

Salamat Hashim's Concept of Bangsa Moro State and Government *

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By the time the Spanish colonialists arrived in the Visayas and Luzon the political institutions of the Muslims were already in place on Mindanao and the Sulu archipelago. The Magindanaw Sultanate was in control of areas from Sibugay to Davao; the Rajah Buayan was ruling the upper valley of Cotabato; the rulers of the confederation of the *Pat a Pangampong ko Ranao* were the overlords of the Ranao area and Misamis; and the Sultanate of Sulu was ruling Sulu archipelago, including what is now known as Tawi-Tawi and Palawan and the Malaysian state of Sabah.

When the Spanish colonial government attempted to extend its military and missionary conquest to Mindanao and Sulu to add the territory to the Spanish colony, the Muslims fiercely resisted. The Spaniards launched a series of expeditions against the Muslims to conquer them but failed. For more than 300 years Spain attempted to establish its political control of Mindanao and Sulu archipelago without success.

When Spain ceded the Philippines to the United States under the 1898 Treaty of Paris, Mindanao and Sulu archipelago were included despite the fact that Spain did not exercise sovereignty over these territories. Expectedly, the Muslims resisted the American colonial rule, as they resisted Spanish colonization, in defense of their way of life and rights over their homeland.

The Muslims resisted also their incorporation into the Philippine political entity when the United States granted independence to the Philippines on July 4, 1948. They considered the Philippine government, like its predecessors, as *gobirno na sarwang a tao* (foreign government). The suppression of the pockets of rebellion, like the ones staged by Kamlon and Tawantawan, did not tame the Muslims to be loyal to the Philippine government but engendered more their desire to free themselves from Philippine colonial rule.

In the early 60's some Muslim political leaders and students in Manila and Cairo clandestinely planned an organized resistance. After the military training of the first batch of trainees (Top 90), the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) was formally organized. The MNLF was at the forefront of the revolutionary struggle. It was able to centralize the pockets of resistance into a national struggle for liberation. The MNLF popularized the term *Bangsamoro* as a national identity of the Muslim population of Mindanao and Sulu archipelago.

The MNLF was a monolithic revolutionary organization. But in December 1977 a group of MNLF leaders and commanders petitioned for the resignation of Nur Misuari as Chairman of the Central Committee. When Nur ignored the petition and later expelled Salamat Hashim, who was recommended by the petitioners to replace him, a rival Central Committee was organized with Salamat as the Chairman. The new faction was called the New MNLF Leadership. In 1984, the New MNLF Leadership arrived at a consensus to rename the breakaway faction as the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). The word "national" was permanently dropped in favor of the word "Islamic" to emphasize the Islamic ideological line which Salamat originally and invariably espoused during the founding years of the revolution. Since then, Salamat served as Chairman of the MILF.

Salamat defines the ideology of the MILF as *LAILAHA ILALLAH MUHAMMADAR RASULULLAH*. This means that there is no god worthy to be worshipped but Allah and that worship of God must be in accordance with the teachings and examples set by Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him.¹

He explains that under this ideology, man commits himself not to recognize, obey and submit to any authority, including political authority, except the authority of God. In similar vein, no authority on earth can pass laws contrary to the laws handed down by God through His Prophet, peace be upon him.²

Since Salamat's political goal is not just the liberation of the Bangsamoro homeland from what the Moro fronts perceive as Philippine colonial rule but the application of the Islamic ideology, there is indeed a need to know and understand his concept of Bangsamoro state and government.

SALAMAT HASHIM: THE REVOLUTIONARY ALIM

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

Salamat's first teacher was his mother. It was through the tutorship and guidance of his mother that at the very tender age of six he could read the Holy Qur'an and memorized many of its verses.

At the age of six he started his formal education in the Philippine public school. He finished his elementary education in 1954 with honors and his secondary education in 1958 also with honors.

While pursuing his formal education, he enrolled in the village *madrrasah* where he attended classes during Saturdays and Sundays. He finished *ibtida'iyah* at about the same time that he graduated from high school.

In 1958, Salamat joined the pilgrims from the Philippines in journeying to Makkah for the *hajj*. He took his opportunity to stay behind and study in Makkah under the care of Sheik Jawawi. He attended regularly the *halakat* held at the *Masjidul Haram* and enrolled at the *Madrasatu As-Sulatiyah ad-Diniyah*.

In 1959, he went to Cairo, which at that time was the center of political activism in the Middle East. There, he enrolled at Al-Azhar University, the most prestigious institution of learning in the Muslim world. He graduated from Al-Azhar's *Ma'had al-Buuth al-Islamiyah as-Sanawiyah* in 1963. Then he enrolled at Al-Azhar's College of Theology for a bachelor's degree program majoring in *Aqidah* and Philosophy and graduated in 1967. Pursuing his scholastic inclination further, he took up his postgraduate courses at the same university and finished his master's degree in 1969. He completed the academic requirements for a doctoral degree, but he was unable to write his dissertation because he had to return to the Philippines by then to organize the Moro revolutionary movement.

