

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF MORO DISSENSION AND CONSCIOUSNESS
IN MINDANAO

by:

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The Moros

The term "Moros" often used to refer to the Muslims in Southern Philippines, was taken from the Spanish corruption which was erroneously used to identify such inhabitants as similar to Moors in Northern Africa. The Moors were engaged by the Spaniards and the Portuguese in a war of attrition for a hundred years. The Moros are largely found in the island of Mindanao, in the Sulu Archipelago and in the portion of the island of Palawan south of Puerto Princesa (Gowing, 1979:1). Among the Moros, thirteen ethnolinguistic groups have been identified, namely: the Palawan group--Palawani, Molbog and Jama Mapun; the Sulu groups--Tausug, Samal and Badjao; Mindanao groups--Maranao, Ilanun, Maguindanao, Kalibugan, Yakan, Karaga and Sangil. Their estimated population in 1975 was 2,288,000 (Gowing 1979:2).

Long before the Spaniards arrived in the Philippines, Mindanao was already the home of the Moros who claimed jurisdiction over the areas along the Gulf of Davao and Sarangani in the south, Misamis Oriental in the north and areas in the west beyond Zamboanga Peninsula, including Basilan and the Sulu Archipelago.

This ancestral domain is shared by three major sultanates (Sulu, Maguindanao and Lanao) which claimed descent from the Prophet upon the introduction of Islam in the area. The Sultanate whose jurisdiction then covered all the islands in the Sulu Archipelago wields political and economic influence reaching as far as Basilan and Zamboanga. The Sultanate of Pulangi, as well as the prominent Sultanate of Maguindanao and the Sultanate of Buayan, controlled the whole region of Cotabato and the adjacent areas of Davao and Sarangani. The Sultanate of Lanao was composed of "Pat-a-paggamong a Ranao," meaning the Four Sultanate of Lanao, which was further broken down into 15 supported sultanates and 28 supporting sultanates. The Lanao sultanate covered the area stretching from the Tagoloan River in Misamis Oriental to Pangil Bay and from the border of Zamboanga to the southern border between Lanao and Cotabato.

With an ancestry dating back to the great empire builders of Asia (Indonesia and Malaysia) and enriched by the introduction of Islam, Moro leadership and/or the government was the most advanced and developed compared to any baranganic system existing before the coming of Islam (Hurley 1936).

Islam as the unifying factor among every heart and soul of Moro society "became the well-spring of an emergent Moro nationality" (Gowing 1979:26). When the Spaniards began to escalate their colonial design in Moroland, the way they were greeted by the Moros was very different from the way they were greeted in the Visayas and Luzon. What they encountered was a proud people. One reason for this was that "Islam had given Muslim communities a more advanced social and political system than was available in the northern islands" (George 1980:38). It is not surprising to note, therefore, that in the later years of Spanish occupation in Mindanao, the Spaniards found it difficult to impose their colonial policies.

The Initial Encounter: Spanish Policy in Moroland

Spain's policy in Moroland was included in the set of instructions addressed by Governor-General Francisco de Sande to Captain Figueroa after the successful naval and military expedition to Borneo in 1578. The order

included, among others, four basic instructions:

- 1) Get them to acknowledge Spanish sovereignty over their territory.
- 2) Promote trade with them while obliging them to limit their trade to the Philippine Islands; and discover the natural resources of the Moroland with a view to their commercial exploitation.
- 3) Bring an end to Moro "piracy" against Spanish shipping, and put an end to Moro raids on the Christianized settlements of the Visayas and Luzon.
- 4) Begin the Hispanization and Christianization of the Moros, in line with the pattern followed with respect to other Filipino groups (Gowing 1979:29-30).

This grand plan was the standard procedure Spain applied to all conquered territories as a basic foundation of her colonial gain. However, it is worth noting that when the last element contained in Captain Figueroa's instruction was applied in Moroland, it gained no positive response from the Moros up to the end of the Spanish period in the Philippines. Initially, when the Muslim knew of the Spanish presence in their area, they were unhappy about it "for this was not only an intrusion into their commercial activities but a threat to their expanding political influence, considering that the royal families of Manila and Sulu were related to that of Brunei. Moreover, the strangers belong to another faith which was looked upon as a threat to their own" (Majul 1973:81). As a matter of fact, when Spain intensified their efforts to induce Hispanization and Christianization in Moroland, the Moro resistance against them became stronger. Actually, the last elements in Spain's policy was at the root of the fierce Moro resistance against the Spaniards and their Christian allies (Gowing 1979:30).

The Spanish policies on Mindanao were contained in two sets of instruction but which were practically of the same substance. One was issued to Captain Figueroa in 1578, and the other to Captain Rivera in 1579. However, the initial military expedition to Mindanao in 1596 fell into a trap set up by a ferocious Maguindanaon warriors. The last expedition under Captain Rivera ended in retreat in Sulu. Three years after that unsuccessful Spanish expedition, both the Datus of Maguindanao and Buayan organized the biggest naval retaliatory raids against Spain and Christian allies in the Visayas. Spanish frustration over these raids was described this way:

Following stiff Muslim resistance, Spanish policy became, during most of the seventeenth century, one of fierce aggression. Expeditions went on rampage one after another, Muslim sea-crafts and farm were destroyed wholesale, commercial activities upon which southern society depended were wracked, several villages attacked and burned (George 1980:39).

Spanish aggression did not frighten the Moros nor put their resistance to an end. Brave Moro fighters took shelter in the hills and carried out sporadic guerrilla activities against enemy positions. Somehow, the Moros were able to fortify their villages and build strong kotas to prevent Spanish intrusion into their territories. This period in history according to Majul, covers three-hundred years of "Moro wars."

