

THE MUSLIM MIGRATION AND RESETTLEMENT IN THE VISAYAS AND LUZON

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The islands of Luzon and Visayas before the Spanish conquest in 1571 had been gradually settled and influenced by Muslims. If the Spaniards had not impaired the advance of Islam on the islands, the whole of the Philippine archipelago would have been Muslim by now. For three centuries of colonial rule, the Muslims had been constantly checked from extending their influence over the Visayas and Luzon. Hence, Muslim concentration has been confined mainly in Mindanao.

Today's presence of the Muslims in the northern part of the islands, notably the Manila area, may be observed as a very remarkable phenomenon in Philippine history. It is a fact viewed by some Muslims as part of the resurgence of Islam in this country.

This paper is an attempt to give an account of and explain the factors and reasons for the Muslim migration from Mindanao to Manila area and some parts of Luzon and Visayas that has continued to take place and accelerate during the last two decades (c. 1970-onward).

Historical Background

Some writers point out that, historically, Manila as we know it at present, was once a "Muslim settlement" (Zafra,

1974:33). Its rulers were "Muslims" (Cushner, 1971:66) before the imposition of Spanish rule in 1571.

Majul (1973:35-78) wrote that what possibly took place in Manila was that some Bornean traders formed a settlement among the older inhabitants at the mouth of the Pasig river. The ruling family of Manila was reportedly also Bornean in origin and closely related by family ties with the sultanate of Brunei.

It is not well-established to what extent the Islamic religion had been adopted by the early inhabitants of Manila except that Manila was once ruled by a Muslim aristocracy. Furthermore, the Muslim segment of the population was noted to have exhibited some Islamic practices such as the avoidance of pork and the performance of prayer rituals which were observed to have spread in Manila and as far as the province of Cagayan (north), Batangas and the Bicol region (south). Many of the natives and their chiefs had been circumcized and had taken Muslim names (such as Mahomet, Baser, Sulayman, Abdullah and so on). The treatment of the corpse by bathing and shrouding, and the grouping of the graves into communal cemeteries also implied Muslim practices. Maybe the insertion of *Bathala* (...ALLAH?), the highest or supreme deity in the hierarchical order of divinities also indicate some Islamic influence (Peralta & Salazar, 1974:65).

The beginnings of Islam in Manila and its vicinity was obviously an initiative of the Bornean Muslims, later reinforced by missionary work launched by the king of Borneo, whose political and commercial influences over Manila and the whole of Luzon was already evident. Missionary work and activities were conducted in Cebu, Oton, Manila, and other districts such as Balayan, Mindoro and Bonbon. Interestingly, the Qur'an, Islam's Holy Book, was already introduced and preached by religious mentors (Blair & Robertson, pp. 148-152).

Upon their arrival in the 1570's, the Spaniards noted the presence of a sizable Moro (i.e., Muslim) population already settled in the Manila area. They exaggerated the Moro population

initially at 80,000 (within the Manila settlement alone), then later dropped the figure down to merely 2,000 persons comprising men, women and children (*ibid.*), pp. 148-152). Moro settlements were likewise noted by the Spaniards to be present in Mindoro, Batangas, and Bicol. Were not the legendary Bornean datus and similar others, who were allegedly Mohammedan Malays, settled into these areas?

The greatest chiefs of Manila and Tondo were Rajah Matanda, Soliman and Lakandula. Rajah Matanda (old chief) was dubbed "prince of Luzon" and was believed to be a grandson of Brunei's sultan Bulkeiah (Siripada). Rajah Soliman (Sulayman) was the famous Muslim and last native ruler of Manila to oppose and resist the Spanish colonizers. He was a nephew of Matanda and married to a daughter of a Bornean sultan and was himself of Bornean origin. Lakandula (Abdullah), related both to Sulayman and Matanda, was a noted chief of Tondo (on the delta of Pasig just opposite Manila).

The Borneans tried to recover Manila following its capture in 1571, but the fleet prepared for it (in 1574) did not materialize and from then on lost the territory to the Spaniards. The Moros, for their part, tried to compete with the Spaniards for supremacy over the Visayas and Luzon. Altogether (Buayan, Maguindanaon, Sulus), they launched frequent offensives to as far as the Calamianes Group and Camarines in Bicol, exacted tribute and took away captives and booties from these islands, including Samar-Leyte, Bohol, Cebu, Negros and Panay.

