

2 The Sulu Sea

Of the three regions under study here, the Sulu Sea was the most strongly associated with piracy in the eyes of nineteenth-century observers. The raiders from Sulu were also, for good reason, the most feared by the coastal populations of Southeast Asia, who comprised by far most of the victims of the depredations.

Maritime raiding in the Philippines predated the first Spanish incursions in the region in the sixteenth century but was aggravated by the protracted conflict between the Spanish colonisers and the Muslims of the southern Philippines from 1565 to 1898, as well as by the region's integration into the global commercial systems of the early modern period and the influx of European firearms to the region. All of these factors initially served to strengthen the two major powers of the southern Philippines, the Sultanate of Maguindanao and – particularly from the second half of the eighteenth century – the Sulu Sultanate. Spain never managed to assert authority over the southern Philippines, and effective imperial control over the region was established only by the US Army after a series of bloody campaigns at the beginning of the twentieth century. Throughout the three and half centuries of conflicts between the Spanish and the populations of the southern Philippines, maritime raiding played a key role, not only for the accumulation of wealth and slaves, but also as a means of warfare and anticolonial resistance.

Piracy, Raiding and the Moro Wars

With few exceptions, relations between the Spanish colonisers in the northern Philippines and the predominantly Muslim population of the southern parts of the archipelago were characterised by hostility and mutual detestation and distrust. The Muslims fiercely resisted Spanish attempts to convert them to Christianity and to take control over their lands and waters. For close to three centuries, until the mid nineteenth century, this resistance effectively checked Spanish colonial ambitions in the southern Philippines.

The Spanish interpreted their protracted struggle with the Muslims in the south by analogy with the *Reconquista*, the effort of the Christian Iberian



Map 2: The Sulu Sea

kingdoms to expel Muslims from the Iberian Peninsula from the eleventh to the fifteenth centuries. The Spanish consequently labelled their Muslim adversaries in the Philippines ‘Moros’, a condescending term for Muslims derived from the Mediterranean and Iberian context. From the point of view of the Spanish, and to some extent also from the point of view of the Moros, the protracted conflict was interpreted as part of a long-standing global struggle between Christianity and Islam.¹ In the course of this struggle, and as a result of increased contacts with the wider world from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries, the Muslim identity of the Moros was strengthened, largely in opposition to the Spanish incursions and their attempts to propagate the Christian faith.²

The religious dimension was thus at the heart of the so-called Moro Wars, a series of wars and hostilities fought with varying intensity throughout the Spanish colonial period in the Philippines from 1565 to 1899. In the context of these wars maritime raiding, including attacks on the enemy’s commercial vessels and coastal raids for the purpose of taking slaves and booty, and as a means of reprisal, was undertaken by both parties. As the Moros generally lacked the strength and concentration of sea power to combat the Spanish

¹ Majul, *Muslims in the Philippines*, esp. 39–88; Hawkey, ‘Reviving the Reconquista’. The term *Moro* is no longer regarded as condescending, as demonstrated by the inclusion of the term in the name of the two leading secessionist movements in the southern Philippines since the 1970s, the Moro National Liberation Front and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front.

² Federspiel, ‘Islam and Muslims’, 340–1; see further Majul, *Muslims in the Philippines*.

naval vessels or troops directly, Moro warfare principally took the form of maritime raiding, focusing on soft targets, such as Christian Filipino seafarers and coastal populations. Although material gain, principally in the form of human captives, was an important aspect of the raids, they should thus not be understood primarily as motivated by private gain, but as a part of the religious and political war that the Moros fought against the Spanish.³

Such an understanding of maritime raiding in the Philippines in the early modern period is probably close to how the Spanish colonisers interpreted the phenomenon during their first two centuries in the archipelago. As we have seen, maritime raiding was frequently used as a means of warfare in the European context, and the raiding of enemy vessels and settlements was a regular part of European wars at sea.⁴ The boundaries between pirates and privateers were also far from clear-cut in European legal and political doctrine. For example, in the Spanish Laws of the Indies, which was first compiled in the seventeenth century, the terms *pirates* (*piratas*) and *privateers* (*corsarios*) were used interchangeably.⁵

Maritime violence in the context of the Moro Wars thus included Spanish raids on the coasts and islands of the southern Philippines. In the middle of the eighteenth century, for example, the Spanish governor in Manila authorised the use of privateers to capture and enslave all Sulu men, women and children who could be seized, and to confiscate or destroy their property.⁶

Allegations of piracy were at times used by the Spanish against the Muslims of the southern Philippines and north Borneo (particularly Brunei) from the earliest days of the Spanish colonial period, but it was not a principal reason for the onset of the Moro Wars, nor a prominent part of Spanish discourse about the Moros during the first two hundred years of the Spanish presence in the Philippines.⁷ To the extent that the terms *pirate* (*pirata*) or *privateer* (*corsario*), or their cognates, are mentioned in the digitized records of the Audiencia de Filipinas from the late sixteenth to the middle of the eighteenth centuries, they deal above all with European or Chinese navigators whose activities were deemed to be illegal by the Spanish colonisers.⁸ Maritime

³ *Ibid.*, esp. 121–89; Scott, *Slavery in the Spanish Philippines*, 54.

⁴ E.g., Glete, *Warfare at Sea*; Starkey, van Eyck, van Hesling and de Moor, *Pirates and Privateers*.

⁵ *Recopilación*, 64–6. On the early ‘antipiracy’ campaigns of the Spanish, see Mallari, ‘Spanish Navy in the Philippines’.

⁶ Majul, *Muslims in the Philippines*, 281; Bando del gobernador de Filipinas, in Montero y Vidal, *Historia de la piratería*, 2, Appendices, 29–31. According to Montero y Vidal, 299, the order was illegal because slavery was not permitted in the Philippines according to Spanish law; cf. Scott, *Slavery in the Spanish Philippines*, who discusses several ambiguities in relation to the Spanish laws on slavery and their implementation in the Philippines.

⁷ Saleeby, *History of Sulu*, 168–71.

⁸ Website of the Portal de Archivos Españoles (PARES), searches for *corsario*, *pirata* and *piratería* in the Archivos General de Indias, Audiencia de Filipinas between 1565 and 1800, rendering 46, 14 and 3 hits, respectively (30 March 2017).

violence emanating from the southern Philippines, by contrast, was not for the most part labelled piracy or even raiding, but simply described as attacks by enemies from various islands outside the control of the Spanish, such as Borneo, Ternate, Sangir, Jolo and Mindanao.⁹

In the second half of the eighteenth century a shift in the pattern of maritime violence emanating from the southern Philippines occurred as raids conducted by certain ethnic groups in the region, particularly Iranun and Sama, increased, and Sulu overtook Maguindanao as the principal centre for slave raiding.¹⁰ The surge in slave raiding was associated with the increase in the China trade from the eighteenth century, which gave rise to a great demand for natural products from the Sulu Archipelago and other parts of the Malay Archipelago. The much sought-after products from the southern Philippines and eastern Indonesia included pearls, mother-of-pearl, sea cucumber, wax, bird's nests, shark fins and tortoise shells, all of which were exported in exchange for textiles, opium and firearms. The Sulu Sultanate was strategically located to benefit from the trade boom, and Jolo emerged toward the end of the eighteenth century as an important market for both slaves and natural products and other commodities. The main sponsors and beneficiaries of the slave raids were the *datus* (chiefs or headmen) of the Sulu Sultanate, who used part of the income from the burgeoning trade to equip ever larger and well-armed raiding expeditions. With the integration of the slave- and raid-based economy of the Sulu Archipelago in the global commercial system during the second half of the eighteenth century, the Sulu Sultanate prospered and overtook Maguindanao as the major Muslim power in the region.¹¹

From the second half of the eighteenth century the label *piracy* began to be used more frequently by Spanish officials to describe Moro raiding, and the efforts to contain or suppress such activities were stepped up.¹² In 1754 the governor-general of the Philippines, Marquis Francisco José de Ovando, proposed the conquest of Jolo and Mindanao in order to put an end to the 'piracy and grave evils' (*piratería y gravísimos males*) that the Moros from these islands visited upon the Spanish colony every year.¹³ When peace was negotiated between Spain and the sultan of Sulu later the same year, moreover, the latter promised to punish any of his subjects who carried out

⁹ Scott, *Slavery in the Spanish Philippines*, 53.

¹⁰ Warren, 'Moro Wars', 40; see further Warren, *Iranun and Balangingi*, 25–40.

¹¹ Warren, *The Sulu Zone, 1768–1898*.

¹² Cf. Vlekke, *Nusantara*, 198, according to whom Europeans only began to distinguish between indigenous pirates and honest traders in the Malay Archipelago in the eighteenth century, whereas they had not made the same distinction in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

¹³ Carta del marqués de Ovando sobre necesidades para la conquista de Joló y Mindanao, 1753–55, ES.41091.AGI/23.6.277//FILIPINAS,385,N.25, Archivo General de Indias (PARES).

raids against the Spanish territories, although the actual word *piracy* (*piratería*) or any of its cognates were not mentioned in the Spanish treaty text.¹⁴

The treaty notwithstanding, maritime raiding emanating from the southern Philippines continued and increased during the last decades of the eighteenth century, driven, ironically, in part by Spanish efforts to develop the commerce of the colony.¹⁵ The beginning of the nineteenth century created further opportunities for maritime raiding in Southeast Asia, in part because of the decline of European naval power in Southeast Asia during the Napoleonic Wars. Iranun and Sama raiders formed large bands who undertook annual raiding expeditions, not only to the Spanish colony in the northern Philippines, but also to the Dutch East Indies, the Strait of Malacca and north Borneo. In the Philippines, the raiders ventured as far north as Luzon and even conducted raids close to the centre of Spanish power in the region, in Manila Bay, carrying off hundreds and sometimes thousands of slaves from different parts of the Spanish colony every year. The Spanish sent several punitive expeditions to the Sulu Archipelago and tried to enforce a blockade on Sulu's trade with China and Manila, but despite the damage occasionally inflicted on the Iranun, Sama and other groups involved in the raids by Spanish naval forces, they were unable to put an end to the depredations.¹⁶

The increase in Sulu raiding coincided with greater commercial interest in the region, not only on the part of the Spanish, but also of the British and Dutch, all of whom saw the raids as a serious impediment to their commercial and territorial interests. The problem of maritime security thus took on a new importance, and the Sulu Sultanate was identified as a pirate state and the major sponsor of the raids. The term *Moro*, which for more than two hundred years had been used pejoratively by the Spanish, also came to be understood by Europeans in the region as more or less synonymous with *pirate*. The Spanish now consistently began to describe Moro raiding as piracy, and they often linked the practice to the influence of Islam, as well as to ethnic or racial deficiencies associated with the Moros.¹⁷

Such notions were not unique to the Spanish but were frequently expressed by other European observers as well. However, against the background of the protracted Moro Wars, the association between piracy and Islam seems to have been more emphasised by Spanish observers and officials than by their British and Dutch counterparts. Proselytisation among the Moros was at times promoted by Spanish colonial officials as a means of weaning the Moros

¹⁴ Majul, *Muslims in the Philippines*, 284–5; for the original Spanish text of the treaty, see Montero y Vidal, *Historia de la piratería* 2, Appendices, 31–3.

¹⁵ Scott, *Slavery in the Spanish Philippines*, 56. ¹⁶ Warren, *Iranun and Balangingi*, 86–123.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 23; Frake, 'Genesis of Kinds of People', 314–15.

from their piratical habits, although such efforts were on the whole unsuccessful.¹⁸

In the 1820s, several naval expeditions were dispatched by the Spanish to the Sulu Archipelago and Mindanao with the aim of destroying the mainland bases and vessels of the raiders. The expeditions, however, proved largely inefficient due to the limited naval power of the Spanish. The authorities in Manila then changed their tactics – partly also in response to the increased interest in the region shown by other colonial powers – and began instead to encourage more friendly commercial relations with the Sulu Sultanate. In 1836 two treaties were signed between Spain and the Sultanate, a commercial treaty and a treaty of friendship and alliance. The purpose of the first treaty was to discourage the Moros from engaging in piratical activity, or at least to make them refrain from attacking Spanish shipping and territory, and to encourage them to take up more peaceful pursuits. The main purpose of the second treaty was to keep other European powers from gaining a foothold in the region. In particular, the Spanish worried that Great Britain or the Netherlands might try to extend their influence in the East Indies to the Sulu Archipelago if the piratical incursions from the area were allowed to continue unchecked.¹⁹ The risk of intervention by other European countries was demonstrated in 1845, when France made an attempt to acquire the island of Basilan from the sultan of Sulu. The venture was abandoned only after King Louis Philippe rejected the proposition in order to maintain good relations in Europe with Spain.²⁰ The incident seemed to display Spain's weak control over the southern Philippines, but even more worrying for the Spanish were the British designs on Sulu, particularly in view of Great Britain's superior naval strength, the British advances in north Borneo in the 1840s and the interest that the British had shown in the Sulu Sea since the eighteenth century.²¹

These developments, combined with the fact that the annual maritime raids emanating from the Sulu Sultanate continued more or less unchecked, cast doubts on Spain's claim to sovereignty over the southern Philippines. As Janice E. Thomson has shown, a fundamental requirement for the acknowledgement of sovereignty in the international context since the nineteenth century has been that the sovereign is able to control extraterritorial violence emanating from his or her territory.²² In order to enforce her claim to the Philippine Archipelago, Spain thus had to put an end to the piratical depredations of the Sulu raiders. For the first time in history, moreover, Spain began to acquire the naval strength to do so, largely because of the arrival of steam navigation.

¹⁸ Cf. Majul, *Muslims in the Philippines*, 321. ¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 318–19.

²⁰ Nardin, 'Français à Basilan'. ²¹ Tarling, *Sulu and Sabah*, 9–44.

²² Thomson, *Mercenaries, Pirates and Sovereigns*.

The Suppression of Piracy in Sulu

In 1848 a large Spanish naval expedition, which included three English-built steamboats, attacked and destroyed the Sama settlement on the island of Balangingi in the Sulu Archipelago, which was considered by the Europeans in the region to be the most formidable pirate base in the Malay Archipelago. On the eve of the attack, the island had a population of some 10,000 people, most of whom were engaged directly or indirectly in maritime raiding, and a fleet of 200 *prahus* (traditional Malay outrigger boats). The attack resulted in the death of more than 450 Sama raiders, along with some 200 women and children. Those who survived – apart from those who escaped or were out on raiding expeditions at the time of the attack – were deported to the Cagayan Valley in northern Luzon, where they were to be turned into farmers. The Spanish also took measures to prevent the Sama from re-establishing themselves on Balangingi by destroying 4 forts, 7 villages, 150 vessels and thousands of coconut trees, thereby making the island unfit for habitation for many years to come.²³

The destruction of Balangingi signalled the beginning of the end of the great raiding expeditions emanating from the Sulu Archipelago and other parts of the southern Philippines. In contrast to most earlier Spanish attempts to put an end to the maritime raiding emanating from Sulu, the attack had the desired effect of bringing about a drastic decline in slave raiding. As in other parts of Southeast Asia at the time, the main reason for the newly found strength of the colonial navies vis-à-vis the raiders was the arrival of steam gunboats, combined with improved intelligence about the composition, location and *modus operandi* of the perpetrators.

The victory strengthened the position of the Spanish in the southern Philippines, but it failed to remove the threat of other colonial powers gaining a foothold in the region. The main threat to Spanish hegemony in the southern Philippines came from the two neighbouring colonial powers, the British and the Dutch, both of whom seemed determined to increase their commercial activities and political influence in the Sulu Archipelago. In 1849 rumours of an impending Dutch attempt to take possession of north Borneo and Sulu prompted James Brooke – a British soldier and adventurer, who in 1841 had been installed by the sultan of Brunei as Raja of Sarawak in north Borneo – to sail to Jolo and negotiate a treaty of friendship and commerce with Sultan Muhammad Fadl Pulalun (r. 1844–62). The destruction of Balangingi the year

²³ Warren, 'Balangingi Samal', 46–7, 49, 54; Warren, *The Sulu Zone, 1768–1898*, 192; see also Majul, *Muslims in the Philippines*, 324–7; Warren, *Iranun and Balangingi*, 343–78. A Sulu chief, Datu Tampang, nonetheless tried to establish himself and constructed a fort at Balangingi in December 1848, but was dislodged by the Spanish; Saleeby, *History of Sulu*, 204.

before had convinced the Sultan and the majority of the Sulu nobility of the necessity of rapprochement with Great Britain in order to counter the Spanish assaults. The result was that a treaty was signed in which the Sultan, among other things, agreed to do all in his power to suppress piracy and not to harbour or protect any persons or vessels engaged in piratical activities. Controversially from the Spanish point of view, the Sultan also agreed not to cede any portion of his territory to a foreign power or to acknowledge the sovereignty of any other power without the consent of Great Britain.²⁴

The news of the treaty was received with alarm in Manila. The Spanish claimed that it violated the treaty between Spain and Sulu from 1836, according to which Sultan Pulalun's predecessor had pledged not to enter into an alliance with a foreign power without the consent of Spain. The Brooke treaty was ratified by the British Parliament shortly after its conclusion, but the ratifications were not exchanged, and therefore the treaty did not formally come into force, and the British government did not pursue the issue for fear of provoking an open conflict with Spain. However, the unclear status of Sulu continued to poison relations between Britain and Spain for several decades, and hampered any initiatives to cooperate in the efforts to suppress maritime raiding emanating from the region.²⁵

The Brooke treaty, combined with Spain's greatly improved naval strength, triggered further Spanish interventions in Sulu. The destruction of Balangigi in 1848 had brought about a decline in large-scale organised raiding, and between 1848 and 1851 there were few reported slave raids in the Philippines. Piratical activity emanating from Sulu and affecting the Dutch East Indies also declined substantially in the years after 1848.²⁶

These circumstances notwithstanding, allegations of piracy continued to be used as a justification for further Spanish advances in the southern Philippines. The reputation that Sulu had by now acquired as a hotbed of piracy and slavery made the charges seem credible to other European powers, regardless of their actual substance.²⁷ Piratical activity, moreover, continued, with smaller raids emanating from various other parts of the Sulu Archipelago, including the small islands of Tunkil, Bukutua and Bulan. To the colonial authorities, these raids provided a pretext not only for wiping out the alleged pirate bases on these islands, but also for attacking Jolo, the capital of the Sulu Sultanate located on the north coast of the island with the same name. The purpose was to enforce the Spanish claim to sovereignty over the Sultanate and to take control over its trade.²⁸ In justifying the attack, the Spanish, among other

²⁴ Warren, *The Sulu Zone, 1768–1898*, 104–5; see *ibid.*, 283–4 for the full text of the treaty.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 104–5; see further Tarling, *Sulu and Sabah*, 52–94.

