

MAJORITY-MINORITY SITUATION IN THE PHILIPPINES

Mamitua Saber

What constitutes today the emergent Philippine nation is discernibly a plural society and culture comparable to those of sister countries in the region of Southeast Asia. Since colonial times, the direction of change in this country has been towards the integration of the diverse and isolated small tribal communities into a developing nation. The desired goal of the nation is to effect a cohesive society under the unifying influence of the national government and other institutional processes.

The pluralistic nature of this society is an interesting study in the special area of race and ethnic relations. Perhaps a sub-area could be found also to focus on the problem of majority-minority relations. Unfortunately, studies on this social problem are minimal as shown by the scarcity of materials on it in libraries, social science departments, and research centers in the Philippines. The reason perhaps for this "neglect" is that intergroup conflict has not been as acute and persistent in this country as it has been in other areas of the world, among them, South Africa, Belgium, Canada, India, Pakistan, and the United States, to mention a few. However, the current intergroup crisis in Mindanao in southern Philippines invites the interest of scholars and concerned citizens for scientific studies and application.

Within this territorial setting of more than seven thousand islands, whose natural barriers of land masses and seas have created isolation and communication gaps, there are diverse ethno-cultural sub-societies ranging from the most primitive jungle tribes to the most modern urbanized community of inhabitants. With such diversity, it is often difficult to establish a comprehensive taxonomy of groups that constitute the entire population. Nevertheless, the inhabitants can discern how they

are variously united and divided into distinct groups that create in-group and out-group situations.

Although the Philippines is constitutionally a secular state, neither supporting nor antagonizing any religious institution or people, customarily and officially, the people generally classify themselves along sectarian lines. Thus, the native and alien populations are classified into major groups, with sub-groups of Christian, Muslim, and Pagan, instead of being drawn along non-sectarian lines. The divisiveness of the Filipino thought, feeling, and attitude is sectarianly expressed by members of the majority who often announce that the Philippine is the only "Christian nation" in Asia. Such a religious label is overtly challenged by a minority group — the Muslim, who also make such contrasting labels as "Muslim Philippines," "Muslim Mindanao," or "Muslim South." The more reserved and relatively non-irritant minority — the so-called "pagan" or animistic groups in isolated areas — has maintained their socio-cultural-spiritual identity and their ethnocentric attitudes, despite their obvious material backwardness. It is obvious that the religious fanaticism of these groups tends to divide the social structure of the nation, notwithstanding the desired oneness of a common homeland under the same government.

For the convenience of this discussion, I have attempted in this paper to differentiate and stratify the entire Philippine population into four major groups of alien and native populations. The object of such tentative classification, which may invite refinement by other taxonomists of Philippine groups, is to identify which group represents either the majority or minority. At the time of writing, I was unable to get hold of the census count or estimate of each group and sub-group. Were they available, statistical data would have been useful in presenting the demographic background of the majority-minority relations under consideration. At any rate, the terms "majority" and "minority" as used in this paper, refer more to the characteristics of "dominance" and "subordination" in the relationship between groups and individuals, rather than serve as a criterion of numerical predominance. The terms refer to a given group's access to such scarce values as wealth, power, prestige, and influence in intergroup relations and interaction.

The following table briefly summarizes the diverse population

groups whose different geographical, historical, socio-cultural, educational, religious, and political background create a variety of majority and minority situations:

