



© Mankind! We created you from single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other (not that ye may despise (each other))

Al Hujurat: 13

There is a type of man whose speech about this world life may dazzle thee, and he calls Allah to witness what is in his heart; Yet is he the most contentious of enemies.

Al Baqarah: 204

ETHNICITY, LEADERSHIP AND THE
MORO INDEPENDENCE MOVEMENTS
IN THE PHILIPPINES

BY
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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

This study explores and analyses the impact of ethnicity and leadership in an attempt to explain the success and failure of Moro independence movements in the Philippines. Its focus is on ethnic mobilization and leadership in ethnic conflict of Moro revolutionary movement. A theoretical framework is designed to analyze interethnic relationship within a single movement and the impact of such interaction on the overall relations to the central government. For this study, the factors of ethnicity and leadership are modeled on three theories, namely Internal Colonialism theory, Competition Theory, Rational Choice Formulation.

The data for this analysis come from standard sources of non-survey data, namely books periodicals articles, government and non-government reports. Semi-structured interviews and non-participant observations were also employed as supplementary method of data collection for clarifying the authenticity of the published data.

An examination of the issues of ethno-politics and leadership of the Bangsamoro people in the revolution reveals that ethnicity is deep-seated in history of separate development of early Moro societies, and the establishment of the Moro political powers in the 16th century. Ethnocentrism tends to diminish, when external threats were commonly perceived as directed to Islam as the way of life of the Moros. However, the relative decline of the threat to Islam would trigger ethnocentrism among them. The reasons for this conflictual tendency are inherent in the traditional socio-cultural and political environment of the Moro ethnic groups. The Moros have suffered geographical differences and historical tri-polarity of economic and political centers that also contributed to the preservation of ethno-politics within the traditional ethnic constituents. The effect of the ethnic conflicts within the single Moro movement was ethnic cleavage on the systemic customary practices, fragmentation of the established movement(s), and localization of ethno-masses' support toward specific ethnic-based movements.


ملخص للبحث

تعالج الدراسة بالتحليل لتأثير الإثني و القيادة على فشل ونجاح حركات مورو الاستقلالية في الفلبين. تركز الدراسة على مسألي القيادة و حشد الطاقات الإثنية في الحركة الثورية ولمعالجة ذلك صممت الدراسة مخططا نظريا لمعرفة مدى تأثير العلاقة الإثنية في داخل الحركة الواحدة و علاقة ذلك بالحكومة المركزية. و يقوم المخطط على نظرية ثلاث: نظرية الاستعمار الداخلي, نظرية المنافسة, ونظرية الاختيار المنطقي. وقد جمعت المعلومات لهذه الدراسة من مصدرين الأعمال المنشورة كالكتب، المقالات العلمية والتقارير الحكومية وغير الحكومية، المقابلات و ملاحظات المراقبين الخارجية.

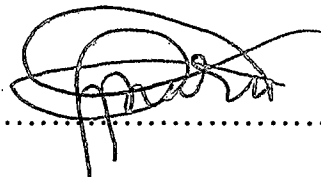
أن دراسة موضوع الإثنية والقيادة تأثيراته السياسية عند شعب المورو أيام الثورة تبين ان الإثنية ضاربة الجذور في التاريخ الاجتماعي و التطور السياسي لشعب مورو و خلال تأسيس القوى السياسية في القرن السادس عشر ثم قلت حدة التزعة القبلية عند وجود خطر خارجي موجه تجاه الإسلام ولكن ريثما تخف حدة الخطر الخارجي تثار التزعات الإثنية. و ألا سباب وراء هذه التزعة العدائية همود با لدرجة الأولى ألى المحيط السياسي و النظام الاجتماعي و الثقافي لجماعات مورو كما ساهمت في ذلك أسباب جغرافية و تاريخية واقتصادية و سياسية على استدامة الفواصل الإثنية. والنتيجة لهذا النزاع مزيد من التمسك بالعادات الإثنية وتفكيك الحركات الثورية التي باتت تعتمد على التأييد المحلي.

APPROVAL PAGE

I certify that I have supervised/ read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to the acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as thesis for the degree of Masters of Human Science in Political Science.



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This thesis was submitted to the Department of Political Science/ Kulliyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences and is accepted as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Human Science in Political Science.



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10/8/2000

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. Other sources are acknowledged by footnotes giving explicit references and a bibliography is appended.

