

The Lone Muslim Filipino in the 100 Great Muslim Leaders of 20th Century

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Abstract: This paper provides significant information about the life of Ahmad Domocao Alonto. He is the lone Moro awarded in the King Faisal International Prize for Service to Islam in 1988. The researcher pointed out his genealogical and family background, his marriages, and his educational attainments. The researcher also emphasized his major contributions, and legacies as a Muslim political leader in the Philippines. These includes his contribution to the Islamic development in the Philippines, and his integration advocacy such as the creation of the Commission on National Integration (CNI), Mindanao State University (MSU), Mindanao Development Authority (MDA), and his efforts to amend the Civil Service of 1959. This study concluded that Ahmad Domocao Alonto played an important role in developing the conditions of the Muslims in the Philippines. He has always been regarded as a legend of his time by the Bangsamoro people in the Southern Philippines. The data used in this paper was gained from books, journals, newspapers, and first-hand sources such as the speeches of Ahmad Domocao Alonto, Sr. And to balance the gathered data, the researcher spoke with the most important persons in his life like his contemporaries, friends, and family.

Keywords: Bangsamoro, Mranaw, Right to Self-determination, Sultan

I. INTRODUCTION

The modern world is apparent on how the youths of this generation is adapting to the evolution of human society and globalization. Culture, customs, traditions, and even history are swiftly forgotten. The researcher believed that remembering the history and the legacies of certain individuals who have meaningfully contributed to the society are noble inspirations to the coming generations. With this, the most remarkable progress that happened to the *Bangsamoro* people in the Southern Philippines was through the leadership of one of the great Muslim leaders in the 20th century (Alam, 2005). Certainly, like the rest of the admired Muslim leaders in the world, his greatness lies in his sincere, selfless dedication to the cause of Islam and Bangsamoro people, in his determined efforts to resolve the problems faced by the Bangsamoro people and Lumads in Mindanao, in his contribution to the advancement of Islamic learning, and his lasting impact on Muslim societies. Undeniably, Senator Domie played a significant role in shaping the development of the political and intellectual history of Mindanao.

Nonetheless, being awarded in the King Faisal International Prize for Service to Islam in 1988, Ahmad Domocao Alonto, Sr. has a significant contribution in the Bangsamoro socio-religious and political affairs. Thus, the

researcher strived to document the life Ahmad Domocao Alonto, Sr. since it has not been completely written in the field of discourse in the political and intellectual history in the Southern Philippines.

Ahmad Domocao Alonto is often described as a political giant, a great teacher, a peacemaker, and a champion of the rights of the Muslims in the Philippines. He was an important political figure in Lanao. The Mranaw people regarded him for his insight, leadership skill, accomplishments, and the legacies that he bequeathed to the Bangsamoro people. He was a national figure who was prominently known as a Muslim leader who rose to prominence from 1942 onwards. For the Bangsamoro people, he is remembered with high esteem and will stay in the hearts of many who witnessed his life and leadership (Javier-Alonto, 2009).

II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The most commendable work on Ahmad Domocao Alonto was written by Tocod D. Macaraya entitled Nomination Letter for the 1988 King Faisal International Award for Service of Islam and other Related Papers. This paper was a comprehensive portrayal of Ahmad Domocao Alonto as a nominee for the Service of Islam in the Philippines. Macaraya outlined the paper in such a way that Islam as an ideology and Ahmad Domocao as a leader and intellectual merged through service and commitment. Against this framework was the Mindanao crisis that drew international attention, especially from the Arab Muslim world. However, Macaraya argued that the crisis was not religious; it was political, a product of centuries-old Spanish colonization, which lasted for 300 years. When the Americans came as the “benevolent missionaries to save the Philippines,” a neo-colonialism lasted for 50 years. Then World War II came into picture, and Philippines finally gained its political independence in 1946 (Macaraya, 1988).

In addition, Rowena Awliya Javier-Alonto, the wife of Bobby Alonto, one of Ahmad Domocao Alonto's grandsons wrote about Alonto's leadership in a paper entitled Ahmad Domocao Alonto, Case Study on Muslim Leadership. Rowena included in the biography the following: Alonto's family background, and how the people of Moro land considered him a legendary character of his time, as man of vision, a great teacher, a social reformer, a statesman, a pragmatic politician and a champion of the Muslims' rights in the Philippines. Rowena concluded that Ahmad Domocao

Alonto should be considered as the early father of contemporary Moro struggle for the rights of self-determination. Determined to emphasize the contributions of the old man, Rowena explained that Alonto's greatness lies in his sincerity, his self-dedication for the cause of Islam and Muslims in the Philippines, and his commitment to resolve the challenges and problems facing the Muslim community (Javier-Alonto, 2009).

Furthermore, another writing the researcher reviewed one of the earliest undergraduate theses entitled Ahmad Domocao Alonto: An Annotated Bio-Bibliography written by Pantonan M. Said in 1981. In his study, Said endeavored to illustrate Ahmad Domocao's life by describing his philosophy of life, This thesis also touched on Alonto's record as a delegate to the Constitutional Convention of 1971, his works, works composed about him, the impact of his character on diverse audiences and sectors of Philippine society, and his membership and presence in various international organizations and conferences. All these achievements demonstrate Alonto's noble ambition for social, economic and educational development of the citizens Philippines (Said, 1981). Generally, Said's study provides factual information from Alonto's birth in 1914 to his education and professional career, stressing on his writings until 1980. This thesis was based on a compilation of published writings from different national newspapers magazines. From a journalistic point of view, the thesis undoubtedly speaks of Alonto as a public figure in a span of 66 years.

