



Moroland: The History of Uncle Sam and the Moros 1899-1920

By Robert A. Fulton

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Moroland is the lost history of the once-famed struggle between the United States Army and the "wild" Moros, the Muslim peoples of the southern Philippine islands. Lasting over two decades, it was this country's first sustained encounter with a volatile mixture of nation-building, insurgency, counterinsurgency, and militant Islamism. A byproduct of the Spanish-American War, the task of subduing and then "civilizing" the "Land of the Moros", a land area larger than Ireland, was delegated to the U.S. Army. Working through the traditional ruling hierarchy and respecting an ancient system of laws based on the Qur'an, "Moro Province" became an autonomous, military-governed Islamic colony within a much larger, overwhelmingly Christian territory. For three years it was a successful and bloodless occupation, but trouble arrived in mid-1903 when the American objective transitioned to a grand experiment: an audacious plan to transform and remake Moro society, values, and culture in an American image; placing the Moros on an uncertain and ill-defined path towards eventual integration in a Western-style democracy. The Moros reacted with obstinate and unyielding resistance to what they perceived as a deliberate attack on the religion of Islam and a way of life ordained by God. The constant stream of battles and expeditions that followed over the next ten years is known in U.S. Army history as the "Moro Campaigns". In violence and ferocity they may have equaled, if not surpassed, the more famous late-19th Century Indian Wars of the Great Plains. Despite seeming victory after victory on the battlefield, pacification of the Moros remained a distant and elusive goal. Gradually the Army was replaced as the principal instrument for achieving "law and order" over the troubled province by the famed Moro Constabulary and the Philippine Scouts; native troops led by American and European officers. In 1914, the US Army left Moroland altogether, replaced by a civil government and a major increase in the Constabulary. Despite proving far more effective than the Army, Moro resistance to what they perceived to be outside rule continued (for that matter it has not abated to this day). In 1920 the last American Governor left and control over Moroland was handed over to the Filipino-dominated colonial legislature. The backdrop is a bustling, raucous, newly-prosperous nation finding its way as a world and imperial power. But with this new-found status came a near-religious belief that the active spread of America's institutions, values, and form of government, even when achieved through coercion or force, would create a better world. A subplot is a deep and bitter rivalry between two of its most prominent players, Capt. John

J. Pershing and General Leonard Wood, born only one month apart, each championing markedly opposed military philosophies. Eventually they would compete to lead one-million American "doughboys" into the cauldron of the world's first Great War. Few Americans are aware that a century later the U.S. military quietly returned to Moroland, to battle "radical Islamist terrorism"; using Army Green Berets, Navy Seals, and other elite forces. It is the smallest of the fronts of the "global war on terror" and the least-covered or critically examined. It leads the reader to an obvious question: are we avoiding or are we repeating our own past?

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Editorial Review

Review

I've just started what promises to be a great book: It's titled Moroland -- 1899-1906. It's the story of the American conflict in the Philippines at the beginning of the 20th Century -- as the author describes it, "America's first attempt to transform an Islamic society." This one of those stories you don't learn about in school, though the conflict was arduous and bloody -- much more intense than the famous Indian Wars. It presaged American experiences in Vietnam and has obvious resonance with our current situation in the Middle East, confronting Islamic terrorism. The really cool thing, which I didn't realize until I'd already gotten into the book, is that it is written by a local man, Robert A. Fulton of Bend. It's published by Tumalo Creek Press. It's available at Paulina Springs Books.

Fulton has done a first-rate job in this, the first of two volumes on this fascinating, little-known subject. The book is clearly exhaustively researched by a man who knows the territory. He was a foreign service officer in the Philippines in the 1960s and walked the country he describes. The best part is, it is extraordinarily well-written; clear, engaging, readable -- qualities not often found in monographs on obscure historical subjects. I don't know Mr. Fulton, but I intend to track him down. After I've finished this wonderful book.

Jim Cornelius, Editor -- The Nugget Newspaper, May 6, 2008

From the Publisher

This is a partially revised and enlarged new edition of the same book was first published in 2007. Six new chapters have been added to extend the period covered by the book to the year 1920, when the United States ended its direct control over the Moros.

About the Author

In the 1960's Robert A. Fulton was a young foreign service officer with the U.S. Information Agency stationed in the Philippines. It was here he first came into close personal contact with the Moros of the islands of Mindanao and the Sulu Archipelago and witnessed first-hand the beginnings of the modern-day Moro separatist movements. He never forgot hearing many tales of the long ago battles between the Moros and the Americans. Following retirement from a long career in international business and as a successful entrepreneur, he spent 4 ½ years researching for this book.

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