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Makhdūmūn and Easternmost Dawah in Early Modern Philippines

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Abstract

European accounts of early modern insular Southeast Asia document the expansion of Islamic beliefs, institutions, and missionary networks across the Malay Archipelago and into the Pacific frontier. This article examines the role of *makhdūmūn* and other Islamic preachers in the Islamization of the Philippine Archipelago before and during the early Spanish colonial period. Drawing on European chronicles, Spanish administrative records, indigenous *tarsilas*, genealogical traditions, epigraphic evidence, and the *Boxer Codex*, the study reconstructs the activities of Muslim missionaries and the broader transregional networks that connected the Philippines with the Islamic world. The findings demonstrate that Islamization was not an isolated or localized phenomenon but part of a continuous maritime process linking Arabia, India, Persia, China, the Malay world, and the easternmost islands of Southeast Asia. Muslim preachers, traders, and religious scholars introduced Qur'anic teachings, established mosques, legitimized emerging Islamic polities, and integrated local communities into the wider *umma*. Spanish sources further reveal that colonial authorities perceived these missionary activities as a significant challenge, leading to systematic efforts to suppress Islamic preaching and replace it with Catholic evangelization. This study argues that the early history of the Philippines cannot be fully understood without recognizing the extensive Islamic missionary movement that preceded Spanish rule. Recovering the role of the *makhdūmūn* highlights the Philippines as the eastern frontier of a dynamic Islamic ecumene and restores a largely overlooked chapter in the religious history of maritime Southeast Asia.

Keywords:
Dawah, Islamic mission, *Makhdūmūn*, Southeast Asia, Spanish Philippines

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Abstrak

Sumber-sumber Eropa mengenai Asia Tenggara kepulauan pada masa modern awal menunjukkan bahwa Islamisasi berlangsung sebagai proses maritim yang dinamis dan melintasi batas-batas geografis hingga mencapai kawasan Pasifik, termasuk Kepulauan Filipina. Artikel ini bertujuan mengkaji peran *makhdūmūn* dan para pendakwah Islam dalam penyebaran ajaran Al-Qur'an serta pembentukan komunitas Islam di Filipina sebelum dan pada masa awal kolonial Spanyol. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode sejarah dengan pendekatan kualitatif melalui analisis sumber-sumber primer dan sekunder, meliputi kronik Eropa, arsip Spanyol, *tarsila*, tradisi genealogi, bukti epigrafi, dan *Boxer Codex*. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Islamisasi di Filipina merupakan bagian dari jaringan dakwah transregional yang menghubungkan dunia Islam di Arab, Persia, India, Tiongkok, dan Kepulauan Melayu. Para *makhdūmūn*, ulama, pedagang, dan mubalig berperan penting dalam memperkenalkan ajaran Al-Qur'an, mendirikan pusat-pusat keagamaan, serta membangun legitimasi politik kesultanan-kesultanan Islam setempat. Sumber-sumber Spanyol juga memperlihatkan bahwa aktivitas dakwah Islam dipandang sebagai ancaman terhadap proyek kolonial, sehingga mendorong upaya sistematis untuk membatasi penyebaran Islam dan menggantikannya dengan misi Katolik. Temuan ini menegaskan bahwa sejarah awal Filipina tidak dapat dipahami secara utuh tanpa menempatkan dakwah Islam sebagai bagian penting dari dinamika sejarah keagamaan dan jaringan maritim Asia Tenggara.

Kata Kunci:

Asia Tenggara, Dakwah, Filipina Spanyol, Makhdūmūn, Misi Islam.

Introduction

Before the consolidation of Islam as religion, Arabs (also Persians, Indians, and other future Islamized communities) had maritime experiences in the Indian Ocean. The contacts reached as far as China, mainly due to commercial goals. Terrestrial and maritime routes were the way in transferring goods, but ideas too. When Islam became a strong revolutionary movement, Muslims expanded rapidly towards the four cardinal points. The sea was an open space, and the new faith navigated to the end of the ecumene:

> In view of the existence of maritime commercial relations between the Middle East and China since before the birth of the new religion, it is very probable that the coastal zones of Southeast Asia have had some contact with Muslims from the very first period of Islam […] Many adherents both of the early Arab origin theory and of the later Indian

> origin standpoint indicated international maritime trade as the main mechanism [of the Islamization] (Meuleman, 2005, 25).

The international network across the Indian Ocean moved from the 7th century onwards a huge number of individuals with strong religious solidarities. The new message represented a driving force for many different ethnolinguistic communities that, by believing in a common creed and cosmovision, and by sharing practices and rituals, changed the local orderdrastically in parallel to and with global dynamics—what is called *Glocalization* (Andaya, 2010):

> By the thirteenth century, Southeast Asia was in contact with the Muslims of China, Bengal, Gujarat, Iran, Yemen, and South Arabia […] From its bases in Sumatra and Java, Islam spread further eastward. Ternate was converted in 1495. The Moluccas became Muslim in 1498 as a result of contacts with Java, and the coastal towns of Borneo were converted by Javanese contacts before the arrival of the Portuguese in 1511. Islamic influences from Sumatra, Ternate and Borneo reached the Philippines. Conversions were made in Luzon, Sulu, and Mindanao. On the basis of the intersecting interests of traders and local princes, and the migrations of merchants and missionaries, Islam became the common religion of the Indies (Lapidus, 2002, 383-384).

When Luis Váez de Torres discovered in 1606 the strait that has his name in New Guinea, he found Muslims preaching Islam to the Papuans:

> The water was observed throughout this land of New Guinea as far as the Moluccas, and the compass was set to fall on the Meridian of the Isles of the Thieves [Guam] with the Philippine Islands: at the end of this land we found Moros dressed with ready artillery, such as *falcones* and *berzos*, arquebuses and white weapons: they are conquering these people who are called Papuans and preach the sect of Muhammad: we trade with these Moros (Fernández de Quirós, *Descubrimiento de las regiones austriales*, 1607, 325).

Since ancient times, Arabs connected Mediterranean products with the Indian Ocean and China. Thus, as early as 651 A.D. / 30 H. the rise of the new Arab religion reached China (Hourani, 1947). The legend narrates that the caliph ʻUthmān sent a diplomatic mission that year to the court of the Tang dynasty. Khānfū / خانفو (Canton) became a commercial entrepôt for Muslims in China until the Guangzhou Massacre in 878-879. Since then, Zaytūn / زيتون (Quanzhou) emerged as a commercial and cultural center for Islam in eastern

Asia, influencing decisively the Islamization of neighboring regions (Chaffee, 2018).

