Who Were the Balangingi Samal? 
Slave Raiding and Ethnogenesis in Nineteenth-Century Sulu

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The problem of ethnic identification is an important but neglected theme in Southeast Asian history. Historians of the region are indebted to Leach, Lehman, and Moerman for their pioneering work on the nature and history of upland societies in Southeast Asia. In *Political Systems of Highland Burma*, Leach demonstrates that culture and ethnic identity are not necessarily synonymous. He points out that the process of identification among tribal people like the Kachin is never simple; it entails migration, intermarriage, barter trade relations, warfare, interpenetrating political systems, and values and beliefs shared with non-Kachin. Manifest in the work of all these anthropologists is a conscious effort to define the nature of social categories applied to ethnic groups in Southeast Asia across time. Their work has led to a more complete understanding of the nature of ethnic groups and the processes responsible for "accomplishing ethnicity" among upland peoples in Southeast Asia.

These studies reveal more of the Southeast Asian past than was thought possible a generation ago, but our understanding of the development of the present extraordinary ethnic diversity of insular Southeast Asia still remains far from perfect. Historians of island Southeast Asia in particular have been generally inclined to accept "ethnicity" as a fixed premise. Such formulation has hindered necessary reappraisal of available evidence on the nature and history of particular "societies." An outstanding example of this is the case of the Balangingi Samal, a little-known but important population group in the nineteenth-century island world. Before the beginning of that century, the Balangingi Samal did not exist. Yet by the 1830s, Balangingi Samal slave-raiding activities, which were an important component of the
wider island economy of the Sulu Sultanate, had made them a group renowned and feared throughout Southeast Asia. How did this come about?

The zone encompassing the Sulu Sultanate is the historic home of peoples, languages, and cultures as varied as its landscape. The Taosug ("peoples of the current"), the dominant ethnic group in the Sulu Archipelago (now part of the Philippines), are the sole residents of Jolo Island, the historical seat of the Sultanate. Originally fishermen and traders with martial skills and a flair for organization, num-

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bers of them adopted agriculture. With the introduction of Islam, about the fifteenth century, they evolved a well-articulated political and economic system. The institution of the Sultanate established formal dominance of the Taosug over indigenous Samal-speaking peoples and later migrants to Sulu.

The Samal, strand-dwellers with close ties to the sea, possessed of highly developed boat-building techniques and sometimes practicing simple garden agriculture, are the most widely dispersed of all ethnolinguistic groups in the Sulu chain. Manifesting the greatest degree of internal linguistic and cultural differentiation, Samal communities predominate on the coralline island clusters of the northern and southern parts of the Sulu Archipelago, as well as on North Borneo and on Celebes. The Samal distinguish among themselves by dialect, locality, and cultural-ecological factors (principally between sedentary Muslim shore-dwellers and nomadic animistic boat-dwellers).

Samals tend to identify themselves with a particular island, island cluster, or regional orbit. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, they comprised several groups which occupied noncontiguous territories along the southern Mindanao shore, on the south coast and in the near interior of Basilan, and on the islands

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3 For a cogent discussion of the advent of Islam in Sulu and Mindanao, and its relationship to Southeast Asian Islam until the coming of the Spaniards in the 16th century, see chap. 2 of Cesar Majul's Muslims in the Philippines (Quezon City: Univ. of the Philippines Press, 1973).
4 William Geoghegan, "Balangigi Samal" in Southeast Asia, II (New Haven: HRAF, 1975), pp. 6–8. Ethnographic studies of the Samal (Bajau) Laut, spanning nearly a decade, have been conducted in the environs of Tawi-Tawi in the Sulu Archipelago; see Harry Arlo Nimmo, "The Structure of Bajau Society" (Ph.D. diss., Dept. of Anthropology, Univ. of Hawaii, 1969).
of the Tapian Tana group, Cagayan de Sulu, and the Balangingi cluster. Expert voy-
agers at sea, particular Samal groups had fixed bases of operation on a series of low
coral-and-sand islands flanking the northeastern side of Jolo. This group of islands,
named Los Samales by the Spanish, was a springboard for launching seasonal raids
against coastal villages from Luzon to Celebes. The most important island was Balan-
gingi, dwelling place and organizational center of the major slave-retailing group for
the Sulu Sultanate in the first half of the nineteenth century. A related group of
raiders, the Iranun, Maranao-speaking migratory strand-dwellers, established
their principal settlements along the river mouths of the southern coast of Min-
danao.

The history and organization of the Balangingi Samal can be related generally to
factors affecting ethnic and social transformations in the Sulu trading zone during
the later eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries. Elsewhere I have explained these
changes in terms of stimuli supplied by a rapidly expanding foreign trade that en-
couraged the dependent peoples of the Sulu Sultanate to procure marine-forest
produce. Seasonal raiding programs in search of additional manpower to service the
procurement of trading produce—tripang (sea cucumber), birds' nests, wax, cam-
phor, mother-of-pearl—became fundamental to the Sulu Sultanate as its economy
expanded and it established itself as a powerful commercial center.

