

AHMAD DOMOCAO ALONTO SR. - CHAMPION OF THE MUSLIMS IN THE PHILIPPINES

Author: **Raihan Yusoph**

Assistant Professor, Mindanao State University, Marawi City, Philippines

One of the turning points and most remarkable developments that happened in Mranaw society was the emergence of one of the great Muslim leaders of the 20th century.ⁱ He helped to enhance unity, cooperation, and harmony among the Bangsamoro people which later led to being involved in national political affairs. He had lived a life filled with amounted political career and was a great supporter of Muslim movements in the Philippines.

Notwithstanding the way that Senator Ahmad Domocao Alonto, Sr. has a significant effect in the Mindanao socio-religious and political affairs, there are no broad examinations directed about his legacy as a figured Muslim political leader in the Philippines, particularly in the Bangsamoro Land.

Thus, the researcher endeavored to record the emergence of a Muslim leader and his contributions since it has not been completed reliably written in the field of discourse in the political and intellectual history of Mindanao.

As famously known among his associates in the Philippine congress in the 1950s as "Senator Domie", he served at the Philippine Senate as a senator representing the Bangsamoro in the Minsupala region and he integrated the Moro leaders to take an interest in Philippine politics while securing their Islamic belief, culture, and customs inspired by the Glorious Quran and teachings of Prophet Muhammad peace be upon him.

Senator Domie 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.ⁱⁱ

THE ROLE OF SULTAN ALAUYA IN THE LIFE OF SENATOR DOMIE

Fifteen years before Ahmad Domocao Alonto was born, American colonization of the Moro land began. From 1889 up to 1902, Mindanao and Sulu were constituted into a Military District by the Americans for the purpose of pacifying Moro armed resistance. The Military District was headed by the United States' military officers, the first of whom was Gen. John C. Bates.ⁱⁱⁱ To emphasize this military pacification requirement for the effective integration of Moro land into the United States colonial system, the Moro Province was organized in 1903. This military government was led by the veteran US officers in the American campaigns and lasted until 1913 when the Moros were considered to have been, in general, disarmed and tamed. As pointed out by Peter Gowing, much of the time and energy of the Americans, particularly in the decade of the Moro province was spent in fighting Moro groups.^{iv} One of the first governors in the Moro province was Gen. Leonard Wood, who eventually became the Governor-General of the Philippines.^v The Moro province's last governor was Gen. John Pershing, infamous for his bloody campaign to demolish Moro *cottas* (forts) around Lanao Lake.^{vi}

It is deemed important to remember that the American-Moro wars began when Spain ceded the Philippines including the Moro homeland through the Treaty of Paris of 1898 to the United States of America. Moro land (Mindanao, Sulu and Palawan), however, was never part of the Philippines because Spain failed to colonize the Moros and place them under her rule. Spain therefore had no right to include Mindanao in the transfer of their sovereignty over the Philippines to the United States of America; on the other hand, the Americans also had no moral and legitimate right to rule over Mindanao as the latter did not belong to Spain. Nevertheless, the American occupation in Moro land faced series of arm struggle and resistance from the Moros to defend their land and maintain their freedom from the colonies.

In 1913, the Moro Province was abolished and a civilian colonial government, the Department of Mindanao and Sulu was established. It was headed by an American civilian named Frank Carpenter.^{vii} The following year, the American colonial government initiated the first systematic migration of Christian Filipino settlers to Mindanao. In 1915, Governor Frank Carpenter compelled the Sultan of Sulu into an agreement that forced the latter to accept US sovereignty. The Carpenter Agreement ultimately led to the unilateral and arbitrary abolition of the once sovereign Moro sultanate states by the US and signaled an end to the independence of the Moro people.^{viii} It was under these circumstances that Ahmad's father, Sultan Alauya was catapulted to center stage in this chapter of Moro history in particular and Philippine history in general.

The father of Senator Domie, Sultan Alauya Alonto, was born before the occurrence of the Spanish-American war in 1898 and witnessed the military defeat of the Moros by the advance and superior American weapons.^{ix} This was a traumatic period in his life. However, it also made him realized the Moro bravery and determination to fight for their religion, people, culture and land. This effort of Sultan Alauya Alonto could be reflected during the 1935 National Assembly, when he said;

“Moro people want to control their houses but how can they do that if they don't have their own keys? And maybe the Moros are unlocked inside or outside their houses because they don't have the key. And the worst thing is that the ones who have the keys are those outsiders and strangers who not even know the language of the people they ruled” (Free Translation)^x

This is the reason at that time, the Philippine government became aware and knew the cause of the plight of Muslims in Mindanao and through this, the Moros finally understood who they were as the subservient citizens of the government. This also stirred them to separate from the Philippine government.

In addition to his effort, even during the celebration of the July 4th of the Philippine Independence Day in Malacañang, Sultan Alauya first encountered the US Governor-General Leonard Wood. Numerous sultans, datos, and other tribal chiefs from Mindanao were present which implied for their willingness to remain under American rule. Moreover, the Sultan

interrupted the Governor-General in the middle of his speech and said: “What are you saying, you white monkey? We Muslims have always held on to our sovereignty and independence.”

^{xi} He then continued and said that the “Americans should go home and leave the affairs with the Filipinos with us.”^{xii}

This episode caught the attention of Manuel L. Quezon and Sergio Osmena, who were then the leading figures of the pro-independence “Filipinista Movement”.^{xiii} Sizing him up as a potential ally among the Moro leaders, they expedited the release of Sultan Alauya who was at that time detained at Fort Santiago after his argument with General Wood from American custody and brought him to the Philippine legislature where he was presented as the voice of Muslims in Mindanao.

