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Security in the Southwestern Border of the Philippines:

Governmentality and Resistance (1920-1941)

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[*Abstract*]

Examining the border as governmentality during American colonialism in the Philippines, this study argues that while American and Filipino bureaucrats sought to control and safeguard the southwestern border of the Philippines from various forms of threats, some Moros and Chinese evaded this through smuggling (i.e. opium and Chinese coolies) and illegal immigration. The colonial powers carved the southern borders through treaties and agreements to legitimize access to the resources of their respective colonies. However, the Americans wanted to control some islands like Baguan (in Turtle Islands) to protect the archipelago from threats posed by illicit activities like smuggling. While authorities-imposed customs and immigration laws along the border, they also faced challenges in monitoring impending threats including active resistance to existing laws and the lack of government support for customs services.

Keywords: border, security, opium, Chinese coolies, governmentality, resistance

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Ⅰ. Border as Governmentality

Michel Foucault (2007) conceptualized governmentality in his book *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the College de France*. He broadly describes it as a technique and procedure for directing human behavior (Rose et al. 2006). Governmentality entails diffuse structures and procedures designed to govern, control, and discipline the conduct and mentality of individuals and the general population (Legg 2007; Thompson 2017). The management of citizens' conduct is not only acted upon by any single body like the state. Instead, it recognizes the variation of "authorities that govern in different sites, in relation to different objectives" (Rose et al. 2006: 84).

Specifically, governmentality is a configuration of elements that form a triangle of (1) "sovereignty" or state's authority over subjects through law, edicts, and regulation; (2) "discipline" or techniques of regulation and normalization of bodies, their forces, and capacities in architecturally delimited places; and (3) "governmental management," which includes the political economy that establishes policies that promote production and well-being and the biopolitics that seeks to manage the sanitation, health, and the life of the population (Thompson 2017:22; Foucault 2007:107). As art of governing, governmentality strengthened the state and its power by intervening and managing the activities of the subjects to attain that end. One of the most efficient ways to govern the subject is through territoriality where groups or individuals influence, impact, or assert control over geographic areas (Sack 1986). People employ devices where they create and retain spatial organizations through (a) classification by area, (b) communication by boundary, and (c) attempting to enforce the boundaries and borders (Sack 1986).

According to French anthropologist and sociologist Didier Fassin (2011: 214), borders are generally viewed as "territorial limits defining political entities (states in particular) and legal subjects (most notably citizens)." It also created partitioning lines in politico-administrative maps of control. Border excluded outsiders through control over the external border and created distinctions between acceptable and unacceptable residents of the territory

(Salter 2008). Fassin also raised three dimensions on the functions of the state in border security: (1) The state exerts its rule on the most peripheral segments of its subjects; (2) develops increasingly sophisticated technologies at its border; and (3) tends to create laws of exception when it targets immigrants (Fassin 2011: 217).

State bureaucrats were crucial in identifying how and on whose body a border would be performed. John Clad (2011: 11) stressed that a surveyed state "was also expected to be an administratively competent entity." The police view the border as a mechanism of control while government exchequers regard it as a place to collect revenue (i.e. customs duties or import levies). Guardians of security like armies and navies understood the border as a barrier where they could interdict threats. To control illegal immigration and eradicate contraband, for instance, the state implements restrictive policies and develops administrative apparatus at the borders. As part of policing the population along the border, the state's creation and enforcement of laws defined who and what is labeled as "illegal." This includes identifying who are considered illegal immigrants or determining things that are considered contraband.

During the height of direct administrative imperialism (1880-1914), Europeans and Americans colonized regions like Southeast Asia and introduced borders as part of their "liberal plan for enlightened rule and administrative order" (Clad 2011: 8). In the context of colonialism, Stephen Legg pointed out that governmentality serves as "a space of experimentation and a laboratory of modernity" for security. The colonizers introduced fixed international borders and assumed that a world of bordered entities meant a world at peace. Borders were shaped through deals with contending colonial powers. Colonial powers carved the territorial boundaries through agreements, maps, and treaties to legitimize access to the resources of the conquered territories. At the same time, borders strengthen control and exclusion, especially for people and products that would enter the borders.

However, in the context of Southeast Asia Robert L. Solomon (1970: 3) stressed that "there were no stable, delimited, or

demarcated boundaries" before colonialism. Even the concept of boundary lines is foreign to the region. For instance, Southeast Asian historian O.W. Wolters introduced the concept of mandala where typically there's a central power where vassal states or tributaries were not directly controlled. But they recognized its power by owing allegiance. Meanwhile, borders were fluid and not rigidly defined where influences of central power diminished as distance increased. Instead of borders, "zones of contact and sporadic positional warfare, within which the limits of extension of the sovereignty of each kingdom or principality were determined by a power-relation that was always subject to change" (Solomon 1970: 3).