After 1770, Sulu fitted into the patterns of European trade with China. The
marine and jungle produce were new products for redressing the West's adverse
trade balance with China. This commerce—involving trade with English merchants
from Bengal, with Manila to the north, with Yankee adventurers from the New
England seaboard, with Singapore and later Labuan—formed a complex set of inter-
relationships through which the Sultanate was able to consolidate its regional
dominance. Under the stimulus of this international trade, the Taosug state experienced
tremendous economic growth. The interdependence patterns of external trade con-
tributed toward the Sultanate's ability to promote organized raiding, and hence its
rise to power. The country traders of Bengal provided the Taosug with the sinews of
marauding—shot, powder, ball, and large cannon. The Manila merchants supplied
basic foodstuffs in bulk. (The Taosug needed a reliable source of food for the tiny
archipelago's expanding population, so that they could employ their human re-
sources in procurement and raiding rather than in agriculture.) The period 1768–
1848 witnessed a large-scale infusion of captives, European trade goods, and arms,
accompanied by a florescence of political and economic life.

*The Fishers of Men*

The unprecedented international trade demands for maritime and jungle prod-
ucts created the need for large-scale recruitment of labor in Sulu's economy. As the
China trade grew, so did the demand for manpower. Trade demands kept forcing
the Sultanate to incorporate more people—rewarding those Taosug who provided
the most produce, and forcing them to acquire more wealth-producing persons in
order to compete with their rivals. Driven by their patrons' desire for wealth and
power, the Iranun and Balangingi Samal surged out of the Sulu Archipelago in
search of slaves.

From the end of the eighteenth century to the middle of the nineteenth, insular

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5 "Trade, Raid, Slave: The Socio-Economic Pat-
terns of the Sulu Zone, 1770–1898" (Ph.D. diss.,
Dept. of Pacific and Southeast Asian History,
Australian National University, 1975).
6 See ibid., pp. 1–244, for a detailed discussion
of the various trading patterns.
Southeast Asia felt the full force of the slave raiders of the Sulu zone. Their harsh
e xploits were carried out on a large scale; manning well-organized fleets of large,
 swift prabu, they navigated along the west coast of Borneo and crossed the South
 China Sea to the Straits of Malacca and the Bay of Bengal. In the south, their raiding
 vessels thrust through the Makassar Strait and fanned out over the Indonesian
 world. They crossed the Banda Sea to New Guinea, made raids along the coasts of
 Java, and circumnavigated Borneo. In pursuit of captives, Iranun and Balangungi
terrorized the Philippine Archipelago. They preyed on the poorly defended lowland
 coastal villages and towns of southern Luzon and the Visayan Islands. They even
 sailed and rowed their warships into Manila Bay, their annual cruises reaching the
 northern extremity of Luzon and beyond. They earned a reputation as daring, fierce
 marauders who jeopardized the maritime trade routes of Southeast Asia and domi-
nated the capture and transport of slaves to the Sulu Sultanate.

Historical studies have invariably failed to place Sulu’s raiding activity in proper
 context. Past and present historians of the colonial period, in considering the Sulu
 raids, have uncritically adopted the interpretation perpetrated by interests “on the
 right side of the gunboat.”7 They have relied heavily on sources inherently antago-
nistic to the nature of the society and values of the raiders: the hostile accounts of
 the Spanish friars, the printed reports of Dutch and English punitive expeditions,
 and Sir Stamford Raffles’s and James Brooke’s influential reports on “Malay piracy.”

Ann Reber has shown that Raffles’s writings were largely responsible for the
 genesis of a “decay theory” of Malay piracy: Raffles forcefully argued that the
 monopolistic trade practices of the Europeans (particularly the Dutch) in the eighteenth
 century tore away the props that supported the economic foundations of many of
 the indigenous coastal and island realms; and that, severely weakened, these polities
 turned to piracy, the “nemesis” of native trade and European commercial in-
 volvement in the Malay world.8 Meant primarily for English consumption, Raffles’s
 and Brooke’s writings about the “nefarious activities” of the Iranun and Balangungi
 relegated the Sulu Sultanate to the status of a mere “pirates’ nest” in the 1840s. This
 propaganda portraying the Sulu world as the scourge of the seas from Singapore to
 Papua became grist for anti-piracy campaigns mounted to destroy these seafarers
 whose demonstration of power aroused colonial governments from their lethargy.
 The decline-and-decadence interpretation gained currency with the passage of time,
 and is widely upheld by contemporary historians of the area.9

1 In these Euro-centered histories, which dwell
 on the activity of the Iranun and Balangungi at
 length, the term “piracy” is conspicuously present
 in the titles: Vicente Barrantes, Guerras Piraticas
 de Filipinas contra Mindanaos y Jolonoos (Madrid,
 1878); Emilio Bernadiez, Resana Historica de la
 Guerra a Sur de Filipinas, sostenida por las armas
 Espanolas contra los piratas de aquel Archipielago,
 desde la conquista hasta nuestras dias (Madrid,
 1857); Jose Montero y Vidal, Historia de la Pirat-
 eria Malayo Mahometana en Mindanao, Jolo y Bor-
 neo (Madrid, 1882); Nicholas Tarling, Piracy and
 Politics in the Malay World (Melbourne: F. W.

