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Revisiting the Penetration of Islam in the Philippines and its Implication for the Development of Muslim Institutions

Pengkajian semula Tentang Penetrasi Islam di Filipina dan Kesannya terhadap Pembangunan Institusi Islam

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Abstract

This study discusses the penetration of Islam in the Philippines, particularly the third wave of its expansion, which was brought by Sufi missionaries. It reinstates the historical relevance of Sufi ideas and approaches due to its contemporary relevance to the concept of social co-existence. The rational, intellectual and philosophical dimension of Islam is manifested in the cultural and traditional life of Muslim communities. The study also analyzes the impact of Muslim struggle for the development of Islamic institutions in the context of the secular state. The ongoing, unsettled debate between Islamic and government approaches to peace and development in Mindanao and Sulu continues unabated. Over the years, reforms were introduced, but in their midst, evidence of government biases and prejudices with regards to Islamic institutions have surfaced. Muslim leaders and intellectuals responded in the context of historical rights and freedom, but those views were often questioned as they are presumed to be incompatible with the national agenda for national unity. It was very recently that this incompatibility was readdressed giving support to having lasting peace and justice in Mindanao. The study argues that there have been substantial state-sponsored reforms which may contribute to the gradual advancement of Muslim communities. Though the path for the passage of Muslim concerns within the given condition is fragile and open to challenges, the study recognizes the prominence of inter-civilizational dialogue, from which the universal values of humanity will be embraced by both Muslim and non-Muslim policy makers. In addition, Muslim and non-Muslim communities in the Philippines need to embrace the universal principle of humanity and coexistence due to its relevance to the political stability and economic growth in the country.

Keywords: Muslims in the Philippines, Islamic institutions, Islamization, Muslim intellectuals, Reform.

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Abstrak

Kajian ini mengkaji tentang kemasukan Islam, terutamanya gelombang ketiga perkembangannya, yang dibawa oleh para pendakwah sufi. Kajian itu mengembalikan semula sejarah penting tentang idea-idea dan pendekatan Sufi yang boleh digunapakai pada masa kini untuk mewujudkan keharmonian sosial di kalangan rakyat pelbagai agama. Pemahaman tentang Islam mempunyai pengaruh yang jelas terhadap kebudayaan dan tradisi Islam. Kajian ini juga menganalisis kesan perjuangan Muslim untuk pembangunan institusi Islam dalam konteks sebuah negara sekular. Perbahasan yang berterusan yang tidak menemukan penyelesaian antara pendekatan Islam dan pendekatan kerajaan untuk perdamaian serta pembangunan di Mindanao dan Sulu terus berlanjutan. Walaupun bertahun-tahun pembaharuan telah dilakukan, namun terdapat bukti penolakan dan prasangka buruk kerajaan terhadap institusi Islam. Para pemimpin dan intelektual Muslim bertindak berdasarkan pada fakta sejarah dan hak kebebasan bersuara, namun pandangan mereka sering dipertikaikan kerana mereka dianggap tidak seiring dengan agenda dan perpaduan nasional. Baru-baru ini ketidakserasian ini mulai disuarakan semula untuk mendapat sokongan terhadap keamanan dan keadilan yang berterusan di Mindanao. Kajian ini mendapati bahawa terdapat pembaharuan yang dilakukan oleh pihak kerajaan yang boleh menyumbang ke arah kemajuan masyarakat Islam secara beransur-ansur. Walaupun pendekatan bagi memenuhi hasrat orang Islam masih dalam keadaan yang rapuh dan penuh cabaran, namun kajian ini mengusulkan peripentingnya dialog antara peradaban dimana nilai-nilai universal manusia akan diperoleh dan dipegang oleh kedua-kedua pihak pembuat dasar iaitu Islam dan bukan Islam. Di samping itu, umat Islam dan bukan Islam di Filipina perlu mengkaji dan mencontohi model keharmonian sosial Malaysia dan Singapura kerana kaitannya dengan kestabilan politik dan pertumbuhan ekonomi.

Kata Kunci: Muslim di Filipina, institusi Islam, Islamisasi, intelektual Islam, Pembaharuan.

Introduction

A brief survey of research on Islam in the Philippine reflects the dominance of the "Moro Problem," a particular historical approach that is commonly held by authorities of Philippine studies, which promotes the inevitability of clash between Islam and Christianity in the Philippines. The terms "Muslim" and *"Moro"* refer to the thirteen cultural Muslim minorities in the Philippines. The contemporary usage of the term refers to the Islamized inhabitants of Mindanao and Sulu. The Spaniards originally used the term referring to the natives of Mindanao, who shared the religion of the Moors who had ruled Spain for seven hundred years up to the fall of Granada, their last stronghold, in 1492. More often than not, literatures on Islam in the Philippines give more prominence to the discourse of Muslim identity and integration within the context of national body politics. There is no doubt that secular approaches have powerfully shaped government policies and laws. The unresolved in-

compatibilities of the government-secular approach in addressing the problem of Muslim communities have undoubtedly obscured the true meaning of multiculturalism in the Philippines.

