BARMM – BANGSAMORO AUTONOMOUS REGION IN MUSLIM MINDANAO

Administrative Divisions

The Bangsamoro Autonomous area in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) is an administrative area in the Philippines that is part of the Mindanao island group. It encompasses five provinces: Basilan, Lanao del Sur, Maguindanao, Sulu, and TawiTawi. The City of Cotabato serves as the regional hub.

History

Islam's advent and early history

Historical boundaries of the Muslim sultanates of Sulu, Maguindanao, and Lanao. For the most of the Philippines' history, the region and much of Mindanao were independent territories, allowing them to establish their own culture and identity. Since the 15th century, even before the entrance of the Spanish, who began colonizing most of the Philippines in 1565, the westernmost and west-central areas have been the traditional homeland of Muslim Filipinos. The vast majority of Mindanao was home to indigenous Lumad groups who were neither Christians nor Muslims.

In 1380, Muslim missionaries came in Tawi-Tawi and began colonizing the area and converting the native inhabitants to Islam. The Sultanate of Sulu was created in 1457, and the Sultanates of Maguindanao and Buayan followed soon after. During the period when much of the Philippines was under Spanish administration, these sultanates maintained their independence and regularly challenged Spanish dominance of the Philippines by raiding Spanish coastal cities in the north and repelling numerous Spanish assaults into their territory. The Sultanate of Sulu did not legally accept Spanish suzerainty until the latter part of the nineteenth century, but these lands remained under Spanish administration since their jurisdiction was restricted to military bases. Military garrisons and pockets of civilian populations in Zamboanga and Cotabato until their loss in the Spanish-American War forced them to depart the peninsula.

Colonial control in Spain and America

For nearly 400 years, the Moros have fought against Spanish, American, and Japanese domination. Modern Moro Muslim leaders consider the violent armed struggle against the Japanese, Filipinos, Spaniards, and Americans to be part of the four-century-long "national liberation movement" of the Bangsamoro (Moro Nation), though the term is only used in mainland Mindanao as those in the Sulu archipelago had a much distinct culture. The Moro Muslims' 400-year-long battle against the Japanese, Americans, and Spaniards lasted and evolved into a war for independence against the Philippine state.

Except for the islands controlled by Muslims in the southern Philippines, Filipinos in the northern and central Philippines either voluntarily or were forced to abandon their existing city-states to become a member of the Spanish administration. Due to Moros resistance, the Spaniards' three-century rule did not result in complete control of the archipelago. The Spaniards' use of violence and cruelty in suppressing Moro tribes has resulted in the deaths of several families and the burning of communities.

In 1903, the United States' Insular Government of the Philippine Islands had barely been in operation for two years when it launched the "Homestead Program," which was intended to stimulate migration of landless populations from non-Muslim portions of the nation into Muslim-majority areas of Mindanao. Lanao and Cotabato, in particular, experienced a surge of immigration from Luzon and Visayas. Because the mostly-Christian migrants placed claims on the land, but the native peoples of Mindanao did not have a land titling system in place at the time, the flood of migrants caused disputes concerning land ownership and disenfranchisement of Lumads and Muslims. As a result, the US-led Homestead Program, which was later continued or duplicated by Philippine governments after independence, is frequently identified as one of the underlying reasons of what would later become the greater Moro war.

During the early stages of World War II's Pacific War, Japanese Imperial Forces invaded and overran Mindanao, while the native Moro Muslims conducted an insurgency against the Japanese.

Three years later, in 1945, joint United States and Philippine Commonwealth Army soldiers freed Mindanao, eventually defeating Japanese forces holding the region with the support of local guerilla formations.

Postwar period

Later Philippine presidents, under pressure to settle agrarian unrest in various regions of the nation and observing that Mindanao was rich in natural resources and had ideal weather for agriculture, continued the promotion of migration that the American colonial administration begun in 1903. Massive influxes of non-Muslim migrants occurred, most notably during the Commonwealth era of President Manuel Quezon, and later under right-wing leaders Ramon Magsaysay and Ferdinand Marcos. As a result, indigenous peoples of Mindanao fell from a plurality in 1913 to a minority by 1976. The finest lands in Mindanao were handed to settlers and corporate agribusiness owners, while the Christian populace received the majority of development investments and government services. As a result, the Muslim population became backward and among the poorest in their own country. The resettlement program was not entirely peaceful, as some settlers obtained land from native Muslims through harassment and other violent efforts, driving the Muslims out of their own lands.

