

CHAPTER I

COTABATO: GEOGRAPHY AND ETHNOHISTORY

Cotabato is one of the most interesting places of study in Mindanao, not only as the land of the Magindanaos and the scene of a formidable resistance against Spanish power in Mindanao but also as the government-initiated settlement destination for countless Filipinos under the “land for the landless’ scheme. Furthermore, as the starting point of the Mindanao conflict of the modern times, Cotabato assumes special significance in both historical and socio-cultural studies.

Occupying almost the whole of southwestern Mindanao, Cotabato covered a vast area of some 8,800 square miles of which a quarter was level valley land; a half undulating plateau lands at an average elevation of about 300 meters; and a quarter mountainous land which was covered by virgin forest in the early part of the 20th century (Wernstedt and Spencer 1967: 543).

The first chapter gives a brief description of the land and people of the old undivided Cotabato before the advent of resettlement. Also discussed its short historical background.

Cotabato: Its Cultural and Ecological Landscape

Man as the creator of his world has to contend with the environment in which he lives. Cotabato is one endowed with ecological characteristics that favor the development of a well-developed socio-political and economic structure even before the coming of Spain to the Philippines. As the following description shows, these characteristics include the vast and fertile plains; a typhoon-free climate; a river system whose nurturing power brought forth settlements based on both agriculture and trade; a reliably and naturally safe harbor for anchorage of ships vital for trade; and finally, its people, whose ethnic diversity allows for making the area a melting pot of culture.

Etymology. The word **Mindanao** was originally given to Cotabato giving a clue on the degree of importance of Cotabato in Mindanao affairs in the bygone days. Mindanao comes from the root word *danao* that means “inundation by a river, lake or sea”(Saleeby 1904: 13). This phenomenon is attached to the Pulangi River, called by the Spaniards the Rio Grande de Mindanao. This is further clarified by the Magindanao scholar, Michael Mastura, who said that “for more than 10 miles from the sea the Rio Grande, aided by the rise of the tide periodically overflows its banks and flows all the adjacent lands” (Mastura 1979: 5). Similar reference to the great river was given by the seventeenth century Spanish writer Francisco Combes, who gave the meaning of Mindanao as “movement of the lake” (Combes 1897: iv). The Englishman William Dampier, who stayed for six months at the Magindanao sultanate’s capital in Cotabato in the latter half of 1686, was more direct by using the word Mindanao in reference to Cotabato.

Magindanao is the derivative of the word “midsanao,” meaning “flooded by the tide” due to the propensity of the Rio Grande or the Pulangi to overflow its banks. Wernstedt and Spencer (1967) explain the phenomenon of massive

flooding in connection with the "impounding of river waters and the creation of two large swamp areas, the Libungan Marsh and the Liguasan Swamp," caused by recent uplift across the mouth of the river. The term Mindanao eventually applied to the whole island as the Magindanao sultanate expanded its territorial and political power.

According to Claudio Montero, Cotabato is the Spanish corruption of the Muslim word "kuta-watu" meaning "stone fort" referring to the fortified hill with some stone defenses occupied by the Magindanao sultan (Montero y Gay 1876: 332). This was given the native name of *Tantawan*. No map of the Philippines prior 1861 was found carrying the name Cotabato because the term came into use after 1861 with the creation of the politico-military government of Mindanao and Sulu. (Fig. 1) Those areas in Mindanao not under Spanish control and inhabited by the Muslims were then referred to by Spanish writers as District of the Moros (Combes 1897: lvij).

Location and Limits. Cotabato, described by a migrant settler as heart-shaped, with its "apex tipping the Sarangani Bay and its vortex immersing in Illana Bay" is situated in the southern part of the island of Mindanao (Millan 1952: 2). Its territorial limits varied with its political fortunes in various stages of its history.

During the apogee of Magindanao power during Sultan Kudarat's reign, the Magindanao sultanate's influence encompassed almost the whole island of Mindanao from Davao to Zamboanga, what is now the Lanao provinces, Cagayan, and Basilan. Thus, according to Majul, except for the Sultanate of Buayan, a rival sultanate in Cotabato, Sultan Kudarat was virtually ruler of all the people from the Davao Gulf down to Basilan and had either received tributes or forged alliances with the Ilanuns, Maranaos, Samals, Cagayanos, and other indigenous tribes within his territorial domain (Majul 1973: 125).

The eighteenth century division of Mindanao consisted of Butuan, Zamboanga, District of the Moros, and Caraga. The District of the Moros referred to the areas in Mindanao which were outside the Spanish control. Starting from the village of Sibuguey in Zamboanga, the District of the Moros extended southward and eastward till the jurisdiction of Caraga in the east (now Agusan and Surigao provinces), and the Bay of Tagalooc (Davao Gulf) in the south. It was bounded by Misamis in the north and by the sea in the southeast (Combes 1897: lv).

The creation of the District of Cotabato dates back in 1851 with the Spanish occupation of the strategic port of Polloc near the outlet of the Pulangi River. In 1858, the Commandancias of Makar and Glan of Sugod Boyan in the modern-day General Santos City were created to make an effective thrust into Cotabato's southern sector. As mentioned earlier, they were then placed under the fourth district of Mindanao, Davao, whose territorial jurisdiction "covered the region from Point Tagubon westward to the original Davao Gulf area, down to the present South Cotabato and Sultan Kudarat Provinces with Malaluna Point near Lebac as the farthest southern boundary" (Corsino 1998: 37).

The Royal Decree of July 30, 1860 created the politico-military government of Mindanao with the following politico-military districts, namely: first district, Zamboanga; second district, Misamis; third district, Surigao; fourth district, Davao; and the fifth district, Cotabato. Moreover, the present SOCSKSARGEN area (South Cotabato, Sultan Kudarat, Sarangani, and General

Santos City) was not a part then of fifth District of Mindanao, Cotabato, but the fourth District of Davao as shown by Fig. 1.

