

## Modern Islam in Southeast Asia: Mindanao

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### **Abstract**

*This research is entitled History of Modern Islam in Southeast Asia: Mindanao. The limitations of the discussion in this study are: 1) History of the Arrival of Islam in the Philippines, 2) Spanish Colonial Period, 3) United States Imperialism Period, 4) Transitional Period, 5) Post-Independence Period until now. It aims to find answers to the following questions: (1) What are the reasons behind their armed struggle and the search for secession? (2) What actions have been taken and are still being taken by the Philippine government to solve the problem of Muslim rebellion? This research was conducted using a literature study approach, with the aim of tracing the history of Islam in Mindanao. The results show that: The research shows that the causes of the Muslim problem are rooted in the Philippines' colonial past while the direct and current causes are traced to government neglect and abuse, corrupt local/traditional Muslim leaders, agrarian discontent and land disputes and, the rise of the Islamic religion in the whole world. The study revealed that the Philippine government was sincere in finding a solution to the problem as they had started peace negotiations with the insurgents. Any peace negotiations or talks that the government participates in are always within the terms of the Tripoli Agreement and within the constitutional boundaries of the Philippines.*

**Keywords.** *History, Modern Islam, and Mindanao*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Southeast Asia is a region that has diverse social attitudes and beliefs. Socio-culturally, the majority of the population in this area are Muslims, but the reality of social, cultural and belief that develops in it shows diversity and heterogeneity. The Philippines is an island nation located in the western Pacific Ocean. Its population is about 90 million people. Muslims are also a minority group in this country, which numbers only approximately 4,654,000 people or 5.1% of the total population of the Philippines.

Islam was once the majority religion in the Philippines before Western colonialism entered the region. Islam entered the Philippines is estimated to have occurred in the 1300s. A tombstone in the name of Miqbal, dated 1310, was found at Badatto, not far from Jolo, Sulu Island. The discovery of this tombstone is one of the archaeological evidences of the entry and development of Islam in the Philippines. At that time the people of Jolo Island still worshiped idols and animism.

Another important figure commonly referred to as the pioneer of Islam in the Philippines is Sharif Karim Al Makhdam who preached through his mastery of occult sciences, medicine and the like. He is said to live in the old capital, Bwansa. There he built a mosque and people flocked to it. One of the tribal chiefs reportedly converted to Islam.

This study generally examines the history of modern Islam in Mindanao, specifically examines the historical evolution of the Muslim uprising in Mindanao and how the current Muslim separatist groups developed over the decades of this problem. Mindanao today is still a conflict zone as it was in the sixteenth century. Muslim separatist groups currently continue to rebel against the Philippine government under the banner of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG). This paper aims to answer the following specific questions:

1. What is the reason behind the armed struggle and their attempts to secede
2. What actions have been and are being taken by the Philippine government to solve the problem of Muslim rebellion?

## **METHOD**

This research includes qualitative research. The approach used is pure library research. Data were obtained from reading material obtained by researchers from books, articles contained in printed books or electronic print (internet). Data is collected and sorted to fill in the answers to the formulated research questions. The analysis uses a content analysis approach that is tailored to the needs of compiling related to Islamic history in Mindanao.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **History of the Entry of Islam in the Philippines**

Islam entered the southern Philippines, especially the Sulu and Mindanao islands in 1380. The first person to introduce Islam to Sulu was Tuan Mashaika who is thought to have arrived in Sulu in the 13th century. His descendants later became the nucleus of the Muslim community in Sulu. The next who came to spread Islam in Sulu was an Arab scholar named Karimul Makhdum in the second half of the 14th century. He was well received by the Buansa Muslim community. The religious activity he set in motion strengthened the growth of the Islamic community founded by his predecessor, Tuan Mashaika.

The spread of Islam in Magindanao and Lanao is generally attributed to Syarif Kabungsuwan. He is thought to have arrived in Mindanao in the early 16th century. Similar to King Baginda, he is also a prince who comes with his bodyguards and followers. When he landed on the Pulangi river; he already found a Muslim community in this area. They then built the cities of Cotabato and Maguindanao (Silangan). The expansion of Islam into Lanao cannot be separated from the joint efforts of Raja Kabungsuwan and a number of the ruling families of the area, including the royal families of Sulu, Borneo and Ternate. Meanwhile, Islam in Luzon came via Brunei. It was reported that a member of the Bruneian aristocratic family married the daughter of a Luzon aristocrat.