Indeed, the Islamization of far eastern regions was produced through a process of human contact and interchange. Traders, merchants, travelers, adventurers, together with preachers, holy men, scholars, and missionaries from many nations joining together a global enterprise composed of Arabs, Persians, Turks, Chinese, Iberians, Berbers, Indians, and now, Malays. It was a global call, a *da'wah* / دعوة , an invitation to spread the message and the community, the umma.

At least this is the narrative depicted by some Spaniards, now established as new inhabitants of the Islamized entrepôt of Manila. Melchor de Ávalos described this Islamic call in 1585 with alarming and inflated tone:

> 8. And it is to be believed that since the Egyptians had the spice and treated and lorded over the islands, they would dogmatise and teach the natives, as they taught and indoctrinated them, in the law of Muhammad, and they gave them Muslim names and surnames, such as Ibrahim and Almansur, who was King of Tidore, and Abdalla and Raja Soliman and Alcandora and Mahamut and Mahamet; and Sidi Ali was from Granada and ambassador of the King of Calicut against the Portuguese, and so there were and are others; and those they have for great captains, they call *bassá* or *baxá*, and so they call the president and the counsellors here; and the King of Borneo is called Sultan Lexar, who went out with an army of many galleys and artillery and people, against Dr Francisco de Sande, governor of these islands, and having approached him with peace and friendship, always showing the white flag, in effect he began to shoot cannon first, as it seems by the progress of that journey, which I had in my possession to certify this, so that all the Mohammedans who are in this part of the world, are known enemies, as exposed by the rebellion of the Moluccas and Ternate […] And as for those of Borneo, it is proven that their tyrant lords and princes are from Mecca, which is the known house and site of Muhammad, and they are pirates, *et forte* they come under cap. 3 of the Papal bull […]. And it is also to be believed that those of Egypt, Arabia, and Mecca who came, would tell the natives the capital enmity they have against the Church and all of Christendom. It was prophesied and is seen, what the angel said to Hagar, Abraham's slave, that a man would be born of her, who was later called Ismael and his descendants and sequels were called and improperly called *Saracens*, of whom the Scripture says, Gen. 16:12, *hic erit fertis homo; manus cius contra omnes, et manus omnium contra eum*. In fact, the prophecy came out and comes out true, because they are the capital enemies of Christianity […] So, it seems to me that these

> Muslims of the Philippine islands enter into the account, especially that, as has been said, they come from Egypt and Arabia and Mecca, and are relatives, disciples and members of theirs, and every year they say that Turks come to Sumatra and Borneo and to Ternate, including some of those defeated in the famous naval battle given by the lord Don Juan of Austria. And they also come to other islands of the Moluccas and usually come to preach, and give warnings for war against Christians (Melchor de Avalos, *Cartas y alegaciones*, 1585, as quoted in Donoso, 2023, 306-307).

Cartas y alegaciones is an *arbitrio* [Letters and legal claims concerning and against the Muslims of the Philippines] was written by Melchor de Ávalos in 1585. In it he links the two edges of the Islamic world, Granada and Manila, with the goal of convincing the King to take political action against the so-called Moros in Manila and its surroundings. Comprising two long letters, both dated July 3, 1584, this document exposed the scope of Tagalog Islamization and the further development of Islam in Luzon. It represents the first Spanish effort to deal specifically with the Islamic presence in the Philippines.

The *Primera carta* (first letter) is a 48-page meticulous dissertation on the controversy that originated after the destruction, ordered by Governor Sande, of the great mosque of Brunei. The *Segunda carta* is a more severe essay of 25 pages justifying the legal authority of the Catholic King over Muslims (and pagans) in the archipelago. Overall, its purpose is to prove the legitimacy of conquest of the Muslims by connecting Philippine Muslims with the international expansion of Islam. Ávalos cited Portuguese sources and accounts of foreign Islamic warriors fighting in Southeast Asia, Egyptian Muslims controlling the Indian Ocean, Arab Muslims preaching in eastern regions, and even Moriscos from Spain in local Asian affairs.

Beyond Ávalo's view aimed to impress the King, preachers and missionaries "from above the winds" (i.e. western side of the monsoon) changed the spiritual and political life of the Malay world indeed. Numerous missionaries, traders, and adventurers, *makhdūmūn*, *shurafā'* and *awliyā'* are recorded in shrines, traditions and local *silsilas* (*tarsilas* for the Philippine case). Trade, mission, and conquest were the forces to Islamize coastal areas of maritime Southeast Asia, but interracial marriages were also important, between foreign Muslims and local aristocracies. Afterwards, a political institution was organized under the power of a sultan, as central government or as a coalition of parties, and Malays entered modernity as an Islamic community with power to influence other regional ethnicities.

Methods

Considering the state of the art and the historiography of Muslims in the Philippines, early Islamization has not been fully described. We aim to describe in this paper a preliminary rationale after the data collected by European and indigenous sources. Tarsilas and genealogical accounts provided much information to erect a diachronic process about the Islamic mission in the Philippine Archipelago.

These materials were canvassed to narrate the creation of Islamic polities in the region, and the incorporation of local tribes into the global umma. It was a rhetorical act indeed, using the word, the Quranic word, but it was also material access to worldwide Islamic civilization, including regional and global trade, economics and goods. In fact, that was the global access that Portuguese and Spaniards sought to erase, abort and usurp, as in fact the Western powers finally did. Accordingly, European sources testified to the intensive activity of Islamic mission, materials that we examine in the present paper to understand the Islamic mission vis-à-vis the European vision.

After exploring the sources as method to identify agents of Islamization, we sought to compile a list of actors in the mission. It was in fact a real dawah, a call through which Southeast Asia was being Islamized before and after the European intervention. Exploring Spanish sources we could understand that the call was probably accelerated by the European alteration of the previous status quo.

Result and Discussion

Agents of Islamization

The different historical sources, from the *Sejarah Melayu* to the *silsilas* or the epigraphy, testify to the presence of individuals whose main purpose was to expand the Islamic charisma and dogma. Overall, the data reveals the role of Muslim preachers known as *makhdūm* / مخدوم in Southeast Asia. It was a title more properly used in the Indian continent for "master" or "teacher."

