

POLITICS, RELIGION, AND SOCIAL STRATIFICATION: THE CASE OF CAGAYAN DE SULU

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The social-stratification system of Sulu, marked by three status groups (nobles, commoners, and slaves), underpinned traditional economic, political, and religious behavior. Starting from about 1900, the Americans changed the system when they pensioned the sultan off, curtailed the nobility's power, and abolished slavery. Power, wealth, and prestige, which in the past were allocated largely through ascription, are now achievable by all. Proof is in two emergent high-status groups, teachers and successful trader-hadjis.

The society under consideration is that of the Jama Mapun, a Muslim people inhabiting the island of Cagayan de Sulu, southern Palawan, Sabah (formerly North Borneo), and the small islands in between. On the map this culture area appears as the northwestern horn of the Muslim crescent which sweeps down from Mindanao to Sulu and up again to Sabah and Palawan. The Jama Mapun ethnolinguistic group is sometimes called Samal in Sulu and Bajau in Borneo. In the 1960 census of the Philippines the population of Cagayan de Sulu was given as 10,789. Adding population figures for the Jama Mapun inhabitants in southern Palawan and Sabah to this figure would increase the total Jama Mapun population to over 20,000. My estimate of the present total Jama Mapun population is 25,000 to 30,000.

The data on which this paper is based were gathered in the course of fieldwork conducted among the Jama Mapun during three successive visits in 1963, 1966, and 1969-70. The study focused on ecological and sociocultural change. The chief manifestation of this change is the shift from subsistence rice cultivation to commercial copra production which has gradually transpired from about 1900 to the present. There was also a major shift from sailboats to motorboats from about 1950 to the present, which transformed the islanders' transport and

trading activities. One would naturally expect to find corresponding changes in other institutional aspects of their society and culture. It is the other changes, particularly in economic, political, and religious behavior in relation to the kinship system, which form the sociological focus of the main study.

In this paper, however, I am concerned with a narrower problem, namely, the stratification system and the role of political and religious variables in it. After sketching the background of the sultanate as a sociopolitical structure, I will give a description of the formal aspects of the stratification system, followed by an account of the system in operation and the changes it has undergone. I shall end with some tentative explanations of why and how the changes took place.

Social Stratification in the Traditional Society

To understand social stratification among the Jama Mapun one must keep in mind the historical perspective of the Sulu and Brunei sultanates within which the Jama Mapun were a mere district enclave, i.e., a part-society and a part-culture. Both Sulu and Brunei exercised some measure of sociopolitical control over the peoples and territories of Cagayan de Sulu, Palawan, and North Borneo notably during the 15th to 18th centuries.

The traditional stratification system of the Jama Mapun conforms to what ter Haar (1962: 33) in writing about Indonesia calls "the triad consisting of chieftain class, commoners, and slaves." This model is also found in Malaysia and in the Philippines. In Kroeber's (1943) study of Philippine societies, he noted a great contrast between the village organization found among the Christianized Filipino groups in Visayas and Luzon and the Islamized groups in Mindanao and Sulu. In pre-Christian times the villages outside the Muslim areas consisted of localized kin-groups called *barangay* or *banwa*; these were more or less autonomous units internally organized according to the triadic model. They were headed by nobles or *datus* who were not subject to any supravillage political authority. Some villages located in strategic ports along the interisland trade routes, for example the port of Cebu in the Visayas and the port of Manila in Luzon, developed into larger settlements with more complex sociopolitical structures.

In contrast to the village organization in Visayas and Luzon, the pattern in Mindanao and Sulu showed villages linked together in larger supravillage organizations. In pre-Islamic times these villages were like those found in the north. According to Majul (1964), in pre-Muslim Sulu the "datus were for all practical purposes independent of one another." But after the gradual introduction of Islam and the establishment of the sultanate, the *datus* and the villages or districts under them were linked together by adherence to a higher political authority which transcended the villages and which was symbolized in the office of the sultan.

