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UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES  
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## Challenges and Prospects

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# Philippine Muslim History

## Challenges and Prospects

Darwin J. Absari<sup>1</sup> and Macrina A. Morados<sup>2</sup>

**ABSTRACT** ■ Philippine Muslim history (PMH), which is part of the Philippines' historical past, was subjected to minimalization and even exteriorization in Philippine literature as a consequence of Western colonization. Its importance was slowly recognized when the Muslims in the 1970s asserted their self-determination through armed struggle. This paper will examine the challenges PMH has gone through and see its potential as a tool in bridging religious and cultural gaps necessary for nation-building. It will also find out its relevance in rediscovering the Philippines' pre-Hispanic cultural heritage. Some of the ideas and arguments in this paper are derived from a roundtable discussion on the subject involving Filipino historians.

**KEYWORDS** ■ Moros, Muslims in the Philippines, Philippine Muslim history (PMH), Republic Act No. 10908 (Integrated History Act), history education



## Introduction

The Philippines was once a home of cultural and philosophical mixing through economic interactions with various Asian civilizations. It has

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also been subjected to foreign imposition by Western powers whose agenda was control under the guise of religion and democracy.

These varying experiences with different kinds of people of different missions have impacted the production of the country's historical narratives which shaped Filipino ideas and concepts of nation-state, religious and cultural orientations, and domestic relationships of the Filipino people.

Data on religious affiliations from the 2015 Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) census shows that Catholics (including Charismatic Catholics) constitute 79.5 percent of the total population; Muslims 6.0 percent; Evangelicals 2.4 percent; Iglesia ni Kristo 2.6 percent; and 9.4 percent for other religious affiliations.<sup>3</sup> Muslims are composed of thirteen (13) ethnolinguistic groups, with the surging Balik-Islam in the country constituting the fourteenth Muslim group. Generally, four-fifths of adult Filipinos described themselves as religious.<sup>4</sup>

The above data shows that Christians and Muslims are the largest religious majority and minority groups in the country, respectively. However, the relationships of these two groups have not always been "sweet and friendly" as there had been many detours shaping their respective historical trajectories. An example of an unfriendly encounter was in 2004, when Muslims met strong opposition from non-Muslim vendors and residents when they attempted to establish a mosque inside the Greenhills Shopping Center (GSC). Voicing the growing concern of local Christian communities, the late *Philippine Daily Inquirer* columnist Max Soliven wrote, "The Muslim traders and vendors, if they obey our laws and behave themselves, are like all Filipinos—entitled to life, liberty and the pursuit of commerce. But a 'mosque' or 'Islamic prayer room' in the very heart of Christian community makes no sense, especially when the Moros [Philippine

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<sup>3</sup> Philippine Statistics Authority, "Philippine Population Surpassed the 100 Million Mark (Results from the 2015 Census of Population)," June 30, 2017, <https://psa.gov.ph/content/philippine-population-surpassed-100-million-mark-results-2015-census-population>.

<sup>4</sup> Ricardo G. Abad, "Filipino Religiosity: Some International Comparisons," *Philippine Studies* 43, no. 2 (1995): 195–212.

Muslims] are transients, not residents.”<sup>5</sup> Notably, this is not an isolated case of discrimination and stereotyping against Muslims in the Philippines as shaped by historical mouldings.

## Philippine Historical Mouldings

Long before the arrival of Western colonizers, Indians, Chinese, and Muslims came to trade. They brought with them their culture and religion, which contributed to the development of Philippine civilization. From the Indians, early Filipinos developed their system of writing, political institutions, concept of religion, languages, and literature.<sup>6</sup> The Chinese taught them new occupations, varieties of dining pleasure, a sense of beauty, and the skill to transform precious metals into jewelry.<sup>7</sup> The Muslims, who came much later, introduced moral development, deepened Filipino spirituality, and strengthened the established political institutions.<sup>8</sup> However, the legacies of these Asian civilizations in many parts of the country were lost to the long period of evangelization by the Spanish (1521–1898) and of Westernization by the Americans (1898–1946).

Empowered by the Papal Bull of 1493, Spain came with the self-declared mission of Christianizing and civilizing the natives.<sup>9</sup> They

<sup>5</sup> Max Soliven, *By the Way, The Philippine Star*, October 4, 2004, cited in Macrina Morados, “Theocentrism and Pluralism: Are They Poles Apart?,” *Policy Perspectives* 5, no. 3 (July–December 2008): 37–49.

<sup>6</sup> Juan R. Francisco, “Two Views on the Origin of Philippine Script: The Sanskrit Factor,” in *Filipino Heritage: The Making of a Nation*, Vol. 3, ed. Alfredo Roces (Manila: Lahing Pilipino Publishing, Inc., 1977), 598–601; and Juan R. Francisco, *Indian Influences in the Philippines: With Special Reference to Language and Literature* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines, 1964).

<sup>7</sup> S. V. Espitola, “The Day the Chinese Came to Trade,” in *Filipino Heritage: The Making of a Nation*, Vol. 3, ed. Alfredo Roces (Manila: Lahing Pilipino Publishing, Inc., 1977), 588.

<sup>8</sup> Islamic legacies in Christian Philippines can be seen through the use of Malay and Arabic words such as *po*, *opo*, *pasintabi*, *asal*, and *samba* (from the Malay *sumba* and the Arabic *sabbah*, which means glorify). See William Henry Scott, *Prehispanic Source Materials for the Study of Philippine History* (Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1984).

<sup>9</sup> The Papal Bull of 1493, issued by Pope Alexander VI, granted King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Spain rights to discover, claim, and spread Catholicism to countries

declared that the pre-Hispanic era was a dark age and that the country's enlightenment began with their arrival. This meant that the Spaniards came to bring salvation and civilization to the people of the Philippines who they deem uncivilized and savage. During a roundtable discussion on Philippine Muslim history (PMH) held in 2019,<sup>10</sup> Dr. Vicente Villan recalled how colonial scholars like Juan de la Concepcion and Gaspar de San Agustin spread this bipartite historical narrative that gave the notion of Philippine history as the history of Spain in the Philippines and made Filipinos an object of this historical moulding.<sup>11</sup> In the course of pursuing this religious and civilizing mission, Spain, as decreed in the 1493 Papal Bull, had to exercise its political will in a colonized state. Local manuscripts containing historical records and indigenous thoughts were burned and destroyed by the Spaniards as they persecuted groups of local thinkers such as the *babaylan*.<sup>12</sup>

But Spain's bipartite historical narrative has actually buried the country's growing civilization and distorted its own past. There was indeed a growing civilization through the country's extensive commercial and cultural relations with neighboring countries, as seen

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not inhabited by Christians. See "The Papal Bull Inter Caetera Alexander VI May 4 1493," American History: From Revolution to Reconstruction and Beyond, University of Groningen, accessed July 13, 2020, <http://www.let.rug.nl/usa/documents/before-1600/the-papal-bull-inter-caetera-alexander-vi-may-4-1493.php>.