2 Reber, “The Sulu World in the Eighteenth and
 Early Nineteenth Centuries: A Historiographical
 Problem in British Writings on Malay Piracy”
 (M.A. thesis, Cornell, 1966). In fact, as Reber
 points out, Raffles could have reached very dif-
 ferent conclusions regarding the subject of piracy
 and the Sulu Sultanate. He seems to have been un-
 aware of the accurate published accounts and the
 manuscript material (written by Alexander Dal-
 rymple, Thomas Forrest, and James Rennel at the
 end of the eighteenth century; and available in the
 archives of the East India Company) on the Sulu
 world.

3 See Lennox A. Mills, British Malaya, 1824–
 1867 (orig. pub. 1925; Kuala Lumpur: Oxford in
 Asia Historical Reprints, 1967), pp. 323–24, 328–
 29; Tarling (n. 7 above), p. 20, 146; K. G. Treg-
 gnon, A History of Modern Sabah 1881–1963
 (Singapore: Univ. of Malaya Press, 1965), p. 186;
 L. R. Wright, The Origins of British Borneo (Hong
 Kong: Hong Kong Univ. Press, 1970), pp. 5, 39;
 Majul (n. 3 above), chaps. 7, 8.
It is inadequate to explain the explosion of the Ibanun and Balanginigi into the mainstream of Southeast Asian history after 1770 purely in these terms. Imperative to an understanding of the nature and evolution of their marauding activities is a consideration of the relationship of Ibanun and Balanginigi raiding to the indigenous society and economy of the Sulu Sultanate. Much information can be gleaned from the heretofore virtually ignored statements of captives, and records of trials and interrogations; these provide invaluable detail on the genesis and ethnic identity of particular Samal populations, and on the place of slaves and raiding in the Sulu world, from the perspective of the indigenous participants themselves.10

Ethnic Identity and Ethnogenesis: The Balanginigi Samal

Considerable confusion has surrounded scholarly efforts to pinpoint the ethnic identity of, and significance of the role and raiding activities of, the Ibanun and Balanginigi in Southeast Asia’s recent history.11 These societies being labeled—in response to colonial governments and other authorities—as Moros (Muslims), Sulu Zeeroovers (Sulu pirates), or Illanun (pirate) has bedeviled researchers who expect such populations to place themselves in one of the official categories. The ethnic nomenclature and ascription traditionally applied to the Ibanun and Balanginigi is particularly unreliable. Travelers, officials, and academics have frequently failed to recognize the ethnolinguistic distinctions perceived by these raiding populations.

The name l-lanaw-en, a word of Magindanao origin meaning “people from the lake,” is a clue to the origins of the Ibanun marauders. It suggests that they were originally Maranao, “people of the lake” from the lofty tableland around Lake Lanao in central Mindanao.12 The term l-lanaw-en—popularized by the coastal inhabitants of the Philippine Archipelago, the Malay Peninsula, Java, Sumatra, and their European rulers as “Ilanun” (Ibanun, Illanaon, Lanun, Illano)—was erroneously extended to include the non-Maranao-speaking people of southern Mindanao, the Taosug of Jolo, and the Samal of the Sulu Archipelago. On the other hand, to the shore-dwellers of Celebes, these seaborne raiders became known as “Magindanao.” While

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10 See Blake to Maitland, 13 Aug 1838, Public Records Office–London [hereafter PRO], Admiralty 125/133 [hereafter A 125/133]; Declaraciones of todos los cautivos fugados de Jolo y acogidos a los Buques de la expresada divicion, con objeto de averiguar los puntos de donde salen los panceos piratas, la clase de gente que los tripulan, la forma en que se hacen los armamentos y otros particulares que arrogan las mismas declaraciones, Jolo, 4 Oct 1836, Philippine National Archive–Manila [hereafter PNA], Mindanao/Sulu [hereafter M/S] 1803–1890, pp. 1–72; Relacion de los 45 cautivos venidos de Jolo sobre el Bergantin Espanol Cometa, 19 Mar 1847, PNA, Piratas 3; Verklaringen van ontvlugten personen uit der handen der Zeeroovers van 1845–1849, Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia–Jakarta, Menado 37.