The nobility. Jama Mapun society is divided into three segments, nobles, commoners, and slaves. There are two things to note about the nobility: the first is that it is composed of two titled groups, the *datus* and the *salip*; second, that it is internally differentiated into royal nobles and ordinary nobles. The distinction between royalty and nobility is based on relative closeness to the royal line of the reigning sultan; the operative criteria behind the distinction are kinship and descent. This phenomenon of internal differentiation in the nobility has

been noted by many writers who have studied Islamic polities in the Malay world. Although the descriptive terms vary, there is an underlying structural similarity. For Western Malaya, Gullick (1958: 59-60, 65-66) uses the terms "inner circle" and "outer fringe"; for Brunei, Brown (1970: 11-33) uses "core nobility" and "common nobility"; for parts of Indonesia, ter Haar (1962: 61-62) separates the "prince" and his immediate royal relatives from the "chiefs"; and for Sulu, Majul (1964) distinguishes "royal *datus*" from ordinary ones.

It may be recalled that the system in Cagayan de Sulu was only a subsystem of the sultanate, in the same measure that the village or district was only a component of the state. Being separated by some distance from the capital in Jolo where most of the royalty lived, the Jama Mapun *datus* appear to belong to the ordinary type. Nevertheless, the *datus* in Cagayan de Sulu are to be regarded as originally Tausug-speaking *datus* who moved out of Jolo and Borneo to establish districts in Cagayan.

The distinction we mentioned between royalty and nobility does not apply to the other titled group, the *salip*, although they are regarded as part of the upper stratum. The term *salip* is a variant of *sharif* and is equivalent to the title *sayyid*. Commenting on these two terms, Saleeby (1905) says:

The word 'sharif' is Arabic and means 'noble.' It is a title which is universally given to the descendants of the Prophet Mohammed. The full title is 'Sayid Sharif,' the 'master and noble.' The Arabians generally use the first word, Sayid, alone, but the Moros have adopted the second.

Both in Malay and Brunei *sharif* and *sayid* enjoy noble status, although their relation to the royal nobility has not been fully clarified. In Cagayan de Sulu the *salip*, like the *datus*, were intrusive, one small group coming from Jolo and another, a larger one, from Kudat and Marudu Bay in North Borneo. One indication of the equivalence of the status of *datus* and *salip* is the prevalence of intermarriage between the two groups, as is also reported for Malaya and Brunei.

Let us now briefly consider the nature of these titles. The titles *datu* and *salip* can be used with an individual or group referent. Members

of the nobility may bear the title before their personal names, e.g., Datu Kiram or Salip Kasam. Female datu are referred to individually by the prefix *dayang-dayang*; female salip have no variant prefix except salip. The personal use of the title datu, however, may differ from that of salip in the sense that datu can assume the meaning of headship, i.e., a political office which may be assigned to only one individual in the group. In this usage, status title merges with office title, but it is important to remember that the two are analytically distinct. Datu and salip as titles may likewise refer to the entire status group. Membership in either group is inherited patrilineally.

Ideally one is born into the category or group; I say ideally because although birth-ascription is an absolute rule for salip membership, membership in the datu status group may have been acquired in the past. That is, a man could become a *de facto* datu if he succeeded in amassing wealth and building up a band of followers; he could also become one through declaration by the sultan. This seems to have been the case, for instance, with the appointment of Baron de Overbeck as *datu bandahara* and *raja* over North Borneo in 1878 when Sultan Muhammad Jama-ul-A'alam leased or ceded the territory. The same principle presumably operated when Brooke was declared *raja* over Sarawak by the Sultan of Brunei.

The commoners and slaves. Let us now turn to the social orders below the nobility, the commoners and slaves. Before slavery was effectively abolished by the Americans, the Jama Mapun clearly distinguished freemen from slaves. The freemen made up the class of commoners, or *tao marayao* (literally, 'good people'), a term which is not from the Jama Mapun language but from the language of the dominant Tausug centered in Jolo, place of the origin of Cagayan de Sulu's datu. The use of this term by the Jama Mapun to refer to the commoner class in their society reflects the power situation, for it would be natural for the Tausug-speaking datu who set themselves up as the ruling class to label the commoners as *tao marayao*. In Malaya, Indonesia, and Brunei, Muslim leaders

referred to the masses by the Arabic term *ra'ayat*, meaning 'subjects.'

We have mentioned the fact that both elements of the Jama Mapun nobility, the datu and salip, were intrusive to the island at some point in the past. Yet we know that there was a pre-existing society in the island which must have had a leadership and authority structure; in short, there were villages and village headmen who apparently did not bear the title datu. It is naturally a point of curiosity to ask what happened to these local headmen after the establishment of the datu-salip nobility.