At that time, Sultan Alauya Alonto was very afraid of being under the American rule. Because of his knowledge about US history, Sultan Alauya Alonto was alarmed that his people, the Muslims in Mindanao might end up like the American Indians. The son of Ahmad Domocao Alonto, Ahmad E. Alonto Jr. said in my interview:

“My father would describe Sultan Alauya as very intelligent and having a very good memory man. Accordingly, the Sultan asked my father to read and translate to him the book on American history. After but one reading, the Sultan surprised the Americans in one of his dialogues with them by informing the latter that he would not want the Moros to end up like the American Indians. He even enumerated to them what had happened to the different American Indian chiefs.”

It is true that Sultan Alauya Alonto was afraid for his people to be controlled by the Americans. He in favor to Philippine independence rather than annexing Mindanao under the American rule. And despite of his passionate opposition to American colonial rule, Sultan Alauya however agreed to some of the American programs being implemented in Mindanao. These programs include: education, health, and infrastructure development to Moro territory. To him, what is important is the interest and welfare of his people. Thus, he saw it necessary for the Mranaws to accept the education offered by the Americans.

During the early American period, Muslims of Mindanao were hesitant and even resistant to accept American programs like education because of their fear of Christianization. Sultan Alauya Alonto encouraged his people to allow their children to study and attend to this education. According to Ahmad Domocao E. Alonto, Jr., his grandfather lived very humbly and he even supported their other relatives and treated them like his own children. During the Commonwealth government in the Philippines, he went to the houses of his relatives and told them to send their children to the American schools. To convince his people, he sent his own children to schools held and run by the Americans.

To illustrate this point, Ahmad Domocao Alonto, Sr. narrated to his son Ahmad E. Alonto Jr. the story of how Sultan Alauya convinced his father-in-law who never agreed sending his grandchildren to American schools for the fear that they would become Christians like the Filipinos.

“Accordingly, at that time, the American authorities forced Moro families to send their children to school and a fifty-peso fine was imposed on those who did not comply with this compulsory regulation. But being a wealthy man of the Mranaw Moro nobility, the Sultan’s father-in-law was determined and would rather pay the fine than allow his grandchildren to acquire Western education, despite the request of his son-in-law. Sultan Alauya then suggested to the American authorities to inform his father-in-law that the fine would be increased to one hundred pesos if the latter still resisted. When informed about this by the Americans, however, the Sultan’s father-in-law was again willing to pay the increased fine rather than comply with the American decree. The Sultan thereafter told the American authorities to announce that the punishment for those who repeatedly broke this law was imprisonment. Then the Sultan gathered all his family members and his people and announced to them that the Americans were about to imprison him (the Sultan) for failing to send his children to school. A tremendous uproar ensued, as the people could not allow their sultan to land in an American jail. Their ‘maratabat’ (collective pride and honor) prompted them to prepare to fight for and defend their sultan. Realizing therefore that there was bound to be bloodshed because of his determination,

Sultan Alauya's father-in-law finally changed his mind and allowed his grandchildren to go to school.”^{xiv}

Consistently, Sultan Alauya Alonto would emphasize to the Mranaw the importance of education. He inspires his Moro brothers regardless of tribal affiliation to learn the American language and not just Arabic literature and Islamic jurisprudence. He quipped: “You should learn the language of the enemy to be able to fight them.”^{xv} Therefore, a powerful and effective weapon used by the Muslims in the Philippines to be able to resist colonial assimilation, defend their religion, people, land, and ultimately gain back their freedom was the secular education offered by the Americans. He believed that education can be used as their weapon to get what they want.

This view of Sultan Alauya Alonto in adopting Western education was intended only for his people to be literate like the Americans. He was very diplomatic towards the Americans because he knew that the Muslims in the Philippines cannot fight the Americans because of the latter's superior and advance weapon. Ahmad Domocao told his son, Avicina Alonto., that his father, the Sultan, had disclosed to him:

“Looking at the Americans, you can never defeat the Americans even if you will be able to solidify Mindanao”. Accordingly, the Sultan had thrown his support to the Philippine Independence Movement which included Mindanao on the premise that ‘if these people (Christian Filipinos) will cheat on us and if these people will betray us, we are the same people, belonging to the same race, the same size, the same height – we can defeat them provided we will continue and we will be patient. But with the Americans, we will end up in the museum and our children will end up dancing in the airport welcoming these whites. But because we don't have the weaponry, they can finish off any struggle down here. But with the Christianized Indios here, we can fight them”.^{xvi}

Thus, his father had always remained an inspiration to him in his endeavor to fight for the rights and improve the condition of Mranaw society and the rest of the Muslims in the Philippines. During his talks with his family, Ahmad Domocao Alonto, Sr. would always describe his father as “the most enlightened man that I have talked to. He is the most knowledgeable man that had instructed things to me that I have accepted.”^{xvii}

Ahmad Domocao’s father, Sultan Alauya Alonto, was the first Muslim senator in the Philippine Commonwealth Government. He always reminded his people of their Moro ancestors’ undying love for freedom and their legacy of continuous struggle for independence. Thus, no other person with the legacy of Sultan Alauya Alonto has a great and permanent impact than on his son, Ahmad Domocao Alonto, Sr.

