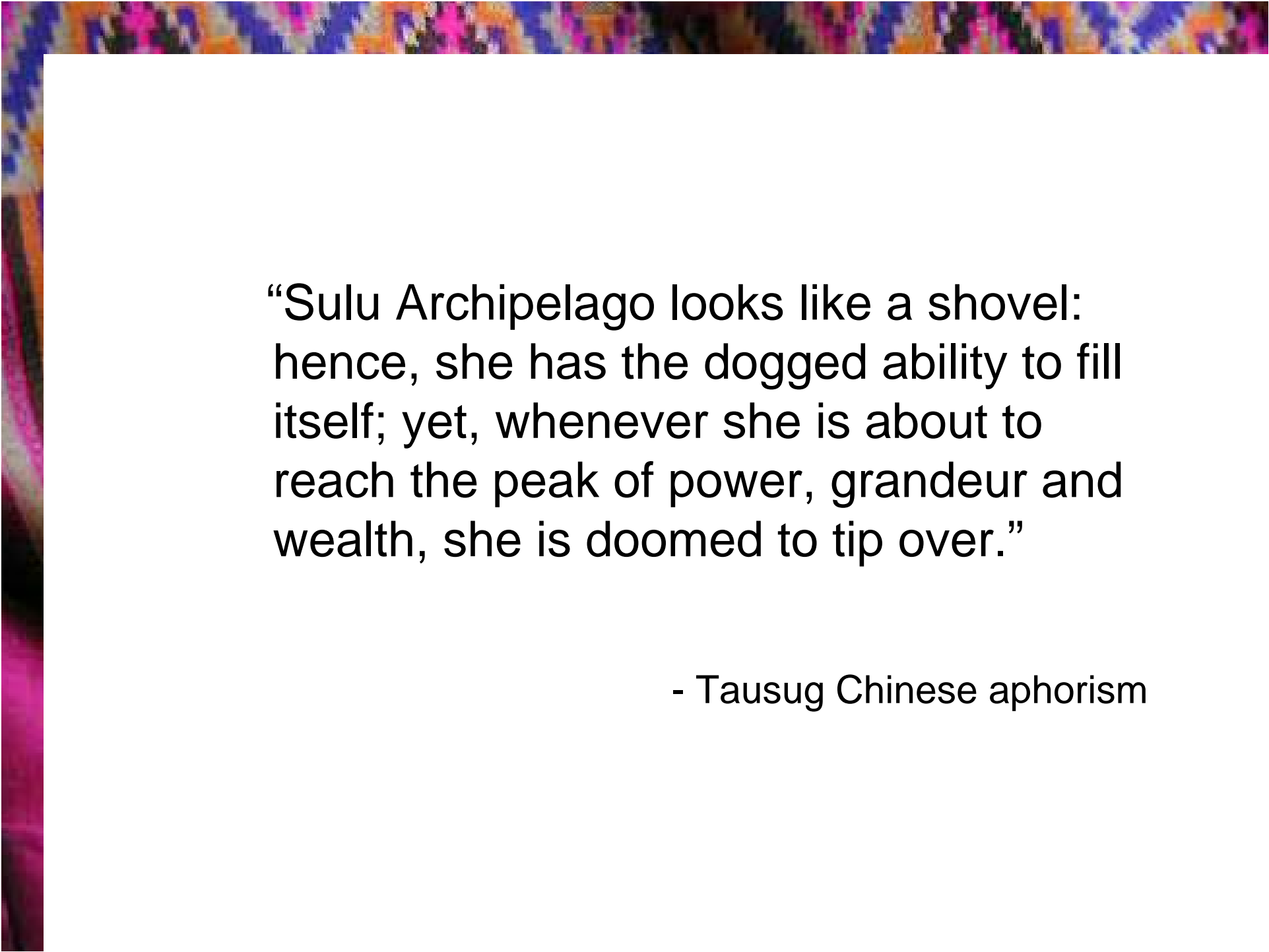




# **Sulu Power, Contexts and Dynamics**

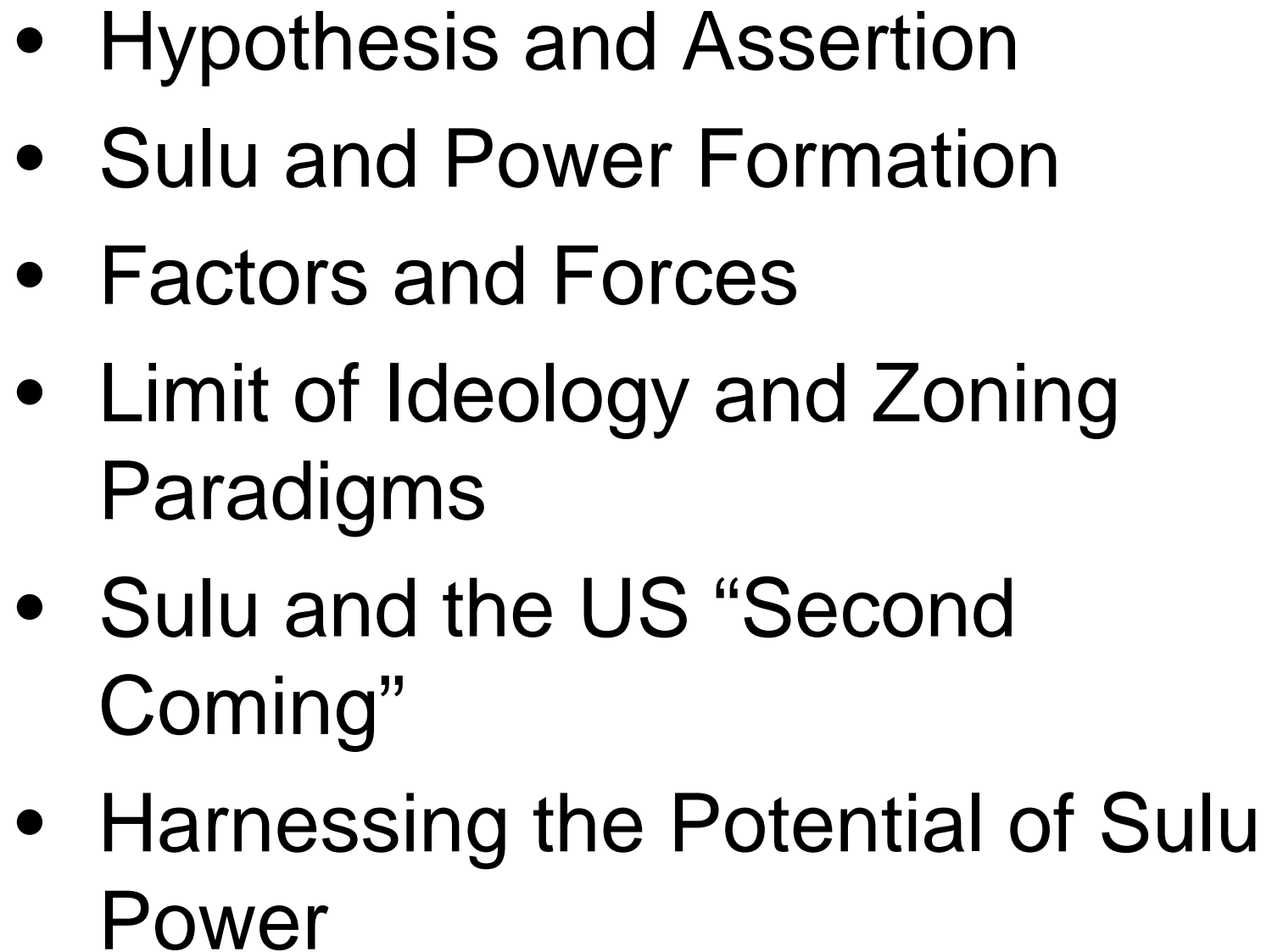
Julkipli Wadi  
Associate Professor, UP



“Sulu Archipelago looks like a shovel:  
hence, she has the dogged ability to fill  
itself; yet, whenever she is about to  
reach the peak of power, grandeur and  
wealth, she is doomed to tip over.”