<sup>10</sup> The roundtable discussion on Philippine Muslim history was held last November 13, 2019 at the University Hotel, University of the Philippines Diliman. The event was organized by the Islamic Studies Program of the UP Center for Integrative and Development Studies and the Institute of Islamic Studies, University of the Philippines Diliman.

<sup>11</sup> Dr. Vicente Villan is a Professor at the Department of History of the College of Social Sciences and Philosophy, University of the Philippines Diliman and the current President of the Asosasyon ng mga Dalubhasa, may Hilig at Interes sa Kasaysayan ng Pilipinas (ADHIKA).

Gaspar de San Agustin published the book *Conquista de las Islas Pilipinas* in Madrid in the late 17th century.

<sup>12</sup> For more on the *babaylan* during the Spanish colonial period, see Carolyn Brewer, *Shamanism, Catholicism and Gender Relations in Colonial Philippines, 1521-1685: Women and Gender in the Early Modern World* (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2004).



in the tribute missions to China as early as 1001 CE.<sup>13</sup> As a matter of fact, it was the consequence of Spanish dominance, as Graciano Lopez Jaena asserted, “that the Filipinos were prevented from progressing as rapidly as they could have.”<sup>14</sup> Contrary to what the Spaniards believed and wanted Filipinos to believe—that they have fulfilled their religious and civilizing mission—Jose Rizal, in his *Noli Me Tangere*, described the long Spanish evangelization as the period of decline which culminated in a social cancer: “The entire Spanish regime from its very inception was at the root of the social cancer which had declared itself by the late nineteenth century.”<sup>15</sup> The imposition of Catholicism that came along with Hispanization has, as Andres Bonifacio pointed out, made the Filipino people abandon their good customs.<sup>16</sup> It was also, as Rizal depicted through the dialogue between Simoun and Basilio in his *El Filibusterismo*, “the destruction of national identity, disappearance of the homeland and ratification of tyranny that produce a people without a soul and a nation without freedom, and where everything will be borrowed.”<sup>17</sup>

It was only in the second half of the 19th century when no less than the Hispanized youth such as Rizal, Jaena, and many others saw the need to rectify Spain’s historical narratives by producing a counter-vision of native interpretation of Philippine history. This counter-vision of the Hispanized youth, who later constituted the Filipino thinkers of the Propaganda Movement and the Revolution, was to revise Spain’s bipartite historical narratives by resurrecting the Philippines’ pre-Hispanic civilization and reconstruct Filipino society.<sup>18</sup> Rizal and other scholars such as Pedro Paterno, Trinidad H. Pardo de Tavera,

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<sup>13</sup> William Henry Scott, *Filipinos in China Before 1500* (Manila: Chinese Studies Program, De La Salle University, 1989).

<sup>14</sup> Quoted in Zeus Salazar, “A Legacy of the Propaganda: The Tripartite View of Philippine History,” in *Kasaysayan at Kamalayan: Mga Piling Akda Ukol sa Diskursong Pangkasaysayan*, eds. Neil Martial R. Santillan and Mary Bernadette P. Conde (Quezon City: Limbagan Pangkasaysayan, 1998), 22.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

and Isabelo de los Reyes began to study Sanskrit, pre-Hispanic scripts, ancient religion, and native mythology.<sup>19</sup>

The native historical counter-vision, which was described by Salazar as the tripartite historical view, was integrated in the Katipunan's ideology. New members in the rites of entry into the Katipunan had to know the correct answer to the three questions derived from this tripartite view—i.e., concerning the condition of Filipinos before the Spaniards came, its condition since then, and its condition after liberation from Spanish rule. The answers were to be found in detail in Bonifacio's *Ang Dapat Mabatid ng mga Tagalog* (What the Tagalogs Should Know). Bonifacio articulated that “of old, prior to the arrival of the Spaniard, these Islands were governed by our own compatriots who were then living in the greatest abundance and prosperity.” Furthermore, they maintained good relations with the neighboring countries like Japan, trading with them “commodities of all sorts.” Wealth and good customs were then “a common patrimony” and everyone knew how to read and write in the ancient Filipino script. Then came the Spaniards and “with the pretense of peace... deceived (us) by their offers to guide us on the paths of wisdom and increased prosperity.”<sup>20</sup>

It has to be noted, however, that in their efforts to resurface pre-Hispanic civilization, legacies of Islam—some of which came from Muslims in the south, particularly the Tausug of Sulu—were mentioned less, if not totally neglected. Possibly because Islam was the religion that Spain's traditional enemies, the Moros, professed. Rizal and other thinkers remained captured by Spanish black propaganda against their Muslim brethren who were portrayed as slave raiders and pirates. Rizal, in his poem *El Combate: Urbiztondo, Terror de Jolo*, even hailed General Antonio de Urbiztondo, who led the successful

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<sup>19</sup> Resil B. Mojares, “The Haunting of the Filipino Writer” (keynote speech, “Localities of Nationhood: The Nation in Philippine Literature” Conference, Ateneo de Manila University, Quezon City, February 10–12, 2000), [http://web.archive.org/web/20041013091756/http://www.geocities.com/icasocot/mojares\\_haunting.html](http://web.archive.org/web/20041013091756/http://www.geocities.com/icasocot/mojares_haunting.html).

<sup>20</sup> Op. cit., 33.

Spanish expedition to Sulu on December 5, 1875.<sup>21</sup> What he and other thinkers have not considered was the fact that slave-raiding was the Muslims' war strategy to weaken Spanish military strength. In most—if not all—Spanish military expeditions to Sulu and Mindanao, the Christianized natives allowed themselves to be used by the Spaniards to kill the Moros, something the Moros could not understand.

