

The Muslim Filipinos and Islam

Antonio Isidro

Islam, which antedated Christianity in the Philippines by about 200 years, was introduced in the country by an Arab missionary, Sharif Makdum who, along with traders from Malay Peninsula and Borneo, landed in Sulu in 1380. Islam was further propagated by an Arabian scholar, Abu Bakr, whose marriage to the daughter of Raja Baguinda, enabled him to succeed his father-in-law as Sultan of Sulu. During his reign, he exerted efforts to convert the inhabitants to Islam.

In Mindanao, the missionary work was led by Sharif Kabungsuwan, a Sultan of Malayan ancestry, who settled at the lower bank of Cotabato River where he propagated the religion. In Lanao and other parts of northern Mindanao, the movement for Islamization was spearheaded by Sharif Alawi who was supposed to have come from Cotabato.

Islam was readily accepted by the native inhabitants and conversion to the new faith was rapid. There are several reasons for this immediate success. As a religion, Islam is centered on the supremacy of one God, Allah. The rituals are easy to perform, and the people were not forced to give up many of their pre-Islamic customs and practices. Instead of coercion, Muslim preachers persuaded the populace to accept the new faith while, with dedication, lived among the people, married their women, adjusted themselves to their customs, and learned to speak the native language. In other words, they identified themselves with the people whom they converted. The policies, practices, and attitudes of the Muslim missionaries were radically different from those employed later by their Spanish counterparts.

Besides religious knowledge, the Muslim missionaries taught the inhabitants the system of government and law, introduced Arabic literature, and helped the people in their various activities.

The meaning of Islam in the life of the Muslim is crucial to an understanding of the Moro problem. Islam, to the Moros, is more than a religion; it is a way of life. The actuations and behavior of the Muslims are deeply influenced by their religion. Since Spanish wars against the people of Mindanao and Sulu had been primarily aimed

at bringing them within the fold of Christianity, Muslims developed fierce resistance towards any attempt at integration – religious or otherwise.

Today, a large segment of people in Muslim provinces identify themselves more readily as Muslims than as Filipinos. This was the finding of an intensive investigation conducted by a congressional committee. In the Muslim parlance, the name “Filipino” is far from complimentary because it means “Christian,” “Bisayan,” or “unbeliever.” So, when they were asked, “Are you a Filipino?” the answer was variably “No! I am a Muslim.” Although the term “Filipino” is purely political and denotes nationality, it has acquired a religious color. The educated Muslims, however, do not mind being called “Filipinos” but they would prefer to call themselves “Filipino Muslims” or “Muslim Filipinos.”

Islam is one of the greatest world religions with followers thickly spread over Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and, less densely, in Europe and America. Although the Christians constitute 85 per cent of the Philippines’ 30-million population, they are a minority in Southeast Asia since in Indonesia alone, there are about 90 million Muslims.

As a religion, Islam means submission to the will of God. Propagated by the Prophet Mohammed and his followers, the Islamic faith recognizes Christianity with Jesus Christ as one of its 28 prophets.

The Koran

The *Koran* or *Quran* is the basis of Islam, as the Bible is the foundation of Christianity. Considered as the original source from which all principles and ordinances of Islam were drawn, the *Koran*, according to the Muslims, consists of the words of Allah as revealed through Archangel Gabriel to Prophet Mohammed. Portions of the *Koran* are derived from the Bible as indicated by many names from the Old Testament found in the Islamic book such as Adam, Noah, Abraham, David, Solomon, and Elijah. The names of Jesus, Mary and John the Baptist in the New Testament are also mentioned in the *Koran*.

The *Koran* is the fundamental source of law that governs much of Muslim daily conduct and behavior. In theology, it lays down the rules on prayers, poor tax rate for charity, pilgrimage and fasting during the month of *Ramadan*. It contains the civil and criminal laws on marriage, divorce, adultery, and other kinds of social relationships.