We find a clue to the answer in Brown's (1970) description of Brunei. It seems that just as the nobility was internally divided into two ranks – the royal nobles and the nonroyal ones – so the commoners were internally differentiated into two ranks, the ordinary commoners and the notable commoners, or notables. The criteria for distinguishing between ordinary commoners and notable commoners are not very clear. Closeness to the nondatu village headman seems to be one of them, but other criteria seem also to have been operative, e.g., possession of wealth, as in the case of the *orangkaya*, which literally means 'wealthy man,' and appointment to a minor administrative position in the bureaucracy of the sultanate, as in the case of the *mantili*.

The Jama Mapun term *mantili* appears elsewhere in Malaysia and Indonesia as *mentri*. In Brunei *mentri* refers to an official holding a position in the state bureaucracy and may be roughly translated as 'representative,' for Brown says that foreign resident traders had their own quarters in the city and were represented by *mentris* from their own groups. In Cagayan de Sulu, *mentili* does not have a very clear referent, but I suspect that in the past it referred to some sort of local representative who belonged to the notables. Religious specialists and functionaries, collectively known as *paki* (i.e., *fakir*), would also be notables. But unlike the datu and salip, the notable commoners did not constitute a status lineage, membership in which was jealously guarded through the rule of patrilineal inheritance of status. In other words, the notable commoners could win or lose their status, since

it was not securely anchored in recorded genealogy and descent.

To complete the triadic system, we shall now briefly mention the slave class. This class no longer exists, but it was traditionally an integral and important category in the social structure. The term for slaves in the Jama Mapun language is *ata*, the same term used in other parts of the Philippines to refer to the negritoid aboriginal inhabitants of the archipelago. The Jama Mapun use of the term to refer to slaves probably reflects the historical fact that many captured slaves originated from the island of Palawan, where pockets of these aboriginal inhabitants are still to be found. The use of *ata* for slaves is somewhat anomalous, however, because in most of the Philippines the common slave term is *ulipon* and its variants — *alipin*, *uripon*, and *ipon*. In Indonesia and Malaysia the usual terms are *hamba*, *abdi*, or *orang berhutang*. Notwithstanding these differing terminologies, the slave class in the Malay world showed fundamental similarities. For instance, recruitment throughout the region is based on descent from slave parents, capture in war or raids, or debt. It is interesting to note that the word *utang*, the root of the term *orang berhutang* is found throughout Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines with the universal meaning of debt. This gave rise to the concept of debt-bondage as a fundamental trait of the slavery system.

In the village of Duhul Bato in Cagayan de Sulu, which has 56 households, I uncovered three families of former slaves which have disappeared into the commoner class through manumission and intermarriage.

The Stratification System in Practice and Transition

Let us now look at the operation of the stratification system and at the changes it is presently undergoing. The prestige hierarchy of the three status groups was empirically manifested and their differences reinforced through verbal, behavioral, and symbolic markers. Socialization occurred in the context of a general awareness of the various types of people in Jama Mapun society.

Symbols of high status. Among the verbal

markers must be included the titles *sultan*, *datu*, and *salip*. But there were others as well, such as the address terms *ampun* for *datus* and *tuan* for *salip*. Special necronyms were also used to properly designate deceased members of the nobility. A dead sultan was always referred to by the Arabic term *maruhum*; a dead *datu* was *lindang*, and a dead *salip* *wapat*. Commoners had no ranked necronyms; the dead among them were simply referred to as *imua*. Dead *hadjis* were assimilated to *salip* and were called *wapat*.

Social allocation of prestige was also manifested in the amount of bride-price in marriage transactions. Among the nobility the amount was always higher than it was among the commoner or slave classes. In the years 1920 to 1940, a *datu* or *salip* bride fetched ₱1,000; a commoner, from ₱200 to ₱500; a slave, less than ₱100. Sather (1967) noted that in coastal Sabah, where many Sulu *datus* are found, "marriage payments remain a significant measure of the status" of the persons involved.