Certainly, numerous *makhdūmūn* established themselves in Southeast Asia as new region and people to incorporate within the Islamic ecumene. It is revealing that, while the Portuguese were bombarding Malacca, the sultan discussed mystical lessons with his *makhdūm*:

> Writing from Malacca in 1556, Jesuit Baltasar Diaz labels the passage of Muslim teachers 'under the pretence of their being merchants' in Portuguese ships 'one of the gravest offences that could be offered God our Lord', and recounts a personal experience. In the ship in which he came from India, one of his fellow passengers was a Moro, 'proclaiming himself a relative of Muhammad', who was on his way to Borneo to join

> a companion who 'has already made Moros of the major part of that paganism' (Scott, 1992, 29).

It is possible as well to consider the Yuso of Cauin that appears in the section of Brunei in the *Boxer Codex* as new data added to existing materials about the Bornean *silsila* (Donoso, 2016, 116-117). Perhaps Yūsuf of Qazvin, from Persia, was one of those *makhdūmūn* / مخدومون recorded by Southeast Asian sources, somebody that arrived in Borneo at the end of the 13th century. He could have been a *makhdūm* of Persian origin, like so many other Muslim missionaries, traders and adventurers in the region.

Philippine tarsilas regularly mention these personae, such as the famous Karimul Makdum. This was an isolated individual coming "from above the winds" that built a mosque in Sulu. It seems clear, therefore, that his intention was to preach. He was a *sharīf* whose name was "Noble Master," Karīm al-Makhdūm / كريم المخدوم:

> The coming of Karim ul-makhdum to Sulu is stated […] about 1380 A.D. […] Actually, the end of the 14th century and the early part of the 15th century had witnesses various *makhdūmīn* (pl. of *makhdūm*) coming to Java, Malacca, and North Borneo by way of India (Majul, 1985, 54).

The Malay Annals (*Sějarah Mělayu*) recorded how the *makhdūm* Sayyid 'Abd al-'Azīz was instrumental in the conversion of Raja Tengah as sultan of Malacca, later to be known as Muḥammad Shāh (second sultan of Malacca after Iskandar Shāh, ruling from 1424 to 1444). Similarly, in the twilight of Malacca, the *makhdūm* Sadar Jahan taught lessons of Sufism to sultan Aḥmad while the Portugese besieged the city. This is to say, from the beginning to the end of the Sultanate of Malacca (1403-1511) it is possible to find references about the presence of these preachers and missionaries in the region. They came "from above the winds" to change the spiritual and political life of the Malay world: "In the written records (Malay, Javanese, Sulu, etc. written records) the makdumin are pious and learned Muslims who have originated from the West, from «above the winds»" (Majul, unpublished).

Using Pedro de San Buenaventura's *Vocabulario de la lengua tagala* (1913), the *Boxer Codex*, the tarsilas and other historical sources, we can display some of the main terms used for Muslim missionaries in early modern Philippines:

a) *Makdum* (*makhdūm* / مخدوم)
b) *Sarip* (*sharīf* / شريف)
c) *Sayc* (*shaykh* / شيخ)
d) *Catip* (*khatīb* / خطيب)
e) *Kali* (*qāḍī* / قاضي)

f) *Morabito* (*murābuṭ* / مرابط)
g) *Gazi* (*ghazi* / غازي)
h) *Sufi* (*sufi* / صوفي)

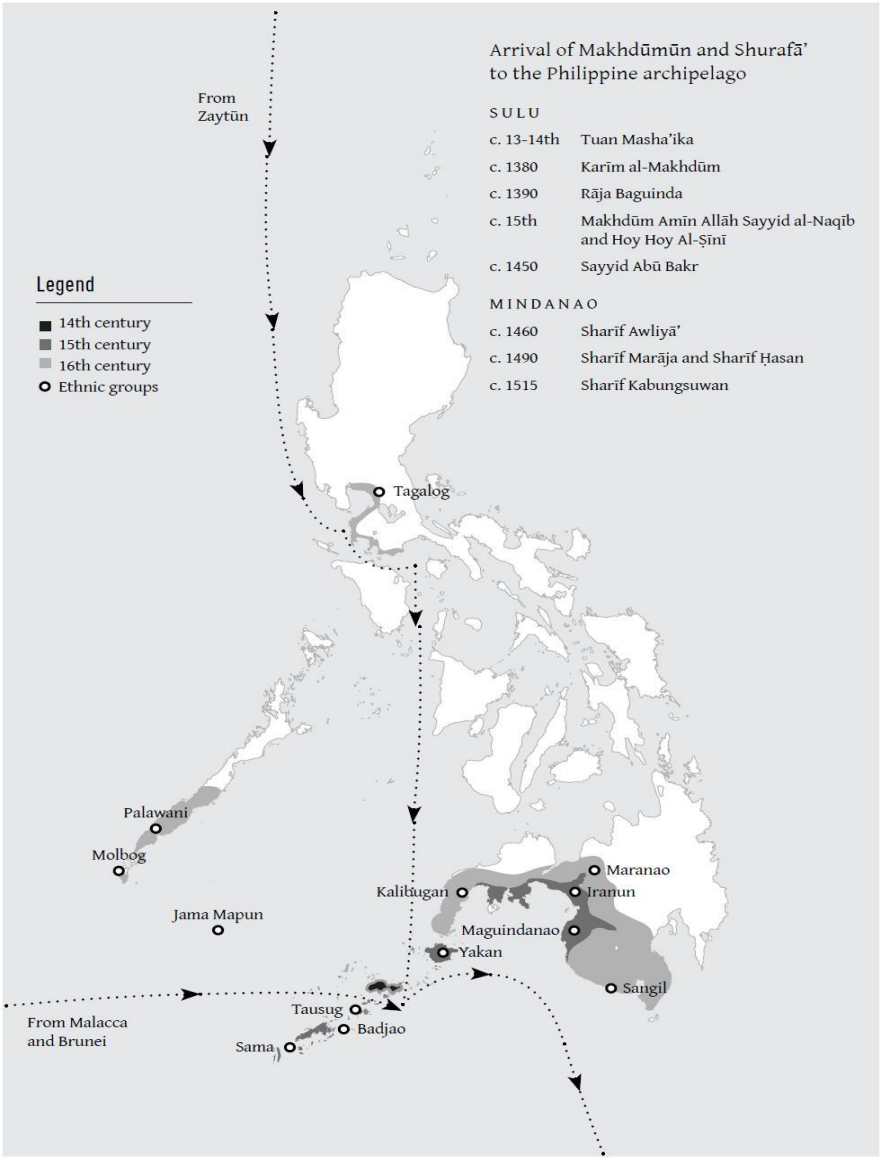

Fig. 1: Islamization of the Philippine Archipelago.
Source: Donoso, 2013, 157.