State institutions were created to produce a population of well-educated and trained workers for the advancement of a secular state – the Philippines. This has resulted in the emergence of a dualistic system, often described as being religious or non-religious, personal and social, "… or between the education of the mind and education of the body, or between the education of the intellect and the education of emotions and the will."[1] The elites' high regard for the patron-client relationship has been instrumental in re-shaping the socio-political landscape of the country and is reflected in the institute-building of the successive governments, from the birth of the Philippine Republic (in 1946) up to the declaration of Martial Law (in 1972).[2] Full participation of several prominent Muslim leaders and intellectuals in the established national system of governance and culture has obviously contributed to the formation of a unified system of governance, which has been questioned by Muslim and non-Muslim communities, particularly revolutionary organizations in the Philippines.[3]

Over the years, the given disparaging interaction between Muslim and Christian worldviews within the Philippine context has gradually resulted in losing much of the Muslim spiritual, intellectual, and cultural heritage, the most precious of which are those elements of wisdom which in the past served as a major inspirational force in transforming them into a nation of great learning, intellectual vitality, as well as of scientific and technological creativity.[4]

The plight of Muslims in the Philippines has shown a sincere call for socio-moral reconstruction on the basis of the Qurʿān and Sunnah through which the epistemological foundation of Islamic knowledge and culture has served as the nerve for decades of revivalism in the Philippines. Observers may wonder how the flame of faith, the light of spiritual life and faithfulness to the teaching of Islam could be preserved in the secular system of the Philippines. Had only the intellectual and moral

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[1] Syed Sajjad Husain and Syed Ali Ashraf, *Crisis in Muslim Education*, (Jeddah: King Abdul Aziz University, 1979), p. 30.
[2] Howard M. Federpiel, *Sultans, Shamans, and Saints: Islam and Muslims in Southeast Asia,* (Honolulu, Hawaii: University Press, 2007), p.196.
[3] Renato Rosaldo*, Cultural Citizenship in Island Southeast Asia: Nation and Belonging in the Hinterlands,* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), p. 23.
[4] Ibid.

fabric of civilizational understanding been integrated in the social system, there would have been more tolerant Muslim and Christian communities in the Philippines.

It has always been the aspiration of Muslims in the Philippines to witness a meaningful peace and justice in which the true spirit of brotherhood is expressed through acts of compassion, love and respect for the welfare of all Filipinos. A part of this dream has come true when Muslim Personal Law was recognized as a part of national law in 1977 and *Shari'ah* courts have become part of the national judiciary of a non-Muslim state like the Philippines; the recognitions of Islamic education and the rights given to the local *'ulama'* and Muslim intellectuals to design Islamic educational an system to be integrated with the national educational system, without jeopardizing Islamic tradition and culture.

The Influence of Non-Islamic Worldviews

Historians and social scientists in the Philippines contend that Hindu and Buddhist culture, arts and philosophy can be traced in the socio-cultural pattern of the Muslim communities in the Philippines.[5] Linguistic anthropologists in particular support this argument by pointing to the presence of Sanskrit loan works in Muslim dialects, particularly among the Maranaos, dating to as early as the 10th century.[6] Aside from the close geographical proximity of Muslim communities to the Indianized areas of Southeast Asia, the Indian influence is also manifested in the oral traditional literatures of the Maranaos like the mytho-poetic sources, the *Radia Indarapatra*, and the oral-epic *Darangen.*[7] These literatures were regarded by traditional Maranaos as significant sources of their behavioral norms, which educate the youth about ways to control one's temper and to display qualities of honesty, reason, prudence, intellect, wisdom and honor.[8]

An historical understanding of Hindu and Buddhist influence may suggest that Hindu-Buddhist doctrines and philosophies were profoundly

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[5] Anscar J. Chupungco, *Lithurgical Enculturation: Sacramentals, Religiosity, and Catechesis* (Collegeville, Minn: Lithurgical Press, 1970), p. 15.

[6] Jeffrey Ayala Milligan, *Islamic Identity, Postcoloniality, and Educational, Policy Schooling and Ethno-Religious Conflict in the Southern Philippines,* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), p. 22.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Ibid.

established in ancient Mindanao and Sulu.[9] However, historical accounts substantiate the fact that prior to the coming of Hinduism and Buddhism to the Malay world, the people of Mindanao and Sulu were not ready to absorb the philosophical aspects of both religions. The same thing may be said of Malay and Indonesian peoples.[10] This shows the oral traditional literatures of the Maranaos, the *Radia Indarapatra* and the *Darangen*, can be categorized as epic, romantic and mythological aspects of Hindu literatures which were in great demand in the court of the ruling group of Maranao society.

It is worth mentioning that although there was a wide readership and circulation of the *Darangen* in Maranao communities, there is no clear indication that Hindu literatures such as the *Mahabharata, Bhagavad Gita* and the *Bharatayuddha* had been translated into Maranao or other Moro dialects. It is also important to underline the fact that the romantic and mythological aspects of the Indian religious literatures (as reflected in the text of *Radia Indarapatra* and *Darangen* literatures) were greatly emphasized by the Maranaos in their interpersonal and social interactions. This is quite similar to the "… philosophical worldview envisioned by the poets of the Old Javanese literature which was glimpsed in the *wayangs* filtered, as it was through the medium of art."[11]

So far, scholars don't discuss reasons why Hinduism, Buddhism and their worldviews did not flourish in the Muslim communities, particularly among the Maranaos. After all, they had close historical links with the rest of the Malay-Indonesian world where Hindu and Buddhist religious beliefs were widely practiced. As a non-missionary oriented religion, Buddhism emphasizes an ascetic life in finding seclusion and peace for the purpose of contemplation.[12]

From the above assertions, we can infer that Hinduism, Buddhism and their philosophical worldviews had failed to penetrate the inner self, the core of Islamic identity. Therefore, an attempt to understand the foundations of the Muslims in the Philippines from the context of pre-Islamic or Hindu-Buddhist influences does not offer important insight into the imagery and ideology that inform behavior.

