

The Tri-People Relationship and the Peace Process in Mindanao

B. R. RODIL .


Abstract

This paper is divided into three parts. Part One is on the historical background of the tri-people relationship; Part Two covers the GRP-MNLF peace process; and Part Three focuses on the basic considerations in advocacy for peace and development.

Tri-people refers to the three broad segments of the population of Mindanao and the Sulu archipelago namely, the Lumad ethno-linguistic groups, the Moro communities and the generally Christian or migrant inhabitants.

Given the history of Mindanao wherein the indigenous inhabitants became displaced, discriminated against and reduced to the status of minorities in their own ancestral lands and the migrants became the dominant population, we have now reached a point when it is no longer rational to think of peace and development in the region without seriously considering how the same may be mutually beneficial to all concerned. The tri-people approach is presented here as such a strategy. This is the way to a common vision and a common destiny.

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 B. R. RODIL was designated by President Fidel V. Ramos last August 6, 1993 as a member of the Government Negotiating Panel, officially known as the Government of the Republic of the Philippines Autonomous Groups (GRP-SPAG), that conducted Formal Peace Talks with the Moro National Liberation Front.

Part One Tri-People Relationship

Within the whole country, it is only in Mindanao that we speak of a tri-people relationship. By tri-people we refer to the Muslims (or Moros), the Lumad and the Christians. The grouping is loose and there is plenty of overlaps in between but the designations are popularly used.

The Moros

The name *Moros* is originally given by the Spaniards to those Muslims of northern Africa who occupied Spain for nearly eight centuries, 711-1492 A.D.. Now, it refers to the 13 ethno-linguistic groups of the Maranao, Maguindanao, Tausug, Samal, Sangil, Iranun, Kalagan, Kalibugan, Yakan, Jama Mapun, Palawani, Molbog and Badjao. They are mostly Muslims except for the Kalagan and Palawani who are partly Muslim and partly not; the Badjaos are generally non-Muslims. They constitute, according to the 1970 census, about 20.2 percent of the entire population of Mindanao and the Sulu archipelago and they are the majority population only in the five provinces of Maguindanao, Lanao del Sur, Basilan, Sulu and Tawi-Tawi and in eleven other towns, namely, one in Cotabato, seven in Lanao del Norte, two in Zamboanga del Norte and one in Palawan. (See Attachments A & B for more details)

The Lumads

The Lumads include the 18 ethno-linguistic groups indigenous to Mindanao, namely, in alphabetical order, the Ata, Bagobo, Banawaon, Bla-an, Bukidnon, Dibawahon, Higaunon, Mamanwa, Mandaya, Mangguwangan, Manobo, Mansaka, Subanon, Tagakaolo, T'boli, Tiruray and the Ubo. There may be more because they normally refer to each other by their geographical and not by their ethno-linguistic names. They constitute, according to the 1970 census, about five percent of the entire population of Mindanao and the Sulu archipelago, and are the majority only in eight towns, namely, one in Agusan del Sur, four in Bukidnon, two in Davao del Sur, and one in Zamboanga del Sur. (See Attachments A & B)

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though most of them are Christians, mostly belonging to various Protestant denominations, depending on which arrived at their place first, they seldom refer to themselves in their religious identities. Lumad seems to be the more popular term nowadays. Or simply, their geographical and/or ethno-linguistic identities.

The Christians

Composed mostly of those settler populations of the 20th century and their descendants, the Christians include the Bisayan speaking natives of Mindanao, mostly from northern and eastern Mindanao, who were converted to Christianity during the Spanish period and also the Chavacanos of Zamboanga. Many of them are still known by their geographic place names, like, Davaweño, Tandagnon, Surigaonon, Butuanon, Camiguinon, Cagayanon, Misamisnon, Iliganon, Ozamiznon, Dapitanon, and so on and by some peculiarity in their respective accents.

The Chavacanos were originally the Mardicas or Merdicas, meaning "free people" who were natives of Ternate, Tidore, Siao, Manados, Cauripa, Celebes and Macassar. They were brought to Manila as soldiers by the Spaniards in 1663. Later, some of them were settled in Ternate, Cavite; the others must have been assigned to Zamboanga, possibly in 1718.

Constituting nearly two hundred thousand in 1898, these native Christians are now integrated into the majority population. The entire Christian population constitutes approximately seventy percent of the entire population of Mindanao and the Sulu archipelago. (*See Attachments A & B*)

Emergence of the Tri-People Concept

The tri-people concept did not emerge in our history until around the early 1980s, shortly before Lumad Mindanaw was founded. They were asserting their right to self-determination as a distinct segment of the Mindanao population, and they wanted to govern themselves within their ancestral domains in accordance with their custom laws. Genuine autonomy within the republic was their battle cry.

The Moros, for their part, have been vocal in their demand for recognition of their distinctness as a people. Their political awakening reached its maturation under the leadership of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) which originally advocated independence from the colonial clutches of the Republic of the Philippines through armed struggle. They wanted their own Bangsamoro Republik.

In the face of these Moro and Lumad assertions of their respective rights to

self-determination, the Christian population will have to rethink their position. Although they constitute the majority population, it does not seem appropriate anymore to speak in simple terms of majority rule. Democracy in Mindanao will have to be redefined. There are fundamental rights, interests and sensibilities involved that should be considered.