Rizal and other thinkers forgot—or perhaps did not know—that before the coming of Spanish conquerors, there was no incident of Moro attacks and forced conversion to Islam of unchristianized natives. Instead, the Moros, along with other foreign Muslims, were actively participating and, to some extent, leading in both inter-island and progressive international trade. For instance, the tribute mission sent from Mao-li-wu (Marinduque or Mindoro)—together with Luzon—to China in 1405 was headed by a Muslim named Taonu Makaw.<sup>22</sup> When Magellan came to Cebu in 1521, it was a Muslim who mediated his talk with the ruler of Cebu. This Muslim who warned the Cebu ruler of the Spaniards' deceitful attitude, according to Magellan's chronicler Antonio Pigafetta, "seemed more intelligent than the others."<sup>23</sup> Coastal areas of Manila were a thriving Muslim principality ruled by Raja Sulayman at the time of the arrival of the Spaniards. Even the Spaniards who came to the Philippines also carried with them influences of Islam, as they have been ruled by the Muslim Moors for nearly 800 years.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Ma. Corona S. Romero, Julita R. Sta. Romana, and Lourdes Y. Santos, *Rizal and the Development of National Consciousness* (Quezon City: Katha Publishing Co., Inc., 2006), 105.

<sup>22</sup> Scott, *Filipinos in China Before 1500*, 8.

<sup>23</sup> Antonio Pigafetta, *Magellan's Voyage Around the World*, vol. 1 (Cleveland, OH: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1906), 257.

<sup>24</sup> Alice M. L. Coseteng's *Spanish Churches in the Philippines* (1972) shows that old churches in Cebu and Bohol were designed after the mosques in Spain. Some Spanish words that were integrated into the Tagalog vocabulary such as *alkalde* (mayor; from the Spanish *alcalde*, taken from Arabic *qadi* (judge)) and *baryo* (from the Spanish *barrio*, taken from Arabic *al-barri*) originated from Arabic. See Isaac Donoso, "Sources on Philippine Islam," in *More Islamic Than We Admit: Insights into Philippine Cultural History*, ed. Isaac Donoso (Quezon City: Vibal Foundation, 2017), 3–43.

Actually, the Spaniards' hatred of the Moros was a result of their centuries of war with the Moors in Spain. And in the Philippines, it was the Moros and other foreign Muslims who stood as the main obstacle to their religious and economic ambitions in the country. Had the Spaniards not come, the entire country would have possibly been Islamized and all Filipinos could have attained and enjoyed the peak of civilization as did the Moros, especially the Tausug, after the establishment of the Sulu Sultanate in 1405. But the natives in Luzon and Visayas fell upon the swords of *conquistadores* and the promise of salvation by the friars, and were convinced of the black propaganda against their Moro brethren in the south.

### **Imaging of the Moros: Colonial Historical Blunder**

The word “Moro” comes from the “Moors” (Moroccan Muslims) and was coined by the Spaniards in reference to the natives in Mindanao who adhered to the Islamic faith. The Moors, under the leadership of the Umayyad Caliphate, conquered and ruled Spain for almost 780 years. Even today, the remnants of the Islamic civilization are apparent in the cities of Granada and Cordova, the old centers of the Islamic Empire in Spain.

In 1492, the city of Granada fell from the hands of the Muslims to the Crusaders. The Crusaders fought the Muslims in the name of the Church, upon the blessings of Pope Urban II. Filipino scholar Luis Francia wrote: “As a reward for his success in driving away the infidel Moors towards the end of the 15th century, the Catholic King Ferdinand has asked for and received from the Pope the right of patronato real over all churches to be established in the territory of the reconquista. This was exactly what the Crown wanted, and Ferdinand skillfully maneuvered thereafter to secure from the Papacy extensions of his patronato to all his overseas dominions on the ground that evangelizing the heathen, or Indios, was the same as recovering Granada for Christendom.”<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Luis H. Francia, *A History of the Philippines: From Indios Bravos to Filipinos* (New York: Overlook Press, 2010), 4.

Obviously, when the country was colonized by the Spaniards, this historical connection shaped the policy of the Spanish *conquistadores* in dealing with the Muslims. Under the name “Moros,” the colonizers depicted them “as a degraded race of savages whose only ambition was to plunder, guided strongly by a religion based on the teaching of a false Prophet which they called Mohammedanism.” This savage imagery and negative depictions from the colonizers’ perspectives stressed the Moros’ “lack of civilization which underlined the need to subjugate and civilize them through Christianization.”<sup>26</sup>

Bearing the hatred against the same peoples of Rajah Lapu-Lapu who killed Magellan in the island of Cebu in 1521, King Phillip II affirmed this policy in his written instruction to Miguel Lopez de Legazpi in 1566, which partly reads, “We give you permission to make such Moros slaves and to seize their property.”<sup>27</sup> Another Jesuit missionary stressed, “It is an error to believe that the Moros of Mindanao cannot be converted. And if someone persists in this belief, he must confess that they are unconquerable; because, note carefully they will become loyal subjects of Spain only upon divesting themselves of their being Moro and becoming Christians.”<sup>28</sup> The effect of this hard colonial policy towards the Moros was met with fierce resistance. The Moros’ fighting the Spaniards was labeled as the historical years of the “Moro Wars.”

The “Moro Wars” manifested the early sense of nationhood among Muslims even prior to the age of the Propaganda Movement spearheaded by distinguished national heroes like Jose Rizal and Andres Bonifacio. The agenda of the Propaganda Movement which was to liberate the country from slavery was already articulated by Sultan Qudarat. Below is an excerpt of Sultan Qudarat’s inspiring message to the Moros to continue the fight against the colonizers even at the cost of their own lives:

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<sup>26</sup> Samuel K. Tan, *The Muslim South and Beyond* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 2010), 82.

<sup>27</sup> Cesar Adib Majul, *Muslims in the Philippines* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 1999), 91.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 112.

