

# AN ANALYSIS OF THE "GENEALOGY OF SULU"\*

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## I

The term *tarsila* comes from the Arabic *silsilah*, which means a chain or link. It is used in the Muslim South as in other parts of the Indonesian and Malay world to refer to written genealogical accounts. One of the primary functions of the *tarsila* was to trace the ancestry of an individual or family to a famous personality in the past who was either an important political figure or religious teacher. This fact immediately suggests that *tarsilas* were not meant to remain purely historical documents or quaint remembrances of things past. On the contrary, they served to bolster the claim of individuals or families to hold political power or to enjoy certain traditional prerogatives, if not some prestige in their respective communities at least. Consequently, all sultans and leading datus had their respective *tarsilas*.

Obviously, if *tarsilas* were to serve their purposes, they had to be kept up to date. When written on perishable materials such as paper, their contents were preserved by copying them on new paper. Thus, the age of the material used is no index to the age or authenticity of the accounts. However, it is commonly accepted that the use of the Malay language, especially in the earlier parts of *tarsilas*, is an index to their ancient character—at least for those parts in Malay. The use of this criterion is quite reasonable. Sulu was actively involved in the trade which covered the Malay peninsula and the Indonesian archipelago as far back as the 13th century, if not earlier. And, as is well-known, the *lingua franca* of the traders was Malay. This language was also extensively used in the Sulu court, just as it was in the courts of Malacca, Brunei, and so on. It was only during the the 17th century, with the coming of the Spaniards to the Philippine archipelago and other Europeans

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to other parts of Southeast Asia, that the Sulus gradually became isolated from other Malay lands. It was then that the use of Malay in the Sulu court began to decline.

The tradition of writing or having *tarsilas* among the Muslims in the Philippines probably derived from the Muslim principalities in the neighboring Indonesian islands which has an earlier history of Islamization. In turn, these principalities used as a model the earliest part of the *Sirat Rasul Allah* (*The Biography of the Messenger of Allah*) as their model. This work was written by Ibn Ishaq (c. 85 A.H. — A.H. — 151 A.H. or c. 704 A.D. — 768 A.D.). Its first paragraph, in the recension of Ibn Hisham, contains the genealogy of the Prophet Muhammad, tracing his descent from Adam—a total of 48 generations. The style here is not much different from the Jewish Bible's genealogies.

It would be a mistake to look at the *tarsilas* of the South as purely genealogical documents. Actually, they may contain descriptions of some of the personages mentioned, place names, and actual data regarding distorical events in the past. Some *tarsilas* even include mythological elements, some of which have now lost their original meaning for us. In brief, *tarsilas* were meant to accomplish a few aims beyond the genealogical function. These aims will be discussed in greater detail later on.

## II

We are all greatly indebted to Dr. Najeeb Saleeby for the collection, translation, and publication of many *tarsilas* from Sulu and Mindanao in the first decade of this century. We owe Saleeby even more, considering that many of these documents had been burnt or lost during the last days of the Japanese Occupation in 1945. This especially holds true for the Sulu documents belonging to the Kiram family and Haji to put down in writing the dictation of Faqir Maulana Hamza, in the possession of some of the leading Muslim families in the upper valley of the Pulangi were burned in 1972 as a result of fighting between government troops and secessionists in the area. Nevertheless, there still exist *tarsilas* among some families there—at least this is what we have been assured.

In the past, *tarsilas* were jealously guarded from the prying eyes of the curious, especially those of strangers. It took years

of friendship with the families of the sultans and chief datu for Saleeby, who was an Arab from Lebanon, to succeed in seeing the *tarsilas* and having them published. Yet even Saleeby missed some important ones, possibly because of mistrust. For example, he did not have the chance to see the ones from the Buluan and Tawi-Tawi areas. In any case, the debt of Philippine Muslim scholars to Saleeby remains inestimable.

