

Citizenship Dilemmas in Conflict-Prone Areas: the Muslim Samals of Mindanao, Philippines¹

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Abstract: The Philippines is among the first democracies in Asia. However, the democratic political community that is the cornerstone of the Philippine nation-state has been built along the lines of the ethnic and religiously dominant Luzon-based, Christian Filipinos. So much so that the state has been challenged by various contenders, among which are the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), resulting to cycles of violent conflicts and peace talks. While the former is a secular movement, it is nevertheless ruled by the Islamized ethnic group of Tausugs in Sulu. The MILF is guided more by their Islamic tradition, but are nevertheless led as well, by another Islamized ethnic group – the Maguindanaos. Both the established but young Philippine state and its contenders are anchored on particular ethnicities. And it is within this “master narrative” that other ethnic groups negotiate their own identities and citizenship. One of these are the Samals, who are the 4th largest Islamized ethnic group in the Philippines. The Samals, unlike the rest of the Islamized ethnic groups in the Philippines, embrace “Bangsa Filipino” (Philippine nation) rather than the “Bangsa Moro” (Moro nation), which is a call waged by the secessionists MNLF and MILF. Literature suggests that this is a response to escape subservience and being treated as 2nd class citizens within the Muslim community itself. However, this process may also create a process of alienation among the Samals to their own Islamized community. This paper seeks to examine how the Samals negotiate their identity, and how this process defines their citizenship as they interface with different ethnic groups and socio-religious influences.

Citizenship, says British sociologist Marshall (1950), is the “*full and equal membership in a political community*”. It assumes equality and universality among individuals. This notion of a “universal citizenship” is as much challenged then, by the reality that society’s structure in itself is hierarchical – ranging from colonial, race, gender, class, caste and other categories of cleavages, as now. The rise of immigrant communities in the “West”, the intensifying spread of globalization, the mobilization of indigenous group rights, the greater recognition for sexual rights, and secessionist struggles not only in developing countries like the Philippines, Thailand and Sri Lanka, but also in higher income countries such as Canada, Ireland and Spain give rise to a ‘*crisis of citizenship*’ (cited in Soutphommasane, 2005). Consequently, all these dynamics call for a reconsideration of the citizenship discourse – one that respects the individual, yet

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safeguards what Kymlicka (1995:76) calls the “societal culture” – which “*provides its members with meaningful ways of life across the full range of human activities, including social, educational, religious, recreational and economic life, encompassing both public and private spheres*”, one that provides an affirmative edge to previously disenfranchised and “oppressed” minorities (Young, 1989; Tully, 1995:5).

The debate in reconsidering the citizenship discourse is certainly more encompassing than the previous claims of universal citizenship. However, the points that are raised tend to collapse different units of political belonging into two –that of the state and specific identity groups, glossing over the mediating and important figure that individuality brings in the equation (i.e. in the case of Young). Or while it recognizes a trichotomy of individuals, state, and identity groups – the latter only addresses the concerns of national minorities but not ethnic and immigrant groups, as such is for Kymlicka. And apart from the seminal work of Varshney (2002) on cross-ethnic ties in riot-prone territories, there seems to be no existing literature on citizenship dynamics within areas of violent conflict.

In this paper I would like to examine why, in the context of a mobilized Muslim identification and secessionist claims in the Christian-dominated Philippine Republic, Muslim Samals show evidence of identifying more with Philippine citizenship than the attendant claims of a “*Bangsa Moro*” or with belonging to the Muslim *umma*? With the end in mind of investigating how Muslim Samals identification has been constructed, both on the basis of a historical trajectory and an ethnographic present, data taken during my fieldwork between July 2006- May 2007³.

To address this question, this paper will mainly be divided into four parts. First, I would try to anchor this study with a survey of existing theories on citizenship. Second, I will then give an overview of the Philippine’s colonial history and its influence on the shaping of citizenship, as is known now in the country, and its current state of affairs. Third, I will be looking into the case of the diasporic Sulu-native Muslim Samals, as they

³ Data for this presentation is taken from the 2006 PhD fieldwork of the author in Southern Philippines, funded by scholarship from the German BMZ through DAAD and GTZ.

negotiate their way of belonging to a political community. And lastly, I would not conclude, as this is part of a work in progress. However, I would attempt to end this paper by linking my empirical findings with the dynamic discourse on citizenship.

