

BEING MUSLIM IN METRO MANILA: Diversity of Identity and Political Loyalty

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Abstract: This study examines how the multiple identities of the Mindanao Muslim minority in Metro Manila influence their loyalty to the Philippine state. Using qualitative methods through Focus Group Discussions and in-depth interviews conducted in Quiapo, Maharlika Village, and Culiati, the research applies Creswell's qualitative data analysis framework. The findings reveal four key tendencies: (1) reluctance to identify as Filipinos due to historical, cultural, and religious dissonance; (2) prioritization of ethnic and religious over national identity; (3) pragmatic identification as Filipinos for bureaucratic purposes; and (4) successful integration of Islamic, Bangsamoro, and Philippine identities among a small group who perceive no inherent conflict between them. The study contributes to the discourse on Muslim minority identity negotiation by demonstrating that identity pluralism and adaptive negotiation are crucial mechanisms for sustaining minority existence within a dominant national framework.

Keywords: Muslim minority; Mindanao; Identity negotiation; Bangsamoro

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Introduction

This paper examines how Mindanao Muslim minority in Metro Manila negotiate their religious and tribal identities with the Philippine state identity that is historically, culturally and religiously different from them. Their diverse loyalties to the Philippine state are also shaped by this diversity of identities. Before the arrival of colonialists, Spanish and American, the Philippines had two Islamic kingdoms, the Sultanate of Sulu and the Magiundanao. Therefore, the Philippines was once a part of Malay or Islamic history. But when the Philippines was under the Spanish and American rule, the state favored Christians because they were of the same religion and the spread of Christianity was supported by colonialist political power.¹ Muslims' reluctance to become part of the Philippine state is inseparable from their religious differences. Another reason for their reluctance to accept the Philippines as part of their lives is a worldview that has always been passed down from generation to generation, which is "their ancestors (Muslims) would never submit to Felipe" (Spanish prince) who once colonized their country. The resistance is a form of the Bangsamoro's persistent fight against the colonialists.² Islam was also the ruling force in Metro Manila in addition to Sulu and Magiundanao in the Southern Philippines. In the mid-16th century, Sulayman bin Mahmud II or better known as Rajah Sulayman, was believed to be of Malay descent, once controlled a relatively large area in front of Manila Bay. His domain was the area of Fort Santiago in Intramuros, Manila and the outskirts of Sapa, now Santa Ana, Pasig, Tondo and Malabon.³ Moreover, Mindanao Muslim has a history of political conflict with the colonials and with the Philippine government after independence. The colonial government's support for massive Christian migration to Mindanao was the cause of the conflict. After independence, the Philippine government continued this political policy. This policy had an impact of alienating Muslims from their own land and thus the economic and political marginalization of many Mindanao areas.⁴ Similar realities could be found in different areas, such as one illustrated by Damayanti's study.⁵

Many studies on Muslim relations with Philippine political power have been conducted: Cornelio and Calamba examine the youth political movement that led to the rebuilding of Marawi after the Philippine government's fight with Islamic groups allegedly linked to the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria;⁶ Maboloc et al. explore economic injustice influenced by power dynamics in Mindanao;⁷ Ragandang and Podder concentrate on youth involvement in the transition of Bangsamoro authority in Mindanao;⁸ Maksum analyzes the granting of autonomy to Bangsamoro as a solution between the government and the people of Southern Philippines;⁹ Mendodoza-Dave identifies the absence of regional identity was caused by the fragmentation of education in the North (Christian) and South (Muslim) during the colonial period.¹⁰ Political studies on Muslim minorities in Philippines were also conducted by Andres and Suva who attempted to analyze the colonial transition from Spain to America which was always marked by the struggle for power of the Sultan by local figures in Sulu.¹¹ If previous research talks about politics and policies,

the next research talks about conflict and violence. Brilantes and Lorenzo found the internal conflict in the Philippines between the government and the Bangsamoro create the new public administration in this country, namely Bangsamoro autonomy administration.¹² Related to violence, Kanas found there is a correlation between out-group violence and strong ethno religious identification in Indonesia and Filipino students.¹³ Beside conflict and violence, Casanova seeks to explore the representations of minorities in the media in the Philippines.¹⁴ Negotiation and social capital are also perspective used in the study of Muslim minorities in the Philippines. Jamora et al. explore how the Maranao in Sorsogon City negotiates their cultural identity through multilingual discourse;¹⁵ Bernardo identifies poly culturalism as social capital for positive attitudes towards minorities in the Philippines.¹⁶ Unlike the above studies, this research seeks to understand how the different identities of the Mindanao Muslim minority in Metro Manila affects their loyalty to the Philippines.

