

## **A Brief History of America and the Moros 1899–1920**

The tribes which inhabit the island of Mindanao and...Sulu...have attracted much attention because of their warlike character and their distinction as the only Mohammedan wards of the United States. As a governmental factor they are most embarrassing. The wild men [pagan tribes] are good raw material, and the [Christian] Filipinos are easily influenced in favor of good government, but the Moros, encased in the armor of Islamism, present a much more difficult problem. - Charles Burke Elliott, 1917

### **The Empire of Spain and the Moros (1565-1899)**

Like two large, opposing tectonic plates grinding against one another, the westward push of Christianity collided with the eastward thrust of Islam over 440 years ago in the islands we now call the Philippines. Although first claimed for Spain by Ferdinand Magellan in 1521, it was not until 1565 that the Spanish conquistadores, with cross in one hand, sword in the other, began a conquest of the islands. Their goal was to extend the realm of their king, Philip II (whom they named the islands after), find riches, and save souls. To their consternation and rage, they discovered that many of the people they sought to subjugate were Muslims, believers in the same religion as that of their ancient and bitter enemies, the Barbary Moors of North Africa (present day Morocco). Only seventy-five years earlier, in a revolt lasting over hundreds of years, the newly-united Spanish kingdoms of Castile and Aragon had overthrown the nearly seven-hundred year long rule of Muslim invaders over the Iberian Peninsula. Thereafter they referred to any practitioner of Islam as a “Moro” (or Moor), considered a hereditary enemy of their nation and religion, a target for their vengeance and destruction. But after 330 years of trying, by 1898 the Spanish had failed to fully conquer and subdue the southern Muslim homelands, known as *La Tierra de el Moros*, “The Land of the Moros”. Despite extravagant claims to the contrary, by the time the Spanish were forced to abandon the Philippine Islands by the United States they had only come to control a handful of small, fortified port cities. Spanish sovereignty never extended beyond the parapets of these few miserable and remote outposts.

### **The Spanish-American War (1898)**

In the pivotal year of 1898 war broke out between Spain and the United States as the result of a long-simmering feud over the island of Cuba. Improbably, the first battle of that conflict took place half-way around the world in Manila Bay, when on May 1 a small U.S. flotilla led by Commodore George Dewey sank or captured most of the Spanish Far East squadron and their naval station at Cavite. The motive had been purely tactical, to destroy the Spanish fleet and then either blockade or seize the capital city of Manila, holding it as a bargaining chip for expected peace talks after the war. The original objective of the war was to remove Spanish power from Cuba, not the Philippines. Nevertheless an expeditionary force of 20,000 men was assembled and dispatched in stages to reinforce Dewey, creating an American beachhead on Manila Bay which would have future consequences.

The war with Spain, the shortest and least costly in U.S. history, ended only 3 ½ months after it had begun; the fighting limited to two one-day naval battles and two-days of storming of Spanish defenses at the city of Santiago in Cuba. No ground fighting took place between Spain and the U.S. in the Philippines other than a sham, pre-arranged “battle” in which the Spanish garrison turned over the capital city of Manila to the Americans in order to avoid surrendering to Filipino revolutionaries. A truce was declared the next day, August 12, 1898, and a peace treaty signed December 10, 1898. Puerto Rico and Guam were ceded to the United States and Cuba was granted independence, although subject to two-year “transitional rule” by the Americans. But a last-minute, surprise demand from President McKinley was made for the cession of the Philippine Islands to the U.S. McKinley was unequivocal: the Spanish must either sign over all their claims to the archipelago or go back to war. With great reluctance and bitterness Spain capitulated. America’s new venture in the Philippine islands would signaled its entry onto the world stage and usher in an infatuation

with the idea of building a new kind of empire by creating an entirely new nation in an American image.

### **The Philippine-American War (1899-1902)**

The Philippine-American War began February 4, 1899, two days before the Senate narrowly ratified by one vote the treaty ending the Spanish-American War. Unlike the conflict just ended, the Philippine-American War (a.k.a. Philippine Insurrection) ranks among the nation's longest (3 ½ years) and nastiest. The point of contention was straightforward. Who would become the ruler of the former colony in the wake of Spain's departure? The United States or the Philippine Revolutionary Government (PRG)? The PRG was dominated by the largest ethnic-language grouping (Tagalog) and the largest island, Luzon? The President of the PRG and commander of its armed force, the Army of Liberation, was 29-year old General Emilio Aguinaldo and most of its civilian and military leadership were drawn from the "illustrado class", the country's landed and educated elite.

Eventually the United States prevailed but in doing so more than 126,000 American soldiers would be "cycled through" the Philippine conflict (the peak strength in 1900 was just over 71,000) in order to subdue the 30-40,000 man Army of Liberation, the military arm of the PRG. It was truly the first of the many of the "wars of national liberation" that would follow in the 20th Century in Asia, Latin America, and Africa, and in being such would set the pattern and provide the lessons for the multitude of conflicts that followed.

### **American Troops arrive in Moroland (May 19, 1899)**

In an exquisite irony, both the United States government and the Philippine Revolutionaries were agreed upon two major points. First, their stated end objectives were the eventual establishment of the first "democratic form of governance" in Asia, based on the principles embodied in U.S. Declaration of Independence and Constitution. They disagreed however, and were willing to go to war over how that should come about and under whose control. Second, both sides sought to build one large, unitary future nation, comprising all the islands in the archipelago. But given 7,000 separate islands and enormous cultural and language diversity, many other peoples in the islands opposed this vision and sought to control their own destinies. Whether one lived in a colony controlled by a foreign power or one controlled by Manila, it was still subservience. Nowhere was this attitude stronger and more certain to cause grief to whomever prevailed than in Moroland—primarily a legacy of the long and bitter enmity between Muslims and Christians that had been a hallmark of the Spanish era and could not be easily put aside.

On May 19, 1899 as the war between the U.S. and the Filipino revolutionaries began in earnest, two battalions of the 23rd Infantry, 75 officers and men commanded by Captain Edward B. Pratt, were landed at the walled and fortified city of Jolo on the island of Jolo, to replace the Spanish garrison. The Spanish flag was ceremoniously hauled down and the Stars and Stripes "unfurled to the breeze" amongst weeping Spanish officers and jubilant Americans. The Spanish garrison was by then, because of desertions, down to 824 men, a fraction of its original size. In low spirits they trudged up the gangplank and left. The next day the equally depleted Spanish garrison at Zamboanga, on the island of Mindanao, was evacuated as well. But no American troops could be spared to occupy the city and Zamboanga was abandoned to a well-armed Christian Filipino militia aligned with Aguinaldo. Captain Pratt had been informed that in the event of hostilities his small command was "not to expect any relief or reinforcements as none were available." What he was to do in the eventuality of trouble on an island of 40,000 armed inhabitants was left unanswered.

### **The Bates Agreement (August 20, 1899)**

The commanding officer of the American forces, Major General Elwell Otis, realized that he had not the resources to deal with two wars at the same time. He delegated the problem in to a newly-arrived field commander, Brigadier General John C. Bates. Bates was the well-educated son of Abraham Lincoln's Attorney General and as a young man had fought with valor in every major battle of the Civil War fought by the Army of the Potomac. Otis

demanded four things from Bates: 1) keep the Moros from joining the war in the north, 2) avoid a separate conflict, 3) gain recognition of U.S. sovereignty and acceptance of the stationing of U.S. troops, and (4) set up the framework for a longer-term relationship.

It was a delicate undertaking, fraught with risk to the greater American mission in the Philippines. Bates succeeded in only a few months. On August 20, 1899, the Bates Agreement was concluded between the United States, the Sultanate of Sulu. While smaller in land area than Mindanao, the Sulu Archipelago was the homeland of the powerful Tausugs and numerous Samals, the population epicenter of Moroland. In the agreement the U.S. would have the prerogatives and external responsibilities of a sovereign power over Sulu in exchange for defending its borders from foreign powers and promoting its trade and commerce. The American flag would fly above all others on buildings and on vessels. With it went the commensurate right to establish military garrisons and naval facilities, and move freely about the territory. In turn, the Moros were entitled to continue to govern themselves in their long-accustomed manner, through their traditional *datus* and headmen according to *adat*, their interpretation of Islamic *Sharia* law. Traditional property rights and ownership would be respected by the U.S. Moros would be judged by Moros in Moro courts according to Moro law. Americans or other nationalities charged with offenses would be judged in American courts under American law, while taking care to respect Moro law. Of greatest importance, the U.S. pledged it would not attempt to displace or interfere with the practice of the religion of Islam. This was the deal-breaker/deal-clincher for the Moro leadership. It was a unique arrangement of shared power.

By far the most difficult and touchy issue for both sides centered on slavery. The Moros believed enforced servitude was sanctioned by Islam. The Americans were but a little over one generation removed from having fought a cruel and wrenching civil war over the existence of slavery in their own country. In Article X of the Agreement, Bates proposed what he thought to be a pragmatic, reasonable, and acceptable compromise--a right of those in servitude to purchase their own freedom. His intention was that the manumission would be funded in its entirety by either the U.S. government or private philanthropy, in either way an almost inconsequential amount for the Americans. The concept had precedents: just prior to the Civil War Abraham Lincoln had proposed a "buy-out" scheme for slavery in order to head off southern secession and in nearby British controlled Borneo and Malaya, just such a scheme had ended an identical system. However as it would turn out, the issue of slavery was simply too toxic for either McKinley or the Congress to touch. The Bates Agreement was approved but without Article X, and became a political football, which eventually would be used to undermine and destroy the basis of the Bates Agreement.

The next challenge for Bates was to extend the range of the American presence to the next largest population grouping, the Maguindanaos of the vast Cotabato basin of central Mindanao and to wrest control of the Zamboanga Peninsula, and its large city away from the allies of the PRG. Time and sensibility dictated that Bates not get bogged down in having to conduct hundreds of separate negotiations and arrangements, with the possibility of conflicting interpretations. Instead he held up the Bates Agreement as a template, explaining its terms and implications and then asking each potentate for an up or down commitment to abide by its terms and spirit. With the Navy's assistance, Bates set forth on a tireless traveling road show. In Zamboanga, an insurgency of the combined Moro and Chinese communities, supported by the US Navy gunboat *Castine* and two companies of the 23rd Infantry, toppled the Christian insurgents and drove them from the town.

As the world entered the new century in 1900, the Stars and Stripes flew over 70% of the Moro peoples and 80% of their land by a process of mutual assent. Pragmatically, Bates chose for the time being not to approach the most remote of the Moro peoples, the Maranaos, of the high, mountainous plains surrounding Lake Lanao. In addition to geography, the Maranaos were the least cohesive of the Moros; with literally hundreds of sultans, *datus*, and other titled headmen who were princes unto themselves. Historic hostility to the Christian communities on the north coast of Mindanao made it highly unlikely they would join in against the Americans or make trouble on their own. It was deemed better to let that sleeping dog lie.

