



# The Will to Trade:

## The Bruneian Incorporation of the Pre-Hispanic Manila Region

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### Abstract

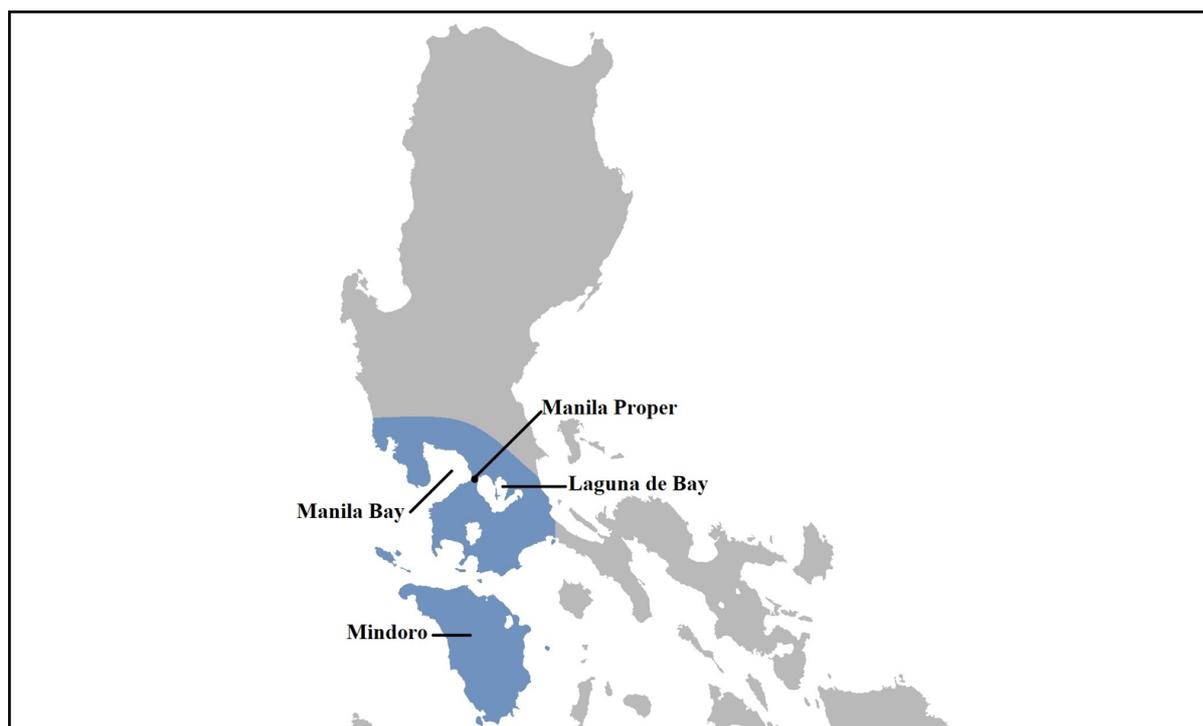
*While it is difficult to precisely trace the origins of Brunei’s establishment of the Manila region as an economic satellite, sufficient sources suggest that it occurred as a result of a marriage between Bruneian and Manila royalty. Bruneian oral histories suggest this was a forced event brought upon the Manila polities by Bruneian leaders. However, other historical sources of the Luzones, the inhabitants of the Manila region, show that the Luzones played a greater role in the maritime trade of Southeast Asia. This is in part due to the strategic location of the Manila entrepôt between China and the more southern islands of Southeast Asia. This location, coupled with the Luzones long exposure to maritime trade in the region, motivated the Luzones polities to intermarry with the Bruneians to gain greater access to Southeast Asian maritime markets.*

### Introduction

The bulk of information about Philippine history accessible to the public is about the islands during and after Spanish colonization. Pre-Hispanic sources and histories are few, and the amount of colonial and post-colonial sources draw historians to study those periods. Due to this, scholars know little about the pre-Hispanic period or

the precolonial Philippine natives. This is especially true with the Luzones<sup>1</sup> Tagalogs who inhabited pre-Hispanic Manila and the surrounding region. When Europeans started colonizing and trading in Southeast Asia, the Luzones were a fierce and regionally sophisticated people that spread beyond the Manila region. Unfortunately, little research has been done on the subject

<sup>1</sup> The term “Luzones” is a term I borrow from William Henry Scott. However, primary sources use spellings such as “Luções.” The Spanish also referred to the island as “Luçon” before standardizing the spelling to “Luzon.” See William Henry Scott, *Barangay: Sixteenth-Century Philippine Culture and Society* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1994), 193; Tome Pires, *Sixth Book of Malacca in The Suma Oriental of Tome Pires* (New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1990), 2:268; and Miguel Lopez de Legazpi, “Relation of the Filipinas Islands and of the character of their inhabitants” *The Philippine Islands, 1493-1898* edited by Emma Helen Blair and James Alexander Robertson (Cleveland: Author H. Clark Company, 1904), 3:60-61. From this point forward, *The Philippine Islands* will be referred to as *B.&R.*



The Manila Region in blue.

of precolonial Luzones leaving the Philippine islands and interacting with foreign polities.<sup>2</sup>

One detail that scholars know about pre-Hispanic Manila and the surrounding area is the Bruneian economic influence in the area. Manila, shortly before the advent of the Spanish, became a satellite of the Brunei Sultanate. However, while some historians speculate that Brunei conquered Manila, historical, archeological, and other sources suggest otherwise. The purpose of this paper is to show that the Luzones in reality agreed to become a Bruneian satellite. They did this to gain greater access to the Southeast Asian trade networks

because of Brunei's well-established presence there.