Muslims felt alienated by the Philippine government and threatened by migrants' economic and political dominance in their own country, much as Lumads were displaced centuries earlier when Islam came in the Philippines. To safeguard their land and escape displacement, some Muslim communities turned to extortion and violence. These "integration" attempts are attributed with helping to consolidate the Moro identity in mainland Mindanao, because the Muslims' capacity to identify with the rest of the Filipino nation diminished as a result of the danger to their economic and social safety.

The Philippine government did not instantly accept Islamic rules, resulting in the Muslim education system and social progress. Children in public schools were obliged to learn about Christianity, while the Bangsamoros struggled with their economy, land, and ownership, as well as the continuance of unfriendly and unfair behaviors in comparison to the Christian communities in Mindanao.

As a result of the resettlement, traditional Muslim officials (also known as datu) were thrown out of office, since Christians, who made up a sizable majority of voters, chose Christian politicians over them. These local datus lost reputation because they could no longer rule the Muslim areas. These politicians lost many of the competencies they had once held to manage the Muslim community.

Moro conflict

Fishermen in Manila Bay rescued a Muslim man called Jibin Arula from the waves in March 1968. They noticed that he had bullet wounds, and he subsequently revealed that he was the lone survivor of what became known as the "Jabidah Massacre."

According to Jibin Arula, the Marcos administration collected a squad of Tausg recruits for an operation known as "Project Merdeka." (merdeka being the Malay "freedom"). On the island of Corregidor, the military began training them to establish a secret commando organization named Jabidah, which would destabilize and take over Sabah. The trainees finally rejected their assignment for reasons that historians are still debating today. Jibin Arula said that, for whatever reason, all of the recruits but him were slaughtered, and he barely escaped by claiming to be dead. Juan Ponce Enrile, a Marcos supporter who served as Justice Secretary and Defense Minister during the Marcos administration, stated this was a fraud and an attempt to destabilize the country.

Cut part

After the exposé revealed that Marcos was ultimately culpable for the killing, Lanao del Sur lawmaker Rashid Lucman urged on Congress to initiate steps to impeach President Marcos. When his plan was rejected by Congress, he grew convinced that Muslims should rule themselves in Muslim Mindanao, which prompted him to found the Bangsamoro Liberation Organization (BMLO), which ultimately merged with the Moro National Liberation Front. (MNLF).

The Muslim Independence Movement (MIM) was founded by Cotabato governor Datu Udtog Matalam, who openly called for the secession of the region to create a Muslim state. The MIM did not last long because Datu Udtog Matalam negotiated with Marcos and accepted a position in his cabinet, but many of its members broke away and became the main force of the MNLF.

Ferdinand Marcos declared martial control over the whole country of the Philippines, including Muslim Mindanao, on September 23, 1972. While Datu Udtog Matalam's MIM was already extinct, one of its former members, Nur Misuari, founded the MNLF on October 21, 1972, a month after the proclamation of Martial Law.

With the MIM already defunct, Marcos' declaration of martial law effectively ensured that the MNLF, which was more radical than its predecessors, would come to dominate the Moro separatist movement.

The Peace Process

The Tripoli Agreement was struck on December 23, 1976, between the Philippine government and the MNLF, with the pact mediated by then-Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi. Mindanao was to become an independent territory under a treaty.

Marcos would eventually put the agreement into action by establishing two regional autonomous administrations, rather than one, in Regions 9 and 12, which would span 10 (rather than thirteen) provinces. As a result, the peace treaty was broken and hostilities between the MNLF and Philippine government forces resumed.

Misuari, however, did not contact one of the MNLF's main leaders, Salamat Hashim, before signing the 1976 Tripoli Agreement. Salamat, together with 57 other MNLF field leaders, founded a dissident organization known as the Moro Islamic Liberation Front. (MILF).

A year after Marcos was deposed during the People Power Revolution, the government of President Corazon Aquino signed the 1987 Jeddah Accord with the MNLF in Saudi Arabia, agreeing to hold further talks on the proposal for autonomy for the entire Mindanao, rather than just the thirteen provinces specified in the 1976 Tripoli Agreement. However, in 1989, an act was approved that established the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM). The MNLF sought that the thirteen Tripoli Agreement provinces be included in the ARMM, the bulk of which were Christian areas, but the government rejected; eight of the provinces were largely Christian. Soon after, the government controlled just four provinces, as only Lanao del Sur, Maguindanao, Sulu, and Tawi-tawi opted to join the ARMM. At the time, the four provinces were the only ones with a Muslim majority.