## **Occupation of Moroland (1899-1903)**

Despite later disparagement and revisionary history, the Bates Agreement permitted a relatively peaceful and mutually-beneficial four-year occupation for both sides. The US Army was able to take over the former Spanish outposts, establish new ones, and freely traverse through Sulu, Cotabato, and the coastal areas of Mindanao and Palawan without firing a shot. The U.S. Navy had free rein to patrol the Sulu Sea and even gained assistance from the British in nearby North Borneo; thereby effectively blockading Malaya-based gunrunners from exploiting “the backdoor of the Philippines.” The Moros not only stayed out of the Philippine-American War, but often assisted the Americans, permitting Bates’ successor, General William Kobbe, to use his very limited resources to defeat Christian “insurrectos” in northern Mindanao in 1901. Less than a half-dozen Americans and about thirty Moros died in incidents or altercations between the two parties. In sharp contrast to the bitter centuries long conflict between the Moros and the Empire of Spain, the relationship between occupier and occupied was tolerant, and occasionally outright friendly. In 1901 General Kobbe noted that small parties of Army surveyors regularly traveled unarmed and unhindered through miles of rough terrain, often greeted with warm hospitality by Muslim villagers.

In May of 1901 the 2nd Philippine Commission, headed by Judge William Howard Taft, visited Jolo, Zamboanga, and Cotabato as a part of a larger fact-finding mission in preparation for the installation of a civil government for the Philippines. At the same time word came that Aguinaldo had been captured and it was assumed that this event would bring the war to an almost immediate end (but it went on for more than another year). However, the Commission, and Judge Taft came away uncertain that the Moros could ever fit into their greater scheme for the “civilizing” of the islands. In July a new civil government for the Philippines was proclaimed with Judge Taft at its head as the Governor General, but Moroland was pointedly excluded from being a part of the new arrangement.

## **The Battle of Bayan (May 2, 1902)**

General Kobbe had been replaced by Brigadier General George W. Davis. At Kobbe’s recommendation, Davis entrusted Captain John J. Pershing, Kobbe’s former Adjutant General, to attempt to bring the Maranaos of Lake Lanao American sovereignty, as General Bates had done in the rest of Moroland peacefully through diplomacy and negotiation. Pershing, who had become conversant in the Maranao language and studied their customs, made exceptional progress with the most powerful datus at the north end of the lake towards that end. Davis became convinced that, with sufficient patience, diplomacy could achieve American objectives.

However, Davis had to contend with a newly-arrived, headstrong and stubborn second in command, Colonel Frank Baldwin, commanding officer of the 27th Infantry Regiment and three troops of the 15th Cavalry. Baldwin was no ordinary Colonel but an Army legend, one of the very few two-time recipients of the Medal of Honor (in the Civil War and against the Cheyenne). Baldwin thought Davis’ and Pershing’s initiative a waste of time. His instinct was not to parley but to show the Maranaos who was boss at the first opportunity, and that was soon presented. On March 9 a soldier strayed off post into the jungle and was found dead with his rifle missing. Three weeks later a second soldier was killed and one wounded taking a second rifle. The assailants were alleged to be Maranaos from the lake. Ignoring standing orders and without informing his superior General Davis, Baldwin embarked on a major punitive expedition to the southern end of Lake Lanao; although against whom and for what end was unclear. Hearing of the operation second-hand, General Davis cabled Baldwin, ordering an immediate halt to avoid hostilities. Baldwin ignored the order and assaulted and captured two small fortifications on his route of march. Davis cabled his superior, Department Commander Major General Adna Chaffee in Manila, asking for help.

In the meantime the expedition had run into more than a few difficulties. The old, narrow Gnassi trail, which led to the lake, climbed steeply up to almost 5,000 feet before descending 2,000 feet to the plain. Jungle overgrowth which almost obliterated the trail had to be laboriously hacked out by hand and its stream crossings were flooded and the bridges

missing. Heat prostration and injuries plagued the soldiers struggling to reopen the trail, most of whom had only recently arrived from the U.S. and were not yet acclimated to tropical conditions, and a daily toll of spent men had to be sent back to Malabang for medical treatment and rest. A group of Maranaos ambushed an advance party of seventeen cavalymen, killing one trooper and capturing a number of horses. The column came under steadily increasing and unpredictable sniper fire. By the time Baldwin's expedition reached the top of the trail, it had been whittled down to fewer than 600 riflemen, all on foot, as the trail proved too much for the large cavalry horses. The supply line was seriously overextended, unreliable, and vulnerable. Nearly half the force ended up either defending the trail or carrying supplies up from the coast.

Meanwhile an alarmed General Chaffee sped down from Manila by steamer. In the last few months, a Congressional committee had opened investigations into charges of war atrocities committed by American troops in the two last major campaigns of the Philippine-American War, Batangas Province and on the island of Samar. The President and the administration had been greatly embarrassed and Roosevelt, vowing privately to declare an end to the troublesome and controversial conflict, ordered Chaffee at all costs not to pick any new fights.

Davis and Chaffee sped to Baldwin's encampment and ordered a halt. All datos and sultans at the south end of the lake were invited to a conference in an attempt to cool down the confrontation. Meanwhile Captain Pershing, travelled to the north end of the lake for a meeting with its datos and sultans. In a tense atmosphere, with personal insults and challenges flung in his face, Pershing's calm, reasoned presentation and the courage he demonstrated by coming alone and unarmed (save for an interpreter) convinced the most powerful datu in the region to counsel the others to restrain their followers from rushing to Bayan and to adopt a wait and see attitude. But despite the parleys, a hard core of several hundred Maranao warriors, coalesced around the Sultan of Bayan, and spat out their defiance. Reluctantly, Davis and Chaffee concluded that in order to avoid a major loss of face they had no choice but to slip the leash on Baldwin.

On May 2, 1902, seven companies of the 2nd Battalion, 27th Infantry advanced toward the settlement of Bayan on the south edge of Lake Lanao, accompanied by the 25th Battery Light Artillery with four small mountain guns. They were confronted by two large *cottas*, or forts, one called Binadayan and the other Pandapatan. Binadayan, lightly defended, was quickly taken with the loss of only one man, but the assault on Pandapatan, across a small valley and about 700 feet (215 meters) distant from Binadayan, was met by stiff resistance. The light mountain guns proved of little effect against its thick, mud walls. Surrounded by a ten-foot deep moat and vertical earthen walls ten-twelve feet high, the American assault force of a little over 200 men became entangled in a maze of bamboo lattices and sharpened stakes, "forming an almost impenetrable barrier to an assaulting party."

At very close quarters, with the light beginning to fail and ammunition running out, the overwhelming firepower advantage of the Americans suddenly ceased to be a factor, and the men were forced to fix bayonets. But a bayonet-tipped rifle was poor defense against the deadly double-edged Moro short sword known as a *kris* or the equally lethal *kampilan* and *barong*. Certainly an ancient Greek warrior would have had little chance against a modern-day infantryman—until he ran out of bullets. Then the advantage would be dramatically reversed, and this is exactly what happened.

As the short tropical dusk ended and turned pitch black, the lead company lost its two officers and half its men in the space of a few minutes of hand-to-hand fighting. They were providentially saved by a sudden rain, an obscuring heavy deluge accompanied by a thick pea-soup fog. The men crawled away from the battlefield through the deep mud, dragging their wounded behind. It was not until dawn that they reached the safety of their lines after having suffered through a tense, fear-filled night with frequent squalls of cold rain and no food or cover, harassed by prowling Moros. Baldwin acted paralyzed, leaving all four companies to make their way back on their own. Fortunately a few brave artillerymen crawled out into the no-man's land to locate and drag back the wounded. It was only due to their courage that so many survived.

But early the next morning, to new American assault party gathering on the parapets of Binadayan, a miracle seemed to happen. The heavy rain subsided, the fog lifted, and instead of the defiant red flags of the Sultan of Bayan, white flags of surrender flew over Pandapatan. A brief parley was held, and eighty-three Moros filed out of the *cotta*, lay down their arms, surrendered, and were marched across the valley to Binadayan. However, in the early hours of the next morning, at a concerted signal, the imprisoned Moros overpowered the guards, seized their guns, and all eighty-three took off running across the open ground. By chance, a change of guard had just formed, with rifles loaded, and fired on the fleeing prisoners running down the hill. Half were killed, eight wounded and recaptured, while the rest escaped.

From the post-mortem of the battle, it was estimated only about 600 Moros had opposed the Americans, with no more than 100 single-shot rifles and a few dozen ancient small-bore cannons. The number killed was estimated at between 300–400, higher than the actual body count of 200 as many had been observed being carried away or crawling into the high grass to die. The assault party against Pandapatan had totaled about 300 infantrymen, all armed with bolt action, five-shot .30-.40 Krag, a seemingly lop-sided advantage in firepower. Their casualties were seven killed and forty-four wounded. Four of those wounded died within several days, bringing the KIA count to eleven. Most of the wounds were caused by blades and quite severe (a large number of lost limbs), enough for most to be invalidated for life.

Using eighteenth-century bladed weapons and tactics against a twentieth-century army, the Maranaos had inflicted serious damage. They had surrendered only because their leaders were killed and they had run out of ammunition. Despite abundant resources, Baldwin had outrun his supply lines and the ability of his reserve to respond, allowed his rations to run down to two days, failed to take along assault gear, such as ladders and scaling equipment, and left half his men stranded in no-man's land without ammunition for an entire night.

The Muslim *Imams* quickly spread a story among the Maranao that, following the death of the Sultan of Pandapatan, the principal war leader, four angels appeared amidst a blinding flash of lightning and bore his body up to heaven on a chair, then inflicted a punishing rain and fog on the hapless Americans which forced them to withdraw from the *cotta* walls and spend a night in misery. The next morning a bright rainbow appeared, so the story went, signifying that the people of Bayan, by aggressively defending their part of *Dar ul Islam* (the realm of Islam), had greatly pleased God. Herein lay the rub, the conundrum that would dog the Americans for the next several years. The Maranaos understood from the beginning that they were no match for American firepower and when expected reinforcements did not arrive they did not expect to win. But “so what?” From their perspective the final measure of victory or defeat was not winning or losing. The more adverse and overwhelming the odds against one, the greater and more divine the personal glory. Life is fleeting and transitory, what mattered most was demonstrating to Allah how well you could die? In the first of many hostilities to come, the Americans and Moros were using different scorecards.

