

# philippine studies

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

---

## **A La Recherche de L'Islam Philippin, by Loyre-de Hauteclocque**

Review Author: Jose S. Arcilla, S.J.

*Philippine Studies* vol. 42, no. 1 (1994): 131–132

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](mailto:philstudies@admu.edu.ph).

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

**A La Recherche de l'Islam Philippin. La Communauté Maranao.** By Ghislaine Loyré-de Hauteclocque. Paris: Éditions l'Harmattan, 1989. 250 pages.

Philippine historical writing has been described, correctly perhaps, as "combat literature." Books and essays have appeared mainly to impose one's views, seldom to explain the truth.

This we do not say of Ghislaine Loyré-de Hauteclocque's essays on the Maranaos, except with slight reservations. Despite the odds, the lack of sources, and even personal risk to her life, she has written about a group of people hardly known or understood outside their boundaries. One may disagree with her conclusions or methodology, but nevertheless, she deserves credit for her painstaking study.

Divided into three parts, the book is not a "history" in the sense of a chronological narrative—it verges on an ethno-historical analysis of Maranao society in Lanao. A brief description of the country and its inhabitants is followed by an economic section, "From Agriculture to Piracy," and a third section, "Islam and Society." The book concludes with a succinct statement that underlines the fragile relations between the Maranaos and non-Muslim, as well as Muslim groups—the Maguindanaos and the Tausugs especially—relations which have always served as points "of attraction and repulsion, of understanding and rivalry" (p. 215).

In the past, their common hostility to Spain brought them together in periodic but generally short-lived unity. This theme recurs in the book. Even recently, occasioned by their fight against the Manila government, a similar unity was forged among "various factions with divergent ends seeking either autonomy, or even independence." The final question then is, what might be their future in the face of a common enemy that whittles down their cultural and religious heritage? Political and cultural balance is needed, "but in reality quite difficult to achieve" (*ibid.*).

Modern research has shown that in the chronic Muslim-Hispanic hostility, Spain had been facing a multifaceted enemy lumped under the common but erroneous application of "Moro." Peninsular difficulties besetting Spain in the seventeenth century, when her European rivals sought her downfall, effectively stalled action in a distant colony that by itself was an economic nightmare. But once European interests in southern Philippines bestirred her to action, the tide turned in her favor. Steam gunboats arrived in the Philippines in 1843, and the decline of the Mindanao-Sulu sultanates because of the changing economic realities in Southeast Asia spelled the beginning of defeat for many Muslim leaders. It would be wrong, then, to say that the Muslims were not "conquered," for Spain never really attempted any such undertaking, except in a rather attenuated sense. The pattern was an isolated raid, almost always successful, but without any steps to consolidate whatever military gains had been won. As Ghislaine Loyré-de Hau-

teclocque indicates, Muslim leaders signed treaties in order to rid themselves of a thorn on their side. On the other hand, fidelity to treaties of "friendship" with Spain would have meant the disappearance of Islam from Mindanao.

The analysis of Maranao genealogy and its place in Maranao society is perhaps the most important section of the book. Despite modern democratic legalism throughout the rest of the Philippines, the Maranaos have continued to be conscious of their roots. This would explain many of the feuds and vendettas inexplicable to Christians. While family roots provide security to an individual, paradoxically they also feed the continuing rivalries among individual Maranao clans.

Ghislaine Loyré-de Hauteclouque is at pains to point out that this sensitivity to kinship ties is not exclusively Muslim, but is true of the Southeast Asian society as a whole. One agrees. In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the Jesuit missionaries were continually baffled by the "unreasonable" and "barbaric" *bagani* code of honor among the unbaptized tribes of Mindanao, the Mandayas, the Bagobos, the Manobos, etc. An injury to any member of the tribe had to be avenged; death had to be paid with another death. Slowly, however, through constant efforts, the missionaries were able to disabuse them from this tradition. But apparently, among the Maranaos, no such change could be seen.

One of the problems of the study is the lack of documentation which personal interviews could fill in only to a certain degree. The danger is the tendency to telescope various testimonies from different centuries and consider them as one. Possibly, no change has affected Maranao society from the seventeenth century to the present, a point taken for granted but then is not proven. Besides, Ghislaine Loyré-de Hauteclouque tends to simplify Spanish sources by calling them "*les Espagnoles*," although we know that the viewpoints of missionaries differed from those of the military officer and the bureaucrat in Manila or Spain. Surprisingly, Alip is cited, when better sources on prehispanic society could have been consulted, for example, Alcina or the late William Henry Scott.

However, these remarks should not detract from the value of the book. At least, it explains many things which non-Muslims are generally unaware of. Certainly the Maranaos, perhaps overlooked in Muslim studies, are now made to appear as a group with a specific identity, "*En somme, on est musulman parce qu'on est maranao et un Maranao ne serait avoir d'autre religion que l'Islam*" (p. 147).

Jose S. Arcilla, S.J.  
Department of History  
Ateneo de Manila University