Some chiefs on the islands were reportedly Moros, which is not historically improbable, like Rajah Lapu-Lapu of Mactan. Reportedly, the Moros had built certain "Kotas" here, too. Bornean datus or Mohammedan Malays were said to have settled in certain these islands.

Accounts of Moro raids report the Moros taking away some seven to eight hundred captives on the average or some ten thousand prisoners in a span of thirty years at their peak (probably beginning from 1599 to about 1629). These captives

may have been enslaved to work for masters (datus, rajahs, or panglimas); some were sold on neighboring islands (Makassar, Celebes) and a certain number may have been freed owing to their physical qualities or attributes, or upon payment or negotiation (as in the case of Dona Lucia).

It is to be noted that the Spaniards similarly took away Moro natives as captives, especially from the Sulu islands (in 1637, 1640's, so on). Some of them may have been freed (like Datu Acheh and his companions), and the rest possibly detained or imprisoned for the rest of their lives.

Although Manila and Luzon were lost to the Spaniards and became deserted by the Muslim settlers quite early in time, it continued to be visited by several Muslim rulers, from Sulu and its neighboring principalities, who were taken either as prisoners or coerced to become sympathizers (like Sultan Said Din Berkat of Ternate in 1608/1628, Sultan Azim ud-Din of Sulu in 1749/1764, and Harun ar-Rashid sworn in Manila as the Sulu Sultan in 1886). Sultan Rashid was the last Muslim ruler to visit Manila during the Spanish period.

During the Spanish period, Manila became a cosmopolitan city and was inhabited by people from every country (Bernad, 1974:19). Refugees from Ternate, people from Borneo, and Timor and Bengal, Mindanaos and Joloanos, Malays, Javanese, some Persians, Tartars, and Turks were found in the city.

Surprisingly, towards the end of the Spanish rule in 1898, Manila and other parts of Luzon or Visayas remained unsettled by any definite number of Muslims. Spanish colonial policy had been always suppressive, especially with respect to the Moros and their Islam religion.

Comparatively, the presence of Muslims in Manila thereafter may be attributed to the American liberal policy, that guaranteed basic freedom, like worship. During the American administration, Manila already became very accessible to the Muslims. There began to emerge a Muslim population of political

leaders and legislators who were designated or elected to the newly established Philippine Assembly and who came or were invited to visit Manila (like Sultan Jamal ul-Kiram and several others). A number of Moro youths (among them Pullong Arpa, Pendatun, Alonto and some others) were educated in Manila under the pensionado Muslims who came to trade. There were job seekers, too (Gowing, 1977:318-328; Pullong Arpa; Census of the Philippine Islands, 1903).

Thus the Muslim presence was duly noted, for example, in the 1903 census taken under the direction of the Philippine Commission, which showed that some 95 Mohammedan Moros within the total population of 219,928.

In the 1918 census taken under the direction of the Philippine Legislature, there were about as many as 14,215 Muslims in Manila or 2.0% of the total 285,306 Manila population. This large Muslim population clustered around Binondo, San Nicolas and Sta. Cruz. Of all Manila districts, Binondo had the largest population with 5,248; while Pandacan, on one hand, had the lowest with only 12 persons.

The 1939 census, however, showed a sudden drop in the Muslim population down to only about 2,120 concentrated mostly in Sta. Cruz, San Nicolas, and more than a hundred in Tondo, Sampaloc, and Binondo. The decline continued since Independence in 1946, with 1,077 in the 1948 census and 551 in the 1960 census.

The consistent decline in the Muslim population cannot be attributed to any definite factor other than the consequence of the global wars (the period between 1915 to 1945 onward), among other possible causes and assuming that the censuses taken were reliable.

Migration and Resettlement (1970-Present)

Muslim migration from Mindanao to other islands during the last couple of decades or so could be explained by a number of factors which were related to economics, the Mindanao conflict, attraction to city life and education, among others.

Recent Muslim migration has been caused by a number of reasons primarily related to economics such as low agricultural productivity, high rates of unemployment/underemployment and disasters.