That the sultans jealously guarded their *tarsilas* does not mean that they did not divulge some of their contents to foreigners. For example, Alexander Dalrymple, who was in Sulu in 1761 and 1764 and who came to know the Sulu Sultan 'Azim ud-Din (Alimudin) in Manila, learned from the Sultan and other leading datu many details of Sulu *tarsilas* which correspond to those published by Saleeby in 1908. Likewise, Thomas Forrest, who was in Maguindanao in 1775, was able to put down in writing the dictation of Faquir Maulana Hamza, a Maguindanao sultan, who was consulting his *tarsilas* on data concerning the history of Maguindanao. Moreover, the Sultan appeared to have known the genealogies of the sultans of Sulu and Brunei, to the extent of claiming that they, together with the sultans of Maguindanao, had a common Arab ancestor somewhere in the dim past. Significantly, some Maguindanao *tarsilas* make it a point to mention dynastic or marriage relations between the royal families of Maguindanao and Sulu. The Brunei *Selesilah*, likewise, makes reference to a marriage between the Brunei and Sulu royal families. John Hunt, who was in Sulu in 1814, appeared to have had indirect information regarding various Brunei and Sulu *tarsilas*, probably from his datu friends. Written from memory, however, his account is a bit unreliable since he often confuses different sultans with each another and unnecessarily telescopes events. But anyone with a knowledge of Dalrymple's works and Spanish sources can easily recognize the misidentifications in the genealogy and historical events reported by Hunt. No less than seven varied sources must have been available to him. If, instead of lumping them together, he had reported them separately according to specified sources, he would have been of greater value to present-day scholars.

What follows is a description and analysis of the Sulu *tarsilas* published by Saleeby.

## III

The so-called "Genealogy of Sulu" was published by Saleeby in 1907 in a chapter of his important work *The History of Sulu*.<sup>1</sup> It was supplemented, in the same chapter, by another *tarsila* which he entitled "Sulu Historical Notes." For convenience, Saleeby also entitled various parts of the "Genealogy of Sulu" in accordance with subject matter, successively as follows: "Sulu author's introduction," "Descendants of Asip," "Descendants of Tuan Masha'ika," and "Original and later settlers of Sulu."<sup>2</sup>

The first part deals with the writer of the *tarsilas* while the second part is a *tarsila* of the descendants of Asip, one of the ministers who came to Sulu with Raja Baguinda, a Sumatran prince. (Incidentally, the writer of the *tarsilas* claimed descent from Asip.) The other two *tarsilas*, namely, the "Descendants of Tuan Masha'ika" and the "Original and later settlers of Sulu," as well as the "Sulu Historical Notes" were written in Malay, attesting to their antiquity. It is believed that the "Sulu Historical Notes," which consists of four parts, were originally composed before the "Descendants of Tuan Masha'ika" and the "Original and later settlers of Sulu." All three *tarsilas* have many elements in common, but unlike the "Original and latter settlers of Sulu," the "Sulu Historical Notes" do not deal either with the first sultan or his descendants.

Disregarding some differences (if not actual inconsistencies) between the above three *tarsilas*, and setting aside certain details which are not quite relevant for purposes of this essay, what follows is their summary:

During the time of Raja Sipad the younger, a son or descendant of Raja Sipad the elder, a certain Tuan Masha'ika, arrives in Jolo island, in the area now known as Maimbung. At that time, the inhabitants are not Muslims but worshippers of stones and tombs. On account of his qualities, probably regarding knowledge and skills, he is very much esteemed and respected by the people. In time, he marries a daughter of Raja Sipad. She bears him three children of which two, one male and one female, have Arab names. The name of the female,

<sup>1</sup> Saleeby, Najeeb M., *The History of Sulu* (Manila: Filipiniana Book Guild, Inc., 1963).

<sup>2</sup> The "Genealogy of Sulu" and the "Sulu Historical Notes" are found in *ibid.*, pp. 30-36.

'Aisha, is a typical Muslim one. One of the sons, Tuan Hakim, in turn, has four sons (Tuan Da'im, Tuan Buda, Tuan Bujang, and Tuan Muku) and a daughter.

Not long after, people from Basilan (called *Tagimahas*) and another group called *Baklayas* settle in Sulu. They are followed by Bajasos supposed to have come from Johore. The Bajasos do not remain in one place but become scattered in various islands.

Some time after the arrival of the Bajasos, a certain Karim ul-makhdum, entitled Sharif Awliya, arrives in Sulu and eventually settles among the Tagimaha nobles in Buansa, who then build a mosque. At this time, the people of Sulu begin to adopt Islam. Ten years later (it is not clear whether after the arrival of Karim ul-makhdum or after the building of the mosque), Raja Baguinda from Menangkabaw, Sumatra, appears with his followers, in Buansa. There is a fight between the Raja and his followers on one hand, and the Tagimaha chiefs of Buansa and their followers on the other. Peace ensues henceforth, especially after it is found out that Raja Baguinda is a Muslim like the Buansa chiefs. Raja Baguinda appears to have become a chief in Buansa as evidenced by the report that five years after his arrival, he receives a gift of elephants from the Raja of Java. In any case, Raja Baguinda settles in Buansa and marries there. It is important to note that one of the *tarsilas* mentions that during the arrival of Raja Baguinda, some of the Sulu chiefs (not from Buansa) were Tuan Buda, Tuan Da'im, and Tuan Bujang. These chiefs, it will be recalled, were grandchildren of Tuan Masha'ika of Maimbung.