The colonial construct of borders in Southeast Asia trampled around their colonized subjects' conceptions of space, order, and authority. These abrupt changes brought by territorial segmentation in Southeast Asia made the colonized subject "slow to realize the irrevocable changes brought by the surveyor's skill and surveys. For instance, historian Eric Tagliacozzo's (2005) seminal work *Secret Trades, Porous Borders: Smuggling and States along a Southeast Asian Frontier, 1865-1915* discusses how legislation and technologies of enforcement of the British and Dutch changed the 3,000-kilometer route that ran along the frontier of Dutch and British Empires—from the Strait of Malacca down towards Western North Borneo. Despite the legitimacy of these colonizers to create and monitor the border, some traders circumvent the existing law through cross-border smuggling.

When the United States colonized the Philippines in 1898, they utilized the information revolution and maximized new technologies to determine potential threats (McCoy 2009). Census reports written by colonial officials seem to convey an objective representation of the world which signifies the state's ability to represent and govern its new colonial subjects (Rafael 2009). Through their comprehensive database, they identify criminals, and brigands, and neutralize other threats to the American regime. These technologies of surveillance contributed to the pacification of the Philippines, the suppression of many uprisings (McCoy 2009), and threats within the border of the archipelago.

The borders between British North Borneo and the American-controlled Sulu archipelago and southern Palawan witnessed the use of new technologies on surveillance for security purposes. From the 1920s until the advent of the Second World War, both American and Filipino bureaucrats faced challenges in monitoring impending threats that entered the jurisdiction of the Philippines, a colony of the United States and an emerging nation-state. These threats include the smuggling of Chinese coolies, opium, and contraband goods.

Although historians like James Warren discussed the role of slave raiding of the Iranun and Balangingi as key to the economic and political development of the Sulu Sultanate during the 18th and 19th centuries, few scholars narrated the maritime trading and monitoring on the southwestern border of the Philippine archipelago. Historian Anne Foster (2009) briefly highlighted the challenges that the Americans confronted when guarding the southwestern border of the Philippines, including the smuggling of opium. Despite these challenges, the colonial government spent some money to prevent opium from entering the Philippines. Efforts include raids on opium dens, confiscation of opium by the Customs Service, and coastal patrols using fast Coast Guard cutters. Like Foster, Filipino historian Dondy Pepito Ramos (2020) focused on the consequences of the American prohibitionist policy from 1910 to 1935 concerning smuggling. Ramos (2023) also analyzed the various motivations, reasons, and methods of the smugglers and the involvement of the Chinese in opium-related cases.

Although this article would also touch on the smuggling of opium and Chinese coolies from North Borneo to the Philippine southwestern border, it would also include other border-related security issues like Japanese espionage, and public health threats that emerged before the Second World War. As a manifestation of governmentality, this article looks at existing laws, government reports, and media reports that define the southwestern border of the Philippines. Notwithstanding the efforts of the Americans and Filipino bureaucrats to implement strict border control, my article would also look at the challenges faced in monitoring the border due to resistance from the local population.

Examining the border as governmentality, this study argues that while American and Filipino bureaucrats sought to control and safeguard the southwestern Philippine border from various forms of threats, some Moros and Chinese evaded this through smuggling (i.e. opium and Chinese coolies) and illegal immigration.

The geographical scope of this study focuses on the border between the American-controlled Sulu archipelago and southern Palawan and British North Borneo. This study uses newspaper articles in various American British, Australian, and Filipino newspapers from 1920 to 1941. It collects fifty such travel accounts, accessed via www.newspapers.com, a database of more than 840 million pages from more than 24,000 newspapers. The timeframe of the article starts five years after Governor Frank Carpenter of the Department of Mindanao and Sulu and Sultan Jamalul Kiram signed the 1915 Kiram agreement in Zamboanga City where the sultan recognized the sovereignty of the United States. By 1920, the Department of Mindanao and Sulu was abolished by Act 2878. The management of the Moro lands was reassigned to the Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes. In preparation for independence, the Filipinization of colonial bureaucracy was already in full swing since 1913 (Endriga 1985). Filipino bureaucrats were appointed to offices and actively participated in border security. This continued during the Philippine Commonwealth (1935-1946) that marked a period of self-governance under American supervision before granting full independence. The timeline ends on December 7, 1941, when Japan attacked Pearl Harbor in Hawaii signaling the start of the Second World War.

Ⅱ. Historical Background

2.1. The Sultanate of Sulu

The introduction of Islam by Muslim traders within Southeast Asia in the late 14th century molded the systematic political and social structure of Islamized ethnolinguistic groups in Mindanao. Arab Sharif Abu Bakr founded the Sulu Sultanate in the second half of the fifteenth century. Since the Tausug governed the Sulu Sultanate,

they established an economic and political system that made it a crossroad of regional and international trade (Warren 2002).

The Spaniards tried to reduce the Mindanao and the Sulu archipelago into vassalage through Christianization and invasions. The Spaniards began to use the word *Moros* which refers to all Muslims in Mindanao, and which obscured the real cultural and linguistic differences among the Muslim ethnolinguistic groups (Warren 1977). Maritime raiding and slaving of the people of Sulu emerged as a product of cross-cultural commerce and wars of rival empires like the English, Spanish, Dutch, and Portuguese to collect products in the forest and seas (i.e., pearl) as commodities for export (Warren 2002). The Sulu Sultanate served as an intermediary channel to meet the market demand of the West.