### **Pershing's Lake Lanao Campaigns (1902-1903)**

Several days after the battle, General Chaffee ordered Captain Pershing to meet him at Camp Vicars, an American outpost newly established on Lake Lanao near Bayan. Pershing was startled to be told he was being placed in “temporary command” of Camp Vicars, ostensibly a part of Baldwin's command but in reality reporting directly to Chaffee through Davis. Even more surprising he, a mere Captain, would be given two troops of the 15th Cavalry, three companies of the 27th Infantry, the 25th Field Artillery Battery, engineers, and hospital corpsmen, about 700 men in all, to Pershing's command. This gave him what amounted to an independent mini-army equal in size to half a regiment.

Pershing expressed skepticism, knowing only too well that giving a junior officer such an important command would invite intense jealousy and resentment from his peers and meddling from higher-ranking officers (he was right), but Chaffee pledged his full backing and support (from which he never wavered). Chaffee had selected Pershing for this unique assignment, not for his prior combat experience, which was negligible, but the good sense, skilled diplomacy, and personal courage he had demonstrated in convincing the vast majority of the Maranaos to stay on the sidelines. Chaffee shuddered at the thought of what

might have happened had 20-30,000 Maranao warriors shown up on the battlefield instead. In Chaffee's estimation the real hero of the battle was the man who had not even been there.

Pershing's strategy at Lake Lanao has often been described by historians as one of divide and conquer, but the Moros, by the very nature of their societal institutions, were already divided. Rather, Pershing first focused his attention on sorting out who were his likely friends, who were his likely enemies, and who were somewhere in between. He sensed that at some point he would have to fight some of the most recalcitrant *datus*, but unlike Baldwin, he knew he could not fight everyone and must avoid at all costs making permanent enemies. Invitations went out to all the headmen at the south end of the lake to visit the camp, where they were received with great fanfare and gifts. Follow up visits were made to the home villages of those who visited. Pershing's one year of command of Camp Vicars would consist of eleven months of diplomacy and two fortnights of fighting.

The first of the military campaigns was in September of 1902 against two known troublemakers not far away from Camp Vicars, Sultan Uali of Butig and the Sultan of Maciu. Pershing's objective was to demonstrate that he could capture and destroy the typical Moro *cotta* (an earthen fort protected by deep moats and fields of sharpened bamboo stakes and cannon), which the Moros believed impregnable. And he intended to do it swiftly, efficiently, and at minimal cost. Considerable time and practice was devoted at Camp Vicars to devising new tactics and implements to deal with the difficulties of direct assaults on the formidable earthen fortresses. Of equal importance for Pershing was to demonstrate discipline and restraint; killing no more Moros than was absolutely necessary and rigorously avoiding damage to their civilian, as opposed to their "war," property. He did not want to risk offending those who remained friendly or neutral and thereby turn them against him.

An expedition of 643 men departed Vicars September 18, 1902 against Butig and Maciu, returning October 3. One of the biggest problems it faced was an absence of decent maps and knowledge of the trail systems. Reckless heroics were discouraged. Small assault parties would rush the walls, but only to set fires and quickly retreat. Pershing wanted to avoid storming the forts until their defensive works had been clearly reduced. A frontal assault, when made, was kept deliberately slow and paced, with continual, but well-aimed, rifle and artillery fire, the objective being to pressure the Moro defenders to abandon the *cottas*, for which purpose escape routes were left open, creating as few martyrs as possible. Using these tactics, the expedition captured more than twenty *cottas*, large and small. Approximately fifty Moros were killed and fifty wounded during the campaign and several hundred other defenders fled. No Americans were killed and only two wounded. Afterwards, the defenses were torn up and their structures burned to the ground. Prisoners were paroled rather than incarcerated. Pershing made his point; exercising patience and the disciplined, controlled use of force could take the *cottas* at little cost.

But despite these successes, he was forced to curtail further military exercises for the next six months as a series of typhoons and the advent of the rainy season rendered the trails and river crossings impassible. This was followed by a devastating cholera outbreak and rinderpest (a livestock disease) that swept the Lake Lanao region, forcing men, horses, and mules to confine themselves to the camp. Then a major earthquake destroyed the few semi-permanent structures that had been built at Vicars. Through all these setbacks, however, Pershing kept up a regimen of direct meetings with *datus* and headmen and achieved considerable goodwill through treating opening up the camp hospital clinic to children who were cholera victims, sending teams to teach water purification, and helping to repair damaged houses and buildings. Pershing understood the key to his success was not the application of force but salesmanship; convincing the Maranao leadership that cooperating with or at least tolerating the American presence could serve their best interests.

On April 5, 1903 Pershing was finally able to resume his unfinished military business, leaving Camp Vicars with a fighting force of 512 officers and men for a two-stage "march" around Lake Lanao to confront the remaining intransigents. A letter in Maranao was sent to the *datus* along the route of march, identifying the intended route and making a simple proposition: if you wish to be our friends or simply stay neutral and not impede our way, fly

an American flag or a white flag and we will leave you alone. If you intend to be enemies, fly a red flag (a flag of war to the Moros). Interestingly, most complied.

April 7 with red flags flying, two hundred men opposed Pershing's small force from a formidable *cotta* at Bacolod. Moving into the surrounding hills above the lake, the Americans gained the heights, allowing the mountain guns to rain fire down on the fortification. Since it was thought likely that women and children were inside, Pershing designated a clear escape route, a safe zone where no one fleeing would be fired upon. Uppermost in Pershing's mind was that at the end of his campaigns it would appear to the Moros that, by their definitions, he had fought both honorably and fair; and thereby avoiding entrapment in never-ending rounds of retribution and revenge-seeking. Of the estimated 200-plus Moros in the *cotta*, more than half chose to flee after the first day's bombardment, most women and children. Only then was further exit cut off. The assault was launched the next morning and completed in only twenty minutes, after the climatic explosion of the defender's main powder dump.

However, despite being outnumbered and outgunned, the defenders of Bacolod made a desperate fight to the death, and refused surrender. 120 Moros lay dead in the *cotta* and surrounding trenches, about half killed in the cannon and rifle barrage leading up to the final assault. Only eight Americans were wounded, and none were killed. A second lakeside *cotta* three miles away at Calahui surrendered after a day and night artillery bombardment and intense rifle fire killed 23 defenders and demoralized another 200 sufficiently to prompt a mass flight by boat and abandonment of the fort. Two dozen surrendered. Victory at the Battle of Bacolod, as both actions together came to be called, totaled 150 Moro dead at a cost of one American killed and fourteen wounded. Along the route of march, ten *cottas* had flown red flags in defiance, but white ones had waved from ninety-nine. The true extent of Pershing's success was made evident just before his last foray. A prominent and formerly hostile Maranao holy man and a group of *datu*s acclaimed Pershing a "*datu*" in a public ceremony. It was a show of respect for one who had respected their rules even while conquering them. He was the first (and only) American ever accorded that title.

On May 2, the expedition returned to Vicars to replenish manpower and supplies and then resume the march to circumnavigate the lake. A day later, 529 officers and men left Camp Vicars, marched east along the bottom of the lake and then turned north. Approaching the Taraca River, the *cotta* of a hostile *datu* named Ampuan-Agaus was found to be literally covered with red flags as well as a second large *cotta* at a nearby place called Pitacus. Both were assaulted and swiftly taken. During the assault on Pitacus 1st Lt. George C. Shaw of the 27th Infantry found himself suddenly alone, standing on a bamboo ladder and looking over the top of the parapet as two men beside him were knocked off by rifle fire. Fully exposed Shaw nevertheless held his precarious position, coolly returning fire, first with his .45-caliber revolver and when that was emptied by having his men pass him up rifle after rifle until other ladders could be placed and a wave of troops poured over the walls. For this marked act of courage, he would be the first man awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor in action against the Moros.

The earlier expeditions in the Fall of 1902 had initially received scant attention from the American press. But this had changed by the Spring of 1903, and his march around the lake was covered daily by thousands of newspapers. Following two tours in the Philippines totaling 3 ½ years, Captain Pershing returned to the U.S. in July of 1903 a hero.

### **The Proconsul - Leonard Wood (1903 – 1906)**

Leonard Wood is largely forgotten today, other than through the major Army post of the same name in the state of Missouri. But in the early part of the 20th Century, he was seldom out of the public spotlight, but for the most part because of controversy. Entering Army service as a contract physician in Arizona in the 1880's, he eventually became the youngest Army Chief of Staff at age 49. He received the Congressional Medal of Honor for his part in the "capture" of the Apache renegade leader Geronimo, although it was awarded twelve years after the fact and under highly peculiar circumstances. Although an Army surgeon not a line officer, at the onset of the Spanish-American War he co-founded the famed volunteer cavalry regiment known as the "Roughriders" with Theodore Roosevelt; a strange combination of cowboys and ivy leaguers, followed by a battalion of adoring "war correspondents." Wood

was its commander and a Volunteer Colonel, although he remained in the shadow of his more well-known, headline-seeking deputy. Afterwards he was the Military Governor of Cuba and appointed a Brigadier General by President McKinley the youngest in the Army. In 1917 Wood was perceived by many as an unfairly wronged hero when President Woodrow Wilson bypassed him in favor of John J. Pershing to lead over one million American doughboys into the cauldron of the First World War. In the 1920 election, Wood came within a hairsbreadth of becoming the Republican nominee, barely nosed out by Warren G. Harding, the eventual winner of the Presidential election. Under Presidents Harding and Coolidge he became the Governor-General of the Philippines, until his sudden death in 1927.

Of medium height, Wood had the powerful physique and presence of a modern day football linebacker. In fact, he took up and excelled in the sport, as well as boxing. Despite an aloof, distant, and cold personality, Wood was charismatic. He projected the public image of the strong, decisive, capable and serious leader. But his flaws were both many and serious. Above all he was inordinately obsessed with career advancement and the ruthless destruction of any and all perceived rivals. Major Archie Butt, President Taft's astute military aide, although not unfriendly to Wood, wrote, "Wood is never at heart's ease as long as he beholds one, not greater, but as great as himself."<sup>1</sup> There were serious defects of character as well; unhesitating abuse of power, willful insubordination of his superiors, and a proclivity to embellish, distort, and outright lie in official reports.

The closest comparison to Wood in recent American history would be an equally controversial military figure, Douglas MacArthur, although more in reference to personality than military achievement. But MacArthur did owe his rise to occasional demonstrated military competence, however uneven his performance. Wood would never have achieved the heights he rose to except for his carefully cultivated, close personal relationships with two Presidents, William McKinley and Theodore Roosevelt, especially the latter.