²⁶ Warren, *The Sulu Zone, 1768–1898*, 193–4.

²⁷ Majul, *Muslims in the Philippines*, 330–2. ²⁸ Warren, *The Sulu Zone, 1768–1898*, 105.

wrongdoings, pointed to the robbery, desolation, death and slavery that the Sulu pirates throughout history had visited upon the population of the Spanish islands.²⁹ In the context of Europe's piratical paradigm, such rhetoric served to place the sultan and his subjects among the generic enemies of mankind and make them liable to subjugation and destruction.

In December 1850 the governor of the Philippines, Don Antonio Urbiztondo, left Manila in command of a naval expedition that proceeded first to Zamboanga and then to the Sulu Archipelago, where they visited several islands, burning houses and vessels and killing several people. Upon arrival in the Sulu capital at Jolo the expedition was met with hostility and failed to obtain any concessions from the sultan. As Urbiztondo estimated that he did not have the strength to invade the fortified capital, he sailed for Tunkil, where Spanish troops conducted a raid that left twenty-five Moros dead. They also burnt down 1,000 houses and destroyed 106 boats before the expedition returned to Zamboanga.³⁰

Early the following year the Spanish returned to Jolo with a heavily reinforced expedition, which now consisted of a corvette, a brigantine, three steamboats, two gunboats, nine tenders, nine transports and twenty-one smaller sailing boats (*barangay*), carrying altogether around four thousand regular and voluntary troops. Despite fierce resistance on the part of the Joloanos, the Spanish captured the town in a battle that lasted two days and left around three hundred Moros and thirty-six Spanish troops dead. The rest of the population fled, and the town was burnt to ashes. Having thus accomplished their aim of destroying the Sulu capital, the Spanish left without leaving a garrison on the island. The Joloanos promptly returned to the site of the battle and started to rebuild the capital.³¹

In April 1851 a treaty between the sultan and the Spanish was signed, according to which the sultan – at least in the Spanish text of the treaty – recognised Spanish sovereignty over the Sulu Sultanate and its dependencies and, among other things, agreed to allow the Spanish to establish a trading factory and a naval station on Jolo.³² Neither of the signatories upheld the provisions of the treaty, however, and as Najeeb Saleeby has observed, it did not receive as much attention in Jolo as it did in Madrid or London. The Spanish and Tausug texts of the treaty also differed significantly, a circumstance that Saleeby – based on his close examination of both versions of the treaty – put down to the interpreters' insufficient knowledge of the Tausug language.³³ It seems likely, however, that certain words and passages

²⁹ Ayala, *Discurso*, 8. ³⁰ Saleeby, *History of Sulu*, 204, 206–7. ³¹ *Ibid.*, 208.

³² *Ibid.*, 205–14, where English translations of the treaty (from both the Spanish and Sulu texts) are given; Warren, *The Sulu Zone 1768–1898*, 105–6.

³³ Saleeby, *History of Sulu*, 214, 209.

that no doubt would have been difficult to accept for the sultan and the leading *datus* of Sulu were deliberately omitted from the Tausug version of the treaty. In particular, this seems to have been the case with regard to Article 3, where Spain's rights over the entire Sulu Archipelago were described in the Spanish treaty text as 'ancient and indispensable' (*antiguos é indispensables*), a phrase that was omitted from the Tausug text.³⁴ British sources from the years following the signing of the treaty also indicate that the sultan did not think that he had surrendered his sovereignty over Sulu to the Spanish.³⁵

The 1851 treaty also contained an article dealing with the suppression of piracy, but there were differences in the Sulu and Spanish versions in this respect as well. Article 4 of the treaty text in Sulu, as translated into English by Saleeby, read:

New promise: Pirates shall not be allowed at all here in Sulu. Should they commit any crime they shall be punished wherever they may be.³⁶

The corresponding article in Spanish, by contrast, was more exhaustive:

They [the Sultan and *datus*] renew the solemn promise not to carry on piracy or allow anybody to carry on piracy within the dominions of Sulu, and to run down those who follow this infamous calling, declaring themselves enemies of all islands that are enemies of Spain and allies of her friends.³⁷

The reference to a renewed promise in the Spanish (but not in the Tausug) text of the treaty referred to the 1836 Treaty of Peace, Protection and Commerce, according to which Spain and Sulu offered mutual protection for the vessels of the other country in its waters and territories. Article 5 of that treaty read:

The Sultan and Datus of Sulu pledge themselves to prevent the piracies of the Ilanuns [Iranuns] and Samals in the Philippines, and if they are unable, the Sultan shall so report in order that the Spanish Government may afford assistance or undertake the task alone.³⁸

The 1851 treaty thus extended the promise of the sultan to suppress piracy to include not only the raids of the Iranun and Sama against the Spanish colony, but also any form of piracy emanating from Sulu, without limitation in terms of location or ethnicity of the perpetrators. In contrast to the formulation in the treaty from 1836, the Spanish text of the 1851 treaty clearly resonated with the

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 210, 213; Spanish text from Montero y Vidal, *Historia de la piratería*, 2, Appendices, 54, where the Spanish text of the treaty is rendered.

³⁵ Earl of Derby to Lord Odo Russell, 17 January 1876, in *Philippine Claim to North Borneo*, 1, 25.

³⁶ Saleeby, *History of Sulu*, 213.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 210; for the original Spanish text, see Montero y Vidal, *Historia de la piratería*, 2, Appendices, 54.

³⁸ Saleeby, *History of Sulu*, 198; transl. by Saleeby from the Spanish text of the treaty.

European understanding of pirates as the enemies of mankind. In that sense the treaty served as a signal to other colonial powers that Spain was committed to the suppression of piracy emanating from its territory and affecting the neighbouring British and Dutch colonies.

Traditionally, Sulu noblemen had a radically different understanding of piracy from that of the Spanish, particularly as formulated in the treaty of 1851. Before the destruction of Balangigi in 1848, the Sultan and *datus* of Sulu had thrived on the slave raids conducted by the Iranun and Sama but sponsored by the Tausug *datus*. Not only did the Sulu nobility regard raiding as a legitimate and potentially honourable activity, it also formed the basis for the economic prosperity and political power of the Sulu Sultanate, and the slaves and material wealth that the raids brought enhanced the power and social status of the nobility. As James Warren has shown, the raiding economy of the Sulu Sultanate flourished from the last decades of the eighteenth century largely as a result of the region's integration into the global capitalist economy, but raiding and slavery had a long history, not only in the southern Philippines but also throughout the archipelago.³⁹

From the 1840s, however, the system began to decline. The Sulu Sultanate came under pressure to end its sponsorship of maritime raiding, not only from the Spanish but also from the British and Dutch. The British, for example, attacked Jolo in 1846, and a couple of years later the Dutch utterly destroyed by fire a portion of the town, which was built on piles in the sea.⁴⁰ The most serious blow to the raiding system was the destruction of Balangigi by the Spanish in 1848, and subsequent Spanish naval expeditions and attacks seemed to indicate that the system was coming to an end.

In response to these developments the Sulu Sultanate began to reorient its economy from an emphasis on raiding to trade. The latter had all along been an important foundation for the Sultanate, but the Spanish onslaught made the promotion of trade, particularly with the British in north Borneo, more important. From the second half of the 1840s Sultan Fadl Pualun began, at least superficially, to distance himself from the Iranun and Sama raiders and declare his commitment to the suppression of piracy. The sultan was aware of the Spanish intention to use accusations of piracy as a pretext for waging war on his country and to assert Spanish sovereignty over Sulu. In order to avert the Spanish threat, the sultan sent his brother to negotiate with Manila, and he tried to placate the Spanish by banning the Iranun and Sama raiders from bringing their captives to his capital at Jolo.⁴¹ In the wake of the destruction of

³⁹ E.g., Warren, *The Sulu Zone, 1768–1898*; Junker, *Raiding, Trading, and Feasting*; Scott, *Slavery in the Spanish Philippines*, 50–2. See also Jansen, 'Aanteekeningen'.

⁴⁰ St John, *Life of Sir James Brooke*, 150; Teitler et al., *Zeerroof*, 284.

⁴¹ Majul, *Muslims of the Philippines*, 338; Warren, 'Port of Jolo', 185. The sultan nonetheless maintained contacts with the Iranun and plotted to attack Spanish interests in the southern Philippines; *ibid.*, 185–6.

Balangingi, moreover, the sultan and the leading headmen of Sulu rejected proposals from one of the Sama chiefs who had escaped the Spanish attack, Panglima Julano Taupan, to attack to the Spanish in order to liberate the prisoners from the raid on Balangingi.⁴²

The Spanish obviously did not believe – and probably did not want to believe – that the sultan and his followers were committed to the suppression of piracy. The British, however, were of a different opinion. According to Henry Keppel, the Royal Navy officer who commanded the frigate *Maeander*, which carried James Brooke on a visit to Jolo in 1849, the sultan was sincere in his wish to cooperate with the colonial navies in the suppression of piracy, but he was hampered in his efforts by Spanish aggression:

The Sultan, under the influence and counsel of the Rajah of Sarāwak [James Brooke], had become opposed to piracy, and anxious for its suppression. His fortified position gave him weight, which he had frequently thrown into the scale of humanity: and it must now be feared that many, whom he was able to hold in check, will again follow their evil propensities unrestrained, as they did under previous dynasties.⁴³

The reason for the military weakness of the sultan was to some extent due to the Spanish attacks, but the Sulu Sultanate was also a segmentary state, in which the political influence of the sultan depended on his ability to form strategic alliances and enlist the support of the leading *datus* and other influential groups.⁴⁴ On his own, thus, the sultan could only muster a small armed force, and he had few means by which to impose his authority in the remote parts of the Sulu Archipelago. The naval attacks, not only by the Spanish but also by the British and Dutch, contributed to weaken whatever power the sultan previously had to restrain the raiders dispersed around the archipelago, regardless of his level of commitment to do so.⁴⁵

Imperial Rivalry

The Spanish victory at Balangingi in 1848 had broken the back of the large raiding expeditions emanating from Sulu, but it did not put an end to piratical activity. At the time of the attack more than half of the male population had been out on raids, and hundreds of others managed to escape. Many of those who were thus displaced by the Spanish destruction of Balangingi and other naval campaigns around the middle of the nineteenth century took refuge in the borderlands between the Sulu Sultanate and the British, Dutch and Spanish

⁴² Warren, 'Balangingi Samal', 55.

⁴³ Keppel, *Visit to the Indian Archipelago* 1, 58; cf. Tarling, *Sulu and Sabah*, 83–4.

⁴⁴ For the political system of the Sulu Sultanate and the concept of 'segmentary state' in that context, see Kiefer, 'Tausug Polity'; cf. Majul, *Muslims in the Philippines*, 377–402.

⁴⁵ Keppel, *Visit to the Indian Archipelago*, 1, 58.

colonies, where colonial naval power and political control were weak and hampered by imperial rivalry. The borderland region included the western parts of the Sulu Archipelago, south Palawan, northeast Borneo and the eastern islands of the Dutch East Indies, including Sulawesi, the Moluccas and Flores. From their new bases the raiders continued to harass maritime traffic and neighbouring coastal settlements, albeit generally on a smaller scale than before.⁴⁶

In the aftermath of the destruction of Balangingi in 1848, the Sama chief Julano Taupan first continued to lead raids on trading boats and to conduct raids on the coasts of Samar and Leyte to the north of Mindanao. Followed by some of the most militant of the survivors from Balangingi, Taupan settled in Tawi-Tawi, a group of small islands located in the western part of the Sulu Archipelago. From 1852 Taupan's band scaled up their depredations, and they triggered a 'general sea war', as James Warren put it, which for six years affected the region, costing the Spanish colonial government large sums of money and resulting in many casualties, both on the side of the victims – most of whom were Filipinos, as well as coastal populations and seafarers in the Dutch East Indies and north Borneo – and on the side of the raiders.⁴⁷ Taupan's followers became known in European sources as 'Tawi-Tawi pirates', and at times they joined forces with Sama and Iranun raiders from other parts of the Sulu Archipelago. In doing so they were occasionally able to assemble fleets of between sixty and one hundred *prahus*.⁴⁸ The depredations were facilitated by the decrease in antipiracy operations by the British Navy in the region following criticism in London of the brutality of the operations, which often resulted in the killing of hundreds of alleged pirates.⁴⁹

By the mid 1850s attacks on the Philippines and the southeast coast of Borneo, Sulawesi and the Moluccas had become so frequent as to prompt the Dutch and British to try to bring about an international agreement with Spain in order to combat piracy. Madrid, however, was loath to allow the navies of other European powers to operate in Philippine waters, because it might compromise the Spanish claim to sovereignty over the southern Philippines, a claim that was not formally recognised by the neighbouring colonial powers. Spain thus rejected the proposed naval cooperation, claiming that Spanish forces had already succeeded in suppressing Sulu piracy and that the obligation to cooperate with Great Britain and the Netherlands would restrain their hand in dealing with the pirates. The Spanish also warned the Dutch and the British

⁴⁶ Tarling, *Sulu and Sabah*, 95, 98; Warren, *The Sulu Zone, 1768–1898*, 194–5; Teitler et al., *Zeeroof*, 289; see also Jansen, 'Aanteekeningen', 218, for a list of the main islands harbouring Sulu raiders in the 1850s.

⁴⁷ Warren, 'Balangingi Samal', 56.

⁴⁸ Warren, *The Sulu Zone, 1768–1898*, 194–5; Warren, *Iranun and Balangingi*, 362–6.

⁴⁹ Tarling, *Sulu and Sabah*, 96; see further Chapter 3.

not to give chase to pirates within Spain's maritime zone or to attack the pirates on land in areas over which Spain claimed sovereignty. The British and Dutch consequently went ahead without Spanish cooperation and increased their naval presence in the waters adjacent to the Spanish colony. They tried to some extent to coordinate their operations against the Tawi-Tawi (and other) pirates, and the patrols were successful in bringing about a decline in raids affecting Dutch and British interests in the region from the early 1860s.⁵⁰

The Spanish refusal to cooperate with the Dutch and the British again demonstrated that the main concern for the Spanish was not the suppression of piracy but the assertion of their control over the Sulu Archipelago. For the Spanish, naval cooperation with Great Britain or the Netherlands was out of the question as long as Spain's claim to the Sulu Archipelago – which also implied north-east Borneo (Sabah), an area over which the sultan of Sulu had exercised at least nominal sovereignty – was not internationally recognised.

The commercial and territorial rivalry was particularly strong between Great Britain and Spain. The destruction of Balangingi in 1848, as we have seen, pushed the Sulu Sultanate to seek closer relations with the British in order to fend off the threat of further Spanish aggression. The British, for their part, were interested in expanding their commerce in the region, particularly after Labuan off the coast of Brunei was established as a British coaling station in 1847 with the intention of developing it into a hub of trade in the region. After a slow start, trade between Sulu and Labuan developed rapidly after the middle of the 1850s, and Labuan emerged as an important entrepôt for the trade between Sulu and Singapore. For the Sulu Sultanate the trade with Labuan was very advantageous, and it provided the nearest alternative trading station to the Spanish-controlled ports at Zamboanga and Balabac. The commercial boom also helped to reestablish the domestic authority of Sultan Fadl Pulalun, which had suffered as a result of the Spanish attacks in the middle of the century.⁵¹

The Spanish, however, were not happy with the commercial competition from the British, and they claimed that the trade between Sulu and Labuan violated the treaty of 1851. The Spanish tried, mostly ineffectively, to enforce their monopoly on the trade of the Sulu Sultanate. Spanish naval vessels patrolled the Sulu Sea in order to assert sovereignty and to enforce Spain's commercial monopoly. The patrols also tried to suppress piracy and maritime raiding, and in 1858 the Spanish won a major victory when Taupan and two of his close lieutenants were captured and sent off to exile in the northern Philippines. Thus ended the exploits of the man whom the Spaniards considered to be the last of the great raiding chiefs of the Moros.⁵²

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 105–6. ⁵¹ Warren, *The Sulu Zone, 1768–1898*, 104–14.

⁵² Warren, 'Balangingi Samal', 56–7.

