

The Mindanao Siege of 1942 to 1945

The Mindanao Siege of 1942 to 1945:

*The Japanese Invasion and
Subsequent Resistance of
Mindanao*

By

Bob East

**Cambridge
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Imagine there's no countries
It isn't hard to do
Nothing to kill or die for
And no religion, too
Imagine all the people
Living life in peace... You...

You may say I'm a dreamer
But I'm not the only one
I hope someday you'll join us
And the world will be as one.

John Lennon 1971

Bertrand Arthur William Russell, 3rd Earl Russell, (18 May 1872 – 02 February 1970) was a British mathematician, philosopher—and follower of notable causes including peace activism. He was jailed during World War I for criticism of Britain’s involvement against Germany. He did not have the same anti-war feelings when Germany invaded Poland in 1939 or Japan’s invasion of U.S. territory in December 1941.

After the end of WWII—specifically the detonation of the two atomic weapons on Japan in September 1945—he became a champion of peace.

In his autobiography, completed in 1969, he made the following comments in the preface.

“Three passions, simple but overwhelmingly strong have governed my life: the longing for love, the search for knowledge, and unbearable pity for the suffering of mankind. These passions, like great winds, have blown me hither and thither, in a wayward course, over a deep ocean of anguish, reaching to the very verge of despair”.

“Echoes of cries of pain reverberate in my heart. Children in famine, victims tortured by oppressors---the whole world of loneliness, poverty and pain make a mockery of what human life should be. I long to alleviate the evil. But I cannot and I too suffer”. (Bertrand Russell)

Inter alia. In some small way, Russell may have been reflecting the underlying pain the people of the Philippines—a country he admired—suffered under the Japanese occupation of their country from 1941-1945.

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PREFACE

To do justice to the moving account of the Japanese invasion of the islands in the Sulu Archipelago, the author found it both necessary and intrinsic to include in this narrative, an extended preface that touched on some of the pre-1942 history of the area. This included where Islam fitted into the picture. During the guerrilla campaigns against the Japanese from 1942-1945 in the Sulu Archipelago region, the overwhelming number of fighters were of the Islamic faith.

Islam came gently and gradually to the Philippines...along with other cultural baggage, Muslim traders carried their religion along the coasts and up the rivers of various islands, converting towns and villages...these seaborne visitors had their greatest and most enduring impact in Mindanao. (Sales, 2013)

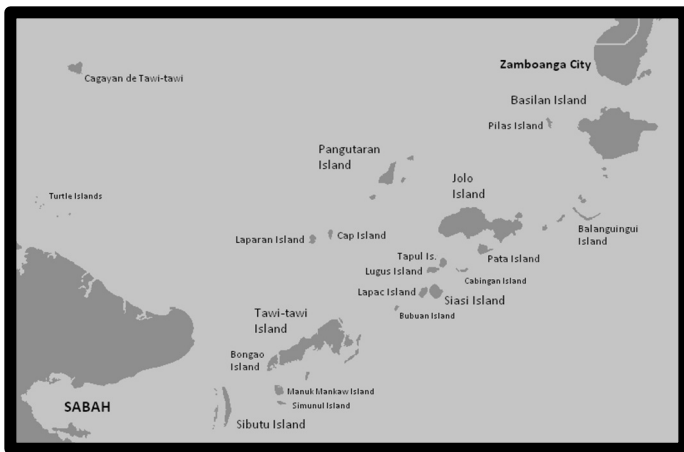


Fig. p.1. Sulu Archipelago showing Basilan, Sulu (shown on the map as Jolo), and Tawi-Tawi. To the North is Zamboanga. And to the South is Sabah—Northern Borneo.

Basilan, Sulu and Taw-Tawi (and associated islands) are three predominately Islamic Philippine provinces that stretch south from the Zamboanga Peninsula (Mindanao) to Sabah—Northern Borneo. The Sulu Archipelago

is sometimes referred to simply as **Basulta**. This is derived from the first syllables of the three provinces just mentioned. As also mentioned, these provinces are predominately Islamic—Basilan being the exception—but only marginally. Whilst the population of Sulu and Tawi-Tawi are close to 99% Muslims, the Muslim population of Basilan is approximately 65%. The balance is made of a collection of predominantly Christian religions, such as Roman Catholic and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints—(Mormons). These percentages would not have changed much since the United States took possession of the Philippines in 1898 following the Spanish-American War of the same year.