Method

This study employed a qualitative research design using a case study approach. Fieldwork was conducted among three Muslim communities originating from Mindanao and residing in Metro Manila: the Golden Mosque in Quiapo, Manila; the Blue Mosque in Maharlika Village, Taguig City; and the Salam Compound in Culiati, Tandang Sora, Quezon City. Quiapo is a predominantly Muslim trading hub, Taguig accommodates many civil servants, while Quezon City represents a mixed neighborhood where Muslims and members of the Iglesia Ni Cristo coexist peacefully. Data were gathered through Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) involving traders, civil servants, preachers, and mosque administrators, as well as in-depth interviews with Muslim and Christian leaders and officials from the National Commission on Muslim Filipinos. A purposive sampling strategy was used, comprising 23 informants—seven from Salam Compound, nine from the Golden Mosque, and seven from the Blue Mosque.¹⁷ Data analysis followed Creswell and Creswell's qualitative analytic procedures,¹⁸ while validity was ensured through Lincoln and Guba's criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.¹⁹ The discussion draws on identity negotiation theory,²⁰ incorporating the concepts of legitimizing, resistance, and project identities,²¹ alongside dual loyalty theory to analyze how Mindanao Muslim migrants construct religious and political loyalties within a secular, Catholic-majority state.²²

Results and Discussion

Mindanao Muslim Minority in Metro Manila

The presence of the Mindanao Muslim minority in Metro Manila cannot be separated from the interplay of *push* and *pull* factors that influence patterns of migration. Politically,

the dominant power structures and historical marginalization in Mindanao have long served as push factors, creating dissatisfaction and insecurity among Muslim communities. Conversely, the pull factors that attract migration include the promise of prosperity, employment opportunities, political stability, and access to education in Metro Manila and other urban centers.²³

The migration of Muslims from Mindanao to the Philippine capital has both historical and structural roots. Politically, the policies implemented during and after colonization—first under American rule and later by the independent Philippine state—played a decisive role. Beginning in the 1920s, government-sponsored resettlement programs encouraged large-scale Christian migration into Mindanao, drastically altering its demographic composition. Muslims, who once formed the majority, became minorities in their own ancestral lands. These demographic changes led to widespread land dispossession and displacement, deepening socio-economic inequalities and fostering recurring cycles of conflict. Many Muslims, facing economic decline and social exclusion, migrated to Metro Manila seeking safer and more viable livelihoods.²⁴ Environmental degradation and competition over land further intensified these migrations. Population pressures and unequal resource distribution often led to clashes between indigenous communities and migrants.²⁵ These tensions, visible in other parts of the Philippines such as the Dayak–Madurese conflicts in Kalimantan, also echoed in Mindanao. Migration, while initially an adaptive response to crisis, sometimes reproduced new forms of ethnic competition in the receiving areas.²⁶

Mindanao Muslims began settling in Metro Manila as early as the 1910s during the American colonial period. The colonial *Pensionado* program sent children of Muslim aristocrats to study in Manila and Washington, D.C., as intermediaries between their communities and the colonial government. By the 1950s, permanent Muslim settlements had emerged across Manila, including forty Tausug and Maranao families in Corta Vitarte, Malate. Other communities grew around the Tondo wharf, Divisoria’s commercial area, and the residential districts of San Andres and Sampaloc. These migrants were active in trade, particularly in textiles, jewelry, and handicrafts, and maintained social relations with the Christian majority.²⁷ Mindanao Muslim people not only migrated to cities in the Philippines but also to neighboring countries such as Malaysia and Indonesia, although the largest population concentration was in Metro Manila.²⁸ In addition to these factors, Mindanao Muslim people were already present in Metro Manila as early as the 1910s during the early period of American colonialism. The “Pensionado” policy brought children of Muslim aristocrats and leaders to Metro Manila and Washington to be educated. The implementation of this policy was to allow young Muslims to act as intermediaries between Mindanao society and the colonial government.²⁹

Muslims residing in Metro Manila are part of the thirteen ethno-linguistic groups found in Mindanao, namely Iranun, Maguindanao, Maranau, Tausug, Yakan, Jamapun,

