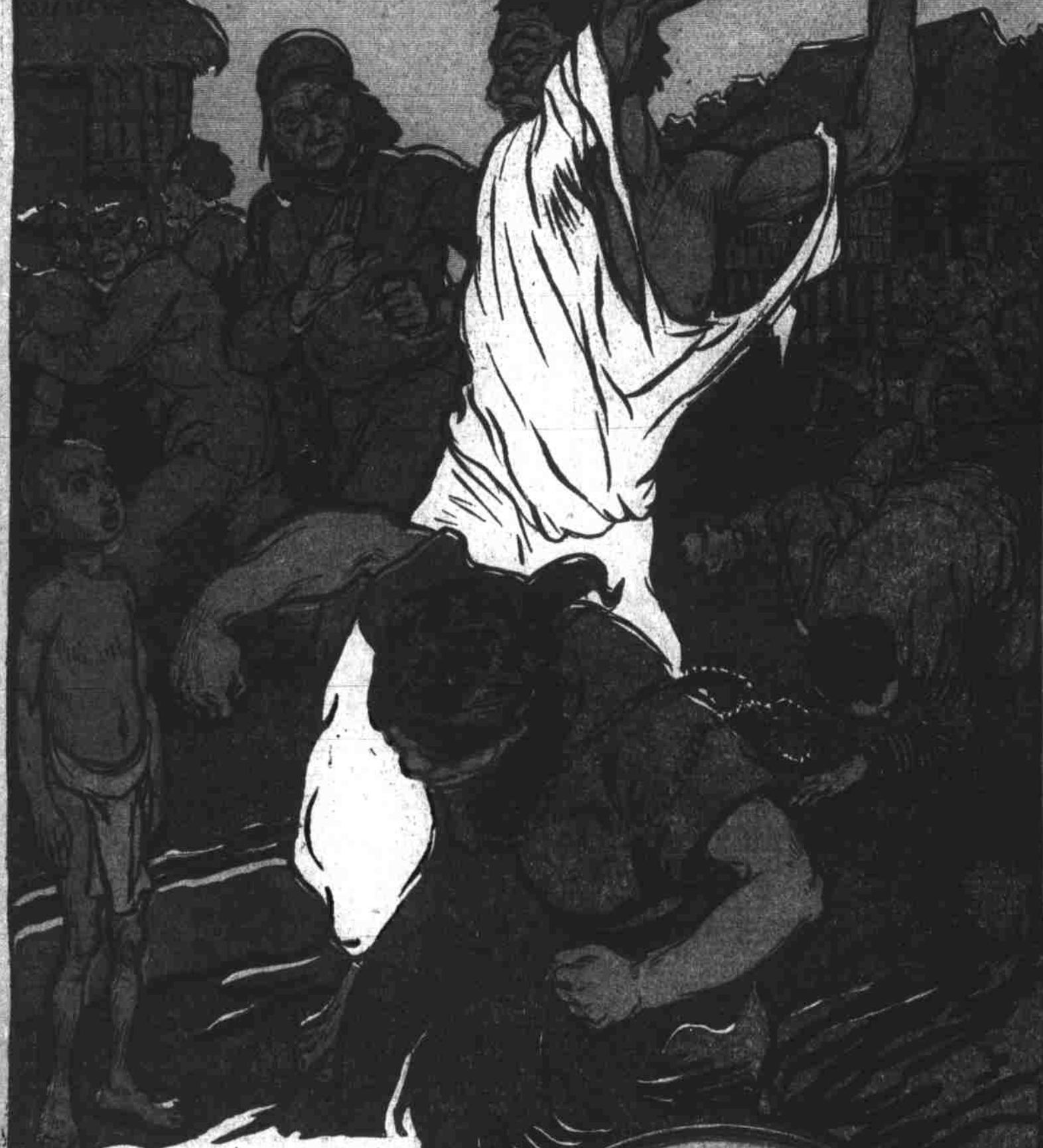


WHERE MURDER is a RELIGIOUS RITE

Bloodthirsty Fanaticism of Priests Who Influence the Warriors of Jolo



Moro Chief in War Bravery.

"Jolo is, perhaps, the most interesting of the chain of islands which form the Sulu archipelago of the Philippines," wrote a recent visitor. "This, because of its historical associations, because it is the residence of the sultan, and because here one steps suddenly into a warlike atmosphere."

"Life in Jolo is not always the peaceful dream of the tropical Orient. One never knows when a religious fanatic, running amuck, will slip a sharp barong into him. Indeed, Jolo is now, perhaps, the one place under the flag where murder is a religious rite."

Natural pirates, too, are the Moros of the archipelago. They delight in traditions of the time when their Malay ancestors set out in their war praus to conquer the multitude of islands in the South Seas and to scour the waters for prey. One of the first tasks of the United States authorities was to break up the system of slavery that had flourished there from earliest times.

Born to warfare and inheriting hatred of Christians, the Mohammedan Moros do not take kindly to the restraints of western civilization. At any time a juramentada, or religious fanatic, is apt to be seized with a murderous craze.