The Makhdūmūn *in European sources*

With the exceptional data gathered during the expedition, another Portuguese sage started to design in Seville's *Casa de la Contratación* the world cartography of *Padrón Real*. Namely, Diogo Ribeiro designed the maps to prove that the Philippines and the Moluccas were in the Spanish side after the Treaty of Tordesillas. However, since geographically that was not accurate, 1529 Treaty of Zaragoza settled the discussion. Spain withdrew claims over the Moluccas but reserved future rights over the Philippines. Between China and the Spice Islands, the almost virgin and tribally divided Philippine Archipelago presented huge strategic opportunities in Asia as a platform connected to America.

It does not appear, therefore, that the Philippines were unaffected by the cultural processes developing in Southeast Asia. Perhaps Arab sources did not fully describe the inner regions of the Malay Archipelago, but Arabs and Muslim adventurers, traders and missionaries reached and settled there indeed. As a matter of fact, it was the missionary activity of the so-called *makhdūmūn*, together with the trade of the Hui of Zaytun and the ventures of Islamized Malay princes, that would gradually bring Islam to specific entrepôts, including Manila Bay. Above all, the link with Brunei seems definitive, a link that would also be motivated by both Brunei and Manila being responsible for the distribution of Chinese merchandise:

> The Moro also informed the General how two junks from Luzon —as these nations call the main island of Manila— were currently in Butuan trading gold, slaves and wax. The merchandise that those from Luzon brought was the same shipped in their junk from China and Malacca [...] The junks that came from China, called *champanes*, were very large, and the smaller only came to the island of Luzon. From here the goods were sold in Borneo. People from Luzon and Brunei carried the products to be sold around those islands (San Agustín, *Conquista de las Islas Filipinas*, 1698, 156).

Huge Chinese junks (mainly from Quanzhou) anchored in Malacca, while smaller ships arrived at Brunei and Manila, from where the goods were locally distributed by local sailors, including as destinations Cebu or Butuan. Therefore, the commerce was in hands of people in process of Islamization connected with the maritime *silsila* that was already at the doors of the Pacific Ocean. Gaspar de San Agustín (1651-1724) noted the commercial predominance and presence of *moros* throughout the Philippine Archipelago, in Luzon, Cebu and Mindoro.

After the Magellan-Elcano fruitful expedition, several envoys were sent with limited success, under García Jofre de Loaísa (1525-1528) and Álvaro de

Saavedra (1527-1529). The difficulty of undertaking the enterprise to colonize the Islands of San Lázaro or *Islas del Poniente* manifested with the expedition of Ruy López de Villalobos (1542-1546). Portuguese patrols prevented Spaniards to set foot on those islands (*Ilhas dos Luções* and other) that were, in fact, within the Portuguese jurisdiction of Tordesillas. King Felipe II finally entrusted Andrés de Urdaneta (c. 1508-1568) and Miguel López de Legazpi (c. 1503-1572) with the organization of a mission to conquer and settle the western islands, renamed *Filipinas*. The enterprise began in Cebu in 1565, where a city was erected although it was constantly attacked by Portuguese forces. Eventually, it was confirmed the wealth and political development of Manila in the island of Luzon, and the next target was to conquer Manila: "Legazpi by this time realized that Tagalog Muslims enjoyed a virtual monopoly on the retailing of Chinese goods in the archipelago, and Cebu's days as Spain's commercial outpost in the Orient were numbered" (Scott, 1992, 56).

The Spanish quickly realized that the Muslims controlled the archipelago's trade by reselling Chinese goods. It was ideological antagonism, but also commercial and, ultimately, political rivalry that would soon lead to conflict. However, peace, diplomacy and good manners were encouraged by the king and the conquistador. Yet, the few Spaniards undertaking the conquest of an archipelago of hundreds of islands had no choice but to initially assume the order of the local thalassocracy and state of affairs, i.e. the rules of Muslim trade. Unlike the Portuguese, who controlled strategic ports, the Spanish faced an unfamiliar, dispersed landscape, intent not on controlling the maritime network, but the whole land, as platform to China and a momentous consolation after giving away the Moluccas to Portugal.

Legazpi also rapidly noted the archipelago's anthropological diversity. Although Moros controlled trade, they were only numerous in western and southern Luzon, Mindoro, Palawan and western Mindanao. The remaining population was composed of divided and less developed tribes. He thus explained the situation in his 1570 report to the king, considering how easily the Christian faith could spread and, consequently, territorial conquest:

> There are many provinces in this island [of Luzon]. Different language and customs predominate in each one. The majority are populated by Mohammedan Moros and other Indians who paint themselves, who worship their ancestors and invoke the devil. They have no natural king. The land is ruled by private lords. The richest of them have wars between them to capture and make slaves for being sold in other provinces. […] These natives will be easy to convert to our holy Catholic faith because almost all are pagans, except those of Borneo and Luzon who are Moros for the most part. Some principals have been

> converted in these islands. Yet they have little knowledge of the law they took except circumcision and avoiding pork. The pagans are without law and have no temples or idols or sacrifices and easily accept what is told and persuaded to them. They have some superstitions of spells and other miseries that will be easy to remove from them if we send missionaries who know the language and preach to them. (Legazpi. *Relación de las Islas Filipinas*, 1570, as quoted in Retana, 1898, V, 39 and 24. Our translation).

In this way, a preliminary partisan view began to form among some of the first Spanish settlers of the archipelago who cautioned against the Islamic expansion and emphasized a worldwide contestation. They used arguments observed and taken from the Islamic west, for instance *gacices* (*gāzī* / غازي, "warrior in the path of God," *mujāhid fī sabīl Allāh*) and *morabitos* (*murābiṭ* / مُرابِط, marabout, "defender of the frontier"). Under this perception, Muslim missionaries were accelerating conversion in the archipelago:

> Many on the island were beginning to become Moros. They circumcised and took Arabic names. The cancer was spreading so rapidly that if the arrival of the Spaniards was delayed any longer, they would all be Moros today, as are all the islanders who are not in the government of the Philippines, to whom very well trained *gacices* and other *morabitos* come to preach across the Strait of Mecca and the Red Sea (Grijalva, *Crónica de la orden de nuestro padre san Agustín*, 1624, 492).