Kalibangan, Sangil, Molbong, Palawan and Badjao. Muslims who traditionally inhabit Mindanao, Basilan Island, Palawan, as well as the Sulu and Tawi-Tawi archipelagos in southern Philippines identify as Bangsamoro. But for traditional Muslims in the Philippines, the term 'Moro' does not fully represent their identity as Muslims because 'Moro' or Bangsamoro is basically a political term that includes not only Muslims but also non-Muslims.³⁰

Culturally, the migration of Muslims to Metro Manila is also influenced by internal traditions and social dynamics. One significant factor is *rido*, or family feud, a form of inter-clan conflict driven by cycles of revenge similar to *qisas* in Islamic law. Those seeking to escape such cycles often migrate to distant areas to rebuild their lives.³¹ Economic motives also play a central role. Many Mindanao Muslims relocate to the capital to improve their livelihoods, pursue education, or respond to invitations from relatives already settled in Manila. According to Nimfa Ogena's survey, 58.9 percent of migrants cited economic reasons for migration, 22.5 percent cited employment opportunities, 5.3 percent cited family connections, and 3.3 percent migrated for education.³²

In terms of religion, the population of the Philippines is predominantly Catholic, with 85,645,362 people or 78.8 percent of the total population of 108,667,043. Islam comes next with 6,981,710 people or 6.4 percent. Iglesia Ni Cristo is the next largest group with 2,806,524 people or 2.6 percent of the country's total population. Hence, these three religions are called the Top 3 Religious Affiliations in the Philippines.³³ Although Islam is the second largest religion in terms of numbers of adherents, it is still a minority religion. There are 6,981,710 Muslims in the Philippines, which is 6.4 percent of the country's total population. However, Muslims are present in every province, but in small percentages. Though a minority overall at national level, the Muslim population in certain areas such as autonomous regions like Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) and provinces including Palawan, Sarangani, Zamboanga Sibugay, Cotabato, Sultan Kudarat, Lanao del Norte, Maguindanao, Basilan, Lanao del Sur, Sulu, Interior Province and Tawi-Tawi varies from 10.8 to 97.2 percent. According to census results, Muslim population is also a minority in Metro Manila, numbering 173,346 out of a total Metro Manila population of 13,403,551 or 1.3 percent.³⁴ The object of this research is Mindanao Muslim migrants because they are a majority of the Muslim population in Metro Manila, comprising about 40 percent of Metro Manila's total Muslim residents.³⁵

Mindanao Muslims are also known as traditional Islam adherents. This is because they have been trying to integrate and preserve their religion, customs and traditions, particularly the Bangsamoro customary traditions with their various ethnic variations. They practice Islam while at the same time keeping their traditional customs, one of which is *Rido*.³⁶ Therefore, in terms of Islamic understanding, Mindanao Muslim living in Metro Manila adhere to the Ahlussunnah wal Jamaah religious ideology. This Islamic

group easily negotiates their religious identity with traditions, religious difference, and nationalities;³⁷ realities by no means unique to the region.³⁸ The two other Muslim groups in Metro Manila are Expatriate Muslims and Balik-Islam who are more conservative and sometimes fundamentalist. These latter two groups are heavily influenced by Salafism-Wahhabism in their religious practices.³⁹ In addition to religious and cultural differences, Mindanao Muslims residing in Metro Manila also have divergent political attitudes from the majority of Filipinos who have fully accepted the Philippines as a nation. Mindanao Muslims in Metro Manila have different political stances in their interactions with the Catholic majority and the secular Philippine state, which are a result of their ongoing negotiations with the state and the Catholic majority. The negotiations result in assertions, resistances and adjustments of their religious and ethnic identities regarding the state and other religious groups in Metro Manila. In the end, this identity negotiation leads to different types of loyalty to the Philippine state.

Today, the Mindanao Muslim diaspora in Metro Manila represents diverse ethno-linguistic groups, including the Tausug, Maranao, Maguindanao, Iranun, Yakan, and Sama. Each group has its own historical and cultural roots. The Tausug, native to Jolo Island—the former capital of the Sulu Sultanate—are traditionally fishermen and farmers, while the Maranao, originally agriculturalists from the Lake Lanao region, have become prominent traders and business owners. The Maguindanao, heirs to the Maguindanao Sultanate, reside primarily in Cotabato and its surrounding areas, while the Iranun, historically known as seafarers and warriors, have now turned to farming in Sultan Kudarat. The Yakan, displaced from Basilan by conflict, have resettled in Zamboanga, and the Sama, often referred to as sea nomads, now live permanently in areas such as Tawi-Tawi. Collectively, these groups form a culturally vibrant and historically grounded diaspora that continues to shape the urban landscape of Metro Manila.⁴⁰

