

AUTONOMY IN SOUTHERN PHILIPPINES DURING THE MARCOS ADMINISTRATION

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INTRODUCTION

Muslim Filipino society became gradually incorporated into the Philippine body politic during the American colonial regime. By then, the term "Moro Problem" had emerged. The search for "that method or form of administration" to effect the integration of the Muslims into the mainstream of Philippine society continued since the American regime up to the establishment of the Regional Governments in the South in 1977.

The situation in the Muslim South remains unstable in spite of the shift in the government's policy toward the Muslims from integration to autonomy since 1977. The search for a meaningful or "full autonomy" for the South is still going on up to the present. But throughout this search, the problem seems to be mainly treated as a problem of the underdeveloped Muslim communities. It is argued in this study that the autonomy policy of the government particularly during the Marcos administration failed to seriously consider the sense of nationality among the Muslim Filipinos (that is, the feeling of belonging to a community of culture distinct from the other segments of Philippine society).

This paper is focused on the autonomy issue in Southern Philippines during the Marcos administration. The term Muslim, Moro or Bangsamoro are interchangeably used in this paper in reference to Muslim Filipinos.

THE MOROS

The Moros in history refer to the thirteen (13) ethnolinguistic groups in the south. They are the *Tausug*, *Sama (Samal)* and *Badjao* in the Sulu Archipelago (including Tawi-Tawi), the coastal areas of Zamboanga Peninsula, South Palawan and Davao; the *Jama Mapun* of Cagayan de Tawi-Tawi and South Palawan; the *Palawanon (Palawani and Molbog)* of southern Palawan; the *Yakan* of Basilan Island; the *Kalibugan* of Zamboanga Peninsula; the *Maranao* of the Lanao provinces; the *Ilanun (Iranun)* of the coastal areas of Cotabato, Lanao del Sur and Zamboanga del Sur; the *Maguindanao* of Cotabato; the *Sangil* of South Cotabato and Davao del Sur; and the *Kalagan* of Davao. Today many Moros are residing in various parts of the Philippines including Metro Manila. Spanish and American colonial propaganda had infused derogatory connotations to the term Moro. Hence even some Muslim Filipinos would prefer not to be called Moros prior to the rise of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) in the early 1970s. They preferred to be identified with their ethnic identity (Tausug, Maranao, Maguindanao, etc.) or as "Muslims". Today, however, many Muslim Filipinos particularly those sympathetic to the MNLF cause prefer to be called Moros or Bangsamoro (Moro People or Moro Nation).

There are various estimates on the number of Muslim Filipinos. It is suggested that any figure should be taken as suggestive rather than definitive. The 1980 census figure is 2,504,232. The 1983 estimate of the then Ministry of Muslim Affairs was "around four (4) million." Cesar A. Majul estimates that there "were at least three million Muslim Filipinos in 1975"¹ and, at present, the Muslim population "is anywhere between 4.5 and 5.5 million."² The MNLF's 1987 estimate claims that out of a population of about 15 million in the South, "the Muslims are roughly 8 millions, the indigenous people 3 millions, and the remaining 4 millions are mostly Philippine settlers from Luzon and Visayas."³

Islam and indigenous traditions as embodied in *adat* (Customary Laws) constitute the basic foundation of the Moro cultural heritage. This heritage is the basis of their sense of nationality, that is, the feeling of belonging to a community of culture distinct from the other segments of Philippine society.

COLONIAL POLICIES

Warfare was the common denominator of the Spanish and American colonial policies towards the Moros. The Moros however, resolutely resisted Spanish attempts to colonize and Christianize them. They continued their resistance against western colonialism and imperialism up to the American period. The state of war between the Moros and the Spaniards started during the last quarter of the 16th century. For a period of almost three centuries, i.e., up to around the middle of the 19th century, the Moros remained politically supreme in their own dominions. This was partly due to the moral as well as material support they received from neighboring Muslim principalities and even the Dutch.