A careful analysis of previously accessed sources will show that the Luzones were lucrative and had hundreds of years of experience trading with China and Southeast Asian polities and traders. They actively participated in the Indian Ocean trade and attracted both Chinese and Southeast Asians. This long-standing trade with these foreign polities transformed Manila and the surrounding region into a maritime economic center that attracted foreigners and their goods. Sometime around 1500 CE, the Bruneian Sultanate peacefully gained some economic control in

<sup>2</sup> William Henry Scott discusses the presence of Luzones outside of their indigenous homeland, but does not delve into much detail. See Scott, *Barangay*, 191-195. Others acknowledge the existence of foreign influences, particularly Chinese and Islamic influences, but do not go in depth about these interactions between these polities. See Luis H. Francia, *A History of the Philippines: From Indios Bravos to Filipinos* (New York: Overlook Press, 2010), 45-48; Anthony Reid, *A History of Southeast Asia: Critical Crossroads* (West Sussex, UK: John Wiley & Sons, 2015), 105-106; Vicente L. Rafael, *Contracting Colonialism: Translation and Christian Conversion in Tagalog Society Under Early Spanish Rule* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), 106-107.

the Manila region through a marriage between the two polities, allowing Luzones to further access Southeast Asian maritime trade.

### **The Manila Region**

To better understand why the Luzones allowed Brunei to gain some economic control over the Manila region, an understanding of the Manila region and the Luzones that inhabited it is needed.

Manila's placement is strategic. It lies near the center of Luzon, the largest of the Philippine islands located in the South China Sea with China to the north and Borneo and the spice-producing Maluku islands to the south. Directly west of Manila is its natural harbor, the Manila Bay, and Laguna de Bay, a landlocked lake, is directly east. Laguna de Bay flows westward into Manila Bay via the Pasig River, which divides Manila north and south. The land region surrounding Laguna de Bay and the western segment of Luzon directly south of Manila Bay, known today as the Southern Tagalog regions, as well as the Island of Mindoro, located just south of the Southern Tagalog regions, all played important roles in the historical relations with Manila. This is especially true in regard to Manila trade with Brunei, China, and Japan. For this purpose, Manila, the

Southern Tagalog regions, and Mindoro will be referred to as the Manila region for the rest of this article.

The native inhabitants who inhabited the Manila region during the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries called themselves Luzones. Scholars assumed they were Tagalogs and the various indigenous groups from Mindoro since these peoples inhabited the region when Spanish colonizers arrived. However, in their interactions with the Spanish, the Chinese, the Malays, and with other Philippine natives, they referred to themselves as Luzones, after the island of Luzon.<sup>3</sup> Whether the inhabitants of the Manila region called themselves Luzones before the fourteenth century is unknown, but it is assumed that the predecessors of the Luzones and population of the Manila region before the fourteenth century, to some extent, were Tagalogs.

The region, to use the words of Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell, is a micro-region located in the greater Southeast Asian region. It is a relatively small region with its own goods, peoples, and geographic attributes that differs from the rest of greater Southeast Asia.<sup>4</sup> This micro-region is distinct because of its natural harbor, Manila Bay, as well as its placement between China to the north and

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<sup>3</sup> Scott, *Barangay*, 191-195. Pires, *Sixth Book*, 268. Ming court documents show that the Luzones differentiated themselves from other Luzon natives. A banquet with the Luzones and the Pangasinans shows that the two groups, while both inhabitants of the Luzon island, were referred to by different names. See "Yong-le: Year 8, Month 11, Day 15" in *Southeast Asia in the Ming Shi-lu: an open access resource translated by Geoff Wade*, Singapore: Asia Research Institute and the Singapore E-Press, National University of Singapore, <http://epress.nus.edu.sg/msl/entry/1599>, accessed November 18, 2016.

<sup>4</sup> Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea: A Study of Mediterranean History* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2000), 77-80.

Borneo and the Maluku islands to the south. It proved to be a beneficial entrepôt through the centuries. It acted as a gateway port at the end of an extended archipelago, or a series of landmasses separated from each other, but connected through maritime travel due to their close proximity.<sup>5</sup> Bruneian and other Insular Southeast Asians could reach the Manila region by sailing north from Borneo, along Palawan, to Mindoro and Luzon. From here, goods filtered between insular Southeast Asian traders and the Chinese and Japanese traders that came from the north in the open sea. The Manila region, in a sense, created a safe, visible shipping line between the insular Southeast Asian traders to a micro-region that was closer to China than any of the other insular Southeast Asian polities and ports south of the Philippine archipelago.<sup>6</sup> This geographical placement is one of the reasons why the Bruneian Sultanate wanted some control over the micro-region.

### **Manila: Bruneian Economic Satellite**

When the Spanish arrived to Manila, they discovered the Luzones and the Bruneians had close connections to one another. Within time, the Spanish learned that Bruneian elites and oligarchies exercised some control over the Manila region politically and dominated the economic sphere. They also realized that

much of the population declared themselves to be Muslim, a fact compatible with the notion that the Manila region was a satellite of the predominately Muslim sultanate at that period.<sup>7</sup> Notwithstanding, why Manila was a satellite of Brunei is still disputed due to lack of sources, but most sources point to the fact that an intermarriage occurred between a Brunei official and Luzones royalty, something that the Luzones willingly agreed to in order to get a better foothold in Southeast Asian trade.

A common argument made about Brunei's economic expansion into the Manila region comes from a Bruneian oral history. This history argues that Brunei took over Manila through a war. It tells how a Bruneian Sultan conquered the leading datu of Salundang, a name given to the home of the Luzones, assumed to be modern-day Manila. After the capture of Salundang, the Sultan married the daughter of the datu and proceeded to conduct trade with Luzon and China.<sup>8</sup> However, primary source accounts support a peaceful unification of Bruneian and Luzones.