The highlight of the Moro resistance came about during Sultan Kudarat's time (1619-1662). After Kudarat took over the sultanate throne from his ailing father, he imposed his will all over Mindanao and united "the Muslims of Cotabato, Lanao, Davao, Sulu, Zamboanga and Borneo". He fought the Spaniards bitterly and refused to become subservient to the Spanish Crown (Glang 1969:43). It was Kudarat who heightened the Moros sense of nationalism when he delivered a speech addressed to the Maranaos

in the lake region of Lanao. His speech was recorded by Jesuit Combes in full.

What have you done? Do you realize what subjection would reduce you to? A toilsome slavery under the Spaniards! Turn your eyes to the subject nations and look at the misery to which such glorious nations had been reduced to. Look at the Tagulogs and Visayans! Are you better than they? Do you think that the Spaniards consider you of better stuff? Have you not seen how the Spaniards trample them under their feet? Do you not see everyday how they are obliged to work at the oars and at the factories with all their rigors? Can you tolerate anyone with a little Spanish blood to beat you up and grasp the fruits of your labor? Allow yourself to be subjects (today) and tomorrow you will be at the oars; I, at least will be a pilot, the biggest favor they will allow a chief. Do not let their sweet words deceive you; their promises facilitate their deceits, which, little by little, enable them to control everything. Reflect on how even the minor promises to the chiefs of other nations were not honored until they became master of them all. See now what is being done to these chiefs and how they are being led by a rod (Majul 1973:141).

Soon thereafter, "the Maranaos, who merely refused passively in the beginning to cooperate with the Spanish troops, pretty soon were up in arms against the newly built fort. . ." (Majul 1973:42). Kudarat, after recuperating from the wounds in the battle of Imitan in 1637, allied with the Ilanuns to strengthen Moro resistance against the Spaniards. But after his temporary inactivity, it was quite difficult now for Kudarat to consolidate all his gains and to secure the cooperation of the Sultanate of Buayan who entered into a peace treaty with Spain. Nevertheless, for him, the situation called for no turning back. Even when the Spaniards were in full battle gear and strengthened their forts around the Pulangi-area, Kudarat pushed harder into the Spanish line of defense and tried to take them by surprise. As this developed, the Sulus, who suffered defeat from Corcuera in 1638, regained their strength and renewed their resistance against the Spaniards. Thus, at the outset there was generally an orchestrated Moro resistance to oppose and dislodge the Spanish forces in Mindanao.

In 1645, while the Moros were regaining their vigor in pushing the Spaniards back, the Spanish high command in Manila ordered its troops in Mindanao withdrawn in preparation for a possible Dutch attack of Manila. In order to maintain the Spanish garrisons in Mindanao and Sulu, Spain entered into a treaty with Kudarat in 1645 and with the Sulus in 1646. Such treaty gave Kudarat much power and influence over Mindanao and earned him the reputation "Lord of Mindanao". According to Gowing (1979:33), the 1645 treaty with Sultan Kudarat recognized that his sphere of influence extended along the entire coastal area from Sibugay Bay (in Zamboanga Peninsula) to the Gulf of Davao, and into the interior to include the Maranao territory and the upper reaches and tributaries of the Pulangi. Gowing added that with such a sphere of influence, "aside from the present Republic, the Philippines has never had a more extensive state governed by Filipinos than the Sultanate of Maguindano in Kudarat's time." And as a point of reference in the 1976 Tripoli Agreement, the demand of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) to include 13 provinces and cities as part of the autonomous region in Mindanao could be derived from the 1645 treaty.

What was revealing during the entire period of the Moro wars was the shaping of two different forms of ethnic stereotypes: the Moros who were Islamized and branded as pirates, slaves and barbarians, on one hand,

and the Indios who were Christianized and quickly succumbed to the whims and caprices of Spain on the other. This tactical dichotomy created and applied by Spain throughout the colonial period made these two Malayan stocks poles apart in their perceived identity of themselves. Both were placed under extreme prejudice. George commented on this (1980:44) saying that "in areas where they (Spaniard) enjoyed unchallenged authority, the Spaniards employed various stratagems to condition the minds of the locals. As part of the intensive religious instruction imparted to the people, the converted masses were told that the Muslims were the natural enemies of the faith and values of Christians. Public subscription were raised to support military campaigns against Muslim communities. Town rallies, children's assemblies, and all-out publicity on such occasions generated mass hysteria against the very mention of the word "Moro."

As this situation developed, the Moros though for a while why their Malayan brothers were fighting on the side of the intruders. This filled them with sorrow, but this feeling slowly turned into hatred. The bond of friendship and love between the two groups of one Malayan stock was lost amidst the wedge of disunity set between them. When the Spanish colonizers left, there was not only no meeting of minds between the Christian and Muslim peoples left behind; there was pronounced natural hostility (George 1980:47).

About two years after the Spaniards attacked Fort Marawi in 1895, the wind of conquest turned against Spain in the Philippines. In May, 1898, the American Asiatic Fleet surprised and demolished the Spanish squadron in a one-sided naval battle in Manila Bay.