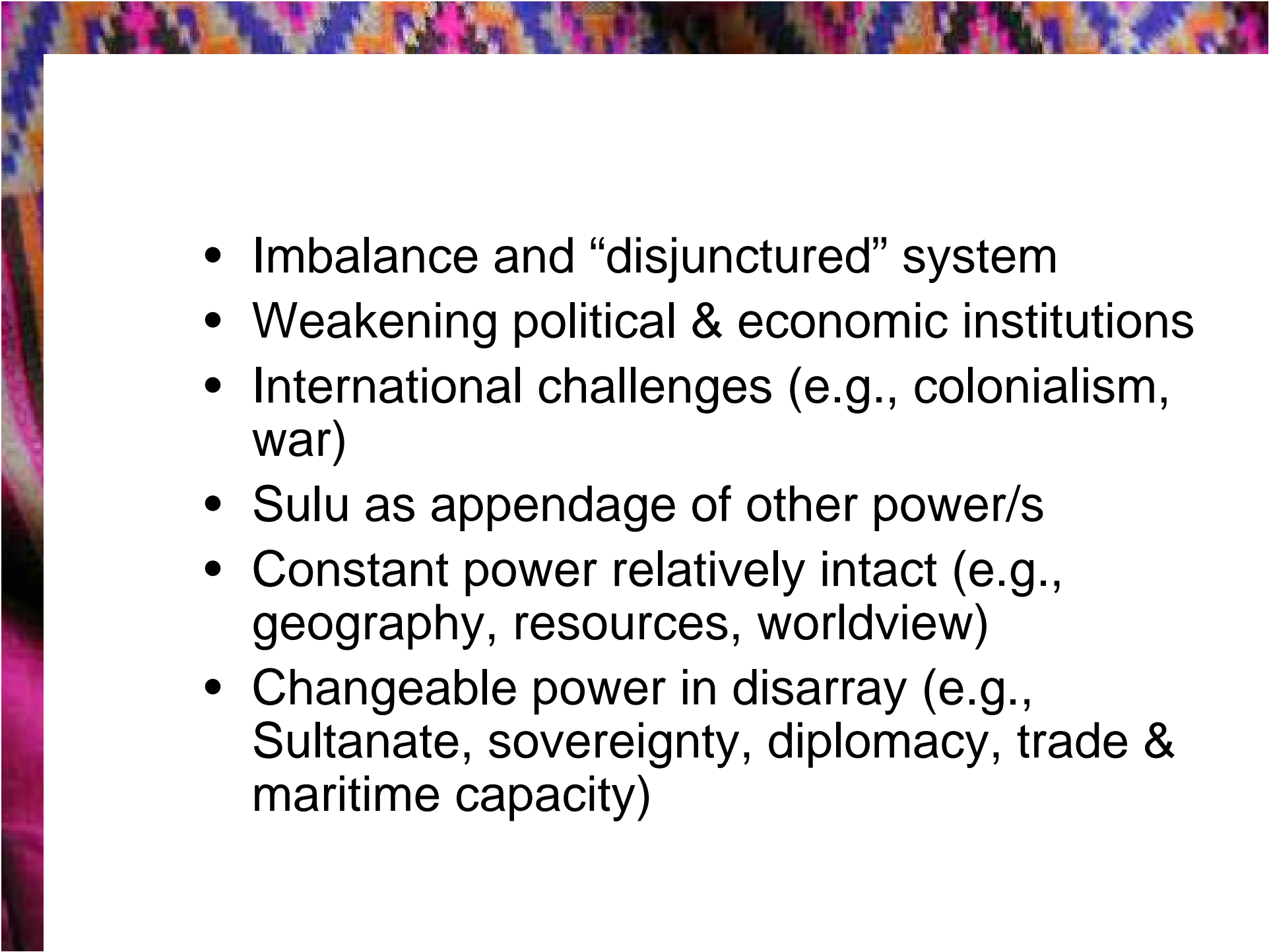
- Tausug Chinese aphorism



- 
- Hypothesis and Assertion
  - Sulu and Power Formation
  - Factors and Forces
  - Limit of Ideology and Zoning Paradigms
  - Sulu and the US “Second Coming”
  - Harnessing the Potential of Sulu Power

# Hypothesis

- 3 great epochs of Sulu history: communal, imperial (dynastic/colonial), nation-states
- Pre-Indic Influence, Sulu Hindu Kingdom, Sulu Sultanate, nation-state  
(Tan, 2003), (Hedjazi, 2002)
- Sulu power: constant & changeable
- Balance: Domestic & international
- Longevity & resilience of Sulu as civilization