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Date: *08-08-2000*

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*(Amahtuan, Inahdayang, Kah Tuan, King, Ming,
Indayang, Tatah and Titah).*

Insha'Allah, HE Will Give due rewards to your sacrifices throughout the ***Jihad Fi***

Sabillilah in this worldly life and Blessings in the hereafter.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

INTRODUCTION

Ethnic divergence became a salient feature of post-independence Southeast Asian countries. In the last few decades, most of these countries have been experiencing emergence of various types of ethnic-based movements. New ethnic loyalty was formed with leadership that demands for self-determination. The historic ethnic markers and sometimes, religious differences legitimize the emergence of new ethno-nationalist movements. While some ethno-nationalist movements have extinguished as the country develops, there are others that have persisted. The Moro independent movement in the Philippines is among the most persistent ethno-nationalist movements in Southeast Asia sub-region. The continuing struggle of the Moro ethnic groups from colonial dominations and later from the sovereignty of the Philippines for the last four hundred years is a showcase of the persistence of ethnicity that can explain the success or even failure of any ethnic movements. Since the colonial period, integration of Moro populations in the southern Philippines has always been considered as of the major problems of the “central government,” which came to be known as the “Moro Problem.”¹ The “Moro Problem” is a multidimensional problem, which includes several interrelated factors such as cultural, historical, economic, political and religious differences ² between the Moros and the central government that gives birth to the contemporary Moro independence movements. However, the Bangsamoro independent movement in the Philippines is not a monolithic ethno-

¹ The term “Moro Problem” was first used by Najeeb Saleeby, in his study of the Moro societies under American administration in *The Moro Problem*, (Manila: Manila Bureau of Printing, 1913), and later coined by the late Peter Gowing to describe the Bangsa Moro resistance toward the central government policy. See Peter Gowing “Religion and Regional Cooperation: The Mindanao Problem and ASEAN,” *JIMMA* (Vol. 19: 2 July 1998), 14 -23.

nationalist movement. It consists of approximately 13 different ethno-linguistic groups with established territories, cultural heritages and linguistic divisions that constitute entire Muslim population of the Philippines. Moreover, the differences among ethnic groups are also deep-seated in historical experiences and socio-cultural setting, with three traditionally political dominant groups, namely; the Maranao, Maguindanaon,³ and the Tausugs. At the height of Moro revolution in the 1970's and in early the 1980's, the differences among these ethnic groups seem to have been diminished and Moro struggle was directed toward the central government. However, since the mid-1980's, the ethnic differences among these groups seems to have resurfaced, that reflects in the policy orientation *vis-à-vis* the central government. There are incontrovertible evidences that most of the ethnic Maranao were partially assimilated, the Tausug has predominantly accepted partial autonomy, while the majority of Maguindanaon intensified the campaign for independent "Islamic state."

This evolution of Moro struggle pointed to the direction of differences of ethno-politics and reveals that the Moro problem was not solely on their relation to the central government, but also resilience ethno-politics among the traditionally political dominant Moro ethnic groups in the contemporary Moro struggle for self-determination and independence. There are clear evidences that "Moro Problem" is internal ethnic diversity, which is skillfully manipulated by some ethnic leaders. Recent developments in the Moro struggle have pointed to this direction. On 3rd September 1996, Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) under the leadership of Nurulaji Misuari, signed autonomy agreement for some parts of Mindanao and Sulu.

² For elaborate discussion of "Moro Problem" please refer to Robert D. Mac Amis "Muslim Filipinos: 1970-1972," in Peter Gowing and Rober McAmis (Eds.) *Muslim Filipinos*, (Manila: Solidaridad Publishing House, 1974), 42-5.

³ It has to be clarified that the words, *Maguindanaon* and *Maguindanao* connote two different meanings. The earlier refer to name of ethnic community, while the latter refers to their territory. For

Meanwhile, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) led by Salamat Hashim, has intensified its campaign for full independence of “Moroland.” In my opinion, the differences between these established groups are strongly influenced by the persistent of ethnicity orchestrated by the leaders. These are indications that the nature of “Moro Problem” is not only problem of the Moros *vis-à-vis* the central government ⁴but also an internal problem of the Bangsamoro movements as well.⁵ Moro masses are clustered along the organized movements, in which to some extent reflect ethnic differences. In this context, this study attempts to examine the factors leading to policy differences among the three important groups and their implication for the Muslims in the Philippines.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

This thesis addresses the problems of ethnicity and leadership within the Bangsamoro struggles for independent Islamic State in the southern Philippines. It investigates the following questions:

Firstly, how deeply divided are the Muslims in the Philippines?

Secondly, is this division clearly discernible in the leadership structure and organized movements?

Thirdly, can ethnicity and leadership structure explain the various policy options adopted by major Moro politico-religious movements in the Philippines?

details refer to Alunan Glang, “The Maguindanaon and Islam,” in Nagasura T. Madale (Ed.) *The Muslim Filipinos: A Book of Reading*, (Quezon City: Alemar Phoenix Publishing House, 1981), 332-4.