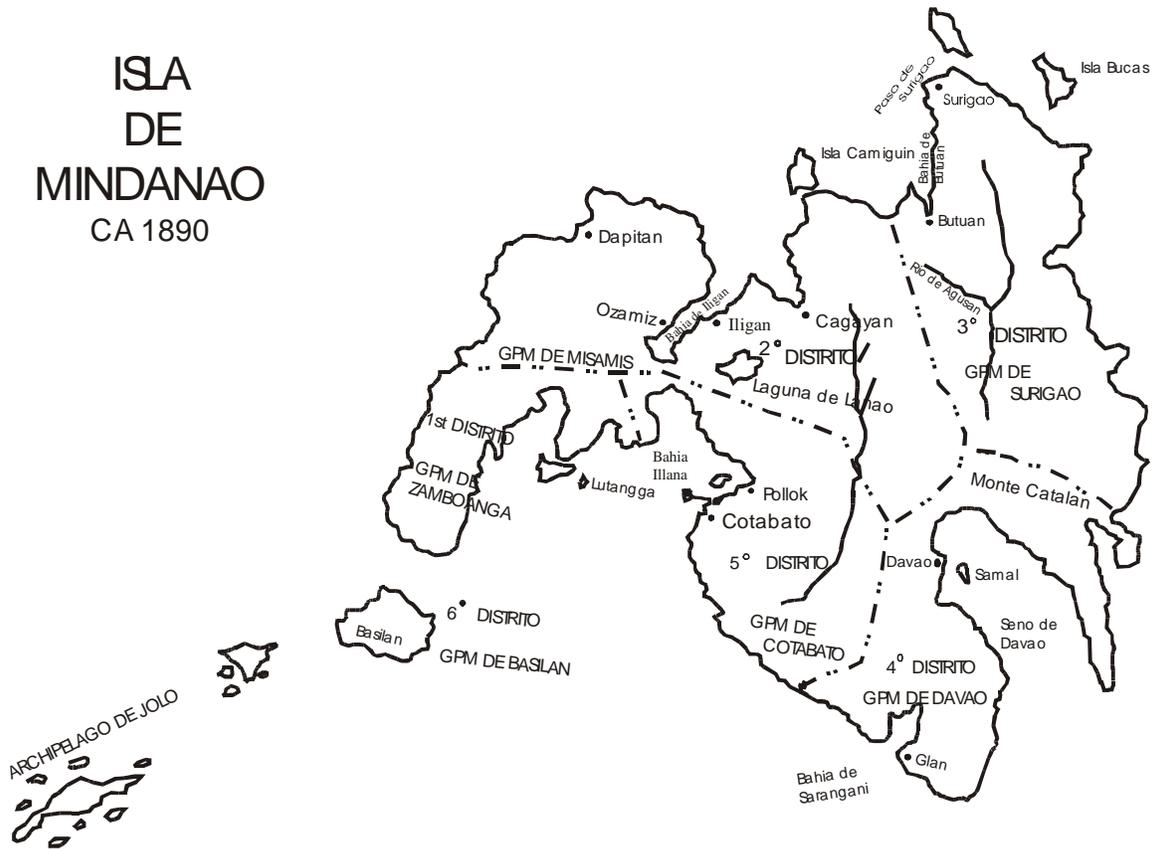


Fig. 1. Isla de Mindanao ca. 1890. Adapted from Don Julian Gonzalez Parrado's *Isla de Mindanao*, 1890.

By 1887, Corsino (1998), noted the incorporation of Davao into the jurisdiction of the *Commandancia* of Mati just as the *Commandancia* of Glan (in today's Sarangani Province) had jurisdiction over the southern limits of Davao, which extended southwestward to Malaluna Point near the Bay of Tuna in present-day South Cotabato (Corsino 1998: 41). During the early American period, the *Commandancia* of Glan, Davao and Mati were all returned back to Davao District during the American military occupation of Mindanao as provided in General Order No. 10 of the Military Department of Mindanao and Jolo.

The rapid growth of the Koronadal and Allah Valley settlements due to the post-war upsurge of Christian settlers led to the separation of the southern part of Cotabato from the Empire Province of Cotabato in 1966. In 1973, the two provinces of South and North Cotabato became four provinces with the carving out of Sultan Kudarat and Maguindanao provinces from the former. Finally, the creation of the Province of Sarangani in 1992 made the once Empire Province into five provinces today - North Cotabato, South Cotabato, Maguindanao, Sultan Kudarat, and Sarangani provinces (Fig. 3).

Legend:

