

## **The Emergence of Muslim Communities in Ilocandia**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This study was conceptualized to trace the history of Muslim migration in Ilocandia. It employed mixed quantitative- qualitative method of research using triangulation. It provided an analysis of Muslim migration from Mindanao to Ilocandia, particularly at the Darussalam Compound, Zone 3, Bantay, Ilocos Sur. Twenty- seven (27) Muslim migrants served as respondents of the study, selected through purposive sampling. Key informants were also interviewed. Pertinent data needed were culled out from the Registration of Barangay Inhabitants of 2014. The reasons of leaving their homeland, their migratory pattern, as well as their experiences in coping with their new environment were looked into. The push and pull factors of migration were identified. The findings of the study revealed that all of the Muslim migrants of Darussalam Muslim Compound, Zone 3, Bantay, Ilocos Sur are from Marawi City, they are Maranaos, married, 21- 59 years of age, with ideal family size, businessmen /vendors. Majority received low income; migrated directly to Ilocandia except for a few who passed by Cotabato City, Cebu City, Davao City, Cagayan de Oro, Metro Manila and Nueva Ecija and finally settled in the Muslim community of Bantay, Ilocos Sur. Their coming to Ilocandia was caused by political, economic, social, and cultural factors that hamper and hinder their social, economic, political and cultural growth and well- being such as poverty, violence and fear, less educational opportunities, unemployment, low income, high crime and mission to spread Islam. Muslim migration to Ilocandia has been steered by a promising place for business, better environment for their children to grow, better quality of life and religious tolerance. They migrated to Ilocandia because they wanted a better place to live in. These Muslim migrants are peace- loving people and entrepreneurial who dream of living in a peaceful community where they can be economically productive.*

**Keywords:** Muslim migrants, push factors, pull factors, migratory pattern, migratory experiences, Muslim migration

### **INTRODUCTION**

People move from one place to another either seasonally, annually, periodically or permanently for countless factors. This movement may be

spontaneous, forced, impelled, free and planned. Poverty, violence better economic opportunity, better living and working conditions or greater security and peace are just a few of the reasons why people tend to leave their native land. This phenomenon is called human migration.

Migration may have either the rural-to-urban or urban-to-rural pattern. The former is the most dominant pattern of migration in the Philippines which could be attributed largely to economic factors.

Muslim migration always catches attention of people. Their religion, customs, traditions, beliefs are appreciated by many while others are bothered by the issues concerning Muslim terrorism and rebellion.

The League of Cities in the Philippines noted in their conference, that several cities such as Baguio, Cagayan de Oro and Zamboanga experienced or registered an uptrend of rural-to-urban or urban-to-urban migration. According to reports, Baguio City registered an uptrend of rural-to-urban migration of Muslims in the last five decades. However, in Cagayan De Oro (CDO) City, displaced Muslim people moved closer to the city due to armed conflict from the neighboring provinces. According to the Office of Muslim Affairs (OMA) 2000, statistics showed that 69,561 or 59 percent of the Muslim migrants population are in Region IV especially in Region IV A or CALABARZON area. This population ranked number 1 in the Luzon area, which was more than the number of Muslim migrants in Metro Manila (Tandug, 2011). Ilocandia, is not spared for being the destination of Muslim migrants in the country.

Ilocandia, is deemed to be the “baluarte” of the brave, frugal, hardworking, nomadic and adventurous people in the northern part of the Philippines. The region which was originally composed of the provinces of Abra, Ilocos Sur, Ilocos Norte, and La Union, the original home of the Ilocanos is endowed with rich natural resources that no one is expected to leave in search for a greener pasture. However, least expected, this group of people of all ages as being noted in the transnational and global data has been found all over places for various reasons. They leave their homeland in search for more and better opportunities that can be found elsewhere.