The *Koran* is central to the education of the Muslims. Since it is the basis of worship, the Muslim child is taught its verses in Arabic. Also, it is the basis of curricula of the elementary grades, secondary school, and the university and actually provides the major content

of general education. However, schools in the Middle East primarily offering religious instructions also teach modern courses.

The *Koran* is one of the world's most widely-read book and held in great reverence by Muslims. Translated into 40 or more languages which are not intended to replace the original Arabic, the *Koran* is designed to be read as a lecture or discourse because of its melodious rhyme and meter. Peoples in Arabic-speaking countries find it easy to understand each other in the written language because they follow the Koranic model. Studies show that the *Koran* consists of 77,934 words in 6,236 verses with a total of 323,621 letters.

Other Sources of Law¹

The secondary source from which Islamic laws are drawn is the Sunnah or Hadith. Literally, the former means "a way, rule or manner of acting." In its original sense, *Sunnah* indicates the doings, while *Hadith* the sayings of the Holy Prophet Mohammed. In effect, both cover the same ground and are applicable to the Prophet's action, practices, and sayings. The Hadith is the narration and record of the Sunnah and contains various Prophetic and Historical elements of Islam. As the Holy Quran generally deals with the broad principles or essentials of Islam the details are generally supplied by the Sunnah of the Holy Prophet. It repeatedly appeals to reason and denounces those who do not use their reasoning faculty.

The fourth source of Islamic law is the *Ijma* which conveys the meaning of "collecting or gathering together." As a Muslim legal terminology, it means the consensus of opinion or agreement of jurists (*mujtahids*) who gather together to settle some points of law. *Ijma* is not, however, an independent legal source; it is *Ijtihad* or a wider basis where group reasoning or thinking is involved to arrive at a consensus. Both *Ijma* and *Ijtihad* are open to revision.

General Muslim laws, the Shariah, or Divine Law as revealed and written in the Koran, and others just mentioned contains provisions on marriage and divorce and the treatment of slaves whose liberation is also the humanitarian concern of Islam. Also included are many other ethical injunctions such as the prohibitions against drinking alcohol, eating pork, gambling, and usury and the corresponding penalties for murder, homicide, and other social infractions.

¹ Derived from the lecture of Dr. Amir Hassan Siddiqui, SEATO Visiting Lecturer from the University of Karachi, delivered at Mindanao State University, June 20, 1963.

Among Philippine Muslims general Islamic laws are supposed to be of extensive application, but they have, in the process, been so integrated with native traditions as to create obvious cultural diversities between Philippine and foreign Muslim communities.