III. METHODOLOGY

This study utilized two sources of research: primary and secondary. The primary research data used in this study was the in depth interviews and accounts written by Ahmad Domocao Alonto, Sr. On the other hand, the secondary research data were obtained from previous studies on the same topic or written documents through library research. The researcher visited several private and government libraries like the Mamitua Saber Research Center (MSRC) in MSU-Marawi, Lanao Public Library, Jamiatu Al-Filibbin Al-Islamia Library, the Browsing Library of the College of Social Sciences and Humanities, and the Mindanao State University Main Library, the National Library of the Philippines and the Lopez Museum and Library in Ortigas City, Manila. The researcher included not only books, articles and journals that can be found in libraries but also data from reliable websites.

IV. THE LIFE OF AHMAD DOMOCAO ALONTO, SR.

4.1. His Genealogical and Family Background

Ahmad Domocao Alonto was born on August 1, 1914 in Ramin, Lanao del Sur. He was the eldest son of the six children of Sultan Alauya Alonto of Ramin and Hajja Aminah Bariga Alangadi of the Royal House of *Mala-a-Bayabao* also in Ramin. Domie, as called by his family and friends is a responsible brother to his siblings named, Abdulghafor Madki Alonto, Princess Tarhata Alonto Lucman,

Yasin Madrigal Alonto, Naima Bai Iki Alonto, and Masiding Alonto (Adiong, 2016).

His mother, Aminah Bariga was a sixth-generation descendant of Al-Marhom Muhammad Dipatuan Kudarat, who was the Sultan of Magindanaw and a well-known hero of the Muslims in the southern Philippines. His father, Sultan Alauya was the son of Alonto and Dayang in Ditsaan Ramin and he was the great grandson of Marohom of *Patola Alam-a-Dimala* who was also the great grandson of the sixth *Simban* sa Ranaw, Datu Akari. Datu Akari was the great grandson of Datu a Batara, the fourth *Simban* of *Mala-a-Bayabao* and the second *Simban* sa Ranaw. Datu Batara was also the fourth generation descendant of Radiamoda of Bumbaran.

His family bequeathed service for the betterment of the people of Lanao. And his advocacies and legacies would remain on the hearts of the Mranaw people. He also made possible the development and progress of the Mranaw society particularly on education and supported the plight of the Muslim in the Philippines.

4.2. His Education

Ahmad Domocao Alonto finished his primary education at Ditsaan-Ramin Primary School in 1924, and he finished his intermediate education at Camp Keithley Elementary Dansalan School in the year 1927. He pursued his secondary education at Lanao High School from 1927 to 1931. Though he was pressured by his father Sultan Alauya to take a law degree instead of engineering, he finished the Preparatory Law Course at the College of Liberal Arts in University of the Philippines, with advanced studies in Philosophy and History in 1934. His student days were highlighted by his fiery leadership and active participation in different youth organizations. He also obtained excellent training in national politics in his capacity as a secretary to his father.

Ahmad Domocao Alonto finished the prescribed course in Law at the College of Law, University of the Philippines in 1938 and later he passed the Philippine Bar Examination and was granted with license to practice law in the same year.

During his time in the University of the Philippines, he met a senior student who was the founder, the president and the editor of the UP collegian paper, Wenceslao Vinzons. This man was inspired by the ideals of Jose Rizal, that he considered himself as not just a Filipino but more of a Malay (Yusoph, 2016). In 1934, Vinzons started to approach Ahmad Domocao to work together with the movement so-called *Perhempunan Orang-Orang Melayu* or "Malay Peoples' Movement". Together with some students coming from Sumatra and Borneo, they organized this movement in the year 1936. Their first mission was to study the Malay history and to learn their language. This time, Ahmad Domocao was introduced to the Malay people as a whole because he studied the history of Southeast Asia much deeper than that of his knowledge on the Philippine history. In fact, in the 1936 interuniversity oratorical contest, with his piece entitled "Malaysia Eredenta" or "Malaysia Redeem," he got the

winning prize. This, made him popular to some Malay students in Malaysia. Consequently, after several years in UP and later being a practicing law maker, Ahmad Domocao Alonto was conferred the degree of Doctor of Laws (*honoris causa*) given by the Mindanao State University in 1973 (Alam, 2005: 345).

4.3. His Marriage

Ahmad Domocao Alonto was married to Hajja Mohminah Malawani, his first wife. Ahmad Domocao and Hajja Mohminah were blessed with eight children namely, Alexander, Soraya, Jurairah, Jamilah, Bayi, Asnawi, Abdul and Amrosi Alonto. He was also blessed with five children with five different wives and another nine children with his last wife. In this case, he was not married to all at one time; he was separated to some and married another one. The respondents requested for confidentiality regarding information about all the wives and children of Ahmad Domocao Alonto.

It is also worthy to note that at that time, polygamy was common among Mranaws. The women of the time could not do very much to protest against it, and so many of the husbands would take another wife. It was in fact, encouraged among men of high status and wealth. Nowadays, because of gender sensitivity, women empowerment, and a host of other factors, the custom had somehow declined.

V. HIS LEGACIES

5.1. His Integration Advocacy towards the Bangsamoro People in the Philippines

In this integration advocacy of Ahmad Domocao Alonto, it is deemed important to know that his view on integration policy differed from the concept of integration policy of the Philippine government, because the concept of the Philippine government on its integration policy was to combine and integrate the Muslims to the Christian majority. It is clear that the integration policy of the government was deceptive, because the Philippine government's motive was to establish and provide industrial, agricultural, and educational assistance to Muslim farmers in Mindanao so that they could legally manipulate Muslim's ancestral lands without any resistance. Another intention of the integration policy was to eradicate Islamic religion through the implementation of Western education. However, instead of following the integration policy of the government, Ahmad Domocao Alonto implemented his own view of integration policy to protect the religion, culture and tradition of the Muslims in the Philippines.