- 
- Imbalance and “disjunctured” system
  - Weakening political & economic institutions
  - International challenges (e.g., colonialism, war)
  - Sulu as appendage of other power/s
  - Constant power relatively intact (e.g., geography, resources, worldview)
  - Changeable power in disarray (e.g., Sultanate, sovereignty, diplomacy, trade & maritime capacity)

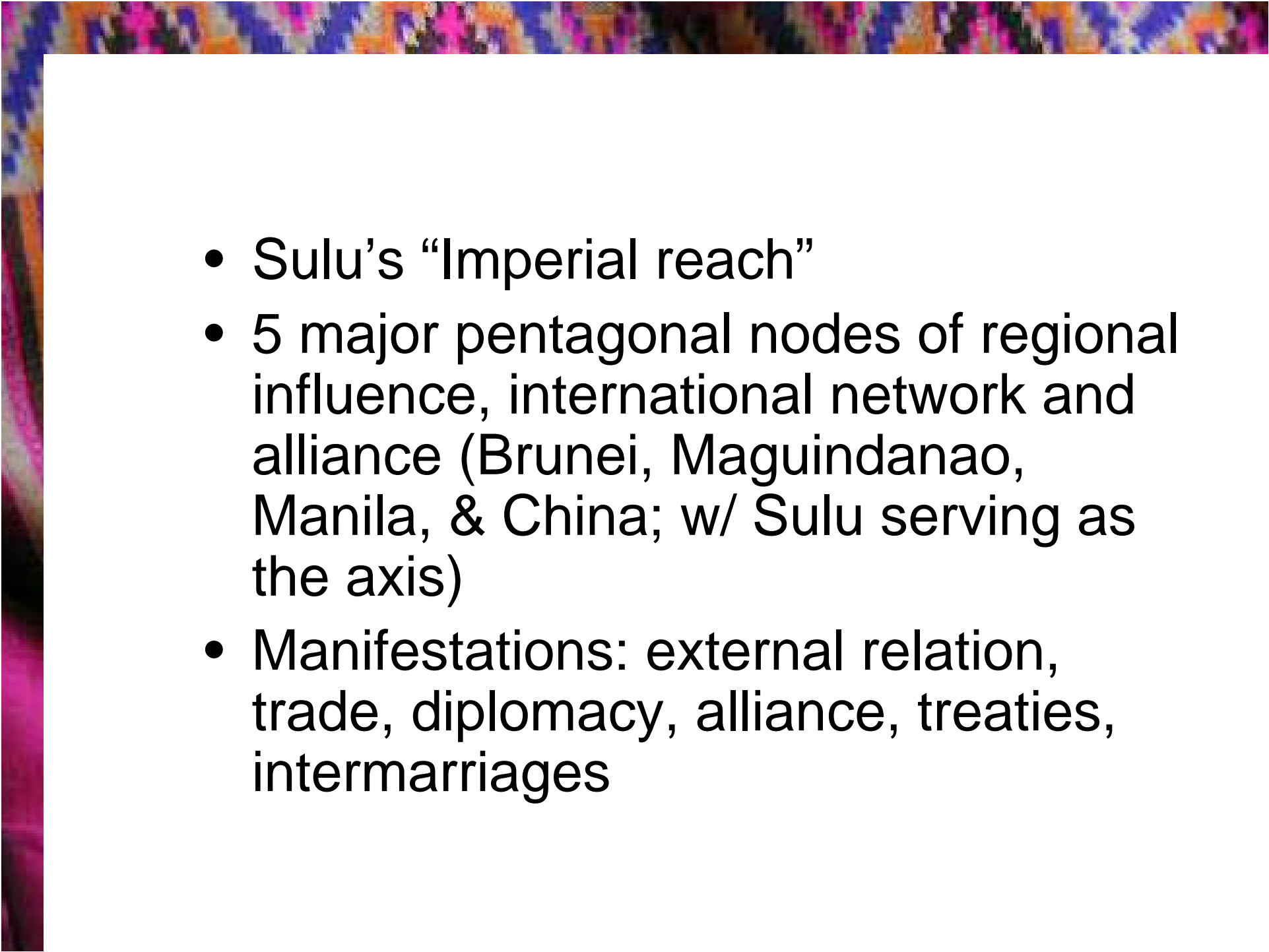
# Approaches

- National Power
  - 2 categories: constant, changeable
  - Constant (Land, resource, food)
  - Changeable (sovereignty, government, population, military, industrial capacity, diplomacy etc)
- Ibn Khaldun's cyclical concept of civilizations