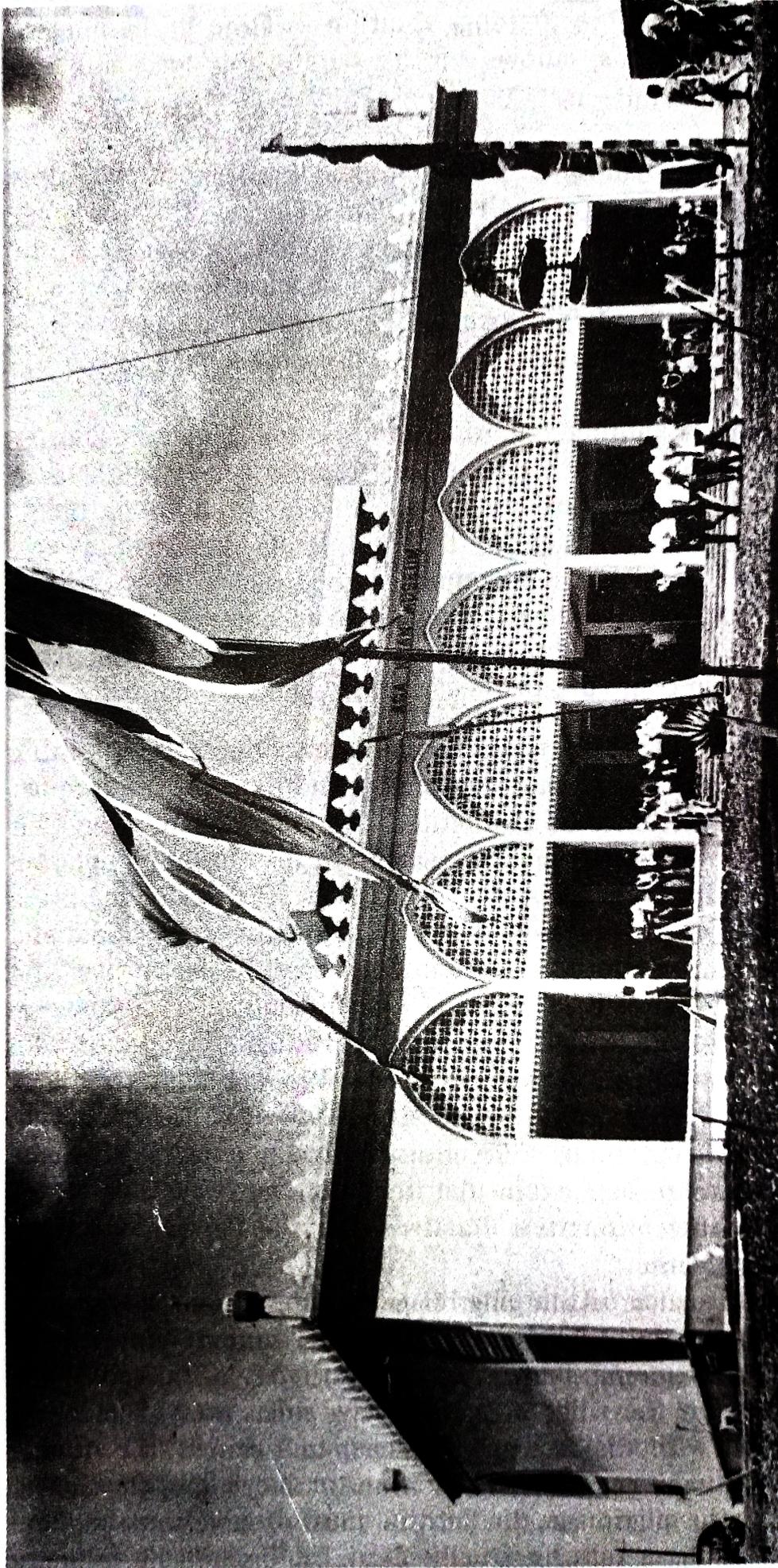
Concept of State

Ideally, in an Islamic state, sovereignty emanates from Allah, but this does not mean that all laws come from God or the Koran or are prescribed without the people's participation. As mentioned above the *Ijtihad* and *Ijma* provide reasoning and consensus as the basis of man-made laws for the Muslim state or community. As a whole, Muslim society is governed by both divine and human contractual laws. Enactment of state laws are made by the people, but consistent with Koranic fundamentals. Thus, a Muslim state is both religious and temporal. Not all citizens in an Islamic state are Muslim as non-Muslims (*Zimmis*) are guaranteed full liberty of conscience, protection of property, life and honor – and religious freedom. The Koranic verse (II:256) says, "Let there be no compulsion in matters of faith."

Pillars of Faith

Islam is based on what are called the Five Pillars of Faith consisting of the profession of faith in one God and the practice of the four obligations, namely, praying, almsgiving, fasting, and pilgrimage. "There is but one God, Mohammed is the Apostle of God" is the credo of the Muslims, while another Koranic verse says: "Oh ye who believe, believe in God and His Apostles and the Book which He hath sent down to His Apostles and the scripture which He hath sent down formerly. Whosoever denied God and His angels and His books and His apostles and the last day hath strayed far from truth." Islam holds the absolute oneness of God and, in the Koran, God revealed His will to the Apostles who carried and expounded the written message to the rest of the world.