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[9] Crawford Young, *The Politics of Cultural Pluralism,* (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1979), p. 327.
[10] Syed Naguib Al-Attas, Syed Naquib Al-Attas, *Preliminary Statement on a General Theory of the Islamization of the Malay-Indonesian Archipelago,* (Kuala Lumpur: Dewanb Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1969). p. 3.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Ibid.

A Glimpse of the Formative Period of Islamization in the Philippines

Islam is both a dynamic and missionary oriented religion. The dynamism of its teachings, the universalistic nature of its membership is one of its unique characteristics that attracts individuals, groups and great civilizations. More often than not, due to the simplicity of Islamic teachings and philosophy, the adherents of Islam may find Islamic theory of knowledge and practices easy to follow. The birthplace of Islam, Makkah and Madinah, occupy a special position in the life of Muslims.[13] Muslim intellectuals from different eras traced their intellectual links to renowned Muslim scholars who received educational nourishment from the true fountain of Islamic knowledge that originated from the land of the *Haramayn* (Makkah and Madinah). The *Haramayn* are regarded as the intellectual center for Muslim scientists, philosophers, theologians, *Sufis* and *'ulama'*.[14] The *'ulama'* in the Malay-Indonesian world, including the Philippines, were historically linked to the dominant Islamic discourses developed by the *'ulama'* of the *Haramayn*.[15]

Studies on networks of Muslim intellectuals in Southeast Asia indicate that their discourses were not only confined to basic Islamic concepts.[16] Proper methodologies of teaching were systematically operational and, thus, restructuring of *adat* laws in conformity with the *Shari'ah* was relatively common in the various centers of Islamic learning, like *madrasahs* and mosques.[17] The system of education was based on a dynamic pattern of interpersonal relationship between teacher-teacher, teacher-student, and student-student. Unfortunately, some universities no longer appreciate such relationships between the learned and the learner today.

There are many interesting observations that may shed light on Islam's coming to the Philippines. There are considerable literatures that have extensively examined Islamization in the Malay-Indonesian world, which are often associated with the unwavering contribution of the Ar-

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[13] Azyumardi Azra, *The Origins of Islamic Reformism in Southeast Asia: Networks of Malay-Indonesian and Middle Eastern Ulama in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century,* (Crows Nest, NSW: Asian Studies Assoc. of Australia in Assoc. with Allen & Unwin, 2004), p. 8.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Jurrien van Goor, Prelude to Colonialism: the Dutch in Asia, (Hilversum: Uitg. Verloren, 2004), p. 40.

[16] Azyumardi Azra, p. 9.

[17] Syed Naguib Al-Attas, pp. 1-10.

abs, Chinese Muslims, Indian missionaries and traders.[18] Historians highlight the Sufi, or *tasawwuf*, trends of Islam, through which a mystical expression makes Islamic teachings more amenable to the spiritual traditions of local cultures. For instance, Louis Massignon asserts that it is through "...mysticism that Islam is an international and universal religion."[19] Indeed, historical evidence suggests that in the second half of the 13th century, there was a great upsurge of Sufi groups in the region.[20] Nicholas Tarling also observes that from about the 13th century, *tasawwuf*, or mystical schools, had begun to develop in Southeast Asia. The teachings of a particular Sufi leader, or *shaykh*, are transmitted to his disciples through a genealogical chain linking pupils and master to the founder.[21] In fact, Sufism became an integral part of Islamic societies in the Malay world as early as 12th century.[22] Muslim merchants, sailors, missionaries and *'ulama'* were more or less exposed to the fields of religious law and jurisprudence (*Shari'ah* and *fiqh*), philosophy or rational theology and metaphysics (*'ilm al-kalam* and *tasawwuf)*. Al-Attas argues that Sufi *'ulama'* were responsible for bringing Islam to the Malay-Indonesian archipelago.[23] Some traders were directly or indirectly influenced by Sufi *'ulama'* and they had contributed to funding centers of Islamic learning like *langgar* (*rangar*) or *suraus* and mosques, as in the case of Islam in Melaka. Sufi teachers fanned out along the trading

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[18] There are at least three important literatures that had profoundly examined Islamization process in the Malay world. The work of S.Q Fatimi, *Islam Comes to Malaysia,* (Singapore: Malaysian Sociological Research Institute, 1963, seems to suggest that Indian *'ulama'* were responsible of bringing Islam in Malay world. However, Syed Naquib Al-Attas had meticulously examined the historical evidences which support the idea that Arab *'ulama'* who were mostly Sufi in practice and they were instrumental in propagating a blend of Islam that portrays a well-balanced understanding between Islamic Law and *Tasawwuf.* See Syed Naquib Al-Attas, *Preliminary Statement on a General Theory of the Islamization of the Malay-Indonesian Archipelago,* (Kuala Lumpur: Dewanb Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1969). In the introduction of the latest edition of Cesar Majul's work, it suggests that the first missionaries to Sulu may have come from South China. See Cesar Adib Majul, *Muslims in the Philippines,* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 1999).
[19] Quoted from Robert Day McAmis, Malay Muslims: the history and challenge of resurgent Islam in Southeast Asia (WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2002), p. 17.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Nicholas Tarling, *The Cambridge History of Southeast Asia,* (Cambridge University Press.1993), p. 177.
[22] Judith O. Becker, *Deep Listeners: Music, Emotion and Trancing,* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press. 2004), p. 78.
[23] Refer to Syed Naguib Al-Attas, pp. 1-35.