Historically, the Ilocano “Diaspora” started in 1906 when the Ilocanos invaded Hawaii and California due to high labor demand. This led to the emergence of the “sacadas”, the Filipinos working in the sugar plantations abroad. Such movement was also experienced in Mindanao, this time through

a government sponsored migration. After the Philippine government passed the Homestead Act which covers areas in Northern Luzon and Mindanao, enterprising Ilocanos migrated to Mindanao to have greater chances of acquiring at least 16 hectares of land to cultivate. Throngs of

Ilocanos settled along the vast areas of Cotabato, Sultan Kudarat, Davao region, and many more availing of the program, hence, the Ilocanos in Mindanao.

While some Ilocanos moved to Mindanao, some of the Muslim residents have also come to Ilocandia. For decades now, the enterprising Muslims have come to Ilocos for the purpose of trading and settling permanently. As a general knowledge, the Muslims are the dominant inhabitants to the second biggest group of islands in the southernmost part of the country which is Mindanao, and their venture to the extreme north is quite a little bit surprising. Except for the foreign colonial migrants that settled in the Ilocos during the period of Spanish conquest, no other tribe with such propensity has ventured to settle down in the coastal region fronting the controversial West Philippine Sea. The migration of the Muslims to this part of the country can be labelled as a “counter stream” or a “reversal” of the flight of the Ilocanos down south many years ago.

The Muslims are the largest non-Christian group in the country that comprises about five percent of the total Philippine population. They are part of the 13 ethno- linguistic groups, each of which has a home region in the different parts of Mindanao and Sulu described as Muslim South (Watanabe, 2007). However, due to migration, Muslim communities are now found in different parts of the country.

The emergence of Muslim migrant communities outside Mindanao has long and deep historical roots that became more pronounced with the armed conflict in Mindanao in the late 1960’s.

The presence of a Muslim community in Bantay, Ilocos Sur can be noted. This is a 3<sup>rd</sup> class municipality of Ilocos Sur, located in Region I of the Philippines. According to the 2007 census, it has a population of 33,174 residing in 34 barangays

The researchers find it imperative to conduct this study to trace the history of Muslim migration in Ilocandia particularly at the Darussalam Compound, Zone 3, Bantay, Ilocos Sur. A description of the profile of the household heads was also provided. The factors or reasons of leaving their homeland once dubbed as the “Land of Promise”, relating the Muslims migratory pattern, experiences and how they cope with their new environment

were given attention. The push and pull factors of migration and the contributions of the migrants to their new- found home were also identified. Findings of this study will provide baseline information to local government units in their policy recommendations in addressing concerns related to multi-cultural communities. Results of the study could provide useful insights in mainstreaming the Muslims in the non- Muslim community and eventually become instrumental in making Muslim brothers and sisters live in harmony with their new -found home and make them productive partners in development.

### **METHODOLOGY**

This study employed the mixed quantitative-qualitative method of research using triangulation. The respondents were 27 migrants of the Muslim community in Zone 3, Bantay, Ilocos Sur, Region I who were identified using purposive sampling. Data gathered by a questionnaire were supplemented by interviews with persons who are knowledgeable regarding the deeper causes of the phenomenon. The key-informants were leaders of the Muslim migrants, non- Muslim residents, ordinary Muslims, and public officials who have enough knowledge regarding the reasons of their migration.

A questionnaire- checklist was administered to the respondents to gather pertinent information; this was supplemented by interviews with key informants. Documentary analysis was done using the Registration of Barangay Inhabitants. Life stories and narrations of the experiences of the Muslim migrants who are generous with their time were also noted.

Part I of the questionnaire gathered information about the profile of the respondents such as place of origin, ethnic tribe, educational attainment, number of children, among others

Part II elicited information on factors relating to migration such as period of arrival in Ilocandia, place and factors influencing their migration, the push and pull factors. These push and pull factors were further categorized into political, economic, social, cultural and environmental.

Part III is on migratory experiences that provided description of their feelings when they just arrived to their new- found home, the inconveniences that they have encountered and their coping mechanisms.

The following ten principles of ethical considerations were observed by the researchers as a result of analysing the ethical guidelines of social science research. The respondents were not subjected to harm in any way whatsoever. Respect for the dignity of research participants was prioritized. Full consent was

obtained from the participants before the study. The protection of the privacy of research participants was ensured. An adequate level of confidentiality of research data was ensured. The anonymity of individuals was maintained, and any type of communication about the research was done with honesty and transparency (Bryman & Bell, 2007).