Boundary of provinces

**Boundary of chartered
Cities of Zamboanga
and Davao**

**City of Zamboanga
includes islands of the
Basilan Group**

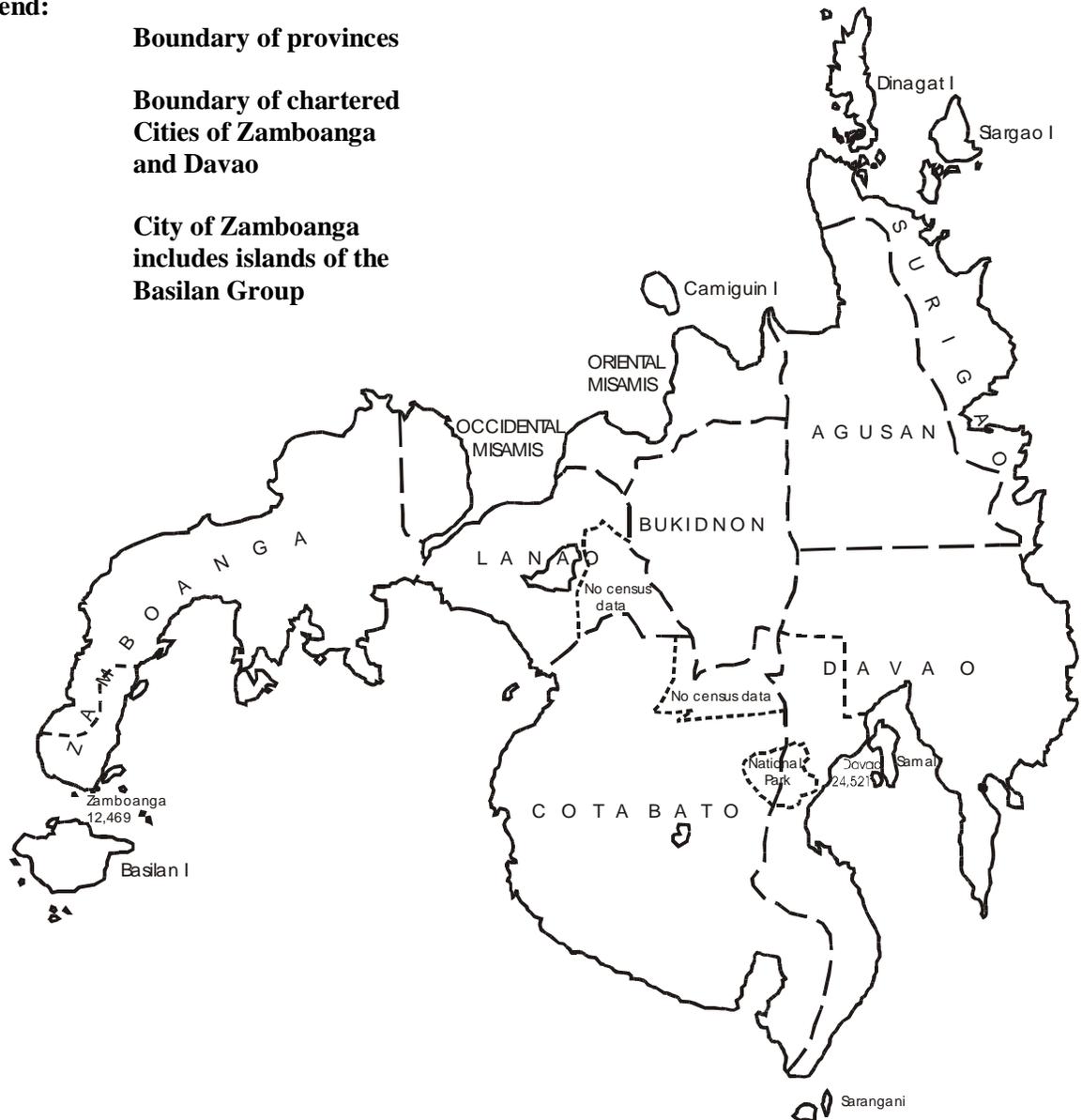


Fig 2. Mindanao ca 1939 as adapted from Pelzer's (1945)
Pioneer Settlement in the Asiatic Tropics, 136.

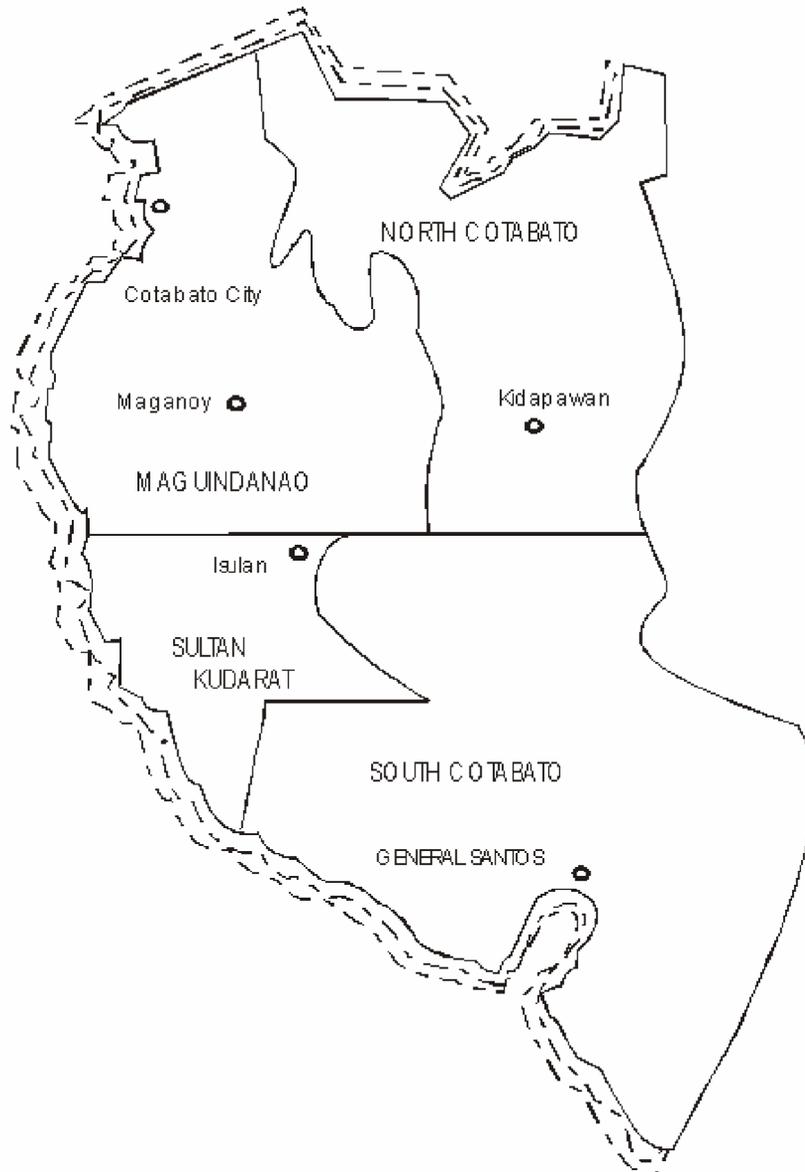


Fig. 3. Map of Cotabato ca 1973

Koronadal Valley in South Cotabato

Koronadal Valley, the subject of the present study, is located in the southeastern part of Cotabato. A narrow plain flanked by two mountain ranges, the Quezon mountain range in the east and Roxas mountain range in the west, it extended in a northwesterly direction from Sarangani Bay to Lake Buluan about 80 kilometers long and from 10 to 12 kilometers wide covering an area of about 97,000 hectares. Between these mountain ranges "is the fertile cogonal and marshy valley of Koronadal, called by the B'laans *kolon na dal* which comes from the Magindanao words *kolon* or *kalon* which means "cogon" grass and *nadal* or *dalal* meaning "plains". As the name suggests, the Valley was an extensive plain found from the northern shore of Sarangani Bay at Dadiangas (now General Santos) running in a northwesterly direction to Lutayan barrio in Buluan Lake, approximately 8 miles wide and fifty miles long. Wernstedt and Spencer (1967) described Koronadal Valley:

The Koronadal Valley in the south is the largest of the peripheral lowlands. With an average width of nearly 8 miles, the Koronadal extends for over 50 miles from the shores of Lake Buluan in the north to the head of Sarangani Bay. Structurally, the Koronadal Valley terminates at the low topographic divide located along the line between the Parker and Matutum volcanoes. North of the divide the drainage of the valley is dominated by the north-flowing Marbel River, whereas to the south, drainage is by way of the Buayan river into Sarangani Bay.