# Sulu and Power Formation

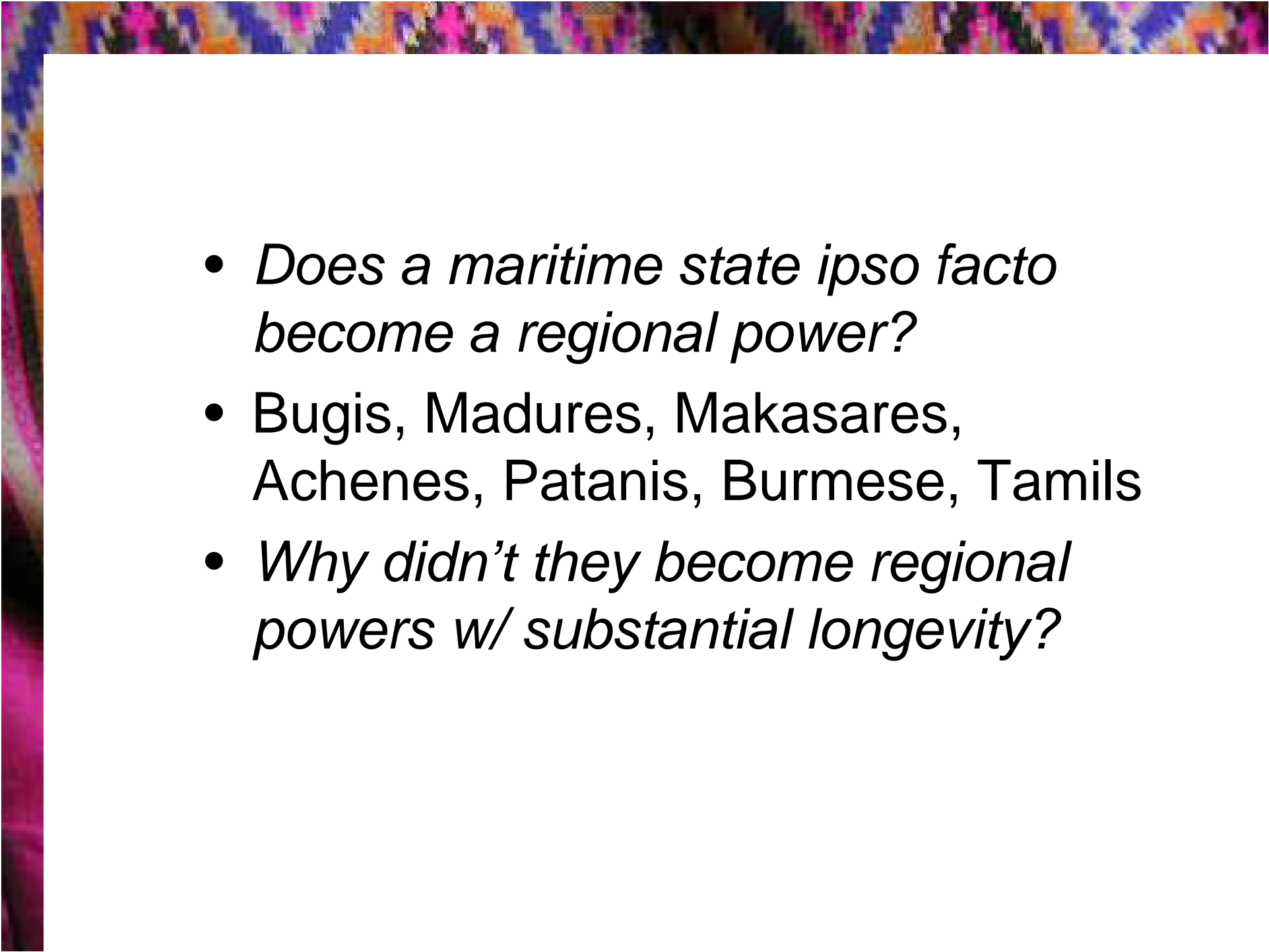
- Regional Power?