routes, where members of the *tariqah* were often drawn from commercial communities. In other cases, traders sponsored a group of *dā'i*, or Islamic preachers, from the Middle East, Persia, China and India to teach and propagate Islam in the region. In line with the influences of Sufi *'ulama'*, Al-Attas observes:

> ...I am inclined to believe that it was the Sufis who actually propagated and finally made it possible for Islam to become established among the people. With regard to Malaya, I feel almost certain that Islam was propagated by Sufis. There may not be direct evidence to support this theory, but it is valid to the extent that there is circumstantial evidence in its support. [24]

The coming of Sharif Awliyah Karim Al-Makhdum around 1380, who was described in the annals of Muslim literature as actually preaching Islam to the local people.[25] The oral traditions that were handed from generation to generation also provide an important historical account that may facilitate our attempt in understanding the religious background of *'ulama'* in the Philippines. The *Sejarah Melayu* (Malay Annals) provides ample records of the names of *'ulama'*, their functions in the society, as well as their connections with renowned teachers and sometimes centers of Islamic learning. These seem to suggest that they came from foreign countries, either from the Middle East, Persia or India. This can be ascertained from the meaning and implications of their names that bear a specific title such as *Makhdum*. For instance, one of the prominent *'ulama'* of Pasai bears the title of Makhdum Sadar Jahan, who can be linked with Shaykh Ismail of Makkah.[26]

The word *makhdum* represents a meaningful position in the Islamization of the Malay world. Scholars believed that there could have been many *makhdumin* (plural of *makhdum*) who visited and preached in the Malay world.[27] Thus, the term *makhdum* refers to a learned person

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[24] Al-Attas, 1963, 21 quoted from Robert Day McAmis. *Malay Muslims: The History and Challenge of Resurgent Islam in Southeast Asia,* (WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2002), p. 17.

[25] Cesar Adib Majul, "An Analysis of the "Genealogy of Sulu," The genealogy of sulu," In A. Ibrahim , Siddique & Hussain, (eds.), *Reading on Islam in Southeast Asia*. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1985.

[26] Yusny Saby, *Islam and Social Change: The Role of the 'Ulama' in Acehnese Society,* (Bangi: Penerbit University Kebangsaan Malaysian, 2005), p. 45.

[27] Carmen Abu Bakar, "The Advent and Growth of Islam in the Philippines," in *Islam in Southeast Asia: Political, Social and Strategic Challenges for the 21th Century,* edit-

who holds an important function in the community. He is believed to have had a sharp understanding of worldly and religious matters. His enlightening sayings and actions made people believe that he is a holy man. Such description of a *makhdum* can also be verified in *Sulu Tarsilah,* which narrates how the *makhdum* came walking over the water.[28] This is very interesting, for it suggests that the *makhdum* was an *'alim* who was a member of a well-organized Sufi *tariqah* known as the Qadiriyyah, a mystical brotherhood whose origin is attributed to a famous mystic and saintly man called Abdul Qadir Al-Jilani (470 AH - 561 AH / 1077-1166 CE).[29] It was also reported in the *Sejarah Melayu* that a certain *makhdum* was responsible for converting Sultan Muhammad Shah of Melaka, who reigned from 1414-1224.[30] It can be inferred from *Sejarah Melayu* and *Sulu Tarsilah* that *makhdumin* were individuals who possess charismatic Islamic personalities. Due to their astonishing characteristics, the royal court and its subordinates were attracted to the ideas they advocated. A study of networks of the *'ulama'* bearing the title of *makhdum* reveals that they were mostly Sufis, and they were associated with extraordinary or magical powers. Majul asserts that this could be one reason why Karim Al-Makhdum was called *Sharif Awliyah*, who had been regarded by the community as a saintly person and full of Allah's blessings.[31]

Aside from the saintly qualities attributed to Karim Al-Makhdum, he was a noted Arab judge and a *dā'i*. Karim Al-Makhdum seems to be the first *'alim* who built a mosque in Tubig Indangan, Simunul Island, now part of Tawi-Tawi province. The teaching methodology of Karim Al-Makhdum indicates his profound understanding of the principles of Islamic *da'wah*.[32] His approach also indicates his gentleness and moderation which attracted the attention of the Sultan and the common people. He refrained from being dogmatic, self-regarding or offensive and his manner was not acrimonious, but modeled on the most courteous and most gracious examples which leave an impression that his motive was

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ed by K.S. Nathan and Mohammad Hashim Kamali, (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2005), p. 49.

[28] Cesar Adib Majul, "An Analysis of the "Genealogy of Sulu," p. 56.

[29] Ibid.

[30] Ibid.

[31] Ibid.