The topography of Koronadal suggests its division into three parts: the Southern, Middle, and Northern Koronadal. Settlers of the three parts give varying impressions showing the differences in the physical characteristics of the three parts. One settler vividly recalled:

"As I have arrived, I can really feel the loneliness and emptiness of the place for there were no plants except the cogon grass and the trees that stood along the river banks. Only few kinds of trees were there, mostly Klinon and Dadyangas. I was saddened upon seeing that the place was hot, arid, and desolate."

The loneliness and emptiness of the surroundings was understandable since Southern Koronadal, better known as Buayan, was the driest portion of Koronadal Valley. With a low rainfall of only 38.45 inches and 4.5 wet months (Barrera, 1963:226), Buayan was the least inhabited area before settlement days with most inhabitants found more numerous in the Middle and Northern Koronadal. As a residential place, it did not appeal either to the we-rice agriculture-based Magindanaos and the kaingin-type agriculture of the Blaans. Experts could not even say whether this part of the valley ever had a forest cover (Pelzer, 1945:145).

The impressions gathered from the interviewed settlers tell of "dust as thick as one inch" which the strong, southerly wind coming from Sarangani Bay blew across the plains of Buayan. As a result Buayan was sometimes called "Dust-diangas" referring to its poblacion area, Dadiangas. Sometimes the area was also called "the Dust Bowl of the Philippines." On the other hand, Middle and Northern Koronadal were noted for forest and *babay ramo*. An interesting

theory presented by Smith (1924), as quoted by Pelzer, says that Koroandal Valley was once a shallow sea channel connecting Lake Buluan to Sarangani Bay before the eruption of Mount Matutum. The eruption of the volcano led to the filling of the channel by volcanic materials.

A province as vast as Cotabato is expected to have varying topography ranging from flat level land and towering mountain ranges. Moreover, the plains are particularly important for an agricultural nation like the Philippines, especially if such plains are watered by river systems. Since farmlands are usually found in the plains, these also became centers of communities.

Cotabato is especially favored by an extensive area of plain extending for almost fifty miles eastward from the shores of Illana Bay to the southern boundary of what is now Bukidnon Province and southeastward to Sarangani Bay. These extensive plains provided the first element in a material infrastructure that made Cotabato the leading power in Mindanao and Sulu region during the heydays of Sultan Kudarat and his successors. Thus, Warren (1985) mentioned Sulu's reliance on Cotabato to solve Sulu's eighteenth century chronic food shortage particularly rice, its staple food. Likewise, Iletto (1971) attributed Buayan's dominance in the nineteenth century Cotabato to its economy spurred by its agricultural activities in direct contrast to *sa-ilud's* waning power due to lessened trade activities in the region.

The second important feature of Cotabato is its towering mountain ranges in the north, east, south, northwest and southwest which virtually insulate Cotabato from the neighboring areas and bodies of water. Wernstedt and Spencer (1967) identify these ranges as the Tiruray Highlands or Cotabato Cordillera, which occupy the extreme southwestern corner of Mindanao, extending in an unbroken front along the Celebes Sea coast for more than 125 miles composed of four distinctive physiographic units. Fronting directly along the Celebes Sea is the "4,000 foot-high Southwest Coast Range". The northern section is composed of the Mount Blik Uplands, which has summits ranging between 3,000 and 4,000 feet in elevation. The eastern edge of the Tiruray upland area is formed by the Daguma Range, a narrow, linear mountain chain which overlooks the Allah Valley. Between the Mount Blik Uplands and the Daguma Range is the Kulaman Plateau, an interior upland that lies at an elevation of approximately 3,000 feet (Wernstedt and Spencer 1967: 546-547).

The mountains in Cotabato region, said Huke (1963), prevent the rain cloud in passing over them giving Cotabato the distinction of receiving the least rainfall during the northeast monsoon during the months of December to March. But when winds do come, its rivers overflow and renew the fertility of the soil by depositing the sediments which they carry from the mountains to the plain. Thus, reports made by the governors-general of the Philippines during the American period mentioned the periodic droughts and floods which settlers had to contend with in Cotabato.

Despite the environmental constraint, however, the mountains resulted to Cotabato's unique distinction of being outside the typhoon belt. Its typhoon-free climate and the vast expanse of seemingly uncultivated arable land made Cotabato an almost ideal settlement area, a fact not lost on the Americans and the later Commonwealth and Philippine government officials.

B. *The People and Their Socio-Politico-Economic Organizations*

The multi-ethnic reality of the 17th century Cotabato world was observed by the Dutch writer Ruurdje Laarhoven (1989) as not a “single ethno-linguistic group” but a “series or cluster of populations tied together functionally under a religious or state ideology.”

Interestingly, such population complexity came about as a result of Western colonialism. The trade restrictions imposed by the Dutch in Indonesia during the colonial days led to the displacement of people which included the sea nomads called by some writers as the Badjaos and by Spanish sources as the Lutaos.

In the Southern Philippines world, on the other hand, the Spanish attacks of the Magindanao and Sulu homeland led to the intensification of an ancient practice in the Malay-Indo-Philippine waters of slave-raiding activities into the support mechanism of Spanish power in the Philippines - the Christianized natives of Visayas and Luzon. Eventually, the capture, purchase, and welcoming of slaves became a lucrative business since slaves could be put to productive use in farming, fishing, or rowing in sea expeditions. These captives eventually became freemen with their conversion to Islam. Laarhoven (1989) mentioned the Dutch traders' observation of the Magindanaos' “conscious policy of attracting new people (except the Europeans)” to settle on their territory. Furthermore, the Spanish presence also served as a major impetus for the Magindanao territorial expansion and the incorporation of new ethnic groups as tribute-paying population. Thus, the competition posed by the Spaniards led to the build-up of Magindanao power over territory and people in Mindanao by the seventeenth century period.

