

# The Political Biography of Senator Ahmad Domocao Alonto, Sr.

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## ABSTRACT

This research delves into the political biography of Senator Ahmad Domocao Alonto, Sr., a prominent figure who held significant positions in the Philippine government from 1948 to 1986. Serving as a Presidential Assistant and Adviser, Congressman, Senator, and delegate to constitutional conventions, his life story is meticulously documented in this study. The exploration encompasses his genealogy, education, marriage, pivotal life events, government roles, political advocacy, and enduring legacy among the Mranaw and Bangsamoro communities. Senator Ahmad Domocao Alonto, Sr.'s influence on Maranaw society and the Bangsamoro people is paramount. Revered as a visionary, social reformer, statesman, and advocate for Bangsamoro rights, he left an indelible mark on Moro land, earning legendary status among his people. This research holds immense significance in the political and intellectual history of Mindanao. The study draws extensively from primary sources, including Senator Ahmad Domocao Alonto, Sr.'s written speeches, alongside books, journals, and newspapers. To ensure a balanced perspective, the researcher engaged with key individuals in his life, including contemporaries, relatives, family members, and local residents in Marawi and Lanao del Sur. This comprehensive approach not only preserves the rich legacy of Senator Ahmad Domocao Alonto, Sr. but also contributes significantly to the broader literary landscape, enriching our understanding of political history in the region.

**Keywords:** *Bangsamoro, Da'awah, Integration Policy, Political Biography, Self-determination*

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The researcher believed that remembering the history and the legacies of certain individuals who have meaningfully contributed to society is a source of noble inspiration for the coming generations. With this, the most remarkable progress that happened to the Bangsamoro people in Mindanao was through the leadership of one of the great Muslim leaders in the 20th century (Alam, 2005). Certainly, like the rest of the admired Muslim leaders in the world, his greatness lies in his sincere, selfless dedication to the cause of Islam, his determined efforts to resolve the problems faced by the Bangsamoro people and Lumads in Mindanao, his contribution to the advancement of Islamic learning, and his lasting impact on Muslim societies. Undeniably, Ahmad Domocao Alonto, Sr. played a significant role in shaping the development of the political and intellectual history of Mindanao. He had lived a life filled with a remarkable political career and was a great supporter of Muslim movements in the Philippines.

Notwithstanding the way that Ahmad Domocao Alonto, Sr. has had a significant effect on the Mindanao socio-religious and political affairs, there are no broad examinations directed at Ahmad Domocao

Alonto's political biography.

Thus, the researcher strived to document the political life of Ahmad Domocao Alonto, Sr. since it has not been completely written in the field of discourse in the political and intellectual history of Mindanao.

As famously known among his associates in the Philippine Congress in the 1950s as "Senator Domie", he served in the Upper House as a senator representing the Bangsamoro in the Minsupala region and he encouraged and challenged the Moro leaders to take an interest in Philippine politics while securing their Islamic belief, culture, and customs inspired by the Glorious Quran and teachings of Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w).

Ahmad Domocao Alonto, Sr. is often described as a political giant, a great teacher, a peacemaker, and a champion of the rights of Muslims in the Philippines. He was an important political figure in Lanao. The Mranaw people held him in high regard for his insight, leadership skills, accomplishments, and the legacies that he bequeathed to the Bangsamoro people. He was a national figure who was prominently known as a Muslim leader who rose to prominence from 1942 onwards. For the Bangsamoro people, he is remembered with high esteem and will stay in the hearts of many who witnessed his life and leadership (Javier-Alonto, 2009).

## II. METHODS AND MATERIALS

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This research relied on two distinct categories of historical sources: primary and secondary historical sources. Primary sources included detailed interviews, written speeches, and works by Senator Domie and other literature attributed to him. To supplement oral accounts, secondary research data were gathered from previous studies on Senator Domie or written documents found through extensive library research. Notably, these secondary sources underwent meticulous internal and external evaluation, with a critical assessment for authenticity and reliability.

The researcher extensively explored various local private and government libraries, including the Mamitua Saber Research Center (MSRC) at Dansalan College Library, Lanao Public Library, Jamiatul Filibbin Al-Islamia's Library, the Browsing Library of the College of Social Sciences and Humanities, and the Mindanao State University-Main Library. Additionally, resources from prestigious institutions such as the Lopez Museum and Library in Ortigas City and the National Library of the Philippines in Kalaw Avenue, Ermita, Manila, were accessed.

Crucially, this research went beyond traditional sources like books, articles, and journals, incorporating data from reputable websites. This approach ensured a diverse and well-rounded collection of information for in-depth analysis and interpretation. Throughout the research process, both internal and external criticism were applied rigorously to uphold the credibility and integrity of the sources utilized in the study.

### III. SCOPE AND LIMITATION

A significant limitation in this study is the dearth of secondary sources directly related to the topic, particularly concerning the controversies that marked his political career. Due to the limited availability of in-depth, well-documented secondary materials, this study faces challenges in thoroughly exploring the controversies and challenges Senator Alonto faced during his time in politics. Consequently, the analysis might lack a nuanced understanding of the complexities of his political decisions and the controversies surrounding his actions. This limitation could potentially impact the comprehensiveness and depth of the study, leaving gaps in the narrative that hinder a complete understanding of Senator Alonto's political legacy. Addressing this limitation would require further research efforts aimed at uncovering and analyzing primary sources, interviews, or archival materials that might shed light on the controversies and challenges

faced by Senator Alonto during his political career, providing a more comprehensive and balanced view of his contributions and shortcomings.

## IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Genealogical and Family Background

Senator Domie was born on August 1, 1914, in Ramain, Lanao del Sur. He was the eldest son of the six children of Sultan Alauya Alonto and Hajja Aminah Bariga Alangadi of the Royal House of *Mala-a-Bayabao* in Ramain. Senator Domie was a responsible brother to his siblings, namely Abdulghafor Madki Alonto, Princess Tarhata Alonto Lucman, Yasin Madrigal Alonto, Naima Bai Iki Alonto, and Masiding Alonto (Javier-Alonto, 2009).