The need to demarcate status groups led to the use of such symbolic items as the number of tiers in the ritual umbrellas used in burial processions: nobles used 12 tiers; commoners, fewer than six. Certain types of gongs and gong rhythms were also reserved for the nobility. In Malaysia, it is said that the color yellow, which is equivalent to the royal purple among Western royalty, was reserved for the sultan's family. For Indonesia ter Haar (1962: 62) describes boundary markers between status groups which can be applied with little modification to Sulu in general and to the Jama Mapun in particular.

In many regions of Sumatra, Borneo, Celebes and Timor, a chieftain class developed internally. It is maintained by an Indonesian right of inheritance with election, prohibition of marriage between chief's daughters and lower-class men, and the taking of a girl of chieftain class as the principle wife of a chief's son, with lower-class girls as secondary wives. The amount of bride-price or marriage gift, where these occur, is higher for girls of the chieftain class than for daughters of lesser men, who may even be prohibited from demanding too high a bride-price. Delicts against chiefs call for heavier legal penalties. The chiefs bear names and titles unattainable by the common man. In the case of customary ceremonies, precedence is given and respect shown to persons of the chieftain class in the protocol of sitting at table, in the quality

of the dishes in which the food appears, in the portion of the slaughtered animal which is served to each. The manner of dress for chiefs differs from that of ordinary people, and the mode of burial of chiefs differs from that of the little man and is forbidden to the latter. By means of such customs, difference in class is given a distinctive realization in daily affairs and results in many legal ramifications.

To sum up this description of the operational aspects of the stratification system, it is clear that the total pattern of customary mechanisms of differentiation — verbal, symbolic, and behavioral — all converge to demonstrate both to the observer and the participant that there are upper and lower status groups varying in rank in proportion to their possession of prestige, property, and power. Although I have not explicitly made the analytic distinction between these criteria, I consider it implicit in the data that the nobility, in general, had special access to and effective control of economic and political power, in addition to high prestige which they effectively controlled through the rule of patrilineal descent. My view is partly confirmed by the tendency of other analysts to describe the system in elitist terms, seeing the nobility as the ruling class and those below as the subject class. This two-class system is the basic analytical framework used by Gullick (1958) for Western Malaya, by Carroll (1968) for pre-Spanish Philippines and by Lynch (1959) and Hollnsteiner (1963) for contemporary lowland Philippines.

The importance of the economic and political aspects of the stratification system — what Brown calls stratificational correlates — cannot be overstated, since they are integral parts of the system.¹ However, I cannot now depict the economic aspect for lack of space, and must limit myself to the political as it manifests itself in political changes in Jama Mapun life. To do this we must view the changes against the background of the present sociopolitical framework.

The Jama Mapun communities in Cagayan de Sulu in 1960 were distributed into villages officially called, for administrative purposes, barrios. Each barrio unit is headed by a barrio captain assisted by six barrio councilors. All the barrio units together constitute the municip-

pality of Cagayan de Sulu, the municipality being administered by a mayor assisted by eight municipal councilors. The municipal unit is part of the Province of Sulu, together with 21 other municipalities, the head of the province being the governor assisted by a provincial board. The final element in this administrative pyramid is the national government, headed by the president of the Republic of the Philippines. The Province of Sulu is only one of over 60 provinces making up the national state.

I have gone into some detail in portraying the administrative setup to highlight the fact that this framework, imposed first by the Spaniards and the Americans and later by the Republic, was not the pattern in Sulu, say, before 1900, when the sultanate was still the dominant political authority. Likewise in Cagayan de Sulu, the present municipal arrangement of nine barrios headed by barrio captains under a mayor, did not exist. The population of each of these nine barrios according to the 1960 census is shown in Table 1.

In the past, say, between 1850 and 1900, the system was as follows. There were villages with a kinship basis grouped into districts under the rule of powerful leading families. I estimate that in this period there were no more than three of these districts located on the south, north, and northeast sides of the island. Two of these districts, the southern and northeastern ones, were ruled by noble families; the third one on the north was ruled by a non-noble but notable commoner family. The datus were found mostly in the southern district, mainly in the present barrio of Pauwan; the salip predominated in the northeastern district, the present barrio of Guppah, and the notable commoner headmen ruled in the northern district around the present barrio of Ungus Mataha. The other villages in other parts of the island were allied to the three main districts mainly on the basis of contiguity. As far as the meager records and oral tradition show, there was no overall authority in the island prior to the American period. The only recognized supradistrict authority was the Sultan of Sulu who lived in his capital at Jolo.