What have you done? Do you realize what subjection would reduce you to? A toilsome under the Spaniards! Turn you're your eyes to the subject nations and look at the misery to which such glorious nations had been reduced to. Look at the Tagalogs and Visayans! Are you better than they? Do you think that the Spaniards consider you of better stuff? Have you not seen how the Spaniards trample them under their feet? Do you not see every day how they are obliged to work at the oars and the factories with all their rigors? Can you tolerate anyone with a little Spaniards blood to beat you up and grasp the fruit of your labor? Allow yourselves to be subjects (today) and tomorrow you will be at the oars; I, at least will be a pilot, the biggest favor they will allow a chief. Do not let their sweet words deceive you; their promise facilitates their deceits, which, little by little, enable them to control everything. Reflect on however the minor promises to the chiefs of other nation were not honored until they became masters of them all. See now what is being done to these chiefs and how they are led by a rod. Don't we have a right to regain back our Independence?<sup>29</sup>

Instead of appreciating the heroic act of the Moros in resisting foreign rule, the major legacy of the three centuries of Moro-Spanish warfare in the Philippines had reinforced the branding of the “Moro” image—as cunning, cruel, treacherous, savage, pirate, raider, and slaver. To this very day, this image is quite operative in the minds of many, if not most, of Christian Filipinos, whose forebears after all, bore the brunt of the Moro *jihad*.<sup>30</sup> This kind of depiction is commonly known as negative stereotyping.

In the case of Muslims in the Philippines, negative stereotyping is a form of colonial blunder depicting the negative imagery of the Moros. It was also designed to survive because it was part of the “divide and rule” policy of the colonizers. It drew a distinction

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 156–57.

<sup>30</sup> Peter G. Gowing and Robert D. McAmis, eds., *The Muslim Filipinos: Their History, Society and Contemporary Problems* (Ermita, Manila: Solidaridad Publishing House, 1974), 77.

between the converted Indios and the Moros, along with the other tribal groups, who refused conversion to Christianity. Moreover, the Christian prejudices against the Moros were reinforced by the invention of the theatrical play called *moro-moro*. In this play, the Moros were depicted as villains and Christians as heroes.

Spain's historical distortion of the past, which Rizal and other Hispanized thinkers failed to rectify, became the root cause of the minimalization and even exteriorization of PMH that remains alive in the consciousness of the Filipinos until today.

Furthermore, in the early days of the Propaganda Movement, the Hispanized youth still cling to Spain as the mother country whose culture is superior to that of the natives. Rizal even proposed the assimilation of the Philippines to Spain so that Filipinos would enjoy egalitarian laws and free and liberal reforms. Marcelo H. del Pilar proposed the same scenario, but with the expulsion of the friars.<sup>31</sup> It was Bonifacio and the Katipuneros who took the ultimate solution: absolute freedom from the Spaniards through revolution. Unlike the Hispanized youth who remained captive of Spanish black propaganda against the Moros, Bonifacio, as pointed out by Dr. Villan, recognized the courage of those who did not submit to Spanish rule and called them true countrymen.<sup>32</sup> His vision of society includes all Filipinos of diverse cultural and religious backgrounds.

During the Revolution, Filipinos were slowly returning to their pre-colonial religious upbringing. Dr. Villan recalled that in Bohol, local resistance burned churches and stabbed the statue of Virgin Mary eighteen times. During the 1897 attacks of Spanish-controlled towns in Visayas, Katipuneros also burned churches and killed the priest. In some places in Cavite, thirteen friars were savagely put to

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<sup>31</sup> Salazar, "A Legacy of the Propaganda," 24–25.

<sup>32</sup> Virgilio S. Almario, *Panitikan ng Rebolusyon(g 1986): Isang Paglilingon at Katipunan ng mga Akda nina Bonifacio at Jacinto* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 1997).

death. One was burned alive, another was hacked to pieces, and still another one was roasted on a bamboo pole.<sup>33</sup>

But as Bonifacio died, so did his vision. The revolution and the task of reforming Philippine society once again fell upon the hispanized youth who could not denounce everything the Spaniards have implanted. Catholicism remained an important component in their socio-political life despite knowing the fact that it was Spain's most important colonial tool. Rizal's rejection of the God of Catholicism shows that Catholicism as taught by the friars did not at all bring spiritual enlightenment even to the *Ilustrados* as did the Sufi masters who brought Islam to the south.

In the 1899 Revolutionary Congress convened at Malolos, Bulacan that crafted the first Philippine Constitution (the Malolos Constitution), the separation of Church and State became the most contentious issue. The Congress, largely composed of the *Ilustrados*, was divided into two groups. The first group, headed by Felipe G. Calderon, who was a grandson of a Spanish friar, called for the union of Church and State and even proposed Catholicism to be the state religion. His proposal, however, lost by one vote against the second group who advocated the separation of Church and State. But despite their conflicting positions on Church-State relations, both groups were in agreement that it was not the Catholic Church nor Catholicism per se that they were campaigning against, but only the Spanish priests. The campaign was to "Filipinize the Catholic Church," where control will be taken from the hands of Spanish friars and be given to native priests, who have been treated inferior by the friars. However, the issue of Church-State relations actually remained unresolved. The short-lived Malolos Republic maintained the unity of Church and State and opted to retain Catholicism as state religion for the sake of political expediency. It was the Americans who settled the issue of Church-State relations by imposing Church-State separation, but without Filipinization.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Peter G. Gowing, "The Disentanglement of the Church and the State in Early American Regime in the Philippines," in *Studies in Philippine Church History*, ed. Gerald H. Anderson (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1969), 204.

<sup>34</sup> For more on the debate, see Filomeno V. Aguilar, "Church-State Relations in the 1899 Malolos Constitution: Filipinization and Visions of National Community," *Southeast*



Under American colonialism, the recovery of the Philippines' past heritage, which Rizal and other thinkers pursued, and the pluralistic society envisioned by Bonifacio were outlived by another new historical moulding. History books during the American occupation portrayed America as a benevolent nation who came only to save Filipinos from Spain and spread amongst them the boon of liberty and democracy. Mass education with English as a medium of instruction was conducted to fulfill the goal of civilizing the natives and training them in the science of self-governance. Spain's bipartite historical narrative was followed by the discourse aimed at creating a nation-state which was dominated by Western Christian thoughts. Thus, the kind of nation produced was a transposition of American political institutions and ideas that do not reflect the values of the Filipino people. Indigenous institutions which could have led to the evolution of native democratic ideas and institutions were disregarded. The imposition of the English language as medium of instruction and the importation of American textbooks filled with American narratives, heroes, and cultural referents set the stage for what Renato Constantino describes as the "Americanization" and the beginning of Filipinos' "miseducation."<sup>35</sup>

During the American period, this negative depiction of the Moros continued. Even under the Commonwealth government of 1935-1946, history books taught that the Muslims, who fought the Spaniards, were pirates and slave raiders. Indeed, the terror of Muslim slave raiding in the Christianized areas remains frightening in the memory of the Christianized natives.<sup>36</sup> The *moro-moro*, which was a popular festival attraction, survived up to the 1950s. In fact, according to a popular columnist in 1971, "The already damaging image of the 'Moro image' perpetrated by the Spaniards, was further made more damaging by the

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*Asian Studies* 4, no. 2 (August 2015): 279–311, <https://doi.org/10.20495/seas.4.2.279>.