The Spanish were still largely unable to check petty acts of piracy effectively, however, and further measures were deemed necessary in order to assert Spain's de facto sovereignty and control over the Sulu Archipelago. To this effect the Spanish Governor-General, Fernando Norzagaray, issued a proclamation in 1858 according to which anyone would receive 10 pesos for each captured or killed pirate, provided the latter had been caught in the act, whereas a pirate leader commanded a reward of 50 pesos. The incentive seems to have had some effect, at least on paper, and over the subsequent years thousands of pesos were paid by the Spanish authorities to Moros for their efforts to suppress piracy, although it is far from certain that all of those for whom rewards were paid were indeed pirates.⁵³ Overall, these and other measures taken by the Spanish authorities did little to bring an end to petty piracy and coastal raiding in the Sulu Archipelago and the neighbouring parts of the Spanish colony. From the Spanish point of view, the problem was exacerbated by the relative efficiency of Dutch and British efforts to suppress piracy in the adjacent waters, one effect of which was to push the Sulu raiders to increase their operations in Philippine waters.⁵⁴

The situation changed only in 1861, when the Spanish government purchased eighteen small gunboats, by means of which they, for the first time, were able to extend regular patrols to all parts of the Sulu Sea. The main tasks of the gunboats were to chase after pirates and to enforce a Spanish embargo on the importation of firearms and ammunition to the Sulu Archipelago. The embargo was difficult to control, however, and was compromised by the influx of arms via Labuan.⁵⁵

By means of their new superior naval and military capacity, the Spanish managed over the course of the 1860s to put an end to most of the remaining piratical activity and slave-raiding in and emanating from the Sulu Archipelago.⁵⁶ The measures deployed were harsh and often arbitrary, however, and, according to British observers, the cruel and destructive naval warfare of the Spanish provoked bitter hatred among the Moros.⁵⁷ In July 1871, the British commander of the steamer *Nassau* reported from a visit to the Sulu capital at Jolo:

There is now a Spanish war vessel stationed at Sulu, and occasionally a gunboat, to punish Pirates. They have just returned from a tour round Tawi-Tawi, where they have shot 25, burnt their villages and destroyed their cocoonut trees, releasing 9 Bisayans. They go . . . to the South of Tawi to destroy the building yard Balingki (I think) where all the large Boats are built and fitted out. This is unfortunate for us.

⁵³ Llanos, 'Piratas y cautivos', 49, n. 82. Hurley, *Swish of the Kris*, 147, claims that the Sultan used the provision as a convenient way to dispose of individuals who had lost royal favour.

⁵⁴ Saleeby, *History of Sulu*, 214; Tarling, *Sulu and Sabah*, 95, 98.

⁵⁵ Saleeby, *History of Sulu*, 214, 221; Tregonning, *History of Modern Sabah*, 10; Tarling, *Sulu and Sabah*, 101.

⁵⁶ Saleeby, *History of Sulu*, 214, 221. ⁵⁷ Tarling, *Sulu and Sabah*, 140.

The Sultan of Sulu is very civil to us, and wanted me to hoist the English flag to protect himself against the Spaniards, who will no doubt eventually take the whole group, that being their object clearly . . .

While we lay here 30 June, there are 3 Spanish steam Vessels of war, a sloop and two gunboats, one has just arrived with 5 Boats in tow, and having on board 34 men and women chained to their steam chain. They are Pirates. They were captured (having no arms) off Siassi 30 miles South of Sulu doing nothing. One of the Boats belongs to the Sultan. Two days after they all sail for Tawi where a trial takes place, a witness has been obtained who saw them some years since in the act of piracy – kidnapping. They are guilty; are taken to Zamboanga to work as convicts for life. The Sultan . . . says the men are all quiet, harmless persons and that whenever women and children are found in Boats with the men there is no mischief intended.⁵⁸

In suppressing piracy and other forms of subversion on the part of the Moros the Spanish relied on tactics that were not very different in character and effect from those of the Moro raids they aimed to suppress. The Spanish frequently attacked Moro settlements that were suspected of serving as pirate bases. Typically, the Moro forces were defeated, some of the inhabitants killed or sentenced to transportation, and the houses, trees and other property were burnt, after which the Spanish withdrew. By and large, these tactics were similar to the ones that the Spanish had deployed during the three centuries that the Moro Wars had been fought. Meanwhile, the Moros, just as earlier, retaliated by making war on the Spanish, mainly by raiding Spanish or Christian coastal settlements and vessels.⁵⁹

The outcome was that the already bitter relations between Spain and the Sulu Sultanate deteriorated further as a consequence of the increased Spanish naval activity in the Sulu Sea. The sultan, meanwhile, considered the 1851 treaty with Spain ‘null and void’, as he and his chiefs allegedly had not received their annual salaries during the previous ten years. The Sultan’s salary was 1,500 pesos a year according to the agreement and was intended as compensation for the loss of his palace and fort, which were burnt to the ground in the Spanish attack of 1851.⁶⁰

Although the Spanish, by means of their gunboat flotilla, were able to uphold a reasonable degree of maritime security in the Sulu Archipelago, sporadic acts of piracy and coastal raids continued to occur. For example, in 1870, pirates preyed on the maritime traffic through the San Bernardino Strait separating Luzon from Samar and raided several islands on the southwest coast of Luzon. The Spanish colonial government accused the sultan of Sulu of not fulfilling his obligations according to the 1851 treaty of suppressing piracy,

⁵⁸ Extracts from a letter from the Commander of the ‘Nassau’, Sulu, 1 July 1871, FO 71/2, The National Archives of Great Britain, Kew (TNA).

⁵⁹ Saleeby, *History of Sulu*, 221–2; Warren, *The Sulu Zone, 1768–1898*, 119.

⁶⁰ Commander of the ‘Nassau’, 1 July 1871; Saleeby, *History of Sulu*, 214.

and of importing arms without licence, which also was a violation of the treaty.⁶¹ The British, however, were of the opinion that the Spanish brought up the accusation of piracy as a pretext for intervention and that their real aim was to extend their control over the Sulu Sea and to convert the Moros to Christianity. The British Consul in Manila, George Thorne Ricketts – who, like most British officials, was clearly no admirer of the Spanish colonial administration – wrote:

The suppression of piracy can then only be regarded as the ostensible cause, and a desire to propagate the doctrines of the Roman Catholic faith and exterminate Islamism in the South, a love of aggrandisement, the creation of new places for the support of a certain number of officials, a jealousy of foreign influence obtaining any footing within the zone of Spanish rule, and the exclusion of foreign vessels from trading freely with the Sultan's people are, we may rest assured, the real causes which prompt Spain to aim at this extension of her territory.⁶²

In the eyes of the Spanish, however, religion could not be separated from the problem of piracy. In 1859 a royal edict claimed that 'piracy was an occupation that found religious basis and was viewed not as an act arising from moral degradation but rather, lack of civilisation'.⁶³ Proselytisation, thus, did not only serve religious purposes but was also seen as a means of bringing civilisation to the Moros and thereby ending their addiction to the practice of piracy. The suppression of piracy may not have been the primary objective of conquering Sulu from the Spanish perspective, but doing so, it was hoped, would make it possible for the Spanish to civilise and convert the Joloanos and thereby make them give up their piratical habits.

Naval Destruction

From the 1870s the Spanish began to pursue their claim to sovereignty over the southern Philippines even more aggressively. They increased their naval presence in the region to thirty-two ships of different sizes, and Spanish gunboats constantly patrolled the Sulu Archipelago, not only to suppress piracy but also, and primarily, to enforce the blockade on Sulu's foreign trade with Labuan and Singapore.⁶⁴ The Spanish claimed to have the right to visit all ships, both Sulu and foreign, in the archipelago, and they seized vessels and cargoes deemed to be in violation of the embargo. At the same

⁶¹ Tarling, *Sulu and Sabah*, 118–19.

⁶² Ricketts to Earl Granville, 16 October 1871, FO 71/2 (TNA), cf. Tarling, *Piracy and Politics*, 183. Majul, *Muslims in the Philippines*, 341–2, makes a similar assessment of the Spanish motives for conquering Sulu.

⁶³ Cit. by Warren, 'Balangingi Samal', 58.

⁶⁴ Consul-General, Labuan to Earl Granville, 27 April 1872, FO71/2 (TNA).

time interimperial rivalry also increased. The British undertook to survey the archipelago, and there were signs of increasing German interest in the region, all of which served to strengthen the Spanish resolve to take firm control over the Sulu Sultanate.⁶⁵

In 1872 a Spanish naval commander, Santiago Patero – who apparently had some understanding of the social and economic conditions of the Sulu Sultanate – published a policy paper entitled ‘A Suitable System for Putting an End to Piracy’. Santiago Patero made fifteen recommendations with regard to Spanish policy in Sulu, including occupying the capital at Jolo and dispatching as many Catholic missionaries as possible to the archipelago. He also recommended establishing forward naval bases in the area and the increased use of steam power in order to destroy all Sulu craft and facilities for boat-building. The principal idea, according to Santiago Patero, was to let the natives go through a transitional period of ‘proper and marked humility’ [*conveniente y marcada humildad*], which would serve completely to ruin their commerce, destroy their boats, make them lose their capacity to build them, and to turn the natives, by force or by necessity, to the agricultural life.⁶⁶

The programme was promptly adopted as the blueprint for Spanish naval policy in the Sulu Archipelago. After an incident in which Sultan Jamal ul-Azam (1862–81) refused to fly the Spanish flag in his capital and instead had the flag burnt in public, the Spanish declared Sulu to be in open rebellion.⁶⁷ Citing the need to prevent raiding on the Philippine coasts, the Commander of the Spanish Naval Station in the Philippines, Rear Admiral Juan Antequera, in August 1873, issued a regulation that declared all Muslim shipping in the Sulu Sea illegal. All Spanish vessels were to observe the following orders:

1st. Every vessel coming from the Soloo Archipelago and manned by Moors shall be destroyed, and its crew and passengers destined to labour on public works on the northerly islands of the Archipelago.

2nd. If the vessels referred to in the former article be armed, they shall, as our laws direct, be held as pirates and their crews be tried by court martial according to the provisions of the Penal Code.

3rd. Every vessel, although it may not be manned, belonging to Moors of the islands of Soloo and Tawi Tawi shall be destroyed by the cruisers.

4th. Vessels referred to in the former articles, which do not acknowledge the authority of the Sultan and do not carry on piracy, shall, when they endeavour to sail from other islands than those of Soloo and Tawi Tawi, be conducted by the cruisers to the islands whence they had come.

⁶⁵ Majul, *Muslims of the Philippines*, 344–5; Warren, *The Sulu Zone, 1768–1898*, 116–18.

⁶⁶ Santiago Patero, *Sistema que conviene adoptar*, 39–40; cit. 40; italics in original; my transl. from Spanish. See also Warren, *The Sulu Zone, 1768–1898*, 118, on the influence of Santiago Patero’s book on Spanish policy.

⁶⁷ Majul, *Muslims in the Philippines*, 290.

5th. In the islands whence the vessels referred to in the previous article may proceed, fishing will be permitted under restrictions deemed desirable by the Commander of the Division.⁶⁸

The implementation of the declaration did great harm to Sulu trade and fishing but failed to force the Sultanate into submission. The trade embargo was circumvented by Sulu traders, aided by Chinese, German and British smugglers, who brought food and other necessities, as well arms and munitions, to Jolo from Singapore and Labuan.⁶⁹

The governor-general of the Philippines, José Malcampo y Monge, was convinced that the only way to enforce Spain's claim to sovereignty over the Sulu Archipelago was once and for all to conquer and occupy Jolo, as recommended by Santiago Patero. For the first time in more than 300 years of Spanish colonial presence in the Philippines, moreover, it seemed possible, in view of Spain's enhanced military and naval supremacy, not only to defeat the Moros but also to take control over the Sulu Archipelago and the rest of the southern Philippines.

In February 1876 a large military expedition, consisting of nine thousand troops conveyed in ten steamboats and eleven transports, and escorted by a fleet of twelve gunboats, left Zamboanga for Sulu in order to conquer and occupy Jolo. The expedition succeeded in conquering the capital at Jolo and destroyed several other alleged pirate nests in the archipelago. A Spanish garrison was established at Jolo, and further expeditions were dispatched to search for alleged pirate bases around the Sulu Archipelago. A medal was struck for each of the participants in the campaign, and Malcampo was given the title 'Count of Jolo'.⁷⁰ The victory was widely celebrated in Spain, and Malcampo was hailed as a hero.⁷¹ There seems to have been little or no questioning of the use of the word *pirate* to describe the Moros, and the Spanish press reported enthusiastically the Spanish Navy's heroic encounters with the piratical Moros.⁷²

Two years later a book entitled *Piratical Wars of the Philippines against the Mindanaos and Joloanos* was published by Vicente Barrantes, a Spanish writer and poet who had worked for several years in the colonial administration in the Philippines. The work dealt with the Moro Wars up until the early nineteenth century, and the purpose, as stated by the author, was to 'demonstrate the perverse behaviour of the Moro along with our prudence, in order now to win their friendship and to contain their piracies'.⁷³

⁶⁸ Appendix L: Regulation Declaring all Muslim Shipping Illegal in the Sulu Sea, in Warren, *The Sulu Zone, 1768–1898*, 288; transl. by Warren.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 120–1, 129. ⁷⁰ Saleeby, *History of Sulu*, 222–3.

⁷¹ Montero y Vidal, *Historia de la piratería* 2, 520–1.

⁷² See, for example, the report of an encounter between the Spanish corvette *Santa Lucia* and an allegedly piratical banca in 1876; *El Globo* (4 March 1876).

⁷³ Barrantes, *Guerras piráticas*, 4.

A more comprehensive study of Moro piracy in two volumes appeared ten years later, written by José Montero y Vidal, a Spanish author and politician, who, like Barrantes, had served for several years as an official in the Philippine colonial administration. The title of Montero y Vidal's work was *The History of the Malay-Muslim Piracy in Mindanao, Jolo and Borneo*, and it covered the whole history of the Moro Wars, from the sixteenth century until the present. It was possibly even more negative in its assessment of the Moros than Barrantes' work, describing them as 'cruel, vengeful, devious, treacherous, deceitful and false'. 'War is his element; piracy his only occupation; slavery his wealth', according to Montero y Vidal.⁷⁴

The works of Barrantes and Montero y Vidal were examples of a colonial historiography 'cast in a heroic and imperialist mould', in the words of Nicholas Tarling.⁷⁵ The image of the Muslims of the southern Philippines as piratical by nature and of the Moro Wars as a series of heroic Spanish efforts to suppress piracy was part of colonial propaganda and seems to have gone more or less unchallenged in Spain. Such notions, however, were not limited to Spanish colonial historiography but were prevalent in other colonial histories and assessments of the Moros (and other Malays) as well. A few years after the Spanish conquest of Jolo an Austrian ethnographer, Ferd. Blumentritt, published a map and a survey of the peoples of the Philippines in which he lumped all ethnic groups of the southern Philippines together under the label 'pirate tribes' (*Piratenstämme*).⁷⁶ His writings would come to exercise a great influence on American understandings of Moro culture and society as the United States acquired Spain's Philippines colony in 1899.⁷⁷

Moro Resistance

The Joloanos regarded the establishment of the Spanish garrison at Jolo as an intrusion and a humiliation, and they continued, encouraged by Sultan Jamal ul-Azam and the leading *datus*, to wage a guerrilla war that inflicted many casualties on the Spanish troops. Spanish soldiers and Christian Filipinos were frequently ambushed and killed or became victims of assaults by

⁷⁴ Montero y Vidal, *Historia de la piratería*, 1, vii. ⁷⁵ Tarling, 'Establishment', 73.

⁷⁶ Blumentritt, 'Versuch einer Ethnographie der Philippinen', 52, encl. map. References to the Moros as being piratical by nature are also frequent in American colonial sources well into the twentieth century; e.g., *Annual Report of the Governor of the Moro Province* [henceforth *ARGMP*] (1908), 23, and the discussion below. See also Warren, 'Moro Wars', for the different perspectives and historiographical perspectives on the Moros and the Moro Wars.

⁷⁷ Amoroso, 'Inheriting the "Moro Problem"', 125; cf. Brinton, 'Professor Blumentritt's Studies', 122–5.

juramentados, suicide attackers, usually armed with a dagger, sword or spear, who ventured to kill as many Spaniards or other Christians as possible before they, in most cases, were themselves killed. On several occasions the Moros also made concerted attacks on the Spanish garrison at Jolo but were repelled with heavy losses.⁷⁸

After more than two years of hostilities, one of the leading Sulu *datus*, Harun ar-Rashid, convinced the sultan that peace and submission to Spanish suzerainty were preferable to continued fighting, which looked likely to bring about the complete ruin of the Sultanate. Negotiations followed, with the result that the sultan accepted Spanish sovereignty in exchange for an annual salary and full autonomy in matters concerning internal administration, customs, law and religion. The status of the Sulu Sultanate in the 1878 treaty thus resembled more that of a protectorate than a dependency or a fully integrated part of the Philippines, as the Spanish claimed it was.⁷⁹

The Sultan's earlier promise in the 1851 agreement not to permit or engage in piracy and to punish those who attempted to do so was developed further in the 1878 treaty. According to Article 8:

We will try to suppress all pirates; but in case we are unable to do so we will notify the Governor of their location. But in case we do not know where they are, we can not be held responsible for such information. We will also aid the Government with as many men as we can afford to bring together, and we shall be pleased to give guides who can tell the hiding places of such pirates.⁸⁰

The treaty did not immediately put an end to hostilities, however. The sultan's power was dependent upon the loyalty and support of the local *datus*, whose allegiance to the sultan often was little more than nominal and whose relations with the Spanish were frequently outright hostile and contemptuous. After the death of Sultan Jamal ul-Azam in 1881, hostilities between the Spanish and Sulu Moros led by discontented *datus* once again surged. The Spanish had no control over the island of Jolo beyond their garrison, and small parties of soldiers who ventured outside were frequently ambushed and killed. The unleashing of *juramentados* seems to have been encouraged and used as a military tactic for the purpose of striking fear into the hearts of the Spanish soldiers and the Chinese and Christian Filipinos who resided in the garrisoned

⁷⁸ Ewing, 'Juramentado', 148–55; Majul, *Muslims in the Philippines*, 353–60; Saleeby, *History of Sulu*, 224. See also Hurley, *Swish of the Kris*, 139–40, for several reports of *juramentado* attacks in Jolo toward the end of the Spanish colonial period.