they were rarely able to distinguish among the several ethnic groups that brought devastation to their coast every year, the people of the Celebes never forgot whence came the first Iranun marauders—southern Mindanao, opening like a window on Celebes; the label Magindanao was still being used in that aggrieved area to describe the Balangiingi Samal in the 1850s.\textsuperscript{13} Only Magindanao, Maranao, and Iranun were called “Ilanun” by the Taosug of Jolo.\textsuperscript{14}

The English used Ilanun indiscriminately to denote simply “Sulu pirates.” The Dutch considered the “Ilanun” a “vile race,” identifying them as the shore-dwelling people of southern Mindanao, Sulu, and several places on the coasts of Borneo and Sumatra. The Spaniards viewed Jolo as the center of a world fundamentally hostile to the interests of Spain and Catholicism—an Islamic world whose activities centered about piracy and slavery. In official reports to the Crown, they often referred to Iranun and Samal populations as Los Moros Infeles (the Muslim infidels). In the correspondence of the commanders of imperial gunboats who hunted them, in colonial gazettes, and in published works, the labels Moros, Zeeroovers, and “Ilanun” were still being used as late as 1862 to classify various maritime peoples whose ethnic origins did not always correspond to linguistic and political affiliation.\textsuperscript{15}

As Sulu’s trade expanded at the end of the eighteenth century, Taosug datu (aristocrats) increasingly retained neighboring groups of Samal as slave raiders. From Balangiingi and related communities on other islands, Samal-speakers voyaged great distances; they swept the coasts from Luzon to Brunei and from Singapore to Menado, capturing slaves. But who were the Balangiingi? Although Francisco Combes and Thomas Forrest described the warlike activities and trade of the Samal in earlier periods, there are no historical references to the Balangiingi as a separate group before the nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{16} In Western sources, marauders are first mentioned as Balangiingi rather than Iranun in the area of Singapore and East Malaya in the 1830s.\textsuperscript{17} From that period, the label Balangiingi began to supercede Ilanun in the European literature as synonymous with “pirate.” The Balangiingi Samal seem to have acquired ethnic distinction only as they specialized in raiding activity and incorporated an incredible number of non-Samal peoples into their number.

The Balangiingi Samal lived, along with Iranun and other Samal-speaking groups, in a dozen or more villages scattered along the southern Mindanao coast, on the southern shore of Basilan, and on the islands of the Samalese cluster of which Balangiingi was dominant. The Samalese group comprised Balangiingi Island (6 square miles) and Tunkil, a cluster of four islets (9.5 square miles) situated in the center of the Sulu Archipelago, midway between Borneo and Mindanao. The islets were subject to change of size and shape with tidal variations and modulations in the wind and weather patterns, separating into small parcels of rock when inundated at high tide. They were fringed with mangrove swamps, and separated from neighboring

\textsuperscript{13} N. 839, De Resident van Menado, Jansen, aan den Gouverneur der Molukschte Eilanden te Amboina, 8 June 1855, Algemeen Rijksarchief-Schaarsbergen, Kolonien, 5873.

\textsuperscript{14} Saleeby (n. 12 above), p. 11.

\textsuperscript{15} Admiralty to Under Secretary of State, 14 July 1862, PRO, Foreign Office–London [hereafter FO], 12/30.

\textsuperscript{16} Combes, Historia de 1st Islas de Mindanao y Jolo (Madrid, 1667), cols. 28–52; Forrest, A Voyage to New Guinea and the Moluccas from Balambangan: Including an Account of Magindanao, Sooao and Other Islands (London: G. Scott, 1779), pp. 372–74; Geoghegan (n. 4 above), pp. 4.

\textsuperscript{17} Several “Iranun” prahus were destroyed by the steamboat Diana on the east coast of Malaya in 1856, and some of the survivors when interrogated called themselves Balangiingi after the island that was their home. See Warren (n. 5 above), pp. 459–60.
islands by reefs and winding channels through which swirled strong currents and countercurrents. With no surface water, and little flora except the ubiquitous coconut palm, they were incapable of providing the subsistence base necessary to support a dense population. On these islands, the Balangangi Samal constructed wells and four forts (Balangangi, Sipac, Bucotingal, Sangap) to guard their villages and prabu. The forts (kota), situated on raised ground and protected by coral reefs on three sides, were stockades of two, three, and four tiers of stout tree trunks, packed with earth and coral to a height of twenty feet and defended with heavy cannon.

The islands and shallow seas upon which the original Samalan-speaking people of the Balangangi cluster lived placed them in an ecological bind that shaped their character and relationship to the Sulu Sultanate. The sole orientation of the Samal was, of necessity, toward the sea. From it, as specialists in maritime raiding and marine procurement, they derived their strength, security, and—ultimately—wealth. Lack of self-sufficiency bound the Samal to Jolo. Its proximity to Jolo as an outlet for retailing captives; its dependence on larger, volcanic islands like Jolo and Basilan as sources of rice, fruits and vegetables, and trade goods; and the natural barriers surrounding it help to explain why Balangangi became the natural home of one of the most feared piratical groups of island Southeast Asia.