Stepping Back into History; Clarifying Political Realities

We are presently in the process of commemorating the centennial of the Philippine Revolution which culminated in the establishment of the Republic of the Philippines in 1898. We take great pride in recalling the long process how from the bondage of colonialism we rose to establish our national identity and won our national independence.

But often we overlook, or we are simply not conscious, that many of our Lumad and Moro brothers and sisters in Mindanao cannot identify with our commemorative activities. Let us move back into history for a few moments and examine why this is so.

Political Situation in 1898

On December 10, 1898, at the time of the signing of the Treaty of Paris between Spain and the United States, the Republic of the Philippines was almost six months old, still in its infant stage but a perfectly legitimate state. We declared our independence on June 12, 1898, and it is this date that we now celebrate as our independence day.

The Sultanate of Sulu, a state in its own right, was established in 1450, fought the Spaniards for 333 years and had remained free until 1898.

The Sultanate of Maguindanao, formed in 1619 by the famous Sultan Kudarat from the two powerful datuships of Rajah Buayan and Maguindanao, also fought the same Spanish colonizers and remained independent until 1898.

In short, there were at least three states at that time, all free and independent. If such was the case, what part of the Philippine archipelago belonged to Spain which she had the right to cede to the United States in the Treaty of Paris? Maybe we could say Intramuros. The political leaders of the United States were aware of this situation but chose to ignore it. When they paid the twenty million Mexican dollars to Spain for the Philippine archipelago, they claimed that there were no nations in existence here at that time, only scattered tribes fighting one another,

thus neatly deflecting any possible accusation that the United States was guilty of invading free nation states.

We say that the Treaty of Paris was a spurious transaction in which Spain sold what did not belong to her. The sultanates of Sulu and Maguindanao were never her colonies, and the Filipino people have just won their independence from her.

In any case, the United States won the day by force of arms, and since then the Philippine islands were described in American textbooks as "Our Insular Possessions."

In 1946, independence was given back to the Republic of the Philippines, but not to the Sultanates of Sulu and Maguindanao.

What about the case of the other indigenous peoples? Apparently, they did not have any social structures which would merit the status of states. But in their simplicity, they contributed immensely to the anti-colonial struggle. The peoples of the Cordillera fought off the Spaniards successfully until 1898 and were never colonized. The Aetas of Luzon, the Mangyans of Mindoro, the indigenous peoples of Palawan and the Lumads of Mindanao chose to avoid or evaded contacts with the Spaniards and so remained free.

One Ugly Twist in Our History

But the stain of an ugly twist in our history remains with us until today. Those of our people who were colonized and became the Christians fought and struggled to eventually give birth to the Filipino nation and to the Republic of the Philippines. This is what we are commemorating in the centennial today. Those of our people, the Moros of the two sultanates of Sulu and Maguindanao and the Cordillerans who were never conquered and colonized because they fought tooth and nail for their independence; the Aetas of Luzon, the Mangyans of Mindoro, the indigenous peoples of Palawan and the Lumads of Mindanao who succeeded in avoiding contact with the Spaniards and also remained free, they all must now suffer the status of cultural minorities.

Their own struggles against colonialism have yet to find a place in the Philippine flag and their own accomplishments have yet to be made part of the centennial activities. This is because we have yet to cleanse our consciousness of the stains of colonial mentality. Colonialism contributed to the sowing of these stains but the cleansing process is now in our hands.

American Share in the Process

One of the achievements of the American colonizers which has endured to this day is the labels that they have neatly put on us. First, they categorized the population into two broad groupings of Christians and non-Christians. The Christians were generally those belonging to any one of the eight linguistic groups of the Tagalog, Cebuano, Hiligaynon, Waray, Bikol, Iloko, Kapampangan, and Pangasinan, who predominated the Christian population, also characterized and called *civilized*. They were colonized by the Spaniards. It was this group of people who rebelled against the colonizers and, after more than 300 years, their struggle ripened into the Philippine Revolution. They gave birth to the Filipino nation and to the Republic of the Philippines. In 1898, they were the Filipino people.

The non-Christians, also tagged as *uncivilized*, were those — let me reiterate very quickly for emphasis — who fought back and were successful in maintaining their independence throughout the period of Spanish presence. These were the proud Moros of the two sultanates of Maguindanao and Sulu and the indigenous peoples of the Cordillera, known today as the Bontoc, Ibaloi and Kankanaey, Ifugao, Ikalahan or Kalangoya, Isneg, Kalinga, Kankanais or Applais, and Tinguian. The others were those who kept out of Spanish reach, thereby remaining free, among whom may be counted the Aetas of Luzon, the Mangyans of Mindoro, the indigenous peoples of Palawan and the more or less eighteen Lumad communities of Mindanao, namely, Ata, Bagobo, Banwaon, Bla-an, Bukidnon, Dibabawon, Higaunon, Kalagan, Mamanwa, Mandaya, Mangguwangan, Manobo, Mansaka, Subanon, Tagakaolo, T'boli, Tiruray, Ubo.