Geologically, this archipelago, (Sulu Archipelago) in the past, was believed to have been along a bridge between the Philippines and Borneo—during a past ice age, or sometimes referred as glaciation. Exactly which one is uncertain because there have been many ice ages. The most significant were “the Huronian, Cryogenian, Andean-Saharan, late Palaeozoic, and the latest Quaternary Ice Age”. (Allaby, 2013) However, it has since been proven that the islands are predominately the result of tectonic activity that has produced upward thrusts of ridges. (Scott 1984) The 7000 odd islands of the Philippines have been gradually formed by tectonic plates moving toward and against each other over millions of years. (Inter alia). It is hard for modern man to comprehend time in amounts of millions of years when they usually comprehend time frames in “human existence”—BC (before Jesus Christ. Or BCE—“before the common era”). Both are, give or take only a few decades apart.

To understand the population growth—or decline in some instances—of Basilan, Sulu, and Tawi-Tawi island groups, four census dates showing populations are now included below. The population dates are 1903—the first census after the United States acquisition of the Philippines following the 1898 Spanish-American War, 1938, and 1948—during which time saw the Japanese occupation from 1941 to 1945: As accurate as is possible, hopefully covered in some detail in this narrative. And the latest population recorded. This was 2020. The figures recorded below are from two sources: (The Philippine Information Agency), and (the Philippine Statistics Authority).

Year	Basilan	Sulu	Tawi-Tawi
1903	4,480	73,914	16,675
1939	57,561	201,348	45,769
1948	110,297	182,295	58,531
2020	426,207	1,000,108	440,276

Basilan in Brief

The first province covered briefly in this complex preface is Basilan. The capital of Basilan Province is Lamitan. Prior to this the capital was Isabela. Isabela is still a component city of Basilan but is under the administration of the Zamboanga Peninsula region.

Prior to the Japanese invasion of Basilan in 1942—as part of the overall Japanese invasion of the Philippines—military personnel of the United States of America—later just referred to as the United States or U.S.—took formal possession of Basilan. This occurred on 08 December 1899. Before this, Basilan was under Spanish rule and consisted of three districts: (1) Isabela de Basilan (capital), (2) Lamitan, and (3) Maluso. With the acquisition by U.S. forces on 08 December 1899 came the ownership of the well-established Spanish naval base of Isabela de Basilan. However, before the acquisition of Basilan the Philippine-American War broke out. (This war broke out on 04 February 1899 and lasted until 02 July 1902.) It was just a continuation of an internal war started by Philippine forces, led by the legendary Emilio Aquinaldo—regarded as the Philippines first president. The conflict originally started when Spain refused to acknowledge a declaration of independence.

It is now timely to give a small account of where Emilio Aquinaldo stood at the time of the Japanese invasion—and a little prior to that. The Imperial Japanese Army had invaded the Philippines a mere 10 hours after their devastating attack on the U.S. naval base at Pearl Harbor on 07 December 1941. (The actual date of the Philippine invasion was 08 December 1941, but the International Date Line comes into the equation.) Aquinaldo had always been an admirer of the Japanese Empire. He admired the way the Japanese had always believed that European nations had no right to rule Asian nations. (Asia for Asians—Europe for Europeans—and later, America for Americans.)

He had fought hard against the Spaniards and later United States troops in the Philippine-American War. It was during the latter encounter that he surrendered to U.S. forces—23 March 1901. (And it was also during his time as *de-facto* president that the First Philippine Republic was formed.) On 19 April 1901, having formally surrendered to the United States he took an “oath of allegiance” to that country and recognised their sovereignty. This was more or less an allegiance of convenience as history would show.

During what is now referred to as the “American Period” Aquinaldo adopted a low profile. He did however support any organisations that advocated independence for the Philippines. He was successful in forming what was referred to as the *Asociación de los Veteranos de la Revolución*. (The Association Veterans of the Revolution.) One of the most successful achievements that the Veteran Association achieved were secure—but minimal—pensions. Another achievement that Aquinaldo managed to enshrine was the right to display the Philippine flag. This was amended on 30 October 1919 so that it was then illegal to display the Philippine flag. To commemorate this, he transformed his home in Kawit—a municipality in the Province of Cavite: on Manila Bay—into a “monument to the Philippine flag”. It was known as *Aquinaldo Shrine* and, at of the time of writing, 2023—it is still standing.



Fig p.2. The Aquinaldo Shrine. Situated in the Province of Cavite.