Now, according to the "Original and later settlers of Sulu," it is while Raja Baguinda is in Buansa that Sayyid Abu Bakr, after having stayed in or passed through Palembang (in Sumatra) and Brunei, arrives and preaches Islam. The people then become more attached to Islam. Abu Bakr then marries Paramisuli, the daughter of Raja Baguinda, and ends by establishing himself as the first sultan. He lives thirty years in Buansa and upon his death, one of his sons, Kamal ud-Din, succeeds him as sultan.

The enumeration of sultans in the "Genealogy of Sulu" is as follows:<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 34. The names of the above seventeen (17) sultans are Saleeby's transcriptions from the Arabic Jawi script. Strictly speaking, not all follow the correct Arabic transcriptions of the names the way

1. Abu Bakr (Sultan Sharif)
2. Kamalud Din
3. Maharaja Upo
4. Pangiran Buddiman
5. Sultan Tanga
6. Sultan Bungsu
7. Sultan Nasirud Din
8. Sultan Kamarat
9. Sultan Shahabud Din
10. Sultan Mustafa Shapiud Din
11. Sultan Mohammad Nasarud Din
12. Sultan Alimud Din I
13. Sultan Mohammad Mu'izzid Din
14. Sultan Sra'il
15. Sultan Mohammad Alimud Din II
16. Sultan Mohammad Sarapud Din
17. Sultan Mohammad Alimud Din III

Judging from the last name in this list of sultans, this enumeration of sultans was completed around 1808 since 'Azim ud-Din III (Alimud Din III), seventeenth and last in the list, ruled and died in this same year. He was sultan for only 40 days. The earlier portions of the chapter must have been written much earlier. Some of its contents were even told to Dalrymple in 1761.

The brief summary above suggests various observations and conclusions:

1. The genealogy of Sulu asserts that the earliest inhabitants of Jolo island were centered in the area of Maimbung, in the southern part of the island. Their rulers were called "Raja Sipad," from the Sanskrit Raja Shripaduka, a title of Indian or Hindu origin. The second wave of settlers were the Tagimahas who came from Basilan and who settled in Buansa, in the northern part of the island west of the present Jolo town. The third wave were the Baklayas who settled in the northern part of the island east of Jolo town. They were followed by the Bajaos (and Samals) who settled all over the Sulu archipelago.

They are spelled classically. For example, the Tausug Sarapud Din is Sharaf-ud-Din in correct Arabic, which a learned man ('alim) in Sulu would normally use.

2. Tuan Masha'ika was one of the first foreign Muslims to come to the Maimbung area and, therefore, to Jolo island. That some of his children and grandchildren had Arabic names supports this view. Moreover, the "Sulu Historical Notes" state that "Masha'ika begot Mawmin." Now, the word "*mu'min*" (pl. *mu'minin*) is an Arabic term for "faithful" or "believer." The phrase, therefore, means that Masha'ika begot Muslims. Furthermore, the word "*masha'ikh*" is one of the Arabic plural forms for "*shaikh*," a title of respect. In South Arabia, the term "*masha'ikh*" is also used for pious men or religious leaders to distinguish them from the "*sayyids*" or "*sharifs*" who are descendants of the Prophet Muhammad. Of common knowledge, too, is the fact that the majority or Arabs who settled in the Indonesian archipelago came from Southern Arabia.
3. The account of the genealogy of Tuan Masha'ika to the effect that he was "born out of a bamboo and was esteemed and respected by all the people," not only reveals that this land of origin was unknown, but also serves to emphasize his greater knowledge *vis-a-vis* the people he came to live with. The other report in the "Sulu Historical Notes" that the parents of Tuan Masha'ika were sent to Sulu by Alexander the Great shows that the writer of the "Sulu Historical Notes" was acquainted, in one way or another, with the traditions of the Malacca sultans who claimed descent from Alexander the Great. Other Sulu traditions state that the rulers of Sulu were descended from Alexander the Great. This is simply a technique to bolster the claim for legitimacy to rule, for the rulers of Sulu were, in this case, claiming kinship with the Malacca sultans.
4. The coming of Karim ul-makhdum suggests the coming of a Muslim to actually preach Islam. This is unlike the coming of Tuan Masha'ika to whom neither the preaching of Islam nor the building of a mosque is attributed. The word "*makhdum*," in Arabic, means "master." In Arab lands, it is used as a converse of "server." However, in India and in the land of the Malays, the word came to be used as a title for Muslim religious teachers or scholars and pious men. That he was called "Sharif Awliya" suggests that people considered him a descendant of the Prophet Muhammad since this is what