Before exploring the flaws of this oral history, it is necessary to acknowledge the importance of oral histories in general, especially in Southeast Asia. Oral histories contribute significantly to all historiographies. They provide perspectives of generations of people. Cultural patterns and

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 133-135.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 124-142. Kenneth R Hall, *A History of Early Southeast Asia: Maritime Trade and Societal Development, 100-1500* (Plymouth, UK: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2011), 328-333.

<sup>7</sup> Linda A. Newson, *Conquest and Pestilence in the Early Spanish Philippines* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2009), 12, 19; Scott, *Barangay*, 190-194.

<sup>8</sup> Pehin Jawatan Dalam Seri Maharaja Dato Seri Utama Dr. Haji Awang Mohd. Jami Al-Sufri, *Survival of Brunei: A Historical Perspective* (Bandar Seri Begawan: Brunei History Centre, 2002), 20.

past values are interlaced throughout their accounts. They also add details to written records by providing themes, details, and expressions that cannot be written in words alone.<sup>9</sup> In a Southeast Asian context, they become especially important when Europeans authored the only available written sources of a specific event or period. Oral histories give perspectives of indigenous people and their history when the only other available sources were written by foreigners. This is further amplified in parts of Southeast Asia that have no known written histories before European contact and oral histories are the only available histories of specific events or periods.<sup>10</sup>

While oral histories play an important role in Southeast Asian history, especially during periods before European contact, this Bruneian source is questionable based on these contradictions and the lack of supporting historical or archeological evidence. The unification probably only resulted from the marriage between a Bruneian elite and a ruling Luzones family after years of trade and diplomatic relations, as suggested by the pre-Iberian Islamic practices in the region of intermarrying ruling families for economic and political purposes.<sup>11</sup> Many other historical sources also suggest no warfare or conquering

occurred due to the peaceful relations between the two groups.

Present-day historians assume a Bruneian wrote this particular oral history on paper in the eighteenth century. It was not until the nineteenth century that British imperialists obtained the manuscript, and scholars have yet to finalize the age of the manuscript.<sup>12</sup> Regardless of these details, the fact that the author penned the oral history in the eighteenth century at the earliest implies at least two centuries distance the manuscript from the intermarriage of Bruneian officials and the Manila ruling class. The passage itself about the takeover of Manila is comparatively short, only incorporating a few sentences. It is inside the genealogy of the Sultans, a description that attempts to justify the authority of the Bruneian dynasty. It is likely that the story slowly changed over time by including warfare elements of conquering due to Spain's subsequent colonization of the region and Spain's later attempt to colonize Brunei.<sup>13</sup> The cultural justification to legitimize Islamic rule by controlling trade through warfare may have also played a part in the change.<sup>14</sup>

Other historical and scholarly sources suggest that the marital unification of Manila and Brunei was more peaceful. Indeed, these sources suggest that the

<sup>9</sup> Kwa Chong Guan, "The Value of Oral Testimony: Text and Orality in the Reconstruction of the Past" in *Oral History in Southeast Asia: Theory and Method* ed. P. Lim Pui Huen, James H. Morrison, Kwa Chong Guan (Singapore: National Archives of Singapore and Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1998), 24-28.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 21-27.

<sup>11</sup> Reid, *A History*, 44, 104-107, 113, 127-128; Scott, *Barangay*, 191.

<sup>12</sup> P. L. Amin Sweeny, "Silsilah Raja-Raja Berunai" in *Papers Relating to Brunei* (Selangor, Malaysia: Academe Art & Printing Services Sdn. Bhd., 1998), 46-49, 99.

<sup>13</sup> Al-Sufri, *Survival of Brunei*, 22-26.

<sup>14</sup> Hall, *Early Southeast Asia*, 291.

Bruneian elites not only gained a political foothold in Manila through intermarriage, but that the Luzones agreed to this intermarriage so they could gain more access to Southeast Asian maritime trade.

To better understand the incorporation of Manila and the surrounding region as a Bruneian satellite, Brunei's motives in incorporating the region need to be analyzed. Its motives were tied to closer access to China, a longtime trade connection. Geographically and economically, Brunei wanted to control the Manila region to strengthen its relations with China. The region traded with China for centuries before Brunei molded it into a satellite polity. This factor, tied with Brunei's long history of trading with China, motivated the Sultanate to create political ties with the Manila region to have more access to Chinese markets and more control over their goods.

Scholars still do not know who originally settled the Manila area and transformed the region to an entrepôt, how they did it, or when. However, archeological and historical sources show the existence of settlements in the Manila Bay and Laguna de Bay area that traded with China as early as the thirteenth century C.E, suggesting the

region existed as an entrepôt for several centuries before the Spanish advent.<sup>15</sup> Archeologists found Chinese porcelains throughout the Manila region dating back to the Song dynasty, though a majority of their findings are from the Ming dynasty.<sup>16</sup> One Chinese source suggests that Chinese started trading with Mindoro as early as the tenth century, though one historian argued that this source is referencing Laguna de Bay, not Mindoro.<sup>17</sup> Regardless of the outset of Chinese trade with the Manila region, by the advent of the Spanish takeover of Manila in 1571, the Tagalogs and Luzones traded with the Chinese for hundreds of years. Indeed, a small Chinese community existed in Manila in 1571 and Chinese junks visited the city at least annually. These junks also visited Mindoro, making the Manila region an active and attractive micro-region to the Chinese, the Bruneian, and the Spanish by the mid-sixteenth century. The region was not only strategically located, it proved to be a valuable source of Chinese good and maritime trade.<sup>18</sup>

This information is important because it not only shows the long period of contact the Manila region had with China, but it also shows why the region attracted

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<sup>15</sup> William Henry Scott, *Prehispanic Source Materials: For the Study of Philippine History* (Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1984), 24; F. Landa Jocano, *Filipino Prehistory: Rediscovering Precolonial Heritage* (Manila: Punlad Research House, 1998), 144-149.