His mother, Aminah Bariga, was a sixth-generation descendant of Al-Marhom Muhammad Dipatuan Kudarat, the Sultan of Magindanaw and a well-known hero of the Moros. His father, Sultan Alauya, was the son of Alonto and Dayang in Ditsaan Ramain. He was also the great-grandson of Marohom of Patola Alam-a-Dimala who was the great-grandson of the sixth Simban sa Ranaw, Datu Akari. Datu Akari was the great-grandson of Datu a Batara, the fourth Simban of Mala-a-Bayabao, and the second Simban sa Ranaw. Datu Batara was also the fourth-generation descendant of Radiamoda of Bumbaran (A. Alonto, Jr., interview, 2016).

### His Education

Senator Domie finished his primary education at Ditsaan-Ramain Primary School in 1924, and his intermediate education at Camp Keithley Elementary Dansalan School in the year 1927. He pursued his secondary education at Lanao High School from 1927 to 1931 (which is now the Lanao Agricultural College in Lumaban, Lanao del Sur). When he pursued his college education at the University of the Philippines, he was pressured by his father to take a law degree instead of engineering, thus, he finished the Preparatory Law Course at the College of Liberal Arts at the University of the Philippines, with advanced studies in Philosophy and History in 1934. His student days were highlighted by his fiery leadership and active participation in different youth organizations. Senator Domie also obtained excellent training in national politics in his capacity as a secretary of his father when he was a Senator (Ocampo, 1956).

Senator Domie completed his Law degree at the College of Law, University of the Philippines, in 1938. He passed the Philippine Bar Examination in the same

year and was granted a license to practice law. During his time at the University of the Philippines, he met the author, the president, and the editorial manager of the UP Collegian paper, Wenceslao Vinzons. This man was motivated by the belief system of Jose Rizal in seeing himself as a Filipino as well as to a greater degree a Malay.

In 1934, Vinzons encouraged Senator Domie to join him in planning the establishment of a movement known as "*Perhempunan Orang-Orang Melayu*" or "Malay Peoples' Movement". Together with some students coming from Sumatra and Borneo, they organized the movement in the year 1936. The first mission was to study Malay history and learn various Malay languages. Through it, Senator Domie became more knowledgeable about Malay history than his own country's history. In fact, in the 1936 inter-university oratorical contest, with his piece entitled "Malaysia Eredenta" or "Malaysia Redeemed," he garnered the winning prize. This made him popular with some Malay students from Malaysia. After his study at UP and in recognition of his notable practice as a lawmaker, Senator Domie was conferred the degree of Doctor of Laws (*honoris causa*) by the Mindanao State University in 1973 (A. Alonto, interview, 2016).

### **His Marriage**

Senator Domie was married to Hajja Mohminah Malawani, his first wife. They were blessed with eight children namely, Alexander, Soraya, Jurairah, Jamilah, Bayi, Asnawi, Abdul, and Amrosi Alonto. He has five children from five different wives and another nine children from his last wife. In this case, he had a total of eight wives. However, he was not married to all of them at one time. He was married his other wives, one after another (Z. Alonto, interview 2016).

It is also worth noting that at that time, polygamy was common among Mranaws. Women at that time did not protest against it as a sign of respect and obedience to their parents. It was, in fact, encouraged among men of high status and wealth to marry more than one. Furthermore, as a religion, Islam also permits capable Muslim men to marry from one up to four wives.

## **SENATOR DOMIE: BEFORE ENTRY TO POLITICS**

### **Bandung Conference in 1955**

Towards the end of the Second World War, there was the rise of new country states in Asia and Africa with the liberation of their colonized domains from former invaders. In 1955, a meeting of non-aligned nations that refused to be drawn into the cold war

existing between the West and the Eastern Communist alliance was held in Bandung, Indonesia. The conference demonstrated the determination of those 29 nations, which had recently freed themselves from colonialism (domination by foreign powers), to have an independent voice in international affairs. In the words of Senator Domie; "The Bandung Conference, where 29 nations of Asia and Africa met to discuss problems of common interest proved that belief in God is the greatest deterrent force against Communist ambition to convert the world into the Communist way of life. It was a well-known fact – which seemed to be why our country at first hesitated to join – that this conference was going to be a propaganda medium for the Communists. But it turned out to be a dismal failure among the Communists and a signal victory for democracies" (Alonto Sr., 1955).

This was the 1955 Afro-Asian Conference, whose theme included, among others, political self-determination, shared respect for power, peace, and non-impedance in a state's internal affairs, and equality. During this time, Senator Domie was a member from the Philippine delegation to the Conference headed by Foreign Secretary Carlos P. Romulo. Indeed, he was the lone Muslim representative from the Philippines. The Bandung Conference was in reality an achievement for him as it opened new horizons and opportunities. He was anxious with thoughts to free his people from the fortress of the central government.

Because of the Bandung Conference, Muslim countries learned about the presence of the Bangsamoro people in the Philippines; Zia Ur-Rahman's comment below is a reflection on this:

"Papa related to me that because of the Bandung conference, Muslims in the Philippines had now connected with the Muslim brothers outside the country. Papa told me what happened at that conference when he had the chance to meet the President of Egypt, Gamal Abdel Nasser. Papa taps the back of President Nasser and said 'Assalamo Alaykom' and that Gamal Abdel Nasser responded 'Wa alaikomussalam'. Papa then introduced himself, 'I am a Congressman from the Philippines and I'm representing the Muslims in the Philippines; we are about 3 million Muslims who were not subjugated by the foreign colonizers for so many years.' President Abdel Nasser immediately hugged Papa and replied; 'we thought our Muslim brothers in the Philippines were wiped out by the Spaniards for many years ago, we don't know that there are remaining Muslim brothers in the Philippines'".