Prayers. Praying, one of the most important obligatory duties of the Muslims, is done five times a day: dawn, noon, afternoon, sunset, and night. Prayers can be recited anywhere, but, preferably in the mosque with the Imam who leads the prayers and sets the timing of the accompanying prescribed movements. While praying, Muslims face toward the direction of the antique mosque, Kaaba, in Mecca. Women in veils join the congregation during prayers but they stay in rows behind the men. On Friday, there is a regular congregational prayer. In Marawi, all activities are supposed to cease and business establish-



The Aga Khan Museum of Islamic Arts on the Mindanao State University campus was constructed from funds donated by Prince Karim Aga Khan, an outstanding Ismaili Muslim leader. (Photo courtesy of the Aga Khan Museum)

ments owned by Muslims close to give every religious person time to go to the mosque. Before praying, ablution — done by bathing or washing the face, hands, elbows and by wiping the head and feet with water or fine sand — is required.

Alms Giving. Every believer is also required by the Koran to give alms as a sign of piety and a way to salvation. There are two kinds of alms: obligatory and voluntary. The former constitutes one-fortieth of a man's income in cash or in kind; the latter is left to the conscience of the giver. Alms are spent for altruistic purposes and are given to the poor, the needy, the orphans, and others who deserve charity.

Fasting. Fasting is another important obligation. It is done during *Ramadan* or the ninth month in which the Koran was revealed. During fasting, the believer observes complete abstinence from food, drinks, water, and smoking from sunrise to sunset. Only the sick, the very young, and the travellers are exempted. Around Lake Lanao, fasting is patiently observed by the Muslims. What meals they miss during the day are made up at night, however. More importantly, the practice is a training in conscious patience, charity, and self-control.

Pilgrimage (Haj). Pilgrimage is another important obligation. A Muslim is expected to visit Mecca and, optionally, the tomb of the Prophet at Medina, at least once in his lifetime. In Mindanao and Sulu, this requirement is observed by a large segment of the Muslim population who organize trips to Saudi Arabia every year. Either under private auspices or government management, the trips are made by boat and by plane. A pious and devout Muslim tries every means to perform the pilgrimage because it constitutes a significant religious achievement which also enhances one's social prestige. For those who have savings, this is the justified way of spending money since it is in accordance with one's duty toward Allah. However, for those who do not have sufficient funds, every measure is made to secure adequate funds for the fare to such extent that they even mortgage their lands, carabaos, and other properties. Relatives and friends also contribute to a pilgrim's expense.

The performance of the pilgrimage requires certain ceremonies like going around the Kaaba seven times and running between the nearby hills of *Arafa* and *Marua*. On the ninth day of the month, all pilgrims gather on the Hills of *Arafa* twelve miles away. This event is accompanied with the sacrifice of sheep and camels, the stoning of a devil, and the kissing of the Black Stone on the wall of the Kaaba. In undertaking the pilgrimage, the faithful must observe some requirements. First of all, he must be ritually clean. He discards his ordinary

clothings and, during the ritual, he uses two plain unsewn sheets to cover his body.

These four obligatory duties — praying, almsgiving, fasting, and pilgrimage — together with the belief in one Supreme Being constitute the so-called Five Pillars of Faith.

Jihad: Natural Right of Defense²

“Thou shall not kill” is an Islamic prohibition similarly observed by Christian, Jewish, or Buddhist; it is shared by all religions which consider killing as a sin. However, there is “justified” killing for self-defense to protect one’s own life and this principle is shared by Islam with all other creeds. Even some species of plants, as everybody observes, are provided by nature with thorns as protective armors against invasion by man, animals, and insects. Hence, to Muslims self-defense is “natural.”