In the nineteenth century, the Balangangi were integrated within the Sulu Sultanate by a three-level class system comprising aristocrats, freemen, and d'ata (slaves). The Sultan appointed a panglima to represent him, but datus exercised titular rights and imposed jural authority over specific Samal islands and populations. All datus were Taosug, but not infrequently panglima were Samal. The Samal paid tribute in tripang, pearl shell, and salt; and as clients of powerful datus, they offered their services for slaving expeditions, in return for trade opportunities and for protection from rival Taosug. Datus who exercised supervision over Samal populations were frequently associated with—if not directly related to—the Sultan, and often resided in or near Jolo. In the first half of the nineteenth century, the most important Taosug patrons of Samal communities were: Datu Daacula (Sipac), Datu Tahel, Datu Molok, and Maharaja Lela (Balangangi).

To understand the important role played by the Balangangi in the slave trade in Southeast Asia, it is necessary to trace their history as an ethnic group. The only historical work that deals with the Balangangi does not consider their ethnic origins. Avoidance of this question presents a deceptive picture of a static “society” with a homogeneous population. Samal groups in the Sulu Archipelago were emer-

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18 In regard to the treacherous character of these currents, Bernaldez (n. 7 above) wrote: "They usually swirl about at six or seven miles an hour [and] we have seen a steam warship dragging both anchors, after letting out more than 60 fathoms of chain on each anchor in Balangangi waters" (p. 153). Also see p. 153.

19 El Gobierno Politico y Militar del Zamboanga a El Gobernador Capitan General [hereafter GCG], 30 May 1842, PNA, M/S 1838–1885.

20 Bernaldez (n. 7 above), p. 153.

21 El Gobierno Politico y Militar de Zamboanga a GCG, 30 May 1842, PNA, M/S 1838–1885; statements of Francisco Gregorio, Domicio Francisco, and Mariano Sevilla in Expediente 12; Declaraciones de todos los cautivos fugados de Jolo, 4 Oct 1836, PNA, M/S 1803–1890 [Exp. 12, unless otherwise specified, will hereafter refer to this set of Declaraciones]; J. Farren to Viscount Palmerston, 29 Feb 1848, PRO, FO, 72/749.


23 Statements of Juan de L: Cruz and Jose Ruedas in Exp. 12; Van Hoevell (n. 10 above), p. 102.

24 Tarling (n. 7 above), pp. 146–85.
gent populations; the success of the Balangingi as slave raiders was due in large measure to their ethnic heterogeneity. Captives' statements present a picture of Samal populations undergoing constant readjustments until 1848. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, there was an infusion of ethnically diverse captive people among the Balangingi—mostly through demands for their labor on raiding prabu and in the tripang and pearl fisheries—that complicated the identity of the Samal populations.

Many of the captives or slaves who were brought to Balangingi turned Samal—borrowing language, religion, and customs. Insufficient data prevent a precise reconstruction of the overall size and origin of Samal populations at that time. What information there is for the nineteenth century has survived in the statements of fugitive captives; these show that the incorporation of foreign elements took place on a large scale, especially in the second and third generation. In 1836 it was estimated that only one-tenth of the male population were "true" Balangingi Samal; the remainder were renegados (renegades), more particularly Visayan and Tagalog indios (Filipinos) and other captives.\textsuperscript{25}

The Taosug economy was expanding rapidly enough at this time for Samal populations to absorb larger and larger numbers of captives. An apparently conscious recruitment policy of the datus changed the numerical structure and ethnic composition of Samal groupings in less than two generations (1820–1848). Barth\textsuperscript{26} considers a ten-percent rate of incorporation in a generation drastic. By those standards, the flexibility of the Sulu system was incredible. Village populations in 1836 appear to have ranged from just over 300 people with 10–12 raiding prabhu (garay) at Tunkil to more than 1,000 people, with 30–40 prabu, at Balangingi.\textsuperscript{27} In less than a decade, Balangingi's population roughly quadrupled; in 1845 the village had an estimated 4,000 people and 120–150 large vessels.\textsuperscript{28} The overall Samal population devoted to slave raiding reached an upper limit, in 1848, of 10,000 people with 200 raiding prahu.\textsuperscript{29} The consequence of this extraordinary growth was the creation of an "emergent" slave-raiding population within the Sulu Sultanate—the Balangingi.