- “Sharif” connotes. His title of “Awliya,” the Arabic plural for *wali* or saint, implies that he was a pious man.
5. The coming of Raja Baguinda from Sumatra and his establishment of a principality in Buansa creates a dramatic link between Sulu and a center of an older empire, that of Srivijaya, which was based in Sumatra. In personal terms, this means that Raja Baguinda was claiming uninterrupted sovereignty. His marriage with a local girl also means that his descendants who became sultans had rights to land in Sulu by virtue of bilateral relations. In brief, the Sulu sultans who were descended from Raja Baguinda could not be criticized as representing a foreign dynasty; after all, their ancestress who married the Raja was of local origin. In effect, the links with Raja Baguinda who was asserted to be a Sumatran prince bolstered the claims of Sulu sultans to reign in Malay lands.
  6. Sayyid Abu Bakr, who was entitled Sultan Sharif, is also asserted to have been a descendant of the Prophet Muhammad. The word “sayyid” like “sharif” connotes this. It has been held by some classical Muslim jurists that one of the qualifications for a *khalif* was to belong to the Quraish or family of the Prophet. Clearly, then, the claim of the Sulu sultans to rule over Muslims is based on their reputed descent from the Prophet, through Sayyid Abu Bakr. But again, in order to strengthen their claims on the land without appearing fully as a foreign dynasty, the Sulu sultans claimed descent from the wife of the first sultan who, in spite of her being a daughter of Raja Baguinda, was considered a local girl. Indeed, her mother was reported to have been a lady from Buansa.
  7. In brief, the Sulu *tarsilas*, particularly those owned by the Sulu royal family, are not mere genealogical accounts made for posterity’s sake, but represent documentary evidence *par excellence* to support their claim of legitimacy to rule over Muslims as well as their claims to their right to the land. The *tarsilas* are also meant to show kinship and historical links between Sulu and older centers of empire.
  8. Of great importance is that the three above-mentioned *tarsilas* try to explain the advent and the spread of Islam in Sulu. As such, they represent an affirmation that



Sulu constituted an important part of the Islamic international community—that of *dar-ul-Islam*.

The problem can now be raised as to the authenticity or historicity of the personalities and accounts found in the *tarsilas* as well as to that of the chronology.

#### IV

First of all, the elaborate and well-preserved tomb of the Sultan of Sulu, Sultan Sharif, still exists on one of the slopes of Mt. Tumangtangis which faces Buansa. The tomb carries the elaborate titles of the Sultan; but, unfortunately, it carries no date. A stone slab nearby is pointed out as the marker of the grave of Kamal ud-Din, the second sultan.

According to Spanish records, Spanish soldiers in 1638 destroyed one of the most revered tombs near Buansa. This tomb was a center of pilgrimages and was supposed to be that of a Muslim ruler who had come from other lands. Whether or not this tomb was that of Raja Baguinda remains an unsolved problem.

The fourth sultan, Jangiran Buddiman, was known to the Spaniards in 1578. He was a brother-in-law of the Brunei Sultan Seif ur-Rijal and had a home in Brunei.) The fifth sultan, called Pangiran Tengah, was also known to the Spaniards and the Jesuit Francisco Combes narrated a few things about him. This same priest also had various times conversed with Sultan Bongsu. In effect, all the sultans numbered from 4 to 17 in the "Genealogy of Sulu," had dealings with the Spaniards and some of them had even communicated with the Dutch and the English. However, that sultans from 4 to 17 are to be considered as historical figures only because of the existence of cross-references in European sources, is no reason why the first three sultans cannot be regarded as historical figures in their own right. It is just unfortunate for scholars that the first three sultans had no dealings with or were unknown to the Spaniards, who were simply not to be found in the area. But, indeed, there are Spanish references to a Sulu ruler in 1521 who happened to be a father-in-law of the Brunei sultan. This ruler might have been one of the earlier sultans. On the basis of other *tarsilas* or Sulu traditions not reported by Saleeby, it accepted that it was the first sultan who placed the different peoples of Sulu, including those in the mountains in the interior, under

one rule. Thus did Sulu begin to have the semblance of a principality or small state.