Table I

Group Differentiation/Stratification of Philippine Population

Location of Group	Group Name; Identification by race, nationality, ethno-linguistic-cultural, religious, and/or other differentiating factors:
Mostly in Urban Centers	Group A -- Alien or foreign Westerners: Spanish, English, Americans, etc. Orientals: Chinese, Indian, Japanese, etc.
Luzon	Group B -- Christian Majority Ilocano, Pangasinanese, Zambal, Pampango, Tagalog, Bicol, etc.
Visayas	Cebuano, Hilongo, Samar-Leyte (Waray), etc.
Mindanao-Sulu-Palawan (Minsupala)	Mixed or heterogenous Christian groups originally migrants from Luzon and Visayas and native converts in the region.
Mindanao	Group C -- Muslim Minority¹ Maguindanao, Maranao, Iranon (marginal between the first two), Sangir; Kalagan, Tausog and Samal.
Sulu	Tausog, Samal, Jama Mapun, Badjao ²
Basilan	Yakan; Tausog, Samal, Maranao, Maguindanao (n)
Palawan	Palawani; Tausog, Samal
Balabac	Molbog or Melebugananon
Luzon	Group D -- Isolated Tribal ("Pagan" or Animistic) Minority³ Ivatan, Bontok, Apayao, Gaddang, Ifugao, Kankanai, Inibaloi; Ilongot (Egoñgot), Italon, Abaka; Isinai, Kalinga; Pagan Gaddang, Kalagua, Balbalasan-Ginaan, Lubuagan-Sumadel, Mangali-Lubo); Negrito, Tinguian, Mangyan, etc.

Visayas	Magahat, Negrito, Bukidnon, Ati, Mundo, Kubugan
Mindanao	Ata, Bagobo, Bilaan, Bukidnon, Kualaman, Mandaya, Mangguangan, Manobo, Mamanua, Subanon, Tagakaolo, Tirurai, Tasaday (recently discovered stoneage tribe), etc.
Sulu	Badjao or Luaan (boat-dwelling animist, some being Islamized and Christianized)
Palawan	Latak, Tagbanua

Using this table as basis for discussion, we may describe the position of some selected groups and sub-groups in the total intergroup relationships.

Group A (Alien or Foreign) does not constitute a single social structure. The Spaniards, despite their small number, once represented the dominant power-majority over the more numerous native Christian population, and partly over the Muslim and Pagan groups, because of their superior civil, military, and religious organizations. They ruled the country for over three centuries, imprinting upon the natives Hispanic civilization, including the Catholic Faith. Thus, they brought the progress and civilization of the Old World to the Philippines as they had done to Latin America. Rightly, the Christian Filipino may be regarded as a "Latinized Asian" today.

The Americans, also relatively small in number, replaced the Spanish colonial regime at the turn of the 20th century. They held the dominant power for over four decades, leaving behind them cultural effects that even today continue to have impact not only on the Christian group, but also upon the once resistant Muslim and Pagan minorities. They left behind them their institutional traits that are still retained under continuing contact and socio-cultural alliances. The Filipino is to a certain degree a "little American," racially and culturally, as much as he is also Hispanic. The influence of the Old and New Worlds added a new dimension to the racial and cultural personality of the Filipino *kayumanggi* that is embodied in a mestiza, who repeatedly wins in international beauty contests.

East-West amalgamation

With its ancient Asian heritage amalgamated with Western traits, Philippine civilization seems totally western; it is Philippine civilization, mestizo style. Thus, this amalgamation creates in the personality development of a Filipino group or individual the social status of a majority.

The Philippines, along with its Southeast Asian neighbors, had earlier felt the impact of the Great Traditions of Asia — from the centers of civilization in Arabia, India, and China — whose influences are traceable in Philippine past and contemporary life.

For a significant case of race and ethnic relations, let us take up the Chinese minority. The Chinese minority in the Philippines has not gained and exercised political dominance over Philippine natives as did the Spaniards and Americans. It was often a victim of a mild degree of racism, especially from the Spaniards and natives. Today it is still envied, prejudiced and discriminated against by the natives for its continuing economic dominance in business and industry in most trading centers of the nation.

The Chinese in a mixed marriage with a Filipino produces a Sino-Filipino *mestizo/mestiza*. These mestizos/mestizas or their progeny often gain dominance in the economic, social, and political life of the nation, as the Spanish and American mestizos do. The pure Chinese female often rejects the native male as a marital partner, but the Chinese mestiza seldom discriminates against a pure Filipino male.

According to a study by an American anthropologist, the Chinese often rejects a Filipino and other non-Chinese as a gambling opponent due to the belief, purportedly based on experience, that a non-Chinese is often a dishonest gambler.

The Filipino's stereotype image of a Chinese is that of a merchant or a cook who is *suki*, that is, one whom the Filipino regularly patronizes. In his interaction with the Chinese, the Filipino has developed a taste for Chinese cuisine such as the *pansit* noodle, *mami*, *siopao*, etc.

