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THE CHINESE IN MOROLAND

Introduction

Chinese presence in Moroland¹ is an account full of historical and social significance. For one, Sulu and Maguindanao were pioneers in the historic trade and commerce directly with the merchants from South China as well as with neighboring societies in Southeast Asia with profound Chinese influence. Observers noted that such relations are "colonial," even antedating Islam in Mindanao and Spanish colonization of the Philippine islands for over 300 years (Saleeby, 1908; Beyer, 1921). Chinese trade in Moroland probably intensified during the three centuries of Spanish conquest due to restricted trade and Spanish monopoly that discouraged Chinese junks from visiting Manila (Laarhoven, 1987). Meanwhile, Sulu remained a "free port" even under the brief Spanish rule confined to Jolo town.

The second reason for Chinese presence is that the Moros (term for Muslims in the Philippines) were the most organized and "developed" communities compared to the more "primitive tribes" in Mindanao. The Chinese bartered goods (pearls, *tripang*, wax) with the Moros in exchange for items that in turn enriched Moro material culture and enhanced their political and cultural dominance (Warren, 1976). What began as purely commercial relations evolved into a permanent or continuing Chinese influence in the shaping of the social institutions of Moroland, notably the economy, polity, and social structure of Moro society. This paper is a preliminary attempt to show the underlying process behind all this. It shall paint a social and economic picture of the Chinese in Moroland before and during the start of this century, and show how such picture interfaces with Moro social stratification. Some implications on social integration are then drawn, with an eye to understanding the situation in "Muslim Mindanao."

Chinese Population

The coming of the Chinese in the Philippines was rather late and from the south, so argued Reynolds (1967). While permanent Chinese settlements (*hua-ch'iao*) were noted in Palembang (Sumatra) in 1270, and in Tamasik (now Singapore) by

1349, it was unlikely that this was so in the Philippines before the 15th century.

Such contact was spurred by trade and commerce between the Chinese and peoples of Mindanao in known entrepôts such as Jolo (Sulu) and Butuan, even before the coming of Islam in 1345. The evidence is clear. The rich archaeological finds in Butuan now unravel aspects of our pre-colonial history which are hitherto unknown to us, particularly our relations with Southeast Asian neighbors during the Majapahit period and by the time Islam came via Sulu. Also, historical sources indicate that Arab traders who visited Jolo came with Islamized Chinese. Tombs of royal families there often feature Arabic characters and Chinese names.

By the 19th century, the Chinese population in Moroland was insignificantly small. Bowring (1859:111), quoting the *Guía de Foresteros* of 1858, found only 455 tribute-paying Chinese and mestizos. Such population refers to the settled or immigrant Chinese. Outside of the province of Misamis, where the Chinese resident population was greatest, the Chinese were also concentrated in Maguindanao and Sulu due to the historic trade with the Moro sultanates (Warren, 1976). By the 1900s, there were probably at least 1,000 Chinese scattered all over Moroland, particularly in primary towns or *pueblos*. When the Americans occupied Mindanao, the exploring expeditions found significant Chinese population in Jolo, Pollok (Cotabato), Isabela (Basilan), and Zamboanga, among others.² The US expeditions reported that "all or most trade was carried out by the Chinese." In Sulu and Cotabato alone, General Davis reported that "the Chinese are equal in numbers to Filipinos."

About a decade later, at the end of the military regime in 1913, General John Pershing placed the number of Chinese in the Moro Province at 3,188 or 0.6 percent of the total population (518,695). By the next government census in 1918, the Chinese population had increased to some 5,000 but still remained a tiny fraction of the Mindanao population.³

Chinese immigration to Mindanao has steadily increased through the "backdoor." After World War II, the Philippine Census of 1948 would report 10,663 Chinese speakers in Moroland. This represents 7.3 percent of the total Chinese speakers in the Philippines, or 0.4 percent of Moroland's population. Interestingly, there were more Japanese in Davao in 1935 (at 15,000) than Chinese in Moroland in 1948.

Moro-Sino Trade

Moroland, or at least Jolo, was already known to the Chinese even before the Europeans set foot on Southeast Asia. Known sources revealed that as early as the 11th century, Chinese junks began visiting Sulu and other islands. Marco Polo was said to have provided detail of such trade, especially during the Majapahit Empire (1293-1389). Chinese sources (e.g., by Chau Ju Kua in 1225) also gave more vivid accounts of trade and provided an early ethnography of the native peoples before they embraced Islam (Beyer, 1921). Anthropological research in Butuan and Zamboanga would later confirm that porcelain wares bore dates associated with

the reign of the Ming Dynasty during the 14th century. Perhaps, the seven military expeditions from 1405 to 1433, or its subsequent impact on trade under the command of Admiral Cheng Ho had also something to do with this discovery (in Reynolds, 1967:470).