Citizenship Theories : A Survey

As mentioned above, the citizenship debate has moved its borders more than ever. It has diverged into two major parallel, but often mutually exclusive, strands (Kymlicka & Norman, 2000:1). They however converge by both its attempts to liberate the citizenship discourse from a purely legal-formal structure to that which encompasses socio-cultural elements such as emotional and cultural ties, civic loyalties, social capital, among others.

One side of this debate is what may be broadly called the *democratic citizenship* discourse which revolves on the value of virtues, practices and responsibilities that would make “good citizenship”. There are good arguments to be made about its adherence to difference-blind belonging. But coming out are criticisms of this discourse’s bias towards homogeneous societies and particular historical experiences, notably that in North America and Western Europe.

This reconsideration presents the other side of the debate, which we can refer to in shorthand as *differentiated citizenship*⁴, recognizing both sexual and cultural differences (Young, 1989; Kymlicka, 1995; Squires, 2001). This discourse considers that citizenship goes beyond the civil and political rights set in most Western liberal democracies. Also, while it recognizes individual rights to have primacy and overriding value, it situates the individual within a host of social and cultural arrangements and contexts (Habermas, 1994:129). This very much provides a middle way in the chicken-and-egg debate over individual and communal rights plaguing the human rights discourse. Kymlicka (1995: 75) for instance, attempts to merge these two categories by arguing that claims to citizenship should protect national minority rights, if and only if these rights go as far as protecting the rights and autonomy of its individual members.

⁴ Literature has many other concepts used to refer to the same idea, with each having its attendant strengths and flaws. Among these concepts are multiculturalism, civic pluralism, minority rights, among others.

But like its predecessor, differentiated citizenship still claims casualties. There are a number of minds working on this but to name a few, Young's model, revolving on the context of protecting the "oppressed" has a tendency to be deterministic and to treat identities as unchanging (Taylor, 1994:71). Kymlicka, meanwhile, has provided more ways of addressing the issues of national minorities but not on other minority groups in a plurinational state, like ethnic and immigrant groups (Benhabib, 1998:5).

Filipino and Moro: Citizenship Regimes and the Colonial Past

The Philippines is among the first democracies, and still one of the most vibrant in Asia, with its strong press freedom and the generally high efficacy of the populace in unmaking perceived abusive officials – like the notable bloodless People Power in 1986 which ended martial rule in the country. However, the democratic political community that is the cornerstone of the Philippine nation-state has been built along the lines of the ethnic and religiously dominant Luzon-based, Christian Filipinos. Similar to the experience of post-colonial countries, the question of who belongs and who partakes of the political community has been shaped to a large extent by its history and the system of governance in that particular historical period.

Prior to being known as the Philippines, Islam arrived in the southern islands of Sulu in Mindanao in the 13th century (Majul, 1973: 63-64). The arrival of Islam superseded by 200 years Christianity's arrival in the archipelago through the Spanish who mistakenly took the country for that of Moluccas in their search of spice. Had it not been for the arrival of the Spanish, it could have been inevitable to have a majority Muslim population in the country, like its neighbors in Southeast Asia. Political organization revolved around the *barangay* headed by a *datu* or around the *kampong* of the sultan (Jose, 2007). In pre-colonial Philippines, two sultanates were very prominent, the Sulu Sultanate founded in 1450 and the Maguindanao Sultanate in 1500.

Three hundred years of Spanish "pacification campaign" in the country starting in the 1500s yielded to their occupation of the sedentary rice farming communities in Luzon but

resistance and military defeats from the more militarily and commercially-organized sultanates in Mindanao (Majul 1973: 63-64). The Spaniards categorized the natives into *Indios*, referring to the Christian converts in Luzon, and *Moros*, to Muslims in the southern part of the country - Mindanao. The term *Moro*, is a metaphor for Spain's previous unsuccessful confrontation with the Moors. Filipino, which today refers to the country's citizens, was solely used to refer to Spaniards born in the colony at that time. *Indios* were the second class citizens, if at all they had rights, who were made to be subject to the payment of tax and forced labor to the colonial government. The *Moros* in Mindanao and Sulu were the subject of Spanish campaigns to be under their effective rule.

The Philippines was subsequently handed over to the Americans, following the Treaty of Paris, which was, together with Guam and Puerto Rico, ceded by Spain to the US in 1898. With their inherited "Mindanao problem" the Americans encouraged migration and settlements to Southern Philippines. Even the army campaigned vigorously to make the place attractive to settlers (MH, 29 July 1905).

