

# Husay, Sandugo, and Kapatiran: Peace Process and Education for Development\*

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**Abstract.** The current paper is fused from two papers delivered in separate events: “A Mindanao Historian’s Views On the Basic Issues of the GRP-MILF Peace Process,” delivered during the Peace Process Exchange Workshop hosted by the Hiroshima University Partnership for Peacebuilding and Capacity Development (HiPeC) from 30 July to 5 August 2012, and “Peace Process and Peace Education for Development,” delivered during the Teaching Enriched History and Bridging Cultures: In Search of Peace in Mindanao, Philippines” hosted by the Mindanao State University–Marawi at Crystal Inn, Iligan City, last 21 June 2013. In this invited paper, I draw on my many years of experience as an academic, peace advocate, and member of the government peace panel in talks with the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) from 1993 to 1996 and with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) from 2004 to 2008. I have also added a few reflections given the recent developments in the Bangsamoro Basic Law and the Mamasapano incident.

**Keywords:** Bangsamoro; Lumad; Mindanao; peace education; peace process; Philippine history

## Introduction

In this paper, I will talk about the peace process and peace education for development by raising five points for discussion. More specifically, I will talk mainly about the formal peace negotiation between the government and the rebel groups, namely, the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), from 1975 to the present, and on the issue of the Lumad or indigenous peoples of Mindanao. I draw on my many years of experience as an academic, peace advocate, and member of the government peace panel in talks with the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) from 1993 to

1996 and with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) from 2004 to 2008.

### 1. On the Frameworks of the Peace Talks

When the Muslim Independent Movement (MIM) articulated its cause in 1968, its intention was to put up an Islamic state in predominantly Muslim areas of Mindanao.<sup>1</sup> The MNLF’s proclaimed goal was to establish a Bangsamoro Republik covering the entirety of Mindanao, Sulu, and Palawan. The MILF announced its vision to create an Islamic state covering the predominantly Muslim areas of Mindanao, Sulu, and Palawan. The government has always been threatened and has consistently defended itself, insisting that it cannot allow the constitution and national sovereignty to be undermined and the territory of

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**1.** Former President Ferdinand Marcos had a private talk with Datu Udtog Matalam, the head of the Muslim Independence Movement (which later became the Mindanao Independence Movement), and then Marcos appointed Matalam as presidential adviser on Muslim affairs and gifted him with a gold wristwatch. After which, there was no more activity in the MIM front.

the republic to be dismembered. The assumption is that the republic is standing on solid foundation and must be defended at all cost.

While negotiations between the government and the Bangsamoro, mainly the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), has been going on in the last forty years, from 1975 to the present, already between 100,000 and 120,000 lives have been lost and billions of pesos have gone down the drain. If the problem has taken so long to discuss and has not yet been solved, maybe we do not have a common grasp of the problem. So how about rethinking the problem? Some military generals have said, “We were second lieutenants when we started fighting the Moro rebels in the early ’70s. Now, we are generals and are still fighting.” They have solid reason to think that military force is not the answer. The peaceful way, peace process, peace education, and community dialogues just might provide the way, they added.

In the ensuing peace negotiations, informal and formal, with both the MNLF and the MILF, from Ferdinand Marcos (1972) to Benigno Simeon C. Aquino III, the stand of the Office of the President to the peace negotiating panel has always been to negotiate within the framework of the Philippine Constitution and the territorial integrity of the republic. This was how the Tripoli Agreement of December 1976 was reached, with the insertion of these two paragraphs: (1) “First: The establishment of Autonomy in the Southern Philippines within the realm of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of the Philippines,” and (2) “The Government of the Philippines shall take all necessary constitutional processes for the implementation of the entire Agreement.” The Final Peace Agreement on the implementation of the Tripoli Agreement was proof that the Philippine government has opened itself to political restructuring with the creation of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM).