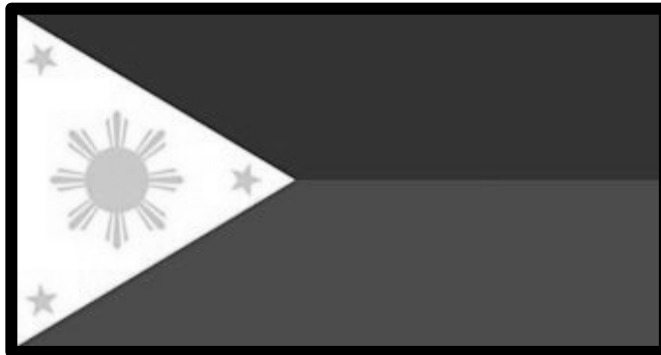


Fig p.3. The Philippine flag. Designed by Emilio Aquinaldo.

The eight rays of the sun represent the eight provinces of the Philippines that were placed under martial law by the Governor-General, Arthur MacArthur, Jr. during the Philippine-American War. The three individual stars represent the three major Philippine Island groups—Luzon, the Visayas, and Mindanao.

Aquinaldo may have adopted a low profile during the first part of the American occupation, but he still yearned for political power. He was cut short in his role as president at the end of the Philippine-American War, and thought, given the opportunity, the Philippine people would vote him back into the top position.

1935 gave Aquinaldo the opportunity he was looking for. In 1935 the Commonwealth of the Philippines: *Commonwealth de Filipinas*—Spanish, or *Mancomunidad de Filipinas*—Tagalog was formed. It had been years in the making and was as a result of the enactment of the *Tydings-McDuffie* Act. It was designed to be a transitional administration before the Philippines was given its formal independence. The only one small drawback was that the Philippines foreign affairs had to be managed by the United States. This was offset by having a Philippine president, and a Philippine government that were both elected. (The president being elected for a term of six years.) This would have suited Aquinaldo in the extreme because by 1941 he would have been 72 years of age—as it was, he lived to be just short of 95 years of age. However, there was only one small drawback—he had to win the presidential election.

This was just a formality as far as Aquinaldo saw it. Afterall, in the past he had fought both the Spanish and the Americans and had designed the Philippine flag. (His credentials seemed impeccable.) However, to his detriment he was also remembered for his being involved in the trial and execution of the Bonifacio brothers—Andres and Procopio—who were accused of sedition and treason against the Aquinaldo Government of the time. The executions took place on 10 May 1897—the year before the Philippines was ceded to the United States following the Spanish-American War. The Bonifacio brother's execution may have been in the previous century, but they were still legendary figures.

One very important event that Aquinaldo believed would stand him in good stead when people were contemplating who to vote for as president, was his promulgation of the Philippine Declaration of Independence on 12 June 1898. He seemed unbeatable. His main contender, or so it would

seem, was the popular politician, Manuel Luis Quezon y Molina—known just simply as Manuel Quezon.

He, Quezon, began his political career by being elected a municipal councilor, (American spelling), and followed this up by being elected governor of Lucena. (Inter alia, Lucena is now a city in the province of Quezon—southeast of Manila—and named after Manuel Quezon.) At the time of his election to the post of governor, Quezon was only 28 years old.

When he was 29 years old—in 1907—he was elected as a representative for Tayabas—as mentioned, now known as Quezon. This was in the first Philippine Assembly, now known as the House of Representatives. He had many roles from 1907 to 1916, not the least being the majority floor leader. Then from 1909 to 1916 inclusive, he was one of two commissioners to the United States House of Representatives that worked on and lobbied for the historic Philippine Autonomy Act. He was gaining recognition and popularity. Then, in 1916 came the real test of his popularity—he ran for the Senate. He was elected for the Fifth Senatorial District and held that for 19 years.

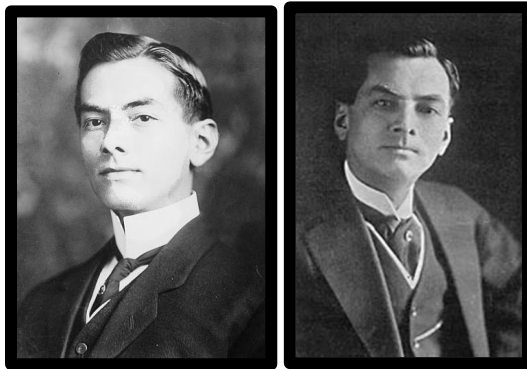


Fig. p.4. Quezon as a newly elected senator.