The Americans had generally adopted a dual policy towards the Moros. First, they used persuasion/co-optation and a "policy of attraction" particularly among the traditional elites by giving them economic concessions and guaranteeing non-interference in the religious and customary affairs of the Moros in exchange for their political allegiance to America. Second, brutal force was used against those who were not convinced of the "manifest destiny" of "America to train in the science of self-government" the people of Moroland.

The Moro's bloody and mainly successful resistance against Spain and her native allies for centuries was an effort to preserve their faith, traditions and culture. The same could be said of their resistance against American colonial rule. The state of war for centuries was, and still is, the primary source of antagonisms between the Moros and the rest of Philippine society.

Except for some traditional leaders who benefited personally out of the system of administration into which Moroland had been incorporated by the Americans, the Moros "were not enthusiastic about the Filipinization"⁴ of their homeland. To them, Filipinization meant that Christian Filipinos were placed in dominant administrative positions in their homeland. It also meant the appropriation of their fertile lands for the productive use

of American, Christian Filipino and even Chinese and Japanese settlers, while some of them were assigned to reservations. It could be said that many Moros welcomed the implementation of more health and infrastructure programs in their homeland. But the Moros were generally suspicious or resentful of the educational system established by the Americans because its curricular offerings were basically Western or Christian-oriented and completely devoid of Islamic and indigenous Moro traditions and culture.

INTEGRATION

Prior to the establishment of the Regional Autonomous Governments in Region IX and XII in the late 1970s, the thrust of the Philippine Republic's policies toward the Moros can be summarized by the word "integration". In the Philippine context, the term "integration" or "national integration" refers to the technique or measures pursued by the government to preserve and enhance the political unity of the various segments of Philippine society (majority and minorities) and the territorial integrity of the Philippines.

The government of the Republic of the Philippines' perception of the Moro Problem was spelled out in the report of the Special Committee created by Congress in 1954. The Special Committee was mandated to investigate the Moro Problem, especially with regard to peace and order in Mindanao and Sulu, and to recommend solutions to it. In its report, the Committee defined the Moro Problem as

. . . nothing but the problem of integrating into the Philippine body politic the Muslim population of the country, and the problem of inculcating into their minds that they are Filipinos and that this government is their own and that they are part of it.⁵

The whole integration policy of the government revolved around the philosophy that if more roads, bridges, schools, civic programs, health centers, and industrial plants were built in Moroland, and if the Moros were taught modern methods of farming, granted more scholarships for higher education in Manila and abroad or given more jobs in the government, then integration would be effected and the Moro Problem would be solved. While such measures have undoubtedly met relative success in some areas (like infrastructure, education, Moro participation in government), nevertheless they also served to heighten the awareness among the Moros of their being a distinct people from the rest of Philippine society.

The use of force, which has always been justified by the government as the answer to "secessionism," revives the Moros' memory of the policy of warfare which had been the hallmark of the Spanish and American colonial policies towards them. This leads the Moros to be suspicious of government's policies and programs in the south so much so that the Moros also resort to violence and to label the Philippine government as colonial as the Spanish and American colonial regimes.

A number of Moro leaders, most of them from the educated *datu*-rank and wealthy families of Moro politicians, supported the government policies and programs. As a consequence of their being elected or appointed to high offices in the government, they already felt "integrated" and they believed that the government and its integration programs could serve Moro interests. The vast majority of the Moros, however, were not generally enthusiastic about the integration policies of the government. The Moros, particularly those in the rural areas where the benefits of government programs have hardly reached, do not even have a real concept of being part of the Philippine nation. Many Moros think that integration would take away their religious and cultural identity. They also suspect that there is an intimate connection between the incorporation of their homeland into the Philippine body politic and the continuous influx of settlers from northern provinces to Moroland.⁶

