

13 STORIES OF ISLAMIC LEADERSHIP

Volume I



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The Islamic Leadership Development Program (ILDLP) is aimed at developing, supporting, and propagating an approach to leadership development that is particularly suited to Muslim communities in the Philippines, Malaysia, and Indonesia. Its goal is ultimately to contribute to the development of leaders who are committed to reforming the social, economic, and political systems in their respective communities and contributing to the growth of more productive, peaceful, and progressive Muslim communities in Southeast Asia.



In May 2008, the AIM–TeaM Energy Center launched the Islamic Leadership Development Program with the generous support of the British Embassy in Manila. The initiative was framed in response to the leadership crisis besetting many communities in Muslim Mindanao, as research studies and experience have repeatedly shown. Instead of helping address the inequities in these areas, oftentimes the leaders were themselves so entrenched in the systems propagating poverty and conflict that they had become a part of the problem.

ILDLP aimed to develop a leadership framework that was very much grounded in the context of these communities, not only to better understand the problem but to surface ideas and solutions from them as well. That, in fact, was one of program's most important goals: to ensure that its content and output would be developed by implementors and partner-beneficiaries themselves, thus giving them a voice in, and ownership over the resulting outputs. In line with this, its earliest activities involved consultations with members of the ulama, the academe, the religious, youth, women, and civil society sectors, and the revolutionary organizations across significant hubs of Muslim Mindanao. It also met with development partner institutions active in the area and with recognized groups and scholars from Indonesia and Malaysia for input and feedback on the program.

With the identification of ILDP's research agenda and then again with the completion of its research on the Islamic perspectives on leadership, this type of intensive engagement has continued and even deepened. From simply giving input to fulfilling research and validation roles and participating in framework, curriculum, and learning materials development, the more thorough involvement of different groups and tribes from Muslim Mindanao, and partners in the region has also meant the propagation of the framework within and by its stakeholder base. Now, with the start of the Islamic Leadership Fellows Program, and particularly with the mix of participants and resource persons from three different Muslim communities, ILDP and its partners have embarked on a new stage for the program, one that will test all its previous work and provide valuable information for its future direction.



To prepare for the program's framework and module development activities, ILDP conducted three research initiatives over the third quarter of 2008. One of them was the preparation of thirteen case studies on successful or effective Muslim leaders in the Philippines, particularly those exemplifying certain tenets of leadership important from an Islamic perspective. These are the stories which are found in this compilation.



FELLOWS STORIES



Shahana Abdulwahid

This case was written by Jess Alfonso A. Macasaet for the Asian Institute of Management-TeaM Energy Center for Bridging Societal Divides. This case is prepared solely for the purpose of class discussion. It is neither designed nor intended as an illustration of correct or incorrect management of the problems or issues contained in the case. Copyright 2009.

She was often described by her fellow students as ‘willing to answer questions,’ as someone who was ‘genuinely interested’ in hearing about their problems. This was how Shahana Abdulwahid marked her days in campus politics – first as councilor, then as Chairperson of the student council, and recently as Student Regent at the University of the Philippines (UP) in Diliman. As a student leader, she coordinated discussions regarding UP’s fee increases, ensuring that all university stakeholders were heard on the matter. She also represented the interests of the university’s Muslim community, and ultimately served as UP’s first female Muslim Student Regent. “I was very thankful that I had been given the chance to be of service to the other students the best way I could,” she stated, her modest response as much a trademark as her wire-rimmed eyeglasses and hijab.

EARLY INFLUENCES: FAMILY, ETHNICITY, AND SCHOOLING

Shahana Abdulwahid was the daughter of former Regional Trial Court Judge and current Court of Appeals Justice Hakim and wife Naida Edding. She studied in a Chinese school in Zamboanga City – from kindergarten to fourth year – where she was the only Muslim in her batch. Some classmates used to call her ‘tiko,’ a derogatory Chinese term for Muslims. Roughly translated, it meant ‘barbaric,’ or *mamamatay-tao* (‘murderer’). But it was more the exception than the rule. “Kasi

parang may acceptance kasi sa school e. Since we grew up together, since elementary and high school, hindi naman masyadong major issue kung Muslim ka o Chinese ka or Christian ka,” she explained. “Kung nakita nila na kaya mo’ng mag-lead. Nakita nila na since kaya mo’ng mag-lead, ikaw na.”

She graduated with honors from the Zamboanga Chong Hua High School. Shahana was a champion declaimer, twice winning a national oratorical contest in both English and Filipino. She headed their school paper, served as corps commander¹ in her senior year, and was the class president

1. Basic military training is mandatory for all Filipino high school students, under the Citizen’s Military Training System of the Armed Forces of the Philippines.

from sixth grade onwards. Upon graduation she was conferred the President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo Leadership Award.

Despite the patriarchal nature of Muslim society, Abdulwahid explained that she and her three other sisters – she is second in an all-female brood – enjoyed as much freedom as any contemporary, young Filipino woman. In referring to her parents and their manner of upbringing, she mentioned that *“sila pa nga ang nagpu-push e, kung may maganda ka’ng idea. Hindi ini-impose ng papa ko na, ‘ito ang dapat nating sundin.”*

She elaborated on this point thus:

Medyo active na rin ako sa extra-curricular activities nung high school kasi yung parents namin – kasi sa Chinese school, three in a batch na Muslim, so minority lang talaga din – pero since elementary active na rin ako sa mga ganun kasi in-encourage kami ng parents namin to go out, hindi lang nakakulong sa studies; may sports, may leadership, may extra-curricular activities.

Abdulwahid traced her roots to the Sama of Mindanao, one of the region’s thirteen ethno-linguistic groups, to which

the Maranaos, Badjaos, and Tausugs also belonged. Each of these groups had its own distinct characteristics. While Maranaos, for example, are popular for their successful business enterprises, the Sama people are known to put great value, and thus excel, in education.

“As children, we were required to attend *madrasah* or Muslim Arabic school on weekends and during summer vacations,” she explained. Abdulwahid added that growing up in a diverse community in Zamboanga – where Muslims, Christians, and Chinese live in the same neighborhood – helped open up her mind in terms of relating with other cultures.

THE ACCIDENTAL STUDENT LEADER

When she started studying in college, Abdulwahid initially resolved not to engage in extra-curricular activities so she could focus her attention on her studies, as she wanted to pursue a degree in Philosophy. According to her, she wanted to go on ‘acad mode.’ *“Ang panata ko nga dati nung pumasok ako sa UP, bawal kang sumali sa organizations, bawal kang sumali — sa kahit ano!”* But the lure of leadership proved irresistible. *“Pero nag-join ako ng orgs, naging active ako sa dorm. I joined organizations sa UP dahil gusto ko mapabilang sa mga orgs na ito. But not really campus*

politics.” she recalled.

Her incursion into campus politics in the UP came as a surprise. The party STAND UP (the Student Alliance for the Advancement of Democratic Rights in UP) approached her and offered her to run as representative of the College of Social Sciences and Philosophy (CSSP) in 2005. *“Kinuha lang ako na hindi ko naman alam kung bakit ako kinuha in the first place. Out of nowhere lang ako hinugot. Parang sabi ko, ‘Ano namang naging criteria ninyo kaya ninyo ako pinili?’”*

“Actually, by accident lang lahat e. Halimbawa, yung pagpasok ko sa mga leadership na ganito. Parang exploration lang. [Kahit] yung dito sa UP. I never intended to go into campus politics, but someone offered me to run for a position. Sabi ko sige, let’s try campus politics. Eventually doon na nagsimula,” she explained.

She noted that usually, candidates came from the party’s member organizations; the two student organizations she was a member of did not belong to any party. *“Kasi sa campus politics, kailangan mo ng mass base, ibig sabihin galing ka sa isang organization na maraming members. Ang org ko lang noon, [Philosophy] Organization at Muslim Students Organization (MSA). Minority ang MSA, at ang Philo Org, konti lang kaming members.”* The support from the

MSA was even divided, since other Muslim students were also running for positions in the student government.

Eventually, she won. In 2006, she found herself running for candidacy again –this time as councilor of the University Student Council (USC)² – and won, garnering the most number of votes. After she graduated *cum laude* from college that year, she thought that her stint as councilor would be her last venture into campus politics. “I was very thankful that I had been given the chance to be of service to the other students the best way I could. But I felt that I had reached the end of my political career and there was no other way to go from there,” she said.

Abdulwahid was then offered a scholarship at the UP Institute of Islamic Studies. She was in her first year of graduate studies when another opportunity to get into the USC presented itself; she was asked to be her party’s standard bearer for the University’s highest student government post. “I said no to STAND-UP when its officers offered to field me for USC chair last December [2007],” she recalled.

Although another Muslim, Rommel Romato, had won as USC chair in 2002, Abdulwahid felt that she was not right for the job. She

was aware that women occupying the highest position in politics were unheard of in Muslim culture. “I was in a dilemma then because of all the preconceived notions people have of Muslim women,” she remarked. Dealing with the restrictions -- which a fellow member of the MSA passionately pointed out to her -- would be another big issue. Campaigning, which involved speaking in front of a crowd and mingling with people, would expose her to temptation. “[Abdulwahid’s colleague at the MSA] emphasized that good Muslim women should always stand behind the men and subserviently follow them,” she echoed.

Her family was also worried that the responsibilities that come with the position may put undue pressure on her. Her family was saying that “*Pag nanalo ka, ikaw ang magiging mukha ng students, ikaw ang magiging mukha ng UP, at kung ano yung magiging reply mo, salita mo, ay magrereflect sa iyo. At security-wise, hindi rin safe sa iyo, dahil babae ka.*”

When the STAND-UP officers were steadfast in asking her to run as their candidate for USC chair, Abdulwahid decided to consult professors of the Institute of Islamic Studies about her concern. “My professors told me that it was okay for me to run [as USC chair] because although it

is the highest student position in an academic institution, Muslim women are only restricted from heading an Islamic state,” she explained. Her parents, who initially expressed apprehension at the thought of their daughter leading the entire student council, finally relented and gave her their support when Abdulwahid explained her professors’ opinion on the matter.

“*Ilang beses akong tinanong, for how many times, last minute akong um-oo.*” She explained to her MSA associate that Muslim women should not allow themselves to be forever imprisoned in that kind of thinking. “Besides, I have been a leader for as long as I can remember,” she beamed.

PIERCING THE VEIL: MAKING A STATEMENT IN UP’S CAMPUS POLITICS

She started campaigning along with her other party mates in March 2008. “I was careful to still abide by Muslim rules during the campaign period,” Abdulwahid related. She said that handshakes with the opposite sex are prohibited, because Muslim culture dictates that females should not interact intimately with men. “Instead of shaking hands with male students

2. The University Student Council is UP’s official student representative body. The USC is composed of a chairperson, vice-chairperson and twelve university councilors. In addition, each degree granting college is represented in the USC by a college representative.

which is one manifestation of intimacy in our culture, I gave them leaflets and flyers,” she recalled with amusement. But whenever contact such as handshakes could not be avoided, she gave in out of politeness and respect.

Abdulwahid’s *hijab* or traditional Muslim headdress, which the Quran requires Muslim girls who have reached the age of puberty to wear, also raised questions among the UP student population. “People easily recognized my religion because of my *hijab*, so they asked a lot of questions about why I was running for USC chair and how I would deal with the restrictions involved. “I shared with them what my professors earlier explained to me: that it is possible for a Muslim woman to run for the highest position in an academic institution,” she pointed out.

She further recalled her experiences going from classroom to classroom, from one college to another thus:

Ang kalaban ko that time, fratman [fraternity man] at sorority girl, from the College of Law, which is the most influential college; and from the College of Engineering, which is the biggest college. Ako, from the Institute of Islamic Studies. Tinatanong ako ng mga estudyante, ‘Meron pala’ng Institute of Islamic Studies sa UP?’

Sabi ng ibang mga estudyante sa akin, ‘A, Shan, tanggalin mo yung veil mo, para iboboto kita’ – may ganon. Pangalawa: ‘Bakit mo tinatakpan yung ulo mo? Kalbo ka ba?’ – mga nang-aasar. Pangatlo: may mga professor na nagtatanong na, ‘Anong masasabi mo na terorista ka?’

Parang sabi ko, nasa UP tayo di ba? Dapat mas malawak yung pang-unawa natin sa mga bagay-bagay, so bakit pa ako nakakaencounter ng mga ganito?

The holy book of Islam, the Quran, mandates women to cover their *awrat*, or body parts that could tempt men, such as their hair, arms, and legs. Abdulwahid thus believed that wearing the *hijab* is “every Muslim woman’s moral obligation.”

“May mga iba na gumagamit ng hijab pero nakasuot naman ng short sleeves o fitting outfits, so parang defeating rin yung purpose ng hijab mo. Kung maghihijab ka, dapat naka-long sleeves ka, tapos hindi masyadong naka-tight [clothes], yung kita yung curves mo. So basically, hindi pang-attract ng attention.”

As Muslims are still a minority group in the Philippines, Abdulwahid noted that the *hijab* seems to be doing otherwise.

“Pero iba yung nangyayari: nakaka-attract ka ang ng attention dahil kakaiba ka sa society. So pag may nakakitang naka-hijab ka, kakaiba ka, kasi ikaw lang ang nakaganyan. So nakakacatch ka ng attention in a way.”

Some feminists condemn this practice as oppressive of women. But for Abdulwahid, the piece of cloth she would wear around her head and fasten under her chin with a brooch is anything but oppressive. *“Para sa akin it’s a form of expression. Kasi kung naka-hijab ka, makikilala ka ng mga tao as a Muslim. Kung makikita ng mga tao na capable ka na maging student leader or makipagsabayan sa mga students ng UP, it’s a statement kung baga. It’s a political statement on our part.”*

When the 2007 university student council elections were done, Shahana Abdulwahid tallied 4,365 first-place votes, or 48 percent of the electorate. However, the victory was not as unanimous for STAND UP, her political party. *“Ako ang chair. Ang vice chair namin ay Alyansa. Six of our councilors are STAND UP; the remaining six are Alyansa. College representatives namin ay hati rin. Hati talaga. Meron kaming mga members na KAISA na iilan,”* she said, recalling the composition of her Student Council.

The following year, she was selected as Student Regent

based on a majority vote of all constituent units of UP. A body called the General Assembly of Student Councils (GASC), composed of elected student council members across the UP system, decided on the Student Regent based on a list of nominees forwarded by university students and organizations.³

THE LEADERSHIP SETTING: UP AND UNIVERSITY GOVERNANCE

The University of the Philippines (UP) is the country's premier state university, an academic system comprised of seven constituent universities located in 12 campuses throughout the archipelago. Established in 1908, the UP system currently offers 246 undergraduate programs and 362 graduate programs, with courses ranging from Applied Physics to Ethnomusicology, covering almost all disciplines and appealing to all interests. Its student population is over 50,000 every academic year.

The UP system was administered by a President (currently being held by Dr. Emerlinda Roman of the College

of Business Administration) and governed by a Board of Regents (BOR), its highest decision-making body. It is composed of twelve individuals 'representing various sectors of the University, the private sector, and the government.'⁴ The University President serves as Co-Chair of the BOR, with three Board members being appointed by the state. The Student Regent (SR) sits as Board member.

As constituted by Republic Act (RA) No. 9500, or the new UP Charter, the BOR was mandated to exercise 'corporate powers' in leading the university towards attaining its goal of 'unique and distinctive leadership in higher education and development.' The BOR decides on the most important matters and issues concerning the University, such as fixing tuition and other fees, electing the University President, approving the graduation and granting honors to students, appointing faculty members and other University officials, and receiving and appropriating University funds. Decisions of the Board are finalized through secret balloting.

The current members of the BOR are selected based on

the guidelines provided by RA No. 1870, the old UP Charter. Of the twelve regents who constitute the Board, only the student and faculty regents were sectoral representatives of the University. With the approval of the new UP charter in April 2008, the number of Malacañang⁵ appointees decreased, and a staff regent was included in the provisions for selection of Board members. These changes took effect when the terms of the regents for 2008-2009 expired.

All regents served without compensation other than reimbursement for actual and necessary expenses incurred in attendance to meetings or other official business authorized by the BOR. The UP System code states that the Board shall conduct its regular meetings once a month during the academic year in any UP unit.

ISLAMIC LEADERSHIP IN THE SECULAR CONTEXT: ADDRESSING UP'S TUITION FEE INCREASES

Data from the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) noted that as of 2008, there were

3. The GASC meets in late October every year in order to ratify the Codified Rules for Student Regent Selection (CRSRS), a document that serves as a 'rule book' for the selection process. They then meet again in December to select the Student Regent. Autonomous units like UP Baguio, Manila, Diliman, Los Baños, and Mindanao get two votes each, while other constituent units like UP Visayas Tacloban College gets one vote.

4. From the 'Administration' page of the UP website www.up.edu.ph

5. This refers to appointees of the Philippine President. Malacañang is the President's official residence.

Table 1: Statement of expenditures of SUCs (in Billion Php)

Year	Government subsidy	Expenses from internal revenue	Overall expenditures	Percentage of internal revenue from overall expenditures
2001	15.35	2.42	17.79	13.71
2002	17.01	2.67	19.67	13.53
2003	17.07	3.48	20.56	16.93
2004	16.67	3.82	20.5	18.65
2005	17.51	4.97	22.51	22.07
2006	16.67	4.59	21.3	21.57
2007	19.34	6.53	25.88	25.24
2008	20.81	7.54	28.35	26.61
2009*	22.57	8.19	30.76	26.63
Average	18.11nB	4.91Bn	23.03Bn	20.55%

*Projected

Source: Department of Budget and Management

2,060 higher education institutions in the country, with 110 being state universities and colleges (SUCs) and 1,523 being private institutions. The rest were classified as CHED-supervised⁶ institutions, local universities and colleges, and other government schools. State universities and colleges (SUCs) are institutions funded by the national government. They have their own charters and are thus autonomous from CHED.

Footing the bill: the state of government subsidies for SUCs

The Department of Budget and Management (DBM) noted that while SUCs needed an average

annual budget of Php 23 Billion starting 2001, the Macapagal-Arroyo administration had managed to provide a little over Php 18 Billion in average annual subsidies over the same period. For 2009, despite a more than eight percent increase in projected expenditures (at Php30.76 Billion), government will only be able to commit Php22.57 Billion to SUCs. These state schools were expected to generate Php8.19 Billion in internal revenue to compensate for the deficit (See Table 1).

The 110 SUCs generate their internal revenue from tuition and other student fees, grants and

donations, interest earned from revolving funds, and other sources. More than sixty percent of this was in the form of student payments, and for 2009 this percentage was to be translated to an estimated Php5.79 Billion worth of fees to students. In turn, this amounted to more than eighteen percent of the total spending needs of SUCs (See Table 2). Since 2001, the percentage share of student fees to revenues of SUCs had increased from 55.46 percent to 65.89 percent in 2008.

In an interview for UP's student newspaper, the Philippine Collegian⁷, Alliance of Concerned

6. The Commission on Higher Education is the governing body covering both public and private higher education institutions as well as degree-granting programs in all tertiary educational institutions in the Philippines.

7. Toni Tiemsin and Marjohara Tucay, "Taunang subsidy sa SUCs mula 2001, kulang ng halos limang bilyong piso," in The Philippine Collegian Issue No. 14, 30 Sept 2008.

Table 2: Internal revenue sources of SUCs (In Billion Php)

Year	Tuition	Other student fees	Revenue from revolving fund	Donations and grants	Other sources	Total
2001	1.17	.332	.192	.142	.871	2.71
2002	1.33	.379	.224	.126	.870	2.93
2003	1.69	.773	.484	.125	.827	3.90
2004	1.84	.812	.487	.103	.751	3.99
2005	2.68	1.08	.669	.072	1.16	5.67
2006	2.97	1.17	.665	.047	1.22	6.07
2007	3.77	1.43	1.03	.194	1.57	7.99
2008	3.89	1.49	1.07	.121	1.60	8.18
2009*	4.19	1.6	1.18	.120	1.78	8.87
Average	2.62Bn	1.08Bn	.850Bn	.132Bn	1.18Bn	5.59Bn

*Projected

Source: Department of Budget and Management

Teachers president Antonio Tinio remarked that “*Mas maraming Pilipino ang mapagkakaitan ng mas mataas na edukasyon dahil sa mababang subsidyo ng SUCs. Mas maraming Pilipino ang umaasang makapasok sa SUCs dahil sa kahirapan ng buhay at sa mataas na halaga ng pag-aaral sa mga pribadong eskwelahan.*”

According to CHED, one third of the total 2.4 million college students were enrolled in SUCs. Beginning 2005, this number increased by six percent every year, while enrolment rates in private universities and colleges had gone down by five percent – from 1.66 million students in 2000 to 1.58 million in 2005. “*Panahon pa ni [former*

Philippine President Joseph Estrada] may recommendations na bawasan ng bawasan ang badyet ng SUCs upang matulak ang mga pamunuan nito na magpalitaw ng sarili nilang pondo through tuition fee increases and other income-generating activity,” Tinio lamented.

In its Medium-Term Development Plan for Higher Education 2005-2010, the Macapagal-Arroyo government declared that “for the next six years, efforts will be directed to...rationalizing governance and financing higher education in a manner that would unleash institutional creativity and entrepreneurship.” For its part, the DBM proposed an overall

education budget of Php 204.9 Billion for 2009, an almost ten percent increase from its previous year’s budget of Php 186.6 Billion. However, the Department of Education (DepEd) was originally asking for a budget of Php 259 Billion.

The Philippine House of Representatives, through its Subcommittee on Appropriations, had approved a Php 6.69 Billion budget for UP; the state university’s initial budget proposal was worth Php 15.35 Billion.⁸

Unleashing creativity and entrepreneurship: UP endorses tuition fee increases

In September 2006 UP

8. Ibid.

President Emerlinda Roman issued a memo to all chancellors of the UP system, requesting them to help disseminate the findings of a proposal⁹ to adjust the state university's tuition and other fees. According to the proposal, inflation had 'eroded' the value of UP's tuition and other fees, stating that the current fees were worth only a third of their value in 1989, the last time it adjusted the level and structure of its undergraduate fees. These figures are reflected in Table 3.

The primer¹⁰ summarizing the proposal's findings noted that:

The erosion in the value of UP's undergraduate fees has severely affected its institutional capability on two levels:

a) coping with rapidly increasing maintenance and other operating expenses for power, security, and other

utilities costs; laboratory maintenance; equipment repair; chemical reagents; instructional supplies and materials; and other instruction-related expenses and
b) procurement of equipment and upkeep of its facilities.

The staggering cost of power and utilities has eaten up a large part of its income.

The university's ability to respond to technological developments is hampered by its lack of funds for the acquisition of equipment for its instructional and research needs. Furthermore, the erosion of the real value of tuition fees extends unwarranted subsidies to students coming from families that could actually have

afforded to pay the full cost of instruction.

For UP campuses all over the country, the average cost of undergraduate instruction (faculty time/salary spent for instruction, supplies and teaching materials, utilities, etc.) was estimated to be Php1,531 per student-credit unit, although it was documented that there were significant variations across campuses. In campuses such as Diliman, Los Baños, and Manila for example, the cost actually incurred for each student-credit unit was Php1,500-Php1,600; while it was at Php1,000.00 for the regional campuses.

The UP administration was thus asking for a tuition fee adjustment based on inflation, with subsequent annual adjustments referenced on the national inflation rate. These rates are seen in Table 4.

Table 3: Real values of UP's tuition fees, controlled for certain factors

1989 rates	Real value in 2005 controlling for inflation	Real value in 2005 controlling for increase in the price of education services
Php300/unit (Diliman)	Php98/unit	Php42/unit
Php200/unit (regional units)	Php61/unit	Php28/unit

Source: Tuition fee primer, 2006.

9. Primer on the Proposal to Adjust Tuition and Other Fees, an attachment to Memorandum No. PERR 06-036 issued by UP President Emerlinda Roman on 12 September 2006.

10. Ibid, p.2.

According to the tuition fee primer, “With these revised tuition fees, UP’s charges for tuition remain significantly lower than the true cost of an undergraduate UP education and therefore still contain a significant public subsidy for higher education.”¹¹

The proposal also stated that UP’s miscellaneous fees had to be adjusted because of rapid increases in: a) maintenance of internet infrastructure in each campus; b) electricity consumed by the university’s facilities; and c) purchase of books and maintenance of journal and library subscriptions. These adjustments are reflected in Table 5.

UP’s income from these adjustments were going to be used to cover increasing cost of power and other utilities, procurement of equipment and upkeep of facilities, purchase of books and maintenance of journal and library subscriptions, and enhancement of teaching and research.

The primer had this to say as far as benefits of the tuition and other fees increase (ToFI) to UP’s student body was concerned:

For students, this will translate into quality academic services (in terms of instruction and supervised research)

Table 4: UP’s proposed tuition fees

Campuses	Existing	Proposed
Group I		
Diliman	Php300	Php1,000
Manila	Php300	Php1,000
Los Baños	Php250	Php1,000
Group II		
Baguio	Php200	Php600
Visayas	Php200	Php600
Mindanao	Php200	Php600

Source: Tuition fee primer, 2006.

Table 5: UP’s proposed miscellaneous fees

Campuses	Existing	Proposed
Group I		
Diliman	Php615	Php2,000
Manila	Php515	Php2,000
Los Baños	Php565	Php2,000
Group II		
Baguio	Php595	Php1,405
Visayas	Php595	Php1,405
Mindanao	Php830	Php1,640

Source: Tuition fee primer, 2006.

provided by highly qualified faculty members, improved student-computer ratios, increased internet access, well-maintained teaching and research laboratories with state-of-the-art equipment, easy access to a wider and updated collection of textbooks and reference materials (in various forms, i.e., online, print, etc.) in UP libraries,

and increased stipends and a larger number of recipients of the Socialized Tuition and Financial Assistance Program (STFAP)¹².

On December 15, 2006, the BOR approved the proposal and planned to implement it beginning Academic Year (AY) 2007-2008. However, UP’s students protested the implementation of the fee

11. Ibid, p.2.

12. Ibid, p.5.

On December 15, 2006, the BOR approved the proposal and planned to implement it beginning Academic Year (AY) 2007-2008. However, UP's students protested the implementation of the fee adjustments, stating a number of counter-arguments. The protesters also noted that the Faculty and Student Regents were not present when the Board discussed and subsequently voted on the proposal. *"Yung Student Regent namin that time, wala siya during the meeting, nung dine-deliberate yung tuition fee increases, and the Faculty Regent. May change venue e. Originally, nasa isang venue siya, but nung nag-mass up yung mga students to protest para hindi ipa-continue yung board meeting, iniba yung venue. Doon, hindi na na kapunta yung faculty and student regent,"* Abdulwahid explained.

The students' voice: Abdulwahid and the students' stand on ToFI

Soon after, the USC moved to consult with students regarding the fee increases, as well as analyze its possible impacts. Abdulwahid noted that *"I was Councilor that time, at Chair ng system-wide alliance ng student councils. Yung chair namin sa Diliman was [Paolo] Alfonso. Student Regent at that time was [UP Cebu's Raffy] Sanchez...During yung deliberation ng tuition increase,*

Chair ako ng alliance ng student councils ng [UP] system. So we had several campaigns in each UP unit, so coordinated yun ng Council. We coordinated with the Student Regent that time."

She further recounted the prevailing sentiments at the time of the ToFI ratification thus:

[The UP administration] gave us some computations, sabi nila it's high time to increase tuition. But ours was that yung increase would prevent other students – lalo na yung mga nasa lower brackets ng society – to enter UP. If UP was a University for the People, sinasabi yan, subsidized yung tuition sa UP.

Yung board decision kasi was that mag-increase tayo ng tuition this year subject to increase annually depending on the inflation rate. So yun yung protest namin, tapos they gave us financial assistance, which we think hindi naman talaga effective in the first place kasi for the past years, yung old system hindi rin siya naka-accommodate ng maraming mga students.

Even as early as June of 2006, the board decided

to approve it on December 2006. As early as May we had several consultations in different UP units na. We had campaigns, consultations. Eventually, we decided na sa darating na board meeting, we would have a big protest. Na cancel nga yung lantern parade¹³ because of the protest. Walang lantern parade [in 2006] because the administration was afraid that, malaking rally yung binubuo, yung ibang mga outsiders, baka kung anong gawin ng mga students sa sobrang galit sa tuition increase.

In her capacity as Chair of the *Katipunan ng mga Sangguniang Mag-aaral sa UP* (KASAMA sa UP), the system-wide alliance of student councils, Abdulwahid had to deal with the differing opinions that the university's student groups harbored on the issue. *"May mga student groups na nagsasabing junk the tuition increase, she said. "Some would say na i-delay muna, pag-aralan pa uli yung proposal. Meron din iba na we go for tuition increase but study or implement effectively yung financial assistance program [STFAP]"*¹⁴

Results of these consultations were enhanced by a survey on UP Diliman freshmen

13. The Lantern Parade is an annual tradition in UP Diliman, where colleges feature their respective Christmas lanterns for public viewing.

regarding their perceptions on the tuition increase, along with a review of system-wide and unit-wide enrolment and STFAP data. “*Yung sa Student Councils, we opted to go for the maximum na pag-junk ng tuition increase. Kasi yung sa ibang mga points, halimbawa we delay it, we study it further, you would still want an increase in the tuition. Pero yung principle kasi, we don’t want any increase because it would hinder students to enter the university,*” Abdulwahid declared.

These findings and recommendations were eventually included in a policy review paper that was presented by the OSR to the University’s Regents at a regular board meeting in September 2007. At the onset, the review cited the 12.3 percent decrease in enrolment figures in the UP system as *prima facie* evidence of the ToFI’s impact. The report noted that the lower student enrolment was ‘coincidental only with the implementation of the tuition increase, especially as the tuition increase remain (sic) the only new variable introduced in this year’s enrolment.’¹⁵

The review also noted low enrolment figures in certain courses of study, as shown in Table 6.

According to the review, the data ‘points out the mismatch between the quotas, the number of qualifiers and the actual enrolment post-implementation of the new tuition scheme.’ It also stated that:

The use of the course quotas compared the actual freshman enrolment in a particular course is an indicator of the prospective decreasing and market relevance of these courses, and the corresponding effect on the production of knowledge and graduates for the scientific and cultural development of the university and the country.

These low enrolment rates prevailed across the university’s creative disciplines (which are in the College of Arts and Letters, or CAL). The review pointed out that ‘CAL produces the country’s most notable writers and artists, both in English and Filipino, that have gained critical accolades’ both for

the institution and the state.

The same downward trend was also evident in UP Diliman’s engineering and science courses. The review emphasized that ‘the necessity of such courses for contributing to the scientific, technological, and socio-political capital of the country is being threatened by the low enrolment posed during this initial implementation of the tuition increase.’

The ToFI caused the University to ‘automatically’ lose a measure of its comparative advantage to other schools in terms of affordability. ‘As the tuition gap between UP and other universities offering similar courses narrowed with the implementation of the tuition increase, UPCAT¹⁶ qualifiers and their families now readily look for alternative schools, compared to previous years when the default University of choice can often be UP, in terms of cost and quality.’

The review also sounded the alarm for reduced access to college education among the youth, citing decreasing enrolments

14. All UP students receive state subsidies even when they pay the regular tuition rates because the regular UP tuition rates are not sufficient to defray the actual cost incurred by the University in providing quality education. However, students who need further subsidies may apply for the benefits under the STFAP, also known as the ‘Iskolar ng Bayan’ Program. Students who apply for STFAP benefits are classified by the University into STFAP brackets based on the student’s declared family income and other socio-economic indicators to determine the level of their capacity to pay.

15. An Assessment and Review of the New Tuition and Socialized Financial Assistance Program, prepared by the Office of the Student Regent, University of the Philippines. Presented in the September 28, 2007 meeting of the Board of Regents.

16. The University of the Philippines College Admission Test

Table 6: Selected UP Diliman (UPD) courses with low freshman enrolment relative to the quota

Courses	Quota	Freshman qualifiers	Confirmed enrollees	Actual enrollees	Actual enrollees/ Course quotas
BA Araling Filipino	25	1	1	0	0%
BA Filipino	25	n/a	n/a	0	0%
BA Malikhaing Pagsulat sa Filipino	25	n/a	n/a	0	0%
BA Theater Arts	25	9	1	1	4%
BS Mining Engineering	35	2	2	2	5.71%
BS Home Economics	30	3	2	2	6.67%
BA Comparative Literature	50	6	5	5	10%
BS Geodetic Engineering	75	15	9	9	12%
BA Creative Writing	30	5	5	56	16.67%
BA History	35	13	6	6	17.14%
BS Community Development	35	9	6	6	17.14%
BS Social Work	35	8	6	6	17.14%
B Landscape Architecture	35	12	6	6	17.14%
BS Geology	100	21	19	19	19%
BA Art Studies	10	4	2	2	20%
B Library and Information Science	35	10	7	7	20%
B Music	15	15	3	3	20%
BA Communication Research	40	14	9	9	22.5%
BA Public Administration	70	20	18	16	22.86%
BS Metallurgical Engineering	35	9	11	9	25.71%
BS Physical Education	15	2	1	1	26%
BA Philosophy	70	32	21	20	28.57%
B Elementary Education	35	16	13	10	28.57%
BA Speech Communication	70	29	24	21	30%
BA English Studies	75	40	29	27	36%
BS Interior Design	45	23	18	16	35.56%
BA Sociology	35	14	12	12	34.29%
BS Business Administration	100	102	49	44	44%
B Sport Science	20	14	9	9	45%

Table 6 cont.: Selected UP Diliman (UPD) courses with low freshman enrolment relative to the quota

Courses	Quota	Freshman qualifiers	Confirmed enrollees	Actual enrollees	Actual enrollees/ Course quotas
BS Applied Physics	60	28	27	24	40%
BS Materials Engineering	75	30	44	45	60%
BS Statistics	120	64	67	57	47.5%
B Fine Arts	35	33	19	19	54.29%
BS Physics	60	28	35	33	55%
BA Anthropology	30	22	15	16	53.3%
BS Business Administration and Accountancy	100	101	58	54	54%
BS Geography	10	10	7	5	50%

Source: An Assessment and Review of the New Tuition and Socialized Financial Assistance Program

in private universities and the subsequent enrolment increase in state universities and colleges (SUCs). This is shown in Table 7.

According to the review:

Despite increased enrolment in public tertiary institutions, [SUCs] cannot be able to absorb all of those who have dropped out from private schools... With an increase in tuition in the premier state university, and a widespread tuition hike in the public sector, it is prospective that enrolment rates may drop for both public and private educational institutions. Thus, the national capacity to provide tertiary

education decreases with the implementation of tuition increases.

Finally, the review mentioned the lack of consultation with incoming freshmen and their parents regarding ToFI. According to a survey done by the OSR and volunteers of UPD's School of Statistics, UP administration's consultation with the freshmen came only in the form of a paper together with their confirmation slip for admission into the university. Thus, 82.2 percent of UPD freshmen surveyed had no knowledge of the bases [for] and processes behind the tuition increase. Almost all of those surveyed—94.7 percent—expressed disagreement on the ToFI, and around 89 percent considered the

increase to be heavy in terms of their current financial capacities.

In terms of recommendation, 9.4 percent insisted on the continuation of the tuition hike. Other recommendations ranged from lessening the increase, to the outright scrapping of the ToFI policy. 'Majority, or 54.8% positioned for an immediate rollback of the tuition rate to levels before the new tuition scheme,' the review noted.

Despite living with ToFI, Abdulwahid and the student government, along with the OSR, continued to monitor its implementation:

There were some effects eventually as tuition

Table 7: Enrolment figures, 2000-2004

Type of institution	AY 2000-2001	2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004
Philippines	2,430,842	2,466,056	2,426,976	2,420,856
Public	771,162	808,321	815,595	829,181
SUCs	700,199	733,827	734,224	742,108
LUCs	61,954	67,749	74,382	80,037
CSIs	4,043	360	554	561
OGS	4,966	6,385	6,435	6,475
Increase (Decrease)		37,159	7,274	13,586
Private	1,659,680	1,657,735	1,611,381	1,591,675
Sectarian	527,753	500,753	505,068	492,438
Non-sectarian	1,131,927	1,156,982	1,106,313	1,099,237
Increase (Decrease)		(1,945)	(46,354)	(19,706)

Source: Higher Education Statistical Bulletin AY 2003-2004, CHED

increase. Ngayon, sa second year implementation nya na, we found out na karamihan ng mga students na pumapasok sa UP ay either middle class o sa upper class. Kasi yung mga nasa lower bracket either they apply for the financial grant pero kakaunti lang nakaka-apply, or they go to other schools kasi mataas nga tuition sa UP.

Somaging more or less yung demography ng students, pati yung orientation ng UP students, nag-iiba na rin. Yung dating sinasabi nilang UP culture, ngayon nag-iiba na. Parang, ano na'ng difference ng UP sa

Ateneo o sa La Salle given the demography... Dahil na rin sa effect ng tuition fee increase.

But yung point of view naman ng administration, they want to improve facilities, they want to acquire more equipment for the university. Kasi low subsidy nga'ng binibigay sa university. So we want increase, we have to generate income for the procurement, pag-aayos ng facilities.

[The improvements in facilities are not significant], kasi yung interest na nakukuha sa

tuition increase maliit pa lang. Konti pa lang yun, yung impact nun hindi pa nama-manifest. So ibig sabihin, income-wise konti lang nakukuha ng UP sa tuition increase. May usapin din ng mga budget e, kasi yung maintenance and other operating expenses ng university kina-cut down every year ng national government, so the university had to find ways para makakuha ng funds for that. So ginawa nila, chi-narge nila sa students through energy fee, internet fee... So tumaas din ang tuition because of that.

When she became Student Regent, Abdulwahid requested ‘for student councils to facilitate the gathering of necessary documents such as enrolment-related information in order to comprehensively review and update the policy paper formulated by former SR Terry Ridon, who initiated the policy review during school year 2007-2008, when ToFI was first passed.’ She also said that sometime during the fourth quarter of 2008, ‘the OSR has also organized a series of consultations in UP units to get the sentiments of the students regarding the ToFI and the STFAP, especially from the freshmen and sophomores.’

Islamic leadership in its own context: establishing a Muslim prayer area on campus

Though her mandate was to serve the interests of the greater UP student body, Shahana Abdulwahid made sure that she also represented the university’s Muslim minority from which she came. This became evident in a long-standing issue among UP’s Muslims: the establishment of a masjid (mosque) on campus.

“Yung pinaka-advocacy ng mga Muslim students in UP is to establish a parang decent prayer area in the campus,” she reiterated. “For the past twenty, thirty years wala kaming prayer area. Eventually, ako bilang Chair at Muslim din, student at that,

kailangan ko rin ipasok yung interest ng mga Muslim students. By my being a student chairperson, we initiated some talks with the administration kung paano ma-accommodate yung prayer hall. May ongoing talks kami hanggang ngayon with the administration.

The idea to establish a UP Diliman mosque was formally proposed to university administration in February 2003, in a letter drafted by the UP Masjid Foundation, Inc. Part of the letter – addressed to then Chancellor Emerlinda Roman – reads as follows:

Prayer is an integral part of a Muslim’s way of life. Muslims pray five (5) times a day – one at daybreak (between 5 am and 6 am), lunchtime (12 pm), late afternoon (3 pm to 5 pm), evening (6 pm to 7 pm) and the last prayer at 8 pm onwards. At present, Muslims are using the Institute of Islamic Studies Conference Room for Friday prayers. Indeed, this lack of a proper place of worship for Muslims creates inconvenience and worse, a sense of alienation.

Thus, the presence of a small mosque in the campus is truly indispensable to every Muslim student,

faculty, employee and (local and foreign) visitor in the campus... The mosque, serving as a place of worship and also an information resource center, will highlight the beauty and possibility of coexistence among the different faiths in our community. In addition to the existing places of worship in the campus, accommodation of this project will strengthen our initiatives in promoting knowledge, understanding and respect among people. The UP Diliman Mosque will definitely add to the rich cultural and institutional identity of UP Diliman as a world-class university.

The clamor for a proper prayer area had remained a sore point among UP’s Muslims. “Parang medyo maingay yung Muslim community na, there’s discrimination, bakit hindi pinapayagan ng UP yung mosque, bakit may dalawang chapel dito sa UP tapos wala ng mosque. So I had to research on the legal basis, kung bakit may dalawa ng chapel tapos walang mosque,” Abdulwahid recalled.

University administration had its own misgivings regarding the request of Muslims within their community. Among these

was the notion that ‘suspicious elements’ would enter the campus should the mosque be constructed. *“Baka maging Little Quiapo¹⁷ siya,”* she remarked. *“Kasi meron pa ring ilang mga ganung notion ang administration. So we had to explain na hindi dapat ganyan ang impression nila sa mga Muslim.”*

“Sa tingin ko ang UP medyo hesitant sila ibigay yung prayer area kasi may sensitivity issue. Kasi pag na-grant ng UP – kasi di ba UP is a secular university – at pag na-grant ng UP ang prayer area na yun parang sinasabing biased sila towards Muslims,” she added.

Abdulwahid explained her role in rallying the university’s Muslim community behind the proposal and the inherent difficulties in the advocacy:

Yung masjid project, regular nagkakaroon kami ng meetings with students, tapos parang we plan out kung ano yung dapat na gagawin namin, ano yung mga dialogues na kailangang hingin from the administration. So para siyang collective effort; the Muslim Students Association does its part, tapos ang faculty nagbibigay din, ang Islamic Studies nagbibigay

din ng kanilang part. Eventually parang, since maliit din lang yung community na y un, hindi ganoon ka-significant yung magiging impact niya when it comes to pressuring the administration to give us such demand.

Parang ang nangyayari, part lang yung Muslim concerns sa malaking problema ng...so halimbawa tuition increase versus the masjid, siempre mas mag-aano yung tuition increase...pero continuous yung advocacy ng masjid project.

In September 2004, the Chancellor’s Office agreed in principle to lease a 3,000 square meter portion of UP Diliman land for the masjid as well as a Muslim-inspired dormitory. The terms were as follows:

1. The lease term shall be for 25 years and renewable for another 25 years;
2. The lessee shall contribute to the overhead of the University equivalent to 10 percent of the project’s gross receipts;
3. The structure’s design shall be approved

by the Office of the Campus Architect;

4. The lessee shall abide by University rules concerning dormitory operations; and
5. The contract shall be confirmed by the BOR.

“Pwede naman talagang magtayo ng masjid pero problema nga lang yung sustainability ng project,” Abdulwahid clarified. *“Eventually, nalaman namin na pwede naman talaga magtayo ng mosque inside the campus as long as magbabayad ng commercial rate. At itong dalawang chapel na ito, they are considered not as religious institutions but commercial entities na nagre-rent sa UP. Kasi given na, halimbawa yung Church, medyo malakas yung support from outside, paano natin ma-sustain kung tinayo natin yung masjid? Would it be feasible for us to maintain that for the next fifty years? So yun yung question.”* The UP Masjid Foundation was left looking for project benefactors while negotiating the finer points of the lease, including the exact location for the structure.

Epilogue

Despite the challenges she faced in UP’s student government, Abdulwahid remained ever the unassuming student leader who was both proud of and humbled by

17. Small pockets of Muslim communities spread across various places in Metropolitan Manila, including districts such as Quiapo. These areas are usually considered flashpoints of ethnic tension.

the experience. “I never expected that the students would accept my candidacy the way they did, especially because I come from a minority group,” she noted. “I am glad my decision to run...has somehow changed some people’s opinions of what Muslim women are capable of.”



Dr. Ahmad Domocao A. Alonto

This case was written by Rowena Alonto for the Asian Institute of Management-TeaM Energy Center for Bridging Societal Divides. This case is prepared solely for the purpose of class discussion. It is neither designed nor intended as an illustration of correct or incorrect management of the problems or issues contained in the case. Copyright 2009.

A 1988 King Faisal International Prize Awardee for Service to Islam and one of the personalities profiled in the book “100 Great Muslim Leaders of the 20th Century (1)”, Ahmad Domocao Alangadi Alonto has always been regarded as a legend of his time by the people of Moroland. Muslims and non-Muslims both in the Philippines and in the Muslim world view him as a man of vision, a great teacher, a social reformer, a statesman, a pragmatic politician, and a champion of the rights of Muslims in the Philippines. To others he is considered as the father of the contemporary Moro (Mindanao-Sulu Muslims) struggle for the right of self-determination.

The quality of his leadership could best be measured according to one of his favorite quotes from Jose Rizal’s “El Filibusterismo,” when Basilio said to Simoun: “...*The greatness of a man does not consist in going far ahead of his generation but in knowing its aspirations, meeting its necessities, and guiding it to move forward.*” (2) Indeed, like the rest of the acclaimed 100 great Muslim leaders of the 20th century, his greatness “*lies in (his) sincere, selfless dedication to the cause of Islam and Muslims, in (his) creative response to the challenges faced by Muslims, in (his) determined efforts to resolve the problems faced by Muslim communities, in (his) contribution to the advancement of Islamic*

learning, and in (his) enduring impact on Muslim societies.” (3) Indisputably, Ahmad Domocao Alonto played a very important role in shaping the course of Moro Muslim history in this country.

Born in Ramin, Lanao of Mindanao on August 1, 1914, he was the eldest son of the six children of Sultan Alauya Alonto of Ramin and Bai Hajja Amina Bariga binte Alangadi of the royal house of Mala-a-Bayabao, the oldest of the three original lake-based (Ranao) kingdoms or Moro Iranon emirates in Mindanao. His mother, Bai Hajja Amina Bariga was a 6th generation descendant of Al-Marhom Muhammad Dipatuan Kudarat, Sultan of Maguindanao and acknowledged as the

Bangsamoro people's greatest hero because he fought the Spaniards. His father, Sultan Alauya, was the nephew of the mother. Their families were also related to the Sultan of Sulu.

THE MINDANAO SITUATION IN ALONTO'S TIME

Fifteen years before Ahmad Domocao Alonto was born, American colonization of Moroland began. From 1899 to 1902, Mindanao and Sulu were constituted into a Military District by the Americans for the purpose of 'pacifying' (read: suppressing) Moro armed resistance to US colonial rule. The Military District was headed by US military officers, the first of whom was Gen. John C. Bates.

In 1903, the Military District of Mindanao became the Moro Province which served as a transitional military politico-administrative mechanism for the entrenchment of US colonial rule in the Moro homeland separate from the Americans' Hispanic colony, the Philippines. The first

governor of the Moro province was Gen. Leonard Wood, who would eventually become the Governor-General of the Philippines. The Moro province's last governor was Gen. John 'Black Jack' Pershing, infamous for his bloody campaign to demolish Moro *cottas* (forts) around Lanao lake (4).

In 1913, the Moro province was abolished and a civilian colonial government, the Department of Mindanao and Sulu, was established. It was headed by an American civilian named Frank Carpenter.

The following year, the American colonial government initiated the first systematic migration of Filipino Christian settlers to Mindanao. In 1915, Governor Frank Carpenter compelled the Sultan of Sulu into an agreement that forced the latter to accept US sovereignty. The 'Carpenter Agreement' ultimately led to the unilateral and arbitrary abolition of the once-sovereign Moro sultanate states by the US and signaled an end to the independence of the Moro people.

It was under these circumstances that Ahmad's father, the Sultan of Ragain, was catapulted to center stage in this chapter of Moro history in particular and Philippine history in general. Ahmad's father, Sultan Alauya Alonto, the first Muslim senator in the Philippine Commonwealth, played a very important role in his life. He was, in fact, the greatest influence on Ahmad's life.

INSPIRED BY THE SULTAN OF RAGAIN, ALAUYA ALONTO

Sultan Alauya was born before the outbreak of the Spanish-American war in 1898 and witnessed the military defeat of the Moro Muslims by the technologically superior Americans during the subsequent American-Moro Wars (4). Though the experience was a traumatic episode in his life, it was also an eye-opener; it served as testament to the Moros' undaunted bravery and determination to fight for their religion, people and land.

1. 100 Great Muslim Leaders of the 20th Century © 2005 by Institute of Objective Studies, New Delhi (India).

2. Taken from the Paper read by Ahmad Domocao A. Alonto, Commencement Speaker, 8th Commencement Exercises, MSU, Marawi City, May 22, 1973 entitled Islamic Education and Its Relevance to Nation-Building, page 4.

3. Criteria in the selection of the 100 Great Muslim Leaders. From the book 100 Great Muslim Leaders of the 20th Century © 2005 by Institute of Objective Studies, New Delhi (India), page xxxvii.

4. The American-Moro wars began when Spain ceded the Philippines - including the Moro Homeland - in the Treaty of Paris of 1898 to the United States of America. Moroland (Mindanao, Sulu and Palawan), however, was never a part of the Philippines because Spain failed to subdue the Moro Muslims and place them under her rule. Spain therefore had no right to include Mindanao in the sale of the Philippines; on the other hand, the Americans also had no moral and legitimate right to rule over Mindanao as the latter did not belong to Spain. The American occupation of the Moroland was therefore resisted by the Moros through armed and parliamentary struggle.

Sultan Alauya's first brush with US Governor General Leonard Wood was during a large gathering to celebrate the July 4th American Independence Day in Malacanang, where the different sultans, datus and other tribal chiefs from Mindanao were presented as a showcase for those wanting to remain under American rule. The Sultan interrupted the Governor-General in the middle of his speech and said: "*What are you saying, you white monkey? We Muslims have always held on to our sovereignty and independence.*" (7) He then continued and said that the "*Americans should go home and leave the affairs with the Filipinos with us.*" This episode caught the attention of Manuel L. Quezon and Sergio Osmena, who

were then the leading figures of the pro-independence 'Filipinista movement' (8). Sizing him up as a potential ally among the Moro leaders, they expedited the release of Sultan Alauya - who was at that time detained at Fort Santiago after his altercation with General Wood - from American custody and brought him to the Philippine legislature where he was presented as the voice of the Mindanao Moros. (9)

The Sultan dreaded being under the Americans because, having read US history coupled with his first-hand observation of the trauma that the Moro people had gone through under US colonial rule, he said that he would not want the Moros to end

up like the American 'Indians' (the indigenous nations of North America) whose communities were decimated and given only settlements (reservations) for their homeland. (10) Unlike the other Moro datus who signed the 1935 Dansalan Declaration opposing the annexation of Mindanao to the Philippines and asking to remain under American rule rather than be part of an independent Philippines, the Sultan favored joining Philippine independence. He rationalized this stand to his people by arguing in simple logic that the Americans were physically bigger, stronger and so harder to fight, unlike the Filipinos who were of the same built and color like them and who had not colonized the Moros yet. (11)

5. There are no accurate statistical data on the number of Maranaw Moros killed during the American 'pacification' campaign in the Lake Lanao area. The best estimate that living witnesses can give is that from 3,000 to 5,000 Maranaw Moros died resisting US colonial rule. The actual number may be higher than this.