⁷⁹ Saleeby, *History of Sulu*, 231; for English translations of the treaty, see 227–31.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 230; transl. by Saleeby. For the Spanish text, see Montero y Vidal, *Historia de la piratería*, 2, Appendices, 82. Compared with earlier treaties, the Spanish and Sulu texts of the 1878 treaty were relatively similar.

town of Jolo.⁸¹ An American scientist, Dean Conant Worcester, who visited the island in 1891, described the situation: 'Hardly a night passed during our stay at Sulu that marauders were not in evidence near the town. They took pot-shots at the sentries, stole cattle, and made themselves generally disagreeable.'⁸² The journalist and amateur historian Vic Hurley – possibly with a flair for the dramatic – likewise claimed that a 'reign of terror persisted in Jolo without respite until the town was finally evacuated to the American forces in 1899'.⁸³ General John C. Bates, who shortly after the American takeover of the Philippines in 1899 led a mission to establish an agreement between the United States and the sultan of Sulu, concluded from his studies of Spanish records of their activity in the Sulu Archipelago that:

Spain never announced nor conceived a definite, fixed policy of control over the archipelago which looked to improvement and permanency. Its frequent recorded actions seem to have been the result of a desire to temporarily meet difficulties growing out of some strained relationship with the Moros existing at the time, accompanied by the evident fixed purpose to maintain a sufficient number of troops in the archipelago to show to Europe that occupation in fact which would demonstrate Spanish sovereignty.⁸⁴

If the Spanish never succeeded in establishing more than nominal control over Jolo and the other islands of the Sulu Archipelago, they were eventually, toward the end of the Spanish colonial period, relatively successful in upholding maritime security in the archipelago. In addition to the garrison at Jolo, the Spanish established ports and a military presence in Siasi and Tawi-Tawi, both in order to overcome Moro resistance to Spanish rule and to assert Spanish sovereignty over the region *vis-à-vis* other colonial powers. As a result of the increased Spanish naval presence, there seem to have been few cases of piracy in or emanating from the Sulu Archipelago during the last years of the Spanish colonial period.

In 1885 Great Britain and Germany officially recognised Spanish sovereignty over the Sulu Archipelago, both with regard to the effectively occupied parts and those not yet occupied.⁸⁵ Spain had thus, after more than 300 years, finally achieved most of her main objectives in the Sulu Archipelago, that is, to

⁸¹ Saleeby, *History of Sulu*, 233–45. On his detailed map of the Philippines, published in 1882, Blumentritt noted that in Jolo the Spanish only had direct control of the close surroundings of Fort Alfonso XII and that the rest of the island was under the control of the sultan of Sulu; Blumentritt, 'Versuch einer Ethnographie', encl. map. The situation remained the same until the end of the Spanish presence in Sulu; see the report of the commanding officer of US troops upon his arrival in Jolo in May 1899, in US War Department, *Annual Reports of the War Department* (henceforth ARWD) 2 (1899), 133.

⁸² Worcester, *Philippine Islands*, 175. ⁸³ Hurley, *Swish of the Kris*, 144.

⁸⁴ ARWD 2 (1899), 155.

⁸⁵ See Saleeby, *History of Sulu*, 367–73 for the full text of the protocols. See further Tarling, *Sulu and Sabah*, 95–179, 239–51, for the background and negotiations surrounding the protocols.

put an end to the raids and warfare that affected the northern islands and to assert her sovereignty, at least nominally, over the Sulu Sultanate. The conversion of the Moros to Christianity, however, did not make any significant progress despite the establishment of a Catholic mission at Jolo following the 1876 conquest of the town.

The sultan, meanwhile, continued to hold his title and was allowed considerable autonomy in legal, religious and cultural affairs, but his authority was nonetheless severely weakened. In the course of a generation, the Spanish expansion in Sulu had not only ended the maritime raiding system on which the Sultanate had thrived before the middle of the nineteenth century: it had also destroyed much of the maritime commerce of the Moros, and indigenous traders found themselves increasingly marginalised or pushed out of business by European and Chinese competitors.⁸⁶ These developments would brew up further resentment against both colonial rule and foreigners in the Sulu Archipelago, which eventually would lead to a renewed wave of piratical activity in the region in the early twentieth century.

The United States and the Philippines

In April 1898 war broke out between Spain and the United States, and in just ten weeks the Spanish forces had been soundly defeated, both in the Caribbean and the Philippines. In the peace treaty, Spain was forced to transfer sovereignty over the Philippines to the United States, giving the latter country a foothold in Asia and a commercial gateway to the Chinese market. American businessmen and policymakers hoped that the commercial opportunities that would follow colonial expansion would help alleviate the economic, social and political ills caused by the Industrial Revolution in the United States. There was also a conviction that the United States needed strategic bases in Asia if American companies were to be able to compete successfully with European enterprises.⁸⁷

The Philippines was by far the largest of the overseas territories that the United States acquired as a result of the war with Spain. It was the most remote of the new territories and was at the time virtually unknown, not only to ordinary Americans, but also to most of the civil and military officials who were charged with the task of governing the new colony.⁸⁸ Moreover, America's colonial expansion in Asia was vigorously opposed, both in the colony itself and in the United States. In the Philippines, Spain's harsh repression of even relatively moderate nationalist aspirations had triggered

⁸⁶ Warren, *The Sulu Zone, 1768–1898*, 126–34. ⁸⁷ LaFeber, *New Empire*, 412.

⁸⁸ Amoroso, 'Inheriting the "Moro Problem"', 118. See also Mark Twain's satirical sketch 'The Philippine Incident' (1901) in Zwick, *Mark Twain's Weapons of Satire*, 57–60.

an armed uprising in 1896, and although a truce was concluded the following year, nationalist sentiments and demands for independence continued to be strong among Christian Filipinos. When the Spanish–American War broke out, Philippine nationalists, led by Emilio Aguinaldo, joined forces with the Americans in the hope that the United States would grant independence to the Philippines. Encouraged by the Americans, who counted on the support of the nationalists to weaken Spain’s control over the colony, Aguinaldo declared independence for the Philippines in June 1898.⁸⁹

After the war, however, the US government had no intention of allowing independence for the Philippines.⁹⁰ In February 1899, after much controversy, Congress barely voted to ratify the peace treaty with Spain and thus to approve the annexation of the Philippines. Philippine nationalists, who at the time were in control of most of the archipelago, with the exception of Manila and the southern Philippines, however, refused to recognize American sovereignty, and a three-year armed struggle for independence, the Philippine–American War, followed. The United States was substantially in control of most of the islands by 1900, but fighting and brigandage continued in a number of locations for several years.⁹¹

In the United States colonial expansion was opposed by prominent public figures, including politicians, intellectuals, artists and writers, who formed a vigorous anti-imperialist faction. American anti-imperialism was linked, ideologically as well as genealogically, to the antislavery movement from before the Civil War, and many of the leading anti-imperialists saw colonisation as another form of enslavement and thus as unconstitutional.⁹² The anti-imperialists also claimed that imperialism was a flagrant violation of the fundamental principles on which the United States was founded, as colonial domination was incompatible with the principles of freedom, democracy and every nation’s right to self-government.⁹³

American policy in the Philippines from the conclusion of the Philippine–American War of 1902 up until the outbreak of the Pacific War in 1941 was to a great extent shaped by the tension between, on the one hand, the commercial and geopolitical arguments for continued colonial administration and, on the

⁸⁹ This summary of events is based on Kratoska and Batson, ‘Nationalism and Modernist Reform’, 253–6; see also Smith, *Spanish–American War*.

⁹⁰ See Brands, *Bound to Empire*, 20–35, for a rebuttal of the argument that American colonial expansion happened by coincidence.

⁹¹ Kratoska and Batson, ‘Nationalism and Modernist Reform’, 253–7; see further Linn, *Philippine War*.

⁹² Salman, *Embarrassment of Slavery*, 33, 40, 43.

⁹³ Tompkins, *Anti-imperialist in the United States*, 2; Harrington, ‘Anti-imperialist Movement’, 211.

other, Filipino nationalist aspirations and the sympathy that those aspirations commanded among anti-imperialists in the United States.

Transfer of Power in the South

It took several months after the ratification of the peace treaty by Congress before the United States could muster enough troops to occupy the Spanish posts in the southern Philippines. According to the American Military governor of the Philippines, Major-General Elwell Stephen Otis, who relied on reports from the Spanish acting governor of the southern Philippines, the situation in the region was very unsatisfactory, and Otis hesitated to dispatch the few troops he could spare into the area. He was particularly concerned that if the troops were too few they would not be able to secure and hold the necessary positions there given the hostility of the local population. Moreover, not only had the northern and northeastern coasts of Mindanao fallen to Philippine nationalist rebels after the Spanish troops on the island had withdrawn to Zamboanga, but control by the Spanish military had also been relaxed in the Sulu Archipelago, and gunboat patrols had practically ceased. The Spanish had deserted the smaller military posts in the area, such as the one at Siasi, and withdrawn its troops in Sulu to the main garrison at Jolo. Meanwhile, it was reported that the sultan and the *datus* of Sulu were gathering large supplies of arms and ammunition from abroad and that they planned to oppose any American attempts to assert their sovereignty over the Sultanate.⁹⁴

A further blow to American ambitions in Sulu came in March 1899, when most of the Spanish gunboat flotilla – thirteen vessels in all – that had been used to patrol the Sulu Archipelago and adjacent seas was hijacked by Mindanao nationalists. The boats were eventually recovered and escorted to Manila by the Spanish Navy, but not before the nationalists had stripped them of arms and munitions.⁹⁵ Once in American hands, the fate of the gunboats became the object of a controversy between the Army and the Navy. Governor Otis intended for the gunboats to be commissioned with Army personnel and used to stop illicit trade between the Philippine Islands, but he was told by Admiral George Dewey, Commander of the US Navy's Asiatic Squadron, that the Army had no authority to operate gunboats. Should they nevertheless attempt to do so, Dewey said, the Navy would consider them to be pirates

⁹⁴ Annual Report of Maj. Gen. E. S. Otis, USV commanding the Department of the Pacific and Eighth Army Corps, and Military Governor of the Philippine Islands, 29 August 1898–31 August 1899, in *ARWD* 2 (1899), 130.

⁹⁵ Otis, Annual Report, in *ARWD* 2 (1899), 130–1; cf. Sawyer, *Inhabitants of the Philippines*, 117.

and run down the gunboats and sink them.⁹⁶ The outcome of the standoff was that the Navy took the seagoing gunboats while the Army was allowed to keep ten shallow-draft steamers, some of which were equipped with heavy cannon and machine guns, to support military operations. As a consequence, the Army's maritime capacity in the southern Philippines was strictly limited and insufficient to uphold maritime security.⁹⁷

In the middle of May 1899 the situation for the Spanish troops in Zamboanga became untenable after the garrison was attacked by nationalists who managed to cut off their water supply. The Spanish then decided to evacuate both the garrisons at Zamboanga and Jolo immediately and requested that the Americans relieve them. The latter, unable to spare enough troops to take control of both major garrisons in the South, decided to concentrate their forces on Jolo and let Zamboanga fall into the hands of the nationalists, despite the greater strategic importance of the latter town and garrison. According to Otis, there was a significant risk that if the Jolo garrison was abandoned, the Moros would destroy the fortifications and turn the guns on the Americans once they arrived. In order to avoid this Otis dispatched a force of 700 troops to occupy the fort at Jolo.⁹⁸

Upon arrival in Jolo, the Americans learnt that the Spanish had already turned over the small garrison at Siasi to Sultan Jamalul Kiram II (r. 1894–1936) and that they had planned to leave him the garrison at Jolo as well. The sultan was reportedly very disappointed when the Americans arrived and prevented him from taking control of the garrison. The sultan and the leading *datus* had seen the departure of the Spanish as an opportunity to restore the sovereignty of the Sulu Sultanate.⁹⁹ Against this background, the delicate task for the Americans during their first weeks in the Sulu Archipelago was to convince the sultan and his chiefs to accept American sovereignty and to try to establish friendly relations with the Moros.

When the Americans first arrived in the southern Philippines they knew virtually nothing about the Moros, 'save that they professed the Mohammedan religion and were a warlike people who had always resisted the domination of Spain', as a contemporary official report put it.¹⁰⁰ Their military strength was not insignificant, as it was estimated that the Sulu Sultanate could put 20,000 fighting men in the field. This figure did not include the fighting capacity of

⁹⁶ W. H. Standley to F. H. Sawyer, 1945, Subject File 00: Operations of Gunboats in the Philippines, 1900–02, Box 469, RG 45, National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), Washington, DC.

⁹⁷ Linn, *Philippine War*, 132. The arrangement seems mainly to have been aimed at supporting the American effort to win the Philippine–American War, however, and at least before 1902 there were few gunboats in operation in the Sulu Archipelago.

⁹⁸ Otis, Annual Report, in *ARWD* 2 (1899), 132–3. ⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 133, 153–4.

¹⁰⁰ Philippine Commission, *Fifth Annual Report of the Philippine Commission 1904*, 1, 6.

other Moros in the southern Philippines, such as in Mindanao and Basilan. Against this background, Governor Otis was of the opinion that hostilities would be unfortunate for all parties concerned and risked being very costly to the United States in terms of money and troops.¹⁰¹ The situation was particularly critical in view of the Philippine–American War, which stretched the military capacity of the Americans, who thus had strong incentives to try to win the hearts and minds of the Muslims in the southern Philippines in order to avoid having to fight a double war, as well as an incentive to weaken the predominantly Christian Philippine nationalist movement.

Against this background, rather than opting for direct rule in the Sulu Archipelago, the Americans sought to establish indirect rule on terms similar to those of the 1878 treaty between Spain and the Sultanate. The sultan was to be given a large degree of autonomy in matters concerning religion, custom, law and internal administration in exchange for his acknowledgement of American sovereignty. To this effect, a mission led by Brigadier General John C. Bates was sent to Sulu in mid 1899 with instructions to negotiate an agreement with the sultan and the leading *datus*. Several of the latter were reportedly favourably disposed toward the Americans, but the sultan was initially reluctant to negotiate with the American delegation.¹⁰² After six weeks, however, in August 1899 he was persuaded to sign the agreement, largely on the terms proposed by the Americans.

With the signing of the so-called Bates Agreement the American military seemed to have covered its back in the Sulu Archipelago for the coming years and could concentrate its efforts on the task of fighting the nationalists. In the United States, however, the agreement caused an uproar, because it seemed to imply that the American authorities in the Philippines condoned slavery. Article 10 of the agreement stated that '[a]ny slave in the archipelago of Jolo shall have the right to purchase freedom by paying to the master the usual market value'.¹⁰³ For American anti-imperialists, this provision seemed to confirm their worst fears in connection with the American takeover of the Philippines, and the opponents of colonial expansion readily seized on what they saw both as a violation of the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution, which abolished slavery in the United States or any place subject to its jurisdiction, and as evidence that colonialism in itself was a form of slavery.¹⁰⁴

The controversy over the Bates Agreement seems to have come as a surprise to the senior military officers in the Philippines. Slavery, or its abolition in the Sulu Sultanate, was not mentioned in Otis's instructions to Bates, and several statements and observations by leading military officials in the Philippines

¹⁰¹ Otis, Annual Report, in *ARWD* 2 (1899), 157. ¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 156.

¹⁰³ Gowing, 'Mandate in Moroland', 849. ¹⁰⁴ Salman, *Embarrassment of Slavery*, 27–8, 36.

indicate that they did not consider Moro slavery to be a problem. Many leading American military officers in the Philippines at the time claimed that Moro slavery was in fact not slavery at all, at least not in the common (that is, American) sense of the word. In order thus to distinguish Moro slavery from the chattel slavery of the American South before the Civil War they tended to use less offensive terms in official reports, such as ‘peonage’ or ‘a species of serfdom’, to describe the phenomenon.¹⁰⁵ The military governor of the Department of Mindanao and Sulu, Brigadier General W. A. Kobbé, even went so far as to claim that the ‘slaves belong to the same race as the masters, appear to live with them on equal social terms and, as far as is known, have no hard labor to perform’.¹⁰⁶

Petty Piracy

In contrast to slavery, piracy was mentioned by Otis in his instructions to Bates, indicating American concerns over the issue from the outset of their administration in the Sulu Archipelago. Occasional acts of piracy and slave raiding emanating from Sulu and affecting Mindanao and other Philippine islands, as well as the east coast of Borneo, occurred throughout the first years of American rule in the Philippines. Although piracy was not a major problem for the Americans, it soured relations between the American authorities and the Moros.

In his instructions to General Bates in mid 1899, Governor Otis pointed out that it was necessary for the military to take control over strategic points in the Sulu Archipelago in order to undertake ‘naval and military operations against foreign aggression or to disperse attempted piratical excursions’. He instructed Bates to get the sultan and his chiefs to promise that they would not ‘permit acts of piracy by their people on its waters, and to assist the United States Government to suppress and abolish this crime by whomsoever attempts to commit it, whether American, inhabitant, or alien’.¹⁰⁷

The issue of piracy did not generate any longer discussion in the negotiations between Bates and the sultan of Sulu, and seems to have been of minor concern to both sides.¹⁰⁸ In their respective drafts for the agreement text, both sides proposed an article that provided for cooperation to suppress piracy, but

¹⁰⁵ Otis, Annual Report, in *ARWD* 2 (1899), 153–5; cit., 157; Kobbé, Annual Report, in *ARWD* 3 (1900), 269–70.