Thus, so far it can be seen that the process of Islamization was carried out by clerics and traders who married local women, giving birth to generations of Muslims who in turn formed Muslim communities. Muslim political leaders came later and introduced the Islamic political system, education, law and Islamic institutions. Therefore, the process of Islamization is not only limited to ideological and legal aspects but also covers the fields of education and politics. It was also seen that there was an alliance between the royal families of Sulu, Maguindanao, Lanao, Borneo and Maluku in strengthening Islamic teachings and awareness in the people of the Southern Philippines.<sup>1</sup>

### **Spanish Colonial Entry**

Historically, the Philippines was colonized by Spain and America. Islam was already developing in the Philippines when the Spanish colonials came to colonize the Philippines on March 16, 1521. The Sulu Sultanate, which was established in 1450, was then 71 years old. When Legafzi arrived in 1565, the empire was already 115 years old. It is clear that Islam became their back and reference, as well as their identity in fighting against the colonialists.

Spanish troops entered the Philippines and attacked from the south. As a result the Manila Sultanate fell to the Spanish in 1570, while the other Muslim sultanates in Mindanao and Sulu were able to retain their territory. Muslim Mindanao and Sulu were different from the northern regions which were easily conquered without significant resistance—put up very staunch resistance against the Spanish. The Spanish colonial army had to fight tooth and nail kilometer after kilometer to reach Mindanao-Sulu (the Sulu sultanate surrendered

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<sup>1</sup> Carmen Abu Bakar, "The Advent and Growth of Islam in the Philippines", hlm. 51.

in 1876). They also spent more than 375 years of colonialism in a continuous war against Muslims. However, Muslims can never be totally subdued.

In 1578 there was a big war involving the Filipinos themselves. The natives of the North who had been Christianized were involved in the Spanish colonial army, then were pitted against one another and ordered to fight against the Muslims in the south. So there was a war between the Filipinos themselves in the name of "holy mission". This is where the hatred and suspicion of Filipino Christians arose for the Moro Nation, which is Muslim until now.

### **The Age of American Imperialism**

Americans came to Mindanao presenting themselves as good and trustworthy friends. This was proven by the signing of the Bates Treaty (20 August 1898) which promised freedom of religion, freedom of expression, and freedom to get education for the Moro people. However, this treaty was only a tactic to win the hearts of Muslims so they would not rebel, because at the same time America was preoccupied with the rebellion of the North Philippine revolutionaries led by Emilio Aguinaldo.

Basically this policy was more due to America's desire to include Muslims into the mainstream of Filipino society in the North and assimilate Muslims into the traditions and habits of Christians. As the Sultans' political power diminished and power gradually shifted to Manila, this approach gradually threatened the tradition of self-reliance that Muslim societies had cherished.

### **Transition**

Entry of Quino-Recto Colonialization Act No. 4197 on February 12, 1935 marked a more aggressive attempt by the Philippine government to clear land and colonize Mindanao. The government initially concentrated on road building and state land surveys, before establishing new agricultural colonies. NLSA - National Land Settlement Administration established under Act No. 441 in 1939. Under the NLSA, three large settlements housing thousands of settlers from the North were built in the province of Old Cotabato.

Ownership of land that was so easy and legalized by the government prompted migration and large-scale settlement of Northerners to Mindanao. Many settlers who come to Mindanao, such as in Kidapawan, Manguindanao, admit that their main motive for coming to Mindanao is to acquire land. To attract large numbers of settlers from the north to Mindanao, the government built subsidized colonies complete with all the necessary aids. The concept of colonization through the colony was continued by the Philippine government once the US left the country. So that slowly but surely the Moro people become a minority in their own homeland.

### **Post-Independence Period**

The independence that the Philippines (1946) obtained from the United States did not have special meaning for the Moro Nation. The departure of the US from the Philippines turned out to give rise to other colonialists (the Philippine government). The pressure was increasingly intense and heavy when Ferdinand Marcos came to power (1965-1986). Compared to the reigns of all the presidents of the Philippines, from Jose Rizal to Fidel Ramos, the reign of Ferdinand Marcos was the most repressive for the Moro nation. The formation of the Muslim Independent Movement (MIM) in 1968 and the Moro Liberation Front (MLF) in 1971 cannot be separated from Marcos' political stance, better known as Presidential Proclamation No. 1081 it.