Indeed, as far as inculcating into the minds of the Moros that they are Filipinos is concerned, integration was a failure. In 1961, Datu Ombra Amilbansa, a congressman from Sulu, introduced a bill in Congress requesting the Philippine government to grant independence to the province of Sulu. Following the Corregidor Incident or Jabiddah Massacre of March 1968, Datu Udtog Matalam (a former governor of Cotabato) announced on May 1, 1968 the establishment of the Muslim Independence Movement (MIM) which was later changed to Mindanao Independence Movement. Regardless of the motives of Datu Amilbansa and Datu Matalam, their actions revived memories of Muslim freedom and independence in the past, and their admirers spread beyond their close circle of followers. The same could be said of the MNLF when it was formally launched in 1972 by Nurullaji (Nur) Misuari.

AUTONOMY

When the late President Ferdinand E. Marcos declared Martial Law on September 21, 1972, he cited two major reasons: the existence of a communist insurgency and a Muslim secessionist movement in the south. It was soon after the proclamation of Martial Law that the MNLF came to prominence and became the successor of the MIM. Nur Misuari, one of the original founders of the MNLF, emerged as a new Muslim leader. The leaders of the MNLF were generally young, and armed with university or college education. They originated from different ethnic groups and social classes although some of them were related to the traditional leadership. The rise of the MNLF and its military arm, the Bangsa Moro Army (BMA), exemplified the level of dissatisfaction among the Moro youth with the kind of leadership so far provided by Moro politicians. The MNLF vigorously campaigned for "self-determination and independence" of the "Bangsamoro Homeland."

The government initially opted to fight and downplay the MNLF, and at the same time vigorously implemented programs and projects intended to uplift the socio-economic conditions in Muslim areas. Such policy of course was vigorously resisted by the MNLF. Government attempts to confiscate firearms were met with fierce resistance by the

Muslims. The most intense battle between government troops and the MNLF occurred in Jolo, the capital of Sulu province, on February 6, 1974 which resulted in the almost total destruction of the town.

Among others, the government established diplomatic relations with various Muslim countries to counteract the growing international support for the MNLF and recruited more Muslims into the foreign service and other government agencies. The government established the Barter Trades between Sulu and the North Bornean regions and the Presidential Task Force for the Reconstruction and Development of Mindanao, built Muslim communities in Metro Manila, authorized the use of Arabic language in schools that might need or desire it, granted more scholarships to young Muslims (including rebel returnees), established the Institute of Islamic Studies at the University of the Philippines, created the Philippine Amanah Bank, codified Muslim Personal Laws, recognized Muslim Holy Days and festivities, administered the annual Pilgrimage to Mecca, and negotiated for the surrender of some MNLF fighters.

The MNLF received (and continues to receive) substantial support (material and others) from various Muslim countries and organizations particularly in the Arab world. From 1972 onwards, the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) had the Muslim issue in southern Philippines in the agenda of its annual meeting and it had persistently "pressured" the Philippine government to take steps to resolve the issue. In January 1975 a government panel was sent to Jeddah, Saudi Arabia to meet with an MNLF panel led by Misuari. Nothing substantial came out of the talks. Towards the end of 1976, Mrs. Imelda R. Marcos embarked on a trip to Libya to see Colonel Qaddafi. The result of her visit was the formation of a government panel which negotiated with MNLF representatives in Tripoli. The negotiation resulted in the so-called Tripoli Agreement of December 23, 1976 where both sides agreed to a ceasefire and the granting of autonomy to thirteen (13) provinces⁷ in the South. Autonomy as a measure of self-rule or home-rule for the Muslim Filipinos was (and still is) considered by many as the just solution to the Moro question. However, subsequent negotiations failed to resolve the differences on the details of the autonomy formula. Charges and countercharges of insincerity were traded by both sides, with Misuari talking once more of "self-determination and independence" for Moroland.