The Filipino and Chinese majority-minority problem is mainly economic rivalry. This economic rivalry has been minimized by governmental restrictions on Chinese retail trade and the increasing shrewdness of Filipinos in business.

In a mild sense, perhaps, the Filipino racially discriminates against the Chinese, forgetting, or without knowing, that the Chinese is an ancestor of the Malay and indeed of the Filipino himself. According to physical anthropologists, geneticists, and historians, the ancestors of the Malay came from ancient Yunan in Southern China.

The Japanese also was once discriminated against by the Filipino. This was due to the Japanese pre-war military and political ambition to dominate the whole of Asia. The Japanese image to a Filipino was that of an expert carpenter who turned into a ruthless soldier during World War II. The post-war Japanese image, however, softened into that of a technologist and manufacturer who sells such products as cameras, watches, toys, carpentry tools, and transistor radios, etc., for the enjoyment of Filipinos. But the Filipino is still suspicious of the Japanese because of the latter's wartime record in the Pacific military theater.

The Indian, locally known as "Bombay" or "Turko" (mistaken for a Turk), is not considered as much of a threat to Filipino interests. Like the Chinese, he is also a *suki* to the native but unlike the Chinese, he is not a dominant business rival. The Indian limits his merchandise to the relatively high-prestige goods. Some Sepoys, who deserted the British Occupation Army in Philippines, married Tagalog women. These unions resulted in pretty descendants in the town of Cainta, Rizal. It is a historical case of Indian-Filipino amalgamation.

Except for the Filipino-Sino majority-minority problem brought about by business rivalry, the Filipino's general relationship with foreign groups is relatively peaceful and mutually beneficial. The dominance of foreign groups has gradually eased since the later part of the American administration. The movement of change was from colonial domination to independence for the Filipinos.

As the chart shows, the native Filipino population grouped into B, C, and D, is not a homogenous social unit like those of other nations. For example, the Japanese more or less belong to a common race, nationality, language, culture, and religion.

Racial Homogeneity

There is, however, an apparent racial homogeneity among the Christian, Muslim, and Pagan groups and sub-groups. They belong to

the racial stock of the Malay and the Indonesian. Separately or taken together, they differ in physical features from the aboriginal Negrito. Except to the physical anthropologist and other meticulous observers, persons of the Malay and Indonesian types are to the layman indistinguishable from one another. Nevertheless, Filipinos belong to various racial types which tend to amalgamate in the course of physical contacts in past and contemporary life, especially in the mixed urban setting. Except for the most isolated tribes, lowland and coastal native groups have racial admixture with foreign stocks who are listed under Group A. Filipinos traveling abroad can easily distinguish the physical type of their countrymen even from other Orientals such as the Chinese and Japanese. Many Filipinos, however, can easily pass for Japanese, Chinese, and a variety of Southeast Asian types. Racially and culturally, Filipinos share the psychology of "consciousness of kind" like most other peoples.

However, the Philippine groups are fragmented into a variety of spoken dialects or languages. Eighty-seven of them have been recorded or studied, and there are more recent ones reported by linguists. These belong to the family of Indonesian or Malay-Polynesian languages and many of them are similar to one another. Thus a cosmopolitan speaker of one native tongue may understand and communicate in a number of tongues. At any rate, language integrates members of an in-group, but creates a socio-cultural gap between them and the out-group.

From the colonial period to the present, the introduction of Spanish and English has played the integrative role of bridging the communication gap among the groups. In today's intergroup contacts, the national language, called Pilipino, is increasingly a powerful influence in nation-building, along with English, the medium of classroom instruction. Two major tongues also exhibit integrative effects, and they are the Ilocano in Northern Luzon and Cebuano-Visayan in Central Philippines and Mindanao-Sulu area. Recently, the Hilongo-speaking Visayan from Western Visayas and the Maguindanao-speaking Muslims in Cotabato have met in an intergroup conflict that upset the unity of their socio-political and economic relations.