SOLDIERS and foreigners in many parts of Jolo go armed. They wish to be ready should a crazed juramentada make them the object of attack.

As a rule, the juramentada becomes wrought to a remarkable frenzy. When one breaks loose the people of the community arm themselves and hunt him down as they would a dangerous wild beast.

"One is constantly greeted," said the traveler quoted above, "with the sight of a lot of men going about with big pistols strapped to them. I met some soldiers returning from a plunge in the surf. They wore only bathing suits, but each man carried his revolver in his hand."

When a Moro becomes sufficiently inflamed under the priestly ministrations to determine upon a juramentada career, he formally announces his purpose. The word juramentada—pronounced "hooramentada"—is Spanish and means "vowed ones," the vow in question being to die killing Christians.

Having announced his desire to take the required vow before his priest, the fanatic devotes three days to ablutions—this in itself being a suspicious thing. Then he has his eyebrows shaved off, puts on his best clothes, usually white, and takes his oath with sundry ceremonies.



Even the little girls are taught to take care of themselves.

Having already arranged his worldly affairs, he may spend a few days working himself up to a white heat of murderous frenzy. Then, some fine morning, armed with the sharpest weapon he can lay hands on, he bounds into a village. Charging through the streets, cutting right and left, he keeps on his desperate way until some one kills him.

Under the Spanish rule the juramentada was much more in evidence than now. Many a Spaniard seated quietly in front of his house, his place of business or a cafe, has had his head ripped from his shoulders by a charging Moro before he was aware that danger was approaching.

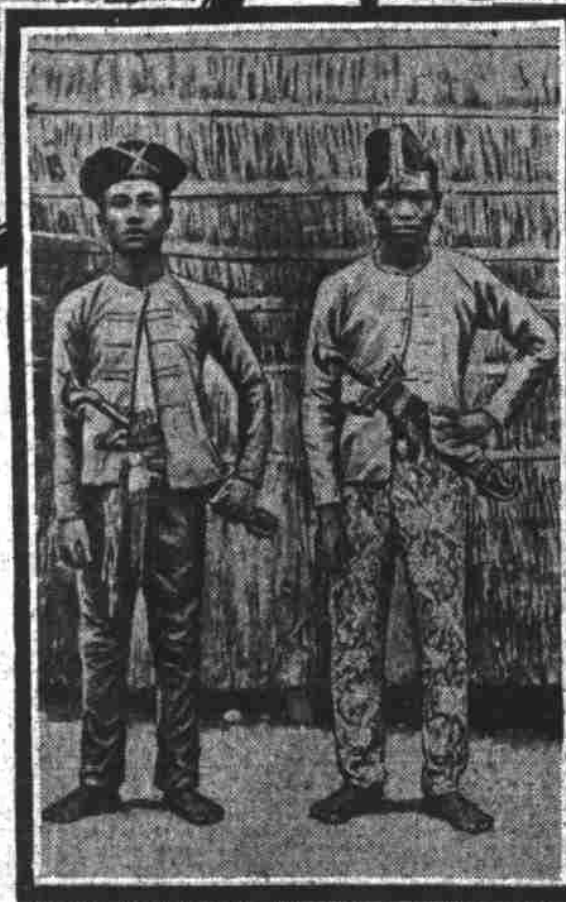
When General Arolas became Governor of Jolo—or Sulu—he made a determined effort to prevent this religious slaughter, which was such a menace not only to his countrymen, but to all other foreigners.

He issued an order that all Moros must be disarmed before being permitted to enter a village where there were Christians.

A dead line was established. Outside each gate was a company of soldiers under orders to shoot to kill every Moro who did not give up his arms freely.

But even with these precautions, juramentadas were able frequently to run amuck and slaughter persons in their path.

On one occasion a Moro entered a town, leaving his weapon at the gate without making objection. He was known to the soldiers as a native of peaceful disposition, and no trouble was expected from him.