On the basis of the "referendum-plebiscite" of April 17, 1977, the Philippine government by virtue of Presidential Decree No. 1618 issued on July 25, 1975 established two autonomous regions, namely, Region IX (Sulu, Tawi-Tawi, Basilan, Zamboanga del Norte, and Zamboanga del Sur) and Region XII (Lanao del Norte, Lanao del Sur, North Cotabato, Maguindanao, and Sultan Kudarat).⁸ The Marcos government insisted that this was an implementation of the Tripoli agreement. The MNLF (including the OIC) rejected the government's position and charged that Marcos had never intended to abide by the agreement and merely wanted to keep the Muslims divided.

The autonomous governments in Regions IX and XII were tasked with three basic functions: first, to enhance the attainment of peace and order conditions; second, to resettle displaced families of returnees and evacuees; and third, to accelerate the socio-economic

development of the area. While theoretically the Regional Autonomous Governments possess broad powers and functions, they are not allowed to act on matters within the jurisdiction and competence of the National Government which include:

- a. National defense and security;
- b. Foreign relations;
- c. Foreign trade;
- d. Currency, monetary affairs, foreign exchange, banking and quasi-banking, and external borrowing;
- e. Disposition, exploration, development, exploitation and utilization of all natural resources;
- f. Air and sea transport
- g. Postal matters and telecommunications;
- h. Customs and quarantine;
- i. Immigration and deportation;
- j. Citizenship and naturalization;
- k. National economic, social and educational planning; and
- l. General meeting.⁹

With respect to the other national line agencies, the autonomous governments shall:

- a. Oversee the activities and performance of the regional directors of the following ministries: health, education and culture, public highways, agriculture, social services and development, public works, human settlement, industry and youth and sports development;

The authority to oversee refers to the identification, planning, programming, prioritization, and implementations of socio-economic regional development projects funded out of national funds and the evaluation thereof from a regional development prospective;

- b. Be consulted in the assignment of regional directors of the aforementioned Ministries to positions in the Autonomous Region;
- c. Recommend to the Ministries concerned the transfer outside the Autonomous Region of any of the regional directors aforementioned; and
- d. To be informed by government-owned or controlled corporations in the region as to the status of the implementation of their programs and projects in the region.¹⁰

Many Muslims found themselves holding high political and administrative positions in the two autonomous regions. But few of them believed, including those holding office, that real autonomy had been attained. Most of the political appointees were well-known Marcos cronies. The executive and legislative bodies of the two regions could

not take action without the previous knowledge and consent of Marcos. There was no significant improvement in the economic condition of the Muslims in both regions and many of them remained as refugees, away from their ancestral lands and farms. The predominance of the military remained noticeable with the suspension of the *writ of habeas corpus* still in force.¹¹ The Regional Autonomous Governments in the south served as monitoring units in the area for the central administration particularly the Office of the President. Indeed the Marcos autonomy formula was mainly administrative, not political.

Among others, the autonomous governments helped the national government to neutralize the influence of the MNLF in Regions IX and XII, and passed resolutions to unify or streamline the diverse administrative machineries of the government agencies in the said Regions. They established Archives, Museum, Library, and Statistical and Monitoring Centers. They also established skills training centers and offered more scholarships for qualified youth, particularly members of the *Kabataang Barangays*. They built or assisted in the building of "impact and urgent projects" like cultural and multi-purpose centers, training and rehabilitation centers, sports complex, dry goods markets, water systems, school buildings, conference and barangay halls, and ports. The autonomous government officials were also quite busy entertaining both national and foreign dignitaries particularly visitors from Muslim countries or the OIC. The officials themselves had realized their limited power and authority. Prior to the end of the Marcos regime, some of them together with other concerned citizens from the two regions demanded a more "meaningful" form of autonomy.

PROBLEMS

From 1977 up to the present, the Moro struggle in the South has remained badly divided along political and regional or ethnic lines. Under such condition, the Marcos government found it very convenient to implement its own autonomy formula in accordance with the "constitutional process".¹² The irony is that while these "constitutional" and "democratic processes" are carried out smoothly, the problem they intend to solve remains, and is even reaching an alarming magnitude.