The total area of Cagayan de Sulu is 43 square miles. The total population was estimated

Table 1

*Population of Cagayan de Sulu municipality, by barrio
(Sulu Province, 1960)*

Barrio	Population		Comment
	No.	%	
Boki	1,286	11.9%	—
Duhul Bato	1,416	13.1	—
Guppah	530	4.9	Salip center
Kaumpang	424	3.9	—
Pauwan	1,477	13.7	Datu center
Poblacion	1,594	14.8	Called Lupa Pula, newly established government center
Sikub	875	8.1	—
Tanduan	1,633	15.2	—
Ungus Mataha	1,554	14.4	Center of non-noble leadership
Total	10,789	100.0	

Source: 1960 Census of the Philippines.

by a British explorer who visited the island in 1883 at less than 3,000 (Guillemard 1889: 186). As there are no extensive jungles or high mountains in the interior, communication between villages was easily accomplished by foot or more often by sailboats inside the fringing reefs. And yet interdistrict relations were characterized not by amity but by strife. This I gather not only from oral tradition, but also from the presence of stone fortifications in the principal districts. Fights between villages or districts, however, could not be termed war on the usual sense; they were more like feuds involving small numbers.

From our analysis of the number of villages with nobilities and those without, it is obvious that the nobility formed only a small part of the total population. Only two of the present nine barrios have a concentration of datu and salip; it is safe to say, therefore, that the nobility formed no more than 10 percent of the total. This figure is similar to those reported by Brown for Brunei (10 percent) and by ter Haar for Bali (8 percent).

When the Americans first arrived in the Sulu

Archipelago, they headed straight to the heart of the sultanate at Jolo, and having captured it and forced the surrender of the temporal powers of the sultan, they proceeded to "pacify" the districts. In 1913, under the command of General Pershing, a combined American-Filipino force of 1200 attacked a Muslim stronghold in Mt. Bagsak, on the main island of Jolo. About 500 Muslims were killed in the fighting. In Cagayan de Sulu, opposition to American pacification was most pronounced in the districts ruled by datu and salip. Less opposition was offered by the notable commoners in the northern district of Ungus Mataha, one reason perhaps why General Wood, when he visited the island, landed there. Eventually, however, even the datu and the salip, after some determined fighting, yielded to superior power.

The first American resident governor of Cagayan de Sulu was a certain Guy Stratton from Kansas, a former officer of the American army. He lived in the island nearly 20 years, during which time he brought the three districts and the other allied villages under a single municipal authority. He established a new

administrative center, the present poblacion of Lupa Pula located at a new anchorage in the southeast, thus making his own administrative district distinct from the three traditional ones of Pauwan, Guppa, and Ungus Mataha. He also married a datu woman from the southern side, a reflection not only of his estimate of the importance of the datu but also perhaps of his desire to be in a more advantageous position with regard to the rest of the population whose reverence for the nobility faded only with the passage of time.

By about 1910 a new municipal administrative structure was emerging, headed by an appointed mayor directly under a resident deputy governor. An analysis of the 15 changes of incumbents of the mayorship (Table 2) reveals the strength of the datu faction from the

south, for the first three appointed mayors (from about 1910 to 1935) were all datu. A shift occurred after 1935, when three non-nobles held the position in succession, two of them being from Ungus Mataha and one appointed from Jolo. During the Japanese period, a salip leader came to power with the help of the Japanese from neighboring Borneo; the salip rise to power was part of a revenge pattern against the American, Stratton, who was said to have been particularly ruthless in subduing the salip in the early phase of the American pacification.