As previously mentioned, in 1935 the Philippines held a presidential election. Other elections were also held but the presidential election gave male Filipinos the opportunity to elect one of their own as supreme ruler.

(Females—Filipinas—did not receive the vote until two years later: in 1937.)

The 1935 presidential election was designed to not only elect the president but the vice-president as well. The candidates for both positions are listed below.

President: (a) Manuel L. Quezon, Nacionalista Party. (b) Emilio Aguinaldo, National Socialist Party. (Nothing to do with the German version.) (c) Gregorio Aglipay, Republican Party, and (d) Pascual Racuyal, Independent.

Vice-President: (a) Sergio Osmena, Nacionalista Party. (b) Raymundo Melliza, National Socialist Party. and (c) Norberto Nabong, Republican Party.

Once voting had ceased and votes counted, the tallies were as followed.

President

Manuel L. Quezon	Nacionalista Party	695,332	67.9
Emilio Aguinaldo	National Socialist Party	179,349	17.5
Gregorio Aglipay	Republican Party	148,010	14.5
Pascual Racuyal	Independ.	158	0.02
Total		1.03 million	

As can be seen, Manuel Quezon won comfortably. Of interest, Pascual Racuyal, who won only 158 votes out of over one million, went on to contest all presidential elections up until 1986. His percentage never climbed much further. He lived until 2004 and died aged at 94.

Vice-President

Sergio Osmeña	Nacionalista Party	812,352	86.91
Raymundo Melliza	National Socialist Party	70,899	7.5
Norberto Nabong	Republican Party	51,443	5.50

Four decades on from Aguinaldo's 1901 "oath of allegiance", the Japanese attacked the Philippines—covered briefly in *"Introduction"*. Aquinaldo was not unduly put back by this. In some arcane way he thought it might eventually benefit the Philippine people. Accordingly, it did not take Aquinaldo long to engage in what he considered positive dialogue. In early 1942, just over a month after Japanese forces had landed in Luzon—the northern part of the Philippines—Aquinaldo met with the Chief-of-Staff of the 14th Philippine Army, General Masami Maeda, and suggested to the general that he try to convince the Philippine president, Manuel Quezon, to negotiate with the Japanese and create a pro-Japanese provisional government. He still held this veiled hatred of the country he had fought against—the United States.

The next month, February, Aquinaldo delivered what is now referred to as the infamous "Bataan Address". In this broadcast he called upon General Douglas MacArthur, who was now the Field Marshal of the Philippines, to surrender all Filipino and United States forces to the Japanese. To the contrary, General Douglas MacArthur "deserted"—a description used by many historians—the U.S. and Philippine forces fighting in the Bataan area and left for Australia. This is where he resided until he returned to the Philippines in October 1944—under much rehearsed fanfare and acclaim.

The departure of the now, once again, "General" Douglas MacArthur ushered in the collapse and surrender of thousands of U.S. and Philippine troops. Aquinaldo did not appear—at least on the face of it—to be unduly concerned at the demise of thousands of his fellow countrymen, or the U.S. soldiers in his country. His thoughts were for himself and the Japanese who were in charge. For his "loyalty" he was made a member of the provisional Council of State, and a member of the Preparatory Committee for Philippine Independence. He also set up the Kenpeitai's campaign to suppress anti-Japanese resistance, and urged guerrilla groups to lay down their arms and surrender. The guerrilla groups, as will be shown later, took no notice of his request—as was to be expected.

For all his efforts to keep in good faith with the Japanese authorities in the Philippines—and in Japan also—Aquinaldo was expecting to be made president of the Second Philippine Republic. He was disappointed. Jose P. Laurel, a former Supreme Court justice was chosen as president of the new republic. Inter alia, Laurel, although arrested after the war and accused of being a traitor, was eventually released and is now officially regarded as the third president of the Philippines.