But the MILF did not accept the said Final Agreement and proceeded with the Moro struggle for self-determination. After years of GRP–MILF negotiation, the Memorandum of Agreement on Ancestral Domain (MOA-AD)<sup>2</sup> was born in July 2008. Political oppositions immediately raised

the issue to the Supreme Court, and the Supreme Court aborted the signing and soon ruled the MOA-AD as unconstitutional in October of the same year.

In the negotiations during the term of President Aquino, the two panels arrived at what I call a historic convergence in succession, the Ten Decisions (April 2012) and the Framework Agreement (October 2012), a political leap from the ARMM. What items are politically new? Let me cite four of the ten decisions:

- The recognition of Bangsamoro identity and the legitimate grievances<sup>3</sup> and claims of the Bangsamoro people.
- The ARMM is unacceptable and a new autonomous political entity shall take its place.
- The new autonomous political entity shall have a ministerial form of government.
- There will be power sharing and wealth sharing between the national government and the new political entity.

The Ten Decisions became the guide in the formulation of the Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro. Part of the framework is the four annexes on power sharing, wealth sharing, normalization, and transition arrangements, the discussion on which are ongoing. Let me highlight the following additional details:

- The Bangsamoro shall be governed by a basic law, formulated and ratified by the Bangsamoro.
- Core territory of the Bangsamoro: (1) ARMM

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2. I became a subject of “persona non grata” official resolution by no less than the city council where I reside – for my participation in the MOA-AD in 2008. I am not taking this personally; this is a demonstration of the emotional dimension of the problem.

3. Legitimate grievance is an open concept, undefined and not acceptable to all. It is also a feeling, an emotion, with corresponding energy. In short, we are dealing with live people. The best thing really is to do consultation with those who are directly affected by the conflict. When they see that people care enough to go out of their way and come to talk to them, positive energy is created by this gesture and opens the way towards reconciliation and harmony. Grievances mean felt problems. How they feel about it will say what their expected responses are, at least initially. The consultation report should show the measurable dimensions of the problem, as well as the emotional component, and whether their expected response is implementable.

territory; (2) the six municipalities of Baloi, Munai, Nunungan, Pantar, Tagoloan, and Tangkal in Lanao del Norte; barangays of the Municipalities of Kabacan, Carmen, Aleosan, Pigkawayan, Pikit, and Midsayap that voted for inclusion in the ARMM during the 2001 plebiscite; (3) the cities of Cotabato and Isabela; and (4) all other contiguous areas where there is a resolution of the local government unit or a petition of at least ten percent (10%) of the qualified voters in the area asking for their inclusion at least two months prior to the conduct of the ratification of the Bangsamoro Basic Law and the process of delimitation of the Bangsamoro.

- Bangsamoro's justice system shall cover the customary rights and traditions of indigenous peoples.
- Vested property rights shall be recognized and respected.
- Indigenous peoples' rights shall be respected.
- Settlement of legitimate grievances of the Bangsamoro people arising from any unjust dispossession of their territorial and proprietary rights, customary land tenure, or their marginalization. In case reparation is not possible, there shall be adequate reparation collectively.
- A third-party monitoring team composed of international bodies and domestic groups shall monitor the implementation of all agreements.
- The MILF shall undertake a graduated program for decommissioning of its forces, complete with normalization process and timetables.

Both panels are hoping that the GRP-MILF comprehensive compact shall be considered done before President Aquino steps out of Malacañang. The roadmap is already clear in the Framework Agreement. The various documents regarding this matter are made available to the public. What remains are the completion of the four annexes to the framework and immediately the formulation of the Bangsamoro Basic Law and the installation of the new government structure. We need to reframe the foundations of this republic, but this time, it should be based on the free and informed consent of the governed. We need to create new boxes and see realities with new lenses—our own lenses, not those left behind by our colonizers. But the biggest question is the point of social consciousness. Are we ready for this constitutional change that will allow for distinct social spaces within the republic?

## 2. On Rereading and Rewriting History

I have an important question at this point. Which Philippines are we talking about when we talk about “Philippine history”? May I invite you to take one step backward to 12 June 1898?