<sup>16</sup> Jocano, *Filipino Prehistory*, 144-149.

<sup>17</sup> Go Bon Juan argues that China referenced trade with Laguna de Bay in the tenth century, see "Ma'I in Chinese Records – Mindoro or Bai? An Examination of a Historical Puzzle" in *Philippine Studies* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University, 2005), 53, (1):119-138.

<sup>18</sup> Francia, *History of the Philippines*, 46-47; Scott, *Barangay*, 207-209.

Brunei traders. Its location was not only a convenient gate port between Brunei and China, but it also brought Chinese traders. Historians generally accept the fact that the Chinese called Brunei “Bo-ni.”<sup>19</sup> Chinese records dating back to the sixth century CE show trade relations between China and Bo-ni. With these details in light, Brunei likely traded and held relations with China for centuries.<sup>20</sup> By the fifteenth century, Brunei and other maritime polities took advantage of the Zheng He voyages to entice Chinese officials and traders by establishing trade routes and offering specific goods.<sup>21</sup> While Brunei perhaps had centuries of trade history with China, it took measures to strengthen trade alongside other competing centers of trade. One of these was Manila.<sup>22</sup>

It was under these circumstances around the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries that Brunei officials intermarried with and created strong ties with the Luzones peoples in Manila. With current understandings of Southeast Asian Islamic culture during the time, historians assume that Manila became a Brunei satellite through the marriage of Luzones leaders and started filling aristocratic and political classes in the Manila region.<sup>23</sup> They did this to exercise more

influence over the Manila region and to have better access to Chinese trade. They also lengthened their extended archipelago by obtaining this entrepôt at the end of a series of islands that allowed Bruneian traders to decrease the amount of time they spent sailing the open oceans on their way to China. This, in turn, ensured that the Bruneian Sultanate controlled more Chinese goods in the Southeast Asian markets through their connections in the Manila region.

### Trade History of Manila Region

Though it appears to threaten the Luzones, Bruneian economic control over Manila, the surrounding region, and the Chinese goods that entered the region is something that the Luzones willingly agreed to and wanted. The Brunei marital union in the Manila region meant that the Luzones gained greater access to the wider Southeast Asian maritime and Indian Ocean trade routes.

Well before the Bruneian Sultanate took control of the Manila entrepôt, the Luzones actively traded with foreign polities. As discussed earlier, the Chinese contacted and traded with Manila and the

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<sup>19</sup> Barbara Watson Andaya and Leonard Y. Andaya, *A History of Early Modern Southeast Asia, 1400-1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 109-110; Geoff Wade, translator, *Southeast Asia in the Ming Shi-lu: an open access resource*, Singapore: Asia Research Institute and the Singapore E-Press, National University of Singapore, <http://epress.nus.edu.sg/msl/place/bo-ni>, accessed February 25, 2017.

<sup>20</sup> Johannes L. Kurtz, “Pre-modern Chinese Sources in the National History of Brunei: The Case of Poli” in *Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences of Southeast Asia and Oceania* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2013), 169 (2-3): 213-231. While Kurtz article is critical of the Brunei and “Bo-li” connection, it is very revealing of Chinese records that reference Bo-ni, or Poni. The current consensus, as discussed by Andaya, Andaya, and Reid, still suggest that Bo-ni is a premodern reference to Brunei. See footnote 12.

<sup>21</sup> Reid, *A History*, 65-67.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Shelly Errington, *Meaning and Power in a Southeast Asian Realm* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 236-237; Scott, *Barangay*, 191. Andaya, *Early Modern*, 107-110.

surrounding area for centuries before the Bruneian intermarriage with the region's leaders. However, the Chinese and the Bruneians were not alone in contacting the Luzones before Spanish colonization.

Archeological evidence proves the existence of Srivijayan contact with the Manila region in the ninth century of the common era. While this piece of evidence is limited, a copperplate inscription found near Laguna de Bay written in a mix of Old Malay, Old Javanese, and Old Tagalog proves trade relations existed between the two polities. The inscription indicates that two parties settled a debt weighed in gold. One party is probably a Tagalog native, judging by geographical location and the use of Old Tagalog. The other party could very well be Javanese or another Southeast Asian foreigner from Srivijayan or an area under its influence, but that is still difficult to determine.<sup>24</sup> Either way, the document verifies that the Manila region was in contact with Srivijaya as early as the ninth century, decades earlier than the first known Chinese mention of the Manila region.

Linguistic elements and archeology also show that the Manila region had some sort of contact with India, whether directly or indirectly. The Tagalog language, coupled with several other Philippine languages, are replete with words of Sanskrit origin. Archeological evidences include glasses, metals, and beads that originated in India found throughout the Philippine islands.

Archeologists identified twelve of these metals dating back to pre-Hispanic Philippines that only could have been mined in the Indian subcontinent. Specific to the Tagalog region, archeologists identified a medallion with a Siamese-influenced Buddhist figure on it south of Manila Bay. Scholars even linked some cultural elements of native Philippine society to Indic influences. Of course, there is debate as to whether these Indic elements came through the Tagalog and Philippine contact with Srivijaya and other Southeast Asian polities or from Indian traders that frequented the Southeast Asian seas during the first millennia of the common era.<sup>25</sup> Despite this debate, these pieces of evidence show early Southeast Asian trade between the Manila region and other extra-Philippine polities even before the ninth century copperplate inscription.