¹⁰⁶ Appendix P: Report of Commanding General Department of Mindanao and Jolo, in *Annual Report of Major General Arthur MacArthur, U.S. Army, Commanding, Division of the Philippines*, 1 (1901), 5. On changing American perceptions of Sulu slavery, see further Eklöf Amirell, “‘An Extremely Mild Form of Slavery’”.

¹⁰⁷ Otis to Bates, 3 July 1899, in Otis, Annual Report, in *ARWD* 2 (1899), 155.

¹⁰⁸ US Congress, *Treaty with the Sultan of Sulu*, 49; cf. Salman, *Embarrassment of Slavery*, 73.

the sultan readily agreed to use the American version in the final text of the agreement. The article, which was somewhat less specific than the corresponding one in the 1878 treaty between Spain and Sulu, read: 'Piracy must be suppressed, and the sultan and his datos agree to heartily cooperate with the United States authorities to that end, and to make every possible effort to arrest and bring to justice all persons engaged in piracy.'¹⁰⁹

Despite the apparent commitment of the sultan and his headmen to cooperate in the suppression of piracy, their sincerity was soon doubted by the American officers charged with the task of governing the Sulu Archipelago and the rest of the military department of Mindanao and Jolo. Less than a year after the signing of the Bates Agreement, General Kobbé expressed his doubts about the value of the cooperation against piracy. Such cooperation could not be controlled, he claimed, and was 'believed to be perfunctory and valueless, because piracy has existed in one form or another for many years and is considered by the average Moro a perfectly fair game'.¹¹⁰ The commander of Jolo Garrison, Major Owen J. Sweet, likewise reported that everything was 'smooth and complacent on the surface', but that there was no desire or intention on the part of the sultan or his chiefs to cooperate with the Americans in order to improve the condition of the people or to stop acts of robbery or piracy. The sultan, Sweet claimed, would put two or three hundred armed men in the field to collect a fine but would not care, or would plead inability, when asked, to arrest pirates or thieves wanted by the US authorities.¹¹¹

Piratical activity and other forms of banditry, both on land and at sea, increased during the first years of American rule in the Sulu Archipelago as a result of the lapse in security in connection with the withdrawal of Spanish troops and the discontinuation of gunboat patrols.¹¹² The departure of Spanish gunboats, which, as we have seen, were transferred to the US Navy and were used mainly in the Philippine–American War in the north, rendered the effective suppression of piracy and other forms of criminal or insurgent activities difficult in the Sulu Archipelago and other parts of the southern Philippines.¹¹³

¹⁰⁹ US Congress, *Treaty with the Sultan of Sulu*, 49, 26–7; for the Sultan's suggestion, see 67.

¹¹⁰ Annual Report of Brig. Gen. W. A. Kobbé, USV, commanding Department of Mindanao and Jolo, in *ARWD* 3 (1900), 257.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 267.

¹¹² *ARGMP* (1904), 6–7; see also 'The humble petition of the residents, traders, and natives of Bongao, Tawi Tawi', 1 October 1903, cited in Report of General Wood as to abrogation of Bates Treaty, 16 December 1903, in *Annual Report of the Philippine Commission* [henceforth *ARPC*] 1 (1903), 508–9.

¹¹³ *Annual Reports of the Navy Department 1900: Report of the Secretary of the Navy: Miscellaneous Reports* [henceforth *ARSN*] (1900), 3; *ARSN* 1 (1901), 608; Col. W. M. Wallace, Report Commanding Officer, Jolo, 2 June 1902, *ARWD* 9 (1902), 530; Maj. James S. Pettit, Report Commanding Officer Zamboanga, 16 September 1901, *ARWD* 9 (1902), 555.

At first the situation was seen by the American authorities as quite satisfactory. In 1902, the Commander of the Seventh Brigade, which was charged with the administration of the Department of Mindanao and Sulu, reported that after the Spanish gunboats had delivered the death knell to the Sulu pirates, 'these whilom sea rovers limit their forays to an occasional assault on other Moro boats, but the merchant vessels of all nations are as secure in the Sulu Sea as in the Atlantic Ocean'.¹¹⁴ In general, the American assessment of the situation was that piratical activities now only occurred sporadically. According to the 1899–1900 Annual Report of the Department of Mindanao and Sulu, the inhabitants of Tawi-Tawi – all of whom, it was claimed, were either 'pirates, ex-pirates, or descendants of pirates' – now only rarely engaged in piracy and then only on each other.¹¹⁵ This claim implied that the Tawi-Tawi pirates supposedly only attacked local vessels, owned and crewed by Moros, and not American-, European- or Chinese-owned vessels. As a consequence, the petty piracies that still occurred were of little concern to the colonial authorities.¹¹⁶

To the extent that the piratical activity and slave-raiding emanating from the Philippines affected other countries or colonies, however, it did cause the authorities concern. In May 1900 an attack occurred in which six Moros from the Sulu Archipelago killed five Moros and one Chinese from the Dutch East Indies near the island of Kulan, off the east coast of Borneo. The vessel of the victims was sunk, and the pirates got away with \$6,000 (US) in cash and \$20,000 (US) worth of merchandise. The Americans were informed by the Dutch authorities that the perpetrators were hiding in a village on Jolo. Sultan Jamalul Kiram II was asked to cooperate with American forces in order to capture the perpetrators, to which he reportedly only agreed reluctantly. The Sultan's followers, together with American troops, surrounded the village and tried to arrest the suspects, but five of them escaped and only one was apprehended. The American officer in command of the operation was convinced that those who managed to escape did so with the aid of the Sultan's fighting men and that the arrested Moro in fact was a mere scapegoat.¹¹⁷

A few months later a small outrigger canoe (*banca*) with two Chinese and four Moros, or Filipinos dressed as Moros, and a cargo of goods worth \$2,000 (US) was attacked near Bunbun after they had left Jolo for Zamboanga. The entire crew was killed, except for one of the Moros, who escaped.

¹¹⁴ Report of Brig. Gen. George W. Davis, USA, commanding Seventh Separate Brigade, 1 August 1902, *ARWD* 9 (1902), 501.

¹¹⁵ Kobbé, Annual Report, *ARWD* 3 (1900), 266; see also Davis, Report, *ARWD* 9 (1902), 495.

¹¹⁶ On one occasion, in September 1899, however, a dinghy belonging to the US Navy and sailed by a crew of four American officers and enlisted men was chased by pirates who set out from Tawi-Tawi; *New York Times* (12 November 1899). The dinghy managed to get away.

¹¹⁷ Kobbé, Annual Report, in *ARWD* 3 (1900), 257.

Investigations by the US military pointed to a certain Sabudin, a chief from Lapingan, as the instigator of the attack, and the Americans asked the sultan to assist in capturing the perpetrators. According to the commander of the Jolo garrison, Major Sweet, however, such help was not forthcoming.¹¹⁸

To the Americans, this and other similar incidents seemed to prove that Sultan Jamalul Kiram II was not sincere in his commitment to suppress piracy. As during the Spanish colonial period, however, the sultan had limited means by which to suppress it or other forms of banditry, and was dependent on the support of the *datus*, some of whom were only nominally loyal to the sultan.¹¹⁹ Moreover, although the sultan had pledged to combat piracy, both to the Spanish and the Americans, piracy or maritime raiding was not a crime according to Sulu law. Theft and abduction were criminal offences, but it was not stated in the law that they were punishable if committed outside the jurisdiction of the Sulu Sultanate or against foreigners. Moreover, the Sultan's power and authority to implement the law waned in principle with increasing distance from the capital and was particularly weak in the more remote parts of the Sulu Archipelago. In places such as Tawi-Tawi, he thus had very limited means at his disposal by which to suppress piracy without the support of the local headmen.¹²⁰

The Americans understood piracy as a natural phenomenon in the Sulu Archipelago and an integral part of Moro culture, but as long as the victims were other Moros or Chinese merchants based in the region, the problem was not seen as a major security issue. The number of attacks was probably significantly underreported, and no attempt was made to collect information systematically or to assess the true scope of the problem.¹²¹ Officers in the region, however, were aware that maritime security in the Sulu Archipelago was deficient. In July 1900 Major Sweet reported of the situation in the Sulu Archipelago:

The natives of the islands are natural pirates, the multitude of small reefs and islands favoring them. These piracies are committed against each other or against Chinamen. When boats and their crews disappear, the natives take it as a matter of course; it is only another case of piracy. No reports of piracy against whites have been received, but from

¹¹⁸ Sweet to Sultan of Sulu, 23 November 1900 [Extract], cited in Wood, Report, *ARPC* 1 (1903), 509.

¹¹⁹ The Americans seem gradually to have realised that the Sultan's power was limited; e.g., Wallace to Wood, 17 August 1903, Hugh Lenox Scott Papers (HLSP) 55, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress (MDLC), Washington, DC (henceforth MDLC).

¹²⁰ For the Sulu Codes, see Saleeby, *Studies in Moro History*, 89–100. For the political system of the Sulu Sultanate, see Kiefer, 'Tausug Polity'. Cf. also the report by the District Governor of Sulu, H. L. Scott, 12 October 1903, *ARPC* 1 (1903), 490.

¹²¹ The lack of interisland transport and telegraph cables connecting some outlying military posts, including Bongao, contributed to a lack of intelligence about what was going on in the more remote parts of the Southern Philippines, particularly in many of the smaller islands of the Sulu Archipelago; Davis, Report, 1 August 1902, *ARWD* 9 (1902), 507; Wallace, Report, 2 June 1902, *ARWD* 9 (1902), 530.

evidence found by Captain Cloman in the Selungan affair, it would appear that piracies against Sandakan traders have been committed recently.¹²²

Selungun was the leader of a band of Sulu pirates who were responsible for a number of attacks on local fishing boats and traders in the archipelago in the first years of the twentieth century. According to official reports, he was a 'slave dealer' and a 'bad Jolo Moro', but Captain Sydney A. Cloman, the commander of the garrison at Bongao, who eventually arrested and interviewed him, was impressed by his charismatic personality and described the pirate chief as 'magnificent', 'well-built, dignified and fearless'.¹²³ The description may have been influenced by a penchant for literary flair, but in addition, the opportunity to catch an illustrious and notorious pirate probably provided a welcome distraction from the routine and boredom of daily life at the isolated military post at Bongao.¹²⁴ Chasing pirates could still be seen as something of an adventurous and romantic pursuit for American soldiers in the Philippines at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Apart from carrying out petty pirate attacks against local traders and fishermen, Selungun and his band undertook slave raids to Mindanao and possibly other islands. Pablo, a Filipino who escaped from enslavement in Jolo in 1901, gave the following testimony of how he was abducted by Selungun and his followers from his home in Cotabato, Mindanao, and brought to Sulu, where he was sold as a slave:

I was walking about in a jungle very close to Cotabato, some one called out to me to wait; I waited; three men came up and caught hold of me and tied my hands behind my back and took me to a small boat, and I was then taken to a large boat that brought me to Jolo Island. Eleven besides myself were brought to this island as slaves – 3 women and 3 children (females), 6 males (2 boys and 4 grown men), all were brought from near Cotabato . . . We came from Cotabato and landed at Patotol, where 8 were sold; from Patotol we left for Parang; Selungan met Akir and asked him to sell the slaves; there were 12 slaves then; we were all taken to Wuolo by Akir, who sold some of them, 6 (3 women and 1 girl child, 1 man, and 1 boy). One woman was sold in Tapul; 1 girl child was sold in Siassi; 1 woman, 1 man, and 1 boy were sold in Look; 1 young girl was sold at Bual. One grown-up boy escaped over to the town of Siassi . . .¹²⁵

¹²² Maj. O. J. Sweet, Twenty-Third Infantry: Report No. 12: Jolo, I., 19 July 1900 [Extract], cited in Wood, Report, *ARPC* 1 (1903), 496.

¹²³ Maj. Lea Febiger, Report of the commanding officer at Cotabato, 4 June 1902, *ARWD* 9 (1902), 525; Pettit, Report, 16 September 1901, *ARWD* 9 (1902), 555; Cloman, *Myself and a Few Moros*, 90; see also 96.

¹²⁴ See Cloman's vivid description of the boredom at Bongao in Kobbé, Annual Report, in *ARWD* 3 (1900), 266. In his book from 1923, by contrast, he wrote that 'all days seemed like holidays at Bongao'; Cloman, *Myself and a Few Moros*, 111.

¹²⁵ Captain W. H. Sage, Investigation in connection with suspicion of stealing slave from Mindanao. . . , cited in Wood, Report, in *ARPC* 1 (1903), 533.

A couple of months later, in August 1901, a small sailing boat (*vinta*) was attacked close to Tukuran by a gang of pirates linked to Selungun. The attackers killed one of the men on board and abducted another man and two women, all of whom were sold as slaves to Selungun, who in turn seems to have sold them on. The Americans, who began to investigate the matter upon receiving a complaint by the owner of the boat, were initially unable to catch the perpetrators, but they destroyed the house of one of Selungun's accomplices, *Datu* Malalis, at Dinas in South Mindanao. Malalis and another suspect named Sulug were subsequently tricked by a *datu* who was friendly to the Americans to come to Cotabato, where they were arrested and sentenced to prison terms of four and three years respectively. The arrests and the destruction of *Datu* Malalis's house reportedly dealt a serious blow to the slave market at Dinas.¹²⁶

Selungun himself still evaded capture, however, and he was believed to have taken refuge in Tawi-Tawi. The Commander of Jolo Garrison thus asked the Sultan to arrest Selungun and arrange for the slaves to be returned to Mindanao. In connection with this request, Captain Cloman, the commander of the Bongao station, received a letter from the Sultan asking for permission to capture and punish Selungun. According to Cloman's – somewhat fanciful – later account of his service in the Sulu Archipelago, the letter accused Selungun of an attack on a boat belonging to a rich trader who was a friend of the Sultan. Three people were reportedly killed, the cargo was seized and the boat burned. Cloman claimed that he then, with the assistance of the Sultan's men, managed to find and arrest Selungun, but that he later escaped en route to Maibung, the capital of the Sultan. Selungun subsequently – with the connivance of the Sultan, according to Cloman – made his way to Celebes (Sulawesi) in the Dutch East Indies, from where he continued his piratical depredations. Despite the joint efforts of the Americans, the British and the Dutch, Selungun seems never to have been captured.

The depredations of Selungun's band brought to the fore the need for gunboats to patrol the coasts and waters of the southern Philippines. The Commander of the Zamboanga garrison, Major James S. Pettit, was convinced that the lax security measures under American rule compared with the last decades of the Spanish era was the reason for the surge in piratical activities and human trafficking:

We would have broken up this nefarious business before this, but did not have the boat transportation. I will repeat a recommendation I have made, that one or two gunboats should be constantly on patrol duty between Marigosa, Punta Flecha, and the mouth of the Rio Grande and down the coast for about 40 miles, with instructions to overhaul

¹²⁶ Febiger, Report, 4 June 1902, in *ARWD* 9 (1902), 525.

every vinta and capture and destroy all those containing arms or slaves without a permit from some commanding officer. The Spaniards never permitted them to engage in that sort of traffic, and they expect to be harshly dealt with when caught. A half dozen captures would probably break up the business.¹²⁷

Gunboat patrols were intensified, particularly after the United States managed to gain the upper hand in the Philippine–American War. From 1902 between two and six or eight naval vessels constantly cruised the waters of the Department of the Mindanao and Sulu. They reportedly provided efficient service and were very valuable in policing the seas against illicit trade and for ‘furnishing to evil-minded Moros a manifestation of vigilance and national power’.¹²⁸ The patrols continued over the following years and seem to have been instrumental in the suppression of piracy, human trafficking and smuggling, as well as in improving the general conditions of peace and security in the Sulu Archipelago and other parts of the southern Philippines. The mere presence of the gunboats reportedly had a deterrent effect even if they did not have recourse to violence. The 1903 annual report of the Navy’s Asiatic Squadron claimed that the Moro coastal tribes had ‘great fear of and respect for a gunboat’, although subsequent developments indicated that this claim may have been somewhat too optimistic.¹²⁹

Colonial Rule and Economic Expansion

After the demise of Selungun’s band, security conditions at sea and around the coasts of the archipelago improved. Piracy, coastal raiding and the maritime slave trade were virtually brought to an end, and for three and a half years, from the beginning of 1903 until the middle of 1906, there is no mention in the annual reports of the region of any piratical activity.¹³⁰

The increased patrols coincided with a policy shift on the part of the United States in the southern Philippines. From 1899 until 1903, the military administration, in keeping with the Bates Agreement, pursued, as far as possible, a policy of noninterference with regard to the Moros. Army activities were limited in principle to the suppression of piracy, slave-raiding and human trafficking, and to trying to keep major conflicts among the Moros within bounds. The Sulu Sultanate had great autonomy in matters concerning internal

¹²⁷ Pettit, Report, 16 September 1901, *ARWD* 9 (1902), 555.

¹²⁸ Report of Brig. Gen. George W. Davis, USA, commanding Seventh Separate Brigade, *ARWD* 9 (1902), 501. Despite the 1899 controversy over the command of the gunboats acquired from Spain, local army commanders and gunboat captains for the most part cooperated efficiently; Linn, *Philippine War*, 132.