As anti-colonial sentiments reached Southern Philippines, Americans who started banana plantations in the area sought the support of their Manila-based fellow Americans. Their campaign against the resistance movement was along the following themes: that "only the American (was capable of) carrying progress in Mindanao" and peace in the region had only happened when the Americans came (MH, 26 Jan 1907).

Land tenure⁵ soon created a big rift as Diaz (n.d.) narrates, with

"land grants and titles under Spanish and American laws recognized but not those granted by the sultans and datus under [the] Moro pusaka (traditional) system". [Likewise] Under the Commonwealth regime, laws and policies were passed to open lands in Mindanao for settlement and acquisition by corporations. [While] Moros were limited to eight hectares, Filipino homesteaders could acquire up to 24 hectares; corporations could acquire up to 1,024 hectares and lease by the hundreds of thousand hectares".

⁵ Also see Fianza, 2004.

At the turn of the century, in the 1920s, Mindanao and Sulu were made to be under the administration of the Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes of the Department of Interior. Muslim Filipinos launched parallel but entirely separate struggles with Luzon and Visayas Christians against the American forces. But in 1921, the Mindanao *datu*s and *sultans* submitted a petition to the US President and Congress not to group Mindanao and Sulu with the rest of the Philippines, come independence. A second petition followed, with the the Dansalan Declaration of 1935 as the last of the three petitions that were made, which read as follows:

“Should the US government grant the Philippines independence, the islands of Mindanao and Sulu should not be included. Our public lands must not be given to other people. The practices, laws and decisions of our Moro leaders should be respected similar to what the Americans have extended to us. Our religion should not be curtailed in any way. All our practices that are incidental to our religion Islam should be respected because these things are what a Muslim desires to live for. Once our religion is no more our lives are no more.”

This petition was not granted. With the withdrawal of the US colonial presence in the Philippines, Mindanao and Sulu became part of the archipelago. In between, as the Japanese adventured to its neighbors in Asia, their own business interests were involved in various extracting activities in Mindanao, among them the operations of abaca plantations.

Post-independence, attempts were made to make the *Moros* be part of the life of the new nation, or at least, make Mindanao and Sulu effective territories of the Philippine republic. To avert the land conflicts and peasant uprisings in Northern and Central Philippines, the Philippine government encouraged mass migrations of people from these areas to Mindanao and start settler zones in the area. Five major state-sponsored migrations were launched between 1946 and 1972 (Abinales, 2000). In the 1960s, Mindanao *“had been virtually taken over by a Christian majority except areas like Lanao, Cotabato, Basilan and Sulu”* (Majul, 1973: 29).

“Moros, not Filipinos”, has become a chant commonly advanced in progressive Muslim circles and those sympathetic to the Muslim cause in the country, then and now.

“The term Filipino can only refer to a segment of our people who bowed in submission to the might of Spain. Certainly, the Muslims do not fall under the category of Filipino. Being a historic people, the Muslims therefore cannot but reject the generalization that

the word Filipino applies to them as well. Because when the word Filipino is applied to a segment of our people, the implications is that the word Filipino was derived or at least named in honor of King Felipe II...In so far as the Muslims are concerned, the application Filipino does not have any meaning to them” (Alunan, 1969: 21; also cited in Che Man, 1990: 55-56).

Morohood signifies a collective identification among the Muslims in the Philippines, of communitarian, religious and territorial elements. With regards to its communitarian nature, Morohood claims to embrace 13 ethnic groups⁶. It also asserts a common Islamic experience, threading the 13 ethnic groups together, and a claim to the whole of Mindanao, and not just the carved-out Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM).

This assertion of Morohood marks the Muslims in the Philippines from the mainstream citizens or what may be called the official national discourse of the Philippine Republic – that of being Filipino. It also is said to be a unique marker distinct from other Muslims in Asia or even in the world. Although, this is also highly contestable, given that the name Moro has been used first by the Portuguese to refer to all Muslims in Southeast Asia when it seized Melaka in 1511 (McKenna, 1998).