Emilio Aguinaldo was then the leader of the Philippine revolutionary forces against Spain during the coming of the Americans. Together with his junta who were on voluntary exile abroad, he consolidated all efforts to solicit armaments and moral support in the Philippines and abroad, subsequently coordinating with the Americans in landing troops to escalate the war against Spain on land. As sporadic skirmishes went on land between the American and the Spaniards, Aguinaldo proclaimed Philippine Independence on June 12, 1898. Seven months after Sultan of Sulu "pledging" that the birth of the Philippine Republic would "respect absolutely the beliefs and traditions of such islands in order to establish on a solid basis the bond of fraternal unity demanded by our mutual interest..." (Gowing 1977:26). The message could have been an initial attempt towards unification of "two different minds" had events in the north not caught up with it. A few weeks after the receipt of that message, the situation in the north changed as Filipino-American relations tottered on the brink of a collapse.

As the situation worsened, Emilio Aguinaldo once more issued orders to his cousin Baldomero Aguinaldo, the Commander of the "South Region" of the Philippine Republic, to negotiate with the Sulu Sultan. The former wrote the sultan authorizing him to establish in all the rancheries (the territorial domain of a datu or sultan) of Mindanao and Sulu a government in accordance with the decrees of the Republic" (Gowing 1977:26). Gowing explained further that in spite of necessity to forge political relations between the northern and the southern fronts, the sultan paid no attention to the call because neither he nor his advisers could see "any real gain in allying themselves with their traditional enemies, the Christian Filipinos". Had the northern and southern fronts forged a political and military alliance, the event could have radically changed the direction of Philippine History.

Five months after the conclusion of the Treaty of Paris on December 10, 1898, the American troops occupied Sulu and Mindanao and assumed Spain's erstwhile responsibility and burden there.

The Second Encounter: American Mandate in Moroland

At the height of the Spanish-American War in the Philippines, American troop movements were escalated behind the enemy line without prior consultations with the Filipino contingents high command. This led Aguinaldo to suspect that America wanted him out in this war. It was only in February, 1899 that the reason became quite clear. As the Filipino-American rift worsened, the Americans knew that it would be difficult for them to face two enemies at the same time: The Moros in the south and the Katipuneros in the north.

While the war in the north went on, in August, 1899, the American high command in the Philippines issued orders to Brig. Gen. John Bates authorizing him to enter into negotiations with Sulu Sultan Jamal-ul-Kiram II, with a further instruction to relay the message "that US Army maintained only token forces in Moroland and followed a strictly 'non-interference policy' with respect to the Moros, except for curbing the traffic in slaves and forbidding certain 'barbaric' practices" (Gowing 1979:34-35). And as a matter of confidence, the sultan agreed. But, "the Muslim Filipinos undoubtedly saw this arrangement from a different point of view. The Americans believed that they were keeping the Muslims peaceful while at the same time securing their acknowledgment of United States sovereignty. The Muslim leaders, on the other hand, seemed to believe that their diplomacy had kept the Americans out of their internal affairs and guaranteed their way of life on terms no worse than those which had been imposed by the Spaniards" (Gowing-McAmis 1974:34).

While the American soldiers were in hot pursuit of Aguinaldo, the American government was preparing for the installation of their mandate in the newly acquired Philippine territory. With everything fitting into the grand plan in May 1899, President William McKinley reiterated his government's policy before the American legislature that "the Philippines is not ours to exploit but to develop, to civilize, to educate, to train in the science of self-government..." (Gowing 1977:15). Gowing remarked that the same basic policy was applied in Moroland.

As total American victory in the north neared its realization with the capture of Aguinaldo, American officials in Manila carried out their mandate that required them to hasten the pacification of all affected areas. Their plan was almost complete except in the case of Moroland which in their mind required careful approach with regard to integration within the mainstream of Philippine politics and society. In 1902, America "decided to abandon the policy of non-interference and to exercise direct rule over the Muslims" (Gowing 1977:35). This led to the abrogation of the Bates Agreement marking the final showdown between the Americans and Muslims.

The idea that Mindanao is an inseparable part of the Philippines was not only the sole product of American policy-makers but also of Filipino leaders. As a result, the Moro Province was established under a military rule from 1903-1913. Under this regime, the "mailed-fist policy" of Gen. Leonard Wood and the "fighting prowess" of Gen. John S. Pershing challenged the Moros to resist the Americans, as evidenced by two major encounters--one in 1906, in the battle of Bud Daho, and the other in 1913, in the battle of Bud Bagsak. There were also sporadic clashes in some isolated areas in Lanao and Cotabato but these two battles were the most remarkable and decisive in the Muslim history.

According to Tan (1977:71) "The Americans viewed the Muslim armed struggle as a problem that could best be solved by initial employment of strong military pressure and subsequent adoption of conciliatory non-militaristic approaches." Thus, it happened in Mindanao, that while the Americans were engaged in major and minor military campaigns against the

Moros in line with their policy, schoolhouses were set up in Muslim areas which were supposed to invite the attention of Muslim children, especially children of datus and sultans. In addition to the teaching program, the Americans integrated the teaching of Muslim moral values and the Koran with American history, laws and culture. However, the initial program did not gain much interest among the Moro children whose parents were suspicious of falling into some kind of American trap.

Looking at the American educational scheme, one can discern that it was intended as another psychological approach to condition the mind of the Moro children not to become more of a Moro but a true believer of the American dream. With the realization of the educational plan as one aspect of American determination to establish hegemonic rule throughout the Pacific and Asian regions, the American envisioned further the establishment of a strong foundation in the Philippines by uniting all islands in the archipelago into a homogeneous and compact unit.

The appointment in December, 1913 of Frank W. Carpenter as the first civilian governor of the Moro Province, and the subsequent reorganization of the province into the Department of Mindanao and Sulu, a new development in American policy towards the Muslims emerged (Gowing, McAmis, 1974:38). The Carpenter regime in Moroland gained credibility among the Moros. In fact it achieved what other rulers were not able to do before him. However, Carpenter's policy was more of a wrapper than the candy itself that tried to attract the Moros to cooperate within the framework of the American mandate, which according to Gowing-McAmis (1974:39), was an old mandate "given a new name: it was called policy of attraction."