Muslim minority in Metro Manila engage in a number of occupations, including running businesses, such as restaurants, grocery stores, retail shops, brassware businesses, handicrafts, and imported goods.⁴¹ Additionally, many work as professionals, office employees, and factory workers.⁴² Some are also labor recruitment agents aside from being vendors in flea markets and street side stalls in Metro Manila.⁴³ Many of them take part time jobs as security guards.⁴⁴ The Bangsamoro's strong attachment to their culture and religion influences their loyalty to the Philippines.

Political Loyalty of Metro Manila's Muslim Minority

At least three strategic patterns emerge from the cultural contact between religious minorities and majorities. First, separation—a strong sense of belonging to one's own ethnoreligious group only. This approach is adopted by migrants who do not change their ethnoreligious identity to fit in with that of their host country. They, however, keep a strong attachment to their original identity. Second, assimilation this is the opposite of

the first strategy, where migrant minorities assimilate into the culture of their host country. However, this approach may erode their original ethno religious identity over time. Third, integration—which is the capacity of migrant minorities to integrate their ethnoreligious identity with that of their host country. They do not reject one for the other, but they manage to blend both.⁴⁵ Cultural contact also results in cultural hybridity, as syncretism is inevitable.⁴⁶ In this sense, there are no strict or clear cultural boundaries between groups, but cultures are on a continuum. This dynamic often leads over time to the development of dual or mixed cultural identities.⁴⁷

The Muslim minority in Metro Manila demonstrates complex patterns of cultural negotiation in balancing their ethno religious identity with the Philippine state. This process produces varying models of loyalty and self-identification. Many Muslims affirm their Islamic and Bangsamoro identity while redefining their relationship with the Philippines, often viewing the state as synonymous with Christianity. Consequently, Islam and Bangsamoro serve as primary markers of identity, while national affiliation remains secondary. Over time, these communities have learned to adapt their religious and ethnic identities to align with the broader national framework. Two types of identity—fixed and fluid—emerge in this process: the first preserves tradition, while the second adjusts to social and cultural changes. Factors such as power dynamics, solidarity, and emotional experience influence this balance.⁴⁸ Migrants often experience divided loyalties between their homeland and host nation, resulting in limited political participation and feelings of marginalization. Dual identity, while occasionally fostering political radicalism or separatist tendencies, can also promote intercultural understanding when acknowledged and respected by the majority. Thus, dual identities function as a double-edged sword—simultaneously a source of tension and a potential bridge for social cohesion within plural societies.⁴⁹

Inter-group relations among Muslim minorities in Metro Manila are deeply shaped by historical, religious, cultural, and political contexts.⁵⁰ These diverse backgrounds have produced differing political perspectives and varying degrees of loyalty toward the Philippine state. For many, three intertwined identities—Islam, Bangsamoro, and the Philippines—define their sense of belonging. This interplay of connected religious and national identities parallels the trends observed in other Southeast Asian Muslim communities, where religious scholarship and social networks significantly influence community identity and political allegiance.⁵¹ As Muslims, they identify with Islam as a faith; as members of the Bangsamoro ethnic group, they maintain cultural distinctiveness; and as residents of the Philippines, they engage with the broader national identity. These overlapping affiliations often create tensions of loyalty and self-definition. Social identification among these groups involves both cognitive awareness of belonging (“in-group”) and evaluative judgments that may foster positive bias toward one’s own group and negative perceptions of others.⁵² Consequently, religio-centrism and ethnocentrism shape political attitudes, leading to varying degrees of affirmation, resistance, or adaptation to Philippine national identity.

This identity is affirmed by the political attitude of the Muslim minority who are reluctant to identify as Filipinos. That is because for them, the Philippines has a political and religious history that is very different from Islam. The reasons why they are reluctant to be called Filipinos are: First, politically, the word Philippines was given by King Philip, the king of the Spanish Kingdom who conquered the Philippines from Muslims. Second, culturally, the Philippines is synonymous with Christianity because King Philip was a Christian. The motto that has been passed down from generation to generation from Muslims is that their ancestors never submitted to Felipe (the Spanish prince) who once occupied their country. This attitude of non-submission is a form of the Bangsamoro resistance against the colonialists.⁵³ This resistance occurred not only in Sulu and Maguindanao as the center of the Islamic kingdom in the Philippines, but also in Metro Manila. In the mid-16th century, Sulayman bin Mahmud II or better known as Rajah Sulayman who was believed to be of Malay descent, once ruled a relatively large area along the shores of Manila Bay.⁵⁴ For this reason, they reject the statement when responding to the form of nationalism of some Muslim minority, such as ‘I am a hundred percent Muslim and a hundred percent Filipino’.⁵⁵ This attitude is inseparable from the history of Muslim contact with Spanish colonialists who harmed Muslims, such as during the conquest of Mindanao, many Moros were arrested, mosques were burned, and Islamic relics were destroyed.⁵⁶