¹²⁹ *ARSN* (1903), 476.

¹³⁰ *ARGMP* (1903–06); in particular *ARGMP* (1904), 6, 16; *ARGMP* (1905), 29; *ARGMP* (1906), 12, 13, 31.

administration and justice, leading to a double system of justice in Sulu – one for Moros and one for Americans, Filipinos and others – with many anomalies and conflicting or overlapping laws and practices.¹³¹

Many of the commanding officers in the southern Philippines believed that the policy of noninterference and indirect rule encouraged banditry and general anarchy and disorder. Gradually a consensus emerged among most American officers who had firsthand experience of interaction with the Moros that the only way to end the unrest and violence and to create favourable conditions for developing the region, economically as well as socially and culturally, was to impose direct colonial rule. Many officers were also eager to take a direct hand in the project of civilising the Moros, both in the Sulu Sultanate and other parts of the southern Philippines.¹³²

After the end of the Philippine–American War in 1902 the American colonial authorities were able to divert more resources to the south, and the need to maintain friendly relations with the Moros by means of noninterference became subordinated to the goal of developing and modernising the region. These goals involved the exploitation of the natural resources of the southern Philippines, such as fish, pearls, mother-of-pearl and timber. With increasing self-confidence, the American colonisers thus began to assert their sovereignty over all parts of the Philippine Islands and set about bringing Western civilisation to the Moros and other purportedly backward peoples of the colony. The civilising measures, particularly the abolition of slavery, were also important in order to legitimise American colonial rule in the Philippines, not only internationally but also domestically, particularly in the face of continuing strong anti-imperialist sentiments in the United States.

A first step toward abolishing indirect rule over the southern Philippines was the creation of Moro Province in 1903. It was still kept under military command, and Major General Leonard Wood, a headstrong and progressive army officer and medical doctor, was appointed as the first governor because of his administrative skills in both civil and military affairs. Wood was convinced that a strong authoritarian government would bring Sulu and other unruly parts of the southern Philippines under American control. He had no hesitation about imposing such a government by firm military action and to set clear examples to the Moros. To Wood, the problems of Moro Province seemed straightforward enough. Shortly after his arrival there, he wrote to the governor-general in Manila, William Howard Taft: ‘A good many people have been looking at the Moro question through magnifying glasses, and taking it altogether too seriously . . . What is needed is the establishment

¹³¹ Gowing, ‘Muslim–American Relations’, 374–5; Wood, Third Annual Report, in *ARGMP* (1906), 12.

¹³² Gowing, ‘Muslim–American Relations’, 374–5.

immediately of such simple and patriarchal government as will adapt itself to their present conditions.¹³³

One of Wood's first priorities as governor was to bring about the abrogation of the Bates Agreement. To this effect he submitted a report to the colonial authorities in Manila in December 1903, in which he recommended that the treaty be abrogated immediately and even retroactively, from 30 October, and that all payments to the Sultan and the *datus* of Sulu be stopped. Wood listed eight reasons why the treaty was detrimental, including: the inability of the Sultan and the *datus* who signed the agreement to fulfil their obligations; the treaty's recognition of the 'authority of a class of men whom we have found to be corrupt, licentious, and cruel'; the frequent *juramentado* attacks on Jolo Garrison; the continuation of slave-raiding; the stealing of government property by Moros; the general condition of anarchy and impunity; the deficient and allegedly barbarian laws of the Sulu Sultanate; and a recent armed uprising in Jolo led by Panglima Hassan.¹³⁴ The Moros, Wood summarised, 'are nothing more or less than an unimportant collection of pirates and highwaymen, living under laws which are intolerable, and there is no reason, in view of the numerous acts of bad faith on their part, why the so-called Bates agreement should be longer continued'.¹³⁵

Most of the report's fifty pages consisted of extracts from official reports and correspondence from the previous three years. Wood cited them in order to demonstrate the general condition of insecurity and anarchy in the Sulu Archipelago. Several of the extracts mentioned piratical activities, particularly the raids of Selungun before his exile in 1902.¹³⁶ In relation to the other reported disturbances, however, piracy and maritime raiding were not particularly prominent in the reports. The governor and his staff had presumably studied the official documents of the preceding years carefully in their search for arguments for the abrogation of the Bates Agreement, and the fact that there were relatively few cases of piracy must be taken as an indication that piracy had in fact not been a significant problem for the colonial authorities in the preceding years. There is no evidence, moreover, that the Sultan or the leading Sulu *datus* would have sponsored or tacitly tolerated piratical activities, although Wood claimed that the Sultan and the other signatories to the Bates Agreement were incapable of fulfilling their part of the agreement with regard to, among other things, the suppression of piracy.

The report was well received by Governor Taft and the government in Washington, and in March 1904 President Theodore Roosevelt unilaterally

¹³³ Cited in Lane, *Armed Progressive*, 120.

¹³⁴ Report of General Wood as to abrogation of the Bates Treaty, in *ARPC* 1 (1903), 489–90; cit., 489.

¹³⁵ Wood, Report, *ARPC* 1 (1903), 490.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 496, 497, 509, 533–5. Most of these cases have been discussed earlier.

abrogated the Bates Agreement on behalf of the United States. General Wood notified Sultan Jamalul Kiram II of the abrogation, and although the Sultan was displeased, he acquiesced, along with most of the major *datus* of Jolo. The Sultan was still to be given an allowance by the Americans, and was to continue to enjoy a position of dignity as the symbolic head and religious leader of the Sulu Moros. Although slavery was formally abolished, manumission was to be achieved only gradually and involve some form of monetary compensation for the slave owners. It is uncertain, however, how the Sultan and the leading headmen of Sulu interpreted the new arrangements, particularly with regard to the separation of the political from the religious leadership.¹³⁷

Governor Wood now set about imposing direct colonial rule, establishing law and order and modernising Moro society. A new legal code was adopted to replace the traditional Moro laws, and an unpopular Spanish-era head tax known as the *cedula* was restored. These and other policies met with opposition and resentment from many Sulu Moros, including several *datus* whose power and social status were threatened by the abolition of slavery and the imposition of direct colonial rule and administration of justice. Many Moros, both in Mindanao and Sulu, refused to recognize American rule, and attacked American military posts and soldiers. The military answered with a series of punitive expeditions designed to break the resistance, and in Sulu these culminated in a massacre in March 1906 of close to 1,000 Moros, including many women and children, who had garrisoned themselves in the crater of an extinct volcano, Bud Dajo, in Jolo. The assault, which was carried out with the support of the Sultan and most leading *datus* of Sulu, broke the back of anti-American resistance in the Sulu Archipelago, although at a very high cost in human lives.¹³⁸

Piracy Resurgent

Parallel with the military campaigns against the Moros the colonial authorities started to implement measures to develop the region in areas such as education, healthcare, infrastructure and commerce. Regular markets were set up from 1904 in order to facilitate trade and to stimulate the growth of a commercial fishing industry. Efforts were also launched to increase agricultural output, and American settlers were encouraged to invest in plantations and other export-oriented businesses.¹³⁹ The result of these policies was that the export of

¹³⁷ Gowing, 'Mandate in Moroland', 405, 408.

¹³⁸ Byler, 'Pacifying the Moros', 42–3; see also Gowing, 'Mandate in Moroland', 449–94; Lane, *Armed Progressive*, 123–31.

¹³⁹ Finley, 'Commercial Awakening', 325–34; Miller, 'American Military Strategy', 46; Gowing, 'Mandate in Moroland', 412–20.

natural resources and agricultural products, including fish, mother-of-pearl, rubber, lumber, coconut, sugar cane and hemp, increased rapidly. The economic opportunities attracted not only American settlers but also Europeans, Chinese, Japanese and Christian Filipinos to Moro Province.¹⁴⁰

The commercial expansion also led to an increase in maritime traffic that provided increased opportunities for piratical activities. On the whole, however, the authorities were successful in maintaining maritime security, and, as noted earlier, there were virtually no reports of piracies from the beginning of 1903 until the middle of 1906. This period approximately coincided with Wood's term as governor of the province, and his iron-fisted rule and the frequent military campaigns probably served as a deterrent to would-be pirates. American gunboats, moreover, provided interisland transport in the Sulu Archipelago, and although they were not primarily charged with the task of suppressing piracy, they provided protection for local traders from piratical attacks.¹⁴¹

In April 1906 Wood was replaced as governor of Moro Province by Brigadier General Tasker Howard Bliss. In contrast to his predecessor, Bliss preferred diplomatic to military solutions for dealing with the unrest in the province. Bliss thus discontinued Wood's practice of conducting sweeping punitive military expeditions in favour of more targeted actions aimed at punishing individual wrongdoers rather than entire communities.¹⁴² In Bliss's opinion, raids, killings and tribal feuds among the Moros should be treated as criminal actions and not as security problems or challenges to American sovereignty.¹⁴³

Around the time that Bliss assumed the position of governor, however, piracy began to resurge in the Sulu Archipelago, and within a couple of years the problem had, for the first time since the 1860s, developed to become a serious security problem.¹⁴⁴ From the middle of 1906 scattered piratical attacks, mainly on local vessels, began to be reported. The *Manila Times*, for example, reported that the inhabitants of South Ubian in Tawi-Tawi had turned to piracy because of the deteriorating economic conditions on the island and that they undertook coastal raids on towns and villages in British North Borneo. The provincial authorities, concerned about the risk that these acts

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 422; Wood, Third Annual Report, 1 July 1905–16 April 1906, *ARGMP*, 6 (1906).

¹⁴¹ Miller, 'American Military Strategy', 98; cf. *ARGMP* (1908), 23.

¹⁴² Byler, 'Pacifying the Moros', 43; see further Thompson, 'Governors of the Moro Province', about the differences between Wood and Bliss.

¹⁴³ Linn, *Guardians of Empire*, 39–40.

¹⁴⁴ The fact that acts of piracy, particularly around Basilan, increased already from 1906 is rarely noted; e.g., Gowing, 'Mandate in Moroland', 517–23; Arnold, *Moro War*, 182–7. Tan, 'Sulu under American Military Rule', 75–80, and Hurley, *Swish of the Kris*, 194, note in passing that there was piratical activity in the months preceding the major wave of piracy from the end of 1907.

of piracy might disturb relations with the British, promptly sent a customs cutter and two quartermaster launches to Tawi-Tawi to stop further depredations.¹⁴⁵ The result seems to have been that the piratical activity shifted to Palawan, and in the following year the governor of Palawan reported that entire fleets of *vintas* from Tawi-Tawi, Samal and Siasi had come to the island for the purpose of fishing and committing piracy and that they were responsible for several attacks around the coasts of the island.¹⁴⁶

This piracy was initially not seen as a major problem by the authorities. Despite the complaints of piracy around Tawi-Tawi and Palawan, the 1907 Annual Report of the Philippine Commission stated that '[s]ince April of this year complete tranquillity has prevailed in every part of the archipelago, inclusive of the Moro province'.¹⁴⁷ This apparent tranquillity seems to have prompted the military to withdraw the gunboats that since 1902 had assisted the Army in patrolling Moro Province, although the main reason for the decision was the rising tension between the United States and Japan during the so-called Japanese War Scare of 1906–07.¹⁴⁸

The tranquillity turned out to be short-lived, however, as the increased seaborne commerce, particularly between Jolo and Zamboanga, provided new opportunities for piratical activity. Traders based in Jolo were attracted to the newly established Zamboanga Exchange, where they were able to sell their products, such as fruit and pearl shells, at higher prices than in the Sulu Archipelago. In order to avoid strong currents in the vicinity of Basilan the traders had to steer north and pass through the Pilas Islands, which, according to the colonial newspaper in Moro Province, the *Mindanao Herald*, was 'famous in history and song as the rendezvous of daring pirates'. Toward the end of 1906 the paper also reported that pirates from Pilas were harassing Jolo traders on the route between Zamboanga and Jolo. Several *vintas* with traders bringing the proceeds of their sales back to Jolo had reportedly disappeared at sea close to the islands, presumably as a result of pirate attacks that had left all of the victims dead. In December 1906, however, a Jolo *vinta* managed to escape after being chased by pirates for some 40 miles. Complaints were made to the American authorities, who stepped up their efforts to suppress the depredations.¹⁴⁹

In the early months of 1907 it seemed that the repressive measures taken by the provincial authorities, aided by friendly local *datus*, were having the desired effect of bringing the piracies under control. It was believed that most

¹⁴⁵ *Manila Times* (15 June 1906), cit. in Tan, 'Sulu under American Rule', 75–6.

¹⁴⁶ Edw. Y. Miller, Report of the Governor of Palawan, 15 July 1907, in *ARPC* 1 (1907), 425–6.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 44. ¹⁴⁸ *ARGMP* (1908), 23.

¹⁴⁹ *Mindanao Herald* (22 December 1906); Report on Tribal Ward No. 1, 2 May 1908, Tasker Howard Bliss Papers (THBP) 91 (MDLC).

of the depredations were the doings of a single small band of pirates from Jolo based in Pilas. They were reportedly led by a one-eyed Moro named Tahil, and the authorities estimated that the capture or elimination of the band was close at hand. In March a detachment led by the headmen of the tribal ward at Basilan, *Datu* Gabino, killed two members of the band and captured another two. The *datu* had the two dead outlaws decapitated and sent their heads to the district governor of Basilan, Major John Finley, for the purpose of identification – a practice that, according to the *Mindanao Herald*, was an old Moro custom that had been common during the Spanish colonial period. Governor Finley, however, strongly objected and ‘most forcibly’ informed *Datu* Gabino that such gruesome methods would not be tolerated.¹⁵⁰

Despite this and other successful measures, the hope that the piracies around Basilan would be brought to a swift end was confounded as the year 1907 progressed. In May a *vinta* with two Moro pearl fishers was attacked near Pilas, and one of the victims was abducted and the other wounded.¹⁵¹ In September a Chinese pearl trader was stabbed and robbed by the crew of a small vessel that he had chartered to take him, his mother and a young cousin from Basilan to Zamboanga.¹⁵² A few weeks later, at the beginning of November, a Chinese trader, Tao Tila, and three Moro crew members on route from Jolo to Zamboanga were attacked off the north coast of Jolo and Tao Tila, and two crew members were killed. The aggressors made off with the cargo of merchandise worth about 1,000 pesos. The only remaining crew member, however, escaped by jumping into the water and was subsequently able to bring the news of the attack to the attention of the authorities and the colonial press.¹⁵³

According to the *Mindanao Herald*, Basilan was now ‘becoming a rendez-vous for all the bad characters of the Sulu Archipelago’.¹⁵⁴ The band of outlaws led by Tahil – who was still at large despite the efforts to apprehend him – was constantly being enlarged by renegade Moros from Jolo and nearby islands. A hostile local Muslim leader in Basilan, Salip Aguil, was suspected of protecting them. A military expedition, reinforced with thirty constabulary soldiers from Zamboanga, tried to chase down the suspected pirates, but the

¹⁵⁰ *Mindanao Herald* (30 March 1907); cf. (20 April 1907).

¹⁵¹ *Mindanao Herald* (25 May 1907). Arnold, *Moro War*, 183, seems to attribute this attack to Jikiri, but he does not state where this information came from or even which attack he refers to. The earliest raid that can safely be attributed to Jikiri seems to be the attack on Tao Tila on 1 November 1907; *Mindanao Herald* (25 January 1908); see also below. Hurley, *Swish of the Kris*, 199, who in addition to newspaper reports relied on oral sources, seems to be of the same opinion, although he elsewhere states that Jikiri’s depredations started in the middle of 1907; *ibid.*, 198.

¹⁵² *Mindanao Herald* (21 September 1907).

¹⁵³ *Mindanao Herald* (25 January 1908).

¹⁵⁴ *Mindanao Herald* (14 September 1907).

operation only resulted in the killing of one man, a Yakan, who turned out probably not to have been a member of Tahil's band.¹⁵⁵

The surge in piratical activity around Basilan coincided with increased efforts on the part of the American authorities to develop the island economically. Basilan was believed to have great economic potential, particularly for the production of timber, rubber, hemp and other staple products, and the population was generally seen as peaceful and amenable to American rule.¹⁵⁶ Most of the island was covered by forest, and American settlers had in the previous years set up logging camps and other businesses on the island.

Despite the depredations of the Jolo outlaws affecting the local traders around Basilan, it looked as if the risk of an attack against white settlers or traders was small or even inconceivable. American soldiers were occasionally attacked by Moros in certain parts of Moro Province, particularly in Jolo and the Lanao District in Mindanao, but otherwise the life and property of American and European colonisers – in contrast to Chinese traders – seemed on the whole to be secure. This assessment probably contributed to the relative lack of interest on the part of the authorities in suppressing piratical activity, despite the apparent increase from 1906.¹⁵⁷

Jikiri and the Last Wave of Sulu Piracy

On Christmas Eve 1907, Kopagu, a logging camp on the east coast of Basilan, was attacked by a group of Moros who descended on the camp from the sea.¹⁵⁸ After landing on the beach, the raiders sneaked up on the three men in the camp – one American, one Dutchman and one Chinese – and killed them, almost simultaneously, by hacking them to pieces with machetes (*barongs*). In addition, the wife of one of the men received a deep cut across her back and barely survived. After having taken control of the camp the raiders proceeded to carry off everything of value, including, it seems, a substantial amount of cash.¹⁵⁹

The raiders had come to Kopagu by boat, but it was initially suspected that they had come from the nearby village of Ucbung, the home of Salip Aguil, an Islamic leader whom the Americans suspected of sponsoring Jolo pirates.

¹⁵⁵ *Mindanao Herald* (21 September 1907). See also Tan, 'Sulu under American Rule', 76–7.