Scholars still dispute when these Indic influences started to come to the Philippines. Earlier theories suggest as early as the third century before the common era. Others suggest as late as the fifth century of the common era.<sup>26</sup> While scholars continue to debate the sources of these influences and the dates of their appearance, these sources all provide enough evidence of Tagalogs trading with foreign peoples as late as a millennium before Hispanicization.

As stated earlier, it is difficult to determine the full extent of the Luzones trade relations before the Bruneian

<sup>24</sup> Antoon Postma, "The Laguna Copper-Plate Inscription: Text and Commentary" in *Philippine Studies* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University, 1992), 40 (2): 183-203.

<sup>25</sup> Jocano, *Prehistory*, 138-144.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 141.

intermarriage. Indeed, it is difficult to determine the full extent before Spanish contact and colonization since a vast majority of primary sources come from Spanish sources. However, this information all suggests that the Luzones and their Tagalog predecessors in the Manila region actively traded with foreign polities for centuries. They shaped the region into an entrepôt and a micro-region. They knew how to not only trade, but how to attract traders to their coasts. The intermarriage with the Bruneian elites was not the Luzones' first exposure to trade politics. They knew what they were doing.

### **The Lure of Islam**

By the early sixteenth century when the Portuguese and Spanish came to Insular Southeast Asia in the sixteenth, Brunei actively traded with many Southeast Asian polities, including Sulu, Champa, and Melaka. They also sent Muslim missionaries to Champa and Sulu. Their diplomatic and economic network appears to have been extensive and well-developed. As discussed earlier, Brunei had long economic ties with China. However, Brunei surely had similar ties with another Islamic polity in Southeast Asia.

Scholars do not know who brought Islam to Brunei or when, but they must have received it decades or even centuries before the coming of the Iberian powers. Brunei

needed a strong Islamic presence before being able to declare itself a sultanate and authenticate it by marrying into a prominent Islamic line. Scholars speculate that Islamic influences came through Indian Ocean maritime trade and spread throughout Southeast Asia. It began as early as the eleventh century due to the existence of a Muslim tombstone in Brunei dated 1048 CE.<sup>27</sup> Various port cities in Southeast Asia adopted Islam and spread their faith through trade and warfare by the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.<sup>28</sup> These Islamized Chinese, Melakan, Javanese, and Sumatran port cities probably continued to spread their faith to Bruneian traders and political leaders. Melaka, one of the most significant entrepôts of the region at the time, officially adopted Islam in its court during the fifteenth century.<sup>29</sup> Melaka then pressured other port cities and entrepôts to adopt Islam, which many agreed to for trading purposes.<sup>30</sup> Eventually, the Bruneian king married foreign Muslim royalty and had the authority to establish a sultanate.<sup>31</sup>

Although it is still disputed how Islam came to Brunei, Brunei contacted foreign powers during this period and influenced them to convert to Islam. These contacts must have been either strong enough or long enough to allow Islam to establish a Sultanate in Brunei from their former political system. This implies that Brunei held strong relations with foreign

<sup>27</sup> Barbara Watson Andaya and Leonard Y. Andaya, *A History of Malaysia*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2001), 54.

<sup>28</sup> Reid, *A History*, 101-105.

<sup>29</sup> Andaya, *History of Malaysia*, 54-58.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.

<sup>31</sup> Graham Saunders, *A History of Brunei* (London: RoutledgeCurzon), 2002, 35-48.

polities. Additionally, since the Bruneians actively traded with foreign polities at the coming of the Portuguese and Spanish, and since Islam spread into Southeast Asia through Indian Ocean trade networks, the Bruneians definitely held trade relations with many of these Islamic Southeast Asian port cities and polities, just like they did with the Chinese. This appears to be the case with Melaka, which will be discussed later.

With this in mind, creating a political alliance with Brunei must have been incredibly appealing to the Luzones, who had centuries of experience in Southeast Asian maritime trade. After this long period of experience, the Luzones knew what to do to gain a stronger presence in the maritime market. They knew Brunei already had that presence, especially since the Bruneian royalty married a foreign Islamic elite and became a Sultanate.<sup>32</sup> Establishing strong trade relations with the Bruneian Sultanate and intermarrying with them to create a political allegiance was a viable option for them. This is especially true since political leaders intermarried during this period to establish diplomatic relations with foreign powers.<sup>33</sup> Indeed, Brunei did the same thing to establish its sultanate.

Additionally, as Brunei wanted to expand its extended archipelago of economic influence to the Manila region, this

extension worked in reverse. The marital union allowed the Luzones to join an extended archipelago that the Bruneians created to strengthen their economic and political presence in Insular Southeast Asia. The Luzones would have the ability to fully access this extended archipelago to trade with the various Bruneian satellites throughout the Philippines islands, including Sulu and Palawan, down to Borneo and perhaps further into Insular Southeast Asia.<sup>34</sup>

This idea that the Luzones desired this intermarriage is actually supported by their relations with the Bruneians before and after the union. In terms of Islam, the Luzones adopted the religion quickly to enhance trade relations. Several polities during the rise of Islam in Southeast Asia adopted Islam for a variety of reasons, but one included political and commercial opportunities that spanned the Indian Ocean.<sup>35</sup> The Manila region in particular held economic motives to adopt the religion. Spanish primary accounts show how economically driven the Muslims of the Manila region were. In fact, Spanish accounts tell us that the more involved in the Southeast Asian trade network the Luzones were, the more they adhered to Islam.

For the first several decades of European contact with the Luzones, Europeans assumed that all of the Tagalogs were an Islamized people.<sup>36</sup> However, when

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 42-43.

<sup>33</sup> Reid, *A History*, 44, 104-107, 113, 127-128.