On 12 June 1898, Emilio Aguinaldo proclaimed the independence of the Philippines. As an affirmation of that event, we now celebrate our independence day on the twelfth of June. Question: Was the Philippines of 1898 the same as the Philippines we have today?

My reading is that in 1898, there were at least three states here in the region we now know as the territory of the Republic of the Philippines: the Philippines; the Sultanate of Sulu, which had been a state since 1450 to 1898; and the Sultanate of Maguindanao, which was founded in 1619 and was still intact in 1898. All three suffered the same fate as victims of two colonial powers, Spain and the United States, embodied in the Treaty of Paris signed on 10 December 1898. Spain sold or ceded its so-called sovereignty over the Philippines, the Sultanate of Sulu, and the Sultanate of Maguindanao. That was how the Moros of the two sultanates and the Pat a Pongampong ko Ranao, or the four principalities of Lanao, became, on paper, one body politic and part of the present Philippines. Our defeats in the wars against the United States completed the process of domination. It was an act of unification without benefit of consent. We all became part of the Philippine Islands and colonial subject of the United States of America. In 1946, the United States gave back only one independence to the Republic of the Philippines. This was how the Moros became Filipinos.

So, identity-wise, who were the Filipinos in 1898? Only those who were covered by the Philippines declared as independent by Aguinaldo. The citizens of the two sultanates of Sulu and Maguindanao and the constituencies of the Pat a Pongampong ko Ranao had their own respective identities, definitely not Filipinos.

The territory of the Philippines refers only to those parts that were colonized and governed by the Spaniards and declared as independent by the Aguinaldo government. The two sultanates of Sulu and Maguindanao and the Pat a Pongampong ko Ranao were badly battered by war, suffered the

ignominy of defeat many times, and had garrisons maintained within their territories, but they were never effectively colonized or governed. They were certainly not colonized in the same way as the Filipinos were. I say that the two sultanates retained at least their de facto status as states—as de facto as the Philippines. This political reality is probably the reason why Aguinaldo sought authority from Congress to negotiate with the Sultanate of Sulu for a possible confederation.

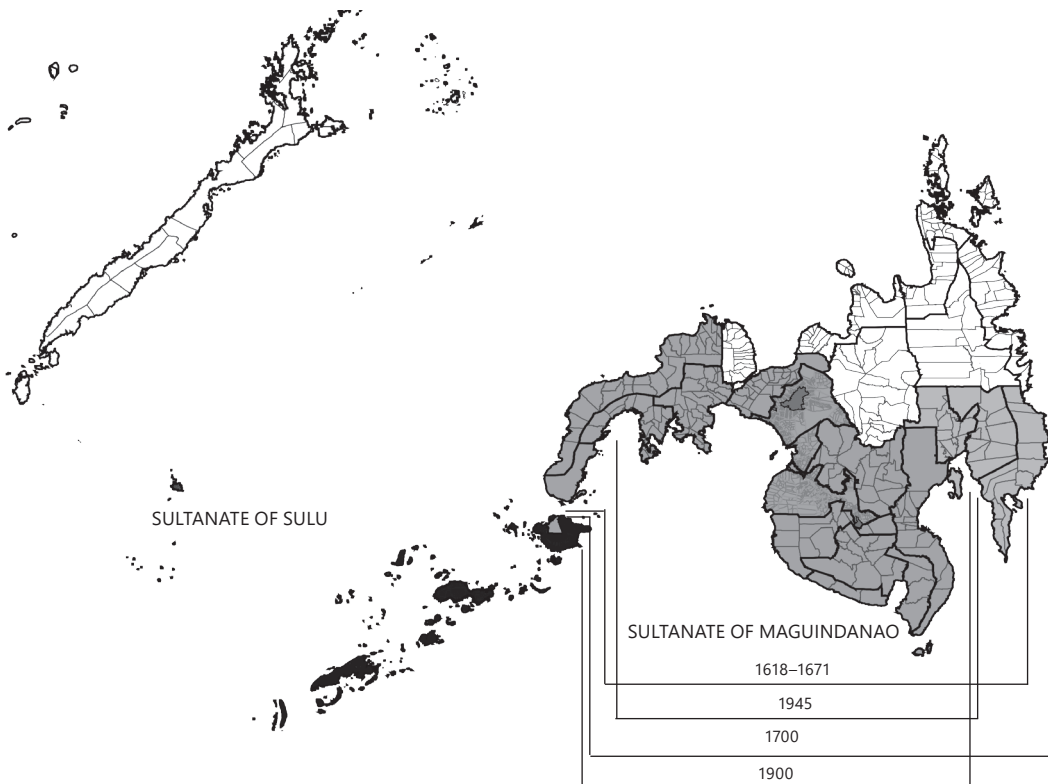
So what is the role of the Treaty of Paris in our current discourse? In what way is this connected with the Philippine Constitution?