Because unconquered and uncolonized, they never had to rebel against the Spaniards. The Moros and the Cordillerans were always at war with these aggressors. They had their record of struggle against the Spaniards, separate and apart from those fought by the Christians, and they are proud of it. Naturally, they had no part in the formation of the Filipino nation and cannot identify with the symbolism of the Filipino flag. Their struggle is also not reflected in the Filipino flag.

Our Own Contribution in the Labeling Process

Within ten years after the Republic of the Philippines regained its independence, Congress passed R.A. 1888 formalizing and making official the labels *National Cultural Minorities* upon those earlier called non-Christians. The la-

bels have since taken deep root in our consciousness. Some minor changes in the labels have been made later to remove the social stigma – *Cultural Communities* in the 1973 Constitution and *Indigenous Cultural Communities* in the 1987 Constitution. But the general public continue to refer to the Lumad groups and individuals as non-Christian, uncivilized, or just minorities.

Displacement in Their Ancestral Homelands

Worse than the labels, it was the American who initiated resettlement programs which created permanent damage on the lives of the indigenous population. It opened the floodgates to a heavy influx of Filipino settlers from the north, starting from 1913 leading to the massive displacement of the local people from their ancestral lands. This inflow of settlers was so heavy that by 1948, the census indicated that where once the indigenous population predominated, they now had become the numerical minorities. By 1970, we are told that the Muslims retained numerical majority only in the five provinces of Maguindanao, Lanao del Sur, Basilan, Sulu and Tawi-Tawi. The Lumads remained the majority in only eight towns all over Mindanao.

The provisions of the public land law and other related laws were stacked against the indigenous communities. Let us have a quick look at them.

First, the Philippine Commission passed a law (Act No. 718) on 4 April 1903, six months after the passage of the land registration act, making void "land grants from Moro sultans or datos or from chiefs of non-Christian tribes when made without governmental authority or consent." Section 82 of Public Land Act No. 926 which was amended by Act No. 2874 by the Senate and House of Representatives on 29 November 1919 in accordance with the provisions of the Jones Law, continues to carry the almost exact wordings of said law, reiterating further the legitimacy of the transfer of sovereign authority from Spain to the United States, and the illegality of indigenous claims. This same provision is still in effect to this day (1993).

Second, the Land Registration Act No. 496 of 6 November 1902 requires the registration of lands occupied by private persons or corporations, and the application for registration of title, says Sec. 21, "shall be in writing, signed and sworn to by the applicant." The very matter of registration was not only totally alien to the indigenous communities, most of them would have been unable to comply, illiterate that they were, even if by some miracle they acquired the desire to register. Also, what would they register? There was no room for registration of communal

lands. As a young Filipino lawyer recently pointed out, "under our present property law, communal ownership is a mere fiction of the mind; it is unregistrable and deserves no legal protection."

Third, the Public Land Act No. 926 of 7 October 1903, passed by the Philippine Commission, allowed individuals to acquire homesteads not exceeding 16 hectares each, and corporations 1,024 hectares each of, "unoccupied, unreserved, unappropriated agricultural public lands" as stated by Sec. 1. Nothing was said about the unique customs of the indigenous communities.

Fourth, Public Land Act No. 926, amended through Act No. 2874 by the Senate and the House of Representatives on 29 November 1919 in accordance with the provisions of the Jones Law, provided that the 16 hectares allowed earlier to individuals was increased to 24, but the non-Christian was allowed an area (Sec. 22) "which shall not exceed ten (10) hectares" with very stringent conditions, that is, "It shall be an essential condition that the applicant for the permit cultivate and improve the land, and if such cultivation has not begun within six months from and after the date on which the permit was granted, the permit shall *ipso facto* be cancelled. The permit shall be for a term of five years. If at the expiration of this term or at any time theretofore, the holder of the permit shall apply for a homestead under the provisions of this chapter, including the portions for which a permit was granted to him, he shall have the priority, otherwise the land shall be again open to disposition at the expiration of the five years."

"For each permit the sum of five pesos shall be paid, which may be done in annual installments."

Fifth, Commonwealth Act No. 41, as amended on 7 November 1936, withdrew the privilege earlier granted to the settlers of owning more than one homestead at 24 hectares each and reverted to only one not exceeding 16 hectares. But the non-Christians who were earlier allowed a maximum of ten hectares were now permitted only four (4) hectares!

The Moros and the Lumads lost their lands to the settlers through the operation of law. Their displacement and dispossession in their own ancestral lands was legal!

Moro Response

The MNLF-led revolution was the maturation of a series of Moro protests against the discriminatory treatment that they experienced within the Republic, the most infamous being the Jabidah massacre wherein an undetermined number of

young Moro recruits undergoing secret military training in Corregidor were massacred for alleged mutiny. This is not the place to recall the details of the story but the groundswell of Moro protests spiced with reports of secret military training became one of two excuses for President Marcos' declaration of martial rule. Martial law for its part provided the valve for the eruption of the Bangsamoro armed struggle for national liberation from the clutches of alleged Philippine colonialism.

Although never advocating armed struggle, Lumad Mindanaw and all its affiliate organizations were clear in their desire to attain genuine autonomy within the Republic. They wanted to govern themselves in accordance with their own traditional laws.