6. Bangsamoro: A Nation Under Endless Tyranny © 1999 by Salah Jubair, IQ Marin SDN BHD, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, page 81.

7. Narrated by Dr. Ahmad E. Alonto, Jr., former President of the Mindanao State University System, and Ayesha Merdeka Alonto Datu Ramos (son and grandniece, respectively).

8. The Filipinista movement was established by Quezon et al for the purpose of obtaining Philippine independence from the United States that included Mindanao and Sulu as part of an envisioned independent Philippine Republic.

9. Former Ambassador Abul Khayr Alonto recalled his uncle, Senator Ahmad Domocao Alonto, telling him: "There is this Philippines now where you have Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao because of one man and that is my father. He fought and stood up for Mindanao and he was the same – of Mindanao's part in taking part in the Philippine Independence. So it was Quezon of Luzon, Osmena of Visayas and Alonto of Mindanao."

10. According to Sahania Alonto Mamainte Lucman, her granduncle, the Senator would describe Sultan Alauya as "very intelligent and having a very good memory." Accordingly, the Sultan asked his son Ahmad to read and translate to him the book on American history. After but one reading, the Sultan surprised the Americans in one of his dialogues with them by informing the latter that he would not want the Moros to end up like the American Indians. He even enumerated to them what had happened to the different American Indian chiefs.

11. Senator Alonto told his nephew, former Ambassador Abul Khayr Alonto, that his father, the Sultan, had confided to him: "...looking at the Americans, you can never defeat the Americans even if you will be able to solidify Mindanao". Accordingly, the Sultan had thrown his support to the Philippine Independence Movement which included Mindanao on the premise that "if these people (Filipinos) will cheat us and if these people will betray us, we are the same people, belonging to the same race, the same size, the same height – we can defeat them provided we will persevere and we will be patient. But with the Americans, we will end up in the museum and our children will end up dancing in the airport welcoming these whites. But because we don't have the weaponry, they can finish off any struggle down here. But with the Christianized Indios here, we can fight them".

Notwithstanding his passionate opposition to American colonial rule, however, the Sultan agreed with the American rulers on three matters: education, health and infrastructure development. To him, the interest and welfare of his people were paramount. Thus, he saw it necessary for the *Maranaws* (the Moro Muslims of Lake Lanao) to get the education offered by the Americans. During the American period when the Moro society of his time defied and rejected anything American and shunned American education, he encouraged his people to allow their children to receive such education by setting an example: he sent his own children to school.

To illustrate this point, Ahmad Domocao Alonto narrated the story of how Sultan Alauya outwitted his father-in-law who never approved of sending his grandchildren to American-run schools for fear that they would become Christians like the Filipinos. At that time the American authorities compelled Moro families to send their children to school, and a fifty peso fine was imposed on those who did not comply with this compulsory regulation. But being a wealthy man of the Maranaw Moro nobility, the Sultan's father-in-law was

obstinate and would rather pay the fine than allow his grandchildren to acquire western education, despite the pleas of his son-in-law. Sultan Alauya then suggested to the American authorities to inform his father-in-law that the fine would be increased to one hundred pesos if the latter still resisted. When informed about this by the Americans, however, the Sultan's father-in-law was again willing to pay the increased fine rather than comply with the American decree. The Sultan thereafter told the American authorities to announce that the punishment for those who repeatedly broke this law was imprisonment. Then the Sultan gathered all his family members and his people and announced to them that the Americans were about to imprison him (the Sultan) for failing to send his children to school. A tremendous uproar ensued, as the people could not allow their sultan to land in an American jail. Their *maratabat* (collective pride and honor) prompted them to prepare to fight for and defend their sultan. Realizing therefore that there was bound to be bloodshed because of his obstinacy, Sultan Alauya's father-in-law finally relented and allowed his grandchildren to go to school. (12)

Consistently, the Sultan would emphasize to the Maranaws the importance of education. Being literate only in Arabic literature and Islamic jurisprudence, he would inspire his brother Moros regardless of tribal affiliation to learn the American language. He quipped: "*You should learn the language of the enemy to be able to fight them.*" (13) Education for the Sultan was therefore a powerful and effective weapon to be used by the Moros to be able to resist colonial assimilation, defend their religion, people and land, and ultimately regain back their freedom.

Even in his later years after he had worked with the Philippine Commonwealth as Senator and as member of the Constitutional Commission, he always reminded his people of their Moro forebears' undying love for freedom thereby leaving to posterity his legacy of continuous struggle for independence (14).

No other person, however, would this legacy have a greater and permanent impact than on his son. Ahmad Alonto.

12. Related by both Dr. Ahmad E. Alonto, Jr. and Former Ambassador Abul Khayr Alonto.

13. Related by both Dr. Ahmad E. Alonto, Jr. and Former Ambassador Abul Khayr Alonto.

14. Senator Alonto disclosed to Former Ambassador Abul Khayr Alonto that it is his father, the late Sultan Alauya Alonto, who should be regarded as the father of the contemporary Moro resistance and not him.

FOLLOWING THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE FATHER

Ahmad Domocao Alonto was tutored on the fundamentals of Islam by his mother. He attended the government school in Lanao for his elementary and high school education (1921-1931) while he had his college education at the University of the Philippines (UP) in Manila. He passed the Philippine Bar examination and was granted the license to practice law in 1938.

His father had then joined Philippine Commonwealth President Manuel L. Quezon (despite the popular clamor of the Moros for a separate Mindanao under the Americans) as a senator and a delegate to the Constitutional Convention, and was articulating the needs and problems of the Muslims in the South. The elder Alonto demanded ‘for the permanent and final solution of the so-called “Moro Problem” and called for equal rights for the Muslim Filipinos in the country. (15) Cognizant of the numerous difficulties that the Moro people

were confronted with, Ahmad joined his father in advocating for the advancement of his people.

He joined the government premised on the belief that he could effectively speak and work for the betterment of the Muslims because as such he would be listened to by the political powers-that-be in Manila. So determined was he in his goal that he gained the attention of President Manuel A. Roxas in 1933 who said: “The future of this nation can be prophesied by the quality of its youth leaders of today. From among our Moro brothers of the South a new star has arisen, whose intense nationalism and love of country has injected a new life to our fight for freedom: Domie Alonto - - one of our sturdy pillars of the rising generations. (16)”

He started working as a classroom teacher then worked as a confidential writer for the National Information Board, Department of the Interior, and was even commissioned as First Lieutenant in the Philippine Army, 81st Division, United States Armed Forces in the Far East, during

World War II (1941-1945). He also served as the municipal mayor of Dansalan (now Marawi City) and was subsequently governor of Lanao province during the caretaker government under the Japanese occupation.

The Japanese authorities considered him above suspicion while he occupied these positions, so he was thus able to secretly help the underground anti-Japanese resistance movement. His direct involvement in the day-to-day operations of the municipality and province also educated him in the state of affairs of the people and provided him the opportunity to analyze the problems that beset the Maranaw society. He was Presidential Assistant and Adviser to the Office of the President of the Republic of the Philippines from 1948 to 1949. (17)

Ahmad Domocao Alonto’s exposure to Philippine politics propelled him to an elective position in government to pursue the same objective as his father’s – a better life for his people. Both father and son shared the same vision that Christian Filipinos and

15. Sultan Alauya said: “To be frank with you, there was a time when not even a soul among the Mohammedan Filipinos was for the independence of our country. I was the only one who worked for the independence of our country, sacrificing everything, and I have never turned traitor to my country, because I believe that through independence the higher destinies of our people can be attained.” Taken from The Sultan sa Ragain Speaks, Constitutional Convention Record, Journal No. 18, August 21, 1934. <http://blogs.inquirer.net/current/2008/08/08/the-sultan-sa-ramain-speaks-1934/>

16. Nomination Letter for the 1988 King Faisal International Award for Service of Islam and other related papers, King Faisal Center for Islamic and Arabic Studies, MSU, Marawi City, page 25.

17. Data gathered from the Nomination Letter for the 1988 King Faisal International Award for Service of Islam and other related papers, King Faisal Center for Islamic and Arabic Studies, MSU, Marawi City, page 4.

Moro Muslims can build a nation together as equal partners and not with the Muslims playing a subordinate role to the Christian Filipinos. He was also of the conviction that he can use the position “for the purpose of illustrating the Islamic way of life among the Muslims of the Philippines and arouse Islamic awareness and consciousness in them. (18)”.

He got elected as congressman (representing the then undivided Lanao province) and eventually as senator (1954-1955 and 1956-1961). He was also elected delegate to the 1971-1972 Constitutional Convention. In 1986, he was appointed member of the Constitutional Commission that drafted the new Constitution of the Republic. Sadly, his efforts to push for the grant of meaningful political autonomy for the Muslims in the 1971 Constitutional Convention and in the 1986 Constitutional Commission were defeated by powerful and dominant political, religious and economic vested-interest blocs. The regional autonomy that was granted to

the Muslims fell short of that ‘meaningful political autonomy’ envisioned by Ahmad Domocao Alonto for the Moros that would allow the latter a degree of freedom to govern themselves according to Islam, preserve what remained of their ancestral domain, and protect their culture and traditions within the larger framework of the Philippine nation-state.

In his capacity as a Muslim official in the Philippine government, he was guided by the Sultan’s famous saying “How can we put our house in order if we do not have the key to our house? (19)” As always his father remained an inspiration to him in his endeavor to improve the lot of Maranaw society and the Muslims in general. During intimate talks with his family and friends, he would describe his father as “... the most enlightened man that I have talked to. He is the most knowledgeable man that has instructed things to me that I have accepted. (20)”

As a member of the Philippine legislature, Ahmad

Domocao Alonto filed bills for the development of Mindanao and its people economically, politically, and culturally (21). He was constantly impressing on the minds of his colleagues in Congress (and the whole country for that matter) that the economic destiny of the Philippines ‘lies in the development of Mindanao’ (22), the latter being the so-called Land of Promise. Today, his then unheeded words are becoming true. Mindanao does not only possess the richest mineral and marine resources and the only forest preserve in the country, it is also the depository of largely untapped strategic resources such as deuterium (that can be found in the Mindanao Deep), and natural gas and petroleum, reportedly concentrated in the Cotabato Basin (of which Liguasan Marsh is a part) and off the coast of Sulu and Palawan.

He was also ‘one of the bulwarks of the Filipino-First Policy” (23) adopted during the incumbency of President Carlos P. Garcia. As chairman of the Special Committee created by the

18. Nomination Letter for the 1988 King Faisal International Award for Service of Islam and other related papers, King Faisal Center for Islamic and Arabic Studies, MSU, Marawi City, page 7.

19. Narrated by Dr. Ahmad E. Alonto, Jr.

20. Narrated by Former Ambassador Abul Khayr Alonto.

21. http://www.senate.gov.ph/senators/former_senators/domocao_alonto.htm

22. http://www.senate.gov.ph/senators/former_senators/domocao_alonto.htm

23. Quoted from President Carlos P. Garcia, 1954 and taken from the Nomination Letter for the 1988 King Faisal International Award for Service of Islam and other related papers, King Faisal Center for Islamic and Arabic Studies, MSU, Marawi City, page 26.

House of Representatives to find a definite solution to the so-called Moro Problem, he was able to comprehend the enormity of the injustices committed on the Moros, thus enabling him to wrestle with the government for more reforms.

TURNING POINTS IN HIS LIFE

Ahmad Domocao Alonto considered 1950 a defining year for himself as a Muslim. This was the year when he was given Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall's English translation of the Holy Qur'an because, though he was born a Muslim, he was at first not knowledgeable about the teachings of his religion. His interest to know more about Islam was aroused only after a few days of reading it, which led him to invite friends who could read and understand the Arabic Qur'an so that he could study the Holy Book with them. A voracious reader, he would thereafter read all Islamic books and literature written in English that came his way. Eventually, he became acquainted with two Indonesian Muslim graduates of Al-Azhar University and a student from Indonesia who helped and guided him in the study of Islam.

A visit from two Pakistani

religious scholars the following year stirred him to make an in-depth study of his religion as a complete way of life and ponder on the global position of Islam with respect to the rest of the world. Regarding this significant meeting, he said:

"Unexpectedly, a seemingly unimportant visit to the Philippines was made by a Muslim religious personality....It is still a sort of mystery as to why of all nations of the world chose to come to the Philippines, which was then still bearing the ravages of war...But one thing definite was that it jolted most of the Philippines Muslims, especially the younger set then, in the realization of the state of their very weak position. As the situation developed on both Muslims and Christian camps through the years, the significance of this brief but divinely-inspired visit rose in greatness in the hearts of Filipino Muslims (24)".

Henceforth, he would always be engaged in group discussions and studies about Islam.

In the 1950s, Mindanao saw the arrival of more foreign Muslim missionaries as a resurgence in the faith gradually began to sweep across the Islamic world from the Middle East to Southeast Asia and from Africa to Central Asia. This was heralded by the appearance of new independent Muslim nation-states that emerged from European colonialism. This made the Moros better aware of their greater identity as Muslims and their belonging to the larger ideological community of Islam (Ummah).

THE KAMLON REBELLION

Even after the grant of Philippine independence and the inclusion of Mindanao to the archipelago, Moro uprisings in Mindanao continued, with major clashes occurring in Cotabato, Lanao, and Sulu. Over in Lanao there was the Tawantawan Insurrection. With his family and men, Tawantawan battled government troops for almost a decade. Tawantawan was avenging the death of his parents and sister who were among those brutally massacred by the Christian settlers in Kapatagan because of land conflict between the latter and the Moros in that locality. (25) Cotabato also witnessed intermittent armed skirmishes

24. 'Reversion to Islamic Shariah: The Only Way to Save the Contribution of Islam Towards the Development of Social Institution of the Muslim Communities in the Philippines', Paper written by Dr. Ahmad D. Alonto for the National Hijrah Centenary Celebrations Committee (Law Division) of the Government of Pakistan, page 19.

25. Aristocrats of the Malay Race: A History of the Bangsa Moro in the Philippines © 1995 by Nasser A. Marohomsalic, page 147.

during that period for basically the same reason.

The Kamlon rebellion in Sulu was, however, the bloodiest conflict during that period. It lasted for almost eight years and ended only with the surrender of Hadji Kamlon in 1952 due to his advancing age. Almost all of the Philippine government's resources were used to quell the Kamlon rebellion. This climaxed in a final military campaign consisting of 5,000 ground troops along with naval, air and ground artillery complements. Nonetheless, this military campaign failed to either capture Kamlon or end the resistance in Sulu.

The anti-Kamlon military campaign almost bankrupted the national government's coffers as expenditures reached about Php185 million, prompting then Secretary of Defense Eulogio Balao to make a public pronouncement saying that to solve the Mindanao Problem the Moros of Mindanao had to be Christianized. Balao's statement demonizing the Moro Muslims resurrected the US Army's slogan during the American-Moro Wars that "a good Moro is a dead Moro" and was played up in public by both the print and broadcast media at that time, thus creating pandemonium and outrage among the Moro people.

As a result of this, the Alonto family immediately convened a family council. Ahmad Domocao Alonto, who had just arrived from a meeting abroad with Muslim leaders, was asked to apprise the family of the situation and explain the implications of Secretary Balao's statement. Amidst much shouting and cries of *Allahu Akbar* (Allah is Great) from clan members, verses from the Holy Qur'an were read regarding jihad (struggle in the way of Allah).

At the time, *Eidul Adha* (an Islamic religious feast celebrated by Muslims world-wide marking the end of the pilgrimage to Makhah) was a week or two away. Datu Berua, the younger brother of the late Sultan Alauya, invoked the authority of the Sultanate and then decreed that all mosques be closed during the coming *Eidul Adha* and that congregational prayers be held in open ground to see who among the people of Lanao were ready to fight and die for the cause of Allah. Days before the *Eid*, people came to clean the fields and mats were brought.

On the morning of the congregational prayer for the *Eid*, there was a huge crowd as men, women, children, young and old, came from the different areas of Lanao to demonstrate

their willingness to fight for their religion Islam. Cries of *Allahu Akbar* reverberated throughout the open field. Ahmad Domocao Alonto was very much impressed by the response of Lanao's Muslims and realized how a good cause, a cause in the way of Allah, could mobilize the people .(27)

It was in the midst of this uproar precipitated by Balao's pronouncement that then Representative Ahmad Domocao Alonto stood up in Congress to denounce Secretary Balao and defend the Moros of Sulu. It is worthy to note that in the aftermath of this event, the people of Sulu gave him the highest vote in their province when he first ran for the Senate.

The Kamlon rebellion generated so much national attention and interest to get at the bottom of Moro unrests in Mindanao. A Special House Committee was created to look into the problem, and the Committee was composed of Lanao Congressman Ahmad Domocao Alonto, Cotabato Congressman Luminog Mangelen, and Sulu Congressman Ombra Amilbangsa. The Committee's findings concluded that "the Moros must be made to feel that they were an integral part of the Philippine nation and this

26. Aristocrats of the Malay Race: A History of the Bangsa Moro in the Philippines © 1995 by Nasser A. Marohomsalic, page 148.

27. Narrated by Former Ambassador Abul Khayr Alonto.

aim must be achieved through a comprehensive approach covering economic, social, moral, political and educational developments” (28).

Consequently, Ahmad Domocao Alonto authored and filed bills leading to the creation of the Commission on National Integration (CNI), the Mindanao Development Authority (MDA) and the Mindanao State University (MSU). The creation of MSU and its establishment at Marawi City was a landmark accomplishment because it realized Ahmad Domocao Alonto’s long time dream to bring affordable but quality education to the Muslims and other cultural communities in Mindanao. Like his father before him, he believed that through education the Muslim Moros can be at par with the Christian Filipinos and thus be equal partners in nation-building.

He also authored Republic Act No. 1515 providing for the election of provincial and municipal officials in the Muslim areas instead of being appointed or handpicked by the Philippine President. Through this, he made democracy a process accessible to the Muslims.

BANDUNG CONFERENCE

The end of the Second World War saw the emergence of new nation-states in Asia and Africa with the liberation of their colonized territories. In 1955, a meeting of non-aligned nations which refused to be drawn into the cold war then existing between the West (led by the United States of America) and the Eastern Communist bloc was held in Bandung, Indonesia. This was the 1955 Afro-Asian Conference, better known as the Bandung Conference, whose theme included among others political self-determination, mutual respect for sovereignty, non-aggression and non-interference in a state’s internal affairs, and equality. Colonialism in all its manifestations was strongly condemned and repudiated by the participating Third World nation-states.

Ahmad Domocao Alonto was a member of the Philippine delegation to the Conference headed by Foreign Secretary Carlos P. Romulo; in fact, he was the only Muslim delegate from the Philippines. The Bandung Conference was indeed a milestone for him for it opened new horizons and he was “agog with ideas to liberate his own people from

the throttlehold of the central government “(29). It was also in Bandung that he personally met President Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt, then the recognized leader of the Pan-Arab world, which led to a lasting friendship. Nasser was a charismatic Arab leader who sought to unite the Arabs and the Muslims with his idea of “Pan-Islamic Confederacy of Muslim States and their liberation from European and foreign colonization.”(30)

He also had his first introduction to the struggling Malay nations and their leaders at that time such as Acmad Sukarno of Indonesia and Tunku Abdul Rahman of Malaysia. Indonesia had just newly won its War of Independence from Dutch colonialism at that time, while Malaysia was still a British colony also aspiring for independence. He struck a friendship with these Malay leaders and was impressed with their vision of liberating the Malay peoples from Western colonial influences. It strengthened his conviction that the Moros in Mindanao and Sulu as well as the Filipinos belong to the Malay World and that for both peoples to succeed in the future and build a truly united nation-state, they have to retrace their Malay roots and revive Malay consciousness. (31)

28. Bangsamoro: A Nation Under Endless Tyranny © 1999 by Salah Jubair, IQ Marin SDN BHD, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, page 124.

29. Aristocrats of the Malay Race: A History of the Bangsa Moro in the Philippines © 1995 by Nasser A. Marohomsalic, page 151.

30. Aristocrats of the Malay Race: A History of the Bangsa Moro in the Philippines © 1995 by Nasser A. Marohomsalic, page 151.

This historic event also introduced him to the revolutionary ferment then taking place in the Muslim World in particular and the Third World in general.

Upon his return to the Philippines and together with former Senator Salipada K. Pendatun of Cotabato and other Moro and foreign Muslims, he revitalized the 'dormant' Muslim Association of the Philippines (MAP) making it "the first national organ of the(se) reawakened Muslims. The association (also) made contacts and re-established inter-communication with the Muslim world." (32) The MAP was an organization founded in 1949 by mostly foreign Muslims primarily to unify the Muslim minorities in the Philippines and promote their welfare. Combining the stature of its members with the advocacy of promoting Muslim identity and aspirations, MAP became very popular in all the areas of Moroland and was thus transformed into a pressure group that lobbied for Muslim rights with the central government. The Association gained the

appointment of the first Moro in the Philippine judiciary, among others, as well as the declaration of Maulidin Nabi (Birthday of Prophet Muhammad) as a Muslim holiday.

Also as an aftermath of the Bandung Conference, Ahmad Domocao Alonto got more scholarships for the Moros to the different schools and universities in Muslim countries, foremost of which was Egypt. Through him, 15 Moro youths, majority of whom were Maranaws, were recipients of scholarships for military education and training at the prestigious Cairo Military Academy. It was also because of him that Al Azhar University, the oldest and most renowned Islamic institution of learning, opened its portals to students from Mindanao and Sulu. Among these students was the young Salamat Hashim.

All told, his exposure abroad, particularly to the challenges then facing Muslims around the world, transformed Ahmad Domocao Alonto into a champion of Muslim rights in

the Philippines. His advocacy to this effect influenced his Muslim colleagues even in government. It would be worthy to note that in 1961, Sulu Congressman Ombra Amilbansa filed House Bill 5682 for the restoration of the Sulu Sultanate and its separation from the country as an independent realm (33).

By the 1960s, the prevailing national mood in the country was characterized by political activism and radicalism especially among Filipino students and young intellectuals in major urban centers. But while the Filipino youth were enamored with nationalist and even Marxist ideologies, the Moro youth took on a different orientation and were consumed with an unprecedented interest in Islam which in turn prodded them to reassert their separate Muslim identity as 'Moro'. Different Moro Muslim organizations emerged as religious leaders and western-educated Moro professionals worked hand in hand in propagating Islam not only as a religion but as an ideology itself.

31. According to Dr. Ahmad E. Alonto, Jr., his father's awareness of the importance of the Malay roots of the Moros and Filipinos and, consequently, his belief in Malay unity had in fact first developed during his days in UP. While studying law, Ahmad Domocao Alonto became intimately associated with Wenceslao Vinzons who was a fervent advocate of Pan-Malay unity. Together they inaugurated a Pan-Malay movement called "Perhempunan Orang-Orang Melayu" or "Malay Peoples' Movement". He served as Vinzons's vice-president of the movement. When Vinzons left UP to take the bar (he was a topnotcher), Alonto took over as the movement's president. In World War II, Vinzons became an anti-Japanese guerrilla leader and was eventually captured by the Japanese and executed. Vinzons Hall in UP bears his name.

32. 'Reversion to Islamic Shariah: The Only Way to Save the Contribution of Islam Towards the Development of Social Institution of the Muslim Communities in the Philippines', Paper written by Dr. Ahmad D. Alonto for the National Hijrah Centenary Celebrations Committee (law Division) of the Government of Pakistan, page 25.

33. *Aristocrats of the Malay Race: A History of the Bangsa Moro in the Philippines* © 1995 by Nasser A. Marohomsalic, page 158.

This development would be accelerated by another fateful event that was to have a profound impact on Ahmad Alonto's political life and Islamic advocacy.

THE JABIDAH MASSACRE

The massacre of sixty-four Moro trainees on the island of Corregidor on March 17, 1968 by their military handlers is historically known as the 'Jabidah Massacre'. The trainees were executed because of their refusal to be part of the secret military invasion of Sabah. According to the lone Moro survivor, Jibin Arula, they could not attack Sabah (now a state of Malaysia) because the people there were their Muslim brethren and they had no quarrel with them. In any case, the Corregidor Massacre (as the incident was also called) jolted the Moros, their leaders and the Muslim world as to the perfidy of the ruling power in the Philippine government.

Not the least of those who were horrified was Ahmad Domocao Alonto. The Corregidor Massacre was another turning point in his life that made him realize then that the Moro Muslims were in a very precarious situation. The launching of the Muslim Independence Movement

in Cotabato (later renamed the Mindanao Independence Movement) by Datu Udtog Matalam barely two months after the Corregidor tragedy reflected the state of insecurity that the Moro Muslims felt at that time.

In Lanao, Ahmad Domocao Alonto organized the Ansar El Islam (Helpers of Islam) in 1969 in response to the conspiratorial design for the total eradication of Islam in the Philippines under the rule of President Ferdinand E. Marcos. Accordingly, "It is a mass movement for the preservation and development of Islam in the Philippines (34)."

The establishment of Ansar was as much an ideological necessity to transform Moro society into an Islamic one as it was dictated by reason of survival. A year after the Jabidah Massacre, in 1969, when the Ilaga depredations on Muslim communities in Cotabato were beginning to spread to other provinces, a letter addressed to all Muslim leaders by an Ilaga leader who called himself "Commander X" demanded that all Muslims convert to Christianity or face extinction. These incidents led Ahmad Domocao Alonto to realize that the time had come for the Muslims to come together under the ideological banner of Islam

and one Islamic Movement in the face of this great threat to Islam and Muslims in the Philippines.

This he elaborated on when he said that the Ansar is "... oriented towards Islam as a way of life to which every Muslim should conform... (it is) concerned with the crystallization of what Islam is and in pointing out to the Muslims of this country, particularly among its members, the tenets of Islam in all its ramifications. As such an Islamic-oriented Movement, it is wide awake to all crises appearing in the national scene, especially that which profoundly affect our process of nation-building, like the present tragic Mindanao crisis involving the different religious communities. Being such, the Movement asks guidance from Islam in looking for the solution of such a crisis... (35)". To his nephew, Abul Khayr D. Alonto, who would later become the first Vice Chairman of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) Central Committee, he confided that he only fully understood what his father was saying about 'continuing the struggle for independence' when he realized the true meaning of Islam in his later years (36).

The Ansar El Islam registered more than a half-a-

34. Nomination Letter for the 1988 King Faisal International Award for Service of Islam and other related papers, King Faisal Center for Islamic and Arabic Studies, MSU, Marawi City, page 24.

35. Opening Statement of the Murshid El 'Am, A.D. Alonto, during the 2nd National Islamic Symposium of the Ansar El Islam, Marawi City, April 28, 1972 entitled The Ansar El Islam and the Mindanao Crisis, pages 4-5.

million members throughout the country. Later, it was to inspire and initiate the creation of, and provide mass support to, the MNLF and then the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) whose founder and late chairman, Ustadz Salamat Hashim, was closely associated with Ahmad Domocao Alonto.

THE STRUGGLE FOR MUSLIM RIGHT TO SELF-DETERMINATION

From 1968 to 1976, during the regime of President Ferdinand Marcos and the outbreak of war and conflict in Mindanao which started with the ravages of the Ilaga (37), more than 200,000 Moros were killed. From 300,000 to 500,000 Moros were forced to flee to Sabah, Malaysia as refugees of war. An estimated 300 mosques were burned and desecrated, and over one million Moros were internally displaced. Hundreds of thousands of farmlands owned by Moros were abandoned and fell into the hands of marauding Christian militias

organized against the Bangsamoro people by the Marcos dictatorship. These figures did not include the casualties wrought by the war and conflict from 1976 to 1986, the year when the dictatorship fell from power (38).

Congressman Eduardo Ermita, then a member of the GRP Panel that negotiated with the MNLF (1993-1996) said that “Over a period of 26 years since 1970, more than 100,000 persons were killed in the conflict in Southern Philippines...The AFP has spent about Php73 billion in connection with the Mindanao conflict since 1970.” (39) Ermita’s figure on the number of deaths may be understated but his admission nevertheless should illustrate the horrendous situation of the Moros during the period mentioned.

Ahmad Domocao Alonto passionately exposed, denounced and opposed this horrible state to which the Moros were forced into by the Marcos dictatorship. As a

renowned religious and political leader in the Muslim world, and being a founding member of the Constituent Assemblies of the Rabitat al-Alam al-Islamie (Muslim World League) and the Mo’tamar al-Alam al-Islamie (World Muslim Congress), “he took the world as his stage in exposing and denouncing the ‘conspiracy to liquidate Islam in the Philippines.’” (40) The Muslim World League and the World Muslim Congress, based in Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, respectively, were influential international organizations of Muslim peoples and nations which protect and promote the interests of Muslims and Islam.

He would straightforwardly disclose to his local and foreign audiences that the plight of the Muslims of Southern Philippines was no better than before because in the Philippines, there “... was a mere change of masters. There was no change at all of any of the policies adopted during the colonial days

36. Narrated by Former Ambassador Abul Khayr Alonto.

37. Ilaga, an Ilonggo word for ‘rat’, is the name of an ultra-rightist armed Christian para-military organization in Mindanao which had the backing of the State that attacked Moro communities in various parts of the Cotabato, Lanao and Zamboanga areas in the late 60s and 70s. It was first established by Christian settler-politicians in Cotabato in order to drive out the indigenous Moro Muslims and tribal peoples from their ancestral lands. The Ilagas later became an ‘auxiliary’ force of the AFP during the MNLF-led armed struggle of the Bangsamoro people for the right of self-determination. They massacred innocent Moro civilians – men, women and children – and were known for their barbarity and ritualistic cannibalism. They cut the ears and/or mutilated the bodies of their Moro victims, and there were cases where they even ate the entrails and brains of those whom they killed. It was the Ilaga that inaugurated the first ‘ethnic-cleansing’ in this part of the world. It is estimated that at the height of the Ilaga depredations, about 60,000 Moro Muslims were killed.

38. These statistics were presented by Dr. Alunan Glang, former Philippine Ambassador to Kuwait before the Conference on Population of the Islamic World held in Cairo, Egypt on March 1-4, 1987.

39. Bangsamoro: A Nation Under Endless Tyranny © 1999 by Salah Jubair, IQ Marin SDN BHD, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, page 162.

40. Aristocrats of the Malay Race: A History of the Bangsa Moro in the Philippines © 1995 by Nasser A. Marohomsalic, page 215.

directed towards the liquidation of Islam in the country.” (41) In his privilege speech before the 1971 Constitutional Convention, he would emphatically state the need for the emergence of a truly national community reminding the national government of the reason behind the unity of the Filipinos and the Muslims during the struggle for Philippine Independence from the Americans, saying that “During the recent past when we were fighting for our political freedom the diverse elements that constitute the society, who then were all equally tasting the bitterness of political bondage, [we] were united behind our leaders’ pretensions to present an image of unity. Even the few discordant notes from segments of the society were drowned by the overwhelming cry for emancipation.” (42)

But far from being an outright separatist or secessionist, Ahmad Domocao Alonto believed that some form of an accommodation or compromise can still be worked out between the Moro Muslims and the Filipinos within the Philippine nation-state system. He did not succumb to the ‘radical views’ then of

the impatient, youthful Moro nationalists who were calling for complete and immediate independence of the Bangsamoro Homeland from the Philippines.

The demand for Moro independence among the militant Moro youth was premised on the historical and current injustices committed on the Moro people. The argument that was put forward was that the Bangsamoro people were denied their democratic consent when the Moro homeland was annexed and incorporated into the Philippine nation-state once independence was granted to the latter in 1946. Thus, they further argued that this was the root cause of the Mindanao conflict and the ‘mother of all injustices’ currently being experienced by the Bangsamoro people. Therefore, they said that the only solution to end this conflict in Mindanao and Sulu is to restore the Bangsamoro nation’s independence.

Ahmad Domocao Alonto subscribed to the arguments of the Moro youth, many of whom were inspired by his works and efforts. But he cautioned against outright separation which he

believed would lead to a prolonged and bloody conflict. He favored exhausting all available legitimate means to resolve the conflict before resorting to separation. This explained why he wanted a political compromise, in the form of a political settlement of the Mindanao conflict by establishing a meaningful political autonomy for the Muslims of Mindanao and Sulu. It was in this context that he presented the federal system as “the system that could provide the maximum opportunity for separate and diverse communities to organize themselves into larger units as illustrated by the histories of Switzerland, the United States...” (43)

This was made more evident in his support of the MNLF’s revised stand from independence to genuine political autonomy in the 1974 Kuala Lumpur meeting of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) when he declared that “...the demands of the Moro National Liberation Front for a meaningful and substantive autonomy within the context of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of the Philippines can bring about

41. ‘Reversion to Islamic Shariah: The Only Way to Save the Contribution of Islam Towards the Development of Social Institution of the Muslim Communities in the Philippines’, Paper written by Dr. Ahmad D. Alonto for the National Hijrah Centenary Celebrations Committee (law Division) of the Government of Pakistan, page 17.

42. The Need for a National Community, Speech delivered by Delegate A.D. Alonto (Lanao del Sur) during the privilege hour before the 1971 Constitutional Convention on August, 1971, Con-Con Session Hall, Manila, page 1.

43. The Need for a National Community, Speech delivered by Delegate A.D. Alonto (Lanao del Sur) during the privilege hour before the 1971 Constitutional Convention on August, 1971, Con-Con Session Hall, Manila, page 10.

the final and lasting solution of the problem.” (44) This concept of autonomy had been adopted by the Philippine government, but only on paper.

It is worth mentioning that he also fully supported the creation of the MILF under Ustadz Salamat Hashim when the latter began to separate from the MNLF of Nur Misuari as early as 1975. Ahmad Domocao Alonto believed that Salamat was a more worthy leader of the Moro liberation movement being an ‘*alim* (Islamic scholar) whose devotion to the Islamic ideology and cause was untainted by secularist and alien ideological influences.

It is also important to note that the late Ustadz Salamat Hashim, while chairman of the MILF, issued a principled policy statement that “the best and most civilized way to resolve the conflict in Mindanao is through a negotiated political settlement”. In pursuit of this, in the “*Agreement on the General Framework for the Resumption of Peace talks Between the GRP and the MILF*” signed on March 24, 2001 at Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia between the MILF and the GRP delegations, the parties agreed to resume the peace negotiations stalled by the all-

out war unleashed by the regime of President Joseph Estrada “... from where it had stopped before April 27, 2000 until we shall have reached a negotiated political settlement of the Bangsamoro Problem”. (45)

HIS LEGACY

Ahmad Domocao Alonto will always be remembered especially by his brother Maranaws as the man who had touched their lives and given them much. Professor Muhamadali M. Bantuas, a Moro Maranaw, recalled: “I was in my high school days when I first met him. I became one of his listeners in his daily night lectures. Everyone he met loved him. I still remembered those advices he had frequently told us. He said ‘love people because they will love you back. The more knowledge you give them, the more reward you will be receiving from God.’” (46)

Apart from his political activities, foremost among his accomplishments was in the field of education. The establishment of the Mindanao State University and the Jamiatul Philippine al-Islamiyyah (Islamic University of the Philippines) is living testimony to this. Quality education was made accessible to the Moros whereby

they now share equal opportunities with Christian Filipinos in acquiring education and excelling in all fields of discipline.

In relation to this, he is remembered as the author of the bill that created the Commission on National Integration (CNI) which, among others, provided scholarships to many poor Muslim students to study in the different colleges and universities in the country. Through his association with different foreign Muslim leaders and organizations, he was able to foster closer linkages between the Muslims in the Philippines and the global ideological community of Muslims. More Philippine Muslim students enjoyed grants and scholarships abroad especially in the different universities in the Royal Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Kuwait, Malaysia, Indonesia, Libya and Qatar and more foreign Muslim missionaries were sent to the Philippines mainly through his efforts.

Ahmad Domocao Alonto is also remembered as the man who strengthened Islamic awareness among his people. Having organized the Ansar el Islam, he vigorously campaigned for improving Muslim society by

44. Consensus on Proposed Formula for Final Solution of Minsupala Question submitted by A.D. Alonto on September 30, 1977, page 2.

45. Disclosed by Robert Maulana M. Alonto, member of the MILF Peace Negotiating Panel and nephew of Dr. Ahmad Domocao Alonto.

46. Quoted from the draft of the paper of Mohamadali M. Bantuas entitled “The Profile and Ideals of an Intellectual Visionary” page 2, JPI, Marawi City.

exhorting the people to revert to the pristine teachings of Islam and to lead their lives according to its lofty moral values. Many would remember him giving nightly lectures among the youth during his stay in the province, trying to inculcate Islamic values. During these sessions, he would ask everybody to speak his mind out. He encouraged them to be assertive if they knew they were right. The participants would also recall his being emphatic in advising them to shun the ‘crab mentality’ that was then prevalent in society if they wanted to succeed and improve their lot. Similarly, he was openly critical of what he called ‘amigo mentality’ which prevailed among many Moro leaders who obsequiously followed without question the dictates of Manila politicians so as to be able to extract and be granted political and economic privileges and concessions at the expense of the general interest and welfare of the Muslims. (47)

Because of his Islamic advocacy and determined effort to reform Moro society at large along the ideological lines of Islam, he is considered by his people and the Muslim World as a *mujadid*, an Islamic reformer and liberationist, who belonged to the genre of Islamic Movement thinkers and leaders such as Hassan Al Bannah

of Egypt, Abul a’ala Maududi of Pakistan, Sayyid Nursi of Turkey, among others.

It could be said that he was obsessed with Muslim unity in his homeland. He discussed at length the need for unity among the people. Despite his being a Maranaw, Ahmad Domocao Alonto transcended the ethnic divide that separated the thirteen ethno-linguistic groups that constituted the Moro nation (Bangsamoro) in Mindanao and Sulu. His leadership was not confined to the Maranaw group alone, which is the second largest of the Moro ethno-linguistic groups (next only to the Maguindanaon). He was always concerned with the welfare of all Muslims, and this was manifested in his defense of the people of Sulu during the Kamlon rebellion and the establishment of MSU. To him, being Muslim was first and foremost.

As such, many heard him talk and he was respected and obeyed. At the height of the Mindanao war during the martial law regime, even poor Muslims in the mosques willingly shared their meager income to assist the *mujahideen* (literally meaning ‘strugglers in the way of Allah’ and also referring to the Moro freedom fighters) because the ‘Old Man’ (Ahmad Domocao Alonto) said so.

His opinion on religious matters was very much sought after, that the determining of the exact date for celebrating the two *Eids* in the different mosques in the Lanao provinces was referred to him and his decision was final. (48)

He was determined to strengthen Islam among the Maranaws that he undertook the painstaking task of translating the Holy Qur’an from its original Arabic to the Maranaw language so the Maranaw masses would be able to read it in their own tongue and understand it. For this purpose, he organized a group of *ulama* and linguists who were experts in Arabic and the nuances of the Maranaw language.

He himself was fluent in both the ‘old’ and colloquial Maranaw and had in fact also translated Jose Rizal’s ‘Mi Ultimo Adios’ in the classical Maranaw dialect that became very popular among the masses as it aroused deep feelings of love of freedom and homeland.

His faith, conviction and idealism remained unshaken even in times of adversity. His devotion to Islamic principles and values was impeccable that when President Marcos (who was his contemporary at the University of the Philippines and a ‘fraternity

47. Narrated by Robert Maulana M. Alonto.

48. Narrated by several interviewees.

brother' in the Upsilon) attempted to entice him to support his martial law regime by secretly offering him the position of Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, Ahmad Domocao Alonto flatly rejected this offer by humbly telling the dictator that he was not qualified for such a position and that he intended not to work with the Philippine government anymore after his retirement from Philippine politics. (49) Even then, he vigorously opposed the Marcos dictatorship despite the risks that such opposition entailed to himself and to his family and clan.

Despite outwardly disapproving 'Muslim secession', Ahmad Domocao Alonto loved his Moro homeland very much. Championing the cause of the Muslims (he used the word Muslim to refer to the Moro Muslims in Mindanao) in the Philippines, he travelled around the country and all over the world in search of a lasting solution to the Mindanao Problem.

During his travels abroad, he consulted and shared his thoughts with Moro Muslim students regarding the problems faced by the Muslims in the Philippines. Ustadz Salamat Hashim, then a student at the Al Azhar University

in Cairo, fondly remembered how the Senator would send for him and they would meander together among the pyramids of Egypt while discussing the challenges confronting the Muslims in Mindanao. (50)

Still, he advocated for a united Philippines for both the Christian Filipinos and the Moro Muslims. To this day, his advocacy for 'Unity in Diversity' still resonates among many Moro Muslims who share his views of working out a mutually beneficial political settlement with the Christian Filipinos. He explained his perspective on this aspect thus:

Under this situation, I dare say that if to achieve unity we have to retrace our steps and divide the country into several autonomous states bound together by a common goal and sense of oneness, we should not hesitate to do so. If unity cannot be achieved in a strictly unitary system as experience has taught us, then by all means let us revert to the only option left open for us: Unity in Diversity – which seems to be the goal fixed for us by

Divine Wisdom when our ancestors, belonging to a common racial strain but speaking different tongues, ventured through uncharted seas, guided by the same Divine Providence, to these beautiful islands separated by natural barriers yet belonging to the same geographical region. For the sake of the hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions, of precious lives of our kith and kin that were sacrificed in the fields of battle to defend their newfound paradise for us their progeny, let us forge that unity on the anvil of necessity, perchance God Almighty, whose providence controls the destiny of men and nations, grants that we can preserve these 'beautiful isles' for the generations yet to come. (51)

Ahmad Domocao Alonto passed away on December 11, 2002 in his home in Marawi City after a brief bout with cancer. He endeared himself to the men and women who came to know him personally and through his teachings, writings and advocacies. He was most

49. Narrated by Robert Maulana M. Alonto.

50. Narrated by the late Ustadz Salamat Hashim to Robert Maulana M. Alonto and Prof. Ahboud Syed Lingga, Executive Director of the Institute of Bangsamoro Studies (IBS).

51. Basic Issues on the Mindanao Question by Dr. Ahmad D. Alonto prepared by request of the Mindanao Executive Development Academy (MEDA), 1975, pages 51-52.

loved especially by his family, his children, and relatives. He was held as a living legend in his lifetime (52), his name still revered by Muslims.

Yet, “he died a sad man” (53), knowing that the conflict in Mindanao whose resolution he devoted his life to is still far from over. His greatest frustration stemmed from the fact that the Filipino ruling elite have invariably ignored the reality that only remedial justice for the Moro Muslims in Mindanao and Sulu can rectify the wrongs committed

against them in the past, address current legitimate grievances, and thus resolve peacefully the conflict in Moroland. On this matter, he felt that the Filipino ruling elite betrayed the Moro Muslims, especially his father, the late Sultan, who supported and joined the founding fathers of the present-day Philippine Republic in the struggle for independence from the United States of America (54).

Ahmad Domocao Alonto is an institution to his people. His accomplishments in the field of education is exemplified by the

founding of MSU and the great number of Muslim professionals that passed through its portals; his efforts to send many scholars who were able to earn degrees in reputable educational institutions abroad; his political advocacy for the right of the Moros to self-determination; and the preservation and revival of Islam among the Moro Muslim people have become monuments to his leadership that, despite its imperfection, today remains unsurpassed and has become a guiding light for Muslim leaders of the younger generations.

52. 100 Great Muslim Leaders of the 20th Century © 2005 by Institute of Objective Studies, New Delhi (India)., page 363.

53. Disclosed by an interviewee who requested anonymity.

54. As disclosed by Ahmad Domocao Alonto to his nephews, Robert Maulana M. Alonto and Zafrullah M. Alonto when they visited him at the Makati Medical Center during his thigh operation in 1996.



Alim Abdulmajeed Ansano

The Humble and Dedicated Ulama

This case was written by Samira Gutoc and Susan Granada for the Asian Institute of Management-TeaM Energy Center for Bridging Societal Divides. This case is prepared solely for the purpose of class discussion. It is neither designed nor intended as an illustration of correct or incorrect management of the problems or issues contained in the case. Copyright 2009.

As part of his continuing advocacy for improved education, Ansano helped found several madrasahs in rural communities in Lanao del Sur, including his hometown Taraka. As his legacy and living memory to his hometown, a school under his name, the Ansano Memorial High School, had been built and is personally administered by his wife, Dr. Zainab Ansano.

INTRODUCTION

Islamic history has made known that the Prophet Mohammad and his four guided Caliphs assumed political and spiritual leadership of the Muslim community. They developed Muslim socio-political and educational institutions which remain to this day. To ensure the continuance of Islamic leadership, author Abdul-Fazi Ezzati stated that:

The Prophet introduced the 'ulama' of the community as the successors of the Prophets, undertaking their responsibilities. He entrusted them with the task of securing Islam whenever and wherever it is endangered and promoting its cause.

The *ulama* (singular, *alim*) and the *ustadz* (religious leader) form the Arabic-educated intelligentsia of today, its predecessor being the *pandita*, a member of an elite religio-social class.

In the 14th century, coincident with the formation of the Islamic community in Mindanao and Sulu, Islam had accordingly provided a learning process that transmitted moral values and religious prescriptions passed on as 'Arabic' education. The Arabs who first came to the Philippines included *aulia* or pious men, if not plain traders-teachers, to whom could be attributed the formation of an early Muslim community of the faithful – *ummatul muslimin*. This was followed by the rise of a group called *pandita* in Mindanao and Sulu who received religious instruction from neighboring Muslim principalities.

With the Spanish-American War in 1898 leading to the Treaty of Paris that ceded the Philippines to the United States, the American policy articulated that "the Philippines are not (theirs) to exploit, but to develop, to civilize, to educate, to train in the science of self-government." Henceforth during this period, while the Americans introduced the western form of education, institutional Muslim instruction embodied

what are termed 'pandita schools.' These are schools conducted by men, generally more or less learned Mohammedans called 'panditas,' who are distinguished in communities in which they live by reason of some knowledge of the Koran, writers by Commentators thereon and other books deemed sacred or authoritative by Mohammedans. These panditas also are generally persons credited with ability to read the Arabic version of the Koran. The instruction given by them relates to the forms and principles of the Mohammedan religion as practiced in Mindanao-Sulu, reading the Koran, reading and writing the local dialect in a modified Arabic script, and some elementary principles of arithmetic. Some of these teachers have a decided inclination to mysticism and a pretense to magic.

The period from 1913 to 1935 was known as the period of Filipinization. A law passed in 1916 established an elected Senate. There was the pledge of independence for the Philippines when judged that a stable government already existed. The following years saw Philippine Christians increasing assertion of full independence from the

Americans while Philippine Muslims were showing their opposition to Filipino Christian rule.

ALONG CAME ANSANO

It was during the Commonwealth period that Alim Abdulmajeed Ansano was born on September 13, 1943 in Taraka, in one of the towns of Lanao del Sur. Three years after Ansano's birth, the United States officially annexed Mindanao and Sulu into the territory of the Philippines with the grant of independence on July 4, 1946.

Earlier, Muslim leaders of Sulu and Mindanao had begun a peaceful movement that asserted their right to establish their own nation-state and form a government of their choice. This included the issuance of various petitions, resolutions, and manifestos prepared by Muslim leaders seeking to separate Mindanao, Sulu and Palawan from the rest of the Philippines. They also sought to establish in those areas a separate and distinct form of government directly under American sovereignty. Ultimately however, this movement proved to be futile.

By the 1950s, foreign Muslim preachers and missionaries had begun arriving in Mindanao and, by their teachings, there came

an Islamic resurgence as seen in a heightened consciousness among the Bangsa Moro Muslims of their greater identity as Muslims in a world order called *Ummah Islam* (Muslim Community). The American war-damage payments and back-pay awards during the post-World War II period given to guerrillas - both to Philippine Christians and Muslims - fighting the Japanese Imperial Army stimulated a surge in mosque-building, the establishment of *madrasahs* (Islamic schools) in Mindanao and Sulu and pilgrimages to Mecca, among others. The *haj* (pilgrimage) almost always deepened the Islamic consciousness of the Muslims, and they became models of Muslim religiosity upon their return to their communities. Some expressed this further by organizing Muslim brotherhood associations.

The impetus to provide better Islamic education in the *madrasah* was further enhanced when the Muslim Association of the Philippines, an organization founded in 1949 by mostly foreign-educated Muslims with the primary aim to unify the Muslim minorities in the Philippines and promote their welfare, received support from Muslim countries. Such support particularly came from the United Arab Republic, extending assistance in the form of scholarships to Al Azhar University and other universities in the Middle East.

HIS GROWING UP YEARS

It was in this socio-political context that Abdulmajeed Ansano grew up. Being one of the direct descendants of Datu Dianalan of Dalem a Masiu, one of the heirs to the throne of the Lanao Sultanates, Ansano's mother initially did not allow him to have any formal elementary education for fear that he would be Christianized if schooled in public schools run by Philippine Christians using the American system of education.

As recounted by Ansano's wife, Dr. Hajjah Zainab Intan Dimakuta, having only one parent (mother) to tend for them, "Ansano, being the eldest among his siblings, played an important role in the family for survival. As a small boy, he gathered firewood and bamboo for fuel. He picked up vegetables and caught fish for food. But his interest to earn an education pushed him to study by all means. Sometimes 'attending' formal classes through observation and listening, he would stay at the backyard of the school and peep through the small hole of a window while tending to the carabao of his brother-in-law."

