

Wednesday, 1st February 2017 at 2:30 p.m.

IAS Meeting Room 2.27, Level 2, FASS Building

Abstract

Among the M'ranao in the Lanao provinces of Mindanao, there may be more than a thousand men who carry the title of sultan. While many scholars, colonial administrators and travelers have noticed the peculiarity of this phenomenon, few have sought to explain it. To seek a comprehensive understanding of the fragmented nature of 'sultanship' among one of the largest Muslim ethnolinguistic groups in the Southern Philippines, the paper examines various 'internal' and 'external' dynamics and determinants of local-level leadership, including geographical, socio-cultural and political economic. In addition to engaging historical and other scholarly literature on the M'ranao, the paper draws on data from ethnographic fieldwork among members of an upland mixed swidden and fixed field agricultural community. Their diverse and dynamic livelihood practices, bilateral and flexible kinship system and 'egalitarian' style of leadership, as well as their account of the origin and spread of Islam in the region, provide key pieces to the puzzle of why there are so many sultans in Lanao. More than that, I argue that the resonance of sultanates in the everyday life of M'ranao upland farmers can help us move past traditional frameworks for understanding sultanates as an institution.

Speaker's Profile



Over the last ten years, Magne's research has broadly focused on change and continuity in livelihood, family and community relations in coastal and upland regions of Southeast Asia. In 2010, he was awarded a PhD-degree in social anthropology at the Australian National University. Before coming to UBD in 2015, he was a post-doctoral fellow at the National University of Singapore.