In line with the above ethical considerations, the researchers sought permission from the Municipal Mayor of Bantay, Ilocos Sur, then from the Punong Barangay of Zone 3, the head of the barangay where the Darrusalam Muslim Compound is situated, and from the leader of the said Muslim Community to conduct the research in their place. The questionnaire was carefully explained by the researchers to the respondents before it was administered. Key informants were also identified and interviewed. Documentary analysis was also done. Documents and records that are related to the study were reviewed. Quantitative data were treated using frequency counts and ranking.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **History of Muslim Migration in Ilocandia and Their Migratory Pattern**

Data and information revealed that all of the Muslim migrants in the Darrusalam Muslim Compound of Zone 3 are Maranaos. They are entrepreneurs who started visiting Ilocandia in the 60's. They came to Ilocos to sell mats, blankets and other items. They came in pairs and have not settled long. In time, they came in bigger number and settled in Zone 4, Bantay, Ilocos Sur temporarily. Eventually, they increased in number and looked for a place to stay for a longer period of time. According to the descendant of one of the earliest residents in the Muslim Compound, the migration of Muslim in Bantay came in various waves, starting with a group of five men who tried their luck in Ilocandia which they regarded as a promising place for business. As it was told, they went back to Mindanao and returned to Ilocandia with their wives and soon with their children. This movement was followed in the 70's, 80's and 90's up to the present. Parents, friends and other relatives have convinced their Muslim brothers and sisters to move -in to Ilocandia. This time, they left their places not only for the purpose of trade but for various reasons.

The acquisition of land by the Muslim migrants enabled them to build permanent homes and a mosque where they could worship everyday. Zone 3 has a public elementary school where Muslims and non- Muslim study. During summer, Madrasah, a Muslim school is functional where Islam, Arabic language and culture and Islamic values are taught. The inhabitants organized

themselves into the Ilocos Sur United Muslim Association with their own set of officers.

The point of origin of almost all of the Muslim migrants of Zone 3, Bantay, Ilocos Sur is Lanao del Sur particularly Marawi City, a 4<sup>th</sup> class component city in the province, classified as urban. A few originated from Cotabato City and its neighbouring towns and cities.

### **Profile of Household Heads**

As to the age of the household heads, 33.76% are 40- 49 years old, 19.48% are 50 years and above and 24.67% are 21- 29 years of age. Almost all of them are married to Muslim women, five are married to Ilocano women who were Roman Catholics but later on converted to Islam; 70.12% have three or less children, and only a few with 8- 11 children; more than 80% are businessmen/traders/vendors.

Places of migration before coming to Ilocandia are Bacolod City, Manila, Cotabato City, Cebu and Nueva Ecija. Others have moved to Manila, Davao City, Cagayan de Oro City and Palawan before they migrated to Ilocandia. However, the earliest residents came directly to Ilocandia.

The primary source of income in their place of origin is the buy and sell business. Others are vendors, farmers and unemployed having an average income of 4,000- 5,000 pesos. It can be noted that in their present settlement, their average family income has gone to an average of 7,000 – 9,000 pesos especially those who are into the buy and sell business who own stalls in public markets and other places. On the other hand, the vendors who are selling DVDs and other small items have an average monthly income of 3,000-4,000 pesos. According to one of the key informants, some of them maybe earning low but having a source of income meant more than having none at all. It can be observed that Muslim peddlers are everywhere in the province and they have stores/ stalls in public markets and malls. This is a clear manifestation that Muslim brothers are hard-working and enterprising.