¹⁵⁶ E.g., *ARGMP* (1908), 25; *Mindanao Herald* (15 February 1908).

¹⁵⁷ The *Mindanao Herald* (28 December 1907), for example, noted that although there had been numerous attacks on the peaceful Moros of Basilan throughout 1907, the marauders had not, until the end of the year, been so bold as to attack white men.

¹⁵⁸ This is a condensed account of Jikiri's depredations, based on Eklöf Amirell, 'Pirates and Pearls'.

¹⁵⁹ Memorandum for Major Finley and Captain Muir, 3 January 1908, THBP 88 (MDLC); *Mindanao Herald* (28 December 1907).

Ucbung was also believed to be the centre for the piratical depredations that for more than a year had affected the waters around Basilan.¹⁶⁰

The news of the murders caused a great uproar in the colonial community in Zamboanga. The two white men were well-known and apparently much-liked figures among the Europeans and Americans of Moro Province.¹⁶¹ In the week after the raid, two well-attended public meetings were held for the purpose of supporting the government in the capture of the perpetrators and assisting the survivors of the attack. The meetings, among other things, discussed how to improve security for the white settlers in the region. The consensus was that Moros should not be allowed to carry any arms except smaller machetes (*bolos*) and only when engaged in labour requiring them. They should not be allowed to enter any town or village carrying knives or other arms. American and European colonialists, by contrast, were to be sufficiently armed to defend themselves from attacks by Moros, and demands were made for the government to facilitate the procuring of arms by white settlers in the province. The meetings focused on the protection of the white community in Moro Province, whereas there is no indication in the newspaper reports of the events that the protection of Chinese, Filipino or other Asian traders and settlers was discussed, despite the fact that one of the murdered men was Chinese and both the widows of the two other slain men were Japanese.¹⁶²

The tragic event brought much latent racist sentiment to the fore. The *Mindanao Herald* probably reflected the general mood when it editorialised that the raid revealed 'the Moro again in all the savage cruelty and treachery of his nature' and that the murders had 'stirred this community to a sense of the dangers which attend the isolated Americans and Europeans who are facing the wilderness with the spirit of the Western pioneers in an effort to push a little farther the bounds of our civilization'. The newspaper also called for prompt and resolute action by the government for a 'salutary lesson' to be taught to the 'murderous bands of vagabond Moros' who terrorised the Basilan coast. Ucbung and Malusu, another village suspected of harbouring pirates, should be wiped out, and every Joloano on Basilan should be made to go to work or be 'driven into the sea', according to the editorial. The operation on Bud Dajo in March 1906 was held up as a model for such prompt and resolute action.¹⁶³

The murder of two white men by Moro pirates was thus immediately seen as a major security threat that demanded swift, extraordinary measures. Governor Bliss requested military reinforcements from Manila for the purpose of

¹⁶⁰ *Mindanao Herald* (28 December 1907); see also *ARGMP 1908*, 25, for Salip's role in sponsoring the perpetrators of the raid and other Jolo outlaws.

¹⁶¹ Thompson, 'Governors of the Moro Province', 155–6.

¹⁶² *Mindanao Herald* (4 January 1908).

¹⁶³ *Mindanao Herald* (28 December 1908; 4 January 1908).

bringing the perpetrators to account and restoring confidence in the ability of the authorities to uphold law and order in the province, and in early January 1908 a battalion of four infantry companies was dispatched to Basilan.¹⁶⁴ Their orders were to take Ucbung, where the perpetrators were believed to be still hiding, and to arrest Salip, who was suspected – wrongly, as it later turned out – to have been the mastermind behind the attack.¹⁶⁵ Meeting no resistance, American troops captured Ucbung, but Salip and his followers had already escaped, and only one man was arrested.

Although the authorities were convinced of Salip's complicity in the attack, they had little positive information about the identity and origin of the raiders beyond that they were from Sulu. By coincidence, however, more information was obtained through the arrest of a Moro implicated in the murder of the Chinese trader Tao Tila and two of his crew members two months earlier. The suspect confessed to taking part in the attack on Tao Tila and also revealed that the leader of the band responsible for the attack was Jikiri, a Moro from the small island of Patian, to the south of Jolo.¹⁶⁶ It also transpired that the raid on the logging camp was meant as revenge on the Americans for arresting their comrade.¹⁶⁷

After the raid on Kopagu, Jikiri and his followers took refuge in Patian and then in Jolo, where they seem to have received assistance from *datu*s hostile to the Americans. Successfully evading capture, Jikiri ventured forth occasionally to conduct several minor raids in the first months of 1908, before he, along with ten of his followers, in March, conducted a major raid on Maibung (Maimbung), the Sultan's capital on the south coast of Jolo. Three Chinese shop owners were killed and several other people were wounded, and every store in town was burned to the ground. Apart from Europeans and Americans, the Chinese who traded and operated small stores and businesses around the Sulu Archipelago were the main target of Jikiri and his band. Jikiri's aversion to the Chinese appears to have been based on his resentment against their commercial success in the colonial economic system, a success which was perceived as having come at the cost of Moro traders and producers. The Chinese, moreover, were an easy target because they often lacked the protection of the local population or local strongmen. Some of the Chinese merchants who survived the raid on Maibung even claimed that the Sultan had received warning of the impending raid but had failed to share it with them.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁴ Report of the Department of Mindanao, *ARWD* 3 (1909), 271.

¹⁶⁵ Thompson, 'Governors of the Moro Province', 156.

¹⁶⁶ *Mindanao Herald* (25 January 1908).

¹⁶⁷ Report of the Department of Mindanao, *ARWD* 3 (1908), 272.

¹⁶⁸ Chinese Merchants of Jolo to Colonel Alexander Rogers, 5 May 1908, THBP 91 (MDLC).

By mid 1908 Jikiri had evaded capture for more than half a year and appeared to be growing increasingly confident, which allowed him to expand his operations and recruit more followers. In August his band reportedly consisted of dozens of armed men capable of attacking larger vessels, particularly pearling luggers, which was another main target for Jikiri and his followers. In the middle of August a pearling lugger was attacked by some forty armed men in four *vintas* off the island of Tunkil, between Jolo and Basilan. The attackers killed a Japanese pearl diver and four Moro crew members, and made off with half a ton of pearl shell, including several valuable blisters, and a supply of provisions.¹⁶⁹

By this time, it was estimated that Jikiri had killed around forty people, most of whom were Chinese, and the failure of the authorities to kill or capture him was starting to draw criticism, not only because of the insecurity that the depredations brought on the region, but also because Jikiri reportedly had begun to acquire a heroic reputation among the Moros. As a consequence, it was feared that his depredations might develop into a full-scale rebellion against American rule.¹⁷⁰

The Army was assisted in the manhunt by the Philippine Constabulary, a paramilitary force consisting of indigenous troops led by American officers. The rivalry between the Constabulary and the Army, however, hampered the efforts to defeat Jikiri and his band. The Chief of the Constabulary, General Harry Hill Bandholz, accused the Army of being incompetent in dealing with the situation and was convinced that his forces would have defeated Jikiri quicker and with far fewer losses than the military, had they been allowed to bring their small launches to the Sulu Archipelago.¹⁷¹ Bandholtz's argument seemed convincing to the governor-general of the Philippines, William Cameron Forbes, who blamed the provincial governor and his inefficient management of Moro Province for the failure to catch Jikiri.¹⁷²

The Constabulary troops, however, were on the whole no more successful than the Army in their efforts to kill or capture the outlaws. Captain F. S. De Witt of the Constabulary – who, in contrast to most Army officers, spoke the Joloano dialect fluently – tried to trace Jikiri with a small detachment, hoping to get information from the local population in order to catch him and his band off guard. In November 1908 De Witt believed that he had trapped Jikiri near Parang on the West coast of Jolo. An exchange of fire ensued, and four outlaws were killed, but Jikiri himself escaped.¹⁷³

¹⁶⁹ Rodgers to Bliss, 15 August 1908, THBP 86 (MDLC); see also *Mindanao Herald* (22 August 1908).

¹⁷⁰ *Mindanao Herald* (22 August 1908). On Jikiri's attacks against Chinese, see also Tiana to Scott, 3 September 1908, HLSP 11 (MDLC).

¹⁷¹ Coats, 'Philippine Constabulary', 24–5.

¹⁷² Thompson, 'Governors of the Moro Province', 167–8.

¹⁷³ Bliss to Provsec, 24 August 1908; Bliss to Rodgers, 29 August 1908, THBP 86 (MDLC); *Mindanao Herald* (9 September 1908; 31 October 1908; 14 November 1908).

In January 1909 Jikiri's band made their hitherto boldest attack when they assaulted a pearling fleet consisting of four luggers owned by a British businessman based in Zamboanga. The attack took place off Parang, on the west coast of Jolo, and was carried out by four *vintas* coming from the shore. Two of the pearlmen managed to escape but the other two, *Ida* and *Nancy*, were surrounded by the raiders and looted, and *Ida* was sunk by the pirates. Most of the crew members managed to escape by swimming to the shore, but a Japanese diver and three crew members were killed. When American troops arrived at the scene the following day they were unable to catch any of the perpetrators, and they managed only to retrieve a lamp from *Nancy*, despite a thorough search operation in a nearby village, where Jikiri was believed to have disposed of the goods.¹⁷⁴

By now the depredations were beginning to have palpable economic effects. Pearling luggers fishing in the Sulu Archipelago had difficulties recruiting local crews because of their fear of piratical attacks at sea.¹⁷⁵ Interisland trade and exports from the province declined sharply, with the period from July 1908 to April 1909 – which approximately coincided with Jikiri's most successful period of operation – showing a two-thirds decrease in customs returns at Jolo. According to the collector of customs at the port, the decrease was due to the insecurity of life and property throughout Sulu district owing to the depredations. Chinese businesses were particularly affected, and all but two Chinese merchants – one of whom was suspected of being an accomplice of Jikiri – stopped doing business in the area outside the garrisoned towns of Jolo, Siasi, Sitankai, Bongao and Jurata.¹⁷⁶

Two days after the attack on the pearling fleet off Parang, Governor Bliss formally asked the aid of the Navy for assistance to suppress the piratical attacks by Jikiri and his band.¹⁷⁷ Bliss was convinced that the withdrawal of the gunboats in mid 1907 was the main reason for the renewed pirate activity in the province. In his annual report for the fiscal year 1907–08, he wrote:

Since the withdrawal, about a year ago, of the small, light-draft gunboats which were employed by the Spanish and American governments alike for the suppression of piracy in the Sulu seas, there has been a revival of lawlessness which nothing but the continued presence of these vessels will prevent. The Spanish Government made no progress in complying with its international obligations for the suppression of piracy until it built and maintained this fleet of small vessels. The American government found them here engaged in the performance of this international duty and continued to maintain them until about the close of the last fiscal year. So far as the government of this province knows, no question has ever been raised as to the necessity of their continued presence.

¹⁷⁴ Bliss to Smith, 28 January 1909, THBP 100 (MDLC); *Mindanao Herald* (30 January 1909).

¹⁷⁵ *Mindanao Herald* (30 January 1909).

¹⁷⁶ *Straits Times* (29 May 1909); *ARGMP* (1910), 6–7.

¹⁷⁷ Report of the Department of Mindanao, *ARWD* 3 (1909), 224.

It may be, though it is scarcely conceivable, that the maintenance of the peace for a couple of years, without any serious outbreak of hostility, has given rise to the belief that the Moro has changed his nature. The Joloano Moro is now just what he has always been—a warrior and a pirate.¹⁷⁸

Bliss believed that a dozen gunboats were needed to keep Moro Province free from pirates, but he was only able to secure the aid of the *Arayat* and the *Paragua*, both of which arrived at the end of February. Operations around Basilan over the following weeks resulted in the capture of seventeen prisoners and the confiscation of a number of rifles, spears and other weapons, but those arrested turned out not to be members of Jikiri's band. The gunboats were then dispatched to the Sulu Archipelago, but again they failed to catch Jikiri, despite several close brushes with his band.¹⁷⁹ According to the commander in charge of the manhunt, Colonel Ralph W. Hoyt, the operation was hampered by 'scarcity of transportation, the numerous islands affording hiding places, and the utter impossibility of obtaining from the natives any information concerning the whereabouts of this band'.¹⁸⁰

In this situation Jikiri launched a counteroffensive against the Americans. Shortly after the arrival of the gunboats, he attacked the Constabulary barracks at Siasi, where twenty-two troops were stationed under the command of Captain De Witt, apparently for the purpose of securing arms and ammunition. Over 600 bullets were fired into the barracks before the troops managed to repel the attack. Jikiri's band were forced to retreat, reportedly taking four dead comrades and a number of wounded with them.¹⁸¹

A few days later, after an unsuccessful attack on a Greek sponge fisher on the island of Latuan, Jikiri and his band landed on the small island of Simunul (Simonore) in Tawi-Tawi, where an English trader and a former American soldier were murdered. Both were killed in ways similar to those murdered in the attack on Kopagu, and the body of the Englishman was hacked into thirty-two pieces that were scattered over an area of several meters.¹⁸²

The raid on Simunul was the last of Jikiri's spectacular attacks. The massive manhunt against him and his band – which by now was believed to consist of more than a hundred mostly well-armed men – finally began to bear fruit.¹⁸³

¹⁷⁸ ARGMP (1908), 23. See also Bliss, Report of the Department of Mindanao, in ARWD 3 (1908), 294, for a further plea for the necessity of gunboat patrols in the Southern Philippines.

¹⁷⁹ *Straits Times* (26 February 1909); *Mindanao Herald* (6 March 1909); Report of the Department of Mindanao, ARWD 3 (1909), 208. For the initial reports of the raid at Lampinigan, when it was attributed to Jikiri, see *Mindanao Herald* (30 January 1909).

¹⁸⁰ Hoyt, Report of the Department of Mindanao, in ARWD 3 (1909), 208.

¹⁸¹ *Mindanao Herald* (27 March 1909).

¹⁸² Bliss to Smith, 22–23 March 1909, THBP 101 (MDLC); *Mindanao Herald* (27 March 1909).

¹⁸³ *Mindanao Herald*, 27 March 1909. The estimation is probably reasonable: in all, sixty-four of Jikiri's followers were known to have been killed during the long campaign against him and

The two gunboats relentlessly pursued the outlaws throughout the Sulu Archipelago, and throughout May and June military and constabulary troops killed dozens of members of Jikiri's band, including his closest lieutenants.¹⁸⁴ At the beginning of July Jikiri himself was cornered on Patian, where he barricaded himself in a cave with six men and three women. They were besieged for two days by troops from the Sixth Cavalry, supported by the Navy and Artillery, before they made a deliberately suicidal attempt to break out. Jikiri and all of his followers, men as well as women, were killed. The Americans also suffered heavy casualties, including four killed and twenty seriously wounded.¹⁸⁵

A New Pearl-Fishing Regime

The unbridled violence and the hideous mutilations, combined with the swift and unexpected character of Jikiri's attacks, were designed to strike fear in the hearts and minds of Americans, Europeans and Chinese in the Sulu Archipelago. As such, Jikiri's tactics can be characterised as terroristic, and the authorities had obvious problems in eliminating him and his band. Not only did trade and pearl-fishing in the archipelago come to an almost complete stop for fear of the raids, but the killings also, as the *Mindanao Herald* put it, 'created a feeling among all white planters and traders that no one is safe'.¹⁸⁶ The fear that Jikiri's depredations provoked among foreigners also drew on a long-established image of the Moro as a violent and brutal pirate.¹⁸⁷

Three main explanations as to the rise of Jikiri have dominated the literature to date. The first is the lack of naval patrols in Moro Province, particularly after the withdrawal of the Navy's gunboat patrols in mid 1907. As we have seen, Governor Bliss and other American officers in Moro Province believed that this was the major reason for the surge in piracy from the end of 1907. The explanation rests on the covertly racist assumption that the Joloano Moro was a pirate by nature, as Bliss argued, and the fact that piracy returned to the region as soon as the opportunity arose seemed to imply that the American — and earlier Spanish — attempts to make him change his ways and give up piracy for more peaceful pursuits had been largely unsuccessful. Essentially, this explanation was a variety of the so-called innate theory of piracy, which assumed that the propensity to carry out piratical depredations was an 'integral part of the

another forty were subsequently sentenced to prison; see Woods, 'Looking Back Thirty Years', 191; *Straits Times* (30 November 1909).

¹⁸⁴ *ARWD* 3 (1909), 208; see also *Straits Times* (4 May 1909); *Mindanao Herald* (29 May 1909, 19 June 1909).

¹⁸⁵ *Straits Times* (19 July 1909); Record of events, Post return: Post of Jolo PI, July 1909. Returns from US Military Posts, 1800–1916; Microfilm M617, Roll: 53 (NARA); see also Davidson, 'Jikiri's Last Stand', 14–16, 71–2, for an eyewitness account.

¹⁸⁶ *Mindanao Herald* (27 March 1909). ¹⁸⁷ E.g., *ARGMP* (1908), 24.