Salamat also became interested to learn the English language so he enrolled at the British International Correspondence School and the American University in Cairo.

Salamat was an active student leader. His active participation in different student activities exposed him to various revolutionary trends, both Islamic and secular, which Cairo was known for at that period. This exposure brought him awareness of the colonial oppression his Muslim brothers and sisters were suffering back home, an awareness which gradually transformed him from a scholar to an Islamic revolutionary later in his life.

Among the student organizations he joined were the Philippine Muslim Student Association and the Organization of Asian Students in Cairo. He was elected

president of the former and Secretary-General of the latter.

While in Cairo he clandestinely organized a core group among the Filipino Muslim students who planned the Bangsamoro revolution in the early sixties. To finance their early activities, each member contributed half of his meager allowance to a common fund.

It is interesting to note that among the contemporary Muslim thinkers who influenced Salamat, two Muslim personalities made a lasting impression on him: Syed Qutb of *Al-Ikhwān al-Muslimūn* and Syed Abdul A'la Mawdudi of *Jamaati Islami*. It was, however, Syed Qutb's writings which shaped his Islamic outlook and political beliefs. The impact that Syed Qutb and Mawdudi made on him was what inspired him to plant the seeds of Islamic revolution in the Bangsamoro homeland.

Known to but a few, Salamat was the one responsible for covertly arranging the military training of the first batch of cadres (Batch 90) that was to become the military core group of the Moro National Liberation Front. Working with a prominent political leader, he laid the groundworks for the organization of the Bangsamoro armed struggle.

In 1970, Salamat was compelled to return home to organize, together with Nur Misuari, Utoh Salahuddin, George, Manny, Abul Khayr, Datu Alih, Maguid, Ronnie and others, the MNLF and arranged the military training of the second batch (Batch 300). The situation then on Mindanao was very tense as the *Ilaga* movement was unleashing its atrocities against the Muslim communities. As a cover for his mission, Salamat found a convenient employment as provincial librarian of North Cotabato.

In the organization of the MNLF, Salamat served as the first chairman of the Kutawato Revolutionary Committee (KRC), a regional organ of the MNLF. Later he was elevated to the Central Committee in charge of foreign relations. Using his contacts and connections in the Middle East, Salamat was able to bring to the attention of the Muslim world the cause of the Bangsamoro struggle for decolonization of their homeland, thus gaining for the MNLF moral, political and material supports.

As a person, Salamat is serious in everything he does. He is well-organized with regards to his family and his work. His personal discipline was developed during his spiritual sojourn with Sufism.

As an *Alim*, he loves learning so much that even in his jungle base he maintains a library. he is also a prolific writer and lecturer in Arabic, English and *Basa Magindanaon*, his native language.

Although he follows the *madhab Shafi'i*, Salamat has an open mind towards the followers of other schools of thought and religions.

BANGSAMORO STATE

Salamat Hashim believes that "Any solution [to the Mindanao problem] less than full independence of the Bangsamoro Muslims will not work."³ The setting up of autonomy on Mindanao by the government, in his view, is not meant to solve the problem but merely to appease and pacify the Muslims.

Historically, according to Salamat, the Bangsamoro homeland were independent states recognized by the international community. The Sultanate of Sulu and the Sultanate of Magindanaw entered into treaties with other countries. Jolo and Salimbaw were bustling international trading centers in Southeast Asia.

To Salamat and the MILF, the objective is the reestablishment of the Bangsamoro state, and to continue the building of the political institutions in accordance with the supremacy of the Law of God which was impeded with the coming of the Western colonizers. In one occasion he made it clear:

We have no intention to crush or overthrow the Philippine government. All we are asserting is our legitimate rights to self-determination, that is the independence of the Bangsamoro homeland.⁴

What Salamat envisions to establish is not a secular state but an Islamic state founded on the doctrine of the sovereignty of God.