However, the Spaniards initially failed to subjugate the Muslim Tausug through a series of attacks. This was until 1851 when the sultanate recognized its sovereignty through a friendship pact to avoid possible alliances with other European powers (Majul 1965). But from 1871 to 1879, the Spanish naval forces blockaded Jolo and patrolled Sulu waters. It destroyed all vessels traveling across the Sulu Sea to and from Jolo and the Sulu archipelago (Warren 2018). This led to the Spanish invasion of Jolo in 1879. The United Kingdom, Germany, and Spain signed the Madrid Protocol (1885), an agreement that recognized the authority of Spain over the Sulu archipelago. According to Article III of the said protocol:

> [T]he Spanish government renounces, as far as regards the British Government, all claims of sovereignty over the territories of the continent of Borneo, which belonged in the past to the Sultan of Sulu (Jolo) and which comprise the neighboring islands of Balambangan, Banguey, and Malawali, as well as all those comprised within a zone of the maritime leagues from the coast, which form part of the territories, administered by the Company styled the 'British North Borneo Company.'

Around the same period, the Sulu Sultanate turned over North Borneo to the British. Originally the Sultan of Brunei ruled Sabah, but the Sultan of Sulu helped suppress an uprising in 1704. The Sultan of Brunei awarded North Borneo to Sulu (Samad and Bakar

1992: 556) and was ruled under the sovereignty of the Sultanate of Sulu. In 1878, Alfred Dent and Gustavus von Overbeck, heads of the British North Borneo Provisional Association signed an agreement with the Sultan of Sulu whereby the Sultan granted these territories to them. It also guarantees no trade restriction on the parties involved in the protocol within the North Borneo and Sulu archipelago. By May 1888, North Borneo became a British Protectorate (Jayakumar 1968).

After the signing of the Treaty of Paris on December 10, 1898, the Americans handed over the Philippines, including the Sulu Sultanate.[1] On August 29, 1899, Sultan Hadji Mohamed Jamalul Kiram II and United States General John C. Bates signed the Kiram-Bates Treaty that recognized the "sovereignty of the United States over the whole Archipelago of Jolo (Sulu), and its dependencies" (Fernandez 1980: 73). More so, Sultan Jamalul Kiram II and his datus were free to suppress piracy and "heartily cooperate with the United State authorities to that end." The Kiram-Bates Agreement pointed out that the Sultan and his datus should "make every possible effort to arrest and bring to justice all persons engaged in piracy." While they allowed the US to occupy the archipelago, the treaty also stipulated that no territories in Sulu would be given or sold to other nations. While flying the American flag, the Sultan and his datus would receive monthly payments. But Moro Province governor Leonard Wood unilaterally abrogated the Kiram-Bates treaty because of continuing piracy and attacks on American personnel. This signaled the United States's direct control over Sulu. The American colonial government passed Act 51 in 1904 which regulated shell fishing and opened the Moro province to commercial fishers from other regions. Filipinos, Europeans, Australians, and American pearl fishers began to exploit the aquatic resources of Sulu (Amirell 2017).

Perceived as uncivilized and barbaric, the American authorities introduced progressive reforms to civilize, develop, and educate

[1] The Americans found some islands excluded in the meridians described in the Treaty of Paris. The Washington Treaty signed November 7, 1900, by the US and Spain explicitly included Cagayan Sulu, Sibutu and their dependencies in the Philippine archipelago (Prescott 1981).

their newly colonized Muslim subjects. However, opposing forced education, payment of local tax, and the incorporation of the Muslim lands to the United States-controlled Philippines, the Muslims launched sporadic and local resistance throughout Mindanao (Abinales 2010). But the Americans violently pacified the Moroland which resulted in two of the bloodiest uprisings in Jolo–the Battle of Bud Dajo (1906) and the Battle of Bud Bagsak (1913), where the US troops massacred over 600 and 3,000 Tausug, respectively (Abreu 2008). In 1913, Gen. John Pershing acknowledged the necessity of transitioning the Moro Province to civilian government. The practice of rotating military governors limited their tenure, prompting the need for civilian governors to ensure longer terms. This made Gen. Pershing the only military officer to hold civilian power.

President Woodrow Wilson and Governor-General Francis B. Harrison accelerated the "Filipinization" of bureaucracy. The creation of the Department of Mindanao and Sulu prompted many Christian Filipino officials to get involved in the Moro Province (Gowing 2007). As part of policy of attraction, Filipino officials directly participated in educating, civilizing and training Moros for self-governance. Matters related to education, health, public works and agriculture were transferred from Zamboanga to Manila. By May 1920, the Insular Government directly controlled the Moro affairs under the Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes in the Department of Interior (Gowing 2007).