Spanish colonization of the Philippine islands (1565-1898) restricted trade with the Chinese and created hostility between the natives and the Chinese merchants. The threat posed by Limahong during the 17th century was singularly important — it made a scapegoat out of the Chinese residents who were herded in the *Parian* of Manila. Many of the Chinese residents were said to have moved down south to avoid persecution from both the Spaniards and Christianized natives.

Such was not the case in the south. The relative independence of Moroland until the 19th century even promoted trade between the Muslim aristocrats and other nations, including the Chinese who frequently visited Sulu, Malabang, and Maguindanao in search of pearls, *tripang* (sea cucumber), birds nest, beeswax, and other products. In return, the Chinese paid the natives in gold or exchanged weapons (e.g. bronze cannons) and gunpowder (Combes, 1909). The Moro-Sino trade during this period was immensely important, according to Warren (1977), who found that heightened commercial activity in Southeast Asia accompanied the rise of the Sulu sultanate to economic and political supremacy. Incidentally, it was also during this era (second half of the 17th towards the middle of the 18th century), that so-called "Moro piracy" and slavehunting became a notorious chapter in the pages of Philippine history.

On the eve of the US-Spanish War of 1898, the maritime importance of Sulu was already on the decline. Sulu's claim to power waned as a consequence of the introduction of modern steamboat, which the Spanish used with success to crush the "Moro pirates" in 1849. By virtue of the Treaty of Paris of 1898, the United States "inherited" Moroland and by its military administration of the same perfected the arduous project of creating a Philippine state.

With that change came the inevitable decline of the Moro-Sino trade. Remnants of early Chinese traders decided to stay and carve out a new life in Moroland with the thought of establishing themselves in the host community. Today, many of them become part of the Moro society with which they initially engaged in trade. Most of them are still in business which, like it or not, is a major source of upward mobility in an impoverished, rigidly stratified society (Hunt, 1954).

Economic and Social Roles

Despite their being a minority in demographic terms, the Chinese in Moroland were significantly represented in commerce and trade as well as in education. In almost every major town, trade was almost completely under the hands of Chinese merchants. Big business, however, had been monopolized by American or European interests. In 1911, statistics showed that of the 126 large plantation owners (those who managed 100 hectares or more), 20 were owned by the Chi-

nese (Pershing, 1911; Box 371A, Pershing Papers). In Davao, while the major plantations belonged to the Japanese and Americans, "90 percent of the retail trade is in the hands of the Chinese."⁴

While most of the natives were illiterate, half of the Chinese were literate enough to be able to read and write. In Jolo, some Chinese associated in Jolo wrote to the American authorities in Spanish or English, suggesting the level of their education.⁵ Those with knowledge of English are most likely immigrants from Singapore, with which Sulu had a well-developed trade. Occasionally, Chinese teachers are recruited in the American-run public schools. In the schools, Chinese pupils constituted about 1 percent to 1.5 percent of the total number of students enrolled from 1911 to 1913 (Pershing, 1913:80).

Table 1. Estimated Chinese Population in Moroland

	Number of Chinese	Total Population
Pollok (Cotabato)	75	275
Isabela (Basilan)	75	500
Jolo (Sulu)	600	1,270
Zamboanga	500	20,000
Davao	500	

Table 2. Chinese Population in 1948*

District	Number of Chinese	Percent	Total Population
Cotabato	1,921	0.4	439,669
Davao	2,988	0.8	364,854
Lanao	577	0.2	415,647
Palawan	259	0.2	467,769
Sulu	1,461	0.6	240,826
Zamboanga	3,457	0.7	521,941
Total	10,663	0.4	2,398,584

*Persons able to speak Chinese

Census of the Philippines, 1948: Summary of Population and Agriculture
(Manila: Bureau of Printing, 1954).

American occupation and militarization of Mindanao effectively controlled business and commerce and minimized profiteering by local merchants. The military government itself served as "entrepreneur" by founding trading stations and the relatively organized Moro Exchange in 1904 which flourished in Zamboanga, Jolo, and Lanao.⁶ For one, the volume of business accounted for by the Moro Exchange in Zamboanga went up from P238,573 in 1904 to P558,220 in 1908.

In more ways than one, the intrusion of government in business diminished the dominant position of Chinese trade and likewise checked possible excesses. General Pershing, then Governor of Moro Province, reported in 1911 about a "tendency (among Chinese traders) to take advantage of the ignorance and of the necessities of the primitive people" (Pershing, 1911:8, Box 371A, Pershing Papers). Unscrupulous Filipino and Chinese traders on the Pacific coast of Mindanao were found to "corner rice during the southeast monsoon and sell to the impoverished inhabitants at 100 to 150 profits."