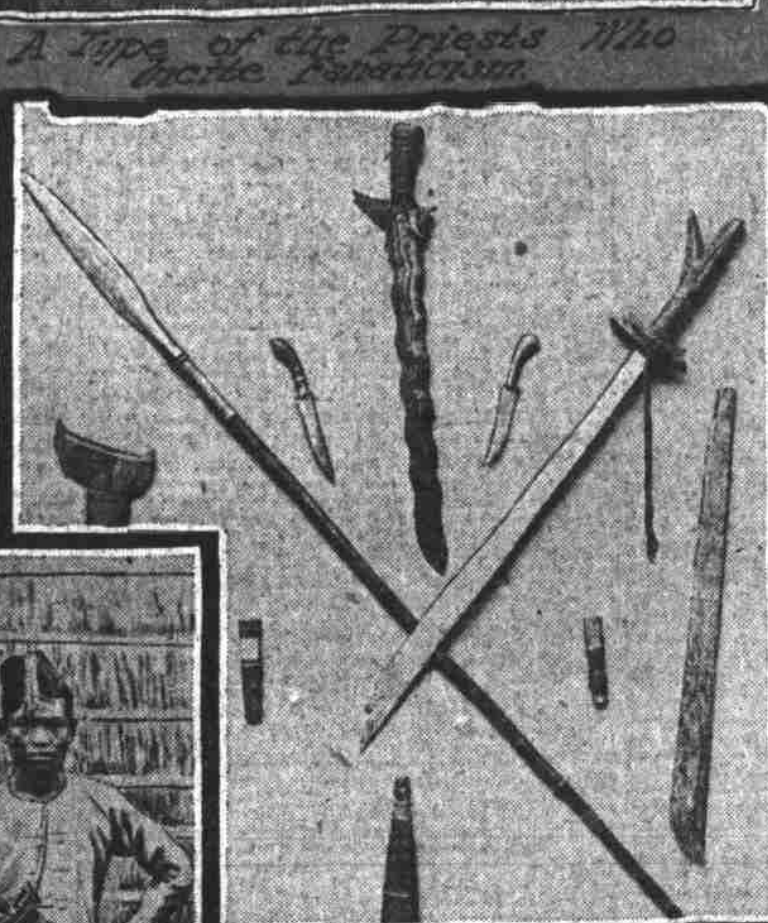


Body Guards of the Sultan.

A little later he returned and claimed his barong. When it was returned to him, he passed a package of cigarettes around as an evidence of peace and good will.

Several of the soldiers set their guns down in order to light their cigarettes. Instantly the Moro sprang upon them, killed two or three and wounded others desperately before he could be shot down.

Nature seems to have implanted in these people the taste for blood. They are born fighters. From the time they are 16 years old their weapons seldom leave their belts except for use.



Weapons of the Moros.



How Many of the Fanatics Live.

Being Mohammedans of a peculiarly fanatical sort, they have long been imbued with the idea that the killing of Christians—riding the earth of their hateful presence—insures admission to heaven.

The greater the number of "unbelievers" slain, the higher, they think, will be the slayer's seat upon the steps of the heavenly throne.

When the Spaniards discovered the Philippines, some 400 years ago, they found the Moros occupying, as now, about ninety islands south of Mindanao, the large southern island of the Philippine group, and stretching far away toward Borneo.

Not so very long before, it seemed, a large tribe of Malays from Borneo had made their way into the Sulu islands—a people so fierce and warlike in disposition, so bold and daring in action, that, for centuries thereafter, they defied the power of Spain and made that part of the Philippines a very uncomfortable place for the Europeans.

Any kind of work except that connected with his profession as a warrior is distasteful to the average Moro. He expects to find all his physical wants supplied by his wives—they were looked after largely by his slaves as long as he was permitted to have them.

Much to the disgust of the Moros, the Americans have done away with slavery. Formerly, for failure to pay a debt as low as \$2.50 gold, both a man and his family could be enslaved.

It was a Moro practice, running back for hundreds of years. At one time, it was estimated that nearly 10,000 Filipinos were held in slavery on the island of Jolo.

Until some time in the sixties, when a fleet of steam gunboats broke up the practice, the Moros were given greatly to piracy on the high seas. Even now they are not averse to any depredations they may carry on in the waters about their island homes.

Their praus, or boats, are neatly carved from logs, are sharp at both ends, and can be sent through the water at great speed. Bamboo outriggers prevent them from sinking.

Moro lads begin their education early—it is an education of arms. They practice constantly with the shield, the campilan, a kind of sword; the barong, which is used for close conflict and is the favorite weapon of the juramentada; and the kris, which is for thrusting and cutting. A Moro, as a rule, becomes so expert in the use of the barong that he can decapitate a man at a single stroke.

On the water these people use a kind of assegai, called "bagsacay," or "simbilin," which is about half an inch in diameter, with a sharp point. Some of the more expert can throw four of these at a time, making them spread out in their flight.

Very skilful do the Moros become in the manufacture of their weapons. Blades of their knives are as finely tempered and as sharp as a Damascus blade. Their homes are armories. Within the last few years a number of Moros have come into the possession of firearms.

"The innate cruelty of the Moros," stated a Filipino writer shortly after American occupancy of the archipelago, "is shown in their dealings with the savage tribes of Mindanao, whose men they hunt with murderous zeal."

"The title of 'bagan' gives its holder the right to wear a scarlet turban and makes him eligible to the office of chief. But to obtain this title the aspirant must have cut off sixty human heads."

"These are sought from the savage Mandays of the interior, who are pursued remorselessly through the deep forests. They build their huts high up in the trees and defend themselves with stones."

"The Moros seek to bring them down by shooting burning arrows at the huts. If these fail, they climb the trees, with their shields locked above their heads, and cut down the posts that support the huts. The captives are then divided, the heads of the men are cut off and the women and children held as slaves."

Except in the wilder parts of the archipelago these practices have been stopped almost entirely by the Americans.