<sup>35</sup> Renato Constantino, "The Miseducation of the Filipino," in *Kasaysayan at Kamalayan: Mga Piling Akda Ukol sa Diskursong Pangkasaysayan*, eds. Neil Martial R. Santillan and Mary Bernadette P. Conde (Quezon City: Limbagan Pangkasaysayan, 1998), 231–49.

<sup>36</sup> For more on Moro slave raidings, see Luis Camara Dery, *The Kris in Philippine History: A Study of the Impact of Moro Anti-Colonial Resistance, 1571-1896* (Quezon City: Luis Camara Dery, 1997).

American colonizers who coined a catch phrase that stuck fast through the years: ‘Only a dead Moro is a good Moro.’<sup>37</sup>

The 1960s onward marked the beginning of the second attempt to rediscover pre-Hispanic heritage when Filipino nationalist scholars took the initiative to challenge the relevance of Western thoughts in understanding the Filipino way of life. This initiative brought back the urge to rediscover Filipino indigenous thought and traditional values where the legacies of Asian civilizations can be found. This initiative was reinforced by many archeological findings such as the Balangay boat excavated in Butuan in 1974 and the 900 CE Laguna copperplate unearthed in 1989, among others, that reveal the country’s rich historical past. It is here that the importance of Philippine Muslim History is seen as it continues to preserve the Philippines’ lost heritage.

Some of the past histories of the Moros remain relevant as the Philippines under President Rodrigo Duterte’s administration re-establishes the country’s ancient ties with China, Middle East, and the neighboring Southeast Asian nations. For example, the grave of the Sultan of Sulu who died in China in 1417 has become one of the foundations of Philippines-China relations.<sup>38</sup> But the legacies of hatred, bias, and prejudice against the Moros left by the Spaniard and American colonizers in the minds of the Christianized Filipinos continue to manifest in the succeeding decades.

After Sulu and Mindanao were integrated into the larger Philippine society in the newly established Philippine Republic in 1946, the discussion of the history of Muslims in the Philippines has remained insignificant in many history books. The negative depiction of Moros in public life also continued even after independence. School children

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<sup>37</sup> Sixto Y. Orosa, “The Great Moro Problem,” *Philippine Free Press*, August 28, 1971, 34, cited in Fredelino Cafe, “A Content Analysis on the Image Portrayal of the Mindanao Muslims by *Bulletin Today* Newspapers 1971, 1976 and 1981” (master’s thesis, Institute of Islamic Studies, University of the Philippines Diliman, 1985), 6.

<sup>38</sup> The first thing that Chinese President Xi Jinping mentioned to President Duterte during their first meeting in China was the grave of Sulu Sultan Paduka Batarah in Dezhou City in China’s Shandong Province.

attending their history classes learned all the negative stereotyping against the Moros. The teachers' bias and prejudices were obviously the result of the colonial historical blunder committed against the Moros. Here is a classroom incident in the early 1970s documented by a journalist to show how non-Muslim Filipino pupils were introduced to the Muslims in their classrooms:

Once upon a time, there lived in the southern island of this country a fierce and violent people. They used to carry swords of all sizes and shapes. With this weapons, they used to kill people, especially Christians, whenever, they ran amuck—which happened quite often. Named Moros by the Spaniards, it is said that they astride a horse, a Moro looked like a monkey...<sup>39</sup>

A graduate study done by Fredelino Cafe (1985) reveals that stereotyping has usually portrayed the Muslims in a bad light. The predominance of unfavorable themes is shown through analyzing portrayals about Mindanao in a national newspaper. The stereotyping of Muslims was seen through persistent, consistent, and repetitive patterns of usage of labels such as “rebel,” “terrorist,” “killer,” and “outlaw.” In his study, Cafe revealed that these four negative categories topped all other unfavorable categorizations that appeared in the national newspaper in the years 1971, 1976, and 1981.<sup>40</sup>

In a similar study on media portrayals of Muslims by Samira Gutoc (1995), a news article used “Muslim” as a label for a gunman and a kidnapper. Gutoc observes that other articles used “Muslim” to label separatists, rebels, or guerillas. Only two articles used “Moro” (instead of “Muslim”) to refer to a rebel.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> S. B. Castillo, “Fire in Cotabato,” *Philippine Free Press*, December 11, 1971, 19.

<sup>40</sup> Cafe, “A Content Analysis on the Image Portrayal of the Mindanao Muslims by Bulletin Today Newspapers.”

<sup>41</sup> Samira Gutoc, “Are Muslims Maligned in the Press?: A Content Analysis of the *Philippine Daily Inquirer* and *People's Journal* and Their News Coverage of Muslims” (undergraduate thesis, College of Mass Communication, University of the Philippines Diliman, 1995).

The difference in religion became a basic alienating factor between Christianized Indios and Muslim Moros. Whatever ties of race and custom had previously existed were broken, and worse, were replaced by suspicion and hatred or antipathy. Mastura (1984) described the evolution of this phrase:

The Spaniards regarded them as pirates and as enemies of the faithful. Thus, 'hay Moros en la playa' (there are Moros on the seashore) is indicative of warning to keep watch and keep distance from them. When the Americans came, they thought of them (Moros) as hostile fanatics. Following their experience from the (American Indian Campaign), hence the only good Moro is a dead Moro came about.<sup>42</sup>

The second attempt to rediscover pre-Hispanic heritage in the 1960s was further strengthened by President Ferdinand Marcos' promotion of a "New Society." In his attempt to construct a narrative of Philippine history to address what he perceived as a national identity crisis, a 19-volume tome promoting his vision of history was published. In *Tadhana* (Destiny), he wrote:

My view of our history as a people follows a conceptual framework that considers our earliest ancestors as having participated in man's universal evolution before commencing the particularization process that would, over the centuries, produce a racial identity. From this point follows the development of the Filipino people into a unique and distinct nation...the story of a people is not merely a heritage but a destiny.<sup>43</sup>

It was also during this period when PMH was considered part of the nation's history in reconstructing Philippine society. To

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<sup>42</sup> Datu Michael O. Mastura, *Muslim Filipino Experience: A Collection of Essays* (Manila: Ministry of Muslim Affairs, 1984), 87.