American occupation of the Philippines, as defined in the Treaty of Paris, is premised on the legitimacy of the treaty. What basic documents were used to govern the Philippine Islands? These are the Philippine Bill of 1902, the Jones Law of 1916, the Tydings-McDuffie Act of 1934, and the Commonwealth Constitution of 1934. Take note that each of these has affirmed the legitimacy of the Treaty of Paris. Since none of the subsequent

constitutions have questioned this very point, I assume, too, that these latter constitutions have affirmed the treaty. The Republic of the Philippines of 1946 as we know it today was anchored on this erroneous—I repeat, *erroneous*—fundamental premise. It was the structure grounded on this erroneous premise that gave way to the extinction of the two respective Moro political structures.

### 3. On the So-called “Moro Problem”

Who created the Moro problem? The bad blood between Christian Filipinos and Moros was created and nurtured by the Spanish colonizers during the many years of the Spanish-Moro war. When the Spanish colonizers tried to conquer the Moros, they always employed thousands of Christian Filipinos as soldiers and supporters. In their counterattacks, the Moros would also hit these Christian Filipino communities. Since it was the Spanish chroniclers who wrote the stories, they naturally labeled the Moros as “pirates” (one of the books was entitled *Guerras Piráticas de*



**FIGURE 1.** Temporal changes in the extent of the Sultanates of Maguindanao (in gray) and Sulu (in black)

*Filipinas contra Mindanaos y Joloanos* written by Vicente Barrantes [Madrid, M.G. Hernandez, 1878]). Unfortunately for us historians, the Moros never wrote their own impressions of the bloody events. What we have inherited is the deep-seated mutual distrust that Christian Filipinos have for Moros. This is one of the invisible problems that we face today. It interferes with the proper and objective appreciation of the political issues being raised by the Bangsamoro advocates.<sup>4</sup>

The American imperialists created a new political structure, one colony, one governance, one set of public land laws, which led to the resettlement of homesteaders from the rest of the Philippines into Mindanao and Sulu and the imposition of the English language in governance and in the public school system. The marginalization of the Moros and the Lumad or indigenous peoples of Mindanao was a direct consequence of these very structures. The structures were inherited from the American colonizers, which the Republic of the Philippines continued to use. It is precisely from these complex structures that the Bangsamoro is trying to extricate itself, thereby creating its own political space. The Lumad or indigenous peoples of Mindanao who are located within the new Bangsamoro structure, more specifically the Teduray, Lambangian, and Dulangan Manobo, are also working hard to create their own social space within the Bangsamoro.

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4. The Moros hated the being called such. When I was in the grade school, if one wanted to have a fight with Moro kids, all one had to do was call them *Moro*. After the Moro National Liberation Front used the term in its name and fought for it, the term *Moro* has now acquired an honored position in Bangsamoro consciousness. It took a while for government to accept the name Bangsamoro. I remember using it in 1993 in one of the early meetings of the GRP Panel in the talks with the MNLF, and I was immediately corrected by my chair that the government panel, representing the Republic of the Philippines, cannot use this name because the government did not recognize it. But when I returned as a member of the GRP panel in 2004, the name *Bangsamoro* was gaining public acceptability and was being used in panel meetings without anyone raising any issue about it. So now we see both GRP and MILF panel using the name in an agreement and, to me as a Mindanao historian, this is historic and unprecedented, more so because the recognition of the name is followed by the recognition of the legitimate grievances and claims of the Bangsamoro people.