<sup>34</sup> Saunders, *History of Brunei*, 42-51; Newson, *Conquest*, 33-34.

<sup>35</sup> Hall, *Early Southeast Asia*, 288.

<sup>36</sup> Legazpi, "Relation," 60-61; Tome Pires, *Fourth Book – China to Borneo in The Suma Oriental of Tome Pires* (New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1990), 1:134.

the Spanish arrived to Manila in 1570, the animist traditions of the Luzones in the Manila region surprised them. They discovered that the Luzones were a small population of a greater Tagalog ethnicity that populated the Manila region with other ethnicities. Only a small number of the Tagalogs professed to be Muslim and followed the precepts. Many of these Tagalogs in the Manila region claimed to be Muslim but only followed a few precepts, specifically abstinence from meat, and continued to practice various aspects of animism. The rest of the Tagalogs, mostly those inland away from the coast, only practiced animism and did not profess to Islam at all.<sup>37</sup>

In the account, “Relation of the Conquest of the Island of Luzon,” the unnamed author made some interesting distinctions between the various Tagalogs on Luzon. Only those close to the coastal areas professed to be Muslim. But even though they professed the faith, their adherence was allegedly shallow. “In the towns closest to the sea,” the author states, “some do not eat pork, the reason for their not eating it...being that, in trading with the Moros of Burney [Brunei], the latter taught them some part of the evil doctrine of Mahoma [Mohammed], charging them not to eat pork.”<sup>38</sup> It is interesting that these professors of Islam only lived near the coast, where Muslim merchants from

Brunei had the ability to come into contact with them through their maritime journeys. Also, given the geographic location of Manila in comparison to the rest of the Manila region, many of these Bruneian traders probably took advantage of the trading opportunities available in these coastal villages surrounding Manila on their journeys to and from the entrepôt. Of course, when trade relations are established, people do not just trade goods, services, and currencies. People also trade ideas, which is why this European author noted how the Bruneian traders, who traded with them, “taught them some part of the nefarious doctrine of Mahoma.”

Even with these Bruneian trade relations and Islamic connections, the author still recounted how superficial he believed this conversion was. The author further described why these coastal Tagalogs who proclaim Islam do not eat pork. The author claims that they did not know why nor did they know “Mahoma” or his laws.<sup>39</sup> Though these coastal Tagalogs professed to adhere to Islam, they hardly practiced it. They just abstained from meat and called themselves followers of “Mahoma.” This particular author was not alone in this observation. Miguel Lopez de Legazpi also noted how many of the natives of Luzon who professed to be Muslim had “little knowledge of the law which they profess[ed], beyond practicing circumcision

<sup>37</sup> “Relación del descubrimiento y conquista de la isla de Luzón, y Mindoro, en Filipinas,” 20 April 1572, block 2, pages 1, 17-20, in Pares Portal de Archivos Españoles, [http://pares.mcu.es/ParesBusquedas/servlets/Control\\_servlet?accion=3&txt\\_id\\_desc\\_ud=121790&fromagenda=N](http://pares.mcu.es/ParesBusquedas/servlets/Control_servlet?accion=3&txt_id_desc_ud=121790&fromagenda=N), accessed July 12, 2017.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 17-18.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

and refraining from pork.”<sup>40</sup> Based on these two supportive observations of the European explorers, the Tagalog Muslims may have had a limited understanding of Islamic law and only proclaimed to follow the faith and only practiced a few precepts of it.

Continuing in the “Relation of the Conquest of the Island of Luzon,” the author made another interesting observation: “It is true that some of them who have been in Burney understand some of it [Islam], and are able to read some of the Alcoran [Koran]; however these are very few.”<sup>41</sup> Here, the author noted the differentiation between those who understood Islamic law and those who did not. That differentiation is whether that individual visited Brunei or not. This is understandable, given that Brunei at the time not only had a marital union with Manila, but that it was also the Manila region’s sultanate.

As interesting as the Luzones travels to Brunei are, there is something deeper to these travels than just the sultanate. Another chronicler, Doctor Francisco de Sande, mentioned the economic enterprises of the Philippine natives who had ties to the Bruneian Sultanate, which included the Manila Tagalogs. Said Sande, “Some are Moros, and they obtain much gold, which they worship as a god. All their possessions are gold and a few slaves... They believe that paradise and successful enterprises are reserved for those who submit to the religion of the Moros of Borney, of which they make much account.”<sup>42</sup> It is interesting

how economically tied the religious practices of the “Moros” were to the Bruneian Sultanate. In fact, if a Tagalog or other Philippine native wanted to be successful, the popular belief was that they would have to submit to “the religion of the Moros of Borney,” or the Bruneian Sultanate. Only through submitting to the sultanate could they prosper economically.

This idea that a Philippine native had to tie themselves to the Bruneian Sultanate suggests that one or more factors played a part. First, the Philippine natives, especially the coastal Tagalogs, saw that if they declared themselves patrons to the Bruneian Sultanate and to the Islamic faith, they accessed the maritime markets more easily. It was a simple way to gain access to the Bruneian traders and their economic trade. If Luzones intermarried with Bruneian elites and created these political connections, more people would be willing to trade with the Luzones. This declaration of loyalty and faith liberated Luzones from some form of isolation and opened the doors to economic development with the greater Southeast Asian maritime markets. This idea is supported with the statements of the European conquerors who noted that along the coasts all professed to belong to Islam but did not actually know much about the faith. While it is not certain whether the coastal Philippine natives actually accepted or adopted Islam in the sense that Europeans claimed they did, the European observation of coastal Philippine natives

<sup>40</sup> Legazpi, “Relation,” 60-61.

<sup>41</sup> “Relación del descubrimiento,” page 18.