The presence of Muslims in the Philippines was

recognized and acknowledged by Egypt as well as other Muslim nations. Also, in the Bandung Conference Senator Domie had his first introduction to the battling Malay countries and their leaders around then such as Acmad Sukarno of Indonesia and Tunku Abdul Rahman of Malaysia. Indonesia had quite recently won its War of Independence from Dutch imperialism, while Malaysia was as yet a British state seeking independence. He formed a friendship with these Malay leaders and was intrigued by their vision of freeing the Malay people from Western frontier impacts. This fortified his view that the Bangsamoro in Mindanao and Sulu just as the Filipinos have a place in the Malay world and that for these peoples to succeed in the future and build a truly united nation-state, they need to follow their Malay roots and restore Malay cognizance.

Ahmad Domocao E. Alonto Jr. (personal communication, 2016) mentioned that as an aftermath of the Bandung Conference, Senator Domie got more scholarships for the Moros to the different schools and universities in Muslim-majority countries, foremost of which was Egypt. Through him, 15 Moro youths, majority of them were Mranaws, were recipients of scholarships for military education and training at the prestigious Cairo Military Academy. It was also because of him that Al-Azhar University, the oldest and most renowned Islamic institution of learning, opened its door to students from Mindanao and Sulu. Zia Ur-Rahman's comments below are a reflection on this:

"Papa mentioned what happened to his visit to Egypt and his meeting with President Gamal Abdel Nasser. When he arrived in Egypt, (his grandfather said), he was overwhelmingly welcomed by the president and other officials. [At] the end of his talk with the President, Gamal Abdel Nasser asked Papa if he wanted gifts, money, or anything, but Papa replied, 'My brother, I don't need any amount of money and wealth. All I want is for you, my brother, to open up Al-Azhar University to the young Muslims in the Philippines and give free education to my people.' The President was impressed with what Papa had said to him. After their talks, Papa left Egypt with the guarantee from his sincere friend, President Gamal Abdel Nasser, for free education for his people."

Gamal Abdul Nasser honored the solicitation of Senator Domie and gave scholarly awards to the Muslims in the Philippines. The grant was named after Ahmad Domocao Alonto Sr. Fifteen students were sent to Cairo Military Academy in Egypt. Among these students were the previous Moro Islamic Liberation Front's executive 'Alim Salamat Hashim and the previous governor of Lanao del Sur 'Alim Miraato Mutilan,

both notable religious leaders among Moros. This is also supported by 'Alim Ansary Abdulmalik when he related to the researcher that, "In the 1960s, only a few Mranaws were able to study abroad, but the scholarships offered in *Mis'r* (Egypt), many Mranaws and other more people had the chance to enroll in Al-Azhar University". 'Alim Jamal Guro stated also that, "after these students from *Mis'r* have graduated, they become *Ustadh* (Arabic/Islamic teachers) and some founded Islamic institutions or schools."

Further, as a distinguished religious and political leader in the Philippines, and a founding member of the Constituent Assemblies of the *Rabitah Al-Alam Al-Islamie* (Muslim World League) and the *Mo'tamar Al-Alam Al-Islamie* (World Muslim Congress), Senator Domie had the chance to share to the world the condition of the Bangsamoro people in Mindanao. These organizations were influential international organizations of Muslims and nations that protect and promote the interests of Muslims and the Islamic religion. He straightforwardly revealed to his local and foreign audiences the plight of the Bangsamoro people. Thus, because of his connection to the said Islamic organizations, it enabled him to internationalize the issues about the Muslims in the Philippines. Through his eloquent speeches in many conferences, he reported the condition of his people.

Everything considered, his introduction abroad, especially to the difficulties confronting Muslims around the globe, changed Senator Domie into a champion of Muslim rights in the Philippines. His advocacy of this cause influenced his Muslim colleagues even in the government (Marohomsalic, 1995).

In the 1960s, the overall national disposition in the nation was described by political activism, particularly among Filipino students and youthful learned people in many urban areas. However, while the Filipino youth were captivated by nationalist ideologies, the Moro youth then again took on an alternative direction and were edified to follow the way of Islam which in turn pushed them to demand their separate Muslim identity as 'Moro'. Distinctive Moro Muslim associations developed as religious leaders and Western-educated Moro experts worked inseparably in proliferating Islam as a religion as well as a belief system itself. This advancement was quickened by another terrible event that profoundly affected Senator Domie's political life and support—the Jabidah Massacre.

### **The Jabidah Massacre or Corregidor Massacre**

The Jabidah Massacre occurred on March 18, 1968. This was the primary aggressive activity of the government towards the Moros. Some written records con-

sidered that this Massacre ended the lives of more than 68 youthful Muslim trainees in the Philippine Army perpetrated by their Christian military superiors. As indicated by the lone survivor, Jibin Arula, the trainees needed to retreat from training after finding that the truth behind their training was to invade Sabah and not to battle the Communist uprising, as they were told during the enlistment (Jubair, 1999). In any case, the Corregidor Massacre (as the incident was also called) pushed the Moro leaders and the Muslim world to denounce the deceit of the ruling power in the Philippine government. Not the least of those who were horrified was Senator Domie.

The Jabidah Massacre was another turning point in the life of Senator Domie because he realized that the Bangsamoro people were in a dangerous situation and that the time had come for the Muslims to come together under the banner of Islam and one Islamic Movement to face this great threat to Islam and Muslims in the Philippines.

Thus, he organized an Islamic organization called Ansar Al-Islam in response to the conspiratorial design for the total eradication of Islam in the Philippines under the rule of President Ferdinand E. Marcos.