In 1920, the Department of Mindanao and Sulu was abolished, in line with the American policy of Filipinization and "thereafter Moro affairs were controlled by the insular government directly through the Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes in the Department of Interior" (Gowing, McAmis 1974:39). As this developed, Moro leaders became annoyed and disgusted with the idea that their areas were now administered by Christians. Towards the installation of the Commonwealth Government in 1935, the Moros were adamant to cooperate with whatever plans or goals their Christian brothers in the north devised. And as a result of subsequent Moro discussions, the Moros of Lanao filed a petition addressed to the President of the United States, expressing their unwillingness to join their Christian brothers in the north if ever independence is granted:

Dansalan, Lanao, P.I.
March 18, 1935

His Excellency
The President
of the United States
Washington, D.C., U.S.A.

Sir:

We have the honor to inform you that the leading datus of Lanao, all of the Hadjis, Imams and Kalis held a meeting for the second time. In this meeting, we discussed matters that would redound to the welfare of our people and our later generation. In the agreement that we arrived at, our people gave their unanimous approval. It was then decided that the decision arrived at must be written in the Arabic characters and then translated to English. It also decided that the result of this meeting should be forwarded to U.S. Congress through his excellency, the President of the United States of America.

On the outset, we want to be excused for daring to forward this petition to safe-guard ourselves in case of false steps which we may take and which may displease the honorable President.

We would like to inform you that we have learned that the U.S. is going to give the Philippines an independence through the efforts of Hon. Quezon, Osmena and others, that the Philippines is known as a country with different religions, practices and traditions. The Christian Filipinos occupy the Islands of Luzon and Visayas. The Moros predominate in the islands of Mindanao and Sulu. This condition will be characterized by unrest, suffering and misery and because of these, we do not desire to be independent. It is by living under the Stars and Stripes that those hardships would not bear down against. The Americans have respected our religion, customs, traditions and practices. They have also recognize our rights to our property. The American have directed most of their efforts for the welfare of our people.

Our Christian associates have for many past years shown their desire to be the only ones blessed with the leadership and have well progressive towns without sharing with us the advantage of having good towns and cities. One proof of this is that, among us there are some capable of participation in managing and administering the government but they have not been given chances to demonstrate their ability. Another proof is that the Christian Filipinos have taken control of our Insular funds which by right, we must have an equal share. Most of these funds are annually appropriated for the provinces of Luzon and the Visayas and very little are appropriated for the so called Moro provinces in the islands of Mindanao and Sulu. As a result, their provinces progress by leaps and bounds and ours are behind. Another result is that we have been and are still behind in advantages of Modern civilization and education.

One more very discriminating set of our Christian Filipino Associates is shown in the recent written Constitution of the Philippine Commonwealth. In this Constitution no provision whatsoever is made that would operate for the welfare of the Moros although in the draft of the Constitution there was a precept leading to take care of our welfare. The Constitution is all for the welfare of the Christian/Filipinos and nothing for the Moros. As proof of this our delegate did not sign the Constitution.

We have besides these many more reasons for not desiring to be away from the desiring guidance and protection of the American government. First, because we are yet weak and powerless to defend our rights as an independent nation. Second, because we are a small nation, unlike other big independent nation. It is not the proper and fitting that a small, weak and poor nation should an independent from a benevolent powerful nation. Third, we do not want to be included in the Philippine Independence because once an independent Philippines is launched troubles between us and the Christian Filipinos because from time immemorial these two people have not live harmoniously will arise. If trouble would now happen that the American are still here, more troubles would happen when the American should finally withdraw her sovereignty over these islands will be beyond imagination. It is not then proper to have antagonizing people live together under one flag, under the Philippine Independence. One proof of this that when Lanao had its Filipino Governor, many leading datus were killed for no apparent reasons. Our people can't and will never forget the bitterness of this incident. Lawlessness

in this province was rampant. When Lanao had the blessing of an American Governor, it wiped out its bad elements.

The Moros (Islam) of Mindanao and Sulu can be compared to a small child lost in the thick forest who does not know where to go. The Americans are equivalent to more than our fathers and mothers who taught us the right thing to do.

Because of these we want our reasons for not desiring to be independent from the Americans to be heard, considered and weighed considering the fact that we are weak economically also weak in power and above all we are not educated along the modern civilization. It is not legally right that the parents should abandon their child who can't yet live out in this cold and cruel world.

We would like then to pray that the American people should not release us until we are educated and had become powerful because we are like a calf who, once abandoned by its mother would be devoured by a merciless lion. Should the American people grant the Philippines an independence, the islands of Mindanao and Sulu should not be included in such independence because we do not deserve at all to be independent. Our public lands must not be given time to acquire them because most of us have no land. Our people does not yet realize the value of acquiring land of considerable areas. We do not know also how to acquire these lands by the process of law. Where shall we obtain the support of family if our lands are taken us. It will be safe for us that a law should be created restricting the acquiring of our lands by other people. This will also avoid future troubles.

Our practices, laws and the decisions of our Moro leaders should be respected similar to what the Americans have extended to us. Our religion should not be curtailed in any way. All our practices which are related to our religion of Islam should be respected because these things are what a Muslim desires to live for. Once our religion is no more, our lives are no more.

We have the honor to request further that his letter be read very well so that its contents may be understood and considered.