THE START OF HIS LEGACY

Ahmad Domocao Alonto, Sr. considered the 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.^{xviii} Although he was 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 the Quran, 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.^{xix} A voracious reader, he further 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^{xx} and a student from Indonesia who helped and guided him in the study of Islam. A visit from two Pakistani religious scholars the following year encouraged him to make a profound study of his religion as a complete way of life and consider the global position of Islam with the rest of the world. Regarding this significant meeting, Ahmad Domocao Alonto, Sr.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.”^{xxi}

Henceforth, he was always engaged in group discussions and studies about Muslims and Islam. In the 1950s, Mindanao saw the arrival of more foreign Muslim missionaries as the resurgence of 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 observed by the appearance of new independent Muslim majority nation-states that emerged from European colonialism. This made the Moros better aware of their greater identity as Muslims and their belonging to the larger ideological community of Islam, ‘*Ummah*’.^{xxii}

So, in this section of the study, it is important to know the turning points in Ahmad Domocao Alonto’s life as a Muslim political leader. Through these events, he became more inspired to spread Islamic teachings, serve for the advancement and betterment of his people, the Mranaw, and the Muslims in the Philippines in general.

BANDUNG^{xxiii} CONFERENCE IN 1955

At the end of the Second World War, there was an emergence of new nation-states in Asia and Africa with the liberation of their colonized territories. In 1955, a meeting of non-aligned nations which refused to be drawn into the cold war existing between the West and the Eastern Communist alliance was held in Bandung, Indonesia. The conference demonstrated the determination of those 29 nations, which had recently freed themselves from colonialism (domination by foreign powers), to have an independent voice in international affairs.

In the words of Ahmad Domocao Alonto, Sr.: “The Bandung Conference, where 29 nations of Asia and Africa met to discuss problems of common interest proven that belief in God is the greatest deterrent force against Communist ambition to convert the world into the Communist way of life. It was a well-known fact- which seemed to be why our country at first hesitated to join- that this conference was going to be propaganda medium of the Communists. But it turned out to be a dismal failure among the Communists and a signal victory for democracies.”^{xxiv}

This was the 1955 Afro-Asian Conference, whose theme included among others political self-determination, mutual respect for sovereignty, non-aggression and non-interference in a state's internal affairs, and equality.^{xxv} During this time, Ahmad Domocao Alonto, Sr. was a member of the Philippine delegation to the Conference headed by Foreign Secretary Carlos P. Romulo. In fact, he was the lone Muslim delegate from the Philippines. The Bandung Conference was indeed a milestone for him for it opened new horizons and opportunities. He was eager with ideas to liberate his own people from the stronghold of the central government.

It was also in Bandung conference that he personally met President Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt^{xxvi} and became his close friend. According to Ahmad Domocao Alonto, Sr.:

“There were many points of similarity between the people of Egypt and the Philippines and foremost of these, he added, ‘Is that they firmly believe in God-both Christians and Muslims. And our constitution is based on full trust and faith in God. Gamal Abdel Nasser was a charismatic Arab leader who sought to unite the Arabs and the Muslims with his idea of Pan-Islamic Confederacy of Muslim States and their liberation from European and foreign colonization.’”^{xxvii}

Because of Bandung Conference, Muslim countries learned the presence of the Muslims in the Philippines; Zia Ur-Rahman's comment below is a reflection on this:

“Papa related to me that because of the Bandung Conference, Muslims in the Philippines had now connection with the Muslim brothers outside the country. Papa, told me what happened in that Conference when he had the chance to meet the President of Egypt, Gamal Abdel Nasser. Papa taps the back of President Nasser and said ‘Assalamo Alaykom’ and that Gamal Abdel Nasser responded ‘wa alaikomussalam’. And papa introduced himself says that; ‘I am a congressman from the Philippines and I’m representing the Muslims in the Philippines, we are about 4 million Muslims who were not subjugated by the foreign colonizers for so many years.’ President Abdel Nasser immediately

hugged papa and replied; 'we thought our Muslim brothers in the Philippines were wiped out by the Spaniards for many years ago, we don't know that there are remaining Muslim brothers in the Philippines.'^{xxviii}

The existence of Muslims in the Philippines were acknowledged and recognized not only by Egypt but also other Muslim countries. Also in the Bandung Conference that Ahmad Domocao Alonto, Sr. had his first introduction to the struggling Malay nations and their leaders at that time such like Acmad Sukarno^{xxix} of Indonesia and Tunku Abdul Rahman^{xxx} of Malaysia. Indonesia had just newly won its War of Independence from Dutch colonialism, while Malaysia was still a British colony also aspiring for independence. He had a friendship with these Malay leaders and was impressed with their vision of liberating the Malay people from Western colonial influences. This strengthened his view that the Muslims in Mindanao and Sulu as well as the Filipinos are belonging to the Malay World and that for these peoples to succeed in the future and build a truly united nation-state, they have to retrace their Malay roots and revive Malay consciousness.

In addition, this historical event also introduced him to the revolutionary confusion that took place in the Muslim World in particular and the Third World in general. Upon his return to the Philippines, together with former Senator Salipada K. Pendatun of Cotabato and other Moro and foreign Muslims, they re-activated the inactive Muslim Association of the Philippines (MAP) making it "the first national organ of the reawakened Muslims." The association also made contacts and re-established inter-communication with the Muslim world.

The Muslim Association of the Philippines was an organization founded in 1949 by mostly foreign Muslims primarily to unify the Muslim minorities in the Philippines and promote their welfare. Combining the importance of its members with the advocacy of promoting Muslim identity and aspirations, MAP became very popular in all the areas of Moro land and was transformed into a pressure group that promoted for Muslim rights in the central government. The Association gained the appointment of the first Moro in the Philippine judiciary, among others, as well as the declaration of *Maulidun Nabi*^{xxxi} as a Muslim holiday.