Likewise, this country is fragmented by multi-religious identities of groups and individuals. The dominant religion adhered to by the

majority is Christianity. This is the basis for labelling the Philippines as the only "Christian nation" in Asia. But Christianity is also fragmented into the Roman Catholic denomination, which has the largest number of adherents, and the multi-denominational Protestant churches, that include the Aglipayan or Philippine Independent Church, and Iglesia ni Kristo. Adhered to by a slight minority are Hinduism and Buddhism.

A close rival to Christianity is Islam, adhered to by the Muslim minority. Islam is the largest religious fraternity in the entire South-east Asia. At the coming of the Spaniard, Islamic influence extended as far north as the Manila Bay area, and to some scattered small pockets in the Visayas. But today, Islam's adherents are confined to southern and western Mindanao, Sulu, Basilan, and Southern Palawan,⁴ whereas, Christians are distributed throughout the length and breadth of the Philippine archipelago.

For their part, the tribal communities adhere to animism, although they are being encroached upon for conversion by Christian missionaries. While Christian and Muslim look down upon each other's group, both are equally prejudiced and discriminatory against the animistic tribal groups, most of whom resist conversion to either Christianity or Islam. Animists, who are greatly exposed to urban ways, tend to become Christian converts. Islam has no organized mission, although it has Madrasah schools, religious teachers, and associations. Thus it is not fast penetrating the communities of animists. But since the post-war era, newly-organized Islamic associations have been gaining new converts among Christians in the Manila metropolitan area. Muslims becoming Christian are relatively fewer than Christian converts to Islam.

It is well-known that followers of both Christianity and Islam had once fought one another in a series of wars due to the Spanish program of Christianization of both Muslim and pagan groups. The Spaniards and their converts had allied against the Muslims who resisted any religious change in times of war and peace.

Past experience in war contacts, caused by religious and other motives, left behind today a divisive scar that has caused Filipino citizens to distinguish themselves religiously, socially, and culturally as Christian,

Muslim, and "Pagan." It should be noted that the animist group does not accept the derogatory term "pagan" which is used to describe their indigenous institution and community. The Constitutional mandate, however, on religious freedom tends to establish religious toleration among the different religious communities.

Within each large religious group of Christian, Muslim and "Pagan," there are still sub-groupings of ethno-linguistic and localistic lines. Regionally and linguistically, the Christians identify themselves as Ilocano, Tagalog, Visayan, etc.; the Muslims classify their cultural communities into Maguindanao, Maranao, Tausog, Samal, etc. The so-called "Pagans" are most segmentalized due to the physical and mental isolation of their localities. For example, there is no interactive contact between the Ifugao mountain terrace cultivator and the sea-gypsy Badjao whose life is built around his boat-house and fishing.

To an increasing degree, however, interactive contacts among Filipinos are aided by processes of government, education, technology to include especially transportation and communication, and the money economy which gradually replaced the ancient and tribal barter trade among the once isolated communities. The silver coin represents the symbolic circle whereby every Filipino, except the stone-age Tasa-day, steps inside for economic interaction with other individuals and groups.

The foregoing brief description is a general geographical, historical, cultural and social, political and economic, and religious profile of the Philippines. It pictures the opposing situations of unity and diversity and the achievements and problems of nation-building.

'Christian-Muslim relations'

As indicated on the Table and as earlier explained, social segmentation may arise, among other factors, on similarities and differences in race (biological), nationality (political), religious (ideological and cultural) and language.⁵ These may be aggravated by an imbalance in economic positions. Groups and individuals divided by such factors might be mutually discriminatory against and prejudiced to each other in varying degrees and at varying situations. The same divisive factors

may cause frustration and tension, overtly or covertly, on the levels of majority versus majority, minority versus majority, or majority versus minority relations. For our purpose, we may ask, who really are the majority and minority in the Philippines?

A majority group is variably called a "dominant" group; a minority group a "subordinate" group.

The Christian group occupies a place of dominance in relation with the Muslim and Pagan groups who are in a social position of relative subordination.

A section of individuals from the majority (e.g. Christian) who are in the area dominated by a minority social-power (e.g. Muslim) may become a sub-minority. A minority member, who gains much of the traits and status of the majority through personality development, may also pass for a majority member. This theoretical reference applies to many concrete cases in the Philippines today.