<sup>42</sup> Doctor Francisco de Sande, “Relation of the Filipinas Islands,” in *B.&R.* 4: 67-70.

identifying to some extent with the Islamic faith should be acknowledged. The Philippine natives probably professed to be Muslim because they knew it would benefit them economically and help boost their image to the Bruneian traders that dominated the Philippine seas with their frequent travels to Manila and other port cities.

Second, the Bruneian traders convinced Philippine natives that if they joined ranks with the Bruneian Sultanate, they would have greater economic access. Once again, this idea is supported by the fact that the coastal Tagalogs submitted to the faith to some extent. It is also supported by the Spanish observation of the Tagalogs proclaiming to have more economic success because of their Islamic faith.<sup>43</sup> But it would not have been the Tagalogs deciding on their own to pledge allegiance to the Sultanate. It was the Bruneians convincing the Tagalogs to come under their economic influence through a marital union in exchange to access to the wider markets.<sup>44</sup>

Third, perhaps the Islamic faith within itself attracted the Luzones and other Philippine natives. The spiritual elements of having a single god that united them with the wider Southeast Asian traders must have been appealing to those who wished to travel abroad. This aspect may have been particularly appealing to the animist Luzones who believed in and depended on a

centralized and geographically-located religious center with their animist beliefs and the Indic elements in those beliefs. Islam broke this religious geocentricism, allowing Luzones to worship a deity that not only followed them throughout their travels on the seas of Southeast Asia, but allowed them to worship wherever they went.<sup>45</sup>

All three of these factors all involve economic success in regard to maritime trade. Accepting Islam as a society included trade incentives, something that the Luzones and the Tagalogs dealt with for centuries before the Bruneian political exchange. Perhaps spiritual factors existed with the Luzones, as suggested through the means of geographic liberation from location-based deities, but here this still includes a trade element that the Luzones wanted to take advantage of and indeed did take advantage of.

### **Luzones Political and Trade Patterns After Marital Union**

While the date of the marital union between the Luzones and the Bruneians is unknown, fifteenth and sixteenth century trade patterns note close ties between the two groups in the extra-Philippine island world. The most obvious example is within Brunei. This marital union did not benefit the Bruneians alone with controlling trade within the Manila region. Luzones went to

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Andaya, *Early Modern*, 159.

<sup>45</sup> H. M. J. Maier, "The Malays and the Sea, The Waves and the Java Sea" in *Looking in Odd Mirrors: The Java Sea* edited by V.J.H. Houben, H.M.J. Maier, and W. van der Molen (Leiden: Vakgroep Talen en Culturen van Zuidoost-Azie en Oceanie, 1992), 1-26. Reid, *A History*, 70.

Brunei as well. Probably the best known example of Luzones in Brunei is the Spanish capture of the son of the Luzones “king” in Brunei. After the death of Magellan, his fleet went to Brunei. On their visit there, they captured a number of junks, one of which held the son of the “king” of Luzones. He told the Spanish that he worked as a captain-general of the Sultan of Brunei and just completed a mission to destroy and sack a settlement that refused to pledge allegiance to the Brunei Sultanate and followed a Javanese polity instead.<sup>46</sup> The Portuguese also encountered Luzones sent by the Brunei Sultanate to fight them during their takeover in Melaka.<sup>47</sup> In his description of the Luzones, Tome Pires, a Portuguese native who stayed in Melaka for some years in the early sixteenth century, described the Luzones as a people that travelled down to Brunei, presumably through the extended archipelago, traded with them, and sailed with them to Melaka to trade their goods with the traders there.<sup>48</sup> Indeed, the Luzones and the Bruneians maintained close relations in the Malaysian peninsula as they established trading colonies there.

Pires described the Luzones, whom he met as early as 1511 in Melaka, as a recent group represented in the Melakan port city. The Melakan government ap-

pointed a Luzones to a government position. After his appointment, this official rallied other Luzones to join him in Melaka and they established a small colony of some five hundred Luzones on the Malay peninsula. A few, including the government official, intermarried with the Malay populations. “They never used to be in Malacca as they are now,” Pires explained describing the people.<sup>49</sup> This statement indicates that the Luzones only began to arrive and interact with the Melakan trade on the Malay peninsula. This is compatible with the idea that the Luzones took advantage of the intermarriage between their royalty and the Bruneian elite because it offered them more economic opportunities through Brunei’s economic connections with the larger Southeast Asian trade networks.

Pires further validates this notion. “They [the Luzones and the Bruneians] are almost one people; and in Malacca there is no division between them.” Before this statement, he described the Bruneians, their visits to the Malay Peninsula, and the goods they brought and traded. His description distinguishes the two, illustrating the Bruneians as long time traders with the Melakans and the Luzones as a people that recently joined the Bruneians with their trading in Melaka.<sup>50</sup> This not only implies a recent marital union between the Bruneians

<sup>46</sup> Antonio Pigafetta, *The First Voyage round the World in European Sources for the History of the Sultanate of Brunei in the Sixteenth Century* edited by Robert Nicholl (Bandar Seri Begawan: Star Press, 1975), 10-11.

<sup>47</sup> Scott, *Barangay*, 194. The term “king” is in quotes because that was the Spanish description of the captive’s father. His father may have gone by a different title and operated a government system very different from the European monarchies.

<sup>48</sup> Pires, *Fourth Book*, 133.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 134.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 132-134. Pires, *Sixth Book*, 283.

and the Luzones, but the Luzones utilizing this union to access foreign trade markets. Once the union took place, certain Luzones took advantage of these new trade possibilities, went to Brunei, traded with them, and followed them to Melaka. After the Melakan government appointed one Luzones to be a government official, he encouraged more to come to Melaka, taking advantage of the Bruneian connection, and to create a new society of Luzones in Melaka. Those five hundred Luzones in Melaka came to Melaka not only because of the government official, but also because of the Brunei connection. Getting to Melaka was more of a possibility now with the extended archipelago and the Bruneian political connection. That is why the Luzones were frequently considered one with the Bruneians.