This fact is significant indeed. Perhaps an exaggeration, the matter is that an Islamic religious reaction (i.e. an Islamic call or *da'wa* / دعوة) against Christian intromission could be activated taking in notice the international rise of the Ottoman, Safavid and Mughal states. In addition, the exile of thousands of Andalusians and the economic ruin of Muslim assets across the Indian Ocean due to Portuguese maritime intrusion caused massive movements of population. Muslims were forced into the informal economy, contraband and piracy during the 16th century in both the Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean. Southeast Asia had been continuously a strategic milieu, and international politics were being balanced between emerging sultanates and European new polities formed after the decomposition of the Islamic west.

William Henry Scott stimulatingly questioned how many people from Granada to Manila were able to speak Spanish when the Iberian polities entered Southeast Asia, since the sources describe many Muslim individuals able to communicate (in Spanish) with the newcomers:

> These questions [usual presence of Spanish-speaking people in the Indian Ocean] suggest that the presence of a Spanish-speaking slave on the Luzon caracoa may not have been and isolated phenomenon. Perhaps further research on the Mediterranean connection will provide the final explanation by exploring the question of just how many people between Granada and Manila could speak Spanish in 1521 (Scott, 1992, 35-36).

Scott named "Mediterranean connection" those evidences manifesting feasibly an Andalusian diaspora in Eastern Asia. Perhaps the *lenguas* that interpreted *Paces del Maluco* ("Treaties with Moluccan rulers") during Magellan-Elcano's expedition were also part of the same diaspora proved by Monçaide. Scott referred specifically to that mysterious Moro taken in Brunei after capturing the junk of the king of Luzon's son. He was the *lengua* who interpreted the treaty with Tuan Muḥammad, ruler of Palawan and vassal of Brunei, because "*entendía algo el castellano*" (who understood some Castilian language):

> With the lord of Palawan, a Muslim, on Monday 30 September 21 in the ship Vitoria, taking captive the said lord of the said island and a brother and son of his and others who came with them in a junk from the city of Brunei for the said island of Palawan. His name was Tuan Muhammad, vassal of the King of Brunei, with whom peace was made while the Trinidad and Vitoria were in the Brunei channel [...] It was done by interpretation of a Muslim who was taken on the island of the King of Luzon who understood some Castilian. The brother was named Guantail, and the son Tuan Muhammad, aged about eighteen. On the first of October the Spaniards swore to keep the peace by taking a crucifix in their hands for God, Holy Mary and the sign of the cross. Tuan Muhammad and his brother and son put their fingers in their mouths and then in their heads (Fernández de Navarrete, 1837, 4, 296).

It is interesting to note that in this case the alliance followed the procedure of kidnapping, ramson and security with *cartaz* ("*se le daría carta de seguro*"). In other hand, when preparing the protocol of the agreement October 1, Palawan ruler Tuan Muḥammad wrote a letter to the Spanish king, without doubt using Jawi script. As many other diplomatic letters during these *Paces del Maluco* —and following agreements with Southeast Asian Muslims—, the originals in Jawi script cannot be currently located in the repositories.

Regarding the way Palawan Muslim rulers swore the agreement, they "put their fingers in their mouths and then in their heads." They did this way

most probably because they did not have a material copy of the Quran over which to conduct properly the oath. At least that was the ritual conducted by other Muslim rulers in the region, as we have seen by al-Manṣūr of Tidore and the *zambahean*. The invocation sounds like *Subḥān Allāh* / سبحان الله, but is more properly the Malay *sambayang*, which is also found in Tagalog —in the adoration (*simba*) and the place for worship (*simbahan*)— (San Buenaventura, 1613, 570):

> The *Ramasan* or *Ramadan* of the Mohammedans is called *Sambayang*, a word that seems to be related to *Simbahan* or *simba* of the Christian Indians of the Philippines. During the *sambayang* (which lasts seven days) they all remain in rigorous fasting; after this time they all purify themselves with a general bath and celebrate the feast (Blumentritt, 1893, 281).

Regardless of whether *subḥān Allāh* and *sambayang* are etymologically related or not, they are the same thing—a pray over the holy word, in mouth, mind and, if possible, over a physical copy of the *muṣḥaf* / مصحف. Therefore, these are factual testimonies in European sources of the circulation of the Quran as a material object around the Philippine Archipelago and the Moluccas Islands during the first circumnavigation of the globe, evidence that the Quran had already travelled completely the inversed way, from al-Andalus to the Spice Islands.

Preachers and missionaries "from above the winds" changed the spiritual and political life of the Malay world. Numerous missionaries, traders, and adventurers, *makhdūmūn*, *shurafā'* and *awliyā'* are recorded in shrines, traditions and local *silsilas* (*tarsilas* for the Philippine case). Trade, mission, and conquest were the forces to Islamize coastal areas of maritime Southeast Asia, but interracial marriages were also important, between foreign Muslims and local aristocracies. Afterwards, a political institution was organized under the power of a sultan, as a central government or as a coalition of parties.

The Makhdūmūn *in indigenous sources*

The Tarsila shows that after the settlement of the kinship another foreign element emerged with dramatic consequences. For instance, it is mentioned a so-called *Karimul Makdum.* It was not a tribe or a nation, but a single person, and his aim was not to settle, but to preach. It is clear from the Tarsila that his purpose was to assemble people and preach, and for this goal built a religious house—a mosque. Moreover, he was called *Salip*, i.e. *sharīf* / شريف, descendent of the Prophet Muhammad and "Noble Master," Karīm al-Makhdūm / كريم المخدوم:

Therefore, oral traditions collected by Najeeb Mitry Saleeby (1870-1935) and César Adib Majul (1923-2003) identified Karīm al-Makhdūm as a first missionary in southern Philippines. Together with archeological relics and preserved shrines (Absari, 2017), the history of Islam in the Philippines was being shaped:

> Continuing farther east, he reached Sulu and Mindanao in 1380. In Sulu, it is said, he visited almost every island in the Archipelago and made converts to Islam in many places. The Island of Sibutu claims his grave, but the places at he was most successful are Bwansa, the old capital of Sulu, and the Island of Tapul (Saleeby, 1963, 42).