One of his approaches regarding to the integration is that, people living in society should understand one another and live side by side away from all feelings of cultural superiority. Because for Ahmad Domocao, integration can only be achieved through unity in diversity, that is why he raised the level of his involvement by collaborating with the employees of the Philippine Government, local and intellectuals in order to minimize the problem between

Muslims and Christian Filipinos. Thus, through his institutional and integral advocacy, it helped the Muslims in the Philippines to be integrated in the government and it later gave them economic stability. These advocacies had benefited the Muslims, Cultural minorities and even Christian Filipinos in Minsupala.

5.2. His Contributions to the Bangsamoro People

Ahmad Domocao Alonto integrated the Muslims in the Philippines to the policy integration of the Government because he wanted to protect their Islamic beliefs and traditions based on the Glorious Quran and teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) to solve and lessen the on-going chaos and hostile in Mindanao. He worked for cultural, educational, political, and economic integration in the Philippines specifically in Mindanao Islands. According to Ahmad Domocao's integration policy, "it is the unity in the diverse culture in Mindanao and every cultural group should preserve its cultural identity under a unified and diversified national culture (Alonto, Sr., 1975: 14)." His ideas on Muslim integration is a part of national body politics because it provides the Muslim in the Philippines the power and authority to decide and shape their own purpose and destiny in the government that will also help them to develop their own communities.

According to Ahmad Domocao Alonto, Sr.:

"If unity cannot be achieved in a strict unitary system as experience has taught us, then by all means let us revert to the only option left open for us- Unity in Diversity- which seems to be the goal fix for us by divine wisdom when our ancestors, belonging to a common racial strain but speaking different tongues, venture through uncharted seas guided by the same divine providence to these different islands separated by natural barriers yet belonging to the same geographical region. for the sake of the hundreds of thousands, perhaps million, of precious lives of our kith and kin that were sacrificed in the fields of battles to defend their new paradise for us their progeny, let us forge that unity on the anvil necessity, perchance God Almighty, whose providence controls the destiny of man and nations, grants that we can preserve these beautiful isles for the generations yet to come." (Alonto, 1971: 13)

Thus, this is the point why Ahmad Domocao attempted and finally implemented his integration policy among the Muslims and cultural minorities in the Philippines. He believed that the only way to solve the problems in the Philippines is to create different institution having the same goal of integrating the people, both Muslims and Non-Muslims in the Philippines particularly in Mindanao.

Hence, towards the end of this chapter, the researcher emphasized the contributions of Ahmad Domocao to the development of law on the integration of Muslims in the Philippines which led to the creation of the Commission on National Integration (CNI), the Mindanao Development

Authority (MDA), the amendment of Civil Service Act of 1959 and the establishment of the Mindanao State University (MSU), and Jamiatu Al-Filibbin Al-Islamia (JFI).

5.3. *The Commission on National Integration (CNI)*

According to Ahmad Domocao Alonto, the conflicts in Lanao and Sulu were considered as major problems impeding peace and order and must be buried through education. Because of this, he maintained that his role in regards to integration implied that the Government should respect Moro rights in their land and if possible, settlers must be stopped. During the time when Jose P. Laurel, Jr., led The House of Representatives of the Third Congress of the Republic of the Philippines, he felt a greater concern for the plight of the Muslims in the Philippines. So he organized a special committee consisting of congressmen, with Ahmad Domocao as a chairman and Datu Luminog Mangelen of Cotabato and Obra Amilbansa of Sulu as its members to investigate the Moro Problem with emphasis on peace and order conditions in the Mindanao, Sulu, and Palawan. The investigation of the Moro problem headed by Ahmad Domocao Alonto reported that the so-called Moro problem implies an issue on integration of Moros into the Philippine politics and the need to inculcate in their minds the fact that they are Filipinos representing integral part of the Filipino nation, and that the Philippine Government is elected for their welfare (Alonto, 1984: 10).

Ahmad Domocao Alonto said that this Moro problem cannot be solved easily as it requires a gradual process involving a complicated historical conflict of fight, religion, doctrinal, economic, settlers, social, educational and political. To solve this problem, Ahmad Domocao Alonto proposed a new approach instead of military or armed confrontation. His proposal consists of formulation of a consistent government policy towards Moros to tailor their problems and needs in order to achieve rapid socio-economic, political, and educational development. In June 22nd, 1957, the Republic Act no. 1888 was approved and the Commission on National Integration was formally organized in August 29th, 1957 under President Carlos P. Garcia (Alonto, 1975: 17).

This policy of integration has a good impact to the Muslims and other cultural minorities, such as that many Muslims and cultural minorities in the Philippines acquired their education through the scholarship of Commission on National Integration and this include the story related by Ahmad Domocao E. Alonto Jr.;

“In 1974, I attended the ACAP convention with Datu Ligdin Luminton from Bukidnon. After the morning session of that convention, together with some friends, we discussed about the issues happening in Mindanao. While we were chatting, somebody on the other table probably observing at us and later he came to me, and he asked how I was related to Senator Domocao Alonto and I said I am his son, and he immediately hugged me when he heard that I am the son of Senator Domocao. Without knowing the reason, I asked him why he hugged me, he

said; I am a lawyer who acquired my degree because of the CNI scholarship... I thank Senator Domocao.” (Yusoph, 2016)

After ten years of the creation of Commission on National Integration, many Muslims, and cultural minorities became literate because of the scholarship sponsored by this program. It also led for the Muslims and cultural minorities in Minsupala to study in Manila and other universities where they acquired their education. Other Muslim intellectuals and leaders in the Philippines specifically in Mindanao, Sulu, and Palawan received grants and support to pursue their studies in the prestigious universities in the Philippines and even overseas. This is one of the importance of Commission on National Integration, where through the efforts of Ahmad Domocao Alonto, the Muslims and cultural minorities in the Philippines finally became educated and later, able to work in the government, sustained their needs and wants and even developed their communities.