### The Kamlon Uprising

At the point when the Moro uprisings in Mindanao proceeded with significant conflicts happening in Cotabato, Lanao, and Sulu much after the grant of Philippine independence and the incorporation of Mindanao into the archipelago. In Lanao, there was the Tawantawan revolt, and with his family and men, Tawantawan battled government troops for almost a decade (Marohomsalic, 1995). It must be remembered that Tawantawan was avenging the death of his parents and sister who were among those brutally massacred by the Christian settlers in Kapatagan because of land conflict between the latter and the Moros in that locality. Cotabato also witnessed irregular armed conflicts during that period for basically the same reason.

The Kamlon uprising in Sulu was the bloodiest clash during that period. It went on for right around eight years. In this contention, practically the entirety of the Philippine government's assets was utilized to quash the Kamlon uprising. The counter-Kamlon military crusade nearly depleted the national government's assets, and along these lines, it incited Secretary of Defense Eulogio Balao to make an open proclamation saying that to settle the "Mindanao Problem", the Moros of Mindanao must be Christianized (Javier-Alonto, 2009). Balao's announcement dehumanizing the Moro Muslims restored the US Army's ethnocentric motto during the American-Moro Wars that "a

good Moro is a dead Moro" and was played up in the public by both the print and broadcast media around then, in this manner creating alarm and shock among the Moro people.

Because of this, according to Ahmad Domocao E. Alonto Jr. (interview, 2016), the Alonto family quickly held a family meeting. Senator Domie who had quite recently shown up from a gathering abroad with Muslim leaders, was approached to disclose to his family about the circumstance and clarify the ramifications of Secretary Balao's announcement. Amid much yelling and cries of *Allahu Akbar* (Allah is Great) from clan members, verses from the Glorious Quran were read regarding jihad (struggle for the sake and in the way of Allah). A religious feast celebrated by Muslims overall denoting the end of the journey to Makkah, *Eidul Adha*, was 14 days away. Datu Berua, the younger sibling of Sultan Alauya Alonto, summoned the authority of the sultanate and afterward announced that all *masajids* (Muslim places of worship) be shut during the coming *Eidul Adha* (Feast of Sacrifice) and that congregational supplication be held in open ground to see who among the people of Lanao were prepared to battle and die for the cause for Allah.

Days before the *Eid*, people came to clean the fields, and mats were brought. On the morning of the congregational prayer for the *Eid*, there was an enormous crowd of men, women, young and old, originating from various areas of Lanao to show their ability to battle for their religion, Islam. Cries of *Allahu Akbar* (Allah is Great) repeated all through the open field. As indicated by Ahmad E. Alonto Jr., his dad was dazzled by the reaction of Mranaws and acknowledged how a decent aim, a cause in the way of Allah, could galvanize the people. It was amidst this commotion encouraged by Balao's profession that then-Senator Domie stood up in Congress to condemn Secretary Balao and defend the Moros of Sulu.

This Kamlon uprising generated much national attention and interest in getting to the bottom of Moro unrest in Mindanao. Because of that, a Special House Committee was created to look into the problem, and this Committee was composed of Lanao Congressman Ahmad Domocao Alonto, Sr. Cotabato Congressman Luminog Mangelen, and Sulu Congressman Ombra Amilbangsa. The Committee's findings were that "the Moros must be made to feel that they were an integral part of the Philippine nation and this aim must be achieved through a complete approach covering economic, social, moral, political and educational developments" (Alonto Sr., 1995).

Consequently, these noteworthy occasions in the life of Senator Domie gave him the plan to start his

idea of the integration policy of the government by ensuring the rights of the Bangsamoro and making laws that would facilitate the integration of the Moros into the Philippine government and to educate and improve their condition. Being a legislator, he utilized his position to promote and defend the rights of his people. As his family, companions, family members, and contemporary leaders have stated, Senator Domie spent his lifetime serving the Mranaws and for the progression and advancement of the Bangsamoro People in general.

## **SENATOR ALONTO'S LIFE IN POLITICS**

### **His Positions in the Government**

Years before Senator Domie joined Philippine politics, he became a Cedula Tax Collector in Ramin for about over three years and that was the point at which he was all the while concentrating on secondary school in 1927. Later after he completed his preliminary law course at the University of the Philippines in 1934, he became a clerk translator at the House of Representatives from 1935 up to 1937. He also became a classified author at the National Information Board in the year 1937 to 1938. During World War II, he was appointed as First Lieutenant in the Philippine Army, 81st Division, United States Armed Forces in the Far East from 1941 up to 1945.

He served as acting governor of Lanao province in the caretaker government under the Japanese occupation; his term ended in 1947. From 1948 to 1949, he became Presidential Assistant and Adviser to the Office of the President of the Republic of the Philippines.

Later after being so much exposed to the Philippine government, he was elected as Congressman of the undivided Lanao province from 1954 to 1955. At the point when he was in Congress, he was instrumental in chartering Marawi City. Given the positions, all the political situation in Marawi City were filled by people not appointed by the government. He was also ready to make Lanao del Sur a different region since he accepted that the Meranaw must have their political region to have a specific level of self-determination.

In 1955, he was elected as a senator and served as a member of the Philippine Senate up to 1961. His term as a senator was one of the fundamental defining moments of his life and of being a Muslim since he became a delegate to the historical Bandung Conference which gave him the opportunity to have associations outside the nation. It must be noted that he filed bills for the improvement of Mindanao and its people eco-

nomically, politically, and culturally. During his days in the Senate, he was also one of the bulwarks of the "Filipino-First Policy" which gained support during the incumbency of President Carlos P. Garcia.

Senator Domie's exposure to Philippine politics pushed him to an elective situation in government to seek a similar goal as his Father before him did – a superior life for his people. Sultan Alauya and Senator Domie had a similar vision that every Christian Filipino and Bangsamoro people could build a nation together as equal partners and not with the Muslims assuming a subordinate role to the Christian Filipinos. He immovably accepted that he could utilize his position in the government to represent the Islamic way of life among the Bangsamoro people and stir Islamic mindfulness and awareness in them.