What happened next in Moroland had nothing to do with grand schemes, national interest, changing technology, ideology or other more subliminal forces. He was appointed both civil Governor and Military Commander over Mindanao and Sulu and then President Roosevelt, with the endorsement of Governor-General Taft, allowed Wood to write his own position description. The result mimicked the powers of Rome's famous proconsuls. Nominally accountable to the Army chain of command, Taft, and the Secretary of War, Roosevelt allowed him a direct back channel to the White House, which Wood adroitly manipulated to avoid restraints or checks on his authority. He then engineered what was no less than a coup, unilaterally abrogating the Bates Agreement and replacing its concept of shared power by a military dictatorship and a puppet government of outsiders. Giving such absolute power to Wood was like giving an unlimited supply of cocaine to a drug addict.

On the day of Wood's arrival in Manila and following his first meeting with Taft he wrote a confidential personal letter to Roosevelt Wood stating his intention to deliberately provoke the Moros into a battle where he would use overwhelming force and chastisement to inflict a defeat and damage of such proportions they would be forever intimidated and compliant to his rule. "I think one clean-cut lesson will be quite sufficient for them, but it should be of such character as not to need a dozen fritting repetitions." This straightforward proposition would become the U.S. policy towards the Moros for the next three years.

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To make matters worse at that juncture, events back home gave a personal impetus and a special urgency to Wood's "one clean-cut lesson" as well. Wood had been temporarily promoted to Major General in a "Congressional recess appointment" by Roosevelt. In 1903 the only higher position in the US Army was Lieutenant General, reserved solely for the Army Chief of Staff. When the President attempted to make the promotion permanent, which required Senate approval, he ran into a firestorm from scores of active duty and retired Army officers, veteran's organizations, and Senators. Roosevelt later wrote in private that the opposition to Wood's promotion was the fiercest he ever encountered in his many,

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<sup>1</sup> Major Archibald W. Butts, *Taft and Roosevelt, the Intimate Letters of Archie Butt, Military Aide* (1930).

legendary, battles with Congress. A parade of decorated retired Army Generals gave interviews to reporters mocking Wood's qualifications. The core of their argument was that, although a General of the line and a holder of the Medal of Honor, he had almost zero combat credentials and owed his rapid rise in the Army the product of political favoritism not merit. The promotion would almost assure his becoming the Army chief of Staff within a few years despite his thin credentials. It was not even a partisan issue. Republican conservatives, hoping to undercut Roosevelt were at the forefront of an attempt to have the nomination torpedoed in committee.

Wood responded by turning his initial inspection tour of the important island of Jolo into a huge, fully-armed, intimidating "practice march", invading the home turf of the Sultan of Sulu (who was out of the country) and the most powerful datus of the island without advance warning. Wood would arrive unannounced with a large column, set up camp nearby, then "summon" local datus and headmen for an "audience" followed by a "demonstration" of artillery and massed firepower. Crops were trampled by cavalry horses, livestock stampeded, and Tausug headmen and warriors mocked and shown ill respect in public. If a datu or headman did not come, a troop of cavalry was sent to "arrest" him (despite any such authority) and deliver him to a public tongue-lashing by the General. But the normally aggressive Tausugs did not immediately rise to the bait, perhaps because of the lingering residue of four years of friendship fostered by Wood's predecessors.

The next attempt at the "one clean-cut lesson" became a second "practice march", this time around Lake Lanao, with twice as many men as any of Pershing's expeditions. Wood ignored the warnings of more experienced subordinates that such a maneuver would be folly during the height of the rainy season. As it was, the Maranaos stayed in their houses flying white flags or temporarily moving into the nearby hills, believing anyone who attempted such a stunt during the monsoon to be mentally unhinged and therefore unworthy of fighting. The march soon became a miserable enterprise, bogged down to a snail's pace by never-ending rain, trails far too choked with bottomless mud for horses or carts, and flooded rivers that were dangerous to cross. Half the ammunition and a man were lost in just such a crossing attempt. Compounding matters, Wood refused to hire local guides and frequently got lost.

After two weeks of fruitless slogging, the expedition was on the verge of running out of rations and becoming a soggy failure. But providentially for Wood, a misunderstanding had occurred between the newly-appointed District Governor for Sulu, Major Hugh L. Scott, and a powerful Tausug, Panglima Hassan, one which was too convoluted and nuanced to reasonably explain in this limited space. Serious threats had flown back and forth and in a separate incident shots were fired at an Army surveying party. But eventually both men came to their senses and backed off from a showdown. However at the height of the disagreement, Scott telegraphed Wood's aide de camp in Zamboanga advising him that he thought there was a strong possibility he might be attacked by Hassan, but that he could hold his own. Shortly thereafter he sent a second cable that said in effect, "never mind." But the content of the two cables were combined, summarized, and edited before being sent by messenger to Wood. Wood called his officers together and announced, dramatically, he was immediately aborting the march around Lake Lanao in order to respond to an urgent plea for help from the Jolo garrison, which was surrounded, under siege, and on the verge of massacre by the forces of Hassan.

Two days later after a non-stop march, the entire expedition re-embarked on transports and set sail for Jolo; except Wood's ship, which sailed to Zamboanga to cable the news to Washington, on the eve of the Congressional hearing on his nomination, that General Wood was on a hell-bent mission to rescue the valiant Jolo garrison from certain death at the hands of the savage Moros. It became front-page headlines in the states, creating the lurid drama of a penny paperback story.

Wood arrived at Jolo and despite Scott's explanations and attempts to dissuade him, effected a surprise early-morning beach landing of 1,300 soldiers in Hassan's territory. The orders were to capture Hassan's house and compound, several miles distant, making "abundant use" of the expeditions plentiful ammunition and firepower before entering any

village or dwelling in between. Any Moro they came across were to be considered combatants the taking of male prisoners was not encouraged. Hassan was taken captive but later escaped and remained a fugitive for months until finally tracked down and killed, with great personal regret, by Scott. By Wood's own estimates the expedition killed between 500 to 1,000 Tausugs, a quite large percentage of whom were women and children. Only one American soldier was killed. Even a large wedding party was gunned down in the midst of a ceremony. Scott wrote that nearly all houses and other structures along the line of march were put to the torch, crops laid waste, livestock seized, and a green light given to the men to take home as many "souvenirs" as they wanted. Wood joked in his diary that they had to bring in additional mules to carry back all the loot.

Wood immediately cabled a report of the one-sided battle to Washington, asserting his soldiers had been unexpectedly and "treacherously attacked" by Hassan's men while in "peaceful encampment" and that he had been forced to respond accordingly. He claimed that Scott and the Jolo garrison had been in "dire peril" of being massacred, halved the estimates of the number of Tausugs killed in his own diary, and asserted that all had been male warriors killed in open combat. No mention was made of the destruction. Taft, hearing whispers, was suspicious of the truth and accuracy of the claims but let it pass. The War Department was equally skeptical, but did not press for a more detailed explanation of the sequence of events. Roosevelt was jubilant and wired his congratulations. The dramatic headlines, while not exactly saving his second star, served to keep his nomination alive in committee.

But in terms of inflicting the "one clean-cut lesson" that would supposedly cower the Moros into submission, it was a dud. Over the next eighteen months, between the end of November, 1903 and mid-May, 1905, Wood promulgated five major campaigns against the Tausugs of Jolo, the Maranaos of Lake Lanao, and the Maguindanaos of Cotabato, resulting in hundreds of battles and skirmishes. An estimated total of 5,000 or more Moros were killed. As in the other encounters, a high percentage were women, children, and non-combatants, versus about 200 American dead and half-again as many wounded. Several hundreds of villages were looted and burned to the ground, their crops destroyed and livestock appropriated. In a nearly two-year fruitless pursuit of **Datu Ali** in Cotabato, Wood came close to completely destroying the economy of the once-prosperous Rio Grande basin. Wood was able to inflict enormous pain on the Moros at will but never succeeded in achieving his "one clean-cut lesson." Getting the combative Moros to fight back proved as easy as hitting a wasp nest with a stick, but despite loss after loss, they stubbornly refused to submit.

Glowing reports of vast achievements in improving the economy, dispensing justice, and introducing a Western style educational system, and otherwise "civilizing the Moros" can be found in the next three years of the Annual Reports to Congress of the Philippine Commission. Scores of big city and small town reporters were invited to Zamboanga to meet with compliant minor datus and see the progress and transformation with their own eyes and take canned tours through the islands on government ships with Army handlers. But the reality was that the allegiance of the Moro populace never wavered from their traditional leaders and Shari'ah-based laws. Moro governance occurred in the shadows and attempts to transform their culture were met by stubborn resistance. The end result was that, unlike during the period of occupation, Moroland became a very dangerous place for any American not armed and accompanied by a troop or company of soldiers.

Then suddenly, in mid-1905, the quest for the one clean-cut lesson went on pause for six months. Wood discovered he had developed a non-malignant, but life-threatening brain tumor, which mandated a return to the U.S. for operation. The subsequent medical operation was not entirely a success, leaving Wood with partial paralysis and subject to seizures triggered by stress, although this information was withheld by his physicians. Shortly after his return to the Philippines, Roosevelt wrote a blunt letter to Wood, informing him that, for his own well-being and unless he could furnish strong evidence to the contrary, he would be ordered home for an extended convalescence. Wood's odd reply ignored the President's central message, thanked him for his "inquiry into his health", and stated he would stay at

his post. Within days and in secret he embarked on what would be the last and most controversial military campaign of his career.

### **The Battle of Bud Dajo (March 6-8, 1906)**

In the middle of June, 1905, the tax collector for the island of Jolo, Sawajaan (who also occasionally acted as an interpreter and secret informant for the Americans), made a careful estimate that 610 persons, all Tausugs, consisting of three separate bands of people whose datus and headmen had been killed, homes destroyed, and crops razed in the earlier fighting, had sought sanctuary atop a dormant volcano six miles from Jolo City named Bud Dajo. Sawajaan further estimated there were 220 men who had brought with them 136 rifles. The remaining 390 were women and children, the families of the men. The largest group, about 250 in total, were led by a Muslim cleric, Imam Harib, and had concentrated at the top of the East trail. Another 200, also led by a cleric, Imam Sanuddin, were settled near the West summit. The remainder were on the South summit and led by a former minor headman named Adam. The datus of the island later told the Americans they thought that, while the number varied from month to month, by the time of the battle in 1906 at least another 300 persons had joined the existing bands, most of them relatives. A somewhat reliable estimate can be made that 900 Tausugs were on top of the mountain at the outset of the battle, a third men and two-thirds women and children.

An unusual drought and severe storms earlier in the year had resulted in wide-spread crop failure throughout the Sulu archipelago. Many people were starving, and the Governor of Sulu, Major Hugh Scott, had met with indifference and outright obstruction from Governor Leonard Wood's Headquarters when he requested emergency supplies of rice and relief from taxation for the islands. With steep, rugged and wooded sides but a large fertile crater on top and underground springs, Bud Dajo offered a refuge for these dispossessed people, remote from the Americans and safe from their Moro enemies. They wanted to raise crops, be left alone, and not pay the insidious cedula, or head tax, imposed by Wood on every male Moro. One sympathetic American officer described their position (to Wood's fury) as partly motivated by something familiar to Americans, "taxation without representation."