The word *Bangsa*, commonly used by the Moros themselves, means race, people, nation or state. Thus *Bangsamoro* can be interpreted to mean Moro race, Moro people or Moro nation. As far as the MNLF is concerned, *Bangsamoro* is the appropriate term to designate Moro nationality. It is meant to override the diverse ethno-linguistic groups and to invoke traditional courage, gallantry and dignity. The MNLF asserts that *Bangsamoro* as an identity is not exclusively for the Muslims but for the entire inhabitants of the South. However, its origin, growth and development as a concept are intimately linked with the struggle among Muslim Filipinos to achieve political unity and consensus as well as to protect and enhance their way of life.

The first issue of *Mahardika*, official organ of the MNLF, declared in 1972:

From this very moment there shall be no stressing the fact that one is a Tausug, a Samal, a Yakan, a Subanon, a Kalagan, a Maguindanao, a Maranao, or a Badjao. He is only Moro. Indeed, even those of other faith who have long established residence in the Bangsa Moro homeland and whose goodwill and sympathy are with the Bangsa Moro Revolution shall, for purposes of national identification, be considered Moros. In other words, the term Moro is a national concept that must be understood as all-embracing for all Bangsa Moro people within the length and breadth of our national boundaries.¹³

In a speech before the International Islamic Conference on "Prophet Muhammad and His Message" in London in 1980, Misuari asserted that:

The Bangsamoro people, including the non-Muslim inhabitants, belong to various tribes. But despite some diversities among them, they constitute one formidable and inseparable nation, sharing a common past and a common future and committed to the pursuit of their common national freedom and independence under the able and steadfast leadership of the Moro National Liberation Front.¹⁴

With regards to the non-Muslim Moros, the MNLF speaks of two categories: those who are natives or indigenous (the Highlanders or Lumadnon and those who came from Luzon and Visayas or the "Filipino settlers". The MNLF considers the Highlanders as integral part of its "people" while the "Filipino settlers," if and when the MNLF comes to power, may exercise the liberty to choose from among the following options, namely:

a. That they shall be most welcome should they choose to join the new Bangsamoro society and become an integral part of it, with the full legal guarantee that they shall enjoy equal rights and privileges with the rest of the nation.

b. That the Bangsamoro government shall guarantee to them safe conduct should they choose to return to their respective places of origin. They shall return with full respect and dignity and be free from any form of harassment or molestation. Their property rights shall be respected and protected according to civilized practice.

c. And, finally, they may decide to continue to reside temporarily or even permanently in any part of the Bangsamoro homeland while remaining citizens of the Philippines, but the Bangsamoro government shall naturally put them under its lawful jurisdiction, control and protection according to international practice.¹⁵

From the above quotations, it can be surmised that the MNLF has redefined the term Moro or Bangsamoro (which is historically used in reference to Muslims in the Philippines) to include both Muslim and non-Muslim inhabitants in the South. As envisioned by the MNLF, indigenous and Christian cultural elements are now considered parts of the pluralistic Bangsamoro society and culture. Current materials coming from the MNLF speak of "Bangsamoro Muslims, Christians and Highlanders".

The MNLF definition or usage of the term Moro or Bangsamoro (that includes the Highlanders or Lumadnon and the Christians) is problematic. The Tripoli Agreement speaks of autonomy for the Muslims of Southern Philippines. The MNLF demands in all negotiations with the Philippine government exemplify more Islamic features. Furthermore, the 1970 population figures reveal that the Christians are now the majority in the South. Of course the MNLF considers the Philippine government's population figure on the Muslims as a form of "statistical genocide". The MNLF maintains that the Muslims together with the Highlanders constitute the majority of the population of Bangsamoro homeland. At present only a few Christians would readily identify themselves as Bangsamoro. There may be a good prospect for the Bangsamoro concept if more Christians in Mindanao would become disenchanted with the national government.