⁴ Interview with Francesco Nemenzo, in M. Jayaretnam (Ed.) *Aquino Alternative*, (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1996), 146.

⁵ See for example, Nagasura T. Madale, “The Future of Moro National Liberation Front as a Separatist Movement in Southern Philippines,” in Lim Joo-Jock and Vani S. (Eds.) *Armed Separatism in Southeast Asia*, (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1984)

JUSTIFICATION

Since, the mid 1980's, Moro independence movement in the Philippines were divided into several factions and established along traditional ethnic constituency. Ethnic Maguindanaon became the strong supporters of Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and bid for recognition of independent Islamic State. This ethnic movement reflects a probable return to the historical socio-political setting of Muslims in the Philippines. On the one hand, the move by MILF is commonly perceived as an attempt to supplant the Moro National Liberation Front's (MNLF) successes in promoting the Moro struggle and MNLF acceptance of partial autonomy is commonly viewed as the success of Moro struggle, on the other. These conflicting views seem to give a definite advantage to the central government to down play the Moro problem. It also opened possibilities for the central government to utilized ethnic and leadership differences of Moros against each other. The proposed study will shed light on these inter-ethnic rivalries and will be useful for leaders of the movements to chalk out a strategy for the welfare of the entire populations. Further, this will open the room for further study on similar type of inter-ethnic relationship and leadership structure of other independent movements.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature on Moro Independent movement is numerous. Yet, the following analysis reveals that none of the related literatures have dealt exclusively with the impact of ethnicity and leadership on the Moro struggle. The related literatures have shown that the emphases were on two different approaches in analyzing "Moro Problem." One type of analysis is "state-centric," which investigates the impact of different national policies of the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) on Moros and the other type is "movement-centric" analysis that evaluates the successes and failures

of Moro movements. Thus, this study is going to deal with completely new issues and presents new perspective on this subject. There are some monographs and articles written by some scholars, which may be related, relevant and sometimes parallel to this study.

Among the earliest study on Bangsamoro, is Cesar Adib Majul's *Muslims in the Philippines*.⁶ Majul conducted a major survey on the development of early Muslim history. This historical exploration explains the contribution of Moro civilization to the development of national history of the Philippines. The author argues that national integration policies have lead to the "Islamic consciousness" among Moro people. The emergence of Moro secession in the south, Majul argues is conditioned by this consciousness. He asserts, integration of the Bangsamoro has to start from the recognition in order to diffuse the tension between Muslim masses and Christian dominated superstructure. Majul observes that "Islamic consciousness" is a positive force that can bind together diverse people to enable them to stand up against external aggression, and relates themselves to a larger international community.⁷ This common binding of the Moros, to him, is a common ground of closer understanding among the diversity among ethnic groups in the Philippines, particularly the Muslims. Obviously, Majul is optimistic to see the differences of the Muslim-Christians resolved through common understanding of their past. However, he ignores that ethnicity reinforced by religion can also be a major source of internal conflicts. In addition, Majul categorizes the Moro as "Islam" or more precisely Muslim had established dichotomy within the Philippines society.⁸ Hence, it shows that this work though provides comprehensive historical study, but fails to address the significance

⁶ Cesar Adib Majul, *Muslims in the Philippines* (Manila: Saint Mary's Publication, 1978)

⁷ Alejandro Melchor, "A Book and a New Nation" In Cesar Adib Majul, *Muslims in the Philippines* (Manila: Saint Mary's Publication, 1978),viii

of the Muslims-Christians dichotomy and ethnic divergence of Philippines society. Thus, it is irrelevant to the current study of ethnicity and leadership in the Bangsamoro independent movement.

In *Government Response to Armed Communism and Secessionist Rebellion in the Philippines*⁹ Wurfel examines the impact of ideological differences between the rebels and secessionists *vis-à-vis* the central governments. He was of the view that causes of armed struggle in the Philippines are explainable by ideological differences between Moro groups *vis-à-vis* the central government.¹⁰ The author noted that Moro "secessionist rebellion," as an ideological movement is conditioned by internal ideological differences between Islam and Christianity. The dominant Christian majority and Moro elite, who are co-opted to central government, particularly during the Marcos centralized regime, were responsible for the Moro uprising in the 1960's. He also indicated that Moros had developed dual recognition of their identity. "Moro identity" was on the decline internally but grew positively outside the country.¹¹ He asserts that these lead to further alienation of Moros from Philippine politics. Francisco Nemenzo on his *Comments* on Wurfel's analysis discusses "moral consensus" among the Filipinos to resolve the "Moro problem."¹² He contends that the origin of the Moro secessionist has been long contained by the central government. The famous Jabidah massacre in 1968 was only an opening new phase of Moro rebellion. Nemenzo conceded that the centralization of Marcos administration is responsible for the prolonged insurgency among the Moros. Thus, he believes that

⁸ Majul, *Muslims in the Philippines*, 80.