Very respectfully,

Hadji Bogabong
Kali sa Onayan

*The letter was written in two languages English and Arabic, signed by three hundred (300) Maranao leaders in Lanao. One of the original copies of this letter is now in the possession of the Peter Gowing Research Center, Marawi City.

But amidst all the grievances and complaints that should have resolved the pending issue, had they been attended to, the Americans as well as Filipino leaders in Manila never listened. Instead, they allowed them to deepen and snowball into unmanageable proportions.

Plans for Colonization

Mindanao was the last frontier in the Philippines where not only Spain but also America wanted to establish a full lasting and meaningful

colonial expansion. The Moro resistance had always been a threat to the Americans' plan which was implemented through strong military pressure, violence, intimidation and many kinds of terroristic acts. The campaign encountered difficulties, involving thousands of lives that were thrown to the water front, displacement of civilians, hunger and pestilence, rugged terrain and deployment of resources for the various preparation during naval and military expeditions. Spain was less successful in Mindanao throughout her pacification campaign. She maintained only a handful of forts and garrisons in Jolo, Zamboanga and Cotabato. America, on the other hand, was more resolute in attaining her ambitious plan to motivate if not force, the Muslims into joining the mainstream of Philippine society and the Philippine state system. What America achieved in her campaign in less than 30 years Spain failed to attain in her 333 years of attempts at fully colonizing Mindanao.

The lukewarm attitude of the Moros towards the colonial policy of the Americans brought the latter to the decision of resorting to colonization as an effective alternative towards solving the Muslim resistance.

Full colonization of Mindanao was also in the mind of the Spaniards shortly before the Americans came. In 1895, shortly after a Mariani Expedition was sent to Mindanao, Governor-General Blanco was coming up with a plan to establish settlements in various areas in Mindanao using Christian Filipinos from Luzon and Visayas. According to Tan (1977:73), Blanco "believed that Christian colonization was the only way to obviate the necessity of maintaining a large standing army". But time and the turn of events were never favorable to Blanco and his colonization plan.

During the American occupation the plan to colonize Mindanao was always the subject of discussions. In fact, as early as 1899, the Bureau of Insular Affairs had noted three plans on how to initiate colonization: (1) In 1899, C.A. Muir of Weatherford, Texas, called for the settlement of 1,000 Texan farmers and mechanics in areas like Mindanao, to be followed by other settlers from the poor sectors; (2) In the same year, W.G. Douglas of Baltimore suggested to the Bureau of Insular Affairs that lands in the Philippine colony be granted to 200,000 American soldiers who would be organized into 200 colonies of 1,000 each or 100 colonies of 1,000 each and 20 colonies of 5,000 each; and (3) In 1906, R. Macarthy Williamson of San Francisco proposed in a letter to the President that colonization of the Philippine colony be done by Italians and Greeks (Tan 1977:73-74). There were also other plans profounded by groups of individuals and religious sectors such as the Belgian missionaries who showed interest in opening up agricultural colonies among the Tirurays in Cotabato (Silva 1979:35). Other Americans in Mindanao also favored the separation of the southern regions as an "American Territory" (Tan 1977:74).

Wood and Pershing who were appointed military governors of the Moro Province in 1903-1906 and 1909-1913, respectively were among the top proponents in considering Mindanao colonization as a good idea. Wood believed that a "good class" of American settlers and plantation owners would not only contribute to the earnings of the province but would also be a good example to the native inhabitants (Silva 1979:36). Both Wood and Pershing agreed that the Christian settlers from the north with their knowledge and skills would serve as good models to the Muslims. Suggestively, the settlements were called colonies, an influence no doubt of America's own early history that made them perceive the south with its Muslim population as a wild frontier of "Indians".

Based on the perception of Mindanao as a wild land needing to be tested, homesteaders from the north were transported to Mindanao. Between 1913 and 1917, six agricultural colonies in Cotabato and one in Lanao were founded. Settlers were grouped together into townships to constitute a colony, with 800 to 900 square kilometers of land making up a homestead (George 1980:109). The Muslims who were made part of these colonies were

only appropriated eight (8) hectares each as compared to the Christians who were appropriated sixteen (16) hectares each. The Muslim, thus, became not only colonials in their own ancestral homeland but also victims of injustice from the hands of the colonizers.

The decision to import homesteaders from Luzon to Mindanao was made possible through the issue raised by the American colonial government about overpopulation "in Philippine areas". Actually, the Americans were just using the issue as a pretext. The census report in 1903 showed the island's population as 7,635,426, including 647,740 non-Christians. Fifteen years later, there was an increase of 2,678,884, which is not really a significant change. Another pretext used was the need to increase food production in Mindanao, after drought and grasshopper infestations had affected most of the island's cultivated lands from 1912 to 1913 and threatened to lower agricultural production. The truth of the matter is that the colonial government was just overreacting to the disenchantment of peasants, particularly in Central Luzon, over the "maldistribution of land and the inequitable appropriation of its products". Aside from the problem of population pressure on available land, capitalism and colonialism had made life for a large proportion of villages in Central Luzon more insecure than they had ever known before (Kerkvliet 1979:25).

Throughout the colonial period in the Southern Philippines, at least six agricultural colonies were in existence in Mindanao. These six colonies and their particular settlement sites were: (1) Cotabato--Pikit, Silik, Ginatilan, Peidu Pulangi, Pagalungan and Glan; (2) Davao--Kapalong, Guingga, Tagum, Lipon and Baganga; (3) Zamboanga--Labangan; (4) Basilan--Lamitan; (5) Agusan--Kabadbaran, Butuan and Buenavista; (6) Lanao--Munugan (Baloi) and Kapatagan district. This planned and accelerated transplantation of an alien culture in their midst brought no better life and future to the Muslims, particularly because their Christian co-inhabitants received greater privileges and attention from the government in the north.