Thus, this Commission produced many professionals and it opened up more opportunities to the Muslims and cultural minorities for a brighter future. This also means bringing cultural minorities of Mindanao in taking part of nation-building.

5.4. *The Creation of Mindanao State University (MSU)*

Ahmad Domocao Alonto was an Islamic *da'wah* activist and he wanted to improve the life of the Muslims in the Philippines through his idea of integrating them into the mainstream of Philippine politics. His solution to the problem facing by the Muslims and other indigenous peoples in the Philippines was to establish an educational institution that would educate them. According to Ahmad Domocao Alonto in an interview with the Philippine Free Press, he said:

“The bill has passed in Congress for the construction of the proposed state university to implement the intensification of the education of the youth from the south. The proposed university will be patterned after the University of the Philippines here. Its charter will provide for five members of the boards of regents to be elected by the alumni and another five to be appointed by the President of the Philippines. He added; the so-called Moro problem has not yet been properly diagnosed due to the inability of the government to integrate the national minorities into body politics. And this integration would be the solution of the problem of national minorities in the Philippines today.” (Yusoph, 2016)

The thrust of its creation was to implement and accelerate the Philippine Government's Western educational policy for the Bangsamoro people and indigenous peoples of Mindanao so that there will be an increase in professional and technical training on literature, philosophy, sciences, and the arts through Western education. Special attention to culture and to conduct several researches in these fields of study specifically those related to Filipino culture was also part of its mission and vision so as to facilitate better implementation

of integration policy through the opinions of the Philippine Government (Alonto, 1971: 21).

In the past decades, it should also be noted that the Mindanao State University has upheld educational standards comparable to the best universities all over the Philippines. Mindanao State University is one of the distinguished educational institutions of the Philippine Government in Minsupala providing Western education to the residents of these areas and this resulted to thousands of Moros and Indigenous peoples obtaining degrees in various academic disciplines. Many later became Muslim intellectuals and leaders in the respective communities. The graduates of this university also were hired as employees and technical staff for government agencies, schools, universities, non-government organizations in Mindanao, some in Visayas and Luzon, particularly in the Metro Manila and abroad.

Thus, through the efforts of Ahmad Domocao Alonto (the brain-child and father of Mindanao State University), MSU had significant impact among Muslims and Indigenous peoples in Mindanao, particularly the Mranaws who cannot afford to study in the private universities. Because of the Mindanao State University, the Mranaw people were able to improve and develop their community. The creation of Mindanao State University is said to be the biggest contribution of Ahmad Domocao Alonto to the entire people of Minsupala, regardless of religion, culture and belief. Mindanao State University caters and accommodate students in every corner of Minsupala and even outside the region coming from all walks of life. Thus, because of Mindanao State University, poor families in Minsupala can gain and finish a degree from a great institution of higher learning.

Moreover, the very significant contribution of Mindanao State University to Minsupala and to the entire archipelago is its unique mandate which is the promotion of integration to the so called Tri-people of Minsupala. Through Mindanao State University, it lessened the conflict among the people of Mindanao and continues to create a harmonious environment and peaceful co-existence in the land of promise. Hence, MSU known as the melting pot of the South. Mindanao State University therefore, is the living legacy of Ahmad Domocao Alonto.

However, the creation of Mindanao State University was not that easy because of the rising problems and negative stereotypes towards the Bangsamoro people because according to some congressmen in the House of representatives during the deliberation of the bill intended to the establishment of MSU, the fund that will be spent to MSU is a waste of government's resources since the Moros were ignorant and they may failed to achieve the objectives of the said university.

Furthermore, in the work of Murasul Jupakkal, he argued that the Kamlon uprising was one of the triggering factor to the establishment of Mindanao State University as a response by the Philippine government to the uprisings in Mindanao, as well as solution to the "Moro Problem" in

general (Jupakkal, 2014). He mentioned that the Mindanao State University was supposed to be erected in Sulu. But unfortunately, it was failed to provide enough parcel of land to cater MSU.

On the other hand, it is also worthy to mention that the role of Ahmad Domocao Alonto in establishing the second state University in the Philippines which is the MSU was amounted to some sort of rigid exertion because this university was not easily approved in Congress. This university is a living testament of his eagerness to instill mutual respect between Muslims, Indigenous peoples and the Christian Filipinos in Minsupala. He fought tirelessly in Congress to establish MSU in his home town of Marawi city. One of his fierce adversaries as far as Mindanao State University is concerned was the Congressman of Davao in 1960. According to Ahmad Domocao Alonto, Jr.:

"My father related to me about how MSU was established in Marawi city. During one of its debates, that Congressman asked my father why he would want MU to be erected in Marawi. He added; you don't know how to use facilities as a university as Mindanao University, it would be a government waste of money if we place it in that area because people there are ignorant. However my father replied; it would be too selfish to Davaoenios, they already have Ateneo de Davao and other colleges. You are right that people of Lanao are ignorant, so thus, they need to have higher institution in order for them to be educated." (Yusoph, 2016)

Thus, during the time of Ahmad Domocao Alonto at the Senate, he authored Republic Act No. 1387 that led to the establishment of the Mindanao University. Later then amended by Congressman Haroun Al-Rashid Lucman as Mindanao State University through the Republic Act No. 2312. In September 1, 1961, the Mindanao State University was then founded in Marawi City to answer the need for an institution of higher learning in Mindanao, Sulu, and Palawan.