Twice before Scott had been able to talk the dissidents down off the mountain peacefully and had worked out alternative ways to collect the tax and handed out rice from his own stores. General Wood and his Aide de Camp, Captain George Langhorne repeatedly clashed with Scott over what they perceived as insolent flouting of American sovereignty, haranguing Scott to just take his troops and "clean the place up." Scott stoutly resisted, countering that these were simply demoralized, desperate families doing what it took to stay alive, not insurgents. But in early January Scott was forced to take an emergency medical leave in the U.S. the same week as Wood, recently returned from a six month absence in the U.S., was promoted to Commanding General of the Philippine Department, a signal increase in his power. With Scott now out of the way Langhorne, in a letter dated February 9, 1906 addressed to Wood, proposed a simple and unequivocal solution —"exterminate them." Wood telegraphed his enthusiastic agreement.

Three steep trails led to the top of Bud Dajo, and each group (there being no single overall leader), fortified their trail. In secret Langhorne and Captain James Reeves, Scott's temporary replacement, offered a bribe to the leader of the group controlling the South trail, Adam, whereby his band would stand aside to permit a column of American soldiers to ascend the mountain at night and make a surprise attack on the other two groups. But there was a strict standing order in place specifically put in place by the Secretary of War William Howard Taft, with the agreement of President Theodore Roosevelt, that advance approval had to be obtained from Washington before launching any military expedition in Moroland, with no exceptions. Taft's purpose had been to rein in the often insubordinate Wood. Nevertheless,

Wood proceeded to organize, in secrecy and without a hint to any of his superiors, a strike force of just under 800 officers and men, and dispatched them to Jolo on March 2 after giving blunt orders to the designated field commander, Colonel Joseph Duncan, to either kill or capture all "the outlaws" atop Bud Dajo. Nor did he advise his designated successor, Brigadier General Tasker Bliss, of his intentions.

As Colonel Duncan assembled his new command on Jolo and reconnoitered the mountain redoubt, Captain Reeves failed to bring Adam to the table. He had promised Adam that only a small force from the Jolo garrison would be used and that their objective would be to chase the other two groups down the mountain, leaving the base of the other two trails unguarded. When Adam learned of the size of the force from the troop arrivals, and not trusting Reeves, he felt a double cross was in the works. He sent back a message that he would take a stand and fight with his fellow Moros.

The initial American assault force totaled 752 officers and men. On the line were 372 infantrymen, 220 cavalry troopers, and 52 Moro Constabulary soldiers led by 29 officers. The Infantry were armed with .30-.40 Krag rifles, the Cavalry with .30-.40 Krag carbines, and the Constabulary with single-shot 1889 Springfield .45-.70 trapdoor carbines. Each man carried 200 rounds of ammunition and five days rations. 67 artillerymen manned four 75mm Vickers mountain guns, with both solid and shrapnel rounds. On May 7, three Colt "potato-digger" machineguns with 8,300 .30 caliber rounds were added to the mix; one manned by a 9-man Army crew and the other two by 11 sailors from the gunboat USS Pampanga, incongruously dressed in white. Supporting the line, were 3 surgeons and 7 hospital corpsmen, 5 Signal Corps, 6 HQ, and 150 mules driven by American civilian packers. A composite company of approximately 40 men were held in reserve in Jolo, but never called upon. Unit-wise, it consisted of five companies of the 6th Infantry Regiment, two companies of the 19th infantry Regiment, four troops of the 4th Cavalry Regiment, the 28th Artillery Battery, the ad hoc Moro Constabulary company, a shore party from the USS Pampanga. Officially there were 12 "observers" for most of the battle, including Generals Wood and Bliss, two Navy officers, and a French Army officer. Wood, who did not arrive until May 7 after the initial assault, brought along two newspaper correspondents (Hamilton and Wright), and a cameraman as well.

Duncan had split his new command into three separate columns, one each deployed at the West, South, and East trailheads leading to the three summits. His HQ, the field hospital, Signal Corps and a fourth "flying column" of two cavalry companies, camped behind the column at the West trail. On March 5 a probe was made up the South trail by the company of the Moro Constabulary with its commander, Captain John R. White, 30-40 yards in front, closely followed by a company from the 6th Infantry. To everyone's surprise, White's daring foray made it nearly two-thirds of the way up the mountain before encountering Moro trenches. The next day, White led a reinforced column up even further, but was blocked by fierce resistance at a large log and bamboo abattis across the trail. Even then, White might have been able to fight his way through it, but was forced to abandon his effort by inadvertent "friendly fire", in the form of artillery shrapnel shells, coming from the other side of the mountain. However, White's unexpected progress and information relayed from Jolo that a group of other Tausugs might be planning to reinforce those on top of the mountain, caused Duncan to order a coordinated, simultaneous dawn attack by all three columns (later modified to the South and East trails when he realized there would be a good chance of them shooting each other. However, Duncan failed to comprehend that, owing to the complexity of the trails and a serious underestimate of the time required to move messages between the three different positions, his order to the East trail was never received.

At dawn on May 7 Captain White resumed the advance up the South trail and broke through the abattis, his men and companies K and M of the 6th Infantry scrambling up a 45-degree

slope, through intense fire, to take cover below the log walls of a large cotta, teaming with Adam's men (and a few women warriors). At this point White was badly wounded and Captains Samuel Schindel and Dwight Ryther of the 6th Infantry took command, just as the Tausugs poured over the cotta walls in a fierce counterattack. In intense hand-to-hand combat, it became a fight to the death. When the fighting stopped, all the Tausug defenders, about 150 in total and including Adam, were killed. On the American side, also about 150, 3 US soldiers and 3 Moro Constabulary were killed and 35 US soldiers and 13 Moro Constabulary wounded plus Captain White and Lt. Gordon Johnston of the Signal Corps; a 37% casualty rate. Schindel and Ryther then led those still standing, crawling on all fours under sporadic fire, up the last hundred yards to seize the South summit. Major Omar Bundy, close behind with the rest of his command, brought up the rest of the column to the top.

Bundy had expected to be seeing Captain Edward P. Laughton and his men to their right, at the top of the East summit. But he concluded quickly, due to the lack of battle noise, that something had gone awry and Lawton had not launched an assault. This information was signaled back to an astounded Duncan, who dashed off a blistering message to Laughton to launch an immediate attack. The situation became rather confused for the next three hours, made even more complex by the sudden arrival of General Wood and his party and Wood's subsequent issuance of his own, conflicting orders.

Nevertheless at 1:30PM, Lawton got underway on the East trail. Despite its being the steepest trail (at places nearing a 60-degree incline), an assault party of one company each of the 6th and 19th Infantry, about 110 infantrymen, led by Captain A.M. Wetherill and accompanied by 11 sailors from the gunboat USS Pampanga carrying two Colt machine guns, quickly advanced under fire to a position about 20 yards below the crater rim. Sharpshooters from below kept the Moro defenders from firing down the hill on the men, many clinging to vines to avoid slipping back down the steep slope. Meanwhile Captain Lawton came up with a bugler to signal a charge. In less than a minute, the men swarmed over the parapet of the crater edge of the East summit and dropped to their knees to begin firing at two large defensive trenches only twenty feet away while the sailors quickly set the two machineguns on their tripods. Trapped and packed in tight in the deep ditches were at least 400 Tausug men, women and children.

It was at that moment, the battle turned into a massacre. In the adrenalin of the charge and the through thick smoke black powder discharges of the Tausug defenders, as many as 10,000 .30 caliber rounds may have slammed downwards into the deep pits at point blank range from Krag rifles and the two Colt "potato-digger" machineguns of the Americans; with a collective force that tore bodies apart. Less than ten minutes later Lawton's shouts and a bugle call caused the firing to cease. By then no Moros were left alive in the trenches. For the next hour, before night fell, Lawton's men had their hands full cleaning out snipers firing from hidden rifle pits and others hiding in the crater bottom. With the South and East summits and crater bottom under their control, as night fell only one lone cotta and a few rifle pits remained in the hands of Tausug defenders.

The next morning, May 8, the remaining rifle pits were quickly taken, and in a sharp, half-hour battle the cotta defenders fought to the death. To the horror of many of the American soldiers observing the bodies, it has become obvious that at least two-thirds of the dead were unarmed women and children. In piecing together the estimates made by the individual field commanders and the leading datus of the island, some of whom witnessed the battle, the best estimate of this author is that from a low of 700 up to 850 Tausugs were killed during the course of the entire Battle of Bud Dajo, probably no more than 250 being adult males. This is measurably lower than the estimate of 600 dead with less than 20% women and children, later supplied by General Wood. Only seven were captured, three women and four children found in

hiding shortly after the cotta on the South trail was taken. Two weeks later it became known that at least eighteen men had escaped from the carnage by fleeing the mountain during the battle, and the number might have been double. Casualties taken by the American side were low in comparison, but not necessarily insignificant. Roughly 350-400 soldiers, sailors, and Constabulary took part in the combat at some point. Out of that twenty-one were killed and seventy-three severely wounded (hospitalized, with a number of those losing limbs and/or invalidated for life), a relatively steep 20% plus casualty rate. Among the 52-man Moro Constabulary, which led the initial assault, the rate was closer to 25%.

The fall out in the U.S. when the news arrived by cable of what was quickly dubbed the "Battle of the Crater" was almost as furious and contentious as the battle itself. It was called the "worst massacre in U.S. history, exceeding that of Wounded Knee South Dakota. Despite a massive attempt by Wood and the War Department to suppress the details, some details leaked out, including that women and children were among the dead. Wood was excoriated on the floor of Congress. However, the most scathing attacks came from the pulpits. In a fiery sermon, the Rev. Dr. Charles Parkhurst of New York's Madison Square Presbyterian Church, President Roosevelt's own personal congregation, castigated the administration. (The famous humorist Mark Twain wrote a satirical, stinging rebuke of Wood. But, contrary to popular lore, Twain never published his tract, nor was it disclosed until following his death in 1910). Closing ranks, Republicans vehemently defended Wood, claiming outrage over what they termed was the "unfair besmirching of the honor of the U.S. Army" and placing the responsibility on the "Christian-hating fanatical Moros" for their own demise. It was claimed that the women died because they were "dressed like the men", children were held up as shields against American bullets, wounded Moros had leapt up from operating tables to kill American doctors seeking to treat them, and that if there had been casualties among women and children it had been due to "long-range artillery shelling" (all inventions). In a resolution, Democratic legislators in the House of Representatives demanded a full accounting from the Roosevelt administration, and threatened a Congressional investigation, blaming General Wood, but not the troops. However the largest minority party, the Socialists, attacked American soldiers, depicting them as "sadists" and "beasts" who laughingly shot down innocents.