However, reverting back now to the period just after the end of the Philippine-American War. The Americans had enough to contend with in fighting Philippine nationalists without having to engage in conflict with Moros in Basilan who rejected the American acquisition of their Sultanate. That is when Brigadier General John C. Bates stepped into the equation. His job, as explained to him by Major General Elwell Stephen Otis, the commander-in-chief of the U.S. forces in the Philippines, was to appease the Sultan of the Sulu Archipelago—Sultan Kiram—so that the U.S. forces were not fighting *two enemies*. Consequently, Bates drew up an agreement that said—among other conditions—the sovereignty of the Sulu archipelago—of which Basilan was a part of—would be returned to Moro rule after the United States had defeated the troops of Emilio Aquinaldo. This treaty was known as the Kiram-Bates Treaty. As history has now shown, the Sultan was deceived by the clever wording of Major General Otis, and political manoeuvring by the United States President, Theodore Roosevelt. (The Philippine-American War finished on 02 July 1902, and the Kiram-Bates Treaty was abandoned on 02 March 1904.) The Moros of Basilan had lost the battle but not the “war”. The “Moro Wars” (1901-1913) was just beginning, and the Sulu Archipelago, including Basilan was involved. (Officially the Moro Wars may have finished in 1913, but not the Moro struggle. It was to go on for another century.)

A Moro uprising in 1971 was led by a University of the Philippines lecturer, Nur Misuari. He had founded in 1970 the Moro National Liberation Front, MNLF, in Sulu but it quickly attracted followers in Basilan and other Muslim areas. It had such a devastating effect on peace in the Mindanao area generally, that the Philippine president, Ferdinand Emmanuel Edralin Marcos Sr. declared martial law on 23 September 1972. It was lifted on 17 January 1981. For the record there were three other official martial law declarations before the Philippines became a Republic in 1946. They were: (1) January 1907—United States colonial rule. (2) 02 January 1942—Japanese military administration. And (3) 22 September 1944—Laurel administration. (And of further interest, after independence there have been two other declarations of martial law—all in Mindanao Island: 05-13 December 2009, and 23 May 2017 to 31 December 2019.) The 1971 martial law declaration resulted in Basilan officially becoming a province. This did not quell the Moro unrest in the Sulu Archipelago. It only added to it. Another Moro fighting group, the Moro Islamic Liberation (MILF) was established in 1977. It was disbanded on 27 March 2014. In 2022 Lamitan gained the attention of the Philippine press—and the international press to a lesser degree—when its three times elected female mayor, Rose Furigay, was shot dead in a mass

shooting whilst attending a graduation ceremony for her daughter at the Ateneo de Manila University in Quezon City. The culprit was identified as a physician, Dr. Chao Tiao Yumolf who was facing libel charges.

Sulu Province in Brief

The second part of this extended preface now briefly covers Sulu Province in the early part of the 20th Century. The Bud Dajo Massacre of 1906 is covered below in some detail—as it should because of its obscenity—in the sense of being evil.) The capital of Sulu Province is Jolo. Sulu has the unenviable distinction of being the poorest province of the 82 provinces in the Philippines. (This is judged by having the highest poverty rate.)

Sulu has always had a history of violence especially since the acquisition of the Philippines to the United States from Spain in 1898. Three incidents are particularly lurid. The first was the Bud Dajo Massacre on 07 March 1906—expanded on at the end of this paragraph. The second was the Jabidah Massacre on 18 March 1968 where a number of Moro (Philippine Muslim) army officer recruits refused to obey orders to kill fellow Moros. (Up to 70 recruits were executed.) (Smith 2015) The third was the Battle of Jolo on 23 February 1974. (Lelyveld 1974) This involved the MNLF (Moro National Liberation Front) and Philippine Government Forces of the 14th Infantry Battalion.

The Bud Dajo Massacre

This massacre, which was wrongly referred to at the time as “The First Battle of Bud Dajo”, was a counterinsurgency operation against Moro men, women and children who were living in a dormant volcanic crater. They numbered upward of a 1000 and were armed only with a kris—double bladed dagger or short sword. Against these entrenched Moros were about 750 U.S. men and officers under the command of a colonel—Joseph Wilson Duncan. (It was a totally one-sided affair.) The U.S. troops were not only armed with rifles but also had the assistance of some naval gunfire.

After the massacre was over—of which it is estimated only six Moros survived—the news reached the United States and received a hostile response from certain quarters. The media, in general, and particularly the

New York Times were hostile—as was the writer, humourist, and publisher, Mark Twain. Twain, at the time was the vice-president of the American anti-imperialist league. An organisation originally set up in 1898 to oppose the annexation of the Philippines as an insular area following the Spanish American War of 1898. Immediately following the Bud Dajo massacre he wrote in the *New York Times*: ***“In what way was it a battle? It has no resemblance to a battle ... We cleaned up our four days’ work and made it complete by butchering these helpless people”***. This of course was in stark contrast to the U.S. president, Theodore Roosevelt. He sent a congratulatory cablegram to the Governor-General of the Philippines—Leonard Wood on 10 March 1906. It read: ***I congratulate you and the officers and men of your command upon the brilliant feat of arms wherein you and they so well upheld the honor of the American flag. (Signed) Theodore Roosevelt.***

It is worth now including a published essay by Mark Twain on 12 March 1906. In it he displayed his usual humorist [American spelling] genius. Under the heading *Moro Massacre*, he wrote the following—unabridged.