5.5. Mindanao Development Authority (MDA)

During the time of Ahmad Domocao Alonto in the senate, he was also the principal author of the Republic Act No. 3034, the law creating the Mindanao Development Authority which was designed for the economic upliftment and development of the Muslims and other cultural communities in Mindanao. Ahmad Domocao Alonto described the Mindanao Development Authority as a corporate body in order to carry out and spread the broader policy of integration and more specifically the socio-economic development of the region of Muslim Mindanao, Palawan and the Sulu Archipelago (Yusoph, 2016). It was authorized to develop important strategies towards increased and balanced growth of Mindanao, Sulu and Palawan regions and to provide quality leadership in the setting up of pioneering manufacturing and agricultural enterprises; organize and program the diverse efforts of the various public and private entities directly involved in the plan and projects affecting power, manufacturing, production, construction, mining,

transportation and communications, conversation and also provides Western education to Muslim and cultural minorities, extension work, health and other activities leading and ahead to the socio-economic growth of the Mindanao Island and extending financial administration and technical support to worthwhile several manufacturing and business ventures in Minsupala. According to Ahmad Domocao, he said in an interview with Manila Times Press:

“The purpose of the bill is the systematization and acceleration of the development of the island of Mindanao. The MDA will pioneer in those fields hitherto untapped by private and governmental agencies. And as soon as the necessary economic climate is created which encouraging to privately owned capital, the MDA will gradually be dissolved and liquidated to give way to private enterprise.” (Macaspac, 1954: 19)

This program gave big opportunities to the Muslims and cultural minorities in Mindanao to improve their quality of life and increase their incomes through the strategic trainings in improving their productivity. Through this program, in addition, many Muslims were employed in different industrial enterprises, factories and governmental projects.

However, because of the country’s economic challenges, Ahmad Domocao mentioned that the Mindanao Development Authority did not enjoy full financial support for a long time from the Philippine government. Yet, this is another solution planned by the government to easily manipulate the use of the Muslims in the Philippines’ ancestral lands in Mindanao, Sulu and Palawan. It is very clear that one of the methods adopted by the Philippine Government in the control of the whole Mindanao Islands was to establish many industrial enterprises such as manufacturing, mining, transportation and communication, resettlement, Western education and others. This can be justified in the fact that Philippine Government established infrastructures in Minsupala in order for the government to legalize their claim of ownership to those lands belonging to the natives of Mindanao.

5.6. Civil Service Act of 1959

Ahmad Domocao Alonto’s policy on integration included a review and amendment of the Civil Service Act of 1959, which he found discriminatory to the Muslims and cultural minorities in the Philippines. Concerned on providing equal opportunities to all Filipino citizens in the Philippines, according to Ahmad Domocao Alonto, he stated that:

“In line with the policy integration, members from Muslims and cultural minorities with educational and other qualifications may be appointed to positions in the Civil service in their respective provinces when determined by the appointing authority with concurrence of the Commissioner of Civil service to be in the interest of the service (Alam, 2005: 362).

This policy shows the tremendous opportunities offered for Muslims in the Philippines with regards to good job with the government and this is the significance of the amendment of the Civil Service Act of 1959. Some Muslims and cultural minorities in the Philippines were appointed in managerial positions in their respective municipalities and provinces through Civil Serviced Act 1959 (Alam, 2005: 362). Because of this law, many ‘Ulama, professionals and graduates from Mindanao State University and Jamiatu Al-Filibbin Al-Islamia were employed as lecturers, employees and staff in several government and private institutions, and even abroad. Hence, this fourth component of Ahmad Domocao’s integration helped Muslim and cultural minorities join government institutions enjoy the same privilege with other Filipinos to any government’s program.

Thus, the creation of the Commission on National Integration, Mindanao State University, Mindanao Development Authority and the amendment of Civil Service Act of 1959 has had very influential impact on Muslims in Mindanao, Sulu and Palawan and in the Philippines as general. This could be seen on the education of Muslims in the Philippines and the professionals in Mindanao Islands. This is considered to be one of Ahmad Domocao’s great achievements during his parliamentary struggle in the Senate of the Philippine Government.

VI. HIS CONTRIBUTION TO THE ISLAMIC DEVELOPMENT AND ARMED STRUGGLE FOR THE RIGHT TO SELF-DETERMINATION OF THE BANGSAMORO PEOPLE IN THE SOUTHERN PHILIPPINES

Ahmad Domocao Alonto considered 1950’s a defining year for himself as a Muslim. This was the year when he was given Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall’s English translation of the Glorious Quran. Although he was a born Muslim, he was at first not knowledgeable about the teachings of his religion. His interest to know more about Islam was awakened only after a few days of reading it, which led him to invite friends who could read and understand the Quran in Arabic so that he could study the Glorious Book with them. A voracious reader, he would thereafter read all Islamic books and literature written in English that came his way. Eventually, he became acquainted with two Indonesian Muslim graduates from Al-Azhar University and a student from Indonesia who helped and guided him in the study of Islam. A visit from a two Pakistani religious scholars the following year encouraged him to make profound study of his religion as a complete way of life and consider on the global position of Islam with respect to the rest of the world. Regarding this significant meeting, Ahmad Domocao said:

“Unexpectedly, a seemingly unimportant visit to the Philippines was made by a Muslim religious personality. It is still a sort of mystery as to why of all nations of the world chose to come to the Philippines, which was then still bearing the ravages of war...But one thing definite was that it jolted most of the Muslims in the Philippines,

especially the younger set then, in the realization of the state of their very weak position. As the situation developed on both Muslims and Christian camps through the years, the significance of this brief but divinely-inspired visit rose in greatness in the hearts of Muslims in the Philippines (Alonto, 1996: 19).”