It is evident from the record, although suppressed at the time but nevertheless preserved, that Wood was the source for most of the false tales and had illegally censored press reports coming out of Zamboanga. He sequestered the field reports in Manila and claimed to have been merely present, "observing" the action of Colonel Duncan, whom he claimed was in full charge; even though he had personally planned and organized the expedition and had usurped its command on at least four occasions. He claimed the assaults were halted in mid-operation several times in order to issue calls for surrenders and to plead for the women and children to be sent down the mountain, which never occurred. Taft and the War Department were almost as egregious in inventing and spreading false stories about what had happened, using their allies in Congress. At one point it was claimed that no women and children had been killed but instead all had been seized and held in "protective custody" during the battle. But, at the height of the debate, the War Department's many contradictions and unproved assertions began to wither under intense scrutiny. As the inconsistencies piled up, even many hard-core administration supporters soon became suspicious and raised their own questions.

But fate intervened. Early on the morning of April 18, 1906, a gigantic earthquake tore San Francisco apart and killed over 3,000 people in a matter of a few minutes. For the next two weeks the destroyed city was seen burning in photographs headlined across the front pages of every newspaper in America. The Battle of Bud Dajo all but disappeared from print, as public attention turned to the great drama taking place in the nation's own backyard. Whatever righteous outrage had been stirred in the American breast at an avoidable tragedy inflicted on a distant, small brown people evaporated overnight. Congressional anger dissipated even faster. The field reports were locked away in War

Department files and made unavailable for decades afterwards. Theodore Roosevelt simply chose not to be further informed about what really did happen, and continued to protect and favor his close friend General Wood for the rest of his career and noted public life. William Howard Taft was almost certain that Wood had violated orders, lied, and caused the deaths of innocents. But, angling to be anointed by the very popular Roosevelt as his successor two years hence, the obligations of his office and conscience took a back seat to his political prospects (Taft became President in 1909 and Chief Justice of the Supreme Court in 1921). General Wood was never held to account for his actions at Bud Dajo and went on to later become the Army Chief of Staff in 1910 and in 1920 narrowly lost out to Warren G. Harding to be the Republican candidate for President.

### **General Tasker Bliss and the Moro Constabulary (1906 – 1909)**

General Wood was placed in command of the Philippine Department on February 1, 1906. At the same time the Department had informed him the Brigadier General Tasker Howard Bliss, Commanding General of the Department of Luzon, was to replace him in both his military and civil positions, the “twin crowns.” Wood protested, he wanted to name his own successor, but he was overruled by Secretary of War Taft and instructed to turn over his military command and Governorship to Bliss on March 1. Had this been done there would likely have been no battle, or massacre, at Bud Dajo. But Wood kept procrastinating, referring vaguely in correspondence to yet “unfinished business.” This was rank subordination but he got away with it. Instead, Wood brought Bliss along on the Bud Dajo expedition as a powerless “observer.” This never sat well with Bliss.

Tasker Bliss was not a fighting general but highly regarded as one of the Army’s leading intellectuals—the first head of the Army War College. Bliss had been assigned to the Philippines six months earlier in order to gain the field experience necessary to qualify him for a second star. Wood did not turn over his offices to Bliss until April 1, three weeks after Bud Dajo. Bliss soon became aware of the full extent of Wood’s activities and extensive abuses of his positions over the previous three years. In a private letter to his wife he expressed dismay over learning that Wood had needlessly “killed unknown thousands” of Moros and expressed fear that he might end up tarred with the same brush. “Sooner or later people will say that a military man, occupying both positions, does as a civilian what will give him prominence as a soldier.”

From the beginning Wood attempted to dictate to Bliss how he should do his job. Bliss was not normally confrontational and figured out that the unique structure of the twin offices of Moro Province provided him with a way to avoid Wood’s grasp; by using his authorities as civil Governor rather than military Department Commander to deal with the province’s law and order problem. But it came at a price. As a military Department Commander, Bliss’s resources were considerable, consisting of 5,000 officers and men of the U.S. Army, one-quarter of all the troops in the Philippines, who were equipped with the latest weapons, supported by a small fleet of transports, and a with a large budget for civilian packers and other logistical support. But if he ordered this formidable force to take to the field he would report to General Wood, and could expect to be countermanded and micromanaged. Wearing the hat of Provincial Governor, which reported to the new and somewhat disinterested Governor-General James Smith, he commanded the Moro Constabulary (a subsidiary of the Philippine Constabulary), a separate, capable paramilitary force but only one-tenth the size of his Army command. There were a little less than 500 Moro constables led by American, European, and Filipino officers; with obsolete rifles, only one transport vessel, and a meager budget.

Analyzing the Wood campaigns, Bliss had concluded that, even when used properly, the Army had proved itself a blunt and unwieldy of a weapon for pacifying a civilian population. An axe when one needed a razor. Even though inferior in physical capabilities, the far nimbler and less doctrinally rigid Constabulary had already demonstrated a talent for nipping conflict in the bud rather than allowing it to fester. And on one key score the Constabulary won hands down over the Army--superior intelligence capabilities, owing to their soldiers being drawn from the same communities in which they operated and having fostered close ties to the traditional Moro leadership. Bliss put the Constabulary in charge of maintaining law and order and for most of his tenure kept the Army in the barracks.

The models for creation of the Constabulary had been the famed Texas Rangers and Northwest Mounted Police. Originally the civil government had requested the Army to supply officers on detached duty, as was done to staff the Philippine Scouts. But the Army refused, except for the top four positions. For officers, the civil government instead recruited among former Army non-coms, land-grant college ROTC candidates, private military academies, or from foreign armies. This diversity in itself was an asset as was their own internal, specialized officer training academy, which put heavy emphasis on learning local languages, culture, law enforcement, and exercising independent judgment (their operating manual was quite thin). The result was a distinctly different leadership mindset from the Army and a flat, responsive command structure. Physical toughness and agility were equally emphasized (30 mile marches on foot over mountainous trails were the norm) and they were required to be dead shots, competent in the use of a barong, and know how to use their fists. Those not up to snuff were unhesitatingly weeded out, much like today's Special Forces. The Moro rank and file too were an elite group; much like the legendary Ghurkas of Nepal they were rugged, absolutely fearless in battle, and intensely loyal to their officers. Few were their peers in hand-to-hand combat.

Author Vic Hurley described Bliss's official three-year tenure the "peace era"<sup>2</sup>, and scholar Peter Gowing "The Velvet Glove", contrasting it to Wood's tour which he referred to as "The Mailed Fist".<sup>3</sup> Because of this period and his later career Frederick Palmer titled his biography of Bliss "*Peacemaker*."<sup>4</sup> Indeed, the Annual Reports of the Philippine Commission and the War Department and the absence of the large and often well-publicized military expeditions of the sort mounted by Wood have led to the belief that the Battle of Bud Dajo represented a turning point in the Moro Campaigns and marked at least a temporary era of pacification. But such was not the case. There were nearly as many armed engagements between the Moros and the American government during the Bliss period as during Wood's tenure. Smaller actions in terms of combatants and casualties they received much less notice since few involved the Army (and have been generally ignored by military historians for the same reason). During the Bliss regime the chronic levels of unrest and violence, while lessened and better contained than under Wood, in no way ended.

### **General Pershing and the Disarmament Campaign (1910–1913)**

November 11, 1909 Brigadier General John J. Pershing returned to Moroland. Ironically, although he had left six years earlier as a national hero, he owed his rocketing career advancement more from marrying wisely than recognition of his military merit. In 1904 he met, wooed, and wed Helen Francis ("Frankie") Warren, twenty years his junior, the daughter of Senator Francis Warren of Wyoming, powerful chairman of the Military Affairs Committee. In 1905 President Roosevelt personally jumped Warren's son-in-law over the heads of 862 senior officers, from a low seniority Captain to one-star General. But for Pershing it was bittersweet. The promotion broke him out of the pack just as he was facing possible mandatory retirement. But despite his distinguished past accomplishments in Lanao, charges of favoritism over his promotion, rumors of scandal from his bachelor days in Zamboanga, and his powerful father-in-law's pulling of strings tarnished his reputation and bred resentment among fellow officers.

In his first year back in Moroland, Pershing accomplished little and alienated many of those he needed to rely on. Instead of cracking down on the out of control three-way rivalry between the Army, Scouts, and Constabulary, Pershing added to the chaos, siding first with one faction and then switching to another; at one point infuriating Governor-General William Forbes by going behind his back in a failed attempt to eliminate the Constabulary from the province altogether. He seemed not to comprehend that Moroland had changed dramatically since he had left and his "expertise" on the Moros had become severely dated.

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<sup>2</sup> Vic Hurley, *The Swish of the Kris*, 188.

<sup>3</sup> Gowing, "Mandate in Moroland", Chapter X.

<sup>4</sup> Frederick Palmer, *Peacemaker: The Life and Letters of General Tasker Howard Bliss*.

Even old friends among the Maranaos turned wary, no longer referring to him as the “American datu.”

Through the Military Affairs Committee, Senator Warren heard the rumblings and realized his son-in-law was in deep trouble. He bluntly suggested he shape up. Chagrined and humbled, Pershing did an abrupt about face and finally brought clarity to the relationship between the Scouts and the Constabulary. The Constabulary was placed squarely back in the forefront of addressing public order and security concerns, and Pershing requested an increase in their numbers rather than their demise. He convinced his new Army boss, General Franklin Bell, that the time had come to begin phasing the Regular Army out of the Province altogether, replacing them with Scouts who were assigned as the backup to the Constabulary the primary military force in the event of a major uprising or a situation that was beyond the Constabulary’s capabilities.

An additional important step was the formation of the first two all-Moro Scout companies, one recruited in Lanao from among the Maranaos and one in Cotabato from the Maguindanaos. A re-energized Pershing also reorganized and shook up what had become an ineffective civil government. He began paying more personal attention to the Moro datos and became more personally involved with their many issues and grievances. Pershing’s second year, therefore, became one of progress, and his popularity soared. The province was moving closer to pacification, the local economy prospering, many public works were in progress, and a re-energized civil government had emerged. But just as he seemed to be transitioning to a sound footing, an overreaction to an unfortunate incident, inadvertently plunged the province and his command into disarray.