The Social Organization of Raiding

The general importance of the relationship of Balangingi raiders to the history of island Southeast Asia is widely recognized; but thus far, scholars have concentrated primarily on the Samal as "pirates," and on their suppression by colonial navies.\textsuperscript{30} These explanations of Samal piracy fail to recognize the central relationship of ethnogenesis to Sulu's redistributive economy, its exponential growth and its dependence on raiding. Clearly, much of the Sultanate's power and much of the rapid growth of the Balangingi population in the first half of the nineteenth century stemmed from the traffic in slaves, and incorporation of them into the society.

\textsuperscript{25} Exp. 12: statements of Angel Custodio, Juan Salvador, Domingo Candelario, Juan Santiago; Diary of William Pryer, 9 Mar 1879, Colonial Office–London, 874/68; Warren (n. 5 above), Appendix XVIII: The Statements of the Fugitive Captives of the Sulu Sultanate, 1836–1864, pp. 461–82.

\textsuperscript{26} Barth (note 1 above), p. 22.

\textsuperscript{27} Exp. 12: Jose Ruedas, Gabriel Francisco, Matias de la Cruz.

\textsuperscript{28} El Gobierno Politico y Militar de Zamboanga a GCG (n. 21 above); 15 Feb 1845 letter of Jayme Simo in Expediente 12, sobre haber salido la expedicion contra Balangingi, 17 Feb 1845, PNA, M/S 1836–1897.

\textsuperscript{29} Information obtained by Charles Grey at Singapore from Wyndham relating to Sulo, 24 Feb 1847, PRO, A 125/133; Van Hoevell (n. 10 above), p. 102.

\textsuperscript{30} Tarling (n. 7 above), pp. 146–83; Majul (n. 3 above), pp. 271–77.
For the Taosug, slave raiding was significantly related to power and wealth. A *datu* who could acquire large numbers of captives could engage more people in procurement activities and trade; and, with the wealth they produced, he could attract others to him. Hunt recognized that the power of the *datus* derived from the number of wealth-producing persons—clients and slaves—in their retinues: “Their principal passion appears to be a lust for power, . . . and the object of their life is to increase their number of ambas [slaves].” Thus, the principal aim of Taosug-sponsored Iranun/Balangingi attacks on Southeast Asian villages and prabu shipping was the capture of slaves who could be converted into a source of wealth. Slave raiding in the Sulu Sultanate was highly organized. There were several types of expeditions: some equipped by the Sultan and his kindred, some independently recruited with the encouragement of the Sultan, and some conducted without the sanction of the Sultan. The right to organize raiding expeditions resided at all levels of the Taosug political system; however, the Sultan and certain *datu* on the coast—by virtue of their control over foreign trade and their more expansive network of alliances—were in the best position to actually carry it out.

The Sultan’s main source of wealth was from trade, harbor and market fees, and tribute. His income was supplemented, however, by slaves—given in repayment for commissions to raid, for assistance to raiding parties, and for harbor fees. Hunt charges the Sultan with a principal role in the organization of slave raids, stating that Samal raiders handed over to him and to other aristocrats a certain number of captives, on the basis of previous agreement. The statements made by fugitive captives in the 1830s tend to corroborate this allegation. But the disclosures that directly implicate the Sultan as an important backer are contained in the statements of Balangingi prisoners taken on board the H.M.S. Wolf after the capture of their prabu in West Malayan waters, and at Singapore’s Paupers Hospital in 1836: “Orang Kaya Kullul informed us that the Sultan had desired him to plunder and capture all nations save Europeans.”

The military and economic activities of Samal populations were closely regulated by their Taosug patrons, who encouraged the Balangingi over a number of generations to become fishers of men. To meet the increased demands for slave labor in the Sulu zone between 1800 and 1848, *datus* not only equipped Samal vessels but also provided credit to the Iranun—with advances in boats, powder and ball, cannon, rice, opium, and additional crew. Everything was to be repaid in captured slaves. In this context, slaves were considered not only chattels but currency as well; they provided a valuable medium of exchange that was readily transferable. For example, the value of a slave in the 1850s, as an article of barter in transactions between *datu* and Samal raiders, was roughly equivalent to 200–300 *gantangs* (3.1 kilograms) of rice. A *prabu* could be purchased for six to eight slaves; boat rental

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32 Blake to Maitland, 8 Aug 1838, PRO, A 125/133; Jansen (n. 10 above), pp. 217, 229.
33 Statement of Silamkoem, 11 May 1838 in Bonham to Maitland, 28 June 1838, PRO, A 125/133.
34 Exp. 12: Matias Domingo, Juan de la Cruz; extract from Singapore Free Press, 6 Apr 1847, in PRO, A 125/133. Majul (n. 3 above) fails to recognize the important redistributive role of the Taosug raiding, and its relationship to the economy of the Sulu Sultanate: “All the evidence points to the fact that the Sulu Sultan and chief *datu* never encouraged or approved of piracy by Samal or Iranun datus, for they were themselves traders having an interest that all shipping lanes be kept safe especially for traders going or coming from Jolo” (p. 285).
amounted to only two or three slaves. A rifle (often defective) could be rented for five pieces of linen of twenty fathoms; a portable cannon was loaned at the rate of one slave.\textsuperscript{36}