Were Muslim Filipino *conquistadores* to reverse their side in the past wars and invade Spain, America or Japan they would certainly meet resistance from the aggrieved. But the fact of history was that Muslim land in the Philippines was invaded and Muslims naturally fought back with bloody results. To Islam, a holy war of defense is called *jihad*. It is declared and fought when Muslim land is invaded.

If Islamic law were to be strictly followed, a Muslim state could not fight a war of invasion, but only one of “natural” defense — when the land, religion and independence are unjustly threatened. However, Muslim armies fought wars not solely for religious defense, but for economic gain and had used religion as a rallying point to carry on the war.

Those Muslim warriors who defended their land and their rights in the historic battles of Marawi, Bayang, or Jolo were examples of fighters of a *jihad* war. “Those of them who lost their lives,” according to common belief, “were assured of a place in *sorga* — heaven.”

The Spanish-coined term *juramentado* for the “sworn killer” or amok is not sanctioned as a *jihad* defense, even if the amok verbally professes a “religious” motive. To the Maranaos, such a mental case is called *miakasiya* — a simple suicide who acts *not* “in the way of God.” Amoks or suicides do not necessarily know the real meaning of *jihad*.

Dar-al-Islam and Dar-al-Hard

According to the Muslims, the world is divided into two spheres:

² This is an interpretation of Dr. M. Saber, a Maranao scholar.

Dar-al-Islam and *Dar-al-Hard*, with specified territories between Muslims and non-Muslims, respectively. The faithful is obligated to defend the boundaries of *Dar-al-Islam* from invasion, even through Holy War or *Jihad*.

Dar-al-Islam is classified into four territories: *forbidden*, *reserve*, *cannonical*, and the *irredentist*. Mecca and Medina are considered *forbidden* to non-Muslims. Iraq, Syria, the Arabian Peninsula, Persia, Egypt, and Afghanistan – where there is continuous Muslim control – belong to the category of *reserve*. The *cannonical* territories are those countries which are governed by non-Muslim rulers, but where Muslim minorities are allowed to practise Islam – like the case of the Philippines. The *irredentist* territories are countries where previous Muslim rulers held political control but were later expelled, like Spain and now Israel.

The concept of Dar-al-Islam could explain why Maranaos expressed sympathy and some even would like to volunteer for Egypt, when the Israeli Army crossed Egyptian border in June 1967.

The consciousness of belonging to an international brotherhood with a memory of 13 centuries of religious tradition and a golden age of political and cultural pre-eminence is far from dead in the Muslim masses, especially in the Arab block of the Middle East. For them and for the generality of Muslims everywhere the Dar-al-Islam is still a reality and the nationalistic aspirations of the West are artificial and unreal.³

Plural Marriages⁴

In Muslim society, a man can have four wives. The Koran tolerates four wives, provided that he can do justice to all his wives and treat them equally.

Following the Koranic law, the Muslims practice polygyny. Practiced quite extensively during the Spanish time and even in the early years of the American regime, polygyny is now gradually diminishing. This has been attributed to the improvement of education among the Muslims, most particularly the girls, and to the general trends the world over.

³ Thomas G. O'Shaunessey, "Islamic Law and Non-Muslim Government," *Philippine Studies*, XII, 3, (July, 1964), 439-445.

⁴ Derived from Rufino de los Santos, *Developing a Revised Program for the Dansalan Junior College HS, Marawi City, Philippines, on the Basis of the Discovered Maranao Needs*. D. Ed. Thesis, Columbia University, 1961.

Besides the provisions of Islamic law, there are other factors that tend to promote polygyny among the Maranaos. The greater the number of wives a man has the higher is his social prestige. Aside from being a status symbol, polygyny serves as a means of extending one's influence. He who has four wives establishes relationships with four families, which in the local society, are solid and close units. With the increasing interest in politics, family relationship has great significance since it means more votes. Before a second or succeeding wives can be brought to the household, permission of the first wife and that of her parents must first be secured. The wives hold different degrees of importance in the household according to priority or seniority. The first or the senior wife can demand service and request assistance from her junior "partners." Since every additional wife means increased household assistance, the senior wives do not usually object to the husband taking additional wives.