He explains that when God created the whole universe, He provided the system upon which each creature operates. For man, God revealed the scripture as guidance (2:2) promising that among those who follow it, "there shall be no fear come upon them, neither shall they grieve" (2:38), and that they will harvest *falah* (prosperity) in this world and in the Hereafter. This point of view is anchored on the following Qur'anic verses:

He hath created man. he hath taught them utterance. The sun and the moon are made punctual. The stars and the trees adore. And the sky He hath uplifted; and He hath set the measure. That ye exceed not the measure. (55:3-8)

It is not for the sun to overtake the moon, nor doth the night outstrip the day. They float each other in an orbit. (36:39)

When man affirms LA ILLAHA ILLALLAH, Salamat explains further, he accepts the truth that Allah is his creator and He is the highest authority and therefore the absolute Law-Giver.⁵ The second part of the *tawhidic* creed, MUHAMMADAR RASULULLAH, is interpreted to mean:

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is the final messenger of God and there will be no more messenger from God after Prophet Muhammad until the end of the world; that through the prophet (peace be upon him) Allah sent complete guidance for mankind and the Shariah (law); that he was ordained by God to apply such guidance and laws in his daily life as an example and pattern for Muslims to follow, and that we accept without reservation all the teachings and guidance of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him).⁶

He also believes that judgment of what is right or wrong, legal or illegal, moral or immoral has to be based on the standard set by God, not to perception of man. The Qur'an says: "Whoso judgeth not by which Allah hath revealed: such are disbelievers." (5:44)

The operationalization of the concept will certainly be incompatible with the Philippine political system. The Philippines, being a republican state, adheres to the doctrine of people's sovereignty and that the Constitution, drafted and ratified by the Filipino people, is the highest law of the land. This is probably the reason why Salamat says that "Islam, as a complete way of life and system of government, cannot function properly under another constitution"⁷ other than the Qur'an. His position is clear that man-made laws cannot be above and superior to God's laws.

BANGSAMORO GOVERNMENT

Consistent with his concept of the Bangsamoro state, Salamat envisions the establishment of an Islamic government in the Bangsamoro homeland.

Why an Islamic government?

Salamat explains that the purpose of Divine creation is in order for man and the *jinns* to worship God. *Ibadah*,⁸ in his understanding, is not limited to the

performance of prayer, fasting, *hajj* or the giving of *zakah*, although these are basic requirements of Islam, but includes the political affairs of man, his business transactions, social relations, education, culture and all other aspects of life. All these have to be pursued in accordance with the system provided by Allah. He argues that a Muslim may be able to perfectly perform his prayer, observe the rules of fasting and *hajj*, but if the political authority to whom he owes obedience and allegiance does not recognize the supremacy of the Law of God, he has not perfected his worship to God. To Salamat, the establishment of an Islamic government is one of the requirements in the perfection of the Muslim's *ibadah* to Allah.⁹

Functions of the Government

Salamat believes that government is an instrument for the realization and perfection of man's worship to God. In any society men transact business, administer public affairs, enter into contract, legislate rules and regulations and interact with one another. All these have to be done in accordance with the system and law of God. The function of government is to regulate the affairs of humankind so that individually and collectively they can perform their worship to God. Government should ensure that justice prevails and should eradicate all forms of evils and encourage all forms of virtue and excellence.

The Model

What the Qur'an prescribes are principles that govern the political life of man but it does not provide a model upon which an Islamic government may be patterned. Because of this, Muslim political thinkers look up to the practices of the Holy Prophet, peace be upon him, and his followers as guides.

Salamat opines that the model which should be considered in the establishment of the Bangsamoro government is the government organized by the Prophet, peace be upon him, when he migrated to al-Madinah. Likewise, the rule of his four immediate successors, al-Khulafa al-Rashidun,¹⁰ should also be considered.

According to Salamat, the principles operative during the Prophetic period and the rule of the Khulafa al-Rashidun shall be made as bases in the organization of the government and guides in governance. Specific matters of governance should be left to *ijtihad*,¹¹ taking into consideration the conditions, needs and welfare of the people.

Form and Structure of Government

The Qur'an does not recommend a definite form of structure of government. Salamat's position is that this should be decided through consultation with the people.

Experiences of other people, Muslims and non-Muslims, have to be studied to determine what form of structure may be suited to the political culture of the Bangsamoro.

However, in one occasion, Salamat made known his personal view in favor of a federal system where the Muslims, indigenous inhabitants of Mindanao, and the Christian migrants will each constitute separate autonomous states. No mention was made of the specifics because those have to be referred to the people in a consultation.

In practice, the organizational structure of the MILF is similar to the structure of the Philippine government. The executive functions are exercised by the Office of the Chairman, the legislative functions by the *Majlis as-Shura* (Consultative Council) and the judiciary by the *Sahri 'ah* Court.

The Non-Muslim Citizens

The position of Salamat is that government should ensure that its citizens, Muslim and non-Muslims, enjoy freedom, justice, equality and democracy, and their human rights are projected and promoted.