The migrants and their descendants have been made to believe by government that the lands they acquired were public lands and their acquisitions were legitimate under the law and this government is the only legitimate government they know. They are bewildered not only by Bangsamoro claims to ancestral homeland, as it was articulated by the MNLF—the MILF later shifted the language to ancestral domain—but also by their audacity to assert their right to self-determination, not hesitating to employ the weapons of war. Threatened by these claims, they are naturally wary and afraid that the lands might be taken away from them and their lives disrupted by the wars that intermittently erupt in their midst. It is from this side where I hear comments like “Wipe them out to solve the Moro problem.”

#### 4. On the Case of the Lumads

Throughout this paper, the discussion on the plight of the Lumads, the originally non-Christianized and non-Islamized indigenous peoples of Mindanao, have been discussed tangentially to the issue of the peace in the island. The Lumads have equal rights to their ancestral lands as the Bangsamoro, which is stated both in writing and in public declarations of the MNLF and MILF. Both Lumad and Muslim claim common ancestral roots (see Rodil 2003). This is partly the reason they are included in the front’s definition of Bangsamoro.

It must be noted, however, that these indigenous peoples have reached a level of political maturity such that in 1986, they had their own congress in North Cotabato where fifteen of the then known eighteen tribes of Mindanao decided to adopt Lumad (Bisaya for “indigenous” or “native”) as a collective name. Although it is ironic that the Lumad use a term from Bisaya to collectively call themselves, the language of the migrants from the Visayas that led to the dispossession of their lands, it is common knowledge that when the Lumads come together in big assemblies, they spontaneously shift to Bisaya as their lingua franca. Along with the name, they also proclaimed that they have their own right to self-determination and they wished to govern themselves within their respective ancestral domains in accordance with their customary laws. Eleven years later,

the government enacted the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (IPRA) of 1997 recognizing the right of the Lumad to their lands and to self-governance. Now, they, too, like the Bangsamoro, cite the provision in the UN Declaration of Indigenous Peoples Rights recognizing their right to self-determination.

I should point out that from 1975 to 1996, both the government and the MNLF saw no need to consciously involve the Lumad in their negotiations. It was only in the last two years of the three-year negotiation that the MNLF included in their delegation one Lumad for a while, then a larger number in the last two rounds of negotiations. But they just sat there in silence. On the government side, there was no attempt to even consider Lumad presence in the negotiations.

To the credit of the GRP-MILF negotiations, Lumad presence was felt but only in the background as invited consultants, when deemed appropriate, in government technical working group meetings. In subsequent negotiations, starting from 2004, the government panel had one Lumad and the technical working group had three. The MILF has had one in the technical working group until the present. In the current government panel, there used to be a Lumad member but then his status was modified—his own decision—to senior consultant on indigenous peoples' affairs since he was elected mayor and could not afford to neglect his responsibilities.

Lumad voice is also getting louder and more systematic in the espousal of their cause. Among the points raised is the assertion that while they recognize the legitimacy of the Bangsamoro struggle, they must insist that they, too, have their distinct identity, their own ancestral domain, and their own right to self-determination. They also recall, louder and more clearly, that their Moro and Lumad ancestors had entered into agreements, which included setting territorial borders. They urge upon their Bangsamoro counterpart to affirm these sacred agreements. For one thing, not only are these sacred, but these also have no expiration dates.

I like what I heard that the MILF panel had been holding dialogues with Lumad leaders in their public sorties. There are also more positive developments to date: there have been held already several re-affirmation ceremonies between Lumad

and Moro leaders in Maguindanao, in Cotabato, in Bukidnon, and in Pagadian City.