Among foreign migrants, the Indonesians and Chinese became important segments of Cotabato population until today. The Indonesians, called as Marore, antedated the coming of the Spaniards. The pre-war settlers met them in Koronadal and Allah Valleys when they came. The Chinese, on the other hand, were believed by Wickberg (1963) to have settled down in Cotabato and Sulu as a result of 1755 expulsion order by the Spaniards. In Cotabato, they became rice millers, carpenters, and palm wine distillers assisted by high interest loans from local Muslim datus. Eventually, before the Spaniards bowed out from Cotabato with the coming of the Americans the Chinese were observed to have wrested control of the retail trade of Cotabato town.

The multi-ethnic reality of the Cotabato world was further strengthened by the 20th century migration from the northern and central parts of the Philippines into Cotabato under a state-sponsored settlement program inaugurated by the Americans in 1913.

The Magindanaos. Islam took its successful direction under the guidance of Serif Mohammed Kabungsuwan from Johore. In the same manner that Spain's coming to the Philippines separated the Christian converts from the Muslims of Southern Philippines, the Islamic advent in Mindanao divided the original inhabitants of Cotabato into the Muslim converts and other cultural communities who refused to accept the new religion and system of government and/or remained detached from the new cultural force due to geographic isolation from the foci of the new cultural changes.

Casiño (2000) argues that the central idea of fusion, linkage, and alliance underlies the basic framework of the Magindanao society. Fusion is the

"acceptance and assimilation of foreign ways, like the submission of the pagan tribes to the Islamic faith which Sharif Kabungsuwan brought to them. The Magindanao myth of a female Putri Tunina who emerged from the bamboo and who was offered to Sharif Kabungsuwan for a wife was considered by Casiño as the clear symbol of fusion between the indigenous female and the foreign male. Linkage and alliance was commonly done through dynastic marriages. Thus, Sharif Kabungsuwan married Tabunaway's sister, Surabanun. From his marriage with Putri Tunina whom Tabunaway found in a bamboo, his daughter Putri Mamur, married Pulwa, the datu of Buayan. To build an alliance with the Iranuns, Sharif Kabungsuwan married an Iranun woman, Agintabu. The product of such union was Sharif Maka-alang who married Bulim, a B'laan woman found in a crow's egg. Significantly, the Maka-alang-Bulim marriage representing Magindanao-B'laan alliance resulted to a royal lineage where Sultan Kudarat came from (Casiño 2000: 166).

The folkloric tradition of both the Lumads and Magindanaos of Cotabato talked of common origin, based on the story of the brothers Tabunaway and Mamalu. The only difference in the two versions was which of the two brothers embraced Islam religion with the coming of Serif Kabungsuwan to the valley. In the Manobo version, it was Mamalu while in both the Tiruray and Maguindanao version, it was Tabunaway.

The first authentic description of the Magindanaos was given by William Dampier at the end of seventeenth century who spent six months with the Sultan of Magindanao. According to Dampier, the people of Cotabato appeared to be of various origins, just like the inhabitants of Luzon, greatly resembling the people of Borneo, Macassar, and the Moluccas. Of the many divisions of the Magindanaos, two had always been pre-eminent - the Sultanate of Magindanao and the Sultanate of Buayan. Magindanao proper of the nineteenth century period occupied the delta of the Pulangi River and the coastal area of southern Mindanao while Buayan covered the upper valley and the interior plains of the Pulangi. The 19th century map made by Father Pablo Pastells shows that the important settlements during the period which recognized the authority of the Sultan of Maguindanao were: Cotabato proper, Slangan, Simuay, Katitwan, Libungan, Tumbao, Bagumbayan, Taviran, Tamontaka, Lalabuan, Baras, Malabang, Dinas, Sugut, Glan, Boayajan, Mlut, and Sarangani Islands. That of the Buayan sultanate, on the other hand, were Buayan, Pinyaman, Cabalungan, Sapakan, Talayan, Dulawan, Kudarangan, Banguingued, Matinggawan, Kabacan, Kabuntalan, Dansalan, and other settlements along Lakes Liguasan and Buluan (*Jesuitas*, Legajo 66, 21 de Noviembre de 1883: 29-33).

The coming of Islam to Southern Philippines was considered an integral part of the penetration and expansion of Islam in Southeast Asia. Islam first arrived in Sulu, but contrary to expectations, Islam's coming to Mindanao did not come from Sulu. It was a direct thrust from the Malay archipelago. Although the arrival of Serif Mohammed Kabungsuwan in Cotabato is dated by some writers as 1475 A.D. and by Majul as 1515 A.D. , some of the inhabitants might already be Muslims by that time.

Serif Kabungsuwan is the son of Serif Ali-Zainul Abidin, a descendant of Prophet Muhammad and Putri Jusul, the daughter of the Sultan of Johore. The Islamization process was effected by marriages with the daughters of the local chieftains and by Kabungsuwan's success in forging alliances and reconciling warring factions within the Mindanao area. Forthwith, the prestige of Islam led

the ruling principalities in Cotabato and Lanao to base their legitimacy to rule by tracing descent from him.

The development of the port of Cotabato and its continuous contact with traders and preachers from Brunei, Ternate, Arabia, and Sulu greatly strengthened the Islamic institutions in Cotabato despite the arrival of the Spaniards in the archipelago.

The Spaniards found to their dismay that the Muslim resistance in Mindanao and Sulu was more intense and better organized. This can be attributed to its more advanced political organization owing its political vocabulary to Islam. The central authority was ruled by the sultan. He ruled over a number of villages governed by the *datus*. The sultanate had a well-developed bureaucracy whose council was made up of the *raja muda* (Crown Prince), *Rajah Bendahara* (a senior prince), *Rajah Laut* (commander of the Royal Fleet), and the *Temenggong* (chief of the Royal Guards). The council gave assent and concurrence in the promulgation of laws, declaration of war, ratification of treaties, and the nomination of a new sultan. Besides the council, the sultan was also advised by the *panditas* with the highest ranking among them, the Pandita Kali, having the sole authority to interpret and revise the *luwaran*, a code of laws taken from the old Arabic law and translated into Magindanao tongue with some changes adopted to local condition for guidance in the administration of justice.

Another Muslim group were the Iranuns, former inhabitants of the cool, rainy highland country of Lanao who came to settle along the coast in Illana Bay and the great plains of the Pulangi. They follow the Maranao speech with a considerable admixture of Magindanao idioms but they adopted the sober Magindanao dress and quiet manner (Kuder 1945: 123). They have gained recognition as a genealogical clan since the Magindanao sultanate, says Majul, "refers to a particular family or dynasty that was Iranun in origin" (Majul 1972: 32).