⁹ David Wurfel "Government Response to Armed Communism and Secessionist Rebellion in the Philippines" in Jeshurun Chandran (Ed.) *Government and Rebellion in Southeast Asia*, (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1985)

¹⁰ David Wurfel "Government Response", 222.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Francesco Nemenzo, "Comments" in Jeshurun Chandran (Ed.) *Government and Rebellion in Southeast Asia*, (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1985), 240.

"autonomy" can be the solution to the secessionist problems faced by the central government.¹³

Similarly, Elisco R. Mercado's article *Culture, Economics and Revolt in Mindanao: the Origins of the MNLF and the Politics of Moro Separatism*¹⁴ explains the persistence of the "Moro problem." His historical analysis of the origins of Moro problem traced back to the differential treatments of the colonizers of Muslims and their loyal Christian subjects. He believes that the present problem of marginalization of the Moros is the result of the institutional transfer of political power from the colonizers to Christians.¹⁵ The Moros were alienated from the Philippines Politics. The feeling of alienation of Moros from the Philippines serves as a legitimization of their claim for separate state. Mercado concludes that the contemporary movement for independence is a "renewed revolutionary struggle of the MNLF seek liberation of *Bangsa Moro* and the preservation of Islamic culture and civilization and its revolutionary heritage."¹⁶

In his article *The Situation of Philippines Muslims*,¹⁷ RJ May explores the nature of Muslim resistance to accommodation policies by the central government. He argues that despite of several attempts made by the central government in the 1950's to bring the Muslims into the mainstream of national development they remain at the "secondary" compared to the Christians. The author provided examples of the national policies to attract the Muslim minority to the accept development in the Mindanao. However, the Muslims, he asserts, failed the central government's effort of

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Elisco Mercado "Culture, Economics and Revolt in Mindanao: the Origins of the MNLF and the Politics of Moro Separatism" in Lim Joo-Jock and Vani S. (Eds.) *Armed Separatism in Southeast Asia*, (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1984)

¹⁵ Ibid.,168-75.

¹⁶ Ibid.,166.

promoting economic, social, moral and political advancement in their areas. The Muslims refused to accept the fact that they are the minority of the country¹⁸ and remains with their traditional modes of life and further associate themselves to the larger Muslim community rather than to the Philippine society. Thus, May suggests that underdevelopment of Muslims in the South is a deliberate choice of the Muslims, who remain alienated and hence marginalize themselves rather than to be considered as minority within the general framework of Philippines.¹⁹

H. Monte Hill conducted similar investigation on the Moros. In *The Impact of Philippine Development Policy upon Filipino Muslim: A retrospect*,²⁰ Hill asserts that the Philippine development policy toward the Muslims has been oriented toward elevation of living standard and assimilation into the Filipino Mainstream.²¹ The author observes that the noble objective of the central government to assimilate Moros into the Philippine politics has been viewed as a threat to their cultural identity. The Moros perceived themselves as different people from the Filipinos. Hill contends that the Muslims commonly perceive any national policies as an intrusion to their socio-political life. He concludes, that the Muslims perceive such policy not only as external threat to Islam, as a religio-cultural ways of life but also to the existence of the Muslims themselves. Hence, they resisted it as "they have been resisting the outside force."²²

¹⁷ R.J May, "The Situation of Philippines Muslims" *JIMMA* (vol. 9: 2 March 1998)

¹⁸ *Ibid.*,249.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ H. Monte Hill "The Impact of Philippine Development Policy Upon Filipino Muslim: A Retrospect" *JIMMA* (vol. 2: 2 winter 1982)

²¹ *Ibid.*,27-8.

²² *Ibid.*,38.