## 5. On Peace Education

Even if a new comprehensive compact is arrived at in the coming months between the GRP and the MILF, it remains that there are many social problems inherited from history, one of which is straightening out our history. Whenever I share my rereading of Mindanao history, many participants in my various audiences have consistently asked, How come your version of history is not taught in our Philippine history books? It is incumbent upon government to ensure that correct Mindanao history is told in Philippine history books used in schools. To rewrite Mindanao-Sulu history will involve professional historians, but because we only have a few of them and these few do not stand in the same political or emotional arena, they are themselves part of the social divide among the citizens. Forming an assembly of historians is already a huge problem in itself because they, too, are part of the problem.

The teachers play a major role in creating a new generation of the republic. One sensitive solution is for the teachers to teach not only the corrected history but also nurture mutual respect and acceptance of each other's culture. Allow me to make some suggestions: (1) review all existing Philippine history books from grade school to college; (2) list down major items that should be integrated; (3) note what parts of culture we use and practice; (4) keep in mind what kind of consciousness we nourish among our children; and (5) finally, agree on the Mindanao-Sulu vision that we want.

I want to share with you my own doubts about the long-term impact of the use of English as a medium of teaching Philippine history. When the American colonial government imposed English in the Philippines, it was not only as a tool for learning but also a weapon of subjugation. The American government's project was a big success, which is why we are still deep to our necks with it. My question is, Is it really proper to teach our own story to our own people using an alien tongue? Is this really the correct way to create a new generation of Filipinos using a foreign language? In my own experience, I have had three successes: (1) I have written the

Mindanao-Sulu history in simple English, (2) I have taught Philippine history in Filipino, and (3) I have also taught Lumad-Moro students in Bisaya. My students claimed that they had captured the local flavor of the story. In my experience in peace advocacy, I have noted that a patient narration of history, in their own languages, will tell them that we, all of us, have been heirs to a history that brought about the marginalization of the Lumad and the Bangsamoro in their ancestral lands, and the settlers were unwitting instruments in this marginalization process. Barangay communities, to whom I have had the opportunity to speak to, are able to appreciate their own history in their own language. Unfortunately, this is not normally taught in school.

We have another century to nurture our own languages, and in the process, we also decolonize ourselves. Hopefully, we can settle our armed conflicts using our own languages and do our peace processes within our own republic.

### Concluding Reflections

This is where we are now, the part of convergence, not yet finished but ongoing.

The life in the republic was flowing beautifully when the BBL emerged. But then there was the eruption of the Mamasapano event—one huge boil, an eruptions of bad blood spilling all over the country. The widespread distrust between Moros and Christian migrants, which we inherited from Spanish colonialism, came to light. An echo from the past when Christians and Moros were made to fight each other like in a cockfight. This has increased my felt need to acknowledge the emotional dimension as an integral part of the problem.

Hence, this is the task of the present—our—generation: to fix what once was broken in order to create a new history. We will do the moulding, based on our relationships, based on our acceptance of each other, based on our collective efforts. The passing into law of the Bangsamoro Basic Law is just the start. We need to talk to each other. Let us talk. This is our life. Our world. In our own hands.

So while the two panels of the GRP and the Moro are trying to sort out the details of their agreements, the public must also be prepared to dialogue with each other. So much the better if the details of the agreements can be publicly discussed. All parties ought to appreciate how they will be affected by the comprehensive compact. It is important for all—Lumad, Bangsamoro, and settlers—to realize that coming to terms with history is also coming to terms with one another's presence in a land that is now shared.

According to a Timuay Arumanen (Manobo) in Carmen, North Cotabato, we must view Mindanao as a clay pot balancing on three stones each representing the Bangsamoro, the Lumad, and the migrants. All of us draw our food from the same pot. The issue of peace in Mindanao should not be a numbers game, but rather, an endeavor that is anchored on the recognition of equality of all its inhabitants. We need to dialogue to determine acceptable social spaces for everyone in a spirit of mutual recognition and mutual acceptance of each other's collective rights. We must learn to dream together and to find peace in each other's presence.

In the end, the one true goal of any settlement of conflict is *husay*, *sandugo*, and *kapatiran*. Or: harmony, mutual acceptance, and fellowship.

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