Under its banner, *Morohood* also forms the basis for the call of secession from the Philippine state. This resistance is not without reason, and is anchored on four main premises (*Rabasa & Chalk 2001, 85*). One is the concern over the political, religious and cultural dominance of the Christian-majority Philippine state. Another is the increasing displacement of the Moros due to voluntary and state-sponsored migration from the north (See Abinales, 2000). Third, while Mindanao is a major food and seafood exporter in the country, it has long been lagging in social and economic development, with the North mostly getting the lion share in the government’s priorities. Out of the 10 poorest provinces in the Philippines, 7 are in Mindanao. Lastly, “*rido*” or clan feuds also reinforce the secessionist calls. Clans who are involved in *ridos* may also have private armies whose accountability is to the clan, or the strongmen in the clan. In this cases, the

⁶ Muslim Filipinos belong to any of these tribes: Badjao, Molbog (or Melebugnon), Iranun, (also known as Ilanun), Palawani, Jama-mapun, Sama/I, Kalagan, Sangil, Kalibugan, Tausug, Maguindanao, Yakan, and the Maranao.

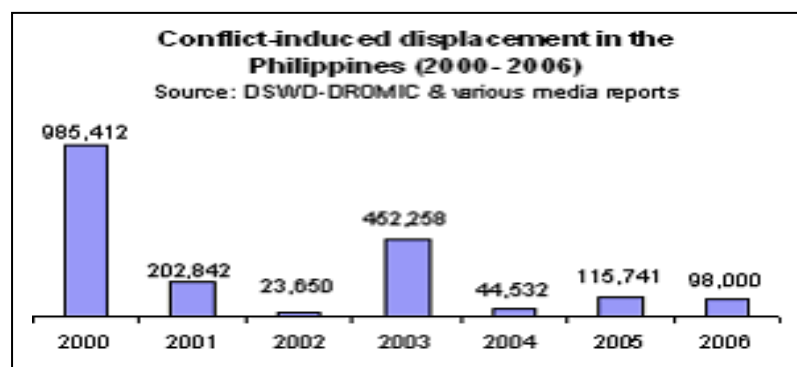
clans attempt to be surrogate for, and at times are in conflict with institutions and agencies of the state like the court system, police, military authorities and local government (Ragsag, 2006).

But the deployment of *Morohood* as an identification claim, by Muslim solidarity groups, should also be seen within its internal dynamic. First, as much as it is a citizenship claim from “without”, i.e. the Christianized Filipinos, it is also a claim from “within”. Nur Misuari, the university-educated Moro leader of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF)), has cast Morohood as a critique to the Muslim elite represented by the *datus* and *sultans*. The MNLF originally derived its philosophy from historical materialism based on class struggle, largely because of the left-wing roots of its leader Nur Misuari. However, its most prominent battlecry is the Bangsa Moro nationality to contradict itself from the Manila-based government (San Juan Jr., 1999). Prior to the MNLF’s disintegration, a splinter faction, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) launched its own movement relying mainly on more orthodox leanings, with supporters like the World Islamic League and the World Islamic Conference (Noble 1987:19). Both MNLF and MILF are recognized by the Organization of Islamic Countries (OIC).

And second, Morohood claims seem to be more resonant in, and representative more, of the three out of seven Muslim linguistic groups in Mindanao – the Maranaos of Lanao Province, the Tausugs of Sulu, Basilan and Zamboanga, and the Maguindanaos of Cotabato and Maguindanao Province.

Between 2000-2006 alone, around 2M people were displaced with the armed conflict (IDMC, 2006), as shown

in the table below. The conflict in Muslim Mindanao proves to be more disastrous than in other parts of the country or in other Mindanao



provinces even. A study commissioned for UNICEF (IBON 2006:6) shows that the

displacement in North Cotabato and Maguindanao, on average, lasts for a year and nearly 5 years, respectively. This is as opposed to 11 days in Surigao del Sur, two weeks in Compostela Valley and eight months in Leyte, where fighting is propelled not by the Moro secessionists but by Maoist guerillas.

The Moro struggle in Mindanao is considered to be the 2nd oldest internal conflict in the world, spanning for about five decades and since independence, considered to be one of the five major conflicts in the Philippines (Campo & Judd, 2005: 1). In today's time, this internal conflict manifests strongly in three administrative regions in the country – Region IX (Western Mindanao), Region XII (Central Mindanao) and the ARMM (Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao), and in the four provinces –Davao del Sur, Sarangani, South Cotabato and Sultan Kudarat - of Region XI (Southern Mindanao).

Choices and Dilemmas: Muslim, Moro, Filipino

While undoubtedly, the Philippine republic is anchored on particular ethnicities – mainly Luzon based groups, it is a sensitive matter to suggest that its contenders - particularly the Moro-based solidarities - are likewise representing particular rather than broad coalitions or causes.