Luis Q. Lacar in his article *The Neglected Dimension in the Development of Muslim Mindanao and the Continuing Struggle of Moro People for Self-determination*,²³ surveys the degree of penetration of government development policy toward Muslims. He argues that the continuity of Moro struggles were mainly due to the neglected factors in the government policies. He stresses on three factors: dichotomy in educational system in the country, lack of interactions and common understanding between the Muslims and Christians within the society, and inequality of opportunities within the current political system.²⁴ Lacar argues that all of these factors have always been present in all country's administration since its independence and have significantly alienated the Moros. Thus, he concludes that there seems to be a systematic subjugation of the Moros in most Philippine government policy, which restrains the Moros from gaining their self-determination rather than understanding the very nature of the conflicts. Lacar writes:

Historical evidence now indicates that deliberate efforts were in fact made by Christians to delay the development of Mindanao because of their fears that American investments might contribute to the alienation of the southern area from the rest of the Philippines.²⁵

In his second book *The Contemporary Muslim Movement in the Philippines*²⁶ Majul explores the psychological environment, which induces Muslims to seek independence or at least full recognition from the Philippines. He explains Moro history in the light of four factors: the ideology and its general religious and social precepts and institutions, the history of Moros and its relation to national history of the Philippines, the relationship of the Moros and the rest of the world and the relationship between Moros and the Christian majority in the Philippines.²⁷ Majul asserts that the degree of perceived exploitation by Muslims is historical in nature. He

²³ Luis Lacar "The Neglected Dimension in the Development of Muslim Mindanao and the Continuing Struggle of Moro People for Self-determination" *JIMMA* (vol. 9: 2 March 1998)

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 305-6.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 300.

²⁶ Cesar Adib Majul, *The Contemporary Muslim Movement in the Philippines*, (Manila: Saint Mary's publishing, 1985)

stresses that those exploitations, as claimed by Moro leaders also exist among Christians. The issue of underdevelopment in the country is not only experienced in Muslim areas but also in some Christian areas as well. Therefore, the struggle of the Muslims and its relationship to the central government is the by-product of both the institutionalized relationship among different ethnic groups and the socially imposed psychological state of that relationship. Majul believes that finding ways for reduction of such psychological factors can contribute to the reduction of the conflicts between the Moros and the Christians in the country.²⁸

In *Muslims in South East Asia: A Study of Minority Problem*,²⁹ Chaunan traces the problem of minority Muslim in the Philippines to the pre-colonial period.³⁰ He observes that in 1913 there was a shift of authority from the dominant Moros to the colonial powers. From that time onwards recognition of Moro politico-cultural identity in the country was on the decline but Muslim communities outside the country recognize the Moros. He contends that this is the primary cause for the struggle against the central government. Hence, the struggle of the Moros from MIM to MNLF is strongly influenced by attempts to protect and even to restore their identity internally. He writes, "the Muslims in the southern Philippines did not after all develop their culture and society in vacuum."³¹ The author contends that it is important for "the Muslims to have these artifacts of better life on their own terms and in any way that does not suggest any subtle subjugation."³²

²⁷ Ibid.,10.

²⁸ Ibid.,111.

²⁹ Rajinder Singh Chaunan, *Muslims In South East Asia: A Study of Minority Problem*,(Delhi: Kanisha Publishing, 1991)

³⁰ Ibid., 61-71.

³¹ Ibid.,197.

³² Ibid.,199.

W.K Che Man in his book, *Muslim Separatism: The Moros of the Southern Philippines and the Malays in Southern Thailand*,³³ cites this argument. Che Man explores the degree of the continuation of colonial rule in the both country. National policies of the central government are commonly viewed as extension of colonial persecution of the Muslims in the past. He suggests that Moro struggle for self-determination is a reaction against the imposed assimilation policy of the central government.³⁴ The Moro problem, to him, is a manifestation of the perceived threat to Muslim tradition. Further, the author succeeds in investigating the changes in political and leadership structure of the Moros. He emphasizes the change of leadership in Moro society and the replacement of the “traditional leaders,” who are Islamic oriented by “the new” and more secular leaders. The new secular leader, for Che Man, is inclined toward reactionary approaches compared to the conservative traditional leaders. The author singled out that Muslims under new leadership, who are influenced by the emergence of Islamism abroad, are more active in reasserting Islamic identity in the country. Thus, the mixture of Islamism and the revolutionary zeal of new leaders lead the Moros to struggle for secession to escape the domination of the Christians. Che Man observes in the following words;

The Moro society has been transformed from Islamic oriented community of the pre-colonial times to the one of subordination under the rule of the Christians secular government. Accordingly, a sense of distress and alienation and the anticipation of bad treatment have been part of the Muslims relationship with the ruling Filipinos. In this relationship, the inevitable outcome has been the struggle for liberation.³⁵

Asani's *Bangsa Moro: a Nation in Travail*,³⁶ a study of the success of the Bangsa Moro independent movement, compared the degree of recognition of Moros between

³³ W.K Che Man, *Muslim Separatism: The Moros of the Southern Philippines and the Malays in Southern Thailand*, (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1990)

³⁴ *Ibid.*,19.

³⁵ *Ibid.*,126.