According to Avecina Alonto (personal communication, 2016), one of the reasons why Senator Domie joined the Philippine government was that he believed that he could speak and work for the betterment of the Bangsamoro. Because of his direct involvement in the day-to-day operations of the municipalities in Lanao, he was educated in the internal affairs of the Mranaw and it provided him an opportunity to understand and analyze the problems that affected the Mranaw society and the Muslims in the Philippines in general. Thus, he was so determined in his goal that he even gained the attention of President Manuel A. Roxas who said:

"The future of this nation can be prophesied by the quality of its youth leaders of today. From among our Moro brothers of the South, a new star has arisen, whose intense nationalism and love of country have injected a new life to our fight for freedom: Domie Alonto - one of our sturdy pillars of the rising generations" (Ocampo, 1956).

In the 1971-1972 Constitutional Convention, Senator Domie was also one of its delegates. Later in 1986, he was appointed as a member of the Constitutional Commission that drafted the new Constitution of the Republic of the Philippines. Being one of the delegates, he made efforts to push for the grant of meaningful political autonomy for his people. According to his speech:

"I refer to the 1971 constitutional convention whereby our people, through their chosen representatives, [were] given the opportunity to re-frame our fundamental law. And, unless we can imbue our people with a sense and oneness and common destiny, there seems to be no possible avenue of containing the process of disintegration that is going on in our very midst involving not only the cultural minorities but the whole fabric of our society. I dare say that if it is necessary to divide the country into several autono-

mous states bound together by a common goal and sense of oneness, I will not hesitate to do so" (Alonto Sr., 1971).

Sadly, his endeavors to push for the grant of significant political self-determination in the 1971 Constitutional Convention were vanquished by incredible and predominant political, religious, and economic partnerships among Christian legislators in the government.

The motivation behind Senator Domie's endeavor to attain political self-determination for the Bangsamoro people was because he realized that the government and its adopted constitution would not have any effect on the Bangsamoro people in the Philippines. The meaningful political autonomy intended by Senator Domie was for the Moros to have the opportunity to govern themselves according to Islam, secure their remaining ancestral domain, and ensure their way of life and traditions within the Philippines. Thus, he was depicted by his family as a "champion in many ways". According to his son Avecina Alonto (interview, 2016):

"My father was a statesman, more a statesman than a politician, because a politician attempts to compromise his principles and ideologies to the end of achieving his self-interest. My father never was that man. He never compromised his beliefs; he never compromised his stand on issues in the fight for equal grant opportunities [for] Muslim minorities. That's why he commissioned the creation of CNI that benefited Muslims and also the cultural minorities in the Philippines".

These principles by which he lived could be seen at work during the Marcos regime. He was even offered the position of the Chief Justice of the Philippines provided that he would join the *Kilusang Bagong Lipunan*. As related by Avecina Alonto, his father told him the exact words to Marcos:

"I am willing to work for you and your government even as a janitor provided that you will not pay me a single centavo. Marcos replied; what kind of job is that?"

The incident proved that he was a statesman and a gentleman. It was a polite way of saying "no" to Marcos because work always has to be compensated. Though he was offered that kind of position, he did not take advantage of the opportunity. According to Avecina Alonto, he was never after money in doing public service. This can also be supported even during the Stonehill controversy when he was a senator. Stonehill was an American investor during the time of Magsaysay and he wanted to invest in the Philippines but there was a problem in the legislation on how he

would be able to place his money in the Philippines. Stonehill bribed some senators so that he would be allowed to bring his money to the Philippines. When the issue was exposed, the Senate had a congressional hearing and investigation similar to those conducted in the Blue Ribbon Committee. Later, Stonehill confessed that he was able to bribe senators and every week the periodicals and the newspaper releases followed and published developments involving the controversy. According to Avecina, it was a small matter that had escalated. Every week there was a revelation in the Senate with a list of those who allegedly received money from Stonehill. At the end of the controversy, finally, there were only four senators who never received and took money from Stonehill. They were Alonto, Puyat, Diokno, and Tañeda.

Thus, as a legislator, he did not utilize his authority for his self-interest. He used the power given to him by the people to work for the improvement and betterment of the Bangsamoro and to overcome any barrier between Muslim and Christian Filipinos.

Senator Domie became the Chairman of the Special Committee created by the House of Representatives to find a definite solution to the so-called "Moro Problem". He was able to comprehend the enormity of the injustices committed against the Moros, in this way empowering him to struggle with the government for more reforms. After, directing intensive study, they discovered that the "Moro Problem", as it is known and thus called by the government and the country everywhere, was only the issue of incorporating into one body politic the Bangsamoro populace of the nation and instilling in their mind that they are Filipinos and that the government is their own and they are a part of it (Alonto, Sr., 1975). One of the solutions given by this committee was mentioned in his speech at the first national Muslim conference in Cotabato, he said:

"We are convinced that to solve this "Moro Problem", the government must adopt a policy and course of action tending to accelerate the social, educational, economic, and political programs of the Muslims so that at a given period in our history, which should be as early as possible, they would approximate, if not equal, the level of progress of the rest of the country. In this connection, let it be known that at the present rate of progress, the gap that separates one from the other is becoming wider and wider, so much so that it might happen in the future that the Muslim populations in our country may be so far behind that they will wake up someday, literally, holding the bag empty. God forbid, such predicament might wind up as a crisis in our history or become a national catastro-

phe" (Alonto, Sr., 1971).

Thus, he filed bills for the betterment of the Bangsamoro and the Lumads in the Philippines because he believed that the only solution to the "Moro Problem" was to integrate them into the national body politics.