A minority group or individual is so-called if he or his group is frequently a victim of prejudice and discrimination by other groups. To illustrate, President Marcos once said that the Ilocanos, who are primarily majority, are occasionally treated as minority. Due to some regional traits, an Ilocano is at times a victim of prejudice and discrimination by Tagalogs, Visayans, or Muslims, who are predominant in a given area. Nevertheless, a good Ilocano is a strong-willed person who survives competition like a Jew or Chinese. His group produced two Presidents of the Republic, including the incumbent.

Background

Christian, Muslim, and Pagan Filipinos generally belong to the same race of originally mixed Malay and Indonesian stocks, except the biologically isolated Negrito aborigines. The first two were also once "Pagans" or animists before Islam and Christianity ever heard of these Islands on the Pacific. Both have pagan traditions, some persisting to this day, just as Europeans had pagan heritage before Romans became Christian. Folklorists could document the animistic traits of lowland Christian and Muslim cultures originating from pagan times. Many of these traits bastardized some local Christian and Islamic rituals, beliefs,

and practices. Sorcery and black magic, for example, are held in common by peasant Christian and Muslim and their contemporary mountain tribal brothers.

A Filipino belongs to the majority if he is a Christian who has assimilated and adheres to, and practices to a high degree, Western values, Philippine-style. On the other hand, a minority is simply a non-Christian as the Muslim and Pagan are.

For a non-Christian to pass for or be accommodated as a "little majority," he has to imitate the personality development of a socio-cultural majority, even minus conversion. It follows that the urbanized, educated, or acculturated non-Christian participates in public life shoulder-to-shoulder with his majority compatriots. But the non-Christian is only a "marginal man" in the total social and cultural context. The "marginal man" gains a social "passport" to be accorded equal acceptance in urban prestige-labelled activities and in the professional, business, industrial, and political life of a community or the nation.

Mindanao Conflict

Peoples enter into conflict not just because they recognize their physical and material-cultural differences, but because of their contrasting allegiances to different institutions.

Muslims are predominantly rural-dwellers in the Minsupala area in contrast to the Christians who are urban-dwellers.

Though complementary in socio-economic contracts, *rural* and *urban* ways of life create two different life-styles and a socio-economic imbalance. This imbalance can be readily seen in urban-to-rural and rural-to-urban migration. Christians go to the rural areas to farm and some of them get to own large tracts of land and become big hacienda or plantation operators. In contrast, a smaller number of Muslims penetrate the urban centers for small-scale business, but they seldom gain equal success or position with the Chinese and Christian Filipinos.

Muslim generally dwell in city peripheries in a slum-like style of life, as one could witness in the mixed cities of Zamboanga, Basilan, Cotabato, and Jolo.

In Marawi City, however, the Maranaos are dominant in the city proper because they seldom sell their "sacred" ancestral lands in the city and province. In other big towns and cities, they do not gain much prominence in politics in the face of stronger Christian rivalry. Even in foreign cases, residents of rural and urban communities, as institutions themselves, have dormant hostilities against each other. More so when people have unequal opportunities to pursue decent living, differences in religion, race, language, and ethnicity — all of which are not minimized by government regulation or control.

Political systems, landholding rights

Under the Constitution, a Muslim is as much a citizen as his Christian compatriot. Politically, he is a "new Filipino," forced into allegiance to the government by military and peaceful government means. However, at the back of his mind and in practice, he still owes loyalty to his traditional form of government and the laws of the sultanates.

Under the old sultanate, he is to comply, as he has been accustomed to, with the *adat* law (customary) and Islamic law (*Shariah*). But under the Philippine republican government, he must obey the laws, too. Thus, he is torn between the compliance of *adat*-Islamic laws, on one hand, and Constitutional law, on the other hand.

To illustrate, a Muslim may be part-owner of a parcel of land which was allotted to his kin group or family in the *pangampong* (principality, state), *inged* (township), and *agama* (village community). Generally, he owns no individual parcel of land for the property collectively belongs to his family or kinship which may include many of his relatives.