The prolonged legacy of post-colonial marginalization by the Philippine government toward Muslims in Mindanao fostered the emergence of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) in 1963, a movement advocating for Mindanao’s independence. For MNLF activists, Muslims had been humiliated three times—under Spanish and American colonial rule, and again by the post-independence Philippine state. The government’s Philippineization program was viewed as a continuation of colonial oppression, reminiscent of the Crusades against Islam.⁵⁷ The old memory that the Philippines once had an Islamic history also strengthened the assertion of identity that had an impact on weakening Muslim loyalty to the Philippines. The Philippines already had an Islamic kingdom in the Philippines like the Sultanate of Sulu and Maguindanao before the arrival of the colonialists. This is based on which the Philippines was once part of Malay or Islamic history. But when the Philippines was under the control of Spain and America, Christians were treated better. The colonialists supported the spread of Christianity.⁵⁸ The same attitude is also seen from the discomfort of some British born Caribbeans being called British because white people as the ethnic majority in the country did not want to accept them. They experience discrimination, harassment and violence.⁵⁹

This sense of displacement continues to shape the political identity of Muslim minorities in Metro Manila. Bebot Mali, a Tausug leader from the Golden Mosque, recounts how Rajah Sulayman once ruled a Muslim Manila before Spanish conquest forced mass conversions. For him, the term “Filipino”—derived from King Felipe of Spain—carries colonial connotations, yet it remains a legal identity he must accept. Despite this, he

acknowledges progress: many Muslims now attain professional success, and national anti-discrimination laws have begun to reduce prejudice.⁶⁰

Such narratives reveal two patterns of political loyalty among Muslim minorities: resistance to full identification as “Filipino,” perceived as synonymous with Christianity, and pragmatic acceptance of Philippine citizenship grounded in civic obligation and recent state reforms. As Muhammad Ali, a graduate student from Marawi, noted, being Filipino is not a choice but a necessity—national identity is imposed by state structures, leaving no alternative to official recognition.⁶¹ This dynamic illustrates how historical grievances, religious identity, and modern state policies intersect to produce complex, negotiated forms of belonging among the Muslim minority in the Philippines.

The Muslim minority in Metro Manila hold a form of dual loyalty in making Islam as an identity other than the Philippines. They do not deny the existence of the Philippine identity as a national identity, but they do not consider it as the main identity, they prefer Islam as the main identity and the Philippines as the second. Historical factors contributed to Islam becoming the primary identity, with the Philippines emerging as a secondary one, which Aljamil Mercado, a convert, chose. Metro Manila was once under Muslim control before it was conquered by Spain and Muslims were forced to convert to Christianity, he said. It is interpreted as returning to Islam, and becoming a convert. Thus, the converts in the Philippines formed themselves in the organization ‘Balik Islam’ which means returning to Islam after having been politically converted to Christianity by the colonialists.⁶²

The Muslim minority in Metro Manila constructs its collective identity through three interconnected dimensions—Islam, Bangsamoro, and the Philippines—each representing religious, ethnic, and national affiliations. While Islam forms their primary identity, Bangsamoro functions as a cultural and political identity linking them to Mindanao, and “Filipino” serves as a pragmatic national identity. Many Muslims in Metro Manila accept their Philippine citizenship mainly for practical reasons such as obtaining passports, education, and employment.⁶³ “We have no other choice. As Tahir Lindasan, Executive Director of the MNCF and a member of the Maguindanao community, explains, “We have no other choice. Our documents are issued by the Philippine government, and we live under Philippine law—so we must be Filipinos”.⁶⁴ This attitude reflects what he calls *pseudo-nationalism*, a form of national belonging rooted in necessity rather than emotional or ideological attachment.⁶⁵