Some of Senator Domie's greatest achievements throughout his capacity as a legislator in the Philippine government included the creation of the Commission on National Integration (CNI), the Mindanao State University (MSU), and the amendment to the Civil Service Act of 1959.

### **The Commission on National Integration (CNI)**

According to Senator Domie, the issues concerning Lanao and Sulu were considered serious barriers to harmony and order and should be addressed through education. Because of this, he maintained that his role regarding integration implied that the government should respect Bangsamoro's rights in their land and if possible, settlements must be halted. When Jose P. Laurel, Jr., led The House of Representatives of the Third Congress of the Republic of the Philippines, he felt a greater concern for the situation of the Bangsamoro people. So, he created an exceptional board of trustees comprising congressmen, with Ahmad Domocao Alonto, Sr. as a Chairman and Datu Luminog Mangelen of Cotabato and Ombra Amilbansa of Sulu as its member to examine the Moro Problem with emphasis on peace and order conditions in Mindanao, Sulu, and Palawan. The investigation of the Moro problem headed by Ahmad Domocao Alonto, Sr. revealed that the supposed Moro problem had its roots in the issue of integrating Moros into Philippine politics and the need to inculcate in their minds the fact that they are Filipinos representing an integral part of the Filipino nation and that the Philippine Government is elected for their welfare (Alonto, Sr., 1984).

He said that this Moro problem cannot be solved easily as it requires a gradual procedure including a complicated historical conflict of the religious, doctrinal, economic, settlers, social, educational, and political. To solve this issue, he proposed another methodology rather than a military confrontation. His proposition comprises the definition of a predictable government strategy towards the Bangsamoro to tailor their problems and needs to accomplish quick economic, political, and educational development. On June 22, 1957, the Republic Act no. 1888 was affirmed, and the Commission on National Integration was officially composed on August 29, 1957, under President Carlos P. Garcia (Alonto, Sr., 1971).

This policy of integration has had a good impact

on the Bangsamoro and Lumads, such that many of them acquired their education through the scholarship awarded by the Commission on National Integration and this includes the experience related by Ahmad Domocao E. Alonto Jr.

"In 1974, I attended the ACAP convention with Datu Ligdin Luminton from Bukidnon. After the morning session of that convention, together with some friends, we discussed the issues happening in Mindanao. While we were chatting, somebody [at] the other table was probably observing us and later he came to me and asked how I was related to Senator Domocao Alonto I said I was his son, and he immediately hugged me when he heard that I was the son of Senator Domocao. Without knowing the reason, I asked him why he hugged me, [and] he said; I am a lawyer who acquired my degree because of the CNI scholarship... I thank Senator Domocao".

Following 10 years of the formation of the Commission on National Integration, numerous Bangsamoro and Lumads became proficient as a result of the grants supported by this program. Other Moro intellectuals and leaders in the Philippines explicitly in Mindanao, Sulu, and Palawan secured awards and backing to seek after their studies in renowned colleges in the Philippines and even abroad. This is one of the significant accomplishments of the Commission on National Integration, where through the endeavors of Senator Domie, at long last the Bangsamoro and the Lumads had the opportunity to be educated and later, ready to work in the government, sustained their needs and even developed their communities.

Thus, this Commission created numerous professionals and it opened up more chances to the Bangsamoro people and Lumads for a more promising time to come. This also implies bringing these two minority groups of Mindanao into taking part in nation-building.

Senator Domie's role in the administration was to build up a national community whereby residents became united despite diversity. As a prominent Moro leader in the government and tireless supporter of Islamic developments in the Philippines, he anchored Republic Act no. 1387, which prompted the foundation of the Mindanao State University System.

### **The Mindanao State University (MSU)**

Senator Domie was an Islamic *da'wah* activist and he needed to improve the life of the Bangsamoro people through his concept of integrating them into the body politic. His answer to the problem faced by the Bangsamoro and the Lumads was to create an educational institution that would educate them. According

to Senator Domie in an interview with the Philippine Free Press, he said:

"The bill has passed in Congress for the construction of the proposed state university to implement the intensification of the education of the youth from the south. The proposed university will be patterned after the University of the Philippines here. Its charter will provide for five members of the board of regents to be elected by the alumni and another five to be appointed by the President of the Philippines. He added that the so-called Moro problem has not yet been properly diagnosed due to the inability of the government to integrate the national minorities into body politic. And this integration would be the solution to the problem of national minorities in the Philippines today" (Macaspac, 1957).

It is important to mention that the role of Senator Domie in establishing the second state university in the Philippines which is the Mindanao State University demanded strenuous exertion because the envisioned creation of the university went through a rough passage. It was not easily approved in Congress. This university is a living testament to his eagerness to instill mutual respect between Bangsamoro, Lumads, and the Christian Filipinos in Minsupala. He fought tirelessly in Congress to establish MSU in his hometown, Marawi City. One of his fierce adversaries as far as Mindanao State University is concerned was the congressman of Davao, according to Ahmad Domocao E. Alonto, Jr.:

"My father related to me about how MSU was established in Marawi City. During one of its debates, that Congressman asked my father 'why he would want Mindanao University to be erected in Marawi'. He added; 'you don't know how to use the facilities [of] a university such as Mindanao University. It would be a government waste of money if we placed it in that area because people there are ignorant'. However, my father replied [that] 'it would be too selfish of Davaoenios, they already have Ateneo de Davao and other colleges. You are right that people in that area are ignorant, so all the more they need to have higher institutions for them to be educated."

The thrust of its creation was to implement and accelerate the Philippine government's Western educational policy for the Bangsamoro people and Lumads Mindanao so that there would be an increase in professional and technical training on literature, philosophy, sciences, and the arts through Western education. Special attention to culture and conducting research in these fields of study specifically those related to Filipino culture was also part of its mission and vision to facilitate better implementation of inte-

gration policy through the opinions of the Philippine government (Alonto, 1971).