Shortly after returning to Moroland, Pershing had taken a firm stand against a popular but ill-considered solution to the Moro problem among the American civilian community and supported by Bliss--to disarm the Moros. In a rare bit of unity, the Constabulary, Scouts, and Army had always opposed such a move, both due to the fear of igniting a new round of resistance and the near impossibility of implementing such a scheme. However, on April 16, 1911, 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Walter H. Rodney, a young officer of the newly-arrived 2<sup>nd</sup> Cavalry, was viciously attacked and killed by a lone Moro while out for a stroll with his five year-old daughter on a public street in Jolo. Rodney was unarmed. The real blame lay with the post commander, who neglected to enforce a standing order that officers and men were not permitted to leave the garrison alone or unarmed. Pershing’s detractors within the Army seized upon the incident to make trouble, claiming he had been too lenient. Aggravating matters, Rodney’s father was a retired Army General and was falsely informed that Pershing had forbidden anyone to carry arms unless on duty.

Under pressure and mounting criticism, Pershing abruptly reversed himself and issued Executive Order 24 for the complete and immediate disarmament of all Moros no later than September 8, 1911, only a few months distant. The men who had to do the disarming, the Constabulary and Scouts, were utterly dismayed; but Washington and Manila signaled their endorsement and the local American community was ecstatic.

Not only did the disarmament order include all firearms, it extended to all bladed weapons. Every Moro male, and many women, carried a personal bladed weapon from the time they were an adolescent. With almost sacred connotations, a kris or a barong was handed down from generation to generation. It was even thought to have a spirit or soul. Even though Pershing offered generous cash bounties, only a handful of rusty old rifles and pistols were turned in, and scarcely any few blades. As the crackdown on weapons accelerated, so did the level of violence when seizure attempts were made. A new deadline of December 1 had to be set. An Army maneuver encampment was attacked by three “juramentados” amidst calls for a holy war from several more-radical Imams. Incensed, Pershing decided to make an object lesson of the most defiant locale, the eastern wards of Jolo. In mid-December as he began a sweep for weapons in several towns, an eerily déjà vu moment occurred when between 500 to 800 Tausug men and women retreated with their weapons to the top of Bud Dajo and began to dig in.

But instead of becoming a second massacre, the **2nd Battle of Bud Dajo**, which took place between **December 14-26, 1911** may have been Pershing’s finest hour in Moroland.

Discouraged and feeling under intense pressure from Governor-General Forbes, Pershing's initial impulse was to pull out all the stops and massively assault the mountain; not much different than Wood's course of action in 1906. But sobered by a blunt message passed from the White House that President Taft would not countenance a second Moro massacre on the eve of his extremely contentious bid for a second Presidential term in 1912, Pershing regained the calm, deliberate composure that had served him so well in Lanao nine years earlier. His subsequent disciplined and well-crafted conduct of the second battle of the crater was not only superbly-executed counterinsurgency, but delivered an unmistakable rebuke to Leonard Wood for his 1906 fiasco. Pershing adopted the identical strategy that six years earlier Wood had argued was unfeasible and foolish; the pressure of siege and blockade accompanied by persistent persuasion. By Christmas Day all the women and children were gone from the mountain and only a hard core of 75 defiant male warriors were left. Rather than use US Army, Pershing brought in the newly-formed 52nd Moro Scout company to confront their fellow Moros. In sharp contrast to the first battle, only twelve Tausug males were killed and a small number wounded. There were no dead and only three wounded on the American side.

### **The Battle of Bud Bagsak (June 11-15, 1913)**

#### Temporary Suspension of the Disarmament Order:

The U.S. Presidential election of 1912 ranks as one of the more consequential in the nation's history. The three-way battle between Taft, Roosevelt, and Woodrow Wilson had an impact on the future of the nation and, in turn, altered the great experiment in transplanting "Americanism" to the Philippine Islands, and solving its most intractable problem, Moroland. Pershing suspended enforcement, announced a new deadline for compliance after the November polling date, and renewed and increased the bounty offer for firearms. Wisely, he backed away from the ban on bladed weapons. Violence subsided. At first the Americans were buoyed by seeing a dramatic increase in the number of weapons surrendered. But it soon became apparent that the new Tausug leadership were combing the populace for thousands of older, obsolete rifles, shotguns, and pistols, turning them in and using the proceeds to purchase modern, high-powered, bolt-action models from arms dealers. In effect, they were using the lull to better their arms.

#### Renewal of the Disarmament Campaign:

Following the election and in the substantial power vacuum that existed between then and the inauguration in March of 1913, the new deadline expired and Pershing issued orders to the Constabulary and Scouts to resume enforcement. But by now the Tausugs had coalesced behind a single, charismatic leader and Moro nationalist named Naquib Amil. When confronted by government agents over his known accumulation of a hidden cache of at least 300 new, high-powered rifles, Amil simply shrugged and replied, "Tell the soldiers to come on and fight."

Pershing took up the challenge, sending three companies of Scouts, one company of Constabulary, a battery of mountain guns, and a troop of the 8th Cavalry to surround the small cotta of Amil's deputy Datu Sahipa, suspected of being the hiding place of the arms. Although greatly outnumbered, 65-70 well-armed Tausugs, led by Amil and Sahipa, put up a stiff fight, repelling the initial assault, and inflicting 20% casualties on the American side and killing the American commander. Although two-thirds of the defenders died, Amil, Sahipa, and many others escaped with the arms cache through hidden passageways while a second assault was under preparation. Ominously, the American edge in firepower--and marksmanship--seemed to have eroded. A few days later a ferocious night attack was made by eight juramentados, religiously-motivated suicide warriors, on Camp Steever at Siet Lake. In the days that followed, several times snipers fired into the Jolo garrison at night, forcing Pershing to once again evacuate badly spooked American dependents from the island.

Amidst this fighting, an estimated more than 6,000 Moros loyal to Amil, almost ten times the number of those on Bud Dajo, gathered on a second dormant volcano, Bud Bagsak. With five separate summits, Bagsak posed a knottier tactical problem than Bud Dajo. Governor-General Forbes ordered Pershing to nip the insurgency in the bud, but Pershing feared an inadvertent blood bath, a repetition of 1st Bud Dajo on a larger scale. He knew that, as at Bud

Dajo, two-thirds of those on the mountain were probably women and children. Using the Sultan of Sulu and a number of the older datus as intermediaries a bichara was arranged with Amil. Pershing promised to suspend the disarmament effort if Amil and his people would leave Bagsak, return to the villages, and keep the peace. The tensions briefly subsided and Pershing quietly suspended enforcement.

However Governor General Forbes, seeking reappointment by the new Wilson administration and not wanting to appear weak, ordered Pershing to reinstitute the disarmament campaign. Reluctantly, Pershing complied, but even many previously friendly Moros now refused to cooperate. Few firearms came in and the level of resistance ratcheted up. In early June of 1913, Pershing received word that Amil had quietly returned to Bud Bagsak with between 300-400 well-armed men and built fortifications on its highest summit. Believing a showdown was now inevitable and fearing even more that there could be a pell-mell rush to the mountain of the large number of women and children from nearby coastal villages, Pershing devised a secret plan.

#### The Battle:

Orders were posted temporarily suspending all field operations, including disarmament activities, stating General Pershing would be absent for several weeks in order to enjoy a vacation with his family at Lake Lanao. That night with much fanfare and ceremony, Pershing departed Zamboanga by an Army transport, accompanied only by his aide de camp. But once away from the city the running lights were doused and the vessel headed to two nearby islands to pick up waiting companies of Philippine Scouts. Arriving in Jolo near midnight, he walked into the middle of a raucous party of the Army's 8th Infantry at the officer's club. Pershing ordered them to sober up and assemble their men, their assignment to guard Jolo.

Pershing quickly assembled an expeditionary force of 883 officers and men, however only one infantry company (50 men from Company M) and a demolition detail from the 8th Cavalry (25 men) were US Army Regulars. Over 90% of the force consisted of eight companies of Philippine Scouts (including the two that were all Moro). Two thirds of the expedition piled onto large barges pulled by steam launches, traveling 15 miles along the coast to land at a trail leading directly up to Bud Bagsak. The other third marched 20 miles overland to flank the opposite side of the mountain. By early the next morning, Bud Bagsak had been surrounded and the trails that could bring reinforcements, supplies, and the huge expected surge of villagers from the coast had been blocked. As a result, few if any additional warriors and almost no women and children reached the mountain during the battle that followed. However, Amil and his small band of 300-400, while surprised, were dug into defensive positions and prepared with abundant ammunition.

The large crater of Bagsak was horseshoe-shaped, closed on three sides and open at one-end. Three smaller summits within the crater stood just behind the opening and guarded the entrance. An immediate, simultaneous assault took the three smaller hills in the early morning hours, with minimal casualties. Amil made a serious, and fatal, tactical mistake by concentrating most of his men and firepower on the higher, main summit and too few on these three lesser rocky promontories, where they could have brought a deadly cross-fire to bear and possibly blocked Pershing's men from entering the crater or at least made them pay a higher price. The defenders only briefly resisted and then fled to trenches on the side of a fourth, but lower, summit named Pujagan, further back in the crater. From these heights, two mountain guns, the 8th Infantry company, and two Scout companies pummeled the trapped Tausugs for the rest of the day and through the night, inflicting many casualties and gradually rendering Pujagan untenable. In desperation, the survivors made a last desperate, suicidal charge in successive waves of 12 to 20 men each, getting as close as 40-50 feet from the American lines but no further. An American officer recounted, "None of the charging Moros reached our lines alive." A day later in burying the bodies, the corpse of Amil was found. But Sahipa and about half of the defenders still commanded the ridges and summit of Bud Bagsak.

For the next two days, Pershing carefully maneuvered his forces into position for a final assault. However, highly accurate, long-range Tausug sniper fire from well up the mountain

hindered the effort and caused the death of Captain Taylor Nichols, who led both Moro companies. Pershing selected the two all-Moro Scout companies (170 men total and now under the command of Captain George Charlton) to make the final assault. On June 15, the 51st Scouts, Maguindanaos from Cotabato, and the 52nd Scouts, Maranaos from Lanao, attacked up through lines of trenches and barricades, straight up a steep, partly open, curving slope for 450 yards (415m) to eventually capture a large stone cotta at the top. The 51st and 52nd were backed up by the 24th (Ilocano) and 31st (Tagalog) Scouts, Christian companies from the northern Philippines. The intense fighting that followed lasted nine hours, and became the fiercest, hardest-fought military action to take place in Moroland during the entire period of direct American rule. But nearly all of the fighting on the American side, although directed by white officers, would be carried out by Moro or Filipino foot soldiers and non-coms, supported by three mountain guns of an American battery. The 8th Infantry company would watch, not participate in the pivotal final battle.