Business and occupations became stagnant and hampered during the period of conflict in the 1970's. The working populace could not engage in fishing, farming, or business for fear of terrorists and military incursions. Owing to the depressed economic conditions, many of the working populace were compelled to move to other safe areas where they could participate in business or the pursuit of their economic well-being. In fact, among the "push" factors that had the greatest impact on the decision to migrate, economic reasons ranked number one (first, 46% overall) for Muslim household respondents in a study conducted in 1983 (Matuan).

Similarly, a study showed that Sulu Muslims migrated into Sabah, Malaysia because of the perceived socio-economic opportunities there. On the other hand, Muslims from Mindanao, particularly those of Lanao, tended to migrate to the north as far as Manila because of more economic or business opportunities there (H. Kadil, 1986). Among the "pull" factors which had the heaviest impact in choosing Manila as the place of destination, economic-related reasons also was ranked number one by migrant respondents (in Manila).

To support the findings, there are studies that have indicated that migrants from rural areas achieved greater social mobility than those left behind, largely because income and occupational prestige are considerably higher in the urban than in the rural area (in Lee & Barringer, 1978:3). Migration to cities

was therefore motivated by a desire for a "better life" or "better economic condition" (*ibid.*) which in turn can be translated into a desire for upward mobility in the national stratification system.

The same desire for upward mobility may have influenced Muslim migration from rural areas to the urban capital and city (i.e., Manila). Recent trends in Philippine life would explain the changing socio-economic motivation of the Muslim.

As already mentioned, Muslim migration to Manila in the 1970's was also caused by reasons related to the Mindanao conflict. Majority (72%) of the Muslim migrant families which predominated in the two major Muslim resettlement areas - Maharlika Village Project and the Islamic Center (including Bago a Inged and San Andres Bukid), migrated to Manila between 1977 and 1981. Migration of Muslim families to Manila from 1972 to 1976 counts much less (27.2%) than when hostilities were continued in 1977.

Of the "push" factors with the heaviest impact on the decision to migrate, the Mindanao conflict was ranked second to economic/business related reasons by respondents (except in Maharlika Village where it was number three).

It is understandable from the above that Maharlika Village was settled by many Muslim families then residing in Manila even before the influx of Muslim migration in 1977. Although migration already began during the period of fighting in the early 1970's, it was during the escalation of hostilities in 1977 that the number of migrants to the Islamic Center in Quiapo-Manila reached its peak.

As a "pull" factor, attraction to city life ranked third (18%) among migrant respondents (except in Maharlika Village where it is fourth). From the above, it could be observed that attraction to city life (like moving to Manila) is only a secondary factor in Muslim migration.

As a "pull" factor, reasons related to education was fourth, though not last, as ranked by migrant respondents (except in Maharlika Village where it was third).

Reasons related to education was merely secondary and not as important as economic and business, insofar as Muslim migration to Manila was concerned. Schooling in Manila was mainly transitory, although some decided to work and reside in Manila upon completion of their studies. Only the more fortunate Muslim families could afford to send their children to the schools and universities in Manila at their own expense.

Through the CNI educational assistance program, educational opportunities were opened to thousand of Muslims. More scholarships were made available to the Muslims which gave them access to the schools and universities in Manila and other places in the country. Many Muslim scholars from MSU were sent almost annually to UP and other universities in Manila. There may have been already hundreds, if not thousands of such grantees since MSU opened in the 1960's. Similarly, the UP-IIS has been granting scholarships to deserving Muslim scholars (a total of about 284 grantees since it opened classes in 1974 up to about 1984). The granting of educational assistance to the Muslims has been a part of government policy and programs, with the aim of enhancing their integration into the national body politic.

In line with national policy, the government has created different agencies and offices designed to serve special functions, mostly connected with Muslim matters. Through these agencies or offices, the Muslims were more than privileged to work, study, and reside in Manila and other places in Luzon or Visayas where their services were needed. Among such agencies/offices are the Philippine Amanah Bank, Office of Muslim Affairs, Philippine Pilgrimage Authority, just to mention a few.