Delayed Government Response

For the first time in our political history, the 1987 Constitution states its recognition of the ancestral domains of the indigenous communities. Being a product of the EDSA Revolution, the 1987 Charter carries a sincere attempt to cleanse our political and social system of the various stigma of the martial law regime and our colonial past. Political autonomy, too, is clearly provided for with the Cordillerans and the Muslims of Mindanao as direct beneficiaries.

Peoples' Response to Martial Law

By its oppressiveness the martial law regime of President Ferdinand Marcos created the occasion for the people of Mindanao to realize their own situation. The Lumads, the Muslims and the Christians were helping each other against martial law. Out of this was born the need to evaluate our view of one another. Out of this emerged the tri-people concept.

The Lumads, the Moros and the Christians must view one another, not in numerical terms but as distinct peoples, with their respective histories, identities and dignity. As inhabitants of Mindanao and the Sulu archipelago, they also have a common destiny. The problem now is how to arrive at a common vision. To what extent this will affect our centennial activities remains to be seen.

Part Two
GRP-MNLF Peace Process

As we all know, the Peace Agreement between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) and the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) was signed on September 2, 1996. The opening line of the document clearly states: "the final agreement on the implementation of the Tripoli Agreement." It represents the product of four years of exploratory and formal peace talks. It reflects an honest to goodness attempt on both the GRP and the MNLF to come to an agreement on the implementation of the Tripoli Agreement signed nearly twenty years ago on 23 December 1976.

Participants in the talks were the Organization of Islamic Conference Ministerial Committee of the Six and the Secretary General of the Organization of Islamic conference. Indonesia as Chair of the Committee of the Six presided over all meetings.

Agenda of the Talks

As agreed upon in Par. 14 of the Statement of Understanding between the GRP and the MNLF, signed in Cipanas, Indonesia, on 16 April 1993, "the agenda for the formal talks will focus on the modalities for the full implementation of the Tripoli Agreement in letter and spirit, to include specifically:

- a. Those portions of the Agreement left for further or later discussion; and
- b. Transitional implementing structure and mechanism."

Terms of Agreement

There are 154 points of consensus in the Agreement. Let me quote pp. 7-8 of the document itself.

I. "Implementing Structure and Mechanism of this Agreement

1. **Phase 1** shall cover a three (3) year period starting after the signing of the peace agreement with the issuance of Executive Order establishing the Special Zone of Peace and Development (SZOPAD), the Southern Philippines

Council for Peace and Development (SPCPD), and the Consultative Assembly.

During this phase, the process of joining in of MNLF elements with the Armed Forces of the Philippines will start. The joining in of MNLF elements with the PNP as part of the regular police recruitment programme will also take place in this phase.

2. **Phase 2** shall involve an amendment to or repeal of the Organic Act (RA6734) of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) through Congressional action, after which the amendatory law shall be submitted to the people of the concerned areas in a plebiscite to determine the establishment of a new autonomous government and the specific area of autonomy thereof.
 - a. While peace and development programs are being implemented in the SZOPAD, a bill to amend or repeal the RA 6734 shall be initiated within Phase 1 (1996-1997). The bill shall include the pertinent provisions of the Final Peace Agreement and the expansion of the present ARMM area of autonomy. After a law shall have been passed by Congress and approved by the President, it shall be submitted to the people for approval in a plebiscite in the affected areas, within two (2) years from the establishment of the SPCPD (1998).
 - b. The new area of autonomy shall then be determined by the provinces and cities that will vote/choose to join the said autonomy (1998). It may be provided by the Congress in a law that clusters of contiguous-Muslim-dominated municipalities voting in favor of autonomy be merged and constituted into a new province(s) which shall become part of the new Autonomous Region."

From what I have read and heard, a bill has been filed in Congress earlier this year and a batch of 250 MNLF trainees for the Armed Forces has just graduated. Before we proceed, let me first discuss an aspect of the talks which is hardly ever talked about, the psychology of the peace process. It will put the talks in a more meaningful perspective.

Psychology of the Process

The Talks, you see, cover highly political matters. It is part of the nationwide effort to heal old wounds and start a new page in history. It is an integral part of a bigger peace process and, many are not aware, it is also an intimate interplay between the psychological process and the legal issues. Allow me to relate to you how it was from the GRP Panel's end, of which I was part.

As early as August 1993, when the GRP Panel was constituted, there was already an informal but unwritten understanding within the Panel that the MNLF people are not enemy; they are our citizens. Anyone of us could go across, as it were, and make friends with anyone of the MNLF without fear of being cited for high treason or for fraternizing with the enemy. We were not expected to report what transpired in our conversations. This had the effect of contributing to a positive atmosphere in the talks. It set the tone of goodwill for all of us. This was very much in line with the mandate given by President Ramos, which says in part,

"The conduct of the formal talks shall be in line with the aim of the national comprehensive peace program to seek a principled and peaceful resolution of armed conflict, with neither blame nor surrender, but with honor and dignity for all."

There was no illusion, however, that things would be easy. The President further said that "the formal talks shall be conducted within the mandates of the Constitution and the laws of the land," but these are not always in harmony with the Tripoli Agreement, or at least, not clearly so.