Henceforth, he was always engaged in group discussions and studies about the Muslims and Islam. In 1950's, Mindanao saw the arrival of more foreign Muslim missionaries as resurgence in the faith gradually began to sweep across the Muslim majority countries from the Middle East to Southeast Asia and from Africa to Central Asia. This was indicated by the appearance of new independent Muslim majority nation-states that emerged from European colonialism. This made the Moros better awareness of their greater identity as Muslims and their belonging to the larger ideological community of Islam, '*Ummah*'.

Furthermore, Ahmad Domocao Alonto's Islamic thought was accepted by the Muslims in the Philippines because it was grounded in the glorious Quran and the teachings of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). It must be recalled that Ahmad Domocao was born during the American occupation. His entire educational background was greatly influenced by Western scholars, and he even read the Quran in English translation. The need to learn Arabic came only in the mid-1950 when he realized that to spread Islam, he must read the Quran in Arabic text (Yusoph, 2016). His Islamic thought was a product of his active involvement in Islamic religion as a tool to solve the Mindanao crisis and also as to educate the Muslims in the Philippines.

Because of this, he found it necessary to recontextualize his Islamic social reform agenda to accommodate the diverse composition of inhabitants in Mindanao Island. As a result, he initiated and established several Islamic institutions in the Philippines such as the establishment of Jamie'o Mindanao Al-Islamie in Marawi city which was the first functional Islamic center in the Philippines. In addition, he initiated the establishment of the Islamic Center and mosque in the Philippine capital city of Manila which is now the Manila Grand Mosque and the Philippine Islamic Cultural Center. These became the model of establishment of other madrasahs and mosques in different parts of the Philippines including those predominantly inhabited by Christian Filipinos.

Moreover, he also initiated the creation of the Rajah Solayman Islamic Call and Education Foundation, Inc. and built the Masjid Solaymaniya at Binangonan Rizal which is his home place in Luzon and a predominantly Christian community. He chose Binangonan to be his home in Luzon for a very historical reason, according to his son:

“My father disclosed to me that Rizal was a certain degree close to my father's heart because of a historical significance. Rizal used to be the last position of Muslim resistance in the north after Raja Solayman was defeated where he withdrew to a nearby town Morong. So basically that was the last line of defense of his forces

against the Spaniards. So that's why he build his house in Rizal and build a mosque there. He named it as the Masjid Sulaymania named after the last sultan of the north, Raja Solayman. The intention was to revive that once upon a time Rizal was part of the Muslim kingdom in the north. Through religion he wanted to revive this historical fact because in the next generations, they will asked why Sulaymania? So it indicates as that Rizal was a home of Muslim resistance (Yusoph, 2016).”

This mosque and center was very strategic because it is also the place where Muslim local and international scholars met for important occasions and affairs. As what was mentioned in the previous chapter, Ahmad Domocao Alonto revived the Muslim Association of the Philippines. He was strongly influenced by education as a tool to change the condition of the people and the society. Because of this, he collaborated with other 'Ulama and Muslim intellectuals around the world to establish the Islamic university in the Philippines which is in Marawi City. The main characteristic of his Islamic thought was the need to share the teachings of the glorious Quran and other writings on Islamic religion. It is also the same with Mindanao State University as his major milestone of propagating his message of Islamic unity, development, and peace to the Minsupala region and all over the Philippines.

Ahmad Domocao Alonto was also instrumental in reshaping the Islamic values and ethics in the Philippines. Like for instance in the condition of Muslims in Manila, his response was to build the mosque in Manila because the Moros in Manila had shown signs of losing their connection with the Islamic religion. Firstly, they lost their fear of one God; secondly, they lost their Islamic brotherhood; and thirdly, they lost their Islamic cultural ethics. Because Muslims are obliged to pray five times a day, building the mosque became the symbol of Islamic rebirth in Metro Manila.

He also made strong linkages between Muslim minorities in the Philippines with the majority Muslims in Islamic countries and around the globe. Most importantly, he was able to share and teach Islamic thought to his fellow Muslims in the prestigious Universities. These includes Al-Azhar university in Cairo, the Islamic University of Medinah, the King Abdel Aziz University at Jeddah, the University of Riyadh Makkah Al-Mukarramah, the University of Kuwait, the University of Omdurman, the University of Indonesia, University of Malaysia, and the University of Qatar. With these connections with other Islamic Universities in the world, he was encouraged to establish an Islamic University in the Philippines and this was no other the Jamiatu Al-Filibbin Al-Islamia (Macaraya, 1988: 05). His exposure to many Muslims and Muslim countries widened his mind and ideology of understanding Islam as a factor to the strengthening of his deep feeling and sentiment towards his Muslim comrades and fellow people.

6.1. *Jamiatu Al-Filibbin Al-Islamia*

The forerunner of the Jamiatu Al-Filibbin Al-Islamia was a *madrasah* (Islamic School) established in 1950 by a group of ‘Ulama who belong to the Kamilol Islam Society, one of the first associations to be organized locally as an outgrowth of the early throbbing of an Islamic revivalist movement (JPI, 1992). Although the *madrasah* offered the equivalent of the elementary level of instruction in traditional Islamic courses, it was not formally structured as a school to qualify for government recognition.