The role of Islamic organizations/sectors cannot be discounted, like in their effort to work for the interests of the

Muslims and the propagation of Islam (elsewhere in the country). One of them is the Converts to Islam Society of the Philippines or CONVISLAM, whose missionary activities could be partly responsible for the emergence of Muslims in places where they were previously unknown. In Cebu the (Central Philippines) Islamic Mission, whose organizers are some Cebuanos, has been engaged in broadcast/radio programs to serve the particular purposes of Islam.

In their concern for the future of Islam, some Muslim states - Libya, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait - extended financial assistance for the construction of mosques and propagation of Islam, like what have been enjoyed by certain Islamic-oriented groups, including the Islamic Mission in Cebu.

There are Muslim migrants especially in the primate city of Negros, Samar-Leyte (and possibly in other nearby islands) in the Visayas and in the Bicol area. Some of said migrants have moved farther to the northernmost part of Luzon in Baguio, Cagayan, and Babuyan Islands. Mosques have been constructed in these places and Islamic propagation has been initiated by the so-called *Balik-Islam* or converts. Most of them are transients, subsisting mainly on trade, mostly Maranaos, along with the converts. (Their actual figures cannot be accounted for by reports).

In the early 1980's it was estimated that the *Balik-Islam* in the Manila area numbered some 30,000 thousand persons; about 10,000 in the Bicol region; probably by hundreds or so in the other parts of Luzon. In the Visayas (Dumaguete, Cebu, Tacloban), transients, subsisting on trade/peddling, mostly Maranao, plus converts possibly counted in the hundreds or so. Northern Mindanao, particularly Iligan City has some 200 *Balik-Islam* who are now joining the congregation in the Iligan mosque.

Intervening Circumstances

There are factors or variables that could intervene, in the affirmative way and otherwise directly or indirectly, with Muslim migration. These include socio-demographic characteristics, geographical factor, and relocation.

For the socio-demographic variables, Muslim migrant respondents in Metro Manila are mostly Maranaos, old, not professionals, and mostly engaged in business or trade (Matuan, *op. cit.*). On the contrary, Muslim migrants to Sabah, Malaysia are young, educated, married, belonged to the low-income group and were mostly jobless (Hassan, 1978:98-119).

The Muslim migrants, because of their low educational background and lack of technical know-how/skills for that matter, could hardly obtain a job especially with the stiff competition for employment in Manila. The difficulty of getting a job and the cost of living, especially nowadays, would not encourage Muslims from the south to come and reside in Manila for a long duration. This is as true for the Muslims as with other migrants in Metro Manila.

With their lack of education and technical know-how, Muslim migrants tended to engage in business/trade and other economic activities (legal or otherwise), but could only remain on it for so long as it was promising. If business was no longer prosperous, it could be the primary reason for moving from Manila to other places or returning to one's hometown. This considers the fact that Muslim migration was primarily influenced by economic/business related factors.

In the above circumstances, some migrants prefer go back home for reasons of kinship ties or traditional and cultural attachment, disregarding the question of peace and order. In fact, the study of Helen Kadil (1986) showed that a majority (89%) of migrant families did indeed plan to return home. Of the ten categories of reasons for staying, "if able to earn more/become rich" received the highest percentage (16.0%)

showing that if economic opportunities proved difficult migrants would go home. That difficulty was followed by "when children and other dependents have finished schooling (12.3%) as a reason for returning home. It is obvious from here that most of the Muslim migrants do not intend to stay or reside in Metro Manila, thus their numerical strength would remain unstable and uncertain.

Furthermore, the capacity to pay on the basis of one's income is essentially required for occupancy in any self-liquidating project, such as the Maharlika Village in Taguig, Metro Manila. In fact, as already happened, the inability to pay the installment scheme for a housing unit could be the prime reason or cause for ejection from the Village. This case was true with certain settlers in the area (though there is no established figures of ejection), and could still affect and prevent the low-income group from acquiring a residence in the said Village.

Inevitably, occupancy in the Village has become selective in preference to the fortunate and affluent families or individuals. Although that was most practical and logical, it defeated the very purpose of resettlement. Thus according to critics, occupancy in the Village has been given to some selected people who actually do not need to be pacified since they were not involved or affected by the trouble in the south.

In addition, the affordability level of many Muslim migrant families/individuals, particularly the low-income group, cannot cope with the cost of the housing project at Maharlika Village. Besides, the Village is only intended for a definite number of families and could not accommodate more than its capacity.