Self-studying would later pay off when in 1960, Ansano was accepted into the Ma'had Mindanao Al Arabi Al Islamie in Marawi, the capital city of Lanao del Sur. He worked his way through school as a laborer in his

brother-in-law's rice mill, tasked to manually carry off sacks of rice from one point to another. He lived simply to make ends meet; for instance, for one whole year he only had a single pair of trousers which he washed every other day. He was firmly committed to finish school and would not let poverty be an issue.

In 1964, Ansano took his secondary education at the Preparatory High School of the Mindanao State University (MSU), also in Marawi City. During this time, the Philippine Muslim Mission (PHILMUSYM) was founded by Maranao religious leaders and Western-educated professionals. Immersed in Islamic pursuit, the aim of PHILMUSYM was to spread Islam the *Tableegh* way. The *Tableegh* way of teaching and preaching Islam does not require any formal program or any venue for the preacher to reach out. The whole activity is either a personal initiative or a group undertaking. Anybody is encouraged to share his knowledge of Islam and to spread the faith as a man of peace and as a brother to all. At that time, in Lanao, the streets, cafes, and even social gatherings like weddings were turned to religious fora.

PURSuing HIS STUDIES ABROAD

In 1968, Ansano earned

a scholarship through the endorsement of senior Muslim-Filipino leader Achmad Domocao Alonto, who was then inviting Filipino students to study in Muslim universities overseas. There was also a rising culture of political activism during this period, especially among the Filipino youth in Metro Manila, and an unusual interest in Islam was spreading among the Bangsa Moro youth. Lanao and Marawi City served as epicenters of this militant awakening.

Ansano was fortunate to have passed a scholarship exam to pursue BS Theology at the Karyunish University in Libya, completing his studies in 1973. A year earlier, he also obtained his Certificate in Education from the same university.

Ansano's moral foundation, which was based on religious precepts, was formed during his studies abroad. His interest in intellectual discourse, on the other hand, was stirred by his exposure to writings on communism, democracy and Islamic theology. His wife said he would use his extra allowance to meet with other fellow Moro student leaders abroad (who would eventually become his future political party mates) to study and analyze the problems confronting Muslim minorities in the Philippines.

It was also while Ansano

was preparing to go overseas to study that the incident called the Corregidor Massacre (now popularly known as the Jabidah Massacre) happened. The incident involved the killing of 64 innocent Bangsamoro youths who were enticed to join a clandestine military operation yet went against their officers when they came to learn that they were being trained to invade Sabah. The Jabidah Massacre became the spark of the Mindanao War.

As a prelude to this, in the early 70s hostilities between Christians and Muslims heightened when in-migration of people to Mindanao increased. A Christian-led *Ilaga* armed group was formed and had gone on a rampage across Muslim villages, committing all sorts of atrocities to terrify the whole Muslim population of Cotabato province. In Lanao del Norte, a Maranao armed group known as *Barracuda* was organized by local Maranao warlords who were threatened by rival Christian leaders with political ambitions in the 1971 local elections.

In July 1971, faced by threats to the existence of the *ummah* (Islamic community), a 'Consensus of Unity' was issued by Muslim leaders, mobilizing Islam for political action. On account of past and recent events,

the communiqué stated that:

"... if the government shall fail or refuse to perform its fundamental duty to give equal protection to all citizens, whether Muslim or Christian, if it fails to stop the criminal depredations in Muslim areas which are brazenly and openly committed with the very presence of the military and if we shall not get justice for our people thru peaceful and legal means – we hereby pledge today before God, that despite our present personal and political positions, we shall do our utmost to preserve our community and land. Towards this end, we are willing and ready to sacrifice our worldly possessions and even our lives as our forebears have done before us in defense of freedom and Islam."

On September 21, 1972, President Ferdinand Marcos declared Martial Law in the Philippines. A month after the declaration, the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) came out into the open, claiming the leadership of the Moro secessionist movement and leading the Bangsamoro War in the 1970s in Mindanao and Sulu.

President Marcos had

dissolved Congress and postponed indefinitely the congressional and presidential elections that would have been held in 1973. With the suspension of the writ of *habeas corpus*, several Filipinos, including Muslim leaders, began leaving the Philippines.

RETURNING AS A SCHOLAR AND EDUCATOR

In 1974, during the height of the Mindanao War, Ansano chose not to work abroad but return to Lanao. Upon his return, he was conferred the title *Alim sa Masiu*, which in the Muslim tradition was considered as a 'semi-traditional, semi-religious, and a resource person whom people ask about for clarifications on intellectual concerns.' This title bestowed upon Ansano gave him the right to be consulted on both public and private matters.

During that year, Ansano also worked as an instructor in the Mindanao State University Institute for Islamic, Arabic and Asian Studies, believing in the Islamic value that before serving or feeding others, one must feed and help those within his immediate environment.

Aleem Elias Macarandas, representative of the Muslim World League in the Philippines, was mentored by Ansano in the 80s. He appreciated this move by

Ansano, saying that “As graduates from other countries, we were expected to give our skill to foreign use or search for greener pastures. Aleem Ansano was one of the very few who decided to (be in Mindanao) and focus on his own society first. He was one with such level of intellectual competence who did not use it for personal gain but rather to help people through reforming the society and encouraging people to be both good Muslims and good citizens - healthy, productive, and happy without necessarily forgetting or “killing” their culture.”

Ansano was described as the type of teacher who was always ready and willing to share his knowledge to his students. “He was very active and was always enthusiastic to teach others,” said Ansano’s former student, Prof. Sagola Tago.

Islamic university graduates like Ansano are often placed on a pedestal by their communities because of their profound knowledge of Prophet Muhammad’s teaching in his own language, Arabic. These scholars are now known as part of the communities of the *ulama*, the religious authorities in Islam who interpret the Word of God passed on through the Holy Qur’an.

Together with the Qur’an and the Sunnah (sayings of the Prophet Muhammad), the consensus of the *ulama* (called “*ijma*”) is considered one source of Islamic law. Thus in Muslim society as a whole, the *ulama* are highly regarded to this day.

While the present crop of *ulama* are reformists who view education as a medium for Islamic *da’wah* (the call of faith), the locally-educated *ustadz* tend to react militantly (more than the foreign-educated *ustadz*) toward the current state of secularizing education that does not reflect Islamic values and culture at all.

MOBILIZING RELIGIOUS LEADERS FOR *JIHAD*

For returning Muslim scholars, only a fraction had landed in teaching jobs at academic institutions such as the King Faisal Institute at the Mindanao State University and other privately-run Arabic schools. Quite a number settled for staff positions in the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) for reasons other than economic survival. It was believed that scholars choosing the latter helped expand the military arm of the Bangsa Moro revolutionary movement by leaps and bounds.

By 1975, about three-quarters of the government’s combat forces, which had

grown four-fold to become 250,000-strong, were deployed in Mindanao as against an estimated military strength of some 20,000 armed men in the MNLF. Because of this military imbalance, local religious leaders who were graduates of Islamic universities in the Middle East and trained in *da’wah* or missionary work and pedagogy were reported to have been called in to the battle line for the first time as either fighting commanders or fighting men. Given the support of the religious leaders, it was easy then to call on the Muslim people for *jihad* (holy war).

Outside of his formal academic life, Ansano involved himself in radio broadcasting in the 70s through a regular Islamic radio program aired daily at the government station Radio ng Bayan in Marawi. At the time, radio was the most popular form of communication in Lanao because of its affordability and accessibility to people in far-flung areas. Ansano’s radio broadcast displayed his Maranao wisdom and religious knowledge.

“What I remember and liked about him most is the way he speaks. He was knowledgeable about Maranao culture, especially our language. In fact, he speaks native Maranao fluently – something that the elders liked about him wherever he goes to speak. He is such a convincing

speaker,” said Aleem Abdulmalik Pacalna, Assistant-Principal of the Philippine Integrated School in Marawi and a former *ulama* group colleague of Ansano.

On January 20, 1977, a formal ceasefire agreement between the Philippine government and the MNLF was signed following the Tripoli Agreement made between Nur Misuari and Defense Undersecretary Carmelo Barbero on December 23, 1976. The agreement established autonomy for Muslims in 13 provinces and nine cities in the southern Philippines within the realm of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of the Philippines. The Ceasefire Agreement collapsed completely towards the end of 1977 when government forces mounted massive offensives against all known MNLF strongholds.

Soon after, a leadership split within the MNLF occurred between Chairman Nur Misuari and Vice-Chairman *Ustadz* Salamat Hashim. In 1984, Salamat announced the formation of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). The MILF’s emphasis was the establishment of Islam in Mindanao and saw itself as a religious movement, differing from its mother organization, the MNLF, with the latter being perceived as secular and left-leaning.

During this fragmentation in the Moro movement, Ansano had moved to Manila and completed a Master of Arts in Islamic Philosophy at the Institute of Asian and Islamic Studies at the University of the Philippines in Quezon City in 1983.

Three years later, on February 25, 1986, Ferdinand Marcos fell from power in a nonviolent People Power Revolution that catapulted Corazon Aquino to the Philippine presidency. The incoming administration had inherited an economy devastated by cronyism and marked by crippling dependence on foreign aid and investments.

Guided by a newly drafted Freedom Constitution, among President Aquino’s first acts was the dismantling of formal structures of martial rule. In Proclamation No. 3, Aquino outlined her plan to reorganize the government to eradicate unjust and oppressive structures; guarantee civil, political, human, social, economic and cultural rights and freedoms of the Filipino people; rehabilitate the economy and promote the nationalist aspirations of the people; recover ill-gotten wealth amassed by the previous regime; eradicate graft and corruption in government; and restore peace and order, settling the problem of insurgency and pursuing national reconciliation based on justice.

FORMING THE OMPIA PARTY

It was in this context that in the same year, the *ulama* in Lanao del Sur conceived a political party. In Muslim belief, the *ulama* influence all aspects of the life of communities, from domestic and clan decisions to political affiliations. The *ulama* preach not only about religion. As authorities, they are consulted on domestic and political matters (for example, whether women could be leaders).

In the 1980s the *ulama* were found divided on the issue of religious leaders entering politics, and of Islam and democracy’s seemingly contrasting foundations – Islam as a law of God versus democracy as law of the people.

The conservative *ulama* believed Islam (the divine law) and the present Philippine Constitution (man-made law) were incompatible. Thus, political participation in a secular democracy was discouraged. Philippine law maintains the separation of Church and State, while Islamic belief upholds the union of religion and governance. The *ulama* were suspicious of the one-vote-one-person system, especially where ‘goons, guns and gold’ were used as part of the election machinery. Democracy, based on the rule of the majority is alien to Islam, which is based on “what is good or what is the

straight path.”

But pro-active *ulama* like Ansano believed in the reformatory role of Islam. Sultan Ali Laguindab says that his cousin Ansano justified Islam in politics with these words: “Politics is dirty but people who engage in politics can be made honest and clean. They can be *makatao* (pro-people), *maka-Diyos* (pro-God). At the level of the leader and his activity, one can sanitize them. Rules of the game are different but you can Islamize it. Because of this teaching in Islam, for everything that you do, what is important is the intention. What we intend is for the best. Shall we just look at what’s happening? Can’t you tell yourself: Can’t you not steal? Can’t you follow rules of law and government?”

Henceforth, an *ulama* political party was formed using an acronym that referred to a common Maranao term, *OMPIA* (*Organization of Philippine Muslims for Islamic Advancement*). The term is derived from the word, *MAPIA*, meaning “good.”

It is said that if one uses the word *OMPIA* to refer to projects, i.e., the construction of roads and bridges, the correct term would be “*kiyaompiyaan*,” which means that the area is being transformed. The one who works for the change is addressed as “*mangompiya*,” meaning ‘reformer,’ and the

process being undertaken is called “*kapepengompiya*,” which means ‘transformation.’ Thus, the term *OMPIA* connotes a stage of positive growth and development of a thing, person, group or society.

The *OMPIA* Party was formed on August 7, 1986 on the belief that *ulama* participation in the electoral process will bring about necessary reforms in the society. The organization of the party lies on Islamic faith and consciousness, with the belief that reform is in the hands of Allah through people’s involvement.

On March 18, 1987 the Commission on Election (COMELEC) approved the *OMPIA* Party as a political party with a regional constituency in Regions IX and XII only. With his deep knowledge of Islam, Ansano became the first Vice President and Chairman of the Central Committee of the *OMPIA* Party, with Dr. Mahid Mutilan, an *ulama* who had impressive academic credentials (he has a master’s degree and PhD in theology and Islamic philosophy at the Al-Azhar University in Cairo, Egypt) its first President.

The *OMPIA* Party was based in Marawi City and recruited religious leaders, religious teachers and the masses to support its candidates, who were mostly *ulama*. Ansano became the Party’s standard-bearer. The causes, ideas,

and reforms Ansano proposed and introduced were supported by the organization’s leaders. He thought that the party platform should be the focus of the campaign rather than the personality of a political candidate, as was the usual campaign strategy. He believed in giving poor candidates a chance by having them supported by the well-funded candidates

Lanao del Sur politics prior to the 80s was controlled by traditional moneyed leaders, and *OMPIA* hoped to change the local political landscape. Ansano envisioned a political party that would change the attitudes of people to promote the idea of “*no gun, no men and no relatives*.” As former Mindanao State University Education Dean Pendililang Gunting commented: “He wanted to uphold a clean election in Lanao del Sur that would ensure political reform in this part of the country. He wanted to propagate the ideals of Prophet Muhammad – to strengthen Islam where the Qur’an is the prime abiding law that would eradicate the ills of the community.” The formation of the *OMPIA* Party constituted the beginnings of a campaign to bring into mainstream local politics the tenets of Islam.

Under the *OMPIA* Party, Ansano was slated to run for governor of Lanao del Sur while the more renowned, charismatic and articulate Aleem Mahid

Mutlan was to vie for mayor in the 1988 Elections; Mutlan won for two consecutive terms.

“Ansano remained simple and low-key. In riding a ship bound for Manila, Ansano took economy class. I was aghast that my gubernatorial candidate would take an ordinary bed where everyone, including the Maranao voters, could see us,” said his running mate, former Board Member Aleem Pandapat, recalling their campaign sorties at the time.

In explaining himself, Ansano said that he rode economy class because he could not yet afford to ride business class. He was sending a message that politicians should avoid the pomp and luxury that is usually perceived as coming with the position i.e. moving about with armed bodyguards and staying in classy places, away from the reach of the masses.

In 1991, the OMPIA Party allied itself with the national party of the incumbent administration, LAKAS-NUCD-UMDP. According to its party officer Cabili Cali, OMPIA’s membership had grown across Western Mindanao and Central Mindanao, particularly in the two districts of Lanao del Sur and Marawi City. These districts have a combined voting population of more than 300,000 registered voters.

It was during this period that the OMPIA Party helped Dr. Mutlan win as Governor of Lanao del Sur for three terms (from 1991 to 1999). The elections were phenomenal in the sense that what mattered during the campaign sorties was the mobilization of people, not the usual ‘guns, goons and gold.’ Threats to and bribes for the electorate were not as prevalent at that time, unlike in previous elections.

Unfortunately, Ansano never won a political seat despite the OMPIA Party’s high popularity. He ran for several posts: as governor, assemblyman in the ARMM (Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao), mayor, and as congressman. The cause of his failure in elections could be attributed to several reasons: Some say - *“He lost because he did not have enough resources and did not have adequate connections. He has also the general inexperience of the religious leaders in traditional politics as seen in other OMPIA candidates as well.”*

Ansano learned the hard way on what he already knew about “‘dirty politics’” in Lanao. *“He just validated what he knew,”* Sultan Ali Laguindab, a writer on Sultanate system, said.

Ansano thus settled for being the moral figurehead of the OMPIA Party by becoming a political adviser to its charismatic

figures (like Mahid Mutlan) and by being one of its spokespersons in media. He formulated the OMPIA platform and philosophy, discouraging the use of vote-buying and the use of 3G’s – guns, goons and gold – in elections.

RUNNING THE REGIONAL DECS IN THE ARMM

On August 1, 1989, the ARMM was created by virtue of Republic Act 6734, “An Act Providing for an Organic Act for the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao,” when it was signed into law by then President Corazon C. Aquino. This was in response to Muslim demands for local autonomy in areas where Muslims represent a majority or a substantial minority. The first Governor of the ARMM was Gov. Zacaria A. Candao, duly elected on February 17, 1990. The second Governor was Lininding P. Pangandaman who took office on April 3, 1993. With a strong recommendation from the OMPIA Party, Governor Pangandaman appointed Ansano as Regional Secretary of the Department of Education, Culture and Sports (DECS) in the ARMM.

In his brief stint in the then DECS-ARMM, Secretary Ansano instituted in 1994 some educational reforms in the newly created autonomous government. As the first Muslim cleric to hold a high position in the education

department, his vision was to mainstream Islamic education. He worked hard for Islamic education to be recognized in the law. He pushed a Letter of Instruction (LOI) on the teaching of *madaris* by drafting the supporting documents on integration of Islamic education in the Department programming. He was signatory to a project that integrated Islam into the DECS-ARMM Progress through Development and Decentralization (PRODED) textbooks, to reflect Muslim values. This project was funded by the Muslim World League (MWL) and aimed at providing local context to the realities of the citizens in their own setting. For instance, textbooks would have images of mosques, Muslim heroes, Muslim names, and Arabic words.

However, because of limited experience in educational administration, Ansano's concentration in *madaris* development did not translate to improvement in the other aspects of education in ARMM. The region was still considered one of the poorest in literacy in the country. Another former DECS-ARMM Secretary, Salipada Tamano, observed that during Ansano's term "maximum development in all aspects of education sector was not

ensured." He was referring to the quality of teaching in the subject areas of English and Math, which were not the areas of specialization of Madid Ansano.

When Ansano left DECS, his colleagues best remembered him as "the only secretary who came into office with a suitcase and left with only that suitcase."

FOUNDING THE ULAMA LEAGUE OF THE PHILIPPINES

On September 2, 1996, the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP), represented by President Fidel Ramos, and the MNLF, represented by Nur Misuari, finally forged a Peace Accord on the implementation of the Tripoli Agreement, known as the GRP-MNLF Final Peace Agreement (FPA). Mediated by the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC), this agreement was envisioned to bring much hope among Christians and Muslims in the process of finding a just and peaceful negotiated settlement to the centuries-old Bangsa Moro problem in Mindanao. A new mode of relationship was hoped to be effectively worked out among all the peoples in this region. After several attempts at peace negotiations to end an almost three-decade civil war that had claimed over 120,000 lives in the Southern Philippines, this peace accord was seen as a historic breakthrough.

It was in this setting when the Ulama League of the Philippines (ULP) was formed.

Earlier, as talks with the MNLF were winding down, the Ramos administration prepared to talk peace with the MILF, with the President dispatching emissaries to conduct quiet exploratory talks with them. A parallel effort was likewise taking place when Defense Secretary Renato de Villa saw the potential of a meeting of faiths. Working with Lanao del Sur Governor Dr. Mahid Mutilan, a leading *ulama*, De Villa planned a first dialogue between *ulama* – those who did not espouse *jihad* against the government – and Catholic bishops.

De Villa supported Dr. Mutilan in establishing the League. In mid-1995, the League's first General Assembly and first Islamic Summit was held in Davao City and attended by President Fidel Ramos. There, thirty three *ulama* were convened to draft the constitution and by laws and conduct election of their officers. The objectives of the ULP included the following: (1) to unite the *ulama* in the country; (2) to propagate Islam; and (3) to initiate dialogue with others religions in the Philippines.

Ansano did not get involved in the elections nor did he seek to obtain any seat in the ULP leadership. "That's where I saw that

his involvement is *iklas* (sincere) because he worked without any thought of return,” said Aleem Ansary Mutia, Ansano’s colleague in the ULP. Dr. Mahid Mutilan was elected President of the League.

The League was composed of three regions, namely: Region 1 with 33 members and composed of *ulama* from Sulu, Region 2 with 33 members and composed of *ulama* from Maguindanao and Davao, and Region 3 also with 33 members composed of *ulama* from Lanao del Sur and del Norte.

ENGAGING DIALOGUES WITH THE BISHOPS

Soon after, the *ulama* (including Ansano) and bishops from the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) initiated the formation of the Bishop-Ulama Conference (BUC) of the Philippines. The idea for a dialogue was first brought up by Dr. Mutilan of the ULP to Bishop Fernando Capalla, head of the CBCP Ecumenical Commission for Inter-religious Dialogue in July 1996. This came after the uproar over the formation of the Southern Philippines Council for Peace and Development (SPCPD), a concession included in the proposed peace settlement between the Philippine government and the MNLF that triggered renewed hostilities between Christians and Muslims in Mindanao.

On November 29, 1996, the first BUC Dialogue and general assembly was held in Cebu City. These influential religious leaders - the bishops from the Catholic side and the *ulama* from the Muslim side - resolved to give a religious dimension to the continuing search for peace in Mindanao. It was during the third dialogue and general assembly in Marawi City on May 6, 1997 when the Mindanao bishops of the National Council of Churches in the Philippines (NCCP), the major organization of the mainline Protestants, were invited to join.

The BUC is an umbrella organization of religious clerics and preachers who were Muslims, Protestants and Catholics, advocating interfaith cooperation. As stated in the BUC primer: “In a move to purify, substantiate and strengthen their commitment to total human development, the members of BUC regularly and continuously hold dialogues on areas of common concern along the lines of the peace process. The BUC coordinates all peace and dialogue partners throughout Mindanao, introduces dialogue and culture of peace in schools, and promotes dialogue of faith sharing with Shamans or religious leaders of the indigenous peoples.”

The BUC has been meeting monthly ever since, with Ansano quietly working in the background.

ANSANO’S LEGACY

Aleem Elias Macarandas, member of the *Ulama* League of the Philippines and representative of the Muslim World League to the Philippines, made this eulogy about the esteemed religious leader:

Ansano was one of the very few Ulama in Lanao who had encouraged the Ulama participation in politics. He would always say that to reform our society, the Ulama needs to participate in politics. In fact he was the one who came up with the idea of organizing a political group which is composed and led by the Ulama. He was also very much ahead of Dr. Mahid Mutilan in advocating and campaigning for reforms. He and Dr. Mutilan had organized the OMPIA Party, with Aleem Ansano becoming the Secretary General until his demise. Ansano may not be very lucky in politics. When he ran for Governor, he lost. He again ran for Congress, but he also lost. Finally he ran for mayor in Tamparan, but he lost yet again.

But in intellectual aspects, he was very much active. He wrote many books about Islam in the Maranao language. As Secretary

for DECS in the ARMM, Ansano was very honest in his public service. As far as I know, he was very modest until he died considering the fact that he's one of the most highly educated Maranaos and a graduate from Libya. His education was never used for money or gain but for service. He became very active and enthusiastic in his advocacy - to reform the Maranao society in the Islamic context. He firmly believed that a good Muslim is a

good citizen.

I've worked with Aleem Ansano for many years and what I would never forget about him was his simplicity, humility, seriousness in his advocacies, and he never expects for any recognition in return but his heavenly reward from God. He was a very dedicated person, not after any position or money. He's the only person I know with such level of education and competence who never own a house and

a car. He devoted his time in reforming the Maranao Society. I consider him as a Reformist and my mentor.

As part of his continuing advocacy for improved education, Ansano helped found several *madrasahs* in rural communities in Lanao del Sur, including his hometown Taraka. As his legacy and living memory to his hometown, a school under his name, the Ansano Memorial High School, had been built and is personally administered by his wife, Dr. Zainab Ansano.

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Haji Munib Estino

Warrior, Politician, Peace-maker

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Mayor Hadji Munib Estino is also a deeply religious man. He was able to initiate the repair and improvement of a madaris or Islamic school building in his town. Even before his administration, Panglima Estino was already declared an Islamic Municipality in 2002, when his brother served as mayor.

INTRODUCTION

Panglima Estino is one of the 19 municipalities in the province of Sulu. Created in 1981, it was carved out of the Municipality of Panamao and was formerly known as New Panamao. A relatively small town with 35,600 households, Panglima Estino is a 5th class municipality with a land area of only 45 square kilometers. It consists of 12 *barangays*, and its residents are primarily engaged in farming and fishing. The town is a strategic trading point for farm products, seaweeds and fish coming from the island municipality of Pata and the neighboring town of Kalingalang-Caluang. It is also at the crossroads of the towns of Panamao and Luuk.

Panglima Estino, located 30 kilometers from the provincial capital of Jolo, was the scene of one of the bloodiest episodes of fighting between the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) and the Philippine Government in the 1970s. However, any visitor would observe that the reality of Panglima Estino today is a far cry from the days of old. The place is

progressive and peaceful, vastly different from the general image of a war-torn Sulu.

The Municipality of Panglima Estino today is headed by Mayor Haji Munib Estino, who since 1987, had already served in various local government positions. He has been a provincial board member, a three-term Sulu vice-governor and, for a limited time, was even appointed acting provincial governor.

The history of Panglima Estino as a town and community is closely intertwined with the history of Mayor Hadji Munib Estino and his clan.

HADJI MUNIB ESTINO'S ROOTS

Hadji Munib Estino was born to Hadji Abbas 'Maas Bawang' Estino and Hadja Halima Sahibili-Estino in 1950. The Estino family is a big clan which historically held considerable influence in the locality. It is said that the Estino family descended from the *panglima* class. *Panglimas*, in the Sultanate tradition, are the next in rank to the Sultan of Sulu and

usually serve as the warrior group tasked to protect the Sultanate. The town was even named Panglima Estino after the clan's patriarch, who traced his roots way back to the era of the Sultanate.

Hadji Munib's father was the local chieftain of Panglima Estino's central community of *barangay* Punay, when Panglima Estino was still part of the Municipality of Panamao. Maas Bawang, also known as *Kumander Bawang*, was one of the major Sulu tribal leaders who joined the Moro National Liberation Front after Martial Law was declared in 1972. For years, he and his men fought the government. In the mid 1970s, Maas Bawang together with seven other major MNLF commanders – infamously known as the Magic 8 – broke away from the MNLF and realigned themselves with the side of the government. It was a known fact that the creation of the town of Panglima Estino was a gift from then President Ferdinand Marcos to Maas Bawang Estino for switching allegiances from the MNLF to the government.

Maas Bawang became the first mayor of Panglima Estino. Later on, Hadji Munib's brother, Hadji Kadil Estino, succeed their father as town mayor. The political power and clout the Estinos held in the locality remained with their clan as Hadji Munib also became mayor in 2004.

YOUTH AND EARLY YEARS

Hadji Munib led a fairly comfortable life. During the pre-Martial Law and MNLF rebellion years, he was a student at the Notre Dame of Jolo College (NDJC), where he completed his elementary and high school education. NDJC at that time was a known school for the children of Sulu's elite.

At 14 years of age, Hadji Munib experienced an incident that changed his life. While at home for a school break in *barangay* Punay, Munib Estino heard gunshots from a distance. He learned that his father, along with several relatives, was ambushed while on the way home from Panamao. He rushed to the scene and found his father fighting back the attackers. The elder Estino commanded his son to get a vehicle to evacuate their bloodied relatives. Hadji Munib was on his way to get a truck when he was attacked by one of the ambushers, a sharp *utak* (the local term for a machete) slicing his back and knocking him unconscious. Hadji Munib later found himself in the hospital and learned that four of his relatives died in the ambush.

It was Hadji Munib's first taste of violence in the subsequent clan war in the locality. The incident was believed to be politically motivated, as his family was accused of having caused the ousting of Panamao's erstwhile mayor.

The ambush turned out to be a key event in young Munib's life. Upon reaching the age of eighteen, his mother gifted him with a gun. The gift was accompanied with solemn advice from his mother: find and kill the one who attacked him years ago. The young Munib did, and as a result he became a fugitive from the law with a court warrant for his arrest. Hadji Munib took refuge in *barangay* Punay, his clan's bailiwick, under the protection of his father. He then became the clan's designated enforcer as he took on the responsibility of pursuing the Estino clan's enemies.

Hadji Munib developed a reputation in the province of Sulu as "the warrior from Panglima Estino". In the Tausug culture, a man who had proven himself in battle is worth the respect and admiration of the people.

As a young man, politics and guns influenced his life. Politicians courting the support of his father would also meet the young Munib Estino. The elder Estino would see to it that his son was introduced to the powerful personalities in Sulu every time they dropped by for a visit. Later, even politicians directly sought Munib's help in getting votes, particularly in the clan's stronghold and its neighboring *barangays*.

According to Hadji Munib, "At my young age, I myself was

surprised at the attention I was getting from the big personalities in the province. Maybe it was because of my father Maas Bawang, or my reputation as a 'hitman' was blown out of proportion."

In the late 1960s, one particular politician who was an early admirer of the young Munib Estino was Governor Indanan Anni, a Siasi island-based political clan. Governor Anni solicited his help in delivering the votes of *barangay* Punay in his favor. Through the influence of young Munib Estino, Governor Anni won in Punay (which had a sizeable number of votes) and subsequently got elected to the governorship of Sulu. Says Hadi Munib, "I realized that I can influence people and help determine the outcome of the elections."

Because of Hadji Munib's efforts, Governor Anni took personal custody of him. Using his considerable influence, the governor caused the dismissal of Munib's murder case. During the review of Munib's case, it was discovered that the authorities did not do a preliminary investigation, making the court's arrest warrant on him void. Free of legal impediments, Hadji Munib became Governor Anni's close-in security person and trustee. When Governor Anni became a congressman, Hadji Munib was employed in the same capacity by Governor Murphy Sangkula, who

replaced Anni.

President Ferdinand Marcos's declaration of Martial Law marked another turning point in Hadji Munib Estino's life.

MARTIAL LAW AND LIFE AS AN MNLF COMMANDER

Two days after the declaration, word spread out in Sulu that the Philippine military and constabulary would be confiscating firearms in the possession of civilians. Since Hadji Munib and some of his cousins (who were also serving as provincial guards) owned personal firearms, they decided to go home to *barangay* Punay to bury their guns. In the Tausug culture, guns replaced the *utak* or the vaunted Moro sword called *kris*. The gun is an important part of the family heirloom.

A few days later, on a Friday, the Muslim day of congregational prayer called *salat'ul jum'ah*, government soldiers entered *barangay* Estino. Hadji Munib recalled the incident thus:

The mosques in our community are always full on Friday noon for congregational prayers. It was in the middle of the prayer ritual when a group of soldiers chanced upon a mosque. As an Islamic

rule, women stand behind the men during prayers and usually are separated by curtains. As the soldiers entered the mosque, they asked the women worshippers, who were standing in the back, if they know people who owned firearms.

*Receiving no answer from the women (it is a strict Islamic rule that no talking or moving is allowed in the middle of a prayer), one of the soldiers poked his rifle into the butt of one of the women, who at that time was in a prayer bending position (called *ru'ku*). Startled, the woman shouted causing a commotion inside the mosque. At that point bedlam broke inside the mosque. The soldiers, who I thought were themselves surprised by the commotion, started shooting at the people inside the mosque. Many worshippers died that day. My group and I were at the nearby mosque when we heard the shooting. Quickly we took out our firearms (which we previously buried), went to the place of shooting, and attacked the government troops.*

It was my first encounter

with the government. I realized later that we made enemies already of the government. But we have to do so because, to my mind, Islam that day was attacked by the Christian soldiers when they touched our women and killed the Muslim worshippers. I may be infamously notorious but when it comes to my religion, I will bear arms to protect it.

When the MNLF leadership heard about the bloody incident, they approached Maas Bawang and invited them to join the MNLF forces, which in those years was just starting to gain its strength. Reaching an agreement, the MNLF provided the elder Estino with weapons and ammunition to use against the government. His group later became known as one of the best fighting units of the MNLF with his son Hadji Munib Estino, then still in his early 20s, already considered as a brilliant battle commander and tactician.

Rene Jamih, who had many relatives in the MNLF movement, talked about how his relatives spoke of Hadji Munib: "He is known among the circle of MNLF forces as a fearless warrior. Munib had the ability to endure hardships and does not run from a fight. He is a legend in his own right."

Hadji Munib Estino's battlefield exploits led the MNLF to form a special striking strike force, with him as the leader.

The MNLF pulled him out of Sulu and assigned him to operate in Zamboanga del Norte. Hadji Munib recalled:

My main motivation [for] fighting the government is my firm belief at that time that the government will start converting Muslims to Christianity. I will have to defend my religion. Besides, the massacre at the Punay mosque needs justice.

I led a small unit of MNLF fighting men. We were just few since I do not want to command a large group. It is better to operate in small number[s] since we require only small resources and maneuvering is easier. More importantly, I will be minimizing casualties among my men. I do not leave a man behind, wounded or dead. However, I told my troops in case I get killed in battle, they should leave me behind. Their welfare and survival, even in war, is my priority concern.

In 1974, President Marcos had identified the big tribal leaders in Sulu, and Hadji Abbas Estino was one of them. Marcos then initiated a process of wooing these tribal leaders to return to the fold of the government. Promising

projects and local development, Maas Bawang and seven other MNLF commanders and clan leaders such as Tupay Loong from Parang town and Ahmad Omar of Luuk left the MNLF and joined the government. Following his father, Hadji Munib left the MNLF as well and went home to Punay. This time, the young Estino and his father fought alongside the government and against their former comrades in the MNLF. The Estinos and their men were deputized by the Philippine government as local militia and, for years, assisted the military with its operations against the MNLF.

In 1981, the Municipality of New Panamao was created by Marcos. New Panamao was later changed to Panglima Estino in honor of the head of the clan that traced its roots back to the era of the Sultanate. Hadji Abbas Estino, the legendary Kumander Maas Bawang, became its first Mayor.

FROM WARRIOR TO POLITICIAN

In 1987, a year after the EDSA uprising, the Aquino government under the so-called 'Cory Constitution' appointed provincial and local officials as part of its transition strategy. Among the early appointees was Hadji Munib who was appointed as a provincial board member of Sulu. His former patron, Indanan Anni, served as the provincial

governor-appointee. However, Hadji Munib was not excited about the appointment. He said:

I do not want to be a politician and have no interest in politics. What I wanted to do is lead a simple and quiet life with my family. The appointment for a government position was a surprise. I just want to continue with my rice trading business. I even sold fish in the market just to earn money. I was intent in staying away from the government that I hid for two weeks, hoping that the people around me would help withdraw my appointment.

However, Hadji Munib's mother, Halima Sahibili-Estino, convinced her son to accept the government appointment. According to Hadji Munib:

My mother, who is very dear to me, asked me if I would do anything for her. I said that I would give up my life to make her happy. My mother then said that it is time for me lead a new life. The appointment to serve as a provincial board member was an opportunity to help the people. Since the request came from my mother, I accepted the position. And

I never left politics since then.

In 1989, after completing his appointed term as provincial board member, Hadji Munib ran for the same position and won. In 1992, he ran as vice governor and also won handily. He then went on to win the next two re-election bids, and was thus the first vice governor in Sulu to run undefeated for three successive elections.

What characterized Hadji Munib's term as a provincial vice governor was the mark he made in addressing the perennial problem of clan wars or *pagdangaw* (also called *rido*). During his time as a provincial official, he led the Provincial Mediation Council which was tasked to mediate, settle, and prevent clan conflicts. The Provincial Mediation Council was established because of the festering clan conflicts in many parts of Sulu. This council was established under the administration of Gov. Sakur Tan. However, the council was not sustained when a new governor assumed office in 2001. Hadji Munib recalled:

During my term as vice-governor of Sulu, I mediated family conflicts in the province of Sulu. Some conflicts were in the early stages which we helped prevent while others were

in the middle of a shooting war. In one case, in the middle of the night, I held a lamp over my head in the midst of the coconut trees and literally placed myself in the middle of two groups that were shooting at each other. I have to shout for them to stop as they might hit me. I will do anything to prevent deaths because of this rido.

Many families I know have gone bankrupt because of this. They had to sell their lands and properties or take out a loan from it just to buy guns, bullets and supplies to sustain their clan war. I have been there and I know how difficult it is. This is the reason why I made it my personal responsibility as vice governor to minimize as much as possible these kinds of incidents.

It is one of the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, that "a person who was able to bring peace to warring groups or persons will receive blessings from Allah greater than the blessings he will receive from one prayer".

For this effort, he was

awarded as The Most Outstanding Vice Governor by the Leadership Organization of the Philippines, Inc.

One highlight of Hadji Munib's career as a political leader was in 1997. During that year, he was appointed by the Department of the Interior and Local Government as the acting Governor of Sulu since the incumbent Governor, Sakur Tan, was suspended because of an election protest.

During Hadji Munib's watch as governor of Sulu, Bishop Ben de Jesus of the Sulu and Tawi-Tawi vicariate was murdered by a gunman. Bishop Ben, as he was commonly known, was a beloved figure even among the Tausug Muslims, as he was instrumental in initiating many projects in the area. The biggest of these were the housing projects that dotted Jolo and parts of Patikul. Bishop Ben was also Hadji Munib's friend.

Hadji Munib recalled:

His death left me with much sadness and anger at what had happened. Bishop Ben was a good man. I received warnings and death threats that I should not join his funeral procession. However, to show my solidarity with the Catholic church over this killing, I joined the funeral march together with

then Jolo Mayor Rashdi Abubakar. I was ready for any eventuality that day. If there will be any shooting or explosion, I was ready for it. I marched with the other church leaders shoulder to shoulder. Thank God, nothing untoward happened that day.

In my heart though, I need to do something to bring his killer to justice. That opportunity came when the ARMM Philippine National Police Regional Office had endorsed to me a police officer for the post of PNP Sulu Provincial Director. I said I will confirm his endorsement if he will be able to get the killer of Bishop Ben within ten days. In less than ten days, the suspect was arrested.

As acting governor, Hadji Munib continued with his work as a mediator/ peace-maker to warring families.

In 2001, Hadji Munib Estino ran for Congress, for the 2nd district of Sulu, but lost. In the interim, he engaged in small businesses, primarily trading.

When he lost in the congressional race, he realized that it is very difficult to run against big money. However Munib accepted that losing an election is

part of being a politician. What is important is that "after the elections, politics should stop. I value more my personal relationships with the people around me," he remarked.

As a small entrepreneur Hadji Munib said he enjoyed his short respite from politics and the demands of government. He was able to engage in rice trading, run a buy and sell operation with items coming from Sandakan in Malaysia, and even sold fish in the market. Munib said "business is like politics, you deal with people and make decisions everyday."

In 2004, politics beckoned to him again and he ran for mayor in the municipality of Panglima Estino and won, succeeding his brother Hadji Kadil Estino. In 2007, Mayor Munib Estino won a second term as municipal mayor.

THE MAYOR-EXECUTIVE

The man who used to be the armed enforcer of a small community, a known MNLF commander-warrior, a leader of government's anti-insurgent militia, a political personality and peacemaker, had now came back to the place of his roots, full of experience and knowledge in governance and leadership.

What Hadji Munib saw in Panglima Estino was a place that was left out by development. During rainy days, even the dirt

road leading to the town center would be rendered impassable. The people were economically depressed. This situation, which was known already to Mayor Munib, was especially difficult for him since his father and brother ruled the municipality since its creation. It saddened him to know that members of his clan were not able to bring development to the locality.

Mayor Estino was resolute in addressing this problem. He said that, “Even before I became the mayor, I knew the things I have to do. I already have a development agenda outlined in my mind. The first things that I have to do are to fix the road and repair the Panglima Estino wharf. I believe that if these two projects are accomplished then change would come to Panglima Estino.”

At the outset, he was faced with a rather small municipal fund of only Php 1.3 Million per month. The 20 percent development fund that the state allotted to local government units by law would amount to a little more than Php 250,000 for his envisioned projects. He recalled his first act as a local chief executive thus:

What I did upon assuming office in 2004 was to keep the Php250,000 per month for four months. We were able to save 1 million pesos which we used to

repair the heavy equipment that the municipality has. Immediately we put the equipment to use to pave the road. Over the months, we slowly were able to improve the road connecting the national highway to Panglima Estino. The people were able to travel more easily to other parts of the province. The road also improved the transport of farm products, especially copra, reducing the transport cost.

Our next project was to improve the municipal wharf. Panglima Estino is a drop-off point of marine products, such as seafoods and seaweeds coming from the island of Pata and nearby Kalingalang-Caluang municipality. As a result, trading activity in my municipality increased. The local government also increased its earnings from the wharf fees.

What followed, in a short span of time, was an incredible development for a small municipality like Panglima Estino.

According to Mayor Munib, the economic development that followed from these initiatives moved Panglima Estino from being a 6th class municipality when he

assumed office, to being a 5th class municipality today. He claimed that they were already progressing towards being classified as a 4th class municipality, which Munib hopes would happen during his incumbency.

Under the five-year mayoral term (to date) of Hadji Munib, several organizations converged on his municipality to provide development assistance. Munib Estino explained that “External organizations come to a municipality if they see the leadership is sincere and present in their area. They also look at the peace and order situation of the place. Are they secure? Do they feel safe? Can they trust the LGU? Probably these organizations saw these things in Panglima Estino. I did not approach them. They approached me. My only condition with them is that I will give them my total support as long as they deliver what they promise. You see, it is my name and reputation that is at stake if they do not deliver.”

Starting with the Joint Special Operations Task Force of the United States military, they were able to jointly build a health center and a four-classroom building for the town’s elementary graders.

From the ARMM Social Fund, they were able to put up a municipal storage building, a new municipal social hall, a new

administration building and a public market which also served as the trading center for marine products. The ARMM Social Fund also supported the construction of artesian wells in eight of Panglima Estino's twelve *barangays*.

In 2006, Tabang Mindanaw, a consortium of national and international non-government organizations (NGOs) with a mission to alleviate poverty, provide development assistance, and emergency help to poor, conflict-sensitive Mindanao communities, assisted Panglima Estino with a water system project for the municipality. Tabang Mindanaw helped not only in putting up a water generation and delivery system in the area and repairing and upgrading existing water sources but also initiated community organizing in its *barangays*. In addition, the Tabang water system project also put up a water laboratory building that was used to house water quality testing equipment. With the water project, issues like good governance, basic development rights, people's empowerment and participation and peace-building were placed in the forefront of Panglima Estino's agenda.

In 2007, the municipality received assistance from the Canadian government through the Local Government Support Program for ARMM (LGSPA). The LGSPA was able to assist the local

government in setting up a coastal resource management project, starting with the establishment of a fish sanctuary within the coastal waters of the municipality. Recently, through the assistance of LGSPA, multinational firm Nestle' Philippines partnered with the municipality in establishing a six-hectare coffee nursery, since it was noted that coffee production could be a viable industry for Panglima Estino. Another multinational corporation, DOLE Philippines, also partnered with the local government in putting up a four-hectare pilot pineapple plantation in the municipality.

The most recent project implemented in Panglima Estino was with Gawad Kalinga, another national NGO with a mission of "transforming poverty stricken communities by way of building decent homes". The initiative is an assisted housing project which aims to construct 30 housing units located in the town center.

These development initiatives and projects were all done with counterpart resources from the local government unit (LGU) of Panglima Estino and its communities. The counterparting scheme varies from project to project depending on the agreement with the lead organization. For instance, in the case of Tabang Mindanaw's water project, the LGU provided for the logistics support i.e. lodging,

food, and transportation to the technical team and its engineers. The communities for the water project likewise provided labor during the construction phase of the water system as well as project management after the project turn-over. For the Gawad Kalinga project, the LGU worked out the land arrangement where the housing project is located while the community provided the manual labor requirements. The LGU also hosted the accommodation of the GK technical team. The LGSPA project, on the other hand, had the LGU pass the necessary municipal ordinance in establishing the fish sanctuary. The LGU also provided security for the sanctuary and hosted community meetings.

In all of the projects, Mayor Hadji Munib exercised a day-to-day, hands-on approach in project implementation. He does not rely on the people around him to monitor the projects as he personally attends to all its concerns. "The project will move faster if the people see me having a direct hand in the implementation. More people would participate and support the project if they see their mayor working. Even the implementers would be inspired as well," declared Estino.

Mayor Munib Estino said with pride that they were able to accomplish in five years what his father and brother as mayors failed to do in 23 years combined. "There

are many organizations that are willing to help develop Sulu and its municipalities. It is just a matter of proving to these organizations that the local chief executive is sincere and serious about these projects,” he explained. “What these organizations are looking for foremost is the presence of the mayor in the municipality and a mayor that has a hands-on approach in partnering with these organizations. You see, Sulu is notorious in having municipal mayors that cannot be seen in their municipalities but instead are staying either in Zamboanga or Manila. I seldom travel outside of my town or province. The last time I went out was to attend my son’s graduation from college in Zamboanga.”

THE MAYOR-LEADER

Beyond development projects, Mayor Munib is a man considered by many as a good Tausug leader.

Mayor Munib’s leadership style is one of consultation. During his first terms as local chief executive, he gathered the community leaders, officials, religious leaders and the constituents at large. According to him:

It was a bull session, ‘anything goes’ community meeting which I myself presided. We were supposed to discuss all issues and

concerns facing their municipality and respective communities. I laid down my agenda to them and my expectations. Explicitly I told the community leaders that they have the responsibility of checking my performance as a leader. If they find something is not right with what I am doing, they should tell me right away because if they did not and I commit a mistake, then I will look for them in the Day of Judgment before God. I also asked my constituents to help me preserve the trust that they gave me.

This practice of *masuara*, or Islamic consultation, has already been institutionalized. Every first Monday of the month, there is a big municipal gathering of all officials, religious leaders and the people, where they discuss all problems and concerns that are facing each *barangay*.

Hadji Munib’s personal mission of preserving the peace and order, which he started when he was still a provincial official, he continued as the town’s mayor. Observers noted that aside from Panglima Estino being a town having the most development projects being implemented, it was also the most peaceful town in Sulu. In Panglima Estino, development did not lead to peace.

Relative peace - meaning, minimal incidents of violence - was already there even prior to the entry of development projects. The relative peace in the municipality is one of the factors that led external organizations to engage the municipality.

The town is practically free of lawless elements and armed encounters in part due to the Estino clan’s influence in the municipality. During a major shooting encounter between the forces of the MNLF and AFP, many evacuees from Panamao even took shelter in Panglima Estino.

Mayor Munib Estino puts heavy emphasis on preserving relationships in his community. He said that “Beyond politics are relationships with family, relatives and friends. For me, preserving goodwill in my town is more important. Politics should end after the elections.”

THE OTHER SIDE OF MUNIB ESTINO

Over the years, Mayor Estino had mellowed down. He is more patient and more willing to listen compared to when he was younger.

According to many, Mayor Hadji Munib is a humble, down-to-earth person and is accessible to his constituents. What the people especially like about Mayor Munib

is that his office and even his house are open at all times for people seeking his help.

One constituent narrated that on one occasion, a man went in his kitchen during his mealtime seeking help. Many could see the Mayor was irritated but said nothing. Mayor Munib reasoned that a person would not approach him in such a circumstance if he was not in dire need. It turned out that the man's wife had to be rushed to the hospital because of sickness. The mayor had a vehicle prepared and even asked his wife for money to give to the man.

Mayor Munib admitted though that even now many people in his municipality still look at him with fear because of his reputation as a warrior in his early years. "The young generation, probably having heard stories from their parents, views me with apprehension. I have changed my life already ever since I realized that not all can be achieved by force. However, this is also good because this helps maintain the peace in Panglima Estino. No one will dare to do something bad because it is me who will run after them," he noted. "Even the Abu Sayyaf could not establish a presence in Panglima Estino."

This is the same tact that he uses when mediating local conflicts. Mayor Munib explained that "In settling conflicts, I ask the parties to forgive and settle their

differences. I tell them I do not want any trouble in the municipality. Most of the time, they agree to settle. However I warn them that whoever breaks what was agreed upon will have me as their enemy."

Mayor Hadji Munib Estino is also a deeply religious man. He was able to initiate the repair and improvement of a *madaris* or Islamic school building in his town. Even before his administration, Panglima Estino was already declared an Islamic Municipality in 2002, when his brother served as mayor.

The declaration of Panglima Estino as an Islamic municipality gives the local leaders a legal basis in the limited implementation of the Shari'a process. The reason behind the formal declaration is to allow the local government to settle cases that would otherwise be settled in the regular courts. The said declaration was in response to the slow or non-existent judicial system in the town. The declaration, achieved via municipal ordinance, enabled the local officials to facilitate the administration of justice by resolving local differences without going through the courts.

It also allows for the implementation of certain Islamic *adhab* or etiquette such as wearing of veils for women and mandatory attendance of the menfolk during the Friday prayers. Hadji Munib

expounded on this point, saying that "The government court system does not work here. For one, it is expensive for both the complainant and defendant. Worse, it will take years for a court decision. The people of Panglima Estino wanted swift result and the limited implementation of the Shari'a was the answer."

Mayor Estino fully endorses this municipal ordinance. He continues to oversee the implementation of its provisions, including the following: the prohibition of male members of the family from being seen outside the mosque, or travelling outside of the municipality during *Jum'ah* or Friday prayers (except for emergency situations, in the latter case); the banning of public transport vehicles from plying municipal streets during Fridays; and the wearing of *tirong* for the women, to cover their heads.

The local government has a standing *Shari'a* court that hears complaints. It is composed of the local religious scholars, the Mayor, Vice mayor, Municipal Council and the Chairman of the *barangay* where the complaint originated. The *Shari'a* court handles cases such as theft, land disputes, and disagreements regarding inheritance. It was not determined if the *Shari'a* was able to hear murder cases as this is quite sensitive an issue to probe.

He shares his insights regarding Islamic leadership, his own leadership style, and his leadership aspirations to wit:

Present day politics is not consistent with Islamic leadership. Jihad whether armed or against ones desires should be for the sake of Allah alone and in defense of Islam while in politics personal ambition

comes into play.

I have my share of mistakes. Nevertheless I tried to be fair to the people regardless of faith. And as a leader I have to set an example for my people.