It was on February 23, 1955 that a corporate entity was organized to operate a school complying the requirements for recognition. Thus was founded the *Kamilol* Institute. The first government permit issued to the school was on May 30, 1956 for the opening of its high school. This was followed on April 2, 1958 for the elementary school and for the college courses in liberal arts (JPI, 1992). After a few years of operation, the school was renamed Kamilol Islam College, the precursor of its present name, Jamiatu Philippine Al-Islamia which was adopted in June 1964. Despite the name changes, the Jamiatu Al-Filibbin Al-Islamia claims distinction of being the first Muslim private school in the country to be awarded recognition by government (Yusoph, 2016).

Today, the Jamiatu Philippine Al-Islamia maintains a graduate school, a college of arts and sciences, a department of education, a department of commerce, a department of engineering, and an institute of Islamic studies in addition to its elementary and high school departments. It looks back with a sense of gratification for having graduated several hundreds of young men and women, now few of them are proving to be leaders in the professions, business, politics and government and in community affairs.

According to Ahmad Domocao Alonto, his intention in establishing this university was to educate the residents of Lanao, the Mranaw, and other Muslims from the other parts of Mindanao region. He was forecasting his advocacy because Islamic education is an important component of national integration. This is further demonstrated in Nur Misuari’s argument that Ahmad Domocao’s achievements in establishing the Jamiatu al-Filibbin al-Islamia and the Mindanao State University helped improve the Mranaw’s Islamic knowledge and defend their Islamic religion through Islamic education. With educated Mranaw in the Philippine government, they could be the catalysts to institute change in Mindanao region. The Jamiatu al-Filibbin al-Islamia was also established to help understand the meaning of Islamic religion, and towards Islamic educational upliftment and technology transfer. Thus, Ahmad Domocao Alonto established Jamiatu al-Filibbin al-Islamia in order to enhance Islamic education and to make Muslim people aware of their rights in various spheres of life.

Ahmad Domocao further said that the role of Jamiatu al-Filibbin al-Islamia is to serve as effective control of Christian education among Mranaws as a model for others to follow, prevented education of Christian missionaries and

introduced Western and Islamic mixed curriculum. In this statement of Ahmad Domocao Alonto, it is very clear that this Islamic university was organized in order to control the Christian education’s mixed curricula, and avoid it to be integrated with Islamic education and theology in Mindanao and all over the Philippine Islands. Indeed, he was able to contribute to the Muslims’ struggle towards Islamic educational development and technology transfer, he confirmed that adequate Islamic education and appropriate technology should be provided to the Muslims in the Philippines and if they are educated, they could propose programs to solve the high unemployment rate and economic crisis in the Philippine government.

6.2. *The Ansar Al-Islam*

Another most important contribution of Ahmad Domocao Alonto was the establishment of an Islamic organization which is Ansar Al-Islam. It was a social movement to reawaken the Islamic consciousness of the people in Mindanao. This organization has an active member of more or less 500,000 including its members from Sulu, Maguindanao, Tawi-tawi, Cotabato, and Basilan to counter the threat of the Christianization of the Muslim areas in Mindanao.

The purpose of establishing the Ansar Al-Islam Movement was to strengthen Islamic brotherhood, to defend Islamic religion, to help the Moros, and to inform the Philippine government on the noble ideals of the Moro’s desire to re-establish Islamic institutions in Mindanao Island (Alonto, 1972: 08).

The Ansar Al-Islam Movement was formed to counter the Ilaga’s activities with the military of the Philippine government because a year after the Jabidah Massacre, in 1969, the *Ilaga* attacked Muslim communities in Cotabato, and the violence spread to other provinces. A letter addressed to all Muslim leaders by an Ilaga leader who called himself “Commander X” demanded that all Muslims convert to Christianity or face extermination (Alonto, 1972: 11). They killed Moros, burned their mosques and institutions. The Philippine military with the Ilagas intensified their campaigns, and to justify the atrocities, Ferdinand E. Marcos declared Martial Law on September 21, 1972 in order to liquidate Islamic religion in the Philippines (Macasalong, 2014: 01).

Thus this situation was elaborated when Ahmad Domocao Alonto said:

“Ansar Al-Islam is oriented towards Islam as a way of life to which every Muslim should conform... It is concerned with the crystallization of what Islam is and in pointing out to the Muslims of this country, particularly among its members, the tenets of Islam in all its ramifications. As such an Islamic-oriented Movement, it is wide awake to all crises appearing in the national scene, especially that which profoundly affect our process of nation-building, like the present tragic Mindanao crisis involving the different religious communities. Being

such, the Movement asks guidance from Islam in looking for the solution of such a crisis.” (Alonto, 1972: 09).

Therefore, Ansar Al-Islam Movement was formed to defend the Islamic religion and rights to believe the oneness of God and it is from this historical context. The movement was aimed at re-establishing the ideology of Islamic religion in the Philippines. Ansar al-Islamie Movement is his concrete contribution as a Muslim leader and a Muslim intellectual in the Philippines, because this organization was directed towards the attainment and re-establishment of Islamic religion and Shari’ah in areas inhabited by Muslims in the Philippines.