<sup>43</sup> Quoted in Marc Maca and Moris Paul, "Education, National Identity and State Formation in the Modern Philippines," in *Constructing Modern Asian Citizenship*, eds. Edward Vickers and Krishna Kumar (London: Routledge, 2015), 6.

accommodate Muslims' grievances and aspirations which culminated in an armed struggle in the 1970s, President Marcos, in one of his official speeches, declared that Islamic heritage was part of the cultural heritage of the entire country. Unlike the Commonwealth government, the Marcos government made sure that textbooks and instructional materials in public schools did not contain anything derogatory about the Moro's religious beliefs or cultural characteristics.<sup>44</sup> In 1982, President Marcos issued Letter of Instruction No. 1221 directing his cabinet and ministry of education to "enhance the nation's Islamic heritage."<sup>45</sup>

President Marcos' vision of a New Society, however, did not materialize as he was ousted through the People Power Revolution in 1986. *Tadhana* was seldom used in schools and had less impact on popular historical consciousness. But the reawakening to rediscover the Philippines' historical past and indigenous ideologies remains an important task which Filipino scholars pursue until the present. Various paradigms such as *Sikolohiyang Pilipino* by Dr. Virgilio Enriquez and *Pantayong Pananaw* by Dr. Zeus Salazar, among others, emerged. At the turn of the 21st century, scholars began transcending religious boundaries and continued to widen previous works of scholars containing liberal perspectives on the Moros such as William Henry Scott and F. Landa Jocano.

The policies and programs of accommodating Muslim concerns and aspirations, including the recognition of their rich history, were continued by the succeeding administrations. The 1987 Constitution, which was adopted during President Corazon Aquino's administration, for example, "recognizes, respects, and protects the rights of indigenous cultural communities to preserve and develop their cultures, traditions, and institutions."<sup>46</sup> The importance of Islamic historical landmarks

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<sup>44</sup> Cesar Adib Majul, *The Contemporary Muslim Movement in the Philippines* (Berkeley: Mizan Press, 1985), 77-84.

<sup>45</sup> *Official Gazette*, "Letter of Instruction No. 1221, s. 1982," March 31, 1982, <https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/1982/03/31/letter-of-instruction-no-1221-s-1982/>.

<sup>46</sup> Article XIV, Section 17.

were also highlighted, such as the oldest mosque in Suminul, Tawi-Tawi, which was declared a National Historical Shrine in 2006. In 2008, the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) approved the offering of a Bachelor of Arts in Islamic Studies program in higher education institutions.

The most significant government policy for history education is Republic Act No. 10908, also known as the “Integrated History Act of 2016.”<sup>47</sup> This act seeks “to integrate the history, culture and identity studies of Filipino-Muslims and indigenous people[s] in the grand narrative of Philippine history,” particularly in basic and higher education.<sup>48</sup> Interestingly, this parallels President Duterte’s call to correct historical injustices to solve the problems of Muslims in Mindanao.

On their part, the Moros to this day maintain the pride of being the unconquered people who managed to preserve their cultural heritage and historical narratives. Muslim missionaries who came to the south did not destroy the existing culture and religious traditions of the Moros but developed it further. American author Vic Hurley spoke of the Muslim missionaries in his book *Swish of the Kris* (1936):

The early Mohammedan missionaries were a sturdy lot. They came into raw countries without ships or armies or governments to back them. They must be numbered among the most sincere disciples that any religious faith has produced. They sought nothing but the privilege of converting the unbeliever. Gold they wanted not. Trade routes were not the object of their search. They came alone into the heart of one of the most savage countries on the globe, buoyed high by a faith which protected them well. They had all the fanaticism of the Spanish priests without the accompanying greed for gold. They were the most purely altruistic preachers

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<sup>47</sup> *Official Gazette*, “Republic Act No. 10908,” July 21, 2016, <https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/2016/07/21/republic-act-no-10908/>.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

in the world. Their utter sincerity inspired the confidence of their savage hosts. The priests of Mohammedan were among the most potent spreaders of civilization in the history of man. Their religion did not tear down and strip and destroy as did that of the early Christians. The priests of Mohammedan brought culture and writing and the arts, they added these things to the culture they found in their new lands. They were not destroyers, but were satisfied to improve the old culture.<sup>49</sup>

Islam's first spread took place in the Sulu archipelago in the last quarter of the 12th century. Muslim missionaries, popularly known as the Makhdumin (Sufi masters), worked on the existing religious and spiritual traditions which the Tausug learned from the Indians and Chinese. Tausug exposure to the teachings of their previous masters, on the other hand, prepared them to accept a high level of Islamic spirituality the Makhdumin taught them. At the end of the Islamization process, the Sulu Sultanate was established in 1405 that further consolidated the natives. During this period, the Tausug's growing civilization reached its peak. Harmoniously integrating Indian, Chinese, and Islamic legacies, they began to produce their own system of thought reflective of their values and dispositions. A local group of thinkers known as the Mukali' emerged. They remain as keepers of Sulu spiritual tradition to this day.<sup>50</sup>

At the height of the Sulu Sultanate, Sulu's power as a sovereign state was felt all over the Luzon and Visayas islands, Celebes Sea, Palawan, North Borneo, and the China Sea, and their trade extended from China and Japan, at one extreme, and to Malacca, Sumatra, and Java at the other. Some areas in the Philippines like Mindoro and Calamianes remained to be tributary states of the Sulu Sultanate until the coming of the Spaniards. Dr. Najeeb Saleeby, a Christian Lebanese physician, writing about the history of Sulu in 1908, described Sulu in this period, "[W]hile Manila and Cebu were still small and insignificant

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<sup>49</sup> Vic Hurley, *Swish of the Kris: The Story of the Moros* (New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., Inc., 1936), 41.