Bangsamoro identity is not generally accepted even among the Muslims. A study conducted in 1983 revealed the following:

The majority of the 500 Bangsa Moro College student respondents and the majority of the key informants wanted another name for their nationality other than Filipinos. The most favored name by the Maguindanaon, Maranao and Sama was Muslim while the Tausug indicate willingness to be identified as Bangsa Moro.¹⁶

The study also noted that three groups (Maguindanao, Sama and Tausug) showed "more ethnic commonalities rather than differences" with respect to their attitudes concerning inter-group relations. They even favored secession and suggested one common Muslim national leadership regardless of origin. The Maranao group, on the other hand, was quite aloof in their attitudes toward the Maguindanao, Sama and Tausug. And the three groups in turn considered the Maranao as boastful, troublesome, etc. There is apprehension that ethnic and regional differences might hinder the promotion and acceptance of Bangsamoro identity among the Muslims. There are many people of Sulu who still hold to the idea that if the Muslims and other people in Mainland Mindanao will not cooperate, it is likely that the Sulu (Tausug, Yakan, Sama, the Palawan groups, and others) would continue to assert and struggle for the establishment of an independent state out of Basilan, Zamboanga peninsula, Sulu, Tawi-Tawi, and Palawan. Even Sabah could later be persuaded to join the new state. This, indeed, is the dream to reconstitute the domains of the old Sulu Sultanate under a new state system.

Many MNLF leaders believe that only through self-determination and independence from the rest of the Philippines would the Bangsamoro be able to preserve their identity, to realize their aspirations, and to develop the economic resources of their rich lands for the benefit of their people and future generations. The MNLF enjoyed the support of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC). However, the years 1977 and 1978 were difficult for the MNLF leadership. Some Muslim traditional leaders and politicians bitterly resented the fact that the OIC had consistently dealt with the MNLF as spokesmen for the Bangsamoro armed struggle and with Misuari as the leader of the MNLF. This led to the rise of factions like the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF)

under Hashim Salamat, the Bangsa Moro Liberation Organization (BMLO) which was organized by the late Congressman Rashid Lucman and Salipada Pendatun, and the MNLF-Reformist Group under Dimasangkay Pundato. These three factions have expressed willingness to settle for autonomy.

As mentioned earlier, the Marcos government's policies and programs in the Muslim south that were aimed at "enhancing the quality of life" of Muslim Filipinos have considerable impact on the MNLF. They eventually led to the surrender of many MNLF fighters but did not destroy the backbone of the movement.

Some Muslim countries and "third parties" like the OIC also have tremendous impact on the struggle between the MNLF and the Philippine government. Majul points out that it was "undoubtedly Muslim, especially Arab, sympathy and aid that helped push the MNLF to international prominence."¹⁷ And it is generally believed that it was also the pressure from Arab countries or the OIC that forced Misuari to shift his demand from secession to that of autonomy during the past negotiations.

CONCLUSION

The problem we face today, which can be said of the generations before us, is how Moro aspirations and sense of nationality can be accommodated within the framework of the Philippine national community with a minimum of conflict or tension. As in the past, among the primary objectives of the on-going struggle in the south under the leadership of the MNLF is to defend, preserve and enhance indigenous and Islamic heritage as well as the homeland of the Moros. Some Moros believe that autonomy is enough to safeguard and enhance their heritage. Others taken the view that secession is the only alternative because the national government is only prepared to grant administrative autonomy. I believe that the search for peace and unity among the various segments of Philippine society will have a fair chance to succeed if the Filipino people particularly their leaders in government are appreciative of, and are imbued with a refined attitude towards the various elements comprising the pluralistic Philippine society. Moreover, the grant of political autonomy to the Moro people as their expression of self-determination within the framework of the Philippine state system can enhance the prospect for peace in the South and the unity of the entire Filipino people.