I dream of Sulu where people have love for each other. I dream of leaders that are conscious of the

laws of God and morals of Islam. Leadership should be fair regardless of religion and it should be strong. A peaceful and developed Sulu will not be possible unless the Shari'a system and governance is in place. Islam is the solution to all the trouble and problems facing Sulu now.



Until his demise in July 2003, Salamat Hashim was the chairman of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), a liberation movement he founded after he severed relations with the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) in 1977. Under his leadership the MILF embarked to strengthen its political organization, reorganize and train its military forces, gain economic self-reliance, and vigorously promote Islamic values and education. These initiatives led the MILF to become the biggest liberation movement in Southeast Asia and one of the biggest in the world, with functional political and military organs.

Salamat Hashim

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Ustadz Salamat, as he is popularly known by the Bangsamoro masses, was recognized not only as chairman of the MILF but also acknowledged as an ideologue of the Bangsamoro liberation movement and a Bangsamoro leader. Mujahideen and other Muslim leaders in Mindanao used to come to see him not only to offer *bay'ah* but also to seek his guidance and opinion on military, political, social and spiritual matters, thus earning for him the title of *Amirul Mujahideen*.

His diplomatic acumen earned for the Bangsamoro people the recognition by the United States “that the Muslims of the Southern Philippines have serious, legitimate grievances that must be addressed.”¹ When he was chairman of the MNLF foreign relations committee Ustadz Salamat used

his contacts and connections in the Middle East in bringing to the Muslim world’s attention the cause of the Bangsamoro struggle, and in gaining moral, political and material support for the MNLF.

Known but to a few people, Salamat was the one responsible for covertly arranging the military training of the first batch of trainees that was to become the MNLF military core group. Working with a prominent political leader, he laid the groundwork for organizing the armed struggle for the liberation of the Bangsamoro people from what they perceived as Philippine colonial intrusion in their homeland.

In the MNLF organization, Salamat served as the first chairman of the Kutawato Revolutionary Committee (KRC), the regional

1. Salamat Hashim wrote two letters to President George W. Bush, the first on January 20, 2003 and the second on May 20, 2003. On June 18, 2003 Assistant Secretary of State James A. Kelly replied outlining the U.S. policy with respect to the conflict between the Philippine Government and the Bangsamoro people.

organ of the MNLF with a wide area of jurisdiction covering the present day provinces of Maguindanao, Cotabato Province, Sultan Kudarat, South Cotabato, Sarangani, and the municipalities of Malabang, Balabagan, Sultan Gumander and Kapatagan in Lanao Del Sur, and Karomatan in Lanao del Norte. He was later elevated to the MNLF Central Committee as foreign relations chairman.

SALAMAT HASHIM'S PERSONAL BACKGROUND AND UPBRINGING

Salamat Hashim was born on July 7, 1942 in the Municipality of Pagalungan, Maguindanao. He came from a deeply religious family of seven: four boys and three girls.

Salamat's first teacher was his mother. She taught him how to read the Qur'an and guided him in memorizing its verses. Reading and memorization of the Qur'an was the traditional way of basic learning among Muslims in Mindanao at that time. This system of basic learning enabled Salamat to cite references in the Qur'an with facility. At the age of six, Salamat could already read the Holy Qur'an and had memorized many of its verses. Thus, he was often selected to lead groupings of children of his age, he being the most active and most serious among them.

He started his formal education in a Philippine public school also at age six. He finished his elementary education in 1954 and his secondary education in 1958, completing both with honors.

While pursuing his formal education in the Philippine school system, he also enrolled in the village *madrasah* where he attended classes during Saturdays, Sundays and holidays. He finished *ibtida'iyah* in the *madrasah* at about the same time that he graduated from high school. Enrolling in both systems of education at the same time gave him the opportunity to obtain basic education in both the Arabic and English languages, and in religious and modern subjects like mathematics and science.

In 1958, Salamat joined the pilgrims from the Philippines in journeying to Makkah for hajj. With the desire to pursue further his studies on Islam he took the opportunity to stay behind and study in Makkah under the care of Shiekh Jawawi.

The stay in Makkah provided Ustadz Salamat with the opportunity to learn and grow intellectually. He attended the *halakat* (group study) regularly held at the Masjidul Haram under Shiekh Alawi, Shiekh Abdulrahman, Shiekh Zacaria and other religious personalities. He also enrolled at Madrasatu as-

Sulatiyah ad-Diniyah.

In 1959, he went to Cairo, Egypt, which at that time was the center of political activism in the Middle East. There, Salamat enrolled at the most prestigious institution of learning in the Muslim world, Al-Azhar University. He graduated from Al-Azhar's Ma-ahad al-Buuth al-Islamiyah as Sanawiyah in 1963.

Immediately after graduation, Salamat proceeded to take up higher learning by enrolling at Al-azhar College of Theology. He majored in *aqidah* and philosophy, and graduated in 1967.

Pursuing his scholastic inclination further, he took up graduate courses in the same university and finished his master's degree in 1969. He again enrolled for a doctoral program but was unable to write his dissertation because he had to return to Mindanao in January 1970 to organize the MNLF. This was after the Jabidah incident where Muslim military trainees were reportedly slaughtered in their training camp in Corregidor Island after refusing to join the reported invasion of Sabah province in Malaysia. It was also during this time that the Ilaga movement started its rampage in Mindanao, when Muslims were massacred and their houses and mosques burned to the ground.

He became interested to learn the English language because he knew that the skill was indispensable especially in communicating the Bangsamoro grievances and aspirations to both the Filipino audience and the international community. He thus enrolled in the British International Correspondence course at the American University in Cairo. Aside from being an excellent writer and speaker in Arabic, he also became fluent in English, and ultimately he wrote a book and articles on Islamic issues and subjects in English.

While in Cairo, Salamat was an active student leader. His association with students from other countries who were affiliated with similar revolutionary and liberation movements sharpened his awareness of social and political issues. This exposure acquainted him with the burning issues and problems of the contemporary Muslim world. More significantly, this made him aware of the colonial oppression his Muslim brothers and sisters were suffering back in Mindanao, an awareness that gradually transformed him from a scholar to a revolutionary leader later on in his life.

Among the several student organizations and groups he took part in, Salamat was active in

the Philippine Muslim Student Association. He also became the Secretary-General of the Organization of Asian Students in Cairo whose members came from Burma, Malaysia, Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand, Singapore, Japan, Vietnam, Cambodia and Brunei. While serving as officer of these student organizations he cultivated contacts and networks among student leaders from other countries which he used later in his campaign for support to the Bangsamoro struggle for self-determination.

While he was an active student leader in Cairo he clandestinely organized a core group of Muslim students from South Philippines that planned the Moro liberation movement in the early sixties. To finance the early activities of this core group, each member contributed half of his meager allowance to a common fund. The contribution was sustained for years because he showed the example of consistently giving his contribution on time and seeing to it that the money collected was kept intact. When they returned to the Philippines, they used this fund in organizing and mobilizing constituents. Part of the money was also invested in businesses as a continuous source of funds.

HIS VISION FOR THE BANGSAMORO

In the guidelines he issued to the Bangsamoro mujahideens and MILF members, he said: “Our duty is to establish a just social order under the stewardship of leaders adhering to the Qur’an and Sunnah.”²

To him a just social order can only be achieved by making supreme the Word of Allah, which meant that the community of Muslims must subordinate every aspect of their life i.e. their political, legal, economic, education and social systems to the Word of Allah. To achieve this goal, he called for the establishment of a true Muslim community and a genuine Islamic system of government, and application of a real Islamic way of life in all aspects of the Muslim community.³ Salamat believed that the objective of establishing a just social order in the Bangsamoro homeland cannot be achieved unless the Bangsamoro are free and unfettered in the exercise of their right to self-determination. The methods he applied in pursuing this goal were *da’wah* (Islamic call) and *jihad* (struggle in the way of Allah).

The objectives of the *da’wah* program that he implemented were as follows:

2. Salamat Hashim, *The Bangsamoro Mujahid: His Objectives and Responsibilities*, Mindanao, Bangsamoro: Bangsamoro Publications, 1985, p. 5.

3. *Ibid*, p. 9.

“(a) To transform every individual Muslim member of the MILF into a true and real Muslim whose beliefs, system of worshipping his Creator, norm of discipline, character, conduct and behaviour and his entire life is in conformity with the teachings of Islam derived from the Qur’an and Sunnah.

“(b) To transform homes of Muslim MILF members into real Islamic homes where beliefs among members of the family, their system of worshipping Allah, behaviour, their relationships and their entire life are in conformity with the teachings of Islam as enunciated in the Qur’an and Sunnah.

“(c) To transform . . . (the) community into a truly Islamic one. A community is considered truly Islamic if its social system, discipline, character, conduct, behaviour, customs, traditions and systems of worship are governed by Islamic Shariah.”⁴

As for *jihad*, his view was that “(w)hen a Muslim community is persecuted, oppressed or denied liberty and freedom to perform its obligatory duties to Allah which include conducting *Da’wah* until its final goal is achieved, then armed struggle, . . ., is permitted for the purpose of repulsing such persecution or oppression, paving an unhampered way for *Da’wah* and saving the lives and properties of those persecuted and oppressed.”⁵

SALAMAT’S CONCEPT OF LEADERSHIP

Salamat believed that the decisive factor in human affairs is leadership. His view of leadership is similar with that of Sayyid Abul A’la Mawdudi, a Muslim thinker who founded the Jama’at-i Islami, an Islamic movement based in Pakistan. Mawdudi said: “An objective appraisal of this period in our history shows that everything began to change with the changes of leadership.... Changes in leadership and society have metamorphosed the entire life style of a people.”⁶

He did not deny the role of individual initiative in

bringing about societal change, but he pointed out that individuals operate within the socio-political framework of the community where the influence of the leader is immense. Salamat believed that no matter how small the size of a Muslim community, it must have a government (or an organization to resemble a government) and a leader. He also added that:

*It is not possible to achieve the ends of Jihad as enjoined by the Qur’an through isolated individual efforts. Jihad must essentially be the concern of an organized group. Such organized group may partake of the nature of an Islamic state or government or, in the absence thereof, an Islamic body (al jama’ah) or organization.*⁷

Salamat emphasized that the just social order that he envisioned had to be under the stewardship of leaders adhering to the Qur’an and the Sunnah. In many of his lectures he underscored the importance of righteous and God-fearing leadership.

In his view the fundamental problem of the Bangsamoro people was placing the leadership in the

4. Salamat Hashim, Bangsamoro Mujahid, pp. 10-11.

5. Salamat Hashim, Bangsamoro Mujahid, p. 12-13.

6. Sayyid Abul A’la Mawdudi, The Islamic Movement: Dynamics of Values, Power and Change. Leicester, UK: The Islamic foundation, 1984, p. 78.

7. Salamat Hashim, Bangsamoro Mujahid, p. 24.

hands of those who were in error. He said that “Over the years, it has become crystal-clear to all of us that the root cause of all the ills and tribulations of our people is largely attributable to callous and corrupt leaders whose main obsession is to stay in power at the expense of our legitimate rights and aspirations.”⁸

He urged the MILF members to develop their leadership capability to prepare themselves to work for the transfer of leadership and authority from the hands of the wicked, advocates of materialism and immorality, who seem to be beyond reform, to the hands of righteous and God-fearing colleagues.”⁹

To Ustadz Salamat, promotion of virtue and what is right, and prohibition of evil, as defined by Divine prescription, were the twin functions of the leader. He also believed that leadership is a social responsibility and as such the leader has to serve the people in conformity with what God prescribes. The leader assumes responsibility for the welfare and security of the community.¹⁰ It is also the function of the leader to ensure that the group is strong and

united by providing the vision and group norms. The leader, according to Salamat, should strengthen the spirit of brotherhood among the members. He said:

Our constraints in material capability and other form of handicaps related to revolutionary movements can be overcome by the fortitude, loyalty, brotherhood and solidarity of members under all circumstances.

*Our unshakeable solidarity is by itself a form of victory in our Jihad. For being indivisible and united our hopes for achieving our ultimate objectives as an organization is within our reach and within the realm of possibilities, with the help of Allah.*¹¹

Finally, the most important function of the leader which he had kept on emphasizing in his talks with MILF leaders was to provide a good example in matters of discipline, *iman*, *taqwa* and ethics.

Based on his knowledge of Muslim political thought and his own experiences in life,

Salamat’s formulation of the basic qualifications of the leader were as follows:¹²

1. He must be a Muslim of legal age
2. He must be just and fair
3. His credibility as a witness is acceptable in accordance with the rules of Shariah
4. He should be well-versed in Islamic laws and with a good understanding of Islam
5. He should be morally pure, upright and clean
6. He should be physically and mentally fit to carry out the burden of his responsibilities
7. He should be free from anything that would becloud and cast doubt upon his character or personality

Ustadz Salamat’s view was that the leader is to be elected. The manner of election will depend upon the political maturity of the people and the prevailing political conditions. If the situation is so that the people can freely choose the leader and they can judge fairly

8. Ibid, p. 4.

9. Salamat Hashim, *Bangsamoro Mujahid*, p. 5.

10. Abhoud Syed M. Lingga, “The Political Thought of Salamat Hashim”. Master’s thesis submitted to the Institute of Islamic Studies, University of the Philippines, Diliman, Quezon City, 1995, p. 50.

11. Salamat Hashim, *Bangsamoro Mujahid*, p. 29-30.

12. Lingga, p. 52.

who among the nominees is the best, he is for direct election. If not, the election of the leader has to be delegated to a council called *ahl al-hal wa 'al-aqad*, which shall be composed of *ulama*, professionals, thinkers, and sectoral leaders. The applicability of this principle of selecting government officials in Mindanao today will be problematic because there are sets of rules that are defined by existing laws. However, there will be no problem in its applicability in selecting leaders of Muslim organizations.

BEHAVING AS A LEADER

Grounded in his religious background, Salamat took everything seriously. He was well organized both with regard to his family and his work. He loved learning so much that even in his jungle base he maintained a library where he spent time contemplating, studying, writing his messages, and doing other scholarly work.

His character was impeccable that even in his early childhood he was never known to have committed major infractions against Islam.

As an *alim*, he was prolific writer and lecturer in Arabic, English and Basa Magindanaon, his native dialect. He also upheld *haq* (truth) at any cost and any means, even if this would entail the loss of his life.

He advocated the revival of the true Islamic civilization as defined by the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Holy Prophet, peace be upon him. Nonetheless, he also urged Muslims to acquire modern scientific and technological knowledge in consonance with the command of the Holy Prophet, peace be upon him. For him, every Muslim has to acquire both revealed knowledge (knowledge derived from God's revelation) and acquired knowledge (knowledge gained by man through experience, experimentation and intellectual efforts like mathematics, medicine, economics, astronomy, etc.). However, the application of acquired knowledge has to conform to the moral values defined by revealed knowledge.

His deep concern for Muslims was such that the poverty and sad state of his brethren around the world brought him tears of sadness either while leading the prayer or in solitude. As a leader, Salamat loved the poor and the oppressed of whatever creed or belief. This being so, he had made it a part of his personal commitment to Allah to struggle for social justice. He died a poor man. Except for his personal belongings, his family did not inherit any property when he passed away.

He had made it his life's mission to introduce social change and development to Bangsamoro

society so much so that he had adopted a self-imposed regimen of researching deeper on Islam which, he sincerely believed, offered the only solution to the problems of the Muslims in South Philippines as well as to the sordid state of affairs of the Muslim *ummah*. His dream was the realization of the Qur'anic provisions:

“Ye are the best community that hath been raised up for mankind. Ye enjoin right conduct and forbid indecency; and ye believe in Allah.” {3:110}

“And there may spring from you a nation who invite to goodness, and enjoin right conduct and forbid indecency. Such are they who are successful.” (3:103)

Salamat introduced and practiced the concept of consultative and collective leadership. In his book, *The Bangsamoro Mujahid*, he said that the MILF policy of consultative and collective leadership meant “that no major decisions could be formulated and implemented without first resorting to *Shura* (consultation) in general meetings attended by the Central Committee members in the homeland and representatives from different regions.”¹³ When he was in Camp Abubakre he expanded the consultation process to include other sectors which were not organic to the MILF

13. Salamat Hashim, *Bangsamoro Mujahid*, p. 57.

like the academics, professionals, traditional leaders, and leaders of indigenous communities.

Even in difficult situations, he always found ways to conduct consultations. During the all-out war launched by the Armed Forces of the Philippines against the MILF in year 2000, he convened the MILF General Assembly so that consultations could be made. He ordered the repositioning of the MILF forces from Camp Abubakre to new locations. Secretly he called the members of the MILF General Assembly to a three-day meeting to decide on the movement's policies and programs. He organized the Jihad Executive Council which

he consulted from time to time when it would not be possible for the Central Committee and the General Assembly to meet.

LEADERSHIP LEGITIMACY

Salamat was a revolutionary, an *alim* and a *datu*. As founder and chairman of the MILF, he was a recognized leader of one of the biggest liberation movements in the world.

A graduate degree at Al-Azhar University, the prestigious institution of learning in the Muslim world, and his scholarly contributions to international Islamic journals earned for him the

recognition as a scholar not only in his Bangsamoro homeland but in the Muslim world as well. While in the Middle East he participated in various Islamic conferences which gave him the opportunity to engage Muslim scholars in scholarly discourse.

He was born of a family that belonged to the Pendatun clan.

Although he had three strong supports to the legitimacy of his leadership, often these three support groups contradicted each other. Yet he was able to generate their support for the Bangsamoro struggle, a skill which many were not privileged to have.

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Mujiv Hataman

The Alternative Political Leader

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“All religions teach good things. Muslims or Christians, if you believe and practice your religion faithfully, you will be a good leader. The only difference in the Muslim faith is that as a Muslim, you are obliged to serve the people. There should be no injustices to be done. In our faith, we are asked to be good to the people. Our service to the people is our service to Allah. These are my basic beliefs and practice.”

INTRODUCTION

Basilan is an island province across the tip of the Zamboanga Peninsula in western Mindanao. The province consists of the volcanic, hilly main island and 61 smaller islands surrounding it. The island's early settlers were the Orang Dampuans. They were the ancestors of the Yakan, a peace-loving people known for their colorful hand-woven clothes with intricate geometric designs. Upland, the Yakans grow rice, corn, coconuts and rootcrops. Approximately 55% of the people in Basilan speak Chavacano. The rest speak either the tribal dialects of Yakan, Tausug, and Samal, or Cebuano and Tagalog.

The legendary Sultan Kudarat maintained a stronghold in the town of Lamitan until the Spaniards crushed it in 1637, and Jesuit missionaries arrived a few years later. The Dutch attacked Basilan in 1747 and the French attempted to occupy the province in 1844, but the natives repulsed both attempts. To strengthen its defense, the Spaniards built a

stone fort named after Queen Isabela II soon after. The Fort was constructed on the very spot where the new Capitol Building now stands.

When Zamboanga became a chartered city in 1936, it included Basilan. On July 1, 1948, Basilan itself became a separate city through Republic Act No. 288. The city was converted into a province on December 27, 1973 under Presidential Decree No. 356.

Basilan is an agricultural province with a few industries. It is the country's leading producer of rubber, with plantations such as B.F. Goodrich's in Latuan, east of Isabela and Menzi's on the road to Maluso town. Other major crops grown commercially in the province are coconut, coffee, black pepper and African palm oil.

It was in this environment that a Yakan political leader was born. Mujiv Hataman saw the light of day on Sept. 11, 1972 in Buli-Buli, Sumisip, Basilan. A few days after his birth, the Yakan's peaceful homeland was jolted by

the declaration of Martial Law. When members of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) came to Basilan from nearby Sulu in the 70s, many natives joined the Muslim struggle for secession. The island's economic fortunes took a turn for the worse as peace and order deteriorated and many began to bear arms against the Philippine government.

It has been said that before martial rule was declared, a strong Christian elite ruled Basilan, not because of religion but because of the pre-martial law socio-cultural and political situation. In the 1970s however, when Basilan became a province, a young generation of educated natives showed potential for local leadership. Yakans who were educated in Christian schools began to assert themselves and tried to shed off their traditional timid attitude.

Mujiv grew up in this context. According to Mujiv, his life in Basilan during those days was uneventful. He was a simple student who took his elementary education at the Buli-Buli Elementary School from 1980 to 1986 and his secondary education at the Basilan National High School from 1986 to 1990.

HIS EMERGENCE AS A LEADER

But Mujiv comes from a family of local leaders. "My father

is not a political animal but he is an undefeated *Barangay* Captain since the time of [former Philippine president Ferdinand] Marcos," he said. The older Hataman inherited his position from his father, a *Panglima* (Yakan tribal leader) of Sumisip when the place was just a tribal village.

Historically, Tausugs considered Basilan as an extension of the Sultanate of Sulu. Basilan became part of the Sultanate's extended domain facilitated by Tausug migration into the island. The Yakans came under the influence of Islam and the Sultanate's political structure was superimposed on the Yakan political structure. The Tausugs became the rulers and the Yakans became the ruled in their own territory. However, no Yakan rebellion was recorded. Such absence was presumably because of the religious-cultural nationhood that evolved and bound the two ethnic groups under the mantle of Islam. Hence, the ethno-political structure in Basilan gave way to the Tausug political structure with Islamic trappings. Each village was governed by a new political head called *Panglima*, believed and understood to be the representative of the Sultan of Sulu.

To date, the *Panglima* in Basilan stands parallel to the *barangay* political structure. At the district level, the *Panglima* is seen as the head of the religious

structure. He is aided by the *Pendita*, his religious adviser and a man well-versed in the Qu'ran. Given Mujiv's heritage having a father who is a *Barangay* Captain and a grandfather who was a *Panglima*, Mujiv's emergence as a leader was expected and seen as a natural occurrence.

Such was further reinforced especially when Sumisip became a town. In addition to being his father's son and grandfather's grandson, Mujiv became his brother's brother when his elder brother, Jim Saliman (Hajiman Saliman-Hataman), the second of the nine Hataman siblings (Mujiv was the seventh), became mayor. Saliman is also married to the daughter of former Public Works and Highways Secretary and current Congressman Simeon Datumanong of Maguindanao.

Gleaned from the above, local politics in Basilan can be described as very clannish in its set up. Father Angel Calvo, a present day Spanish missionary who spent almost three decades of his life doing development work in the island, said: "Basilan's leaders reflect the kind of government the province has. Once the head of the family becomes a leader, all the other members of the clan take advantage of the resources that come under the control of the leader."

One study on Basilan said

said that the present social configuration of the Yakan population reveals a prevalence of traditional clan structures located in defined territories within or across municipal boundaries. There is no unified hierarchy that represents the Yakans' overall leadership on the island. Rather, major clans operate and exercise influence and control over defined territories. In Sumisip town, the most prominent are the clans of Hataman, Latip, and Hamsa. In Tipo-Tipo, there are the Janjakilan, Maturan, Ibrahim, and Aron clans. In Lamitan, there are the clans of Poregay (Christian-Yakan), Hamja, Mamang, and Pamaran. And in Tuburan, there are the Salapuddin and Muarip clans. The coastal towns of Maluso and Lantawan are predominantly Tausug while the capital town of Isabela is predominantly Christian.

Mujiv recalled that they came from a clan of warriors. He asserted that "our ancestors became leaders because of *rido* (family wars). They had to kill and subdue other clans, so other families will respect us. Fortunately, our father was a peace-loving person and did not want more bloodshed. He sold his properties and sent us to Manila to study. We became the new leaders because we were educated. Our relatives remain warriors."

YOUTH AND STUDENT ACTIVISM

In 1990 Mujiv left Basilan

to pursue a Bachelor of Science degree in Computer Engineering at the AMA Computer University in Manila. After two years, he quit school and got involved in student activism, as his older brother Jim was then a student council leader at Araneta University and chairman of the Bangsamoro Student Alliance (BSA) in Manila. Accordingly, the BSA had a Marxist orientation. When Mujiv arrived in Manila, there were a lot of demonstrations going on – at the US Embassy, protesting against the autonomous region, and others. As a student activist, Mujiv began his "political career" advocating for Moro people's right to self-determination.

Mujiv was later assigned the task to organize Muslims in Metro Manila. This covered areas in Quiapo, Taguig, Tandang Sora, and others.

WORKING WITH CIVIL SOCIETY

At twenty two years old, Mujiv became a Community Organizer and Coordinator of Al Fatihah Foundation, a non-government organization engaged in interfaith initiatives which promoted cooperative efforts and positive interaction between people of different religious traditions (i.e. "faiths"), particularly between Muslims and Christians. The organization aimed to find a common ground in

belief by emphasizing similarities between faiths, understanding values, and committing to world peace. It was in this setting that Mujiv grew to become cross-cultural and interfaith-sensitive by closely coordinating with the different Christian councils that have active interfaith and inter-religious programs such as the National Council of Churches in the Philippines (NCCP), the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP), and the Association of Major Religious Superiors in the Philippines (AMRSP).

A year later, Mujiv became the Program Coordinator of the Moro Human Rights Center (MHRC). MHRC was formed to promote, protect and realize Moro human rights in the Philippines. MHRC is a member of the Philippine Alliance of Human Rights Advocates (PAHRA), the founding members of which are organizations and individuals who were in the forefront of the struggle against the dictatorial regime of former President Ferdinand Marcos. MHRC conducts fact-finding missions, documentation, and reporting of human rights violations against Muslims.

As Mujiv conducted alliance work with different civil society groups, he also began to help develop reform-oriented programs, especially as participatory mechanisms

have become increasingly institutionalized with the state's passage of the Local Government Code of 1991 that allowed active involvement of civil society groups in the country's policy making processes.

In 1995 Mujiv went back to Basilan and, together with some Christian missionaries, established the Kilusan Para sa Hustisya at Kapayapaan ng Basilan Foundation (Kahapan) to organize communities into cooperative units. "Change must start in the grassroots," Mujiv said, adding that people empowerment must be realized first before peace in Basilan can be achieved. Mujiv further said that Moro leaders must also address the rebellious reaction of the community against the years of subjugation by Christians. Basilan's new leaders must perceive that the healing process is an essential element to peace. "We have to hasten community initiatives and peace projects before banditry and elections overtake us," Mujiv said, adding that the root of Basilan's problems is still the "politically immaturity" of most Moro communities.

Father Angel Calvo commented: "He (Mujiv) is "very hopeful" that an aggressive socioeconomic process and "a very clear and determined way of giving the people the justice they need" will bring peace and development to Basilan.

EXPLORING THE POLITICAL PROCESSES AND ENGAGEMENT WITH THE POLITICOS

Mujiv also joined party-building processes initiated by the progressive movement. Many from among their ranks have participated in electoral contests; In fact, even if progressive candidates won few local contests in May 1995, campaign assessments revealed that it was not difficult to learn the technology of electoral politics.

Mujiv's skills were honed in the electoral process when he became a campaign volunteer for former Congressman Candu Muarip, a traditional Moro politician and the first Yakan Congressman to represent Basilan Province in the House of Representatives (1995-1998). But Muarip became a perennial loser in local elections in later years.

When Mujiv saw that Muarip was not a viable candidate, he joined Rep. Abdulgani "Gerry" Salapuddin as campaign manager. Mujiv also abandoned Salapuddin later and became political strategist of Basilan Gov. Wahab Akbar. He became Akbar's senior executive assistant until 2001 when the two parted ways due to "disagreements in strategy."

After the rule of the Christian elite in Basilan in the 70s, a new kind of leadership emerged.

It was a leadership which had to survive the economic dominance of multinational corporations which owned almost all of Basilan's land, and the presence of guerillas and various local armed groups, including the Abu Sayyaf bandits. Father Angel Calvo described the situation as a perfect setting for corruption. "Because of the war and the unstable situation, the new leaders have to get as much as they can in a short time," Calvo said.

"Politics is a cancer that is slowly eating the soul of Basilan," Mujiv reflected. "People have been looking for an alternative, but they did not find it in Salapuddin and Akbar. Maybe they would not find it in me (either)," he added.

According to him, the present crop of Basilan leaders looks at politics as a business venture. Mujiv observed that in the past, when there was still no Internal Revenue Allotment for municipalities, nobody would even want to become *Barangay* Captain. "Today, people invest thousands, if not millions of pesos just to be elected *Barangay* Councilor," he said.

Mujiv believed that, at present, there was no one leader who has really worked for the good of Basilan. "Everybody just wants to have power," he said. Corruption is rampant and even the taxation system is not working. "Basilan is not going anywhere."

He added that no official of the Office of the Ombudsman or the Commission on Audit dared to look into the anomalies in far-flung municipalities.

“Who will implement the rule of law?” Mujiv asked. “We need a strong and sincere leader,” he said. “There is a clamor for change, but no one seems qualified to lead.”

FORMING AND BUILDING A PARTY

In 2001, Mujiv ran for a seat in Congress as party-list representative of Anak Mindanao or AMIN. The formation of AMIN was a product of several deliberations from the progressive movement as it began to engage the state’s formal political processes. It took advantage of a new electoral law which provided for a “party list” system in the election of members of Congress.

At the House of Representatives, most of the 250 members of Congress are elected in single-member constituencies, but 20% are to be elected through a proportional ‘party-list’ representation system. This ‘party list’ system is intended to provide disadvantaged sections of the population with access to a legislative agenda, and to encourage the development of political parties based on programs rather than personalities.

Henceforth, discussions on party formation from the progressive movement included the need to answer questions such as: What kind of Party? What kind of program and organizational strategy should the Party have? It was a consensus that the image that one needs to build is that of a *new* kind of party whose members take its programs seriously, who are *anti-trapo* (traditional politician), against corruption, against horse-trading in the policy-making process, for good governance, for fair and predictable legal and administrative processes, and are as capable of managing the economy better than other parties. It was emphasized from the very beginning that such a Party will not be the only political instrument of the progressive movement.

Therefore, when progressive groups such as BISIG, SANLAKAS, Pandayan, and Padayon established the multisectoral party *Akbayan*, the Central Mindanao group also formed their own, which was Anak Mindanao (AMIN).

AMIN is a political party characterized as Tri-people (Moro, Lumad, Filipino), multi-sectoral (peasants, youth, urban poor, professionals, labor, fisher folks, etc.), and multi-formation (POs, federations, Coops, NGOs and individuals), organized to respond to the Mindanao peoples’ growing sentiments of affecting positive

change in the country, particularly in Mindanao.

Its general objectives include the following: (1) To effect reforms in the electoral and form of governance in Mindanao and in the rest of the country; (2) To promote genuine Peace and Sustainable Development (PSD) in the country, particularly in Mindanao; and (3) To work for a Just and Humane Economic, Political and Cultural condition of all peoples, especially the marginalized sectors.

Specifically, AMIN hopes to: (1) Work for the enhancement of the electoral system in the country by adapting the Party-List system to include the rest of Congress; (2) Advance the issues and concerns of the Tri-people on: a) Ancestral domain claims and agrarian reform for food security; b) Home for the homeless, home for the aged, and; c) Right to self-determination of all peoples; (3) Develop a self-reliant agriculture-based economy and adopt protectionist policies on export-import control; (4) Promote a scientific, people-oriented and nationalist system of education; and (5) Promote the interest of migrant workers and their right to vote.

AS A LEGISLATIVE LEADER

During the 2001 elections, Mujiv Hataman won a seat and at 29 years old, became the youngest member of Congress at the time as

AMIN Party List Representative.

To date, Mujiv is in his third and last term as Congressman. When asked about his major contributions and achievements, Mujiv was very modest and was hesitant to enumerate any of them. But a visit to the AMIN website would reveal that Mujiv is with the following House Committees as member for the minority: (1) Accounts; (2) Agrarian Reform; (3) Appropriations; (4) Aquaculture and Fisheries Resources; (5) East Asian Growth Area; (6) Games and Amusement; (7) Human Rights; (8) Mindanao Affairs; (9) Muslim Affairs; (10) National Cultural Communities; (11) National Defense and Security; (12) Overseas Workers Affairs; (13) Public Order and Safety.

Mujiv has sponsored and authored fourteen (14) House Bills, the most significant of which is House Bill HB03012 - AN ACT PROHIBITING DISCRIMINATION AGAINST PERSONS ON ACCOUNT OF ETHNIC ORIGIN AND/OR RELIGIOUS BELIEF. He has also co-authored sixty nine (69) House Bills.

Mujiv became the voice of the Muslims in Congress. He tries to be accessible to people.

BELIEFS ON LEADERSHIP

When asked about his

beliefs on leadership, Mujiv said: “The leader is only the representative of the community. The community’s voice should be the leader’s voice and not the reverse.” Henceforth, if he confronts issues in the exercise of his legislative duties, he admonishes himself to observe the Islamic tenet: “*Don’t ever decide if you are not able to consult your constituency.*” This is what he calls the principle of “*maswara*,” i.e., “if your decision would be for the community, it should come from the community.”

Mujiv also believes that the Muslim community must learn how to differentiate the *leader* from *leadership*. The former is a representative; the latter is a process in practice, which is to be consultative.

In general, there is no difference between a Muslim and non-Muslim leader in terms of faith and leadership. Mujiv said: “All religions teach good things. Muslims or Christians, if you believe and practice your religion faithfully, you will be a good leader. The only difference in the Muslim faith is that as a Muslim, you are obliged to serve the people. There should be no injustices to be done. In our faith, we are asked to be good to the people. Our service to the people is our service to Allah. These are my basic beliefs and practice.”

But Mujiv acknowledges that within the Muslim community there are misconceptions in the practice of the faith, especially so because at this point in time, he said: “we cannot yet identify a model Islamic community based on religion. Even the world does not have yet a model Islamic society.” He also cited the example of the Abu Sayyaf, whom he said identify themselves as Muslims and claim to be advocating Islamic principles. But there are no teachings in Islam that say one can kill or one can kidnap. “Even the Prophet,” Mujiv said, “during their Jihad or Islamic War, at the time of the propagation of Islam, admonished, ‘Do not kill women. Do not kill children. Do not kill the elderly.’” Mujiv said: “It was very specific. There is guidance. But this has not been practiced. We do not have yet a perfect Islamic community.”

CHALLENGES TO HIS LEADERSHIP

One of the challenges that Mujiv has faced in his leadership was the death of elected Congressman Wahab Akbar. In November 13, 2007, a few months after having been elected, Congressman Akbar was killed by a bomb blast that exploded as he was about to leave the Congress Building in Quezon City. Allegations behind the apparent assassination were leveled against Gerry Salapuddin and Mujiv

Hataman.

The Akbar bloc and the Salapuddin bloc are said to be the most formidable power blocs to have been formed since the 2004 general elections. Both blocs went head-to-head in the 2007 local elections.

The Akbar bloc (aligned with the Liberal Party- Atienza Wing), was led by the late Wahab Akbar, three-term Governor, religious leader, former MNLF stalwart and alleged Abu Sayyaf co-founder. The bloc is composed of his wives and his nephews and nieces, all of whom have been rewarded with a mayoralty post in all the Basilan towns as well as the biggest electoral prize - Isabela City, which is under his second wife Cherrylyn Santos-Akbar. His first wife is currently the Governor of Basilan, Jum Jainuddin-Akbar, who defeated former Deputy Speaker Gerry Salapuddin. Wahab Akbar himself was elected Congressman.

The Salapuddin bloc (aligned with the Lakas-CMD/ Kampi), is led by Abdulgani 'Gerry' Salapuddin, three-term Governor, three-term Congressman and two-term Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives, and former MNLF member, with his allies Hajiman Salliman Hataman of Sumisip and his brother, AMIN Party-list Representative Mujiv Hataman, along with a mix of other

Tausug and Christian leaders. To them, the 2007 elections proved to be a debacle as they lost in nearly all fronts, save for Lamitan City.

On March 9, 2009, several improvised explosive devices (IED) were found in two *barangays* in Zamboanga City. One of the bombs was accidentally found by a streetsweeper inside a trash can in *Barangay* Tumaga. Two likely targets for the bomb were said to be the Zamboanga bus terminal, which is located a few meters away from where the bomb was found, and the residence of Mujiv Hataman, which is also nearby. Meanwhile, two more improvised bombs were found by *barangay* officials in an abandoned lot in *Barangays* Culianan Tumaga. *Barangay* officials said that the bombs were found a few meters from Rep. Hataman's youth center.

When asked whether the bomb threat was related to the killing of Akbar as revenge, Mujiv said that it seems the incident was masterminded by 'political' enemies warning him not to run as governor of Basilan after his Congressional term is finished in 2010.

When asked if he was running for governor, Mujiv said that there is a difference in his outlook now because his children are still very young and politics in Basilan is really very dirty. Mujiv is married to Sitti Djalila Turabin,

a columnist. They have three children: Ahmed, Khaleed and Amina.

HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

Mujiv said: "I have great reservations to be involved in local politics now because my children are still very small. I don't want them to live within a violent culture of *rido*, which is a [cycle of] revenge and counter-revenge between two conflicting parties. And what if something happened to me and they are still small? I don't want hatred to be developed in them."

Yet, on the other hand, Mujiv said "I still want to engage in politics because I want to create a model community, even at the provincial level, and for people to acknowledge that there is a Muslim leader who can do this. The problem in Mindanao is very complicated. There is failure from government to respond to the present conflict. My authority at the moment is to legislate and at the same time to influence legislation. But it would be better if you are involved in local politics, because you have authority. You have police power. You have funds. I also wish to empower people for them to ask from government what they (authorities) have done to them."

Mujiv continued: "What is now running in my mind is between

the risk to my family and the risk I would take if I would heed the call to develop Muslim communities in order to resolve the Mindanao conflict. From a bigger picture of the right to self-determination of the Bangsamoro people, where there is peaceful coexistence and

unity among different peoples of different faiths in a peaceful Mindanao who are enjoying recognition in their identity and experiencing empowerment and good governance, what I would like to see now is to have a model Muslim community, even at the

local level, where what Islam says would be practiced and where there would be active participation from the community.”

“All of this service to the people is one’s service to Allah,” he remarked.

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**HADJA BAINON
KARON**

This case was written by Jasper Caesar Jampac for the Asian Institute of Management-TeaM Energy Center for Bridging Societal Divides. This case is prepared solely for the purpose of class discussion. It is neither designed nor intended as an illustration of correct or incorrect management of

“The problem lies with the fact that there are limitations to Muslim women being assertive. However, we will still continue to advocate for gender education and awareness on Islamic perspectives in partnership with other women organizations. We would like to have a correct interpretation, for instance, of the polygamy system because this leads to the emotional battering of women.”

Across Mindanao, especially in areas where Muslim Filipinos dominate, veiled women are a common sight in virtually all public places. Presently, Muslim women even hold key positions in government and private institutions. The freedom these women enjoy today was much less available to them in the past.

then, their culture dictated more confinement and isolation.

A descendant of Rajah Buayan from the 15th century sultanate, Hadja Bainon Karon, who rose up to become a Commander of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF)², shared her own experience in this regard:

Bai Lanie de los Santos, from the Autonomous Region for Muslim Mindanao (ARMM)¹, a product of Muslim-Christian intermarriage, revealed that “Before, when you roam around here, you wouldn’t see many Muslim women because they are all confined to their homes. The houses were built to close them in; the windows are very small. They are not permitted to just interact with the people outside their homes.”

For women born into Muslim royal families back

“Growing up as a child and as a teenager, I couldn’t go out without a chaperone. It was a tradition among royal families not to mingle with just about anyone. When we had visitors, we were asked to go inside the house or to our rooms. Even in school, we had to be brought in and fetched. There were a select few whom we could mingle with. For me, it was okay because it was part of the tradition and

1. ARMM - The Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao region was first created on August 1, 1989 through Republic Act No. 6734 otherwise known as the Organic Act in pursuance with a constitutional mandate to provide for an autonomous area in Muslim Mindanao, which includes Lanao del Sur including Marawi City, Maguindanao, Sulu, Basilan and Tawi-Tawi.

The region is one of the most impoverished areas in the Philippines. It has a per capita gross regional domestic product of only PhP3,433 in 2005, 75.8 percent lower than the national average of PhP14,186. It is the lowest among the Philippines’ 17 regions, the second lowest region has a per capita income almost double the ARMM’s. ARMM has a population of 4.1 million based on the 2007 census. It is the country’s poorest region, where average annual income was just 89,000 pesos (\$ 2,025) in 2006, less than 1/3 of Manila level.

culture. However, it was difficult because of the suppressed freedoms. I was born during the time when Muslim royal families had to follow protocols.”

The soft-spoken, frail-looking, petite lady, who grew up as a privileged yet restricted child, has enabled countless Muslim women to rise up, move and assert their rights. In a culture where women are not easily accepted as leaders, growing up in a time when Muslim women were relegated to domestic confinement, Hadja Bainon Karon stood as a symbol for women empowerment, showing that effective leadership has no gender bias.

WHO IS HADJA BAINON KARON

Hadja Bainon, a Muslim royal blood distinguished by a titular prefix, *Bai*, attached to her name, tells her story.

“I was born in Lebak, Sultan Kudarat province. We were 9 siblings. I’m the sixth child in a brood of seven boys and two girls. My father is a community leader, a Maguindanao Datu. He is a descendant of Rajah Buayan. My

mother is also a community leader. My grandfather is the first mayor of Kalamansig, Sultan Kudarat.”

Sultan Kudarat, located at the southwestern part of Mindanao, spans 478,318.98 hectares and consists of 12 municipalities: the coastal towns of Kalamansig, Lebak, and Palimbang, and the inland municipalities of Bagumbayan, Columbio, Esperanza, Isulan, Lutayan, Lambayong, President Quirino, Tacurong, and Senator Ninoy Aquino. Tacurong is the province’s commercial center; Isulan is the provincial capital while Lebak is the other growth center where business and trade are flourishing, and population continues to rapidly increase.

With more than half a million residents, the people of Sultan Kudarat rely heavily on agriculture. The province has a marketable surplus of rice, corn, beef, coffee, and vegetables, and is self-sufficient in poultry, swine, and root crops.

Its coastal towns, where Hadja Bainon grew up, are considered the province’s tuna

sanctuary. About 8,000 metric tons of high-quality tuna (sashimi grade) caught along the shores of Kalamansig, Lebak, and Palimbang are exported to Japan and Europe per month.

Yet in the past, Sultan Kudarat was very much underdeveloped and unpopulated. Poverty incidence was 63% in 1991 (NSO Data), Human Development Index was only 0.533 (1997 figures) and annual per capita income was merely 11,557 pesos (1994 figures). Simple literacy in 1,000 was a mere 259 (1990 data).

The major dialects spoken in the entire province are Hiligaynon (Ilonggo), Maguindanao, Ilocano, Cebuano, and Manobo. Sultan Kudarat is a multicultural locality with the tri-people (Christians, Indigenous Peoples, and Muslims) sharing one land – the cause of much dissent and conflict starting in the 60s when the migration of Luzon-Visayas Filipinos displaced Muslims and Indigenous Peoples alike in Mindanao.³

Hadja Bainon explained the harmonious co-existence between Christians and Muslims then:

2 The Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) was conceptualized by Abul Khayr Alonto and Jallaludin Santos as early as 1969. While still part of the Bangsa Moro Liberation Organization (BMLO) organized by Rashid Lucman, Alonto and Misuari were able to draw the support of Libya away from the BMLO and towards the MNLF. Alonto took the Vice-Chairman position. Nur Misuari, a former professor of the University of the Philippines, activist and prominent leader for the Moro cause, took the top position. Another prominent leader was Hashim Salamat, who later became the Vice-Chairman after Alonto and his followers surrendered to the government. Aside from the political nature of the MNLF, it was able to carry out its armed struggle through its military operations with support from Muslim backers in Libya and Malaysia in terms of weapons and military training. The fighting reached its peak from 1973-1975 as the MNLF was able to field some 30,000 armed fighters. Muslim factionalism led to a further decline in MNLF. In 1977, Hashim Salamat broke away from the MNLF and formed the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). This was due to loss of confidence on the leadership of Nur Misuari as well as ideological differences. While the MNLF had a more secular and nationalist stance, the MILF had a more Islamic orientation.

“There were already Christians then but the relationship with the Muslims was like that of siblings and family. Before the settlers from Luzon and Visayas arrived in Mindanao, it was still peaceful.”

Yet things changed with the influx of more Christian settlers to Mindanao. Problems between the Muslims and Christians escalated. Tagging along with her father in his community work exposed her to the concepts of leadership, service, justice and equality.

When she was about 12, Hadja Bainon had already been caught up in the work of a *Datu* and community leader by happenstance.

“Actually I didn’t think about it. However, I am the favorite of my dad. So my father always brings me to his meetings. I was exposed to their plans, what they do, what the problems of the community were.”

This, together with the knowledge she received from formal education, largely from

Catholic schools, opened her eyes and ears to the realities she was protected from.

“From elementary and high school, I already started feeling the injustices and discrimination against Muslims.”

IMPORTANCE OF EDUCATION VS. TRADITION

Seeing the importance of being educated, her parents sent them all to school.

“Our family isn’t rich but we were all able to study in schools. From high school till I finished my degree, I went to Catholic schools. I finished my high school in Notre Dame University in Cotabato City. In my freshman year, I enrolled in Immaculate Conception College in Davao City. However, I earned my degree in Liberal Arts at Notre Dame University.”

As was customary in Muslim families, she was committed by her parents to marry a son of another *Datu* right after high school.

“My brothers asked me about my decision. I told them that I wanted to study instead. They reminded me that I would be breaking a tradition. Women during my time were encouraged to get married early instead of getting a degree. However, my brothers supported my decision and brought me to Davao City without my parents’ consent. They sent me to school.”

Although she broke a custom, her family did not reprimand her for the decision she made.

“After a few months, my parents learned about my whereabouts and my mother visited to see how I was doing in Davao. On my second year, my mother fetched me in Davao. I moved back to Cotabato City and my parents supported my education.”

JOURNEY TO MNLF

Hadja Bainon started out as a student activist in the late 60s. Between the years 1968 and 1969, she was the Secretary-General of

3 The migration of Christian settlers to the open frontiers of Mindanao in the 50s – 70s as encouraged by the national government to minimize overpopulation in Luzon and the Visayas eventually led to land disputes between the Christian settlers and the Muslims.

The Christian settlers claim that they bought land from one Muslim only to be refused by that Muslim’s relatives and asked to pay more money. The Muslims counter that land titling was an unheard off institution. Due to the large influx of settlers, however, the Muslims were eventually and systematically displaced from their ancestral lands. In time, they became a minority in their own homeland. As the settlers were increasing in number so did their economic wealth. These events led to distrust, animosity and resentment between the settlers and Muslims. Many Muslims believed that the solution to the problem was to have an independent state apart from the Republic. The means to achieve this goal was through armed struggle.

the Federation of Muslim Students. The Federation had a similar cause with the Muslim Students Association⁴ organized nationally in the 60s.

“We started organizing communities with the Federation, and joined student demonstrations with *Kabataan Makabayan* (KM). My parents didn’t know about this, otherwise they would not have allowed me.”

Kabataan Makabayan was founded in 1964 by Jose Maria Sison (founder of the Communist Party of the Philippines and the New People’s Army). This organization rallied Filipino youth against the Vietnam war, against the Marcos presidency and corrupt politicians.

With the influx of Luzon-Visayas Christian migrants to the open frontiers of Mindanao, the conflicts between Muslims and Christians spread like wildfire. In the late 60s, violence was now everywhere in Mindanao. Vigilante groups from both Christians and Muslims were formed to attack

one another.⁵

This moved her to make the biggest decision in her life.

“I saw what was happening to the Muslims – the killings, the rape, the massacres. I was hoping to see organizations rise to fight for the rights of the victims and their families. If there was one, then I will join (them).”

Despite her family’s stature and her sheltered life, she was prepared to take arms, move to the jungles and fight for principles and beliefs.

“When you come from a royal family, you do not necessarily feel the hardships and realities of the common people. But when you look around you and see what’s happening in your community, you ask yourself: why is this happening, how will this be resolved, who will resolve this, who will fight against the perpetrators? That was planted in my head and heart. Someone

has to do all the fighting. That’s when I joined the movement.”

SYMBOL OF THE MOVEMENT

She was fresh out of the University, a time when anti-government protests prompted then Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos to declare Martial Law in 1972. It was in this setting that Hadja Bainon Karon joined the Moro National Liberation Front.

“I left my family and joined the MNLF. I was one of its leaders, representing the women. That time it was the Social Welfare Women’s Committee, later changed to Bangsamoro Women’s Central Committee. In 1980 I became its Chairperson.”

Her education, family background and dedication helped her move up the ranks in MNLF.

“It’s a factor. I saw the respect among MNLF leaders since it’s very rare to see a *Bai* among Muslims turn away from all the comforts in life and

4 The Muslim Students Association of the Philippines was organized even before the Jabidah Massacre in 1968. In 1965, because of the Vietnam War and massive influx of settlers to Mindanao, the militancy of the Muslim students started. The policy of “National Integration” was their first rallying point because Muslims believed that they can not be integrated culturally and socially to the Philippine society that is based on Christian values and acceptance. They supported the position of “unity in diversity” and possibly a “federal system of government” since amendments to the constitution was on the national agenda for 1971.

The Muslim Youth organized the National Coordinating Council for Islamic Affairs (NACCIA) and issued a Manifesto entitled “Al Wahid” in 1967 calling on the Filipino leadership to pay greater attention to the miserable situation of Muslims with the massive influx of settlers in Mindanao that displaced many Muslims and Lumads.

5 See Annex 1. Background Behind the Moro Struggle

join MNLF. But it also took time before I was given a high position.”

Her stature eventually became a rallying point of the movement to influence thousands of Muslims to join the MNLF.

“The MNLF leaders made me an example to persuade women to join the organization – that here’s a *Bai*, a daughter of a *Datu*, someone from the royal family who has joined. I became the symbol for the movement. The strategy worked and so many people joined. This was also the time that the organization needed a lot of recruits.”

More than the recruitment, Hadja Bainon was more concerned about the plight of the Muslim women outside the organization.

“This was also a time for the women to join because they had no other recourse. Many of them were raped, even in front of their family and husbands. Pregnant women were cut open. The only way out of the carnage was to join the movement. That was my role. I was the one who showed them an option.”