In 1959 the first election was held; before this time the mayors were appointed. In this election, a non-noble from the northern district was elected. The same person, a part-Chinese affinally related to the traditional notable

Table 2
*Status and provenance of presidente/mayor of
Cagayan de Sulu, 1911-1971*

Presidente/Mayor	Status	Provenance	Year	Tenure (yrs.)
1. Amilhamja	Datu	Pauwan	1911-1914	(3)
2. Ali	Datu	Pauwan	1914-1920	(6)
3. Kabulay	Datu	Pauwan	1920-1933	(13)
4. Woosing	Commoner	Ungus Mataha	1934-1935	(1)
5. Yasin	Commoner	Ungus Mataha	1935-1942	(7)
6. Awang ^a	Commoner	Jolo	1942-1943	(1)
7. Hatari ^b	Salip	Guppa	1943-1945	(2)
8. Hatab	Commoner	Lupa Pula	1945-1946	(1)
9. Dalus	Salip	Pauwan	1946-1953	(7)
10. Hasim	Datu	Pauwan	1953-1954	(1)
11. Barraquias	Commoner	Lupa Pula	1953-1954	(1)

12. Lim Eng ^c	Commoner	Ungus Mataha	1954-1959	(5)
13. Lim Eng	Commoner	Ungus Mataha	1959-1963	(4)
14. Lim Eng	Commoner	Ungus Mataha	1963-1967	(4)
15. Kiram	Datu	Pauwan	1967-1971	(4)

^aHasan Awang was said to be a Malay from East Borneo associated with the Atkins Kroll Company; he was appointed as presidente.

^bSalip Hatari took over from Awang, becoming de facto ruler of the island with the backing of the Japanese government in Borneo.

^cLim Eng took over from Barraquias who is said to have abandoned his post. The following year, 1955, the first election was held and Lim Eng changed his tenure from appointee to elected. Two years previously Cagayan de Sulu ceased to be a municipal district and became a full municipality - an event indicated by the broken line between numbers 11 and 12.

commoner ruling family of Ungus Mataha, was reelected in the second election four years later, in 1963. Then in the third mayoralty election in 1967 a reversal occurred when a datu from the south won, who is today the incumbent.² Looking back at the sequence of office-holders, the pattern which emerges is the following. The datu held power five times, the salip twice, and the commoners seven times. This suggests a decline of the traditional power and prestige of the nobility class.

This decline is also reflected on the provincial level. Our survey of the social status of incumbent mayors of the Province of Sulu in 1970 reveals that out of the 22 positions only two were held by datu; the other 20 were won by commoners. This is a far cry from the situation suggested by Majul in his reconstruction of the traditional Sulu sultanate, where nearly all the district chiefs, whom we can regard as analogous to the mayors, were datu. The two municipalities where the datu are still in power are Maimbung and Cagayan de Sulu. Maimbung was the traditional personal district of the sultans, which possibly explains the persistence of datu hegemony in that municipality. But the case of Cagayan de Sulu is rather unusual. It is alleged that the election of a datu mayor is not due to the persistence or resurgence of datu power in the island, but to the influence and material support of another datu, the Minister of Sabah, who is first cousin to the mayor of Cagayan de Sulu.

Can we conclude, therefore, that whereas the datu in Sulu are suffering a decline of power and prestige, their counterparts in Borneo have maintained their traditional socio-political roles? Evidence from Sabah suggests the contrary; the same pattern of decline has been observed there. Sather (1967: 101), in a paper on social stratification among the coastal Muslims of Sabah, many of whom are originally from the Philippines, has this to say:

Traditionally the system of ranking served political and integrative functions which other institutions have now largely preempted. The datu class is no longer responsible for providing order and protection among its following, these responsibilities having been taken over by modern governmental agencies in the period beginning with the establishment of British colonial

rule, and the whole hierarchical structure is rapidly taking on the characteristics of a standard class system in which a person's position depends on wealth and social connections rather than genealogical succession.

In the light of this statement, the fact that the Minister of Sabah is a datu is due less to the fact of his being a datu and more to his previous record in the colonial government and his present connections. And his influence in Cagayan de Sulu is probably dictated by more weighty considerations than mere concern for a kinsman.

This brief sketch of the changes in the political dimension of the Jama Mapun stratification system may be concluded by a categorical judgment that the system has definitely changed.³ It is not only a question of change *in* the system but change *of* the system. Further proof of this conclusion can be found in the emergence of a new status system which is now briefly described.