So much has transpired since the signing of the Tripoli Agreement: a turn over of presidents from Presidents Marcos to Aquino to Ramos; a change of Constitution; two attempts at government implementation of the Tripoli Agreement. The legal frame of reference within which the Tripoli Agreement was to be implemented has changed and the problem which the Agreement sought to resolve is still there.

The present GRP Peace Negotiating Panel has consistently been candid and straight forward in its dealings with the MNLF counterpart. Its posture has been cordial and accommodating, dignified and honorable. If our perception is accurate, this has delivered a positive impression on the MNLF counterpart — in all levels of the talks, from the panel down to the last committee.

At the Sixth Mixed Committee Meeting in General Santos City on July 2-28,

1995, no less than the Chairman of the MNLF, another key commander also of the MNLF, and the OIC Assistant Secretary General affirmed the sincerity of the GRP.

Expanding Participation

Another unique aspect of the negotiation was the creation of the various committees. At the First Round of Formal Talks, several committees were created to distribute and facilitate the work. These Committees were:

- A. Joint Cease fire Committee
- B. Ad Hoc Committee - Setting Up of the Transitional Implementing Structure and Mechanism
- C. Mixed Committee Level:
 1. Support Committee 1 - National Defense and Regional Security Force
 2. Support Committee 2 - Education
 3. Support Committee 3 - Economic and Financial System, Mines and Minerals
 4. Support Committee 4 - Administrative System, Representation in National Government, Legislative Assembly and Executive Council.
 5. Support Committee 5 - Judiciary and Introduction of Shari' ah Law

With these committees holding their respective meetings anywhere in Metro Manila and Mindanao, several fronts in the talks were opened, as it were, and allowed the active participation of more people in the process. Mutual confidence building processes took place in all committees. Anyone who has participated in these, whether as active negotiators or merely as witnesses, can speak of new relationships developing from the level of the suspicious to something more cordial and more respectful. In the discussion of the various issues, there was a deepening appreciation and understanding of each other's position, thus opening the way for more give and take. But where it was not possible to give, at least there was the acceptance that despite honest to goodness efforts, certain problems are presently irresolvable and no ill will is triggered by disappointments.

Participation of the OIC

Another aspect that requires some explanation is the participation of the OIC

which is two-fold. First, there is the consistent presence of either the Secretary General himself or the Assistant Secretary General in all Rounds of Talks at the Panel level and at the Mixed Committee Level. Second, there is the constant presence of an Indonesian presiding officer in all levels of the talks, from the Panel to the last Support Committee meetings.

A little historical backgrounder here is in order. The Quadripartite Ministerial Committee was established by the OIC in the implementation of Resolution No. 44 of the Fourth Islamic Conference of Ministers (ICFM) of Foreign Affairs at Benghazi, Libya, 24-26 March 1973. The Chairman of this Committee was Libya, and members were Saudi Arabia, Somalia and Senegal. Its role was to guarantee the security of the Muslim community in the Philippines as well as to secure the respect of their basic rights. A decision to expand the number to six was reached at the 19th ICFM on July 31-August 4, 1990. Bangladesh and Indonesia were added. This is now known as the Committee of the Six with Indonesia as the Chair.

The participation of the OIC has been a permanent fixture in all the formal GRP-MNLF negotiations since 1975. We all know that at the height of the MNLF-led Bangsamoro armed struggle in 1973, there was also the Arab-Israeli war in the Middle East. The Arabs discovered at the time that there was political power in oil. They succeeded in influencing the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), which controlled more than 80% of the world known petroleum resources, to impose an oil embargo on all countries supportive of Israel. The Philippines was one of them. The country only had, reportedly, three months supply of oil; it was said to be 94% dependent on the Middle East for its oil needs; the military had allegedly run out of ammunitions and could not get any immediate replenishment from the United States. The drain on foreign exchange would have been enormous. The country's survival was clearly at stake. And so, there was the move to negotiate with the Arab leaders to lift the oil embargo. We are told that when the Saudi decision to lift the embargo came, it was with the condition for the Philippine government to negotiate with the MNLF with the participation of the OIC. Perhaps, it was for the better.

For one, it has made us, as a country, realized that we have to decisively harmonize our relationships not only with our Muslim citizens in the country but also with Muslim countries abroad. And this in a manner that is mutually acceptable, based on the acceptance of each other's identity and dignity.

Further, the OIC had, from the very beginning to the present, consistently

taken the position that the Moro rebellion in southern Philippines was a domestic problem and should be resolved within the realm of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of the Philippines.

It was the Quadripartite Commission under the chairmanship of Libya that took part in the making of the Tripoli Agreement. Now, it is the Committee of the Six with Indonesia as Chair that is actively pursuing the final stages of the implementation of the same agreement.

The participation of the OIC and Indonesia have contributed immensely to the creation of a positive climate in the GRP-MNLF Talks. Through the guidance of the Indonesian facilitators, the talks in all levels have been able to maintain a high level of cordiality. As hosts of the talks in Jakarta, they ensure that all the amenities and requirements to keep the talks moving forward were in order. As presiding officers, their neutrality was most admirable.