Her committee played an equal part in the armed conflict, as much as what the Muslim men were doing with their actual fighting, because her role was to

convince the communities to join in the struggle.

“When our MNLF brothers were in battle, we convinced the communities to be united in the fight with us, to explain to them the objectives of the organization. During the height of the revolution, we had a big contribution especially in terms of financial support to our brothers. We provided them medical aid. We were the ones doing the propaganda. The women’s committee looked into all aspects of support we can give them. In all the plans and decisions I had, I always made consultations with the members before implementation.”

It was in the middle of all her work that Hadja Bainon Karon met her husband, a high-ranking MNLF leader, Datu Ibrahim Sema, brother of Cotabato City Mayor Muslimen Sema. They married in 1978 and she raised her children in the forest. In all the fighting the MNLF had with the Philippine Government, she lost her husband and five brothers. Despite this unfortunate circumstance, Hadja Bainon continued on with the movement, understanding that in armed struggle, death was always near. Like most Muslims, she felt that the more suffering and pain she undergoes, the closer she gets

to Allah.

CHAMPIONING WOMEN’S RIGHTS

Hadja Bainon’s work for the MNLF’s Bangsamoro Women’s Central Committee was not the only way of asserting women’s rights in a Muslim setting where traditionally the males had the upper hand. This was her way of getting the men’s approval regarding women empowerment and their recognition of their rights. She explained:

“When we were starting to advocate for women’s rights, the men would argue with me. They would ask their wives if what I’m teaching is to fight their husbands. So there came a time when the women no longer joined our committee gatherings. I had to seek them out and talk to them individually. I also invited the men, so that they would know what we were teaching their wives. With our development programs, we made the husbands the project co-makers. The men slowly appreciated what we were doing. This also helped in making the men understand that they are the women’s partners in home-making.”

Hadja Bainon is proudest of this achievement considering

that she was battling to change people's perspectives on women.

"We were able to form and sustain the women organization especially in our culture where supposedly women cannot be leaders. We were able to prove that the women can also lead, and that we've shown that the inaccurate interpretation of the Islamic teaching on leadership is corrected. Little by little, the times have corrected some practices we have because of the assertiveness of women."

In 1996, the Moro National Liberation Front signed a peace agreement with the Philippine Government. The advocacies of the Bangsamoro Women's Central Committee (BWCC) that Hadja Bainon started were now continued in civil society.

ACHIEVEMENTS OF THEIR ADVOCACIES

After the signing of the peace agreement in 1996, the BWCC members organized a legal umbrella organization, *Bangsamoro Women Foundation for Peace and Development*,

to continue what BWCC had started. They also formed the Federation of United *Mindananan Bangsamoro Women Multi-Purpose Cooperative* as a support organization to accommodate all the work they can do for the women and youth. Hadja Bainon presided over these two organizations from 1997 to 2002, and again in 2005. In the three-year gap between terms, she served as the ARMM Regional Secretary of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD).

The focus of both organizations was on women and the youth in all aspects of development. The goals of both organizations were for women to become assertive of their rights and to participate in all levels of governance.

She shared how far Muslim women have reached at this point:

"When Chairman Nur Misuari assumed the governorship in SPCPD (Southern Philippines Council for Peace and Development)⁶, we became assertive. We had representatives in the Regional Legislative Assembly and in the

Cabinet-level during the SPCPD. At the Executive Consultative Assembly, we also had six representatives."

"Then we had women-mayors; Mayor Raida Bansil-Maglangit is the last one remaining of them. Aside from the representation in different levels of government, we asserted to create a Muslim women's counterpart of the NCRFW. Existing up to now, the Regional Commission of Bangsamoro Women was also created. Also, the Bangsamoro Youth for Development and Peace was organized. These are what we have done, aside from the representations we have."

LEADERSHIP STYLE

Hadja Pombaen Karon-Kader, current Assistant Regional Secretary for DSWD-ARMM, described Hadja Bainon as a leader:

"She is a visionary leader. She has that courage and

⁶ SPCPD The creation of the Southern Philippines Council for Peace and Development or SPCPD is meant to represent the "full implementation of the Tripoli Agreement". This was an agreement entered into between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) and the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) signed in Tripoli, Libya, on December 23, 1976 - - with the participation of the Organization of Islamic Conference. Its objective was to end and settle the armed conflict between the GRP and the MNLF in Mindanao. It also provided the establishment of autonomy for Muslims in Mindanao within the realm of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Philippines.

The SPCPD is not a provisional government because it is not a governing authority. It does not have any law-making power. Neither is it an autonomous region, a political subdivision of GRP, nor a public corporation. It has no separate judicial personality; hence, it cannot sue nor be sued. It is a transitory administrative arm under the control and supervision of the President of the Philippines.

fortitude to withstand trials and tribulation in the pursuit of her dream, for the general welfare of her people. She had shown strong leadership attributes even when she was still a revolutionary leader in the MNLF, showing an unyielding spirit to pursue the dream of the Bangsamoro. She has also consistently displayed those traits in DSWD-ARMM as Regional Secretary by pursuing toughly the mandate of the department resulting in successes unparalleled in the history of the department.”

On the other hand, Hadja Bainon spoke about her kind of leadership:

“A leader, likened to a family, is the eldest. You are the one who guides everyone and who gives direction. When you are in the community, it is important to be tough and that at least somewhat feared. You show them what your direction is. I stayed consistent with my words and actions so that they will respect and follow me.”

Hadja Pombaen believes that Hadja Bainon was most respected because of her ways:

“People believe in her and follow her because she is unassuming, humble, and honest, loves her people and has a brave heart to face even the daunting

challenge that may come at any particular time.”

In the end, Hadja Bainon realized that what she had been doing from the beginning did not only work but also earned for her people’s respect.

“First you see the respect already from the people, and then they appreciate and follow what you say. Everything that we do, we have to consult the people. What I did was to gather all our women leaders, I discuss my plan and I solicit for their comments and suggestions. The process of being transparent and participatory I brought with me even to my tenure as DSWD Regional Secretary. With the ARMM Social Fund, I made sure that the program was community-driven.”

What guided Hadja Bainon to lead people was based on basic values she had lived with as a Muslim. Hadja Pombaen offers an insight:

“The Islamic principles on leadership require that major decisions that affect public welfare interest shall be based on consultation and majority rule. She employed that principle as a leader in all her major decisions.”

CONTINUING WORK

Even as their work allowed Muslim women to assert themselves more and to find the veiled women of Mindanao mingling freely with society, Hadja Bainon acknowledged their limitations.

“The problem lies with the fact that there are limitations to Muslim women being assertive. However, we will still continue to advocate for gender education and awareness on Islamic perspectives in partnership with other women organizations. We would like to have a correct interpretation, for instance, of the polygamy system because this leads to the emotional battering of women.”

As life moves on for Hadja Bainon Karon – the privileged child from a royal family who became an MNLF commander, a champion of women’s rights, a public official and a civil society personality – her call for women empowerment will never end.

ANNEX 1. BACKGROUND BEHIND THE MORO STRUGGLE

By Jasper Caesar Jampac

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Islam was introduced and spread in Mindanao towards the end of the 13th century by Arab traders and Muslim missionaries. Soon after, prominent Muslim leaders from nearby sultanates settled in the island and started the political element aside from the religious element of Islam. By adopting Islam, the Mindanao Muslims established ties with the wider Muslim community. Islam also brought political organization, laws and religious and ethical values which different tribes adopted and practiced at various degrees.

Islam also had more than 2 centuries to ingrain itself among the early Muslims before the Spaniards came in the early 1500s. The Spanish colonizers were met with armed resistance from the Muslims in Mindanao. Despite 300 years of occupation in the Philippines, the Spaniards were not able to totally colonize Mindanao but still included it as a part of their colonies.

After the Spaniards ceded the Philippines to the United States towards the end of the 19th century, the American came to pacify and

colonize Mindanao as it did the rest of the country. Likewise, the Americans were also met with armed resistance from the Muslims. The Americans though were successful in pacifying Mindanao to some degree through better arms and military tactics combined with effective government policies of suppressing the Muslim uprising. More importantly, the American and Filipino colonial government were successful in rendering the Moro traditional power structure obsolete. The *datus* and *sultans* became merely symbolic leaders and were removed from power replaced by Filipino officials. In fact, the Muslims did not have proper representation or elected representatives in the government.

During the Second World War many Muslims enlisted under the United States Armed Forces of the Far East (USAFE) to fight the Japanese. Those who could not be accommodated joined the guerilla movement. On the other hand, many Muslims also joined the Japanese ranks believing that joining the Americans, the foreign power whom the Muslims fought, was traitorous as well. There were times when both groups fought each other. After the war, President Osmena instituted a policy of amnesty which brought some of the prominent guerilla leaders into office.

Even during the American occupation, the Muslims have

already expressed their intention not to be part of the Philippines. Muslim *datus* and leaders also voiced their distrust in Filipino government officials. They were also against the granting of independence for the country for fear of being handed over to Filipino government. The pleas however were not heeded and Philippine Independence was granted in 1946. The Americans turned over all territories including Mindanao to the Filipino government. Not a year has passed when violence broke out again between the Muslims and Filipino Christians. Soon enough there was fighting between government forces and Muslims.

Unlike Luzon and Visayas, Mindanao was never completely subjugated and did not absorb the influence of the foreign powers which colonized the rest of the Philippines. Thus the Muslim inhabitants were never fully absorbed into the mainstream Filipino society. It kept itself distant with centuries of resistance and fierce loyalty to Islamic faith and practices while the rest of the country was predominantly Christian who has come to accept Western influence. Because of these differences, the Muslims do not regard themselves as Filipinos. They have come to regard the Filipinos as foreigners and resisted any attempts for them to be assimilated or become part of the mainstream society. Injustices

committed against the Muslims further aggravated the already hostile situation.

OTHER ISSUES LEADING TO THE CONFLICT

The north to south migration of Christian settlers started during the time of the American Occupation which lasted up to the 1970s. During the 1950s and 1960s the national government encouraged this migration as Luzon and the Visayas were getting populated and crowded. Seen as “A Land of Promise”, the settlers moved into the “open frontiers” of Mindanao settling in the Northern Mindanao regions including Cotabato and Lanao province.

Eventually, land disputes and ownership eventually became the focal point of the conflict. The Christian settlers claim that they bought land from one Muslim only to be refused by that Muslim’s relatives and asked to pay more money. The Muslims counter that the settlers had land titles from government agencies which were unknown to them and for whom land titling was an unheard off institution. Due to the large influx of settlers, however, the Muslims were eventually and systematically displaced from their ancestral lands. In time, the number of Muslims dwindled until they became a minority in their own homeland.

As the settlers were increasing in number so did their economic wealth while the Muslims were deprived of the economic benefits. The economic policies during the Marcos regime favored the settlers (especially Marcos’ cronies) and foreign multinational businesses that did not have to pay taxes while operating in the region. Many of the natural resources and sources of income were deprived from the indigenous people as well.

These events led to distrust, animosity and resentment between the settlers and Muslims. Because of this encroachment to their land, economic resources and the wide differences in beliefs, many Muslims believed that the solution to the problem was having an independent state apart from the Republic. The means to achieve this goal was through armed struggle.

ORGANIZED MUSLIM INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSES

Amidst the distrust and animosity between the Muslims and Christian settlers and the growing problems facing Mindanao, many Muslim student activists and professionals in Manila, formed groups and organized protests condemning the injustices and abuses made against the Muslims. In 1959 the Muslim Association of the Philippines (MAP) expressed

their desire to establish a separate government with Pakistan as the model.

Then in 1968, the infamous Jabidah Massacre incident led to the formation of the Muslim (later to be renamed as Mindanao) independence Movement (MIM) headed by Cotabato Gov. Datu Udtong Matalam. The aim of this movement was to form an Islamic Republic of Mindanao comprising the southern islands of the Philippine Archipelago. This group however, did not gain momentum and few outside of Cotabato listened to Gov. Matalam seriously enough.

By 1970 a vigilante group of Christian settlers known as the Ilagas (Rats) started operating in the Cotabato regions. In response, the Blackshirts, a Muslim armed bandit group, appeared to counter the Ilagas. The same thing happened in the Lanao area where another Muslim armed group, the Barracudas, began fighting the Ilagas.

Because of the social unrest and armed hostilities in Mindanao and the rest of the country, Martial Law was declared in September 1972. As the government ordered all weapons to be surrendered and enforced strict rules and curfews, this further worsened the acrimony with the Muslims who traditionally equated the right to carry arms as part of their religious and historical

heritage.

The Bangsa Moro Liberation Organization (BMLO) organized by Rashid Lucman, a former congressman and sultan among his people in Lanao Province, and Salipada Pendatum, an ex-congressman and member of the Maguindanao nobility of Cotabato Province was organized in 1970. It was supposed to be the umbrella organization for all Muslim independence groups but its prominence was diminished when international support shifted to a new organization which was secretly formed by two of BMLO's top officers, Abul Khayr Alonto and Nur Misuari, who eventually separated from the BMLO to lead the new organization. In 1984, the BMLO was renamed Bangsa Muslimin Islamic Liberation Organization. It frowned upon the use of the term Moro, which was given by the enemies of Islam, and in its stead Muslimin was chosen.

The Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) was conceptualized by Abul Khayr Alonto and Jallaludin Santos as early as 1969. While still part of the BMLO, Alonto and Misuari were able to draw the support of Libya away from the BMLO and towards the MNLF which caused a rift with the two organizations. Despite being one of the founding members of the MNLF, Alonto refused leadership and took the Vice-Chairman position. Nur

Misuari, a former professor of the University of the Philippines, activist and prominent leader for the Moro cause, took the top position as the Chairman. Another prominent leader was Hashim Salamat, who was a close second to Misuari for chairmanship, decided to give way and later became the Vice-Chairman after Alonto and his followers surrendered to the government.

The MNLF's numbers grew, its prominence as the organization for Muslim Independence was further established by the recognition of the Organization of Islamic Countries (OIC), a union of Muslim nations to which the Moros look for support, as well as receiving direct international aid from countries such as Libya, Malaysia and Iran.

Aside from the political nature of the MNLF, it was able to carry out its armed struggle through its military operations with support from Muslim backers in Libya and Malaysia in terms of weapons and military training. The fighting reached its peak from 1973-1975 as the MNLF was able to field some 30,000 armed fighters. The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) deployed around 70% – 80% of its combat forces against the Moros. Destruction and casualties both military and civilian were heavy. Aside from military tactics, the government announced economic aid, political concessions and

encouraged factionalism and defections in the Muslim ranks by offering incentives such as amnesty and land.

By 1976, armed conflicts began to wane. Talks between the government, the MNLF and the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC), led to the Tripoli Agreement in 1976 providing for Moro autonomy in 13 provinces and 9 cities in Mindanao and a cease fire. After a lull in the fighting, hostilities broke out again in 1977 amid Moro charges that the government's autonomy plan did not live up to the "spirit and letter" of the agreement.

Muslim factionalism led to a further decline in MNLF. In 1977, Hashim Salamat broke away from the MNLF and formed the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). This was due to loss of confidence on the leadership of Nur Misuari as well as ideological differences. While the MNLF had a more secular and nationalist stance, the MILF had a more Islamic orientation. Another splinter group broke away from the MNLF after Hashim Salamat. This group consisted of former officers of the MNLF who presented a nine-point proposal to reform and improve the MNLF. Their proposal was rejected and the officers who petitioned were dismissed. They later formed the Moro National Liberation Front/ Reform Movement in 1982 but was

short lived as most of the officers accepted amnesty and government positions. Moro fighting strength declined to about 15,000 in 1983 after the breaking up of the MNLF into factions and declining foreign support. There was only occasional fighting between the Moros and government forces.

During the late 1980s, the MNLF and MILF, the two largest Muslim separatist groups, were in regular talks with the government for a cease fire. The cease fire talks achieved some measure of peace in the region and kept the two Muslim separatist groups in the negotiating table but sporadic fighting still continued to brake out after the cease fire talks. Talks for autonomy also resumed which resulted in a deadlock. Despite the deadlocks, a plebiscite was held in 1989 to determine the number of provinces who accepted the autonomy measure. Thus, Maguindanao, Lanao del Sur, Sulu and Tawi-Tawi became the Autonomous Region for Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) which was officially inaugurated on November 6, 1990.

Nur Misuari and the MNLF refused to recognize the ARMM because it went against the Tripoli Agreement of 1976 which had previously set 13 provinces and 9 cities for autonomy. It took another six years of negotiation until the government and the MNLF settled their differences in

the 1996 Final Peace Agreement. The MILF though still refuses to recognize the ARMM and was not included in the peace agreement. To this day, both the MNLF and the MILF still remain to be a force to be reckoned with in Mindanao.

Despite the lessened fighting with the creation of the ARMM, many Muslims still wanted to continue the armed struggle for an Islamic State, unhappy with the peace process with the government. One such faction was the radical group, Abu Sayyaf (Bearer of the Sword) who gained international notoriety for its high profile kidnapping and murder of foreign tourists as well as local citizens. The members composed of former MNLF and MILF who broke away in order to continue the holy war (jihad) for a Muslim state.

The founder and the leader of Abu Sayyaf until 1998 was Abduragak Abubakar Janjalani. In December 1998, Janjalani was killed in a firefight with police in the village Lamitan in Basilan Island.

A veteran of the Afghanistan war, Janjalani kept close ties with other Islamic radical leaders. After Janjalani's death a power struggle took place within the organization, with the former leader's brother, Khadafy Janjalani finally emerging as the new leader. Abu Sayyaf is estimated to have

several hundred active fighters, largely based in the islands of Basilan, Sulu and Tawi-Tawi in the Philippines' southernmost section. It is believed to have roughly a thousand supporters in the southern islands. The group finances its operations mainly through robbery, piracy and ransom kidnappings. Abu Sayyaf may also receive funding from the international terrorist network of Osama bin Ladin.

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO ORGANIZED MUSLIM INSTITUTIONS

MARCOS REGIME

It was during this time that the armed conflict started and reached its peak. Marcos saw the escalation of civil unrest and hostilities around the country and in Mindanao as a reason for implementing Martial Law in September 21, 1972. Seeing the Muslim uprising as a threat to national security, Marcos' initial response was primarily military in nature. The result was widespread destruction of lives and property in the war zones. From 1971-1976, estimates of deaths were around 60,000 – 120,000, as well as 300,000 refugees to neighboring Sabah and some \$3B worth of damage.

By the mid1970s, Marcos went into negotiation with the MNLF with the involvement of the

OIC after the military means did not put down the insurgency. The result was the Tripoli Agreement of 1976 and a Ceasefire Agreement in 1977. The peaceful breakthrough did not prosper however as Marcos implemented the Tripoli Agreement unilaterally without the involvement of the MNLF or the OIC. The MNLF and OIC rejected the outcome of Marcos' implementation of the Tripoli Agreement. With the breakdown of relations and the ambush of an army general in Sulu, Marcos resumed military operations again in Mindanao.

AQUINO ADMINISTRATION

In 1986, with Corazon C. Aquino as the new president, she resumed peace talks with the MNLF and personally went to Sulu to meet Nur Misuari in September of the same year. That historic meeting was followed by talks between the government and the MNLF witnessed by the OIC Secretary in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia in January 1987 which produced the Jeddah Accord. Further talks broke down in the same year since the government was working within the framework of the 1987 Constitution which the MNLF could not accept. In accordance with the constitutional mandate, the government proceeded with the plebiscite and inaugurated the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), which included 4 provinces, in 1990. This

was done without the participation of the OIC or the MNLF which did not recognize the ARMM. Sporadic clashes between the Muslims and government forces occurred during this time.

RAMOS ADMINISTRATION

When Fidel Ramos became President in 1992, the peace talks with the Muslims were resumed but not many believed it would succeed. Unlike the negotiation of the Aquino administration, this time the OIC was heavily involved in mediating, brokering and observing the talks as well as the implementation of the agreements. The talks took several rounds and lasted from 1992 – 1996. The first round of the talks focused on ceasing hostilities between the MNLF and the government forces. In 1993 an Interim Ceasefire Agreement was signed and in 1994 the Ceasefire Guidelines and Ground Rules was signed. The second round of talks was about implementing of the Tripoli Agreement to the “spirit and letter”, finding consensus and resolving disagreements on policy and implementation. It would take another two years from 1994 until the disagreements were settled. The Final Peace Agreement was signed in 1996.

With the signing of the Final Peace Agreement the following measures were put into place:

- Creation of the Southern Philippine Council for Peace and Development (SPCPD), a transitional body to coordinate peace and economic development efforts.
- Appointment of the MNLF or their representatives in the SPCPD and certain offices under the Office of the President
- Establishment of the Special Zone of Peace and Development Social Fund (SZOPAD), whose purpose is to provide basic infrastructure projects to MNLF ex-combatants and marginalized members of the community in Southern Mindanao
- Passage of the New Autonomy Law to repeal/amend the existing ARMM law
- Continuing presence of the OIC in the Joint Monitoring Committee
- Provisions of the Agreement not requiring legislative action shall be implemented
- The joining of the MNLF into the AFP and PNP
- Special socio-economic and cultural programs

The Peace Agreement was thus carried out which involved Two Phases. The first phase established the SPCPD and SZOPAD. The second phase involved the Congressional amendment or repeal of Republic Act 6734 of Organic Act of the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao, after which a plebiscite will be held to determine the shape of the new autonomous government and its specific area of

jurisdiction.

Despite the highly successful breakthrough in bringing lasting peace in Mindanao, the MILF and other factions do not recognize the Peace Agreement and question the leadership of Nur Misuari and whether he represents the Muslim people. Many Christians, who live in the area covered by the ARMM, distrust Misuari as well.

ESTRADA ADMINISTRATION

The first phase of transition came to an end and the second phase of integration and economic development continued.

Aside from being appointed as chairman of the SPCPD, Nur Misuari ran for the governor of ARMM and was elected. Through the SZOPAD and other foreign and local institutions, funding was made available to Mindanao for infrastructure and economic development projects to be implemented.

Despite the available funding, Nur Misuari claims that the government has delayed in releasing the funds thus delaying the much needed development projects while has been accused of being an inept administrator. Furthermore, Nur Misuari called for the postponement of the plebiscite unless it can deliver genuine autonomy

Meanwhile, the government carried out an unsuccessful negotiation with the MILF which led to a brief all-out-war with the MILF resulting in the capture of Camp Abubakar, MILF's largest camp. Estrada also sent a massive force in order to eradicate the Abu Sayyaf group which kidnapped several local and foreign tourists in a resort in Palawan. This drew heavy criticism from the Muslim world which severely tarnished Estrada's credibility as one who is committed in to bringing peace and development in Mindanao.

ARROYO ADMINISTRATION

In 2001, Nur Misuari was replaced by his own MNLF colleagues who formed the Committee of Fifteen. Misuari then declared war on the Arroyo government and attacked an Army camp in Sulu in order to disrupt the ARMM plebiscite. This resulted in the death of many of his loyal followers. He escaped to Malaysia but was captured and incarcerated in Fort Sto. Domingo in Sta. Rosa, Laguna. It was later revealed that much of the funds that were channeled to the ARMM were unaccounted for. Misuari was also accused of pocketing a large portion of the funds for his personal use and for the purchase of arms for his followers. From the Committee of Fifteen, Dr. Parouk S Hussin emerged as the leader and was appointed as ARMM governor.

The Arroyo administration pushed through with the plebiscite which resulted in the inclusion of Basilan, Sulu, Tawi-Tawi, Lanao del Sur and Maguindanao as part of the ARMM.

The current administration is implementing the second phase of the Peace Agreement through its Mindanao National Initiative or "Mindanao Natin". It is the strategy for peace and development in Mindanao that is being implemented across many areas from security to infrastructure to education to economic growth to poverty reduction to law enforcement. Mindanao Natin aims to mobilize the local governments, civil society and the business community for development for Muslim Mindanao.

It is also guided by four principles:

- Peace and development must go together;
- The development of Mindanao must be anchored on constitutionality, national sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country;
- There must be social justice for all, regardless of one's belief or station in life;
- All acts of terrorism and lawlessness should be condemned.

The government is set to earmark P5.5-billion for the regional initiative Mindanao Natin would also receive some \$1.3

billion in official development assistance to bankroll high-impact priority infrastructure project.

A 10-point program has been drawn in view of the Tripoli Agreement reached by the Government of the Republic of the Philippines and the Moro National Liberation Front.

- Substantial implementation of the Tripoli Agreement;
- Strengthening of local monitoring teams looking into the rehabilitation of conflict-affected villages in the Pikit-Pagalungan-Pagagawan cluster in Cotabato and Maguindanao provinces and

the Carmen-President Roxas-Damulog cluster in Cotabato;

- Formation of a new breed of soldiers called the Sala'am (zone of peace) soldiers, half of whom are Muslims, to protect Muslim communities and assist in the delivery of socio-economic services to the latter;
- Financing and conduct of livelihood training programs for conflict-affected families;
- Implementation of a rebel returnees program;
- Creation of one-stop action centers for land documentation and titling;
- Conduct of a distance-learning program that will provide basic

education and specialty training courses;

- Conduct of youth and culture-sensitive programs on sports and the arts;
- Implementation of community-scale, quick-gestation infrastructure projects that include an P281 million worth of projects in the ARMM, P71 million for Western Mindanao, and P73 million in South central Mindanao;
- Implementation of the \$1.3-billion ODA to finance roads and bridges, irrigation and water resource facilities and maritime safety facilities.

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Kapitan Ibnu Kudalat

Tau Maas (Old Man) of Patikul

This case was written by Derkie T. Alfonso for the Asian Institute of Management-TeaM Energy Center for Bridging Societal Divides. This case is prepared solely for the purpose of class discussion. It is neither designed nor intended as an illustration of correct or incorrect management of the problems or issues contained in the case. Copyright 2009.

My dream for the people of Patikul Higad is simple. For them to have the things that I have and enjoyed. If I live in a stone house, I want them to have stone houses also. If I eat three times a day, I want them to have three meals a day as well. We are all equal because we are created equally.

PATIKUL: LAND OF FRUITS AND WARRIORS

The Municipality of Patikul is one of the 19 municipalities in the island province of Sulu. It is composed of 30 *barangays* with 6,000 estimated households, according to the 2000 National Statistics Office census. The center of Patikul, *Barangay Taglibi*, is 20 kilometers from Sulu's capital Jolo. Patikul is an important municipality inasmuch as the seat of the Sulu Provincial Government is located within its political boundary, even though it is geographically nearer to the Municipality of Jolo. Patikul is also home to the Mindanao State University – Sulu campus and the Sulu State College.

Like the rest of Sulu, Patikul is mainly populated by the Tausug. Tausug means *tau* (person or people) and *sug* (sea current); literally they are referred to as 'the people of the current.' It is one of the major ethnic groups in the Philippines and part of the bigger Moro ethnic cluster in Muslim Mindanao. Although Tausugs can be found in the islands of Basilan, Tawi-Tawi and parts of mainland

Mindanao, Sulu is considered as their homeland. Tausugs are known seafarers, artists, and fierce warriors. Tausugs pride themselves as the center of pre-Hispanic Sultanate rule over North Borneo and parts of Mindanao.

Patikul is economically significant to the province of Sulu since it is an important source of native organic coffee, copra and fish. Likewise, during fruiting season, the mountain communities of Patikul are known major suppliers of durian, mangosteen and marang. According to the Sulu Chamber of Commerce and Industry, although no factual data is available, local fruit traders are known to seasonally supply fruits to Zamboanga and Manila.

However, the volatile peace and security situation in the municipality belies its serene demeanor. Patikul was the site of major battles between the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) and the Philippine government until the signing of the final peace agreement in 1994. In the last 3 years however, Patikul has experienced intermittent armed skirmishes between elements of

the MNLF and the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP). The main trigger of such events is the AFP's operation against the notorious Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) which at times would come close to known MNLF camps.

Patikul is a known stronghold of the ASG as the place was made infamous by the two kidnapping incidents; at Sippadan in 2000 and at Dos Palmas Resorts in 2001. In 2008, Patikul and its neighboring municipality Indanan again made the headlines when the ASG abducted Ces Drilon, a known broadcast journalist. In addition, the three members of the International Committee of the Red Cross who were kidnapped by the ASG were abducted in *Barangay* Bang-kal in Patikul, although they were later brought to the mountains of Indanan. Only recently, the ASG ambushed a military convoy and claimed responsibility for a roadside bombing.

In the midst of this untoward environment is a sleepy community called Patikul Higad, tucked in a tiny cove along sugar-white shores. *Higad* in the Tausug language means "close to" or "beside" which accounts for its name as the place is very close to the sea. Patikul Higad is an agricultural community and is home to around 160 households. Its people are mostly engaged in coconut and cassava farming and fishing.

PATIKUL HIGAD'S IBNU KUDALAT

Residing in this community is sixty year-old Ibnu Kudalat, a respected community leader and *barangay* chairman considered by many as a *tau ma-as*. In Tausig culture, *tau ma-as* (literally an 'old man') is a title bestowed upon a recognized community elder. A *tau ma-as* is sought by community members for advice, mediating conflicts, and assistance.

Ibnu Kudalat was born in 1949. His father was a farmer/fisherman named Kudalat while his mother was a simple woman named Aming. In the old days of Sulu, people were mostly known only by their first names. Kapitan Ibnu also has four other brothers, all of whom are still living in Patikul Higad. He is married with one child.

Ibnu received no formal schooling although he has been a relatively successful entrepreneur, farmer, and fisherman. However, he is best known as a *barangay* councilor and a full-term *barangay* chairman. Nowadays, he is simply known as the community *tau maas*.

In the early 1950s Ibnu's father used to guide land surveyors from the national government in moving around the municipality for mapping and cadastral surveys. According to Kapitan Ibnu, the surveyors compensated his father

by awarding tracts of land in Patikul Higad under his father's name. As such the elder Kudalat became a landed farmer in the community. He trained Ibnu in the ways of the land and sea, with the younger Kudalat becoming an accomplished farmer and fisher.

On account of his being a landlord, the elder Kudalat also become a community *tau ma-as*, sought after to mediate local conflicts and settle domestic problems. Thus, Kapitan Ibnu had witnessed at an early age how his father exercised leadership over their community.

In 1969, Ibnu's life was forever changed when his father was shot and killed by one of their tenants. According to Ibnu, the killing of his father was triggered by a local family wanting to take over their land.

Driven by the Tausug brand of justice and honor, the young Ibnu Kudalat sought out his father's killer and shot him to death. Ibnu asserted that he did it to serve justice and preserve his family's honor. In traditional Tausug culture, a killing merits instant retaliation or the family suffers from public ridicule.

Ibnu Kudalat's action triggered a full-scale *pag-dangaw* or clan war. According to Ibnu, his family was at war with two other clans who joined forces against

theirs. During one clan war, Kapitan Ibnu only had himself and his four brothers going against twenty combatants. Still they managed to beat back the overwhelming force of the opposition with him leading his brothers. This episode made him a local legend in Patikul. In the Tausug culture, the most admirable trait in a person is courage in battle.

IBNU'S EARLY LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE

The above episode established Ibnu Kudalat as a recognized albeit informal community leader. His stature in the community further grew when in 1970, Governor Murphy Sangkula heard about his exploits and hired him to serve as one of the provincial government's security personnel. Later on, Ibnu became the governor's personal close-in security.

His affiliation with Governor Sangkula legitimized his standing in Patikul Higad. At this point, people in the community started coming to him for help. According to Ibnu Kudalat, "People started seeking my help in many matters. They saw me as a person of position because of my affinity with the governor. I also think that my exploits as a warrior gained the respect of the whole community."

After two years, even Kapitan Ibnu's enemies approached him and forged peace between their families and his. In return, he and

his brothers allowed them to use the lands that were being disputed. Today his former adversaries are his strongest allies. Ibnu believed that "Every person must find forgiveness in their hearts. It is not good to have enemies. Clan wars destroy many lives and are a waste of resources that could have been put to better use."

IBNU AND THE WAR IN SULU

In 1974, government troops under the administration of then President Ferdinand Marcos waged an all-out war against the Moro National Liberation Front of Nur Misuari. Suluanons remember this chapter in their history with much bitterness, as the year was known in Sulu history as the burning of Jolo.

For Ibnu, this meant taking up armed struggle again, although this time it against the government itself. During the war of 1974, he and his family had to evacuate to another municipality to escape the brutal fighting in Patikul. Ibnu Kudalat recalled that many people died in those days as government soldiers ransacked their homes, pillaged their properties, and stole the produce from their farms. It was then that he decided to go back to Patikul Higad "to defend the land of my family", he stated.

He joined the MNLF as the chairman of the Patikul Higad *Barangay* committee. He was not

a frontline combatant since he was mostly involved in running the affairs of the local MNLF group. However, Ibnu asserted that government troops considered Patikul as a 'no-man's land' back then and would shoot anybody on sight, civilians included. Because of this, he was often in combat with government soldiers every time they entered the territory of Patikul Higad. On several occasions he was wounded in these encounters, and he had the scars to show for it, being a five-year MNLF combatant and leader. In 1980 however, his MNLF commander named Barani decided to give up the armed struggle against the government, and Ibnu Kudalat and his men followed suit.

Ibnu Kudalat then led a quiet life, raising a family of his own and going back to full-time coconut farming and fishing.

IBNU'S ESTABLISHMENT AS A LEGITIMATE COMMUNITY LEADER

Ibnu's reputation as an MNLF fighter and political leader had firmed up his leadership status in *barangay* Patikul Higad, and he was adored by his people because of his generosity to those in need. According to Haji Faisal Jul, a former Patikul municipal councilor and MNLF warrior:

It was common knowledge to anyone familiar with

Patikul Higad how Kapitan Ibnu would come home from one of his overnight fishing [sic], open up his net and ask his neighbors to get some of his catch. For free.

'Panlamay-lamay hadja para kanyu,' (just for a simple viand for your family) Ibnu would say. Many times, people in need of money for a sick child or birthing mother would come knocking at his door for help. Most do not go away empty-handed

Some residents of Patikul Higad have nothing but praise for Ibnu's generosity. Ibnu confides that he allows his neighbors and relatives to plant crops within his lands with him asking for no share at all. Even residents from the nearby *barangays* often flock to his doorstep for help. According to Ibnu, "Each person has the right to earn an honest living and nobody should spend the day being hungry. If I have anything to share, those in need will be able to partake from it."

Since he was already an informal community leader, the next logical step for Ibnu was to join the *barangay* government of Patikul Higad. Spurred by the people of the *barangay*, he ran for a local government post in the mid 1980s and easily won a councilor's

seat. This time, he had an electoral mandate from community residents to serve as their local leader.

In 1991, Ibnu Kudalat became known as Kapitan Ibnu when he assumed the position of *barangay* chairman of Patikul Higad under unique circumstances. When the incumbent chairman died, the law states that the first councilor should assume the vacated position. According to sources however, residents and the *barangay* council decided to make Ibnu Kudalat their *barangay* chairman by consensus, and he served for a full three terms until 2007.

KAPITAN IBNU'S LEADERSHIP

Kapitan Ibnu's work as *barangay* chairman simply formalized what he has been doing since his early years as an informal community leader. His governance style was marked by anecdotes of how he was much loved by his people, such as the following narrative from his elder brother Ammang Kudalat:

During the early years of the feared Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) under the infamous Radulan Sahiron aka Kumander Putol, a small band of ASG positioned themselves along the highway leading to the town of Jolo. Allegedly the intent

of the ASG was to ambush a convoy of government soldiers. The presence of armed groups within the area of Patikul Higad was enough for Kapitan Ibnu to arm himself and confront the ASG. His intention was to tell the ASG elements to position themselves somewhere else outside of Patikul Higad. Ibnu told the ASG that if they want to ambush the military they should do it further down the road as long as it is outside his barangay. He wanted to keep his barangay out of trouble with the military. The ASG left with out an incident.

The following day, a band of around 80 ASG fighters decided to enter Patikul Higad supposedly to confront Kapitan Ibnu regarding the previous day's event. Kapitan Ibnu made preparations to meet the band of armed ASG men. When the community members heard about this, a big number of them went out to accompany Kapitan Ibnu. Ibnu advised them to stay in their homes as he will confront the group on his own. However, his constituents insisted that they come with him. At this point the community members of a neighboring

barangay called Kadday Mampalam also heard about what was about to happen. A contingent of people from Kadday Mampalam joined the group of Patikul Higad constituents. The contingent from the two barangays was large, but only Kapitan Ibnu was armed.

As one group, they confronted the ASG. The latter, upon seeing the large contingent that accompanied Kudalat, decided to withdraw from the area. Kapitan Ibnu's group pursued the ASG up to the foot of a forested mountain. Their sole purpose was to talk to the ASG and ask them to leave their communities alone. However, the armed band of ASG fighters disappeared into the forest.

After three days, wanting to finally put the matter to rest, Kapitan Ibnu went up to the forest stronghold of ASG leader Radulan Sahiron and met with the ASG strongman. Ibnu and Radullan Sahiron were incidentally old friends [from] way back during their MNLF days. During their meeting, Kapitan Ibnu was able to convince the ASG leader to leave

Patikul Higad from any ASG activities. From then on, no ASG sighting or activity happened in their community.

This incident showed how the community was unwilling to leave Kapitan Ibnu during the tense confrontation with the Abu Sayyaf.

Another community resident related how Kapitan Ibnu cared for his constituents:

Kapitan Ibnu was a skilled carpenter who helped families in his community build their own houses. He would personally help out in the actual construction of houses, lending his skills as a carpenter. The Kapitan would see to it that a particular house under construction is completed. Many times he would also lend out money to buy housing materials. To date Kapitan Ibnu was able to help build no less than 10 houses in Patikul Higad. Kapitan Ibnu's small hollow block making livelihood is also open for his constituents to loan hollow blocks for house repairs or construction.

When asked about this, he simply said with a smile, "I want my people to have the same house

as I have".

Meanwhile Kapitan Ibnu continued to be his constituents' source of help and assistance, to be there for them in times of sickness, deaths, and weddings. A local resident shared the following story about how he would be the first on the scene during conflicts with neighbours:

Two local farmers were arguing about a parcel of land and its produce. Ibnu's attempt to broker an amicable settlement failed. In exasperation, he offered his own land, including the coconuts produced, to the disputing farmers. The disagreement ended on the spot and the embarrassed farmers apologized.

Kapitan Ibnu explained that "I was serious about letting them use my land for their farming. I would rather lose part of my livelihood than see my constituents fight among themselves."

There were also instances when he would borrow money only to loan it to a member of his community, even at the risk of incurring debts himself. He would do this because he could not turn down a constituent needing help.

KAPITAN IBNU'S GOVERNANCE

Ibnu Kudalat confided that he never wanted to be a *barangay* chairman. He said he would rather live quietly, making a living for his wife and only son. However, he was pressed by fellow residents who would often visit him at his house by the sea. Ibnu said it would feel like a betrayal if he did not give in to the demand for leadership of his small *barangay*.

Barangay governance in Sulu, according to Lupah Sug Advocates for Peace and Development community organizers Alhajar Abdulgafur and Ibrahim Lakibul, is “Akin to the reign of the sultans and *panglimas* of old. *Barangay* chairmen are more like local chieftains and warlords. They hold absolute power in their communities and have total control over their *barangay*’s priorities, resources and funds”.

But Kapitan Ibnu was not like that. He fully consulted his council for major community decisions and many times held public meetings for community projects.

An example of this was his annual meeting held in the local mosque where he declares the *barangay* fund from national government’s internal revenue allocation (IRA). From this, they calculate the 20 percent

development fund and openly discuss how to use the funds. The process of project identification means discussing problems in the community, identifying how to address these problems, and prioritizing activities based on what their funds can afford.

As a result, Patikul Higad was able to raise counterpart funds for the construction of a multi-purpose hall supported by the SZOPAD (Special Zone for Peace and Development) Social Fund Project, a *barangay* health center supported by the USAID funded project called Enhanced Rapid Improvement through Community Health and Development (EnRICH) and a new *barangay* hall funded partially by the Sulu Provincial Government.

Interestingly, aside from the *barangay*’s 20 percent development funds, Kapitan Ibnu also put up his own money for these projects. He estimated that he contributed no less than Php 200,000 of his personal funds into these projects. Being a skilled carpenter, he also volunteered his own labor during the actual construction of the projects. Being in the sand, gravel and hollow blocks business he also donated construction materials for the projects.

Kapitan Ibnu had education closest to his heart. He said he felt sympathy for the children of

his community who had to walk several kilometers to reach the nearest school in the neighboring *barangay*. In 2001, Patikul Higad had only two classrooms with a lone teacher serving Grades 1 to 3. Given this situation, Kapitan Ibnu negotiated with the Department of Education (DepED) District Office to have additional teachers assigned to his *barangay*. The DepEd supervisor said he will assign additional teachers if there will be additional classrooms in the community’s school. Kapitan Ibnu immediately went to work using local resources to construct three new classrooms in Patikul Higad. He also repaired the existing classrooms and comfort rooms, and constructed a school stage.

When the DepEd sent additional teachers, the *barangay* council hired an additional volunteer teacher paid for by *barangay* funds. Despite the persistent lack of teachers and classrooms, Patikul Higad is now able to serve additional schoolchildren ranging from grades 1 to 6.

Also through Kapitan Ibnu’s insistence, he was able to convince the *barangay* council to set aside a portion of its funds as financial assistance for their constituents during times of death in the family, marriages, and hospitalization. Although the *barangay* has no proper financial records, all the financial transactions are documented in a logbook open for all to

review.

While the municipality of Patikul is synonymous with the Abu Sayyaf, military operations and internally displaced persons, *Barangay* Patikul Higad prides itself as a peaceful community. Kapitan Ibnu had this to say about his locality:

Patikul Higad is known as the evacuation destination of the people coming from other barangays in Patikul during incidents of military-ASG clashes. The evacuees find safety and security in Patikul Higad. Many even opt to stay for good in this barangay. Maybe this was the result of the incident when we drove the ASG away and my striking a deal with Radullan Sahiron not to operate in my community. Even the Philippine military leaves us alone.

According to Pah Salih Ahalul, a known Sulu old timer, Patikul native and an active civil society member:

Kapitan Ibnu's governance is unique in Sulu since he was able to exercise transparency in governance, and the services of the barangay council can be felt by the people. Ibnu Kudalat also

does not act as a strongman but is full of humility and smiles for everyone. In all of the three elections that Kapitan Ibnu and his councilors participated in, there was no opponent who challenged them. All of them ran unopposed for many years.

Patikul Higad exercises a unique political tradition. Each *barangay* election is preceded by a large community gathering. The purpose of such a gathering is for the community to select their political leaders for the next three years (which is the term limit of local government officials). The set of persons selected by community consensus will form the line-up of councilors and the *barangay* chairman. This line-up will then file its candidacy and run unopposed. The election is primarily a ceremonial process to formalize the status of their *barangay* leaders. This is the community's way of manifesting its unity in what is usually perceived as a divisive political process.

The consultative process exercised under Ibnu Kudalat's leadership is evident during local elections. Traditionally, politician-candidates at all levels dole out money to voters in Patikul, usually coursed through the local community leaders and *barangay* captains. In the case of Patikul

Higad, all monies received from politicians regardless of political affiliations are pooled under the guardianship of Kapitan Ibnu. After elections, the total funds received from the politicians are reported to the community who then decide collectively on what to do with the funds. This political tradition started only recently, during Kudalat's administration.

Ibnu Kudalat does not interfere in or dictate the choices of his constituents. He also does not overtly show support for a particular candidate. Because of this, Kapitan Ibnu is not accountable or beholden to any local politician.

In 2007, when Kapitan Ibnu completed the maximum three consecutive terms, the community held a big gathering inside the local mosque. The agenda of the meeting was to select the next group of community councilors and the new *barangay* chairman. Many in the crowd insisted that Kapitan Ibnu be allowed to serve again. However when it was explained to them that he would not be allowed to run anymore, one *barangay* resident noted that many in the crowd received the news with tears in their eyes.

According to Kapitan Ibnu, he gave the residents of Patikul Higad three days to come up with nominees for the new *barangay* officials, as many of the incumbent

councilors had also served their full three terms.

When the deadline came, the gathering put forward the name of his son – who was 22 years old at the time – as the next *barangay* chairman. Ibnu Kudalat did not agree with the choice and expressed his opposition to the community's decision. However, Kapitan Ibnu said that “ I have to bow down to decision of the people of Patikul Higad. They made their choice and I have to follow it.”

Incidentally, the community also nominated the children of the retiring *barangay* councilors to replace them. Today, the *barangay* government of Patikul Higad is made up of the successor generation of its old local leaders.

KAPITAN IBNU: TAU MAAS

Nowadays, Kapitan Ibnu leads a quiet life. He has gone back to fishing and overseeing his small hollow block-making business. He is still the person being sought out by the community for help and other concerns. He continues to mediate conflicts, settle marriages, and assist his fellow residents. His advice is much valued by the people, his wisdom equally treasured.

Kapitan Ibnu also serves as the personal adviser and coach to his son, the young *barangay* chairman. “I want my son to serve as faithfully as I did but he has to find his own way eventually. As long as I am here I will guide him,” he declares.

When asked about his vision for his community, Ibnu explains:

My dream for the people of Patikul Higad is simple. For them to have the things that I have and enjoyed. If I live in a stone house, I want them to have stone houses also. If I eat three times a day, I want them to have three meals a day as well. We are all equal because we are created equally.

Reflecting on his experience as *barangay* chairman and the leadership values he brought to the position, he states that “I try to feel what they feel. I put myself in their place. I simply did the things that I want done to me if I am the one in need”.



**Abdul Karim
Langkuno**

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INTRODUCTION

A Muslim high ranking official or any leader who holds a position in the government usually hails from the line of a royal family. Maguindanao traditional politics dictate that elder *datus* of a political clan pass on their hold of power to younger generations of *datus*. Since *datus* already have a loyal following it is understood that the leader is assured of votes when election time comes. The intermarriage of royal families also adds to a solid voter's base for the political leader.

Abdul Karim Langkuno was not born into Maguindanao royalty. He was not born a *datu* nor were his parents of royal descent. Abdul Karim was an ordinary Maguindanaoan from humble beginnings who excelled in school and was an active participant in the Bangsamoro cause, and who later became a devout fighter of the Moro National Liberation Front. An ordinary man and a loyal follower to the teachings of Islam, Abdul Karim invested in his education as a means to uplift himself and his family from poverty.

So much different from the usual Maguindanao leader which hails from the *datu* lineage of traditional politicians, Langkuno did not have the backing of guns, goons and gold to catapult him to the top of the difficult political arena that is Maguindanao.

Rooted in a solid education, a clear-cut agenda for development and hard work, and following a non-traditional path to leadership, Langkuno transformed the once sleepy, unproductive town of Paglat into what is now known as Darussalam or Abode of Peace, the most peaceful and progressive municipality in Maguindanao to date.

THE MUNICIPALITY OF PAGLAT: CONDITIONS, ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

Under the second district of Maguindanao, the municipality of Paglat was created out of four (4) *barangays* and four former *sitios* of the municipality of General Salipada K. Pendatun (SKP), Maguindanao on July 9, 2001 by virtue of Muslim Mindanao Autonomy Act No.

112. The Act was signed by then Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) Regional Governor Nur P. Misuari. Eligible as a 5th class municipality, Paglat had an average annual income of P10,000,000 or more but less than P20,000,000.¹

First appointed mayor of Paglat was Bai Zulaika Pendatun-Langkuno, niece of the late Gen. Salipada K. Pendatun and sister of then SKP mayor Datu Saidona Pendatun. She served for three months and was replaced by her cousin Datu Conti Mangelen, son of then Congressman Datu Luminog Mangelen of Cotabato Province, through an appointment by Regional Governor Nur Misuari. The May 2004 ARMM elections paved the way for Abdul Karim Langkuno to serve as Paglat's municipal mayor. He is presently on his second consecutive term.

On the other hand, SKP was made into a municipality on April 7, 1991. Taken from the town of Buluan through the Muslim Mindanao Autonomy Act (MMAA) No. 3, it is the first local government unit created by the ARMM Regional Legislative Assembly (RLA).

The municipality of SKP is in the southeastern area of

Maguindanao where some of the most intense conflict has played itself out. Datu Pong Pangilamen Pendatun, incumbent vice mayor of SKP recalls:

First appointed mayor of SKP was my grandfather Hadji Datu Abubakar Pendatun followed by my father, Datu Saidona M. Pendatun who was elected into office and served for three terms. My father's sister, Sakina Pendatun-Bernan assumed office when he died in 2005 and served for one term followed by Bonnie Talusan Kali, present mayor of SKP. Kali is not in any way related to the Pendatuns.

Prior to Mayor Langkuno's term, Paglat was embroiled in various issues and concerns that cut across its different sectors. In governance and administration there was the deficiency in transparency, accountability and participation, as well as very rare instances of community involvement and consultations. No performance indicators can be measured since the legislative body did not have an existing agenda and legislative tracking system. Office equipment and facilities were inadequate. There was also the need to inform constituents of

the correct fees for issuing permits and licenses, while a proper accounting and auditing system, the timely reporting of financial transactions, and an overarching Revenue Generation Plan was also considered necessary².

In the social services sector, the municipality lacked health workers and health service facilities needed by the people. In 2004, there was no assigned doctor or nurse to the municipality and only two *barangay* health workers served the population of 10,932³. A high incidence of malnutrition was prevalent among children specifically those aged 0 to 6 years. The lack of an information drive on health and sanitation among residents was apparent and eventually limited treatment of the sick to the curative aspect of healthcare rather than extending such to its preventive aspect. The sick treated themselves in the traditional way by using variable medicines or consulting with the local *manggagamot* (healer).

In education, the teaching force and facilities did not meet the municipality's growing school age population. In 2004, overcrowding in school rooms, lack of teachers and insufficiency of learning materials were the sector's pressing problems.⁴

1. Municipalities are divided into income classes according to their average annual income during the last three calendar years (see also Table 6).