### **The Push Factors**

Table 1 illustrates the Push Factors related to Migration among the Muslim Migrants at Darussalam Compound of Zone 3, Bantay, Ilocos Sur

**Table 1**  
**Frequency Distribution and Ranking of Push Factors**

Push Factors	Frequency	Rank
<b>A. Political</b>		
• bad governance	18	11.5
• war/ conflict/ personal vendettas	20	10
• slow delivery of justice	21	9
<b>B. Economic</b>		
• unemployment	24	5
• low income	23	7
• poor infrastructure	18	11.5
<b>C. Social</b>		
• poverty	27	1
• violence	26	2.5
• fear	26	2.5
• high crime	23	7
• less educational opportunities	25	4
<b>D. Cultural</b>		
• mission to spread the Islamic religion	23	7

\* Multiple Response

Table 1 shows that poverty, is the primary reason why the Muslim migrants have to leave their place of origin. This is followed by violence and fear; less educational opportunities; unemployment, and low income, high crime and mission to spread Islam ranked least. These reasons could be attributed to the peace and order situation of their place which is validated by key informants who claimed that the effect of crimes as well as war/ conflict among the people is so great that people could not even improve their status in life. The culture of fear and violence has resulted to poverty and stagnation. These factors that are found to have pushed the Muslim migrants to Ilocandia might have hampered their economic growth that resulted to poverty and poor quality of life. Data also revealed the desire of the migrants to proliferate the Islamic faith. Religious tolerance is a reason why it was easy for the Muslim migrants to move-in to Ilocandia. It can be noted that a Mosque had been established at the Darussalam Compound where they could freely worship their God, Allah. It is also interesting to know that the number of Christian converts who have embraced Islam and are living within and outside the Darussalam Compound is increasing. Watanabe (2007) mentioned that the Mosque is not only a physical structure but also a symbolic instrument in the development of Muslim migrant communities.

The dissatisfaction of the migrants in their place of origin became the push factors that forced them to leave and look for a promising place where

they can have a better life. In a paper published in the Journal of Economics, Volume 48 (2014) an empirical evidence of the impact of life satisfaction on the individual intention to migrate has been provided. The impacts of individual characteristics and of country macroeconomic variables on the intention to migrate are analysed jointly. It was found out that people have a greater intention to migrate when dissatisfied with life. The socioeconomic variables and macroeconomic conditions affect the intention to migrate indirectly through life satisfaction. At all levels of life satisfaction, individuals with similar characteristics have greater intentions to migrate from CEE countries than from non-CEE countries.

These findings are corroborated by the study of Tandug (2011) in one of the issues of the Vision (October, 2009), a school paper of Lipa City Colleges, wherein a journalistic investigation was conducted regarding Muslim migrants in Lipa City. According to the said investigation, some of the reasons why Muslims migrated in these cities were fear and chaos from their place of origin, Mindanao terrorism and bombing. In addition, the paper stated that according to the president of a Muslim community, the number of Muslim settlers in Lipa City had reached two to three thousand in a span of five to six years. The same is true with Batangas City and Tanauan City. Most of the migrants were composed of merchandisers selling DVD's and accessories at a very low price. Others were capitalists. The paper also noted that these Muslim migrants were already able to create a community of their own in each of the three cities of Batangas Province. They clustered in one place and built a mosque where they can worship every day.

### **The Pull Factors**

Table 2 presents the Pull Factors related to Muslim Migration in Darassulam Compound, Zone 3, Bantay, Ilocos Sur.

It can be gleaned in Table 2 that the foremost reason why the Muslim migrants move- in to Bantay, Ilocos Sur is they found their new settlement a better place for business, rank 1. This could be due to the fact that majority of the migrants are entrepreneurs/ businessmen. As supported by a Key Informant, they are more productive in their new- found place because they can freely do business without fear of being harmed. Because of the peaceful atmosphere, they also found the place a better environment for their children to grow, rank 2. Another reason why they chose to come to Ilocandia is better quality of life, and they knew that they could freely exercise their religion like in the place where they came from, rank 3.5.