[32] "Invite (all) to the Way of thy Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching; argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious: for thy Lord knoweth best, who have strayed from His path, and who receive guidance." Al-Qur'an, 16:125.

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not based on worldly reward, but the love of Allah and the love of humanity.

Basic foundations of Islam gradually developed in different forms in the society due to the religious activities of Karim Al-Makhdum. As a result, Islam spread gradually and peacefully in the Sulu Archipelago, which has resulted in reshaping the cultural landscape of its people.

The methodology of Karim Al-Makhdum is significant in understanding the nature and characteristics of foreign *'ulama'* in the Philippines. Vic Hurley has correctly pointed out that foreign *'ulama'* in the Philippines were

…the most purely altruistic preachers of the world. Their utter sincerity inspired the confidence of their savage hosts; [and]…were among the potent spreaders of civilization in the history of man. Their religion did not tear down the strip and destroy as did that of the early Christians. [And they]…brought culture and writings and the arts, and they added these things to the culture they found in their new lands…[and] were not destroyers but were satisfied to improve the old culture.[33]

Such a peaceful approach in disseminating the message of Islam invalidates the commonly held notion that Islam was spread through coercion. Islam did not come to this region by force but through the influence of charismatic *'ulama'*. It was considered less threatening than Christianity, which was brought later by the Spanish in the late 16th century.[34] It is safe to say that because of the farsightedness of the *'ulama'* in their approaches, they were willing to allow the inhabitants to retain some of their pre-Islamic practices in order to reduce tension with the newly established religion. It was during this formative period of Islam that the pre-Islamic customary law remained important in regulating social interaction, while Islamic law was confined to specific sorts of agreements and exchanges.

The most dramatic aspect of the Islamization in Sulu was the coming of Abu Bakr, the second Arab missionary to come in the middle of the 15th century. He was a well-known scholar and a Muslim jurist. It was reported that he married the daughter of Rajah Baguinda.[35] The *Sulu Genealogy* stated that the people accepted him as the first Sultan of Sulu

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[33] Vic Hurley, *The Swish of the Kris: A study of the Moros,* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1963), 62.
[34] Cesar Majul, *Muslims in the Philippines,* p. 50.
[35] Ibid.

and he received the title of Sharif-ul-Hashm. The conversion of the coastal people and then the mountain people in the interior of the Sulu islands had been attributed to him. Some of his important contributions to the Islamization of Sulu were the establishment of the Sultanate and the study of Islam by organizing the teaching of the Qurʾān and Hadith. In the words of Majul, "Abu Bakr introduced Islam as a form of state religion with its attendant political and social institutions."[36]

In the early phase of Abu Bakr's religious activities, Islam was incorporated gradually into the existing beliefs and practices of the Moros. Majul observes that due to the tolerant approach of the *'ulama'* towards the beliefs and practices of the natives, Islam became an important force in bringing new paradigms that redefined the socio-cultural and intellectual constructs and frameworks of the newly converted natives.[37] Universal human values are inherently manifested in every organized social system.

Abu Bakr was a great preacher, an intellectual and a famed jurist who was responsible for introducing Islam as a form of state religion. His authoritative social position was rather a result of his unrelenting vision that Islam would someday flourish and would be welcomed by the people with an open heart. It was through the effort of Abu Bakr that organized religious instruction became common on the islands of Sulu whereby the rights of non-Muslims in an Islamic state (*dhimmi*) were conceived in the history of the Philippines.[38]

We can deduce from the above historical facts that the religious and political authority of Abu Bakr enabled him to render a reinterpretation of the Qurʿān and Hadith through the process of *ijtihād*. It was through this juristic reasoning that a new set of laws and educational system were developed in order to suit the needs and challenges of the natives. It is of little surprise that almost every individual in the newly established society was a passionate adherent of the Islamic teachings. Over the period of three decades, Abu Bakr tried to enhance the supremacy of his territorial boundaries by introducing innovative ideas, which strengthened the political, educational and economic systems. As a result, Islamic core values were instated and subsequently united the people

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[36] Ibid., p. 56.

[37] Peter G. Gowing, *Mandate in Moroland: The American Government of Muslim Filipinos 1899-192*. (Quezon City: New Day Publishers. 1983), p. 9

[38] K.S. Nathan and Mohammad Hashim Kamali, *Islam in Southeast Asia: Political, Social and Strategic Challenges for the 21th Century,* (Singapore: ISEAS, 2006.), p.49

against the force of colonialism and imperialism.[39] Therefore, the relatively easy acceptance of the authority of Abu Bakr by the natives of Sulu supports the idea that "... Islam had imbued its adherents with a sense of identity that was at once able to transcend territorial and ethnic boundaries."[40] Sharif Kabunsuan, the son of Jusol Asiqin of Johore, and Sharif Ali Zainul Abidin, who came to Maguindanao in the early 16th century, followed the system of governance that was introduced in other parts of the Philippines.