Part Three

Basic Considerations in Advocacy for Peace and Development

The Tri-people approach is without substitute if we are to succeed in our peace building and development activities in the entirety of Mindanao and the archipelago of Sulu for the interest of all concerned.

Citizens' Participation in Creating a Culture of Peace

Creating a culture of peace in the thirteen provinces, now fourteen with the recent creation of Sarangani province out of South Cotabato, is not a simple case of settling the implementation of the Tripoli Agreement. While it is true that the document clearly speaks of establishing "autonomy for the Muslims in Southern Philippines" in the thirteen provinces, which may also be interpreted as the recognition of the ethnicity of the Muslim population, it is equally true that the same document is silent about the other major segments of the total population in the region. And naturally, the non-Muslims find difficulty identifying with this autonomy. The GRP, for its part, must constantly be conscious of the demographic peculiarity of the area of autonomy. It is just not possible to leave any sector out, especially the Lumad and the Christians whose population in 1990 was decisively greater than those of the Muslims.

In 1970, the total population of the region, Palawan included, based on mother tongue classification, was 8,161,113. Of this, the Muslims were 1,632,932 or

19.91%, the Lumad 437,349 or 5.36%, or a combined total of 25.27 percent. The balance of and the balance of 74.73% was "Christian", more or less.

This was not much different from the figures of 1990 when the total population of the region was already 14,664,249. Of this, the Muslim population had a total 2,564,741 or 17.49%; the Lumad had 733,441 or 5.00%; another category labeled merely as "Others" which refers to unidentified indigenous population was composed of 1,211,301 or 8.26%. The "Christian" population constitute the balance of nearly seventy percent, more or less.

This population reality has a direct bearing on the implementation of the Tripoli Agreement, especially on the decision of the GRP and the MNLF to have a plebiscite.

It is equally important to bear in mind at all times that the various Lumad tribes, all twelve ethno-linguistic groups of them within the 14 provinces, have since the mid-1980s started to articulate their own right to self-determination within their ancestral domain. The Christian population, most of whom are third or fourth generation descendants of immigrants from Luzon and the Visayas but a large number are themselves indigenous, acknowledge themselves as genuine Mindanawons and also distinct from the others, and to this extent may also be deemed to possess a certain level of "ethnicity".

We have thus a situation where diversity of ethnicity is a given, and yet only one, the Muslims, saw the need to assert themselves as Bangsamoro and have succeeded in getting a Tripoli Agreement. On the other hand, the non-Muslims cannot quite naturally identify themselves with it. This is a situation that is almost not possible to balance between the government and the MNLF, even with the participation of the OIC.

Need to Establish Commonalities

The people must take part in identifying what is common among them and working out a *modus vivendi* from there. And this is not something that can be the subject of negotiation between the GRP and the MNLF. And yet this cannot but be part of the broad peace process. We are talking about harmonious relations at the community level.

Perhaps, this is one moment in history when we must grapple with realities in a manner radically different from the way the colonizers did it for us.

If we must unite, we must do so as distinct entities; we must do so as equals accepting and respecting each other's unique identity and dignity — regardless of

population size, and we must do so because unity in diversity is mutually beneficial and best for all concerned. This is an important first step in the creation of a culture of peace. Balanced with one another, ethnicity can be an instrument for sustaining a peace culture - which, in turn, is a vital component for the development, not only of the autonomous region but also of Mindanao and the Philippines.

Peace Credo; the Organic Whole; Implications to Development

At a gathering of peace advocates and educators at the South East Asia Rural Leadership Institute (SEARSOLIN), Xavier University, Cagayan de Oro City, on July 4-6, 1996, called Consultation-Workshop on Peace Education in Mindanao with the theme: *Journey to Peace and Harmony*, jointly hosted by the Mindanao Support and Communication Center for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (MINCARRD) and the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAPP). The participants produced, ratified and adopted a Peace Credo in Filipino; the English translation here is mine. It is very appropriate to recall it here.

Kalinaw Mindanaw!!!
Lumad, Muslim, Kristiyano
Magkaiba, Magkaisa
Isang Diyos
Isang Lupain
Isang Adhikain
Kalinaw Mindanaw!

(English Translation)

*Peace Mindanaw!!!
Lumad, Muslim, Christian
They are different, they can be one
One God
One land
One dream
Peace Mindanaw!!!*

A Maguindanaon introduced the music. To a great extent the consciousness that was created in that forum has been with all peace advocates associated with Kalinaw Mindanaw.

What it advocates is that on the level of the people, the tri-people approach in peace advocacy is creating a stream of unifying ideal among a diverse population whose basic interests may sometimes be conflicting. It is molding a common agenda and a common vision; it is creating unity out of diversity. It is seeing ourselves as integral parts of an organic whole.

Following the idea of an organic whole, the same people will do well to see themselves as one with nature and the physical environment in which they live. Then from there, find the inter links, or the unifying thread among the various forces of nature. With a closer look, one can easily see the interactive roles of the various resources or forces of development in Mindanao in the overall forward movement of the region and the country.