The relatively scanty space at the Islamic Center compound, on the other hand, hinders many people from coming in. As a matter of fact, it is already congested with less than half a hundred thousand people. Only the Maranao Muslims have been encouraged to stay at the Center, since they comprised the

overwhelming majority in comparison to the other ethnolinguistic groups, such as the Tausug and Maguindanaon.

Bago a Inged, just adjacent to the Maharlika Village, like the Islamic Center, remains predominantly Maranao. The Maranaos also cluster at the San Andres Bukid in Sta. Ana, Manila district.

The Maranaos also dominate other groups in several government agencies and offices, like the Department of Health, Bureau of Customs, Department of National Defense, Philippine Pilgrimage Authority, and even the Philippine Amanah Bank or Muslim Affairs Office, not to mention other branches and local agencies.

The Maranao will remarkably become the most dominant group because of their numerical preponderance and political mobility. Ethnicity could influence and control the groupings of the various Muslim groups in the Manila area.

Distance or geographical location is a determinant of (voluntary)migration. The relative remoteness of Manila from mainland Mindanao, Basilan-Sulu/Tawi-tawi, could be another hindrance to Muslim migration. Muslim migration from the south could have accelerated in large numbers if the distance between two places was much less than it is, notably during the period of conflict and economic dislocation in Mindanao in the 1970's when much migration took place. In spite of distance, Muslim migrants were forced by circumstances to move from their hometowns to the pacified areas, in the north of Mindanao, Visayas and Luzon.

The distance between Manila-Luzon and mainland Mindanao would entail at least two to three days of travel via commercial boats scheduled at least once or twice a week, at a fare of about 300 pesos for the usual economy class and superior classes at 500 to 700 pesos (in the 1970's). There would be another day or two for the passengers from Sulu/Tawi-tawi area taking the three-day Zamboanga-Manila bound vessels scheduled at

least twice or thrice a week, with an increased fare of more than a hundred pesos. Besides fare consideration, the total cost of travelling north (especially to Cebu and Manila) is really expensive for one who has no relative or friend to stay with. This is the usual problem of a newcomer and migrant. Hence, kinship ties with somebody in Manila, or any new place for that matter, had strongly influenced the decision of some migrants in moving there.

Though so far there is no empirical study made on them, Muslim migrants are mostly Maranaos and have been a distinct and sizeable number in some key cities and places on the islands, notably those close to the Muslim region of Mindanao. The presence of these Muslims in Cebu, Negros (Dumaguete), Iloilo, Tacloban and some other nearby places (Butuan, Cagayan de Oro) may not be as numerically impressive and remarkable as those in Manila nowadays.

If many of them were moving to Manila area, it could be for the very reason that the former is the primate city and urban capital. Muslim migration here can be seen from the context of rural-urban migration. Despite all the inconveniences and deprivations, the urban poor or rural migrant chooses to live or move to the city, especially in the primate city, because it is viewed as the place of economic opportunity where one can carve a better future for himself and the children (Guerrero, 1977:51-56).

Comparatively speaking, while Mindanao Muslims (Maranao, Maguindanao) migrated to the north, the Sulu Muslims (Tausug, Sama/Badjao), however, tended to migrate south to Sabah, Malaysia because of geographical proximity, setting aside other reasons. From the Sulu archipelago, Sabah is accessible by *kumpit* or motor boat travel for less than a day (24 hours) as near as four hours from coast to coast, at a reasonably increased fare of not even 300-500 pesos per person.

Traditionally, one of the few places that most of the inhabitants know of is "Borneo," of which Sabah is part. As a

matter of fact, the socio-cultural affiliation of most people in south Sulu is more towards Malaysia than Filipinas. But above all, migration from Sulu to Sabah has been influenced by the economic motive, as supplemented by kinship (Hassan, *op. cit.*). More Muslim migrants from the Philippines are found in Sabah (200,000) than in Manila (100,000). Geography would also partly explain this. Sabah is much nearer than Manila to the Philippine Muslim south. Sabah likewise provide many economic opportunities to migrants. Many of the migrants in Sabah are from the Sulu archipelago (comprising the majority), and some from Mindanao (about 4,948 in the 1970 census or more), notably the Maranaos (Datu Alang, 1983). At any rate, many Muslim migrants in the north (especially Manila) are from Mindanao (notably the Maranaos comprising a distinct majority from the rest) than there are from the Sulu archipelago (Tausug/Yakan/Sama or Badjao).

