

CHAPTER VII. SUMMARY OF OBSERVATIONS AND FINDINGS

Muslim Mindanao is the largest section of the population of Muslim Philippines. Despite the various regional ethnic differences, sub-cultures, and dialects these Muslim Filipinos are emotionally tied together by the spiritual bond of Islamic brotherhood. Although Muslims Mindanao is a religious concept, it is basically a social group composed of sub-groups constituting a considerable section of the country's human resources which altogether owe common allegiance as a nation to the constituted authority of the Philippine Republic. Another criterion of looking at the different Muslim units as a social group is their common need for a better and larger participation in the social and political life of the country.

Under Islamic social cohesion and other forces, the different groups constituting sub-societies and sub-cultures belong to the same "Moro-Muslim" ethno-cultural matrix. Their aggroupenents into smaller groups in the different geographical settings is of interest in the development of both natural and human resources. Their larger institutional units have been crumbling in their power structures, but of what valued traditions they have lost and are still losing, they also gained and are still gaining in the present-day patterns of life.

Strong Smaller Tribal Body Politic

Although the larger tribal socio-political systems are seen to be weakening in the face of the rival institution and jurisdiction of the constitutional order, this investigation reveals the structural strength of the smaller local tribal body politic known as *agama*, or sometimes

the anglicized concept of "sultanate or datuship" system, in both Lanao and Cotabato.

As a representative sample of the communal unit in Muslim-Mindanao, the *agama* is a real functional group of human beings actually generating concerted action for the multi-purpose needs of community life. It has the characteristic features of a little democratic state with a territory, people, and traditional government having both formal and informal forms of social control, with a mosque-building as a center of religious and social congregations, and popular assemblies held in the communal houses of *datus* having the role of "council of leaders" representing every significant unit of the whole social group. It has a "federal" relationship with other *agamas*. It has a high degree of Islamic and pre-Islamic cultural heritage.

The present finding contradicts some popular reports alleging without basis that in the Muslim political organization "the word of the sultan is law," a rule attributed to an absolute monarchy in the *Arabian Nights*. The *agama* (as it is ruled by "adat law" defining among others the relationship between the sultans and their followers) has the following democratic features:

- 1) The "council of *datus*" and the *agama* members hold formal and informal assemblies whereby there is free discussion of public matters and the observance of majority rule;

- 2) Every social group of kins is represented in the "council of *datus*" which generates decision and action on matters of common interest;

- 3) The two sets of secular and religious officers have well-defined separation of functions between temporal and spiritual matters, cooperating only on affairs of general interest without imposition from either one over the other;

- 4) Trial-by-jury is the procedure of the "council of *datus*," one of whom is a law consultant called *kali*, and the litigants represented by counsels called *wakil*, a counterpart of attorneys-at-law in the modern constitutional courts;

- 5) The kin-group of heirs to a sultan or *datu* position hold elections whereby the result requires the confirmation of the whole *agama* community and the recognition by other blood-related *agamas*; and

- 6) There is a system of impeachment of ostracism of erring officials, which deny them their "adat rights" and result in their

replacement by new chosen leaders.

Figuratively, this democratic institution wears a native *malong*, not a western skirt, and the observer may fail to see the striking similarities with western-oriented institutions.

The organ of decision-making, perhaps a democratic one, which this exploration seeks, seems to be fulfilled in the ideal role of the *agama* or any similar traditional organization in Muslim Mindanao. With its inherent power for concerted action, the Muslim organization in its continuing existence can be oriented toward modern tasks. Its general affairs can also be seen as a social laboratory of universal meaning to the problems of other Philippine Cultural Minorities having their respective tribal systems.

Conflict and Cooperation with the Government

In the same territorial jurisdiction, the leadership and power structures of the two forms of governmental and tribal organization are at times conflicting and in some other situations cooperating. Government agents and tribal officers assume controls on opposite extremes over the inhabitants in a city, municipality or barrio, but at times their influence are knotted on both ends of the twine. Often, a government agent is also holding a traditional office. As such he assumes both the *legal* and the *traditional* authorities which makes him a "marginal leader."⁷⁸ Today as in the past, this type of a leader answers the quest for good leadership interconnecting the government and the tribal organization. But the two types of authority hold no contractual or formally-defined relationship. A conscious formalization of the working relationship between them might do better success in a new order of governmental administration.

Re-definition of the Research Problem

This research attempted to rediscover the potentials of Muslim society in its old vitality and set it into being *de novo* in order to be of better utility in the modern setting. Substantial data with their meaningful significance have been obtained along geographical, ethnological, religious, and economic lines in the effort to present a candid picture of the conditions obtainable for the use of scientific researchers, social planners, and community innovators. The explo-

ration has merely touched the surface of the extensive area of Muslim community studies

The absence of voluminous studies, records and data on Muslim indicates that the area is still a virgin field for the different areas of knowledge in the different ranges of societal life. Research is essential to the program of organizational development in Moroland where pre-industrial and pre-urban mode of life is not yet complex, and where future conflict shall arise in complexity that is bound to come as a result of industrialization and population movement.

Since action is by nature not only specialized but also integrative of specialties, the needed research should be of inter-disciplinary or integrative sort. While the need calls for the different tools of social science, basic research in the ethnic field can be made a tool of action essential to other tools. It could be a master tool for the early stage of exploration.

Since research findings must be carried into effect by administrators, action-groups, and laymen they must themselves participate actively and creatively in the research directed at their own area of need. The proposal shall in effect push farther back the horizon of knowledge and understanding of the whole series of ethnic groups inhabiting the scattered localities.

The proposal requires the "inside" and "outside" views of a team of qualified local and visiting research personnel for the integration of significant notes and views of practical and scientific values. The results could further enhance administration, policy, personnel and operating methods in programs of extension service and community development organizations. The services of trained statisticians shall prove useful at gathering socio-economic data.

The present investigation could have availed of a census approach to the number and names of *agama* communities and the considerable number of persons enacting roles of traditional leaders who, if united in action under a rejuvenated organization, could generate significant leadership in community movement. Unfortunately, time and resources could not permit such an extent of investigation. The sampling of four communities in this investigation may serve as an eye-opener to both public and private groups for an extensive, continuing research in this area.