The *Sejarah Melayu* shows how *Makhdūm* Sayyid ʻAbd al-ʻAzīz was vital in the conversion of Raja Tengah as Sultan of Malacca, Muhammad Shah (second Malaccan ruler after Iskandar Shah, ruling from 1424 to 1444) (Brown, 44). Similarly, at the end of Malaccan power, *Makhdūm* Sadar Jahan was teaching Sultan Ahmad while the Portuguese were surrounding the city (Brown, 162). From the beginnings of the Sultanate of Malacca till its destruction (1403-1511), the presence of these so-called *makhdūmūn* were noticed. Who they were, and where they came from, is not clear. Within the Indian Ocean maritime route, the *makhdūmūn* are people coming from the West, from the lands *above the winds*: "In the written records (Malay, Javanese, Sulu, etc. written records) the makdumin are pious and learned Muslims who have originated from the West, from «above the winds»".

Makhdūm is a usual concept found in Indian Islamic literature to refer to a person that deserves to be served, this is to say, a holy saint, religious master or Sufi. In the context of Southeast Asia, unquestionably those denominated *makhdūm* had the purpose to preach and teach Islam. Moreover, they were usually surrounded by *Sharīf/ Sayyid* charm, arrogating to themselves kinship with Muhammad and therefore with sacred and holy charisma. Importantly, the *isnād* (genealogical chain) was articulated to validate a political claim after the settlement and the religious preaching, enforcing a holy and sacred linkage (Silsila) of local aristocracies and commoners with a global civilization.

As we have seen, for the Philippine case Majul identified at least three historical *makhdūmūn*:

> My travels in various islands, gathering oral traditions from various islands and claimed descendants of 'makhdum', written tarsilas in the possession of datus, copies of such tarsilas in the hand of non-datus, reports of travellers and earlier attempts at producing a history of Sulu, and so on, had led me to arrive at the conclusion that there had been at least three individuals, all entitled 'makhdum', who came to the shores

> of Sulu. They are as follows: Karim ul Makhum, Mohadum Aminullah, and Sayyidul Mahadum (Majul, unpublished, 2).

At least three Islamic preachers under the concept of *makhdūm* appeared in the Philippine Archipelago. The first being Karīm al-Makhdūm around 1380, and the others coming afterwards. But here we find another data connecting the two extremes of the Islamic World. Hence, the affirmation according to Majul that one *makhdūm* came from the westernmost Islamic region, al-Maghrib:

> Mohadum Aminullah is another makhdum. He is buried in Bud Agad in Jolo island. He is the one often mentioned as being accompanied by 'Sini hoy hoys'. In fact, near his tomb is a tombstone with Chinese characters. Caretakers of the tomb of the Makhdum say that it was that of one of the Chinese companions or partners […] Mohadum Aminullah Sayyidul Nikab is more correctly to be named as Sayyid ul-Naqīb Makhdum Aminullah […] Some traditions say that he came from the West, that is, the Maghrib. In time, some informants claim that a certain Maghrib was another preacher! (Majul, unpublished, 4).

Informants on oral traditions often may confuse names and data. However, Majul affirmed that a certain *makhdūm* appears in Sulu's oral traditions coming from al-Maghrib, and in time "al-Maghrib" was understood as the name of the same or other *makhdūm*. Moreover, he was buried together with a Chinese companion, what is a very astonishing revelation indeed. Thus, according to this Sulu oral tradition, a Muslim preacher called *Mohadum Aminullah Sayyidul Nikab* (Makhdūm Amīn Allāh Sayyid al-Naqīb / سيد النقيب مخدوم أمين الله) also known as "al-Maghrib" or coming from al-Maghrib (al-Maghribī / المغربي, i.e. from al-Andalus or North Africa) appeared in Sulu circa the 15th century together with a Chinese companion called *Sini Hoy Hoy* (al-Ṣīnī Hui Hui / الصيني). In short, the Islamic global network made a person from the Islamic Far West (whether Andalusian or North African), and one from the Islamic Far East (Chinese) work together in the easternmost borders of the world known.

Hence, here Majul was very direct in pointing out the authenticity of the global connection and he articulated his theory about the decisive role of Chinese in the Islamization of the Philippines:

> The makhdum having a Chinese partner who helped him in the preaching of Islam and who had helped him to distribute clothing […] to clothe the natives better refer to the Makhdum Aminullah […] (From a cynical point of view, one cannot but help speculating that the makhdum here and his Chinese partner were both merchants). One can

> further speculate that the Chinese grave close to that of the Makhdum Aminullah is that of this Chinese partner or teacher which legends not only say was a partner (in business?) and a preacher of Islam but also served as kadi) (Majul, unpublished, 4).

Certainly, Chinese Muslim activism in Southeast Asia was significant, given the fact that all the Muslim activities in Indian Ocean were targeting as goal Chinese market and Sino-Muslim involvement in maritime trade since the 13th century. Hence, not only was China a decisive actor in the political evolution of Southeast Asia, but also Chinese Muslims played a major role in the Islamization of the region according to Majul (1964).

Nevertheless, the earliest Muslim mention in Sulu Tarsila is that of *Tuan Masha'ika*, the first element positively connecting Philippine lands with the world created in western Southeast Asia after the Islamic global network. In this case, Tuan Masha'ika was sent to Sulu by Alexander the Great. As we have seen, Sulu authorities properly arrogated Alexander's legacy to obtain Islamic legitimacy, given the fact that in Quranic terms Alexander the Great/ Dhū l-Qarnayn was the first Muslim prophet in the easternmost regions of the world:

> The first person who lived on the Island of Sulu is Jamiyun Kulisa. His wife was Indira Suga. They were sent here by Alexander the Great. Jamiyun Kulisa begot Tuan Masha'ika. Masha'ika begot Marwin. Marwin's descendants multiplied greatly. They are the original inhabitants of Sulu and chief ancestors of the present generation (Saleeby, 1963, 35-36).

Tuan is a Malay title meaning "Sir/ Lord", and *Mashāyikh* / مشايخ an Islamic concept applied to holy men without *sharīf/ sayyid* status. It can be said that Tuan Masha'ika was a Muslim with a high position from western Southeast Asia due to his title as 'Tuan,' though not necessarily a Malay. What is sure is that he was a Muslim conscious of his status and culture, since his offspring were given Arab names.