Still prevailing in Muslim Filipino scholarship are inquiries on themes of a transcendent Moro identity (McKenna 1998, 80) and revolve around specific Muslim ethnic groups in the Philippines: the Maguindanaos, Tausugs, Maranaos and Iranuns. Mc Kenna argues, however, that this articulation of *Morohood* unfolds a myth that “*obscures political complexity and historical diversity*”. Other studies confirm this. The term Moro gained currency only in the 1960s with the rising mobilization of the country's Muslims and seem to have never been used by Southern Philippine Muslims for self-reference (Blanchetti-Revelli, 2003).

One aim of this paper is to attempt a departure from these traditional lines of inquiry by reflecting precisely on the question of whether Morohood is transcendent, and by looking through the experiences of the Samal Muslims, as they are caught between government

troopers and the militia of the Moro solidarity groups - which existing literature has not amply covered, if at all available.

The Samals are the 4th largest Islamized ethnic group in the Philippines. They are concentrated in the provinces of Tawi-Tawi, Sulu, and Basilan, provinces where they share with the Tausugs who are known for the Sulu Sultanate, which as a political structure is often proudly pointed out by them as predating the Philippines. These provinces are also the areas where both US and Philippine military intelligence identify to be where the web of “radical Muslim terrorist activities” happen (Banlaoi, 2006). In these areas, American military presence has also been strongly felt starting in 2000 for the *Balikatan* Exercises with Philippine soldiers (Abinales, 2004).

With the dominance of the *Tausugs* over them and the violent conflicts that continue to rage in Sulu, the *Samals* have increasingly been in a diasporic journey. An entire community of them I have met in Sarangani Province – another identified hotspot like Sulu where they come from, but relatively peaceful.

The *Samals* from the municipality of *Siasi*, *Sulu* and the province of *Zamboanga* who were the respondents in the field work that I conducted, found their way to the coasts of Sarangani Province which juts to the Sarangani Bay and Celebes Sea. Some have been living in the province for about 30 years or more, while some are children of first or second generation migrants. Like the case of most settler zones in Mindanao, family and clan migrations rather than individual movements were evident.

In the village of Sarangani Province where I did my research, there were 726 *Samals* aged 18 and above, out of a total of 1,401 of the same age group village-wide. This is in comparison to the 153 *Maguindanaos* and the 51 *Tausugs* in the area – two other Islamized ethnic groups. The community is diverse, as seen by the other ethnic groups who also live there - the Cebuano migrants who comprise 15% of the population and the indigenous B'laans at 9%, and a fraction of various others.

It may be important to recall that the *Maguindanaos* are associated with the Cotabato sultanate and the MILF ranks. In the same way as the *Tausugs* have the Sulu Sultanate and the MNLF movement. These are movements and institutions, which have traditionally given a physical face for Muslims in the Philippines during negotiations and transactions, or even for cultural recognition, with the government and other bodies like the Organization of Islamic Countries, which the *Samals* do not have.

While maintaining a numerical majority, there is still a feeling of unease among the *Samals* with regards to their relations with the *Maguindanaos*. Separate Mosques just less than 100 meters apart are in place, one for the *Samals* and one for the *Maguindanaos*. During the call to prayer, for instance, the *Samals* had to wait after the *Maguindanaos* had their own. There is widespread discontent with this among the *Samals* but no one formally brings the issue up to the community or to the group involved. It did not help when one *Maguindanao* clan almost successfully made a legal claim to the village, threatening the domicile of all the *Samal* households living there in early 2000. In patronage politics fashion, the local office of the Public Works and Highways, purportedly under the influence of the local government who had close association with one of the strongmen in the clan, gave out a notice for a road expansion project that would demolish all the houses in the area. While the land claim seems to have already lost its potency, most of the *Samals* are still anxious, up to this day, of their stay in the area. They are aware as well that they are informal settlers in what is still considered as public lands.

There is also a sentiment from the *Maguindanaos* that the *Samals*' own way of religious practice is not entirely Islamic. For example, they say, at the Eid al-Fitr celebration, ending the month-long Ramadan, *Samals* honor their dead similar to the Catholic's All Soul's Day Celebration and are observing a peculiar healing ritual. The *Samals* also surprisingly decorate their homes with Christmas trees as the month ushering to December came. When asked why they do this, most of the answers I got were that while they will never convert, it is their way to celebrate as well. That their lives and that of their children changed with the launched of a Japanese NGO-funded scholarship and

sanitation program ran by the Notre Dame University of Dadiangas, which in turn is managed by the Catholic congregation, Marist Brothers, which has been in operation in the area for about 10 years.