However, it should be noted that at this time the struggle of the Moro Nation entered a new phase with the formation of more organized and advanced resistance fronts, such as MIM, Anshar-el-Islam, MNLF, MILF, MNLF-Reformists, BMIF. But at the same time it was also a time when the power of the Moro Nation was divided into factions that weakened their struggle as a whole.

The general policy of the Philippine government towards Muslims has basically not changed, it just differs in intensity from one president to another. The Manila government has four points of view on Muslims. First, the government still holds the colonial view that "a good Moro is a dead Moro. Second, Muslims are second-class citizens in the Philippines. Third, Muslims are obstacles to development. Fourth, Moron's problem is a problem of integration, namely, how to integrate them into the mainstream of national political bodies.

Therefore, the government's general strategy towards Muslims is to integrate Muslims into the national democratic process. All government development programs aimed at Muslims are basically linked to the philosophy of integration and assimilation of Muslims in the national culture (Catholic Christianity).

While the majority of Filipino Muslims lack a sense of national identity due to: First, Muslims find it difficult to respect national laws, especially those concerning personal and family relations, because these laws clearly derive from Western moral values. and Catholic. Muslims cannot understand why national law does not allow polygamy and divorce, whereas Islamic law allows it for believers. Because they cannot accept the premise that the laws and moral values of other nations are superior to their own, Muslims continue to build their family life according to their traditions. national.

Second, the public school system under the Republic was no different from that introduced by colonial America and developed by the Commonwealth. Despite the government's efforts, there are still difficulties in convincing Muslim parents that the existing school system does not alienate their children from Islam.

Third, the inability of Muslims to think of themselves as citizens of the Republic – and the resulting violent reaction is due to their deep hatred of the constant influx of settlers to parts of Mindanao. More than 200,000 Christians have arrived in Cotabato in the past 40 years, reducing the number of Muslims who were once the majority to a minority – by 30 percent.<sup>2</sup>

The increase in the non-Muslim population in Cotabato and parts of Lanao has led many Muslims to conclude that, well, there is a deliberate government plot to disperse Muslims, or ensure that they remain a minority within their own territory. They see with frustration, if not envy, that the areas where Christians live now have better roads and more effective irrigation projects, central offices and schools, than their own facilities. retarded himself. Thus they believe they are victims of government discrimination and neglected by their own leaders. In turn, Islamic leaders blamed the emergence of all these ills on the so-called Christian government in Manila. On the other hand, the government's view is that the Moro problem is nothing but a matter of integration, namely how to integrate them into the mainstream of the national body. Within that framework, in solving the Moro problem, Manila took strategic policies including: First, militarization. This policy is usually implemented in criminal cases reported by Muslims, and this is done without regard to the civil rights of citizens and constitutional boundaries. Second, the government's policy of moving Christians from Luzon and Visayan Province to Muslim areas, as well as changing the composition and demographics of these Muslim areas. Third, the government's policy to label Muslim activities as "Muslim fundamentalists". The arrests and raids that occurred against a number of Middle Eastern citizens who were charged with being international terrorists, and accused of being involved in the plan to kill Pope John Paul II during his visit to the Philippines in 1995, ministers and heads of state of APEC, President Fidel V. Ramos, high-ranking officers the Philippine military and other foreign figures. Fourth, the policy of annihilation, such as indiscriminate killing and massacre of civilians as happened in the Kawit, Jabidah, Mannili Mosque massacres, the burning of the city of Jolo, and so on.

These government policies have invited a number of protests and resistance from Muslims. This is where resistance fronts emerged and formed such as the Muslim Independent Movement (MIM) in 1968, Anshar el-Islam, and the Moro Liberation Front (MLF) in 1971.

Subsequent developments show that the MLF as the mother of the Moro Nation's struggle has finally split. First, the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) led by Nurulhaj Misuari, which has a nationalist-secular ideology. Second, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front

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<sup>2</sup> Cesar Adib Majul, *Op.cit.*, hlm. 24-6.