<sup>50</sup> Darwin Absari, "Pag-tuhan: Tausug Gnosis as a Living Tradition" (master's thesis, Institute of Islamic Studies, University of the Philippines Diliman, 2013).

settlements, Jolo (Sulu Proper) had reached the proportion of a city and was without exception, the richest and foremost settlement in the Philippine Islands. Jolo with the exception of Brunei had no rival in northeast Malaysia prior to the 17th century.”<sup>51</sup>

The same process of cultural and philosophical development by Muslim missionaries and traders took place in the Maguindanao and Lanao areas. A Sultanate in Maguindanao was also established in 1515 followed by a small confederation of sultanates in the Lanao areas. Similarly, the aging Hindu kingdom in Manila was transformed into a Muslim principality after a Brunei Sultan took over Manila in the early 16th century. However, although this Muslim principality in Manila ruled by Raja Sulayman and Raja Matanda resisted Spanish domination, it was lost as it was defeated by the Spaniards. With the sultanates as strong political institutions, the Moros in Sulu and Mindanao withstood Spanish conquest. But centuries of wars had weakened their power and reduced their sphere of influence and their economy. Many of their historical records were also lost during the wars. For instance, in Sulu, many documents written in Arabic script were burned by the Spaniards during the four-month Jolo siege by Don Sebastian.<sup>52</sup>

The Americans’ attempt to deculturalize the Moros and make them subordinate to Christian Filipinos through education also did not succeed. The same failure was met by post-independence Filipino educators as they attempted to continue American educational policies in the Moro areas.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Dr. Najeeb M. Saleeby was a Lebanese Christian physician who volunteered in the American expeditionary forces during American occupation in the Philippines. He was later appointed as chief of Bureau of Non-Christian Tribe with the further designation of chief-in-charge of Moro Affairs. He was also appointed as the first superintendent of Public Instruction in the Moro Province. See Najeeb M. Saleeby, *The History of Sulu* (Manila: Filipiniana Book Guild, Inc., 1963), 20.

<sup>52</sup> Robert Nicholl, *Raja Bongsu of Sulu: A Brunei Hero in His Times* (Kuala Lumpur: Council of the Malaysian Branch of Royal Asiatic Society, 1991), 52–53.

<sup>53</sup> For more on American educational policies in the Philippines, see Jeffrey Ayala Milligan, *Islamic Identity, Postcoloniality, and Educational Policy: Schooling and Ethno-Religious Conflict in the Philippines* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).



The pioneer liberal works of Dr. Najeeb Saleeby, *Studies in Moro History, Law and Religion* (1905) and the *History of Sulu* (1908), gave birth to the writings of PMH which harness indigenous sources and reinterpret colonial writings and records. Dr. Cesar Adib Majul's *Muslims in the Philippines* (1973) and the Jawi studies of Dr. Samuel K. Tan are important products of this liberal historical production, according to former UP Institute of Islamic Studies dean Professor Julkipli Wadi.<sup>54</sup> He further explained that the continuing dominance of colonial constructions of history and traditional orientations of historiography which were state-centric with a strong hegemonic integrationist worldview and method led to the emergence of various trends in the PMH. These are the Filipino paradigms of Moro history: integrationist Filipinist trend, the Moro nationalist or the reconstructionist identity perspectives, the tri-people or regionalist MindanaOne perspective, the Islamic revivalist perspective represented by Hashim Salamat (founder of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF)), Ustadz Abdurazak Janjalani's (founder of the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG)) idealist global *ummah* (Islamic community) perspective, cultural pluralism or the broadening of political and cultural space and form, and the democratization perspectives.

But how PMH is taught in Mindanao remains unorganized and with no systematic approach. Teachers are left to their own approaches and strategies in teaching the subject, according to Professor Rufa

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<sup>54</sup> Dr. Cesar Adib Majul was the first Dean of the UP Institute of Islamic Studies after serving as Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences from 1969 to 1971. His previous work on Apolinario Mabini won first prize in the Biography Contest on the Life of Apolinario Mabini in 1964. He also received the Republic Heritage Award for Most Outstanding Contribution to Historical Writing during the period from May 1, 1960 to April 30, 1961. His other major works include *The Political and Constitutional Ideas of the Philippine Revolution* and *Muslims in the Philippines*, which was published in 1973.

Dr. Samuel K. Tan is a retired Professor of History at the University of the Philippines. He is a native of Siasi, Sulu and has a Muslim-Chinese Christian ancestry. He obtained his Master of Arts in History from the University of the Philippines in 1967 and his Ph.D. in Social Science from the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs at Syracuse University in New York in 1973. He has served as Chairman-Executive Director of the National Historical Institute and Commissioner of the National Commission for Culture and the Arts. He has written 17 books and about 17 essays on Filipino Muslim history and culture.

Cagoco-Guiam, a retired professor and current Director of the Center for Peace Studies at the Mindanao State University (MSU) in General Santos City. Professor Tirmizy Abdullah of the MSU in Marawi City also shared that different ways of teaching PMH sometimes cause confusion among students. Because of limited resources, Muslim teachers in some colleges and universities are still using outdated books as references. They lack updated reference materials and other resources given the insufficient support from the school or universities where they are teaching. As noticed by Dr. Bernardita Churchill, president of the Philippine National Historical Society (PNHS), historians are also diminishing due to modern trends in technology. At present, the growing influence of strict orthodox Islamic orientation of the Middle East-educated *ulama* (religious scholars) is shaking the established system of thoughts which the Muslims, for many centuries, have managed to protect from attempts of foreign powers to distort and even replace.

From the 1980s onwards, Moro scholars who have gone to study Islam in the Middle East came home with strict orthodox Islamic orientation. Many of them joined the Bangsamoro fronts. With forces behind them, they were able to freely teach the ideology in the mosques and *madrassah* (Islamic schools) they built with the financial aid from the Middle East. While it re-strengthens Islamic awareness among the Muslims in the country, rigid orthodox orientation that came with Arabization is slowly eroding Moros' traditional values and replacing the intellectual and tolerant Islam brought by the Sufi missionaries many centuries ago. Some *ulama* in Marawi, for instance, did not like the study of Japanese scholar Dr. Kawashima Midori (2011) on 18th- and 19th-century Islamic manuscripts of Southern Philippines because it reveals Sufi teachings.<sup>55</sup> The new Islamic ideology vigorously denies all esotericism or mysticism which the Sufi masters had promoted when they brought Islam to Southeast Asia including the Philippines. The anti-Sufi presentation of Islam challenges, and to some extent, disregards the centuries-old historical narratives of Sufi preachers who brought Islam to the Philippines and elevated Moro society. The strict implementation of Islamic laws by the Moro *ulama* who are followers

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<sup>55</sup> This incident was shared by Professor Abdullah during the roundtable discussion.

of the new Islamic reform ideology, which prohibits Muslims from celebrating Christmas with their Christian neighbors or friends, for example, is hindering the government's efforts in promoting national unity. The Hispanization and Americanization experienced by Christianized Filipinos during the colonial periods is now being felt by the Moros.