Also, as an aftermath of the Bandung Conference, Ahmad Domocao Alonto, Sr. got more scholarships for the Moros to the different schools and universities in Muslim majority countries, foremost of which was Egypt. Through him, fifteen (15) Moro youth, majority of them were Mranaws, were recipients of scholarships for military education and training at the prestigious Cairo Military Academy. It was also because of him that Al-Azhar University, the oldest and most renowned Islamic institution of learning, opened its door to students from Mindanao and Sulu. Zia Ur-Rahman's comments below are reflection on this:

"Papa mentioned what happened to his visit in Egypt and his meeting with President Gamal Abdel Nasser. When he arrived in Egypt, (his grandfather said), he was overwhelmingly welcomed by the president and other officials. And during the end of his talk with the President, Gamal Abdel Nasser asked papa if he wanted gifts, money or anything, but Papa replied, 'My brother, I don't need any amount of money and wealth, all I want for you my brother is to open-up al-Azhar University to the young Muslims in the Philippines, and give free education to my people.' The President was impressed with what Papa had said to him. And After their talks, Papa left Egypt with the guarantee from his sincere friend, the President Gamal Abdel Nasser for free education for his people."^{xxxii}

Gamal Abdel Nasser granted the request of Ahmad Domocao Alonto, Sr. and gave academic grants to the Muslims in the Philippines. The name of this scholarship was named, the "Domocao Alonto's Scholarship". Fifteen (15) students were sent to Cairo Military Academy in Egypt. Among these students were the young Salamat Hashim^{xxxiii} and Miraato Mutilan^{xxxiv}, both were well known leaders among Moros.

All told, his exposure abroad, particularly to the challenges facing Muslims around the world, transformed Ahmad Domocao Alonto, Sr. into a champion of Muslim rights in the Philippines. His advocacy to this effect influenced his Muslim colleagues even in the government. It would be worthy to note that in 1961, Sulu Congressman Ombra Amilbanga filed House Bill 5682 for the restoration of the Sulu Sultanate and its separation from the

country as an independent realm.^{xxxv} In 1960's, the prevailing national attitude in the country was characterized by political activism and radicalism especially among Filipino students and young intellectuals in major urban centers. However, while the Filipino youth were captivated to nationalist and Marxist ideologies, the Moro youth on the other hand took on a different orientation and were enlightened to follow the path of Islam which in turn pushed them to insist on their separate Muslim identity as 'Moro' ^{xxxvi}. Different Moro Muslim organizations emerged as religious leaders and western-educated Moro professionals worked hand in hand in propagating Islam not only as a religion but as an ideology itself. This development was accelerated by another tragic event that had a profound impact on Ahmad Domocao Alonto's political life and Islamic advocacy- the Jabidah Massacre.

SENATOR DOMIE AS A MUSLIM LEADER

His Positions in the Government

Years before Senator Domie joined Philippine politics, he became a Cedula Tax Collector in Ramain for about over three years and that was the point at which he was all the while concentrating secondary school in 1927. Later after he completed his preliminary law course at the University of the Philippines in 1934, he became a clerk translator at the House of Representatives from 1935 up to 1937. He also became a classified author at the National Information Board in the year 1937 to 1938. During World War II, he was appointed as First Lieutenant in the Philippine Army, 81st Division, United States Armed Forces in the Far East from 1941 up to 1945. He also served as acting municipal mayor of Dansalan (presently Marawi City) from 1942 to 1943 and from 1944 until early freedom days.

He served as acting governor of Lanao province during the caretaker government under the Japanese occupation; his term ended in 1947. From 1948 to 1949, he became Presidential Assistant and Adviser to the Office of the President of the Republic of the Philippines. This can be seen from what Leon O. Ty reported in the Manila Times:

"Ahmad Domocao Alonto of Mindanao was appointed by President Quirino last Monday as a technical assistant and adviser in the office of the President. He took his oath of office Thursday in the morning before assistant

executive secretary Nicanor Roxas. The new technical assistant in Malacañang has strengthened the representation of Mindanao in the government."

Later after being so much exposed to the Philippine government, he was elected as congressman of undivided Lanao province in 1954 to 1955. At the point when he was in Congress, he was instrumental in chartering Marawi City. For this situation, all the political situations in Marawi City were filled by the people not appointed by the government. He was also ready to make Lanao del Sur a different region since he accepted that the Mranaw must have their political region to have a specific level of self-determination.

After his term as a congressman, he ran as a senator under the banner of the *Nacionalista* Party together with the former senator and nationalist Claro Recto. Fortunately, he was elected as a senator in 1955 and served as a member of the Philippine senate up to 1961. His term as a senator was one of the fundamental defining moments of his life and of being a Muslim since he became a delegate to the historical Bandung conference which drove him to have association outside the nation. It must be noticed that he filed bills for the improvement of Mindanao and its people economically, politically, and culturally. During his days in the Senate, he was also one of the bulwarks of the "Filipino-First Policy" received during the incumbency of President Carlos P. Garcia.

Senator Domie's exposure to Philippine politics pushed him to an elective situation in government to seek after a similar target as father his' – a superior life for his people. Sultan Alauya and Senator Domie had a similar vision that every Christian Filipino and Bangsamoro people can build a nation together as equal accomplices and not with the Muslims assuming a subordinate job to the Christian Filipinos. He immovably accepted that he can utilize his position in the government to represent the Islamic way of life among the Bangsamoro people and stir Islamic mindfulness and awareness in them.