A Muslim sociologist reveals his observation about this marriage custom in the following statement:

Despite the seemingly weird report about polygyny by subjective writers, monogamy is held as a general rule of marriage in Islam and more widespread among Muslim families. Islam sanctions polygyny only as an exception, according to social, even "natural," reasons assumed by followers. Of course, the exceptional rule is at times abused and the community is generally offended.

The mere mention of "many co-wives" causes cultural shock, disgust or laughter among non-Muslims. An exchange of jokes between two senators — one a Muslim and the other a Christian — is quite revealing about parallel problems in Philippine society. With value-laden remarks the Christian asked the latter to explain why plurality of wives exist in Moroland. "You know," the Muslim senator amusingly compares, "what we Muslims practice openly, other peoples do secretly" — he meant "illegally." He obviously referred to prevalent common law marriages — *querida* system — as being equally offensive to general society and religion. In mixed communities of the region, these parallel practices are known to exist together. A few Muslim men who double these practices cause disapproval by all groups in the community.

Social scientists often explain that a member of one culture may not judge another by the former's standard and vice-versa. Again, here is a true anecdote of cultural relativity. A parish priest and an *imam* were both invited in

a fiesta banquet where pork was served. Pointing out the meat, the priest told the *imam*, "Why don't you try this?" Sportsmanlike, the *imam* nodded, "Oh, yeah, thank you! I'll take it if it is served at your own wedding."

These are examples of cultural relativity when diverse groups and their opposing folkways and mores may be set for objective comparison.⁵

In this brief discussion on the Islam religion it is necessary to reaffirm its decisive effects upon its believers. As found out in the survey of the Congressional Committee mentioned earlier, the Islamic faith and its tenets profoundly influence Muslim attitudes and this should be considered in the approach to the so-called Moro problem. In the words of the committee report, a Muslim "assumes that his religion is the primary factor of his life and any attempt to subjugate his people and make them bow to the new order would mean not alone the enslavement of his people, but an attempt to do away with his religion entirely." The report adds that "the ordinary Muslim still carries with him the old idea that the sultan is the authority among his people and that the Philippine government is for the Christians alone. He believes that his whole life is dedicated to his religion and his fellow individuals. In his actuations, he sees to it that he does not run counter to the existing ruling and wishes of his sultan or else he feels guilty of having disobeyed the tenets of his religion and of having committed a crime against the ruler of his people."

Resurgence of Islam in the Philippines

Islam is both a unifying and a divisive influence in the history of the Philippine politics and society. For while it binds the Muslims in the country, it also sets them apart from the rest of the population. As a religion, they recognize it as a symbol which made them rally against all foreign enemies.

Before the war, Islam was expressed as a social and moral conduct known for its outward practices that were mainly epitomized by the mosques and the *imams*. But the underlying essence of these religious practices was hardly felt by the large segment of the Muslim populace. Perhaps, this prevalent ignorance could be attributed to the lack of religious leadership so essential in Muslim social organization of a Muslim society or the incessant Muslim resistance against Spanish invasion. Hence, during this period Islam was to a certain

⁵ Mamitua Saber, Mindanao State University, Marawi City.

degree more of a unifying symbol than a working spiritual force:

After the war, however, the picture began to change when Islam surged as a vibrant influence in the life of Filipino Muslims. As a cohesive social force, it has unified not only those who believe in its teachings but also those who sustain its brotherhood, the *Dar-al-Islam*. These changes seem to have awakened the interest of Muslims from other countries.

In the Philippines, the resurgence of Islam is evident in many ways. There has been an increasing number of educated Muslims and who are now leaders in the revitalization of the faith. The observance of Islamic obligations has become more common and regular. For instance, during Fridays a city ordinance requires all commercial establishments, especially those operated by Maranaos, to close to give the faithful opportunity to pray in the mosque. Better mosques are being constructed in different villages. More pilgrims are going to Mecca at great personal sacrifice. All this attests to the growing interest among Filipino Muslims in fulfilling their sacred obligations.