2.2. Chinese Diaspora

During the early years of American colonial period, the Americans observed that the Chinese population already coexisted with the Moros. After years of migration, the Chinese already controlled the economic activities of the islands and monopolized trade. Some of them, such as those in Sitangkai Island, shipped their products, including fish, pearl shells, and various seafood items, either directly or via Jolo and Zamboanga, to ports in China and British North Borneo (Salomon 2024). But at the same time, the entry of Chinese immigrants and opium via British North Borneo was a salient issue during the American colonial period because they were "alleged to

have smuggled large quantities of opium into Mindanao and afterward distributed it throughout the Philippines" (Passaic Daily News 09/10/1920: 8). Opium as a commodity was first consumed for medicinal uses but when it entered Southeast Asia and China it became a recreation and a vice. The migration of Chinese during the late 18th and 19th centuries popularized the pipe and other opium-smoking paraphernalia (Ramos 2020: 80). Although the Spaniards introduced the Royal Decree of 1814 that prohibited the use and possession of opium, they eventually gave the Chinese the "right to use and distribute opium" in 1843 (Ramos 2020: 80).

When the Americans colonized the Philippines, they inherited the problem of opium. With their habit of smoking opium, the Chinese were portrayed by Americans as outsiders, signifying their alien status and that they were not being real Filipinos (Foster, 2010: 97). The colonial government was anxious that these ethnic Chinese ethnic addicts would become criminal and detrimental to Filipino society. By 1905, the Opium Commission would prohibit opium in the Philippines starting in 1908 (Foster 2010). Regardless of the ban on opium, the Americans faced continued traffic on illegal traffic of opium from North Borneo and this continued before the advent of the Second World War.

Meanwhile, an act of the US Congress extended the application of the Chinese Exclusion Law to the Philippines in 1902. The law was intended to protect native labor from the Chinese (Fonacier 1949). The Chinese, however, couldn't undergo naturalization because they were deemed ineligible for citizenship. Moreover, only merchants, travelers, diplomats, and students were permitted to re-enter the Philippines. However, the law did not prevent Chinese immigration, because some Chinese chose to "smuggle themselves in through Sulu" (Hau 1999) from Singapore, Labuan, and Sandakan with the assistance of enterprising Moros.

2.3. Custom Services during the American Colonial Period

During the early years of American colonialism, the Civil Government passed important laws about customs services. The government passed Philippine Administrative Act No. 355 on

February 6, 1902, to comprehensively discuss the general duties, powers, and jurisdiction of the Customs Service. Some of their duties include documenting vessels built or owned in the Philippine Islands (including the owner's nationality and ownership), monitoring the entry and clearance of vessels, collecting or securing revenue for the importation of dutiable merchandise and from tonnage dues, wharf charges, and others as may, to execute laws to immigration, customs, navigation, and commerce by sea and to suppress and prevent smuggling (Senate of the Philippines 1902). The law also stipulated the creation of five collection districts including Zamboanga and Jolo. The said act was amended to the Customs Service Act No. 355. Meanwhile, Public Act No. 430 converted the Philippine Customs Service to the Bureau of Customs and Immigration under the authority of the Department of Finance and Justice. The Bureau of Customs monitored the southern border of the Philippine archipelago. The Philippine Legislature passed acts that would affect custom services. These included Act No. 1751 which restricted and regulated sale of opium, and Act 1760 which prevented the introduction of dangerous communicable animal diseases in the Philippine archipelago (Secretary of War 1909). But despite these laws, smuggling continued in the Sulu archipelago.

Ⅲ. Border Construction and Security

From the 1920s until the advent of the Second World War, Americans negotiated with the British to settle the boundaries of southwestern Philippines. Interestingly, this border construction functioned to prevent the entry of contrabands and to protect the archipelago from impending threats. On July 19, 1920, the status of Baguan, an island only 30 miles northeast of the British North Borneo, was discussed in Baguio City since there were renewed negotiations for its control. Baguan was said to be "the clearing house for a ring which smuggles large quantities of opium into the islands of the Sulu archipelago, as well as into the island of Mindanao" (The Chanute Daily Tribute 07/19/1920, 4). Although the said island was included in the Treaty of Paris of 1898 as part of America's territory, it has remained under the tutelage of the British

due to its proximity to North Borneo. The American colonial government believed that if they controlled the island, it would disrupt the opium traffic (The Chanute Daily Tribute 07/19/1920, 4).

The Americans spearheaded a series of geodetic surveys on "all the coasts and adjacent waters of the Philippine islands and bring to a close a task that has been underway since American occupation nearly 27 years ago" (The York Dispatch 06/12/1925, 19). The military rendered photographic records of the water around the archipelago. According to Lieutenant Commander L.O Colbert, the coast and geodetic survey aimed to specifically examine the characteristics of "currents, tidal information, and similar data necessary for the completion of the hydrographic development of the water areas of the coast or inland waters." (Herald and Review 07/09/1927, 14). Meanwhile, Colonel E. Lester Jones, Director of the United States Coast and Geodetic Survey stated the importance of coastal surveys all over the Philippine archipelago:

> As to the importance of the task we are about to undertake, it can not be overestimated. It is likely to result in the change of steamer routes, will make navigation safer in these waters, and will change the status of the areas from one of unknown waters to one well chartered and entirely safe for navigation. (The York Dispatch 06/12/1925, 19).