However, other Muslim minorities demonstrate a more reconciliatory approach, embracing a flexible or plural identity that harmonizes religion, ethnicity, and nationality.⁶⁶ For these individuals, there is no contradiction between being Muslim, Bangsamoro, and Filipino. Yusop Kasan, a retired civil servant from the Tausug community, affirms, “There is no conflict between Islam, Bangsamoro, and the Philippines—we live all three in our daily lives.”⁶⁷ Similarly, a *Balik Islam* convert expressed that her dual identity as both

Muslim and Filipino allows her to fulfill her religious duties while maintaining civic loyalty. This balance reflects the *dual loyalty theory*, which recognizes that migrants can maintain simultaneous attachments to both their heritage and their host nation without conflict.⁶⁸ But with regard to nationalism, there is only one identity, the Philippines, a place where two citizens of different religions live, Muslims and non-Muslims”.⁶⁹ There is no other choice but to accept that both adherents of these religions have been destined by God to be Filipinos. They have been brought here by history, and until now. Therefore, both must become Filipinos peacefully.⁷⁰ A Kagawat or Muslim council member of Maguindanao ethnicity also expressed the same thing, ‘we are Filipinos because that is the only option available.’ Bangsamoro and Islam are not national identities but ethnic and religious identities. We must now enjoy that we are Filipino Muslims”.⁷¹ In a different context, in an effort to gain recognition as British, the Muslim minority in the country developed a model of “superordinate identity”, in the form of asserting their similarities with non-British Muslims without giving up their religious subgroups.⁷² This identity model is also seen in the negotiation of Mandailing migrants identity with Malaysian culture, which after independence was fully assimilated into the modern Malaysian social system.⁷³ The development of superordinate identity in a multicultural society plays a role in strengthening attitudes of respect and appreciation for each other in the differences they have.⁷⁴

Muslim minority civil servants must be able to balance patriotism and religion independently. They must be able to adjust their religious identity as Muslims and their national identity as Filipinos. This is called nationalism because all citizens identify as both entirely Muslim and entirely Filipino. The state has now shown its support for Muslims as evidenced by the agreement to set up sharia courts not only in Muslim areas but also in Christian areas. This means that there is a growing Muslim population in the Philippines and therefore this service is required. Furthermore, the state has also recognized two major Islamic holidays, namely Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha as national holidays. There is also an increase in the budget allocation for NCMF now. This is a major development for MNCF to build sustainable programs for Muslims. The approval of the halal division by the government is what Muslims in the Philippines have been waiting for a long time. This is one of the divisions in MNCF. Furthermore, the president also stated that the management of the 2024 pilgrimage by MNCF was the best. This is a significant progress in the management of the interests of Muslims.⁷⁵ This may also be a positive impact of having Muslim cabinet members in the Philippine Budget and Management Department.⁷⁶ This is why being a Filipino should not be rejected and this is already a necessity as a form of nationalism. It can also be seen from the statement of Darwin Absari, Islamic studies expert at the State University of the Philippines from the Tausug tribe, who said, ‘I am Muslim, I am Tausug and I am also Filipino’.⁷⁷ The results of Darwin Darmawan’s research on the identity of Chinese people in Indonesia also show the adjustment of ethnic, religious and state identities. For the Chinese, being Chinese, being Indonesian,

and being Christian are all equally important identities, all of which are valuable and must be able to live side by side peacefully.⁷⁸

Conclusion

Theoretically, there is a change in the identity negotiation model of the Muslim minority in Metro Manila towards assimilation. Assimilation is a negotiation pattern that tends to weaken, even eliminate minority identity and merge it into the majority identity. This is evident in the relativization of history and religious understanding as the basis for constructing their identity, distinguishing them from the majority of the Filipino population. This relativization of history and religious understanding significantly influences their loyalty to the Philippine state. Previously they held a very strict identity, believing that Muslims had a different history and religious understanding from the majority of Filipinos—Muslim history was a history of resistance against colonialism, while Philippine history is friendly with colonialism. In terms of religious understanding, there has been a change from will never submit to the Philippine state because this state is identical to Christianity to understand the Philippines has been destined for Muslims. This form of identity flexibility is evident in their ability to negotiate these three forms of identity, placing each identity in its proper place—Islam as a religious identity, Bangsamoro as an ethnic identity, and Filipino as a national identity. This attitude contributes to strengthening the Muslim minority's loyalty to the Philippine state and weakening their aspirations for secession from the Philippines. This mapping of identity and loyalty greatly contributes to the government in taking appropriate policies towards minorities.

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