Under the Constitution, however, the Philippine government under the doctrine of eminent domain has superimposed its territorial boundaries over the sultanate territories which include the forests, fishing grounds, and swamps. Thus a citizen, Muslim or Christian, may apply for land title and acquire *legal* right to a seemingly long-abandoned or idle land or forest that really are ancestral properties. If he asserts his legal rights, he is likely to run into conflict with multiple *traditional*

land claimants from the old sultanates. In many cases, Christians *legally* purchased lands from Muslim individuals and families, but may later encounter other families who would attempt to reclaim the land under customary rights. This is among the causes of armed conflicts in mixed Muslim-Christian settlements which is still unresolved by governmental approaches. In other cases, Muslims squat on land *legally* owned by Christians, who might also be squatting on land *traditionally* owned by Muslims.

Concrete cases of this land conflicts are found in Cotabato and Lanao. These allegedly caused the organization of the "*Ilaga*" (allegedly Christian landgrabbers) bands who pit themselves in armed conflict against Muslim groups ("blackshirts" and "barracudas"). The Muslim and Christian bands, like old frontier Indians and white men in the U.S., conducted genocidal raids which victimized innocent people in hitherto peaceful communities.

Modern politics tend to cause cleavage between the two groups. An editorial of the *Mindanao Varsitarian*, a publication of Mindanao State University, says that the rivalry among the political and economic "elites" — Christian versus Muslim — was a major root-cause of the conflict that reached its height in 1971 and 1972. It says further that the "elites" allied with their respective religious groups only to give the conflict a religious character, like the "holy war" of Christian crusaders and Islamic *jihad*.

But the conflict did not in any way stem from religion, as pointed out in the editorial. The conflict arose from political and economic rivalries. Religion entered into the picture because the protagonists carried the social, cultural, and especially, religious labels of "Christian" and "Muslim" in order to emotionally involve the two religious communities.

Missionaries were therefore suspected by Muslims to have inspired some Christians to fight the Muslims. Military intelligence suspected Muslim *olamas* (Islamic scholars) and some religious associations to be behind Muslim offensive and defensive actions.

To elicit the sympathy of foreign Muslims, some Muslim leaders spread rumors, which were even published in the papers, that some Christian officials favored Muslim genocide. In many towns, the Muslim

army and police personnel were suspected by Christian residents to be on the side of the Muslim group, and thus were against them.

Religious institutions in our own time work for peace rather than war. But an adherent who wants to consolidate his political and economic power, may use religion as a symbol or rallying point for his coadherents to take up offensive and defensive actions against another religious group. It is this context that we can understand the major or minor role of a religious issue in the Christian-Muslim conflicts.

Escalation by the Mass Media

The mass media have contributed to the escalation of the conflict. Prior to Martial Law on September 21, 1972, the press and radio, both local and national, often gave grossly slanted reports. Regardless of how much truth they may have contained, these reports were taken at face value by the average Christian or Muslim, fanning in them the flames of mutual hatred, fear, suspicion, and aggression. These feelings merely heightened the tension and conflict.

The trouble was also aggravated by rumors of raids — indiscriminate killing of innocent people and burning of their houses — which are believed to have been set off by a seemingly endless chain of vengeance perpetrated by each group. The rumors caused panic in towns and barrios and panic was translated into mass evacuation of Christians and Muslims from “troubled” places to “safe” areas.

The “trouble,” as an impartial American missionary observed, “was caused by a small minority of population (from both sides), but the suffering and the loss was staggering to every man, woman, and child in Mindanao.”⁶

Martial Law, however, tempered media reporting. Since then, less sensational reporting of events has tended to cool anti-Muslim and anti-Christian feelings and prevented actions which have divisive effects.

The conflict pitted Filipino against Filipino, resulting in the loss of about 1,000 lives. The more irreparable damage was the sundering of whatever love and understanding may have developed between the two communities. Unless minimized soon, if not totally stayed, the conflict

would re-establish the "ugly image" Christians and Muslims had for each other in the three centuries of "Christian-Moro" wars.

Integration

The present deterioration of Christian-Muslim harmony is pictured as a re-emergence of the so-called old "Moro Problem," now labelled as "Muslim Problem." From a political point of view, the problem is how this Republic can integrate the Christian majority and Muslim minority into the national body politic, considering their multiple differences. It is a problem of effecting unity in diversity.