Take industrialization as a case in point. One may say that industrialization is possible only with a continuous flow of electrical energy. Electricity comes largely from the hydroelectric plants along the Agus river hydroelectric plants, seven of them, for a total of 944 megawatts. The six dams along the Pulangi river will produce a total of 1,003 megawatts and service irrigation systems. Other smaller projects will have a combined capacity of 714 megawatts. The 22 sites, excluding the geothermal plants, in Mindanao are expected to produce a total of 3,006 Megawatts.

From the sources of energy to the distribution of electricity, we can feel a very intimate interconnection between the peace process and the economic development. Water, the source of power that turns the giant generators are dependent on the integrity of the watersheds. And keeping watersheds alive require the nurturing care of people, people who share a common desire to keep the water flowing for the common welfare. The most vital watersheds are located in Moroland. Maintaining the watersheds will mean not only preserving the water resources in all lakes and major river systems, it will also mean a sustained supply of water for agriculture, another very strong component of Mindanao economic development. The best illustration of the latter is the potential of the Cotabato river basin. Sustained effort from a diverse population will only be possible if the same is unified by a common dream.

What this all boils down to is that peace in Moroland is as vital a component as a requirement for the restoration and preservation of the watershed areas that will, in turn, assure us of the continuous flow of electricity. And this for its part will fuel the industries. And the cycle can continue ad infinitum.

The cycle we have presented here may not be complete but the concept of the organic whole approach to development seems worth exploring.

Tri-People Approach; Implication to National History

The Filipinos of today are not the same as the Filipinos of 1898.

In those days, the Filipinos, the colonized segment of the population which felt the need to liberate themselves from the clutches of Spanish colonizers did so and in the process produced the Filipino identity, the Filipino nation and the Filipino Republic. They put together a flag which faithfully represented their political realities and consciousness.

But there were other segments of the population which we cannot so identify for lack of basis in historical fact. The Sulu Sultanate fought Spanish colonialism as a state; so did the Maguindanao Sultanate. And the Moros are extremely proud of it. We cannot take this away from them.

The Lumad who avoided contact with the Spaniards and were therefore not colonized could not be identified as Filipinos either because they were not part of that process that brought about the Filipino nation.

The American segment of our colonial experience changed all this. Having conquered and colonized all of us, it was the American colonizers who decided that we share the same territory and should all be Filipinos. This is why only one independence was restored in 1946. The Muslims were not particularly happy about that. Are we content with what we inherited from the American colonizers?

Mindanao is Shared Territory

At this point in our history, all things considered, not a single segment of the population can claim Mindanao as theirs. Mindanao is already shared territory. The three segments of the population are capable of working out a *modus vivendi* that can make Mindanao a home of peace and harmony. We just have to work it out.

What Mindanao has taught us is that we can still be Filipinos, but the basis of our unity cannot be our differing experiences with Spanish colonialism. Neither can it be the present Filipino flag which is the product of a different era.

It must be our mutual acceptance of one another as distinct peoples in one nation, sharing the same territory. It must be our common vision crafted from present realities.

Perhaps, we should explore the feasibility of designing an entirely new flag, to represent an expanded historical experience and an expanded nation. This will make the current centennial commemorations something Mindanawons can identify with and find more meaningful.

Attachment A

**Muslim And Lumad Population
In Mindanao, Sulu And Palawan Based
On Mother Tongue Classification, By Province**

1970 CENSUS

PROVINCE	TOTAL	MUSLIM	%	LUMAD	%	OTHER INDIGE NOUS INHABI TANTS	%
Agusan del Norte	278,053	1,350	0.48	1,998	0.72	3	—
Agusan del Sur	174,882	1,036	0.59	29,531	16.91	30	—
Bukidnon	414,762	3,998	0.96	73,359	17.68	5,533	1.33
Cotabato	1,138,007	438,134	38.56	62,326	5.49	4,703	0.41
South Cotabato	466,110	28,349	6.08	43,908	9.42	109	—
Davao del Norte	442,543	12,657	2.86	15,034	3.40	5,754	1.3
Davao Oriental	247,991	1,818	0.73	11,503	4.64	84,308	34.0
Davao del Sur	785,398	9,027	1.15	92,666	11.80	12,297	1.57
Lanao del Norte	349,942	83,921	23.98	999	0.29	11	—
Lanao del Sur	455,508	404,359	88.77	89	0.02	0	—
Misamis Occidental	326,855	485	0.15	2,828	0.87	0	—
Misamis Oriental	482,756	656	0.14	2,601	0.54	312	0.06
Sulu	425,617	412,591	96.94	1,573	0.36	581	0.14
Surigao del Norte	238,714	430	0.18	386	0.16	1	—
Surigao del Sur	258,680	1,701	0.66	2,204	0.85	698	0.27
Zamboanga del Norte	411,381	22,098	5.37	43,684	10.62	3,050	0.74
Zamboanga del Sur	1,029,479	178,146	17.3	47,103	4.58	154,710	15.03
MINDANAO	7,924,478	1,600,756	20.20	431,792	5.40	272,100	3.43
Palawan	236,635	32,328	13.66	9,353	3.95	91,434	38.64
TOTAL	8,161,113	1,633,084	20.01	441,145	5.41	363,534	4.45

Source: Republic of the Philippines. National Statistics Office, Manila. 1970 Census of Population and Housing. Table III, 15. Classification by Sex, Major Tongue and Municipality, 1970 Census.

