
TEXTS AND MANUSCRIPTS: DESCRIPTION AND RESEARCH

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PHILIPPINE ISLAMIC MANUSCRIPTS AND WESTERN HISTORIOGRAPHY

The presence of Islam in the Philippine Archipelago was originated as consequence of the incorporation of the region into the Islamic World — South-East Asia became part of the global commerce between the Middle East and China [1]. Being initially a middle pass, South-East Asia attracted the international commerce as mediator. In so doing, Islam emerged as the political tool of legitimacy in an economic world dominated by Muslim traders. As main political institution the Sultanate was incorporated into the Malay Peninsula (Malacca), progressing eastwards in the maritime arena towards and beyond the easternmost edge of the classical known world (*Oikoumene / Οἰκουμένη*), this is to say, the Philippine Archipelago [2].

The Philippine historical sources before the 16th century are not numerous [3]. Hence the reconstruction of the pre-Hispanic Archipelago has to employ usually auxiliary sciences to History [4], or external sources that somehow mention the area. In this sense, Chinese sources are capital to measure the political development in the Archipelago, especially southern regions due to the diplomatic contact between China and Sulu [5]. Regarding Arabic sources, unluckily the data that they provide are circumstantial and intricate to identify [6].

Besides these general data mentioned, it is possible to find two main typologies of primary sources to research on Islam in the Philippine Archipelago: We could call them as: (i) sources internally created (emic genesis) and (ii) sources externally created (etic genesis).

Sources Internally Created

The sources created internally were originated to encourage an Islamic advocacy and legitimacy. Using however autochthonous materials, they were codified to establish a politico-religious authority based on Islam. At

the beginning the sources were orally transmitted, mainly in Malay language, but eventually they were written down in local languages in order to claim an authority and implement Islamic Civilization:

SILSILA

The most important Philippine Islamic sources are oral traditions of genealogical accounts regarding aristocratic families (Datus, Rajas, Sultans), that in some moment were written down. The eldest are commonly known to be codified in the Malay language, but finally they were transmitted in the local ones [7]. These genealogical accounts are called *tarsilas* from the Arabic *silsila* (chain). Its main function is to establish the lineage and succession in order to give advocacy to political power and sovereignty over ancestral domains [8]. These sources are historical documents produced largely by Philippine Islamic communities (Moros), but other communities had produced such genealogical accounts of oral tradition too [9], such can be found in other South-East Asian parts like Brunei:

A good example of a *tarsila* which has references to a pre-Islamic past, the introduction of Islam, and great neighbouring empires is the *Selesilah* of Brunei. It begins with a narration of how Brunei while still *kafir* (infidel) was a dependency of Madjapahit and how this political relation ended. The first ruler who becomes a Muslim then acquires the symbols of royalty from the kingdom of Johore. An officer of the Emperor of China marries his daughter and in time succeeds as ruler of Brunei with a Muslim title and name. His daughter, in time, marries the Sharif 'Ali, a descendent of the Prophet through Hasan. The sovereignty of the kingdom is then given to the Sharif who assumes the name of Sultan Berkat. From this Sharif is descendent all the sultans of Brunei [10].