The term "integration" is variably interpreted by different individuals and circles, causing some confusion. One circle mistakenly thinks it is the total assimilation of the minority into the majority's way of life, which includes the *religious* and *cultural* aspects. Muslims are fearful of religious assimilation and would resist attempts at this. *Culturally*, however, Muslims are relatively not resistant. They have selectively imbibed non-sectarian traits or values from the majority's culture, notably those of science, technology, and government, which make the majority the more advanced group. Again, along this line, the ideal process should be "acculturation," the mutual borrowing and acceptance of "non-harmful" cultural values and institutions. American Governor General Frank Murphy once observed that there are elements of what he called "Mohammedan" culture of the "Moros" which could enrich even the majority's way of life.

The Philippines could learn a lesson from Switzerland which is a model of integration. In the Swiss Republic, French, German, Italian, and other extractions retain their respective ethnic, linguistic, and cultural identities but are united by their common national body politic as by their concept of democracy. Yet, within Swiss inter-societal contact there is acculturation and social accommodation of the diverse communities. Hence, pluralism is not much of a problem.

Attempt at resolution

The "Moro Problem" is not just a regional cause for migraines; it is a national headache especially of Filipinos who want peace, unity, and progress. Since the American administration, it has alternately ap-

peared and disappeared with no apparent permanent solution despite all-out government efforts. There have been trial-and-error solutions which resulted in alternating successes and failures. Today, attempts at solving the problem, which is still manifested in sporadic violent outbreaks in Mindanao and Sulu, are jointly undertaken by the public and private sectors.

While these sectors of reformer-integrators have a common goal of harmonizing a divisive national social structure, they have no inter-organizational plans and approaches to cope with the situation. Their studies, policies, and applications are fragmented. For analogy, how could unorganized medical practitioners band together to cure a widespread epidemic? Associations and individuals tackling the "Moro Problem" should necessarily band together to cure this social cancer.

The government legislative and executive actions on the problem, if evaluated objectively, show more successes than failures, contrary to denunciations by political agitators. Muslims and Christians were once united against a common enemy -- the Japanese -- during World War II. In the post-war period they were also united in the task of nation-building under the Republic. They seemed to have no intergroup tensions, except in the "Ilaga-Muslim" conflict, whereby the armed clashes have shifted to the government forces versus the lawless.

As this is being written, the current fighting is more between the military and the Muslim dissidents. In such clashes, the Muslim, behaving like the "Moro" of past colonial wars, refuses to join the fold of the law. His general society, however, does not seem to support his "personal" cause, even in the establishment of a separate and independent "Muslim" or "Mindanao" Republic.

A fighting Muslim, whether an ideologist or a plain criminal, is often labelled by the military and the press as a "Muslim Maoist." If he were an ideologue, why not label him just "Maoist," minus "Muslim," since a good religious Muslim is never a pro-communist and is like an avowed anti-communist Christian? During the past and recent events, such names as "pirate, bandit, smuggler, and outlaw," associated with the religious and cultural name "Muslim or Moro," have created an ugly image resented by all the members of the society. The name-calling is hurting to Muslims, just as much as it hurts Negroes to hear such labels as "Negro rapist."

Among the majority, there are Maoist-Communists, but they are not customarily and officially labelled as "Christian Maoists or Com-

munists."

My former Belgian professor in Majority-Minority studies, who reviewed world cases, once stated that generally the greater ethnocentric hostilities in intergroup relations come from the majority. Could this be proved in the Philippines and other Southeast Asian countries? My professor forgot that a termite colony, a relatively small group, could eat up the largest log. Should a minority problem be resolved rather than dismissed as a trivial matter?

Suggested solutions based on speculations, surveys, and in-depth studies from a variety of professionals and institutions are too many for a lengthy recording or even listing in this brief paper. The latest among these recommendations are contained in two articles by an American missionary and a Muslim Senator. Rev. Robert D. McAmis in his article, "Muslim Filipinos in 1970's,"⁷ suggested to both Christians and Muslims to follow the Biblical and Quranic injunctions against inhuman killing. Senator Tamano complemented the missionary's appeal with "How to Solve the Muslim Problem Without Bullets."⁸ These and most other recommendations are sound — at least on paper. But who would sincerely and effectively put into action all these workable ideas?