Relocation is the expected response to the emerging problem of migration and resettlement. The influx of rural migrants (here to include Muslim migrants) to the metropolis has resulted in the rise of slum and squatter colonies. As of January 1973, at least 100,000 squatter families had to be relocated from the Metro Manila area. The government's performance in squatter and slum clearance has not measured up to expectations.

Relocation programs outside the city at Bago-Bantay, Bagong Pag-asa, Camarin, Sapang Palay, San Pedro de Tunasan and Carmona has been fraught with problems and difficulties. The major complaints centered on the absence and inadequacy of basic facilities, services, and economic opportunities. The return to squatting in the city have been quite common. The in-city relocation, like the Tondo Foreshore Urban Renewal Project, is another case in point. The residents called for a policy of toleration, to say, "squatter families should be allowed to remain on the land they are presently occupying, while the solutions are being worked out," among other demands (Guerrero, *op. cit.*).

The squatter problem, in some cases, entails illegal occupation of private property, or of government land reserved

for special purposes (Estioko, 1977:39-43), like what happened to the Fort Bonifacio military reservation in Taguig where a number of Muslim families had settled. From the standpoint of Malacanang, the occupation was illegal as there was no permit or authority. But the settlers relied upon a general proclamation to that effect. The issue remains and there were attempts by the military to eject and harass the settlers, like what the government did later to the Tondo residents. Finally, the government yielded in favor of the Muslim settlers. In 1973 President Marcos proclaimed the Maharlika Village as being for the Muslims in the Greater Manila area.

The Maharlika Village is the same in purpose as the Tondo Foreshore Urban Renewal Project and other relocation programs. The urban project in the Tondo Foreshore came about sometime in 1973-1974, at about the same time when the Maharlika Village was created by presidential decrees. The government already took active interest in relocation. In terms of the relocation scheme, the Maharlika Village Project followed other relocation programs, except that the former was not only a renewal of the phased-out Muslim village but also a relocation (outside the city) of the Muslims in Greater Manila area.

The Maharlika Village Project, like other relocations outside the city, is fraught with problems and difficulties. One basic problem is that of providing employment for the resettled families, particularly those who depended on residual jobs. Government employment is quite limited. More than 50% of the Maharlika Village respondents are employed with the government, while the rest are self-employed or in business.

The oil crisis has also added a new dimension to the problem of transportation costs between one's residence in the village and the place of work in the adjoining cities. Findings show that accessibility of one's present residence to the place of work is one feature of the community liked best by the urban poor - hawkers, peddlers or the like (Guerrero, *op. cit.*), which is the characteristic shared by many of the Muslim migrants. For this reason, many Muslim peddlers or traders prefer to live

within the radius of the Islamic Center, which is at the heart of downtown Manila.

In Dumaguete, Cebu, Iloilo, the same pattern can be observed where same migrants cluster within the radius of the marketplace and commercial centers. This explains the overcrowding of the Muslim occupants at the Center and within the Quiapo Golden Mosque zone, which calls for relocation from the viewpoint of urban planning. But the out-of-town relocation experience already served enough lessons to the government. The return to squatting in the city is quite inevitable. If an in-city relocation or renewal (e.g., The Islamic Center just like the Tondo renewal) is proposed, affordability of cost - the high cost of urban/in-city renewal - could hardly be met by many low-income group of Muslim families which is the prime issue.

Concluding Remarks

Muslim migration to the Manila area and the islands of Luzon and Visayas could be explained by various factors, generally attributed to political as well as commercial influences coupled with missionary efforts.

Recent Muslim migration to the aforesaid places, the period from the 1970's and onward, could be largely explained by the so-called "push-pull" factors, such as economics, Mindanao conflict, attraction to city life and education, among others.

Nevertheless, Muslim migration in the Philippine setting should be seen as a continuing process and struggle (*jihad*) to preserve their identity as a people (*bangsa*). Any endeavor to undertake and pursue in their behalf should always bear in mind, for the greater part, the Islamic component of their resurging spirit.

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F. Key Informants

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