It should also be noted that in the previous decades, the Mindanao State University has maintained educational standards comparable to the best universities all over the Philippines. Mindanao State University is one of the recognized educational institutions of the Philippine government in Minsupala giving Western education to the residents of these areas and this came about to hundreds and now a large number of Bangsamoro individuals and Lumads who obtained degrees in different academic disciplines. The graduates of this university also were recruited as employees and technical staff for government offices, schools, colleges, and non-government associations in Mindanao, some in Visayas, and Luzon, especially in Metro Manila and abroad.

Thus, through the endeavors of Senator Domie (the fountain head and father of the Mindanao State University), MSU had a significant impact on Bangsamoro people and Lumads in Mindanao, especially the Meranaws who cannot afford to study in private universities. Because of the Mindanao State University, the Maranaw people were able to improve and develop their community. The creation of the Mindanao State University is supposed to be the greatest commitment of Senator Domie to the whole people of Minsupala, regardless of religion, culture, and tradition. Mindanao State University caters to and accommodates students from each corner of Minsupala and even outside the region originating from various backgrounds. Through the Mindanao State University, deserving students from impoverished in Minsupala can gain and finish a degree from an institution of higher learning.

Lastly, the significant contribution of Mindanao State University to Minsupala and the entire archipelago is its unique mandate which is the promotion of integration of the so-called Tri-people of Minsupala (Moros, Lumads, Christians). The Mindanao State University lessened conflict among the people of Mindanao and continues to create a harmonious environment and peaceful co-existence in the land of promise. Hence, MSU is known as the melting pot of the South and is therefore a living legacy of Senator Domie.

### **The Amendment of the Civil Service Act of 1959**

Senator Domie's policy on integration included a review and amendment of the Civil Service Act of 1959, which he deemed oppressive to the Bangsamoro and Lumads in Mindanao. Concerned about giving equal chances to every single Filipino citizen in the

Philippines, Sen. Domie argued:

"In line with the policy of integration, members from Muslims and cultural minorities with educational and other qualifications may be appointed to positions in the civil service in their respective provinces when determined by the appointing authority with concurrence of the Commissioner of Civil Service to be in the interest of the service (Alonto Sr., 1957).

Anent his policy on integration, he had the chance to revise the Civil Service Law of 1959, which also recognized Islamic holidays such as '*Eid al-Fitr*' and '*Eid al-Adha*'. Accordingly, the changes in the Civil Service Law of 1959 expanded the number of Muslims in eminent positions in the government like cabinet members, judges of higher courts, diplomatic representatives, and others (Alam, 2005).

This policy shows the tremendous opportunities offered to the Bangsamoro people with respect to jobs in the government and this is the importance of the amendment of the Civil Service Act of 1959. Some of the Bangsamoro and Lumads in Mindanao were designated to administrative positions in their particular provinces and areas through the Civil Service Act of 1959. As a result of this law, numerous *Ulama*, experts, and graduates from Mindanao State University and *Jamiatu Al-Filibbin Al-Islamia* were employed as educators, representatives, and staff in government and private institutions, and even abroad.

Thus, the creation of the Commission on National Integration and the Mindanao State University has had an influential impact on the Meranaws and the Bangsamoro people as a whole.

### **His Political Advocacy**

Senator Domie never intended to use force as a means to achieve his objectives for the Bangsamoro people. He did not even want the Moro youth to be radical. He diplomatically dealt with the Philippine government and he believed that some form of negotiation could still be worked out between the Bangsamoro and the Filipinos within the Philippine nation-state system. He also believed in exhausting all available legitimate means to resolve the conflict before resorting to separation. This explained why he wanted a political negotiation, in the form of a political settlement of the Mindanao conflict by establishing a meaningful political autonomy for the Bangsamoro. It was in this context that he presented the federal system as the system that could provide the maximum opportunity for separate and diverse communities to organize themselves. But no matter how he was against the arguments of the Moro youth to the outright separation of Mindanao from the Philippines

which he believed would lead to a continued and bloody conflict, a group of trained Moros established the so-called Moro National Liberation Front with its founder Nur Misuari (Alonto, personal communication, 2016).

At this juncture, it is important to mention that this Moro group needed recognition from the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) but they had difficulty being recognized because the OIC wanted an endorsement from *Rabitah Al-Alam Al-Islamie* of which Senator Domie was a founding member. Senator Domie also found it hard to endorse the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) because he was not in good terms with Nur Misuari because they both have different ideologies. For instance, there was the issue of accepting the term "Moro" in the Philippines. Nur Misuari argued that if the Bangsamoro people wanted to be independent, there must be a national identity or named for them and Nur Misuari asserted the term "Moro".

On the other hand, Senator Domie's view was to use the term "Muslim Mindanao" against which Nur Misuari and Abulkhayr Alonto argued on the ground that not all of the people in Mindanao are Muslims. However, according to Ahmad Domocao E. Alonto, Sr., the logical ideology of his father was historical and visionary.

This comment made by Senator Domie:

"We were the past majority in Mindanao, but later on, we were pushed away from our land by the policy of the government." He added; "in the future, if we work hard, then Islam may spread all over Mindanao".

Senator Domie's stand in naming "Muslim Mindanao" was deemed historical and futuristic. However, this issue on the acceptance of the term Moro did not become a reason for the Moro National Liberation Front to be recognized by the OIC because, at that time, Mindanao was in chaos, so Senator Domie agreed to support MNLF.