Unfortunately, not a single Sulu *tarsila* bears any date. (The same holds true for the Maguindanao *tarsilas*.) The Brunie *Selesilah*, however, contains one single date. Scholars cannot, so far, be absolutely sure about, or conclusively prove, the existence of Tuan Masha'ika or Raja Baguinda. But this does not mean that they did not exist. On the contrary, to assume that they existed can explain a great deal of Sulu history. Actually, by cross references to other sources, historical or archaeological, the probability is that they actually existed. And more than this, they signify persons involved in the dramatic political and religious transformations in the history of Southeast Asia.

Professor Oliver Wolters, in his brilliant book *The Fall of Srivijaya in Malay History*, describes a momentous event in the history of Southeast Asia which took place in 1397, a time coincident with the final dissolution of the Srivijayan empire.<sup>4</sup> His researches revealed that around this year a prince of Palembang, Sumatra, threw off his allegiance to Java, and consequently incurred a brutal invasion. A source says that this prince escaped with a small following to found, after some adventures, a kingdom in Singapore, after which he or his descendants founded Malacca. Another source, however, mentions that the princely evacuation was of such great magnitude that "the sea seemed to be nothing but ships." It says: "So vast was the fleet that there seemed to be no counting. The masts of the ships were like a forest of trees; their pennons and streamers were like driving clouds and the state umbrellas of the Rajas like cirrus."<sup>5</sup> Referring back to this incident at the end of one of his appendices, Professor Wolters concludes that ". . . the years immediately before 1400 were a disturbed time in the western archipelago, and this is another, and perhaps more likely, time when small groups of adventurers migrated to Borneo and elsewhere."<sup>6</sup> One is tempted to ask whether Raja Baguinda was not one of these Sumatran adventurers who came to the Philippines to found a principality. The "Sulu Historical Notes" and the "Original and later

<sup>4</sup> Wolters, Oliver, *The Fall of Srivijaya in Malay History* (London: Asia Major Library, Lund Humphries, 1970).

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 76.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 190.

Settlers of Sulu" mention that he went to Zamboanga first, whence he sailed to Basilan until he decided to transfer to Buansa where he and his followers first had to fight the Tagimaha chiefs before he could establish a principality. That the *tarsilas* say he came from Menangkabaw instead of Palembang is not of much consequence; for the central power in Sumatra in the few years before 1400 was located in Palembang. It does seem that some of the Palembang adventurers had founded not only the city of Malacca, which was to become the greatest emporium and Islamic center in Southeast Asia in the 15th century, but also a principality in Sulu which had become so important later on as to attract the Sharif Abu Bakr. The Malays who eventually left Palembang for Malacca saw this principality as the heir to, or the continuity of, the empire of Srivijaya—an assertion of Malay maritime supremacy in the area of the western archipelago. When the Sulus aimed to build Sulu as the greatest trading center in their own area in the eastern archipelago, was this not a parallel of the action of Malacca's founders?

There is an indirect evidence to further support the speculation that Raja Baguinda came to Sulu about 1397 A.D. or slightly later. This has to do with the *tarsila* report that, five years after his arrival, Raja Baguinda received a gift of elephants from Raja of Java. This date can be placed at anywhere between, say, 1397 A.D. and 1405. Now, in 1410 A.D., the new ruler of Brunei, in the north of Borneo, formally requested the Chinese Emperor that he should not pay tribute anymore to Java (Majapahit) but instead to the Celestial throne. This request was approved by the Emperor.<sup>7</sup> All this means that before 1410 A.D., Brunei was tributary to Java. Most likely, the ruler who gave a gift of elephants to Raja Baguinda was not *the* ruler of Java (Majapahit) but one of the petty rulers of the numerous principalities that constituted the Javanese Empire. Widely-held traditions in Sulu state that the elephants came from the northeastern part of Borneo, an area where Brunei rulers exercised power. Thus, the gift came from the Brunei ruler, or his successor, who stopped being in 1410 A.D. one of the petty rulers tributary to the empire of Majapahit. Consequently, Raja Baguinda must have received his gift not later than 1410 A.D.