On January 2, 1930, Secretary Stimson and British Ambassador Sir Esme Howard signed a covenant that officially fixed the boundaries between the Philippine archipelago and North Borneo. After fixing the boundaries, six islands that comprise the Turtle Islands officially became part of "at least theoretically over some 9,000 other (American) islands" (Miami Herald 01/16/1930, 4). Although the British North Borneo kept a watchful eye on the islands for many years, the Americans believed that the "law is now supreme" and it should continue to guard the islands against pirates (The Saginaw Daily 01/23/1930, 13). By 1933, the American military headed by Lieutenant Charles Shaw finished their survey near Balabac Island, Palawan (The Tribune 12/16/1933, 3). Even if the Americans clearly defined and controlled the southwestern border, illicit activities continued to thrive.

Ⅳ. Governing Threats on the Southwestern Border

4.1. Chinese and Opium Smuggling

Smuggling of Chinese coolies and opium were the most apparent threats at the southwestern border. In 1920, a move led by Secretary of Interior Teodoro Kalaw at a session of the Agricultural Congress in the American House of Congress was proposed to exempt the Philippines from the Chinese Exclusion Act since there was a need to obtain enough workers for sugar, hemp, and other plantations (Parson Daily Republican 11/07/1920, 5). Filipinos were "averse to working to the point of earning more than his immediate requirements," while the Chinese were described as industrious individuals (Parson Daily Republican 11/07/1920, 5). However, organized labor in the Philippines opposed this move from the government and lodged protests. However, there was already a constant flow of illicit entry of Chinese via North Borneo due to the urgent need for labor.

The Americans wanted to open Mindanao for commercial development, particularly in the cultivation of rubber, coffee, and sugar, where there was demand for these products (The Buffalo News 09/11/1926, 2). According to Colonel Carmi Thompson, special representative of President Calvin Coolidge, he felt that the development of these resources would make the United States independent of foreign competition products (The Buffalo News 09/11/1926, 2). Col. Thompson became convinced of the feasibility of development work in Mindanao and the Sulu archipelago. This framework would shape the view of the American colonial government on their policies toward Chinese immigration.

By the early 1930s, Filipinos feared the dominance of the Chinese in retail trade where they approximately controlled 80 percent of the total control and the population of Chinese in the Philippines already reached 100,000-150,000. (Dayton Daily News 10/30/1931, 36). The Chinese already controlled the lumber business and the retail food business. In the same period, Americans and foreigners were confident that the presence of Chinese in the Philippines was favorable to the welfare of the country. On June 27,

1935, Director Teofisto Guingona, who was in a conference aboard a ship with then-Senate President Manuel Quezon, recommended the importation of Chinese coolies for the development of Mindanao "in view of the apparent reluctance of Filipino laborers to pioneer in the Moroland" (The Tribune 6/28/1935, 1). Regardless of the need for these Chinese coolies to develop agricultural lands like in Mindanao and Sulu archipelago, the government continued to restrict their entry, especially in the southwestern border, because some of them were involved in smuggling large quantities of opium from Borneo into Mindanao and throughout the Philippines.

The American media depicted and framed the Chinese as opium addicts and traders. The opium addiction among Chinese in Sandakan, British North Borneo, for instance, served as a precaution to American and Filipino authorities on the threats posed by illegal immigration of Chinese. Journalist Elizabeth Walker wrote an article in February 1927 that showed the negative depictions of the Chinese of Sandakan. Her article stressed that these Chinese performed menial work, where they coaled and unloaded ships that connected Sandakan to other port cities, labored in rubber and tobacco plantations, gathered the coconuts, and "do the rest of the chores that pay the dividends on this British investment" (The Brooklyn Daily Times 02/28/1927, 75). Unfortunately, these Chinese acquired opium addiction due to poverty (Foster 2010). The article discussed and described the condition of the opium addicts in Sandakan:

> The effect of this bootleg stuff is similar to that of moonshine. The better class of addicts do their smoking at home. Only the riff stretch their weary bodies upon the matting-covered shelves and rest their tired heads upon the porcelain pillars in the public dens (The Brooklyn Daily Times 02/28/1927, 75).

More so, Walker mentioned that most of the opium smuggled into the Philippines comes from Borneo.

Opium usually entered the Philippines using three routes: (1) from Borneo's northeast coast past Sitangkai to the island of Tawi-Tawi and from there goes northward, (2) from Sandakan to Cagayan Sulu (present-day Mapun, Tawi-tawi) before heading to the

large central islands, and (3) goes along the coast of Palawan (San Francisco Examiner 08/09/1931, 88). The Chinese Pier of Jolo served as a clearing house for both the smuggled Chinese coolies and opium. Perry Machlan, one of the "secret service agents" of the Philippine customs interviewed by journalist A.C. Senske, narrated his experiences of guarding the border:

> Chinese coolies and opium from Borneo would enter the Chinese Pier of Jolo. It was described as a place where "all the evils of humanity" can be found. While there were jewelry shops, honest pearl traders, and stores that sell provisions and wine, Chinese Pier also hosted smugglers' headquarters, opium and gambling dens, and other types of vices (Senske 1937: 10).

Although the Chinese could easily enter Borneo, Filipino and American authorities strictly prohibited the admission of Chinese to the Philippines. Due to these restrictions, the smuggling of Chinese from North Borneo into the Philippines became rampant. Aleko Lilius, a Finnish explorer, authored a detailed account of the smuggling of Chinese laborers (coolies) by the Moros.