2. Paglat Comprehensive Development Plan Executive Legislative Agenda 2004-2007

3. NSO 2004 Data

In terms of agricultural development, Paglat - despite its vast agricultural lands – could not claim food sufficiency since its production did not meet the local population's need for staple food such as rice and corn. About 117 hectares of the municipality's agricultural land were devoted to high value crops, while a bigger portion (estimated to be about 3,422 hectares) was planted with seasonal crops, and the remaining 6, 903 hectares were found to be idle land. The insufficient production and supply of these valued crops can be attributed to the following factors: (1) lack of appropriate farming technology and farm inputs; (2) inadequate agriculture-support facilities and insufficient agricultural extension services of technicians; and (3) inadequate infrastructure such as farm-to-market roads and roads interconnecting *barangays*⁵.

Livestock and poultry production was another sector that needed attention. There was a shortage of supply of meat and poultry products in the area. Bacaraman Ondo of the Paglat Farmer's Association lamented the fact that "The farmers had to abandon their traditional methods of raising livestock and poultry by learning new ones from other service providers of new

methods⁶. The raisers also needed financial assistance to be able to expand their businesses. Thus, the raisers needed support of the local government to access technical and financial support in order to improve their livestock and poultry production."

Despite rich fishing grounds, fish production was still low due to lack of technology. In addition, there was a lack of extension workers who can provide guidance, preservation and maintenance of fish supply- especially the endemic species - in the municipality. *Barangay* Damakling fisherman Maidza Luminog explained that "Illegal fishing practices such as use of electricity and poisons were a common practice among fishermen. Fisher folks were not aware on how to properly preserve endangered fish species and other marine life. My father told us to fish responsibly. Even if we are poor we do not fish in areas where we know there are endangered marine life."

In the area of natural resource conservation, the local government needed to implement existing laws on protected areas and ecological solid waste management. The lack of environmental plans such

as natural resource management and ecological solid waste management, and the lack of facilities and human resources, coupled with the growing population in the *barangay* centers compounded Paglat's difficulty to improve its capacities to mobilize resources for program and project implementation, including addressing the costs of enforcing environmental policies.

Finally, the peace and order condition was much worse in Paglat. Drug users and pushers were rampant in the municipality. The drug problem was tolerated since constituents were scared to report the perpetrators to the police or military personnel. The strong presence of rogue rebel groups in the *barangays* also added to the poor state of security in the municipality. *Barangays* Kakal and Upper Idtig were such areas of high criminality. "We were scared to go out since there were a lot of drug addicts awake at night," said Macarambon Duldul elder and resident of Barangay Kakal.

THE EMERGENT LEADER

EDUCATION AND UPBRINGING

Mayor Langkuno spent his early years growing up in a

4. Paglat Comprehensive Development Plan Executive Legislative Agenda 2004-2007

5. Paglat Comprehensive Development Plan Executive Legislative Agenda 2004-2007

6. Bacaraman Ondo, Paglat Farmers Association

simple household in Tacurong, a municipality of Sultan Kudarat. He excelled in school; he was the class salutatorian upon graduating from elementary school and was among the top five students of his batch when he finished his secondary education. During his early education he was already very active in school activities and was always president of his class while being an active student organizer. Losing his father at the age of three, Mayor Langkuno decided early on that he had to push himself to be a better student.

As the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), which was fighting for an independent Moro nation, escalated its anti-government attacks in 1973 and as the MNLF received support from Muslim backers in Libya and Malaysia, the military arm of the MNLF, the Bangsa Moro Army, was able to field some 30,000 armed fighters in their offensives. Senior high school student Abdul Karim Langkuno was one of these fighters. Along with his comrades he took up arms and went to battle in various encounters around Maguindanao. After a year of furious fighting, Mayor Langkuno decided that it was time to concentrate on his lifelong dream and go back to school. His mother's cousin, Mohamad Adil was a very big influence in Langkuno's life. His uncle had this to say about this decision thus:

Abdul Karim always had the drive to excel. He had that fire in him that even his father's death could not put out. I always reminded him that education was the only thing that could make his and his family's life better. That it was what will make him stand out from the rest of his peers who fought with the MNLF. He was a good student, he excelled in everything he put his mind into. Laziness was never his problem.

Education became a priority for Langkuno as he vigorously applied for and was granted a Department of Education full scholarship to take up Civil Engineering at the Technological Institute of the Philippines (TIP) in Manila. He worked as a part-time instructor at the same school and at the Manuel L. Quezon University (MLQU) while taking a full academic load. During his last year in college and through a recommendation given by then Senator Salipada K. Pendatun, he was able to obtain part-time employment with the National Water and Sewerage Authority (NAWASA), which later absorbed him into its workforce when he finished his engineering course. He passed the Civil Engineering Licensure Exams in 1976 and was ranked 17th among all examinees that year.

The mayor's leadership capability was honed in his college years as he was an active Muslim student leader. Serving as an MNLF student coordinator, he was also a working member of the Alpha Phi Omega (APO) fraternity, President of the National Integration (NI) Indigent Scholars Group, and other school organizations.

Networking with different student organization leaders, and attending forums and workshops proved to be a big help in cementing his leadership capabilities. Open minded and very willing to learn from his superiors, Langkuno absorbed every experience, from rallying in the streets of Manila with fellow Muslim activists to attending clandestine meetings of MNLF leaders in Taguig.

WORKING OVERSEAS: LESSONS AND PERSPECTIVES

While at NAWASA, British engineers contracted his services for a water system project they were putting up in Saudi Arabia. He left for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) and worked as a Water System Engineer in 1980. He rose up the company ranks and by 1987, he became the first foreigner to act as head of the Water System Department of the Ministry of Agriculture and Water in Jeddah, KSA. A first in the history of the ministry, this was a big factor in forming his leadership style.

While in the KSA he continued to be an MNLF leader and was in constant contact with Chairman Nur Misuari and other MNLF commanders. A few times a year, he would be sent by Misuari to attend forums in different Islamic countries. Such forums in Ethiopia, Cairo, Azerbaijan, Lebanon, and Afghanistan were a good source of information for Langkuno. It was there that he met influential rebel leaders and Islamic scholars from all over the world.

I learned a lot from my 15 years abroad. I gained a bigger perspective of the rebel cause from resource persons in the different events I attended in behalf of the MNLF. I met Islamic scholars from Al Hazar University in Egypt who taught me that economics plays a major role in the rebel cause so one should be educated to play a role in the revolutionary fight.

Simultaneous with his work in the KSA and as the MNLF coordinator in his region, he also gave lectures to and hosted forums for fellow Moros who wanted to know more about the cause. After fifteen years in KSA, upon the prodding of Chairman

Misuari, and once the Final Peace Agreement Signing of the MNLF and the government of President Fidel V. Ramos was consummated in 1996, he decided to return to the Philippines.

The Agreement officially put an end to the 24-year old war that had claimed the lives of over 120,000 persons, caused the displacement and destitution of an estimated 300,000 Muslim refugees and the commitment of as much as 80 per cent of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) to the Mindanao conflict. By the time the Agreement was signed, the war was estimated to have cost the GRP over US\$3 Billion since it began in 1972.

COMING BACK

With the intervention of the Organization of Islamic Countries KSA coordinator, Abdul Karim Langkuno returned to the Philippines in 1995. Nur Misuari played a vital role in his return to the Philippines and as the newly appointed Governor of the ARMM in 1996, Misuari appointed Abdul Langkuno as one of the assemblymen who assumed office as representative of District 1 of Maguindanao in the Regional Legislative Assembly

(RLA), the lawmaking body of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM). He served as RLA Assemblyman from 1996 to 2000.

In 2000, Langkuno saw that there was a possibility to continue his service to the people through the creation of a new municipality by separating a few of SKP's *barangays*. Langkuno, together with his wife Bai Zulaika Pendatun-Langkuno (who considered SKP her hometown), half-sister to then SKP Mayor Datu Saidona Pendatun, and Misuari, spoke with his brother-in-law the mayor about establishing this new municipality, which was eventually created in 2001.

Even though Mayor Langkuno did not belong to royal Maguindanaon lineage, his experience as an MNLF leader, a certified engineer, a political figure and as a husband to a legitimate Maguindanaon *bai*⁷ (princess) propelled him to a status that is comparable to being a *datu*⁸.

Upon personally observing Paglat, Langkuno saw three major areas that needed to be addressed:

1. The proper engagement of constituents in the

7. Is a name for Muslim girls of royal status in the Philippines.
Source: <http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=bai>

8. Bai Sakina Pendatun-Bernan, sister-in-law of Mayor Langkuno, former Mayor of the Municipality of Gen. Salipada K. Pendatun

1. processes/dealings of the local government of Paglat to ensure transparency and accountability;
 2. A detailed and comprehensive Municipal Master Plan of what needs to be done for the municipality, with a clear declaration of the amount of time and resources it will take to realistically achieve those plans. Accountability for a vision of the future needed to start on a drawing board, with detailed writings of the master plan for proper infrastructure, education, commerce, municipal services, and tourism initiatives; and
 3. An authentic peace agenda that forges affirmative action for the municipality and neighboring areas.⁹
- mayor in 2004. Seeing the poor condition of the different sectors of the municipality, he directed a thorough analysis and study of the areas of concern and identified priority areas for attention.
- They then approached the Development Academy of the Philippines (DAP), who endorsed them to the University of the Philippines (UP) and the University of Southern Mindanao (USM) to help the municipality with the proper agricultural studies, soil examination, and irrigation plans in the different *barangays*. With local counterpart funds of the municipality and with added funding from the National Economic Development Authority (NEDA), the proper agricultural studies were done. The DAP studies – with added input from Mayor Langkuno’s administration as well as from scheduled public hearings and consultations conducted in the municipal hall – resulted in a master plan which highlighted good governance, local participation, decentralization of authority, urban reform, and measures to eliminate the traditional style of leadership.
- with a 2.78 productivity index; (2) Administration with a 2.42 productivity index (3) Social Services with a 2.33 productivity index; (4) Economic Development with a 2.88 productivity index; and (5) Environmental Management with a 2.50 productivity index. These gave the municipality an overall productivity index of 2.58 (or an adjectival equivalent of LOW) for the year 2002-2004.
- The CDP also noted that Paglat had a low State of Social Development. Relative to social development, four service areas have the lowest development indices, specifically: (1) Health and Nutrition; (2) Education; (3) Housing and Basic Utilities; and (4) Peace, Security and Disaster Risk Management. The Social Development Index was at a low 2.54. The indices of the four service areas ranged from 0.50 or very low to 3.76 or medium. Health and Nutrition got the highest index at 2.98 and Basic Utilities got .50, or very low. The low index in social development was caused by factors such as limited LGU resources (human and financial) to support social development programs and projects, and limited municipal government capacity to serve its mandate since human and financial resources were still with the regional government.

BUCKLING DOWN TO WORK

The formulation of a Comprehensive Development Plan (CDP) and a Master Development Plan was a priority for Langkuno as soon as he was re-elected

The CDP stressed that the municipality’s Local Government Productivity Index was at its lowest level and priority areas for concern were identified in the sectors of: (1) Governance

9. Notes from Mayor Langkuno’s May interview

The Economic Development Index also showed very low results at 1.50. Entrepreneurship, Business and Industry Promotion was very low at 1.00 and Agricultural and Fisheries Development was at 2.00.

In so far as the State of the Environment was concerned, Paglat's environmental development index was at 2.67. Natural Resource Management was low at 2.33 and medium at 3.00 in Waste Management, Pollution Control and Urban Land Quality.

The CDP then summarized the following priority areas for attention:

- Health and Nutrition: The percentage of children aged 0-71 months with below normal weights and morbidity rate
- Education: secondary school completion rate; tertiary school completion rate; vocational school completion rate; literacy rate
- Housing and Basic Utilities: percentage of households living in informal settlements or makeshift houses; percentage of households with sustainable water supply; percentage of households with

sanitary toilets; percentage of households with electricity.

- Agricultural and Fisheries Development: percentage of irrigated land over total agricultural land; crop yield
- Entrepreneurship, Business and Industry Promotion: Unemployment rate; income per capita

Given Paglat's state of performance, productivity and development, the following priority strategies were recommended by the CDP:

1. The formulation of a capacity development plan that allows proportionate participation of plantilla staff in capacity development opportunities;
2. The integration of Peace, Security and Disaster Risk Management, particularly in the development of effective disaster mitigation and preparedness;
3. The crafting of a Local Agricultural and Fisheries Development Support Program that included: Farm

Productivity; Provision of irrigation facilities, and fishery extension and research services or facilities;

4. The development of an Investment Promotion Plan that will emphasize the "One-Town-One-Product" approach;
5. The development of a Comprehensive Social Services Support Program that will include:
 - a. Health and Nutrition. Provision of health infrastructure with basic facilities in all *barangays*, incentives to health workers, health and nutrition IEC and water-sealed toilet facilities;
 - b. Educational Support that includes additional schools, teachers, textbooks in order to increase access to secondary, elementary and primary

- education. A literacy and technical skills development program was also recommended;
- c. Access to potable water and electricity; and
 - d. Housing and the formulation of a Shelter Plan and policies, mobilizing support for housing projects all over the municipality.
- offices for possible partnerships. Various international donors approved of the Paglat CDP and gradually poured in funding. These include the United States Agency for International Development's (USAID) Growth with Equity in Mindanao (GEM) Program for infrastructure, OXFAM International for infrastructure (school buildings), livelihood assistance, capability building and trainings, Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and Japan-Bangsamoro Initiatives for Reconstruction and Development (J-BIRD) also for infrastructure and education initiatives¹⁰ and AusAid for post harvest facilities and equipment and support for multi-purpose cooperatives.

The overarching strategies of the Paglat CDP showed clear development directions, intensive resource mobilization, staff support and incentives, transparent and accountable program/project implementation and a responsive mechanism for monitoring, evaluation and reportage.

Armed with the CDP, the mayor personally visited different international donor and non-government organizations and government line agencies, and lobbied for assistance to the municipality. He left copies of the CDP in all these agencies and constantly followed up these

Non-government organizations such as Habitat for Humanity and the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) Social Fund, Philippine Business for Social Progress (PBSP), Catholic Relief Services (through the Kadtuntaya Foundation, Inc.), USAID's Alliance for Mindanao Off-Grid Renewable Energy Program (AMORE) and a few more institutions gave funding support for infrastructure, education health capability building, agriculture, and energy initiatives.

Priority setting and local

participation was of utmost importance in Langkuno's agenda as he enjoined all groups to attend municipal sessions which were held in various parts of the municipality (such as *barangay* halls, market areas, and the houses of women leaders) and to take part in decision-making measures, structures or processes that were to be established. He made sure that marginalized groups were heard and their interests included in major decisions¹¹. Municipal sessions were 'open to the public' and a specific amount of time was allotted for them to give suggestions, comments, and to voice out their sentiments. These consultations were properly documented and were reviewed by the LGU staff.

"I suggested that our area be given toilet bowls since our surrounding areas were getting to be very dirty. The mayor listened and reassured us that he would do something about the sanitation situation. That was the first time a mayor talked and listened to us," Said Amina Tacumbol, mother and resident of Barangay Kakal.

"Our crops lacked water. Other farmers and I would walk far just to get water from a well. I told our councilor that we needed water facilities," added Abdila Mangandog, another local who participated in these consultations.

10. Mangoda T. Haji Usop, MPDC, Municipality of Paglat

11. Atty. Virgilio B. Torres, SB Secretary, Municipality of Paglat

Even the local youth aired their concerns, as fifteen year old student Mahendra Masacal lamented that “My classmates and I walked through the dirty waters of Kakal River to get to school. Our feet were always wet when we got to class. A lot of us would get sick especially when it rained hard since we had to cross the river even if it was waist deep. My father said our place needed a bridge.”

ADVOCATING PEACE AND ORDER

One of Langkuno’s milestones as local chief executive was the Peace Forum which was done in 2006. Various stakeholders of different armed groups and the military, police, NGOs, and donor agencies involved in the municipality were invited, with the central committee of MILF, MNLF, GRP Panel, OPAPP and the International Monitoring Team (IMT) also in attendance.

The representatives of the major organizations present during the forum affixed their respective signatures to the document “Affirmation of Support for Peace and Development” which appealed to the conflicting parties for patience and compassion in the light of the renewed impasse in the peace process. The forum also endorsed the declaration of the entire municipality of Paglat

as Darussalam or Abode of Peace. “I tried so many times to do this but I failed. I am deeply moved by the warm response and active participation of my community in this forum,” Langkuno declared in his speech for the occasion.

The MNLF and MILF leaders promised they would lessen their presence in Paglat. In early 2007, they eventually pulled out all troops in the municipality. Former MNLF combatants were given livelihood projects by various NGOs and were trained in various vegetable and crop production endeavors by USAID’s GEM Program.

Another high point in Mayor Langkuno’s leadership was his crafting and creation of the Southwestern Ligwasan Alliance of Municipalities (SLAM) which replicated the Kabalikat PALMA Infrastructure Project¹².

Four member LGUs in Maguindanao, namely: Paglat, Datu Paglas, Sultan sa Barongis and General S.K. Pendatun, came together to find common solutions to common problems with the objective of facilitating development in their respective towns through the pooling and sharing of resources. The four LGUs agreed on the basic principle that with combined resources, much can be accomplished in a shorter

period of time. After crafting the details of SLAM, Mayor Langkuno convened the initial alliance meetings and personally met with the Mayors of the other three municipalities (Mayor Boni Kali of SKP, Mayor Tong Paglas of Paglas and Datu Allandatu Angas of Sultan sa Barongis) to streamline the proposed projects for their areas.

With the assistance of LGSPA, which also helped out with the PALMA Alliance creation, a study tour for the four mayors and their key staff was arranged. This was considered the first Alliance-to-Alliance visit for both PALMA and SLAM. Aleosan town Mayor Cabaya, who was also the current chair of PALMA, updated the ARMM mayors regarding a total of 281.45 km of farm to market roads that have been constructed with a total cost of Php8.47 Million, through their pooled efforts. The Mayors of SLAM learned that this strategy was also being used to pursue other related development initiatives in environmental protection and health, and they had a chance to interact with fellow mayors, LGU staff, *barangay* officials and residents of PALMA in this regard.

Through the study visit, the members of SLAM heard from their peers about the importance of *barangay* development planning,

12. PALMA Alliance is the working alliance of the contiguous municipalities of Pigcawayan, Alamada, Libungan, Midsayap and Aleosan in the 1st Congressional District of North Cotabato Province, Region XII.

revenue generation strategies, and the computerization of the real property tax system, all processes that LGSP II had supported in PALMA and which LGSPA was currently strengthening in SLAM municipalities. The PALMA leadership pledged to assist SLAM in getting established, offered to share their manual of operations and other information, and sent their team to help facilitate the setting up of the SLAM alliance and implementation of priority projects.¹³ “The Alliance was formed with the agenda of helping one another’s municipality. A big brother helping a small brother,” was how Mayor Boni Kali of SKP described the arrangement.

“The SLAM follows PALMA Alliance’s method, while it gets its mandate from Section 33, Art. 3, Chapter 3, of RA 7160,” explained Vice Mayor Amed Piglas. The act states that “LGUs may, through appropriate ordinances, group themselves, consolidate, or ordinate their efforts, services, and resources for purposes commonly beneficial of them. In support to such undertakings, the LGUs involved may, upon approval by the Sanggunian concerned after a public hearing conducted for the purpose, contribute funds, real estate, equipment and other kinds of property and appoint or assign, personnel under such terms and conditions as may be agreed upon by the participating local units

through Memoranda of Agreement (MOA).”

Inspired by PALMA Alliance’s simple yet successful sharing of resources, Mayor Langkuno was convinced it could be done in Maguindanao. He discussed the idea of working together in a similar manner with fellow mayors and with LGSPA assistance, and hosted an orientation session on the Kabalikat PALMA Infrastructure Project. Board member Pader, the first Chair of PALMA, shared how they jointly and effectively worked on addressing common priorities of the five LGUs since 2002. PALMA won a Galing Pook award in 2007 for its Kabalikat PALMA Infrastructure Project which pooled municipal equipment, machinery, personnel and expertise from five contiguous towns for farm-to-market road construction.

Mayor Langkuno and the other three mayors of SLAM pursued its formalization. A MOA was signed among the four municipalities committing their participation in SLAM and defining their roles and responsibilities. The Provincial Government of Maguindanao, DILG-ARMM and LGSPA served as witnesses to the MOA. Each mayor agreed to initially provide a monthly contribution of Php15,000 to a common SLAM fund. The Alliance covered all

aspects of governance such as health, education, economics and livelihood, and infrastructure, among others.

This amount was later raised to Php25,000 when the Alliance’s activities began picking up momentum. The fund was to be used to support the Alliance’s development projects as well as the Project Management Office’s (PMO) operations. Monthly meetings were held with each LGU taking turns hosting the meeting. Mayor Langkuno was selected Chairperson of the SLAM Board and the other members were composed of four *Sangguniang Bayan* members, four CSO representatives (i.e. one from each town) and the DILG-ARMM Provincial Director. The town of Datu Paglas was identified as the location of the Project Management Office, with Vice Mayor Amed Paglas designated as the Interim Project Manager until a full-time manager was hired. Also in the interim, each LGU assigned one of their staff to report to the PMO on a rotational basis and a full-time technical officer was hired to work with Vice Mayor Paglas.

A Technical Working Group composed of the four municipal planning coordinators, municipal engineers and municipal agriculture officers from the four towns served as the implementing arm of the SLAM Board. With the

13. www.lgspa.org.ph

mentoring support of PALMA, a Strategic Plan was developed and a manual of operations completed to guide the SLAM Alliance in their operations, systems and procedures, including the pooling of human, financial and material resources (e.g. equipment), prioritizing activities, external resource generation, and others.

“The only constraint that we have experienced so far is the monthly contributions of each municipality. With sometimes late releases of our supplemental budget we are also late in giving the needed monthly contribution. But we do complete the amount promised,” explained Padido Usman, Municipal Planning and Development Coordinator (MPDC) of Paglas.

Under the leadership of Mayor Langkuno and with the shared vision of the three other mayors, a number of activities were conducted with the participation of vice mayors, planning officers, and senior staff. In response to the immediate need of the municipality of Sultan sa Barongis - where twelve *barangays* had been heavily flooded for several months - a Medical Outreach Relief Operation, Vegetable Seed Distribution and Animal Vaccination campaign were extended to 1,300 affected families. The rehabilitation of a one kilometer farm-to-market

road in one of the *barangays* in the municipality of General S.K. Pendatun was also done.

“Bapa¹⁴ Mayor is very enthusiastic and he constantly searches for ways to better the lives of his people. Bapa Mayor reminds me so much of ama (father who is the late Ibrahim “Toto” Paglas), when he says, “You have to be thick-skinned when asking project assistance for your municipality. For the end result is for the good of the people and not for personal gains,” said Vice Mayor Datu Amed Paglas, eldest son of the late Datu Ibrahim “Toto” Paglas, when asked to describe Mayor Langkuno.

Mayor Langkuno’s approaches to attain development in his municipality follow the non-traditional route. He employs an open door policy in his office in the municipal hall and most of the time he sits at a table in the lobby of the building so as to be closer to his constituents. “Easier access to the head of legislature makes for easier communication and faster output,” he explained.

For security reasons and following the protocol when speaking with a *datu* leader, the open-door policy is rarely done. Staff and bodyguards are the usual front-liners in offices of these government officials. In this aspect of his leadership style, the

communication gap between the upper and lower classes of society was diminished, thus creating open lines of dialogue and a clearer exchange of ideas with proper consultation at the grassroots level.

Early on in his tenure, Mayor Langkuno saw that municipal funds were not enough to fund and fast track development in his area. He thus personally visited donor agency offices, international government agencies, line offices and non-government offices to seek their assistance in the form of projects and programs. This pro-active approach, together with a sincere commitment to counterpart funding from the local government, was one of the reasons why Paglat has the most projects and assistance received among the LGUs in Maguindanao. “In some international donor agencies I had to wait a few hours to speak to the heads of offices but I did not mind the wait. I went to all offices of all the donors and was never shy to approach them. I was doing everything to get my municipality back on the map,” Langkuno recalled.

PAGLAT TODAY: ACHIEVEMENTS AND MILESTONES

Five years after Langkuno sat as Municipal Mayor, Paglat now boasts of a complete turnaround for the better. As per reportage from

14. Bapa means Uncle in the Maguindanao dialect

the 2008-2010 Comprehensive Development Plan and Executive Legislative Agenda, Paglat is now a 3rd class municipality as it has risen from its classification as a 5th class municipality in 2002¹⁵.

The Municipal Government of Paglat had higher capacity levels in five performance areas of Governance, Administration, Social Services, Economic Development and Environmental Management.

According to the 2006 Overall State of Performance Index, Governance was at a very high level with a performance index of 5. Administration and Social Services was high at 4.30 and 4.34, respectively. Social Services, Economic Development and Environmental Management also shared a high numerical equivalent with 4.34, 4.83 and 4.83 respectively. This resulted in an overall Performance Index of 4.66.

In the area of Governance, mechanisms were established to inform constituents on LGU performance and effective CSO participation. The LGU was able to operationalize an effective financial management system and legislative tracking system and enhanced the level of knowledge, skills and

competencies of local legislators by investing in trainings and forums. An effective and efficient local government administration was also achieved by enhancing the level of knowledge, skills and competencies of technical staff on land use planning. As early as 2006 a 30 percent increase in LGU income was realized with the establishment of these mechanisms.¹⁶

In the area of Social Services there was: (1) a measurable improvement in the health condition of Paglat constituents which was apparent in the reduced bed occupancy in the municipal hospital and less frequent check-ups at the health centers. A hospital facility was constructed with counterpart funding from the LGU and majority contribution from the Alfonso Yuchengco Foundation (AYF). AYF also funded the honoraria for one hospital doctor, two nurses and two midwives; (2) reduced malnutrition rate of 0-5 year old children from 48 percent to 25 percent by the end of 2007¹⁷; (3) an increase in secondary education participation rate from 48 percent to 60 percent by 2007; (4) improved access to potable water supply by 30 percent also in 2007; (5) an improved educational system with teaching and learning facilities and services provided

by various donor agencies such as the USAID, JICA, J-BIRD, Habitat for Humanity, Consuelo Foundation, Synergia Foundation, Ateneo De Manila University, GMA Kapuso Foundation and other non-government agencies; (6) improved sanitation facilities with assistance from the local municipal funds; (7) the settlement of political and family feuds (rido) by tapping informal structures and mechanisms such as the Council of Elders and Ulamas to mediate and broker such conflicts; (8) and a strengthened *Barangay* Justice System (Katarungang Pambarangay) to settle minor rifts and issues at the community level.

In the area of Economic Development, an improvement in economic activity and productivity was noticeable. There was an increase in farming productivity and livelihood projects due to various trainings given by a number of donors, line agencies and NGOs such as Catholic Relief Services (through the Kadtuntaya Foundation, Inc.), University of Southern Mindanao and others. Employment opportunities increased due to training and capacity building programs targeted at specific sectors of the municipality.

In the area of

15. Please see table 3 for Municipality Income Classification

16. 2006 Overall Performance Indices

17. 2007 Municipal Performance Indicators

Environmental Management, an effective environmental protection and management agenda was implemented. An Agro-Reforestation Program with capability training for LGU counterparts was conducted and a Solid Waste Management program was put into effect.

The high level of capacity of Paglat can be attributed to factors such as: (1) the LGU's clear development direction which spelled out its plans in

the Executive and Legislative Agenda (ELA); (2) a functioning bureaucracy wherein key positions in the local government unit are filled up and personnel are assigned to report to the office and perform their tasks; (3) the presence of productivity tools and the establishment of offices that are conducive for work ; (4) the proper financial support where the LGU receives its share from the Internal Revenue Allotment regularly; and (5) significant external support for the LGU's programs and projects.

The Local Government of Paglat, with the pro-active leadership of Mayor Abdul Karim Langkuno and in partnership with civil society, government agencies and development organizations, worked under the principle of transparent, corruption-free, and participatory governance. This enabled an environment for local development that encouraged its people to be industrious, disciplined, resourceful, vigilant and committed to peace.

TABLE 1: Population of Maguindanao, ARMM (as of August 2007)

	Municipality	No. of Barangays	Population
1	Ampatuan	11	33,702
2	Barira	14	27,607
3	Buldon	15	36,937
4	Buluan	7	32,310
5	Datu Abdullah Sangki	10	33,259
6	Datu Anggal Midtimbang	7	23,713
7	Datu Blah T. Sinsuat	12	22,656
8	Datu Odin Sinsuat (Dinaig)	34	103,765
9	Datu Paglas	23	29,979
10	Datu Piang	20	49,971
11	Datu Saudi-Ampatuan	14	45,126
12	Datu Unsay	9	38,891
13	Gen. S. K. Pendatun	19	36,038
14	Guindulungan	11	23,777
15	Kabuntalan (Tumbao)	17	22,363
16	Mamasapano	18	29,285
17	Mangudadatu	8	24,300
18	Matanog	8	36,319
19	Northern Kabuntalan	11	22,170
20	Pagagawan	11	32,995
21	Pagalungan	12	31,052

TABLE 1 cont: Population of Maguindanao, ARMM (as of August 2007)

	Municipality	No. of Barangays	Population
22	PAGLAT	8	23,432
23	Pandag	8	20,557
24	Parang	23	102,247
25	Rajah Buayan	11	24,973
26	Shariff Aguak (Maganoy)	25	71,971
27	South Upi	11	32,014
28	Sultan Kudarat (Nuling)	39	121,324
29	Sultan Mastura	13	25,741
30	Sultan sa Barongis (Lambayong)	12	25,767
31	Talayan	15	25,753
32	Talitay	9	21,964
33	Upi	23	41,757

Table 2: PAGLAT, MAGUINDANAO Barangays and Population per Barangay

	Name	Population (as of Aug 1, 2007)	
1	Damakling	Rural	4038
2	Damalusay	Rural	2819
3	Paglat	Urban	4024
4	Upper Idtig	Rural	3441
5	Campo	Rural	1920
6	Kakal	Rural	2673
7	Salam	Rural	1750
8	Tual	Rural	2767
	TOTAL		23,432

Source: National Statistical Coordination Board (NSCB),
Philippine Standard Geographic Codes Interactive

Table 3: Income Classification

1st class	P50,000,000 or more.
2nd class	P40,000,000 or more but less than P50,000,000.
3rd class	P30,000,000 or more but less than P40,000,000.
4th class	P20,000,000 or more but less than P30,000,000.
5th class	P10,000,000 or more but less than P20,000,000.
6th class	Below P10,000,000

Source: Municipalities of the Philippines



*Princess Tarhata
Alonto Lucman*

A Princess Who Defied Tradition

This case was written by Samira Gutoc and Susan Granada for the Asian Institute of Management-TeaM Energy Center for Bridging Societal Divides. This case is prepared solely for the purpose of class discussion. It is neither designed nor intended as an illustration of correct or incorrect management of the problems or issues contained in the case. Copyright 2009.

Princess Tarhata is one of the Mindanao women who have been active initiators and movers of peace and development in the island. Even as a mother who has to balance work and maintain a harmonious family amid an environment of sporadic conflict, Princess Tarhata, now in her 80s, has made her mark in Philippine and Muslim history whether as woman leader, politician, pioneer, and peace negotiator – co-equal with men and with a voice.

INTRODUCTION

Lanao comes from the word *ranao*, meaning 'lake.' The region is located in Northern Mindanao around the basin of Lake Lanao. It is thus known as the land of the Maranaos, or the "people of the lake." The lake measures some 25 kilometers from south to north and twenty kilometers from east to west, filling the crater of a dead volcano. The Lanao region, dominated by the lake and still relatively unblemished by industrial landmarks, is a beauty to behold.

The people of the Lanao region are known for their artistry: from artifacts and tools adorned with *okir* (carvings) and *nagas* (serpent figures) to boats and *malongs* of brilliant colors. The Maranaos further express their artistry in their brasswork, woven tapestry, fine mosques, antiques, elegant *torogans* (royal houses), rich raiment, exotic dances, and musicality. Most of Mindanao's beautiful mosques can be found in Dansalan, now called Marawi, Lanao's capital city.

The spread of the Islamic religion in Lanao followed the pattern in Indonesia and other Malay areas. It started with the coming of Arab traders who intermingled with the Maranaos, thereby establishing communities locally. Historically, the Maranaos were the last to be Islamized among the three major Muslim groups in the Philippines, the other two being the Maguindanaons of Cotabato and the Tausugs of Sulu. During these early times, the Lanao region and the rest of Mindanao and Sulu were geographically distinct from other parts of the Philippines.

The first contacts made by the Arab traders with the Maranaos were primarily economic in nature. But Muslim teachers and Islamic missionaries introduced their religion and pursued the native Maranao traders with intensity. Finally, the Maranao chieftains embraced Islam with the people following suit. Shortly thereafter Islam spread throughout the south.

By the time the Spaniards arrived in the 16th century, they found well settled, small local communities in Lanao. Islam had

already taken deep root among the Maranaos. When the Spaniards attempted to conquer Lanao, they were met with much ferocity by its people. Soon the Spanish presence was felt along the northern coast of Mindanao. But the Spaniards did not succeed in establishing sovereignty over the Maranao people.

In 1898, the Philippines was ceded by Spain to the United States (US). Mindanao, along with the Lanao region, was included in this transfer of sovereignty, despite the strong protests of Muslim leaders and the reservations of some Americans. Beginning 1899, the Americans took over as invading forces in Lanao, and the Maranaos likewise met them with fierce resistance. There were bloody encounters but soon the Americans prevailed and the *cotta* (fort) of the Maranaos fell.

Because of their geographical location and historical circumstances, the Maranaos became the last Muslim group to surrender to the American authority and were considered the least affected by modern Western civilization. The Maranaos remain to be one among the most devout and most traditional of the Muslim groups.

Under a 'policy of attraction,' the Americans began their attempts to integrate the Maranaos and other Muslim

and tribal people into the larger Christian, Philippine society. Guided by the rule that was found useful in governing the Indians of the American western frontier, the Americans showed respect and recognition of the right of the Maranaos to regulate their own internal affairs according to their own laws and customs as they exercised governance in Lanao. The Americans did not interfere with their religious beliefs and worship.

Another attempt at integration was the passage by the US Congress of the so-called 'Philippine Bill' on July 1, 1902, recognizing the distinction among the Moros, pagans and Christian Filipinos and the consequent necessity to provide different forms of government for the different groups of people.

A year later, on July 15, 1903, the Moro Province was created with the same offices and functions of a civilian government at the provincial level but governed under military rule, controlled and staffed by military personnel. Municipal districts were organized, but for territories inhabited by the 'Moros' and 'pagans,' 'tribal wards' were formed, with each ward comprising a single ethnic group or homogenous division thereof (as far as this was practicable). The Moro Province was composed of five districts, with corresponding organized

municipalities and 'tribal wards': Sulu (3 municipalities and 9 Tribal Wards), Cotabato (2 municipalities and 18 Tribal Wards), Davao (5 municipalities and 6 Tribal Wards), Zamboanga (2 municipalities and 5 Tribal Wards), and Lanao (2 municipalities and 13 Tribal Wards).

In 1914, with the inclusion of the districts of Bukidnon and Agusan, the administration of the Moro Province shifted to a civilian governor under the Department of Mindanao and Sulu, and then in 1920, with increasing Filipinization of the civil service, to a Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes within the Department of Interior.

While these rapid political changes have been taking place, there existed in Lanao a traditional, indigenous socio-political organization and territorial division of the Maranao society called *pengampong*. The *pengampong* can be singly or collectively applied to the four states, principalities or encampments in Lanao known as the *Pat a Pengampong Ko Ranao* (literally translated as 'four encampments of the lake' or 'four states of the lake') which the Maranaos divided themselves traditionally into the territories of Bayabao, Masiu, Unayan and Balo-i.

The story of the founding of the Maranao society is told and retold among the Maranaos in the

epic, the *darangen*. The narrative is believed to be the earliest account of the ancestors of the Maranaos who established the *Pat a Pengampong ko Ranao*.

As the author, Melvin Mednick, puts it: The *Pat a Pengampong Ko Ranao* “is a bounded territory within which are to be found a body of custom and usage which define legitimate residence and membership in society, states norms of behavior intended to regulate the relations between persons and groups as members of the larger society, and provides the sanctioning sentiments which cement the whole. Separate, yet nevertheless very much part of this, is the consciousness of sharing a single language, a universal religion, and of being bound to each other by the injunctions of their beliefs.”

The four states or encampments constituting the *Pat a Pengampong Ko Ranao* are co-equal in power, authority and prestige, and are bound together into a sort of alliance or confederation and governed by the ancient unwritten order called the *Taritib*. Unlike Maguindanao and Sulu, Lanao has never been united under the rule of one ruler or Sultan.

Accordingly, each *Pengampong* is divided into *suku* (districts). These districts are again divided into *inged* (townships) and

each township into several *agamas* (communities). The *agama* is the focal point of authority system, the core of the Maranao’s early societal organization. The traditional officials of the *agama* included the *Sultan*, the highest rank within the community, or a number of *sultans* who served and ruled over the *agama*.

The presence of a *sultan* indicates the independence of this *agama* from the other *agama*. Below the rank of the *sultan* was the *Rajah Muda*, or *Datu a Kabugatan*, a position equivalent to the rank of a prime minister. There was always the *Imam* or religious minister in every *agama* who performed religious and social functions and ceremonies. There was also the *Kali*, the judge of the *agama* court who settled all civil and criminal disputes. The *Council of Datus* assisted and advised the *sultan* regarding social, religious, economic, political and cultural aspects of the *agama* and its relation with other *agamas*, the *pengampong*. The *Council of Datus* legislated ordinances, or *ijma* (consensus), approved by the members of the *agama* concerned. In the course of time, this *ijma* was handed down from one generation to another and became traditional law and part of the *adat* and *taritib*.

The founding fathers of these *pengampongs* were considered siblings and it is from this that the present generation

of Maranaos traces their line of descent through the *salsila*, defined to mean the written ‘chain of descent’ or ‘genealogy’ of a people.

Today, the Maranaos classify themselves socially into two groups: (1) the *mala i* (big) *bangensa* or *mapia a tao* (good people) with royal descent and (2) the *mabeba a tao* (low people) or the commoners. The most important thing about these classes is that both are included in the *salsila* from which the Maranaos can trace their rights and obligations according to their status.

The Maranaos are also sensitive to *maratabat*, a code of conduct that controls their behavior. *Maratabat* is about honor, rank sensitivity, ‘face’, dignity, sense of shame, sense of pride, ethics, etiquette, protocol, and self-esteem. It is an age-old guide to social relations and individual and collective action. These two institutions, the *maratabat* and *taritib*, assure the continuity of the Maranao society, the latter being the original agreement of the four ancestors of Lanao that became their ‘codes of organization and protocol.’

With regard to the status and place of women in Philippine Muslim society, customary laws or *adat* vary in the degree of their rigidity and strictness among

the different Muslim groups in the Philippines. Generally, there is an agreement that a woman's place is in the home and that she is subordinate to the male. Fortunately among the Maranaos of Lanao, customary laws grant women equality with men in some very specific cases where genealogical descent warrants it. Maranao Muslim women, for instance, can be installed in titular positions equivalent to those of their male counterparts, such as being a *Bai a Labi* or *Bai a Dalongancob*. Once installed in these positions, women are allowed to take part in policy- and decision-making, settling disputes, enforcing Muslim laws, and protecting the rights of women. To occupy such titular positions, they must show genealogical proof that they were descended from a royal blood line of the title they wish to occupy.

It is in this highly sophisticated culture and fast changing socio-political environment of royalty, rank, privilege and obligation, that a Maranao princess was born.

Princess Tarhata Alonto was born on June 26, 1926 at Ramin, Lanao del Sur. She was the fourth child among the seven children of two royalties, Bai Alangadi-Alonto and then Lieutenant Governor and Sultan sa Ramin of the *Pengampong* of Bayabao, Alauya Adiong

Alonto. Tarhata's maternal side, the Alangadi Clan, controlled vast estates and was said to have descended from the royalties of Johore and Brunei. On the other hand, Tarhata's father, Sultan Alauya Alonto was said to have come down from the royal blood line of the great Sultan Kudarat of Lanao and Maguindanao.

PRINCESS TARHATA: HER EDUCATIONAL FORMATION

In the 1930s, an American Protestant missionary and educator designed a literacy program for Lanao, aimed at teaching the Maranaos to read and write in their own dialect using the English alphabet instead of the Arabic characters. Before such was introduced, education among the Maranaos was done informally in homes or mosques where children were taught the basic dialect mixed with Arabic text and Qur'an reading. Under American tutelage, public education was given free and encouraged for everyone, a set-up which was different from the elitist climate during the Spanish period. A campaign was therefore launched among parents to enroll their children in public schools.

Princess Tarhata was fortunate to belong to a political family that had access to both informal and formal education. However, local culture sheltered royalty from being seen with

commoners often. At first, her parents were unwilling to send her to a public school. Henceforth, the princess was personally tutored and handled by American teachers, notably her adopted mother, Mrs. Spencer, who was part of the Thomasites sent by the US to conduct humanitarian work in the Philippines and provide education. Later, her parents relented and the princess was able to pursue public education, further enhancing her confidence in interacting with other people. Within one year of attending school in her hometown, she was accelerated to grade 4 at the age of 6 years.

Princess Tarhata had always looked up to other pioneering Muslim ladies like Princess Tarhata Kiram and Dayang Dayang Piandao of Sulu, who were able to get educated and travel to the capital and overseas. For Muslim women, this was an achievement because women at this time were discouraged from traveling far for fear that they would be modernized and thus Christianized, something that was taboo in local culture. Muslim women were also 'protected' from stressful activities such as long-distance travel.

The growing years of Princess Tarhata (until 1935) saw the rise of Filipino Christian nationalism, campaigning for complete independence of the Philippine Islands from American

rule. However, Muslim leaders of Sulu and Mindanao began a peaceful movement that asserted their right to establish their own nation-state and form a government of their choice. There were various petitions, resolutions, and manifestos from Muslim leaders seeking to separate Mindanao, Sulu and Palawan from the rest of the Philippines and to establish in those areas a separate and distinct form of government directly under American sovereignty. While the early Muslim leaders did not use the term 'right to self-determination,' those petitions and declarations were expressions of that right.

On March 24, 1934, the Tydings-McDuffie Act (officially known as the Philippine Independence Act) was approved as a United States federal law which provided for self-government of the Philippines and for Filipino independence (from the United States) after a period of ten years. The law contained provisions which specified the various steps as preconditions to the establishment of the Commonwealth, which included the holding of a convention to draft a Constitution which would be forwarded to the US President for approval. After the approval, the Filipino people were to elect the officials of the Commonwealth government. After the ten-year transition, the United States would grant independence to the Philippines.

HAILING FROM A FAMILY OF POLITICAL LEADERS

Princess Tarhata's father, Sultan Alauya Alonto, had served as delegate from Lanao to the Philippine Constitutional Convention of 1934. In his speech before the convention, Alonto implored his fellow delegates to stop referring to Muslims as 'Moros,' but instead as 'Mohammedan Filipinos.' Sultan Alonto then proposed that a 'permanent and final solution' to the 'Moro problem' would come only by giving Mindanao its appropriate share of economic and infrastructural aid and by granting 'Mohammedan Filipinos' equal status with Filipinos under the constitution, beginning with the right to full suffrage. This position was an expression of the willingness for Muslims to support the Filipinization policy of the Americans if they were allowed to retain the identity of 'Muslim' alongside that of being 'Filipino.'

Princess Tarhata's father became the first Maranao to be elected senator under the Philippine Commonwealth in 1935. Tarhata was nine years old then. While serving as Senator, her father had her in tow while meeting with important Filipino leaders in Manila, initiating her into a different kind of life, the life of politics. Only a few Muslims have had the opportunity to do so during her time, and again because

women were discouraged from traveling.

When at home in Marawi City, Princess Tarhata remembered entertaining visitors of her father the Sultan, who came from all walks of life, from soldiers to farmers, from Muslims to non-Muslims. She recalled that many locals would warm up to her because of her amiable nature, "I was friendly. Teachers come to me, asking for favors, wanting of my Manila connections. They ask for coconut, food. Our house was an open home where anyone could eat and where visitors can ask for anything that could be offered." This would serve as her training ground in the male-dominated political world.

Sultan Alauya Alonto, together with Hadji Butu Rasul of Sulu and Datu Piang of Cotabato, cooperated closely with Filipino national leaders Manuel Quezon and Sergio Osmena not only in educational programs and related social welfare projects, but also in such national goals as the campaign for independence from American rule. It could be said that Alauya Alonto's generation laid the foundation for future Muslim participation in Philippine politics.

After the Philippines became independent in 1946, Moro political participation increased considerably. In the national scene, many Moro leaders were either

elected to the Philippine Congress or appointed to key positions in the government. Prominent among them was the illustrious son of Sultan Alauya Alonto and Tarhata's eldest brother, lawyer Achmad Domocao Alonto. He eventually became congressman in 1953, unseating Ali Dimaporo, the incumbent representative from the Liberal Party in the undivided Lanao.

In Congress, Domocao Alonto fought for minority rights by working on what was then referred to as the 'Moro problem.' During the immediate post-war years, there was a sharp upsurge of in-migration to Mindanao. There were reports of clashes between Christian migrant settlers and both Muslim and tribal people.

Princess Tarhata would assist her brother, Domocao Alonto, as emissary to intercede, pacify and help broker peace among blood-feuding families in Mindanao and Sulu. Together with her husband, Congressman Sultan Rashid Lucman, they would urge notorious outlaws to surrender, among which was the famous outlaw Kamlon of Sulu during the 1950s. "This tempered Tarhata's qualities and made her aware of the public nature of a government official's life," former Provincial Government Chief of Staff Pesigue Camid said.

In 1954, a Special

Congressional Committee was formed to investigate renewed unrest in Mindanao and Domocao Alonto was named a member of this body. Soon the special congressional body was able to unearth cases of usurpation by Christian settlers of Muslim lands in Cotabato and the complicity of government men in this injustice.

As a result of this investigation, the Commission on National Integration (CNI) was created in 1957, with the task of "effecting in a more rapid and complete manner the economic, social, moral and political advancement of non-Christian Filipinos and to render real, complete and permanent the integration of all said minorities into the body politic." Two years earlier, Domocao Alonto won a landslide victory in the Senatorial Elections of 1955.

In 1959, the political landscape in Lanao changed dramatically when the province was divided into Lanao del Norte and Lanao del Sur. Such partition gave contending Christian and Muslim dynasties in Lanao separate domains. Of the two new provinces, the population of Lanao del Sur was more than 90 percent Muslim, and of Lanao del Norte, 70 percent Christian. Princess Tarhata's other older brother, Abdul Ghaffur Madki Alonto, also a lawyer, was elected the first Governor of Lanao del

Sur in 1963. Earlier, Sheik Madki Alonto served as Commissioner of National Integration. Sometime later, Madki Alonto was appointed Philippine ambassador to Egypt and other Muslim countries.

THE ALONTO – LUCMAN POLITICAL ALLIANCE

In Muslim Mindanao, marriages are a form of clan alliance that expand the influence of families and allow them to consolidate resources. The marriage of Princess Tarhata Alonto to a man of her choice, her mentor, Haroun al-Rashid Lucman, Sultan of Bayang, united not only two political dynasties but also two pre-ordinate ('supported') sultanates of Lanao. They undoubtedly brought in many families to this marital and political alliance.

Because of their wealth and control of the economy (both local and national), elite families such as the Alontos and the Lucmans possess the values necessary to exercise their influence, giving them more advantages to acquire political power. In addition to wealth and other resources, such values include education, prestige and skill. Oftentimes, traditional politicians from political dynasties would hold public office and use their authority to enact favorable and protective legislation for

their family-owned businesses, amassing additional privileges. But the Alontos and the Lucmans did not do these. With their wealth and political connections, the Alontos and the Lucmans served beyond themselves and became the 'patriarchs' or the 'godfathers' of the Bangsamoro Islamic resistance movement in the Philippines.

PRINCESS TARHATA'S ROLE IN GAINING AN INDEPENDENT HOMELAND FOR THE PHILIPPINE MUSLIMS

It was after the meeting with President Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt in 1955 at the Afro-Asian Conference held in Bandung, Jakarta, Indonesia when Princess Tarhata's brother, Domocao Alonto, together with Salipada K. Pendatun of Cotabato, other Moro leaders and foreign Muslims, revitalized the Muslim Association of the Philippines (MAP). This was an organization founded in 1949 by mostly foreign Muslims, with the primary aim of unifying the Muslim minorities in the Philippines to promote their welfare.

In 1961, with the support of influential members among the *ulama* especially in the Lanao area and of his family, including Princess Tarhata, Domocao Alonto recruited 15 Moro youth, 14 of whom were Maranaos and one from the Sama-Tausug tribe

of Basilan (Abdullah Camlian), and sent to Egypt for military education and training as part of an overall plan to stage a revolution for an independent homeland for the Philippine Muslims. Involved in this project were other Muslim leaders, notably Sheik Hamid Camlian of Basilan and Princess Tarhata's husband.

In March 1968, news broke out on the so called Corregidor Massacre (now popularly known as the Jabitah Massacre). The incident involved the killing of 64 innocent Bangsamoro youths who were lured to join a clandestine military operation and who mutinied against their officers when they came to learn that they were being trained to invade Sabah and would possibly be killing fellow Muslim brothers and relatives living there.

Hardly two months after the Corregidor bloodbath, on May 1, 1968, Datu Udtog Matalam organized the Muslim (which later was changed to Mindanao) Independence Movement (MIM), that sought to form a state comprising the contiguous southern portion of the Philippine archipelago. Its manifesto accused the Philippine government of pursuing a policy of "extermination" of the Muslims and made "manifest to the whole world its desire to secede from the Republic of the Philippines, in order to establish an Islamic

State."