This incident burst upon the world last Friday in an official cablegram from the commander of our forces in the Philippines to our Government at Washington. The substance of it was as follows: A tribe of Moros, dark-skinned savages, had fortified themselves in the bowl of an extinct crater not many miles from Jolo; and as they were hostiles, and bitter against us because we have been trying for eight years to take their liberties away from them, their presence in that position was a menace. Our commander, Gen. Leonard Wood, ordered a reconnaissance. It was found that the Moros numbered six hundred, counting women and children; that their crater bowl was in the summit of a peak or mountain twenty-two hundred feet above sea level, and very difficult of access for Christian troops and artillery. Then General Wood ordered a surprise and went along himself to see the order carried out. Our troops climbed the heights by devious and difficult trails, and even took some artillery with them. The kind of artillery is not specified, but in one place it was hoisted up a sharp acclivity by tackle a distance of some three hundred feet. Arrived at the rim of the crater, the battle began. Our soldiers numbered five hundred and forty. They were assisted by auxiliaries consisting of a detachment of native constabulary in our pay -- their numbers not given -- and by a naval detachment, whose numbers are not stated. But apparently the contending parties were about equal as to number -- six hundred men on our side, on the edge of the bowl; six hundred men, women and children in the bottom of the bowl. Depth of the bowl, 50 feet.

Gen. Wood’s order was, “Kill or capture the six hundred.”

The battle began-it is officially called by that name-our forces firing down into the crater with their artillery and their deadly small arms of precision; the savages furiously returning the fire, probably with brickbats-though this is merely a surmise of mine, as the weapons used by the savages are not nominated in the cablegram. Heretofore the Moros have used knives and clubs mainly; also ineffectual trade-muskets when they had any.

The official report stated that the battle was fought with prodigious energy on both sides during a day and a half, and that it ended with a complete victory for the American arms. The completeness of the victory for the American arms. The completeness of the victory is established by this fact: that of the six hundred Moros not one was left alive. The brilliancy of the victory is established by this other fact, to wit: that of our six hundred heroes only fifteen lost their lives.

General Wood was present and looking on. His order had been. "Kill or capture those savages." Apparently, our little army considered that the "or" left them authorized to kill or capture according to taste, and that their taste had remained what it has been for eight years, in our army out there - the taste of Christian butchers.

The official report quite properly extolled and magnified the "heroism" and "gallantry" of our troops; lamented the loss of the fifteen who perished and elaborated the wounds of thirty-two of our men who suffered injury, and even minutely and faithfully described the nature of the wounds, in the interest of future historians of the United States. It mentioned that a private had one of his elbows scraped by a missile, and the private's name was mentioned. Another private had the end of his nose scraped by a missile. His name was also mentioned - by cable, at one dollar and fifty cents a word.

Next day's news confirmed the previous day's report and named our fifteen killed and thirty-two wounded again, and once more described the wounds and gilded them with the right adjectives.

Let us now consider two or three details of our military history. In one of the great battles of the Civil War ten per cent. Of the forces engaged on the two sides were killed and wounded. At Waterloo, where four hundred thousand men were present on the two sides, fifty thousand fell, killed and wounded, in five hours, leaving three hundred and fifty thousand sound and all right for further adventures. Eight years ago, when the pathetic comedy called the Cuban War was played, we summoned two hundred and fifty thousand men. We fought a number of showy battles, and when the war was over, we had lost two hundred and sixty-eight men out of our two hundred and fifty thousand, in killed and wounded in the field, and just fourteen times as many by the gallantry of the army doctors in the hospitals and camps. We did not exterminate the Spaniards -- far from it. In each

engagement we left an average of two per cent. of the enemy killed or crippled on the field.

Contrast these things with the great statistics which have arrived from [page 172] that Moro crater! There, with six hundred engaged on each side, we lost fifteen men killed outright, and we had thirty-two wounded--counting that nose and that elbow. The enemy numbered six hundred -- including women and children -- and we abolished them utterly, leaving not even a baby alive to cry for its dead mother. This is incomparably the greatest victory that was ever achieved by the Christian soldiers of the United States.