> The coolies are crowded aboard a vinta and pay in advance their passage money of 50 pesos a head, 10 pesos more than a grade-A wife is worth. If all goes well some night, with a guard at the end of the pier and another in an outrigger canoe in the harbor, the smugglers will creep swiftly in unload their human wares at the pier, and long before dawn be gone again (San Francisco Examiner 08/09/1931: 88).

Unfortunately, Moros like the Iranun took advantage of the Chinese. They collected their money and other possessions but marooned them on the islands or dumped them overboard (The Sun 12/27/1925, 15). This forced the coolies to swim while they could face strong winds and bad weather. If the cutters rescued the Chinese, the Americans would ship them back to China (San Francisco Examiner 08/09/1931, 89).

Sitangkai has a custom house and a "perfectly agile agent" (San Francisco Examiner 08/09/1931, 88). Supervising Agent Perry L. Machlan reported in 1934 that the customs arrested 45 individuals

for violation of customs and immigration laws. Forty-four Moros were imprisoned, five were convicted and sentenced to three months imprisonment each and to pay a fine of P100.00. Meanwhile, 39 others paid their fine of P 200.00. Sitangkai also collected P 2, 407.96 for customs duties, internal revenue taxes, fines, wharfage, and tonnage dues, etc. (The Tribune 01/27/1934, 2).

Even before the southern border was more clearly defined, the American colonial government officials initiated deportations of Chinese in violation of existing immigration laws. On September 10, 1920, more than 3000 Chinese in Mindanao and Sulu were deported by authorities (Passaic Daily News 09/10/1920, 8). By 1924, nearly 50 Chinese were arrested in Zamboanga (in mainland Mindanao) and were deported either to Borneo to Hong Kong. The customs services noticed that incidents of smuggling of Chinese increased "and has become a profitable traffic" (The Lithgow Mercury 10/31/1924, 8).

While authorities strengthened the boundaries between Sulu and North Borneo, in the 1930s restrictions against the Chinese continued. In an article published on October 30, 1931, acting director of the Bureau of Customs Guillermo Gomez reported that between 2000 and 3000 Chinese of Sulu and Mindanao were never admitted by the immigration authorities and presumably, were smuggled from Sandakan over 20 years or more (Dayton Daily News 10/30/1931, 36). This accounted for an increase of 30 percent over the average number of several years past.

Even when a storm hit Sulu on April 29, 1932, the insular collector of customs immediately instructed the customs secret service authorities in all sub-ports in the Visayas and Mindanao to be vigilant on possible heavy traffic of illegal entry of Chinese coolies into the Philippines (The Tribune 02/03/1933, 1). In July 1935, the Sulu customs and police officials continued their intensified anti-smuggling drive with the arrest of eight Chinese (The Tribune 08/02/1935, 2). While they waited for their trial, they were jailed at Bongao. In the same year, officials of Zamboanga initiated a drive against Chinese from Borneo and Dutch East Indies who illegally lived in the province. Despite that some of them are already engaged in business and owned lands and property, the authorities

inspected their landing and residence papers. Those who have not provided these necessary documents will be taken before the deportation boards.

Although illegal migrations of Chinese were reported during the Commonwealth period, legal charges were filed against these illegal aliens. For instance, the Palawan province court convicted five Chinese believed to have come from Kudat, British North Borneo. Palawan Governor Sofronio Espanola recommended that both the Bureau of Customs and the Department of Labor deport aliens at the expense of these offices. Some illegal migrants even falsified their identities to bypass existing laws on migration. For instance, Acting Solicitor General Fidel Ibanez filed a case in the Davao court in 1940, "asking for the cancellation of a certificate of naturalization it issued in favor of Yu Kong alias Julian Yu Kong Rodriguez, a Chinese subject." Yu Kong claimed that he was born in Jolo, Sulu on February 3, 1911, but it was revealed that he falsified this information (04/26/1940, The Tribune, 14). Five months before the Second World War, 23 Chinese were convicted by the country due to illegal entry into the Philippines after they were allegedly smuggled through Sulu from Borneo. Each of these convicted Chinese received a six-month prison term (The Tribune, 07/22/1941, 9).

Aside from opium and Chinese coolies, illegal traffic of forest products was also reported where Moros from Palawan partnered with those from Borneo to carry these commodities to North Borneo (The Tribune 02/08/1934, 11). Interestingly, dynamite smuggling was also evident. The Moros used these dynamites to kill fish, but this practice was already prohibited by laws (Springfield Evening Union 03/19/1924, 3). Custom secret service agents in Cebu seized 400 sticks of dynamite from 14 Moro fishermen from Sulu in October 1940. The dynamites came from Bicol (in southern Luzon) where customs authorities thought that they bought these explosives from miners. They planned to sell the dynamite to fishermen in islands between Cebu and Bohol (The Tribune 10/19/1940, 9).