There are two status groups now forming in Jama Mapun society which show tendencies of evolving into a high-level category comparable to the traditional nobility. One group consists of those who have a relatively better education and who function as teachers or as civil servants in the municipal or provincial government bureaus; the other consists of those who have made the *hadj*, or pilgrimage, to Mecca. Many of the latter are successful traders who convert their wealth to socioreligious prestige by gaining the highly-valued title of *hadji*. In contrast to the datu and salip status groups, membership in these emergent categories is not based on birth and genealogy but on talent and achievement. This is not to say that there are no other social constraints operating as selective factors in deciding who gets into the new status groups. In the sphere of education, once one goes above the primary level where education is free, wealth is an important constraint because only the relatively wealthy can afford to send their children to secondary and tertiary education. The same can be said for the attainment of *hadji* status, for the making of the pilgrimage to Mecca requires the kind of money which not all villagers have. Nevertheless, the rules of the game are clearly different from those of the

traditional society dominated by *datu* and *salip*. The commoners are becoming more aware that although they can never break into the traditional nobility, they have now an open channel to an emerging social category which promises to give them analogous social rewards.

Some Tentative Explanations for the Changes

To say that European colonial activities in Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines have undermined the village and state organizations of the societies in this region is the most general explanation one can give for the observed changes. But such an extremely general correlation is unsatisfactory unless we also provide some detailed specification of the points of impact and relate it to the internal organization of the affected systems. My own tentative explanation will correlate the European influence with the three levels of the stratification system. My hypothesis is that external factors affected the three levels together, and subsequently, since the system was functionally integrated, the exogenous disturbances dislocated the internal working of the system.

First of all, Western policies in the region attacked the institution of slavery through the suppression of piracy in the Malay world — piracy being one main source of captured slaves (Tarling 1963). And as we have seen, the slave class was integral to the stratification system inasmuch as slaves were valued as special signs and sources of wealth, power, and prestige for the nobility. Second, Western powers attacked the nobility itself at the highest point of the superstructure, namely, the institution of the sultanate. Dutch, British, Spanish, and American colonial governments captured the traditional state-governing machinery through the policy of indirect rule where the sultan, *rajah*, or prince became a salaried functionary deriving authority from the superimposed metropolitan powers rather than from the allegiance and consent of their traditional subjects. In Sulu the Americans relieved the sultan of his temporal powers, leaving him only the pale shadow of the religious loyalty of his people. Third, Western liberalism transformed the commoner class by the introduction of

literacy, education, and welfare schemes, thereby initiating a new basis of social mobility through talent and achievement. This sort of mobility was antithetical to the traditional one based on birth and descent.

The attempt to reform Sulu society along the lines of Western liberalism is most clearly outlined by Pershing, an early politico-military commander of Sulu (Tan 1967: 104). His statement stands as a policy position or charter on planned change in Sulu.

The closer we get to the individual by giving him complete protection and justice, by aiding him in agriculture and by educating his children, the sooner he will learn that the religious oligarchy of the *datu* [and the *salip*] is an unnecessary evil and the earlier he will escape from the shackles of tribal superstitions.

The most important steps to be taken include prohibition of plural marriages; discontinuance of purchase of women as concubines; settlement of families upon separate homestead; and eventually placing these separate units on the same basis before the law as their Filipino neighbors. It is believed that these reforms will in the end overthrow the oppression of *datu* rule, start the Moros along the path of individual evaluation and give them as a whole, a fair chance of competition with other Filipino people.

Tan (1967: 104), in quoting the above passage, adds that Pershing appears in this policy statement to be "more interested in destroying the powerbase of the *datu*s and the sultans who were deterrents to American control and interests than in transforming the Moslems into a stable and respectable society." This confirms my own analysis of the situation in Cagayan de Sulu, but I would add that social transformation necessarily entails the alteration of the basic power relations of any society.

In the case of the Jama Mapun, the three-level attack I mentioned as corresponding to the triadic system can be clearly demonstrated. Briefly, Guy Stratton, the symbol and embodiment of the American metropolitan power at the local level, enforced the law against slavery and thereby undermined the basis of the nobility. He engineered the reduction of the district chiefs of the island, bringing them under the centralized control of an alien power after they had been dislocated from the structure of the sultanate, which had collapsed. Finally, during his tenure and subsequently, public

schools on the primary and secondary levels were introduced to the islanders.