Now then, how has it been received? The splendid news appeared with splendid display-heads in every newspaper in this city of four million and thirteen thousand inhabitants, on Friday morning. But there was not a single reference to it in the editorial columns of any one of those newspapers. The news appeared again in all the evening papers of Friday, and again those papers were editorially silent upon our vast achievement. Next day's additional statistics and particulars appeared in all the morning papers, and still without a line of editorial rejoicing or a mention of the matter in any way. These additions appeared in the evening papers of that same day (Saturday) and again without a word of comment. In the columns devoted to correspondence, in the morning and evening papers of Friday and Saturday, nobody said a word about the "battle." Ordinarily those columns are teeming with the passions of the citizen; he lets no incident go by, whether it be large or small, without pouring out his praise or blame, his joy or his indignation about the matter in the correspondence column. But, as I have said, during those two days he was as silent as the editors themselves. So far as I can find out, there was only one person among our eighty millions who allowed himself the privilege of a public remark on this great occasion -- that was the President of the United States. All day Friday he was as studiously silent as the rest. But on Saturday he recognized that his duty required him to say something, and he took his pen and performed that duty. If I know President Roosevelt -- and I am sure I do -- this utterance cost him more pain and shame than any other that ever issued from his pen or his mouth. I am far from blaming him. If I had been in his place my official duty would have compelled me to say what he said. It was a convention, an old tradition, and he had to be loyal to it. There was no help for it. This is what he said:

Washington, March 10.

Wood, Manila:- I congratulate you and the officers and men of your command upon the brilliant feat of arms wherein you and they so well upheld the honor of the American flag.

(Signed) Theodore Roosevelt.

His whole utterance is merely a convention. Not a word of what he said came out of his heart. He knew perfectly well that to pen six hundred helpless and weaponless savages in a hole like rats in a trap and massacre them in detail during a stretch of a day and a half, from a safe position on the heights above, was no brilliant feat of arms - and would not have been a brilliant feat of arms even if Christian America, represented by its salaried soldiers, had shot them down with Bibles and the Golden Rule instead of bullets. He knew perfectly well that our uniformed assassins had not upheld the honor of the American flag but had done as they have been doing continuously for eight years in the Philippines - that is to say, they had dishonored it.

The next day, Sunday, -- which was yesterday -- the cable brought us additional news - still more splendid news -- still more honor for the flag. The first display-head shouts this information at us in the stentorian capitals: "WOMEN SLAIN MORO SLAUGHTER."

"Slaughter" is a good word. Certainly, there is not a better one in the Unabridged Dictionary for this occasion

The next display line says:

"With Children They Mixed in Mob in Crater, and All Died Together."

They were mere naked savages, and yet there is a sort of pathos about it when that word children falls under your eye, for it always brings before us our perfectest symbol of innocence and helplessness; and by help of its deathless eloquence color, creed and nationality vanish away and we see only that they are children -- merely children. And if they are frightened and crying and in trouble, our pity goes out to them by natural impulse. We see a picture. We see the small forms. We see terrified faces. We see the tears. We see the small hands clinging in supplication to the mother; but we do not see those children that we are speaking about. We see in their places the little creatures whom we know and love.

The next heading blazes with American and Christian glory like the sun in the zenith:

"Death List is Now 900."

I was never so enthusiastically proud of the flag till now!



Fig. p.5. U.S. soldiers posing with dead Moros. Note the dead female Moro—breasts exposed—in the centre of the photograph.

There was a second “battle” of Bud Dajo fought between U.S. troops and native Moros in December 1911. This was in response to a directive by the governor of the then province—Moro Province. Moro Province consisted of Zamboanga, Lanao, Cotabato, Davao and Jolo (as Sulu was then known.) During this time Major General John Pershing was governor of Moro Province. Just before the second Bud Dajo “battle” Pershing issued a directive for all Moros to disarm. They had been conducting small attacks on American troops and then retreated to the old volcanic crater that saw the infamous 1906 Bud Dajo massacre.