Although customs officials keep an eye on the Chinese and Moros, the military also participated in border monitoring. Moros

in Mindanao and Sulu were not allowed to leave the Philippines by way of the smaller islands of the Sulu group without permission from the Philippine army commanders and the governor of the province. When Moros planned to visit Mecca to fulfill their *hajj*, they needed to board streamers that passed the military's ports (The Tribune 08/29/1936, 2). The rationale behind this border policy is to "minimize the smuggling of aliens between the southwestern island and the colonies near Mindanao like Borneo and the East Indies (The Tribune 08/29/1936, 2).

4.2. Public Health Security and Border Monitoring

Public health concerns were also observed along the southwestern border after authorities feared that a cholera epidemic in Borneo might spread to the Philippines. The government led in anti-cholera vaccination to prevent the cholera epidemic in Mindanao. It also encouraged health workers and sanitary inspectors "to maintain strict supervision in their respective districts and to enforce regulation regarding the sale of foodstuffs in public eating places" (The Tribune 08/06/1932, 2).

In 1937, the provincial health authorities of Sulu also instituted measures against the possible introduction of cholera from China. Authorities then initiated health surveillance where sailboat passengers at Cagayan and Sitangkai were carefully inspected (The Tribune 12/01/1937, 4). After the boats landed, passengers from Borneo were automatically monitored for observation. Luckily, no cholera suspects were identified by the authorities.

4.3. Threats from Japanese Poachers and Espionage

Filipinos and American citizens were only allowed to fish along the coastal waters of the Philippines in 1930 (Yu-Jose 1996). During the Commonwealth Period, the presence of the Japanese in the Philippine archipelago became a threat to security along the southwestern border. In March 1936, Japanese boats were fishing off the isolated island of Cagayan de Sulu and near Sionongan, Parang (in Sulu). The Japanese poachers allegedly gathered thousands of turtle eggs, killed many male turtles, and carried away hundreds of

female turtles (The Columbia Record 03/27/1936, 2). Countering the intrusion of these Japanese boats, the army and customs officials encouraged all citizens to report such incidents to persecute these poachers. The Chinese population felt the growing presence of the Japanese in Sulu.

On September 3, 1938, the Chinese traders of Jolo carried out a successful boycott of the Japanese 6,5000 ton-streamer Namnam Maru that prevented them from loading a copra cargo (The Tribune 09/04/1938: 3). The Chinese of Jolo threatened to boycott Filipino haulage firm Jolo Garage if it would allow the Japanese freight trucks to transport the copra consignment (The Tribune 09/04/1938, 3).

A Japanese was prosecuted and deported due to allegations of espionage. Shimoto Miyamoto was already convicted of opium smuggling by the Zamboanga court, but he was pardoned by Governor General F. Burton Harrison on condition that he leave the Philippines and never return (The Tribune 07/13/1939: 16). But Miyamoto sneaked back to the country by late 1938. He arrived in Manila with a Japanese engineer and a Filipino lawyer and went to Tumbagaan Island in Tawi-Tawi. He was released under bail while he waited for the decision of the secretary of labor (The Tribune 04/10/1941, 14).

Ⅴ. Resisting Governmentality on the Southwestern Borders

Before borders were created by colonial powers, Moros and foreign traders were already accustomed to free travel between Sulu and Borneo. From time immemorial, “there was no control of the boats coming to and from North Borneo (Villiers 1936: 11). Hence, Moros and traders’ various forms of resistance to the colonial construction of borders through illicit trades.

5.1. Resistance to Customs Authority

The Moros conceal these contrabands before their distribution to other places. The Moros were able to load their cargo of opium on the shore of Borneo and under cover of darkness slip across one of

the islands in Sulu (Springfield Evening Union 03/19/1924, 3). Opium is "hidden in heavily weighted packages tied together in a long chain with a mark or buoy which can be seen only at low tides" (San Francisco Examiner 08/09/1931, 88). With the skills of hiding the contraband, the authorities rarely catch the smugglers (Springfield Evening Union 03/19/1924, 3). The customs service interviewed by Aleko Lilius described other ways in which the drugs were hidden and the active role of Samals in smuggling activities:

> You may even find it in the interiors of the fish they sell, but we in the customs service cannot go about cutting open every fish we see the Samals carrying. "Even if we did do so, they would find new places to hide the stuff. And morphine, unlike opium, has so little bulk that it can even for concealed in the orifices of the human body." The man spread his arms in a hopeless gesture. "You see that we are up against" …The Samals hide the drugs in boats covered in hollow masts, in chiseled niches on the side of their boats, or in flower pots, kerosene cans, and in every place their ingenuity can conceive (San Francisco Examiner 08/09/1931, 88).

5.2. Lack of Government Funds for Custom Services

Despite the presence of customs houses along the border, there was a lack of fast cutters to patrol the coastline due to a lack of government support. Aside from that, the government faced difficulty in the enforcement of tariffs, customs, and other laws administered by the Bureau of Customs (Office of the Governor General 1929). For instance, in February 1934, *The Tribune*, reported that Moros smuggled products from Sandakan towards the seacoasts of Palawan and southern Mindanao where "The Moro vintas are continuously discharging contraband goods from Sandakan" (The Tribune 02/08/1934, 11). Yet, "the absence of government cutters on Palawan coasts leaves the smugglers virtually unmolested" (The Tribune 02/08/1934, 11). The merchants urged the bureau of customs to deploy Arayat or Mindoro to suppress smuggling since these ships were already used to patrolling the waters of southern Mindanao. But the governor-general placed Arayat under his disposal while the Mindoro and other custom cutters were tied up in the harbor for lack of funds. The collector of customs urged the

Department of Finance to recommission Mindoro.