Malays' behavior, if not an inherent defect in their character', as Anne Lindsey Reber put it in her analysis of Raffles's writings on piracy in the Malay Archipelago a century earlier.¹⁸⁸

The second explanation as to Jikiri's depredations has been surprisingly persistent since it was first introduced by Vic Hurley, an American journalist and amateur historian, in 1936, despite – or possibly because of – its obviously fanciful character. According to this explanation, Jikiri turned to a life of banditry because of a physical defect. His otherwise striking appearance was allegedly marred by one eye being considerably larger than the other, and the ridicule that he suffered as a young man for his looks caused him to seek fame with his *kris*. 'The strength of my *kris* arm will comfort the women who now shun me', he allegedly told Jammang, one of his accomplices.¹⁸⁹ Aside from the obviously legendary character of the alleged explanation, it does not explain why Jikiri was able to carry out his depredations and evade capture by superior American forces for more than eighteen months. Hurley may have told the story of Jikiri's physical defect to add flair and character to the pirate chief, but it is remarkable that the explanation continues to be cited in scholarly literature.¹⁹⁰

According to the third, and more plausible, explanation, Jikiri took to banditry because of the failure of the American colonial administration to respect the traditional rights of the Moros with regard to the pearl beds of the Sulu Archipelago. The explanation was first conveyed to the Americans by Sultan Jamalul Kiram II, when he met President William Howard Taft in Washington, DC, the year after Jikiri's defeat.¹⁹¹ In his memoirs published in 1928, the district governor of Sulu from 1903 to 1906, Hugh Lenox Scott, also linked Jikiri's depredations to the loss of control over the pearl beds of Sulu:

There were several laws emanating from Manila, against which I protested in vain, that caused a vast amount of trouble and even bloodshed in Sulu. One was the confiscation of the pearl-beds by the government without compensation to the owners. Those pearl-beds had been owned by families for more than a hundred years, and were as much

¹⁸⁸ Reber, 'Sulu World', 2; Raffles, *Memoir*, 78.

¹⁸⁹ Hurley, *Swish of the Kris*, 198. In another book, *Jungle Patrol*, 302, which appeared two years later, however, Hurley instead cited Jikiri's personal skills as a war leader as the reason for his piratical depredations. These allegedly included a 'great personal magnetism, the cunning of a leopard, the ferocity of a boar, and the benefit of Arab blood to give him prestige', in addition to a tall and broad-shouldered physique.

¹⁹⁰ E.g., Gowing, 'Mandate in Moroland', 520; Arnold, *Moro War*, 183; Fulton, *Moroland*, 343.

¹⁹¹ Col. Frank McIntyre to General John J. Pershing, 1 October 1910, John J. Pershing Papers 128 (MDLC). Mentions of this explanation are found in Gowing, 'Mandate in Moroland', 520; Thompson, 'Governors of the Moro Province', 157–8, J. V. Uckung, 'From Jikiri to Abu Sayyaf', *Philippine Inquirer* (9 June 2001).

personal property as the oyster-beds of New Jersey or Virginia. This brought on the war of Jikiri that culminated after I left.¹⁹²

The pearl beds of the Sulu Archipelago were among the richest in Southeast Asia, and pearls and pearl shells had been exported from the region to the outside world for centuries. According to Moro custom, all of the land and sea belonged to the sultan, who granted his subjects the exclusive right to the pearling grounds that they found in exchange for the privilege of receiving the largest pearls. Such pearling grounds were handed down from generation to generation and thus, as noted by Scott, were considered family possessions.¹⁹³

The economic significance of pearl-fishing increased in the second half of the nineteenth century as demand from merchants, based mainly in the Straits Settlements, increased, and the Spanish embargoes and attempts to destroy the commerce of the Sulu Sultanate made the population more dependent on the natural resources of the archipelago.¹⁹⁴ Toward the end of the Spanish period, however, the traditional pearl fisheries came under pressure as modern pearl luggers equipped with diving suits and air pumps began to operate in the Sulu Archipelago. In 1892 a firm owned by two Chinese businessmen, Leopoldo Canizato Tiana and Tan Benga, was established at Jolo, which then was in Spanish hands, and began to fish for pearls with six modern and fully equipped boats of about 10 tons each. According to a Protocol from 1885 between Britain, Germany and Spain, fishing in the Sulu Archipelago was free for all, and the firm consequently did not feel obliged to ask the sultan – who had not been consulted in the negotiations that led to the Anglo–German–Spanish agreement – for permission to fish for pearls in the waters off Jolo, nor to pay him for the privilege of doing so. The luggers were instead protected by the Spanish Navy and only fished in the vicinity of Jolo, literally under the Spanish guns. In the wake of the Spanish–American War of 1898, however, the Spanish garrison at Jolo was greatly reduced, and the colonial gunboats were no longer able to protect the operations of Tiana and Tan. The merchants were thus forced to make terms with the sultan and pay him 100 dollars a month for the right to fish in the Sulu Archipelago. Two other firms, one based in London and one in Singapore, also began pearling in Sulu around the same time, but in contrast to the Chinese firm they made agreements with the sultan from the start and did not need to fish under Spanish protection. In 1899, moreover, the Philippine Pearling and Trading Company, owned by a German long-term resident of Jolo, Eddie Schück, and his brother Charlie, signed an

¹⁹² Scott, *Some Memories of a Soldier*, 370.

¹⁹³ Dalrymple, *Historical Collection* 1, 1, 11; Appendix: Notes and Reports on Mineral Resources, Mines and Mining, Pearl, Shell, and Sponge Fisheries: Statement made by the Sultan of Sulu relative to the Pearl Fisheries, *ARPC* 2 (1908), 529.

¹⁹⁴ Warren, *The Sulu Zone, 1768–1898*, 121.

agreement with the sultan that gave them the exclusive rights to fish for pearls using boats with diving equipment around Jolo.¹⁹⁵

In 1904, shortly after the abrogation of the Bates Agreement, a law was passed that opened up the Sulu Archipelago to pearl fishers of all nations. Licence fees for fishing were to be collected by the treasurer of Moro Province, whereas it was made illegal for any Moro – including the sultan and the leading *datus* of Sulu – to try to exact payment from pearl fishers. The law also stated that the governor of Sulu district was to ‘investigate the alleged claims of certain Moros residing within his district to property rights in the shells of marine molluscs in the seas adjacent to their places of residence’. A sum equivalent to half of the proceeds of the licence fees during the first year and a half after the implementation of the law was to be set aside for the compensation of such claims. The payment was to be ‘understood to be in full and final settlement of the supposed property rights of the Moros of the district of Sulu’.¹⁹⁶ However, as indicated both by Scott’s description cited earlier and by the financial statement of Moro Province for the fiscal year 1906, the payment was never distributed.¹⁹⁷ From 1 January 1906, moreover, the exemption from paying the licence fee for vessels up to 15 tons owned, manned and operated wholly by Moros, as stipulated by the law, expired, thereby putting a new financial burden on local Moros engaged in pearl-fishing. The law also unintentionally imposed an additional hardship on the Moros because it prevented them from exchanging their shells for food and clothing, which the larger boats easily could have carried, had they not been prohibited from trading in pearl shells by the law.¹⁹⁸

An attempt to investigate the claims to the pearling grounds in accordance with the law on pearl-fishing was undertaken by the local authorities in Jolo in September 1907. Scott’s successor as district governor of Sulu, Colonel E. Z. Steever, convened a board for the purpose of carrying out the investigation of the traditional claims to the pearl beds. The move was rejected by Provincial Governor Bliss, however, who was of the opinion that because the investigations had not been carried out immediately after the law was passed, as

¹⁹⁵ *ARPC* 2 (1908), Appendix, 524, 526–7.

¹⁹⁶ Act no. 43 approved by the Philippine Commission 19 July 1904, *ARPC* 2 (1908), Appendix, 549–52; quotes, 551.

¹⁹⁷ *ARGMP* (1906), 47–50. The government collected 3,300 pesos in shell-fishing licences in Sulu district, equivalent to eleven first-class licences (each allowing the operation of one diver equipped with submarine armour), but there is no mention of the disbursement of the compensation among the expenditures for the year. It is also clear from subsequent official correspondence that the compensation was never paid; Governor of Moro Province to the District Governor of Sulu, 13 April 1908, THBP 90 (MDLC).

¹⁹⁸ *ARPC* 2 (1908), Appendix, 544–5, 551. The luggers were required to keep a log of their catches and testify to their accuracy before entering the port of Jolo or Zamboanga, thereby, in effect, prohibiting them from buying or selling pearl shells while operating in the archipelago.

prescribed by the law, the provisions therein had ‘expired by the limitation imposed by its own terms’, in the words of Bliss.¹⁹⁹ No compensation was thus to be paid to the Moros, according to the governor, who also thought that it was time for the Moros to start paying for their fishing licenses.

Shortly afterwards Steever was replaced as district governor by General C. L. Hodges, who – like his successor, Alexander Rodgers – did not pursue the issue of compensation. The failure of Steever’s attempt to settle the compensation question occurred about a month before the first known attack by Jikiri in November 1907, and probably influenced his decision to take to piracy.

The changes in the pearl-fishing industry, combined with the abrogation of the Bates Agreement and the imposition of the deeply unpopular head tax, not only affected Jikiri and his band but all Sulu Moros as well. Consequently, it seems that the population of Sulu had little sympathy for the efforts of the authorities to hunt down Jikiri. Quite a few people – among them the hundred or so who joined him – may even have regarded Jikiri as a hero and something of an anticolonial resistance fighter. Although it is probably an exaggeration to claim that Jikiri’s motives were political rather than economic – his actions, in fact, resembled more those of a desperado rather than a politically motivated resistance leader – his success in evading capture for more than a year and a half was to a great extent due to the general discontent among the Sulu Moros with the laws and policies of the American colonial administration after 1904. This popular discontent was an important reason for the difficulties that the authorities had in suppressing the most serious wave of piracy and coastal raiding in the Philippines throughout the American colonial period.

Maritime security conditions improved significantly in the Sulu Archipelago following the defeat of Jikiri and his band, and the exports from Jolo recovered.²⁰⁰ Occasional pirate attacks and coastal raids nonetheless continued in the year following his death. In October 1909, as the trials against the surviving members of Jikiri’s band were still going on, an American-owned plantation on Basilan was raided, and a large amount of moveable property was stolen. In the same week two pearling luggers were attacked off Jolo, probably by the same band, but the crews were able to fight off the raiders. In neither instance was anyone killed or wounded.²⁰¹

¹⁹⁹ Governor of Moro Province to the District Governor of Sulu, 13 April 1908, THBP 90 (MDLC).

²⁰⁰ Total exports from Jolo increased by almost 50 per cent between 1909 and 1910, and pearl shells by over 80 per cent; *ARGMP* (1910), 9–10.

²⁰¹ *Straits Times* (15 October 1909). In September 1909, a rumour that a British customs cutter had been pirated and the captain along with thirteen crew members murdered, however, proved to be false; *New York Times* (27 September 1909).

A more serious attack occurred in the following year, when seven Sulu Moros raided a settlement in Sulawesi and murdered and robbed two Dutch farmers. The raiders then took refuge on Manuc Manka, a small island near Bongao. The American colonial authorities – obviously fearful of a new wave of piracy – immediately dispatched the constabulary from Bongao, followed by four companies of infantry from Jolo. A Dutch gunboat assisted the troops by patrolling the adjacent seas, and, with the aid of the local population, six members of the band were arrested, whereas the leader was killed by the local Moros who assisted the colonial troops.²⁰²

After 1910, pirate attacks in or emanating from the Sulu Archipelago became even rarer and remained so for the duration of the American colonial period. Conditions of law and order improved steadily, in part because of an executive order issued by the provincial governor in 1911 that prohibited the unlicensed possession of firearms, as well as cutting and thrusting weapons. It is likely that unreported cases of petty piracy and coastal raids continued, but as far as is known the only documented case of piracy before the outbreak of World War II occurred in June 1920, when two boats with twelve Dutch subjects were attacked at sea by a band of twenty-four Moros in six *vintas* from South Ubian. The victims were robbed of their possessions, and two women were raped. The pirates then cut holes in the victims' boat in order for it to submerge, but the victims managed to mend the holes and save themselves. The perpetrators were subsequently identified and captured, and two of them were sentenced to death and executed in 1922, after the Supreme Court in Manila had rejected their appeals.²⁰³

Summary

Maritime raiding was an integral part of the social, economic and political fabric of the Philippine islands in precolonial times, but the expansion of the European colonial powers in maritime Southeast Asia from the sixteenth century stimulated piracy and maritime raiding in and emanating from the Sulu Archipelago in several ways. The Moro Wars, which shaped relations between the Muslims of the southern Philippines and the Spanish colonisers from 1565 to 1878, entailed a sharp increase in the level of maritime violence in the Philippines and neighbouring parts of the Malay Archipelago. Maritime raiding was used as a

²⁰² ARGMP (1910), 19–20; *Annual Report of the Director of the Constabulary* (1910), 9; *Straits Times* (1 June 1910). See also Tagliacozzo, *Secret Trades*, 115, for a summary of the same event based on Dutch sources.

²⁰³ 'The People of the Philippine Islands vs. Lol-lo and Saraw', Supreme Court of the Republic of the Philippines, G.R. No. 17958 (27 February 1922), in Lauterpacht and Williams (eds.) *Annual Digest* (1932), 164–5; cf. Rubin, *Law of Piracy*, 318–19, who discusses the legal implications of the case.

tactic in the wars by the Spanish as well as the Moros, both for the purpose of damaging the enemy's economy and military capacity and for the purpose of material gain. As regards the latter, the main objective of the Moros and other raiders based in the southern Philippines was the capture of slaves.

Slavery was common throughout Southeast Asia, but its importance increased in the early modern period, both because of the Moro Wars and the strong demand for slaves in the European colonies, particularly in the Dutch East Indies. From the second half of the eighteenth century, slave-raiding was also stimulated by the increased demand for export products from the Sulu Archipelago, such as pearls, sea cucumbers, wax, bird's nests and tortoise shells, the provision of all of which was principally the work of slaves.

Before the middle of the eighteenth century Spanish sources rarely referred to raiders from Sulu and adjacent parts of the archipelago as pirates, but as the Sulu Sultanate rose to power toward the end of the century by successfully combining maritime raiding, the slave-based production of export commodities and trade, the Spanish – and other Europeans – began increasingly to describe the Sulu Moros as pirates. Under the influence of Enlightenment notions of race and civilisation, piracy became associated with certain ethnic groups, particularly the Muslim population of Sulu. Islam was seen as an important part of the explanation of the piratical habits of the Moros, which strengthened the case for proselytisation and the conversion of the Moros to Catholicism, particularly from the middle of the nineteenth century.

Allegations of piracy also served to justify Spanish military intervention in the Sulu Archipelago, particularly from the 1840s, when imperial rivalry, combined with increased Spanish naval power, led to a more aggressive policy of colonial expansion in the southern Philippines. As the European states grew economically, politically and militarily stronger, it became increasingly important for them to enforce their monopoly on violence, not only within their territory and colonies but also emanating from them. Against this background, and with imperial rivals, such as Great Britain, France, the Netherlands and Germany, showing greater interest in the southern Philippines over the course of the nineteenth century, it was of crucial importance for Spain to demonstrate sovereignty over the Sulu Sea and to enforce a monopoly on violence in the area. Suggestions for naval cooperation with the Dutch and British in order to suppress piracy were rejected by the Spanish because of worries that such cooperation might compromise the Spanish claim to sovereignty over Sulu, a claim that was not formally recognised by the other imperial European powers before 1885. Sovereignty, rather than the suppression of piracy, was thus the overriding concern for the Spanish as they increased their presence in the Sulu Archipelago from the 1840s, eventually leading to the conquest of Jolo in 1876.

With the establishment of regular Spanish naval patrols and of garrisons in Sulu, large-scale organised piracy in and emanating from the region came to an

end. It is likely, however, that piracy would have come to an end even without the ruthless search-and-destroy strategy of the Spanish Navy from the 1870s. By the mid nineteenth century, the sultan of Sulu had begun to distance himself from the Iranun and Sama raiders and declared himself willing to collaborate with the colonial powers, particularly Britain, for the suppression of piracy. The Sulu Sultanate was in the process of restructuring its economy, from a focus on the slave trade and maritime raiding to trade in export commodities. However, Spanish monopolistic commercial policies and the use of maritime violence to eliminate indigenous maritime commerce hampered the transition. Moro traders, pearl fishers and producers of export commodities were replaced by European and Chinese merchants – largely because of their better access to capital and international commercial networks, but also because of Spanish trade embargoes and naval patrols targeting Moro shipping.

During the first years of the American colonial period sporadic piratical attacks occurred, targeting mainly local fishermen and coastal populations in the southern Philippines, Palawan and eastern north Borneo. As the American military established firmer control over the southern Philippines from 1903, however, piracy seems to have come to an almost complete stop, and for several years, until the middle of 1906, no pirate attacks were reported from Moro Province.

After the imposition of direct rule in 1904 the colonial authorities tried to stimulate commerce and the extraction of natural resources in Moro Province. These efforts included measures designed to improve conditions for indigenous traders and producers, for example by the establishment of regular markets. However, the intensified exploitation of the natural resources of the Sulu Archipelago, particularly in the pearl-fishing sector, seemed to benefit foreign economic interests at the expense of the local population. The economic marginalisation of the Moros and the opening up of the pearl beds of Sulu to outsiders without due compensation by the authorities thus led to much resentment and set the stage for a resurgence of maritime violence. In 1907–09 Jikiri and his band of at least 100 followers were responsible for a sustained wave of piracy, robbery and murder that the colonial authorities, only with difficulty and after a manhunt that lasted for more than a year and a half, were able to suppress.

Shortly after the defeat of Jikiri and his band, piracy in the southern Philippines seems to have come to an end, and for the remainder of the colonial era there were only a handful of sporadic pirate attacks in the region. It was not the definite end of piracy in the Sulu Archipelago, however, and in the wake of World War II, maritime raiding once again began to emanate from the region and affect the eastern coast of north Borneo, stimulated by the spread of firearms and the motorisation of sea transportation.