In this research, 57% in the barangay has stepped in a primary school, 25% went to secondary school and 10% has finished or is enrolled in a university. Since ten years ago (1997), the Catholic-run Notre Dame of Dadiangas University has established an office that looks into the provision of scholarships to the students in the said barangay. Japanese NGOs are also coming in, funneling funds for student sponsorships.

While conversion to Catholicism is not part of the package, parents of the scholars were encouraged to form an association, the Kristiyano–Islam Parents Association or KRISLAM, where various activities gearing towards inter-ethnic interactions were launched – there were araw ng pamilya (family days), livelihood programs, vaccination and medical aid and micro-credit initiatives. The micro-credit initiative, for example, could not have been launched if trust, especially between ethnic groups, was missing. Another group, the Pentecostal NGO, World Vision, has also set up scholarship programs for selected beneficiaries – mostly the B’laans.

Jahura, 60 years old, narrates her family’s story of frequent movement from Sulu to Margus to Maasim, Sarangani Province. *“To escape the violent conflict in Sulu, we moved to Margus. There we got to buy a lot and started to farm. But the Ilagas came. Fightings again (came). And we had to pack up. Since Martial Law (1970s), we have settled here in Tinoto (village in Sarangani). I have liked it here. I am free from fear. My children finished their studies, which could not have been possible in Sulu. They were sponsored by the BRC. All their needs are looked after”*

Daharia, 36 years old, whose family has been to the village since 1974, from Sulu, had this to say *“I feel I am a Filipino first, my religion comes second (Muslim), and my community last (Samal). My parents say, here we can speak Samal, Bisaya and English. No one looks down on us”* This is especially true for the educated Samals. Even in the province of Tawi Tawi, the educated Samals take pride in their English facility, which

they consider as superior to the Tausug language. The ability to speak English, then has become an empowering shield for the previously shy and introverted Samal.

Of my preliminary tabulations, the number of *Samals* whose life histories and narratives I have taken for this study, are equal for those who value being a Filipino in as much as being Muslims, as shown by the tables below.

Table 1. Ethnicity and Levels of Citizenship Identification

	Ethnicity					Total
	B'laan	Cebuano	Ilongo	Samal	Waray	B'laan
CitID 1	4	1	1	7	0	13
2	2	1	0	3	0	6
3	12	3	0	8	1	24
Total	18	5	1	18	1	43

Source: Own Survey, 2006-2007

Table 2. Ethnicity and Levels of Ethnic Identification

	Ethnicity					Total
	B'laan	Cebuano	Ilongo	Samal	Waray	B'laan
EthID 1	12	2	0	4	0	18
2	2	1	0	8	1	12
3	4	2	1	6	0	13
Total	18	5	1	18	1	43

Source: Own Survey, 2006-2007

Table 3. Ethnicity and Levels of Religious Identification

	Ethnicity					Total
	B'laan	Cebuano	Ilongo	Samal	Waray	B'laan
ReligiousID 1	2	2	0	7	1	12
2	14	3	1	7	0	25
3	2	0	0	4	0	6
Total	18	5	1	18	1	43

Source: Own Survey, 2006-2007

Nongsoriya, 65 years old says that “*While Jolo is my homeland, I like it here (Sarangani) better and I do not have plans of going back. We have our source of livelihood here. It is*

away from the battlefield. And I have given birth to four of my children here.” As to how she identifies herself, she claims, “I am Filipino first, Muslim second, and Samal last”. “Here the government (local) is looking after us. The men here can work without fear. And so we the women do not have to carry all the burden of earning a living ”. In the event of a military strike, men are often suspected of being members of or sympathizers of rebellion, forcing them to hide and leaving the care of the entire family to the wives or the women in the household.

When asked about their understanding of what constitutes a Moro, the responses were generally self-exclusionary, if not negative:

Negative *“I don’t understand why this is used as a badge of honor now. What I heard is that it all started as a taunt for being ignorant and savage.”*

“My children for example, they are hurt when they are called Moros. Moros have not been good to us.”