Another group were the Sangils found in South Cotabato and Davao del Sur particularly in Balut and Sarangani Islands. They were said to have come from the Indonesia-owned chain of islands lying between southern Mindanao and northeastern Celebes. They came to settle in Southern Mindanao as refugees due to changing political conditions while others escaped the Christianizing efforts of the Dutch missionaries. They were Islamized by the Magindanaos after their arrival in Mindanao (Kuder 1974: 122).

The Indigenous Peoples (The Ips). The word *lumad*, a Bisayan word meaning "indigenous" became a collective name for the 18 ethnolinguistic groups found in Mindanao. In a meeting of the Lumad Mindanao Congress in June 1986, 15 of the 18 highlander groups adopted the word "Lumad" to refer to non-Muslim, non-Christian indigenous peoples in Mindanao. To Rodil (1992) the emergence of this name is significant because it indicates the rise of self-identity among the heretofore-marginalized highlanders of Mindanao. In Cotabato, the major IP groups are the T'boli, Tiruray, B'laan, and Manobo, a brief description of which follows.

The *T'boli*. The T'boli, also known as Tiboli and Tagabili are an old indigenous people living in the province of South Cotabato in the municipalities of Lake Sebu, T'boli, and Suralah and in the province of Sarangani in the municipalities of Kiamba, Maitum, and Maasim. Located within these areas are the major lakes

which are important to the T'bolis: Lake Sebu, the largest; Siluton, the deepest; and Lahit, the smallest (Benitez 1966: 42).

The T'boli myth tells of the great flood and the bamboo - a combination of the universal and the indigenous elements. According to the legend, the T'bolis are descendants of the La Bebe and La Lomi and Tamfeles and La Kagef, two couples who survived the great deluge after being warned by the Deity diwata. Taking a huge bamboo that could accommodate countless people, they filled the vessels with food. When Mt. Hulon got inundated, the four got into the bamboo while the rest of the population drowned. From La Bebe and La Lomi came the Ilongo and other Visayan groups, the Ilocanos, and the Tagalogs. And from La Kagef and Tamfeles came the *tau sequil* (lowlanders); *tau mohin* (the sea dwellers); *tau sebu* (the uplanders of Lake Sebu and sinulong); the B'laans of Tupi; the Manobos; and finally, the Muslims.

Of all the Lumad groups, the T'boli were considered by Benitez (1966) as the most picturesque and colorful. Their use of black blouses filled with exquisite embroidery over a bright colored skirt called *luwek*, a dangling brass chains embracing the hips holding the skirt in place, and their use of an array of jewelries which include little brass with hanging braids of horse hair on the ears, necklaces made up of shells, bells, and singkil bells in the ankles and a band of beads used as a choker make a T'boli woman a very arresting figure.

The **B'laan**. The word *B'laan* and its various derivatives came from the word *bila* meaning "house" and the suffix *an* meaning "people" so that *B'laan* means the "people living in the houses." The B'laans inhabit the provinces of South Cotabato (in the cities of Koronadal and General Santos City and the municipalities of Banga, Polomolok, Tampakan, Tantangan, T'boli, Norala, and Tupi); Sarangani (municipalities of Glan, Maasim, Malapatan, and Malungon); Sultan Kudarat (Municipality of Columbio; and Davao del Sur (Jose Abad Santos, Kiblawan, Magsaysay, Malita, Sarangani municipality, and Sulop) (Casiño 2000: 237). But in the 19th century, they inhabited the hilly region behind the west coast of Davao Gulf. Their territory then extended all the way into the Bagobo country in the north and westward into the Cotabato-Davao watershed. Casal (1986) found the B'laans culturally related to the Bagobos and Mandayas as shown by similarities in architecture, clothing, ornamentation, and socio-religious practices (Cabrera 1967: 184).

Just like the T'boli and other Lumad groups, the coming of the settlers and their occupation of the coastal plains and foothills on the western coast of Davao Gulf and the Cotabato lowland areas gradually pushed the B'laans deeper into the interior and hilly regions, without much resistance on their part.

The B'laan are highly decorative with beads of crystals of dark color of red, green, blue, black and the like used as necklaces. The most unique feature of their traditional dress is a beautifully embroidered cloth of intricate design of excellent weaving of hemp called the *tabi* cloth. There is also the bras belt around their waist tussled with brass chains and bells at the tip of each tussle thread. The male traditional clothing is a collarless long-sleeved jacket with tight fitting pants cut at knee length. Interestingly, their language is characterized by the preponderance of the letter "f."

Unlike the Tiruray and Manobo, the B'laans were barely touched by the evangelization efforts of the Jesuits of Cotabato during the Spanish period. However, they were believed to be monotheists who believe in the existence of one God, creator of heaven and earth and all things in the universe.

The **Manobo**. The *Manobos* (*man-suba*), inhabitants of the river, inhabit the river basin of Agusan, the Point of San Agustin in the south of the Bay of Malalag in Davao, and the river valley of Cotabato. While Father Pastells considered the B'laans as "timid, amible, and easy to reduce", the Manobos were considered as "fierce, suspicious, and treacherous in their attacks although easy to reduce". In their clothing, arms, and adornment, they were found closely resembling the Mandayas of Surigao and Davao with the exception of the strings of glass beads which were black rather than red among the Manobos (Pastells in Blair and Robertson 1903: vol. 42, 282).

The **Tirurays**. The Tirurays are a traditional hill people found in the upper portion of a river-drained area in the northwestern part of Cotabato, where the mountainous terrain of the Cotabato cordillera faces the Celebes Sea. The Tiruray classify themselves according to their locations: the *etew rotor* are the mountain people; the *etew dogot* are the coastal people; *the etew teran* are the Tran people; the *etew awang*, the Awang people; and the *etew ufi*, the Upi people (Cabrera 1967:184).

The development of Cotabato port as a trading center in Mindanao in the seventeenth century led to a flourishing trade between the Tirurays of Cotabato Cordillera and the Magindanaos of the lowland. From the mountains came rattan, tobacco, almaciga, beeswax, and other forest products while from the Magindanaos came salt, knives, pots, cloth, and other household implements.