**Table 2**  
**Frequency Distribution and Ranking of Pull Factors**

Pull Factors	Frequency	Rank
<b>A. Political</b>		
• better peace and order situation in the new settlement	23	7.5
• dream to live in a peace and in harmony with other people	20	10
• less corruption, and good governance	18	11
• safety and security are guaranteed.	24	5.5
<b>B. Economic</b>		
• better place for business	27	1
• better employment opportunities	23	7.5
<b>C. Social</b>		
• better quality of life	25	3.5
• better quality of education	24	5.5
• Better environment for children to grow	26	2
• Better health care	22	9
<b>E. Cultural</b>		
• Freely exercise religion like in the place of origin	25	3.5

Note: Multiple Response

These findings are in consonance with the findings of the qualitative study conducted on the Push- Pull Factors of Undocumented Migration from Bangladesh to West Bengal, published in The Qualitative Report, Vol 9, No.2 (2004). It was found out that economic push factors that motivate people to leave Bangladesh are instability and economic depression, poverty, lack of employment opportunity, struggle for livelihood, forced grabbing of landed property from minority group, and lack of industrialization in Bangladesh.

These findings support the results of the study of Beltran (1996) which stated that in every area, there are countless factors which act to hold people within it or attract people to it. Some of these, like the physical geographic factors affect most people in much the same way, while others affect different people in different ways. There are several factors which enter into the process of migration and the decision to migrate as follows: factors associated with the area of origin; factors associated with the area of destination; intervening obstacles; and personal factors.

The same experience can be noted with the Muslims who have migrated to the United States since 1965. Tragic events in the predominantly Muslim countries such as tyranny, persecution, poverty, civil strife and wars have driven residents to the U.S. and eventually led to the emergence of a

Muslim ethnic community. In the 1990's its educational institutions have also attracted over half a million foreign students, many of whom chose to remain in the United States, where facilities for their profession are superior, political freedoms wider, and economic rewards greater. Muslim migrants look for a place that offers them better opportunities in life and a peaceful place to rear their children (Duran and Pipes, 2002).

Kadil (1986) as mentioned in the study of Watanabe (2007), points out that the two main reasons for the migrants to come to Manila were the need to seek better economic opportunities and the problematic peace and order situation in the war affected territories of Mindanao. The government also started exporting labor to some members of the Oil Exporting Countries (OPEC) in response to the oil boom.

### **The Migratory Experiences**

According to the key informants, it was not easy for them to leave their homeland. They felt uneasy and nervous because they are moving in as strangers to their place of destination. It was lonely and sad to leave the place where they were born and grew up. Others were sentimental but they needed to live for more important reasons. On the other hand, most of them feel safer and happier because they are spared from the war and soon be living in a peaceful place.

When they arrived in their new- found community, they were happy, good, thankful to Allah for leading them to the right path for that time they were hopeful for a better life. They looked for their friends, got familiar with the place, befriended with their Christian neighbours, found a home, looked for a good business to earn a living. However, they found difficulty to understand and learn the Iloko language, the Ilocano food was not that attractive to the Muslims. But with the help of the fellow Muslims and with the friendship of the Ilocanos they slowly learned their language.

LQ Lacar, CS Lacar (1989) stated that rural to urban migration invariably removes individuals from the familiar ways of life they are accustomed to and places them in situations in which traditional norms and values are often rendered irrelevant. Moreover, kinship ties, as a consequence of the migration, may become so diffused and limited that these no longer provide the emotional and psychological support needed by the individual migrant in his new setting. However, in the Darussalam Compound, the first group of migrants who got acquainted with the residents ahead of the new

migrants have provided support to their fellow Muslim in adapting and adjusting to their new- found home.

Others, on the other hand were nervous, scared, and isolated. Though their feelings and expectations are mixed, one thing was sure for the migrants- it was a new life for everyone.

When they arrived in their new settlement, their neighbours were not that receptive. They felt that they were being discriminated for being Muslims. The residents were suspicious because the migrants are branded as terrorists and are being blamed for the unpleasant things that are happening around involving Muslims.

Silence has made the migrants total strangers, though some have reached the place with their Muslim brothers and sisters who have migrated ahead of them. Winning the friendship of the non- Muslims was vital. Days passed and slowly they were accepted by the people. The residents became nice and friendly.