Under the Republic of the Philippines

In May, 1934, the Tyding-McDuffie Act won approval in the U.S. Congress. The Act called for a Constitutional Convention and the establishment of a Commonwealth in which Filipino officials would function with virtually full powers over internal affairs until July 4, 1946, when the nation would become completely independent (Gowing 1979:171). When the news arrived in the Philippines, it spread like wildfire and public reaction all over the country was marked with praises and jubilation. For the Muslims, it did not have much meaning. To them, it meant a further betrayal and abandonment of their hope for freedom and self-determination, even as they already found themselves dispossessed of their ancestral lands by the migrant Christian Filipinos.

Preparation for the Commonwealth was not completely devoid of Moro participation; however, the Moro population in general believed that the proposed Commonwealth promised few benefits for them (Gowing 1979:172). Nevertheless, after their initial disappointment and apprehension, some Muslims gradually accepted the inevitability of the plan and not long after participated in an electoral exercise orchestrated by the Manila government.

The Muslim participation in the 1934 Constitutional Convention involved the election of four Muslims and two Christians. Arolas Tulawi and Atty. Jose Montano were elected delegates from Sulu. Datu Menandang Piang and Datu Blah Sinsuat were elected from Cotabato. Alaoya Alonto and Tomas Cabili represented Lanao.

Right after the election of the above delegates, Hadji Kamid Bog-bong, a learned Maranao Muslim sent a letter to the Governor-General, signed by 200 Maranao leaders, citing "the deep feelings of many Moros" and expressing their concern and speculation over the unfavorable outcome of the Charter to them if their problems will not be properly addressed in terms of Moro customs, traditions and, most importantly, the tenets of their religion--Islam. Gowing revealed that "the letter was not read in the convention, though the delegates from Lanao, Cotabato and Sulu did their best to represent the interest of their Moro constituents." Obviously, the six Moro representatives stood only as symbolic figures bereft of influence in the convention since their number was only a drop in a bucket, so to say. Even then, when the Charter was drafted, the Muslim delegates refused to sign their names as a gesture of disappointment.

The Commonwealth government established in 1935 was confronted with a poor economy that was tied through free trade to the United States. Compounding this was the imminent termination of this initially beneficial free trade. In addition, "the northern and central provinces of the nation were overpopulated, and dissident farmers and under-employed persons were presenting increasingly serious socio-economic and political problems" (Gowing 1979:175). Consequently, government leaders in Manila turned to Mindanao as an answer to the problem.

Legislative Act. No. 4197, otherwise known as Quirino-Recto Colonization Act, was passed on February 12, 1935. It provided for the settlement of public lands in any part of the country but with special preference to Mindanao (Silva 1979:42). Sometime the following year, the Commonwealth Government then passed Commonwealth Act 691, otherwise known as the Homestead Law, to provide assistance to tenants who had decided to move to Mindanao and Sulu (Glang 1969:14). As observed by Glang, the Homestead Law was designed "to offset the agrarian upheavals in Central Luzon and other sections of the country." This government decision to provide assistance to the would-be settlers from the north deprived the Muslims of their interests in and "propriety rights" to the land they historically occupied. This one simple but important aspect of the Muslim problem was never given a serious look by the Manila government. Neither had it examined and reviewed some details of past historical errors that would have afforded it a fuller understanding of the Muslims' disenchantment. The leaders thought of the Muslims as unfit, backward and ignorant of supposedly superior Christian values and modern civilization. To them, "the only best way to integrate the Muslim was to make him less of a Muslim, to win away from the special laws and conventions that ordained his life" (George 1980:89).

In the succeeding years, the settlement program in Mindanao was accelerated and strengthened to fully implement the government's program of promoting economic prosperity in the area. In 1939, another settlement law was passed, i.e., Commonwealth Act No. 441 which created the National Land Settlement Administration (NLSA) (Silva 1979:43). This law was designed to enforce other preceding laws that has something to do with land used in the goal of accelerating agricultural production for the food needs of the country.

But the year before the NLSA was created and pursuant to Pres. Quezon's instruction, Gen. Paulino Santos "led a team of key government officials to do a reconnaissance survey of Mindanao with the sole purpose of selecting possible sites for the settlement projects (Silva 1979:44). After less than half-a-month of ocular survey, the team covered Koronadal Valley, Kidapawan district and the Campostela-Monkayo area in Davao. And less than a month thereafter, Gen. Santos submitted to Pres. Quezon his findings which subsequently provided the basis for the issuance of Proclamation No. 383 and 384. These documents reserved the two districts, Koronadal Valley as first choice and Campostela-

Monkayo area as a second choice, for NLSA. Some weeks after Pres. Quezon proclaimed Mindanao as a reservation for settlers, Gen. Santos and a horde of migrants were on their way to the south. "The exodus began."

In the 1950's, more government-sponsored programs were formulated and implemented. The major ones were the National Resettlement and Rehabilitation Administration (NARRA) and a separate national Defense-sponsored civil assistance program called the Economic Development Corporation (EDCOR). These organizations were aimed specifically at assisting captured Huks and peasant insurgents in acquiring arable lands in areas under EDCOR and NARRA stewardship. From 1954 to 1963, NARRA administered a total of 23 resettlements all over the country, a good number of which were in Mindanao and Sulu. When the Agricultural Land Reform Code was signed into law in August, 1963, NARRA was replaced by the Land Authority, thus making land resettlement part of the general program of land reform (Silva 1979:45-46). Between the period 1963 to 1971, the Land Authority has registered at least 2,400 settlers.