Related with Tuan Masha'ika we can find the tomb of another Tuan, Tuan Maqbalu, whose deceased year marks 1310 A.D. Although attempts have been made in order to identify the historical person buried in this tomb, it has not been possible to conclude and fit the chronologies. Since the Sulu Tarsila does not mention the existence of this Tuan Maqbalu, in spite of the importance of this archaeological landmark, the person remains unknown. Nevertheless, there are two critical data stated by the shrine: 1) a significant number of Islamized Malay aristocracy emerging in Sulu in the 14th century; and 2) the

factual confirmation of Muslim expansion in the establishment of *ribāṭ* in the eastern limits of the *Dār al-Islām.*

Moreover, this religious shrine or *tampat* allows us to think of an incipient foreign Muslim community in Sulu starting in the 14th century, that provided the roots for the Islamization of indigenous communities:

> However, what can be established from the existence of the tomb is that there must have existed in Sulu a Muslim community or settlement as early as the last quarter of the thirteenth century. And if this settlement was composed mostly of foreign Muslims, the existence of the tomb in the interior suggests that non-Muslims natives, if nor receptive to Islam were at least not hostile to the foreigners. The Bud Datu Tombstones, therefore, present the first datum that can be utilized for a periodization of the Islamization of Sulu (Majul, 1999, 67).

Accordingly, in the current Camp Bud Datu, in a summit above the city of Jolo, one of the most valuable Philippine Islamic historical sites can be found. The landmark announces to be the tomb of Raja Baguinda, but nothing supports this assumption beyond folklore. In fact, the shrine is composed by a modern enclosure with green curtains covering the most precious Islamic epigraphy in the country—the tombstone of Tuan Maqbalu dated 1310. "Tuan Maqbalu" appears clearly written in the epigraphic work probably carved following the style of Quanzhou. "Maqbalu" has very difficult interpretation beyond being a proper name, and the reading of the Malay title "Tuan" is well-defined. Therefore, the main problem is the identification of this Tuan Maqbalu within the process of the Islamization of Sulu. The answer is undeniable for al-Attas, and he considers that Tuan Maqbalu and Tuan Masha'ika were the same person:

> *Muqbal* in the inscription refers to the person called the Tuhan there. He was someone whose coming preceded the coming of another. […] Knowing what the Sulu *tarsila* says about Tuan Masha'ika, it is clear that the Tuhan of the stone inscription refers to none other than Tuan Masha'ika. He was the pioneer who arrived in Sulu to teach and spread Islam (al-Attas, 2011, 104).

For al-Attas there is a problem in the rendering of the epigraphy, with a final and additional *wāw* which is not necessary. Therefore, the reading of the word is *muqbāl(ū)* / مقبال, "the one who precedes," this is to say, "the Tuan who come first." This statement assumes an orthographical error in the Arabic wording, which is certainly feasible considering that the inscription was carved in Quanzhou, far away from Arabic speaking lands. Moreover, an error seems to appear in line two of the inscription, writing *ghuriman* / غرما ("with debts")

when the traditional hadith reads *gharīban* / غريبا ("strange land"). We have transcribed it as *ghariban* / غربا. In short, certainly orthographical errors can occur, but the assumption, despite the rational considerations of al-Attas, is still speculative. Maqbālū can perfectly be a proper name, beyond conjectures.

Thus, since the first tuan recorded by the Tarsila is Tuan Masha'ika, for al-Attas there is no doubt that both are the same person. But if one assumes this premise, Raja Baguinda is the person resting in Camp Bud Datu. Certainly, although numerous attempts have been made to identify the individual buried, the only certitudes are the inscription of the tombstone and the spiritual value of the shrine. Consequently, the existence of Tuan Maqbalu, whoever he is, tell us several unquestionable facts.

In the first place, Muslims and Islamized individuals (probably from Malay and Chinese origins) settled in Sulu at least since the 14th century. The development of the pearl trade and local commerce can explain the connection of Sulu with the Islamic world. We have already seen the *makhdūmūn* and the different names mentioned in the Tarsila. But now we have a material source, a tomb dated the year 1310. Obviously, and within the suitable context, it is expected that proper archaeologic campaigns in Sulu and Mindanao will provide further material data to complete a better picture of Islam in the region. More resources are unquestionably waiting for professional archaeologists to unearth and validate.

Secondly, the tomb of Tuan Maqbalu in Bud Datu is the first material manifestation of Islamic expansion in the archipelago. Indeed, the erection of tombs, mausoleums, shrines and holy places in the borders of the *Dār al-Islām* is the proof of the *murābuṭ* / مرابط, i.e. the presence of that who performs *ribāṭ* / رباط. In other words, the constitution of Tuan Maqbalu's shrine as Islamic revered tomb certainly makes it a place for *ribāṭ*, one at the easternmost of the Islamic world. Thus, Bud Datu is the oldest *tampat* in the Philippine Archipelago, and the testimony of the *ribāṭ*, the protection of the Islamic border, which must be obviously conducted by the Islamic state. In consequence, the shrine is part of the court; the *ribāṭ*, as the jihad, are obligations to be safeguarded by the Islamic ruler. Such is the relevance for Islamic legitimacy, that the shrine is the place to grant the power: "His shrine has been very significant because many Sulu sultans were crowned near this site. Thus the name Bud Datu, "the hill of rulers" was given. In times of emergency when Lupa Sug was endangered, sultans fled to this hill" (Absari, 2017, 126).

Finally, and beyond the activation of the site as *ribāṭ*, the shrine is over all the tomb of a holy man, a pious Muslim, a pilgrimage in the path of God, an *awliyā' Allāh* / أولياء الله. Practically all Islamic territories possessed revered Sufis, saints or ulama that provided Islamic charisma or *baraka* / بركة. Whether

considered as a site to visit performing *ziyāra* / زيارة, or just as cemetery (*maqbara* / مقبرة), the tomb has undoubtfully Islamic value as a sign of respect to the ancients.

The existing tombstone in Bud Datu was destroyed in the 1970s and is now restored. Majul was able to study the enclosure beforehand and obtain photographs of the tombstone reproduced in its original state. He did a preliminary English translation. This is our reading, edition and English translation:

(1) The Prophet said, upon him be the peace:	(١) قال النبي عليه السلام
(2) Whoever dies in the distance dies as martyr	(٢) من مات غربا فقد مات شهيدا
(3) In memory of the blessed martyr	(٣) وفي المرحوم السعيد الشهيد
(4) Tuhān Maqbālū in the month of God	(٤) تهان مقبالو في التاريخ شهرالله
(5) Sacred of Rajab, God Almighty	(٥) الرمضان رجب عظيم الله
(6) blesses him the year 710.	(٦) رحمته سنة عشرة وسبعة مئة

Fig. 2:
Tuan Maqbalu before (left) and after its destruction (right), Majul, 1999, 204

Accordingly, the inscription begins with a hadith blessing those who died far away. Therefore, it must be inferred that the buried was a Muslim far from his home. A date is indicated in the last line, Rajab 710 A.H.

corresponding to November-December 1310 A.D. Majul noticed the great similarities between the features of this tombstone and others from Quanzhou.