The formation of the ARMM and the 1996 peace treaty

A referendum was held in 1989 to ratify the charter that established the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), with Zacaria Candao, an MNLF attorney, serving as the first elected regional governor. The MNLF and the Philippine government, led by President Fidel Ramos, signed a definitive peace treaty on September 2, 1996. Three days after the agreement, MNLF leader and founder Nur Misuari was chosen regional governor.[39] A plebiscite was held in 2001 to expand the area, with the city of Marawi and the province of Basilan (excluding Isabela) joining.

 Peace talks with the MILF

Peace negotiations between the Philippine government and the MNLF's rival party, the MILF, began in 1996. The Memorandum of Agreement on Ancestral Domain was signed in 2008 between the national government and the MILF. (MOA-AD). Many weeks later, the Supreme Court ruled that the agreement was unlawful. The agreement would have resulted in the formation of the Bangsamoro Juridical Entity. (BJE). Under President Benigno Aquino III's administration, the national government and the MILF reached two agreements: the Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro, signed on October 15, 2012, and the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro, signed on March 27, 2014, which included plans for the establishment of a new autonomous region. In 2012, Aquino announced plans to create a new autonomous political unit called Bangsamoro to replace the ARMM, which he referred to as a "failed experiment." Under his administration, a draft Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL) was drafted but never became law, owing in part to the Mamasapano clash in January 2015, which involved the murder of 44 mostly-Christian Special Action Force (SAF) personnel by allegedly combined forces of the MILF and the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) following an operation to kill Malaysian militant Zulkifli Abdhir, known as "Marwan."

Creation of Bangsamoro

During the January 21 BOL referendum, voters check for their names in a Marawi precinct.

A fresh draft for the BBL was created during the presidency of Aquino's successor, Rodrigo Duterte, and was enacted as the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) in 2018. On January 21, 2019, a referendum to ratify the BOL was held, with a majority of ARMM voters voting in favor of ratification. Cotabato City residents decided to join the proposed autonomous region, but Isabela City residents voted against it. On January 25, 2019, the Commission on Elections said that the BOL was "deemed ratified." Sulu's province administration, whose majority voted against inclusion, was also opposed to the bill, with its governor appealing the measure's legality before the Supreme Court. Despite voting against inclusion, Sulu was nevertheless included in the Bangsamoro area owing to BOL regulations, infuriating people.

The second phase of the plebiscite was held in the province of Lanao del Norte and certain municipalities in North Cotabato in February 2019. The plebiscite resulted in the incorporation of 63 of the 67 barangays that participated in North Cotabato. It also resulted in the province of Lanao del Norte rejecting the bid of six of its Muslim-majority towns to join the Bangsamoro, despite the fact that the six towns (Baloi, Munai, Nunungan, Pantar, Tagoloan, and Tangcal) overwhelmingly voted to join the Bangsamoro, with one town voting for inclusion by 100%. The MILF has a large camp in the Muslim districts of Lanao del Norte.

Transition Period

President Rodrigo Duterte blasts the agung at the Bangsamoro inauguration. Murad Ebrahim, the Chief Minister, joins him.

The ARMM's abolition process began with the approval of the BOL following the referendum on January 21, 2019, opening the path for the establishment of the Bangsamoro autonomous region. The Bangsamoro Transition Authority (BTA), established under the BOL, will serve as a transitional authority until the new region's government leaders are elected in 2022. On February 6, 2019, the second round of the plebiscite enlarged the scope of the future Bangsamoro region to include 63 barangays in North Cotabato. On February 22, 2019, members of the BTA took their oaths, along with the ceremonial certification of the plebiscite results from both the January 21, and February 6, 2019, polls. The official transition from the ARMM to the BARMM occurred on February 26, 2019, signaling the end of the former.

On March 29, 2019, BARMM was inaugurated, as was the first session of the Bangsamoro Parliament.

Murad Ebrahim became the region's first chief minister.

In 2020, the Bangsamoro parliament proposed that the BTA be extended for three years beyond 2022 to provide for more transition time.

Duterte enacted Republic Act No. 11593 on October 28, 2021, deferring the BARMM's first regular legislative elections from 2022 to 2025. The bill also prolonged the Bangsamoro transition period to 2025.

Maguindanao was divided into two provinces in a referendum on September 17, 2022: Maguindanao del Sur and Maguindanao del Norte.

Demographics

The population was 4,404,288 according to the 2020 Census. This accounted for 16.78% of the total population of Mindanao, or 4.04% of the total population of the Philippines.

According to the organic legislation, those who "were considered natives or original inhabitants of Mindanao and the Sulu archipelago and its adjacent islands at the time of Spanish colonization shall have the right to identify themselves, their spouses, and descendants" as Bangsamoro.