The Development of Islamic Institutions and its Implications for the Muslim Communities in the Philippines

The revival of Islamic knowledge and culture stands as an epitome for every Muslim society and Muslims in the Philippines are not an exception. The set of principles and methods laid by the Qurʾān and Sunnah are meant to rejuvenate the intellect, knowledge, jurisprudence or *fiqh,* innovation and creativity to meet the demands of the given time and place. At least a few groups of Muslim intellectuals were actively involved in the process of Islamization in the Philippines.[41] They are those who deal with matters of religious doctrine, those who deal with the production of "revivalist" literature, both in the traditional sense of repacking old texts for new inspiration, and seeking new converts to enlarge the Muslim communities. Those who produce special studies of examination and analysis are generally described as academic studies. They also include many who are not necessarily connected with institutions of learning but aim at understanding and reconciling religious principles with the functioning of society.[42] It was through their efforts that issues concerning Muslim identity and culture were conceptualized from the context of Islamic tradition and its contemporary relevance in modern Philippine society.[43] These relatively new ideas and thoughts can be attributed to the

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[39] Carmen Abu Bakar, "*Zakat* and *Sadaqa* Practices among the Moros of the Philippines," in *Islam and the Economic Development of Southeast Asia: The Islamic Voluntary Sector in Southeast Asia,* edited by Mohamed Ariff, (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2005), p. 170.

[40] Carmen A. Abubakar "The Advent and Growth of Islam in the Philippines," p. 49.

[41] Howard M. Federspiel, "Contemporary South-East Asian Muslim Intellectuals" in *Islam in the Era of Globalization, Muslim Attitudes towards Modernity and Identity,* edited by Johan Henrik Meulemanin, (London and New York: Roultledge Curzon, 2002), p. 329.

[42] Ibid.

[43] Ibid.

sincere intellectual efforts of concerned scholars from the country and other parts of the world.[44]

The gradual recognition of Islamic tradition and culture within the context of the Philippine Constitution have conceived a new meaning for social co-existence. It has resulted in the recognition of Muslim Personal Laws and reform of Muslim education in the Philippines. This was possible due to the impact of interfaith dialogue and civilizational interaction between Islam and Christianity in the Philippines.

Bridging the socio-cultural gap between Muslims minorities and the Christian majority has been a gigantic challenge in the history of the Philippines. A holistic approach to Muslim history in the Philippines requires an objective orientation for the recognition of Islamic ideas and advocacies, particularly the responses of Muslim intellectuals towards the reduction of the impactful tensions between Islamic and secular approaches to social reform. Smock has correctly pointed out that intellectuals, "… religious leaders and organizations offer credibility as trusted institutions; a respected set of values; moral warrants to oppose injustice, unique leverage for promoting reconciliation among conflicting parties."[45] It is therefore pertinent that the relevance of the Islamic concept of social change should be given due recognition in the national system to attain more enduring and lasting peace in the country.

There is no doubt that Muslim intellectuals in the Philippines have played a significant role in the overall development of Islam in the country. They have unwaveringly responded to the challenges of modernity and the changing times. They have been relatively successful in the gradual development of Islamic knowledge and culture. Their efforts have broadened Muslim and non-Muslim perspectives on Islamic teachings and ideas of social reform. Most importantly, the framework they have presented before the government's committee on conflict resolution serves as part of the groundwork in conceptualizing peace and tolerance in a secular state. Thus, the Islamic concept of peace has finally been heard in the houses of the Congress and Senate.

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[44] Gregorio F. Zaide, *The Republic of the Philippine: History, Government, and Civilization*, (Manila: Rex Book Store, 1970), 30. See also, Alfredo R. Roces, *Filipino Heritage; the Making of a Nation* (Manila: Lahing Pilipino Pub., 1970), p. 264.
[45] Smok, D, *Religion in World Affairs: Its Role in Conflict and Peace. Special Report.* (Washington D.C.: United States Institute of Peace, 2008), 2. Also cited in Amina Rasul, The Role of Religiojn in Peace Making, Presented at the CSID 10th Annual Conference, May 5th, 2009.

Since the establishment of the Philippine Republic, secular politics have indeed put an indelible mark on the history of Islamic institutions in the Philippines. In response to it, a perspective of social integration was prioritized in research on the socio-legal position of Islamic institutions. [46] It is important to note that the participation of Muslim leaders and scholars in meeting the government agenda for national integration has not diminished the epistemological ground of Islamic knowledge and culture. The ever-increasing awareness and demand for Islam and its relevance in the quest for a lasting peace and economic recovery indicates a new paradigm shift among Philippine intelligentsia and policy makers.

However, the overwhelming reference of many policy makers to the socio-political norms of the governing Christian elites from the north and their exclusivist patron-client relationship have indeed challenged many aspects of Muslim culture and tradition, particularly in regard to legal and educational institutions. This challenge is quite apparent in the case of Islamic reform in the Philippines. The elites' influence on "what is to be" in the national system is evident in the various laws that have been promulgated since the inception of the Republic. Ponciano Bennagen, a renowned anthropologist and constitutional commissioner from the Philippines, has rightly pointed out that this approach would accentuate further disagreements between people of different cultures and religions. [47] He further observes that Filipino people are still engaged in the struggle to free themselves from current and new waves of intellectual domination of the ruling groups. This eventually led to the birth of a minority-dominant group approach to the discourse of identity and education. Meanwhile, the ideology behind the concept of "assimilation", "absorption" or "integration" exhibits the superiority of the dominant group

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[46] A good example of this is the work of Carmen A. Abubakar, a former dean of Institute of Islamic studies at the University of the Philippines. Abubakar relies heavily on four writers of the contemporary era, Murtada Garya, Ismail al-Faruqi, Ziauddin Sardar and others. Howard M. Federspiel, "Contemporary South-East Asian Muslim Intellectuals," in *Islam in the Era of Globalization: Muslim attitudes towards modernity and Identity,* edited by Johan Meuleman, (New York: Routledge Curzon, (2003), p340.