The role of the Ansar al-Islam however was to forge unity among Muslim in the Philippines and to create a religious awareness of their duties towards their fellow Muslims. It appears that the Ansar al-Islam was never intended to provoke tension between Muslim and Christian Filipinos or to encourage political or economic interest of any individual or a group, including the members of the movement themselves. It was certainly concerned with social Islamic reforms to take place in the Philippines as well as to promote Islamic peace and understanding among the inhabitants of Minsupala and the Philippines as a whole. The Ansar al-Islam was committed to implement Islamic freedom and to co-exist peacefully with other communities. As long as there was no plan to eliminate Islamic religion openly or secretly, the movement was reconciliatory with other religions that existed in Minsupala.

Thus, in today’s generation, the Mranaw and Muslims in the Philippines are grateful for Ahmad Domocao’s contributions to Islamic development in Mindanao and the Philippines as a whole. The establishment of Jamiatu Al-Filibbin Al-Islamia and the creation of Ansar Al-Islam considered as one of the greatest achievements of Ahmad Domocao Alonto because of its long-term impacts.

Indeed, the political advocacy of Ahmad Domocao Alonto contributed to the present struggle of the Muslims in the Philippines particularly the Moro Islamic Liberation Front which had been the reflection of his Islamic and political ideology. The struggle for self-determination and self-governance which is based on the Shari’ah law is one of the visions of Ahmad Domocao Alonto. Though he is no longer alive, his political advocacy and ideology is still alive and still practiced by Moro Islamic Liberation Front.

Ahmad Domocao Alonto died on December 11, 2002 and he was buried at *Kota Pangarungan* village in Marawi City. Even when he was on his deathbed, he always reminding his children and his family “to be good and to do well for the sake of Allah. He added; always keep in mind that in helping people, your intention is only for Allah’s satisfaction.” According to his family, before he passed away, he was asked by Imam Jamil “mutawwa” Yahya (Imam of Masjid Center) what would be his message to the people of Lanao; Ahmad Domocao Alonto replied and even quoted a verse from the Glorious Quran and said:

Verse 102 of *Surah Al-Imran* means: {O believers, fear Allah properly (as you should) and do not die but as Muslims.}

Ahmad Domocao Alonto then added; “*Pakabagera niyo so Iman iyo, ka gyoto e kake-isa-isa o mga Muslim sa ranaw nago sa pilipinas*”

[Strengthen your faith, because it will be an instrument for you to be united] (Free Translation)

Ahmad Domocao Alonto equipped his family to take care of three things. First is the good service to the people, that Mindanao State University must be still a genuine and effective institution in giving quality education to the Muslims and non-Muslims in Mindanao. Secondly, is to protect the religion, which indicates the presence of Jamie’o Mindanao Al-Islamie or Masjid Islamic Center in Marawi City. Lastly, is to spread consciousness of Islam through Jamiatu Al-Filibbin Al-Islamia.

However, because of the Siege of Marawi City in 2017 by the *Maute/Abusayyaf* ISIS-affiliated group, both Jamiatu Al-Filibbin Al-Islamia (JPI) and Jamie’o Mindanao Al-Islamie were destroyed and completely annihilated during the battle. Today, Jamie’o Mindanao Al-Islamie is under reconstruction while JPI continued their school operation in the city.

VII. CONCLUSION

In this study, the researcher attempted to give important information about the life of Ahmad Domocao Alonto. The researcher pointed out the genealogical and family background of Ahmad Domocao Alonto, Sr., his marriages, and educational attainments. The researcher also emphasized the major contributions, legacies and advocacies of Ahmad Domocao Alonto as a political leader. Firstly, his integration advocacy which include the creation of the Commission on National Integration, Mindanao State University, Mindanao Development Authority and his efforts to amend the Civil Service of 1959. And finally, his contribution to the Islamic development in the Philippines such as the creation of the Islamic University of the Philippines which is now Jamiatu Al-Filibbin Al-Islamia and the creation of the Islamic organization which is the Ansar Al-Islam.

Through his contributions on the integration and Islamic consciousness in the Philippines, Ahmad Domocao Alonto is no doubt successful in developing the lives of the Bangsamoro people and the Indigenous people of Mindanao. The creation of NCI has affected the lives of many Mranaws who have finished their respective studies in several prestigious universities in the Philippines and abroad. Another contribution of the Ahmad Domocao Alonto, Sr. to the Bangsamoro people is the creation of the University of Mindanao now the Mindanao State University which is located in his native place, Marawi city. This university does have a huge impact to the lives of Bangsamoro, Indigenous people, Christians, and particularly, the Mranaws. Because of

this university, Mranaws were able to educate themselves which leads to their socio-economic progress. The graduates in the said university has topped to various licensure examination in the Philippines. Moreover, the creation of the Islamic University of the Philippines in Marawi city also has contributed to the education and livelihood of the Mranaws.

Thus, the researcher found out that Ahmad Domocao Alonto, Sr. has always been regarded as a legend of his time by the Bangsamoro people in the Southern Philippines. The Mranaws has viewed him as a social reformer, a statesman, a pragmatic politician, and a champion of the rights of the Bangsamoro people. Certainly, like the rest of the admired one hundred great Muslim leaders of the 20th century, his greatness lies in his sincere commitment to the cause of Islam and Muslims in the Philippines through the creation of NCI, in his educational response to the challenges faced by the Bangsamoros through the Mindanao State University, in his contribution to the advancement of Islamic learning through the Islamic University of the Philippines, and in his lasting impact on Muslim societies through the creation of Ansar Al-Islam which has led to the creation of several Moro Fronts who struggle for their right to self-determination which has now granted by the Philippine government through the leadership of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front in the present Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM). Undeniably, Ahmad Domocao Alonto played a very important role in shaping the development of Bangsamoro history in the Southern Philippines.

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