By this time there was a new U.S. president—President William Howard Taft. It is uncertain whether President Taft had given General Pershing instructions on what to do if the Moros continued their spasmodic attacks, but it is safe to assume that President Taft did not want a repeat of the disastrous events of his predecessor in 1906. Accordingly, General Pershing, who, it is reasonable to suggest, was not known for his tolerant nature, did convince these Moros to disarm. Pershing had been involved in the latter stages of both the Apache War (finished 1886) and the Sioux War (finished 1891), so he was quite familiar with what was expected from indigenous forces opposing United States rule. Pershing didn’t acquire the nickname “Blackjack” because of his tolerant nature. It was given to him for his strict ways of discipline whilst he was an instructor at West Point Military Academy.

However, although he may have been successful in persuading some Moros in his precinct to disarm, there were other Moros in other parts of Sulu who were not quite as willing to disarm, and this would eventually lead to the infamous “Battle of Bud Bagsak” (11 to 15 June 1913). When given the option to surrender their weapons, the local leader, Datu Amil—who was later targeted and killed by U.S. troops—retreated back to the volcanic craters of Bud Bagsak and invited the U.S. troops to “come on and fight”. Which they did with devastating effect. It was complete annihilation for the Moros. (Arnold, 2011)

John Joseph Pershing—in brief. Born on 13 September 1860, he died on 15 July 1948, aged 87 years. It was during his time as an instructor at West Point that he was given the name “Black Jack”. This was adapted from “Nigger Jack” because he was so disliked by many of the cadets at West Point. (The word “Nigger” was—and still is by some disrespectful whites—a derogatory term to describe a Black American.) For the record, “Black Jack” accompanied John Pershing’s name throughout his life.

Pershing continued his education after completing his secondary education. He went on to graduate with a Bachelor of Science degree from the State Normal School—now known as the Truman State University, Missouri—in 1880. Although his father did see active service in the Civil War on the side of the Union, it was not John Pershing’s original intention to follow a military career. But he changed his mind in 1882 and enrolled in West Point. He graduated from West Point in 1886 and was immediately involved in the closing stages of the Apache Wars. The follow are the theatres of war he saw action in—and the dates in which he participated—and the awards he earned during his time in the military—ending up as General of the Armies.

Indian Wars--Apache Wars, 1886. Sioux Wars, 1890. **Spanish American War**—Battle of San Juan Hill, 1898. **Philippine–American War**—various battles against Filipinos, including Muslim Moros, 1899-1902. **Mexican Revolution**—Pancho Villa Expedition, 1916-1917. **World War I**—Western Front, 1917-1918.

Awards, given and earned. These are United States awards only. He was given other awards by different countries. N.B. The dates shown are the dates issued only. Not the date of when the particular action occurred.

Army Distinguished Service Cross (1941)	Army Distinguished Service Medal (1918)	Silver Star (1932)
Indian Campaign Medal (1907)	Spanish Campaign Medal (1905) (with silver citation star upgraded to Silver Star decoration in 1932)	Army of Cuban Occupation Medal (1915)
Philippine Campaign Medal (1905)	Mexican Service Medal (1917)	World War I Victory Medal with 15 battle clasps (1919)
World War I Victory Medal with 15 battle clasps (1919)	World War I Victory Medal with 15 battle clasps (1919)	Army of Occupation of Germany Medal (1941)



Fig. p.6. General John Joseph Pershing. Circa 1918

Tawi-Tawi in Brief

Tawi-Tawi originally one of the five provinces that constituted the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao—(ARMM). The ARMM consisted of Tawi-Tawi, Sulu, Basilan—less the city of Isabella—Lanao del Sur and Maguindanao. See below.



Fig p. 7. The original ARMM map. The area is now known as the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM).

It has been chronicled—and carbon-dated just to reinforce it—that human presence in Tawi-Tawi has existed in some form or other from about 6,800 BCE (before the common era). Indigenous tribes occupied the Tawi-Tawi region for several millennia—or more—until the fourteenth century when Islam reached its shores. A period of relative stability prevailed over Tawi-Tawi—and Sulu—for close to 300 years. This period of “peacefulness” was brought to an abrupt halt in the 1760s when the British East India Company (BEIC)—the largest corporation in the then civilised world—entered into a trade agreement with Sultan Muizz ud-Din. The trade agreements were meant to benefit both the Muslims of Tawi-Tawi and Britain as a whole.

This may have been what was intended, however in reality it just did not transpire. The Muslims rose up under Datu Teteng and defeated the British troops in Balambangan—an island in the tip of British Borneo—and also defeated the Spanish troops that had “settled” in Tawi-Tawi. The Spanish may have been “down” but not “out”. They re-established some authority in the 1870s by building garrisons on Bongao and Siasi Islands—(Siasi