Nevertheless, though he supported the MNLF, it is worth mentioning that he also fully supported the creation of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front under '*Alim Salamat Hashim*' when the latter began to separate from the MNLF as early as 1975. He believed that '*Alim Salamat*' was a more worthy leader of the Moro liberation movement because he was an '*Alim*' (Islamic scholar) whose devotion to the Islamic ideology and cause was untainted by secularist and alien ideological influences. As Salamat Hashim finished his Islamic studies at Al-Azhar University in Egypt, this particular background shaped Hashim to become Islamic-oriented, while Nur Misuari, is usually referred to as secular-oriented for he finished his studies in Political

Science at the University of the Philippines. These two leaders had also different goals, Nur Misuari's goal was to liberate the Moro land from the yoke of oppression with a democratic type of governance. For Salamat Hashim, it is not only to liberate the Moro land and have freedom; rather what is more important is to have an Islamic state where Shariah rules. This is how the two leaders were identified based on their orientation and goals. In terms of leadership style, Misuari was said to have monopolized the decision-making in the MNLF, while Salamat Hashim was following the decision-making by consensus or *mosawer* in the Moro Islamic Liberation Front.

It is also very important to note that 'Alim Salamat Hashim, while chairman of the MILF, issued a principled policy statement that "the best and most civilized way to resolve the conflict in Mindanao is through a negotiated political settlement". Thus, Senator Domie had the same view as Salamat Hashim; In fact, they were close friends.

Indeed, the political advocacy of Senator Domie contributed to the present struggle of the Bangsamoro people particularly the MILF which had been the reflection of his Islamic and political ideology. The struggle for self-determination and self-governance which is based on Shariah was one of his visions. Though he is no longer alive, his political advocacy and ideology are still alive through the practice of the MILF.

Furthermore, as a Commissioner to the 1986 Constitutional Commission, he resolutely saw to it that the different Islamic ideas and provisions in the Preamble, Declaration of the Principles and State Policy, Bill of Rights, Social Justice and Human Rights, and other provisions of the 1987 Constitution of the Philippine Government. In his political career, he can be considered remarkable and of great importance. His political career was focused on integrating the Bangsamoro people and Lumads to develop and unite their society and to participate in Philippine political affairs because he believed that development and progress could only be attained by the Filipino people if and only if they were united despite their diverse cultures. His politics was focused on the advancement of Islam. His politics was for the civil rights of the Bangsamoro people. He was an educator, a legislator, a statesman, a reformer, a peace advocate, and a constitutionalist.

Thus, according to Alunan C. Glang; "There are many Muslim politicians, but there was only one Muslim leader, in the person of Ahmad Domocao Alonto" (Glang, 1969).

At the age of 88, Senator Domie passed away on December 11, 2002, and was laid to rest in Kota Pan-

garungan Village, Marawi City. Even during his final moments, he consistently reminded his children and family to live virtuously and to act righteously in the name of Allah. According to his son, Ahmad Domocao E. Alonto, Jr., Senator Domie emphasized the importance of helping others solely for the satisfaction of Allah. Before his passing, when asked by Imam Jamil "mutawwa" Yahya (Imam of Masjid Jamie'o Mindanao Al-Islamie) about his message for the people of Lanao, he responded, quoting a verse from the Glorious Quran.

Verse 102 of *Surah Al-Imran* means: {O believers, fear Allah properly (as you should) and do not die but as Muslims.}

He then added; strengthen your faith, because it will be an instrument for the Mranaws and the Muslims in the Philippines to be united.

Ahmad Domocao Alonto, Sr. equipped his family to take care of three things. First, rendering the good service to the people and Mindanao State University must be still a genuine and effective institution in giving quality education to the Muslims and non-Muslims in Mindanao. Secondly, to protect the religion, which indicates the presence of *Jamie'o Mindanao Al-Islamie* or Masjid Islamic Center in Marawi City. Lastly, to spread the consciousness of Islam through *Jamiatu Al-Filibbin Al-Islamia*.

## V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

### Conclusion

In tracing Senator Ahmad Domocao A. Alonto, Sr.'s life chronologically, his remarkable journey unfolds through distinct phases. Beginning with his genealogical, family, and educational background, Senator Domie's early life laid the foundation for his future endeavors. Before venturing into politics, pivotal events like the Bandung Conference, the Jabidah Massacre, and the Kamlon Uprising shaped his perspective and fueled his passion for change.

Upon entering politics, Senator Domie's career trajectory was marked by significant milestones. His political career was distinguished by his involvement in the Commission of National Integration, where he worked tirelessly to bridge the gap between Muslims and Christian Filipinos. His pivotal role in the establishment of Mindanao State University (MSU) and the amendment of the Civil Societies Act of 1959 showcased his commitment to education and societal progress.

Senator Domie's legacy goes far beyond politics. He emerged as a revered figure among the Meranaws

and the Bangsamoro people. Regarded as a man of vision, a social reformer, and a pragmatic politician, he championed the rights of Muslims in Lanao and the Philippines. His selfless dedication to the cause of Islam and the Bangsamoro people, coupled with his efforts to address their challenges and advance Islamic learning, solidified his greatness.

Unlike some contemporary Mranaw leaders who struggled against corruption within the system, Senator Domie's integrity remained unblemished. His genuine desire to bridge the divide between communities, regardless of religious differences, made him an exceptional political figure. Born in a time when life was simpler, he approached politics with purity of heart, conceiving lofty ideas for his people amid seemingly hopeless circumstances.

Senator Domie's life was a beacon of hope for the Mranaw people. His legacy endures, reminding us of the fortunate timing of his birth and the invaluable impact he had on his community. His story serves as an inspiration, illustrating the transformative power of genuine dedication and unwavering integrity in shaping the political and intellectual history of Mindanao.

### Recommendations

The researcher strongly recommends the following:

The province of Lanao del Sur and Mindanao State University may consider the creation of the establishment of landmarks, buildings, recreation areas, and the like, to be named after Ahmad Domocao Alonto, Sr.

A more in-depth study about the contribution of this eminent Mranaw leader to Bangsamoro nationalism is likewise suggested as well as a more in-depth study about the life of Sultan Alauya Alonto and his contribution to shaping the political history of Mindanao.

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