Islam is now exercising a dominant influence in the school. With the return of Muslim scholars from Cairo, the *Madrasah* schools have increased and have improved their teaching efficiency. Arabic, the language of Islam, is a significant part in the school curriculum. It is taught as a subject in every grade of the Kamilol Islam College, now Philippine Jamiatul Al-Islamia, which holds a university rank in the Arabic world. After initiating the first Philippine Muslim Congress in 1955, Senator Domocao Alonto is now translating the Koran into Maranao in the hope that his people would understand and appreciate it better.

Islamic youth organizations like the Muslim Association of the Philippines have been established to bind the people of the faith. Through the efforts of these organizations, an Islamic Center will soon be constructed in Manila. The intense desire among the Muslim youth to go to Cairo can only be matched by the interest among Christian Filipinos to go and study in the United States. As of 1967, about 300 Muslim Filipinos were studying in the United Arab Republic.

The Muslim leaders are now seeking greater participation in the affairs of the government. Each of the Muslim provinces — Sulu, Cotabato, Lanao del Sur, and Lanao del Norte — is represented in the 6th Philippine Congress by Muslims who plead for the welfare of their Muslim brothers. Working together or separately, these Muslim leaders have done much for the establishment of schools, the construction of roads, and the promotion of their general welfare. A number of Muslim leaders are now occupying important positions in the government. In projecting a new image, they now resent being

called "Moro" with which they have long been identified. Today, they want to be called "Muslim," sometimes in preference to "Filipino."

The Islamic sector of the country is getting attention from other Muslim countries deeply involved in the world-wide movement for the unification of Islam. On matters of political ideology there may be disagreements among Muslim nations, but on matters of faith they are monotheistic. In the words of Dr. Gowing, "this sense of community transcends the obvious diversities of race, language, economics, culture, geographical locations, and history which divide and subdivide the teeming household of Islam."⁶

The Pan-Islamic movement has its reverberation in the Philippines. In 1965 more than 1,200,000 Muslims from different countries went on pilgrimage to Mecca, an indication of renewed interest in Islam. This increase has been aided by the conveniences of modern transportation. There is a vigorous movement for the expansion of Islam today in Asia and Africa, reminiscent of the Muslim expansion in the 7th and 8th centuries. Millions are being converted into this faith every year as new nations are born of former colonial countries. "Today 35 countries in Africa and Asia have Muslim majorities. In much of West Africa, Islam now gains converts at a 9 to 1 ratio over Christianity."⁷

This movement towards the strengthening of Islamic bond is taking several forms in the Philippines. During the past several years, there have been in the Muslim provinces Arab volunteers who teach the Arabic language and the principles of Koran. They usually stay for some time in the community to learn the local dialect and customs of people. As spiritual leaders, they render services in much the same fashion as the American Peace Corps or the British Volunteers, except that they are committed to the enhancement of Islam. They are possessed with the traditional patience and dedication of the 14th and 15th century Muslim missionaries in teaching Islamic knowledge and avoid open arguments with missionaries of other religions.

International interest in Philippine Muslims is also expressed in the form of monetary contributions for the promotion of the Islamic cause. The construction of the Islamic Center in Manila, for example, is to be financed from generous contributions among Muslims from other countries. His Highness, Prince Aga Khan, has donated a sizeable sum for the construction of the Museum for Muslim Arts on the

⁶ Peter Gowing, "Islam: The Contemporary Scene." *Philippine Studies*, Manila, p. 643.

⁷ *Time Magazine*, April, 1965, p. 34.

campus of Mindanao State University.