The Malaysian government of Tunku Abdul Rahman, on the other hand, responded to the Corregidor incident by promising Muslim leaders, especially to Princess Tarhata's husband, Sultan Haroun Al-Raschid Lucman, that he would help train and provide arms to dedicated young Muslims from the Philippines. At that time, Rashid Lucman just lost his Lanao Congressional seat to Macacuna Dimaporo in the 1969 elections.

The first batch of 90 young Muslims recruited by Rashid Lucman and the MIM leaders were composed of 67 Maranaos, 8 Maguindanaos, and 15 Tausug-Samal, who began military training under Malaysian officers in 1969 in Pulau Pangkor, Malaysia. Included in this batch were Nur Misuari and Abul Khayr Alonto, Princess Tarhata's nephew, the son of her brother, Abdul Madki Alonto. Almost all of the Maranao members of the so called Top 90 hailed in most parts from Ragain-Ditsaan and Bayang, hometowns of the Alontos and the Lucmans, respectively.

During the same year, Domocao Alonto and his family founded the *Ansar El Islam* (Helper of Islam) to further Islamic awakening and reform society according to the Qur'an and the *Sunnah* or Traditions of the Prophet. At that time, then

President Ferdinand Marcos was grooming different political clans in Lanao, like the Dimaporos and the Dianalans, to take ascendancy in the local structures of government.

While under training, and without the knowledge of Rashid Lucman and the MIM leaders who had recruited them, the group of 90 conceived the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) and organized a seven-man Provisional Central Committee, electing Nur Misuari as Chairman and Abul Khayr Alonto as Vice Chairman.

When this first batch of trained guerillas returned to the Philippines, Rashid Lucman, together with Matalam's brother-in-law, Congressman Salipada Pendatun, formed the Bangsa Moro Liberation Organization (BMLO) in 1970. The BMLO considered itself to be the umbrella organization of all Muslim liberation forces in the Philippines. Tarhata's husband became the head of the Supreme Executive Council with Macapanton Abbas as secretary. Nur Misuari was appointed as head of the military committee for Sulu, Abul Khayr Alonto, Tarhata's nephew, as the head for Ranao, and Udtog Matalam, Jr. for Cotabato.

However, Rashid Lucman and Nur Misuari soon parted ways when the former learned of the underground organization, the

MNLF, and accused Misuari and his people of betrayal.

THE ESCALATING CHRISTIAN – MUSLIM CONFLICT

Cotabato was already in flames when the 90 Moro youth arrived in Mindanao after a year of training in Malaysia. During that time, Christian-led *Ilaga* armed bands had gone on a rampage, raiding Muslim villages and committing all sorts of atrocities to terrify the whole Muslim population of Cotabato province.

In Lanao del Norte, a Maranao armed band known as *Barracuda* was organized by local Maranao warlords whose political turfs were threatened by rival Christian leaders who made no secret about their political ambitions to topple Muslim leadership in the province by any means in the 1971 local elections.

Members of the Top 90 and their local trainees in Lanao and Cotabato, on the other hand, organized and called themselves *Blackshirts*. They were regarded as a private army of the Mindanao Independence Movement of Matalam and the *Ansar El Islam* of the Lucmans and the Alontos.

In the 1970 election bid of some delegates to the 1971 Constitutional Convention, the Top

90 helped secure their candidacies. When Princess Tarhata decided to run as the Liberal Party candidate for governorship of Lanao del Sur against incumbent Linang Mandangan, a Nationalista and a brother in law of political stalwart Ali Dimaporo - a close ally of then President Ferdinand Marcos - the Top 90 again assisted in her campaign.

THE PRINCESS AS GOVERNOR

It was said that Princess Tarhata's chances for election hinged on a strong showing in Malabang, the Lanao del Sur municipality directly adjacent to Dimaporo's Karomatan stronghold. Princess Tarhata recounted her encounter with Ali during the campaign:

The people liked me when I talked. People were laughing. I point to people who are leaving the hall and ask them why they are leaving. In one campaign in Malabang, Ali Dimaporo was there. I took him to the side and I asked him to support me instead of his brother (in law). I will win and the brother (in law) would lose, I told him. Yes, I will support you, (Ali said) and I announced it. People were amused and cheered (seeing that political rivals could unite).

Soon Princess Tarhata was elected and became first female Governor of Lanao del Sur. In addition to hiring fresh and aggressive graduates from the Mindanao State University (MSU) - many of whom were activists - to staff her office, some members of the Top 90 became her key allies in the provincial government. These included Dimas Pundato (Chief Provincial Jail Warden), and Jamil 'Jungle Fox' Lucman (Chief of the Provincial Guards). During that period, Governor Tarhata's nephew, Abul Khayr Alonto, also won in the election as Vice Mayor of Marawi City.

While in government office, Princess Tarhata always wore a *malong*, symbolic of her deep attachment to her people and her culture. As a trailblazer in fighting for equal rights for Moro women, she was among the last few Maranao women who still proudly wore their *malongs* everywhere. While at first she broke tradition, she also defied trends by opting to display her *malong* regally as only a princess could when the penchant for non-traditional attire became the trend among Muslim women.

Governor Tarhata's vision was to make her province rise above its poverty. She worked for the inclusion of Lanao del Sur in the list of 22 pilot provinces of the Provincial Development Assistance Program (PDAP), a

joint undertaking of the national government and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The objective of PDAP was to enhance agricultural production as part of the national government's Green Revolution project. This project was timely as the province started to utilize its agricultural granaries to export rice and high-yielding crops.

Princess Tarhata also initiated a planning process where 20 percent of the local government budget was allocated for development. She institutionalized a performance-based budget planning process, where programs were approved according to outputs and outcomes. As Governor Tarhata's former Provincial Planner Sultan Ali Laguindab recalled, "It used to be that an office had to give commission before funds could be released. But with the consciousness brought about by her administration against corruption, you have to 'behave' or else you could be charged in court." Governor Tarhata was found strict in implementing the budget as appropriated, by refusing to realign appropriated budgets to other purposes.

THE PRINCESS AS PACIFIER

Muslim-Christian relations were peaceful and strong during Governor Tarhata's term in

office. The Lucman and Alonto families surrounded themselves with Christians who worked for their administration as trusted personnel. The Governor valued the Christian settlers in Marawi by respecting their festivities and church practices despite the fact that they were at the heart of a Muslim homeland. Back then, one can thus see Muslims and Christians walking alongside each other even until the wee hours. Nowadays, such is not possible because of the unstable peace and order situation that has driven many Christians away for fear of being kidnapped. "Everyone was part of the community. Christians felt secure under the Alontos and Lucmans," recalled Sultan Laguindab.

Though it was normal for politicians to publicly display their power through the presence of armed men around them, Tarhata did not want to be perceived as a warlord. "Islam is peace," she declared, exercising this by decreasing the public display of guns. To do this, she shunned bodyguards and confiscated arms in far-flung municipalities.

From 1973 to 1975, the national government initiated a *balik baril* program where civilians and rebels were encouraged to turn in their guns in exchange for their boat fare to do pilgrimage to the holy lands of Mecca and Medina. The performance of pilgrimage

is one of the five pillars of Islam enjoined by all Muslims who can afford it. With government undertaking this project, thousands of Muslims availed of this opportunity and went on *haj*.

Governor Tarhata supported this program by personally talking people into agreeing to lay down their arms and being integrated back to society. She also helped find solutions to settle clan wars, even to the extent of putting herself in harm's way in order to make rebels and soldiers cease firing, "a feat no one will dare get enmeshed," described Aminullah Lucman.

Tarhata's Chief Secretary Engr. Dibolawan Banucag related that "Governor Tarhata and her husband would even go as far as dipping into their personal savings to settle vendetta (*rido*)," In vendetta settlement, there are times when some amount of money is required to pacify conflicting parties so that the violation of honor and pride (*maratabat*) is compensated for.

Governor Tarhata would also give additional time and effort to consult with her political peers. Sometimes she would meet discreetly with some leaders in some desolate places to avoid other parties from jeopardizing her unifying efforts. Such was the case with then Governor Manolo Fortich of Bukidnon who had

asked for her assistance on serious situations such as the fratricidal warring among their people.

She also consulted with close politician friends like Maria Clara Lobregat of Zamboanga, and the Cabilis, Lluch and Badelles families of Lanao del Norte and Iligan City. These personalities formed part of the powerful cluster of families who owned lands and held positions in Mindanao government. They would consult with each other like close family, seriously tackling and deciding on what best courses of action to take when hostilities among their people broke out. Governor Tarhata would likewise consult with important Muslim family friends and relatives in Jolo, Sulu and Cotabato.

HER LEADERSHIP STYLE

In terms of style in leadership, "Governor Tarhata is democratic," Pango Tomawis, a colleague, described. "She values inputs and listens to both the bad and the good news. When sought for advice, she first asks visitors how they themselves would solve their problems before she suggests a solution," Tomawis further said. "She is also an affiliative leader who creates people connections and thus harmony within the organization. Her style is collaborative which focused on emotional needs over work needs."

Her provincial planner, Sultan Ali Laguindab, said: "Tarhata would arbitrate competing interests by consulting the experienced politicians in her midst, among which are her-elder brothers who were more seasoned in politics. Everyone on top such as the Board Members was assigned special tasks and urged to keep us updated of each other's initiatives."

To be in touch with her employees, the Governor asserted that she would go to work before everyone else did so that she would have time to visit every office.

"I go around and urge the employees not to just sit," Tarhata said, imploring her staff to move around so that they can see the province's needs more objectively. She was seen as always on the go to serve as a model to her organization. She also provided for the financial problems of her employees, especially when their salaries were not enough to pay for their various needs.

The Governor visited municipalities every Saturday so that she could get "closer to the people." She saw the reality of poverty in the towns where there were no industries to employ residents. Because many were dependent on the local government for their social-economic needs, Princess Tarhata said she allotted

a part of her salary as donation to those who came to her. She also made people settle in her plantations. To this day, she still resides in her worn-out ancestral home in Lanao.

Yet even as she was seen as caring to her people and having a 'personal touch,' Tarhata also admitted to berating erring staff. She called them inside her office and treated them as a mother would scold an errant child. Laguindab observed that such became a weakness in her governance style, especially when her personal and 'very humane' nature led her to solve problems even without available governmental resources, by using her own personal resources. "Her feelings got in the way," he said, referring to how she would accommodate personal problems of residents and employees even if there was no available budget for them.

Governor Tarhata's strong leadership was felt not only in her province but also throughout Mindanao. She became the chairperson of governors in Mindanao in 1972, a feat which was not easy, especially for any opposition leader during the Martial Law years, and certainly not for a lady. It was a challenge she easily and proudly tackled. She said she was not going to be intimidated by a dictator.

THE PRINCESS DURING TRYING TIMES: LIVING THROUGH MARTIAL LAW

On September 21, 1972, President Marcos declared Martial Law. In his Statement to the Nation on the night of September 22, he referred to the conflict in Mindanao as one among the prominent reasons for his action.

Prior to this proclamation, then President Ferdinand Marcos called datus and politicians to Malacanang to consult them on declaring martial law. Advisers and kin of Governor Tarhata advised her against going to Manila to face the fearsome and notorious Marcos. But her decision prevailed. The only lady in the entourage, the Governor went with other political kingpins such as Tamano, Dimaporo and Pendatun, to Manila. When Marcos asked them, "What could you say about my proposal for martial law?" After a long silence, Governor Tarhata stood up among the datus who then could not oppose the forthcoming militarization of the South. She spoke sarcastically and said: "Even as I am an ordinary woman, I have to raise my hand. Thank you for inviting this group. As governor, I should be here to answer your call for a meeting with Muslims. What I can say with all the datus here is that they are united in agreement to support you in the announcement for reform.

Thank you. God bless you and the Filipino people."

With the country under martial rule, then President Marcos dissolved Congress and postponed indefinitely the congressional and presidential elections that would have been held in 1973. The offices of governor and mayor were retained but with reduced powers. Incumbents now held their positions at the president's pleasure.

Marcos also banned political groups and caused the dissolution of such aboveground Muslim organizations as the MIM. One month after the declaration, the first organized Moro counteroffensive was launched in Marawi City. The MNLF came out into the open, claimed leadership of the Moro secessionist movement, and led the Bangsamoro War in the 1970s. Governor Tarhata's nephew, Abul Khayr Alonto, who was then elected Vice-Mayor of Marawi City, had to go underground, being Vice Chairman of the MNLF and overall commander of the Bangsamoro Army (BMA).

LIFE IN EXILE

In 1975, Princess Tarhata was unceremoniously removed as Governor of Lanao del Sur by the dictatorship. She, together with her husband and children, had to leave the Philippines and become exiles in Saudi Arabia.

Given this, the princess had to grapple with her new environment where as exiles in another country, every aspect of her day to day life was preordained and extraneously difficult. “She began learning how to cook and change diapers for her grandchildren that she never had to do back home where help was aplenty,” recalled her son Aminullah.

Princess Tarhata also spent her time in exile to learn about her religion by going on Islamic pilgrimages to Mecca. To Tarhata, embracing a spiritual journey away from the secular world of politics better influenced her approach to society. She commented that “Connecting to God gives meaning to serving the people. Being a servant of God and accepting his commandments makes me a better servant of the people.”

Amid all these, she continued to support the work of her husband who carried on the struggle of the Bangsamoro secessionist movement even while in another country.

Two years earlier, Nur Misuari, Chairman of the Central Committee of the MNLF, moved to Sabah, Malaysia, where he established the MNLF headquarters. From there he directed much of the early fighting in the war theatre in Mindanao and Sulu. A few months later, Salamat Hashim, Chairman of the Kutawato

Revolutionary Committee (KRC), left Mindanao and proceeded to Tripoli, Libya (via Sabah) for consultations and to assume a new assignment in the MNLF Foreign Affairs.

Datu Matalam’s brother-in-law, Salipada Pendatun, also left the Philippines and joined Rashid Lucman in the Middle East. Together they offered their assistance to Nur Misuari, who created an advisory council in the MNLF for them to head.

On December 23, 1976, the Tripoli Agreement was signed by Nur Misuari and Defense Undersecretary Carmelo Barbero. Entitled “Agreement Between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines and the Moro National Liberation Front With the Participation of the Quadripartite Ministerial Commission Members of the Islamic Conference and the Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Conference”, it established autonomy for Muslims in 13 provinces and nine cities in the southern Philippines within the realm of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of the Philippines. A formal ceasefire agreement between the Philippine government and the MNLF was signed on January 20, 1977, but it collapsed completely towards the end of the year when the government forces mounted massive offensives against all

known MNLF strongholds.

Also during that year, the first major split in the MNLF occurred when Salamat Hashim, a *Maguindanaoan*, broke away from *Tausug*-dominated MNLF. Moro leaders such as Salipada Pendatun, Rashid Lucman, and Domocao Alonto supported the split in favor of Salamat. Hashim founded the ‘New MNLF’ which advocated autonomy rather than independence. This was later renamed MILF or Moro Islamic Liberation Front in 1984, making Islam its official ideology.

While these were going on, an anti-Marcos dictatorship alliance was growing between and among Muslim and Christian Filipinos in exile. This was further strengthened when Senator Benigno ‘Ninoy’ Aquino was allowed by President Marcos to go to the United States in 1980 for heart surgery after seven years of imprisonment in the Philippines. Three months after his operation, Ninoy Aquino assumed leadership of the exile movement and was in constant conference with allies in San Francisco, Los Angeles, Chicago, New York, Washington, Hongkong, and Manila. Ninoy also began exploring a new ‘Christian-Muslim alliance’ with leader Rashid Lucman when the latter was in the US, and with MNLF leader Misuari in Damascus, Syria.

On February 11, 1981,

Ninoy wrote a letter to Rashid Lucman committing himself and the UNIDO (United Nationalist Democratic Organization), the umbrella organization of then political oppositionists, to the cause of the Bangsa Moro. On May 12, 1981, Ninoy Aquino reiterated this commitment in concrete terms in his impromptu lecture at the King Abdulaziz University in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. During the same year, Marcos lifted martial law in the Philippines but retained extralegal powers.

By 1983, the political condition in the Philippines had further deteriorated amid rumors of the declining health of President Marcos. With great concern that extremists may exploit the situation and take over government, Aquino decided to go back to the Philippines, fully aware of the dangers that awaited him. His family, however, learned from a Philippine Consulate official that there were orders from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs not to issue any passports for them. Despite the government's ban on issuing him a passport, Aquino was able to acquire one with the help of Princess Tarhata's husband. It carried his alias, Marcial Bonifacio (Marcial for martial law and Bonifacio for Fort Bonifacio, his erstwhile prison). Ninoy eventually was able to get a second passport from a friend and sympathizer in one of the Philippine consulates in America

and this passport carried his name, Benigno S. Aquino Jr.

On August 21, 1983, the news that Ninoy Aquino had indeed arrived in Manila reached the Lucmans in Saudi Arabia, but he was also shot dead while going down the China Air Lines plane. "My father (Rashid Lucman) was devastated. He started losing hope about the country ... I think he started preparing for his death," the younger Lucman said.

Accordingly, the friendship between the Lucmans and Ninoy Aquino stemmed from the friendship of Aquino's father, Assemblyman Benigno Aquino Sr., with Princess Tarhata's father, Senator Alauya Alonto. Rashid Lucman died in the King Faisal Specialist Hospital in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia on July 21, 1984, exactly 11 months after Aquino's assassination on the tarmac of the Manila International Airport, now known as the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA).

THE PRINCESS RETURNS HOME AND CONTINUES WITH HER PEACEMAKING

When President Corazon 'Cory' Aquino assumed the presidency after the People Power Revolution in February 1986, she invited Princess Tarhata to return to the Philippines and appointed her back as Governor of Lanao

del Sur during Cory's Freedom Administration. However, incumbent Lanao del Sur Governor Saidamen Pangarungan (of the LABAN Party) resisted and fought this in Manila.

On June 4, 1986, the day President Aquino appointed Princess Tarhata's nephew, Dr. Ahmad Alonto, Jr., as President of the Mindanao State University (MSU), its Catholic Chaplain, Fr. Michael de Gigord, was kidnapped from his home on campus. Fr. Gigord was the first priest kidnapped during the Aquino Administration. Upon learning this incident, Princess Tarhata flew to Marawi to seek for Fr. Gigord's release.

Fr. Gigord was released in the evening of June 25, but to the custody of Ali Dimaporo, then Governor of Lanao del Norte. A few days later, on July 11, ten Filipino nuns were abducted from Marawi. The following day, on July 12, Brian Lawrence, a Protestant missionary stationed at MSU, was also kidnapped. Princess Tarhata helped arrange for the release of the Protestant missionary and the ten nuns, and TIME magazine had noted her peacemaking role for helping the release of kidnapped victims.

In September 1986, Princess Tarhata Lucman officially replaced Pangarungan as OIC governor of Lanao del Sur. After

serving her term as Lanao del Sur's appointed chief executive, she continued her life in public service as a *rido* (vendetta) settler, an informal position bestowed on a respected individual, much more on someone coming from a royal lineage.

Princess Tarhata used her influence and her gift of gab to pacify aggrieved parties by extolling on the Maranao virtues of kinship. The princess also talked of *kasusulai* (respect), solidarity, unity and humility. "I talk to the oppositor first. I give him money. I talk to all of them. I make them confront each other. I make them kiss each other. That is how I end the conflict," Princess Tarhata said. Also by literally standing between shooting clans, Tarhata Lucman was able to settle most bloody conflicts.

She had settled several common feuds, mostly based on land-disputes, murder, politics and domestic and marital problems,

and a number of inter-generational feuds which have run for decades. She was effective as a woman, elder, traditional leader and former politician. The people who are usually chosen to mediate in the process of conflict settlement are "women and (most of the time) men who are highly respected by both parties," she noted.

HER LEGACY

There is a saying that "Behind every man's success there is a woman." Indeed this has been found true in the case of the Alontos and the Lucmans. Princess Tarhata, as the spouse of a renowned Muslim figure, Sultan Rashid Lucman, had a unique role in local governance. She was more than a trophy wife consigned to raising children and making coffee. She had supported and had helped in her husband's political career and revolutionary endeavors. Most of the time, the princess had stayed in the background. But there were circumstances that had forced her

into the limelight, like when she became the first female Governor of Lanao del Sur, and later on when she accepted the role of *rido* settler. The general public had found that her family - from her parents, her husband, and siblings - had mentored her well.

Now the saying has evolved to "Behind every success there is the woman". Princess Tarhata is one of the Mindanao women who have been active initiators and movers of peace and development in the island. Even as a mother who has to balance work and maintain a harmonious family amid an environment of sporadic conflict, Princess Tarhata, now in her 80s, has made her mark in Philippine and Muslim history whether as woman leader, politician, pioneer, and peace negotiator – co-equal with men and with a voice. This she leaves behind to the Maranao society, but more specifically, to her children and her children's children.

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RAIDA BANSIL-MAGLANGIT

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“I am doing all my best as a dedicated leader because ARMM has such a bad reputation and I want to erase the stigma associated with the region – that the area cannot be trusted supposedly because the funds funneled here go to the pockets of the local governments.”

It is dawn in Kapatagan, Lanao del Sur. Everyone wakes up to a taped voice of a woman reading the Holy Qur’an. The Morning Prayer has begun. The woman, whose voice rings out to outlying barangays, is not only an internationally-acclaimed Holy Qur’an reader¹; she is also the same woman who brought Kapatagan, Lanao del Sur out of the ashes of war and into the wings of rural development beginning in the year 2001.

Raida Bansil-Maglangit, the Local Chief Executive (2001-2010) of Kapatagan, Lanao del Sur shared her dream for Kapatagan:

“I want everything to change in Kapatagan. I want our people to see real progress and development here. I want to change the living conditions of the people – for them to have access to roads and infrastructure facilities, education, basic health and a lot more. Before, Kapatagan had nothing. There was nothing to see here. For many years, we

have been deprived of government support. You wouldn’t see the presence of governance.”

Bai Lanie de los Santos, Mayor Raida Bansil-Maglangit’s childhood friend, classmate and closest staff, briefly described the leadership style of the Mayor:

“Her vision for real change amidst the impoverished state of a war-ravaged community did not deter her resolve and will power to bring development to her land. Through sheer hard work, dedication, commitment as a Municipal Mayor, she made things happen. At the start of her tenure, she had to literally knock on the doors of line agencies in Manila and beg for assistance from various organizations because Kapatagan had nothing. The first order of her term was to make some sense of organization at the (municipal) hall and to make the offices functioning. She had to

1. Third Place, 2005 International Holy Qur’An Reading Competition, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. National Champion, Philippines.

make the people see and feel the real changes.”

However, the story of Kapatagan’s transformations, under the care of Mayor Raida Bansil-Maglangit, started way beyond the birth of this Lanao del Sur municipality, when Kapatagan was a totally different picture from today.

KAPATAGAN THEN

The municipality was born in 1981, through Parliamentary Bill No. 1087, when it broke away from the Municipality of Balabagan.

Mrs. Soledad Dirumpongan, a Manilena who married into a native Maranao family, now Kapatagan’s Planning and Development Officer, painted a picture of the old Kapatagan:

“We didn’t have an LGU area here. There was zero data on absolutely everything. There were no roads, only footpaths. This was a very remote area: no electricity, no water, and no toilets, no health centers. The only mode of transportation was through riding horses. Otherwise, we would all walk for hours through thick foliage.”

Even the Mayor herself experienced the hardships of having no roads, walking daily in great lengths:

“Everyday, we would walk to school for 3 hours along foot trails. It was very difficult. That’s why our feet have grown huge with walking.”

Bai Lanie de los Santos added:

“Mayor Raida then would only attend the day class during Fridays. Otherwise, she would arrive home late at 8-9PM. It was not safe here then. Robbery was rampant, clan wars (locally called *rido*) were intense and a lot of people were engaged in the armed training. Majority were very poor and uneducated.”

The Human Development Index² of Lanao del Sur in both years 1997 and 2000 support these testimonials and show that Lanao del Sur, where Kapatagan belongs, is lagging behind in terms of development. In both years, the HDI were a low 0.464 and 0.415, respectively. They ranked in the mid-70s (scale considers three factors which are life expectancy, education and income) across all Philippine provinces.

Mayor Raida explained further:

“Development projects did not reach the people. Because the schools were far, and the people were poor, they would rather look for sources of income than attend classes. If one fell ill, the best alternative was to consult the quack doctors.”

Because they were so detached from modern realities, Kapatagan residents considered Cotabato City as a Mecca of all things cosmopolitan: there were restaurants where people ate with fork and spoon, there were hospitals with doctors who diagnosed illnesses properly, there were movies which seemed to them almost real inside cinemas, and the tertiary schools, which Kapatagan has none, were found here.

The Mayor fondly remembered her first movie theater experience in Cotabato:

“It was my first time to get inside a cinema. They were showing a Fernando Poe, Jr. (FPJ) movie. When the scene had FPJ pointing a gun directly at the moviegoers, I really jumped out of my seat and ducked to hide! I thought

² The Human Development Index (HDI) takes into consideration three factors which are life expectancy, education and income. These three measures tell us if people live long and healthy lives; receive enough education to be able to lead productive and creative lives and enjoy a decent standard of living. A high HDI reflects that a people have a wide variety choices available to them in their pursuit of leading lives that they value. On the other hand, a poor HDI shows that people have limited access or restricted choices that would enable them to lead a meaningful life.

I'd get shot. We were so naive then because we were raised in a very rural and remote place."

It did not help that most of the people in Kapatagan relied on farming, and the women were usually kept inside their homes. Tilling the land, training for armed groups, fishing, and walking across barangays on foot defined their lives then.

Clan wars among Muslim families and the armed struggle between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) and the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF),³ and thereafter, between the GRP and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF)⁴ further stalled economic development in the area.

Mayor Raida Bansil-Maglangit saw and experienced all these and compared the living conditions of Kapatagan with Cotabato City. In her young mind, she believed that life had to change in Kapatagan.

KAPATAGAN TODAY

Today, the Municipality of

Kapatagan, strategically sitting at midpoint along the Narciso Marcos Highway that links the bustling cities of Cotabato (southwards) and Marawi (northwards), is touted as the 'Show Window' of Lanao del Sur in terms of peace and development.

Kapatagan is the first municipality in the mountainous province of Lanao del Sur, right after Maguindanao, within the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM). Spanning over 28,813 hectares across 11 upland and 4 coastal barangays, it is located at the southeastern part of Lanao del Sur, sharing the coast of Illana Bay. It is a one-and-a-half hour land trip from Cotabato City or about three hours travel from Marawi City.

Considered a progressing fifth-class municipality, Kapatagan boasts of paved and concrete roads, connecting its 15 barangays to the Local Government Unit (LGU) area of Barangay Duguan. Government and community structures stand to greet incoming and passing visitors along the Narciso Marcos Highway.

In its new town Centro of Barangay Duguan, a flourishing community rises. The new Municipal Hall with all of its functioning offices sits in the middle of Barangay Duguan with a huge field shared by the adjacent concrete stage. The covered sports court is close by. A working health center is just behind. The Mosque is a stone's throw away. Across the field is the police station. Two schools sit across each other along the national highway. The wet and dry goods market stands across the high school. Houses erected in a linear pattern are found around the Centro. A housing project by Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) lies beside the grade school.

There is water flowing out of the faucets. Electricity is supplied by the Lanao del Sur Electric Cooperative (LASURECO). Globe and Smart telecommunication companies both built communication towers within shouting distance from each other. The Municipal Hall has Dream satellite television connection.

Each barangay now has

3 - 4 The Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) was conceptualized by Abul Khayr Alonto and Jallaludin Santos as early as 1969. While still part of the Bangsa Moro Liberation Organization (BMLO) organized by Rashid Lucman, Alonto and Misuari were able to draw the support of Libya away from the BMLO and towards the MNLF. Alonto took the Vice-Chairman position. Nur Misuari, a former professor of the University of the Philippines, activist and prominent leader for the Moro cause, took the top position. Another prominent leader was Hashim Salamat, who later became the Vice-Chairman after Alonto and his followers surrendered to the government. Aside from the political nature of the MNLF, it was able to carry out its armed struggle through its military operations with support from Muslim backers in Libya and Malaysia in terms of weapons and military training. The fighting reached its peak from 1973-1975 as the MNLF was able to field some 30,000 armed fighters. Muslim factionalism led to a further decline in MNLF. In 1977, Hashim Salamat broke away from the MNLF and formed the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). This was due to loss of confidence on the leadership of Nur Misuari as well as ideological differences. While the MNLF had a more secular and nationalist stance, the MILF had a more Islamic orientation.

a new concrete council hall. Today, one Ustadz⁵ is assigned to each barangay to bring Islamic education closer to the people since there are only 6 Madrasah⁶ schools in the entire municipality. Muslims comprise ninety-five percent (95%) of the total 15,635 population⁷; the remaining 5% are Christians. Literacy rate is estimated at over 60%.

The predominantly farming people now have farm-to-market roads, ensuring that food is brought to homes fresher, and merchandise turnover and income flow are quicker. People living below the poverty line are now down to 37% from 68.8% (2000 ARMM estimates).

Multi-cab vans and motorcycles (locally called *habal-habal* in most areas of Mindanao) for the riding public ply between towns and across barangays.

There is now peace and harmony - with countryside development clearly seen and felt, attributed as well to the peace covenants signed – by declaring Kapatagan's Poblacion Daguan and other barangays as Peace

Zones⁸ in 2002.

WHO IS RAIDA BANSIL-MAGLANGIT?

Born into a political Maranao family in the municipality of Balabagan, Lanao del Sur in 1965 but lived in Proper Kapatagan. Mayor Raida wasn't poor. Her father, Sultan Barodi Bansil, was then Vice-Mayor of Balabagan, who initiated the efforts towards making Kapatagan a separate municipality. The Bansils have long been Sultans of Kapatagan. Her father was once its Sultan, now it's her brother's turn. Her mother, Hadji Raisa Saglayan Bansil, unlettered then, tendered their farms and raised the family.

She grew up to see her father fight with the MNLF until he left the group and joined the government. During his term, she saw how much of a beloved leader her father was.

"I admire my father for being very close to the people. Before, it made me wonder why the people obey him. He only says a word, and they'd all follow

him. He lived the saying 'All for one, one for all.' He was always fair and he treated everyone as his co-equals. What he gave to one, he also gave to everyone else. That's why the people responded to him positively."

Tragedy befell the family. Before his father saw his dream of a separate Kapatagan municipality, he was murdered due to political reasons. The Bansil clan mourned with the people and engaged extensively in a *rido*. The mayor who was in fifth grade then, although devastated, continued on with her studies and kept away from the *rido* conflicts. Finally, when the murder mastermind was neutralized, the warring clans went into negotiations and settled the conflict.

Growing up under a traditional Muslim mother, Mayor Raida was sent to a regular school and to a *Madrasah*.

She related:

"The only things I occupied myself with were my

5. An Ustad/Ustadz is used to mean a teacher. In modern Arabic it is used generically to mean college professor or teacher. But it can also be an honorific form of address for anyone of superior wisdom or learning. In the Philippines, it usually means a teacher in a Madrasah.

6. Madrasah (pl. madaris) generally refers to Muslim private schools with core emphasis on Islamic studies and Arabic literacy. The word madrasah literally means "school."

7. 2007 Estimates

8. Peace zones are people-initiated, community-based responses to armed conflict, contributing to build a constituency for stability and security at the barangay (village) level.

studies and the Madrasah school. The remoteness of our place left us with not many choices. I'm glad that that's how I learned how to read the Holy Qur'an."

She later realized that through her exposure to the verses of the Holy Qur'an, she picked up the virtues of compassion, justice and the value of public consultations.

When Mayor Raida entered junior year in high school, her mother deemed her prepared for marriage. She eventually married Jun Maglangit, a Manila-bred Maranao, who went back to Lanao for business ventures.

After she finished high school, Mr. and Mrs. Maglangit transferred to Manila where he worked while she studied Nursing for three years at the Philippine Women's University. However, her pregnancies and duties as a wife and mother prevented her from completing her degree.

In 1986, during the Aquino Administration, after Martial Rule finally found its end, Mayor Raida already had a political calling – she wanted to transform Kapatagan. Despite the favorable political climate of the times, it was her first-hand experiences in the impoverished town of Kapatagan that solidified her resolve to take the path of public service. She decided to send her papers to Malacanang

to become Office-In-Charge (OIC) Mayor for Kapatagan. However, at 21, she thought of giving way to her brother who had wished to lead Kapatagan, too, and instead concentrate on her family life.

The young couple decided to return to Mindanao, raise their growing family of five children, and set up business in Parang, Maguindanao – a progressive town next to Kapatagan.

For five years, they went into the buy-and-sell business, trading copra and corn. Three times they switched businesses from the corn-and-copra, to fresh rattan to coffee. Twice they failed because they trusted people too much by selling goods on credit that were never paid back to them.

In retrospect, Mayor Raida only sees the positive aspect of it:

"We never gave up even if our partners duped us, or the buyers on credit did not pay us back. These were the years that I started to be with the masses, the time I was gradually recognized by the people."

Because they extended credit to just about anyone, she gained some degree of recognition for her compassionate heart but lost her business to bankruptcy eventually. Mr. Maglangit, on the other hand, found work in the

Department of Health and joined government service.

Like her mother, Mayor Raida was also lured into farming and expanded her mother's coffee plantation. While she still had spare time on her hands, Mayor Raida became an Ustadz and taught in Barangay Dagan's Madrasah. After all, she was Madrasah-trained and was a Holy Qur'an champion reader.

Her love for Kapatagan had always burned in her. She observed that life can still be better because of her exposures in Cotabato and Manila.

Since no one in her area rose up to the occasion to do something about their plight, she went ahead and did her share of making things happen, even as an ordinary citizen. She went to see their Congressman, Mamintal Adiong, whom she wasn't acquainted with, and solicited support and funding for roads and culverts for a few remote areas in Kapatagan. She used her own time, money and effort to prepare the papers and do follow-throughs. She was merely a concerned individual, only hoping for their place to improve.

Mayor Raida wanted roads to expedite people's mobility and access into their locality. She successfully lobbied for funding, and did not stop until the small infrastructure projects were

completed.

“I personally supervised the construction – buying materials and renting the equipment. I wanted this project to succeed.”

Although the project succeeded, it was not long after that that a great tragedy occurred, which moved her towards political action.

WAR AND EVACUATION

The all-out war,⁹ declared in 2000 by then President Joseph Estrada against the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), wiped out what little resources the poor Kapatagan municipality had. The Philippine military overran MILF’s Camp Abubakar, located on the fringes of Kapatagan and within Lanao del Sur.

This completely destroyed Kapatagan.

What remained of the place were ashes and debris, felled trees and casualties. Only the Mosque and the schools stood almost untouched by war.

Kapatagan became a virtual ghost town. People fled to nearby municipalities, but most of them went to the evacuation camps.

Life in the evacuation camps was no better. They were cramped, full of people. Sanitation was poor. People were getting sick. Relief goods were not equitably distributed.

According to the May 2000 UNDP Report, 145,733 persons lived in evacuations centers while 50,000 people were dislocated because of the MILF-GRP war around Mindanao. Cost to damaged properties and farmlands easily reached millions of pesos.

Mayor Raida saw how much the people suffered. Just like her father who was kindhearted and generous, she decided to do her share in helping ease the pain of the people.

“I volunteered to assist the evacuees. I went to see Lanao del Sur Provincial Governor Mahid Motilan and asked for help. Even though he did not know me, I waited long just to see and meet him. I had to tell him the real situation in Kapatagan, and I had to bring back to the people food and clothing. When I came home, I brought with me two trucks of relief goods, which we

distributed to the people. I also asked my family to donate for the people, and even spent my salary as Ustadz to buy the people food.”

Aggravating the situation was the fact that Mayor Raida discovered that some budget intended for national government projects for Kapatagan municipality, outside the Internal Revenue Allotment (IRA), coursed through the provincial government, never really reached the majority of the people.

Mayor Raida thought that the only way to be freed from the tyranny of evacuation camp life would be to return to their land – back to the burned villages and torn communities, to their no-man’s land.

Together with her supportive husband and family, they brought their things back to Barangay Daguean – staying inside the Mosque for months, for there was no other structure left in the area.

This move was providential for she later earned the respect and trust of the people and the Philippine Marines.

9. The All-Out War declared in 2000 by then President Joseph Estrada came about from the Philippine Government’s unsuccessful negotiations with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) after the MILF refused to recognize the Peace Agreement signed between the Philippine Government and the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) in 1996 that created the Southern Philippine Council for Peace and Development (SPCPD) chaired by Nur Misuari, whom they question the leadership.

To lure the people to return to their home communities, she asked her friends to come back – starting with her childhood friend, Daguean's barangay captain and now Municipal councilor, Alinadjer Dipatuan. Mr. Dipatuan used to be an MILF commander, but with the persuasion of Mayor Raida, he left the group and returned to his post as barangay captain.

Together with her husband, whom she considers her strength and decision co-maker, they finally built their own house near the Mosque, which prompted the people to return and build their own dwelling places as well in their home community.

She became the symbol of strength and hope in an otherwise hopeless area.

The people, realizing the slowness of their municipality's growth and the inaction of the previous local governments, clamored for change. They spoke about their dissatisfaction in informal gatherings and asked Raida Bansil-Maglangit to lead them to progress. They did not want anything but change.

Edwina Tobias, Municipal accountant, recounted:

“The people themselves already asked for change. They felt a need for fresher

and effective leadership. They wanted someone who can commit to action.”

Bai Lanie de los Santos added:

“Mayor Raida was now known by the people because of what she has done and what she represented for the poor people – hope. Even before she became Mayor, the people already admired her.”

Reluctant at first, Mayor Raida listened to the call of the people. However, she felt that without a machinery and money, she might still lose in the elections. Deep inside her though, she wanted to already serve her people and that burning desire to bring genuine change in her locality should now come to fruition.

“The people would remember what my father had done during his term as Vice-Mayor and as a Sultan. So they prodded me to run in the upcoming 2001 Mayoralty race.”

Sensing that Mayor Raida only had sincere interest in helping the people, the Philippine Marines led by their commanding officer, Col. Bajunaid Abid, gave their word to protect the integrity of the elections, in a private meeting with Maglangit. They assured her that

they would not allow any vote-rigging.

With the support of the majority and the promise of the Marines, Raida Bansil-Maglangit accepted the challenge and ran against the incumbent and another lady contender. In 2001, she won the elections and became the first Muslim woman to lead Kapatagan, Lanao del Sur.

STEWARDSHIP UNDER MAYOR RAIDA

Mrs. Sol Dirumpongan described the starting point of Mayor Raida's leadership as “reconciliatory governance.”

“She reached out to her political nemesis even if they created a lot of issues against her. As a matter of fact, she invited them to be part of her government and made the previous Mayor as a municipal consultant.”

Sol Dirumpongan continued:

“She's a hardworking mayor. The first thing she did was to go to the national offices of line agencies in Manila and pleaded for the unfinished projects of the previous administration to be completed. Whatever remaining funds those would have, there was at least something to start

with.”

One of the challenges that welcomed her first months as Mayor was the lack of basic government data and statistics. People didn’t register births and deaths. The population count had been outdated for years. There was no Municipal Hall. There was no skilled manpower working for the LGU. It was very difficult to court funders in bringing their projects to Kapatagan.

Edwina Tobias shared:

“With very little resources to work on, we still managed to buy a parcel of land in Barangay Daguan and transformed it into the LGU area. Little by little, the government structures were built. The Mayor just kept working on the physical development of Kapatagan as well as the retooling of skills for her LGU staff.”

Bai Lanie de los Santos added:

“She believes in the importance of skilled and knowledgeable people to work with – the kind of staff who understands what they are doing. So she invested in the training of the personnel.”

One of those who greatly benefited from such training was Simbaiyan D. Bansil, Municipal Civil Registrar. She had to beef up the vital statistics of the municipality in close coordination with the planning and development office. Her starting point was education of the people on the importance of registration.

The Mayor listened to her instincts, her staff, and her constituents for clues on her next steps. With her personal conviction to convey change through development and peace, she remained focused on what was needed to be done.

Some of her actions and decisions have become her administration’s crown jewels.

BEST PRACTICES

Zone of Peace - One of the most identifiable features in Mayor Raida’s governance is the signing of peace agreements in some of their barangays in early 2002. Through the facilitation of the Local Government Support Program (LGSP) and the NGO, CO-Multiversity, Mayor Raida enjoined different sectors like the military, the armed groups, the religious groups and the community to be stakeholders of this peace accord. It was a multi-sectoral approach that saw the public-private-civil society synergy worked towards peace.

To strengthen peace in Kapatagan, its local leaders pushed community dialogues and consultations and created a municipal peace committee to settle *rido* cases. Mayor Raida employed local arrangements and traditions for *rido* settlements. She personally helped pool resources and contributed to blood money in settling clan wars. The LGU instituted ordinances against gambling and liquor drinking to avoid occasions for conflicts. Their efforts soon bore fruit.

One of their NGO partners, the Assisi Development Foundation (ADF), through the PEACEPATHS (Promoting Economic and Cultural Enhancement for Peoples’ Action Towards Human Security) program, sought to build peace zones and rehabilitate conflict-affected communities. It was after the all-out war that ADF, through their Tabang Mindanaw Integrated Return and Rehabilitation Program, already had linkages with Kapatagan and this was continued with the PEACEPATHS right after the Tabang Mindanaw project ended. To date, the PEACEPATHS program alone has delivered over two million pesos of assistance to Kapatagan.

The government and partner-NGOs helped provide infrastructure like roads and buildings, livelihood, and basic services – development projects that were sorely lacking in this part

of Lanao del Sur.

Mayor Raida admitted that it was difficult at first for people to put the guns aside and keep the peace. In no time, they understood the tradeoff.

“When they saw that many investments were coming in nobody complained anymore.”

Observing how much the peace zones have contributed to their progress, Mayor Raida renewed their commitment to the peace covenants and had expanded to include more barangays in recent years.

Ivi Codia of the ADF rated the Kapatagan LGU, and compared it to other LGU partners in terms of program implementation:

“They are a very good, effective, action-oriented partner. You can see their sincerity in keeping the peace within their community.”

Strong NGO-PO Ties - The local government enlisted the help of NGOs in bringing in projects and enjoined People’s Organizations (POs) to participate and have a stake in the said projects.

Bai Lanie de los Santos, head of the municipality’s efforts in community organizing, explained:

“With every project we have, we make sure that the community has organized a people’s organization to work closely with us and the NGOs. It is our way of empowering the people and making them feel that they own the projects.”

Ms. De Los Santos explained further that now all NGO-funded projects are coursed through the Municipal Planning and Development Office to ensure correct matching of projects and beneficiaries as well as to ensure that any outside help will run parallel with the Municipality’s plans.

The LGU organizes communities according to the usual clustering like women, youth, farmers, etc and has done away with the project-based approach as this they deem not sustainable.

Consultative Approach - Mayor Raida believes in participatory governance. She employs community consultations and dialogues before she makes decisions.

It is the value she gave to the people, her personnel and partners that led her to create the monthly Municipal Inter-Agency Committee (MIAC) meetings. This is a periodic dialogue to air each agency’s or partner’s concerns. THE MIAC meetings

include people’s organizations that represent the communities, the partner NGOs, and the line agencies, among others. This is the time when these groups update the Mayor with the status of their tasks as well as their concerns. The meetings usually have presentations and an open forum. This gave everyone the chance to be heard.

Gender and Rural Health - In a predominantly Muslim community where men usually take on active roles in society, the Kapatagan LGU led by Mayor Raida differentiated itself with a female Mayor who is a strong gender advocate.

They maintained a gender balance in the Municipal Hall, giving women equal opportunity, voice and power. Stressing its importance in development, the LGU enacted a landmark Gender and Development (GAD) Code. The GAD Code included women’s rights that paralleled verses from the Holy Quor’an.

Mayor Raida emphasized:

“Men and women are partners in development. Both are co-equals. I don’t want women to be relegated as second-class citizens. I don’t like discrimination. That’s why I give my best all the time to show everyone that women have the capacity

to lead as well.”

Basic health was another big concern for Mayor Raida’s administration, making sure that the well-being of the population was cared for.

With the assistance of the Department of Health (DOH) and the Assisi Development Foundation (ADF), each barangay now has a set of barangay health workers and a health center. Tabang Mindanaw introduced the use of toilets for hygiene and sanitation. United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) now works in close coordination with the municipal population office. The Kapatagan LGU drafted a Rural Health (RH) Code, the first of its kind in Lanao del Sur.

LGU Counter-parting - Like in all funded projects, counter-parting is essential to show commitment.

Kapatagan LGU’s practice was always putting the end in mind – that of the successful completion of the project. They fund their share, even going beyond the minimum amount set by fully utilizing their development allotment of 20% from the Internal Revenue Allocation (IRA). However, when the Mayor first started, most of the projects did not require counterpart funding as the Municipality was yet rising from the ashes of war.

Edwina Tobias related that

the funders were always glad that with the projects they brought in, their LGU poured in a lot in counterpart funds, which is not a common practice among LGUs.

STYLE AND TRAITS

Embodying openness, Mayor Raida welcomed the people to the Municipal Hall from sunrise till midnight. She gave everyone time to meet her for their concerns.

Edwina Tobias narrated:

“It’s close to midnight already but there are still people meeting with the Mayor. The Mayor doesn’t turn them away. That’s why sometimes she already sleeps over here at the Municipal Hall.”

Bai Lanie de los Santos shared:

“As much as possible, she makes time for the people. She is like her father. She eats what the people eat. She adjusts to everyone. She never discriminates.”

Simbaiyan Bansil added:

“The Mayor has a big heart and an open hand. She would give even if it’s her last. She feels bad whenever she has nothing left to give to the people who ask for help. She’s

never materialistic. She avoids anything that will make people envy her.”

Bai Lanie de los Santos said:

“Look at her house. It’s very simple. You wouldn’t even think it’s a house of a mayor.”

The common people around town described their Mayor as such:

“She is just and very approachable.”

“The mayor is generous and is kind-hearted.”

“She shows sincerity and acts as the mother of Kapatagan.”

The current Vice-Mayor, Paisal M. Bansil, corroborated the descriptions:

“The Mayor has been recognized among municipal mayors in the Philippines, the NGOs and foreign funders because she shows political will and commitment. Her leadership is very participatory – she involves the people in decision-making through dialogues and consultations. She lives by the saying *Bayan Muna Bago Sarili* (Country First before Self).

The Sultan of Kapatagan, the Mayor's brother, Junaid G. Bansil, agreed:

"She ensures her leadership practices include transparency, fair management and peaceful ways. Her concern is always on the people."

FULFILLING DREAMS AND PROMISES

On the third celebration of Kapatagan's Founding Day, her old allies came to celebrate and were shocked not to recognize the place anymore and to see the big transformation of Kapatagan from being backwardly remote to becoming a progressive municipality.

Mayor Raida, teary-eyed, stood in front of her people, and those who first strongly supported her and said:

"This is now what I had promised you all."

The Mayor had started with a dream for Kapatagan to change and develop in peace because she

had experienced the hardships of an impoverished and chaotic place.

While she has delivered on her promises to the people, and fulfilled many of her dreams for Kapatagan, she still has high hopes for the place.

"I still have a lot of plans for Kapatagan. I hope one day this place will also become a city. I admire Mayor Jess Robredo for what he's done with Naga. Someday, I hope Kapatagan will become the model LGU for Lanao del Sur."

Sharing her formula and idea of a good leader, she said:

"My personal conviction is just to work and work and work for Kapatagan. I never intended to be recognized. I was merely being myself. I showed commitment. I proved I had the dedication and word of honor."

"For me, a good leader doesn't necessarily have to be very smart. What's important is that you have the brains, yet you also

have the heart – and that you are able to balance having those two."

Mayor Raida Bansil-Maglangit, the local chief executive of Kapatagan, Lanao del Sur who has placed her municipality under the radar of effective governance in the country, wishes to share insights to her body of work.

"I am doing all my best as a dedicated leader because ARMM has such a bad reputation and I want to erase the stigma associated with the region – that the area cannot be trusted supposedly because the funds funneled here go to the pockets of the local governments."

She ended with a plea:

"I want to tell future political leaders that they should venture into politics only because they have a task to do for the people, and never because they have self-interests to serve."



NUR MISUARI

Founding Leader and Chairman of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF)

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“My only concern is that I be able to fulfill my pledges to my people. I want them to have a good life. I want to enhance the quality of life of my people. I want to see them free, as free as any people in the world. I want to stop their oppression, exploitation and repression. We want our children to grow healthy and in an atmosphere of freedom, without fear and intimidation. This is my commitment to our people. And I hope some people will not begrudge us for doing something to achieve that.”

INTRODUCTION

Nurallaji ‘Nur’ Misuari was born on March 3, 1939 in Jolo, the fourth son in a family of 10 children. His parents were simple Tausug and Sama fisherfolk from Kabinga-an, Tapul Island. According to friends, Nur was so poor that he could never have gone to college were it not for a kind teacher in Jolo who recognized his potential and managed to get funding for him as a Commission on National Integration (CNI) scholar at the University of the Philippines (UP) in Manila.

Nur recalls being an “ordinary child without ambition. All I wanted was to go to school and serve my family.” In 1958, Nur left Jolo to attend the university, where friends say he was soft spoken, reserved, and a disciplined student. Former Secretary Ruben Torres, who went to the university with Misuari, recalled that Nur’s only recreation was billiards. “He was very religious,” says Torres. “He

never drank or chased women.”

Nur took a degree in Political Science and soon after flourished to become the embodiment of campus charisma through his campus activities particularly as a debater.

Upon graduation, Nur went to law school in 1962, but dropped out in his second year. He took a Master’s degree in Asian Studies and finished in 1966. Through the help of noted historian Dr. Cesar Adib Majul, Nur landed a job as a Political Science instructor in UP.