The establishment of a Spanish military garrison in Cotabato town in 1861 led to an evangelization efforts by the Jesuits who established a Jesuit school and mission near Awang, close to the mountain region. The coming of the Americans brought yet another phase of colonization. Through the efforts of Irving Edwards, an American Constabulary officer married to a Tiruray, a public school was established in Awang in 1916 and an agricultural school in Upi in 1919. The building of roads opened up the area to numerous christian settlers who settled down in Upi. The acculturation of the Tirurays led to a dichotomy in Tiruray culture where those who refused acculturation retreated deeper into their ancestral mountain habitat while the acculturated ones resettled in the Upi valley and became Christians (Schlegel 1979).

The political system of the Tiruray society is clearly democratic. Each neighborhood of subsistence groups may have a leader who sees to the clearing of the swidden, the planting and harvesting of crops, and the equal sharing of food produced from the land. They are kept together by their adat or customary law and by an indigenous legal and justice system. The legal and moral authority is exercised by an acknowledged expert in customary law, the *kefeduwan* who presides over the *tiyawan*, the formal discussion of cases involving members of the community.

The Lumad world shows a close interaction between nature and man, thereby producing a "creative interdependence of nature and culture." Take the case of the kaingin system, their common agricultural practice. Unlike the western-mode intensive cropping and maximum output type of agriculture, the kaingin system understands the need for the soil to renew its fertility by allowing it to lie fallow for sometime. Also, the strong hunting and gathering tradition of the lumadss indicate a vital link between the indigenous people and the forest. The forest provides a multitude of products vital for their physical and cultural survival like food, medicinal plants, abaca cloth, building materials, dyes for their cloth, bees wax, etc. In the modern setting, however, the denudation of

Cotabato's forests by logging and intensive expansion of Christian settlements caused irreparable damage to this balance between nature and man with unfortunate results for the lumads and their simple, rustic setting.

Likewise, in its political organization, the desire for continuity and stability necessitates a deep respect for customary laws and traditions. Among the lumads of Cotabato, knowledge of traditional lore and mythology is one of the qualities needed for the position of chieftainship, besides wisdom, eloquence, fairness in arbitration of disputes, and for the warrior tribes, courage and skill in battle.

In the kinship-based Lumad world, customary law or *adat* is especially strong. For instance, among the Tirurays, an expert in customary law called the *kefeduwan* is not only the most learned in Tiruray custom and law but "also possesses a skill for reasoning, a remarkable memory and an aptitude for calmness in debate." The chief's strong attachment to and knowledge of customary laws and tradition made the chieftain the guide/father of the people. Moreover, the dispersal of small clusters of houses over great distances had done much to prevent the evolution of a central authority. The Lumads, then, maintained its settlement-based strong local leader without evolving into a hierarchical-type centralized authority like the Magindanaos.

However, there are evidences to show that, in the past, the direction towards centralization was manifested by the Manobos, the most numerous among the Highlanders of Mindanao. This is shown by a seventeenth century Spanish report which tells of 2,000 Manobos under Manakior who joined forces with the Spaniards in the attack of Rajah Maputi of the Buayan sultanate in 1638. The same Manakior later formed an alliance with Sultan Kudarat through marriage with Kudarat's sister. This organizational capability of the Manobos was further shown by the Alankat Movement mounted by a certain Manobo chieftain, Timuay Mampuroc of Libungan. The term "Alankat" was described as a "defense mechanism" against the pressure of Christian migration. Mampuroc was able to obtain Maguindanao support by claiming to be a reincarnation of Datu Ali of the Buayan sultanate who was killed by the Americans in 1905. That a Lumadnon chieftain would claim to be a reincarnation of a Magindanao hero shows the spiritual and cultural link between and among the occupants of Cotabato region.

The mechanism towards centralization among the Manobos is explained by the elaborate ritual known as *lantung*, literally a wooden beam that functions as a divider at the center of the house. According to reports, several datus would converge at a place called the center of the earth. The datus represented four directions of Mindanao: "upstream" (Cagayan de Oro), "downstream" (Cotabato), "eastward" (Davao), and "westward" (Lanao). The people of these four directions recognized a ruler whom they chose by common agreement.

Thus, a mechanism was in place for the Manobos to evolve into a centralized authority which also explains Manakior's capacity to gather 2,000 warriors during the Spanish period. That it did not materialize into a formal bureaucratic set-up and remained a loosely federated structure indicates a strong tradition of independence and autonomy of the various ethnic groups of Mindanao.

The two groups of people, the Muslims and the Lumads, while distinct from each other share similar environment and thus had to interact with each other. As occupants of a similar ecological environment, both the Muslims and the Lumads developed a system of alliances, politics, economic interdependence,

and intermarriages when their world was rudely interrupted by the Spanish coming to Cotabato. Henceforth, life would no longer be the same for the people of the valley.

C. The Spanish Period and the Creation of the Historical Divide

The creation of the historical divide between the two peoples of the Philippines - the Christianized natives of Luzon and Visayas and the Islamized natives of Southern Philippines - was the most unfortunate result of Spanish colonization of Mindanao and Sulu.

The earliest Spanish expedition for the conquest of Cotabato was in 1578 where Gabriel de Ribera was literally lost in the vast expanse of Cotabato when the Magindanaons used the time-tested defense: withdrawal to the interior (Blair and Robertson, Vol. 4:282-283). In 1596, Captain Rodriguez de Figueroa ventured to the colonization of Cotabato at his own expense lured by the government promise of land, trade monopoly in Mindanao, and designation as governor of the island for life, a position to be inherited by his heir. Unfortunately for Figueroa, he died in an ambush without a return of his investment.

Moreover, what was revealing in Figueroa's colonization effort was the composition of his attacking force: 214 Spaniards and 500 native allies (Blair and Robertson, Vol 4, 171-181). The use of Christianized natives in attacking the homebases of the Muslims had sown the first seeds of distrust and suspicion between the two groups of people. When the Magindanaos responded to these attacks by attacking in 1599 the Spanish base of support - the Christianized natives of the coastal areas of Luzon and Visayas - the seeds of distrust started to take roots. Through the centuries, this learned fear and distrust of each other mushroomed into a full-blown biases and prejudices nourished by continuous support of the Spaniards by the Christianized natives; various slave-raiding activities into Visayas and Luzon; Spanish literature; sermon in the pulpit; and "moro-moro" plays featured in countless fiesta celebrations. The centuries-old conditioning had succeeded in dividing the people who belonged to a common race.