(MILF) led by Salamat Hashim, a fighting cleric, who has a pure Islamic ideology and aspires to establish an Islamic state in the Southern Philippines. However, along the way, it turned out that the MNLF led by Nur Misuari had split again into the Reformist MNLF group led by Dimas Pundato (1981) and the Abu Sayyaf group led by Abdurrazak Janjalani (1993). Of course this division weakened the struggle of the Moro people as a whole and strengthened the position of the Philippine government in facing the Moro people.

The signing of the peace agreement between Nur Misuari (chairman of the MNLF) and Fidel Ramos (President of the Philippines) on 30 August 1996 at the Merdeka Palace in Jakarta further demonstrated the disagreements of the Moro people in resolving the conflict that has entered the 20th century. On the one hand they want the conflict to be resolved through diplomatic means (represented by the MNLF), while the other party wants armed struggle/jihad (represented by the MILF). All parties see the way is the most appropriate and effective. But it seems that Ramos has chosen one of them even at the risk. "Everyone has to choose, it's impossible to satisfy all parties," he said.

The peace agreement between the Moro people represented by Nur Misuari and the Philippine government with Indonesian mediators in 1996 failed miserably. It turned out that the implementation of the peace negotiations encountered various obstacles because it was alleged that the Philippine government was not really sincere in complying with the terms of the agreement.

In mid-2006, the Moro Muslims represented by the MILF resumed peace negotiations with the Philippine government. This time, the Malaysian government will act as a mediator in the peace talks. The majority of the Moro people support this peaceful process which is expected to stop all forms of armed resistance and acts of terrorism in Mindanao. If peace can really be implemented, Zainudin S Malang from the Center for Moro Law and Policy expressed his belief that terrorist acts would decrease or even disappear altogether. Because according to theory, he said, the only ones who can fight terrorism are Muslims themselves. Muslim society can cut the roots of terrorist acts by eradicating the extremist attitudes that perch in some groups.

The agreement was meant to be a way of peace between the government and the MILF, which has been fighting for a homeland for Filipino Muslims for years. The agreement stipulates that the Mindanao region will be part of the Muslim territory and the government will be controlled by Muslim citizens. The Philippine government will give full authority to Mindanao Muslim citizens to manage their own banks, regulate their own education system, including forming their own security forces. However, this agreement again failed, because thousands of protesters, the majority of non-Muslims opposed the signing. Previously, non-Filipinos who opposed it had filed two petitions with the Supreme Court asking the Philippine government not to sign the agreement with the MILF.

It seems that peace between Filipino Muslims and non-Muslims will still be difficult to achieve if the two sides do not want to push back. Especially if on each side there is still a bad perception. Most Filipinos, for example, still consider Moro Muslims to be synonymous with terrorists. In fact, according to a United Nation Development Program (UNDP) survey, 50 percent of companies in the Philippines do not want to hire Muslim employees. Attitudes like this, according to Zainudin, can trigger hatred among Muslims who are treated unfairly. "If this is not eliminated, it means that they are also promoting terrorism," he said.

News of October 18, 2008 reported that the President of the Philippines, Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, vowed not to stop carrying out military attacks on Muslim guerrillas who occupy villages and attack towns in the Mindanao region, in the south of the country. He even urged the army to continue carrying out operations against the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) guerrillas.

From the description above, it can be seen that the struggle of Moro Muslims to maintain their faith and identity and to win their seized independence has not yet ended, even though they have been at war for 469. The Muslims in the southern part of the Philippines, with the majority of adherents of Islam, have been demanding independence since 1972 and want to determine their own destiny. . However, the local government responded with weapons. Hundreds of mosques have been destroyed by military attacks,

thousands of Muslims have become victims. According to records, more than 120,000 Muslims have become victims.

### CONCLUSION

1. The research indicates that the causes of the Muslim problem are deep rooted in the Philippines colonial past while the immediate and current causes are traced to government neglect and abuses, corrupt local/traditional Muslim leaders, agrarian discontent and land disputes and, the resurgence of the Islamic religion worldwide.
2. The study reveals that the Philippine government is sincere in finding a solution to the problem for they have been initiating peace negotiations with the insurgents. The negotiations or peace talks the government participated in were always along the provisions of the Tripoli Agreement and within Philippine constitutional bounds.

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