It was nonetheless clear that Chinese participation in business had been reduced into "marginal" trading during the colonial era, as Moroland's economy was incorporated into the mainstream. There were cases, however, of Chinese making it to the top of Moro society. One such case was Datu Piang of Kudarangan, Maguindanao. Datu Piang was half-Chinese with a Moro mother. He grew up in the royal circle of Datu Uto and later became the most powerful ruler in Cotabato valley during the American regime. Datu Piang's "cooperation" also paved the way for the successful integration of the defiant Maguindanaoans into the society.

Social Stratification

Ancient Moro society is somewhat rigidly stratified. Members are ascribed statuses according to whether they descended from the nobility (datanship or sultanate), freemen and slaves⁷ (Mednick, 1974). In most senses, the social stratification is a dichotomized structure based on lineage and access to power or status. Either one is a noble or he is a commoner. Although the Moro structure appears to be "caste-like" and stiff, there are avenues through which an outsider can be accepted as a legitimate member of Moro society. How this affects the Chinese is our next concern.

The Chinese occupy a peculiar position in Moro society. Initially alien to the host community, they have continued to be perceived as "outsiders" especially those who still practice Chinese customs and traditions. However, those who have acculturated to the Moro ways, usually by virtue of birth or marriage, have succeeded in gaining membership. In Maguindanao, some of the prominent families have Chinese ancestry, notably the Piangs, Sinsuats, Matalams, and Masturas (Hunt, 1954). The same pattern obtains in other sections of Moroland, particularly in Sulu where the process of incorporation to the dominant Tausug culture is much stronger. Many contemporary Tausug leaders bear Chinese surnames, due to mixed marriages, such as the Tans of Jolo.

Strangely, this is not the case for the Moros living in the hinterlands, the

Maranaos and Iranons. For years, they were peripheral traders working for or through Maguindanao or Sulu. Hence, in Lanao and parts of Cotabato dominated by the Iranons, Chinese presence is relatively scant or recent.⁸ Though many of them have Chinese ancestry, Chinese surnames are virtually absent. The assimilation is complete.

Many Chinese eventually were absorbed into the Moro society by intermarriages. In Cotabato, Hunt (1954:9) noted that the predominance of Chinese males and the scattered nature of Chinese settlers have led to a "considerable degree of intermarriage." The tendency among the offspring of such mixed marriages has been to gravitate toward the dominant culture of the community, hence resulting in a gradual or partial assimilation of the Chinese.

Assimilation of the Chinese (by virtue of intermarriages) has been a passport for their social acceptance as well as contributors to economic affluence of the host community. In time, the growth of the middle class and economic well being is largely attributed to the Chinese success in entrepreneurship.

To the trained eye, the prosperity of the Chinese is in deep contrast to the poverty among the Moros. Perhaps, what results therefrom is a feeling of relative deprivation among Moros exaggerated by identity issues. The rash of Chinese kidnapping in the 1990s could well be an indication of this unsavoury ethnic attitude toward the Chinese, including wealthy Christians, especially in Cotabato City and Basilan during 1993-1996. During the first half of this year (January-May 1997), the papers reported about 36 Chinese kidnapped in Cotabato alone. That event prompted the Chinese community there to decide to "close their shops for a day" as a last-ditch attempt to secure government intervention. The Chinese problem actually began much earlier. In many places where the peace deteriorated since the 1970s, the Chinese paid a heavy toll — it drove away many of them.⁹ In a way, the situation of the Chinese in Moroland could well be a microcosm of the national malaise, which is now a decided social issue.

Concluding Observations

The Chinese in Moroland are there to stay. As Filipinos, they have played and will continue to assume important roles where others are reluctant to tread. No doubt, they have succeeded in entrepreneurial activities, which in turn enlarged the economic welfare of the community. But as they participate more in their own or in the host community's life, social life has assumed a new configuration. "Chineseness" and a definition of Moro cultural identity have yet to converge.

We can see the manifestation of this disjuncture of identity in the stratification system. For one, social interactions between Chinese and locals are not entirely pleasing or satisfactory. The Chinese, together with wealthy Filipinos and foreigners, have become an object of some unsavoury practices in Moroland — "kidnapping" being a notorious example. While the motive is concededly economic, another plausible argument lies in the dominant social stratification defined by marriage and religion. The Chinese are regarded condescendingly as "outside"

this stratification system because they have remained ethnically distinct, though many of them have been absorbed by the local culture. Like the Christian Filipinos, they are perceived generally as "in" but not "of" the Bangsamoro homeland. Getting "inside" the social stratification means securing a social passport usually granted to non-Moros who are married to Muslims or have accepted Islam.