> Comparing Tuan Maqbalu's tomb with many of the extant tombs in Quanzhou, especially figures 32, 33, 37 and 48, as well as with lotus designs in figures 129, 130 and 131 in Dasheng's text, striking similarities emerge. To be mentioned further is that whereas the date of Bud Dato headstone is 1310 C.E. (710 A.H.), figure 32 is 1290 C.E. (689 A.H.), figure 33 is 1299 C.E. (698 A.H.), figure 37 is 1302 C.E. (702 A.H.), and figure 48 is 1325 C.E. (725 A.H.). All five headstones are contemporaneous (Majul, 1999, 437).

Certainly, the catalogue of Chen Dasheng enriched the scope of Islamic material heritage in eastern Asia and allowed us to answer questions about the region's history (1984). The present stone was probably carved in Quanzhou but was undoubtably located in an emblematic hill near the city of Jolo. It represents the site for Islamic recognition. The burial of the pioneer *awliyā'*, *makhdūm* or tuan represents a landmark, the place of *ribāṭ*, the border of the *Dār al-Islām*, a symbol to erect the Islamic state.

Preaching Quran in early Philippines

The idea of a general "Islamic conspiracy" was still present within a sector of the colonial administration of Manila during the first decades. As we have seen, the *oidor* Melchor de Ávalos sent two apologetic letters against Tagalog Muslims to the King in 1585. After the pertinent legal arguments against the Qur'an, he defended the destruction of Brunei by Governor Sande in 1578 and the persecution and punishment of Muslim preachers in the Philippines:

> Being Governor, the doctor Francisco de Sande made bans and punishments against the alfaquis who come here to dogmatize and teach the sect, and this was the reason and fundament of the war that he undertook against Borneo (Melchor de Avalos, *Cartas y alegaciones*, 1585, as quoted in Donoso & Franco, 2015, 159).

This testimony has utmost importance, since it demonstrates a Spanish official campaign to eradicate Islam in Luzon, prosecuting Muslim preachers and, certainly, Arabic writings and Qur'ans used by Tagalogs. In fact, the sources reveal a long list of names related with Islamic preachers and roles: *sayc* (*shaykh* / شيخ), *catip* (*khatīb* / خطيب), *kali* (*qāḍī* / قاضي), etc. The *Boxer Codex* exposes a very interesting description of how the initial Islamic mission took place among Tagalogs, whom the manuscript calls «Moros»:

> When their ancestors had news of this god which that have as their highest, it was through some male prophets whose names they no longer know, because as they have neither writings nor those to teach them, they have forgotten the very names of these prophets, aside from what they know of them who in their tongue are called *tagapagbasa, nansulatana dios* —which means readers of the writings of god— from whom they have learned about this god (*Boxer Codex* as cited in Donoso, 2016, 65).

The Tagalog have "characters that they use to write whatever they want, different to any script known by the Spaniards" (*Tienen ciertos caracteres que les sirven de letras, con los cuales escriben lo que quieren. Son de muy diferente hechura de los demás que sabemos*). Although in matters concerning religion "they do not have a text to read" (*porque como no tienen escritura que se lo enseñe*), but "those who read the word of God," called *tagapagbasa nansulatana dios*, or in Spanish *declaradores de los escritos de dios*. This notion appears revealing since it states that religious preachers —*makhdūmūn* and *shurafā'*, or other names used in the sources: *catip, gazi*, and finally the *pandita*— read, taught and spread the Qur'anic message to the masses. We must remember again what Magachina (the Moro ambassador to Brunei sent by governor Francisco de Sande in 1578) said: "they have the Qur'an and other books which they read through their *catip*, their best preacher" (*tienen escrito del alcorán […] y también lo delatan en otros libros en que leen por su catip que es su mejor predicador*) (*Jornadas a Borneo, Joló, Mindanao, en Filipinas*, 1578 as quoted in Donoso, 2023b, 142).

Therefore, the *catip* (*khaṭīb*) read the Qur'anic word to the people. In parallel the *Letra de Meca* was being introduced and Arabic *cartillas* (readers, primers) circulated as well (Donoso, 2019). Consequently, all the elements of an Islamic milieu can be found in early modern Manila, and certainly with greater level in southern Philippines.

Beyond the initial Islamic roles that emerge in the historical sources, the *pandita* had capital importance. He was the spiritual leader of a community, the alfaqui, imam, *guro* (teacher), ulama, legal adviser, even ambassador. In any diplomatic negotiation with the Spanish administration, notarial agreement, or embassy, the pandita was always present as witness and legal guarantor. Thus, the word 'pandita' was constantly repeated in the Spanish historiography until the point that Wenceslao Retana proposed to incorporate it within the Spanish academic dictionary:

> PANDITA. m. Among the Malay Mohammedans, Priest: "Next, the Most Excellent Sultan [of Jolo] Harun, placing his hands on the Qur'an, officiating his Pandita Tuan Mustafa, the Hon. Governor General swore

him in..." — Minutes of the oath taken in Manila, September 24, 1886 (Retana, 1921, 143-144).

Conclusion

Early Islamic missionary activity, that took several centuries until its consolidation in the 15th and 16th centuries, was aborted by Spanish political conquest and Christian evangelization in Luzon and Visayas, but progressed in Palawan, Sulu and Mindanao. Important regions of the archipelago continued connected to the maritime world of the Islamic civilization.

Across the centuries, the application of the Islamic law in the Philippine sultanates was carried out by a supreme *qāḍī*, the 'datu Kali,' normally exercised by a foreign Muslim: Turkish, Afghan, Indian or Arab. Islam was an international network, and foreign Muslim scholars supplied regularly the religious posts. Finally, at the local level, the missionary activity decisively contributed to the formation of Muslim preachers and scholars within the Philippine milieu, in the form of the pandita, who worked as *al-faqīh* or expert in Islamic *fiqh* and *'aqīda*.

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