The more than three centuries of "Moro wars" failed to bring the complete subjugation of the Muslims. In a scathing indictment of Spanish policy after one such burning of houses and crops about to be harvested, the Frenchman Duke Alencon who was in Cotabato in the 1860s could not help but comment: "the few establishments owned by Spain in Mindanao procure her no material advantage . . . she is, so to speak, besieged there; and had to settle for making sorties just to maintain herself there." The Frenchman thought that the best policy to pursue in Mindanao would be to occupy the territory little by little, to win over the leaders, and conciliate the people by respecting their organization and their customs instead of nourishing their hatred "through periodic devastations" (Alencon, 1870:199). But Alencon missed a major point: Spain was fighting both a political and religious war.

Not much had changed by the last decade of Spanish presence in Cotabato. A Spanish official was honest enough to make the following assessment: "of the five politico-military districts of Mindanao, only two, Surigao and Davao are totally dominated." And as to Cotabato, he said: "The soldiers could'nt leave the camp for a distance of more than 100 steps without a threat to their lives" (Secades, 1895:22).

"Bloodied but unbowed," this sums up the Magindanao's persistent efforts against Spain. Nonetheless, the Spanish colonization weakened the once center of trade in Mindanao which, at the apogee of its power, was lord of the entire Mindanao eclipsing even the older center of Islam - the Sultanate of Sulu. The Englishman Thomas Forrest gave a part of the answer to the disturbing change of fortune by the 18th century - the presence of the Spanish navy in Zamboanga which impeded Chinese junks from going to Cotabato.

But more than economic dislocation, the historical divide which developed between the Christians of the north and the Muslims of the south would prove a tragedy of major proportion for a people of common race, the reverberations of which are felt in the modern times.

D. The Eagle's Shadow: The Deepening Colonization

The Spanish departure from Cotabato was immediately followed by a breakdown of law and order. The historian Sawyer lamented Cotabato's conditions: ". . . robbery, outrage and murder. . . Mindanao has become a seething hell. . . more dreadful than ever before in historic times" .

This chaotic state of affairs was explained in two versions: the Muslim and the Christian versions. The Muslim version tells of triumvirate left by the last Spanish governor to administer Cotabato after their departure. The triumvirate's composition indicated the three major groups of the town of Cotabato with the Christians represented by Roman Vilo, a native soldier; the Chinese as represented by Celestino Alonzo; and the Muslims represented by Datu Piang. Mastura opined that troubles averted when Roman Vilo organized an all-Christian government and had himself proclaimed Governor of the district. This posturing of leadership by the Christians allegedly had so enraged the *sa-raya* Maguindanaos headed by Datu Ali, Djambangan, and Enok that Cotabato town was attacked and ransacked on September 10 1899. According to this account, it was not only the Christians who were attacked but also the datos who were friendly to the Spaniards in the 1886-87 war waged by Datu Utto of Buayan.

The Christian version claims that the Spaniards entrusted the reins of government to Roman Vilo alone. They cited as proof the fact that the arms and the ammunitions were entrusted by the Christians to the Spaniards. Thus, when the Maguindanaos learned of this they negotiated with Roman Vilo for the barter of cows and carabaos in exchange of guns and ammunitions . Accordingly, when Vilo "had already large cattle and the native chieftains had also plenty of guns, the latter came down to Cotabato and while in the conference with Vilo at the wharf in front of the old convent, Vilo was assassinated and the town was ransacked."

Whatever version is correct, the fact is clear that the attacks made by the *sa-raya* Maguindanaos was an attempt to reassert control of the Muslim homeland from the hands of the interlopers. During this period, the once mighty Maguindanao sultanate had waned in power and influenced with Datu Ali of the Buayan sultanate described as the real power in the valley with about 70% of the population under his sway. During this chaotic period, Datu Utto of Buayan who waged war against the Spaniards in 1886-87 was In Nuling, old and enfeebled although still the richest.

Datu Piang's rise to power is the story of the non-royalty penetrating the inner echelon of power in Cotabato valley. A son of a Chinese married to a Muslim woman, the boy Piang became a trader like his father. He caught the attention of Datu Utto who made him a military commander. Moreover, once, he

failed to follow the order of Datu Utto to effect the return of inhabitants living near Sapakan who emigrated to Bakat near the present Dulawan. After having met the people and understood the reason for their departure from Sapakan, Piang then sent a letter to Datu Utto imploring him to pardon the people inasmuch as they continued to recognize him as their datu and they emigrated to a place which was still within his territory. His failure to follow order so angered Datu Utto that the latter immediately ordered his arrest. Moreover, the good relations developed by Datu Piang through the years led the other groups to provide Piang assistance by augmenting his troops. In the ensuing negotiations between the protagonist, Datu Utto recognized Datu Piang's ascendancy and forthwith retired to Nuling (Mastura, 1979: 15).

The strongest challenge against the Americans expectedly came from Datu Ali of Buayan who merely continued his reassertion of Maguindanao supremacy in a recognized Maguindanao territory. General Wood could not but acknowledge his admiration of the intrepid Maguindanao warrior: " He is a good deal on the Geronimo type and by far the most capable Moro we have run into" (Thompson, 1975: 69).

But American superiority in arms and the effective use of the "divide and rule" brought an end to Datu Ali's campaign in 1905 when he was surprised by the Americans in his camp. Datu Sansaluna, his 18 year old son, blamed Datu Enok's treachery for the death of the Maguindanao warrior.³⁶ In 1920 a Manobo chieftain would take up where Datu Ali had stopped, claiming to be a reincarnation of Datu Ali and would campaign for the defence of Cotabato homeland by driving the strangers from its territory (Gowing, 1979:13), clearly an act of cultural and spiritual linkage of the inhabitants of the valley, be they Muslim or tribal groups.

The establishment of the Department of Mindanao and Sulu inaugurated the effective incorporation of Southern Philippines into the Philippine administrative machinery after an loss of 20,000 Muslim lives.³⁷ Moreover, the land settlement program inaugurated by the Americans in 1913 would result in a more cataclysmic change for Cotabato.