According to Avicina Alonto, one of the reasons why Senator Domie joined the Philippine government was that he believed that he can speak and work for the betterment of the Bangsamoro. Because of his direct involvement in the day-to-day operations of the

municipalities in Lanao, he was educated in the internal affairs of the Mranaw and it provided him an opportunity to understand and analyze the problems that affected the Mranaw society and the Muslims in the Philippines in general. Thus, he was so determined in his goal that he even gained the attention of President Manuel A. Roxas who said:

"The future of this nation can be prophesied by the quality of its youth leaders of today. From among our Moro brothers of the South a new star has arisen, whose intense nationalism and love of country have injected a new life to our fight for freedom: Domie Alonto - one of our sturdy pillars of the rising generations"^{xxxvii}

In the 1971-1972 Constitutional Convention, Senator Domie was also one of its delegates. Later in 1986, he was appointed as a member of the Constitutional Commission that drafted the new Constitution of the Republic of the Philippines. Being one of the delegates, he gave efforts to push for the grant of meaningful political autonomy for his people. According to his speech:

"I refer to the 1971 constitutional convention whereby our people, through their chosen representatives, given the opportunity to re-frame our fundamental law. And for, unless we can imbue our people with a sense and oneness and common destiny, there seems to be no possible avenue of containing the process of disintegration that is going on in our very midst involving not only the cultural minorities but the whole fabric of our society. I dare say that if it is necessary to divide the country into several autonomous states bound together by a common goal and sense of oneness, I will not hesitate to do so"^{xxxviii}

Sadly, his endeavors to push for the grant of significant political self-determination in the 1971 Constitutional Convention were vanquished by incredible and predominant political, religious and economic partnerships among Christian legislators in the government.

The motivation behind why Senator Domie endeavored needed political self-determination for the Bangsamoro people was because he realized that the government and its adopted constitution would not have any effect on the Bangsamoro people in the Philippines. The meaningful political autonomy intended by Senator Domie was for the Moros to have their opportunity to govern themselves according to Islam, secure their remaining ancestral domain, and ensure their way of life and traditions within the Philippines. Thus, he was depicted by his family as a "champion in many ways". According to his son Avicina Alonto:

"My father was a statesman, more a statesman than a politician because a politician attempts to compromise his principles and ideologies at the end of achieving his self-interest. My father never was that man. He never compromised his beliefs, he never compromised his stand on issues on the fight for equal grant opportunities of the Muslim minorities. That's why he commissioned the creation of CNI that benefited Muslims and also the cultural minorities in the Philippines."

This comment can also be justified during the Marcos regime, he was even offered the position of the chief justice of the Philippines provided that he will join in the *Kilusang Bagong Lipunan*. As related by Avicina Alonto, his father told him the exact words to Marcos:

"I am willing to work for you and your government even as a janitor provided that you will not pay me a single centavo. Marcos replied, what kind of job is that?"

The incident proved that he was a statesman and a gentleman. It was a polite way of saying "no" to Marcos because work always must be compensated. Though he was offered that kind of position, he did not take advantage of the opportunity. According to Avicina Alonto, he was never after money in doing public service. This can also be supported even during the Stone Hill controversy when he was a senator. Stone Hill was an American investor during the time of Magsaysay and he wanted to invest in the Philippines but there was a problem in the legislation on how he would be able to place his money in the Philippines. What he did was that he bribed some senators so that he would be allowed to bring his money to the Philippines.

When the issue was exposed, Senate had a congressional hearing and investigation similar to those conducted in the Blue Ribbon Committee. Later, Stone Hill confessed that he was able to bribe senators and every week the periodicals and the newspaper releases followed and published developments involving the controversy. According to Avicina Alonto, it was a small matter that had escalated. Every week there was a revelation in the Senate with a list of those who allegedly received money from Stone Hill. At the end of the controversy, finally, there were only four senators who never received and took money from Stone Hill. They were Alonto, Puyat, Diokno, and Tañeda.

Thus, as a legislator, he did not utilize his authority for his self-interest. He used the power given to him by the people to work for the improvement and betterment of the Bangsamoro and to overcome any barrier among Muslim and Christian Filipinos.

Senator Domie became the chairman of the Special Committee created by the House of Representatives to find a definite solution to the so-called "Moro Problem". He was able to comprehend the enormity of the injustices committed on the Moros, in this way empowering him to struggle with the government for more reforms. After, directing intensive study, they discovered that the "Moro Problem", as it is known thus called by the government and the country everywhere, was only the issue of incorporating into one body politic the Bangsamoro populace of the nation and instilling into their mind that they are Filipinos and that the government is their own and they are a part of it.^{xxxix}

One of the solutions given by this committee was mentioned in his speech in the first national Muslim conference in Cotabato, he said:

"We are convinced that to solve this "Moro Problem", it is necessary that the government should adopt a policy and course of action tending to accelerate the social, educational, economic, and political programs of the Muslims so that at a given period in our history, which should be as early as possible, they would approximate, if not equal, the level of progress of the rest of the country. In this connection, let it be known that at the present rate of progress, the gap that

separates one from the other is becoming wider and wider, so much to that it might happen in the future that the Muslim populations in our country may be so far behind that they will wake up someday, literally, holding the bag empty. God forbid, such predicament might wind up as a crisis in our history or become a national catastrophe"^{xl}

Thus, he filed bills for the betterment of the Bangsamoro and the Lumads in the Philippines because he believed that the only solution of the "Moro Problem" was to integrate them into Philippine politics. Some of Senator Domie's greatest achievements throughout his capacity as a legislator in the Philippine government included the creation of Commission on National Integration (CNI), the Mindanao State University (MSU), and the amendment to the Civil Service Act of 1959.