Attachment B

**Muslim And Lumad Population
In Mindanao, Sulu And Palawan Based On Mother
Tongue Classification, By Province**

1990 CENSUS

PROVINCE	TOTAL	MUSLIM	%	LUMAD	%	OTHERS	%
<i>Agusan del Norte</i>	464,789	2,729	0.59	2,673	0.58	29,757	6.40
<i>Agusan del Sur</i>	419,920	870	0.21	53,151	12.70	13,384	3.19
<i>Basilan</i>	208,006	166,110	79.86	53	0.41	34,409	16.50
<i>Bukidnon</i>	742,269	3,562	0.48	84,004	11.30	11,982	1.61
<i>Camiguin</i>	64,176	50	0.08	39	0.06	258	0.40
<i>Cotabato</i>	763,149	111,753	14.64	31,522	4.13	11,985	1.57
<i>Maguindanao</i>	756,878	484,292	24.35	2,470	0.33	117,893	15.60
<i>South Cotabato</i>	1,071,135	52,497	4.90	124,726	11.60	6,798	0.63
<i>Sultan Kudarat</i>	435,454	80,709	18.53	13,961	3.20	10,931	2.51
<i>Davao</i>	1,053,167	19,553	1.86	51,356	4.88	28,191	2.68
<i>Davao Oriental</i>	394,304	13,884	3.52	23,565	5.98	127,700	32.40
<i>Davao del Sur</i>	1,478,723	23,990	1.62	178,474	12.10	16,271	1.10
<i>Lanao del Norte</i>	613,259	134,947	22.00	628	0.10	1,195	0.19
<i>Lanao del Sur</i>	598,800	557,003	93.02	487	0.08	86	0.01
<i>Misamis Occidental</i>	423,590	443	0.10	5,030	0.19	1,990	0.47
<i>Misamis Oriental</i>	862,660	3,423	0.39	2,522	0.29	4,329	0.50
<i>Sulu</i>	468,856	457,866	97.66	867	0.18	872	0.19
<i>Tawi-Tawi</i>	227,731	210,063	92.24	48	0.02	2,676	1.18
<i>Surigao del Norte</i>	425,290	1,018	0.24	1,208	0.28	271,942	63.90
<i>Surigao del Sur</i>	451,287	1,997	0.44	7,553	1.67	87,836	19.50
<i>Zamboanga del Norte</i>	676,014	39,486	5.84	59,081	8.59	5,446	0.80
<i>Zamboanga del Sur</i>	1,540,299	168,800	1.96	78,080	5.07	234,070	15.20
Mindanao	14,139,756	2,535,045	17.93	721,498	5.10	1,020,001	7.21
<i>Palawan</i>	524,493	29,696	5.66	11,943	2.28	191,300	36.40
TOTAL	14,664,249	2,564,741	17.49	733,441	5.00	1,211,301	8.26

Source: Republic of the Philippines. National Statistics Office, Manila. 1990 Census of Population and Housing. Table 10. Household Population by Mother Tongue, Sex and City/Municipality. (Figures are estimates based on 10% sample)

Note: Those in italics belong to the Special Zone of Peace and Development (Szopad) area

Attachment C

**Muslim And Lumad Population
In the Special Zone of Peace and Development
In Mindanao, Sulu And Palawan Based On Mother
Tongue Classification, By Province**

1990 CENSUS

PROVINCE	TOTAL	MUSLIM	%	LUMAD	%	OTHERS	%
<i>Basilan</i>	208,006	166,110	79.86	53	0.41	34,409	16.50
<i>Cotabato</i>	763,149	111,753	14.64	31,522	4.13	11,985	1.57
<i>Maguindanao</i>	756,878	484,292	24.35	2,470	0.33	117,893	15.60
<i>South Cotabato</i>	1,071,135	52,497	4.90	124,726	11.60	6,798	0.63
<i>Sultan Kudarat</i>	435,454	80,709	18.53	13,961	3.20	10,931	2.51
<i>Davao del Sur</i>	1,478,723	23,990	1.62	178,474	12.10	16,271	1.10
<i>Lanao del Norte</i>	613,259	134,947	22.00	628	0.10	1,195	0.19
<i>Lanao del Sur</i>	598,800	557,003	93.02	487	0.08	86	0.01
<i>Sulu</i>	468,856	457,866	97.66	867	0.18	872	0.19
<i>Tawi-Tawi</i>	227,731	210,063	92.24	48	0.02	2,676	1.18
<i>Zamboanga del Norte</i>	676,014	39,486	5.84	59,081	8.59	5,446	0.80
<i>Zamboanga del Sur</i>	1,540,299	168,800	1.96	78,080	5.07	234,070	15.20
<i>Palawan</i>	524,493	29,696	5.66	11,943	2.28	191,300	36.40
TOTAL	9,362,797	2,517,212	26.89	502,340	5.37	633,932	6.77

Source: Republic of the Philippines. National Statistics Office, Manila. 1990 Census of Population and Housing. Table 10. Household Population by Mother Tongue, Sex and City/Municipality. (Figures are estimates based on 10% sample)