[47] Doreen G. Fernandez, "Cultural Fights are Human Rights", in *Values in Philippine Culture*, edited by Manuel B. Dy, 1994), p. 111.

over the minorities. Communities who remain un-assimilated to the national system face marginalization in many aspects.[48]

In a diverse society like the Philippines, the concept of nation-state that is founded on a principle of coherence between culture and nation as defined and advocated by the governing elites has resulted in dissolution of cultural unity between Muslims and Christians. The elitists' concept of nationalism has magnified the impact of social hierarchy between "us" and "them" and consequently resulted in cultural differences among various Filipino communities. Over the years, the Philippine political climates have overwhelmingly strategized the national discourse on multiculturalism by using "culture" as a means to solve social and political inequalities. It is viewed that the Philippines, as a democratic society, could put to an end the problem of integration only via shared national culture. Muslim intellectuals are consciously aware of the implications of the government discourse on cultural diversity and politics of recognition in relation with the Muslim minorities in the Philippines. The basic premises of such concepts seem to be socially conducive for they aim at addressing the issue of unity of different cultural groups in one state.[49] The discourse of multiculturalism as it develops in due course of time turns out to be an advocate for a non-tolerant policy, particularly in the administration of President Erap Estrada, as the entire system undermined the importance of mutual recognition and integration between Muslims and non-Muslims. Such government advocacy eventually leads to the so-called "filipinization" of the entire Philippine society. The tradition and cultural roots of the Muslims in the Philippines become radicalized as political programs polarize the society.

From the 1970s onwards, Philippine intellectuals have been actively involved in various initiatives for the realization of a unified system that may imprint a meaningful social co-existence in the history of the Philippines. Such initiatives are guided by the principles of "*the* Filipino way of life, *our* culture, *the* Filipino personality, *the* Filipino language, *the* philosophy of the Filipino's lives, and be a *true* Filipino." It is apparent, however, that the appeal to regard all people as one, regardless of ethnicity or social class, has no strong impact in the deliberation for a unified social system, particularly in the field of law and education. It is

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[48] Muhammad Anwar, " Young Muslims in a Multi-Cultural Society: Educational Needs and Policy Implications, in *Crisis in Muslim Educatio,* edited by Syed Sajjad Husain and Syed Ali Ashraf (Jeddah: King Abdulaziz University, 1979), p. 26.
[49] Will Kymlicka. *Multicultural Citizenship*. Harvard University Press, 1995.

rather perturbing that the epitome of a true "national life" as experienced by the people of great civilizations is obstructed by the preponderance of a materialistic approach within the system and thus swiped away the urgent demand for social unity, brotherhood, and equality.[50] The Commission on National Integration is mandated by the Philippine Constitution to give a sense of belongingness to all cultural minorities, particularly Muslims. It guarantees the freedom of both majority and minority from hatred and bigotry, prejudices and intolerance and from any system of thought that may favor partial interest detrimental to the vision of achieving one nation.[51] The government had introduced various legal, educational and economic reforms while at the same time land reform and agricultural development have been prescribed as important tools of the Commission in reshaping Muslim Filipinos' sense of belonging to the Philippine Republic.[52]

The political power and freedom given to the Muslim leaders were used by Muslim communities to secure a more conducive social environment for the advancement of Islamic faith and its institutions. One may observe the painful experiences faced by Muslim communities related to the encroachment of secularism in the social system. It is indeed intellectually traumatic and challenging since it obstructed the legal path for growth of Islamic knowledge and culture in the Philippines. Kenneth E. Bauzon observes, "...the government's paternalistic approach towards the cultural minorities reaffirmed rather than alleviated the cultural minorities' disadvantaged position."[53]

Frustrated with the secular approach, particularly the rehabilitation program for Mindanao, prominent Muslim leaders and intellectuals felt the necessity to express their aspiration through extra-legal means. The Muslim Association of the Philippines, the *Agama* Islam Society, the *Ansar* al-Islam and the Supreme Islamic Council of the Philippines, among many others, spearheaded the initiative.[54] Senator Domocao Alonto, the first Muslim representative to the House of Senate in the Philippines argued that the type of education formulated by the government's policy makers, which was proven as a successful mechanism for

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[50] Kenneth E. Bauson, *Liberalism and the Quest for Islamic identity in the Philippines,* (Durham, North Carolina: The Acorn Press., 1991), p. 35.
[51] Ibid.
[52] Jeffrey Ayala Milligan, *Islamic Identity,* p. 105.
[53] Kenneth E. Bauson, *Liberalism and the quest for Islamic identity in the Philippines,* p. 71.
[54] Ibid.

social transformation in the Christian areas, was a debacle in the Muslim areas and to some extent worsened the "Moro Problem or Conflict." An intensive deliberation on the need to reformulate the best suited education for Muslims in the Philippines was recognized in the Republic Act No. 1387 in 1955, which resulted in the establishment of the Mindanao State University (MSU) at Marawi City. The establishment of the MSU was intended to steer the guiding principle for promoting all-inclusive understanding between Muslims and Christians.[55]

Enactments, executive orders and presidential decrees were promulgated by the Philippine government since the tenure of Marcos from 1965-1985, until the administration of Rodrigo Roa Duterte, to eliminate, if not to reduce, the tensions and breakdown of law and order in some Muslim areas. Solutions were seriously considered, formulated and given priority to bridge the chasm that separates the Muslims from other Filipinos.