NOTES

¹Cesar A. Majul, *The Contemporary Muslim Movement in the Philippines* (Berkeley: Mizan Press, 1985), p. 11.

²Cesar A. Majul, "The Moro Struggle in the Philippines," *Third World Quarterly* (Vol. 10, No. 2, April 1988), p. 897.

³Speech delivered by Nur Misuari, Chairman, Central Committee, Moro National Liberation Front, before the 17th Islamic Foreign Ministers Conference held in Amman, Jordan on March 21-25, 1988.

⁴Peter G. Gowing, *Muslim Filipinos: Heritage and Horizon* (Quezon City: New Day Publisher, 1979), p. 168.

⁵Congress of the Philippines, House of Representatives, "Report of the Special Committee to Investigate the Moro Problem, especially with Regard to Peace and Order in Mindanao and Sulu," 1955. Mimeographed.

⁶In 1912, the number of major plantations in Moroland (100 hectares or more) was 159, some 66 of them owned by Americans, 39 by Filipinos (mostly Christians), 27 by Europeans and 27 by Chinese. That same year saw the establishment of the first "Filipino Rice Colony" in the Cotabato Valley, "Moros and Indians: Commonalities of Purpose, Policy and Practice in American Government of Two Hostile Subject Peoples," *DRC Occasional Papers*. Number Six (January 1977), p. 9. Hundreds of thousands of settlers were brought to Moroland during the Commonwealth and Post-War periods through the government's massive resettlement programs.

⁷The thirteen provinces are Sulu, Tawi-Tawi, Basilan, Zamboanga del Norte, Zamboanga del Sur, Lanao del Norte, Lanao del Sur, North Cotabato, South Cotabato, Maguindanao, Sultan Kudarat, Davao del Sur, and Palawan.

⁸Although included in the Tripoli Agreement the provinces of Davao del Sur, South Cotabato and Palawan were excluded by the Philippine government by virtue of the results of the "referendum-plebiscite" of April 17, 1977. These provinces voted against joining the proposed autonomous regions. The MNLF and some critics of the government alleged that the results of the "referendum-plebiscite" were manipulated by Marcos.

⁹Presidential Decree No. 1618 - Implementing the Organization of the Sangguniang Pampook and Lupong Tagapagpaganap ng Pook in Regions IX and XII and for other purposes, issued on July 25, 1979.

¹⁰*Ibid.*

¹¹The lifting of Martial Law in January 1981 had not resulted in the return of the writ in the two autonomous regions. The suspension was only lifted soon after President Corazon C. Aquino took power in February 1986.

¹²The same is true with the Aquino Administration (February 1986-June 30, 1992). After the collapse of the negotiations with the MNLF in 1987, the Aquino government concentrated on the "democratic process" to grant autonomy to "Muslim Mindanao."

¹³Quoted in Peter G. Gowing, "Moros and Khaek: The Position of Muslim Minorities in the Philippines and Thailand," *Dansalan Center Occasional Papers*, No. 1 (April 1975), p. 11.

¹⁴*MNLF Guidelines for Political Cadres and Military Commanders*, Bangsamoro Research Center (1984), p. 20.

¹⁵Moro National Liberation Front, Central Committee Office of the Chairman, *Communique of the IVth General Meeting of the MNLF Leadership*, March 5, 1985, pp. 9-10.

¹⁶Abdulsiddik A. Abbahil, "The Bangsa Moro: Their Self-Image and Inter-Group Ethnic Attitudes," M.A. Thesis, University of San Carlos, 1983, p. 146. The Maguindanao, Maranao and Sama (Samal), and Tausug constitute approximately 85.2% of the Muslim population in the Philippines.

¹⁷Majul, *The Contemporary Muslim Movement in the Philippines* (Berkeley: Mizan Press, 1985), pp. 81-82.

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