<sup>7</sup> Brown, D. E., *Brunei: The Structure and History of a Bornean Malay Sultanate*. (Brunei: Star Press, 1970), p. 133.

In his work on Sulu, Saleeby calculated that Sayyid Abu Bakr arrived in Sulu around 1450 A.D. This calculation was based on his belief that the Sayyid was the same Abu Bakr who, according to the *Sejarah Melayu*, was in Malacca during the reign of the Malaccan Sultan Mansur Shah. Furthermore, Saleeby calculated that Mansur Shah had begun to reign in 1400 A.D. Making allowance for various protracted stops in Palembang and Brunei, he concluded that Abu Bakr must have arrived in Sulu between 1436 A.D. and 1450 A.D. This calculation of Saleeby is not found in his above-mentioned book but in an unpublished essay entitled "The Establishment of the Mohammedan Church in Sulu and Mindanao: The Earliest Mohammedan Missionaries in Mindanao and Sulu."<sup>8</sup> However, after Saleeby had written his book and essay, a more definite and accurate chronology of the Malacca sultan emerged. Mansur Shah, the sixth Malacca sultan, is now known to have ruled from 1458 (or 1459) to 1477 A.D. Thus, the Abu Bakr who was in Malacca during this reign could not have been the Sayyid Abu Bakr who, in Saleeby's conjecture, had come to Sulu around 1450. However, in the above-mentioned unpublished essay, Saleeby calculated, on the basis of the number of generations of succeeding Sulu sultans, that Abu Bakr's reign had begun between 1407 A.D. and 1436 A.D. This calculation fits the well-thought out speculation that his father-in-law, Raja Baguinda, left Sumatra in 1397 A.D. and arrived in Sulu not much later. Incidentally, Alexander Dalrymple, using Isaac Newton's computation for the reign of princes, calculated that the Sulu sultanate under the first sultan was established about 1526 A.D.<sup>9</sup> But if it is considered that Dalrymple's list of sultans misses at least three of the earlier sultans and if 25 years instead of 20 is used for each generation, the sultanate might as well have been established in the first half of the 15th century. Indeed, the date of 1526 A.D. is wrong since Spanish records state that in 1521 there was already a ruler in Sulu who had enough prestige to have become the father-in-law of the Brunei sultan at that time.

Since the coming of Karim ul-makhdum to Sulu is stated by all *tarsilas* to have antedated that of Raja Baguinda by at least ten years, the date given by Saleeby, that is, about 1380

<sup>8</sup> A copy was in the Beyer Collection.

<sup>9</sup> Alexander Dalrymple, "Essay towards an account of Sulu," *The Journal of the Indian Archipelago and Eastern Asia*, Volume III, Singapore, 1849, p. 565.

A.D., can be accepted for want of better reasons to support another date. Actually, the end of the 14th century and the early part of the 15th century had witnessed various *makhdumin* (pl. of *makhdum*) coming to Java, Malacca, and North Borneo by way of India. That two or three places in the Sulu archipelago presently claim the grave of a *makhdum* is not a contradiction. The difficulty is that all of these places claim that their respective graves are the resting place of Karim ul-makhdum. My researches have shown that at least one other *makhdum* came to Sulu in the first few years of the 15th century and that he was associated with Chinese traders or travellers. He is buried in Bud Agad in the interior of Jolo island, and his name is different from that of Karim ul-makhdum.

As for Tuan Masha'ika, which is actually not a name but a title, not much can be said about the exact time of his coming beyond what is reported by the *tarsilas*. To seek a definite date of his arrival is an exercise in futility. The most that can be said about him is that since his grandchildren were already chiefs in Maimbung when Raja Baguinda came to Buansa about 1397 A.D., he must have come to Sulu by the first half of the 14th century. But if this is so, then he might not have been the first Muslim to have come to Sulu; although it is still entirely possible that he was the first Muslim to have come to Maimbung. The evidence for this is the grave of a foreign Muslim in Bud Dato, close to Jolo town, which bears the date of 710 A.H. (1310 A.D.). The name on the grave is that of Tuhan (Tuan) Maqbalu. However, is it possible that Maqbalu is the proper name of Tuan Masha'ika and that they are one and the same person? If so, then Tuan Masha'ika's grandchildren would have indeed been very aged chiefs of not less than 60 or 70 years when Raja Baguinda arrived. However, a peculiarity of *tarsilas* is that they tend to encompass events or, as some historians put it, to telescope them. Indeed, the *tarsilas* do not say that the Maimbung chiefs who were descended from Tuan Masha'ika, either fought against or greeted Raja Baguinda. The "Original and later settlers of Sulu" state tersely that they were chiefs living at that time, and this could mean at *around* that time. Certainly, they were not in Buansa, and they could have lived much earlier. Indeed, to say that they were chiefs living during the arrival of the Raja is a simple case of telescoping events, and it would be rash