EMERGENCE AS A LEADER

In 1964, Nur founded the *Bagong Asya*, a radical student group. Together with Jose Maria Sison, Nur also became one of the founding fathers of the *Kabataan Makabayan* (Patriotic Youth) or KM, which considered itself a comprehensive organization for student, worker, farmers, and professional youth. It engaged in

political demonstrations and trained large numbers of young people for a “proletarian revolutionary party.” It drew membership from students and young professionals. With Sison as overall Chairman, Nur was appointed Chairman of KM’s Western Mindanao unit. The movement became widely known as a Marxist front, and it was the first opposition group to be outlawed upon the declaration of Martial Law in 1972.

DISCOVERY OF A REVOLUTIONARY CALLING

Nur Misuari soon discovered his revolutionary calling as a Muslim in 1968, when news broke out on the so-called Corregidor Massacre, now popularly known as the Jabidah Massacre. It involved the killing of 64 innocent Bangsamoro youths who were lured to join a clandestine military operation and who mutinied against their officers when they came to learn that they were being trained to invade Sabah and would possibly be killing fellow Muslim brothers and their own Tausug and Sama relatives living there.

This incident was reported to have had two important political consequences. First, it angered both Christian and Muslim leaders in the Philippines, particularly Cotabato Governor Datu Udtog Matalam. And second, it inflamed the Malaysian government of

Tunku Abdul Rahman.

On May 1, 1968, hardly two months after the Corregidor bloodbath, Datu Udtog Matalam organized the Muslim (which later was changed to Mindanao) Independence Movement (MIM), that sought to form a state comprising the contiguous southern portion of the Philippine archipelago. Its manifesto accused the Philippine government of pursuing a policy of ‘extermination’ of the Muslims and made “manifest to the whole world its desire to secede from the Republic of the Philippines, in order to establish an Islamic State.”

Nur Misuari, who was then the organizer and moving spirit of the Philippine Muslim Nationalist League (PMNL), wrote as an editorial in the July 1968 issue of PMNL’s official organ, the Philippine Muslim News: *“Separatism is a costly and painful process and few ordinary mortals are prepared to pay the price. But this world has been a witness time and again to the division of certain countries into smaller ones. For, political division is a matter not fully within the control of men, nor yet a sole product of their whims and caprices. It is in fact mainly the creation of the actual conditions in which men find themselves.”* This became the ground where the seed of the liberation front was sown.

TRAINING AS A REVOLUTIONARY

On the other hand, the Malaysian government of Tunku Abdul Rahman responded to the incident by promising Muslim leaders, especially Sultan Haroun Al-Raschid Lucman (then Congressman from Lanao) that it would help train and provide arms to the region’s dedicated young Muslims. Nur Misuari, together with Abul Khayr Alonto, were part of the first batch of 90 young Muslims (composed of 67 Maranaos, 8 Maguindanaos, and 15 Tausug-Samal) recruited by MIM leaders and Lucman who began military training in Pulau Pangkor, Malaysia in 1969, under the auspices of Malaysian officers.

In the midst of their military training, this group of young Mindanao Muslims conducted among themselves political discussions and analyses of Moro history as well as their aspirations of an independent state. This was how the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) was conceived. This group later became the hardcore members of the Bangsa Moro Army (BMA), the MNLF’s military arm. Within this period of training, and without the knowledge of Rashid Lucman and the MIM leaders who had recruited them, the group organized a seven-man Provisional Central Committee, electing Nur Misuari as Chairman and Abul Khayr Alonto

as Vice Chairman. The other major portfolios were given to Otto Salahuddin of Basilan and Ali Wali of Zamboanga. Hashim Salamat was tasked to head the undivided Empire Province of Cotabato where a provincial committee was to be set up immediately.

Upon the arrival of the first batch of trained guerillas to the Philippines, Rashid Lucman, together with Matalam's brother-in-law, Congressman Salipada Pendatun, formed the Bangsa Moro Liberation Organization (BMLO) in 1970. The BMLO considered itself to be the umbrella organization of all liberation forces in Mindanao. Rashid Lucman became the head of the Supreme Executive Council with Macapanton Abbas as secretary. Nur Misuari was appointed as head of the military committee for Sulu, Abul Khayr Alonto as the head for Lanao, and Udtog Matalam, Jr. for Cotabato.

But Lucman and Nur later parted ways. Lucman learned of the underground organization, the MNLF, and accused Nur and his people of betrayal. At this time, the MNLF had already consolidated networks with various militant Muslim organizations in the Philippines, with Muammar Qaddafi, President of Libya, and Tun Mustapha, Chief Minister of the Malaysian State of Sabah, as their primary benefactors.

In the wave of student activism that swept Manila in the early seventies, Muslims led by Nur staged demonstrations of their own to protest the "oppression and exploitation of the people of Mindanao by the Philippine colonial government."

In Mindanao, the Philippine Constabulary was taking control of many towns because of growing violence in the region. Schools were closed, farms abandoned, commerce stagnated, and refugees increased. The Christian-led *Ilaga* paramilitary group entered the scene, with their operations concentrated in various Muslim villages in the two Cotabato provinces (North Cotabato and South Cotabato). One particular attack, at a mosque in Manili, left 65 men, women and children mutilated and dead. A British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) report of the massacre drew the attention of Libyan leader Muammar Qaddafi, prompting him to act immediately and give his unwavering support for the protection of the Bangsamoro people through whatever means.

On July 21, 1971 leaders from all sectors of Moro society published a manifesto demanding that the Philippine government take action to stop these attacks. The Philippine government called the manifesto a threat. In August, the residents of Buldon fortified their town after killing

some Christian loggers. The Philippine army responded with a weeklong artillery bombardment. By September, the cycle of reprisals was uncontrollable. In October, fighting between the *Barracudas* (paramilitary group led by Muslims) and government troops left hundreds dead on both sides. In November, 40 Maranaw Muslims were summarily executed at a military checkpoint in Tacub. Muslims accused the Philippine government of genocide.

ATTEMPTING NONVIOLENT STRUGGLE THROUGH PARLIAMENTARY MEANS

It was during this period that Nur Misuari left the University of the Philippines and accepted a teaching position in the Philippine Muslim College in Jolo. He also sought a seat in the 1971 Constitutional Convention, believing that Muslim aspirations could be achieved faster through a new constitution and attempting a nonviolent struggle through parliamentary means. The 1971 Constitutional Convention was tasked to amend and rewrite the 1935 Philippine Constitution. The original 1935 Constitution provided for a Congress with only a House of Representatives. It was amended in 1940 to include both a Senate and House of Representatives. The Constitution limited the President to a four-year term with a maximum of two consecutive terms in office.

The Province of Sulu was entitled to three delegates to the Constitutional Convention. When the votes were tallied in seven towns, Nur finished a poor fifth, having lost to well entrenched, traditional Sulu leaders such as the Sangkulas, Abubakars, and Annis. However, Nur impressed residents by coming out first in Jolo, the capital town.

A group of students and young professionals calling themselves the *Pahambuuk* (which means “united” in Tausig) - many of whom were sons and daughters of prominent families gathered by Misuari from various schools in Jolo for his campaign - protested the election. They charged that there were massive irregularities in the vote tallying, especially in the outer island. Unfortunately for Misuari, the election protest ended nowhere. The corruption of the COMELEC and the power of the old *politicos* were too much for an idealist like him.

In disgust, Nur came to the conclusion that there was no way the system could be changed through parliamentary means. If Moro society were to be liberated from its colonial status, it would have to be through an armed struggle.

FORMATION OF THE MORO NATIONAL LIBERATION FRONT

Nur Misuari called for a meeting of other Muslim leaders in Zamboanga City. The meeting discussed the situation of the Muslims in the Philippines vis-a-vis their problems with Philippine society and government, and the status of the MIM. The meeting finally gave birth to the formal organization of the MNLF and the election of Nur Misuari as its Chairman. The leaders present also pledged before the Holy Qu’ran to engage in *Jihad* (Holy War) for *Hulah*, *Bangsa* and *Agama* (Homeland, Moro Nation and Islam), for all the Bangsamoro people, and for the Independence of MinSuluPala (an acronym to denote Mindanao, Sulu, Palawan inclusive of Basilan, Tawi-Tawi and all other islands).

In August 1972, Nur Misuari came to Luzon to get in touch with the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP). Jose Maria Sison, Chairman of the CPP recalled: “(Nur) came only to declare that the CPP and New Peoples Army (NPA) should keep out of Mindanao.”

Soon after, Nur disappeared from view. Two weeks later, then Philippine president Ferdinand Marcos declared Martial Law. “I went underground. I went among

the people, but kept as invisible as possible,” recalled Nur. He began organizing his army. “I wanted to right the wrongs committed against my people, the historical injustices. I decided to work first for justice, then independence.”

One month after the declaration of Martial Law, the first organized Moro counteroffensive was launched in Marawi City. The MNLF, with Nur Misuari as Chairman, came out into the open, claimed leadership of the Moro secessionist movement, and led the Bangsamoro War in the 1970s.

CAMPAIGN FOR INTERNATIONAL BROTHERHOOD (“UMMAH”)

Nur Misuari moved to Sabah, Malaysia in early 1973, where he established the MNLF headquarters, and from there he directed much of the early fighting in the war theatre in Mindanao and Sulu. As a full-scale war continued to rage, in the spirit of brotherhood Nur asked the support of the oil-rich Arab countries for the MNLF’s logistical needs i.e. modern weapons, in their quest for independence. As arms and munitions poured into Mindanao through the backdoor, young Muslims rushed to join the MNLF.

In March 1973, the issue of the Muslim Minority in the southern Philippines first officially appeared

on the agenda of the Fourth Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers (ICFM) of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) held in Benghazi, Libya. Next to the United Nations, the OIC is the second largest inter-governmental organization with its membership of 57 states spread over four continents. The Organization is the collective voice of the Muslim world and ensures to safeguard and protect the interests of the Muslim world in the spirit of promoting international peace and harmony among various people of the world.

While the OIC maintained its pressure on the Philippine Government, it also recognized that the problem of the Muslim Minority in the southern Philippines “is internal to an independent sovereign state.” It further passed a resolution requesting Indonesia and Malaysia to open their offices to help find a solution to the problem, within the framework of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). The Quadripartite Ministerial Committee (QMC) - composed of Libya, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, and Somalia - was also constituted in the 4th ICFM, with a mandate to help the GRP and the MNLF arrive at a just, durable and comprehensive political settlement.

In December 1973, upon the instruction of Chairman Nur Misuari, Hashim Salamat left

Mindanao and proceeded to Tripoli, Libya (via Sabah) for consultations and to assume a new assignment in MNLF Foreign Affairs. Amelil “Ronnie” Malaguio succeeded Hashim Salamat as Chairman of the Kutawato Revolutionary Committee (KRC).

The following year the MNLF gathered strength and broad support from Philippine Muslims. Fighting escalated into large-scale conventional warfare with the financial and arms support of Libya. The AFP created two integrated commands - the Central Mindanao Command (CEMCOM) for the Cotabato-Lanao areas, and the Southern Command (SOUTHCOD), for the Zamboanga peninsula and the Sulu archipelago. SOUTHCOD unleashed its full force on MNLF rebels, who had taken control of Jolo, in the biggest battle of the war. In mainland Mindanao, CEMCOM attacked the MNLF forces in Cotabato.

Abroad, the MNLF gained official recognition from Muslim countries as the representative of the Moro people, thus strengthening Nur Misuari’s reputation as the Leader and Chairman of the MNLF. The 5th ICFM in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia urged the Philippine government “to find a political and peaceful solution through negotiations,” and officially acknowledged that the solution to the Mindanao

problem was not to impinge on the territorial integrity of the Philippines. The Conference also mentioned the MNLF for the first time.

The Muslim secessionist conflict reached its peak in 1974. An estimated 50,000 to 60,000 were killed in the armed conflict between the government and the MNLF in the 1970s. Estimates of armed men actively fighting have ranged from 5,000 to 30,000. One rebel estimated that about 55 percent of the Moro population supported the MNLF, 15 percent supported the government, and the remainder was neutral. During these years, approximately 75 percent of the Philippine army, which had grown four-fold to become 250,000-strong, was deployed in Mindanao.

The year that followed saw the Mindanao war reaching a stalemate. Nur Misuari left Sabah and joined Hashim Salamat in Libya where they officially organized the expanded MNLF Central Committee together with other MNLF leaders. Nur Misuari was reelected Chairman and Abulkhayr Alonto was chosen as Vice Chairman *in absentia*. Hashim Salamat became the MNLF’s Chairman for Foreign Affairs. Abebakrin Lucman was named Secretary General, and Abdurasad Asani as the Chairman of the Committee on Information.

PURSUING DIPLOMACY AND THE PEACE PROCESS

In the same year, representatives from the MNLF led by Misuari held their first meeting with the Philippine government in Jeddah through the office of the OIC. Known as the Jeddah Peace Talks, this event paved the way for the presentation of demands and proposals from the two parties (the Philippine government and MNLF) in finding a solution to the problem in Mindanao.

The 6th ICFM held in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia in July 1975 approved the MNLF Nine-Point Agenda to ‘serve as a basis’ for addressing the Mindanao problem. The Nine Points were: (1) self-government; (2) affairs of internal security; (3) defense and foreign policy; (4) administrative system; (5) system of courts; (6) system of education; (7) establishment of Islamic life and society; (8) financial and economic affairs; and (9) participation in central government and all organs of state. The OIC also gave formal recognition to the MNLF, under Misuari’s leadership.

On December 23, 1976, the Tripoli Agreement was signed by Nur Misuari and Defense Undersecretary Carmelo Barbero establishing autonomy for Muslims in 13 provinces and nine cities in the southern Philippines within the realm of the sovereignty and

territorial integrity of the Republic of the Philippines.

During the 8th ICFM in May 1977 held in Tripoli, Libya, Nur Misuari, as the MNLF Chairman, was allowed to address the Conference for the first time. It was also during this OIC Assembly that the MNLF was granted observer status by the OIC on an exceptional basis.

In the 9th ICFM that followed in Dakar, Republic of Senegal in April 1978, the OIC decided to consider the MNLF as the legitimate representative of Muslims in Southern Philippines, being a signatory to the Tripoli Agreement.

In the 15th ICFM held in Sana’a, Yemen in December 1984, the MNLF status was enhanced from being a ‘legitimate representative’ to that of a ‘sole legitimate representative’ of the Bangsamoro people.

During the Fifth OIC Summit held in Kuwait in January 1987, the MNLF Chairman participated in the signing of the so-called Jeddah Accord between the MNLF and the Philippine Government. The agreement called for the granting of full autonomy to the entire Bangsamoro Homeland of Mindanao, Basilan, Sulu, Tawi-Tawi and Palawan.

On September 2, 1996, the

Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) and the MNLF finally forged a Peace Accord, known as the GRP-MNLF Peace Agreement. Mediated by the OIC, this agreement was envisioned to bring much hope among Filipino Christians and Filipino Muslims in the process of finding a just and peaceful negotiated settlement to the centuries-old Bangsa Moro problem in Mindanao. A new mode of relationship was hoped to be effectively worked out among all the peoples in that part of the region.

The following year, the Félix Houphouët-Boigny Peace Prize was awarded to Nur Misuari, representing the MNLF, together with then President Fidel Ramos, representing the Philippine government, for their efforts in reaching the peace agreement signed on September 2, 1996, ending three decades of civil war.

THIRTEEN YEARS OF THE GRP-MNLF FINAL PEACE AGREEMENT

When Chairman Misuari signed the Final Peace Agreement (FPA) with the Philippine Government in 1996, perhaps he did not foresee that there would be sporadic and at times acute encounters in the next ten years between the MNLF and the AFP in Jolo; that he, being a signatory to the FPA, would be under arrest facing

rebellion charges; that the MNLF leaders and commanders would be divided and have tense relations among themselves; that the GRP and MNLF will have different positions on the implementation of the Final Peace Agreement; that formal GRP-MNLF mechanisms for negotiating and monitoring the full implementation of the FPA would be rendered irrelevant; and that the main focus of the Southern Philippines peace process would be the negotiations between the GRP and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).

CHALLENGES TO HIS LEADERSHIP

The first time Nur Misuari experienced a challenge to his leadership was on September 21, 1977 when 57 officers, led by the Kutawato Revolutionary Committee (KRC), signed a petition addressed to the OIC and the Muslim World League (MWL) calling for his ouster as Chairman of the MNLF and recognizing Hashim Salamat as the new leader. This was further aggravated when on December 26 in Jeddah, Hashim Salamat announced an 'Instrument of Takeover' of the MNLF leadership, a move supported by traditional leaders such as Rashid Lucman, Domacao Alonto and Salipada Pendatun. Nur Misuari countered this move by expelling Hashim and charging him with treason. Arab supporters were equally divided:

Egypt supported Hashim while Libya leaned towards Misuari. Mediation by the OIC and MWL failed. Not wishing to be used by the traditional politicians, Hashim transferred to Cairo and went on to form the 'new MNLF,' eventually called the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).

The second time Nur's leadership was challenged was in 1982, when Dimasangkay Pundato broke away from Nur Misuari and formed the MNLF Reformed Group. Pundato went to the extent of seeking support from the United States for a peaceful settlement of the Mindanao conflict.

The third time was in April 2001, when Farouk Hussein and the other members of the MNLF Council of 15, 'retired' Nur Misuari as chairman of the MNLF, making him instead 'chairman emeritus.' In explaining the reason for the ouster, Hussein said "We want to move forward. With Misuari, we are not moving an inch. He's given enough time but what has he done? We have nothing personal against the man. The issue is, shall we allow peace to be held hostage by one man, by his incompetence, by his failure? Whatever his hand touches turns to failure!"

A few weeks later, the Philippine Government stripped Nur of the chairmanship of the

Southern Philippines Council for Peace and Development (SPCPD), an interim body created under the FPA to promote and accelerate development efforts in the so-called Special Zone of Peace and Development (SZOPAD) covering 14 provinces of Mindanao. Beaten, Nur Misuari sought refuge in his hometown. This attempt to completely marginalize and exclude Nur led to a violent reaction. Nur's supporters engaged in armed hostilities against government forces in Jolo and Zamboanga City in November 2001. Following the failure of this uprising, Nur fled to Malaysia, but he was arrested by Malaysian authorities, extradited to the Philippines and later incarcerated in Sta. Rosa, Laguna for charges of rebellion.

REAFFIRMATION OF HIS LEADERSHIP

It has been written about that imprisonment would weaken a man's heart and shatter his resolve. But "what is known universally is that a stint in jail does not damage revolutionary leaders who frequently grow in stature under difficult circumstances." Indeed Nur's experience in jail has strengthened his character as a leader.

This was demonstrated in February 2006 when the MNLF Council of 15 self-liquidated and recognized Nur Misuari as the

undisputed leader of the MNLF. Muslimin Sema, former MNLF Secretary General and now Mayor of Cotabato City, said on such an occasion that:

Nur Misuari is indispensable in the search for peace in Mindanao and it is also the clamor of the Muslim people that Nur Misuari lead the MNLF again.

The first thing we will do now is to put the MNLF as one organization and remove all the problems that beset the MNLF organization, and get our act together and search for peace. We decided to bring back the MNLF again as one organization under one leadership.

This was further proven when Article 5 of the resolutions passed during the 33rd Session of the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers (ICFM) held in Baku, Republic of Azerbaijan, in June 2006, called for “an urgent high level tripartite meeting between the OIC, the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP), and the MNLF to be held in Jeddah, as soon as practicable in 2006, to review the implementation of the 1996 peace agreement, and assess the progress made, along with the obstacles facing its full implementation.” The tripartite

meeting was also mandated “to draw up modalities for a new Joint Monitoring Committee to observe the implementation of the peace treaty and verify complaints in this regard and facilitate agreed solutions to such complaints.”

In November 2007, Misuari was invited to attend the first OIC-GRP-MNLF Tripartite Meeting held in Saudi Arabia to review the implementation of the 1996 GRP-MILF Final Peace Agreement. While the Philippine court allowed him to attend the meeting, it required that Saudi Arabia issue a sovereign guarantee that Nur would return to the Philippines immediately after the meeting. Since no sovereign guarantee was issued, Nur was not permitted to attend this meeting.

Other significant events indicated the imperative for the GRP to free Nur Misuari. On June 18, 2008, the Makati Regional Trial Court lifted the requirement for sovereign guarantee and allowed MNLF Chairman Misuari to attend the ICFM meeting in Kampala, Uganda. Thereafter, he proceeded to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for a follow-up meeting with OIC officials and to confer with Saudi officialdom.

On July 26, 2008, thousands of members of the MNLF from different areas in Mindanao attended the first Bangsamoro-Highlanders National Peace

Summit at the Patadon Elementary School in Patadon village, with Misuari as speaker. During the summit, Datu Jamil Karutin Usman, chair of the Kidapawan City State Revolutionary Committee of the MNLF said that “Misuari is the ‘unifying factor’ among the MNLF members, especially since the organization is experiencing some leadership problems. We still look up to him as our leader. For us at the MNLF, there is no other leader, except him.” The summit hoped to unify all MNLF forces from all over Mindanao.

MNLF members from Davao del Sur, Davao City, Cotabato City, and Marawi City, on board big trucks, arrived in Patadon to attend the summit. Participants also included indigenous peoples from Bukidnon and North Cotabato.

In March 2009 Misuari represented the MNLF - in the presence of other MNLF factions - during the 3rd Session of the OIC-GRP-MNLF Tripartite Meeting held in Manila and made an appeal to “break this cycle of war”:

... (S)earch your conscience and .. make a resolution to break the cycle of terror and war in our Homeland ... This is our last chance. If we will not succeed in these peace talks, if we will not be able to produce anything

positive, then it will leave us with no other choice but to take a departure from this Formula. And probably we will return back to our original intention of seeking independence for our people. This is the message I wanted to convey to you for your guidance so that you will not misunderstand us.

Now I ask you, dear brothers and sisters, please let us break this cycle of war. Let us break the cycle of tragedy and misery. The Philippine government has no right to impose this war on us and on our innocent people ...

I am appealing to you, please let us work together. Let us produce good results here. And let us once again break this cycle of tragedy, of misery in our Homeland.

Otherwise the MNLF will be left with no choice but to seek other means of resolving the problem.

Despite his experience of incarceration, Misuari continued to hope that things will turn out all right. In fact, according to him all is not lost. “If there’s one good thing that has happened since 1996, it is that the alleged abrogation by the government of the peace agreement finally crystallized one thing: that indeed the government is not that interested in hearing us out. I never regretted anything. As a matter of fact, we need this crystallization so we won’t be mesmerized again by their false promises.”

The hills are farthest from Nur’s mind right now. After emerging from his seclusion in Jolo, Nur Misuari went to see his children in the Middle East, where they are studying. Misuari has nine children by two of his four wives

(one of whom, Desdemona, died in 1987). At that time, the youngest was a 14-year-old girl, who, upon hearing a radio broadcast once that severely criticized her father, remarked: “Father, you better go to war.” Nur said he just smiled at her and said: “You don’t understand what war is like.”

Nur asserted that he is not bothered by what history will say about him. “My only concern is that I be able to fulfill my pledges to my people. I want them to have a good life. I want to enhance the quality of life of my people. I want to see them free, as free as any people in the world. I want to stop their oppression, exploitation and repression. We want our children to grow healthy and in an atmosphere of freedom, without fear and intimidation. This is my commitment to our people. And I hope some people will not begrudge us for doing something to achieve that.”

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***Hadji Ahmad Waliyun
Sakaluran***

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According to Hadji Ahmad, reform among the ulama is crucial and key to economic progress among Muslims the world over. “Even with all the technological and modern advancements to aid business, but if we refuse to adapt and use the modern inventions, the Muslims will not progress,” he asserts.

THE POLITICAL AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONTEXT: ZAMBOANGA PENINSULA, ITS ECONOMY, CULTURE AND POLITICS

Lying in the southwestern part of the country and bounded on the north and west by Sulu sea, on the south by Celebes sea, and on the east by the Lanao provinces, the present three provinces of Zamboangas and the City of Zamboanga have always been a contested territory.

Once Moro-controlled during its prehistory, the area was colonized and removed from the Sulu and Maguinadanao sultanates by the Spanish colonial government in the 1700s. It became a unitary Zamboanga province administered separately from the Moro province, and was officially made part of the Philippine colonial republic during the American period in the 1900s. In contemporary administrative parlance of the Republic of the Philippines, it is known as the Region IX of Western Mindanao or the ZamPen (Zamboanga peninsula) region.

Before the height of conflict in the 1970s, the peninsular region

has generally enjoyed peace where Muslim and Christian families used to live harmoniously together as neighbors. Especially among the urban elite and in some rural farming communities of mixed Muslim and Christian populations, the cultural identity as *Zamboanguenos* or *A-a min Sambuwangan* was more pronounced prior to that period; currently, the religious and ethnic differences threaten to divide the people. With the advent of conflicts in the Basilan and Sulu islands in the 1970s and as a result of massive migration from conflict-affected areas, religious intolerance that lead to clashes started being felt especially in areas where Muslim and Christian residents live. (Alojamiento, Arquiza, et.al 2004)

‘The antagonism ranges from the milder “cold wars” characterized by mutual distrust, biases and prejudice (discriminations) in workplaces, schools, and communities; to the more aggressive and violent armed confrontation between government forces and the insurgent groups where civilians are often caught in the crossfire.

The embers of so-called Muslim-Christian intolerance and

distrust have been fanned anew with the signing of the peace agreement in 1996, and made worse by the dispute over Zamboanga City and other provinces in the region as being included in the newly autonomous region of ARMM, which was resolved in a referendum done for the purpose. Recently, the controversial provisions of the Memorandum of Agreement on Ancestral Domain (MOA-AD) between government and the MILF again revived the animosity and inflamed the local government when some *barangays* of Zamboanga City were included under Category B of the Bangsamoro Juridical Entity (BJE), and defined as conflict-affected areas (CAA) and as potential recipients of socio-economic and humanitarian rehabilitation packages.

Today, the region—especially its urban centers—has become a proverbial demographic ‘salad bowl’ of ethnic and cultural groups. Migrant Christianized ethnic groupings of the Bisaya and Ilonggos from the Visayan and Panay islands have become the majority, followed by the indigenous and Moro population of old Zamboanga that have been Christianized, and the peninsular *meztisos* who were ‘Hispanized’ through inter-marriages with the insular Spaniards that are collectively called the Chabacanos. Adding to the growing population of

Christian settlers are trickles of other Christian ethnic groups from Luzon and other parts of mainland Mindanao that were resettled; some were even forcibly transferred (i.e. in the case of penal colonies in San Ramon in Zamboanga City and agricultural concessions and farming colonies in Basilan province) and lured to stay by government’s resettlement program in agricultural colonies beginning the colonial times to the present.

Marginalized in their own territories are the indigenous ethnic tribes who have remained unconverted to either Catholicism or Islam, namely, the remnant Subanon and Higaunon ethnics. Also among these marginalized ethnic communities are the pre-dominantly Muslim Sama Bangingi and the other Islamized communities, with a sizeable population remaining animists and practicing an indigenized form of Islam. These include the Yakans and the Kalibugan, the latter being a unique ethnic mixture of Sama (Moro) and indigenous Subanon; and the sea-faring and semi-nomadic Sama Dilaut (commonly known as Bajaus, they are like the Subanons and Sama Bangingi who were believed to be aboriginal inhabitants of Zamboanga’s seas). Other Muslim ethnic communities that have in time joined to populate the region are the migrants from the Sulus, including the Tausug, and the Samas of Sulu and Tawi-

tawi.

Because of its history of contact with the booming trade and maritime economy of the pre-hispanic Sulu Zone, and its consequent adaptation to Moro-Malayu culture, Zamboanga peninsula’s economic activities remain chiefly agricultural and partly industrial (i.e. canning factories, oil refinery and agricultural processing). However, such is complemented by lucrative maritime and sea-based trading activities, mostly self-instituting and even independent of the Manila government’s control. The barter trading activities among the neighboring Malayan cities of Tawaw, Kota Kinabalu, Sempurna and the rest of Sabah (North Borneo) of Malaysia, and the continued flow of economic exchanges with the northern provinces of Indonesia and Brunei Darussalam, have earned for the region its reputation of being the Philippines’ southern ‘backdoor’.

HADJIAHMAD SAKALURAN: TRADER AND LEADER

Hadji Ahmad Sakaluran traces his genealogical roots to the fifth generation beginning from the reign of Sama patriarch, Panglima Dulla of Pati-an, Sulu who consistently fought the oppressive Sultan and led his people to rebel against the sultanate’s control over the Sama’s traditional economic activities and governance of

his *Banuwa*, which consists of Sinama-speaking coastal dwellers in Sulu. The Panglima Dulla was eventually beheaded in the town square by the Spaniards.

“Our father is an elder son of the Amil. Sakaluran and Amil are my ancestors. I am the youngest of the children. The Panglima Indanan is the other side of my clan. They are from Daungdung in Sulu and here is where the Amil line came from. Because they traditionally inhabited the seaside and therefore were considered Tau higad (coastal dwellers) or Sama, they were actually descended from Tausug datus, belonging to Tausug elite. They were warriors. The Amilasan was a rajah tumanggung [defense minister] of the Sakaluran of my maternal side.”

Almost unknown by his Tausug ancestry and obscure origin in Sulu, Datu Sakaluran is considered the pioneer and first leader of the Sama Bangingi in Sacol, just as the other Sama Bangingi traditional clans and leaders such as Panglima Taupan and Hadji Nuno are known to have led their people in Taluksangay, as well as Datu Mandi of the pueblo of olden day *Sambuwaran* (or the present-day Zamboanga peninsula). The Sakaluran ancestors were originally from Pati-an in Sulu, but they migrated to Sacol island because they refused to pay homage to the Sultan who was oppressive. The Bangingi

had their own form of governance and hereditary leadership was vested on the *karatuan* (datuship) and the *kabanuwahan* (clan-based communities). (see also Tan, 2005)

The Sakalurans and Amils have since led in sea-based economic activities called *pagbugsay* (maritime trading) and *pagusaha dagat* (fishing and shipping), that tend more towards traditional barter trading that locals in the area engage in.

Among those of his generation, Pah Hadji Ahmad proudly claimed that he and all of his brothers were ‘smugglers’. Pah Hadji himself, in his ‘smuggling’ days, ventured as far north as Ilocos Norte and had various economic interests in Albay and Batangas.

Aside from fishing, the Sama ancestors’ traditional economic activities included barter trading. “But the government and Europeans called us pirates,” He lamented. Sakaluran opined that maritime trading activities that did not pass through government’s legal processes were outlawed. However, such has been the way of the Sama forefathers. These were the economic activities they knew of, whose legal protocols were unwritten pacts that the local lords and masters of the seas respected and defended with their lives.

Pah Hadji Ahmad explains his point further:

It really depends on whose perspective we view things from. We are called terrorists, but who is the real terrorist? Isn’t it those who deprive people of legitimate occupation and means to survive? Isn’t it those who try to control resources and claim what is not theirs? Why do they call us pirates and terrorists? To them we are terrorists, because we assert our self-determination and freedom to engage in economic activities where our forefathers used to do. We are declared outlaw because we refuse to submit to their [foreign] control and do not recognize their [foreign] ways of doing things.

EMERGENCE AS A LOCAL BUSINESSMAN

Hadji Ahmad Waliyun Sakaluran was initiated into the trading business when, as a ten-year old, he started accompanying his brother and was conscripted as one of ‘the men’ of the yellow-and-green ‘lansa’ that plied the route from Zamboanga to Sandakan and vice versa. Just like the adult members of the crew, he would have his own portion of tanning bark hoisted unto his young shoulders that the motor vessel carried from Tawaw and Semporna in Sabah to the back

doors of the south in Mindanao. He was treated equally as the rest of the working men and earned his wage like everyone else.

Later in 1961, only two years into college, he had acquired his first outrigger speedboat. At the peak of his trading career, as it was for every Moro trader at the time, he was tagged by the local maritime authority (i.e. then called the RASAC) as an ‘outlaw’ and his wares as ‘contraband’. When not ferrying cases upon cases of tobacco from North Borneo to southwestern Mindanao, he was delivering fish up to northeastern Mindanao, to Butuan, in his own motorized launch. The fishing boat, stocked with mostly tuna and yellow fin that fetched a price of 25 centavos per kilo, would, for each trip, haul out at least 30,000 tons of fresh fish. A minimum capital of Php5,000 would then turn in a profit of Php5,000 to Php8,000. During the 1960s, that amount was already quite a fortune.

When the business was not yet heard of, on the side Hadji Ahmad perhaps pioneered the ‘money changer’ (i.e. foreign currency exchange) business venture. Supplying U.S. dollars and other foreign currencies from Luzon up north to as far south as Bubuan, Borneo and Indonesia, he was mostly sought out by local and regional businessmen for their currency exchange needs. To date, the family of Hadji Ahmad

Sakaluran owns at least 70% of the money changer outlets in Ermita, Manila and a number of stations in Zamboanga City. He also recently ventured into pawnbroking.

He also ventured into coconut and copra business that brought him to the shores of Celebes, from the Sanguir to Manado, from Sarangani to Maruri. On the return journey, he would take home famous perfume brands, silk and textiles, processed food, and chinaware from Sandakan and the Sabahan territories, which were much preferred among the locals than dry goods and consumer goods from Manila. This was the start of his barter-trading activities.

During the Martial Law regime of then President Ferdinand Marcos, Muslim traders, legitimate or not, were all typecast as ‘lawless’ and smugglers. Early on in his barter trading business, twice he had met serious casualties at sea when his outrigger speedboats were apprehended by the RASAC. All his goods were confiscated and the trader had to start all over again. Bent on improving his speed and capacity to defy the pursuing authorities at sea, Pah Hadji Ahmad went to Manila to purchase faster and more sea-worthy craft. He used these to continue with his tariff-free trading and found a good investment in buying cigarettes from Sandakan. A three- to seven-day sailing trip would have the speedboats carrying 60 to 80 cases

of blueseal (‘imported’) cigarettes.

But Moro barter traders were vulnerable not only to the marauding of “fellow” pirates and the pillaging of tax-exacting RASAC authorities, but also to intimidation from the armed elements that prowled the Sulu seas. There would be instances when his speedboats were apprehended by elements of the MNLF patrolling the Sulu and Celebes seas. It had been on necessity rather than choice that would later compel Hadji Ahmad to be more hospitable rather than resistant, friendly rather than hostile, to local revolutionary leaders if he were to have the guarantee that his business were to survive in Sulu’s waters.

PEACE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: A NEW ADVOCACY

For Hadji Ahmad, doing business in Mindanao in the midst of war and conflict has always been a constant battle. However, the ‘new’ frontier of war for most Muslim businessmen has been overcoming the challenges and obstacles in penetrating the market and convincing the business community of the Muslims’ capacity and confidence in business and entrepreneurship.

“We are always branded as doing something against the law because we refuse to submit to government control and regulation.

Why must we, when this has been the economic activity handed down by our ancestors to us? Why should somebody from Luzon or the Visayas dictate to us what to do here in Mindanao and Sulu? Even before the Philippine Republic was born, the Moros had established an advanced society with booming economic and political activities. Why should a newly-born republic dictate on the first and more mature nation?" he asked.

Furthermore, not a few mainstream business people are aware and appreciative of the innovation in Hadji Ahmad's way of doing business that belies the negative stereotyping often hurled at traditional Moro businessmen. Many of his fellow businessmen, including his own relatives and close friends, consider Hadji Ahmad as an exemplary success story of a Muslim businessman because he has not only triumphed in beating the odds of doing business despite the conflict and war situation, but moreso because he has managed to mainstream himself and keep his business above board and 'legal' and continues to inspire other Muslim businessmen to do the same.

"That has been since barter trading became no longer lucrative. I decided to adapt to the changes of modern times. I convinced my nephew [Hji Wahab], who has been one of the pioneers and was most successful in really making

good in the barter business, to go legal. And he did. He started investing [in an] ice-plant and real estate, while I branched out to shipping and other businesses, and I applied for a government permit to operate my [money changer and pawnshop] businesses.

"I have been a businessman since the 1950s and the way I see it, Muslim businessmen lack management skills. Even though they may do good in business and start building capital and acquiring some wealth, these are all wasted and eventually they lose everything because of lack of business acumen. Among us Muslims, when business is doing good, we start buying things and acquiring a wealthy lifestyle, unlike the Chinese who keep on saving when surpluses accrue and profit increases. The Chinese would invest back their profit to make their capital bigger. We can learn a lot from them."

Perspectives on Peace and progress in Mindanao and Sulu

For Hadji Ahmad Sakaluran, the reality of conflict and the Moro rebellion in the south, highlighted by the birth of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) in the late sixties, has become part of his personal story as he learned to survive in his trade in very turbulent times. He shares his views on the MNLF and its efforts at addressing the Moro

problem thus:

...[L]ike most Moros, I believe 99% of us all, we did sympathize with the MNLF struggle and expected a lot from them especially when they signed the Peace agreement in 1996. [However] I wish to express my disappointment that they were not able to harness the opportunity to reconstruct the Moro society and bring progress to our stunted economic base, let alone lead in building the capacity of our people for self-governance.

I am also disappointed with government who seems not very sincere in fulfilling its side of the bargain by not fully implementing RA 9054. The Regional Autonomous Government (RAG) did not exercise fiscal autonomy. It was at the mercy of the Philippine [national] government for budgetary allotment. How can it perform its mandate and implement its own plans if it has no control over its revenues and resources? The budgetary allocation and resources are tiyutupung-tupung or inequitably regulated through governmental mechanism[s] such as the SPCPD, SZOPAD and

ARMM Social Fund which is nothing but a 'softening' agent to extend GOP political [and sometimes military] intervention on autonomous Moro territories.

As far as Hadji Ahmad is concerned, the MNLF also takes an equal share of the blame for the persistent poverty and underdevelopment in Muslim Mindanao today. "The bickering factions of leadership were busy over their political positioning in the RAG, consequently wasting precious time", he observed.

"The worst thing that could happen to a people," he lamented, "is when business leaders turn into politicians and warlords."

The Moro business community, being the economic backbone of progress in Mindanao, had been optimistic at first. "From the beginning we were expecting more from the 1996 peace agreement. As a businessman, my concern is progress. I think the MNLF did not take full advantage of the lull and the resources made available to us for social rehabilitation and to pave the road to progress. The development it promised did not happen. The so-called peace did not happen. How can we develop if there is no peace?"

Hadji Ahmad offers his insights regarding the state's attempts to bring development to

Mindanao thus:

As [a] concession in the Tripoli Agreement [of 1979], the Marcos government offered to legalize and develop the barter trading industry, and even promised more economic development in the south. I was once a president of the Barter Traders in 1981 for three years, we were all expecting that the Philippine government would bring in progress to the Moro people by doing not only barter trading but also investing in other industries to start-up our economic progress. But the barter trading turned out a mere token and a 'band-aid' [solution] just to appease us Muslims. There was no political will on the part of government to really invest in bringing progress to our land. It became just a show-window of Marcos for claiming he has arrested the conflict in the south, a show-window to attract foreign aid.

Now here comes the signing of the 1996 Peace agreement, the BIMP-EAGA (i.e. Brunei-Indonesia-Malaysia Prosperity and East Asia Growth Area) was again

broached as an economic potential for reconstructing the Moro areas and refurbishing capital into war torn provinces. I was not directly part of the BIMP-EAGA but I used to be active in the business forums expecting something that might materialize. In these dialogues I always pose the challenge that how may we attract partners from Malaysia, Brunei and Indonesia if we do not have anything to offer? Regional economic partners would be expecting us to have financial access to the outside for capital assistance. But we do not have such access. So what happened after the Forums? Nothing. In fact there had been a move to create the Muslim Chamber of Commerce. I became part of that initially. But later I chose to distance myself as I realized that we as a Muslim business community, they have nothing to offer us.

PEACE AS HIS PERSONAL CAUSE

Although not personally involved with the cause of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) nor the MNLF, Hadji Ahmad appreciates the initiatives

of the revolutionary movements, if only to honor the good name of his ancestors. “I consider the MILF as a continuation of the Moro struggle from the colonial era. When my forefather Datu Sakaluran signed the Zamboanga Declaration, I also take that as a responsibility to reclaim his cause,” He explained.

The role of Datu Sakaluran in signing the Zamboanga Declaration is well-placed in Moro history and remembered by the Moro freedom fighters themselves. Datu Sakaluran, who lived during the American period, was among the elite Moro leaders and datus who petitioned the US Congress in 1924 demanding independence of the Moro province. That historic document was to be stamped in Moro history as the Zamboanga Declaration of 1924, with other Mindanao datus and rulers serving as signatories. Later, this had become one of the important bases of the MILF’s claim to self-rule and the issuance of the famous post 9-11 letter of Ustadz Hashim Salamat to US President George Bush before the former passed on.

Producing a photocopy of the declaration, Pah Hadji elaborated that “In this declaration, the Moro leaders from Zamboanga, Lanao, Maguindanao and the peninsula demanded that US government should retain the Moro province under its wings and give it separate independence from the Filipino Christian nation. They

did not demand for the right to vote in Congress as [an] American protectorate, but that after 50 years under American tutelage, there was to be a referendum on whether or not the Moro Province wanted to be independent from the US. And that 50 years was supposedly in [the] 1970s [which was] what the MILF wanted to remind the Bush administration.”

“If there should be written any leadership story about me, I want that emphasized. I wish to be remembered as being devoted and faithful to what my forebears had been. That means I have fulfilled my legacy in not putting my ancestors’ name to naught. If I may have the honor, I wish to reclaim that cause.” he declared.

INVESTING IN ALTERNATIVE MORO POLITICS: SAKALURAN’S CIVIL SOCIETY INVOLVEMENT IN PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT

Hadji Ahmad’s leadership is recognized among Muslims as well as among other faith communities when he served as chairman of the Muslim peace organization, SALAM Peace Foundation, founded in the early 1990s by young Moro professionals and religious intellectuals in the Zamboanga and Basilan peninsulas. Through SALAM-Peace, Hadji Ahmad had been actively involved as

an interfaith leader and in inter-religious dialogues organized by counterpart Christian organizations. On the other hand, he had also been very visible in inter-cultural dialogue activities and intra-religious forums among Muslims that Salam and other Muslim civil society organizations have helped organize to promote religious tolerance among Muslims in the city and the region.

His more recent project is the production of a training module on Islamic Leadership and Governance that he and his nephew, Alih Sakaluran Aiyub, worked on. He considers this project to be very relevant to the present efforts to bridge differences among the Muslims who come from varying sects or schools of thought, and to mainstream the Muslims’ contribution to peace work. “We wish to pilot this module locally among the ulama and the academic people.” Supportive of the works of young Muslim academics, Hadji Ahmad believes that there is promise among the young Moro intellectuals who are exposed to both religious and secular perspectives in crafting much needed reform strategies.

RESPONDING TO A LEADERSHIP CALL: THE SIEGE OF CABATANGAN

It was during Holy Ramadhan when the Cabatangan Complex in Zamboanga City

- which serves as the MNLF's satellite office - became the site of a fierce firefight between the Philippine military and the MNLF integrees loyal to Prof. Nur Misuari.

One early morning in November 2001, shortly after Muslim homes had partaken of the *sahur* meal, a spate of gunfire and mortar shelling shook the surrounding silence, broken only by the intrepid cry of the adhan [Muslim call to prayer] signaling the start of fasting and the pealing bells from the cathedral, calling the Christian faithful to say the Angelus and morning rosary in the largely Christian-populated Zamboanga City. The Philippine military attacked the complex purportedly to 'follow higher orders' to forcibly flush out the MNLF "renegades" holed in there. The orders came from then President Joseph Estrada who had earlier declared an all-out war on Muslim Mindanao and labeled Prof. Nur Misuari a renegade after he publicly denounced the peace agreement.

The military siege of Cabatangan alarmed other MNLF members outside the complex and their civilian relatives living in its vicinity. Provoked and agitated, they decided to come to the rescue of the cornered integree-soldiers and resorted to a desperate attempt to divert and stop the ongoing military offensive by staging a

hostage drama, taking civilians in nearby *barangays* Sta Maria and Pasonanca. The drama turned into reality when the military refused to de-escalate their campaign; thus, the fateful incident is most remembered as one of the darkest days in contemporary Zamboanga history.

Hadji Ahmad decided to head a delegation of local Muslim leaders and troop to the bishop's palace to dialogue with their Christian counterpart and with the government and military men. They pleaded for a stand-down and asked for an immediate end to the military siege of the complex, even as they negotiated for a safe-conduct pass so that the MNLF soldiers could peacefully retreat without bloodshed. Going against his instincts as a businessman, he was at that point only wholly Muslim and did what was ethically and morally obligated of a *botang matto'a*, a traditional elder, entrusted by the *pusaka* of stewardship, to stand for the good and welfare of his community both in crisis and prosperity.

Their delegation's final request was that volunteers be allowed to enter the complex to attend to the wounded and deliver food to the MNLF militia who were then fasting when the attack ensued, as they must have been fighting for the past two or three days without break. However, the military only acceded to the request

for provisions, to be delivered by the army to the complex.

The Muslim and Christian leaders found out later that the military did pursue their campaign without abatement. This resulted in the death of twelve MNLF soldiers, whom the military referred to as 'brigands.' Hadji Ahmad supervised the claiming of their remains, paid for their funeral services, and provided for their proper Muslim burial.

HADJI AHMAD AS AN ISLAMIC INTELLECTUAL

Hadji Ahmad Sakaluran is well-versed not only in his people's history and his clan's struggle for economic independence and self-sufficiency. His knowledge of Islam, its divine teachings, and its history qualifies him to be perhaps one of the more articulate and widely read Muslim intellectuals of his time.

Pah Hadji Ahmad's insights on the leadership of the *ulama* have also become a repeated plea for reform within the religious leadership, and he remains hopeful for the renaissance of Islam in Mindanao.

"I have not finished college, and I have not gone to *madrassa* or had formal education on Islamic knowledge." In 1961, he had left the Zamboanga A.E. Colleges after only two years because, like

many in his generation, he lacked the financial means to sustain his studies.

“[But] education was and is very important to me”. He stressed, “Knowledge is liberating”. Despite not having finished any college degree, his knowledge about world affairs and generally about Islam and other religions is very broad and deep.

“I read a lot,” he enthused. He also updates himself in world affairs as well as in general knowledge about Islam through interaction and discussions in forums. “I sometimes get discouraged that in many of the family gatherings I get invited to, we frequently get busy and make a lot of fuss about food and eating. I want to go to affairs where people engage in intellectual discussions and sharing of ideas”.

Hadji Ahmad’s extreme interest in the written word has led him to study different Islamic perspectives. He loves to compare and learn from each of the four *mashabs* or Islamic schools of thought.

“Whatever is good in each, I adopt and take as my own. If we look at the *ulama* of today, I think their knowledge is already obsolete.... because they refuse to learn from different schools or to look from perspectives other than their own”, he elaborated.

INSIGHTS ON ISLAM AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

In the old days, the *kahadjian* were considered not only as well-traveled but also as religious intellectuals and therefore authorities on Islamic knowledge and international affairs. Nowadays, with the growing number of Muslims (the elite, professionals, intellectuals, and ordinary skilled laborers) having gone overseas (especially to the Middle East) for schooling, employment, or other purposes, a new sector of intellectual leaders has emerged. They are the *ulama* or religious learned, and have replaced the traditional *kahadjian* as sources of Islamic wisdom and knowledge about the world.

Pah Hadji Ahmad Sakaluran is among the few remaining *hadji* who are respected for their wisdom and leadership that one might still consider him as representative of the traditional intellectual leaders among the *kahadjian*, one who is well-informed and articulate about Islam and Muslim world affairs. He is open of his critique of the failed leadership of the modern-day Muslim intellectuals, the *ulama*:

The ulama do not care about the dunya or worldly existence as they always think of the ahirat, the hereafter. If that's the case, they are dividing

God's creation into the hereafter which is for Muslims and the worldly for the Christian [and other faith] communities. In some khutbah (Friday sermons) the ulama claim that whatever the other faith communities will do and acquire in terms of modernity and progress would not be blessed. Only the Muslims would be blessed. If such is the case, then what of the inventions of the west that have also brought progress to us? For example, the discovery of electricity and invention of electric light by Thomas Alva Edison, hasn't it benefited us Muslims, too?

According to Hadji Ahmad, reform among the *ulama* is crucial and key to economic progress among Muslims the world over. “Even with all the technological and modern advancements to aid business, but if we refuse to adapt and use the modern inventions, the Muslims will not progress,” he asserts.

He then continues by citing the case of Saudi Arabia, a country that is looked upon by Muslims in the Philippines as a model of Islam and of Muslim practice.

I may not necessarily agree with that as many Muslims also do not. Yet for the sake

of argument, I can say that even Saudi [Arabia] has been succumbing to and adopting to change. If you look at some universities in Saudi, or big companies like ARAMCO, ARAMCO is actually a state within a state. It is not bound by the Saudi law (shari'a), because it is Wahabism that reigns and imposes on the Saudis. With [the] Wahabi [framework], there would be no technology, no economic progress, because wahabism is suspicious of anything western and modern. The Saudi economy would collapse. The clerics would declare anything new [or] modern and any innovation as not permissible.

What seems promising is Abdullah seeming to be exhibiting more open-minded policy than his predecessor, King Fahd. That's why according to Hassan Khalifa, what has been happening in Saudi, the fatwa of the ulama, is actually intellectual terrorism, because there is no freedom of thought. Everything is controlled by the religious elite - the ulama - who insist on a narrow interpretation of the divine teachings. We are luckier because we have a critical civil society and a promising breed of secular Moro intellectuals like you in the academe. According to Adel Tamano [a young Muslim politician and academic leader

who recently spoke in a university graduation], the level of society depends on the level of people's knowledge.

He openly expresses his distrust over wahabi conservatism, arguing that it is inherent for human beings not to follow something that is not good. "As the Qur'an has promised, if it is not good, it will become obsolete and soon perish", he continued.

Manifesting his liberal and progressive leanings, he claims that he does not belong to any [Islamic] school of thought. Instead, he believes in all perspectives and is also critical of all. "I take whatever there is good in every school of thought and accept it and apply it in my life. I do not subscribe to any one of them blindly".

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