Most datu lacked the necessary means to equip expeditions on a large scale. The few datu who possessed such resources were inevitably involved in Sulu’s external trade. Their strict supervision of external trade enabled them to maintain control over the supply and distribution of guns to client military groups. In the first half of the nineteenth century, there was a crucial struggle between the Sultan (and his supporters) and other datu to establish exclusive control over the gun trade. By 1842, the Sultan had lost dominance over external trade and particular Samal populations: “The whole power, within the last thirty years, has been usurped by one or two datu, who now have monopolized the . . . foreign trade that comes to these islands.”\textsuperscript{37} Two chiefs emerged paramount from a factional struggle spanning three decades (1810–1840): the Datu Molok, the Prime Minister, described in European accounts as an enterprising, intelligent man, owning four trading ships and a large quantity of arms (25 cannon and 100 muskets) and reputed to be worth 150,000 pesos; and Datu Tahel (the son of Datu Emir Bahar), a powerful figure in Sulu’s foreign trade in the 1830s, and principal organizer of Balangigi raidsing expeditions.\textsuperscript{38}

In the political organization of slave raiding can be seen the elements responsible for Taosug military efficiency and predominance in the zone. The Sultan and datu formed alliances with panglimas to authorize Samal groups to engage in raiding.\textsuperscript{39} When permission was given to carry out a raid, the panglima acted as the organizer. It was he who obtained from the Taosug datu (who received, in return, a share of the captives) the supplies necessary to outfit the expedition. And it was he who appointed the nakodab (the prabu commanders).\textsuperscript{40} Each nakodab was responsible for recruiting his own crew; he mustered them from his support groups in the village, personal kindred, dependent followers, and others with whom he was allied. This pyramidizing of authority and responsibility in the organization of the raiding was commented on by British officials in 1858: “It is also pretty certain from statements of [the] prisoners . . . that the six boats were under the command of Orang Kaja Koollul [, who is] . . . reported to be related to Panglima Alip, the local chief of Bangeenge [Balangigi] who is again subordinate to the Sultan of Sulu.”\textsuperscript{41}

An expedition was commanded by a panglima or an orang kaya (a notable). Each prabu had its own nakodab; and a large part of the crew would be his kindred, followers, and slaves. The successful execution of a slave-raiding expedition was difficult and dangerous work, and depended largely on the skill of its personnel. Many renegados held important positions—nakodab, occasionally even squadron commander—in slaving expeditions; in return, they acquired wealth and slaves, who complemented their personal followings. Visayan indios in particular demonstrated

\textsuperscript{36} Jansen (n. 10 above), pp. 216, 227.


\textsuperscript{39} Exp. 12: Juan de la Cruz; Bonham to Maitland (n. 34 above).

\textsuperscript{40} Jansen (n. 10 above), p. 228.

\textsuperscript{41} Bonham to Maitland (n. 34 above).
their talent and courage as nakodah, and developed a fearful reputation in the Philippines; but captives from other parts of the Malay world, who had knowledge of dialects and of their former localities, proved equally skillful boat commanders.

Once the panglima and nakodahs determined the course, they rarely left the prabus during the voyage. They had several experienced officers to assist them: the juru mudi (julmuri), of whom there were two or more on each vessel, acted as steersmen and were responsible for the crew (sakay) and the maintenance of the boat; the juru batu (pilot) tended the anchor and kept watch for reefs, shoals, rocks, trading ships, and the enemy. Accompanying a fleet was at least one batib or imam, who read the Koran, led prayer recitation, and acted as legal arbiter and judge (bakim) when disputes arose between the commanders and their crews. In this way, strict discipline was maintained in the fleets. Most vessels appear to have carried several robust youths (12–15 years old), who could provide assistance at the oars in difficult situations as part of their apprenticeship while learning the fine points of raiding technique and navigation. Often there would be an elderly chief (orang tua) on board—a man no longer strong enough to be in command, but placing his rich store of experience at the disposal of the expedition. Women rarely went on expeditions, except occasionally as consort of a commander.

The crew members consisted partly of Balangini whose task was to fight, partly of trusted slaves who had accompanied the raiders since their youth, and slaves who had been seized on earlier expeditions. The officers and even ordinary crew brought slaves with them to cook, fetch water, and assist them from time to time with their shipboard duties. The slaves were not armed, but were considered an integral part of the crew; it was their job to row, bail, clean, and repair the prahu. The size of the crew depended on course upon the size of the vessel. At the end of the eighteenth century, the largest Iranun raiding boats carried from fifty to eighty fighting men and about one hundred rowers. But in the nineteenth century, when slave raiders used smaller craft, the biggest Balangini Samal prahu were only sixty to seventy feet long and carried a complement of no more than a hundred men including slaves. An average-size crew numbered about forty men. Smaller, less heavily armed boats carried twenty-five to thirty men.