During the time of the Prophet, peace be upon him, a Muslim killed a *dhimmi*.¹⁴ The Prophet, peace be upon him, ordered the execution of the Muslim saying, "I am responsible for obtaining redress for the weak." Ali, the fourth caliph, said: "Whosoever is our *dhimmi*, his blood is as sacred as our own and his property is as inviolable as our own."¹³

Non-Muslims have the right to participate in government affairs, except to be elected as head of state and to occupy positions directly in charge of the promotion, preservation and defense of the Islamic ideology. Salamat argues that the Head of State performs religious functions, such as, leading and delivering sermons during congregational prayers. Certainly, a non-Muslim cannot perform such functions. Likewise, it will be unjust to non-Muslims if they are required to perform functions which call for the promotion, preservation and defense of Islam which is not their religion.¹⁴

Muslims are obliged to pay the *zakah*, which is a religious obligation. In lieu of *zakah*, non-Muslims have to contribute to the finances of the government by paying the *jizyah*.¹⁵

Except as mentioned above, Muslims and non-Muslims have equal rights and obligations under Salamat's concept of a Bangsamoro government.

To the non-Muslims of Mindanao who do not want to join the Bangsamoro state, Salamat commits that the MILF is duty-bound to help them if they opt to be free from the oppression and exploitation of the Manila government.

Election of the Leader

Salamat is of the opinion that the *imam*¹⁶ is to be elected. However, the manner of election will depend upon the situation and level of political maturity of the people. If the condition is such that the people can freely choose the leader and they can judge fairly who is the most qualified among the nominees, he is for direct election. If not, the election of the *imam* is to be delegated to a council called *ahl al-hal wa 'al-aqd*, composed of scholars, professionals, thinkers and sectoral leaders.

System of Government

The function of governance, according to Salamat, are *shura* (consultation), justice and equality. In his view, justice is the natural consequence of *shura* and equality is the natural consequence of justice. There will be no equality if there is no justice, and there will be no justice unless the affairs of men are conducted through consultation.¹⁷

As to the mechanism on how to conduct *shura*, Salamat is of the opinion that it is to be conducted in a manner which is practical under the circumstances. the practice of the MILF in the conduct of consultation is through the *Bangsamoro Majlis as-Shura* (Bangsamoro Consultative Council) constituted in 1993 with 51 members.

CONCLUSION

It is very clear that Salamat's goal is the establishment of a Bangsamoro Islamic state and government. His concept of God's sovereignty is no doubt contradictory to the constitutional provision that sovereignty resides in the Filipino people.

Autonomy as an alternative political solution to the problem on Mindanao seems no longer feasible and viable as far as Salamat is concerned. At one time, he said that the only way that the Bangsamoro Muslims will attain prosperity and development in this world and the Hereafter is the implementation of an Islamic government.¹⁸

This is a problem that the Philippine government has to deal with seriously if it has to preserve its territorial integrity and sovereignty. The movement for establishment of Islamic state is not an isolated case among Muslims on Mindanao but a global phenomenon affecting even Muslim countries which have adopted secular systems of government.

NOTES

* Excerpts from the thesis, "The Political Thought of Salamat Hashim," submitted by Abhoud Syed Mansur Lingga to the Institute of Islamic Studies, University of the Philippines Diliman, March 1995.

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¹ Salamat Hashim, *The Bangsamoro Mujahid: His Objectives and Responsibilities* (Mindanao, Bangsamoro: Bangsamoro Publications, 1985), p. 51.

² Ibid., pp. 51-52.

³ Transcript of an interview with Salamat Hashim by a student, no date and place.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Abhoud Syed Mansur Lingga, "The Political Thought of Salamat Hashim." Unpublished thesis, Institute of Islamic Studies, University of the Philippines, Diliman, Quezon City, 1995, p. 32.

⁶ Salamat Hashim, *op. cit.* p. 53.

⁷ Transcript of an interview with Salamat Hashim by a student, no date and place.

⁸ 'Ibadah' means the act of serving Allah. It refers to doing all what Allah commands and refraining from what He prohibits.

⁹ Salamat Hashim, *Khutbah*, February 25, 1994.

¹⁰ The four right-guided successors of Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him: Abubakar, 'Umar, 'Uthamn and Ali.

¹¹ *Al-Ijtihad* means the creative self-assertion to derive laws from the legitimate sources.

¹² *Dhimmi* (pl. *dhimmiyun*) refers to non-Muslim citizens of the Islamic state.

¹³ Quoted from Syed Abdul A'la Maududi, *Islamic Law and Constitution* (Lahore: Islamic Publications, 1980), p. 283.

¹⁴ Lingga, pp. 44-46.

¹⁵ Tax paid by non-Muslims, who are male and adult citizens of the Islamic state. The rate is not fixed, but varies from year to year and from place to place. It is the substitute for *zakah* which is obligatory to Muslims.

¹⁶ It refers to the head of state of the Islamic state.

¹⁷ Salamat Hashim, Speech, May 23, 1993.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*