At 1:30 PM, two-thirds the way up the slope, the assault began to stall. Pershing rushed to the front line and took personal charge. He wrote his wife Frankie a few days later, "It looked for a time as though we should not be able to carry it.... I am a wreck today." He rallied the Scouts just in time. Sensing a counter-attack, Captain George Charlton, ordered his men back to a defensive position just in time to meet a furious charge from above. Firing without stop, the Moro Scouts inflicted heavy losses on the defending Tausugs, but as both sides ran low on ammunition rifles were flung aside and Moros on both sides reverted to their ancient form of warfare; a desperate hand-to-hand battle of kris, barong, and kampilan, see-sawing back and forth for another two hours. The Christian Scouts rushed ammunition from below to their Muslim compatriots and the end came with a climactic, final rifle assault by the Moro Scout companies on the stone cotta, its screaming defenders making a last, furious counter-charge at 4:40 PM. "A few escaped but the remainder fought with fanatical fury until life was extinct" (wrote 1st Lt. James Collins who stood beside Pershing).

The American expeditionary force lost fifteen dead and twenty-nine wounded, roughly a 5% casualty rate (author's count made from unit reports). An official body count was not made of the Tausug dead, although it was reliably estimated that from 300 to 400 male warriors had been on the mountain at the outset of the battle and there had been no reinforcements. Escape tunnels had been incorporated into the trenches and cottas, and the two blocking companies had been pulled away from their flanking positions. As the fighting neared an end, a large number of defenders were observed fleeing, perhaps as many as one-third who were on the field. Few rifles were recovered from the battlefield, most having been carried off. Thus, although there was no official count, it appears likely between 200 to 300 Tausugs were killed in the battle. The climactic final assault was largely a Moro-versus-Moro fight, Maguindanaos and Maranaos against Tausugs, although the dangerous task of carrying ammunition and water up the exposed slope fell to Christian Filipinos.

#### Aftermath:

Perhaps because of few American deaths and the public focus on the upcoming transfer of political power, the battle received little attention in the American press. But one month later a former civilian employee of the Quartermaster Corps named John McLean got off a boat from Manila, went immediately to the offices of a small San Francisco newspaper, and leveled the charge that he had been present on Jolo during the battle and claimed as fact that 1,600 Moros, mostly women and children, had been massacred by (white) American troops. He further asserted that Pershing had placed three newspaper reporters under arrest in order to suppress the story. The front-page headline read "BUTCHERED MOROS HE SAYS." But other newspapers, skeptical of the source, were unable to find verification and refused to publish it. Gaping holes were discovered in McLean's story. He had not been on Jolo at the time but was in Manila, having earlier been fired from his job and ordered off the island. He had skipped the Philippines behind an assumed name, leaving behind a wife, a mistress, many children and a large amount of unpaid bills. His former boss scathingly dismissed his story, "the truth is not in him and we never took seriously anything that he said." The story died. However, two months later, The International Socialist Review repeated the false charges in an inflammatory and dissembling article, without providing any new factual support. Ironically, this flawed article, its highly inflated body count, and the claims of a

massacre, have been cited as factual by later historians and is often quoted on current-day Muslim separatist web sites as if it were the true picture.

### **Francis Burton Harrison and “Filipinization” (1914-1920)**

Woodrow Wilson was inaugurated as the 28th President of the United States on March 3, 1913. A young staffer in the War Department, Felix Frankfurter, was assigned the task of re-examining American involvement in the Philippines. The prevailing sentiment within the Democratic Party was to make a phased withdrawal from the islands, and Wilson, in off the cuff remarks, implied the United States would soon begin to leave. But Frankfurter counseled going slow, fearing the new administration would be politically vulnerable if a sudden a rush for the exits degenerated into chaos. Under Taft’s long custodianship self-government had been extended to the elected lower house of the Philippine legislature, the Philippine Assembly, while the upper house, the Philippine Commission, and the executive and judicial functions, under control of the Governor-General, continued in the hands of American appointees—with Army-controlled Moroland the only exception. The Philippine Assembly, controlled by the *Nacionalista* party, had sent a top leader, Manuel Quezon, to Washington to lobby for the cause of independence. Quezon cultivated the Democrats and had become friends with a young (40 year-old) Congressman from New York, Francis Burton Harrison. Quezon assiduously lobbied the new Wilson administration to appoint Harrison Governor General and succeeded, even though there was little about Harrison to qualify him for the job. Arriving in Manila in mid-November of 1913, Harrison was pre-determined to advance Philippine independence and re-write the chapter on America’s venture into overseas empire. The first issue to land on his plate was the unresolved future of Moroland.

The day Harrison arrived Pershing and Bell requested an audience. The two argued that, the victory at Bud Bagsak six months earlier signified the Moros were finally pacified, and that since Pershing’s tour of duty was about to expire in one month, the timing was perfect for the Army to relinquish its civil role and for the civil government to assume responsibility for governing the Moros. Although respectful, Bell and Pershing delivered the message that as far as the Army and War Department were concerned this was more than just a recommendation, it was not negotiable. While Harrison had been in transit to the islands, Generals Pershing, Bell, and Army Chief of Staff Leonard Wood had reached a less-upbeat conclusion over their long experiment in nation building; it had become a seemingly endless, thankless drain on scarce resources, with remote prospects for a satisfactory conclusion. The Army could ill afford to continue to grapple with such a major and unproductive distraction while relations with Mexico deteriorated and war clouds gathered over Europe. Pershing had written confidentially to Colonel James Harbord, the acting head of the Constabulary (who had lobbied to be Pershing’s replacement) mincing no words, “It means a great deal to the Army to have this Province unloaded.”

But Pershing and Bell had painted an overly rosy picture for Harrison. Datu Sahipa, Amil’s second in command, had escaped from Bud Bagsak and continued to lead a resistance to American rule in Sulu. Two major battles occurred on Jolo less than a month after Bud Bagsak, one fought by the Scouts and one by the Constabulary. Reports of their extent were downplayed. In October, the month before Harrison’s arrival and four months after the Battle of Bud Bagsak, several hundred Tausugs had gathered atop Mt. Talipao to face a combined Scout-Constabulary force in a one-day battle that was easily as large as the one fought at Bud Bagsak. Pershing had once observed of the Moros, “If he takes a notion to fight, he will fight regardless of the number of men he thinks are to brought against him.” In perusing Constabulary records from 1914 through 1920, it is notable that the number of battles and skirmishes in Sulu and Lanao saw little change over the next seven years of civilian government from that of the previous ten years of Army control. The last American death in combat in Moroland did not occur until September of 1918, 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Charles C. LaRoche of the Constabulary; an event little-noticed given the many American doughboys then dying in France. Effectively, the Army had declared victory and left.

Following his meeting with Bell and Pershing, Harrison made a week-long whirlwind tour of Moroland. Harrison admitted later that even before he left a metaphor had come to mind.

The story is not unlike that of our two hundred years of struggle with the Indians of the Atlantic coast.... The population was kept down by incessant warfare, and vast areas of the richest lands in that part of the world lay uncultivated. A hundred thousand starved in a country where a hundred million modern Americans ' have abundance.

Surprisingly for a Progressive and from the Wilson administration, his ideas reflected those of an earlier century. The problem with Moroland, he had decided, was too many Moros. In his eyes, like the American Indian they had committed the sin of "wasting" the rich natural resources bestowed upon them by God, were too internally divided to govern themselves, and were "culturally inferior" to the majority Christian Filipinos, thereby "forfeiting" their right to control their own land.

Almost immediately after taking office, Harrison embarked upon a policy of stripping Moroland of its separate status. The Moros were to be forcibly integrated into the overwhelmingly Christian-oriented body politic of the Philippine territorial government. It was not at all dissimilar from what had happened in the United States because of the well-intentioned but disastrous Dawes Act of 1887, which had assured marginalization of Native Americans through a policy of forced assimilation and subversion of the reservation system. And that same Philippine body politic was about to undergo wrenching change itself. Harrison abolished the Philippine Commission and created an elected bi-cameral legislature, a Senate and a House of Representatives, shifting all legislative power into Filipino hands. In an action which he termed "Filipinization", he began the wholesale replacement of civil service Americans with Filipinos at all levels of the Executive branch, including cabinet positions. The net result was to place the Nacionalista Party in effective control of the governance of the Philippines and to assume the "guardianship" role over the Moros.

In December 1913 Pershing left on schedule and Harrison appointed a civilian administrator, Frank Carpenter, to succeed him as Governor of Moro Province. The next month, General Bell ordered all American Regular Army units to withdraw from Moroland, leaving behind a single battalion of Scouts in their place. At Pershing's recommendation, the civil government made up the manpower difference by more than doubling the number of Constabulary in the province. However, rather than expand the Moro Constabulary, the new government in Manila transferred in Christian Scouts from the northern provinces. Harrison proclaimed:

Moro Province is now fundamentally and essentially a part of the body politic of the Philippines, and it is to be hoped that we may never hear again the suggestion...that the Moro Archipelago be separated from the Philippine Islands.

Frank Carpenter was charged with overseeing a "transitional government", that would lead to Moroland becoming a subsidiary of the new governmental structure in Manila. For the next six years Carpenter systematically worked himself and the remaining Americans out of a job. Pershing, Bell, Wood and the rest of the Army were appalled by this turn of events and protested to the new Secretary of War Lindsey M. Garrison. But they had opted to leave the arena and no longer had a say.

On May 5, 1920 the transition was completed. Mindanao and Sulu were broken up into seven separate provinces, all separately reporting to the new bureaucracy in Manila. By all accounts, during his tenure Frank Carpenter, energetic, honest, and devoted to his duties, provided the Moros with the most efficient and effective government of the entire American period of control. He attracted private beneficiaries from the U.S. to open trade and academic schools among the Moros and was sincere in efforts to improve their lot. To help ease the transition, the leadership of the Nacionalista Party and the new Filipino Governors of the southern provinces, initiated what they termed a "policy of attraction" towards the Moros, the objective being to win them over to the new government. But the Muslims were only allocated three appointed representatives in the legislature and left with little political clout or effective say over their own affairs.

Dr. Sixto Aroso was a young doctor who in 1921 had been among the many ambitious and idealistic young northern Filipinos who went south to implement the "policy of attraction" with their "fellow Malays." But a half century later, in 1970, Aroso observed that the Moros

had still not accepted being a part of the new Republic. “Nominally our Muslim brothers are governed by the laws of the [Philippine] Republic. In reality, however, their mode of life is directed in large part by the tenets of the Luwaran Code..., universally accepted...and held sacred next to that of the Koran.... Many of their customs are given the force of law, and many laws have lost validity because they contradict the prevailing customs of the region.”<sup>5</sup>

Despite wrenching changes imposed on their fate by the Spanish, the Americans, and subsequent regimes in Manila, the Moros clung to their identities. It was almost a parallel universe; a pattern that would continue through the rest of the 20th Century and into the 21st, the large majority of Christians and Muslims living in two separate, divergent, and seemingly irreconcilable worlds.

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<sup>5</sup> Dr. Sixto Aroso, MD, *The Sulu Archipelago And Its People*, (Yonkers, NY: World Book Company, 1923-republished in the Philippines with comments in 1970), 150.