Thus, for more than a generation, hundreds of Christian homesteaders were transported to the south. "They emigrated for no other reason than to have a better life in the undeveloped lands of the south". They were determined to transform their new environment into duplicate models of their home villages or towns, hoping especially to become landlords in their new environment. They brought their lowland Christian Filipino customs, values, ideas and beliefs to Mindanao and Sulu but whose effects were not only dynamic changes but also bitter conflict (Tan 1977:79).

The former peasant insurgents from the north who were transported to the south discovered that the government had no intention of making fundamental changes in their lives. These peasants were made to infiltrate what was left of the virgin lands, making it easier for Americans and other foreign corporate interests to increase their agro-industrial empires and for the non-Muslim landowners to consolidate their hegemony (Razon 1979:129).

In about 30 years or so since 1935, most of the Muslim ancestral lands were already infiltrated. The Muslims were pushed to the interior where they found their lives in disarray. This invasion, according to Razon, transformed Mindanao this way: "In 1914, it was 98% Muslim, today it is only 40% Muslim."

Thus in sum, the Muslim problem in Mindanao may be said to have started simply from one factor--land: Regardless of what had happened during the colonial period, the government and its Christian leaders, starting in 1935, could have opened their eyes and tried to find out and understand the Muslim in Mindanao. They could have paid serious attention to the early signs of Muslim discontent and reviewed the historical errors and prevented the problems of getting out of hand. The framing of the 1935 Constitution could have been the chance for the Manila government to right the inequitable and Christian-biased allocation of land in Mindanao.

One classic example, according to Glang (1969:13), of such lack of acknowledgment of the state of affairs in Muslim areas with regard to real property right is Act No. 496, known as the Land Registration Law of the Philippines. Glang elucidates further that this land registration act established the system of registering private ownership over lands,

*General Paulino Santos was appointed Governor of Lanao when Frank Carpenter (1913-1920) was the Civil Governor of the Department of Mindanao and Sulu. He was also President Quezon's Chief of Staff prior to his appointment as the Administrator of the NLSA in 1939.

and recognized only three titles to properties that could be registered under it, namely: (1) the information possessoria, (2) registration under Spanish Mortgage law, and (3) imperfect title or possession since 1894.

The above law was not effective among Muslim customs and values, nor was it made known to Muslims, considering that they were not controlled, governed or controlled by Spain. The truth of the matter is that these people were already in effective occupation of those areas which they claimed as ancestral lands, long before Islam and Spain came. Ever since, this sense of "ownership" of land had a very special connotation in the minds of Philippine Muslims. To them land was not alienable property. All land in a given area belonged to the community inhabiting that area. Individuals only received the right to use a portion of land, not to own it (George 1980: 109). So, when the settlers from the north migrated to Mindanao either by their own will or under a government-sponsored program, they were either armed with guns or with legal documents to establish ownership over Muslim lands.

When the 1935 Constitution was drafted, its style and content were patterned after Western moral and legal laws which were, in general, influenced by Christian values. Although there were Muslim representatives during the convention, their number was small to have the necessary clout for protecting the Muslim interests.

The idea of integration appeared not to be a good way of bringing the Muslims closer to the Philippine state system. The idea was symbolic and showed a lack of respect for the Muslim culture. So for a decade after the constitutional ratification, the Muslims faced a giant question: "Where do we go from here?"

Struggle for Self Determination

Senator Mamintal Tamano (1979:238-239) who was then the Commissioner of the Commission on National Integration once reiterated that:

Despite a common denominator of tolerance plus good intentions, the so-called Muslim problem remains unresolved, because all previous administration have failed to erase from the minds of the Muslims four latent psychological fears which are stumbling blocks to their wholehearted support of government policy. These fears and misgivings are common to all Filipino Muslims, from the simple unlettered man up to those who have had the benefit of Western education. As a matter of fact, the more perceptive he becomes the more deeply he feels these:

- 1) Fear that they will be alienated from their religion;
- 2) Fear that they are being displaced from their ancestral home;
- 3) Fear that they have no future in this country because they really do not participate in their government nor share in the economic benefits derived from the exploitation of the natural resources;
- 4) Fear of losing cherished values, customs and tradition.

For more than 30 years since the inception of the Commonwealth Government, the Muslims felt that the government had never been so decisive in its commitment to bring substantial and constructive solutions to their problems. And whenever they were made to believe that the government would redeem them from social retrogression, the gestures were no longer taken as credible.

In 1968, the Muslim students in Manila protested the massacre of several Muslims who were undergoing military training in the island of Corregidor. Amidst the subsequent popular clamor for justice, on May 1, 1968, Udtog Matalam, a former governor of Cotabato province, organized the Muslim Independence Movement (MIM), and advocated for the secession of Mindanao, Sulu and Palawan from the Republic of the Philippines as well as the creation of an Islamic state--"The Republic of Mindanao and Sulu." On August 26, 1968, the MIM declaration of policy was approved at Pagalungan, Cotabato. Copies of this declaration were given to the United Nations, heads of all Muslim states and governments, and Muslim leaders in the Philippines and other countries (Glang 1969:24). But months after it gained publicity, "there was no immediate result of the move for independence". It was learned later that Datu Udtog Matalam accepted the invitation of President Ferdinand Marcos to become his adviser on Muslim affairs. The movement disintegrated quickly suffering from a lack of sustained support and campaign with the cooperation of its leader with the Philippine national leadership.