*Why did Sulu become a regional power despite being just an Archipelagic state w/ only a diameter of 37 miles measured from east to west?*

- 
- Sulu's "Imperial reach"
  - 5 major pentagonal nodes of regional influence, international network and alliance (Brunei, Maguindanao, Manila, & China; w/ Sulu serving as the axis)
  - Manifestations: external relation, trade, diplomacy, alliance, treaties, intermarriages

- 
- Requisite of regional power
  - Compact state

*“Who rules East Europe commands the Heartland; who rules the heartland commands the World-Island; who rules the World-Islands controls the world.”* (Harold Mackinder)

- 
- *Does a maritime state ipso facto become a regional power?*
  - Bugis, Madures, Makasares, Achenes, Patanis, Burmese, Tamils
  - *Why didn't they become regional powers w/ substantial longevity?*



## Longevity of Sulu power

*What explains the longevity of Sulu power cutting across the three epochs of history (communal, imperial, nation-state) particularly the Sulu sultanate?*

# Cycle and longevity of empire/dynasty

Ibn Khaldun theory on cycle of civilizations

Badawi (Primitive) & Hadari (Advanced)

Assabiyah (Group feeling) & Din (e.g., Islam)

Birth, Peak, Decline...

Internal & external factors

Arab world & Islamic world

Land-based empire

Break on succession by default, conquest...

*Is Khaldun theory applicable on maritime power like Sulu which is an archipelagic state?*

Internal (yes; succession); external (no; conquest)

No Asian power tried or succeeded to conquer Sulu and change the political institution anew or change the line of succession in the sultanate

Western colonialism: Domination and control not succession

## Islamic Empires:

### Sulu's historical pedigree & longevity

Sulu Sultanate (1450-1915) 465 yrs.

Arab: Mamluks (1250-1516) 266 yrs.

Turkey: Ottoman Empire (1281-1924)  
643 yrs.

Persia: Safavids (1501-1732) 231 yrs.

India: Mughal Empire (1526-1858)  
332 yrs.

# Factors and Forces

- Sulu sultanate as an ideological state (Majul, 1999) – “Moro Wars”  
International diplomacy (e.g, treaty-making) (Mastura, 1984), (Wadi, 1998)  
When Sulu sultanate about to reach its peak, it has to face the first crucible:  
Spanish colonialism  
When it's in decline another crucible struck: American colonialism (7th stage of “Moro war”) and later Philippine colonialism (8th stage)

- Sulu as maritime state (Warren) –  
“Sulu Zone” (1768-1898)  
Triangular trade: Britain, China, Sulu  
Slave-raiding  
Bitter pill than make people object of war of  
extermination  
Historical antagonism (Pillage and plunder of  
Manila by Legaspi in 1571; Brunei by Gov. Sande  
in 1578; Sulu in 1578; Maguindanao in 1578 to  
name a few w/ Vizayan as mercenaries and  
errands  
Lower Asabiyyah  
From faith to crass economic pursuit/plunder:  
Crusade, Arab zealots in Spain

# Limit of ideology & “zoning”

- Majul

Unfinished, half-baked Khladunian discourse

Sulu history in continuing descending line

Implications: For Tausug to carry “salvific spirit” & missionary psychology to save and to build a lost kingdom

What should be done?

Methodological legacy



- Warren

“Sulu Zone”: A classic on its own right

Tainted by Orientalism (e.g., geography as cognate to power; scientific geography” as “commercial geography:” “zoning” as measuring and controlling

Edward Said: “Orientalism” (1979); Culture and Imperialism (1993)

Presently: “Sulu Zone” with new player – United States w/ Sulu as mere spectator

# New Reality in “Sulu Zone:” US Second Coming

- Post-cold war
- Islamic fundamentalism, 9/11
- Mindanao and Sulu as “second front of terror”
- Bloated media war on international terrorism; hallow claim of China’s threat
- US troops in Zamboanga & Sulu
- US control of Malacca Strait; later, Sulu Sea
- GRP-Exxon Mobil oil deal, etc.

# Harnessing potential of Sulu power

- Khaldunian thesis
- Sulu power as intact power (constant, changeable)
- Human resource (gausbaugbug; pangaddatan, pag-agama, pag-iman)
- Tausug *sprit d corp* is alive
- Physical resources (Land, food, flora and fauna, fruits, knowledge on monsoon (musim), land & marine life, away from typhoon belt, Sulu's exotic beauty remains unmolested by time)
- Tausug potential to be expressed in productive endeavors
- Reviving Sulu-China relation: Imperative for the 21<sup>st</sup> century



Magsukul kaniyu katan!