The size of the expedition depended not only upon its purpose but also upon complex factors such as the overall length of time of the cruise, the participants' relative familiarity with the target areas, and—more importantly—the ability of the organizer to mobilize followers for the venture. Small expeditions could be managed by individual communities; sometimes whole crews came from a single village. However, composite crews were not uncommon in expeditions of less than ten prahu. Balangini vessels frequently left with a skeleton crew of ten to fifteen men and traveled to neighboring Samal villages and islands to fill out their complements. It was common for masters to send unaccompanied slaves on these prahu, but nakodah were reluctant to take those who objected to their master's wish.

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43 Statements of Abdul and Sendie in Verklarlingen (n. 10 above); Jansen (n. 10 above), p. 225.

44 Jansen (n. 10 above), pp. 212, 222–24.

45 Ibid., p. 222; Bonham to Maitland (n. 34 above).

46 Exp. 12: Angel Custodio, Alex Quijano, Mariano Sevilla.

47 Exp. 12: Mariano Sevilla, Juan Santiago.
Large-scale enterprises entailing thirty, forty, and even fifty prabu required the cooperation of many communities on a regional basis. Organizationally, such expeditions reflected the alliance networks of powerful datu. For example, of the twenty-six “Balangingi” vessels that seized Francisco Basilo and three hundred and fifty other people in 1836, nine were from Balangingi, four from Tunkil, five from Basilan, two from Pilas, and six from Irunun settlements on Mindanao.48 These groupings did not have any permanence beyond the immediate expedition. Expediency was paramount; leaders and groups of boats were constantly realigned to conduct forays and independent missions patronized by Taosug datu and panglimas.

Of course, not all Samal populations were loyal to their patrons; on occasion, Samal islands were known to have switched their allegiance. Further, there were instances of unsanctioned slave hunting by Balangingi, and defiant refusals by their nakodahs to pay the Sultan’s harbor fee—especially after 1836, when the expanding population of the Balangingi Samal, the success of their raiding, and the growing strength and political independence of their panglimas began to challenge the influence of the dominant ethnic group, the Taosug.

A datu’s main source of wealth was his following. The destruction of Balangingi and Jolo by the Spanish between 1846 and 1852 placed serious constraints on the ability of the Taosug to retain control over the Balangingi Samal, their principal source of slaves. The Western grooved cannon and gunpowder, which had first attracted the Samal to Jolo as clients and suppliers of captives, were now operating to drive them apart. There was a progressive fragmentation of Samal groups because of Spanish incursions and disruption of the Taosug economy.

After mid-century, some Balangingi did remain loyal to their Taosug patrons. Others relocated on the southernmost islands of the archipelago in the Tawi-Tawi chain, openly challenging Taosug authority; a smaller number experienced the humiliation of enforced settlement in and near Zamboanga. With closer cooperation among European navies and more effective use of steam vessels, dispersed Balangingi on Tawi-Tawi (known in the European records as “Tawi-Tawi pirates”) who continued to pursue the old way of life suffered fearful casualties. No longer could their swift fleets expect to find distant coasts unprotected and towns defenseless. By the 1870s, it was clear even to these groups: the era of long-range slave raiding in insular Southeast Asia was over.

Conclusion

In this article I have taken a new look at the genesis of an ethnic group of insular Southeast Asia, the Balangingi Samal, and their role as slave raiders in the economy of the Sulu Sultanate. I have concentrated on the social forces that external trade generated within the Sulu Sultanate—namely, the large-scale incorporation of foreign peoples into Samal society, and the advent of organized long-distance slave raiding in Southeast Asia. By the dawn of the nineteenth century, slavery and slave raiding were fundamental to the state. The Taosug aristocracy depended for its prosperity on the labor of slaves and sea raiders, who fished for trupang, secured pearls, and manned the fleets. Marauding became the exclusive vocation of the Samal-speakers of Balangingi and other small islets, as they fused their activities with certain Irunun groups from the north coast of Jolo and Mindanao. The raiding system

48 Exp. 12: Francisco Basilo, Mariano Sevilla.
enabled the Sultanate to incorporate vast numbers of people from the Philippines and Eastern Indonesia into the population. From the point of view of Philippine history and the larger history of island Southeast Asia, it is important to understand the genesis of this particular ethnic group, to know that the infamous reputation Sulu acquired for slave mongering in the nineteenth century is attributable to the activities of the Balangingi, an "emergent society" increasingly composed of indio captives and their descendants who were brought to the Sulu Archipelago and in many cases assimilated within a single generation to become the predators of their own people.