to dismiss the possibility that the Tuan Maqbalu who died in 1310 A.D. is identical to Tuan Masha'ika.

## V

Although the *tarsilas* in the "Genealogy of Sulu" are of great importance, there are also other important Sulu *tarsilas*. These can often serve to supplement the former. It is significant to note that some Tawi-Tawi *tarsilas* contain, for the same period of time, the names of other sultans not found in the "Genealogy of Sulu." An example is the name of Badar-ud-Din I. This sultan was known to the Dutch and the Spaniards and had written letters to them. He reigned from about 1718 to 1732 and was the father of the well-known Sultan 'Azim ud-Din I (known to the Spaniards and most Sulus as Alimudin) who was proclaimed sultan of Sulu in 1735. His name should have, therefore, been inserted between Sultan Muhammad Nasarud Din (no. 11) and Sultan Alimud Din I (no. 12) in the "Genealogy of Sulu." Other *tarsilas* insist that Alawadin, a brother of Sultan Kamalud Din (no. 2), succeeded him as sultan—something denied by the "Genealogy of Sulu." As a matter of fact, the elimination of the names of some sultans in a *tarsila* signify dynastic problems or controversies. Some names have been eliminated probably to prevent their descendants from becoming pretenders to the throne. In effect, some *tarsilas* can be quite selective in the enumeration of names. Saleeby was himself quite aware of this fact: in his *History of Sulu* he had to depend on other sources, notably certain *khutbahs*, to have a more correct enumeration or succession of Sulu sultans. Now, a *khutbah* is normally a sermon delivered in Muslim Friday congregational prayers. Some of them, however, were composed specially to serve as prayers for the Prophet Muhammad and the first four so-called "rightly guided" *khalifs* as well as for all persons who had reigned, including the incumbent ruler, as sultans in Sulu. They had become public knowledge by virtue of their repeated recitation in the mosques. Thus, it was not easy to tamper with the names of the sultans enumerated in such formalized *khutbahs*. A peculiarity of such *khutbahs* is that they were written in literary Arabic by relatively learned teachers or religious leaders. Consequently, there was the conscious effort to mention the sultans by their Arabic names, whenever possible.

On the basis of the "Genealogy of Sulu," other Sulu *tarsilas*, a few *khutbahs*, seals of sultans found in their letters

and now found in various archives, coins struck by them, and European historical references, especially Spanish, Dutch, and English, the following succession of sultans is presented. Their Arabic names as stated in the *khutbahs* as well as their common names are specified.

1. Sultan Sharif ul-Hasihim  
(Sayyid Abu Bakr) — c.1450 — c.1480.
2. Sultan Kamal ud-Din.
3. Sultan 'Ala ud-Din.
4. Sultan Amir ul-'Umara  
(Maharaja di Raja): ruled during the early 1500's.
5. Sultan Mu'izz ul-Mutawadi'in  
(Maharaja Upo).
6. Sultan Nasir ud-Din I  
(Digunung, Habud).
7. Sultan Muhammad ul-Halim  
(Pangiran Buddiman): was ruling in 1578.
8. Sultan Batara Shah  
(Pangiran Tengah — c.1590 — c.1610.
9. Sultan Muwallil Wasit  
(Raja Bongsu) — c.1610 — 1650.
10. Sultan Nasir ud-Din II  
(Pangiran Sarikula) — c.1645 — c.1648.
11. Sultan Salah ud-Din Bakhtiar  
(Pangiran Bactjal) — 1650 — c.1680.
12. Sultan 'Ali Shah.
13. Sultan Nur ul-'Azam — c.1685.
14. Sultan Al Haqunu Ibn Waliyul-Ahad — died c.1690.
15. Sultan Shahab ud-Din — c.1690 — c.1710.
16. Sultan Mustafa Shafi ud-Din — c.1710 — c.1718.
17. Sultan Badar ud-Din I — c.1718 — 1732.
18. Sultan Nasr ud-Din  
(Datu Sabdula) — 1732 — 1735.
19. Sultan 'Azim ud-Din I  
(Alimudin I) — 1735 — 1748; 1764 — 1774.
20. Sultan Mu'izz ud-Din  
(Datu Bantilan) — 1748 — 1763.
21. Sultan Muhammad Isra'il — 1774 — 1778.
22. Sultan 'Azim ud-Din II  
(Alimudin II) — 1778 — 1791.
23. Sultan Sharaf ud-Din  
(Datu Salapudin) — 1791 — 1808.