His Political Advocacy

Senator Domie never intended to use force as a means to achieve his objectives for the Bangsamoro people. He did not even want the Moro youth to be radical. He diplomatically dealt with the Philippine government and he believed that some form of negotiation could still be worked out between the Bangsamoro and the Filipinos within the Philippine nation-state system. He also believed in exhausting all available legitimate means to resolve the conflict before resorting to separation. This explained why he wanted a political negotiation, in the form of a political settlement of the Mindanao conflict by establishing a meaningful political autonomy for the Bangsamoro. It was in this context that he presented the federal system as the system that could provide the maximum opportunity for separate and diverse communities to organize themselves. But no matter how he was against to the arguments of the Moro youth to the outright separation of Mindanao from the Philippines which he believed would lead to a continued and bloody conflict, a group of trained Moros established the so-called Moro National Liberation Front with its founder Nur Misuari.^{xli}

In this part, it is important to mention that this Moro group needed its recognition from the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) but they had difficulty being recognized because

the OIC wanted an endorsement from Rabitah Al-Alam Al-Islamie of which Senator Domie was a founding member. Senator Domie also found it hard to endorse Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) because he has bad terms with Nur Misuari since they both have different ideologies. Like, for instance, was the issue of accepting the term "Moro" in the Philippines. Nur Misuari argued that if the Bangsamoro people wanted to be independent, there must be a national identity named to them which Nur Misuari asserted the term "Moro".

On the other hand, Senator Domie's view was to use the term "Muslim Mindanao" to which Nur Misuari and Abulkhayr Alonto argued that not all of the people in Mindanao are Muslims. However, according to Ahmad Domocao E. Alonto, Sr., he said that the logical ideology of his father was historical and visionary.

This comment reflected when Senator Domie said:

"We were the past majority in Mindanao, but later on, we were pushed away from our land by the policy of the government." He added; "in the future, if we work hard, then Islam may spread all-over Mindanao".

Senator Domie's stand in naming "Muslim Mindanao" was deemed historical and futuristic. However, this issue on the acceptance of the term Moro did not become a reason to the Moro National Liberation Front to be recognized by the OIC because, at that time, Mindanao was in chaos so Senator Domie agreed to support MNLF.

Nevertheless, though he supported the MNLF, it is worth mentioning that he also fully supported the creation of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front under 'Alim Salamat Hashim when the latter began to separate from the MNLF as early as 1975. He believed that 'Alim Salamat was a more worthy leader of the Moro liberation movement because he is an 'alim (Islamic scholar) whose devotion to the Islamic ideology and cause was untainted by secularist and alien ideological influences. As Salamat Hashim finished his Islamic studies at Al-Azhar University in Egypt, this particular background shaped Hashim to become an Islamic-oriented, while for Nur Misuari, he is usually referred to as secular-oriented for he finished his study in Political

Science at the University of the Philippines. These two leaders had also different goals, Nur Misuari's goal was to liberate the Moro land from the yoke of oppression with a democracy type of governance. For Salamat Hashim, it is not only to liberate the Moro land and have freedom; rather what is more important is to have an Islamic state where Shariah can be the ruled. This is how the two leaders were identified based on their orientation and goal. For the leadership style, Misuari was said to have monopolized the decision making in the MNLF, while Salamat Hashim was following the consensus decision making in the MILF.

It is also very important to note that 'Alim Salamat Hashim, while chairman of the MILF, he issued a principled policy statement that "the best and most civilized way to resolve the conflict in Mindanao is through a negotiated political settlement". Thus, Senator Domie had the same view with Salamat Hashim; In fact, they were close friends.

Indeed, the political advocacy of Senator Domie contributed to the present struggle of the Bangsamoro people 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 Shariah was one of his visions. Though he is no longer alive, his political advocacy and ideology is still alive through the practice of Moro Islamic Liberation Front.

Furthermore, as a Commissioner to the 1986 Constitutional Commission, he joined the different Islamic ideas and provisions in the Preamble, Declaration of the Principles and State Policy, Bill of Rights, Social Justice and Human Rights, and other provisions of the 1987 Constitution of the Philippine Government. In his political career, he can be considered as remarkable and of great importance. His political career was focused on integrating the Bangsamoro people and Lumads to develop and unite their society and to participate in the Philippine political affairs because he believed that the development and progress can only be attained by the Filipino people if and only if they are united despite their diverse cultures. His politics was focused on the advancement of Islam. His politics was for the civil rights of the Bangsamoro people. He was an educator, a legislator, a statesman, a reformer, a peace advocate, and a constitutionalist.

Thus, According to Alunan C. Glang; "There are many Muslim politicians, but there was only one Muslim leader, in the person of Ahmad Domocao Alonto"^{xlii}

Senator Domie 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 reminds his children and his family "to be good and to do well for the sake of Allah. According to his son, Ahmad Domocao E. Alonto, Jr., Senator Domie said; "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 Jamie'o Mindanao Al-Islamie*), what would be his message to the people of Lanao; he 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.}

He then added; *strengthen your faith, because it will be an instrument for the Mranaws and the Muslim in the Philippines to be united.*

Ahmad Domocao Alonto, Sr. equipped his family to take care of three things. First is the good service to the people and 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 the consciousness of Islam through *Jamiatu Al-Filibbin Al-Islamia*.

CONCLUSION

The researcher found out that Senator Ahmad Domocao A. Alonto, Sr. has always regarded as a legend of his time by the Mranaws and the Bangsamoro people. The people of Lanao view him as a man of vision, a social reformer, a statesman, a pragmatic politician, and a champion of the rights of Muslims in Lanao and the Philippines in general. Certainly, like the rest of the admired one hundred great Muslim leaders of the 20th century, 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.

Thus, the political life of Senator Domie has amounted to remarkable legacies that he had left to the Mranaws and the Bangsamoro people. There is no other than Ahmad Domocao Alonto, Sr. who had spent his life in politics only for the good service and betterment of his people. His life in politics has not been marred by anomalies and corruption; all he wanted was to solve the gap between the Muslims and the Christian Filipinos and made them unite despite their differences. And that what makes him a great political figure among the Mranaws.