Following the death of the MIM, a group of young Muslim students, mostly from Manila universities, gathered secretly in Zamboanga City. The group included a young political science professor of the University of the Philippines--Nur Misuari, as well as Abulkayer Alonto, Jamail Lucman, Utoh Salahuddin, Ali Sansaluna, Ramit "Daddy" Hassan, Amilpasa Bandaying, Abdul Alonto and Sali Wali. The group organized themselves, drew a manifesto and discussed their planned trip abroad. In the words of Sali Wali (1980:6), "this group was to become the first batch of the top 90 who will be trained on guerilla warfare at Pangor Island, West Malaysia". The first batch was composed of the so-called top 20, namely: Amilpasa "Caloy" Bandaying, Jamil "Jimmy" Lucman, Hudan "Haj" Abubakar, Dimrsangkay "Dimas" Pundato, Sabturaji "Ji" Salmadan, Alver "Boy" Alonto, Abdul "Bobby" Alonto, Mike "Japanasi" Mayarang, Casar Cana, Ali Clay Sansaluna, Goerge Enampadan, Manran, Ramit "Daddy" Hassan, Biantay Lim, Abubakar "Baka" Juli, Asamlil Amil, Akmad Sumandal and Sali Wali.

The group of the first top 20 left Sulu on December 30, 1968 aboard a motor-boat. This group was followed later by a second, third and fourth batches, thus completing the first top 90 that was to train in Malaysia. While they were on military training abroad, the group secretly decided to organize themselves into one solid front henceforth to be known as the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), with Nur Misuari as Chairman, Abulkayer Alonto as Vice-Chairman and Jimmy Lucman, Caloy Bandaying, Utoh Salahudin, Ramit Hassan and Sali Wali as members of the committee otherwise known as the group of seven before it was formalized into a political structure with its operational network. After more than a year of military training, the group returned home, secretly slipping into their respective home provinces.

The Moro National Liberation Front was organized with the primary objective of creating an independent state for the Muslims in Mindanao and of establishing a government under the precepts of Islamic socialism. As a political unit, "the MNLF has a separate sword arm, the Bangsa Moro Army (BMA)," which operates within the framework of the MNLF Central Committee (George 1980:201).

Lila Nobles, (1979:43-44) a Professor of Social Science at the University of San Jose, California, spent a year in Mindanao to study the nature, structure and development of the MNLF in the area. She described the characteristics of the MNLF structure in the following manner:

The nature of the MNLF's development explains important characteristics of its structure. While considerable consolidation has taken place since 1972, the Front remains a loosely knit organization. Formally, the MNLF has parallel political and military structures. The political structure consists of a central committee of about twenty, a political bureau, and provincial and barrio committees. The Bangsa Moro Army has a field marshal under but not directly supervised by the central committee: field marshals at the provincial level; and zone-commanders at the municipal level.

After the declaration of martial law in the Philippines in 1972, conflict in Mindanao erupted between the government forces and the Muslim rebel forces--all armed to the teeth, so to say. The war escalated all over Mindanao except in the eastern part of the island. Death tolls were high and tens of thousands of civilians both Muslims and Christians, caught in the crossfire, became dislocated and homeless. The Muslims who claimed to have the highest civilian casualties since the conflict broke out, accused the Philippine government of crimes committed against the Muslims in Mindanao and subsequently urged the Muslims all over the world to protest and intervene in the conflict.

From 1972 to 1978, the Muslim problems in Mindanao were addressed to the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) from which they gained attention and support. With this move, the Mindanao conflict also captured international attention. In 1976, after a thorough study of the Mindanao problem, the OIC finally decided that the MNLF and the Philippine Government should discuss their terms of agreement through a negotiation process to be hosted by the government of Libya. Thus, from October to December 1976, things worked out as planned. On December 23, 1976, both parties, i.e., the Philippine Government and the MNLF, signed a document which, by its nature and content, ensured a solution to the Muslim problem in Mindanao. This was the well-known "Tripoli Agreement".

The Tripoli Agreement provides, among others, for the creation of an autonomous region in Mindanao, and the inclusion in this region of the provinces of Lanao del Sur, Lanao del Norte, Davao del Sur, South Cotabato, North Cotabato, Sultan Kudarat, Maguindanao, Zamboanga del Sur, Zamboanga del Norte, Basilan, Sulu, Tawi-Tawi and Palawan and all major cities involved. Months after the signing of the agreement, "Pres. Marcos issued Proclamation No. 1628 declaring autonomy" in 13 provinces in Mindanao which were named in the agreement (Mastura 1986:40). And subsequently, following the agreement between Pres. Marcos and Pres. Ghadaffi, the document provided that "the people be asked how to organize themselves administratively with the areas of autonomy through a referendum" (Mastura 1986:37). Despite the MNLF protest on the manner by which questions were worded in the referendum, the consultative process went ahead anyway.

The results of the referendum were not acceptable as far as the MNLF was concerned. The MNLF accused the Philippine government of non-compliance with the intent of the accord. Despite all accusations and complaints from the Muslim side, Pres. Marcos issued Proclamation No. 1628-A on May 7, 1977 which proclaimed the adoption and implementation of the results of the referendum-plebiscite of April 17 (Mastura 1986:40). It could be that the Marcos government was taking the necessary steps to effect a lasting solution to the Muslim problem in Mindanao; but it disregarded Muslim protests over the referendum and of the provisions of the Tripoli Agreement doomed its efforts to failure. The agreement itself embodied provisions which, had they been enforced to the latter by the government when the time and circumstances were still conducive to their implementation, could have laid the problem to rest, and could have radically changed the direction of Philippine history (De los Santos 1986:17).