Cagayan de Sulu also witnessed the same problem where it was difficult to arrest traders who smuggled heads of cattle due to "the lack of a launch with which to pursue Moros" (The Tribune 08/02/1935, 2). The traders also evaded authority by defrauding the government of its import duties on the goods. With these challenges, the customs secret service in Mindanao reported that it was "handicapped by lack of proper facilities" and was "unable to conduct an effective campaign against opium smuggling and other illicit traffic" (The Tribune 11/08/1935, 16). Despite these limitations, they were able to run down some smugglers "vigorously and energetically as possible within the limits permissible" by the Bureau of Customs (Office of the Governor General 1928, 199).

But Perry Machlan observed that the Moros like in South Ubian (in present-day Tawi-tawi, Philippines) and Tabawan (in present-day Sabah, Malaysia) islands became bolder against customs men after they filed criminal complaints for open violation of customs laws and regulations. By 1940, the opium traffic carried on through Ubian island in Tawi-tawi already "reached sizeable amounts" (The Tribune 10/19/1940, 9). With the lack of government support for customs services in Sulu, it became more susceptible to the resistance of people on the colonial construct of the Philippine southwestern border.

The lack of a cutter to patrol the southern water led Director Teofisto Guingona of the Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes to suggest the assignment of a Philippine agent at Sandakan to monitor the activities of Moro smugglers. He also suggested mobilizing a small swift motorboat that could follow vintas into shallow waters (The Tribune 02/14/1935, 16). The government also approved an appropriation of P1,000,000 in the budget for 1940-1941. According to Collector of Customs Alfredo de Leon, the Bureau of Customs planned to construct three 140-ton coastguard cutters and three 60-ton seagoing launches all over the Philippines to strengthen the fleet of the customs bureau (The Tribune 05/19/1940, 3). This plan includes putting a cutter to patrol the Sulu Sea and the coastline of Palawan.

Ⅵ. Conclusion

Analyzing borders as governmentality, this study argues that while American and Filipino bureaucrats sought to control and safeguard the southern Philippine border from various forms of threats, some Moros and Chinese evaded this through smuggling (i.e. opium and Chinese coolies) and illegal immigration. The colonizers such as the British, and Americans carved the territorial boundaries through agreements and treaties to legitimize access to the resources within the bounds of their conquered territories. The Americans also led in geodetic and hydrographic surveys to map out their newly conquered territories like Baguan. Most importantly, the acquisition of these islands aimed to strengthen maritime security to protect the Philippines from threats posed by piracy and smuggling.

Authorities arrested individuals who violated laws on border security, especially those who imported opium and Chinese laborers. On top of these pressing problems, authorities also feared the cholera epidemic and the presence of Japanese poachers and espionage. However, authorities faced challenges in monitoring impending threats on the southern border such as active resistance of Moros and Chinese to customs and immigration laws and the lack of government support for customs services.

Despite the existence of border security enforced by Filipino and Malaysian governments, illicit trade between Sabah and Sulu and Tawi-tawi traders continued to thrive and were highly accepted. This is due to "(a) the geographical distance and proximity with Sabah provides easy access to quality consumer at cheaper prices and (b) the flow of goods from mainland Mindanao is not enough to supply the needs of the communities" (Villanueva 2016: 206). More so, different actors in the economic value chain of cross-border trade (i.e. small traders, brokers, boat operators) benefited from illicit trade through collection of "kotong" (extra fees).[2] Interestingly, customs police and state authorities also gained

[2] "Kotong" refers to "extra fees" paid by illicit traders to rent-seeking state agents (Villanueva, 2016).

from payment of "kotong" and "special arrangement."[3]

In recent years, the southern border of the Philippines has remained susceptible to many illicit activities including gun trade (Yeo 2022; Quitoriano 2016; Miani 2011) illegal drugs, piracy (Tokoro 2010; Liss 2016) kidnapping, and terrorism (Yeo 2022 Yusa 2020; East 2018; Santos et. al 2010), poaching (Kirishnamoorthie et. al 2023; Joseph et. al 2019), and human trafficking (Jabar 2024). However, the flow of goods from Sabah, Malaysia, and Sulu is very crucial for Sulu and Tawi-tawi because of its easy access to quality consumer goods at cheaper prices (barter trade) and the inadequate flow of goods from mainland Mindanao. Participants in these activities are small traders who face insufficient capital and are forced to find other sources of income (Villanueva 2016). With the persistence of these challenges of border security since American colonialism, this historical study would hopefully contribute to understanding how the people who live along the border of the Philippines and Malaysia navigated their economic activities with the presence of these borders.

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[3] Within the framework of "special arrangement" with state authorities, boats that engaged in illicit trade have separate docking area which is few meters away from where other boats anchored. This enables illicit traders to escape customs duties, port charges and other regulatory fees (Villanueva, 2016).

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