24. Sultan 'Azim ud-Din III  
(Alimuddin III) — 1808.
25. Sultan 'Ali ud-Din — 1808 — 1821.
26. Sultan Shakirullah  
(Datu Sakilan) — 1821 — 1823.
27. Sultan Jamal ul-Kiram I — 1823 — 1842.
28. Sultan Muhammad Fadl  
(Pulalun) — 1842 — 1862.
29. Sultan Jamal ul-'Azam — 1862 — 1881.
30. Sultan Badar ud-Din II — 1881 — 1884.
31. Sultan Harun ar-Rashid — 1886 — 1894.
32. Sultan Jamal ul-Kiram II — 1884 — 1936.

The exact dates for the reigns of at least fifteen of the above 32 sultans are known with certitude. The rest have to be calculated. The most comprehensive attempt at a chronology for the Sulu sultans is found in the work *Muslims in the Philippines*.<sup>10</sup>

## VI

As mentioned earlier, some *tarsilas* contain mythological elements as well as incidents considered miraculous or normally impossible. It may be recalled that "Descendants of Tuan Masha'ika" say that he was born out of a bamboo. It also adds that he was not a descendant of Adam. The bamboo motif is quite common in many of the myths and traditions of the Malay peoples. The original meaning of such a myth is probably lost. However, it has certain functions, among which is portray the beginnings of mankind or certain important historical figures whose ancestry are not traceable. Thus, to say that Tuan Masha'ika was born out of a bamboo is to state that his origins were unknown. Here, also, the bamboo motif may be understood as a literary device to indicate the starting point of a story. The allegation that Tuan Masha'ika was not descended from Adam only serves to emphasize that he was an extraordinary man *vis-a-vis* the people he had come to live with, and that he represented a different and superior culture.

The report that Karim ul-makhdum came on an iron pot or vessel might mean that he came on a boat different from those used by the Sulu inhabitants at that time and that it

<sup>10</sup> See Cesar Adib Majul, *Muslims in the Philippines* (U.P. Press, Quezon City, second edition 1973), pp. 14-24 for dates of the reigns of sultans and the bases for their statement.



was probably a boat utilizing metals in its construction. There are other *tarsilas* that narrate how the Makhdum came walking over the water. This is very interesting, for it suggests that the Mukhdum was a member of a mystical (*Sufi*) brotherhood (*tariqat*) of the Qadiriya order. The reputed founder of this *tariqat* was the famous Muslim mystic and saintly man called 'Abdul Qadir Al-Jilani (470 A.H.-561 A.H. or 1077 A.D.-1166 A.D.) to whom, it is believed, God gave the power to walk on the waters of rivers and seas. Even at present he remains the patron saint of fishermen and sailors in some parts of the Islamic world. Thus to say that Karim ul-makhdum walked on water is simply an allegorical or symbolic manner of stating that he belonged to the Qadiriya *tariqat*. Actually, a study of many of the *makhdumin* who went to Malaya and Indonesia had been Sufis and to them had been attributed extraordinary or magical powers. This is probably one reason why Karim ul-makhdum had been called "Sharif Awliya," for such men had been considered saintly and full of Allah's blessings to the extent that they were supposed to have *barakah*, that is, the power to confer blessings on other people.

To conclude, no history on the Muslims of the Philippines can be written without paying due regard to *tarsilas*. Their existence can also be a source of pride not only for the Muslims but for all Filipinos; for they represent the efforts of the human mind to understand the past within an ordered pattern—that of descent and sequence of events in time and space. Moreover, they have given part of the Filipino people a historical sense, without which their present would be unintelligible and their future blurred.