Non-negative but exclusionary

“These Moros, they have different factions. But most of them are ‘bandidos’. It is a common term for Maguindanaos, Maranaos, Tausugs, but not for Samals like me. I would be happier to be called just as a Samal.”

“Ah, Moros are Muslims. –Then you are a Moro too?- No, I am a Samal Muslim. Not a Moro.”

“I don’t know but I have not heard it (Moro) being used here. It is enough that you refer to someone as a Samal, like you refer to B’laans (an indigenous ethnic group) as B’laans.”

“Come to think of it – it is the Bisayas who started calling Muslims with that term right? Then we use it to refer to ourselves? No, maybe it applies only to the Maguindanaos.”

“I have nothing against them, but I’d rather be called a Muslim than a Moro. I just do not feel like I am a part of them (Moros).”

While a common description about the *Samals* is that, they are peace-loving people, who avoid physical confrontation or violence (Jundam, 1983; Salibio, 2006), they are known more on who they are not – either as non-*Tausugs* or non-*Badjaos*. Most of their lives are spent on the sea, relying on fishing for their livelihood.

Historical accounts show that the relationship between the *Tausugs* and *Samals* were not, and even at present still can be seen to be not, on equal plane. The *Samals* have served as slaves and subjects to the *Sulu* sultanate of the *Tausugs*, where they took on the role of pirates and raiders in the peak of the sultanate's maritime raiding activities starting the pre-colonial times.

This unequal relationship is further legitimized by the prevailing *sarsila*, or the oral history of the *Samals*. One theme of the *sarsila* tells about the arrival of the *Samals* to *Sulu* from Johore, Malaysia (Bentley 1981, Nimmo 1972, Frake 1996). The *Samals'* arrival in *Sulu* is believed to have come after the *Tausugs* have already set a socio-political order. This is further buoyed by the little recognition of a bigger *Samal* community among the *Samal*-speaking population themselves (Horvatic, 2003), and the pervasiveness of the use of *Tausug* as a common language, even in *Samal*-populated areas. Linguistic characteristics and anthropological evidence seem to show however, that the *Samals*, rather than the *Tausugs*, are the pioneers in *Sulu* (Horvatic (2003).

Some Final Remarks

Scant literature suggests that the *Samals*, unlike the rest of the Muslims in the Philippines, evidently embrace “*Bangsa Filipino*” (Philippine nation) more than the “*Bangsa Moro*” (Moro nation) waged by the secessionists MNLF and MILF (Horvatic, 2003). Which corresponds somehow to the earlier statement in this paper that Morohood claims seem to be more resonant in, and representative more, of the three out of seven Muslim linguistic groups in Mindanao – the Maranaos of Lanao Province, the *Tausugs* of *Sulu*, Basilan and Zamboanga, and the Maguindanaos of Cotabato and Maguinadanao Province.

Identifying to the framework offered by *Filipino* citizenship, has become the route that *Samals* take, facilitating their access to social mobility, a window they feel they do not have, even with the *Moro* movement. A similar pattern, for example, is seen with the untouchables' conversion to Buddhism and Christianity so as to escape the rigid caste system that have placed them at the lowest rung of Hindu society.

With no sultanate, and not land-tied being of maritime lifestyle, and neither institution of resistance, it is observable that the *Samals* have shifted their views on education and literacy as a form of resistance to the existing power relations within their own Muslim community, if there can be a community called as such. In Sulu, the elderly respondents in my research recall that fluency in *Tausug* makes one accepted. Today, the younger *Samals* in Sarangani are armed with these languages: *Bisaya*, which is the regional lingua franca, the national language *Tagalog*, and English, all of which are viewed generally as of higher value to the village and even to the whole country.

In a period of turbulence – either of a diasporic experience, armed conflict, or forced migration – the need for people to belong to a political community intensifies rather than diminishes. Basch, Schiller and Blanc (1994:7) talks about “*the process by which migrants [and in this case, people displaced by armed conflict] forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement*”. In the case of the Samal, they are torn not only between but among many spaces of belonging – Muslim, Moro, Filipino, Samal and Bisaya. Being torn between the old and the new sense of belonging positions them in what Soja (1996) and Bhabha refers to as the third space.

However, this period also makes those in this locus of turbulence to be straddling between their new and old homelands – an opportunity that may give rise to what I would prefer to call as a resurgent citizenship – a sense of belonging resulting from the citizen’s wading through many layers of exclusive and inclusive practices, and choosing that which offers greater sense of agency and autonomy.

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