There have been an impressive number of visitors from Arabia, Malaya, Pakistan, Egypt, and Indonesia who have bolstered the local Muslim's interest in his faith. In 1963, a widely known authority on Islamic history and culture from the University of Karachi, Dean Hassan Siddiqui, gave a series of lectures in Marawi City and the University. High officials of the UAR have also visited Marawi and other Muslim centers in the country. His Excellency, Mohammed Tewfic Oweida, Secretary-General for Islamic Affairs of the UAR, was the last visitor before the outbreak of the Israeli-Arab conflict. He went to various Muslim schools and delivered addresses on important gatherings to explain the meaning of Islam and the contributions it has given to world civilization especially in the fields of law, mathematics, astronomy, geography, chemistry, and medicine. In exhorting the Muslims, Oweida said, "the Muslim civilization was prominent from the Atlantic to India and from the Mediterranean to the heart of the Sahara. It still is everywhere, growing and going strong, genuine and creative."

A recent event that clearly indicated the unity of Muslims under the Dar-al-Islam was the spontaneous and massive demonstrations of the Muslims of Marawi when the Israel-Arab war broke out in the middle of 1967. In large, attractive placards they expressed their sympathy for the Egyptian cause. As a matter of fact, many people manifested their desire to join the Egyptian army while contributions for Egypt were collected.

Importance of Muslim Philippines

The Filipino Muslims play a significant role in the progress of the Republic and the stability of international affairs. A young and developing nation like the Philippines needs the support and cooperation of every citizen. United, it can achieve its national purpose; divided, it will disintegrate and eventually decay. The wounds wrought in the history of our country must now be healed, and the different forces that have separated our population into two major opposing camps must now be forgotten, especially now that we face economic and political problems with our neighboring countries. We have to strengthen ourselves vis-a-vis Malaysia and Indonesia with which our local Muslims share common culture and traditions.

The Filipino Muslims are an integral part of the *Dar-al-Islam* which recognizes no barrier in language, color, history, or geography. The practices and concept of Muslims may vary from country to country, from region to region, but their religious bond binds them all as brothers under Allah, sharing in victory and defeat, in prosperity

and misery.

Islam constitutes the second largest religious community in the world today. Its adherents have been variously estimated from 430 million to 580 million and are found in practically all countries of the world. Representing more than 20% of the total human population, they are mostly concentrated in Asia and Africa covering about one-sixth of the world's land surface. They include more than three dozen sovereign states in addition to non-Muslim countries like India, China, and the Soviet Union which have Muslim minorities. In our neighboring countries, the Muslim population predominates; Indonesia has 97 million (1961), Pakistan, 89 million; India, 47 million; China, 40 million; and Malaysia, 7 million. These Muslim countries can be united as a formidable third force in the present ideological conflicts among the Big Powers.

In international diplomacy, identification with the newly independent nations of Africa and Asia which are predominantly Muslim may prove advantageous in world affairs. It has been argued, time and again, that one of the reasons for the old local prescription of 24 units of Spanish in the curriculum of colleges and universities is the cultural interest and sympathy that we may get from the Spanish-speaking nations. By the sheer number of those who profess the Islamic faith, taking common cause with them may prove beneficial to us.

Viewed from internal considerations, the Filipino Muslims deserve greater attention. Like the other segments of the Philippine population, they are growing in number. At the rate of 3.2% increase every year, the Muslim population estimated at 1.6 million must now approximate two million — more numerous than the entire population of small Muslim countries like Libya, Kuwait, Barein, and Zanzibar.

The Muslim population is generally poor in comparison with the common level of Christian population in the country. With the current discontent and revolutions around the world, measures must now be adopted to forestall social disorder. We need not wait for social inequities to burst in the open as in the case of the Negro Americans. We need not wait for a Huk unrest as in Central Luzon before applying civic actions. Our apathy and complacency may compel the Muslims in our country to make common cause with their Muslim brothers overseas in order to promote *Dar-al-Islam* at the expense of our national solidarity.