One other foreign area of interest is China. This is a more difficult place to determine Bruneian influence with Luzones and Chinese interactions since the Luzones and Tagalogs had centuries of contact with multiple Chinese empires. However, one court document made an interesting mention of the diplomatic relations between the Luzones and the Chinese.

In the Ming court records, called the Ming Shi-lu, there exist only two references to the pre-Hispanic Luzones. Both occur in the early fifteenth century. One recounts a

visit of a Luzones “chieftain” to the Ming court to attend a banquet held in the honor of the family member of Bruneian royalty.<sup>51</sup> In contrast, for the Bruneian, there are dozens of references of the Bruneians making court appearances through the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, suggesting closer political connections with the Ming dynasty.<sup>52</sup> While Chinese contacted the Manila region for centuries and, assumingly, still contacted the region at the time of the marital union, surely the Luzones wanted to bolster their contact with Chinese traders, and a marital union with a loyal Chinese tribute and Chinese mestizo Sultanate like Brunei was appealing to draw in more Chinese trade, especially since Manila would become a gate port at the end of the Bruneian extended archipelago. Whether this did draw in more trade is another question, but the appeal of making these political ties to such a close ally to the Ming empire certainly motivated or encouraged Luzones to enter into the marital union with the Bruneians.

Although it is difficult to determine exactly how close the Luzones and the Chinese were before the marital union, Pires made an interesting observation in his records. In an attempt to describe Southern China, he relied on the testimonies of Luzones in Melaka who claimed to have visited China. They described Southern

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<sup>51</sup> Geoff Wade, translator, *Southeast Asia in the Ming Shi-lu: an open access resource*, Singapore: Asia Research Institute and the Singapore E-Press, National University of Singapore, <http://epress.nus.edu.sg/msl/reign/yong-le/year-8-month-11-day-15>, and <http://epress.nus.edu.sg/msl/reign/yong-le/year-3-month-10-day-5>, accessed December 13, 2016.

<sup>52</sup> Geoff Wade, translator, *Southeast Asia in the Ming Shi-lu: an open access resource*, Singapore: Asia Research Institute and the Singapore E-Press, National University of Singapore, <http://epress.nus.edu.sg/msl/place/bo-ni>, accessed December 13, 2016.

China as a sophisticated country with plenty of trade opportunities, all of which were on land.<sup>53</sup> This could be a result of the marital union, where the Luzones gained access to Bruneian trade routes and made their way to China via Bruneian ships. Indeed, having Luzones who probably went to Melaka through Bruneian connections, as stated by Pires, say that they have been to China opens the door to the possibility that they utilized Bruneian relations to make their way to China as well.<sup>54</sup> Unfortunately, the evidence for this point is somewhat lacking. It cannot be considered fact, just a possibility.

With the definite examples of travel to Brunei and to the Melaka Straits, and perhaps increased trade and travel to China, it is apparent that the Luzones utilized the Bruneian marital union to gain access to these foreign trade and political opportunities through the means of the Bruneian extended archipelago. In regard to Melaka, it may not have been an opportunity to the Luzones at that time before the marital union based on Pires' description of the Luzones dependence on the Bruneian traders. Entering into this marital union with the Brunei Sultanate opened the doors to the Luzones to expand further in the maritime trade routes of Southeast Asia and the Indian Ocean.

### Conclusion

It is a fact that the Manila region was an economic satellite of the Brunei

Sultanate before the advent of the Spanish in the sixteenth century. How it became a satellite is clearer with the sources put into sight and its placement in the larger maritime trade networks. While there is still no definite source proving a date or place for this intermarriage between the Bruneian sultanate and the Manila regional leaders, enough evidence supports the fact that an intermarriage must have occurred because of regional practices of intermarriage and both parties will to trade. Brunei wanted to influence the Manila region and expand its archipelago to gain safer and more secure shipping routes to China, a close ally. Contrary to the oral legends, Brunei peacefully intermarried with the Luzones of the Manila region to gain this influence.

The Luzones agreed on this intermarriage because they knew it would open new doors to trade. The Luzones traded with foreign polities for centuries. They knew how a marital union could benefit them both economically and politically in maritime trade. Because of this knowledge, and assumingly their knowledge of Brunei's political and economic power in the region and the desire for Brunei to establish an extended archipelago to the Manila region, they agreed to the marital union and joined the wider Southeast Asian maritime trade network with their new ally. Through this, they successfully established a settlement in Melaka, gained economic influence in Brunei, and strengthened relations with China and presumably with a myriad of

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<sup>53</sup> Pires, *Fourth Book*, 121.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid*, 133-134.

other polities throughout Southeast Asia that Brunei was in contact with. This union did not only favor Brunei.

The union displays the role the Manila region played in the Southeast Asian maritime trade network before direct contact with Europeans. The Manila region was very involved in trade, and the inhabitants familiarized themselves with these trade patterns and networks. The Luzones integrated themselves in with new

ideas and political and economic contacts, as implied by their willingness to open trade relations with the Spanish when the Spanish first began colonizing the Visayan islands before they reached Luzon.<sup>55</sup> The Luzones were truly a lucrative people, and they certainly willingly and peacefully agreed to the intermarriage of their royalty with Bruneian elites.

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<sup>55</sup> "Resume of Contemporaneous Documents, 1559-68" in *B.&R.* 2:141-142.

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