The Philippine Government adopted the policy of attraction, reconciliation and rehabilitation. The Presidential Task Force for the Reconstruction and Development of Mindanao (PTF-RDM) was created among other things to restore peace and order in the Moro region and to implement selective amnesty and rehabilitation.[56] The National Commission on Muslim Filipinos (NCMF) was created to provide economic projects to the Muslim populace and to preserve Islamic culture and heritage in the Philippines.

The Philippine Government had finally responded to the demands of the Muslims, especially in the application and enforcement of their personal laws and the recognition of their cherished values and beliefs, which they dearly guarded for centuries. The Muslim Personal Laws in the Philippines were codified and became part of the national laws on February 4, 1977 through Presidential Decree No. 1083, otherwise known as the Code of Muslim Personal Laws of the Philippines.

Regional Autonomy was recognized and incorporated under the 1987 Constitution of the Philippines. This Constitution provides a different judicial system to the autonomous government. The Organic Act provides that the administration of justice in the Autonomous Region is vested in the Supreme Court, the Court of Appeals and other courts established by the Constitution, which shall continue to exercise their judi-

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[55] Antonia Isidro, *Muslim-Christian Integration at the Mindanao State University,* (Marawi City: Mindanao State University Research Center, 1968), p. 376.
[56] Wan Kadir Che Man, p. 79.

cial powers as provided by the Constitution and national laws.[57] The Organic Act mandates the creation of the *Shari'ah* Appellate Court. In addition, the Legislative Assembly of the Autonomous Region, in consultation with the Supreme Court, has been recognized by the Government under the jurisdiction of the *Shari'ah* Courts.

Aside from Islamic legal and educational reform, the Philippine Government had introduced the following programs for the general welfare of Muslim communities in the country: 1) the Arabic language has been made as one of the major languages to be used in predominantly Muslim areas as clearly provided in the 1971 Constitution of the Philippines; 2) a presidential decree was issued directing the use of Arabic as one of the subjects to be taught in appropriate elementary and high schools in Southern Philippines;[58] 3) scholarship has been granted to deserving *mujahid* returnees and their families to pursue their studies in higher institutions; 4) the establishment of the Amanah Bank; 5) the creation of the Maharlika Village in Manila; and 5) the building of the Quiapo Mosque in the Philippine capital city.

Despite the government concession for Muslims' development in the South, the basic goal of the Moro struggle to gain meaningful autonomy was never fully granted**.** However, the former, President Benigno Aquino III, and current President Rodrigo Roa Duterte have shown optimism that the Mindanao conflict will finally be resolved. On October 15, 2012, the Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro, a preliminary peace agreement between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) and Moro National Liberation Front (MILF), was signed in the Malacañan Palace in Manila. Although there are parties who opposed the Framework Agreement, presidential spokesperson Edwin Lacierda pointed out that the framework contained a "…major improvement over the organic act of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao."[59] This new deal is regarded by many Filipinos, both Muslims and non-Muslims, as a replacement of the "failed government experiment in Mindanao," which is currently taking place to ensure the end of the decades-long civil war in Mindanao.

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[57] Sec. 1, Art. 1X, Constitution of the Philippines.

[58] Ali G. Macawaris, "Muslim Society, Higher Education and Development: The Case of the Philippines" in *Muslim Society, Higher Education and Development in Southeast Asia,* edited by Sharom Ahmat and Sharon Siddique, (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1987), 100.

[59]http://www.panaynewsphilippines.com/nation/6442-govt-peace-talks-to-benefit-mnlf-too.html (accessed 6 March 2012).

Conclusion

When Islam was brought to the Philippines in the third wave of its expansion by Sufi missionaries from West and Central Asia, it adapted to the multi-cultural milieu of societies that were under the influence of Hinduism and Buddhism. It eventually introduced a new system that accommodated local customary practices. Before the colonial period, a system of law and government were already established in the Muslim South. The dominant Muslim culture and tradition was the result of the convergence of Muslim Arab, Indian and Chinese culture and local customary practices.

Putting the issue of Muslim identity and culture under the microscope of the government is an endeavor fraught with numerous tensions, and the Muslims in the Philippines are not an exception. Due to the overwhelming influence of secularism in the social system, it was inevitable that any reform taking place in Islamic institutions has always been under the scrutiny of the government, due to its socio-political implications. Western thoughts and ideas were borrowed by governing elites and policy makers in the deliberation of Muslim aspiration for meaningful peace and justice for the entire Muslim community of the Philippines. Those policies have their own strengths and flaws. We have highlighted that due to biases and prejudices against Muslim minorities, Muslim revolutionary organizations demanded a certain degree of autonomy from the Government.[60] Part of the peace package was the national recognition of the Muslim personal laws and the creation of the *Shariah* courts as part of the national judiciary system.

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[60]   Rosita Tolibas-Nunez, *Roots of conflict: Muslims, Christians, and the Mindanao struggle*, (Makati City: Asian Institute of Management, 1997), 84.

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