It was only after the attack of Marawi City by the Maute and Hapilon-led Abu Sayyaf Group which revived the vision of an independent Islamic state of Ustadz Hashim Salamat and Ustadz Abdurazak Janjalani that the government realized how serious the challenge of revivalist ideology that has transformed into violent extremism is. And while the Maute-Abu Sayyaf alliance group was defeated, new Islamic ideology remains present and continues to influence Moros' intellectuality.

With the rise of violent extremism, Muslim-Christian relations in the country today are more volatile especially because of the advent of modern technology. Discrimination and stereotyping have only assumed new avenues, such as the use of the internet and social media. The media also plays an important role in shaping public opinions. Hence, there is a need to advocate for correct and responsible reportage.

Since media shapes public opinion, it is very alarming to hear a grade six pupil associating Islam with ISIS and Al-Qaeda. Another pupil thought Muslims in the Philippines are not Filipinos. When they were asked about the sources of their information regarding Islam and Muslims, majority indicated that information came from television news and from what they heard from their elders. There is a need to bridge the information gap and to correct the negative association of Islam to some terroristic activities.

### **The Way Forward: Teaching History of the Muslims as a Vehicle to Promote Unity and Heal the Nation**

Ours is an age of advanced and growing globalization, wherein it is more common than ever before for people of different backgrounds

to work and live together. Therefore, it is impossible to ignore the ramifications of stereotyping on the grassroots as it will continuously promote the “strained relations” between Muslims and Christians in the country.

If indeed we are serious in strengthening our sense of nationhood, then we should be able to appreciate our cultural differences with respect and tolerance. Acceptance of the “otherness” of the other is the key value that we need to promote in our endeavors in teaching the history of Muslims in the Philippines as a vehicle to promote unity and healing of the nation.

Understanding the dynamics of Muslim-Christian relations in the country need to be viewed from an all-encompassing lens, one which takes into account historical, political, and religious contexts. For instance, the Muslims’ feeling of alienation had some historical undertone as the government’s resettlement program for non-Muslims in Mindanao eventually marginalized the Muslims and other ethnic groups.

The political context provides another perspective where the struggle for self-determination does not only mean secession from the government but reclaiming the aspiration to be independent, inspired by the glorious past of the Moro ancestors. This is a chance for the Bangsamoro to rise from being marginalized and to carve their own framework for development, the kind of development that is responsive to the needs of the people in Mindanao.

As to the religious context, there is hope that we can improve the strained relations between Muslims and Christians. It is because both can use their respective religious teachings in underscoring common terms acceptable to them. These common terms refer to the common universal values enshrined in their respective religious teachings such as the values of love, respect, tolerance, and compassion. There is a need to highlight these positive values to discredit those extremists using religious teachings to justify violence.

To counter the rise of violent extremism, several initiatives and programs are taking place. These include the development of PMH.

PMH is not just a potential counter-narrative to violent extremist ideology. It also contributes to the rediscovering of the Philippines' pre-Hispanic heritage. Thus, the newly created Bangsamoro Autonomous Region for Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) is initiating to produce a unified syllabus for the teaching of PMH in BARMM areas. Ms. Kriselle Aquino from the Office of the Presidential Adviser on Peace Process (OPAPP) shared that it is also undertaking a cultural mapping and planning to conduct local history conference to gather existing data and invite different historians in the BARMM to consolidate different narratives that will serve as a basis in creating a curriculum together with CHED and DepEd. Another discussion is to include Muslim heroes in textbooks. Integration of local histories has also been discussed by CHED and DepEd. However, operationalization was not yet discussed because they still have to engage with the BARMM. Dr. Bernardita Churchill also narrated that the CHED had approved and revised the curriculum for History programs at the undergraduate and graduate levels. She explained that the CHED inserted courses on Islamic history, local history, indigenous history, and peoples history, which were not offered during her time studying.

But the most significant program that is yet to be implemented is RA 10908 or “The Integrated History Act,” which was mentioned earlier. This Republic Act, if implemented will have a nationwide positive impact in promoting national unity, countering the growing influence of extremist ideology, and building a strong nation.

Finally, the academe has an important role in the promotion of the concept of pluralism by providing students courses that relate to intercultural subjects highlighting the positive values shared by various cultures in the country. The beauty of pluralism must be able to foster a sense of oneness despite the real diversities. ■

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- Dr. Bernardita R. Churchill (President, Philippine National Historical Society (PNHS))
- Prof. Julkipli M. Wadi (Professor and Former Dean, UP Institute of Islamic Studies)
- Atty. Mehol K. Sadain (Senior Lecturer and Former Dean, UP Institute of Islamic Studies)
- Prof. Macrina A. Morados (Assistant Professor and Dean, UP Institute of Islamic Studies and Convenor, UP CIDS Islamic Studies Program)
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- Dr. Vicente Villan (Professor, Department of History, College of Social Sciences and Philosophy, UP Diliman and President, Asosasyon ng mga Dalubhasa, may Hilig at Interes sa Kasaysayan ng Pilipinas (ADHIKA))
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- Mr. Laman Piang (Director, Bureau of Muslim Cultural Affairs, National Commission on Muslim Filipinos (NCMF))
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- Abhoud Syed Lingga (Director, Institute of Bangsamoro Studies)
- Kriselle Aquino (Peace Program Officer, Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAPP))

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As Muslim Filipino communities thrive in various parts of the country, there is a need to both celebrate their diverse cultures and traditions and confront the multifarious issues affecting them. The **Islamic Studies Program (ISP)** seeks to take the lead towards an active role for the academe in advancing the role of Islam in nation-building. It aims to encourage the wider Filipino community to know Islam deeper, and, consequently, deal with existing stereotypes against Muslims.

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