In connection with this third point, it is important to note that when education was first introduced, the commoners after some distrustful resistance accepted it more readily than the nobility. This difference in response can be attributed partly to the persistence of the nobility's reliance on their traditional high status: conditioned from birth to see themselves on top, they saw no need to strive to rise through education. The commoners, on the other hand, conditioned in a feudal system to obey those superior to themselves, were easily induced to submit to public education. Some of the more perceptive ones perhaps realized early on that since they had no access to the ranks of the nobility they might find in education an alternative stepping stone to a better life. And they were not proven wrong. Of the 81 public school teachers in Cagayan de Sulu in 1970, 22 of them (33 percent of the total) are natives of the island and, as far as I know, all of them are from the commoner class. These teachers are now accorded high social recognition, something that they could never have found in the traditional status system.

In connection with the second point — that the Americans attacked the nobility — there seems to be a contradiction with our statement that the first three appointed mayors of Cagayan de Sulu were *datus*. Would it not have been more logical to appoint commoners? I do not think that this action of Guy Stratton, or that of the American governor on Jolo who approved the appointment, invalidates my contention that the overall American objective, clearly stated by Pershing, was to undermine and reduce that traditional wielders of power, the *datus*. I think the appointment can be interpreted as a tacit recognition that the *datus* still had considerable power which was, however, then sufficiently diminished and under control that they could be used as idea brokers between the villagers and the regional representative of the metropolitan power. The whole incident, therefore, can be seen as a local variation of the British principle of indirect rule, in which a powerful chief and his party is backed in a

power struggle with rival factions, so that the administration of a territory is facilitated and, in general, the interests of the colonial power are promoted. In Rajah Brooke's classic statement (Tarling 1963: 199), "To protect our trade we must make a monarch and uphold him, and he would be a British servant." Such, I suggest, were the *datus* among the Jama Mapun vis-a-vis the Americans.

In the title of this paper I mentioned politics and religion as factors in the stratification system. Perhaps I am now in a position to clarify the reasons behind this linking. The first reason for associating the three is historical, namely, that the rise of the sultanates was intimately related to the agency of Islam, in which proverbially the sacred and the secular domains are regarded as essentially one. This ideology has been carried over into the mythological charter of the various sultanates. For instance, Jama Mapun believe that any man born of a *salip* father and a *datu* mother is a potential sultan, *tasultan* (*susultanun* in Tausug). The *salip*, being descendants of the Prophet, are conceived as the bearers of the sacred and royal element; and the *datus*, being traditional rulers of the land, are conceived as the bearers of secular and noble elements. The union of the two elements, therefore, cannot but produce something special and potent.

Even before Islam, of course, was the Hindu-Buddhist influence in the Malay world. Indic political ideology was built around the concept of a god-king, a linking of the sacred and secular elements similar to that of Islam. It is not surprising, therefore, to find caste-like elements in the stratification system of Malay societies. Although these elements are mere traces of the classical caste models from India, it is significant that their presence has been noted by ter Haar, Brown, and Saleeby for Indonesia, Brunei, and Sulu, respectively. This is another reason for our linking politics and religion with social stratification.

The interplay of politics and religion in social stratification and mobility is a continuing theme in contemporary southeast Asia. In spite of the secularization movement discernible in the rise of new status groups based on education,

and in growing participation in the national administrative hierarchy and the modernizing economy, there is increasing popularity for the hadji category. This suggests that distribution of prestige is still underpinned by religious values. Supporting evidence can be seen in the continuing importance of Muslim political parties in Indonesia advocating an Islamic state, as well as in the strongly Islamic slant of Malaysia. Both of these broad politico-religious phenomena are now manifesting themselves in the southern Philippines, the traditional stronghold of Islam in the archipelago.

Notes

This is the revised version of a paper read at the National Convention of the Philippine Sociological Society held January 20–21, 1973, at Bocobo Hall, University of the Philippines, Diliman, Q.C. The author is currently curator of the division of anthropology of the Philippine National Museum. He received the Ph.D. in anthropology from the University of Sydney in 1973.

1. For a fuller review of stratification in traditional societies, see M. G. Smith (1966: 141–176).

2. He won again in the election of 1972. However, it is believed he left the island after September 1972. His term does not expire until the next mayoral election in 1976.

3. For the economic aspect of these changes, see Casiño (1967: 1–32) where the shift from subsistence rice cultivation to commercial copra production is analyzed.

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