There are many Moro Leader of today who are as intelligent, as dedicated and as righteously minded as Senator Domie but they were never given the chance to achieve like what he did. Some are lost in the corrupt system that best describes the state of the nation today. Senator Domie was fortunate to have been born in the right space and time when life was simple. He was pure of heart and his actions and legacies reflected this. He conceived fair ideas for his people at a time when all seemed to be hopeless. The Mranaw people and the Bangsamoro nation are blessed that at a certain point in time, Senator Domie was born when he was needed most.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Agoncillo, Teodoro A. *History of the Filipino People*. Garotech publishing 117 2nd St., Bitoon Circle Barangay Commonwealth, Quezon City, 1990.

Alam, Moh'd Manzoor. *100 Great Muslim Leaders of the 20th Century*. New Delhi: Institute of Objective Studies, India. 2005

Alonto, Ahmad Domocao. "The Political Problems of the Cultural Minorities." Paper presented the University of the Philippines-Baguio, held in the City of Baguio. 1971.

"Basic Issues on the Mindanao Question." Paper presented at Marawi: Mindanao State University, Philippines. 1975.

"Islam and the Muslims of the Philippines." Paper presented at the Muslim- Christian Dialogue on the Mindanao Situation", Communication Foundation of Asia, Manila. 1984.

"Reversion to Islamic Shariah: The Only Way to Save the Contribution of Islam towards the Development of Social Institution of the Muslim Communities in the Philippines." Paper presented for the National Hijrah Centenary Celebrations Committee (Law Division) of the Government of Pakistan. 1996.

Gowing, Peter G. *Muslim Filipinos: Heritage and horizon*. Quezon City, Philippines, 1979.

Glang, Alunan C. *Muslim Secession or Integration*. 311 Quezon, Philippines, R.P. Garcia publishing Co. 1969.

Lomondot, Muhammad A. *Maranao: So totholan, taritib, ijma ago impit sa Salsilah*. 1st edition; Flickers Al-Nur Management Services and Islamic Foundation, Inc., Iligan Philippines. 2014.

Majul, Cesar Adib. *Muslim in the Philippines*. University of the Philippines Press, Diliman, Quezon City, Manila. 1997.

Marohomsalic, Nasser A. *Aristocrats of the Malay Race: A History of the Bangsa Moro in the Philippines*. Quezon City: VJ Graphic Arts, Inc. Manila, Philippines. 1995.

Muslim, Macapado A. *The Moro Armed Struggle in the Philippines: the Nonviolent Autonomy Alternative* (Mindanao State University: University Press and Information Office, December. 1994.

Javier-Alonto, Rowena A. *Ahmad Domocao Alonto: Case Study on Muslim Leadership*. Marawi Asian Institute of Management-Team Energy Center for Bridging Social Divide, Islamic Leadership Development Program. 2009.

ENDNOTES

ⁱ Moh'd Manzoor Alam. *100 Great Muslim Leaders of the 20th Century*. New Delhi: Institute of Objective Studies, India. 2005.

ⁱⁱ Rowena A. Javier-Alonto. *Ahmad Domocao Alonto: Case Study on Muslim Leadership* (Marawi Asian Institute of Management-Team Energy Center for Bridging Social Divide, Islamic Leadership Development Program. 2009.

ⁱⁱⁱ Cesar Adib Majul. *Muslim in the Philippines*. University of the Philippines Press, Diliman, Quezon City, Manila, 1997, 387.

^{iv} Peter G. Gowing. *Muslim Filipinos: Heritage and horizon*. Quezon City, Philippines, 1979.

^v Macapado Abaton Muslim. *The Moro Armed Struggle in the Philippines: The Nonviolent Autonomy Alternative* Mindanao State University: University Press and Information Office, December 1994, 58.

^{vi} *Ibid.*

^{vii} Teodoro A. Agoncillo. *History of the Filipino People*. Garotech publishing 117 2nd St., Bitoon Circle Barangay Commonwealth, Quezon City, 1990, 306.

^{viii} *Ibid.*

^{ix} The American-Moro Wars began when Spain ceded the Philippines, including the Moro homeland, in the Treaty of Paris of 1898 to the United States of America. Moro land (Mindanao, Sulu and Palawan), however, was never a part of the Philippines because Spain failed to subdue the Moro Muslims and place them under her rule. Spain therefore had no right to include Mindanao in the sale of the Philippines; on the other hand, the Americans also had no moral and legitimate right to rule over Mindanao as the latter did not belong to Spain. The American occupation of the Moro land was therefore resisted by the Moros through armed and parliamentary struggle.

^x Muhammad A. Lomondot. *Maranao: So Totholan, Taritib, Ijma ago Impit sa Salsilah*. 1st edition; Flickers Al-Nur Management Services and Islamic Foundation, Inc., Iligan Philippines, 2014, 91.

^{xi} Ahmad E. Alonto Jr. (former President, Mindanao State University-Marawi City), interview by author, February 23, 2016.

^{xii} *Ibid.*

^{xiii} The Filipinista Movement was established by Manuel L. Quezon for the purpose of obtaining Philippine independence from the United States that included Mindanao and Sulu as part of an envisioned independent Philippine Republic.

^{xiv} Ahmad E. Alonto Jr. (former President, Mindanao State University-Marawi City), interview by author, February 23, 2016.

^{xv} *Ibid.*

^{xvi} Avicina Alonto. Interviewed by the researcher, phone recording, Public Attorney's Office, MSU-Marawi, 15 February 2016.