During his conference with top Muslim leaders, President Marcos declared, "I will consider myself a failure if I cannot unify the Christians and Muslims in this country."⁹ Both local and foreign Muslims probably believe in the President's sincerity. His declaration is unlike Mussolini's pledge in Libya to be the "Protector of Islam" as much as he was the protector of Catholic Italy. But who among both Muslims and Christians genuinely join President Marcos' action for unity? Politicians, administrators, military men, religious leaders, scholars, and humanists?

What should the university do?

The objective of this Southeast Asian multi-national and multi-university conference is to appraise the role of universities in the resolution of majority-minority problems. The primary reaction in this paper is "We do not know," until this body of university administrators and scholars come to a consensus. This body is not a police force;

nevertheless it studies and suggests means.

In the Philippines, the educational system serves as a spoonful of knowledge based mostly on the values, institutions, and interest of the majority. A Philippine senator, speaking before a conference of Christian missionaries and educators, was once asked: "What is the goal of Philippine Education?" Readily he had a Protestant answer: "To make more Christians." An Italian priest then asked: "What about the Muslims?"

The Senator apologetically explained that he was addressing his answer to the assembly of Christian missionaries and educators and did not mean Christian education for non-Christians. He said that when he was the Assistant Director of the Bureau of Education, he drew up the curriculum for non-Christians including the "Mohammedans."

Yes, the ex-Assistant Education Bureau Director patriotically drew up the curriculum, but how much did it provide for the teaching of Muslim values and institutions to the Muslim youth?

The problem persists today: education is geared at developing the Muslim youth, even to the extent of making him wear a Westernized personality. Thus, he no longer listens to Muslim songs and folktales; instead he reads Mickey Mouse comics. And like his Christian counterpart, he is fast becoming a cultural plankton moving aimlessly and rootlessly.

Christian and Muslim educators seldom meet together to develop a curriculum for the integrated teaching of desirable majority and minority values. This curriculum will help Christian and Muslim youth better understand and appreciate cross-cultural values. Central to curriculum development is how Christian and Muslim could understand and resolve their mutual problems on social, cultural, economic, religious, political, and behavioral interactions. If they ever meet, they develop curricular plans which are rarely or never implemented by school administrators and teachers. This is the problem of educational engineering.

Mine is by no means a malicious criticism. I wish to end up with the words of analogy by a good Christian missionary who suggests: "A cancer must be exposed before steps can be taken to find a cure. This is an effort to expose a cancer . . . in the Philippines. Is there a cure?"¹⁰

In that line, therefore, what can general education and the univer-

sity do to resolve majority-minority conflicts which are road blocks to nation-building in the Philippines, and obviously in sister countries in Southeast Asia?

FOOTNOTES

1. Melvin Mednick, "Some Problems of Moro History and Political Organization," *Philippine Sociological Review*, January, 1957.

2. It is controversial whether Badjao be classified as Muslim (formerly called "Moro") or pagan or animist. Socially and politically, they once owed allegiance to the Muslim sultanate of Sulu.

3. Most data were derived from Dr. Timoteo Oracion, "The Cultural Minorities of the Philippines: A Summary," Silliman University, Dumaguete City, undated (mimeographed). There are other classifications by anthropologists, linguists, and the Commission on National Integration.

4. Mamitua Saber, "Muslim Filipinos in Unity Within Diversity," in Antonio Isidro and Mamitua Saber, *Muslim Philippines* (Marawi City: Mindanao State University, 1968); see map p. 3.

5. Arnold M. Rose, "Race and Ethnic Relations" in Robert K. Merton and Robert A. Nisbert, *Contemporary Social Problems* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1961).

6. Robert D. McAmis, "Muslim Filipinos in the 1970," *Solidarity*, Manila, December 1973.

7. *Ibid.*

8. *Solidarity*, Manila, December 1973.

9. Quoted by Senator Tamano, *ibid.*

10. McAmis, *op, cit.*