A scenario similar to that in Malaysia or Singapore — where ethnic identity is allowed free reign — is a hard model to use in Moroland. Unlike these two countries, the Filipinos consider nationhood in cultural rather than racial terms (Suryadinata, 1989). The peoples of "Muslim Mindanao" are believed to have come from the same cultural roots. However, the unfortunate consequences of colonization have divided them into the popular, oft-heard category of tri-peoples: Moros, Christians, and Lumads. This is cultural (religious) and historical. Here, the Chinese are even "non-entities!" They are not passengers of the ship cruising toward peoplehood.

With the 1996 Peace Agreement now in place, the Chinese will certainly make new adjustments in their social position. Among them are maintaining the balance between local and regional forces and maintaining cultural identity while accommodating the requirements of the local and regional communities. Unfortunately, the Chinese are not yet a voice in local politics. It appears imperative that people brace up toward an increasing articulation of Islamic practices, and somehow take part in the peace process. While a formula for peaceful coexistence among the various ethnic communities without doubt recognized, the mechanics of rendering the tenet of coexistence is yet to be laid.

Notes

- 1 By "Moroland," I mean the areas comprising the Moro Province in 1903, namely: Sulu, Cotabato, Zamboanga, Davao, Lanao, including southern Palawan. It is also more or less equivalent to the areas identified under the 1976 Tripoli Agreement and the 1996 Peace Agreement between the Philippine government and the MNLF. These areas consist of 14 provinces and nine cities in southwestern Mindanao, coinciding with some of the territorial boundaries of the old Moro Province, except for Palawan, which was not part of the Moro Province.
- 2 The exploration reports were filed in the archives of the Bureau of Insular Affairs, henceforth abbreviated here as BIA, or Record Group 350, Washington, D.C. Among such files are those numbered #BIA 1835, 1836, 1837, and 1839.
- 3 General George Davis, "Notes on the Government of the Country Inhabited by Non-Christian in Mindanao and the Neighbouring Islands," BIA#5075-7. In Sulu, Saleeby (1908) noted that about half or 600 of Jolo town's population are Chinese. They were mostly settled in the "walled city" of the town and virtually controlled all trade in Sulu at that time.
- 4 S.K. Matsumoto, "The Truth about the Japanese in Davao," Box 28-2, Joseph Hayden

Papers (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Bentley Historical Library, Aug. 30, 1930).

- 5 A certain L. Tiano wrote 14 letters (in Spanish) to Hugh Lenox Scott, governor of Sulu district, between 1907 and 1909 (see Scott Papers). Some of his letters were about the depredations of Jikiri and the robbery and murder of Chinese traders in Sulu in 1908. Another such letter was written (in English) by Ho Kim Swee, president of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce in Sulu, to the American Governor-General, on July 18, 1919, complaining about the unsolved murders of three Chinese traders in Jolo during 1918-1919 (BIA#4865-143C).
- 6 John P. Finley, "The Development of the District of Zamboanga," *Mindanao Herald* (February 3, 1909), pp. 61-63.
- 7 They are variously termed as *banyaga*, *oripen*, and *bisaya*.
- 8 Lanao, Iligan, and Malabang were the only places where the Chinese settled to trade before the 1900s.
- 9 An example may help. The author is aware of just about one Chinese family still living in, though not permanently, in Marawi City. The wife herself was kidnapped in the past. A son, who is engaged in "big" business, prefers to work in nearby Iligan City.

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THE FAMILY TREE OF LIM EUNG

Introduction

This study focuses on the ascendants and descendants of an Ilonggo Chinese mestizo, Dominador Jabian Javellana, who passed away in June 1994 just before the start of this study. Javellana's origins are traced back to Lim Eung, also known as Go Cuy Co. Dominador Javellana, the 10th of the 16 children of Go Cuy Co, born between 1890 and 1915, changed his ethnic identity completely from Chinese to Filipino.

Javellana's father, Go Cuy Co, adopted the family name of his godfather, Julio Javellana, when he was baptized as a Catholic under the name Jose Javellana in the Jaro Parochial Church. The family tree of Cuy Co (Lim Eung) was reconstructed from personal interviews of his kin from the oldest surviving descendants, in-laws, their children, neighbors, friends, and colleagues, up to his great-great grandchildren.

Genealogy is the history of the descent of a family, often rendered in a tabular list or a family tree in the order of succession, with the earliest known ancestor placed at the head and later generations placed in lines of direct and collateral descent. Genealogy also covers the study and research of pedigrees.

Genealogy is used in the probation of wills when knowledge of descent is necessary especially if a dispute occurs, to ensure that the property goes to the right person. Genealogy is also used when legitimacy is in question. One of the best and most practical modern uses of genealogy is in the medical field. Physicians have, with considerable success, examined genealogical records for the origin of unusual diseases in present-day families.

The researcher used personal interviews first for extracting data. The grandparents, who were very likely to possess written records and family Bibles and whose memories were often clear and accurate, were interviewed. Libraries and courthouses were visited and documentary evidence from the town and parish records that registered weddings, baptisms, and funerals were gathered.