or on land. For metal iron and large porcelain, the inhabitants exchanged gold or pearls. For other Chinese items, they exchanged rice, swine, and other foodstuffs. Where no barter was involved, the Chinese would use copper beads, blue and white porcelain cups, small figured chirtzes, or pieces of iron as medium of exchange. Specifically, they used them to count or value the amount of goods bought by the natives. In Mai (Mindoro), for example, a Chinese account notes that the natives would select and grab the merchandise they wanted and then hurry off to the other islands to barter them. Then, after some time, they would come back to repay the Chinese merchants. This was also the practice in Sulu.

Whenever the exchange between the Chinese traders and natives could not be concluded, the dato would enter to settle the transaction. After mediating, he would receive gifts of silk umbrellas and porcelain from the merchants, and rattan from the natives.

THE RISE OF TRADING COMMUNITIES

Instead of simply waiting for foreign traders, some "Filipino" communities eventually took the initiative in trading. Besides merchandising their wares to the other communities of the archipelago, as has been indicated, they also travelled to Borneo, Malacca, and even to China. A number of inhabitants from Luzon would sail in two or three junks of merchandise on to Borneo and later onwards to Malacca. During the period 1368 through 1644, trade embassies from Luzon, Pangasinan, Sulu, Soli, Camalig, and a certain Ko-Ba-lo-long went to China to pay tribute to the Ming emperor and to trade. With the payment of tribute, permission was granted to enter Chinese ports.

The pre-Hispanic trading experience of the archipelago led to

the following developments. First, external trade established new settlements or communities near the major rivers and bays. During the Sung Dynasty, for example, and as a result of the trade with China, Sta. Ana was founded. Secondly, external trade stimulated the emergence of domestic trading groups, and in the process expanded domestic trade itself. The recent discovery of Chinese porcelain even among the mountain area communities suggests the scope of trading efforts undertaken by coastal communities. Finally, external trade fostered the consolidation of a few trading communities.

THE EMERGENCE OF SULU

Sulu was originally inhabited by the so called "people of the interior," similar to the Dayaks of Borneo and called the Buranuns. In the early fourteenth century the Bajaws or Samals of Juhur came and peopled the coast of Sulu proper. In spite of their larger number, the Bajaws nevertheless became subject to the Buranuns. When the natives of Celebes likewise came, they got assimilated with the Sulus, although it is not known whether the Celebes natives had come as professed Moslems from the very beginning. An Arab judge and scholar called the Makdum visited in 1380 and began to sow the seeds of Islam upon his arrival, probably together with other Arab preachers. These Arabs, according to an account by Francisco Gainza, a Spaniard, were able to integrate with the natives. They married the local women, learned the native language, adopted many customs, and adjusted themselves to the social order. They subsequently acquired many slaves, rose in prestige, and joined the ranks of the *datos*. Moreover, having more unity, skill, and coordination than the natives, their power increased, making it possible for them to constitute a confederation among themselves.

The religion that the Makdum tried to introduce was subsequently renewed when Rajah Baginda, a prince from Menangkabaw, arrived to continue the Makdum's vocation. On the foundations of their work and the acculturation that had previously taken place, Abu-Bakr, who later came to Sulu and lived

with Baginda, succeeded in establishing the sultanate of Sulu.

Even before the Makdum got to Sulu, however, its inhabitants were already trading with the Arabs and the Chinese, a relationship that eventually blossomed in 1417 when Sulu sent a trade mission, bringing tribute to China.

Before the fourteenth century or even before any Arab trader or preacher ever touched her shores, Sulu was like any typical community in the archipelago at the time, except that her primary occupation was piracy or slave raiding. In the course of her exposure to Chinese trade and the Islamic faith, however, Sulu gradually evolved into a more cohesive region, culminating eventually in its establishment as a sultanate.

In the sultanate, all lands that lie within the hearing distance of the sultan's gong belonged to him, including the coast and whatever is found in the waters around the island. While the dato maintained his own leadership in the community, the sultan divided the land into administrative units, appointing a *panglima* for every unit. In principle, the sultan governed and promulgated laws according to the precepts of the Koran. While he preserved the principles of the Koran within the sultanate, the datos represented and stood for the customary laws of the community. Even as both laws are not diametrically opposed to one another, inevitably conflicts over their application arose.

The power of Sulu, by Saleeby's account,

"was felt all over Luzon and the Bisayan Islands, the Celebes Sea, Palawan, North Borneo, and the China Sea. . . And her trade even extended from China and Japan at the one extreme to Malacca, Sumatra, and Java at the other."⁴

⁴ Saleeby, Najeeb. *History of Sulu*, p. 48.