Slowly, they won the trust and confidence of their neighbours by doing good business with them. They became their customers of DVDs, jewelry, fashion accessories, electronic gadgets and clothing. They soon became the “suki” (regular customer of the Muslim vendors and merchants).

The Muslim migrants had unforgettable experiences in their new-found home. Learning to speak Ilocano was a great challenge which they overcome with friends’ help. The difficulty that they have encountered was paid off by the happiness that

they felt with the chance to live in a peaceful place with their loved ones, receiving a higher income, having new friends/ living with friendly people and living in a much better place. It was mentioned by the respondents that they miss many things about their homeland especially the wide farms and plains, good weather, better food, relatives and old friends, fresh air, old home, easy communication with people back there, but the serenity and peace, good governance, safety and security, friendly and kind people, the free exercise of human rights in their new- found home are the things that every person dream of. Thus they have no regrets in migrating to Ilocandia because they are all satisfied with their new found home. The favourable environment of Ilocandia has made the migrants to encourage their friends and relatives to follow their footsteps and migrate to Ilocandia.

The migrants however, do not totally turn their back to their native land. They go back to their place for vacation or when there are special occasions for one week to one month to visit their relatives.

It can be noted that Muslim migratory experiences in the literature cited are the same as the experiences of the Muslims involved in the present study. Muslim migrants organized themselves, build a community, a house of worship, and participate in the economic and political affairs of their place of destination. It can be noted that the Muslims have a voice in Sangguiniang Pambarangay of Zone 3, Bantay, Ilocos Sur.

### **The Muslim Contributions to their New- Found Home**

The migrants have contributions to the development of their new-found community. They participate and support the programs and projects of the government. Inasmuch as many of them are businessmen/ businesswomen, they also contribute to the development of the economy by being good tax payers, law abiding and peace loving citizens. They respect the peoples' culture similar to the way the Christians respect them. They have their share in providing good governance in the barangay considering that four (4) Muslims have been elected to the Barangay Council. This guarantees the participation and involvement of the Muslims in the affairs of the government, making them active partners in development. They also organized themselves into the Ilocos Sur United Muslim Association.

In the interview with the Punong Barangay, he claimed that the Muslim community is peaceful. They support the programs and projects and activities of the barangay as shown in their involvement in their Clean and Green Program and their participation during the fiesta, and other activities of their community and barangay.

### **CONCLUSIONS**

All of the Muslim migrants of Darussalam Muslim Compound, Zone 3, Bantay, Ilocos Sur are from Marawi City, they are Maranaos, married, 21- 59 years of age, with ideal family size, businessmen/, entrepreneurs and vendors, many of them were unemployed, and received low income in their place of origin and have engaged themselves in business and received a better and higher income when migrated and settled in Ilocandia. Almost all of the Muslim migrants migrated directly to Ilocandia except for a few who passed by Cotabato City, Cebu City, Davao City, Cagayan de Oro, Metro Manila and Nueva Ecija and finally settled in the Muslim community of Bantay, Ilocos Sur. The reasons why the Muslim migrants left their place are poverty, violence and fear, less educational opportunities, unemployment, low income, high crime and mission

to spread Islam. Muslim migration to Ilocandia has been steered by a promising place for business, better environment for their children to grow, better quality of life and religious tolerance. The Muslim migrants of Ilocandia are peace-loving people and entrepreneurial who dream of living in a peaceful community where they can be economically productive.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

Considering the increasing number of Muslims in Bantay, Ilocos Sur, the municipal government may want to consider the formulation of a long-term development plan for the Muslim community. Muslim researches/ studies can be further encouraged through the establishment of a Center for Muslim Studies. A mechanism should be developed by the government to further strengthen the collaboration between and among the Muslim and non-Muslim residents of the barangay and to further maintain peace and order and good interpersonal relationship. Addressing their needs is equally important to make them more productive and active partners in development. This could be done through a Needs Assessment Survey so that assistance to improve the quality of life, health, sanitation and education of the migrants could be provided by the government and other sectors. A data bank concerning the Muslim migrants should be maintained for easy access and for future reference to serve as basis in coming out with programs and activities for their welfare.

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