^{xvii} *Ibid.*

^{xviii} Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall (1875 – 1936) was a British Muslim who is best remembered as one of the earliest translators of the Holy Quran in English. His translation was first published in 1930. The mission of 'translating' the Qur'an had preoccupied Pickthall's mind since he reverted to Islam. He saw that there was an obligation for all Muslims to know the Qur'an intimately. In 1930, Pickthall published *The Meaning of the Glorious Koran* (A. A. Knopf, New York). Pickthall maintained that the Quran being the word of Allah (SWT) could not be translated.

^{xix} *Ibid*, 52.

^{xx} The University of Al-Azhar is a university in Cairo, Egypt. Al-Azhar is one of the most important center for Islamic learning.

^{xxi} Ahmad Domocao Alonto. "Reversion to Islamic Shariah: The Only Way to Save the Contribution of Islam towards the Development of Social Institution of the Muslim Communities in the Philippines." Paper presented at the National Hijrah Centenary Celebrations Committee (Law Division) of the Government of Pakistan, 1996, 19.

^{xxii} *Ummah* is the universal and spiritual community of the Muslims.

^{xxiii} Bandung, also Bandoeng, is one of the largest cities in Indonesia and the capital of West Java Province. Bandung is situated in the uplands of western Java at an elevation of 715 m (2,350 ft.) in a scenic region dominated by high volcanoes.

^{xxiv} Ahmad Domocao Alonto, *Islam and the Muslims in the Philippines* (delivered at the first national Muslim Conference held in Cotabato, Cotabato, on June 8-12, 1955), 19.

^{xxv} *Ibid.*

^{xxvi} Gamal Abdel Nasser (1918-1970), Egyptian statesman, who rose from humble beginnings to become president of Egypt (1956-1970) and the most influential leader of the Arab world.

^{xxvii} Alonto Cites PI Egypt and UAR similarities, (Daily Mirror Library and Morgue, December 9, 1960), 10.

^{xxviii} Zia Ur-Rahman Alonto (Member of Parliament, Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao), interview by author, March 3, 2016.

^{xxix} Acmad Sukarno (1901-1970), dominant figure of Indonesia's nationalist movement against the Dutch and the country's first president (1945-1968). He was toppled following an attempted coup and held under house arrest until his death.

^{xxx} Tunku Abdul Rahman (8 February 1903 – 6 December 1990) was a Malaysian politician who served as the first Chief Minister of the Federation of Malaya from 1955 to 1957, before becoming Malaya's first Prime Minister after independence in 1957, remaining Prime Minister following the formation of Malaysia in 1963, when Sabah, Sarawak, and Singapore joined the federation, until his retirement in 1970.

^{xxxi} *Maulidun Nabi* is the observance of the birth date of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) which is celebrated often on the 12th day of *Rabi' Al-Awwal*, (the third month in the Islamic calendar).

^{xxxii} Zia Ur-Rahman Alonto (Member of Parliament, Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao), interview by author, March 3, 2016.

^{xxxiii} Salamat Hashim was the former MNLF Vice-Chairman, but later broke away and founded the Moro Islamic Liberation Front. He finished his Islamic studies at Al-Azhar University, Egypt. This particular background shaped Hashim to become an Islamic-oriented. For Hashim, it is not only to liberate the Moro land and have freedom; rather what is more important is to have an Islamic state where Sharia can be the rule. For more details, see the work of Tirmizy E. Abdullah's work entitled Salamat Hashim: MILF'S Immortal Ideologue in his MA Thesis, First Phase in the Government of the Philippines (GPH) and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) Peace Negotiation.

^{xxxiv} Dr. Mahid M. Mutilan is a respected Muslim religious leader and an acknowledged titan of peace advocacy and inter-religious dialogue in [Mindanao](#). A native of Marawi, Mutilan holds the Mranaw title of *Guro sa Marawi*, meaning a learned leader. For more details, please see the work of Ibrahim, Noraleyah U. The Life of Dr. Mahid M. Mutilan; A Biographical Study (1943-2007) (Undergraduate Thesis Mindanao State University, Marawi, Philippines, 2009).

^{xxxv} Marohomsalic, Nasser A. *Aristocrats of the Malay Race: A History of the Bangsa Moro in the Philippines*. Quezon City: VJ Graphic Arts, Inc. Manila, Philippines, 1995, 158.

^{xxxvi} Historically, the word is associated with war between Muslims and Catholics in Western Europe in the Middle Ages. It is well known that the memory of the Spanish about North African Arab Muslims is closely associated with the formation of its nation and an 800-year war against Muslims, which resulted in a negative image of Muslims in their collective memory. Moreover, the Spaniards tended to extend this prototype to all other Muslims. So, Moro generally refers to all Muslims in modern spoken Spanish. When the Spaniards began their colonial activity in Southeast Asia, they also called all Muslims in the region Moro. But later this term gradually narrowed down to refer to Muslims in the southern Philippines. It carried the discrimination of Western culture against Eastern culture.

^{xxxvii} Cita T. Ocampo. Muslims to have University. The Manila Times; Mindanao library. 1960.

^{xxxviii} Ahmad Domocao Alonto, Sr. "The Political Problems of the Cultural Minorities." Paper presented at the University of the Philippines-Baguio, held in the City of Baguio. 1971.

^{xxxix} Ahmad Domocao Alonto, Sr. "Basic Issues on the Mindanao Question." Paper presented at Mindanao State University, Philippines. 1975

^{xl} Ahmad Domocao Alonto, Sr. "The Political Problems of the Cultural Minorities." Paper presented the University of the Philippines-Baguio, held in the City of Baguio. 1971.

^{xli} Avicina Alonto (Director, Public Attorney's Office-Marawi City), interview by author, February 26, 2016.

^{xlii} Alunan C. Glang. *Muslim Secession or Integration*. 311 Quezon, Philippines, R.P. Garcia publishing Co. 1969.